

Nightjar Presentation Notes

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Hello everyone, my name is.....and I work for the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust is a conservation charity. Our job is to care for and to protect nature for the future. We manage over 50 nature reserves across Norfolk. At these reserves, we try to create ideal habitats for a wide variety of nature so as to have as many different species as we possible and as many of each species as we can.

We also like to make sure that the general public has access to these beautiful places so as to raise awareness of the stunning range of wildlife Norfolk has to offer. The NWT is keen to reconnect people and nature. We try to achieve this through educating people of all ages as to the importance of the nature around us. We believe that in order to care for the natural world people need to understand it. We want everyone to be able to appreciate nature's beauty, complexity and the many benefits we gain from the natural world. All of which are provided to us completely for free. As humans we depend on the natural world for the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. It would be impossible for us to exist if it wasn't for the many jobs that nature does for us.

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This year marks a very special year for us. The NWT is celebrating its's 90th Anniversary. We are the same age as the Queen and David Attenborough

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In the History of wildlife conservation and birdwatching in the UK, few dates stand as proud as the 6th of March 1926. On this day 435 acres of marsh at Cley were bought by a group of 12 gentlemen subscribers led by Sydney Long. It was to be preserved in Dr Long's words, 'as a bird sanctuary for all time'.

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This date was not only significant because Cley's habitats and wildlife were to be preserved. It was also the formation of the Norfolk Naturalist Trust, known today as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. We currently manage over 50 nature reserves across Norfolk, supporting a huge variety of habitats and species.

The foundation of the Trust was also the start of the County Wildlife Trust movement, which today has 47 members across the UK, each helping to protect wildlife at a local level. The Wildlife Trusts movement has been so successful that we now cover the whole of the UK.

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Vision: *Norfolk Wildlife Trust seeks a sustainable environment for people and wildlife, where the future of wildlife is protected and enhanced through sympathetic management, and people are connected with and inspired by Norfolk's wildlife and wild spaces.*

The NWT is keen to deal with the relationship between people and the natural world. The NWT is particularly concerned with ensuring that nature reserves are used and enjoyed by members of the public, without compromising the special and often rare habitats found in Norfolk.

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This very much involves the concept of sustainability. This concept is wonderfully summed up by an old Native American proverb: "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

What do you think this phrase might mean?....That we should look after the earth so that it is in the same state or maybe even better when we hand it over to our children. Unfortunately we adults haven't done the best of jobs looking after the earth...

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Currently species are going extinct 100 to 1,000 times faster than background rates (background rate is the amount of species we would expect to be going extinct). The current extinction rate is the same rate as the other 5 mass extinction events in the past; this includes the extinction of the dinosaurs.

The main cause of this extinction is habitat loss caused by human activity...

In recent history, our landscapes have seen dramatic losses and declines; habitats that were once stretched for miles now exist as small isolated fragments, often surrounded by a landscape inhospitable to wildlife, dominated by intensive agriculture and urban development. Towns and cities, busy roads and railways all make it difficult for wildlife to move between safe havens. The facts and figures for habitat loss in the UK make for some pretty bleak reading...

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- Lowland meadows have decreased by 97% since the 1930's.
- The area of coppiced woodland in the UK has decreased by 90% since the 1900's
- 80% of all of the UK's lowland heathland has been lost since the 1800's
- Due to the intensification of farming practices throughout the 20th century 50% of hedgerows in the UK have been lost.

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This dramatic loss of habitat across the country has led to major declines across many species.

- 72% of the species of butterfly in the UK have decreased over the last 10 years.
- The UK has lost 44 million breeding birds since the late 1960's.
- Mammals such as the hedgehog and water vole have seen major decreases in numbers and the red squirrel is all but extinct.
- In some counties across the UK two plant species are going extinct each year!

At the NWT we aim to save Norfolk's wildlife for the future by managing our nature reserves to the best of our ability....

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The nature reserves we manage are unique and special havens, alive with birds, plants, mammals and insects. We aim to continue to protect these valued wildlife habitats. But reserves alone are not enough- Nature can't exist in a glass bubble. Wildlife needs room to move, especially in the face of climate change. Furthermore, isolated populations concentrated in a small area are more susceptible to disease and predation.

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To allow wildlife to move throughout the countryside, the wildlife trusts are working to restore, recreate and reconnect habitats at a landscape scale, creating a living landscape across the UK. The wildlife Trusts are championing and undertaking this work through our living landscape conservation schemes.

A living landscape consists of core areas of high quality habitat including our 50 nature reserves. These reserves are connected either by corridors such as hedgerows and rivers or stepping stones such as ponds, gardens, school playing fields and church meadows. This approach looks at the landscape as a whole, allowing nature to move and thrive across the entire country.

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Here's where you come in. The NWT only looks after 1% of Norfolk's land. We need your help to look after the rest of it. There are many things you can do to help at school and at home. You can make bug hotels, put up bird boxes, and make sure hedgehogs can get in and out of your garden by leaving small holes in your fence, put a small pond in to your garden or school, put out bird feeders for the harsh winter months and plant a wildflower meadow. All of these small acts help to make up our living landscape.

To celebrate the 90th birthday of the NWT we have decided to focus on 9 key species and their habitats. Your school has been lucky enough to choose the nightjar.

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Nightjars are largely nocturnal and well camouflaged to avoid being seen during the day. The best time to see one is when hawking for food at dusk and dawn. Their characteristically unusual flight patterns and the bright white spots on the male are helpful features when identifying this bird. The first sign that a nightjar is near is usually the males churring song. This bizarre rising and falling call can consist of up to 1900 notes per minute. On a still evening, the nightjars call can be heard at a distance of up to 2,000 metres.

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Nightjars' ideal habitat is heathland, like that found at reserves such as NWT Roydon Common, in the Gaywood valley. Heathland is a man-made habitat so a lot of work goes into maintaining the habitat. Nightjars are protected under the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and classified as a Red List species by the IUCN. The nightjar is one of our most fascinating and short stayed summer migrants. They're only in the UK for a few weeks between late May and mid-August.

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People used to think that Nightjars stole milk from goats. They were known as goat suckers. The reason they spend time around goats and other livestock is thanks to the insects which congregate around them. This makes it easy for the nightjars to hunt for the insects.

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Nightjars prefer to hunt by moonlight. However, if conditions aren't right, they can induce something called torpor. They can lie completely motionless and lower their metabolism to conserve energy until conditions improve. Therefore, it is best to go looking for them on cloudless well-lit nights.

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YouTuber Maddie Moates has been learning about each of our 9 for 90 species in a series of short films. Here's how she got on when she went searching for nightjars.