

## Wildlife and Species Loss

### Background

As a county, Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire have an incredibly rich and varied ecology, that is home to a vast variety of species and wildlife. But actions in the past and the present have threatened these species and their habitats considerable. The Archives hold records that can piece together how these species have been lost, how populations have changed, and evidence of protection and care emerging to conserve wildlife and species from extinction.

### What records are there and what information will they contain?

The following resources offer a starting point to discovering more about how the loss of wildlife and species occurred, how change over time can be evaluated, and progress to enable protection of wildlife and species moving into the future. This list is not exhaustive and there will be more to discover in our collections.

#### Loss

- **P124/CW/2/4** - Churchwardens' accounts from Dursley parish records, which details the prices paid for the eradication of wildlife considered 'vermin' which even includes Hedgehogs (1566-1758).
- **D1571 E510** - Estcourt Park Game book totals (others available in the online catalogue). These are a great albeit sad record of tracking how much wildlife was hunted for game, and the final totals can be quite frightening (1902-1903).
- **D471/F21** - Hunting Journals from the Kingscote family of Kingscote. These volumes shows the scale of foxhunting on the Kingscote estate and documents the numbers of foxes killed on numerous hunts undertaken (1849-1869).
- **D11985/1/1** - The diaries of Captain Jarratt Thorpe detailing their accounts of Badger digging (a practice outlawed since 1973) including a summary of what was captured or killed spread between two volumes. Newspaper extracts from the Gloucestershire Echo that debate the morality of badger digging are to be found in the second volume (1913-1925).

## Evaluating Change

- **D5490/1** - Ornithological Journals of Charles William Bannister. Between 1936 and 1945 he records his sightings over 64 volumes of observations. A fantastic resource for tracking change and species loss across a period of change and impending war (1936-1945).
- **D13705/2/1-2** - Notes on the Birds of Gloucestershire by William Lock Mellersh Vol A (1831-1935) & Vol B (1870-1900). William Mellersh was a leading ornithologist in Gloucestershire. These volumes contain notes on where certain species of birds have been spotted and includes a calendar of sightings. For further research, **D13705/1** also contains the manuscripts notes to the Birds of Gloucestershire and notes from the author (1831-1900).
- **D13789 (Collection)** - Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society and the Nailsworth Bird Recorders. This collection contains bulletins, fieldwork reports, annual reports, and newsletters (1954-2006).
- **P264/IN/4/14** - List of butterflies sighted on the former Thornbury railway branch line, between Yate and Tytherington, complied by vicar Rev J H W Fisher (1970-1975).
- **D11178/10** - "Gloucestershire Wildlife Tapestry" part of the Gloucestershire Country Life Series. A series of recordings taken at some point during the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Ray Goodwin, that document sounds of these landscapes throughout the seasons, including woodlands, meadows, and wetlands. These are taken at both day and night. (1901-2000).

## Protection and Conservation

- **PS/NO/P1/1-2** – Posters relating to swine fever, foot and mouth disease, protection of wild birds and other public matters. The posters for the protection of wild birds show what species were protected at different times of the year, and show early forms of protection for certain species within Gloucestershire (1921-1946).
- **GCC/COU/1/5/1** - Minutes of various special committees of Gloucestershire County Council, including the Special Committee minutes on Wild Bird Protection. This committee invited a leader ornithologist, William Lock Mellersh to aid recommendations and rationales for local birds to be protected (1889-1901)
- **D16675 (Collection)** - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (Formerly Severn Wildfowl Trust and The Wildfowl Trust) collection of Annual Reports, detailing conservation work and progress at the trust (1948-1993)

- **K1937 (Collection)** - Hi8 videos created by Steve Dorey and other members of the Countryside section and Cotswold Warden Service staff and volunteers. These include scenes of wildlife in Crickley Park and Coaley Peak (1991), and the opening of Robinswood Hill by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (1992 - Please email us at [archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk) to request to see these videos in our Searchroom (1991-1992).
- **D12187/4/5** - Publications relating to forestry, wildlife and nature reserves. These include publications by the Forestry Commission on Westonbirt Arboretum, The Fallow Deer, Butterflies in woodlands, Silviculture of Broadleaved Woodland, Silviculture and Yield of Wild Cherry, Principal Butt Rots of Conifers, Post-War Forest Policy, Forestry Practice Eley Game Advisory Service publication for Forestry and Pheasants, Broadleaves in Britain, Poor's Allotment Nature Reserve at Tidenham Chase, Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation publications on Pump Hill Reserve, The Stenders Quarry Mitcheldean (1940s-1970s).
- **GBR/L6/23/B2576** - Town Clerk's file concerning the protection of wildflowers. Contains letter from the Council for the Protection of Rural England with copy of the CPRE Wild Plant Conservation Board's pamphlet "The Protection of Wild Flowers" and list of "the more attractive of the rare wild plants of Gloucestershire requiring protection"; letters from the Town Clerk to the City Surveyor and the Education Officer on the subject (1937).
- **DC94/3/69** - Correspondence and related papers concerning the Northavon Landscape and Nature Conservation Strategy A strategy for the conservation of wildlife and wild spaces in Northavon was established by the Avon Wildlife Trust in 1988 (1988-1991).
- **D14699 (Collection)** – Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – Now available for the first time as part of work by the Green Project, this collection includes papers on individual reserves and sites under their care, reserve management, 11 botanical notebooks compiled by Mr C. S. Downer, and a notebook kept by Hillary Davis (nee Dawson) listing wildflowers on her walk to school in 1938 (1920-2016).

Local Studies material held at Gloucestershire Archives offers a great gateway into secondary research on this topic. Some highlights include:

- **Wild Birds of the Cotswolds** - A series that ran in Cotswold Life showing images with brief descriptions of the wild birds of the Cotswolds (1970-1971)
- **RR156.5GS** - Lower Woods nature reserve guide and species list (c.2004)

- **JQ16.16GS** - The Flora of Gloucestershire – Documenting the wide and varied flora of the county of Gloucestershire (1949)
- **MR1.83GS** - Severn Barrage: What of the birdlife? Nigel Clark Discusses the birds that use the Severn Estuary and their origins, and how the proposed Severn Barrage might have impacted upon the bird life as a result (1989).
- **RQ274.9** - Welcome to the Wildfowl Trust, a brief guide to the Enclosures at Slimbridge (Year Unknown)

## How to Find the Records

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To view the records and documents we hold at Gloucestershire Archives, use our online catalogue which can be found on our website at:

<https://catalogue.goucestershire.gov.uk/> Use the references given above as your search terms if you are trying to locate these examples or explore these collections further. You can also refine or sort your search by other search categories, such as date created.

For more guidance on using our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs or watch our YouTube tutorial.

## Further Resources

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People's Trust for Endangered Species - <https://ptes.org/>

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust - <https://www.goucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/>

RSPB - Gloucestershire Local Group - <https://group.rspb.org.uk/goucestershire/>

## Have something to bring to the Archives?

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We are always looking to grow and develop our collections for Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. If you have any material surrounding wildlife and species loss in Gloucestershire or South Gloucestershire and are either interested in depositing it with us, or looking for guidance of how to look after your collections, visit [Adding to our collections | Gloucestershire Archives](#)

## Podcasts from the Green Pledge Project

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This guide was put together by the Green Pledge Project team. Also, as part of the project, we have created podcasts, meeting people from across our area, sharing stories from the past and the present, and imagining what our future could be. For this theme, why not dive further and listen to:

Green Pledge Project Research Guide: Wildlife and Species Loss  
January 2026

#### **Episode 4: Two dawn choruses recorded seventy years apart**

In this episode of the Green Pledge Podcast we listen to two dawn choruses, recorded in the month of May, in the same place, but 70 years apart.

#### **Episode 8: George Peterken. Part 2 of 2 on grasslands and churchyard ecology.**

In the second part of our conversation with George Peterken, we talk about the importance of grassland ecology and why Peter set up the Parish Meadows Group, as well as hearing about his latest project about the ecology of churchyards.