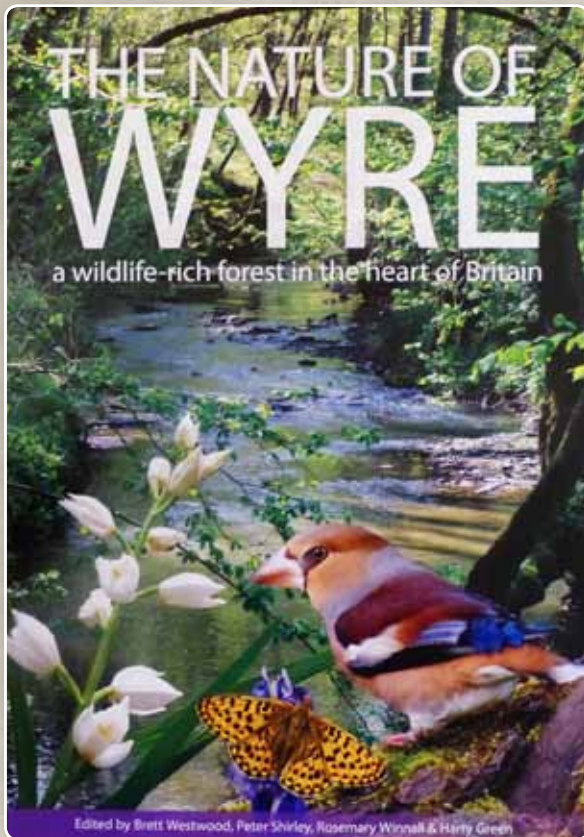


Wyre Forest Study Group

‘The Nature of Wyre - a wildlife-rich forest in the heart of Britain’

Eds. Brett Westwood, Peter Shirley, Rosemary Winnall & Harry Green (Pisces Publications, 2015)

MIKE AVERILL



Some of the Wyre Forest Study Group members and associates have been working hard for a number of years to write this book. It was finally published in December 2015, and those who had taken advantage of the pre-publication offer obtained their copies in time for Christmas. There were 24 different authors and

4 on the editorial team and we were all very pleased to bring to completion this longstanding project. We were very privileged to work with publisher Peter Creed from Pisces. Not only does Peter know the Wyre Forest well from the time when he lived locally, but he brought his brilliant design abilities to make this publication a very special finished product. Peter Marren called it “a thing of beauty.”

The Book Launch took place on Friday 29th January 2016 in the Wyre Forest Community Discovery Centre, and we thank the Forestry Commission for hosting the event. It was very successful with about 80 folk attending. BBC Midlands Today spent the morning with us and gave television coverage during the day. One or two papers picked up on the press release, and our grateful thanks go to Wendy Carter and Brett Westwood for liaising with the media.

At the start of the Book Launch, Richard Boles from the Forestry Commission welcomed everyone and then handed over to Professor Chris Baines who is chairman of the Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership and who kindly wrote the Foreword to our book. Chris said that this was a significant landmark occasion and the book celebrated a place of exceptional natural history as well as human history. It demonstrates the expertise that still exists among amateur naturalists and is a brilliant record of the special place that is Wyre.

Brett Westwood spoke next and said that the thing that epitomises naturalists in Wyre is their generosity of spirit, and that the impetus for the book came from the way that local naturalists share their knowledge.



Most of the the authors, 29 January 2016. From the left -

Top row: Chris Bradley, Phil Rudlin

Middle row: Rosemary Winnall, Jenny Joy, Rosemary Hill, Peter Shirley, Graham Hill, Geoff Trevis, Brett Westwood, Harry Green, Fran Flanagan, Mike Averill

Bottom row: Chris Baines, Mark Lawley, Sylvia Sheldon, Susan Limbrey, John Bingham, Gary Farmer, Mick Blythe, Mike Bloxham, John Partridge, Mike Williams

Stewart Carter

He hoped that it would be apparent to readers that we all love this place, that it has become a magnet and lodestone for us all, so that we find ourselves going back time and time again. We wanted to record what we'd learnt in the process, although getting it together was not easy. Brett said that one of his favourite quotes from Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy is "I love deadlines; I love the whooshing sound as they go past". He'd found himself repeating that on several occasions as one deadline vanished in the rear-view mirror and another one loomed ahead. We thought it would never happen. But it was eventually completed and Brett hoped that it will be a reference book for future landowners, managers of the forest, and all who care for this special area.

Harry Green then spoke and indicated that it was actually 10 years since Rosemary suggested that we write a book. Although he and Brett took on the initial contact with potential authors, more help was soon needed and Rosemary came in to take the book to the next stage, bringing in more authors and collecting together better and better text. In the search for a publisher Harry remembered that Pisces had published a book in 1995 for the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, 'A Year in the Life of Worcestershire's Nature Reserves' (Ed. Harry Green), so he contacted Peter Creed again. When Rosemary, Brett and Harry met Peter in August 2013, they realised that not only did Peter know Wyre

well, but he also had a wide-ranging knowledge of natural history, and what is more, was willing to publish our book. So the publisher had been found. Going on from that period there were hours, days, months, years when the 3 editors were riveted in front of their computer screens looking through documents. Some contributions arrived with 100 pages and 9000 words, and there were others on one side of A4 with 200 words, and the editors had to get some consistency. They knew they needed some help so asked Peter Shirley to come and join them. Peter did a really great job using his editorial skills with much attention to grammatical detail. Harry said that in many respects though, the book was Rosemary's book; she started the process, she encouraged everyone, she kept communications going between the editors and authors, kept smiling, and towards the end received the final manuscripts, sourced all the photographs and was the link person with Peter Creed at Pisces. It was Rosemary that made the book happen.

Peter Creed (Pisces Publications) said that he'd been at Stourbridge Art College and during that time used to catch the bus to the Wyre Forest to get out and study nature. He loved the area, and has continued to visit 2 or 3 times a year, so it didn't take much for him to agree to publish a book about Wyre. When he saw the original text for the book it was massive, and he knew that he wanted to do justice to the weight of the



The editors from left: Brett Westwood, Harry Green, Peter Shirley and Rosemary Winnall 29 January 2016

Wendy Carter



Publisher Peter Creed from Pisces

John Bingham

text and make it as attractive as possible in order to celebrate a wonderful place. He was pleased with the way it has turned out and hoping that it might inspire other groups to do something similar in their areas.

Rosemary Winnall then gave a 20 minute illustrated presentation about some of the special wildlife of Wyre. She said that the Wyre Forest wasn't just woodland but a mosaic of other habitats including forest glades, orchards, meadows, streams and heathland. Wyre releases her secrets slowly to those with the perseverance and patience to search them out. She mentioned specialities like the Narrow-leaved Helleborine, Lemon Slug, Strawberry Spider, Land Caddis, White-clawed Crayfish and Club-tailed Dragonfly. The Wyre Forest Study Group's interest in insects has enabled them to start and continue to host Worcestershire's Entomology Day which has now been running for 12 years. Rosemary said that the book is as much about the people who contributed as about the wildlife. John Bingham with his local knowledge and wildlife and ecological expertise has inspired us all; Harry Green has been foundational in biological recording in Worcestershire; Brett Westwood reads widely and brings not only a national perspective to our work, but a habit of giving us targets to look out for, which often successfully lead us to discover new

species for Wyre. Many good photographers have contributed to our book, including John Robinson and John Bingham. We are grateful to naturalists who have walked through Wyre before us and taught us so much, such as Norman Hickin, Fred Fincher, John Robinson, John Meiklejohn, Frank and Pat Lancaster, Mike Taylor, Mike Boxham, John Day and many others. Local landowners have kindly provided us access onto their land to allow us to extend out studies. The Forestry Commission have generously allowed the Study Group to use a room in the Discovery Centre as their base, and the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust has kindly contributed financially to the book. The Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership members are now working together to try to safeguard this special place for the future. Rosemary finished by giving a huge thank you to Peter Creed and Pisces Publications for producing this beautiful book, the design of which has enhanced all our contributions and resulted in a publication that will be valued by future generations.

Book Reviews

The following are quotes from published Reviews.

Peter Marren in British Wildlife writes:

"The Nature of Wyre is a remarkably detailed account of the wildlife of an English forest. The fungi alone get 25 pages; the flora another 40 (plus separate chapters for mosses and liverworts and lichens); for a change, insects receive more space than birds and mammals combined (although at 34 and 24 pages respectively, the latter are hardly neglected). The specialities of the forest all have their moment under the spotlight – Land Caddis, Narrow-leaved Helleborine, Whitty Pear (or 'true service tree'), Snow Flea, Lemon Slug, Slave-making Ant, Noble Chafer, and many more. This is a Forest tour with a magnifying lens as well as binoculars, giving you an almost overwhelming sense of the diversity to be found in a single large wood. I don't think I have seen anything quite like it. I hope this glittering survey of the inhabitants of a large (by English standards) Forest in the West Midlands will become a standard-setter for similar in-depth elsewhere."

Julian Greenwood writes on the British Trust for Ornithology website:

"Every so often a local natural history is published that surpasses the usual standards of that genre: this is such a book. The writing style is clear and delightful – the editors have performed an amazing task as there have been more than 25 authors associated with the 15 chapters of the book, such that each chapter runs

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seamlessly from one to the other. The book is adorned with excellent photographs depicting the landscape and Wyre's inhabitants from the largest trees to the smallest invertebrates."

Paul Brock reviews on Amazon:

"Billed as the first comprehensive natural history of the Wyre Forest, it lives up to that and more, with the Editors doing a great job bringing together a multi-author book. Anyone interested in nature will enjoy this book and marvel at the detailed fieldwork/research undertaken on the fauna. For those who

know Wyre Forest it is a must have book, others who see it will want to take a trip to the Bewdley area to see it for themselves."



The Book Launch

Stewart Carter



John Bingham with Bob Hockenhull on the right from BBC Midlands Today

Peter Shirley



The Book Launch, 29 January 2016

Peter Shirley