

Transforming the Trent Valley
Identification Guide



1. Brown Hare
Lepus europaeus



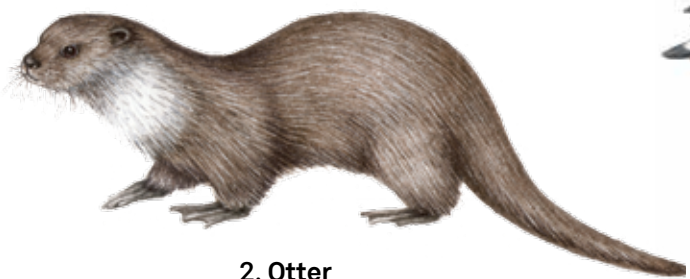
4. Lapwing
Vanellus vanellus



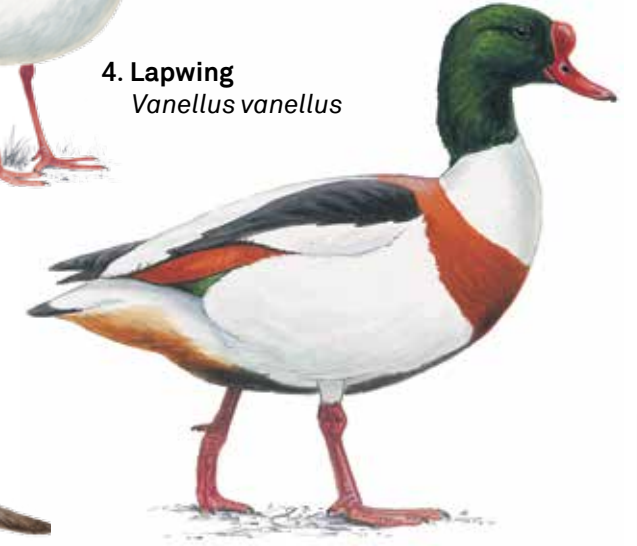
3. Kingfisher
Alcedo atthis



9. Sand Martin
Riparia riparia



2. Otter
Lutra lutra



5. Shelduck
Tadorna tadorna



10. Reed Bunting
Emberiza schoeniclus



11. Willow Tit
Poecile montanus



12. Grey Wagtail
Motacilla cinerea



7. Oystercatcher
Haematopus ostralegus



6. Goosander
Mergus merganser



8. Little Ringed Plover
Charadrius dubius



14. Common Toad
Bufo bufo



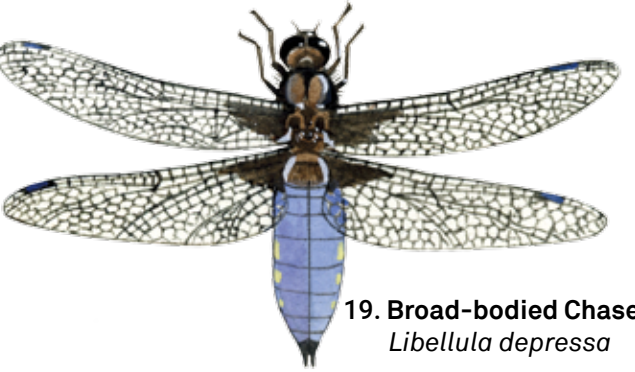
15. Grass Snake
Natrix helvetica



13. Yellow Wagtail
Motacilla flava



16. Slow-worm
Anguis fragilis



19. Broad-bodied Chaser
Libellula depressa



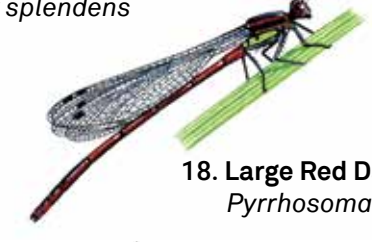
22. Comma
Polygonia c-album



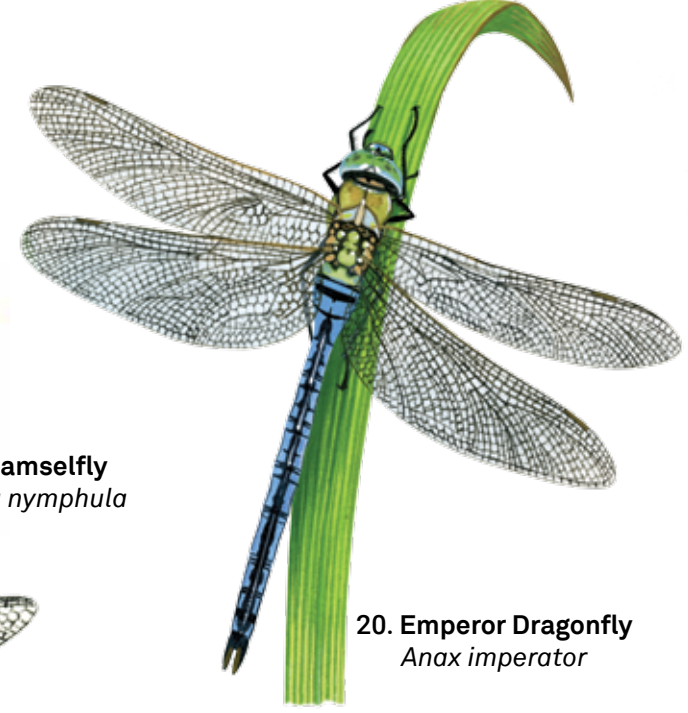
23. Orange-tip
Anthocharis cardamines



17. Banded Demoiselle
Calopteryx splendens



18. Large Red Damselfly
Pyrhosoma nymphula



20. Emperor Dragonfly
Anax imperator



21. Elephant Hawkmoth
Deilephila elpenor



24. Roesel's Bush-cricket
Metrioptera roeselii



25. Lesser Stag-beetle
Dorcus parallelipedus



26. Purple-loosestrife
Lythrum salicaria



27. Himalayan Balsam
Impatiens glandulifera



29. Bee Orchid
Ophrys apifera



30. Cuckooflower
Cardamine pratensis



31. Devil's-bit Scabious
Succisa pratensis



28. Meadowsweet
Filipendula ulmaria



32. Water Mint
Mentha aquatica



Transforming the Trent Valley Identification Guide

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Introduction

Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme (TTTV) is an exciting project which focusses on the Rivers Trent, Dove and Tame in East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire. Find out more at www.thetrentvalley.org.uk.

The scheme aims to increase the biodiversity of the river floodplains, improve access to and understanding of the area, and connect people to their local natural environment.

How to get involved

TTTV have identified 32 species which we want to find out more about in our landscape through the 'Big Washlands Watch' project. Some of these are very common, and some are a bit harder to spot.

What is biological recording?

Biological recording is the way in which we make data sets of wildlife that is spotted in an area. By writing down what wildlife you see, you will be contributing to these data sets which can then be used by all sorts of people in different ways. For example, if a patch of woodland has biological records of rare bird or flower species, it may be given extra protections such as being designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

It is important to contribute to biological recording so that we can gain a full understanding of the health of nature and wildlife in our local areas, and see how it changes over time. The more people get involved, the more records can be collected and analysed.

It is also good for us to spend time outdoors in nature, connecting to the wildlife that we share our green spaces with. It can help to improve our physical health by going out and walking in the fresh air, and our mental health by taking some time to slow down and notice little details in nature.

Species notes

1. **Brown Hare** *Lepus europaeus*

Most often found in grasslands and woodland edges. Golden brown with a pale belly, white tail and black ear tips. Much larger than a Rabbit. Brown Hares create shelters, called 'forms', which are shallow ditches in the ground. When disturbed they can move very quickly, running at full speed using their powerful back legs to propel them forward. They eat plants and the bark from trees and bushes. During early spring Brown Hares can often be seen 'boxing'.

2. **Otter** *Lutra lutra*

A very secretive animal, with brown fur, growing to 60-80 cm long. Once extremely rare in England, Otter numbers are improving. Otters live in 'holts', which are underground burrows dug into ground and hidden amongst vegetation. An aquatic predator feeding on fish, birds and amphibians.

3. **Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

Seen along watercourses and lakes with suitable banks for burrowing nests. Bright blue on its back and with a copper coloured breast, the Kingfisher is very distinctive. Kingfishers often have favourite perches where they will sit and wait until the perfect time to dive into the water to catch a fish. Although small (15-17 cm), their bright colours make them easily recognisable.

4. **Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Lapwings favour wetland and farmland habitats where they breed in spring on small scrape nests. They are recognisable by their crests, black and white patterns and broad, rounded wings. In winter large flocks of Lapwings congregate together whilst making their distinctive 'peewit' call. If a Lapwing's nest is approached by a predator, both parents will mob the attacker and drive it away.

5. **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Mainly coastal, but increasingly found inland on gravel pits, reservoirs and lakes. Heavy set with a dark green head, bright red bill and black patch on the backs. One of the largest ducks found in the UK. Shelducks often use abandoned rabbit burrows to nest in.



6. **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

A duck with a long sharply pointed bill containing saw-like teeth for gripping fish. Male Goosanders are white with dark green head and red hooked bill. Females are grey with a red-brown head and white throat. They breed along rivers during the spring and summer and winter on lakes and reservoirs. Goosander can be seen all year round.

7. **Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

A loud coastal wading bird often found inland on reservoirs, gravel pits and lakes. Black head, black back and black wings, and a long red bill. Contrary to the name their favourite food is in fact mussels, which they prise or hammer open using their bills.

8. **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

This bird species first nested in the UK in 1938, but has spread rapidly since then and has taken up residence in many habitats including flooded gravel pits, reservoirs and quarries. A very small wading bird (15-16 cm), with a black bill, pale brown legs and a bright yellow ring around each eye. Sandy brown above and white below, with a black chest band and black marking on its head. Little Ringed Plover nests on bare gravel. Their diet consists of invertebrates. A summer visitor, mostly seen between April and July.

9. **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

This species is the smallest swallow in the UK. Brown head and back, white underneath, with a brown band across the breast and a short forked tail. This species nests in colonies, digging burrows in steep sandy cliffs around water. The burrows can be up to a metre in length with a chamber at the end of the burrow. The birds migrate to Africa to over-winter before returning to breed. A common summer visitor to the UK from March to October.

10. **Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Male Reed Buntings can be seen in spring and summer perched on top of reeds singing. Males have a black head, throat with white collar and white facial markings, and streaky brown wings and back. Nests are made low within dense reed beds, safe from predators. The diet consists of insects and seeds.

11. **Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus*

Most commonly found in wet woodland and willow carr in wetlands, bogs and around gravel pits. Very similar to the Marsh Tit (they weren't considered as separate species until 1897), but Willow Tits have a pale panel on the wings and a sooty black cap and bib. The most reliable way to identify this species is by its nasal 'zee, zee, zee' call. They excavate nest holes in standing, decaying birch and willow, then use the wood shavings as the base of the nest. Diet mostly consists of insects, but they will eat berries and seeds when food is scarce during winter.

12. **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Grey Wagtails can most often be seen around fast flowing rivers and streams. They have a very long black and white tail with a bright yellow belly, a grey head and black wings. The male has a grey face with a black throat bib and white 'moustache'. The diet consists of small invertebrates and even tadpoles.

13. **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

Favours damp marshes, meadows and grasslands. Olive-green above with a yellow belly, yellow face and black and white tail. Yellow Wagtail has a much shorter tail than Grey Wagtail. Yellow Wagtails nest on the ground using grasses and stems to build a cup-shaped nest. Seen from March to September when birds arrive from their African wintering grounds.

14. **Common Toad** *Bufo bufo*

This amphibian hibernates under logs and stones during the winter. When spring arrives they travel in great numbers to breeding ponds. When the breeding season is over, toads can be found in many habitats, even gardens. Growing to 8-13 cm, they have olive-brown warty skin, copper eyes and short back legs. Toads walk rather than hop like frogs. The diet consists of slugs, snails and other invertebrates.

15. **Grass Snake** *Natrix helvetica*

Favouring wetland habitats, Grass Snakes are the UK's longest snake, growing to a length of over one metre. Green in colour with a yellow and black collar, pale belly and dark markings down the sides. Females

are bigger than males. They prey on amphibians and small mammals. Grass Snakes have two defence mechanisms: if they are in danger they may play dead until the predator moves on, or they can release a foul smelling liquid to deter the predator.

16. **Slow-worm** *Anguis fragilis*

Slow-worms can be found in gardens, particularly if there is a compost heap for food and shelter. Although they look like snakes they are in fact legless lizards. Unlike snakes, lizards have eyelids, enabling them to blink. They have smooth golden-grey skin. Males are paler and may have blue spots. Females are larger with dark sides and a dark stripe running down the back. Growing up to 40 cm, Slow-worms are able to detach their tails if they feel they are in danger. The diet consists mainly of slugs and worms. Female Slow-worms do not lay their eggs but keep them within their body before 'giving birth' to live young.

17. **Banded Demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens*

A large damselfly, the Banded Demoiselle favours habitat surrounding slow moving rivers and canals. Males are blue with dark blue patches on both wings. Females are green and possess pale green wings. Up to 4-5 cm length. When resting on vegetation at the water's edge, they hold their wings along the length of their abdomen. Males can often be seen clustering together flying along water courses displaying to females. They are on the wing from May to August.

18. **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrosoma nymphula*

Large Red Damselfly can be seen around ponds, lakes and canals from April to August. The earliest damselfly to emerge, it is also a regular visitor to gardens. Males are bright red with a black thorax and black bands around the end of its body. Female colouring varies greatly with some appearing almost entirely black.

19. **Broad Bodied Chaser** *Libellula depressa*

A common dragonfly that can be seen on the wing from May to July around pools, ponds and lakes. It is so named as its flattened body makes this species look broad and fat. The male has a powder blue body with yellow spots along the side and a dark thorax. The female is greeny-brown. Both sexes have chocolate-brown eyes. This species can reach a length of 4-5 cm. Often seen on a favoured perch where this species will make flights from over water to catch their insect prey. Females lay eggs by hovering over water, dipping the tip of the abdomen in and laying eggs on leaves and plants below the surface.

20. **Emperor Dragonfly** *Anax imperator*

A very large dragonfly, seen flying from June to August. A common species of large ponds, canals, and lakes. The male is pale blue with an apple green thorax and a black stripe running the length of the body. The females is similar but a duller greeny-blue. She lays her eggs on floating pond weed. Emperor Dragonfly can catch insect prey in flight and also eat on the wing.

21. **Elephant Hawkmoth** *Deilephila elpenor*

Active at dusk, this species can be seen flying from May to early August feeding on nectar. Commonly found in parks and gardens it may also be seen in rough grassland and woodland edges. The adult moths are mainly golden olive with bright pink on the wings and body. Their wingspan is 5-6 cm. Caterpillars feed on willowherbs, fuchsia and bedstraw and are able to deter predators by swelling up to display two large eyespots.

22. **Comma** *Polygonia c-album*

An unmistakable medium-sized butterfly with ragged orange wings and brown spots. Its underside has a brown colouring camouflaging itself into looking like a dead leaf. The wingspan is 5-6 cm. Caterpillars, feeding on common nettles, elm and willows, have brown and white markings on them, making them look very similar to bird droppings. Observable from spring to autumn, the adults can be seen feeding on rotting fruit.

23. **Orange-tip** *Anthocharis cardamines*

A common and distinctive butterfly that can be seen flying between April and July. The male has a white body with bold orange wingtips. Females are also white but have grey-black wingtips. Both sexes have a mottled 'mossy grey' pattern on the underside of their hindwings. The wingspan is 5 cm. Caterpillars feed on Garlic Mustard, Cuckooflower and Hedge Mustards. When the caterpillars hatch from their eggs they eat their eggshell before going on to eat other Orange-tip eggs nearby. Pupating in July, they over-winter before emerging as butterflies the following spring.

24. **Roesel's Bush-cricket** *Metrioptera roeselii*

Roesel's Bush-cricket is dark brown with orange legs, a green face, a creamy border to the thorax, and two or three cream spots on its sides. It is best recognised by its song, which is a long, monotonous, mechanical noise. Until the early 20th century, Roesel's Bush-cricket was only found on the south-east coast. Recent years have seen a rapid expansion in its range, particularly helped by roadside rough grassland and

scrub providing a 'corridor' for it to travel along. It favours damp meadows and grassland, but can be found elsewhere.

25. **Lesser Stag Beetle** *Dorcus parallelipedus*

Found in woodland, parkland and hedgerows in summer. Adults fly at night and are attracted to light. Recognisable by its large mandibles and broad head. Body length 3 cm. The larvae live in and eat rotting wood particularly Ash, Common Beech and Apple.

26. **Purple-loosestrife** *Lythrum salicaria*

Found in wet habitats such as reed beds, marshes and riverbanks, Purple Loosestrife has tall magenta-coloured flower spikes which tower over other nearby plants from June to August. It can grow to a height of 1.5 m. These flowers provide an important nectar source for species such as Brimstone butterflies, Red-tailed Bumblebees and Elephant Hawkmoths.

27. **Himalayan Balsam** *Impatiens glandulifera*

Introduced to the UK in 1839 this species is an invasive species which can grow up to 2 m tall. Found often in areas along watercourses it is fast growing and its explosive seed pods mean more plants grow over a very wide area. This species flowers from July to October. It has large pink flowers shaped like a bonnet. The shade from this tall growing species of plant means that other native species cannot grow beneath it.

28. **Meadowsweet** *Filipendula ulmaria*

Favouring wet habitats such as ditches, damp meadows and riverbanks meadowsweet flowers from June to September. Its leaves are sometimes covered with a bright orange rust fungus. Tall flower heads of densely packed creamy white flowers smell sweet and when crushed smell of antiseptic. Leaves are dark green and divided into pairs with silvery undersides. This plant can grow up to 1.25 m tall.

29. **Bee Orchid** *Ophrys apifera*

Found on limestone grasslands and disturbed land, Bee Orchids get their name from their interesting method of pollination. The flower mimics a bee, so bees are attracted to what looks like a potential mate. When the bee lands on the flower it is dusted with pollen, which then gets transferred when the bee flies away to another Bee Orchid. In practice all Bee Orchids in the UK are self-pollinated, because the species of bee which the plant uses is absent. A small orchid of up to 30 cm, it possesses a rosette of leaves at ground level and two leaves that grow up the stem as a sheath. The stem has a number of relatively

large flowers with pink sepals that look like wings and brown lips that have yellow markings on, just like a bee.

30. **Cuckooflower** *Cardamine pratensis*

Also known as 'Lady's Smock' this species is a springtime perennial of damp grasslands such as ditches, wet meadows and riverbanks. Growing to a height of up to 50 cm, it has a rosette of leaves at its base with an upright stem with small pale pink flowers. Each flower has four petals. Flowering from April to June the plant gets its name as its blooming was thought to coincide with the arrival of the first Cuckoo of the year and the return of the spring season.

31. **Devil's-bit Scabious** *Succisa pratensis*

An important nectar source for a wide variety of bees and insects, Devil's-bit Scabious is in bloom between July and October. Often found in damp meadows, marshes, woodland rides and riverbanks. It has rounded purple blue flower heads, and grows up to 75 cm tall. The leaves are long and oval-shaped.

32. **Water Mint** *Mentha aquatica*

Water Mint grows in damp habitats and in water. Leaves are aromatic, toothed and hairy, growing in whorls around reddish stems. The lilac-pink flowers are found at the end of these stems. Water Mint is a food source for Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma butterflies and the Green Tortoise Beetle. It grows up to 50 cm tall, and can spread vigorously using its creeping runners.

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