

Wildlife

Issue 103 • SUMMER 2015



Avon



Celebrating 35 years! 1980-2015

Making a difference

The story of
Avon Wildlife Trust

My wild life

Find yours!

B-Lines

Bring back the buzz



Includes
UK news &
stories

BRISTOL
2015 EUROPEAN
GREEN CAPITAL

Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Welcome



Dr Bevis Watts
Chief Executive,
Avon Wildlife Trust

Bevis Watts

Dear member

This is a special edition of our magazine celebrating the Trust's 35th anniversary. The Trust has an incredible heritage to be proud of and has been a true pioneer of urban conservation in the UK.

The Trust has always tried to reflect on the outcomes of our work and on the impact it makes. Ecologist Rupert Higgins writes a wonderfully honest article explaining some of the challenges to our wildlife over the last 35 years and the changes he has seen. Our Chair of Trustees, Roz Kidman Cox, plots a history of some of the key milestones in the Trust's past, and Alison Johnson celebrates one of the most significant achievements, Folly Farm.

A major landmark in our history was the opening of our offices on Brandon Hill in Bristol with Sir David Attenborough also opening the adjacent nature park. Thirty years on from that and I hope we have achieved something similar in the creation of our new Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock reserve in the Avon Gorge and given a nod to those early pioneers of urban conservation.

We were delighted with the profile and interest generated from opening our new reserve with the help of our President Simon King, Kevin McCloud of HAB Housing and Bristol Mayor George Ferguson.

However, it is also important at this time of celebration to reflect on what actually makes all of the Trust's achievements happen. 2015 is one of the busiest years the Trust has ever had and when we normally have 800 regular volunteers in a year, we had 744 in just over two months help to make Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock a reality. The Trust's achievements, often in the face of adversity, are because it is a collective movement of members, supporters and volunteers who care about the loss of our natural world, are inspired by it, and take action to support the Trust's aims and projects. In celebrating 35 years, we'd like to thank all those who have done so in the past and continue to do so today – without such support the Trust could not deliver its work and our wildlife would be further threatened.

You will read an article from the Glasson family who were the first ever family members of the Trust. I am constantly amazed when meeting members about how they are involved in our work beyond paying a membership fee, and how the Trust's reserves and projects have impacted on their lives as well. The Glasson family is a great example continuing through generations.

The Trust has always faced financial challenges and as we look forward, those same challenges remain. Our membership support has never been more vital and our 35th anniversary appeal hopes to improve your enjoyment of some of our nature reserve through better interpretation.

We are having our busiest ever year of events, courses and guided walks so please do get involved and have a summer full of magical wildlife!

Best wishes



SAM HOBBSON

Brandon Hill wildflower meadow
with large skipper butterfly

Your magazine

Avon Wildlife Trust is your local wildlife charity working to secure a strong future for the natural environment and to inspire people. With the support of 17,000 members, the Trust cares for 37 nature reserves, it runs educational and community programmes, advises landowners, and campaigns on issues that threaten wildlife habitats.

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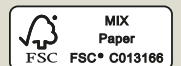
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In this issue

Wild news

- 4 ■ Our latest news and project updates

Feature – 35 years of Avon Wildlife Trust

- 8 ■ In the beginning
- 9 ■ Making a difference – the highlights!
- 10 ■ Wild Avon
- 12 ■ Wildlife in the city
- 13 ■ The Bristol Wildlife Centre

Inspiring people

- 14 ■ My Wild City
- 15 ■ My wild life – my wellbeing
- 16 ■ Wild City workshops
- 17 ■ My wild life – my feel-good factor

Ways into wildlife

- 18 ■ Around the reserves
- 20 ■ Seasonal stroll – Walborough and Purn Hil

Saving species

- 22 ■ Buzzing back – B-lines
- 24 ■ Bumbling about: bumblebee identifier

Spotlight on...

- 26 ■ Guest members – the Glasson family

Folly Farm Centre

- 27 ■ Folly Farm – how it all began

Across the UK

- 28 ■ ???
- 30 ■ ???
- 32 ■ ???

Avon Wildlife Trust

- 35 ■ Birthday Appeal
- Who's who at the Trust

Postscript...

- 36 ■ From Vice Chair Steve Nicholls

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for the latest news and events. Please share your wildlife pictures and experiences!

Teachers can check out the blog at wildschools.org.uk and follow @wildschools. Go to the website to sign up for eshots and event alerts!



/avonwt



/avonwt



Summer

*Bees' feet, with tiny strength,
Carry their bundles,
Sucked from blossom.*

*Slim swallows flash on high:
Living music rings the hill*

Irish, 9th century



ELLA BEESON



My Wild City a People's nature reserve

Two years in the making, Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock has involved over a thousand people from across Bristol, of all ages and mixed abilities, all enjoying the opportunity to get closer to nature in the heart of the city.

In March the reserve was officially launched by the Trust's President, Simon King, along with Kevin McCloud and George Ferguson (pictured above). Joined by more than 100 supporters they planted trees, plug plants and seeds to further transform the former derelict sports ground into a rich mosaic of habitats.

Simon King said "This is a fantastic moment for Avon Wildlife Trust, the transformation of this incredibly challenging brownfield site not only connects up wildlife habitat in the Avon Gorge, it is helping to inspire a whole city. But this is just the beginning: Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock is a key part of the Trust's wider vision to

create wildlife corridors across Bristol. As part of our My Wild City campaign we are calling on everyone to do something amazing for wildlife in their own communities."

There will be opportunities throughout the year for the public to enjoy guided walks of the new nature reserve, and on 13 September and 25 October it will be part of the Portway Sunday Park events when the Portway will be closed to traffic.

The site also has a volunteer cabin complete with a kitchen and amenities that will be used for educational and community events regularly, and we are immensely grateful to HAB Housing and Hugh Strange Architects for their support in making this wonderful facility for all happen.

Feed Bristol's future secured

The Trust has secured significant funding support for Feed Bristol, its community food growing hub.

The project has been disrupted due to the Metrobus development impacting on the site and surrounding area, and had an uncertain future with its initial three year funding ending.

A five year business plan for Feed Bristol was produced with the assistance of Grant Thornton accountants, and this demonstrated the huge impact the project has had on the local community. Initial seedcorn funding of £264,000 over three years and over £500,000 worth of volunteer time is estimated to have generated a social return on investment to the community of £6.7 million. Ten local businesses start-ups and groups have been established and supported at the site and almost 40 volunteers have gone on to obtain employment due to the experience, skills and confidence gained at Feed Bristol. The new business plan for the project has secured grant support from the Cory Environmental Trust, Bristol City Council, Local Food and the Sobell Charitable Trust.

Robin Maynard, the Trust's Director of Community Programmes said; "We are delighted and very grateful for the funding we have secured to date for Feed Bristol's future."



Learning at Feed Bristol

Rewarding awards

We were also delighted to be awarded two grants in to support the community aspect of the project. **Wooden Spoon (Children's Charity of Rugby)** awarded £5K towards the construction of the volunteer cabin.

Toyota Fund for a Better Tomorrow awarded £2K to support community engagement, specifically working with the Scouts movement on site. The Trust's local Cabot Group has also decided to dedicate its fundraising activities to support Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock.



Marbled white butterfly



Concerns for Portbury Wharf

Funding for Portbury Wharf, the UK's first nature reserve managed for wildlife as part of a residents' levy initiative is at risk, prompting concerns about its future maintenance for wildlife and the wider community.

North Somerset Council has agreed in principle with housing developer Persimmon to take ownership of Portbury Wharf nature reserve and abolish an annual levy (currently £54/household), designed to fund its maintenance in perpetuity. This is despite previous intentions for Avon Wildlife Trust to adopt the freehold of the land. This recent decision, made without a process of consultation with Avon Wildlife Trust (involved in Portbury Wharf nature reserve's development and management for the past 10 years) puts future funding for the reserve at risk within Council budgets.

Portbury Wharf nature reserve became the first scheme in the UK of land managed for wildlife, with the costs of its management and maintenance met by householders. It demonstrates how development can occur alongside restoring the natural environment, with residents having direct access to nature on their doorstep. Trust Chief Executive

Bevis Watts said: "It's hard to believe this flagship reserve is under threat such a short time after it was created. Under Avon Wildlife Trust's management the reserve has delivered huge gains for wildlife for, what we had hoped would be, generations to come.

"In a city region that will see approximately 90,000 new homes commissioned by 2026, we need long-term commitments to safeguarding and restoring our natural environment."

Originally created as ecological mitigation as part of a planning approval from North Somerset Council for 2,600 homes, Avon Wildlife Trust has been managing Portbury Wharf nature reserve since 2010. It recently featured as a case study in Tony Juniper's new book *What Has Nature Ever Done for Britain*.

The Trust continues to raise its concerns about changes to the funding arrangements and their implications and regular updates will be provided on the Trust website.

Thanks for the memory...

We asked for your memories of the Trust's early days in the last issue of the magazine and were delighted to hear from Paul Holley, who was involved at the very start.

"I always look forward to receiving the latest edition of *Wildlife* magazine, and amongst the usual range of inspiring features I was delighted to see a picture of the very first issue. This brought back memories, as, amongst other things, I wrote the wildlife gardening feature for this and several subsequent editions. Those early days as a Trust volunteer were immensely enjoyable, and I learnt much of what I needed for my subsequent career in nature conservation and countryside management."

Please share your memories – we will be giving away a copy of Professor David Goode's New Naturalist Book *Nature in Towns and Cities* (see page 12) to the lucky contributor whose name is pulled out of a hat at the Trust AGM. Send to angeladavies@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk



“ Thank you to our Brandon Hill neighbours, Triodos Bank, who in their 20th year in the UK have sponsored new interpretation boards for our Brandon Hill Nature Park, 30 years after Sir David Attenborough opened the Trust's offices in one of the country's first urban wildlife reserves. ”

Triodos Bank

On your bike!

To celebrate Bristol's year as European Green Capital in 2015, Trust Chief Executive Bevis Watts cycled from Brussels to Bristol in early June, accompanying the European Commission on their journey. We are hoping to raise £2,015 to support the work being carried out as part of Bristol's year as European Green Capital.

If you would like to support Bevis by making a donation to the Trust, please visit justgiving.com/cycle2015





Planting a tree at Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock

My wild life

“Contact with nature should not be the preserve of the privileged. It is critical to the personal development of our children. People turn to nature in moments of joy and in moments of sadness. We are part of the natural world: we depend on it for the air we breathe and the food we eat.” **Sir David Attenborough**

My wild Life is a new initiative launched by the Wildlife Trusts to encourage everyone to stop and reflect on what wildlife means to them and think about how to make wildlife part of their everyday lives. If we did this, not only would wildlife benefit, but so would we – because contact with nature is good for us. Those people lucky enough to live near and experience green spaces have a 50% chance of being more healthy – both physically and mentally and are 40% less likely to become overweight or obese.

This is why The Wildlife Trusts are restoring wildlife and wild places in towns and cities as well as in the countryside, and why we are encouraging people from all walks of life to share their own personal stories

about what nature means to them. Sir David Attenborough is one of hundreds of people taking part so far, alongside students, nurses, families, volunteers, teachers and many others from across the UK. His, and other stories, can be found at www.mywildlife.org.uk where people can add their own story and discover wild places near to them.

Avon Wildlife Trust has valued the importance of wildlife and wild places in towns and cities from its founding, 35 years ago, and many of our campaigns have been designed to make wildlife part of people's daily lives. In this magazine you'll read about our My Wild City project, together with contributions from volunteers and members describing their wild life stories.

Improving nature

The West of England Nature Partnership has identified its first Nature Improvement Area, running along the coast of the Severn Estuary, from South Gloucestershire to North Somerset.

Nature Improvement Areas are large areas that take a landscape-scale approach to conservation, by joining up existing wildlife sites, rural and urban areas to create large connected wildlife corridors that enable wildlife to move freely across the landscape.

The land next to the Severn Estuary is rich in wildlife and attracts vast numbers of species to the range of wetland habitats it supports, particularly migratory birds who are attracted to its muddy shores. The area is already dotted with Avon Wildlife Trust reserves and other important wetland habitats, making it the ideal place to create ecological networks by connecting these sites across the wider landscapes and even entering into the urban areas.

The West of England Nature Partnership will be working with partners to improve the area for the benefit of wildlife and people. Severnside Wetlands Nature Improvement Area was officially launched at the WENP Conference in March.

To find out more about WENP or get involved please visit wenp.org.uk



Bevis Watts speaking at the WENP Conference.



AWT Ecological Consultancy

Avon



DAVID KILBEY

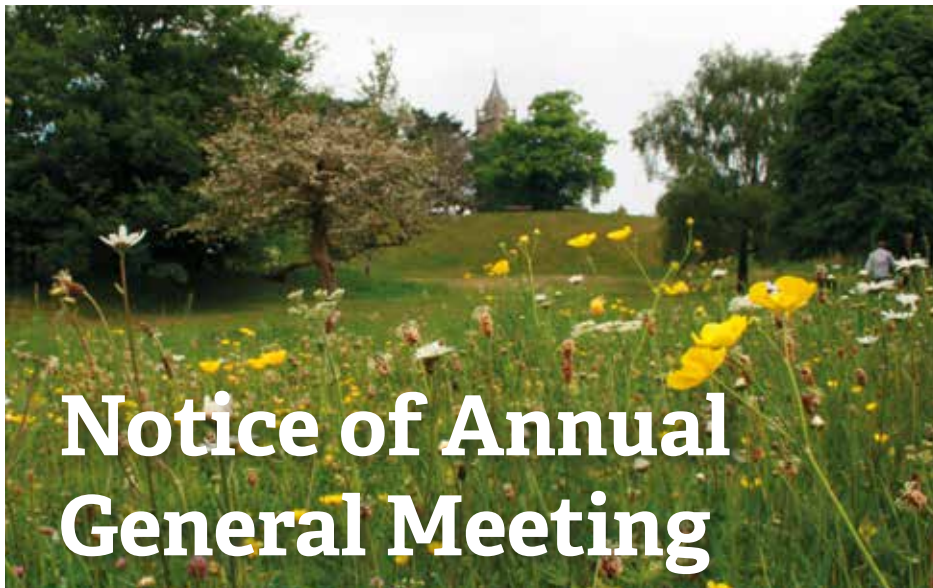
The Trust's Consultancy offers a comprehensive range of ecological services to benefit both wildlife and the interests of clients, and any profits go to support the charitable work of the Trust.

- Ecological impact assessments and mitigation
- Protected species and habitat surveys
- Biodiversity Action Plans and site management plans
- Phase 1 habitat survey
- Habitat creation and restoration
- BREEAM and code for Sustainable Homes ecology assessments

To find out more

Email enquiries@awtecologicalconsultancy.org.uk
Contact 0117 917 7273

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/consultancy



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Avon Wildlife Trust's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is on 22 October 2015 at the Redgrave Theatre, 2 Percival Rd, Bristol BS8 3LE.

Members are invited to arrive from 5.30pm for a 6pm start. *My Wild City Showcase* is an inspiring presentation that shows how a city can be transformed into a nature reserve, and how you can help achieve this. The formal business follows at 7.30pm for the following purposes:

1. To receive the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees and Audited Annual Accounts, together with the Auditors' report for the year ended 31 March 2015.
2. To elect Trustees (for further details go to the website or contact the office).
3. To re-appoint Mr Simon King as President of the Trust (recommended by the Board of Trustees).

By order of the Trustees

Note: under the Companies Act 2006 the serving Auditors, Messrs Hollingdale Pooley, are deemed re-appointed and continue in office.

The Trust's Annual Review is on the website 28 days before the event and on

request along with full Audited Accounts and Trustees' Annual Report.

Any member, not disqualified from acting as a charity Trustee or company director, and interested in becoming a Trustee should contact Jane Davis, Director of Finance and Resources, on 0117 917 7270 to arrange a meeting. Formal written proposal of any candidate must be delivered to the Trust office at 32 Jacobs Wells Road, Bristol BS8 1DR no later than 14 October 2015.

Candidates are required to provide verification of identity and a declaration of suitability and personal interests.

Please contact mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk to book your place at the AGM, to request a copy of the Annual Review or the full Audited Accounts and Trustees' Annual Report, or a proxy form, for a person to attend, speak and vote on a member's behalf, or to register your interest in becoming a Trustee.

Wild Avon Film available now!

Bristol is the global centre for wildlife film making and some of the world's top cameramen have focused their cameras on the wildlife on their own doorsteps to make *Wild Avon*, a superb film in support of the work of the Trust.

First screened at last year's AGM, this film is now available for members to hire for just £5. This charge is for private and public screenings. Contact freinymiles@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk for further information.

Steve Nicholls, an award-winning television producer, wildlife film maker who is also Vice Chair of the Trust, has led this exciting project. Read about Steve in Postscript on page 36.



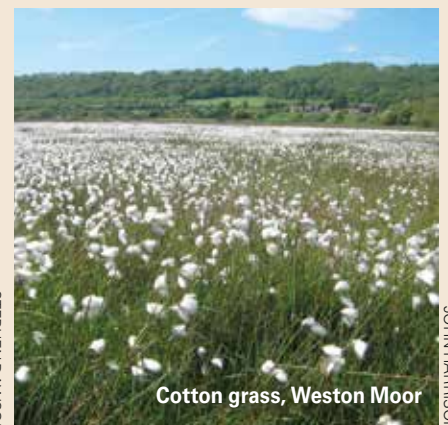
Early morning filming

Picture this

We're always looking for new images of wildlife on our nature reserves to use in our publications and online. These photographs were taken recently by members, and are wonderful examples of a keen eye and an appreciation of the special aspects of a wild place. Many thanks to John Harrison for his image of cotton grass at Weston Moor, and Stephen Dawson for his green hairstreak butterfly at Bathampton Meadows. Please send any images you want to share to jadepreddy@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk



Green hairstreak butterfly



Cotton grass, Weston Moor

STEPHEN DAWSON

JOHN HARRISON



Trust Chair, Roz Kidman Cox, has been looking back at the story of Avon Wildlife Trust and the highlights of our history

In the beginning

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a heady time. Punk rock was in the charts, and Margaret Thatcher was prime minister. Agricultural development and the building boom meant that the natural environment was under great pressure. But grassroots nature conservation was also coming of age, and activism was in the air. Avon Wildlife Trust – Britain’s very first urban wildlife trust – was a product of that time.

The impetus was the creation of the county of Avon in 1974. At its heart were the cities of Bath and Bristol and their satellite towns. A group of conservation entrepreneurs began to plan the creation of an organisation that would not only safeguard Avon’s precious green spaces but promote the value of wildlife to its urban population. It would be community-based, the sum of its members.

Avon Wildlife Trust launched on 4 May 1980, with 800 members and five reserves – four gifted from the Somerset Trust and one from the Gloucestershire Trust. By 1982, it had 3,000 members and three staff – an education officer (then

novel for a wildlife trust), a conservation officer (Chris Johnson, later to become Director) and a secretary. Jon Gething became its chairman (and in its second decade, its director). As today, there was little money, but there was a richness of energy and volunteers. In just four years, 16 local groups were formed.

Partnerships were vital. The councils were keen to collaborate, and Bristol allowed the creation on Brandon Hill of the UK’s first nature reserve in a city park and, in 1985, to move its HQ to the old Police Station on Brandon Hill. The following year, it opened Willsbridge Mill a visitor centre. By 1986, the Trust was managing 23 reserves, but the land area was small, and so it set out to influence land management.

First it partnered with Bristol Water, a large landowner, resulting in management plans for Chew and Blagdon Lakes and the opening of Chew Valley Lake Visitor Centre. A consultancy company was born, advising landowners how best to manage their land. It also advised Wessex Water on managing some of its land for the benefit of wildlife.

But in 1987, the announcement that 35,000 new houses were to be built in the region meant that the Trust was overwhelmed with planning matters. A rash of planning applications in the



Gordano Valley – one of the best wildlife areas in the county – prompted a strategy rethink. The result was the publication of a conservation strategy for the valley that would involve local people and be incorporated into the planning strategy. It went on to receive a European Year of the Environment Award in 1988.

The Trust continued to play a part in ensuring that wildlife was considered in plans for development and that the recreational and educational benefits of wildspace in a city were acknowledged. The 1991 campaign to stop Royate Hill from being built on resulted in the first compulsory purchase of a wildlife site in the UK, reflecting a major change in attitudes towards development by planners and councillors.

In 1996, the disbandment of Avon as a county meant that the Trust had to build new relationships with four unitary authorities, while development pressures continued to grow. Today, the influence of the Trust remains as powerful as the partnerships it creates and the attitudes it influences. It's why the Trust was instrumental in setting up the West of England Nature Partnership in 2012,



to work alongside the West of England Enterprise Partnership.

Volunteers remain at the heart of the trust, without which much conservation work could not take place, whether managing the reserves, working with

young people, undertaking surveys or fundraising to buy reserves. The struggles today remain much the same as they were 35 years ago, and with fewer grants available, membership now provides the lifeblood of the Trust.

Making a difference – the highlights

Championing urban wildlife

The UK's first city-park nature reserve was Brandon Hill, created the year the Trust was born, with the involvement of local people and the local school. It was symbolic of the new trust's twin pillars of education and conservation. On the Trust's 35th anniversary, another new urban reserve has been created with the involvement of local people: Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock, in the Avon Gorge.



Managing reserves

Today the Trust manages 37 reserves. Some are remnant gems of now rare habitats. Others have been bought to save them from development – as a golf course, in the case of Puxton Moor. Some have been created from scratch, such as Bathampton Meadows (above), now one of the area's best wildlife sites.



Inspiring children

Enabling people to experience nature first-hand has been a priority. In 1987, the renovated Willsbridge Mill and its reserve was opened as an education centre; in 1988, work began with inner-city children; and in 1992, the Trust began creating wildlife areas in school grounds and training teachers in outdoor learning. Over 35 years, thousands of children have experienced nature first-hand through the Trust.



Promoting landscape-scale conservation

Educating planners and encouraging landowners to embrace nature conservation has been vital. The Trust's 1988 planning framework for the Gordano Valley has, with the reserves, protected much of it from development. For wildlife to thrive in the wider landscape, a network of connections are needed on a landscape scale. It's why in 2008 the Trust launched its Living Landscape grassland initiative, working with landowners to protect and restore wildflower-rich areas in a joined-up way.



Creating Folly Farm Centre

An early ambition was to own a farm which would demonstrate that land could be farmed for the benefit of wildlife as well as people. So when Folly Farm came up for sale in 1986 – with woodland and wildflower meadows untouched by fertilisers and pesticides – the Trust launched a major appeal, and in 1987 acquired the 250-acre reserve. A schools programme was started, but it took 21 years, a second big appeal and Heritage Lottery funding to transform the farm itself into an education and conference centre, which now offers transformative residential courses for children and facilities for adults.



Celebrating 35 years
35
 1980-2015

Wild Avon

Rupert Higgins is a local ecologist who has been closely involved with the Trust since 1983. We asked him to look back over the past 35 years of wildlife in Avon, and how the Trust has worked for change over this time

Peregrine

Losses and gains

Change in the natural world in this time has been striking: in 1980 the pressures were only too obvious, and many of these remain, but I'm constantly surprised by the way wildlife has responded to them. Over the lifetime of the Trust many familiar species have all but disappeared and a few new ones have colonised. In 1980 I could anticipate seeing grey partridge, cuckoo, turtle dove, nightingale and tree sparrow in the course of a year's local bird watching: now sighting any of these is a treat. On the other hand species such as little egret, great white egret and Cetti's warbler are no longer extreme rarities, and peregrine, hobby and raven are much more common than they were.

However marsh fritillary, pearl-bordered fritillary and high brown fritillary butterflies have all disappeared, their loss only balanced by the spread of Essex skipper. Moths have fared better than butterflies with scarlet tiger the most visible of several new arrivals; many dragonflies have flourished; and we have gained several bush-cricket and grasshopper species. Plants may seem less mobile, but we have witnessed the rapid spread of Danish scurvy grass and other coastal plants along salt-treated roads and new populations of bee and pyramidal orchids appearing;



Pyramidal orchid

Changing the view

Equally striking has been the change in attitudes since 1980, when Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) had virtually no protection. Species protection legislation was largely non-existent and none of the local authorities employed a nature conservation officer. Planning applications that would now be unthinkable were granted without any consideration of wildlife; and virtually no land in the county was managed for nature conservation. Avon Wildlife Trust was one of the pioneers of a more outward looking approach to conservation that emphasised both education and habitat protection beyond the confines of nature reserves. This has brought benefits to the natural world vastly in excess of those that the

Trust could bring about directly. local authorities are major land owners and 35 years ago their open land tended to be manicured to the point of sterility, used as a source of income or neglected. For example, the Trust's early efforts to promote tall grassland, scrub clearance or other wildlife-friendly measures were frequently unsuccessful. We continued to work to influence local authorities and today all four councils encourage wildlife on large areas of land, often with the help and encouragement of enthusiastic and energetic local groups.

Recognising wildlife value

Development was an established threat to wildlife by 1980, and in the Trust's early years I remember that we were powerless to prevent the loss of ancient woodland in the Mendips; hay meadows



Cetti's warbler



Common scurvy grass

in Bristol; the only marsh helleborines in South Gloucestershire; and large numbers of great crested newts in Yate. Planning permission was given for housing covering many rhynes around Weston-super-Mare before we even knew of their wildlife value. Virtually no sites were surveyed before development, unless the Trust was able to harness its slim resources to do so. It took years of the Trust working to change attitudes amongst council officers, politicians and developers to reach the current situation where the need to prevent serious loss of wildlife is accepted by all. It is now rare for rich wildlife sites to be destroyed by development. Where major infrastructure schemes do cause significant loss some form of compensation is now provided

Friendly measures

Agriculture remains the dominant force in shaping habitats across the countryside. In 1980 generous grants

were still available for many forms of intensification, including the draining of wetlands and destruction of hedges. Since then those grants have disappeared and a raft of environmentally friendly measures brought in. Some of these have achieved real benefits in terms of protection of water courses, management of field margins in arable fields and conservation of hedges.

So what of the future?

Sadly, despite these changes in attitude most species and habitats have continued to decline, usually due to a combination



Cuckoo

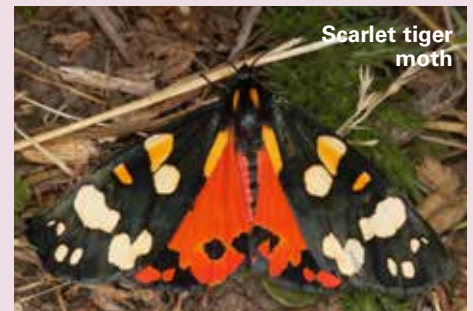
of habitat loss and climate change. I have no doubt that wildlife will continue to flourish on the Trust's nature reserves, but these pockets of excellence cannot protect the majority of species on their own. That is why, over the last 10 years, Avon Wildlife Trust, along with Trusts across the country now work with landowners at a landscape scale to restore and connect valuable habitats to create 'Living Landscapes' ecological networks that are more resilient to pressures such as climate change

We recently experienced an election campaign in which the environment



Marsh fritillary butterfly

barely rated a mention, by any of the major parties. An optimistic view would be that this reflects a broad consensus on most environmental measures, but threats are looming. There will be growing pressure to ease planning legislation in order to ease the housing crisis, endless prevarication on measures to combat climate change and uncertainty over our future in the EU, which will jeopardise many areas of wildlife protection. It is important that nature conservation moves forwards, not backwards. The Trusts have achieved a huge amount in recent decades, and though it is certain that the future will bring challenges, I'm sure that there will be exciting achievements to look back on."



Scarlet tiger moth



Tree sparrow



Grassland

Wildlife in the city

Celebrating 35 years

35

1980-2015

When Avon Wildlife Trust began in 1980, urban conservation was a dynamic new part of the conservation movement, promoting the idea that cities can be good for wildlife and that wildlife is essential to the wellbeing of people. Professor David Goode, author of *Nature in Towns and Cities* (Collins New Naturalist 2014) looks at the background to this movement.

SAM HOBSON

A quiet revolution

In 1981 nature conservation suddenly became newsworthy owing to heated debates in Parliament on the Wildlife and Countryside Bill. The widespread destruction of habitats and the need to strengthen the SSSI system to prevent further losses hit the headlines for weeks on end. Yet nowhere in all those debates was there any mention of urban wildlife. But a quiet revolution was underway.

It had started in 1974 with a conference on *Nature in Cities* organised by Ian Laurie, a landscape architect at Manchester University. One of the participants was George Barker, then deputy regional officer for the Nature Conservancy Council in the West Midlands, who was looking for someone to carry out a survey of the Birmingham conurbation to identify sites of nature conservation value for the new County Structure Plan. Another attendee was Bunny Teagle who was well versed in London's natural history. The conference was a milestone event that set people thinking about the value of nature to town and city dwellers. But another outcome which was to prove significant was that George found the right person to do the job and Bunny Teagle spent much of 1975 delving into the countless places where nature flourished amidst the urban sprawl of Birmingham and the Black Country.

A wealth of wildlife

This was the first major survey of urban wildlife anywhere in Britain and when Teagle's report *The Endless Village* was

published in 1978 it turned traditional views of nature conservation on their head. It demonstrated beyond doubt the wealth of wildlife to be found within urban areas, in a huge range of artificial habitats from formal parks and gardens to wilder expanses of industrial dereliction. Overnight the *Endless Village* destroyed the myth of the urban desert. At the same time the Nature Conservancy Council produced a national strategy for urban nature conservation, arguing that enthusiasm and know-how needed to emanate from the bottom up, from voluntary bodies and local groups. But no one would have predicted the rapid emergence of urban wildlife groups that followed.

Nature on the doorstep

Another strand in the story was the role of habitat creation. In Liverpool and London a few inspired individuals had already started to create new wildlife habitats where city people could experience nature on their doorstep. The William Curtis Ecological Park at Tower Bridge, designed by Lyndis Cole, astonished Londoners when it opened in 1977, and became an immediate



The William Curtis Park

DAVID GOODE

success with local schools. In Liverpool Grant Luscombe was doing a similar job turning run-down inner city wastelands into attractive wildflower meadows that demonstrated the enormous possibilities offered by ecological landscaping.

Bristol's nature park

Good news travelled fast and by 1980 the stage was set for the quiet revolution to take off. With establishment of the Avon Wildlife Trust in 1980 Bristol was the first city to have a predominantly urban trust. The creation of a nature park on Brandon Hill in 1981, which seemed extraordinary at the time, was one of the first of a host of such projects that developed in many towns and cities during the 1980s.

The early 1980s was a time of enormous enthusiasm in urban conservation. All of those involved were pioneers in a radical movement that changed the face of nature conservation in the UK. Thirty-five years after the Avon Wildlife Trust was formed the need for such enthusiasm and dedication remains just as acute, or even more so, today.



Cowslips at Brandon Hill

SAM HOBSON



The Bristol Wildlife Centre



Sir David Attenborough opens the Trust's HQ on Brandon Hill in October 1985

In 1985 Bristol City Council offered the Trust the use of the Old Police Station on Brandon Hill, and we were able to put down roots in our own urban park. That year we were visited by Sir David Attenborough, who launched our new headquarters. In 1989 the Trust published *Wildlife in Bristol*, a guide to wild places in the city which set the scene for the publication two years later of the Greater Bristol Nature Conservation Strategy, which laid out policies for the protection and enhancement of wildlife in the city.

In the early 1990s the Trust played a major role in the campaigns for both Royate Hill and Novers Hill, with tremendous results. Not only were both sites saved for wildlife and local people, but the public inquiry results, which recognised the value of wildlife for

people, set precedents for many other similar battles around the country.

City landmark

Over the years the Trust's presence on Brandon Hill has become a landmark of the city centre, and we've celebrated with nature fairs and urban safaris, wildlife work parties and meadow hay cuts. Cowslips, betony, oxeye daisy and knapweed grow in the meadow and wild garlic, bluebells and red campion now flourish in the woodland, and the pond is full of frogs and newts. The list of birds recorded on site includes species such as redstart, pied flycatcher, goldcrest and whitethroat. Today the park is visited by hundreds of people, and in spring and summer the wildflower meadow is a favoured picnic spot.

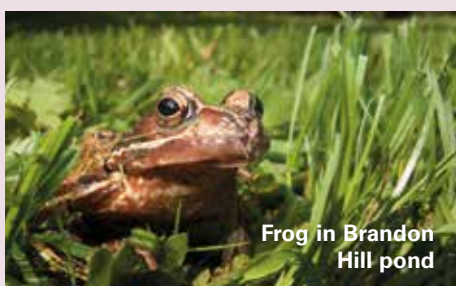
The Trust has plans to improve interpretation on Brandon Hill, so that

visitors to the park can learn about this very special urban wildlife site for themselves. Summer 2015 will also bring new visitors, with the presence of Shaun the Sheep on our nature reserve!



Meadow crane's bill

AMY LEWIS



Frog in Brandon Hill pond

SAM HOBSON

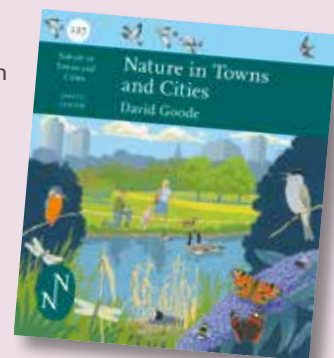


Blue tit at the Trust HQ!

SAM HOBSON

Nature in Towns and Cities

Professor David Goode's book is the latest addition to Collin's New Naturalist series. For more details or to order a copy go to newnaturalists.com information and special offers.



“In the early days we had to contend with lots of complaints about the long grass in the hay meadow, and the ‘weeds’ that flourished there – but gradually complaint turned to compliment, and within a short period the meadow contained an abundance of wildflowers, typical of a species-rich hay meadow.”

Memories of early days at Brandon Hill



My wild city

In this year of Bristol as European Green Capital 2015 the Trust's central campaign is My Wild City. In April Matt Collis was appointed as the Trust's first My Wild City Officer. He tells us about the challenges for the year ahead.

The urban fox

SAM HOESON

“**T**he prospect of turning a city into a nature reserve inspires many feelings, but I'm driven by one in particular – hope. Never has a conservation project attempted a transformation of this scale within an urban setting, but that's exactly what makes this project so revolutionary. For the first time we are taking habitat creation and restoration to the streets, working with local groups and neighbourhoods across the breadth of Bristol. From Henbury to Hengrove, Bishopsworth to Frenchay, we want to engage and encourage all communities to connect with their neighbours, schools, parks and offices, to create green corridors through the city.

Wild actions

Since the launch of the My Wild City maps at the turn of the year, we've been working hard creating resources and starting projects across the city. These include demonstration sites, such as at the one at the BBC building on Whiteladies Road. This is home to the internationally admired BBC Natural History Unit, and we're working with local schoolchildren and TV presenters including Mike Dilger, Miranda Krestovnikoff and Nick Baker to convert the grass – lawned front garden to a showcase wildlife garden, a safe haven for nature in the city. With the launch of our new nature reserve Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock in the Avon Gorge we'll be hosting events during the scheduled Portway closures this year to help people learn about creating wildlife corridors in their areas. Over one hundred of our 2,015 wildlife garden starter boxes have been given away to communities to date, and there



Matt



are plenty of opportunities for further distribution during our various events throughout the summer. We are also running My Wild City classes in all 116 primary schools in Bristol.

Get connected

We're also delighted to announce the launch of the new My Wild City pages on the Trust website. This online resource contains many features including:

- A map showing you what actions people are taking to create habitat for wildlife across the city
- An events map showing you My Wild City events for 2015
- A whole host of information and advice about creating wildlife-friendly habitat in your green space Get Bristol Buzzing – our partner project working with insect pollinators in the city
- Live twitter wall of all social media coverage using #MyWildCity and #GetBristolBuzzing

Log on to find out how YOU can do something amazing for wildlife in the city – and if you have an idea or a project you think we should know about, then please do get in touch: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildcity



Bioblitz at the BBC site

“The prospect of turning a city into a nature reserve inspires many feelings, but I'm driven by one in particular – hope.”



My wild life – my wellbeing

My Wild City encourages people city-wide to help make Bristol a nature reserve. Kelly Bray and Matt Harcourt, Trust Communities and Nature (CAN) Project Officers, write about how the team is doing just this.

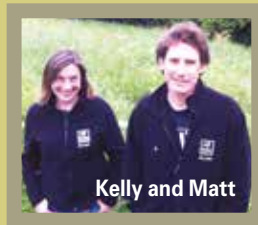


“**W**e’ve recently been working on four demonstration sites in Bristol. These are at Dundry Slopes Park in Hartcliffe, the Greenway Centre in Southmead, South Street Park in Bedminster and Owen Park / Easton Community centre in Easton. These sites will be developed by existing groups and local people, and will develop ideas of what people can do in their back gardens, streets and other local green spaces. All four sites will have simple interpretation and information boards explaining the benefits of each habitat for wildlife – and lots of people will benefit from the physical activity and outdoor environment too. My wellbeing in action!

Month by Month

In **January** Horizons worked alongside Compass Point Primary School in Bristol

City Council’s One Tree per Child campaign. Together they planted over 300 trees at South Street Park. Some students engaged with the children and helped them plant trees, showing growth in confidence in their practical and social skills. KTS Training is a young peoples’ skills training organisation based in the Greenway Centre in Southmead where they helped with clearing brambles, showing great enthusiasm for practical conservation sessions.



Kelly and Matt

inspiring growing space, planted with wildlife-friendly plants. They also made their own bird boxes to take home and encourage birds to nest in their own green spaces.



In **March** Friends of Dundry Slopes together with Volunteering Matters planted alder buckthorn, buddleia, dog rose and honeysuckle adding to the bramble patches, creating attractive bee and butterfly islands. Bird boxes were made with local residents and put up in the trees.

In **April** Horizons created three meadow areas, and Bee Bristol (which aims to encourage everyone in the city to help pollinators) with local residents to create another two meadows at South Street Park. Meadow work began at the Greenway Centre worked with members from Silvercare (which supports adults with learning disabilities) and Changes.

In **May** Work to create large meadow strips at Dundry Slopes Park began. The strips have been sown with annual cornfield mixture, and other areas planted with wildflower plugs. A further two meadow areas will be created with the help of Bristol City Council’s Meadow Project.



My Wild City workshops

Bristol is the first UK city to win the prestigious European Green Capital Award and Bristol 2015 has selected Avon Wildlife Trust to develop and deliver the nature element of the schools' programme. This was launched on 1 May with an environmental day at St Barnabas Primary School in Montpelier. All Bristol schools are being offered free workshops for key stage 2 classes across the five themes of nature, transport, resources, energy and food.

Releasing eels into Blagdon Lake

These workshops are part of the Trust's My Wild City project, inspiring children across Bristol to connect with nature and join with our mission to turn our city into a nature reserve. We get the pupils outside and encourage them to become ecologists for the day; together we investigate their school grounds and complete a habitat survey, play science curriculum-linked games and look at ways we can all improve our environment so wildlife can thrive around us.

Each pupil will make their own 'seed bomb' to take home with them so they can introduce more pollinator-friendly plants into their gardens or window boxes as part of making Bristol a nature-rich city. Every school is also being given free wildlife starter kit boxes packed with bird seed, wildflower seeds, plug plants, an earthworm survey and lots more useful information on how to green their school.

Eel release

Schoolchildren from Cheddar Grove Primary School recently released young European eels into Blagdon Lake in the Chew Valley, after raising the baby eels in their classroom.

After two years of drifting over 4000 miles on currents across the Atlantic from the Sargasso Sea to our shores, the tiny eels make their way up into our rivers, streams and lakes where they can spend up to 20 years before making the return trip back to spawn. The European eel is critically endangered, having suffered a 95% decline in numbers since the 1970s. Weirs, locks, dams and flood-defences can all act as impassable obstacles to this tiny creature's journey.

The Trust's Learning Development Manager, Kate Marsh commented, "It was wonderful to see the children releasing the eels, which they have so carefully cared for. This project has enabled the children to learn about the eels' fascinating lifecycles and the challenges they face. It's great to see their enthusiasm for the issues facing wildlife."

“The release was a really lovely moment. The children were so still and quiet as they watched the eels swim off. It was magical”

Teacher, Cheddar Grove Primary School



My feel-good factor

Trust Community Groups and Partnerships Manager Julie Doherty shares her My wild life story.

“ **M**any of us are familiar with the relaxed feeling that a walk in the woods gives us. We value the joy of hearing a chiffchaff singing close by, the drumming of a woodpecker staking out its territory or the glimpse of a deer bounding through the trees. I still count myself lucky every time I experience one of these moments. Unfortunately, as our lives become increasingly busy, time becomes more pressured and our leisure time more fleeting. It's easy, and increasingly common, to ignore that instinctive urge to get outside and take notice of the world around us. Yet, all our lives are better when they are a little bit wild, which is why I love the Portbury Wharf Nature Bugs project so much.

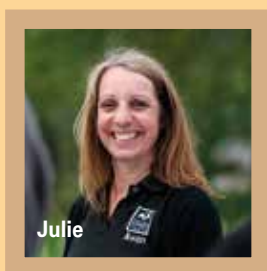
The Nature Bugs project, now in its second year, provides walks and nature activities for pre-school children and their parents in Portishead. Originally focused around our Portbury Wharf nature reserve, the group also explores other reserves and green spaces around the area to help foster an interest in the natural world. Trust volunteer, Beth Doherty, who leads the project, understands the importance of encouraging children from a very early age to be active and connected with the natural world. She told me “It's been a privilege over the last 14 months to encourage a group of families here in Portishead to explore their surroundings and seeing the children play freely amongst bluebells, trees, bird hides and grass.”

On a recent trip to Prior's Wood nature reserve, parents and toddlers crept around the purple carpet of bluebells, singing in woodland clearings. In the middle of the woods they made intricate bluebell canvases using finger paints, and clay creatures out of clay that were hidden away in the woodland.



Children with bluebells in Prior's Wood

These early, playful experiences help to make a strong connection with nature that can stay with us into adulthood. Research from Cornell University shows that ‘the most direct route to caring for the environment as an adult is participating in wild nature activities before the age of 11. It's not just about caring for the environment that's important, it's the feel-good factor of being in a wild place that makes it valuable, at any age. Nature has the ability to heal, lift spirits, and it revitalises our souls. It's beautiful and productive, ever-changing and extraordinary. So, embrace your wild life, take notice of your surroundings and share your experiences with others.



Julie



“ In every walk with nature one receives far more than one seeks ”

John Muir

Becoming ecologists for the day

CHRIS BAHN

A group of volunteers are scything a field of tall grass. One person in the foreground is wearing a black t-shirt with a logo that says 'WILDLIFE TRUSTS Avon'.

Around the reserves

Summer's here!

Scything

The spring months saw a pause to clearance work across our nature reserves to allow birds, butterflies and bees some space to breed and nurture the next generation. Our work plans moved on to infrastructure repairs to fences, gates, walls, styles and steps, and to planning our late summer hay cuts and grazing.

Our volunteer groups have started dry stone walling at **Dolebury Warren** and **Tickenham Hill** and we're hoping to complete two significant sections by the time autumn arrives. Since the arrival of the breeding season the **Portbury Wharf** Tuesday group have been busy carrying out wildlife surveys on species including badgers, water voles, butterflies and newts. We'll begin barn owl and bat surveys in the near future. The bird ringers have also been very busy assisting with the bird monitoring programme for the reserve. Up-to-date records and a gallery can be viewed at portbury-wharf-ringing.co.uk

Raising the levels

Works at **Blake's Pools** by the Environment Agency have begun to raise the sea wall that protects Kingston Seymour and Congresbury along the river Yeo. The reserve has restricted access this summer, but it is hoped that more pools will be created in the area as spoil for the wall is dug from surrounding farmland, and these will provide good habitats for breeding birds. At **Bathampton Meadow**, Kier Construction are working with the Trust to improve the flood storage capacity of the site to help protect the city of Bath from flooding. The artificial Oxbow Lake has had the build-up of deposited

silt removed to allow the flow of water from the River Avon into the reserve.

Woodland works

Extensive woodland conservation work at **Prior's Wood** took place over the winter months. The main larch plantation has been felled and replanted and 3,000 native broadleaf trees which were donated by Eunomia have all been planted, following a colossal joint effort by Eunomia staff and Trust Volunteers.

We can also report that the huge task of clearing eleven hectares of invasive rhododendron is also complete. Ride management work has been carried out at **Weston Big Wood** with support from the English Woodland Grant Scheme and our wonderful Wildlife Action Group volunteers. The central ride has been widened to restore and retain high value open habitat within the dense woodland, which is favoured by butterflies such as silver-washed fritillaries.



Birders on the sea wall at Blake's Pools



Making way

Volunteers at **Brown's Folly** have finished tidying the brash after forestry works over the winter. They have been busy building weaved 'dead' hedges of branches along the tracks and rides to provide habitat for birds and small mammals and made use of the branches



left after the timber was removed to widen the tracks and rides for the roosting bat populations. Volunteers at **Brown's Folly** and **Folly Farm** have also been improving the pathways and waymarked walks around the reserves, by building steps and revetments on the steep, muddy tracks. Our Weston-super-Mare team of volunteers have been repairing fences and gates on the different walking routes across the edge of the Mendip hills. Invisible fencing is making its debut on **Walton Common**. This is underground electrical cable that sends out vibrations to collars that the cattle wear to help manage their movement and is useful on sites where fences cannot be erected. We are welcoming a group of friendly dexter cattle here, anticipating that their grazing will help bring the SSSI grassland back into favourable management condition.



Friday Group volunteer Trevor Thorley has discovered life outside the office

“ Sitting high on the slopes of **Walton Common** overlooking the fields and woods of the Gordano valley, it's a perfect spring day. I'm putting the finishing touches to an invisible fence so that a small herd of cows can keep the brambles and grass at bay, which seems to be the never-ending task for the Friday volunteer group.

What have I seen today? Well, a beautiful golden slow worm, the largest I've ever seen. Then there was the green common lizard scuttling through the deep grass and up above a sparrowhawk making a fly-past.

After thirty or more years working at a frantic pace, inside an office all day, this has become my usual activity for two days of the week. The locations that we visit are always magnificent, **Prior's Wood** with its blue carpets of bluebells in May or our regular excursions up the steep defensive embankments of **Dolebury Warren** hill fort to remove the invading trees from this great historical monument. It's always a pleasure to be up there with those fantastic panoramic views. I also love the **Blake's Pools** site located on the banks between the Severn and the Yeo. The reed beds hide so many bird species, buntings, bullfinch and all types of warbler. A good amount of watching goes on there, but reeds are cut, fences and gates are repaired too. I forgot to mention the masses of sea birds finding food in the mud of the estuary.



But just as important to me is going out and completing physical work with a lovely group of people from all over the world. I enjoy the banter and the chat, to hear their interests and ideas. They also bring with them such a high level of knowledge about the locations and the wildlife. I have learnt so much about the fungi, wild flowers, butterflies and conservation in general – brilliant. The day we searched for dormice at **Goblin Combe** and found 16 of these rare and secretive creatures was really very special – I'd never seen one before, an enlightening day.

There's never a dull day out with the Trust volunteers. Sometimes it is wet, cold and windy but usually bright and sunny, always interesting, often tiring physically but great fun and always enjoyable. My perfect day.



Seasonal stroll

Walborough and Purn Hill

Green winged orchids at Walborough

STEVEN NICHOLLS

A circular walk between two of our nature reserves with marvellous views across the Axe and Severn estuaries from Walborough, and across the Somerset Levels to the Blackdowns and Quantocks from Purn Hill. The sea has once again being allowed to inundate the low-lying field behind the Victorian sea wall at Walborough, to expand the salt marsh. This is known as 'managed retreat.'



Brown hare

RICHARD BOWLER



Male azure dragonfly

RICHARD BURMARR

for coast paths and hill tops



SATELLITE IMAGES © GOOGLE EARTH™ MAPPING SERVICE

OS grid ref: ST316 579

Walk details

duration: 3 hrs

grade: challenging

Key to map

walk

point of interest

reserve boundary

car park

scale

400m

“ I really enjoyed the walk, which takes in part of the East Mendip Way. We walked it in late summer, and were bird spotting all the way! ”

From a member

From the boatyard (1) on Uphill Way, walk south along the surfaced path onto Uphill Cliff (2). Keep on the path and after passing through a small gate (3) climb up the hill. Just before the top, turn right through a stile (4), onto Walborough Nature Reserve. Follow this path around the side of the hill, down through a kissing gate and over a bridge (5). Walk diagonally across this field. At the interpretation board rejoin the surfaced path (6) and leave the reserve, heading south through the kissing gate. The path takes you across part of the Bleadon Levels. Continue until you reach the road that leads to the sewage treatment works (7). At this point turn left. Follow this road until you reach the main entrance (8). Turn left onto the main road (take care here) and follow this until you reach the A370 (9). Turn right and immediately cross the road, turning left at the road junction down Bleadon Road towards the village of Bleadon (10). After 100m turn left through a gate and into a field (11). Walk up the footpath to Purn Hill Nature Reserve (12).

Follow the path and turn left to up a flight of steps to the summit (13). Turn right and heading northwards walk along the spine of the hill, passing through a gateway and out of the reserve through a kissing gate onto Purn Lane (14). Turn left and walk down the lane. At the bottom you reach some houses (15), turn right and follow the old road until you reach the A370. Carefully cross the road and turn right, crossing over the railway bridge before turning sharp left at the next junction (16). Walk down the lane and towards the bottom turn right along a sign posted bridleway (17).

Follow this old country byway until you reach the point where you left Walborough Nature Reserve. As you enter turn slightly left, walking diagonally across the first field. Cross the bridge and turn left, passing two gates, and retrace your steps following the edge of the rising hill. After 150m, bear to the left (18) and descend the path, passing a small quarry on your right, along a boardwalk and over a stile onto the old sea wall. Walk along the wall with the existing saltmarsh on your left (19) and newly created managed retreat on your right. Stay on the coastal path and return to the beginning of the walk by passing alongside the boatyard.

How to get there

Follow signs to Uphill village from the southern end of Weston-super-Mare. Uphill leads towards the south end of Weston beach. Head towards the beach but park near the large sluice gates on the left or by Uphill Way.

Access

A surfaced path on part of Walborough – open access to grassland but please keep off salt marsh to avoid disturbance to birds. Some road walking so take care, steep climb to Purn Hill.

Look out for:



Grizzled skipper butterfly



Rock rose



Tree sparrow

GRIZZLED SKIPPER: ANDREW KERR; TREE SPARROW: MIKE SNELLE

Buzzing back!



One of the Trust's key strategic objectives in 2015 is to create ecological networks, through landscape-scale habitat management and enhancement. As part of this objective an ambitious new plan for helping our bees, butterflies, hoverflies and other pollinating insects was launched by the Trust and Buglife at the West of England Nature Partnership conference in March.

Winford Primary School sowing wildflower seeds

“The West of England B-Lines project will create rivers of wildflowers across the countryside, connecting the region's best wildlife sites from the Cotswolds to the Mendips, from the coast to the hills, and from our towns and cities to the countryside. B-Lines are a series of 'insect pathways' along which the project will restore and create a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones. They link existing wildlife areas together, creating a network, like a railway, that will weave across the British landscape. This will provide large areas of brand new habitat benefiting not just bees and butterflies—but also a host of other wildlife.

Mapping the B-Lines

Janice Gardiner, Conservation Programmes Manager at the Trust described how a B-Lines map has been drawn up, showing the proposed routes. She said “ This exciting new map illustrates our vision for wildflower-rich grassland across the West of England and shows the huge opportunity we have to make a difference for pollinators.” She explained how bees and other pollinators are disappearing from our countryside because of a lack of wildflower-rich habitats. Three million hectares, 97%, of the UK's wildflower-rich grasslands have been lost since the 1930s. “By creating B-Lines we can help wildlife move across our countryside, saving threatened species

and making sure that there are plenty of pollinators out there to help us grow crops. The B-Lines project will work with landowners, providing advice and training and creating and restoring meadows and wildflower-rich grasslands along the B-Lines routes. This first stage of the B-Lines project will restore and create 20 hectares of wildflower-rich grassland for the benefit of wildlife and people.”

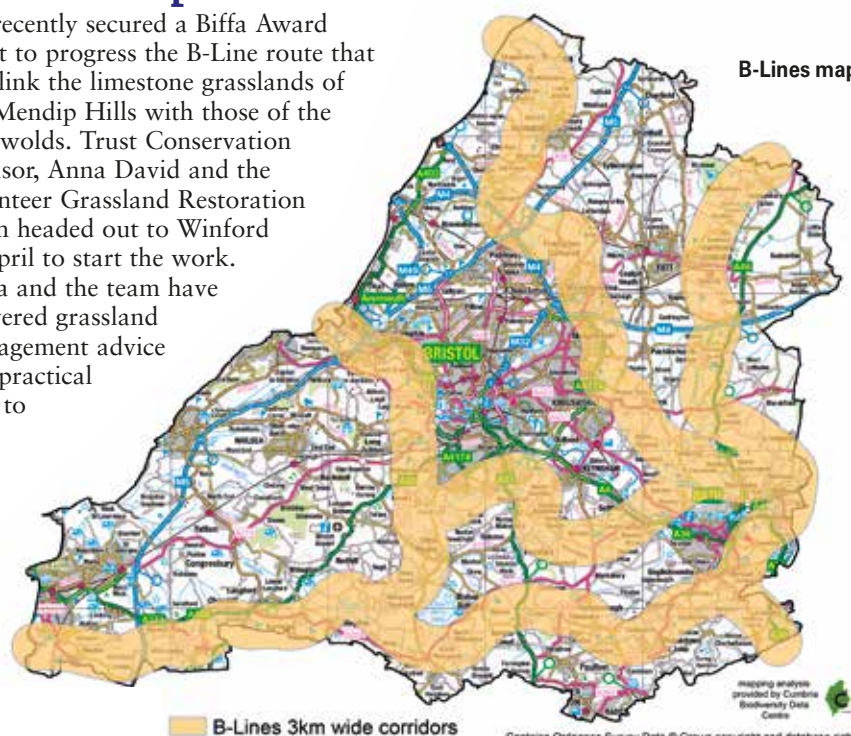
Practical steps

We recently secured a Biffa Award grant to progress the B-Line route that will link the limestone grasslands of the Mendip Hills with those of the Cotswolds. Trust Conservation Advisor, Anna David and the volunteer Grassland Restoration Team headed out to Winford in April to start the work. Anna and the team have delivered grassland management advice and practical help to

What are B-Lines?

B-Lines are wide strips of wildflower-rich grasslands. They link existing wildlife areas creating a wildflower-rich network across our countryside and through our towns and cities.

37 landowners over the past year and we know from feedback from landowners that this support is greatly appreciated.



B-Lines map



The Team cuts the cake!

This time they were heading for the Prince of Waterloo Pub in Winford to turn the adjacent field into a wildflower meadow, with the help of local farmer Charles Patch and Winford Primary School children. The field behind the pub was harrowed and was sown with a mix of wildflower seeds which should grow and bloom over the coming years and be a beautiful place for people and wildlife. The Winford primary school children helped to sow in seeds and planted out wildflower seedlings in the meadow as well.

Anna said, “This exciting new project shows our vision for wildflower-rich grassland across the West of England and the huge opportunity we have to make a difference for pollinators. We are already carrying out restoration but we urgently need more sites. If you have land which you are interested in restoring to wildflower-rich grassland, or if you would like to volunteer for the project, please get in touch – we’d love to hear from you.”

For further information on the West of England B-Lines Initiative, including an interactive B-Lines map where you can view the routes and add your contribution to the B-Lines network, please visit: buglife.org.uk/B-Lines



Thanks to funding from Cory Environmental Trust in Britain, Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust, Natural England, D’Oyly Carte Foundation Trust, South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and Wessex Water the B-Lines project will work directly with landowners, provide advice and training and create and restore meadows and wildflower-rich grasslands along the B-Lines routes.

Biffa Award, SITA Trust, Garfield Weston, John Paul Getty Foundation, Ernest Kleinwort, Duchy of Cornwall also funded the project for grassland work.

Do you know?

- Over half of our bee species have suffered declines over the past 50 years
- Six of our 25 bumblebees have declined in UK by at least 80% in last 50 years.
- 71% of butterfly species are in decline
- 75 moth species declined by over 70% over 35 years
- 38% of hoverfly species are in decline



Red-tailed bumblebee

RACHEL SCOPES



Hoverfly

GATEHOUSE STUDIO

Our partner in B-lines

Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust is the only charity in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates, and is actively working to save Britain’s rarest bugs, bees, butterflies, ants, worms, beetles and many more fascinating invertebrates. Further information is available on Buglife’s website at buglife.org.uk

Why do we need B-Lines?

Imagine trying to travel around Britain without our road and rail network – for much of our wildlife this is the reality as patches of habitat have become isolated. The West of England B-Lines project will create a network of wildflower-rich routes, providing important habitat for bees, butterflies and other insect pollinators, and enabling wildlife to move across the landscape.

LOOK OUT FOR

Bumbling about: bumblebee identifier

Ella Beeson is volunteering with the Trust reserves team, which has given her lots of opportunities to buzz around in search of her favourite insects...



Ella



Male, female or cuckoo?

Females are busier, buzzing from one flower to the next collecting pollen. Males appear later in the summer and sit lazily on flowers or repeatedly patrol areas looking for females.

Females have a pollen basket on their back legs; this is a shiny hairless surface, sometimes with a ball of pollen. Males or cuckoo bumblebees will never have this.

There are six cuckoo bumblebees that pretend to be true bumblebee queens and take over their nest using cunning and force. Similar to their bird namesake, cuckoos trick the bumblebee workers to raise their own young. As well as absent pollen baskets you can spot the difference with their noticeably darker wings.



ANDY JONES

Summer favourite

These fat and fluffy bees are favourites of the British summer and hugely important pollinators for our food crops. Sadly bees are declining due to a number of factors including habitat loss, climate change and increased use of chemicals in agriculture and gardens.

But you can help by increasing awareness of bumblebees by getting to know them better and even helping to record your local bees. There are only 24 bumblebees in the UK, and they are easy to spot with their distinctive buzz and hairy bodies. We've included the six most common found in Avon to get you started.

How you can help

Buy or build a bee box: Nest boxes containing cardboard tubes or hollow plant stems, or holes drilled in blocks of wood will provide nest sites for some species of solitary bees. Such nests are available from garden centres or you can make your own (holes/tubes should be in a mixture of sizes with a diameter of 2-8mm).



Help your local bees

- Attract them to your gardens by planting a range of native wildflowers. Some of the over-bred flowers, whilst pretty, have little nectar to offer bumblebees.
- Avoid using pesticides in your garden. Instead why not try organic companion planting to keep pests away? (good tips available at bbc.co.uk/gardening)
- Count bees for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (find out more at bumblebeeconservation.org)
- Pass on your bee knowledge to others!
- Download a leaflet about gardening for bees and butterflies from avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/learn-discover/wildlife-friendly-gardens



Early bumblebee *Bombus pratorum*:
 Named for their early appearance in spring, this small bumblebee can be spotted as early as February. The red tail is short and the colour may fade in the late summer, so you may have to look very closely at its underside to ID it. An important pollinator for soft fruit such as raspberries and blackberries.



Red-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*:
 The females are a distinctive all-black bee with a large bright red tail (more obvious than the early bumblebee's tail). The males have extra yellow hairs; this is the case for the males in several bumblebee species. Having short tongues, these bumblebees prefer to eat from flowers with 'platforms' such as dandelions and thistles.



Buff-tailed bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*:
 The buff-tail is the largest of the bumblebees and coloured in the typical style with golden yellow and black bands. Queens have a buff tail and males and workers have a buff margin to their white tail. They have a less fussy diet so you will spot them visiting a huge variety of flowers.



White-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*:
 Bright lemon yellow bands, differing from the golden yellow of the similar buff-tailed. The males have extra yellow hair on their faces and bodies. Both the white-tailed and buff-tailed bumblebees are accomplished 'nectar robbers'; biting holes in the base of the longer flowers with harder to reach nectar.



Tree bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*:
 A more recent visitor to the Avon area due to climate change, this species is now one of our most common bumblebees. As the name suggests the tree bumblebee can be often found in woodland, choosing nest sites off the ground such as in old bird nests. It stands out from the others with its brown / black / white pattern.



Common carder bee *Bombus pascuorum*:
 Common by name, beautiful by nature the common carder is the only common bumblebee to be almost entirely ginger coloured. The carder bees gather or 'card' moss and dry grass to make their nests. Several of the other carder bees are in rapid decline in Britain, but you'll still see this one buzzing around.



Guest members

The Glasson Family

The Glasson family are amongst our very first members – the first family membership in fact. Jean Glasson recently sent us a copy of a welcome letter, dated 1 January 1980, together with a membership card – numbers 10 to 15. We met Jean and David, together with son Brian, to look back at their years as Trust members.

“My mum always had a huge interest in natural history,” said Brian. “She was the person that many locally would come to, to identify plants and birds. We grew up here in Backwell, with the Quarry and the woods behind us, where we played from morning til night on weekends and holidays, building dens, climbing trees.” It was an idyllic childhood, by all accounts – “a bit of a Gerald Durrell My-Family-and-Other-Animals household” he added, as Jean reminisced about adders basking on the back terrace, rescued squirrels and a rare ring ouzel in the orchard. She described the delight of watching peregrines and ravens in the old quarry, and finding orchids there, including the very rare yellow bird’s nest orchid. In 1987 she alerted the Trust to the potential loss of an area of limestone grassland when it was threatened by the Quarry’s expansion. This resulted in the transplanting of the area to a local churchyard, as well as to a Trust nature reserve.

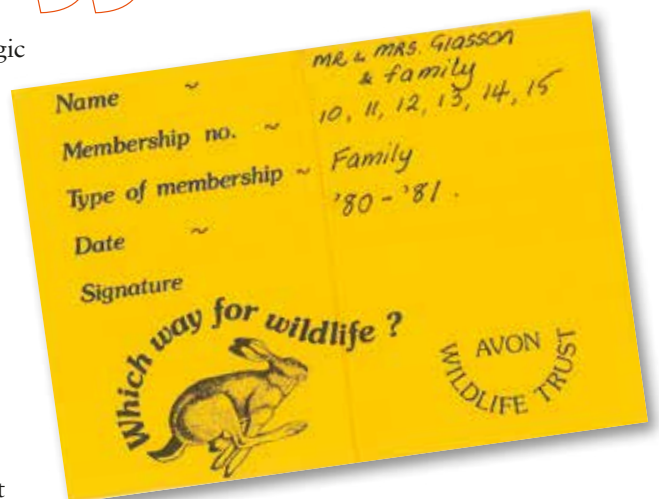
“The children all grew up with an interest in natural history, and the grandchildren too,” Jean said. “My daughter runs a forests schools

programme – maybe inspired by all those years of playing up there in the woods!” Brian agreed. “It was just part of our upbringing – mum influenced all of us in our interest in the natural environment. I grew up and moved away but returned to the area in 2002 and renewed my membership of the Trust. I really enjoy exploring the Trust reserves, and they’re good places to pause and reflect. And that’s necessary when you’re rushing through life – to slow down and let the landscape come to you.”

He is now Head of Strategic Planning and Housing for South Gloucestershire and spoke passionately of his awareness of a need for the natural environment to be considered alongside commercial drivers, and the real challenges of doing so in the current economic climate.

Jean is one of the founder members of the Backwell Environment Trust, a local charity which manages two woodlands with the support

of the local community. She feels that this is part of a strong growth over the years of increased local interest and the formation of groups, like BET and YACWAG, to protect and manage wildlife areas. “But,” she added “what does concern me is the ever-continuing growth of development that doesn’t take account of the natural environment.” It’s a comforting thought that under her influence such thoughts have been passed on to at least two further generations.





The old buildings

Folly Farm – how it all began

Chris and Alison Johnson were two of the first people employed by the fledgeling Trust in 1980 (see page 8) and one of their greatest legacies from those early years is Folly Farm. Alison recalls how this flagship Trust site was identified and secured for the future.

“I remember that in 1985 Chris was on a field visit to the Chew Valley and unexpectedly came across a farmland area with traditional wildflower meadows. Back in the office, he realised the area had been earmarked in the old meadow surveys carried out around the county in 1979 in the run-up to establishing the Trust in 1980. He immediately saw that it was something unique. Chris visited the farmer, who told him the estate was up for sale. He then tracked down Lord O’Hagan, the owner, and asked if he would be willing to sell this, the Folly Farm part of his estate, explaining why this area of traditional farmland was so special.

Lord O’Hagan was interested and sympathetic about the land being conserved for its beauty and wildlife value, although Chris had to admit that the Trust had no money to buy the land! But he was convinced that it could be raised if given time. Folly Farm was valued at £230,000 and the Trust was given just three months to achieve this target. Staff were mobilised for a fundraising campaign, with a special



Alison in the Trust office, 1983

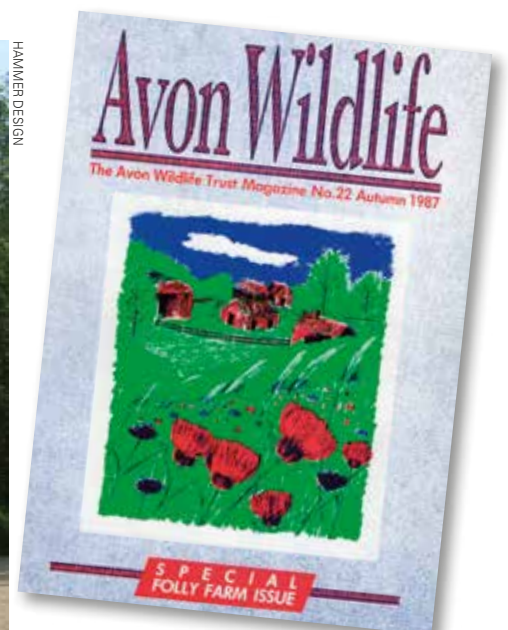
magazine (issue no 22).

And then out of the blue a letter arrived. It came from a firm of solicitors, who had a client, who wished to remain anonymous, but was interested in preserving ‘traditionally managed farmland’ and willing to donate £200,000 to a suitable site. That was a true Eureka moment, the timing was amazing and to this day no-one knows who that client was. Chris wrote a description of the site – and the client became the Trust’s first major donor. It was an enormous achievement!

By 1986 the 250 acres of Folly Farm, with all its buildings, belonged to Avon Wildlife Trust. At that point I became volunteer residential warden. My remit was to harness the enthusiasm of local volunteers and begin organising work days. There were many jobs for volunteers to do, including running repairs on some of the old buildings to make them weatherproof and secure. Wildlife and historical surveys were set in motion, especially finding out more about the original ferme ornée (ornamental farm) which had been part of the 18th century landscaping of the Sutton Court Estate. Community and student groups came to work on the farm. An Earthkeepers programme was set up by a local teacher. Volunteers were trained to take visitors on guided walks or lead work days. Regular Open Days were organised, with walks, demonstrations and activities for families, giving members and local people time to find out more about the reserve. There was something very special about being involved in those early days as part of the Trust.



HAMMER DESIGN



**SPECIAL 35TH
ANNIVERSARY APPEAL**

*Help us tell the story of
our unique nature reserves*

To celebrate our 35th anniversary Avon Wildlife Trust is asking you to donate £15, or whatever you can afford, to improve information signs on our precious wildlife sites.

Our nature reserves boast some of the country's rarest and most beautiful wildlife spectacles, but many of their interpretation boards are worn, outdated or vandalised.

To help us improve information on our nature reserves, starting with the three in most need, simply visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/35appeal or call 0117 917 7270 to make a donation.

Thank you for your generosity.

Installation of new interpretation boards at any of our nature reserves will be subject to the amount of money raised through this appeal.



Who's who at the Trust

Simon King President
Mark Carwardine Vice President
Mike Dilger Vice President
Philippa Forrester Vice President

Trustees
Roz Kidman Cox Chair
Dr Steve Nicholls Vice Chair
Katherine Finn Treasurer
Cecile Gillard Secretary

Anthony Brown
Martin Brasher
Professor Justin Dillon
Alan Dorn
Lesley Freed
Dilys Huggins
Professor Jane Memmot
Nigel Morrison

Staff
Dr Bevis Watts Chief Executive

Conservation team
Dr Lucy Rogers Director of Conservation Programmes
Janice Gardiner Conservation Programmes Manager*
Anna David Conservation Advisor
Chris Giles Head of Land Management
Bernie D'Arcy Reserves Manager
Joe McSorley Reserves Officer
Matt Collis My Wild City Officer

Consultancy team
Sarah Dale Principal Ecologist
Mary Wood Senior Ecologist
Laura Murray Ecologist

Community team

Robin Maynard Director of Community Programmes
Julie Doherty Community Groups and Partnerships Manager
Learning Manager
Kate Marsh Communities and Nature Senior Project Officer
Kelly Bray Communities and Nature Project Officer

Matt Harcourt Feed Bristol Project Officer
Matt Cracknell Feed Bristol Community Grower*
Richard Wright My Wild City Education Officer*
Charly Crump Therapeutic Horticulturist*
Emma Benton

Finance and resources team

Jane Davis Director of Finance and Resources
Freiny Miles Finance and Resources Manager
Pat Sandy Finance Officer
Sam Pullinger Grant Development Officer*
Angela Davies Membership and Administration Officer*
Claire Davey Membership and Administration Officer*
Jenny Holmes Membership and Administration Officer*
Roy Catford Site Assistant – Trust Office*

Communications and marketing
Jade-Alice Preddy Marketing Officer

Folly Farm Centre

Andrew Lund-Yates Folly Farm Centre Director (FF)
Stella Page Front of House Manager (FF) (maternity leave cover)
Sarah Bolton Office Administrator (FF)*
Ellen Mannion & Arthur Newton Resident Couple

* part-time

Postscript



Through the Trust, I'm proud to have been able to do my bit to look after my wild life

Knotgrass moth caterpillar

“I found myself involved with the Trust from the very start in 1980, and if anyone still has a copy of issue 2 of this magazine, you'll find an article by me on local dragonflies, the subject of the PhD I was doing at the time at Bristol University.

In 1986 I joined the BBC Natural History Unit and began travelling the world, seeing some of the most spectacular wildlife you could ever imagine. It would have been all too easy to have been seduced into thinking that British wildlife was second rate, but working with the Trust kept me grounded and more than that, it created unique opportunities for my fledgling career as a wildlife film-maker. I worked on the first 'blockbuster' series about British wildlife (*The Living Isles*) and managed to impress some of the most experienced cameramen in the business with the wildlife on a number of Avon Wildlife Trust reserves – nightingales singing on easy-to-see branches (not easy, as anyone who has tried to see these skulking birds will know), wild honey bees nesting in a hollow log. I even managed to find all the different life stages of glow worms on our Lower Woods reserve. All these cameramen were very complimentary about me



Steve

to my bosses at the time, so it's no real exaggeration to say that my involvement with the Trust helped launch my career.

Now, as the Trust turns 35 years I'm still shooting sections for international wildlife films on our reserves. Working with the Trust has shown me the value of our local wildlife even on an international stage. That's why the Wildlife Trusts' My wild life campaign so resonates with me. OK, so I've managed to build part of my career on local wildlife, but it's also the value of that local wildlife to my soul. This is where I live and this is the wildlife I can see every day and get to know at a deeply personal level. Through the Trust, I'm proud to have

been able to do my bit to look after my wild life. And I'm not alone. Quite a few globe-trotting cameramen that live in the South West love nothing more than to immerse themselves in their own nature, in their own backyards, which is why we decided to make *Wild Avon* – a 30 minute film showing all the different faces of local wildlife that I've come to love over the years.

That we could make such a film is testament to 35 years of hard work by the Trust and now, as vice-chair I can also admit to a glow of pride to see how far the Trust has come.

