Endangered Species in Devon

Youth Speaks December 2018

Chair: Reuben Lidster Speaker: Alex Cregan
Vote of thanks: Harry Branch

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Alex Cregan and I will be the speaker for Offwell primary school today. Thank you to our Chairperson Reuben for his excellent introduction.

My talk today will be on endangered species in Devon. I hope that you find it interesting.

We all hear on the television, see reports online and read in books and magazines about the many endangered species around the world. We are much more aware of the plight of animals such as the White Rhino, Snow Leopard and Asian Elephant. We are also more aware of the destruction of habitats such as the great barrier reef and the rain forests.

What we are probably less aware of, and which I hope I can tell you a little more about today, are the large numbers of rare and endangered species that we have right here in Devon.

The county of Devon is well known for its beautiful wildlife rich landscapes and habitats. Here in Devon we have it all!!!
We have stunning beaches and coastal areas, wild and rugged moors, large areas of woodlands and some of the most fertile farmland in the country. We have thousands of miles of Devon bank hedges which are totally unique and are a mini eco system all by themselves.

Whilst doing some research for another project, I have discovered some really incredible things. Devon County Council has worked with the Devon Bio-diversity record centre to produce a list of the counties most threatened species. Their work shows that amongst the tens of thousands of species in Devon, at least 1,600 are considered to be rare or scarce and many are threatened with extinction.

Many of these species I had never heard of, and I felt I had to learn all about them so that I could come here today and share some facts.

Many of the species are given no protection at all and if we don't act, they are at risk of disappearing all together.

I am a member of the Devon Wildlife trust. I am also a very keen hedgelayer. Hedgelaying is a rural skill that is vital in maintaining hedgerows. Prince Charles is also a very keen hedgelayer. I was invited to his Sandringham estate last year to help lay some hedges. I met his Royal Highness and we chatted about wildlife and the importance of protecting it. He cares a great deal about the environment, as I do.

Devon's "special species" are found in a variety of habitats. They range from Britain's largest bat, the "Horseshoe bat" to the tiny "apple lace bug

Some of our special species also have some weird and wonderful names!! The "Heath potter wasp" uses clay to make its own pots. We also have "scrambled egg lichen" which really looks like scrambled egg and "string of sausages lichen" that hangs in the trees.

Amongst our rarest species is the Horrid ground weaver spider. That's its actual name! Its not horrid at all though! It has only been found in 3 sites in the whole of the UK and they are all within a small area of Plymouth.

The narrow-headed ant, found in heathland, has only been found on a single site in the UK and guess what, its right here in Devon.

We can all help in ensuring the survival of these species. My mum says that "KNOWLEDGE IS POWER". We need know about these species and raise awareness of their decline.

So what can we do?

We can all help to look after our green spaces, recycle our rubbish, clean our beaches, cause less pollution and be kind to animals and wildlife. We can join a local wildlife group, sponsor a species or learn to lay a hedge!

All too often our rare species have become endangered, and our endangered species have become extinct. Often without us even noticing. Recently Devon lost its "Orange upper wing moth".

Lets all hope that we do not lose anymore.

I love living in beautiful Devon and hope its wildlife thrives in future.

Thank you for listening.