Conservation Communities - Wildlife Spotters Challenge

Autumn — Hedgerows

Help us to build up a picture of Devon’s wildlife by telling Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (www.dbrc.org.uk) what you have seen and where.

With an abundance of fruit and nuts in autumn, hedgerows are where many species gather to feed and fatten up before winter. Particularly hibernating species, like hedgehogs and dormice.

Places to look for wildlife — Take a close look and see what you can find.

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Hazelnuts

Hazelnuts are an important source of energy for lots of small mammals. Take a close look at them and see if you can find any that have been nibbled.

Dormouse

- Smooth inner rim of hole
- Tooth marks on surface of nut at angles in a spiral around the hole

Wood mouse

- Parallel tooth marks on inner rim of hole
- Rough tooth marks around outer rim of hole

Bank vole

- Parallel tooth marks on inner rim of hole
- No tooth marks on surface of nut

Squirrel

- Smooth - no tooth marks
- Cracks nutshells open cleanly

Woodpecker and nuthatch

- Wedge nuts into crevices
- Cracks nutshells open by hammering with beak
**Insects**

**Angle shades:** This distinctive moth is often visible in the daytime. It uses camouflage to hide, resting with its wings folded along its body, resembling a dry leaf. Adults can be seen in early autumn. This species overwinters in the ground as a caterpillar.

**Galls:** Fallen leaves give a great opportunity to look closely at some of the galls that can be found, like these spangle galls, caused by a gall wasp. Galls most commonly form due to insects, forcing the tree to produce a growth for the benefit of the insect. Gall wasps are a common culprit, and there are many different species. They cause other commonly spotted galls like oak marble galls and robin’s pin-cushions.

**Birds**

**Redwings** gather in large groups in autumn. They migrate to Britain in October and spend the winter here, initially feeding on abundant berries. Redwings spend most of the time in hedgerows, only visiting gardens in extreme weather. A small member of the Thrush family, they have a striking red colour to their underwing and a distinctive cream-coloured stripe above the eye.

**Fieldfares** are another, larger, member of the Thrush family. They also overwinter in Britain, often in large flocks. Often seen along hawthorn hedges, feeding on the berries. Again, they rarely visit gardens unless snowy weather covers their preferred habitat.

To find out more about these topics, and others, watch the Conservation Communities Project online talks at [www.devonwildlifetrust.org](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org).

Topics include; Hedgehogs, Tracks and Signs, Winter Twig ID, Managing Devon Hedges for Wildlife.