

Malvern Gate

Make your way to the main entrance of the University and notice the rows of oaks (*Quercus* sp.) which blanket the area with their russet leaves in autumn. On frosty mornings look carefully at the metal fencing for tinsel-like frosted spiders web.



Pine tree (*Pinus nigra*) by Matt Smith

Be sure to cross the road safely at the zebra crossing to make your way to the Conservation Area.

Conservation Area



Snowdrops (*Galanthus*)

Managed by staff at the University, the conservation area provides a teaching aid for students to carry out environmental research, as well as being an important wildlife area.

By November, the maple trees (*Acer* sp.) will have dropped a carpet of bright red and yellow star shaped leaves and in February, you may see the delicate white flowers of snowdrops (*Galanthus*) emerging from the ground.

The specimen trees further along the path create a contrasting scene. Most of the trees will be dropping their leaves in autumn and will be bare by winter, but the evergreen Pine tree to your left and Yew tree (*Taxus baccata*) to your right still provide sheltering greenery for wintering birds and the insects they feed on. The yew tree also bears sweet pink berries which are enjoyed by birds and squirrels. The small cherry tree (*Prunus* sp.) next to the path has delicate pink blossom as early as January.

The Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) in the university beehive here will be sleeping through the winter. You may see them on a sunny day though as they come out to find early flowers.

Under the canopy of the huge plane tree, the log pile and leaf pile provide important refuges for insects, spiders and other small animals to escape the cold. It is especially important for hibernating newts (*Triturus vulgaris*) and frogs (*Rana temporaria*) from the nearby pond, which will go back ready to breed there next spring. Rounding the corner, the university pond itself may be frozen but the ice insulates the water, helping pond animals which are hibernating in the mud.

Severn Gate

Crossing to the other side of the field, you can see the university student and staff allotments. The student Environment and Conservation Society regularly maintain the allotments and grow their own fresh fruits and vegetables close to home. Walking along the footpath you will notice the row of trees. The young trees are fastigiate oaks (*Quercus robur*). The older poplar trees (*Populus*) drop bright yellow, waxy leaves in autumn, and

have festive clumps of mistletoe growing on their branches.

Going through the car park, the native mixed-species hedge provides berries, nuts and seeds for birds, small mammals and insects. As you come to the pylon at the end of the car park, the university's own badger sett (*Meles meles*) is to your left!

Walking around the back of the halls of residence you will come to the new university orchard. The 12 trees were planted in 2009 and include apple, pear, and plum trees. As they grow, the trees will bear fruit for students to enjoy. Flanking the field are coppiced hedges. Coppicing involves regularly cutting the trees to a low level and allowing them to regrow. This prolongs the life of the trees and lets in more light for flowers to grow once winter draws to a close. The hedges include young hazel trees (*Corylus avellana*), which have ripe nuts in October and graceful, green catkins in late winter, the first sign that spring is near. Early bees enjoy the nutritious pollen from these strange flowers.



Hazel catkins (*Corylus avellana*) by Natural England

Bredon Building

After walking through the halls of residence you will come to the single storey, flat roofed Bredon building. Behind the building is a secluded garden with some larger apple trees. Fallen apples left lying on the ground are important winter food for birds such as thrushes and blackbirds.

Near the sign round the front of Bredon, you will see a tree with some festive mistletoe (*Viscum album*) growing on its branches with white berries. When birds eat the berries, they wipe the sticky seed off on a branch and this is how the mistletoe spreads. You can see how the plant grows directly from the tree itself so it can tap into the tree's water supply.

Carrying on towards the secret garden in autumn, look out for the classic red and white fly agaric fungus (*Amanita muscaria*), which likes to grow around the silver birch trees (*Betula pendula*) here. There are many different kinds of fungus growing along the trail in autumn for you to spot. Be careful not to touch them though, as they may be poisonous.



Fly agaric fungus (*Amanita muscaria*) by Matt Smith

Secret Garden

Despite its location near the main entrance and car park this tranquil garden is perfect for relaxation. Take a rest on a bench and soak in the atmosphere. Look out for woodland birds such as the robins (*Erithacus europeae*) which stay year-round and still sing in the winter, which is why they have become such a festive symbol. They are joined by flocks of

redwings (*Turdus iliacus*), a type of thrush which migrates here in winter from Scandinavia and Iceland, which like to roost in the large trees here.



Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) by Oldbilluk

When you are ready to end your walk, make your way to the end of the garden and take the hidden trail along the fence and coppiced hedge. You are now outside the Pierson Building.

We hope you have enjoyed the experience provided by the Wildlife Walk and the campus' wild spaces. Come back again later in the year to see what different wildlife is out and about. Why not stop off at the Pear Tree Cafe for a hot drink after your walk?



Robin (*Erithacus europeae*)

If you would like more information about the environmental sustainability initiatives at the University of Worcester, visit <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/sustainability.html>

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University of Worcester Nature Trail

WINTER/AUTUMN

Welcome to the University of Worcester Nature Trail and Wildlife Walk. This walk ties together the many green areas of the University of Worcester St John's campus for you to enjoy. Whether you are visiting the university for the day or a student or staff member there are many wild surprises in store. There are two routes: one suitable for wheelchairs and buggies which is a paved route, the other covering some un-surfaced paths. Both can be walked with normal footwear.

This guide covers the features you will see in autumn and winter.



Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) by Matt Smith

The circular walk takes approximately 45 minutes though you may wish to take longer to enjoy the features and the atmosphere. This guided walk starts and finishes at the Malvern Gate. Please consult the map: <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/university-mile-university-worcester.pdf> for the suggested route but please feel free to wonder anywhere. We hope you enjoy this peaceful and informative walk.