

Swallowtail 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 look 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.

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Your school has been lucky enough to choose the swallowtail butterfly. With a wing span of nearly 10cm, the swallowtail is the UK's largest butterfly. It is also one of our rarest and in my opinion one of our most attractive. It gets its name because of its distinctive 'tail which looks like the tail of a swallow. The swallowtail butterfly has a really neat defensive trick up its sleeve. The spots on the lower part of its wings look like the eyes of a predator. These eyes are there to scare away anything which wants to eat it.

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The swallowtail is confined to small populations in the Norfolk Broads, such as Ranworth in the Bure valley living landscape.

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The swallowtails rarity is predominantly due to the caterpillar's fussy eating habits. The swallowtail caterpillar's only food source is the milk parsley plant. The milk parsley plant will only grow in marshy conditions with a relatively high water level.

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The swallowtail caterpillar is very distinctive and easy to spot if you know where to look. If you walk along the boardwalks at Ranworth and keep an eye out for the milk parsley plant during March and April there is a good chance you may see the caterpillars.

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The caterpillar has two orange 'horns' which are used to scare away predators by producing a smell similar to ripe pineapple. The swallowtail was much more common throughout the fens of East Anglia and possibly in the marshes of the Thames and Lea rivers. However, drainage of land and a reduction in the demand for reeds lead to wide scale declines.

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At Ranworth we regularly cut the reeds so as to allow Milk Parsley to grow abundantly and we keep water levels high in various areas so as to support this wonderful butterfly species. Currently, species numbers remain pretty constant. We also have an occasional migrant from the continent.

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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 swallow tail butterflies.