

Wild New Forest

✦ Guided Tours ✧

September 2025 Newsletter

Autumn in the Air

August has drawn to a close and September has begun with some much-needed rain, bringing with it a distinctly **autumnal feel** to the Forest.

Walking through the woods over the past few days has conjured that unmistakable sense of autumn: **parched trees shedding leaves early**, the **rich scent of the damp woodland floor**, and a quiet sense of transition that feels both homely and welcoming. As always at this time of year, anticipation builds for the **fungi season** ahead. Despite the dry summer, some fine specimens have already appeared, and the recent spell of rain combined with mild temperatures should see the season accelerate.

Signs of the coming winter are also becoming evident. **Green acorns** are scattered across the Forest floor, promising a plentiful **pannage season** for the pigs. In contrast, the **beech mast crop** looks poor this year — after a promising start, many trees seem to be producing small, poor-quality mast that is dropping early, which will impact **small mammals** and the **birds** that rely on it. By comparison, **Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Holly, and Rowan** appear to be producing heavy crops of fruit; time will tell whether they prove as nutritious as they are abundant.

Out on the **heaths**, colour still lingers. **Ling** has put on a particularly fine show this year; even as it starts to fade, the heath is looking especially beautiful. Autumn specialists such as **Autumn Lady's-tresses, Field Gentian, Marsh Gentian,** and **Devil's-bit Scabious** are flowering, though seemingly in smaller numbers than usual.



While it can be a quiet time for **birdlife** as many species go through their annual post-breeding **moult**, this is when many birds compensate for their reduced speed and agility — caused by the loss of flight and secondary feathers — by keeping ultra-quiet and low profile. However, **migration** is now gathering pace. At **Keyhaven**, we've been recording good numbers of **Whitethroats** and **Willow Warblers** moving south, and it has been a bumper year for **Spotted Flycatchers**, with birds appearing on many of our recent Forest walks. Along the **coast**, the lull that follows the noisy breeding season of **terns, gulls, and Avocets** is giving way to autumn arrivals. With the recent rain filling the **lagoons**, it won't be long before the evocative cries of **Grey Plover** and the bubbling calls of **Brent Geese** echo across the marshes, signalling the next chapter in the seasonal cycle.

Image: Telegraph Hill, August 2025 © Wild New Forest Guided Tours

What to Look for Over the Next Few Weeks

With the recent unsettled weather, we should soon see a fresh flush of **fungal fruiting bodies** appearing across the Forest. While mushrooms can spring up almost anywhere, the **ancient woodlands** are especially rich, producing a wonderfully diverse mix of species. Early autumn highlights to look out for include **Tawny Grisette**, **Dryad's Saddle**, **Shaggy Inkcap**, and the delicate **Amethyst Deceiver**.

Migrant birds are also on the move and can turn up almost anywhere. At present, good numbers of **Spotted Flycatchers** are passing through, and among them there's always the chance of spotting their scarcer cousin — the glamorous **Pied Flycatcher**, a true highlight of autumn birding. Gatherings of **ponies and cattle** on New Forest lawns may also attract passing **Yellow Wagtails**, which dart around the feet of the stock snapping up disturbed invertebrates. These same groups can pull in **Swallows** and **Martins**, which put on wonderful aerial displays as they swoop and skim for insects.

This month also sees **ivy** coming into flower — a vitally important late-season source of nectar and pollen for insects. Look out in particular for the **Ivy Bee**, a recent colonist to the UK first recorded here in 2001, which now thrives in the Forest.

If we're lucky enough to enjoy an '**Indian Summer**', it's a great time to make the most of the **butterflies and dragonflies** still on the wing. Keep an eye out too for late migrant species, such as the striking **Clouded Yellow butterfly** — always a delight to see as it drifts across a New Forest meadow.



Images: Redshank & Ruff, Striped Hawkmoth, Clustered Bracket and Roe Deer, New Forest © Wild New Forest GT, Aug 2025



Wildlife Explorers Club

Over the summer, our **Wildlife Explorers** enjoyed a packed programme of activities! One highlight was a classic **bioblitz at Millyford Bridge**, where we set ourselves the challenge of recording at least **80 species**. By the end of two hours, the team had surpassed all expectations with **over 100 species** identified. We were especially pleased to be joined by **Hilary Harper from the New Forest Trust**, and it was a real privilege to share the event with her.

Another highlight of the summer was a **bird-ringing session at Keyhaven**, giving our Explorers the opportunity to experience this important **conservation science** up close. From the familiar beauty of the **Robin** to a range of fascinating **warblers**, it was a chance to learn first-hand about the process of **bird ringing** and the vital information it provides for understanding **migration** and **population trends**.

One of the real highlights of the year so far came in **August**, when we hosted our very first **Wildlife Explorers Talk Evening**. **Seven young naturalists** gave presentations on topics ranging from **bird ringing, photography, New Forest spiders, lichens, butterfly ecology, and survey work in the Forest**. Each talk was outstanding, full of passion, knowledge, and enthusiasm, and it was inspiring to see such talent and

confidence on display. We had a **fantastic turnout** and the **feedback** from those who attended was overwhelmingly positive. We are already looking forward to the **next Talk Evening** — keep an eye out for the date, which will be announced soon!

The latest **Wildlife Explorers Club newsletter** is now available on our website:
www.wildnewforestguidedtours.co.uk/blog

The **Wildlife Explorers Club** is **free to join** and open to all young people aged **10–18**, thanks to the generous sponsorship of **Naturetrek** and **Love the Forest**. Full details and the **application form** can be found on our website.

If you have any **old birdwatching kit** gathering dust, our team of young naturalists would be hugely grateful for **donations** — especially **binoculars** or other **optics** that help them build confidence and independence in the field. Every donation is warmly appreciated and put to good use.

The **Wildlife Explorers Club** is made possible thanks to the ongoing **funding and support** of the following organisations:



August Walk Highlights

August was another busy month. We were joined by **Jess on work experience**, who spent a good amount of time in the **field** on both **walks and surveys**, while also experiencing the all-important **admin** that takes place behind the scenes.

Among the highlights were the **Nightjar walks from Holmsley**, which — in addition to some very showy **Nightjars** — produced great records of **common migrant birds, flora, and invertebrates**. We also ran the first in our series of **photographic workshops**, starting with a presentation on **basic camera settings**, followed by a short walk to put what we had learned into practice. Despite mixed weather, there was plenty to photograph, including some lovely **Ruff** and a **juvenile Curlew Sandpiper**.

Boat trips were again busy with lots to see. A regular **Osprey** delighted participants, and the **White-tailed Eagle** made the occasional appearance. The **seals**, as ever, were a real highlight, while a good run of **white-bait** in the river triggered feeding frenzies that drew in large numbers of **Terns** and **Gulls**.

Fieldwork Update

August is still a busy month for **fieldwork**, with the ongoing **CES (Constant Effort Survey)** at **Keyhaven**, **baseline surveys** continuing at a handful of **private sites** across the New Forest, and ongoing work monitoring the population of **Pine Martens** in the Forest.



We've had one or two interesting developments this month, not least the discovery of a **Pine Marten wearing a radio-tracking collar** on a **camera in the centre of the Forest**. As we have not deployed any tracking devices of this type, we began investigating its origin. We have since learned that it is most likely an individual from a **reintroduction programme in Dartmoor, Devon**. Based on **bib pattern**, we believe the same individual was also recorded on a **trail camera in Dorset** — highlighting a remarkable, and no doubt challenging, **journey**.

We've been getting some fascinating **re-sightings of Sandwich Terns** that were **colour ringed as chicks** in the colony in **June**. Individuals have since spread out across the **country** and **near continent**, with one even travelling as far as the **island of Rømø in the Wadden Sea, Denmark**, before beginning its long journey south to the **west coast of Africa**.



Along the **coast**, **ringing sessions at Keyhaven and Normandy Marsh** are now underway for the **tenth year**, monitoring the movements of **migrant birds**. It's still early days, but we've already had a good run of common migrant species such as **Common Whitethroat**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Sedge Warbler**, and **Reed Warbler**. All appeared in **good condition** and at a **healthy weight**, suggesting a **successful breeding season** for these **insectivorous species**.

Images: Collared Pine Marten and map showing movements of post fledging Sandwich Tern from the colony at Lymington. © Wild New Forest Guided Tours

Looking Ahead

Following the popularity of our **Portland/Weymouth day trip**, we're excited to announce a new excursion to the **Somerset Levels**. This will be a full day of **birding**, finishing with the spectacular **starling murmuration** — one of nature's great winter spectacles. Full details will be added to our **website** shortly. Places are limited to just **four guests**, with **transport** and a **rustic picnic** included.

We're also launching a brand-new **Wild New Forest Safari** — a **full-day adventure** exploring the very best of **seasonal New Forest wildlife**. Like our other day trips, **group size is limited to four**, ensuring a **personal experience**, and includes our much-loved **rustic picnic**!

Looking further ahead to the **winter months**, we'll be running a series of **evening talks** at the **Pavilion in Everton**. These start in **November** and will take place on the **first Saturday of each month through to May**. **Guest speakers** will cover a range of fascinating topics, including **Commoning in the New Forest**, **Wildlife of the Coastal Marshes**, **An Introduction to Fungi**, and updates from our own **fieldwork on Pine Marten and Hawfinch**.

You can view our **full schedule of events** and **book online** via our website: <https://www.wildnewforestguidedtours.co.uk/calendar>

Wild New Forest Facebook Page

If you're not already following us on **Facebook**, now's a great time to join our growing **online community**! The **Wild New Forest Facebook group** is a **friendly and informative space** where we share regular **wildlife sightings**, **fieldwork updates**, **photographs**, and **local conservation news**. With **over 15,000 members** — many from the local area — it's become one of the most **active wildlife communities in the New Forest**. Whether you're looking to **stay up to date**, get **help with species ID**, or just enjoy a **daily dose of New Forest nature**, we'd love to see you there.



A lot of discussion this month has focused on the **extended dry spell** and its **impact on the Forest**. One of our most popular posts came from **Susan Butler**, who was looking for confirmation of the identification of a splendid group of emerging **Silky Rosegill fungi** — a highlight that, despite the dry conditions, there is still some great **fungi** to be found in the **woodlands** at the moment.

The keen-eyed among you may also have noticed that we've established a new **public-facing Facebook page: Wild New Forest Guided Tours**. While the main **Facebook group** will remain **private**, we felt it was time to also have an **easily accessible page for visitors to the New Forest**, where we can highlight our **tours** and showcase the important **habitats and biodiversity** of the Forest to a wider audience.

Reviews

Many thanks to everyone who takes the time to leave a **review on TripAdvisor**. We are proud to receive the **Travellers' Choice Award for 2025**; all our reviews can be found here.

Wonderful evening – Aug 2025

Review of Sunset River Cruise — Beaulieu River

“We had a **wonderful evening** pottering down the river in a great boat, looking out for **wildlife**, lots of **birds**, **waders**, **Sandwich Terns**, and a **seal**. **Marcus** is so welcoming and his **enthusiasm is contagious!** You don't need to be an **expert** — just a wonderful experience. We have just booked a **walk to see Nightjars!!**”

Winner 2025



TripAdvisor
Travellers' Choice
Awards 2025

Wild New Forest Guided Tours

Reviewed from millions of TripAdvisor travellers
place this winner in the top 10% worldwide

Top
10%



Visit our website at
www.wildnewforestguidedtours.co.uk
for further details.

UPCOMING TOURS

Please note that walk dates and times may be subject to change.

Fungi Walk

- Fri 26 Sept – 1000–1200 (Millyford Bridge)
- Sun 28 Sept – 1400–1600 (Eyeworth)
- Tue 30 Sept – 1000–1200 (Culverley)
- Mon 13 Oct – 1000–1400 (Extended Culverley)
- Fri 24 Oct – 1000–1400 (Extended Eyeworth)
- Sat 25 Oct – 1400–1600 (Puttley Bridge)
- Sun 26 Oct – 0900–1100 (Eyeworth)
- Fri 31 Oct – 0900–1100 (Boltons Bench)
- Sat 1 Nov – 1000–1400 (Extended Culverley)
- Sun 2 Nov – 1000–1200 (Eyeworth)
- Thu 6 Nov – 1100–1300 (Boltons Bench)
- Sun 9 Nov – 0900–1100 (Puttley Bridge)
- Sat 15 Nov – 1000–1400 (Extended Culverley)
- Sun 16 Nov – 1300–1500 (Culverley)
- Sat 22 Nov – 1000–1200 (Millyford Bridge)

Discovery Walk

- Lyndhurst (Boltons Bench):
Wed 19 Nov – 1000–1200,
Wed 10 Dec – 1000–1200
- New Forest (Hampton Ridge):
Wed 19 Nov – 1400–1600,
Wed 10 Dec – 1400–1600
- Lymington (Bath Road):
Fri 19 Sept – 1000–1200,
Thu 16 Oct – 1000–1200,
Sun 30 Nov – 1000–1200,
Fri 12 Dec – 1000–1200

Hawfinch Roost Walk

- Fri 24 Oct – 0630–0830
- Sat 1 Nov – 0600–0800
- Fri 7 Nov – 0600–0800
- Sat 15 Nov – 1430–1630
- Fri 21 Nov – 0630–0830
- Sun 30 Nov – 0630–0830
- Sat 6 Dec – 0630–0830
- Sun 14 Dec – 1400–1600
- Sat 20 Dec – 0700–0900

Beaulieu River Boat Tour

- Thu 18 Sept – 1500–1730
- Tue 30 Sept – 0800–1030
- Wed 1 Oct – 1230–1500
- Tue 14 Oct – 1030–1300
- Wed 15 Oct – 1230–1500
- Thu 16 Oct – 1330–1600
- Fri 31 Oct – 1330–1600
- Sat 29 Nov – 1100–1330

Beaulieu River Extended Cruise

- Thu 30 Oct – 1100–1400

Sunset River Cruise

- Sun 21 Sept – 1700–1900

Monthly Fungi & Flora

- Sun 27 Sept – 1200–1400
- Sun 26 Oct – 1200–1400
- Fri 7 Nov – 1200–1400
- Sun 7 Dec – 1200–1400

Half-Day Wader ID Course

- Sat 25 Oct – 0800–1200
- Thu 13 Nov – 0800–1200

Three-Hour Birding Walk

- Sun 21 Sept – 1200–1500
- Mon 27 Oct – 1200–1500

Autumn Migration Explorer

- Sun 28 Sept – 0800–1100
- Thu 23 Oct – 0800–1100

Photographic Workshop

- Sun 21 Sept – 0800–1100 (Fungi)
- Wed 15 Oct – 0730–1130
- Sat 8 Nov – 1000–1400
- Sun 12 Nov – 1000–1400 (Fungi)