

Wildlife

Issue 106 • SUMMER 2016



Avon

Summer meadows



My Wild Child

Wild play for toddlers in urban parks

Walton Common

Explore the meadows and meet the Dexters!

Save our wildflowers

Why we need to act now



Includes UK news & stories

Welcome



MARK CARMARDINE

Roz Kidman Cox
Trust Chair

Dear member

I can't imagine living in a land with no seasons. I love the changes – and the surprises. This year's mild winter led to some remarkable early spring flowering, of bluebells, for example. Yet there was late flowering by others, in particular, hawthorn. It was cool and dry for the first half of spring (with a seeming dearth of insects) and then wet, resulting in a completely new mix of early summer blooms.

It's been all-change at the Trust, too. We said farewell to our inspirational Chief Executive Bevis Watts, who in three years has transformed the Trust (he's now director of the ethical bank Triodos but remains a stalwart supporter). Taking his place, arriving with equal energy, comes Ian Barrett: environmentalist, partnership-builder and, very importantly, a member. The Trust is the sum of its members – who often provide practical as well as financial support. So it's been good to hear from you via the survey about the information you'd like more of. Top of the list is more about reserves. As a member, Ian has already visited most of the reserves, and with this magazine, you'll find the top-ten reserves guide. Later in the year, watch out for Ian's news of an exciting new acquisition.

What the Trust does goes beyond protecting wildlife on reserves. Our work is also about creating wildlife corridors across the region by joining up isolated patches of habitat, safeguarding existing corridor networks and forging new ones, working in partnership with landowners, authorities and other conservation groups. We, as members, can make links, too. Those of us with gardens can top up our wildflowers and service the insects by buying plug plants from Feed Bristol's wildflower nursery, open week days and every first Saturday of the month. Even window boxes or plant pots can become pit-stops for pollinators, planted up through to winter with flowers rich in nectar and pollen (remember to keep them well watered). Window sills and flowerbeds packed with nectar-rich flowers, wild or garden, all add to those B-Lines – corridors for pollinating insects.

And for a feel-good burst of floral wonder right now, take a walk on Dolebury Warren, Walborough or Folly Farm, for flower-rich grasslands scattered with scabious, bedstraw, cranesbill and other summer gems.



PAUL HOBSON

Wildflower meadow

Your magazine

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A huge thank you to all contributors.

All uncredited photos © Avon Wildlife Trust

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Trustees of Avon Wildlife Trust.

Avon Wildlife Trust is your local wildlife charity working to secure a strong future for the natural environment and to inspire people to care for it. With the support of 17,000 members and 1,500 volunteers, the Trust cares for over 30 nature reserves, runs educational and community programmes, advises landowners, and campaigns on issues that threaten wildlife habitats.

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Keep in touch!

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



/avonwt



/avonwt

Teachers can follow @wildschools as well as @avonwt on twitter.



/avonwt



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*Grasses that never knew a scythe
Waves all the summer long
And wild weed-blossoms waken blithe
That ploughshares never wrong...*

*...O who can pass such lovely spots
Without a wish to stray
And leave life's cares a while forgot
To muse an hour away?
From Emmonsale Heath
John Clare 1793-1864*



An invisible solution

Dexter cattle help to restore our reserve



DAVE HORLICK

Walton Common is an important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Scheduled Ancient Monument and our volunteers have been working hard to restore this special area and protect the ancient archaeology.

As with many of our grassland sites, the essential management tool is grazing. Walton Common has not been grazed for decades, due to the absence of fencing, but some recent technology developments have changed the way conservation grazing can be carried out on common land, through an 'invisible fence' system.

Avon Wildlife Trust has invested in the system with support from Natural England, Historic England and our grazier, and the result is that a small herd of Dexter cattle has been introduced to help restore this important grassland.

The invisible fence system is a buried cable that follows the perimeter of the grassland enclosing the Common Land. The cattle wear collars and when they are 3-4 metres from the buried, invisible fence, the collar buzzes to let them know to go back. If they continue to approach the fence, then they receive an electric shock, similar to a typical electric fence. Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches have been successfully using this system for a number of years to keep cattle off major roads and the system has proven hugely effective. The cattle learn very quickly and we are confident that the

addition of cattle on the Common will significantly improve the condition of the SSSI while not having any negative impacts on landscape, the local community, or members of the public and their dogs. Initially there will be a small group of Dexters trained and introduced to the site, but these numbers will, it is hoped, steadily grow to ensure the nature reserve receives the grazing required to benefit the site's unique flora and fauna.

We ask visitors to the site to please keep dogs under close control, especially while the Dexters get used to their new home.

Thank you for taking our members' survey

Here at the Trust, we were delighted to receive your member surveys and find out more about what our members are passionate about and what you want out of your membership.

Your input has been so valuable. We are really grateful for your ideas and suggestions and many of them have really got us thinking. We can't act on all the suggestions straight away, but we have applied some of your feedback to this magazine.

We received over 400 responses and a huge 70% of you picked 'Local nature reserves: walks, seasonal nature and wildlife' as something you wanted to hear more about; wildlife ID and events came in second and third place. We've tried to fulfil these requests in this issue, with a feature focusing on the wildlife and history our reserves - Walton Common, in addition to the usual 'Seasonal Stroll' and a closer look at what our Conservation team get up to on the reserves. We hope you enjoy it.

Q5. What would you like to hear more about?





Epic migrations

Why eels are extraordinary

Wild eel release

Did you know the European eel breeds and spawns in the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda, from where they make the 5,000km journey across the Atlantic to reach our rivers and streams?

Through our Spawn to be Wild education programme pupils in four schools have been learning a lot about these fascinating creatures, as they carefully nurtured tanks of elvers (baby eels) in their classrooms. Pupils in St Peter's Primary, Pilning; Crossways Primary, Thornbury; Severn Beach Primary and Berkeley Primary have found out all about the eel's lifecycle, water conservation and native wildlife through a series of education workshops.

The pupils then went on a fieldtrip to release their elvers into the Little Avon River; a suitable location where they can carry on their migration upstream avoiding man-made obstacles, such as weirs and dams, which have been a large contributing factor in them becoming a critically endangered species.

Year 5 class teacher Lauren Cue from St Peter's commented "It is a fantastic opportunity, allowing the children to experience the lifecycle of the eel first-hand and to have the responsibility of caring for them. It's created a great buzz in the school. The younger children are mesmerised by them". This project has been developed in partnership with Bristol Water who have a regulatory commitment to protect the eel. It has been made possible thanks to the kind support of the Fisheries Team at Bridgwater College who reared the elvers and installed the tanks in the schools, Berkeley Castle who gave us access to their grounds to hold the release days, elver fishermen who donated the elvers and with support from the Sustainable Eel Group.

Wildlife explorers at Says Court solar farm

Says Court Farm in South Gloucestershire is home to a large-scale solar installation covering around 90 acres and providing power for 4,000 homes.

Through granting planning permission Westerleigh Parish council secured a fund for community benefits, for the life of the solar installation. As a result, we have taken two local primary schools to see the renewable installation: Watermore Primary, Frampton Cottrell and Abbotswood Primary, Yate. The children learnt all about renewable technology and also the impact of the solar farm on the local environment

and community. Measures are being implemented to plant trees, create barn owl corridors and wildflower meadows. We will monitor the impact of the installation on the site's wildlife.

We will be working at the site for a number of years and we look forward to seeing how the new wildlife features establish, as we return with school classes and the local community, year on year.

Do you know a wild child?

Sign them up as Wildlife Watch members. If you join Wildlife Watch as a member you'll get all sorts of wildlife goodies – posters, magazines, stickers, a badge, a membership card and more. And, best of all, by being a member you'll be helping to protect your local wildlife. Fantastic!

We also have a really wild website and a monthly e-newsletter full of games, activities and nature-spotting tips. Child membership costs £1.75 a month. Children who are part of a Family membership automatically become Wildlife Watch members too.

To sign up for a child membership visit www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/joinus or call our membership team on 0117 9177270



New maps show the West of England's natural assets, as never seen before

The West of England Nature Partnership has unveiled a series of innovative maps that show environmental evidence for decision making.

The maps, known as 'ecosystem service maps' are the first time that nature's services have been mapped and analysed in the West of England. Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans get from nature, such as pollination, composting and water cleaning. Without these services, life on earth would be almost impossible. These maps are free to view and download, with large-scale versions available to view online. Visit www.wenp.org.uk/ecosystems



Welcome to Ian Barrett

Our new Chief Executive has been exploring our reserves

Ian and family at Dolebury Warren

“**I**n April I was delighted to join the Trust as Chief Executive. I have been a member of Avon Wildlife Trust for many years, exploring our local nature and wildlife with my family. My children are growing up climbing trees, squelching in mud and developing their curiosity in the natural world, in part thanks to the fabulous outdoor spaces cared for by the Trust. Now being part of the team that is responsible for protecting so many key habitats across our region is something I feel very proud of.

The Trust has been through a huge step change over the past three years and I am inspired by the fantastic range of projects and activities being delivered. I feel honoured to be leading such a dedicated and hard working team, and I know I am bringing skills and expertise the Trust can benefit from into the future. Most recently I led the England South team at Sustrans where we brought communities together to help champion the value of walking and cycling, to enable people to travel in ways that are good for their health and the environment.

I also bring a wealth of experience gained through working in policy for the Government Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). I'm a fan of partnership working and I helped to set up the Big Tree Plant, successfully enabling a million trees to be planted in

partnership with community groups across England. I have worked on issues including flooding, forestry, biodiversity, agriculture and ecosystem services. I am passionate about rivers and riparian habitats. But working on the big picture in a policy environment, can mean a considerable distance from specific places and change on the ground.

In contrast, my vision for the Trust is embedded in how excited I am to

be leading an organisation that is all about delivery and impact. The West of England offers so much opportunity as a region: a stunning and varied landscape, nationally important species and habitats and a population who are passionately engaged in their environment. Avon Wildlife Trust's focus on protecting wildlife is vital for our region's wellbeing and its future. The strong track record of successfully connecting people with their local



Kingfisher

“**I love the occasional blue flash of a kingfisher as I walk alongside the River Chew each morning**”

MALCOLM BROWN

nature, to achieve better outcomes for wildlife and biodiversity, is a fabulous legacy to inherit. Yet we still have so much to do.

The value of nature in our area lies partly in the special, rare and threatened species that live here, that I'm keen to discover more of. It's also in the everyday biodiversity that enriches all of our lives. I love seeing the sparrows and starlings zooming around my garden. I love smelling the wild garlic and seeing heron and the occasional blue flash of the kingfisher as I walk alongside the River Chew each morning.

My favourite of the 36 nature reserves cared for by the Trust is Stephen's Vale. This stunning bluebell woodland holds a hidden secret – a waterfall that drops down from the pastures above. Beside the waterfall



is an easy rock scramble that's irresistible for kids and at the bottom the stream is shallow, broad and rocky – perfect for paddling. Wagtails flit around the river, the woods are full of birdsong, the rich forest floor has a carpet of bluebells, celandine and wood anemone, and further down the valley are marshy areas with their own distinct plants and insect life. Stephen's Vale embodies some of the best that our local nature has to offer, for wildlife and for people, with a rich variety of

habitats in one small space. Watching my children splash in the stream, explore fox holes and chase butterflies, brings home the importance of natural play in building a lifelong passion for nature.

I look forward to working alongside my passionate team and you, our passionate members, to inspire more people across Avon to work with us to stand up and help nature recover on a grand scale.



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Avon Wildlife Trust's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is on 1 November 2016 at the Guildhall in Bath.

Members are invited to the formal business meeting from 7.30pm. As in previous years we will be hosting an event before, details of this to follow on our website and in the next magazine. The formal AGM meeting is 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 2016.
2. To elect Trustees (for further details please see 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 1 October 2016.

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

Please visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2016 to book your place at the AGM. Please contact mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk 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.

Meet the conservation team!

It's two years on since the launch of our 2015-2020 vision, where we announced our key focus areas within the Avon landscape, for the next five years.

From ancient woodlands to historical hill-forts, from thriving wetlands to magnificent meadows, our region really does have a landscape to be celebrated, and protected – for the future. With our headquarters in Bristol and a lot of focus being put on this city during the 2015 European Green Capital year, much of our landscape projects haven't received as much attention. However, we have been expanding. Our volunteer base doubled in the past year, which has really energised what we can achieve on our nature reserves and local green spaces. We've also expanded our core conservation staff team in order to deliver more in our aim to create a living landscape. Over to the team to explain their key focuses at the moment...

Our five highest priority areas:

- Gordano Valley and Ridges
- Avon Gorge and Downs
- North Somerset Levels and Moors
- Cotswolds
- Chew Valley

“From ancient woodlands to historical hill-forts, from thriving wetlands to magnificent meadows, our region really does have a landscape to be celebrated, and protected – for the future”

Rosie Maple Conservation Assistant

My role is to manage our practical conservation delivery across the region. Much of this is achieved through our two key volunteer groups. The Wildlife Action Group (WAG), which works on our nature reserves and the Grassland Restoration Team (GRT) which creates and restores grassland on non-AWT land as part of the B-Lines project.



Bernie D'Arcy Conservation Advisor

I cover the Gordano Valley where the largest concentration of our nature reserves can be found. As well as managing our land holdings I also work with landholders to help them adopt best conservation management practice in the area, with a big emphasis on the rhyne network that criss-crosses the area.

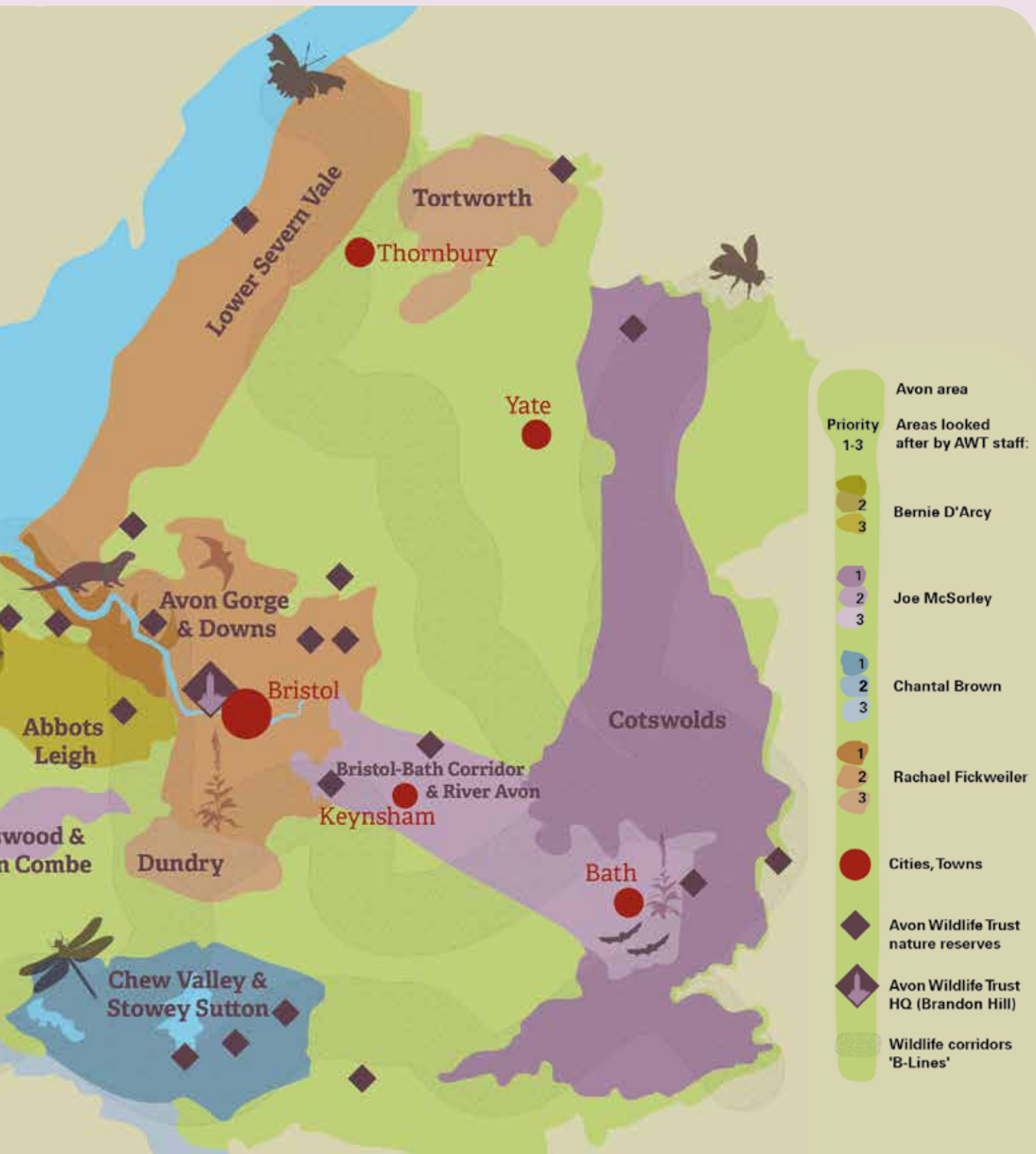


Rachael Fickweiler Conservation Projects Officer

My main focus within the team is searching out opportunities for conservation projects, and developing the funding bids that underpin them.

Alongside this I also manage several of our nature reserves, not least of which is our newest and perhaps busiest nature reserve, Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock in the Avon Gorge.





Chantal Brown

Conservation Advisor

I work with farmers and landowners in the Mendips AONB and North Somerset Levels and Moors. The Levels and Moors are a unique landscape of low-lying wetland next to the Severn Estuary, which for thousands of years were covered by the sea. It's an important area for a range of species, including breeding snipe and lapwing.



Joe McSorley

Conservation Advisor

I work around Bath and the Cotswolds on our nature reserves and on B-Lines project work – connecting landscapes with wildflower-rich corridors which help bees, butterflies and other pollinators to spread. I also look after the ancient woodlands south of Bristol where some of the region's most important bat and dormouse populations can be found.



Wonders of Walton Common

Rock rose

DAVE HORLICK

From tiny rare mosses, to ancient monuments and spectacular views, Dave the volunteer warden takes us on a tour of Walton Common nature reserve.

Just above the village of Walton-in-Gordano, with a slightly obscured entrance, is the public footpath that will take you up onto Walton Common. Although the initial walk is a bit on the steep side, the majority of the reserve is on a flat ridge with excellent viewpoints over the Severn Estuary on one side and the Gordano Valley on the other. It is both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. If you are visiting the reserve in the summer months, you are likely to be greeted by a mass of colour on the south facing slopes, with the yellows of St John's wort and rock rose and the purples of marjoram – with a variety of other herbs, grasses,

mosses and sedges interspersed.

April and May are good months to see the emergence of new life. Violets and primroses are early to flower and this is also the time to look out for migrating birds – some drop in on the way to their breeding grounds, while others, such as blackcaps, whitethroats and chiffchaffs may well stay around and set up territories. Of our early butterflies, one of my favourites is the green hairstreak, found widely around the reserve but often attracted to the yellow gorse bushes for nectar.

June saw an explosion of new flowers with dropwort, eyebrights and a whole host of other plants coming into flower – far too many to mention, but a list can be found on my reserve blog.

Late July and early August has traditionally been the busiest time for butterflies. On a fine sunny day it is quite possible to see up to 25 species on the wing. It is

at this time that some of our most interesting butterflies can be found with both the dark green and the silver-washed fritillaries particularly evident as they dash around the grasslands and woodland edge.

Gatekeeper numbers can reach many hundreds on a fine day and a careful examination of the skipper species is likely to be rewarded with a sighting of the rare Essex skipper.

Walton Common is a great place for orchid spotting – with early purple orchids in the spring, common spotted orchids from June and then, in August, the delicate autumn lady's tresses.

Look out for these tiny orchids along the footpaths, they have small white flowers in a spiral along the stem.

The reserve is host to a large variety of mosses and liverworts. Well over 90 species have been identified, including

Discover more about the wildlife of Walton Common and enjoy Dave's wonderful photography at waltoncommon.wordpress.com



Green hairstreak

PAUL THRUSH

Look out for

...the inky black antennae tips on the Essex skipper; whereas the similarly sized small skipper has orange coloured tips.



DAVE HORLICK



three nationally scarce species. Indeed, one of the mosses, the rabbit moss, is only found in a tiny number of other sites in southern Britain. These rare mosses are being carefully monitored and their site is subject to some very interesting 'gardening', where tweezers are the main tool!

Much of the reserve is also of archaeological interest. Almost in the centre of the reserve, split in two by the public footpath, is one of the most visible features. Here there is a large circular enclosure, with a couple of ridges leading into it, giving the feature its name - the banjo enclosure. This is part of the late Bronze and Iron Age remains of prehistoric settlements here. Much of the recent volunteer effort has targeted this area ensuring that the enclosure is suitably exposed. In

other areas of the reserve, remnants of an ancient field system can be found. However, a couple of nearby depressions, suggesting further archaeological features, are in fact bomb craters dating back from WWII.

Another feature of the grassland around this area is the large number of ant hills. These often play host to colourful plant communities. One might be covered in wild thyme, another covered in thyme-leaved sandwort, another in rock-rose.

Unfortunately, predominantly grassland areas, if left to themselves, will soon revert to scrub, bramble and encroachment by trees. In particular, our grassland has been 'invaded' by some foreign introductions that have spread widely i.e. holm oak and turkey oak. However, this encroachment is now being put into reverse with selected areas of the woodland being felled or thinned and bramble and bracken controlled. A huge volunteer effort, helped by contractors, has been taking place in the last 12 months or

Want to volunteer?

Join the new Walton Common volunteer group: Tuesdays 10am-4pm. Contact volunteer@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk for more information.

so, and the results are very promising. A small herd of Dexter cattle has been introduced to the reserve to help with the ongoing management. These small cattle are particularly keen on 'rough' grazing and should help control the re-emergence of bramble.

A short piece such as this doesn't really do justice to the vast number of species that can be found on the reserve. I haven't even mentioned the grasshoppers, dragonflies, trees, moths and hoverflies you might stumble across. Every visit is likely to be different, and new species are being added to our lists all of the time. Come along and see for yourself!



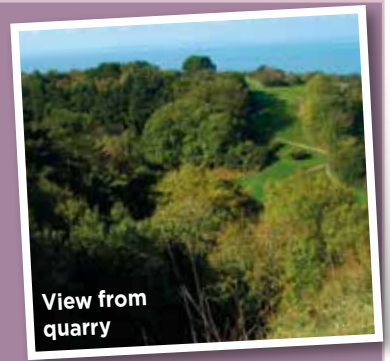
Autumn lady's tresses

DAVE HORLICK

Join Dave for a free guided walk

Walton Common, the second Saturday of the month, 11am-1pm. Meet by the kissing gate, opposite the layby on Walton Street, Walton-in-Gordano.

- 9 July
- 13 August
- 10 September



View from quarry

Please
make a
gift
today!

Wildflowers under threat

EMMA BRADSHAW

If you take a walk through a wildflower meadow this summer, the first thing you will notice is that it's alive. You almost can't absorb the sheer number of butterflies, bees, hoverflies and crickets that are darting, fluttering, jumping, and alighting. So many invertebrates, drunk on the rich array of pollen and nectar on offer. Add the cacophony of insect song to the harmony of bird calls and the rustle of wind through the grasses, the sensual encounter is unforgettable.

Yet this type of habitat is under serious threat. In the UK we have lost a staggering 97% of our wildflower meadows since the 1930s. Changes in farming practice and widespread use of fertilizer have resulted in this significant decline. The loss of our bucolic meadows is catastrophic for the wide range of pollinators that depend on this specific habitat for their long term survival.

Previously common wildflowers like ragged robin, scabious and harebells are now facing an uncertain future – close to being listed as threatened. These flowers were abundant less than twenty years ago and feed solitary bees like the leafcutter – species which are themselves now in serious decline.

Without pollinating insects our bird and bat populations also suffer and the continuous knock-on effects for biodiversity lead to our own front door. Without a supply of wildflowers to feed pollinators we too face an uncertain future. One in every three mouthfuls of our food depends on pollinators.

We need your help to secure the future for wildflowers and wildlife across Avon.

Avon Wildlife Trust protects many stunning wildflower meadows across our region. We manage reserves like Folly Farm and Walborough using traditional methods. Sturdy livestock graze here for three to four months each year to keep the grassland healthy and productive. Dedicated teams of volunteers hack back encroaching scrub. We monitor populations of butterflies each year to enable nature to provide the very best habitat for the meadow wildlife.

Yet these meadows tend to exist like islands in the landscape. Isolated, the wildlife here is trapped and the long term health of many species remains uncertain.

Did you know?
We've lost 97%
of our wildflower
meadows since
the 1930s

As well as hands-on management, your support can help us to work alongside landowners and farmers. We advise them on how to manage their land for the best impact for wildlife and in particular pollinators.

Our B-Lines project operates at a landscape-scale to create corridors of healthy landscape so wildlife is not isolated on islands, and instead can flourish.

We cannot continue this essential work without your help. Please make a gift today to help protect habitats like our wonderful wildflower meadows.

Your gift can ensure thriving habitats and a future for the grasses, wildflowers, pollinators, birds, bats and so much more across our region.

Please make a gift to the Avon Wildlife Trust today.



“ A wildflower meadow, alive with summer sunshine and abundant wildlife is truly something spectacular to experience ”

Under threat

These once common flowers are facing an uncertain future as their habitats are lost.



GENMA DE GOUVEIA

Field scabious: this pretty lilac flower was once a common summer sight on wayside banks and meadows. The pompom-like nature of its appearance gave way to alternative names such as lady's pincushion and blue bonnet. Its rough, hairy stem was once used to treat scabies, hence the name.



LEESCHOFIELD

Ragged robin: despite its rather ragged appearance, this delicate flower is a joyful sight in any wildflower meadow, damp pasture or woodland ride. It thrives in wetter areas and is a favourite food source for butterflies, bumblebees and honey bees.



BRUCE SHORTLAND

Quaking-grass: the sight of the shivering heads of this feathery plant is a distinctive feature of meadow and grassland, particularly those on chalky soils. The purple, heart-shaped heads hang like swollen pendants on fine, delicate stems, which seem barely strong enough to support them.



SUZANNA BIRD

Harebell: don't be fooled by the papery petals and delicate appearance of this little wildflower. It is in fact incredibly resilient and needs to be, given the environment it grows in - dry, open places, from the bare slopes of hills to the windswept coast. Dreaming about harebells is said to symbolise true love.

Please give a gift to help protect our wildflower meadows by:

- returning the form attached to your letter or
- over the phone by calling Angela on 0117 917 7270

Thank you



PHILIP PRECEY

How your gift can help



PAUL HOBSON

£10

can protect one square metre of calcareous grassland to provide a healthy habitat for wildflowers, insects and birds. One square metre of grassland can contain up to 40 different species of grass and flowers.



VICKY NALL

£35

can enable a butterfly survey to measure the health of butterfly populations in rare wildflower sites across Avon.



JAMES BECK

£70

can provide an expert to lead an outdoor learning session for children, introducing them to the wonder and vital importance of pollinators and their habitats.

Greening up Gloucester Road



Matt Collis, My Wild City Officer

Our My Wild City team have been busy again. This time they teamed up with the business community of Gloucester Road Central in Bristol.



Funded by a combination of Neighbourhood Partnership grants and My Wild City project funding, the offer of personalised pollinator planters was given to 55 businesses running from the Egerton Road junction all the way up to Nevil Road, an area locally known as Gloucester Road Central. Thirty businesses got involved, including cafés, boutiques, hardware stores, solicitors and even the local butcher.

Over the course of a week in early May, 50 new planters were installed requiring 1,000 pieces of wood, 22 tonnes of supersoil (compost-topsoil mix) and over 450 nectar-rich plants, flowering shrubs and small trees.

Planting plans were drawn up by wildlife garden experts at Earth Timber Stone who took into account the urban situation of the project to include appropriately hardy species, which can survive the additional pollution and disturbance by people.

More than half the plants included were native wildflowers including bird's foot trefoil, ivy leaved toadflax, wild

strawberry, selfheal, bugle, red campion and meadow cranesbill. Herbs such as sage, thyme, mint and rosemary commonly feature in many of the planters, as they appeal to both people and wildlife. By attaching trellis we even managed to cater for native climbers including honeysuckle and clematis.

As well as members of the Avon Wildlife Trust staff, a series of dedicated volunteers gave up over 120 hours of their time to the project. A doctor, an accountant and a waitress were amongst those who donned garden gloves over the seven days. Even employees of the local businesses got involved, with staff dropping by

Get your Business Buzzing
Check out the RHS perfect for pollinators plant list:
rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators

Our project caught the interest of BBC *Springwatch* and Gloucester Road was on the telly in June with Nick Baker - did you spot us?



on their way home from a long shift.

The project was officially launched on the 7 May at the annual Gloucester Road Mayfest organised and hosted by Sarah Thorp at Room 212, who has recently built her own eco-house at the back of her shop, including two green roofs.

The addition of so much greenery has vastly increased opportunities for pollinators along this 400m stretch of concreted grey. As well as helping the local wildlife, it's hoped the project will make the shopping experience for all those visiting the area a little bit more 'wild' and create a buzzing hub for local traders and shoppers.



Wild play in the city

*Sarah Horsell,
Wild Play Officer*

Toddlers have been unleashed into the urban parks of Bristol this summer for outdoor wild play sessions



My Wild Child, our fun term-time toddler sessions, are crammed full of songs, stories, mini-beast quests, take-home activities and much, much more! Run in five urban parks around Bristol and at our city-centre nature reserve, Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock, the sessions are a great opportunity for families to enjoy the outdoors whilst learning about nature.



Feed the birds

Making bird feeders is a great family activity. We've really enjoyed making apple bird feeders at our My Wild Child sessions.

What do you need?

Apple, sunflower seeds, corer, string and a stick.

- 1) Core the apple
- 2) Tie string to your stick
- 3) Push one end of the string through the centre of the apple
- 4) Push the sunflower seeds into the apple
- 5) Hang up on a tree or bush for the birds to enjoy

Get muddy!

Mud painting is great fun and you can paint all sorts of things: stones, tree trunks, wellies or even hands and faces! All you need is some mud, a container, water and paintbrushes.

Sow your own wildflower meadow

Bees and butterflies love wildflowers and we've been busy making them lots of seed bombs.

What do you need?

Terracotta clay, wildflower seeds, compost.

- 1) Take a ball of clay and roll it in some compost
- 2) Then roll it in your wildflower seed mix
- 3) Place your seed bomb on a bare patch of ground or in a pot with soil
- 4) Leave it to nature, and enjoy watching the bees and butterflies visit your garden.



BARBARA EVRIPIDOU



ELLA BEESON

Avon Wildlife Trust love wild play, as the benefits to young children are endless. Exploring outdoors, children develop their co-ordination and balance as they hop over tree roots and amble over uneven terrain. Collecting sticks, splashing in puddles, watching mud change from dry to wet as they make mud pies, these things may seem trivial to adults, but all these experiences are hugely valuable to children. As they interact with the natural world their language develops and their vocabulary expands. Add all this together and you get happy, healthy children who respect and care for their natural environment.

The support of players of People's Postcode Lottery allows us to deliver these sessions for free to families in Bristol - and it's not too late to get involved! Visit avonwildlifetrust/mywildchild to find out where a wild play session is happening near you...





STEPHEN WOOD

Jan's Garden

A haven for wildlife and people

Sarah Moore, Director of Fundraising, Membership and Communication takes a stroll around Trust member Jan Barkworth's garden

Walking around Jan Barkworth's garden it is clear that this is a lifelong labour of love. Long and thin, stretching away from the house, Jan has divided the space into outdoor 'rooms' using beech and berberis hedges. Round and oval shaped beds are precisely cut into the lawn and filled with stunning shrubs and herbaceous plants. One centre piece involves the skeleton of a pear tree playing host to a honeysuckle, clematis and jasmine. "I never plant one thing when I could plant three," Jan explains. The beds are interspersed by winding paths, arbours, and trees including pine, apple and holly. The 'productive' and the 'pretty' greenhouses are bordered by open areas including a pond and a gravel bed where Jan shows off her potted agapanthus.

Follow the garden to the end and you find yourself in a magical woodland glade, alive with wildlife. Paths run between the trees made by badgers and

foxes. Jan sees deer here, and recently encountered a young fox cub. "I heard a noise and suddenly there was all this shuffling about by my ankles."

The Tranby House garden really is a treat for wildlife and people. Jan has been opening it to raise money for the Avon Wildlife Trust since 1984. She provides teas with the help of her team - many of whom have been helping her since the beginning. "I never have to ask them, they just turn up every year and make it happen!"

Jan's garden is absolutely packed with plants, there is something to enjoy at every time of year. "From January

“I looked down and there was a tiny fox cub, the size of a kitten with a white tip on his tail.”

when the hellebores start to flower right through until the last of the *verbena bonariensis* in November there is something to look at," she says, "and then you have berries through December and early January." This year-round variety explains why Jan's garden is so very rich in wildlife. She lists all the usual suspects: bees, butterflies, ladybirds, dragonflies, rabbits, mice, shrews, hedgehogs, frogs, toads, all three species of newt, sparrows, starlings, and even sparrow hawks, greater spotted woodpecker and once a



Heron

JON HAWKINS

heron on the edge of her pond! "I wasn't so pleased when I saw him fly away with a frog in his mouth," she laughs.

In 1993 Jan was invited to open her garden through the National Gardens Scheme. Now she raises money for the Trust by selling plants during the open garden season. Her productive greenhouse and much of the front section of her garden are crammed with young plants coming on in pots. "Some people just come in for the plants," Jan tells me, "I have lots of unusual plants on offer and people are often here half an hour before the garden opens to make sure they can get the best choice!"

Tranby House Garden Open Days

Tranby House, Norton Lane, Whitchurch, BS14 0BT

- Sunday 17 July 2-5pm
- Sunday 14 August 2-5pm
- Sunday 4 September 2-5pm



Fox

CLIVE NICHOLLS

What's on?

MY WILD CHILD FAMILY FUN DAY

Saturday 22 October, 1-4pm FREE

We have been enjoying weekly urban adventures with toddlers and their families in six locations around Bristol, thanks to support from players of the People's Postcode Lottery. This October half term come and celebrate with us and TV naturalist Nick Baker at our beautiful nature reserve, Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock. Nick is Vice President of the Wildlife Trusts and a national ambassador for the outdoor learning projects. Come along to this free event and be inspired to act for nature! Crammed full of fun family activities and wild play opportunities, it'll be a great afternoon out for the whole family. Explore the 'people's nature reserve' whilst enjoying the autumn colours of the Avon Gorge. More info: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on

Visiting Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock

Pedestrian access to the site is available at all times from the Portway and through Old Sneyd Park Nature Reserve (via Bramble Drive or Glen Avon park) and Bishops Knoll Wood (off Bramble Lane). Access to the car park, cafe and facilities during publicised event days only.



BARBARA EVRIPIDOU



BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

Folly Farm family residential

the
folly farm
centre

Dates: Sunday 7 to Tuesday 9 August 2016 Cost per person: **£153 (inc. VAT)**

The residential is suitable for any families who enjoy getting outdoors. Activities are recommended for families with children over five years old; younger children are welcome but they may not be able to participate in all activities.

The cost includes all meals, accommodation and tutor-led activities. For more information or to book visit the events pages at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or contact Kate Marsh, on courses@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or 0117 917 7270.

This summer why don't you and your family join us for a nature-filled family residential stay at Folly Farm? Located on a 250 acre nature reserve in the heart of the Chew Valley, our 3 day/2 night residential programme, led by an expert tutor, will get you outdoors and having fun!

On the residential course you will:

- Stay in our comfortable, sustainable and beautifully restored 18th century farmhouse
- Explore the wildlife that inhabits Folly Woods and ponds
- Practice your survival skills as you build dens
- Challenge yourselves to make fires without the use of modern day gadgets
- Try to spot the family of badgers that live in the woodland!
- Meet other like-minded families.



What's on – walks, talks and workdays

JULY

Saturday 2 July (NB changed from last Events programme)
WILD FLOWERS OF STOCKWOOD VALE at Stockwood Local Nature Reserve, minibus from Wellsway School, BS31 1PH 10am, or meet at Hungerford Gardens entrance (next to Brislington School, BS4 5EY) at 10.15am. We will lead a 2 hour walk around the reserve. Previously farmland, it now boasts ponds, wildflower meadows and orchard trees. Entrance: £1. FFI Liz 0117 909 9667. (K)

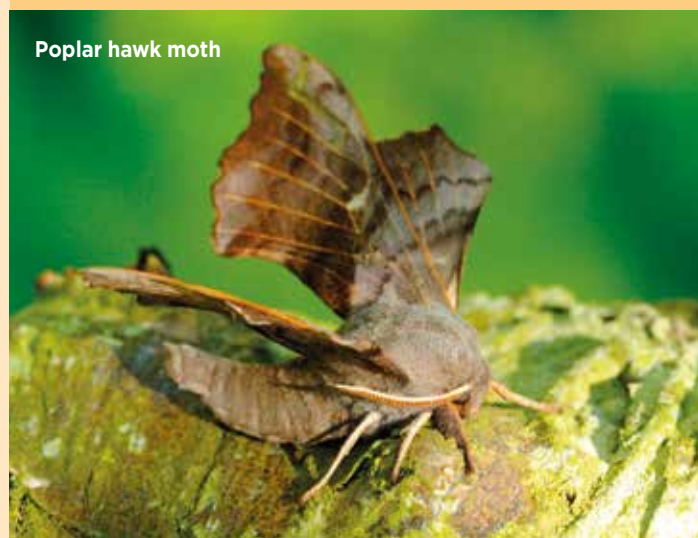
Sunday 17 July
OPEN GARDEN at Tranby House, Norton Lane, Whitchurch, BS14 0BT, 2-5pm. Trust member Jan Barkworth has been sharing her beautiful wildlife garden with the public for over 25 years. Admission £3.50, children free. Tea and cake available and plants for sale. Also open Sunday 14 August and Sunday 4 September.

Sunday 24 July
VISIT PORTBURY WHARF Portbury Wharf (meet at Wharf Lane off Sheepway), 2pm. Bring your binoculars, come and take a look at the wildflowers and birds. Paths can be steep and muddy with some steps. Entrance: Free. FFI 0117 940 0706 (C)

AUGUST

Saturday 6 August
ECOLOGICAL MONITORING DAY at Feed Bristol 10am-4pm. Join us for a day focused on surveying the beautiful site that will be blooming with wildflowers! A great opportunity for skill sharing and improving your ID skills. FREE. For more information: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on

Saturday 6 August
EVENING MOTH HUNT at Old Sneyd Park Nature Reserve, 9pm, meet at main entrance in Glenavon Park. Wear warm clothes and bring a torch. Joint event with Friends of the Reserve. Entrance: donation requested. Booking essential. FFI 0117 968 6799 (C)



Poplar hawk moth

Saturday 13 August
EXPLORE THE WILDLIFE at Manor Road Community Woodland, 2pm, meet at the Manor Road gates between Keynsham and Salford (BS31 1SG). Please park considerately if arriving by car. Entrance: Free. FFI Liz Wintle, 0117 909 9667 (K)

Sunday 14 August

OPEN GARDEN at Tranby House, Norton Lane, Whitchurch, BS14 0BT, 2-5pm. Trust member Jan Barkworth has been sharing her beautiful wildlife garden with the public for over 25 years. Admission £3.50, children free. Tea and cake available and plants for sale. Also open Sunday 4 September.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 3 September

HARVEST FESTIVAL at Feed Bristol, 12-5pm. Join us for a celebration of summer. Explore how we grow with nature, whilst enjoying our café, live music, nature craft activities for children and workshops. Our wildflower plant shop will be open too! FREE. For more information: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on



Harvest Festival

Sunday 4 September

OPEN GARDEN at Tranby House, Norton Lane, Whitchurch, BS14 0BT, 2-5pm. Trust member Jan Barkworth has been sharing her beautiful wildlife garden with the public for over 25 years. Admission £3.50, children free. Tea and cake available and plants for sale.

Sunday 4 September

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDENS BEE & POLLINATION FESTIVAL meet at the Welcome Lodge, Stoke Park Road, Bristol BS9 1JG, 2pm. There will be live hive demonstrations, talks, garden tours and family activities. Bee-friendly plants will be on sale. Entrance: £4.50. FFI Liz Wintle 0117 909 9667 (K)

Friday 9 September

WAPLEY BUSHES BAT WALK. Meet at the Shire Way entrance to Wapley Bushes (opposite Cherington Rd), Yate, BS37 8YA, 7.30 pm. Join us for a twilight stroll in search of bats. Bat detectors provided. Wear warm clothes and stout shoes or boots and bring a torch. Entrance: Free but donation welcome. FFI Gloria 01454 310328 (S)

Friday 23 September

BORN TO BIRD at Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead, BS20 6PR, 7.30pm. An illustrated talk by Mya-Rose Craig (Bird Girl) about her birding experiences in Britain and abroad and her desire to inspire other young people to have an interest in wildlife. Entrance: adults £2, children £1, including tea/coffee. Non-members welcome. FFI 01275 843160 (P)

Sunday 25 September

PORTWAY SUNDAY PARK at Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock, 2-5pm. Take advantage of a traffic-free Portway to come and celebrate the achievements of our My Wild City project. Find out how we've been turning Bristol into a nature-rich city, explore the nature reserve and enjoy some tea and cake in the Wild Café. All summer we've been creating wildflowers and we will display them today as an installation. Please note due to the road closure no vehicle access is permitted. Find out more: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on



Portway
Sunday Park

BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

OCTOBER

Saturday 1 October

ABBOTSWOOD AUTUMN APPLE DAY at St Nicholas Family Centre garden and Abbotswood precinct, Chargrove, Abbotswood, Yate, BS37 4LG, 11am-3pm. This is a seasonal celebration of autumn and apples with the Abbotswood Action Group community. Well behaved dogs on a lead welcome. Entrance: Free. FFI Gloria 01454 310328 (S)

Sunday 2 October

RIVER DIPPING AT KEYNSHAM at Dapp's Hill, by the bridge, BS31 1EX, 2pm. Meet Dave Sage for our annual river dipping family event in the River Chew in Keynsham. Wellington boots strongly advised! Entrance: Free. FFI Dave Sage, 0117 940 7968. (K)

Saturday 8 October

AUTUMN FAIR at the Somerset Hall Portishead, BS20 6AH, 10-11.45am. We will have plants, books, cakes, crafts for sale, tombola, white elephant stalls and much more. Admission: Free. FFI 01275 843160 (P)

Sunday 9 October

FUNGUS DAY at Feed Bristol, 10am-4pm. Aimed at all ages and open to everyone, join us for an educational, fun and enlightening day with activities for children and adults, a fungi film space, mushroom cultivation workshops and much more! Supported by the Justin Smith Trust. FREE. For more information: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on

Friday 14 October

LIFE AND TIMES OF THE DORMOUSE Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS at 7.30pm. With Gill Brown, President of Mammal Section of Bristol Naturalists. Refreshments available, donation requested. Entrance: Adults: £2.50; Under 16s: £1. FFI Cynthia: 01225 874259. (K)

Saturday 22 October

MY WILD CHILD FAMILY FUN DAY, Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock Nature Reserve, 1-4pm.

Avon Wildlife Trust has been running free urban wild play sessions across Bristol. This autumn, come celebrate with us and our special guest – wildlife TV presenter, Nick Baker. Fun, family-friendly activities. FREE. More info: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on

Friday 28 October

GIANT MAMMALS OF THE ICE AGE at Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead, BS20 6PR, 7.30pm. An illustrated talk by Nick Hood. Entrance: Adults: £2, Children: £1. Non-members welcome. FFI 01275 843160 (P)

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 1 November

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) at Bath Guildhall. Members are invited to the formal business meeting from 7.30pm. As in previous years we will be hosting an event before, details of this to follow on our website and in the next magazine.

Saturday 5 November

JUMBLE SALE at Avon Way Hall Portishead, BS20 6LT, 10-11.30am. If you have jumble that needs collecting locally before the day please ring 01275 843160 or 01275 843865. Entrance: 10p. (P)

Friday 11 November

OUR SEAS, OUR FUTURE at Old Gym Studio, Wellsway School, Chandag Road, Keynsham BS31 1PH, 6.30 for 7.00pm. Talk by Alisdair Nauls from the Marine Conservation Society. How can we help make our seas 'fit for life'? Family activities and stalls. Refreshments available, donation requested. Entrance: Adults: £2.50, Under 16s: £1. FFI Kathy Farrell 0117 986 9722, kathyfarrelluk@yahoo.co.uk (K)

Friday 25 November

A SORTIE IN SPAIN at Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead, BS20 6PR, 7.30pm. An illustrated talk by Phil Mugridge. Entrance: Adults: £2, Children: £1, including tea/coffee, non-members welcome. FFI 01275 843160 (P)



Fungus Day

Volunteer Work Days

Volunteering on conservation projects is a great way to make a real difference to wildlife, to get fit and healthy and to meet some wonderful people. There are plenty of volunteering opportunities at the Trust including:

Grassland Restoration Team (GRT)

Meet at Trust HQ 9.45am Tuesdays (fortnightly) and every Thursday.

Wildlife Action Group (WAG) on Trust reserves

Meet at Trust HQ 9.45am Wednesdays and Fridays.

Feed Bristol community food growing days

Meet at Feed Bristol (Frenchay Park Rd, Stapleton) 9.30am, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Feed Folly Wellbeing Garden

Meet at the Folly Farm Centre 10am on Tuesdays.

Reserve-based groups

Browne's Folly, Folly Farm, Willsbridge Valley, Purn and Hellenge Hill (W-s-M), Walton Common, Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock and the Gordano Valley Group.

Please go to avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer for dates and work programmes.



Local group volunteering days

HELLENGE HILL RESERVE, BLEADON PURN HILL RESERVE, W-s-M. Work parties and/or wildlife surveying/monitoring. Phone warden Cynthia Sparks 01934 204028 for times and meeting point.

WAPLEY BUSHES SUMMER FRUIT TREE PRUNING Sunday 10 July. As well as pruning stoned fruit trees such as plums and gages, we shall also be attending to odd jobs on the reserve. Meet at the Shire Way entrance to the woodland, south Yate, BS37 8US, 10am. **(S)**

WESTON MOOR Sunday 31 July. Ragwort-pulling in the meadows and other management. Meet 10am down the small drive beside the church in Weston-in-Gordano (ST 444743). **(GCG)**

WAPLEY BUSHES Sunday 11 September. We shall be undertaking the annual stream clearance and other reserve maintenance. Please wear stout footwear. Meet at the Shire Way entrance to the woodland, south Yate, BS37 8US, 10am. **(S)**

KENNEDY WAY POND Sunday 25 September. We shall be carrying out general management work on the reserve including vegetation clearance. Meet at the Pond, Link Road, Yate Shopping Centre, 10am (parking is available at the Yate overflow car park, also on the eastern side of Link Road, BS37 4AY). **(S)**

WALTON COMMON Sunday 25 September and Sunday 30 October. Removing scrub from the grassland, which may require a bonfire. 10am-12.30pm. Meet on the layby ST 423735 at the end of Clevedon golf course on the coast road above Walton-in-Gordano. **(GCG)**

KINGSGATE PARK NATURE RESERVE PONDS Saturday 8 October. We shall be undertaking maintenance of this important amphibian site including cutting back vegetation. Please wear gloves and wellington boots. Meet at the Scott Way entrance to Kingsgate Park, Scott Way, Yate, BS37 4NW, 10am (parking available at the entrance of Shackleton Avenue). **(S)**

WAPLEY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE Saturday 12 November. This will be a morning of general maintenance work and tidying up the reserve prior to the winter season. Please wear walking or wellington boots and bring some gloves. Meet at the Shire Way entrance to the woodland, south Yate, BS37 8US, 10am. **(S)**

TICKENHAM RIDGE. Sunday 27 November. Reserve management including scrub clearance from the grassland. 10am-12.30pm, meet at the reserve. For details phone Keith Giles 01275 852627. **(GCG)**

Local group and volunteering contacts

(C)	Cabot	Jill Kempshall	0117 940 0706
(CV)	Chew Valley	Anne-Marie Morris	01275 332534
(GCG)	Gordano Valley	Keith Giles	01275 852627
(K)	Keynsham	Cynthia Wilson	01225 874259
(LA)	Long Ashton	Harry Williams	01275 392690
(P)	Portishead	Cynthia Dorn	01275 843160
(S)	Southwold	Gloria Stephen	01454 310328

For further information please go to avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer or email Julie: volunteer@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk



BARBARA EMPIROU

Wildflower nursery open for the summer!

It has been a fantastic start to the season at Feed Bristol. Our wildflower nursery is now booming with over 150 varieties of native wildflowers, a range of organic veg starters and edible perennials.

We have started to collect seed from local meadows to sow and plant out on our land, as part of the stewardship plan. This will give us a seedbank to keep collecting local seed from and spread local provenance plants around the Avon area. If you'd like to pop by and take a look, the nursery is open to the public to drop in mid-week from 9-5 and on the first Saturday of the month at our events.

"It is an inspiring place, by mid-summer all the flowers will be up around the site and there is now an incredible diversity," says Matt Cracknell, Feed Bristol Project Manager.

Our ecological management plan is driving forward a renewed flurry of activity to enhance the different habitats across the site. This year we are carrying



PETE AXFORD

out monitoring surveys to create a new baseline for the site's wildlife. We want to create a model for other projects

"The effect of working at Feed Bristol is having a profound impact on our participants' lives. The supportive, friendly atmosphere, coupled with the inspiring setting and meaningful activities that everyone gets involved with is motivating our teams to lead more independent lives," says Adam Burley of Burley Inclusive.

The project also acts as a business incubator site with six different land based enterprises working as part of a collective alongside Feed Bristol. This includes Sims Hill (veg box scheme),

“ It is an inspiring place, by mid-summer all the flowers will be up around the site and there is now an incredible diversity. ”

Matt Cracknell, Feed Bristol Project Manager



PETE AXFORD

to come and learn from so they can easily adopt best practice on their food growing sites.

The nursery project is about engaging community groups in meaningful activities and developing people's skills with the aim of demonstrating the value of nature through supporting individuals' well-being. Over the years we have worked with many learning disability and mental health groups. One of our long-term resident groups from Burley Inclusive provide a holistic approach to supporting individuals.

Edible Futures (salad co-op and veg sales to restaurants), Pea Shoots Forest School, Up-cycled Mushroom Company, and Chris's Medicinal Herbs.

Want to Volunteer?

Volunteering takes place on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday (9.30am-4pm). Just turn up and say hello and we'll tell you how it all works!

Find us on Frenchay Park Road, Bristol BS16 1HB. For bus information and directions visit: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/feedbristol

Seasonal stroll

Walton Common

A hill-top nature reserve with breathtaking views across the Gordano Valley and Severn Estuary. Discover the history and look out for summer orchids and butterflies.

Ant hill with wild thyme

DAVE HORLICK



MARK SHARWAN

Walk with the warden

Free guided tour around Walton Common on the second Saturday of the month. **Upcoming dates: July 9, August 13, September 10.**

Listen out for - green woodpecker

This vibrant yellow-green bird is Britain's largest woodpecker. It is more often heard than seen; listen out for its fast 'kew-kew-kew-kew-kew-kew' call.



Green woodpecker

ANDREW MORFEW



St John's wort and marjoram

for summer meadows and stunning views



Opposite a layby on Walton Street, there is a kissing gate which is one of three entrances to the reserve and our suggested starting point. (1) Pass through the kissing gate on Walton Street and head directly up the rather rocky woodland path.

At the junction of paths (2), take the left path, which heads steeply upwards. As the woods finish, you'll pass the south facing grassy slopes, which in the summer will be carpeted with the yellows and purples of wildflowers.

At the top of the slope you'll reach the first viewpoint (3); turn round to catch your breath and admire the views of the Gordano Valley and the village of Walton-in-Gordano.

Take the path straight on through another section of woodland. Shortly you'll reach the second viewpoint (4) above an old quarry, with stunning views across the estuary.

Continue along the footpath which leads you across the open grassland with woodland on your left. Continue on, as more trees appear, following the curve of the path to the right and you'll join the main public footpath. (5)

Continue along the main public footpath, just for a few yards, before taking a right turn out on to the open grassland. (6)

Take another right to head across the wide open grassland, keep a look out for the wartime bomb crater on your left. (7)

The walk across the common will take you up and over the remains of a Scheduled Ancient Monument called the banjo enclosure, dating from late Bronze or Iron Age. (8)

Taking the right path both times you reach a fork in the pathway will lead you back to the first view point on the grassy slopes. (3)

Here you can retrace your steps down the woodland path to the kissing gate. (1)

Look out for:



JIM HIGHAM

Dark green fritillary



MARK SHARMAN

Roe deer



STEVE NICHOLLS

Common-spotted orchid

Did you know?
Walton Common is home to prehistoric remains, known as a 'Banjo'.
See pages 10-11

How to get there

Car: Walton Common reserve lies between Clevedon and Portishead, the nearest village is Walton-in-Gordano. Driving out of Walton-in-Gordano, you pass the last cottage and limited parking is available on the left in a layby. The layby is beside the Clevedon golf course and entrance to the reserve is on the opposite side - through a slightly obscured kissing gate.

Public transport: X5 from Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon, Portishead, Cribbs Causeway or UWE. Get off at the 'Home Farm' stop then walk a few minutes to Walton Street.

Access: There are public footpaths that allow access through this site. Pathways can be steep and slippery when wet, especially for the less able. Unsuitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Around the reserves

It's getting 'otter

Otter

ELLIOTT NEEP

Once the birds start to sing and the weather warms up, woodland and scrub clearance work ceases, to allow wildlife the space and peace to enjoy the newly created areas of habitat. Our work then shifts its focus onto infrastructure repairs, which enable members of the public to safely access and enjoy our sites all year round.

While large fencing projects are usually scheduled for the winter when the ground is softer for driving in secure fence posts, ensuring our grazed nature reserves have stock-proof boundaries is a year round task. Volunteer wardens and members of the public are essential additions to our conservation team here at Avon Wildlife Trust, acting as our daily 'eyes and ears' on the ground, and calling in with details of fencing repairs, broken stiles, dry water troughs, dodgy steps and any other maintenance work that might be needed.

Folly Farm

Woodland thinning has continued across the site with fantastic displays of bluebells and other ground flora as it they benefit from the increased light. Ancient woodland indicators such as dog's mercury and herb Paris were displaying beautifully through the spring.

Our Coronation Meadows project has come to an end this year, so we've been busy plug planting native wildflowers to restore the lowland meadow at Folly Farm. These plug plants are grown by our colleagues over at Feed Bristol.

Prior's Wood

Each spring time Prior's Wood becomes the local 'place to be' as the ramsons and bluebells carpet the woodland floor, and providing the perfect backdrop for the magnificent mature beech, hornbeam, oak, birch and lime trees. The main focus of our spring work has been step and bridge repairs as providing safe

access to this popular reserve is essential.

The substantial broadleaf tree planting work carried out by volunteers over the past few years is showing signs of success with new green shoots emerging from the tops of the protective tubes, so we all look forward to seeing this woodland restoration project develop over the years.



Herb paris

JOEMCORLEY

Dolebury Warren

Our team of staff and volunteers worked tirelessly over the winter clearing scrub encroachment on areas of lowland heath and calcareous grassland. During one work party we were fortunate to hear a cuckoo calling nearby, and the warm weather made it ideal for basking adders, common lizards and slow worms.

The relict stone wall boundaries have been extended by the hard working hands of volunteers from both Avon Wildlife Trust and the Mendip AONB. The result not only preserves a piece of our history and landscape, but also provides our grazier with a stock-proof boundary.

Hellenge Hill

The Weston-super-Mare volunteer group has carried out some essential fencing repairs and is continuing with stone wall restoration. While building the stone wall, the volunteers found many adders basking in the sun. It is great to know the management and volunteer efforts on this reserve are providing conditions suitable for this timid, protected species to survive.

Clapton Moor

The bird hide has been given a spring makeover ready for summer time bird watching, and the access path around the site is being managed by volunteers to provide an undisturbed walk around the moor in this wildlife-rich Gordano Valley. Volunteer warden Melvin was fortunate to see an otter on the moor with two young pups. Significant resource goes into managing the ditches in this area and on other wetland sites we manage, so it is always hugely rewarding to see priority species such as water vole and otter using the ditches. If visiting Clapton Moor, it is worth admiring the hedge laying work carried out by volunteers that is developing into a wonderful lush habitat.

Bathampton Meadow

Major work took place close to Bathampton Meadow in early winter to electrify the nearby railway line and to clear out the oxbow lake that provides flood control for the area. Various contractors required access to nearby land and this meant the removal of a large area of scrub adjacent to our land. We've worked with Western Power to plant over 2,000 native woodland saplings to replace those that were lost and we're keen to see how they progress over the summer.



Snipe

MARGARET HOLLAND



Adder

JON HAWKINS



Tree Planting at Bathampton Meadow

KERRY WHITE

Magnificent Moths

*Think moths are dull?
Think again....*

By Rupert Higgins, Ecologist



ELLA BEESON

Moths have for a long time been ignored, or even condemned as destroyers of clothing but interest in this fascinating group of insects has grown substantially in recent years, and studying them has never been easier. Most moths are nocturnal and easy to overlook, but I have recorded over 650 species in my Bristol garden and a good site can produce over 100 species in a single night.

Moth predators

Moths are hugely important ecologically. Blue and great tits nest when caterpillars are most abundant and bats feast on moths on summer evenings. Populations of most are kept in check by the rather gruesome ichneumon wasps, which lay their eggs into caterpillars where the growing grubs eventually kill the caterpillar, if they themselves are not attacked by another parasitic wasp. Many of these wasps are host-specific, so there is a whole community of species dependent on each moth.



Parasitoid wasp and caterpillar

ZIEGLER/NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY



All around a moth trap

Getting up close

There are many ways to observe these fascinating insects. Several fly by day and walking through long grass and gently tapping bushes will disturb others, which normally flutter a short way before landing in view. Others can be found by searching tree trunks and other resting places, although this requires persistence and a good eye. However, the strictly nocturnal habits of most moths mean that more specialist techniques are required. The oldest

of these is 'sugaring': a concoction of molasses and beer is brewed up and then smeared onto tree trunks or fence posts and the moths attracted to feed are inspected. The most effective way to see moths is to exploit their proverbial weakness for light by using a moth trap. There are several designs, but they all consist of a light over a container, in which the moths rest until the morning, when they can be admired and released.

Gardening for moths

Gardens are important habitats for moths and there are many ways in which the gardener can help. Leaving areas a little unkempt and delaying deadheading until spring is a good start. Moths are important pollinators and particularly attracted to white flowers such as honeysuckle, nicotiana and white campion. Most caterpillars feed on trees and shrubs and amongst the most valuable are fruit trees and currant bushes, providing food for the moths and humans alike.



AMY LEWIS

Elephant hawk moth

Hawk moths have been described as the “big game” of the moth world and few are as glamorous as the elephant hawk moth. Despite its spectacular pink and lime green wings and body it is hard to spot by day but the large caterpillars are easy to find, particularly on rosebay willowherb, and the adult frequently comes to light.



KEITH GILES

Scarlet tiger

Proof that not all moths are nocturnal and brown, the increasingly common scarlet tiger is often seen fluttering around urban areas in the sunshine. At rest it reveals red underwings and glossy black forewings spotted with white and gold. The black and yellow caterpillar is also a frequent sight, with a particular fondness for comfrey and nettle.



STEPHEN DALTON / NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

Heart and dart

The noctuids are one of the largest families of moths and the heart and dart is an archetypal noctuid, with plain brown wings folded tent-like over the body, a large furry head and a somewhat fanciful name. It is perhaps our most numerous moth, with hundreds sometimes crowded into a moth trap.



JOE MIDDLETON

Silver Y

Several species of moth are long-distance migrants that move northwards as drought takes hold in southern Europe. Silver Y is one of the most frequent and in some years can be disturbed in large numbers from tall grass, or seen feeding on flowers such as red valerian. Look out for the silver y shaped mark on its wings.



ALEX HYDE / NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

Brimstone

The geometrids are another large family of moths, which usually rest with their wings flat to the surface. The caterpillars loop along and are sometimes called inch-worms because they seem to be measuring as they go. The brimstone is an easily recognisable and common species found in most gardens.



ROD WILLIAMS / NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

Small purple and gold

Around half of moths are classified as micro-moths. Their small size means that they are often overlooked but many are beautifully marked. The small purple and gold is frequent in gardens, attracting attention as it flutters in sunshine around thyme and related plants on which its caterpillars feed.

Further reading... The best of the many books on moths are the BWP guides to macro-moths and micro-moths written by Paul Waring and Phil Sterling respectively. Websites also contain a wealth of information: ukmoths.org.uk is particularly useful. The Bristol and District Moth Group is free to join and runs a series of meetings to which beginners are very welcome.

Trusts embark on biggest-ever youth project

Over the next seven years, Our Bright Future will improve social cohesion, create opportunities for young people and improve our environment



Young people on a straw bale construction workshop at Hill Holt Wood

The Wildlife Trusts are leading a £33m programme to create the next generation of environmental leaders. Our Bright Future aims to tackle the lack of opportunities for young people by addressing society's systemic environmental problems.

Backed by the Big Lottery Fund and run by a consortium of eight partners, Our Bright Future consists of 31 projects. It brings together 100 organisations and 50,000 young people across the UK, to help them step up and take what is rightfully theirs: a healthy planet, a thriving economy, a brighter future.

"Every generation has what it takes to create positive change," said Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts. "This programme fuels the creativity, inspiration and resilience of our young people. With increasing pressure on nature it has never been more important.

“The green economy is a real choice for business”

Societal and environmental challenges are two sides of the same coin. We want to see a generation of courageous, wise leaders empowered to change our world for the better."

"These youth-led projects will help young people take what is rightfully theirs – a healthy planet, whilst developing the employment skills crucial to a growing economy," said Peter Ainsworth, UK Chair of the Big Lottery Fund. "In time Our Bright Future will use the success of the projects to show decision makers that the green economy is a real choice for business."

Four 'Our Bright Future' projects

Your Shore Beach Rangers

CORNWALL WILDLIFE TRUST

Young people will increase their knowledge of the marine ecosystem and be more aware of their ability to make a positive contribution to the health of their marine environment. They will also improve their employment prospects through increased life skills.



CORNWALL WT

Bee You

BLACKBURNE HOUSE EDUCATION



BLACKBURNE HOUSE

Bee You will train young people in the art of beekeeping along with teaching entrepreneurial skills to help take honey and other products to market. The project will help to improve local neighbourhood green spaces and make them better for wildlife.

Milestones

WILTSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Milestones will help young people to build trust and foster an appreciation with the environment through the creation of community green spaces. This approach has been shown to have beneficial effects on well-being, behaviour and social integration.



WILTSHIRE WT

Natural Estates

AVON WILDLIFE TRUST & GLOUCESTERSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST



This youth-led project will train 1,100 18-24 year olds in community engagement and conservation skills. It will empower young people living in social housing to become a catalyst for significant change in the way their community green spaces are managed.

FIND OUT MORE

See all 31 projects at ourbrightfuture.co.uk. Young people can get involved via the website, or email ourbrightfuture@wildlifetrusts.org



LOTTERY FUNDED

OUR BRIGHT FUTURE
OUR ENVIRONMENT TO OUR FUTURE

Hackney transformed



In life, it is all too easy to take things for granted. I grew up near some woods and was allowed to venture wherever I wanted. I took this contact with the natural world as a given, running wild with my brothers and friends. It wasn't until my twenties that I realised how lucky I had been.

By then I was living in the most nature-deprived part of north London. The lifeless, closely-mown grass and wide tarmac paths of the local formal park didn't do it for me. I paced the streets until I found a tiny little pocket of wild land at Gillespie Park, and would walk for miles along the canal to Camley Street Natural Park.

In 2016 something spectacular changed in this area. A real wildlife oasis, hidden from the public for nearly 200 years was opened up: Woodberry Wetlands. A reservoir surrounded by reeds and paths where wild plants, insects and birds thrive, all about 500 yards from my first flat. It had been there all along. But it wasn't until London Wildlife Trust inspired Thames Water to open the gates and drew in Berkeley Homes and Heritage Lottery Fund that everything changed.

Local children, deprived of so much that I took for granted when I was their age, now have somewhere to play that is alive with wildlife. Now they can see herons and hear reed warblers on their doorstep.

Our President Emeritus was there to hail the opening of Woodberry. "It's David Attenborough!" a child shrieked in amazement as the great man walked along the path. "No-one at school will believe I've seen him here!"

Sir David explained that he valued this place as much as he valued the rainforest; that he believed the courtship rituals of the great crested grebe to be as fascinating as those of birds of paradise; that our natural heritage was the most special inheritance we have; that everyone deserved to know and love wildlife, and that Northeast Londoners should be no exception. Thanks to London Wildlife Trust, they aren't any more.

Thank you so much for supporting your Wildlife Trust to make such transformations possible.

Stephanie Hilborne OBE

Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts

Together there are 47 Wildlife Trusts covering the UK, all working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone, on land and at sea. Contact us on enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org or 01636 677711. To join your Wildlife Trust, visit wildlifetrusts.org/joinus. **Natural World, The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1WT.** Editor Rupert Paul Layout editor Dan Hilliard.

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UK's most-travelled dolphin?

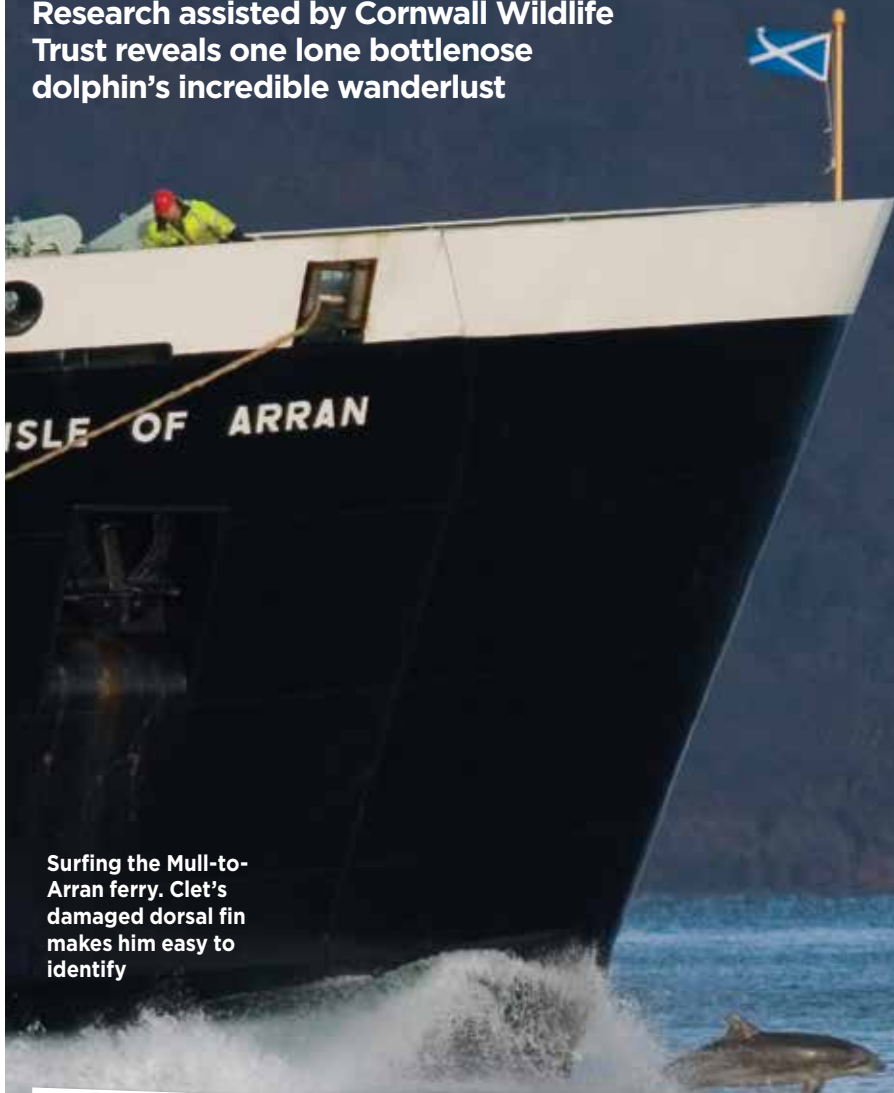
Research assisted by Cornwall Wildlife Trust reveals one lone bottlenose dolphin's incredible wanderlust

French fishermen named the ragged-finned dolphin Clet when he first followed their boats in 2008. Since then, the solitary male bottlenose has been seen as far north as the Isle of Mull, and as far west as Galway. He's also visited Wales, the Isle of Man, Scilly, Dorset, Cornwall and Devon.

His wanderings have been mapped by the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, working with the Sea Watch Foundation. The Records Centre is hosted by Cornwall Wildlife Trust, and has collated sightings over the past five years.

Most bottlenose dolphins live in social groups, and stick to a home territory. They face growing threats from noise disturbance, development and accidental capture in fishing nets. The Trust believes Marine Protected Areas combined with local action to reduce these threats are the best way to protect highly mobile species.

Meanwhile please report any new sightings of Clet to Niki.Clear@CornwallWildlifeTrust.org.uk. More on cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk



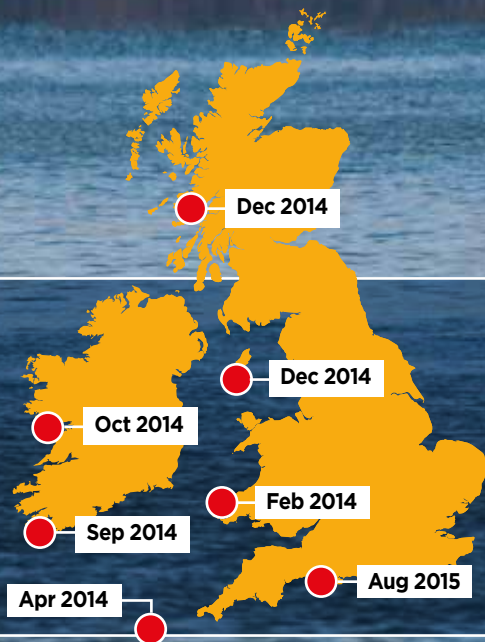
Surfing the Mull-to-Arran ferry. Clet's damaged dorsal fin makes him easy to identify



Showing off at Fowey, Cornwall. Clet usually seems to appreciate human company

Clet's travels

The records centre has collated data on Clet from Spring 2011, when he was off the coast of Brittany. Since then he's spent most time off Cornwall and Devon. He may be wandering due to hostility from other bottlenose dolphins. Full sightings map on ercis.org.uk/TrackingClet



NICK DAVIS, HEBRIDEAN WHALE & DOLPHIN TRUST

LYNNE NEWTON



Puffins: simply irresistible

Online guide to summer wildlife

Summer is the perfect time to immerse yourself in wildlife – and our new 'Top Wildlife Experiences' guide is bursting with ideas on how you can do it. Fancy delighting in a glow

worm, staking out a badger sett, lounging with a lizard, making a splash with gannets, or falling for THE fastest bird? These and many more are on wildlifetrusts.org/lovewildlife.

Plant a bat feast!

The RHS, Bat Conservation Trust and The Wildlife Trusts have joined forces to encourage everybody to make steps to help bats in their area. For example, planting flowers in your garden which attract night insects, such as honeysuckle, evening primrose, globe artichoke and eryngium will make the perfect bat feast! Find out how to help bats in your garden with the new FREE online guide Stars of the Night, available on wildaboutgardens.org.uk



Any flower that attracts moths like this elephant hawk attracts bats too

TONY HARBIN/FLPA

Farming for wildlife

The Wildlife Trusts are setting out on a new partnership with Jordans Cereals, who have a long history of wildlife-friendly farming. Now their 42 farms, totalling 44,500 acres, will build on that heritage with advice from experts at their local Wildlife Trust, making a landscape-scale contribution to wildlife and communities. The Jordans Farm Partnership will create a model for UK farm sustainability and set new standards for nature-friendly farming. For a chance to win a case of Jordans granolas see jordanscereals.co.uk/wildlife.



Look out for our badger logo on Jordans cereals later in the summer



Under new management: Bubbenhall Wood

STEVE CHESHIRE

Boost for ancient woodland in Warwickshire

A crucial new purchase by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has filled in the gap between two existing reserves to create an area of woodland and grassland bigger than Hyde Park.

"We now own or manage over 1000ha of wild space in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull, for the benefit of people and wildlife," said the Chief Executive Ed Green. "Linking these two patches means that the wood is now big enough for us to plan a reintroduction of dormice. In a county with not much ancient woodland that's a big deal."

Thanks to the many donations from members and grants from funders that made the purchase possible, including National Lottery players, WREN as part of the Landfill Communities Fund and the Banister Charitable Trust. More on warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk



A brown hare on a Jordans farm in Suffolk

MIKERA.COM

10 great places to see bats

The more you know about these long-lived, far-flying insect hunters, the more amazing they are. So make time to see them this summer

Bats are simply amazing. Take the common pipistrelle, Britain's most widespread bat species. It's tiny enough to crawl into a matchbox, but strong enough to fly hundreds of kilometres on a summer night, and gobble thousands of midges. Britain is home to 18 species of bat, 17 of which breed here. And now is a great time to see these winged wonders as they



Dusk: the ideal time to see bats. Or even hear them

emerge from their daytime roosts and limber up for the hunt. The suggestions below are some of the best, but your Wildlife Trust will have lots more if you ask.

Equipment? A bat detector (from £60) is nice if you can afford it. Or a ID chart by the Field Studies Council costs about £3. Now get out and have some batty fun.

More at <http://wtru.st/places-bats>

Your bat adventure starts here

Details on each of these sites are on your Wildlife Trust's website. You can find that via wildlifetrusts.org

1 Gwaith Powdwr, Porthmadog North Wales WT

Lesser horseshoe, Daubentons and pipistrelles (among others), best seen at the 'Settling Pool', marked no.2 on the leaflet.

Where is it? Penrhyndeudraeth, on A487, Gwynedd LL48 6LT.

2 Finemere Wood, Aylesbury Berks, Bucks & Oxon WT

Atmospheric ancient woodland with much-studied populations of Natterer's, brown long-eared, and Bechstein's bats.

Where is it? Lee Rd, Quainton, Aylesbury HP18 0QN.

3 Bystock Pools, Exmouth Devon Wildlife Trust

Hugely popular heathland, grassland and lake with seven species of bat, including brown long-eared and Daubenton's.

Where is it? 4 miles north of Exmouth, EX8 5EB.

4 Glenarm, Larne Ulster Wildlife

Grassland and semi-natural woodland: a beautiful reserve with all of N. Ireland's eight bat species.

Where is it? B97 Ballymena Road Glenarm, Co Antrim BT44 0BD.

5 Browne's Folly, Bath Avon Wildlife Trust

Has great views and 13 of the UK's 17 species, including greater horseshoe and the UK's second ever recorded Geoffroy's bat.

Where is it? Above the village of Bathford, Avon.

6 Bailey Einon, Llandrindod Wells, Radnorshire WT

Ancient woodland along the river Ithon. Watch from the bridge or boardwalk to see Daubenton's bats feeding over the water.

Where is it? 1 mile east of Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5PD.

7 Boilton Wood, Preston Lancashire WT

The main path is a highway for bats as well as walkers. See soprano and common pipistrelle, noctule and Daubenton's.

Where is it? Boilton Wood Local Nature Reserve, Preston PR2 6HD.

Bats are most common in the south and west

8 Falls of Clyde Reserve, South Lanarkshire, Scottish WT

16th century ruined castle is a perfect roost for pipistrelle and Daubenton's. Natterer's and whiskered have also been seen.

Where is it? New Lanark, South Lanarkshire, ML11 9DB.

9 Hanningfield Reservoir, Essex WT

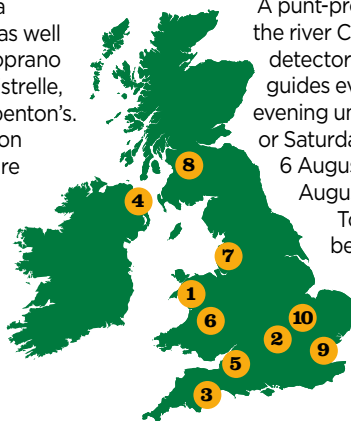
From April to October 400-500 Soprano pipistrelle bats gather in the roof of the visitor centre, in a maternity roost. Special events in July and August let you see them emerging - a real spectacle.

Where is it? Hanningfield Reservoir visitor centre, Hawkswood Rd, Downham, Billericay CM11 1WT.

10 Bat Punt Safari, Cambridge Beds, Cambs & N'hants WT

A punt-propelled safari on the river Cam with bat detectors and expert guides every Friday evening until 23 September, or Saturday 23 July, 30 July, 6 August, 13 August, 20 August and 27 August.

Tours depart just before dusk. Visit scudamores.com for timings and tickets.



A photograph of a Natterer's bat drinking from a garden pond at night. The bat is shown in profile, with its wings spread wide, hovering over the water. Its mouth is open, and a small stream of water is visible falling from it. The background is dark, with some lily pads visible on the water's surface. The bat's fur is a mix of grey and brown, and its wings are a pale, translucent color. The water is dark green and reflects the light from the bat and the surrounding environment. The overall scene is captured in a close-up, high-angle shot, emphasizing the bat's delicate features and its interaction with the water.

Learn to help bats

Bats are under threat from lack of food and habitat, and new development. Our new action pack shows how everyone can make gardens and green spaces more bat friendly. See wildaboutgardens.org.uk

A Natterer's bat having a drink in a garden pond in Surrey. It's just over two inches long, and weighs five to nine grammes

COMPETITION

Curiouser & Curiouser!

Only **20**
places
available!

Win a place on our
Fun Fungi Day!

Folly Farm Centre, Chew Valley
10am-4pm, Mon 24 Oct

Competition Details

If you are **curious about mushrooms** and are between **12-15 years old**, tell us what makes fungi such a **fascinating kingdom** and submit your entries (e.g. pictures, photos, stories) by **Wednesday 31 August 2016**. Twenty lucky winners get the chance to spend a **special fun educational day** at **Folly Farm Centre** with **Fungi Experts**. For more details e-mail: info@justin-smith-foundation.org

www.JustinSmithFoundation.org

In partnership with Avon Wildlife Trust and kindly supported and funded by Bristol Naturalists' Society



Avon

Top 5 butterflies to look out for



There are 59 breeding butterflies in the UK and a few regular visitors from overseas too. Here are some summer highlights, which have a peak flying period of July-August.

1. Silver-washed fritillary A noticeably large butterfly, which will patrol bramble flowers close to woodland edges. The underwing pattern separates it from the similar dark green fritillary.

Where? Woodland glades, try Walton Common nature reserve near Portishead.

2. Comma Named after the white dash on the underside of its wings, this frilly-edged butterfly will rest with closed wings on a tree bark for camouflage.

Where? Keep your eyes peeled at Willsbridge Valley or Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock nature reserves.

3. Painted lady A migrant that sometimes visits us in huge numbers, and sometimes doesn't. Will this be the year for painted ladies?

Where? Anywhere from your garden to the top of a mountain. Wildflower meadows are a favourite stopping point - Folly Farm in Stowey has some of the best!

4. Marbled white These striking black and white butterflies are easy to spot from a distance and will often be feeding on common knapweed.

Where? A meadow specialist, look out at Middle Hill Common and Dolebury Warren nature reserves.

5. Speckled wood As its name suggests these butterflies tend to be found dancing in and out of the dappled lighting in woodlands.

Where? Take a woodland stroll at Browne's Folly near Bath, or Weston Big Wood.

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Natural Estates Project Officer
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*part-time

Postscript



Moths in meadows and madder

Professor Jane Memmott, Trustee

Hummingbird hawk moth egg

“ **Y**ou never forget seeing a hummingbird hawk moth. I must have seen a couple of dozen over the years, and while multiple sightings at the same place blur a bit, I can clearly remember each location and moment. They are probably the most spectacular insect you are likely to see on the wing in this country, looking so much like hummingbirds that each year there are a flurry of reports of hummingbird sightings in the UK. Imagine something not much smaller than a hummingbird (and remember that hummingbirds can be very small weighing just a few grams), zooming into view, hovering and sipping nectar out of a tubular flower. I've seen them most often on red valerian and honeysuckle.

They are a natty orange colour – remarkably like a rufous hummingbird if you are lucky enough to have seen one of these – with what looks like a square barred tail. They don't actually overwinter in the UK, rather each year they fly in from southern Europe; they are the insect version of swifts and swallows and seeing one means that spring really has arrived.

Hummingbird hawk moths can have caterpillars



in the UK and one of my sightings involved one laying an egg on the wild madder that had climbed through the pyracantha outside our kitchen window. But when I went around to try and find the egg (hallucinating about rearing a hummingbird hawk moth caterpillar with the kids) it was like trying to find a needle in a haystack and I never did find it.

Moths can be important pollinators in some habitats, so we welcome them on our nature reserves and in our gardens. They are a part of the natural world it is really easy to see, especially when they come to our windows at night. To see a tiger moth while walking to work is a rather special start to the day; tiger moths are fairly common in Bristol and like hummingbird hawk moths they are day flying. They are drop dead gorgeous with colouring of red, black and yellow as adults and their caterpillars can be seen on green alkanet this time of year. Once there were hummingbirds in Europe, we know this because fossil hummingbirds have been found in France, so this summer see if you can spot their insect lookalike hovering on a street corner in South West England and it'll be sure to make you smile.

