

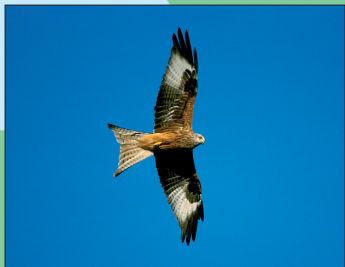
Llanelli – Shrewsbury

Known as the Heart of Wales Line, services on this route are operated by Arriva Trains Wales. Passing through some of the most breathtaking scenery, with views of the dramatic Brecon Beacons, this route runs from the South Wales coastal town of Llanelli to Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire.

This scenic route takes you through some spectacular countryside. The hills and valleys, with their rivers and streams, are home to good populations of two large birds of prey. It should be easy to see the **common buzzard** circling on slightly raised wings. These wonderful birds can vary in colour from dark to light brown – and can appear quite pale underneath. They nest in good numbers in the wooded valleys of Wales. The second is the **red kite**. These graceful birds are a little larger than buzzards, and have a very distinctive forked tail and an overall orange-red colour. Many species of British mammals depend on this watery habitat for food and shelter, including **otters*** (now far more plentiful in Wales), **water voles**, **mink** and numerous species of **bat**. If you look up as daylight begins to fade, you might see some bats after they have emerged from their roosts to begin the night's foraging. Some might even be **greater horseshoe bats**, which can easily be distinguished from birds by their flittery flight and are only now found in the west of Britain. Towards Shrewsbury, **hares*** are likely to be found and in springtime have been spotted performing their spectacular spring boxing courtship ritual, often involving several males chasing a female, giving rise to the saying "mad as a March hare".

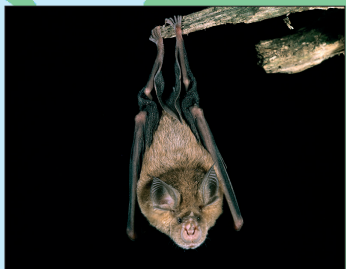
*Otter – picture on page 15

*Hare – picture on page 13



© Paul Sterry/NPL

Red kite - Successful re-introduction schemes mean that you can see kites in many parts of the UK.



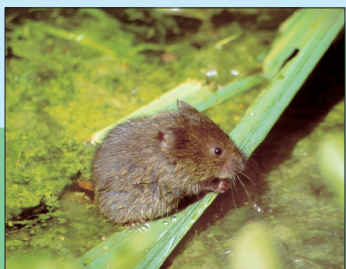
© S. C. Bissessor/NPL

Greater horseshoe bat - rare and confined to the South West, with a highly adapted nose for navigation and insect capture.



© Mike Lane/rspb-images.com

Common buzzard - Increasingly common thanks to removal of harmful poisons from the countryside.



© Clare Bowen/MTUK

Water vole - also known as 'Ratty' in Wind in the Willows! Once common along our waterways, they are now extremely rare.

