

Oxford-Worcester-Hereford

Services between Oxford and Hereford are operated by both First Great Western and First Great Western Link. This route passes through the Cotswolds as it links the Dreaming Spires of Oxford with the Cathedral city of Hereford.

From Oxford as you enter the countryside, you may see large flocks of crows. In the winter, these flocks will probably be made up of three species – **jackdaw***, **carrion crow** and **rook**. In the spring, large groups of crows are likely to be rooks since they nest colonially in rookeries, high in the trees making huge nests from twigs, often adding to old ones. The route continues into the most glorious English countryside, cutting through the Cotswolds, where you may see **red kites***, some of which have come from Wales and the west and some of which are the result of a recent and highly successful reintroduction to this part of England. **Otters** are continuing their recovery from the west and have now colonised the River Avon, which the train crosses near Evesham, and other rivers in the area. As the train continues its journey, look out for the biggest crow, the **raven**. This huge black bird is larger than a buzzard (also often seen) and is gradually spreading eastwards from secure populations in the west. If you're lucky, you may see their amazing display flight when they actually flip upside down! **Badgers**, with their distinctive black and white faces, are thought to be increasing in number throughout Britain and are particularly common in this part of the world, so keep your eyes open, especially at dawn and dusk.

* Jackdaw – picture on page 9

* Red kite – picture on page 17



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Raven - a huge bird with a distinctive low 'Cronk-cronk' call.



© Hugh Clark/NPL

Badger - lives underground in a network of tunnels, coming out at dusk to play, groom and feed.



© Roger Tidman/NPL

Rook - a clever species, faring very well in the wider countryside.



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Otter - after being on the verge of extinction in the 1960s, otters are making a welcome recovery across the UK

