

Tour Report

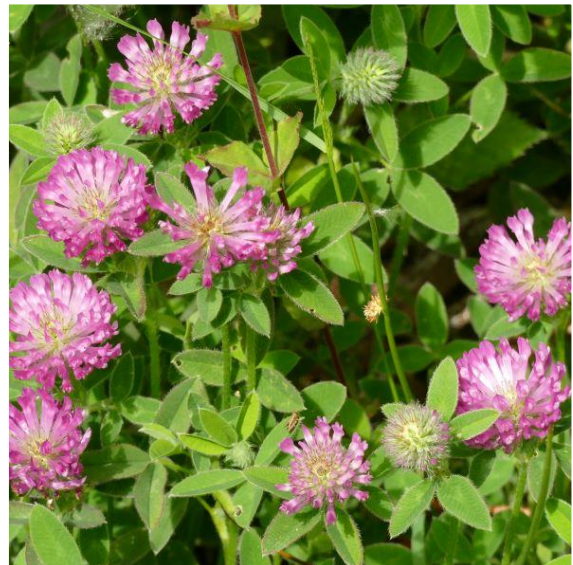
Wildlife of the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley

27-30 June 2021

Juvenile treecreeper



Zigzag clover



Dor beetle



Fallow deer



Compiled by Barry Embling

Day 1: Sunday 27 June 2021

Weather: overcast 16 °C

Our first taster of the Forest was a walk around the Cyril Hart Arboretum, which was surprisingly free of people for a Sunday. Some common woodland birds were seen, including mistle thrushes sharing the cricket field with a horse jumping event. Some initial birdsong learning was enhanced by a singing firecrest that some of us saw moving around high in the canopy. Our next stop was the Cannop Valley for a woodland walk. We soon heard and later saw a pair of wood warbler that were frantically gathering food for their recently fledged young. A walk around the highest pond revealed grey wagtail, little grebe and our first Mandarin duck. After dinner we opted for an early night as we were aiming for an early start the next day.

Day 2: Monday 28 June 2021

Weather: overcast, still 15 °C

RSPB's Nagashead was our first destination on a very wet morning that dried up whilst we were there. A thorough search brought only glimpses of the characteristic woodland birds we were hoping to see, and apart from some song thrushes and nuthatches, birds were decidedly difficult to view in the canopy in these conditions. After a late breakfast we headed over the border to Wales and Goldcliff Lagoons to see some open country and water birds. We weren't disappointed, and at high tide we were treated to good views of little-ringed and ringed plovers, redshank, dunlin, curlew and various wildfowl species. Warblers abounded, with reed and sedge, and a whitethroat, with only the elusive Cetti's warbler just heard. Returning back to Gloucestershire, we had lunch at Wintour's Leap, with its wonderful views of the River Wye and the deserted village of Lancaut below. A fleeting visit to Speech House followed, where some decided to take a break, then we opted for a walk around the beautiful Soudley Ponds, where we saw a variety of species, including a house sparrow feeding on blue-tailed damselflies, and had fabulous views of four fallow deer on the way. After dinner we headed out into the heathland to Crabtree Hill. Passing displaying (called 'roding') woodcock were heard and seen well by all, as was a superb nightjar, that passed close overhead on a couple of occasions and churred in front of us for lengthy spells. Taking the long route back via Ruspidge produced more fallow deer sightings and an elusive wild boar sow with piglets, thus rounding-off a full day that ended successfully and on a late-night high. A tired group eventually retired at about 11.30pm.

Day 3: Tuesday 29 June 2021

Weather: overcast 19 °C

A later start was made and we headed for RSPB's Highnam Wood. The most notable species here is nightingale. The combination of lower numbers and being later in the season meant we unfortunately didn't hear any. We had a good walk around the reserve seeing some woodland bird species, a common hawker dragonfly and plants such zigzag clover and the local Tintern spurge. Our next stop was Symond's Yat rock, where we soon saw one of this year's peregrine chicks on one of the cliff-faces and later two more were seen circling close-by. A good lengthy stint on the rock didn't produce any adult peregrines - they were no doubt off hunting. We had good views of a buzzard and cormorants, and beautiful views across Gloucestershire and Herefordshire in sunny weather. A short drive across the River Wye took us to King Arthur's cave and one of the Seven Sister's viewpoints, a stunning place with a view virtually free of any signs of buildings and the modern world. A quick stop at Parkend and New Fancy Viewpoint on the way back to the hotel gave us wonderful views of ravens and a mixed tit flock that included more long-tailed tits.

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Day 4: Wednesday 30 June 2021

Weather: sunny 20 °C

Our last half day was going to be spent on Tidenham Chase, a once Royal hunting ground affiliated to Chepstow Castle. We first explored The Park, a heathland restoration site. Many small songbirds were encountered, including siskin, whitethroat, a tree pipit with its parachuting display flight and a recently fledged tree pipit bird on the ground in the heather. From here we went to the well-known viewpoint, the Devil's Pulpit to view Tintern Abbey, by the River Wye below, today bathed in the morning sun. A prompt return to the hotel, and our successful tour was concluded. After a final cup of Assam tea, we all went our separate ways reflecting on a full and varied tour of this unique corner of Gloucestershire and the South Wales borders.

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Checklist



	Common Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
	BIRDS				
1	Little grebe	✓			
2	Cormorant	✓	✓	✓	
3	Mute swan			✓	
4	Canada goose		✓	✓	
5	Mandarin duck	✓	✓		
6	Mallard	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Tufted duck		✓		
8	Buzzard		✓	✓	✓
9	Peregrine			✓	
10	Moorhen		✓		
11	Coot		✓		
12	Woodcock		✓		
13	Dunlin		✓		
14	Curlew		✓		
15	Redshank		✓		
16	Ringed plover		✓		
17	Little-ringed plover		✓		
18	Lesser black-backed gull		✓	✓	
19	Herring gull		✓		
20	Stock dove		✓		
21	Woodpigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Tawny owl		H		

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23	Nightjar		✓		
24	Swift		✓	✓	
25	Great-spotted Woodpecker	✓	✓		✓
26	Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	House Martin	✓	✓	✓	✓
28	Sand martin		✓		
29	Meadow pipit		✓		
30	Tree pipit				✓
31	Pied wagtail	✓	✓		
32	Grey wagtail	✓	✓	✓	
33	Wren	✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Dunnock		✓	✓	✓
35	Robin	✓	✓		
36	Stonechat		H		
37	Mistle thrush	✓	✓	✓	
38	Song thrush	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Blackbird	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Blackcap	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Whitethroat		✓		✓
42	Sedge warbler		✓		
43	Reed warbler		✓		
44	Cetti's warbler		H		
45	Willow warbler	H		✓	✓
46	Chiffchaff	✓	✓	✓	Hd
47	Wood warbler	✓			
48	Goldcrest	✓	✓	H	
49	Firecrest	H			
50	Spotted flycatcher	H			

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51	Pied flycatcher	H			
52	Great tit	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Blue tit	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Coal tit	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Long-tailed tit	✓		✓	
56	Treecreeper			✓	
57	Magpie		✓		
58	Jay		✓	✓	✓
59	Jackdaw		✓		
60	Carrion crow		✓	✓	✓
61	Raven	✓		✓	
62	Starling		✓		
63	House sparrow		✓	✓	✓
64	Chaffinch	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Greenfinch	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Goldfinch	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Linnet		✓		✓
68	Siskin	✓	✓		✓
69	Bullfinch	✓		✓	
70	Common crossbill			H	
71	Reed bunting		✓		
72	Yellowhammer				H
	MAMMALS				
1	Fallow deer		✓		
2	Wild boar		✓		
3	Grey squirrel		✓		
4	Rabbit		✓		
	INVERTEBRATES				

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1	Blue-tailed damselfly		✓		
2	Azure damselfly			✓	
3	Large-red damselfly			✓	
4	Common hawkker			✓	
5	Ringlet			✓	
6	Meadow brown		✓	✓	
7	Speckled wood			✓	
8	Dor beetle	✓			
9	Green tiger beetle				✓
	SOME NOTABLE PLANTS				
1	Common rock-rose			✓	
2	Ragged robin			✓	
3	Zigzag clover			✓	
4	Meadow vetchling			✓	
5	Spurge laurel			✓	
6	Upright (Tintern) spurge			✓	
7	Common milkwort			✓	
8	Hemlock water-dropwort		✓		
9	Common spotted orchid			✓	
10	Ivy broomrape		✓		
11	Greater sea spurrey				✓
12	Tree mallow		✓	✓	
13	English stonecrop		✓	✓	
14	Kidney vetch			✓	✓
15	Birds foot trefoil				
16	Great willowherb				
17	Hemlock water dropwort	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Wild carrot				✓

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19	Hogweed				✓
20	Alexanders			✓	✓
21	Sea bindweed				✓
22	Water forget me not				
23	Vipers bugloss				✓
24	Ivy broomrape				✓
25	Ox-eye daisy				✓
26	Greater knapweed				✓
27	White water lily				✓
28	Yellow iris	✓	✓	✓	
29	Southern marsh orchid	✓		✓	✓
30	Common spotted orchid	✓			✓
31	Fragrant orchid				✓
32	Lords and ladies				✓

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