

## Wildlife of Wreay

The area around Wreay is agricultural; mainly grassland, with some arable for livestock feed. The district is quite well wooded, including Wreay Woods, through which the River Petteril runs. Part of Wreay Woods is managed as a nature reserve by Cumbria Wildlife Trust. There is uncultivated land on the sides of the railway and the roadside verges.

### Plants

The mature broad-leaved trees of the district are mainly oak, with ash, sycamore and some beech. There are alder and willow trees beside the river and others, here and there, include birch, hazel, holly, rowan, crab apple, various poplars, horse chestnut, yew, lime, elder, and hawthorn. Field boundary hedges are mainly hawthorn with some blackthorn, often colonised by brambles, ivy, dog rose and honeysuckle. Some remnants of elm survive in hedges. Gardens have a wide variety of more exotic trees of course; for example, the churchyard has a buckeye and two Afghan pines. The ground flora is largely confined to the woods and uncultivated land, and holds few surprises. A good variety of fungi can be found in similar places later in the year.

### Animals

Foxes and badgers are seen, though mainly after dark, and there are occasional reports of otters on the river, stoats and weasels occur, but are seldom seen. Roe deer are sighted regularly, especially in and around Wreay Woods. Moles (or, at least, molehills) are very common, as are shrews, voles, mice and brown rats, though less obvious. Rabbits are variably numerous, and brown hares occasional. Red and grey squirrels occur; the former less frequent than previously, the latter 'controlled', when possible. Hedgehogs occur in the woods and gardens, mainly seen at night. Various species of bats are seen flying on summer evenings. Frogs and toads occur around wet places and common lizards show themselves unexpectedly in dry places.

### Birds

The waterfowl on the River Petteril are mainly mallards, with a few goosanders and moorhen. Also on the river are heron, dipper, grey wagtail and, with Luck, a kingfisher. Raptors include buzzard, kestrel and sparrowhawk and tawny owls and barn owls are heard at night. Of gamebirds there are pheasants and the occasional partridge. There are plenty wood pigeons and a few stock doves and collared doves. Swallows, house martins and swifts all nest around the village and farms and there are sand martin colonies in the river banks. The woods, hedges and gardens have resident stocks of great spotted woodpecker, pied wagtail, wren, dunnoek, robin, song thrush, mistle thrush, blackbird, goldcrest, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, long-tailed tit, nuthatch, treecreeper, jackdaw, starling, house sparrow, tree sparrow, siskin, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch and yellowhammer. These are joined in summer by chiffchaff, willow warbler, garden warbler, wood warbler, whitethroat, blackcap and spotted flycatcher. There are several small rookeries in the district; carrion crows and magpies are common and jays are seen in the woods. In the winter there are flocks of fieldfare, redwing and brambling.

### Invertebrates

In season, butterflies are plentiful around gardens, hedges and rougher places. Commonly sighted are large, small, and green-veined whites, orange tip, small tortoiseshell, peacock, painted lady, red admiral, comma, meadow brown and ringlet. Occasionally one may come across small copper, wall brown and small pearl-bordered fritillary. There is a good range of moths available for the enthusiast. Bumble bees, honey bees, wasps, various flies, dragonflies, damselflies, bugs, beetles, spiders, worms, slugs, snails, etc. can be abundant, (mainly for the enthusiast, also).

This flora and fauna consists of species most likely to be seen, but it is always worth keeping an eye open for more unusual species which are regularly recorded.

Craig Robinson