

## Dormice

The ancient semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows around the Malvern Hills provide a much-needed habitat for the increasingly rare Dormouse. The Dormouse's main food sources are hazel, honeysuckle, bramble and oak, with hazelnuts being a particular favourite. Dormice eat the hazelnuts when they are still green and on the tree, leaving the ground littered with distinctively opened shells. These shells are the best indicator of a Dormouse population; Dormice themselves are much harder to spot as they are very small, nocturnal and forage high up in trees.

**How you can help:** if you would like to take part in the next Dormouse survey on the Conservators' land, then please contact the office.

## Great Crested Newts

Almost black, with a yellow-orange belly and "warty" skin, the Great Crested Newt is Britain's largest newt species, measuring up to 17 cm long. In the breeding season, males have a distinctive jagged crest running along their back. Great Crested Newts are largely nocturnal, spending their days on land hidden under logs and stones or in burrows; from October to February they hibernate in hollow trees or stone walls. On Conservators' land, the biggest threat to Great Crested Newts comes from the invasive pondweed *Crassula* (Australian Swamp Stonecrop), which chokes the ponds the newts breed in, but pollution from road run-off is also a major factor.

**How you can help:** Never dispose of plants, fish or animals from garden ponds in natural ponds; even quite small fish eat newt larvae and you may also inadvertently introduce *Crassula*. Avoid disturbing piles of rocks and dead wood around ponds, as they may be hibernation sites for Great Crested Newts.

Cover image: Berrow Down Pond (Vincent Dolan)



Dormouse

## The Malvern Hills Conservators

The Malvern Hills Conservators are one of Britain's oldest conservation bodies and a registered charity. They own, or have under their jurisdiction, most of the Malvern Hills and Commons (a total area of 1,200 hectares or 3,000 acres) and manage them to preserve their unique ecology and natural beauty.

**How you can help:** Our Conservation Volunteers spend one day a month working on conservation projects on the Malvern Hills and Commons. Alternatively, we can provide litter-picking equipment if you would like to help keep the hills tidy.

For more information, please contact:  
The Malvern Hills Conservators, Manor House,  
Grange Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3EY

Office open weekdays 9am–1pm and 2pm–4pm.

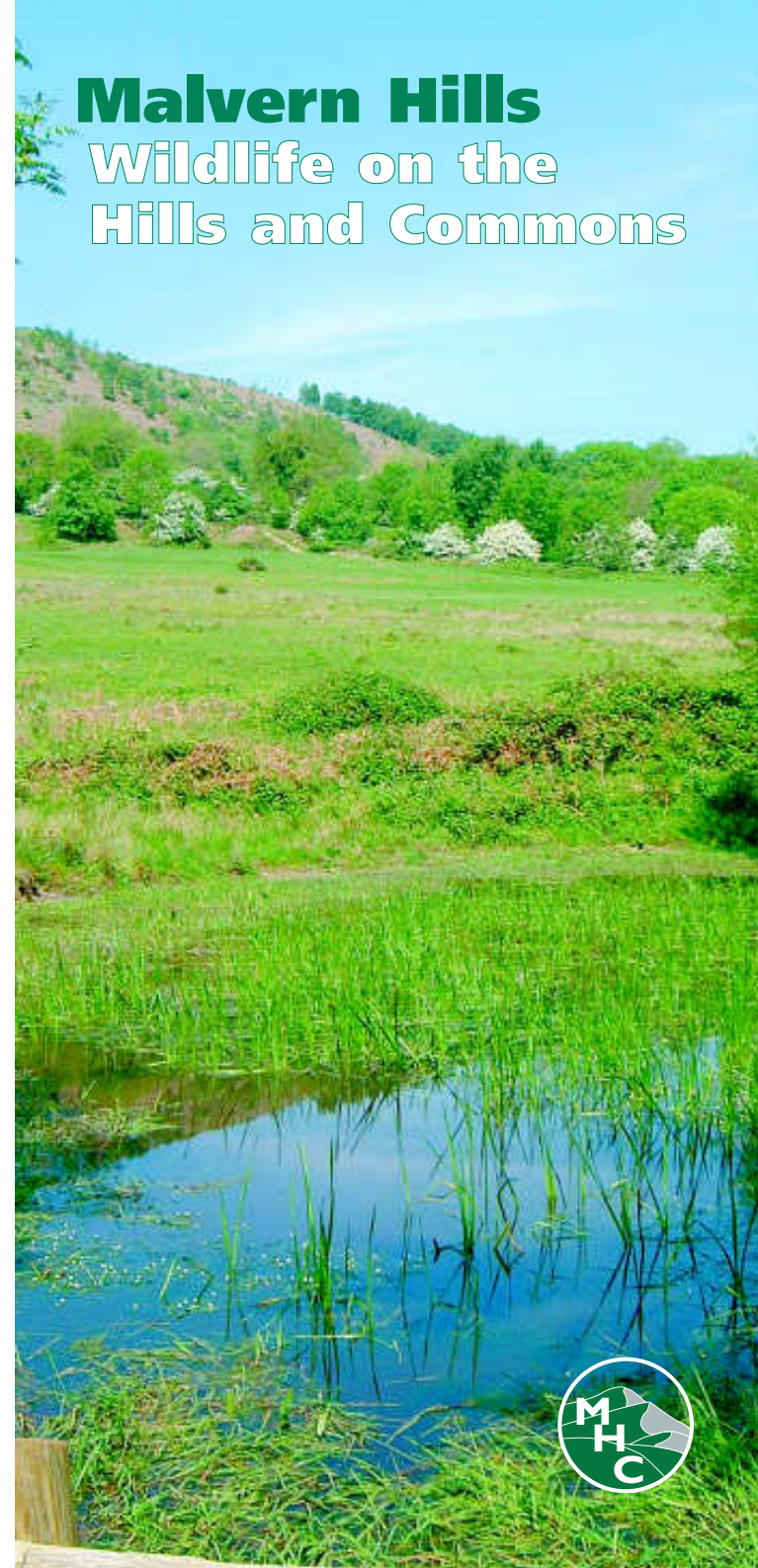
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# Malvern Hills Wildlife on the Hills and Commons



The Malvern Hills and Commons are not only beautiful, but provide a home for some of Britain's rarest animals, birds, insects and plants; the Malverns have been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of their national importance as a wildlife habitat.

Much of the special wildlife on the Malverns is associated with the open hilltops and slopes. However, the wildlife is as varied as the habitats that the Malverns provide; not only is there grassland, but bracken-covered slopes, gorse, scrub, recent woodland, ancient woodland and ponds.

This mosaic of wildlife habitats cannot be maintained by nature alone, because it was created by man – the hills and commons would be covered by woodland if they had not been grazed by sheep and cattle for many hundreds of years. Today, the Malvern Hills Conservators manage the landscape by grazing their own flock of Cheviot ewes, along with a small herd of Galloway and Belted Galloway cattle. Commoners also graze animals in the area. Together, the sheep and cattle will ensure that the Malvern Hills and Commons continue to provide habitats for important species, some of which are described in this leaflet.

## Skylarks

A small, streaky brown bird, with a white-sided tail and small crest, the Skylark is known for its spectacular song flight, when it rises almost vertically, hovers and then parachutes back down to the ground. It is still possible to see and hear Skylarks around the Malvern Hills, but their numbers have halved in the last decade, largely because of the loss of the open grassland they need to feed and nest.

**How you can help:** Disturbance by dogs and walkers is also thought to play a part in the Skylark's decline; please help to conserve Skylarks and other ground-nesting birds by staying on the paths and keeping dogs on a lead on the hilltops

and commons between March and July (the nesting season).



Skylark in flight (RSPB Images)

## Bats

The mix of woodland and grassland on the Malverns provides a good habitat for bats, including two rare species – the Barbastelle and the Lesser Horseshoe bat.

The Lesser Horseshoe bat is one of the smallest British species. At rest, it hangs with its wings wrapped around its body and is about the size of a plum. Horseshoe bats have a circular flap of



Barbastelle bat (Frank Greenaway/Vincent Wildlife Trust)

skin surrounding their nostrils and it is the horse-shoe shape of this “nose-leaf” that gives them their name.

The Barbastelle is one of Britain's rarest and least known bats. It has a highly distinctive appearance, with sooty fur and ears so large that they touch in the middle and seem to surround its eyes. Barbastelles feed almost exclusively on moths and use old or storm-damaged trees to roost and hibernate.

**How you can help:** Like all British bat species, the Barbastelle and the Lesser Horseshoe are protected by law; it is illegal to disturb bats or the places where they roost.

## High Brown Fritillary Butterflies



High Brown Fritillary Butterfly

These are one of Britain's rarest butterflies and rely on violets growing on sunny bracken slopes to feed their caterpillars, which bask on dead bracken in order to get warm enough to develop in cool spring weather. The best conditions for violets and therefore the butterflies are areas of bracken kept open by animals trampling through.

**How you can help:** Avoid disturbing bracken between April and July, when the larvae are developing. You can help monitor High Brown Fritillary and other butterflies by letting us know when and where you see them on the Malvern Hills and Commons.