



Wyre Forest Study Group

NEVILLE WILDE - A TRIBUTE

It was with enormous sadness that we heard of the sudden death of Neville Wilde on 9th January 2004. We shall miss not just a special friend, but also a naturalist of great ability. Neville was a man of gentle spirit, modest and unassuming. He was meticulous in everything he undertook, and he was able to share his passion for the natural world through lectures, writing and photography.

Neville gained a BSc degree in Electrical Engineering from Aston University and was employed by GKN Research for all of his working life. He was working on means of evaluating new scientific inventions when the GKN Centre closed the project down, making Neville redundant in 1991.

He developed an interest in Natural History at an early age, and joined the South Staffordshire Naturalists' Society in the 1960s, later becoming President. He was one of the founder members of the SSNS Journal in 1968 and was one of the major contributors producing 16 articles during the next 36 years, mostly about his observations in the Wyre Forest.

In his spare time, during the late 1970s and early 80s, Neville ran courses for Birmingham University Extra-Mural Department on the Natural History of the Wyre Forest with lectures and accompanying field trips. During that time he taught and inspired many people who developed an abiding love and knowledge of the forest. Neville's dry sense of humour and his ability to recall obscure scientific facts and fascinating anecdotes were all part of his individual lecturing style.

Neville was one of the founder members of the Wyre Forest Study Group, which began in 1991, and he maintained an active interest in the group, contributing to the Group's Annual Review. Neville's quiet and unassuming nature meant that few people actually realised the depth and breadth of his knowledge of natural history. He was able to deliver lectures, illustrated by his outstanding slides, on a wide range of topics including plants, birds, insects, mammals, and fungi.

Neville was an avid and proficient bird watcher, good at identifying bird song. He loved to watch bird behaviour and relationships between birds and their habitat. He spent many hours in hides in Wyre photographing birds, both in the daytime and at night, and led many a Dawn Chorus Walk for the Forestry Commission.

Neville was interested and knowledgeable about moths, and he was a member of the Wyre Forest Moth Group. Neville used to make much of his own equipment and arrive with his latest moth trap of character, carefully made with innovative design, as was his bat detector. He kept meticulous lists of all the moths that we had seen over the years and could always be relied upon to give us the information about when and where we'd seen a particular species.



Neville Wilde at the end of one of his annual Fungus Forays in the Wyre Forest, October 1998.

Neville is perhaps best known for his love and knowledge of mycology. For years he was a member of the British Mycological Society and Staffordshire Fungus Group, and participated in fungus forays across the Midlands. He ran forays in Wyre for the Forestry Commission's Discovery Centre and he was a familiar sight, year after year, with the same fungus basket, penknife and hand lens, neatly dressed in his jacket and tie, setting off with a group in his wake searching for some of the mycological delights of the forest. Interested persons used to book on these courses year after year because Neville always seem to have more information to teach us.

Neville will be missed but the inspiration and encouragement that he gave us over the years will live on because it is our responsibility to be as generous with that knowledge as he was.

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