



Wildlife Trust for
**Beds, Cambs
& Northants**



Learn more
about the wildlife
and habitats of
Beds, Cambs &
Northants

Wildlife Training Workshops 2025

Wildlife Training Workshops programme 2025



Our Wildlife Training Workshops offer a friendly atmosphere where you can expand your knowledge of the special wildlife right on your doorstep. Learn from knowledgeable and enthusiastic local naturalists and develop your skills with a group of like-minded people.

We offer a mixture of online, some with optional outdoor sessions, and face-to-face workshops across Beds, Cambs and Northants. This year we are pleased to offer workshops designed for teenagers again, thanks to funding via our Peatland Progress project from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Find all the information on our website: wildlifebcn.org/workshops

If you have any queries, contact Juliette Butler, Training Workshops Officer on 07793 606026 or email trainingworkshops@wildlifebcn.org

KEY

- B** Bedfordshire
- C** Cambridgeshire
- N** Northamptonshire
-  Online
-  NEW for 2025

Basic Ecology Skills

Botany

Habitat Management

Invertebrates

Lower Plants

Practical Skills

Vertebrates

Introduction to Raptor Identification with Henry Stanier



Raptors are a fascinating group of birds and the Great Fen is fast becoming a great place to see them, especially in winter.

This is a beginner's guide to learn more about where and when to see them, and how to identify them, perched and in flight. There is also

an optional visit to the Great Fen reserve where one-to-one guidance on identification will be given.

Wed 15 Jan, 7- 9pm, online

Sat 18 Jan, 1.30-4.30pm, Great Fen



Luke Massey/2020Vision

Introduction to Winter Tree Identification with Matt Hamilton



Learn to identify common, native broadleaved deciduous and, if found, exotic trees in winter. Types of trees and their associations helps with a better understanding of your local nature reserves.

Sat 25 Jan, 10am-4pm, Cambourne

Spoon Carving with Mark Ricketts



Learn to carve spoons from green (unseasoned) wood using traditional axe and knife techniques. No previous experience is necessary, suitable for complete beginners.

Sat 10R Sun 2 Feb, 10am-5pm, Cambourne. £85 (£80 for members).

Introduction to Amphibians with Helen and Terry Moore



The workshop will concentrate on the identification of our native amphibians, their life histories and habitats including some tips on seeing amphibians and ways to make your garden amphibian friendly.

Wed 19 Feb, 7pm–8.30pm, online

Mosses and Liverworts with Rachel Carter



Mosses and liverworts are beautiful and deserve close examination. This course will help you to appreciate their fine detail, and to use your observations to identify different species. You will use hand lenses for field identification, and also spend time using microscopes.

Sat 1 Mar, 10am–4pm, Lings



Gwen Hitchcock

Introduction to Reptiles with Gwen Hitchcock



With only six native species, reptiles are one of our most elusive group of animals. This online workshop will give you an understanding of these fascinating creatures, introducing the species that live in the UK – especially on our patch – their natural history and how to identify them.

Wed 12 Mar, 7pm–8.30pm, online

Introduction to Water Beetles with Kevin Rowley and Henry Stanier



Water Beetles are a great indicator species and the Great Fen has a diverse variety. This workshop will introduce you to the group, how to sample them using nets and traps and how to identify them. Field trips in Woodwalton Fen and the Great Fen will be included to practise the skills.

Sat 29 AND Sun 30 Mar, 10am–4pm both days, Ramsey Heights. £90 (£85 for members).

Mammal Tracks and Signs with Peter Pilbeam



This workshop will highlight the sorts of mammal tracks and signs that you might come across when out in the countryside. 'Tracks' could include those of the larger mammals, but will hopefully include the smaller mammals like hedgehogs and water voles – all may depend on the weather. 'Signs' can include droppings, hair, fur, feeding signs and 'homes' badger setts and water vole burrows.

Sat 12 Apr, 10am–4pm, Trumpington Meadows

Introduction to Hoverflies with John Showers



Hoverflies are highly diverse and important components of terrestrial ecosystems. Many are very effective pollinators, the larvae of many are aphid predators and a number are associated with ancient woodlands. The workshop is aimed at people with no prior experience of identifying flies and will allow participants to recognise adult hoverflies. A talk will

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lead into a practical workshop using pinned specimens, microscopes and identification keys.

Sat 12 April, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

Identifying Water Bugs with Kevin Rowley

N

This workshop is for people who are interested in identifying aquatic invertebrates using detailed keys. Water bugs are a good starting point, as there are a smaller number of species, some which can be easily identified, either by using keys or a microscope. It also includes a field trip to collect specimens for identification.

Sat 26 Apr, 10am–4pm, Pitsford Water

Introduction to Bird Identification and Birdsong with Paul Gosling

N

This workshop will include visual and aural identification, plus an exploration of the niches each species occupies at the reserve, focusing on feeding, nesting and behaviour. The day will start with an indoor presentation followed by a field trip around the reserve.

Sat 26 Apr, 10am–4pm, Lings

Water Voles and Other Riverside Mammals with Iain Webb and Ruth Hawksley

C

Find out about riverside mammals including water voles, otters and Daubenton's bats. The day will start with an indoor session looking at ecology, field signs and the current local status of the various species, and will include a field trip to look for signs.

Sat 27 Apr, 10am–4pm, Trumpington Meadows

Ancient Woodland – The Meeting of Landscape History and Ecology with Andy Lear

N



Ancient woodland is defined as having existed continuously since the year 1600. It is an irreplaceable habitat, home to a wide range of species, a culmination of the interaction of people and nature over hundreds of years. This workshop will cover ancient woodland in the landscape, and how to identify it through physical features, signs of former management and the presence of characteristic indicator species.

Sat 3 May, 10am–4pm, Short and Southwick Woods



Nick Upton/2020/ision

Introduction to Bumblebees with Andy Benson

N



A morning in the classroom will provide an overview of the value and natural history of bumblebees and equip you with the skills you need to start identifying and recording the UK's most common bumblebee species. The afternoon will be spent in the field, providing an opportunity to net, pot, and identify bumblebees.

Sun 4 May, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

Identification of Warblers with Paul Gosling

B

This workshop is aimed at helping participants to identify our warblers by

Workshops for Teens

These workshops are designed specifically for young people aged 13+.



Introduction to Ecology with Brian Eversham

C

Calling all ecologists of the future! Do you have a passion for wildlife but not sure where to start? Join WTBCN Chief Executive, Brian Eversham for an introductory workshop. Set in the heart of the Great Fen you will learn how to identify different habitats, their importance and how to monitor in the context of our changing world.

Wed 28 May, 10am–4pm, Ramsey Heights

Introduction to Invertebrates with Brian Eversham

C

This day will explain why invertebrates matter, and how their ecology and behaviour affects the ways in which we survey for them. We will try out the range of techniques for finding and surveying invertebrates, including direct searching and transects, sampling methods such as beating and sweeping, and trapping techniques such as pitfalls and baited traps (with syrup for ants!). Having found lots of invertebrates, we will examine some indoors, and look at the sorts of things that help us to identify species.

Wed 13 Aug, 10am–4pm, Ramsey Heights

voice and plumage. It will start with an indoor session where we will listen to warbler songs and look at key features of warblers, to be followed by a walk testing our skills in the field. Suitable for beginners and those who want to improve existing identification skills.

Sat 10 May 10am–4pm, Strawberry Hill

Introduction to British Mosquitos with Dr Mark Welch

C

There are 36 species of mosquito in Great Britain, comprising two sub-families and six genera. This workshop will focus on gaining basic identification skills for distinguishing genera in the field and lab that will enable people to take things further and make valuable contributions to our knowledge of the distribution and ecology of the British fauna.

Sun 11 May, 10am–4pm, Cambourne

Butterfly Identification and Ecology with Andrew Bladon and Matt Hayes

B

Around 60 species of butterfly live in the UK and a diverse selection of them can be seen on our reserves. A complex life cycle means that many butterflies are extremely sensitive to environmental change. Studying these bio-indicators can help us monitor natural ecosystems and protect a wide array of other animals and plants. This workshop will provide background information on the biology and ecology of butterflies, and will include a field trip where you will learn to identify some of the species yourself.

Sat 17 May, 10am–4pm, Totternhoe

Introduction to Wildflowers with Matt Jackson

N

Wildflowers are the most conspicuous species in the countryside, they make

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up the habitats in which other wildlife thrives, and are among the very best 'indicators' of habitat quality. Most wildlife surveys start with the flowering plants. This workshop aims to enable participants to use identification keys accurately, so they can name an unknown plant more reliably than simply by comparing with pictures in a field guide.

Sat 24 May, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

★ **Introduction to Sawflies with Andrew Green** **C**

With 550 species in Britain, sawflies are an important part of the ecosystem. Their identification can be daunting, but many species can be recognised in the field. After an introductory talk we will work from specimens identifying some of the more common genera. Weather permitting, we will venture out with nets to develop field skills.

Sat 24 May, 10am–4pm, Paxton Pits

Woodland Plants and Plant Communities with Lewis Saunders **N**

Old Sulehay supports one of the last remnants of the ancient Rockingham Forest, noted for its amazing displays of woodland wildflowers. The varied soil types have given rise to a diverse flora, and because the woodland has never been replanted, it is also a great place to see and understand semi-natural woodland plant communities. During the workshop we will learn the identification features of a wide range of characteristic woodland plant species and explore the natural variation in the plant communities found in British woodlands.

Sat 31 May, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

Grasses I: A Beginner's Introduction with Brian Eversham **N**

Grasses are among the most important flowering plants, ubiquitous in almost all habitats. Their structure, co-evolved with grazing animals, means they dominate pastureland and meadows. This workshop will explain their structure and their beautiful if subtle flowers, and help you identify common grasses. A guide to recognising the most distinctive species and keys to flowering and vegetative features will be used.

Sun 8 Jun, 10am – 4pm, Old Sulehay



Claire Haskins

Introduction to Macro Photography with Dave Jackson **N**

Join Pitsford nature reserve volunteer warden and photographer, Dave Jackson, for a macro photography workshop. Dave will be sharing his tips during short walks onto the reserve looking for a range of subjects to photograph. A basic knowledge of your camera's settings will ensure you get the best out of the day, however, great shots have been obtained using a mobile phone. A macro lens with a mirrorless or DSLR camera, a tripod and a flash are all desirable but not essential. Weather permitting, participants will be able to photograph moths that have been caught overnight.

Sun 15 Jun, 10am–4pm, Pitsford Water

Introduction to Dragonflies with Henry Stanier

C

Dragonflies (including damselflies) are a fascinating group of insects. Join this beginner's guide to learn more about their natural history and ecology, where and when to see them, and how to identify them (perched and in flight), covering all the species currently found in Beds, Cambs and Northants, plus others which may be on the way here! This workshop also includes a visit to the Great Fen to give you one-to-one guidance on identification.

Sun 15 Jun, 10am-4pm, Great Fen

Meadow Ecology and Conservation with Matt Johnson

N

Learn about the ecology and conservation of floodplain meadows with a look at the ecology, management and conservation of floodplain meadows as well as botanical and hydrological monitoring techniques. Then visit a SSSI meadow to learn about survey techniques, botanical ID skills and comparisons of differing management and restoration techniques.

Sat 21 Jun, 10am-4pm, Bugbrooke Meadow

Grasses II: Practicing Grass Identification with Brian Eversham

N

For people who have already had a go at identifying grasses, or attended Grasses I, this day will use the same identification guides and allow more time to practise using keys, and learning to recognise grasses outside. A little more attention will be given to vegetative, non-flowering

features: the beginning of identifying grasses at any time of year.

Sun 22 Jun, 10am-4pm, Old Sulehay

Introduction to Wildflowers II with Matt Jackson

N



This workshop is intended for people who have attended an introductory workshop or who have a little experience with wildflower identification, but would like to practice more in using identification keys, and getting to know the essentials of flower anatomy. By the end of the workshop, participants should be more confident in using identification keys and other resources such as floras, and in working out what we can recognise, and which species need a more detailed approach.

Sat 28 Jun, 10am-4pm, Old Sulehay

Advanced Techniques for Hoverfly Identification with John Showers

N



Aimed at participants of the Introduction to Hoverflies, or people who wish to develop their skills. It will be assumed that the participants have already used a key to hoverfly tribes. The workshop will look at some of the more tricky genera and species using pinned specimens.

Sat 19 July, 10am-4pm, Old Sulehay

Introduction to Butterflies in Northants with David James

N

Find out more about the butterfly species you are likely to see in Northants. The day will start with a presentation that will include information about the identification and life cycles of our butterflies along with tips to help when conducting butterfly

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surveys. The field trip will put some of the identification skills into practice. No experience or equipment is necessary, although a pair of close focusing binoculars would be an advantage.

Sat 26 Jul, 10am–4pm, Pitsford Water

★ **Elms: Their Ecology and Identification with Brian Eversham**

C

Central and eastern English elms are the most diverse in Europe, perhaps because recolonization routes at the end of the Ice Age converged here. Previous books have included 1–8 species, plus sub-species hybrids and varieties: the latest flora (2018) names 62 British species, most of which are found in our area. They are distinctive in growth form, leaf shape, seed shape and in their associated insect species. Most still grow into large, handsome trees despite Dutch elm disease. This workshop will introduce elms, their history, ecology, genetics and associated wildlife and a new key to the 40–50 local species.

Sun 27 July, 10am–4pm, Cambourne

★ **Introduction to Willows with Brian Eversham**

C



Willows are our most important family of wetland trees and shrubs. The day will introduce the ecology and importance of willows for conservation.

Often considered a 'difficult' group, a single day is sufficient to become familiar with the principal species and common hybrids in our area.

Sun 17 Aug, 10am–4pm, Cambourne

Brian Eversham

BES1: Species and Habitats (Including Habitat Classification) with Brian Eversham

N

An introduction to the basic ecology of species and their populations, with a description and classification of the main habitat types in Beds, Cambs and Northants.

Sun 7 Sep, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

BES2: Habitat Management and Monitoring with Brian Eversham

N

The Trust puts much effort into grazing, mowing, coppicing and other activities – why? How do we decide what to do? What are the underlying principles? Learn about the underlying ecological processes in managing habitat, the basic features of the major habitat types and the role of monitoring in conservation.

Sun 20 Sept, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

Small Mammals – Identification and Surveying with Peter Pilbeam

N

Get involved with the capture and identification of small mammals in this workshop along with a range of related aspects of work.

The evening session will be used to set a variety of small mammal traps and the early start is to see what's been caught overnight – the welfare of any trapped animal is of paramount importance. There will be a session on British mammals in general, methods of study (including owl pellet analysis) and on small mammal surveying.

Sat 25 AND Sun 26 Oct, 5–6.30pm and 8am–1pm, Old Sulehay