

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

17th to 21st July 2019 (5 days)

DEVON

rare mammals and summer wildlife



"excellent in every respect... comfortable and welcoming accommodation"

"fascinating insight into the life of beavers, followed by a sighting. Wow!"

Devon 2018

Devon in the late summer is an idyllic place to be. This short break will introduce us to this beautiful county in the company of local experts, and give us a chance of seeing some of the county's splendid mammal-life.

From our base in the village of Chudleigh, where we will stay in a beautiful 17th century cottage set in its own landscaped grounds, we will travel out to visit some of the key habitats of the country.

We will visit the heathlands and meadows of East Devon, where Hobby hunt dragonflies overhead, delicate sundews catch their own insect prey in the damper corners, and the cocky Dartford Warblers sing their scratchy song from gorse tops.

An evening excursion will take us to the River Otter, now famous as the home for England's only wild European Beavers. We will meet up with conservationists studying this newly established population and (hopefully) enjoy sightings of the family of beavers going about their business.

A visit to the estuary of the River Exe will reveal migrating birds, with a variety of waders, warblers and flycatchers all possible as they head south. After dinner, another evening visit will have us watching the emergence of Greater Horseshoe Bats from their roost sites, with their amazing alien calls revealed by the bat detectors.

Next morning we will visit a woodland as experts monitor the population of Hazel Dormouse that make use of special nest boxes, as well as finding rare flowers and butterflies before visiting Dartmoor, with its famous ponies.



Price

£645

Single Room Supplement

£100

B&B

Day 1 arrive

Day 2 East Devon, R.Otter

Day 3 Exe Estuary

Day 4 Andrews Wood and Dartmoor

Day 5 depart

Leader

Mike Symes

(second leader tbc, dependent on group size)

'behind the scenes' visit to the Devon Beaver Project

Hazel Dormouse, Greater Horseshoe Bat

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Devon is home to some of England's most characterful wild mammals, including Otter, Dartmoor Ponies, Greater Horseshoe Bats, Hazel Dormouse and the most recent arrival, a population of European Beavers who have recently become established on the River Otter.

Our visit to Devon will give us the opportunity to meet up with local experts and conservationists who will introduce us to these interesting mammals and the conservation work going on to help them. Along the way we will also look for local wild flowers, reptiles and a good variety of birds at the start of the autumn migration season.

Day 1 Wednesday 17th July Our holiday starts in the village of Chudleigh where we will meet this evening at our hotel in time for an introduction to the holiday and our first dinner together.

Day 2 Thursday 18th July Today we travel eastwards, to explore some of the gems of East Devon. We will start by heading to the wonderful heathland of the RSPB's **Aylesbeare Common**, where Dartford Warblers sing their scratchy songs from the top of gorse bushes, Tree Pipits parachute down from the birch trees and family groups of Stonechats will be chacking amongst the heather. Down at ground level we will keep our eyes peeled for some of the reptiles that make this habitat their home - Common Lizard and Adder may both be found here, and the rare Sand lizard is present, although rarely spotted.

In the damper parts of the site, delicate sundews flower on the edge of the pools which are home to more than ten species of dragonfly and damselfly including the powder blue Keeled Skimmer, which in turn are preyed on by the sleek Hobby, which hunts overhead. From here, we move on to Devon Wildlife Trust's **Bystock** reserve, where more dragonflies will be hunting around the lake.

After pausing for dinner in a country pub at Otterton, we will be joined by one of Devon Wildlife Trust's Beaver Project staff who will lead us along the River Otter as the shadows lengthen. Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and Dipper are all likely to be feeding along the river, and we may even catch sight of the animal for which the river is named, but our real target this evening are the recently established population of **European Beaver** which now make this part of Devon their home.

Day 3 Friday 19th July After a relaxed start to the morning, with time to explore the beautifully landscaped gardens of the guesthouse, we will head down to the coast where the lazy River Exe meets the sea at **Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve**. It may feel like the height of the summer, but for many migratory birds July is the start of autumn. We will be studying the muddy shores for the flocks of passage waders already making



their way south for the winter, while the hedgerows and scrub may be home to passing warblers and chats. Interesting insects could include the Clouded Yellow butterfly, which frequently turns up on these southern shores, as well as Brown Argus and the chunky Great Green Bush-cricket. The botanists amongst us will also have plenty to look for interesting flowers, hopefully including Marsh Helleborine and the showy Yellow Bartsia.



Heading back towards home, we will stop at Stover Lake to see what we can find, before we find a pub near Chudleigh for our dinner. Fully fed, we have another (optional) evening trip out, this time towards Buckfastleigh where we will learn about Devon Wildlife Trust's work with local landowners to improve the lot of one of the country's rarest mammals; the **Greater Horseshoe Bat**. As dusk falls, good numbers of these large bats emerge from their roost, flying low overhead with their amazing swirling echolocation calls made audible using special bat detectors.



Day 4 Saturday 20th July This morning we join Devon Wildlife Trust volunteers at Andrews Wood as they check the nest boxes on this reserve to monitor the population of **Hazel Dormouse** (weather permitting). We should all get to see this charismatic, if slightly sleepy little mammal. The meadows here are home to the beautiful Heath Lobelia as well as other interesting wild flowers.

Our last afternoon in Devon will be spent on the edges of Dartmoor National Park.

Day 5 Sunday 21st July One final breakfast, and then it is time to bid farewell to Glen Cottage and to head home, hopefully taking some good memories of the special creatures and beautiful views of this part of Devon.

Accommodation, meals and travel

Our accommodation will be at **Glen Cottage B&B**, a 17th Century thatched cottage, set in six acres of tranquil gardens with a stream, surrounded by woodland. All rooms have private bathrooms.



Glen Cottage is on the outskirts of the village of Chudleigh, which lies 20 minutes south of Exeter just off the A38. If travelling by train, we can arrange for a shared taxi from Exeter (cost not included).

We shall be buying packed lunches each day. Evening meals will be taken at local pubs. Requests for special diets can be accommodated.

Our transport for this trip will be by a small 16-seater coach/minibus.

If you would like to **extend your stay** in Devon, we can book extra nights accommodation at the B&B, and give advice on good places to visit.



Leaders

Mike Symes is an excellent all-round naturalist and professional ecologist who has worked for Devon Wildlife Trust for over ten years. Mike led our 2018 visit to Devon, and has also led other trips for Wildlife Travel from Tanzania and Romania, to the Dolomites and Norfolk. His enthusiasm for all aspects of natural history and intimate knowledge of his home county, together with his keenness to share this knowledge with others will help to ensure that you enjoy a wonderful holiday. Dependent on final group size, Mike will be joined in Devon by a second leader.

Weather

The English weather is of course anything but predictable. We should expect warm and sunny conditions, although who knows, the weather could be blazing sunshine one day, and cold and wet on the next! We will adapt our itinerary to the weather. It can be 'breezy' or even windy on the coast at times. We will not walk for long in hot or adverse weather conditions. Evenings may feel chillier, especially when we are stood waiting patiently for a sighting of a beaver or bat.

Fitness

We will be **walking for much of the day**, each day, albeit at a slow pace and never covering any great distance. In some locations 'facilities' are scarce! **You therefore need to have a reasonably good level of fitness** although none of the walks are strenuous. There are likely to be steps at the hotel.



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £350 PER PERSON
BALANCE DUE BY 16th April 2019

INCLUDED: Four nights' accommodation, bed and breakfast basis. Local transport as specified in the itinerary. Entrance fees as specified in the itinerary. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to Chudleigh. Lunches and evening meals, refreshments and drinks with meals. Entrance fees for optional tourist attractions. Gratuities. Travel

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Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Photos all by Mike Symes: front (clockwise from top): Hazel Dormouse, European Beaver, Marsh Helleborine, Silver-washed Fritillary: Inside p2 (left to right): Bystock, Sedge Warbler and Sanderling: Inside p3 (from top): Sand Lizard, Heath Lobelia, Keeled Skimmer, Devon views: Back: Greater Horseshoe Bat.