

WildAvon

A FUTURE FOR WILDLIFE

Help us be there for
nature in Avon

HIDDEN FORESTS

Explore the amazing
miniature world of lichens

AUTUMN WILDLIFE

Heroic hedges

Discover the wildlife that
thrives in our hedgerows



Avon

Welcome



Welcome to your autumn *Wild Avon* magazine, inspiring you with ways to enjoy the season and updating you on what we have been doing during these difficult months. As for many, the vibrant activity in nature during spring and summer has been a much-needed source of wonder and inspiration during such an unprecedented time.

I appreciate the return of autumn as a chance to pause and reset our intentions as an organisation. Coronavirus has had an extensive impact on the way we work – we have been working from home with many of our colleagues furloughed and had to cancel most of our events and many volunteering opportunities from March until the end of the year. The financial impact has been so extreme as to cause redundancies within our teams, and is why we ask for your support to help us be there for wildlife long into the future.

There have also been successes over the past six months however, which we are very happy to include in this edition. Your response to our ecological emergency appeal was fantastic, helping us to raise nearly £12,000 to help bring wildlife back and fight the ecological emergencies that have been declared by Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset Councils, thanks to our influence. Likewise, you have joined us in fighting insect population decline from your homes as nearly 700 people from our community have signed up to take action for insects. You may have written to your MP or stopped using pesticides in your garden, and many of you have ordered wildflowers from our Grow Wilder site, formerly Feed Bristol. At the start of lockdown, we launched our online wildflower shop and delivery service and you reacted incredibly, helping to plant pollinator-friendly wildflowers across the region and support Avon's wildlife through your purchases.

You may notice this edition is slightly shorter than previous magazines. We wanted to make sure it was the best it could be given our reduced staff capacity. Thank you for your continued support during these challenging times and I hope you find inspiration in your autumnal *Wild Avon* magazine.

Ian Barrett
Chief Executive of Avon Wildlife Trust
Follow me on twitter @IanBarrettSW

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DAVID TIPLING/2020 DIVISION

Avon Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*

Wild Avon is the membership magazine for **Avon Wildlife Trust**, 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 over 17,000 members and 1,150 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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Follow us on social media for the latest news and events. Please share your wildlife pictures and experiences! You can also subscribe to our monthly newsletter online through our website to hear about our latest news and events.

Facebook @avonwt
Twitter @avonwt
Instagram @avonwt

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Donate Help us to continue the fight to bring wildlife back by donating today, so that we can all benefit from nature on our doorstep. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/coronavirus](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/coronavirus)

Adopt a species Choose between a badger or bumblebee adoption to celebrate a special occasion, to give to a loved one or simply to help protect these wonderful species. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/adoptaspecies](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/adoptaspecies)

Campaign We need your voice to amplify campaigns, lobby and raise awareness for urgent local issues such as fighting the ecological emergency, reversing insect decline, and creating a connected network of habitats for wildlife. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/campaign](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/campaign)

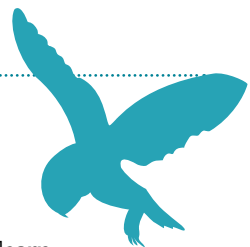
Fundraise Set yourself a challenge or organise an event to fundraise with family and friends to help wildlife in our region. [justgiving.com/avonwildlifetrust](https://www.justgiving.com/avonwildlifetrust)

Volunteer

Sign up to receive our volunteer newsletter to learn about opportunities to get involved. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteernews](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteernews)

Include a gift in your will

Celebrate your love for local wildlife by giving a gift that could last for generations. A gift in your will, no matter how big or small, can make a real difference. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/giftinwill](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/giftinwill)



A large flock of ducks is captured in flight against a clear, light blue sky. The ducks are scattered throughout the frame, with some in the foreground and others further away, creating a sense of movement and depth. The ducks have brown and white plumage, and their wings are spread as they fly.

Your wild autumn

The best of the season's wildlife and where to enjoy it across Avon

Everything starts in autumn. Birds returning from their breeding grounds in the freezing north make their way south to the warmer and nutrient-rich waters of UK shores and wetlands.



Thank you

Thanks to your membership, we are managing land to protect habitats for wetland birds so that they can continue to use our sites as havens with space to rest, feed and raise their young

AUTUMN SPECTACLE

Migrating birds

The autumn bird migration is a spectacle not to be missed! Over 70,000 wetland birds make their way to the Severn Estuary every winter, with thousands more passing through on their way further south. These birds are drawn to the mild climate in the south west, which prevents the invertebrate-rich muds of the estuary from freezing, therefore providing a reliable food source through the colder months. Further inland you can see the skies fill with birds such as starling and redwing, which come to join the resident flocks for the winter.

Migration is a dangerous and tiring business, particularly due to increasingly unpredictable weather events and shifting seasons, as well as the impact of humans. Those with the longer migrations have a variety of fascinating adaptations to conserve energy, such as absorbing non-essential internal organs and re-growing them when they arrive!

SEE THEM THIS AUTUMN AND WINTER

- **Walborough** has good numbers of wildfowl and wetland birds, including redshank, dunlin and godwit, due to the saltmarsh and estuary mud there.
- **Dolebury Warren** is a great place to spot redwing feeding on hawthorn berries, one of their favoured foods.
- **Chew Valley Lake** is an important site for wintering wildfowl, such as shoveler, gadwall, teal and tufted ducks. It also hosts an impressive winter gull roost of up to 50,000 black-headed, common and Mediterranean gulls.



Visit an autumn woodland

As the season starts to turn, the colours of an autumn woodland are a sight to behold. As greens turn to red and golden hues, small creatures like dormice curl up for a winter of hibernation. Fungi sprout up from the woodland floor, and the smell of damp mossy earth rises from the ground. Woodland birds dance between tree branches, hunting for insects to keep their energy up through the colder months. We work with our volunteers and trainees through the winter to keep our woodlands in the best possible shape for wildlife.

SEE IT THIS AUTUMN

- **Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock** Looking out from our reserve next to the Portway you can catch a stunning view of the autumn colours of the Avon Gorge.
- **Weston Big Wood** A walk around this wooded reserve will offer a backdrop of autumn colours and an opportunity to spot a variety of birds, including woodpecker, nuthatch and tawny owl.

BEN HALL/2020VISION

URBAN FIELDCRAFT

Brilliant bats

The air of mystery that surrounds bats has led to many Hollywood misconceptions which can be swiftly dispelled. Bats aren't blind, they won't get tangled in your hair, and all UK species live on a diet of insects rather than blood. Bats are the only mammal capable of true flight.

Due to the decline in numbers they are protected under UK law and this protection is extended to the places where they live, known as roosts. Different roosting conditions are needed at different times of the year, but trees and woodlands are important for all 17 known species of breeding bats. Woodlands provide roosting sites, food and commuting routes between foraging areas and roosts.

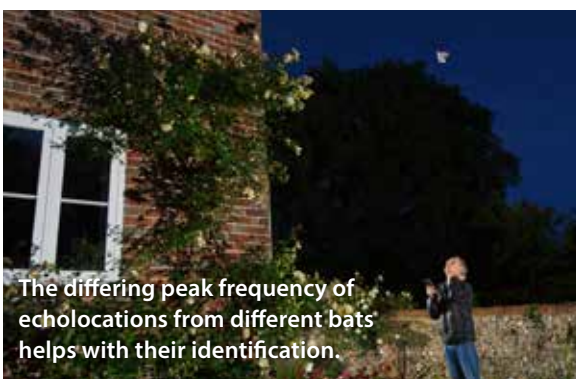
How to SPOT A BAT

- **Tune in** Bats use echolocation to assist with flying and catching prey. They send sound waves out from their nose or mouth which return as echoes when they hit an object, providing the bat with a sonic map of its surroundings. As bats echolocate at high frequencies, we use bat detectors to transfer them into audible sounds. Why not get involved with your local bat group to learn more.
- **Size it up** Our smallest bat, the common pipistrelle (weighing roughly the same as a 20p piece), can consume up to 3,000 insects in one night, making it a wonderful ally to farmers, gardeners and fruit growers. We are also very fortunate to have populations of the rare lesser and greater horseshoe bats in our region.



A pair of common pipistrelle rest their wings

TOM MARSHALL



The differing peak frequency of echolocations from different bats helps with their identification.

TERRY WHITTAKER/2020VISION



SEE THIS

Look out for trees and bushes hanging with fruit. Berries such as sloes and haws help overwintering birds survive the cold months when other food sources are scarce.

DO THIS

As leaves fall to the woodland floor, collect different species and take them home to identify. You could even dry them out and make yourself an autumn leaf collage!

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Owls

Owls have long been a source of intrigue and mystery, often appearing at twilight. As the nights draw in, our waking hours increasingly overlap with theirs, so autumn is a great time for owl spotting.

What to look for

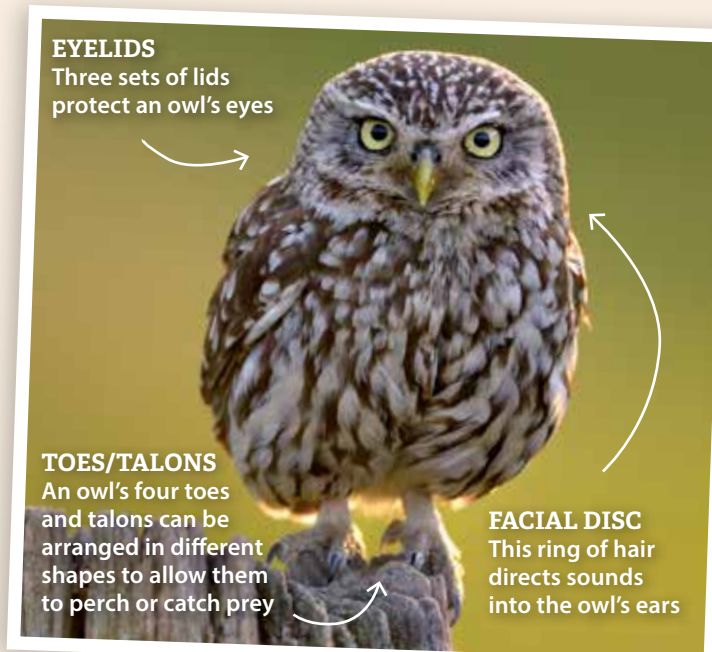
In Britain we have five species of owls: barn owl, tawny owl, little owl, long-eared owl and short-eared owl. All are native apart from the little owl, which was introduced in the 1800s and is now deemed naturalised. Eagle owls have also bred successfully following escape from private collections and aviaries. There are two families of owls: those with heart-shaped faces like the barn owl, and those with round faces like the tawny, short-eared or long-eared.

Amazing adaptations

Owls have an array of impressive features that make them incredibly stealthy night-time hunters. Fringed edges to flight feathers allow for near silent flight. Their fourteen neck bones (double the number in humans) allow for 270 degrees of movement to keep an eye out in all directions. Ears are often asymmetrical, allowing them to judge exactly where a sound is coming from, which helps to pinpoint prey.

Home sweet home

Although highly-skilled hunters, owls do not put so much effort into building their nests. Many, such as little owls because of their size, choose cavities which have either formed naturally or been left by other birds,



ANDY ROUSE/2020/VISION

frequently in trees, or nest boxes that replicate these cavities. Barn owls typically nest on barn rafters, while short-eared owls simply scrape a bowl into the ground.

SEE THEM THIS AUTUMN

- **Clapton Moor** The Clapton Circuit, with its bird hide, is a wonderful place for bird watching, and if you're lucky you might even spot an owl on the hunt.
- **Folly Farm** This peaceful reserve, with joined up woodlands and hedgerows, is great for seeing barn owls gliding through the sky at dusk. You might also see some tawny owls nesting in the roost on the farm.



Reserve information and maps

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves



JON HAWKINS SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

Top tips 3 SPECIES TO SPOT

Barn owl

Watch for this very pale owl gliding along field margins in grassland and farmland as the light starts to dim.



RUSSELL SAVORY

Tawny owl

Listen out for the characteristic 'twit-twoo' of female and male tawny owls calling to each other through the darkness.



STEVE DAVIS

Short-eared owl

Although breeding mainly on upland moors, this owl frequents coastal grazing marsh across the country in the winter months.



ANDY ROUSE/2020/VISION

HEAR THIS

Listen to the crunching and rustling of crispy leaves underfoot as you get out and about this autumn.

FORAGE FOR THIS

Autumn is the season for fungi foraging but take care to identify species correctly. Attending a fungi foray could help build your skills and meet other fungi enthusiasts!

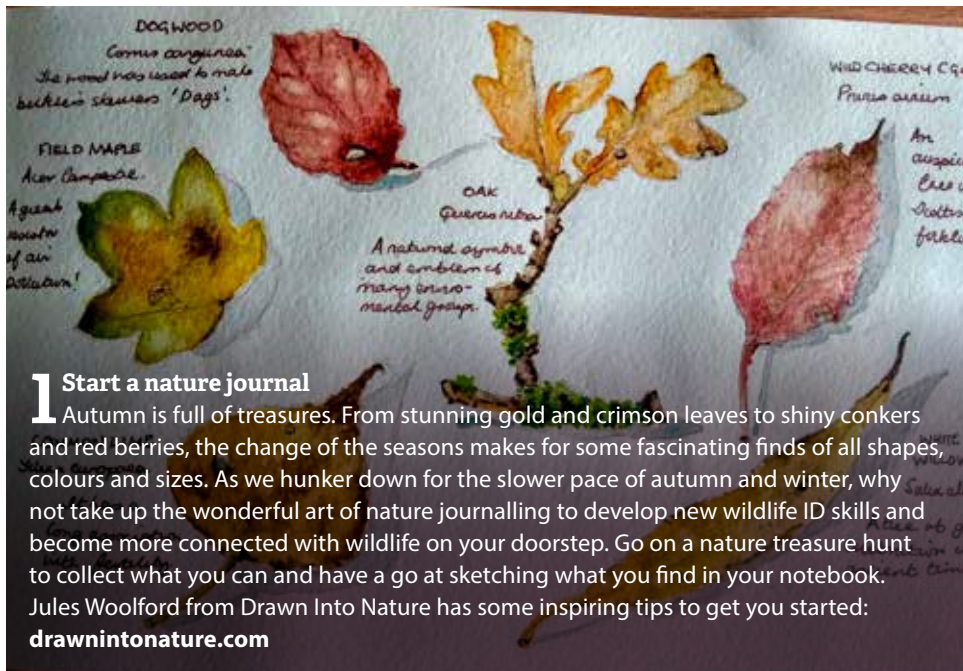


ROSS HODDINOTT/2020VISION

NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Six ways to enjoy nature this autumn

Why should kids have all the fun? Reignite your love of nature with these random acts of wildness



2 Sow wildflowers for a spring bloom

Autumn is an excellent time to plant wildflowers. The summer heat has passed and the ground is damper so the conditions are perfect for plants to settle in ready to get an early start in spring. Whether planting in pots or in the ground, make sure the soil and roots of the plant are moist before planting. If the roots are a bit congested, tease them out at their ends so they grow more quickly out into the soil, then water them well. When spring comes, they will start to grow, giving you beautiful wildflowers as well as life-saving food for the birds and pollinators.

You can buy wildflower plants and wildflower seed from our Grow Wilder site and wildflower nursery: growwilder.co.uk



PHILIP PRECEY

JULES WOOLFORD

1 Start a nature journal

Autumn is full of treasures. From stunning gold and crimson leaves to shiny conkers and red berries, the change of the seasons makes for some fascinating finds of all shapes, colours and sizes. As we hunker down for the slower pace of autumn and winter, why not take up the wonderful art of nature journalling to develop new wildlife ID skills and become more connected with wildlife on your doorstep. Go on a nature treasure hunt to collect what you can and have a go at sketching what you find in your notebook. Jules Woolford from Drawn Into Nature has some inspiring tips to get you started: drawnintonature.com



3 ID some fungi at our reserves

It's the best time to be on the lookout for mushrooms and toadstools popping up from below the ground to show off their weird and wonderful appearances that make them seem as if they are from a fairy tale. There are over 15,000 species of fungi in the UK, making up an entire kingdom of their own. Visit our reserves to see how many you can spot and ID. That is plenty of IDing to keep you busy for a while!

ROSS HODDINOTT/2020VISION



AMY LEWIS

4 Catch an autumn sunset

The autumn equinox, when the day and night are of equal length, has passed and the days are getting shorter. The sun is lower in the sky, which makes for some spectacular autumn sunsets, with rich reds, blazing oranges and golden yellows painted across the sky. End your day with a walk in the woods, at a local nature reserve or even around your neighbourhood. The crisp air, vibrant colours and glimmering light are sure to be an uplifting sight.

5 Enjoy the season's harvest

This is a time of nature's plenty, when you'll be able to harvest blackberries, rose hips, crab apples, hazelnuts and seeds from bushes, trees and hedgerows. Plus, there is often a bounty of vegetables in the ground in gardens and allotments. Why not try your hand at making some jam, a crumble or even some berry gin to give as a gift over the festive period? If you forage, just be sure to do your research on what you take from nature's larder and leave enough to allow wildlife to eat to keep warm over the winter for migration or hibernation.



ALAN PRICE



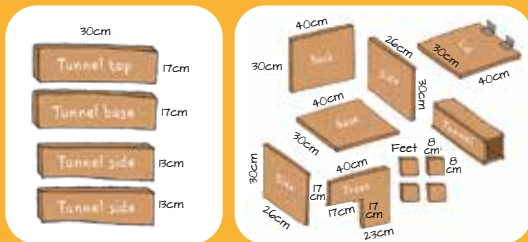
Nature
craft

TOM MARSHALL

6 Make a hedgehog house

Help hedgehogs stay warm and cosy over winter by making a hedgehog home in your garden or at a friend's house. You will need:

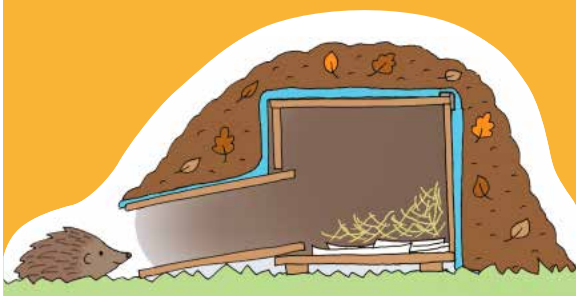
- Hammer and nails
- 2 metal hinges
- Soil
- Dry leaves
- Straw or dry grass
- Newspapers
- Polythene sheeting
- 20mm untreated FSC plywood boards (birch is ideal!) cut to the sizes shown
- A quiet, shady spot
- Access to your garden for hedgehogs



Building your hedgehog home:

- 1 Cut your timber to the dimensions in the diagram above.
- 2 Assemble the tunnel and main chamber separately; attaching the feet and the hinge flap before putting the box together will make things a little easier. The tunnel will be slightly smaller than the height of the opening so that it can be slotted in at an angle, making a ramp.
- 3 Pick a shady, quiet spot to put your assembled hedgehog house. Put the newspaper and straw and dry grass inside, cover the house with polythene sheeting, then pack soil and dead leaves around the outside.

- Visit our website for more actions to help wildlife this autumn:
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/actions



CORRINE WELSH

Wildlife Competitions

Enter one of our wildlife competitions and you could be featured in our next magazine! From showcasing your photography to sharing your nature writing, we'd love to see nature through your lens.

In this issue we're celebrating our Wild Experience Competition winners from this year's 30 Days Wild, who won some wildflowers from our wildflower nursery at Grow Wilder.

Thank you to Natalie, Leaf Girl and Rainbow Flower Fairy for this wonderful entry, sharing their wild experiences with us during lockdown.



Our family lives in Weston-super-Mare, so we consider ourselves very lucky that our list of walk-able outdoor destinations includes seafront, beach and several glorious Victorian parks. My five-year-old and two-year-old daughters, Nancy and Lois, love Grove Park, Weston's central park. The reason they love it is not the play park, or the Victorian band stand, but because of the areas of rewilding created by local voluntary group, Friends of Grove Park. These spaces have been especially precious to my girls during the lockdown period.

In fact they have been so inspired by the outdoors that they have created new personas: "Leaf Girl", an elf with the power to talk to animals and manipulate trees and foliage, and her faithful sidekick "Rainbow Flower Fairy", who can cover everything in flowers. Together they have had long and meaningful conversations with squirrels. They have tried to help a male pigeon unsuccessfully impress a female. They have hidden behind a bush for 30 minutes watching a family of brown rats, speculating on their movements, family relationships and domestic habits. Elf and Fairy have had time to study the internal patterns of an iris, the movement of dragonflies over the pond, the whirls and swirls of tree trunks. We have discovered a new beetle named the "runabout" beetle and marvelled over "red ants".



Thank you, Grove Park, for the hours of diversion and for keeping Elf and Fairy connected to nature.





Discover Walborough

Walborough, just south of Weston-super-Mare, is a 22-hectare site owned by Avon Wildlife Trust since 1995. This fantastic coastal site is part of the Severn Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and is perfect for spotting wading and migratory birds in the autumn.



PETER CAIRNS/2020VISION

Walborough is a great site to visit through the changing seasons. This varied coastal landscape offers something for both the keen-eyed naturalist and the visiting family out for a stroll. The Brean Down Way, which is also part of the National Cycle Network, passes through the middle of the site and gives an option to visit by bike – and means you don't have to remember your wellies, even in the winter months.

Enjoy the beautiful open landscape

Bordered by the mouth of the River Axe, the beautiful open landscape of Walborough and Uphill are a mosaic of limestone grassland, grazing marsh, saltmarsh and scrub. This mixture of habitats provides the perfect home for wildlife such as butterflies, rare plants and wading birds.

This site is managed with grazing cattle to ensure nationally-rare plant species

that define the character of the landscape are maintained. Livestock are grazed in low numbers from the spring through to autumn across the site, allowing flowering plants to bloom and flourish, creating havens for insects.

You can enjoy stunning panoramic views of the estuary from the top of the main hill. The grassland at this spot contains many plant species commonly found in limestone grasslands, including cowslips, common rock-rose, black knapweed, small scabious, kidney vetch, green-winged orchids and autumn lady's tresses.

During the spring and early summer, the flowering plants create a blanket of colour and provide important habitat for a number of butterfly species, including the chalkhill blue, grizzled skipper, small heath and dingy skipper.

In the warmer summer months, skylarks provide a continuous



JOHN BRIDGES



PAUL MCCORMACK

Thanks
to your support, we can look after Walborough for the butterflies, rare plants, wading birds and other wildlife that depend on it and for everyone to enjoy

The estuary and saltmarsh are home to large numbers of birds in winter, including wading birds such as dunlin, redshank, little egret and the unmistakably colourful shelduck. Snipe can also be seen in the pools and lagoons in the saltmarsh fields. During the winter months birds from northern Europe join our resident population and, although numbers have declined nationally in recent years, Walborough has managed to sustain a good over-wintering population.



ANDY ROUSE/ZOOVISION

soundtrack from above as they breed on the saltmarsh. The mixed scrub that wraps around the base of the hill offers nesting sites for visitors like white throats and black caps. Overhead, buzzards can be seen circling and the familiar 'croaking' call of the raven can be heard. You can distinguish these large birds from the crow family by their size and diamond shaped tail in flight.

As we move into the autumn and winter months there is still a lot to see.

Another welcome winter visitor is the short-eared owl. This medium-sized owl can be seen hunting for voles and other small mammals during the day over the rough saltmarsh. They will often quarter an area of ground, gliding, hovering, looking and listening intently for unsuspecting prey. These stealthy birds of prey are regular visitors to the site and well worth looking for while you're on a winter walk. Smaller birds can also be seen in good numbers, as pipits, finches and skylarks flock on the saltmarsh, feeding on the seeds of plants such as sea lavender and sea aster. ■



VAUGHN MATTHEWS NR

DID YOU KNOW In 2003, the Trust removed sections of the sea wall to create a new area of saltmarsh on the reserve. Six-metre sections of the wall were removed and replaced with container-like wire baskets filled with large stones to allow water to filter through as the tide rose and fell. Areas of the field were also reprofiled to help this tidal water flood the ground. You can see this in action if you stand on the top of Walborough Hill and look back towards the boat yard. The field below you will be full of wet ditches and scrapes. Remember to look out for wading birds.

NOW YOU DO IT

1 Visit Walborough

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Location: Uphill Way, Uphill, Weston Super Mare, BS23

How to get there: If cycling use National Cycle Route 33

Opening times: Free entry all year round, dawn til dusk.

Access: There are public footpaths that access the site. A surfaced path allows access to parts of the site for those who are less mobile. There is open access to the grassland areas but please keep off the salt marsh to avoid disturbance to birds. Contact the Trust for disabled access information.

Phone: 0117 917 7270

Email: mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Website: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/walborough

TOP WILDLIFE TO SPOT

➤ **Small heath butterfly:** Catch a glimpse of this small, light-orange butterfly collecting nectar from late-flowering wildflowers on sunny days here throughout the autumn

➤ **Autumn lady's tresses:** While enjoying the views of the estuary from the top of the main hill, look out for the delicate white flowers of the autumn lady's tresses, a plant common to limestone grasslands.

➤ **Dunlin:** Find large flocks of this small sandpiper seeking out insects, worms and molluscs at the estuary during autumn and winter.

➤ **Skylark:** Look up to spot a skylark in song-flight, this streaky brown bird can be seen soaring through the open countryside at Walborough, singing from great heights all year round.

THINGS TO DO

➤ Scan the saltmarsh for wetland birds. Look for the striking white **little egret** as it looks for food in the shallow lagoons. Or even glimpse a **snipe** as it takes to the wing and darts for the cover of a new resting place.

➤ Climb nearby Uphill to the site of the Old Church of St Nicholas on the cliff top overlooking **Brean Down** and the mouth of the **River Axe**. It really is a spectacular view!

➤ Try and find the **Bronze Age bell barrow** on Walborough Hill. This secluded ancient monument dates to 1,500 BC.

More Avon Wildlife Trust nature reserves for an **autumn day out**



2 Willsbridge Valley

Why now?

The autumn months are a fantastic time to visit as the colours change in the canopy and the bubbling water in the brook draws the eye to points of interest in the valley bottom. The circular path takes you through the site and is a great vantage point to spot some winter birds.

Know before you go

Location: The Dramway, Willsbridge, BS30 6EX

Open: Free entry all year, dawn to dusk

Wildlife to spot: kingfishers, foxes, badgers and greater horseshoe bats

Find out more:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/willsbridge-valley

The lowdown

Willsbridge Valley reserve is on the eastern edge of Bristol, in the valley of the Siston Brook, a branch of the River Avon. It is used by the local community and other visitors to relax in the tranquil green space and enjoy the wildlife.

The reserve contains many habitats, including secondary woodland, semi-improved grassland, scrub, ponds, a stream, and man-made quarries.

While you're here, the buff orange underbelly of the nuthatch may catch your eye as it travels head-first down tree trunks, or listen for the drumming of the striking greater spotted woodpecker. Flocks of long-tailed tits can also be seen moving through the branches above, while blackbird and thrushes mix and feed in the hawthorn crowns.



3 Goblin Combe

Why now?

Goblin Combe is a rewarding site to visit all year round, but the autumn really accentuates the mosaic of rich habitats which provides the perfect backdrop for this most dramatic of seasons. On bright sunny autumn days, it can be a real treat to see butterflies like the small tortoiseshell and speckled wood hunting for late flowering plants.



Know before you go

Location: 61 Cleeve Hill Rd, Bristol, UK

Open: Free entry all year, dawn to dusk

Wildlife to spot: rare moonwort fern, hazel dormouse and autumn lady's tresses

Find out more:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/goblin-combe

The lowdown

Just west of Bristol, Goblin Combe offers a dramatic landscape to explore. The gorge-like combe with its large areas of limestone rock contrasts with a high vantage of Cleeve Toot. Over time, much of this has become covered with hazel groves and yew woodland. These dark wooded slopes support a diversity of ferns, mosses and fungi easy to spot on many of the paths at this time of year. The site is also home to a population of dormice who are busy fattening up on fruit and hazel nuts before hibernation.

Your reward for climbing to the top of the limestone ridge is a far-reaching view across to the Mendip ridge and Severn Estuary, whilst the wooded slopes below will be a patchwork of colour as the trees give up their leaves. The sunny, flower-rich grasslands above are home to diverse wildlife and contrast strongly with the eerie combe below. Autumn lady's tresses can be spotted late in the year and fungi, including the lurid bolete, can be seen emerging in the grassland.



Plan your next great day out at our nature reserves:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves



**Melissa
Harrison**



The home patch



When you look back at the spring and summer of 2020, what will you remember? The challenge of home-schooling? The frustrations of domestic confinement? Fear of illness, or perhaps illness itself?

Our shared period of lockdown was a long, strange time, yet for many of us it came with an unexpected silver lining: the opportunity to rediscover (or discover for the first time) the overlooked green spaces around our homes.

Especially in the early weeks, when restrictions were at their strictest, all many of us saw of the outside world was during a brief walk each day. As one of the sunniest springs on record unfolded, we sought out parks, nature reserves and urban green spaces, hungry for contact with the natural world. For some time now we've been reading about the benefits of contact with nature to our mental and physical health, but this year it was really brought home to us, as our deepest instincts drove us to listen out for birdsong, plant windowboxes, cherish humble pavement weeds and take daily note of spring's progress, drawing deep comfort, amid frightening changes, from one of the eternal verities.

So what happens now that many of us are back at work each day, and car trips for leisure are once again allowed? Do we consign the local discoveries we made to the dustbin of memory, filing our wonder-filled walks under 'strange things we did in lockdown'? Or can we take something crucial from the weeks we spent close to home, using what we learned to transform the post-Covid world?

I've written before, in these pages and elsewhere, of the importance of having a 'home patch' that we care for and connect to, physically, mentally and emotionally. Knowing where the swifts nest on your street, which oak in the park is always the last into leaf, why the mason bees nest on one side of a nearby building and not the other – these things root us in place and time, in ways that often prove deeply beneficial both to the world around us, and to ourselves.

If, during lockdown, you found yourself seeing your local area with new eyes, don't turn away from it now. Consider becoming a Friend of your nearest park, or supporting The Wildlife Trusts; look online for Forest Schools who want help connecting kids in your area to nature, or other charities that have been doing unsung work to protect and preserve green spaces where you are.

At the very least, please don't stop visiting the places you discovered in lockdown, no matter how tempting it is to forget them in favour of somewhere further afield. We need them, just as wildlife needs them: not just grand National Parks, but nearby nature, too.

There could still be a new local gem to discover. Find out if there's a Wildlife Trust reserve near you:



wildlifetrusts.org/nature-reserves

A LITTLE BIT WILD

It may have seemed as though the birds were singing more loudly during lockdown, but in fact, it's likely they were able to lower their volume as they had far less noise pollution to compete with. This will have saved them precious energy, and may also have boosted their chances of reproductive success.



Melissa Harrison is a nature writer and novelist, and editor of the anthologies *Spring, Summer, Autumn* and *Winter*, produced in support of The Wildlife Trusts.

6 places to see

Hidden forests

Across the UK, hidden forests of lichen are waiting to be discovered. They thrive in almost any environment with enough light, from the rocky mosaics of dry stone walls to the gnarled bark of ancient woodlands. Lichens are fascinating things — not one organism, but a symbiotic coupling of one or more fungus species and an alga or cyanobacterium (or occasionally both). They live in harmony, the fungus providing structure and the other organism making food through photosynthesis. They're often overlooked, but closer inspection reveals a world in miniature, with lichens growing in sprawling shapes like the trunks, branches and leaves of the forests in which many of them grow. It seems as if no two lichens are alike, each patch a work of chaotic art, from moss-green cups to rust-coloured mats. With a searching eye and an open mind, lichens can brighten any walk in the wild.

Usnea florida, a beard-lichen also known as witches' whiskers, is a declining species found mainly on trees in Wales and south-west England



See the spectacle for yourself



1 Ballachuan Hazelwood, Scottish Wildlife Trust

One of Scotland's most ancient woodlands, where the hazels and rocks are dripping with lichens and mosses. It's home to over 372 different lichens, including Norwegian specklebelly, octopus suckers and elf-ears lichens.

Where: Near Oban, PA34 4RJ

2 Glenarm Nature Reserve, Ulster Wildlife Trust

This beautiful river valley is home to lichens found nowhere else in Ireland. Look for them decorating the branches of ancient oaks or coating rocks along the Glenarm River, where the rare river jelly lichen is found.

Where: Glenarm, BT44 0BD

3 Eycott Hill, Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Admire the collage of lichens along the dry stone walls, or scour the rocky outcrops to find those orange, leafy lichens that grow best on a bird's favourite perch as they thrive on the extra nitrates from droppings of meadow pipits and wheatears.

Where: Penrith, CA11 0XD

4 Roundton Hill, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Once the site of an Iron Age hillfort, this impressive landscape supports almost 200 species of lichen. Look for them on the shady underhangs of volcanic rock outcrops.

Where: Church Stoke, SY15 6EL

5 Roydon Woods Nature Reserve, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

This enchanting ancient woodland is known for its wildflowers, but the lichens draping the ageing trees are just as impressive.

Where: Brockenhurst, SO42 7UF

6 Isles of Scilly, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

One of the best places for lichens in the UK. The granite cairns of Peninnis Head offer a good selection, with a backdrop of spectacular sea views. The islands are also home to rare species like gilt-edged lichen.

Did you discover any lichen?

We'd love to know how your search went.

Please tweet us your best photos of the lichens that take your liking! @wildlifetrusts

WILD NEWS

All the latest regional and national news from The Wildlife Trusts



A huge thank you to National Lottery Heritage Fund for giving us a **£250,000** grant to help us through the financial difficulty we've faced during the Covid-19 pandemic

TOM MARSHALL

REGIONAL

What has changed since coronavirus?


At the start of lockdown, we made the difficult but necessary decision to furlough most of our staff to protect our financial stability during an uncertain time. We worked with reduced capacity for over four months but were encouraged by the continuous support of our members. We have had to postpone our 40th birthday celebrations which were due to take place in March and have made the decision to hold this year's AGM virtually. After much consideration, we have also had to reduce our staff team because of significant financial losses caused by coronavirus. Like many charities, this has meant losing some much-loved, talented members of staff who have contributed a lot to the success of the charity.

Our team have been working hard to secure extra financial support through the pandemic and we were one of 15 Wildlife Trusts to be awarded an emergency grant in July, thanks to the National Lottery

Heritage Fund. We are grateful for this vital funding, which will allow us to plan for re-starting many of our services and help to keep our nature reserves, such as Folly Farm, open as natural havens for both people and wildlife.

Lockdown has brought some unexpected positivity as well, as we have noticed more visitors to our nature reserves and more people than ever engaging and appreciating nature on social media. Nature has been a source of solace and recuperation for so many of us and we hope this admiration carries on into the new normal we now face. Our wildflower nursery, Grow Wilder, has been inundated with orders and encouragement as we have been dispatching plants across the region and beyond – contributing to a wider network of pollinator-friendly wild spaces. We have had the most participants ever in this year's 30 Days Wild, with over 3,282 people locally committing to a Random Act of Wildness for every day in June.

This increased engagement and willingness to embrace nature makes us hopeful for the future of Avon's wildlife as we emerge from this crisis. With Bristol City Council and Bath & North East Somerset Council declaring ecological emergencies in their areas, we have a platform to work with more local authorities and decision-makers to put a plan of action together to bring wildlife back across the region. We have a vision of 30% of land and sea managed for wildlife by 2030 and we know our dedicated staff, volunteers and members, like you, will help to make this a reality. Together, we have made it through this difficult time and are ready to fight for the future wildlife deserves.

 **Turn to page 26 to read more about our virtual AGM or page 31 to read about how we can support your business towards a greener future.**



Thanks to support from The National Lottery Community Fund and players of People's Postcode Lottery for their understanding and flexibility as we redesign our activities for children, young people and families to relaunch this autumn.

HELENA DOLBY

REGIONAL

Stronger communities through nature-based learning

When it was clear that this was going to be a spring and summer like no other, our learning team found creative ways to connect children, young people, teachers, parents and carers with nature. The coronavirus pandemic has revealed nature's value, as people discovered their local wildlife sites for solace, freedom and entertainment. The inequalities in access to green spaces and the impact on physical and mental health were also revealed, with many families without a garden or easy access to local nature struggling.

We are now taking a fresh look at how we connect young people with

nature and inspire them to take action to support nature's recovery in a safe way. This includes self-led video sessions for families, working with schools to improve their grounds and curriculums for wildlife and outdoor learning and integrating nature-based wellbeing activities into our programmes. We are also training others to do the same, while supporting young people to get started in conservation careers and to campaign for change. We hope to come out of this as stronger communities, with an appreciation of the value of local wildlife, and the will to protect it.

Raising awareness of the ecological emergency

We continue to make great progress in raising awareness of the ecological emergency. In July 2020, Bath and North East Somerset Council declared an ecological emergency, following on from Bristol's declaration in February 2020. Alongside the climate emergency that was declared in Bristol in 2018, this shows decisive action rippling through Avon.

To ensure that large-scale action is taken to tackle these twin emergencies we are calling for a collective approach to nature's recovery, and are working with councils, businesses and organisations, communities and individuals. Together

with the Mayor of Bristol and the Natural History Consortium, we've developed an Ecological Emergency Strategy for the city this autumn.

Thanks to your generosity, we've raised nearly £12,000 for our ecological emergency appeal. With your support we will accelerate the pace of change by creating new wildlife habitats and influencing behaviour change that will bring our much-loved wildlife back. It's not too late to donate, help us make a difference today: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ecoemergency



RACHEL SCOPES

Together we're stronger

Here are some of the ways your membership has been helping to protect your local wildlife

Thanks to your support, we protected **12 badgers** on one of our reserves, including **2 cubs**, which we vaccinated this summer against bovine TB to help tackle this disease in a way which allows our wild badgers to thrive.



You planted **17,246 wildflowers** and herb pots from **Grow Wilder** between March and October 2020, helping us to take action for insects during the pandemic and continue to face the ecological emergency by providing pollen and nectar for insects and birds.

We introduced **4 Exmoor ponies** to our Folly Farm reserve, who have been doing some very important grazing work – munching dominant species like thistle and making space for more delicate wildflower species such as bird's-foot-trefoil, selfheal and knapweed.



More than **3,282** people in Avon signed up for **30 Days Wild** this June, a **99%** increase from last year. Thanks to everyone who committed to a Random Act of Wildness everyday throughout June and shared them with us on social media.

The University of Derby created a 5-year review of **30 Days Wild**, and found that participants experienced a significant increase in nature connectedness, rising by as much as **56%**. It also made participants happier and inspired more pro-nature behaviour.

Stag beetles are one of many species in danger.

UK UPDATE

Wildlife Trusts launch biggest ever appeal to kickstart nature's recovery by 2030

As we struggled through the worst pandemic in living memory, the importance of nature in our lives became clearer than ever. Science shows that humanity's basic needs — from food to happiness — can all be met with a healthy natural environment, where wildlife surrounds us.

But sadly, nature is not all around us, at least not in the abundance it should be. Many of our most treasured species like hedgehogs, bats and basking sharks are all at risk, as well as many of the insects that pollinate our food crops.

Loss of wild places and the breaking up of those that remain into small fragments has had a disastrous effect. Only 10% of land is protected in the UK and much of this is in poor condition. While some areas of the seabed are officially protected, harmful activities such as bottom trawling are only banned in a handful of locations.

All is not lost, as we know how to turn things round: we need to see nature's recovery happening across at least 30% of our land and seas by 2030. This would enable our wild places to connect and allow wildlife to move around and thrive. The Wildlife Trusts are fighting to make this a reality through our new 30 by 30 campaign, and we recently called for a new landscape designation for England called "Wildbelt" that would put land into recovery for nature and help us reach 30%.

Craig Bennett, chief executive of The Wildlife Trusts, said: "We've set ourselves an ambitious goal — to raise £30 million and kickstart the process of securing at least 30% of land and sea in nature's recovery by 2030. We will buy land to expand and join up our nature reserves; we'll work with others to show how to bring wildlife back to their land, and we're calling for nature's recovery through a new package of policy measures including big new ideas like Wildbelt."

Wildlife Trusts are fundraising to tackle, on a scale not seen before in the UK, the joint climate and ecological emergency. Restored habitats will capture carbon, helping to tackle climate change, and bring people the health benefits associated with contact with the natural world. There are amazing projects right on your doorstep that need support to take flight.

Craig added: "The next ten years must be a time of renewal, of rewilding our lives, of green recovery. We all need nature more than ever and when we succeed in reaching 30 by 30 we'll have wilder landscapes that store carbon and provide on-your-doorstep nature for people too. Everyone can support and help us to succeed."

 Support our campaign today to bring our wildlife back: wildlifetrusts.org/30-30-30

THE CHANGES WE NEED

Some examples of projects gearing up to help bring back 30%:

- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is hoping to restore natural processes and healthy ecosystems on a huge scale in their **Wild Peak** project, bringing back more wildlife and wild places.
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust is planning a number of **reintroduction projects**, from beavers to curl buntings and coughts.
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust is helping to combat climate change at the first ever UK **carbon farm**, which is locking up carbon and bringing back wildlife habitat as the peatlands are restored at Winmarleigh.
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust is planning to restore reed beds, fen swamps and meres, increasing water resilience on **Bourne North Fen**, supporting improved agriculture and water quality — which is good for wildlife — whilst reducing flood risk.

UK UPDATE

New ambassadors for nature

Award-winning actor Alison Steadman, Bradford-based GP and TV presenter Dr Amir Khan, presenter and filmmaker Hannah Stitfall, science communicator Sophie Pavelle and Iceland managing director Richard Walker



are taking up the new role of Ambassadors for The Wildlife Trusts. The nature enthusiasts will use their voices, influence and audiences to help us raise awareness of the urgent need for

nature's recovery, and encourage more people to take action.

Speaking about her new role, Alison Steadman said, "I'm extremely proud of all the work the Wildlife Trusts do with the local communities in which they work, but have come to see that collectively, they're a force to be reckoned with. Their work is important, from big picture landscape restoration, to encouraging and supporting people like you and I to do our bit for wildlife, whether it's in our garden, or campaigning on issues close to our heart."

You can learn more about our new ambassadors and hear their views on The Wildlife Trusts' website: wildlifetrusts.org/ambassadors

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Hip hip hoor-hay!

Cumbria Wildlife Trust have recently taken ownership of Bowberhead Farm, home to internationally important flower-rich northern hay meadows — a rare habitat with only 900 hectares left in existence. In time these meadows could help create a joined-up network of restored, wildflower-rich grasslands across Cumbria and northern England. cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/bowberhead

2 Crane comeback

A pair of common cranes has bred at Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust's Willow Tree Fen. This is the first pair to breed in Lincolnshire in over 400 years. Cranes were driven to extinction in the UK in the sixteenth century, but a small number returned in 1978 and eventually started breeding. The population has slowly grown and spread, with 56 pairs attempting to nest in the UK in 2019. lincstrust.org.uk/willow-tree-fen



3 Duke's reprieve

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust purchased Deacon Hill, Winchester's only remaining stronghold for the endangered Duke of Burgundy butterfly. This is a crucial piece of land in a network of sites around Winchester that are managed by the Trust with wildlife in mind. hiwwt.org.uk/deaconhill



Safer areas at sea

In 2019 an independent panel was tasked by the Government to review whether Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) could be introduced to English waters. Over 3,000 Wildlife Trust supporters responded to the panel's consultation, backing our call for HPMA introduction. HPMAs would offer the strictest possible

protections for the marine environment, giving nature the best chance of recovery. By removing all pressure, from fishing to construction, our shallow seas, shores and diverse seabeds can become healthier, more productive and full of life once more.

wtru.st/help-our-seas

ALISON STEADMAN © CLEARWATER PHOTOGRAPHY, SPINY STARFISH © LINDA PITKIN/2020 DIVISION, CRANES © NIKKI WILLIAMS



We bet you didn't know...

Alongside The Species Recovery Trust, we've been conducting miniature-scale conservation work so rare rabbit moss can flourish on our Walton Common reserve - discovering 50% more this year than two years ago!

REGIONAL

Taking action for insects

The Wildlife Trusts launched the *Reversing Insect Declines* report this July. The new report, written by Professor Dave Goulson, focuses on the solutions to the 'unnoticed apocalypse' happening to insects. It calls for ambitious targets for pesticide reduction where people live, work and farm, and for all sectors to be supported to move away from avoidable pesticide use.

This is all part of the second phase of the Action for Insects campaign, which began in 2019 with the launch of the pioneering *Insect Declines and Why They Matter* report. The 2019 report revealed that 41% of insect species face extinction through loss of habitats and overuse of pesticides across the UK. Thanks to you, our members and supporters, we were delighted to find out that Avon has the second highest number of people signed up to take action for insects in the country.

Taking action for insects includes creating havens for insects, by properly protecting wildlife habitats and connecting and managing them



JON HAWKINS SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

to be rich in nature. Our homes and gardens, parks and verges, towns and cities and the wider countryside all contribute towards nature's recovery. We're encouraging individuals and communities to become insect champions. With everyone taking action for insects in their homes, gardens, cities, communities, farms and businesses, change can happen. It's not too late, and together we can put insects into recovery.



Find out more about how to protect insects and how to create an insect-friendly garden teeming with wildlife by claiming your free action for insects guide and start to make a difference today: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/action-for-insects

REGIONAL

Grow Wilder

Our urban wildlife site and wildflower nursery in Bristol, Grow Wilder, created an online shop and home delivery service from scratch during lockdown. Originally facing site closure, we were determined to tackle the ecological emergency during the uncertainty by inspiring everyone to grow wildflowers and vegetables in their gardens, allotments or balconies. In doing so, we continued supporting pollinators and provided an opportunity for people to connect with nature from home.

We are excited to be open again, with people on site for courses and events and the launch of a new café and nature trail at

weekends. We are delighted to see families and groups of friends back, enjoying the thriving nature on site and taking action in their homes and communities. We hugely appreciate the support we've received from you and from volunteers and visitors over this period. Thank you, and we look forward to taking you on our journey onwards.



GEORGE COOK



For more information and our online shop visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/growwilder, or find us on Facebook and Instagram.

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Morph

As we went into lockdown, spring blossomed all around us, giving us hope for the future for nature.

Spring delights like bright yellow and purple flowers, buzzing bees, birdsong and dappled light through the fresh growth of leaves on trees brightened our days during a difficult time. Even though we had to stay local, there was still so much we could enjoy on our doorsteps. Local celebrity Morph, from Aardman Studios, was out taking notice of nature too!



AARDMAN STUDIOS

Photography competition



Thanks to everyone who entered and voted in our wild photography competition. Congratulations to Emily Maestri for winning the public vote with this photo of a slow worm!

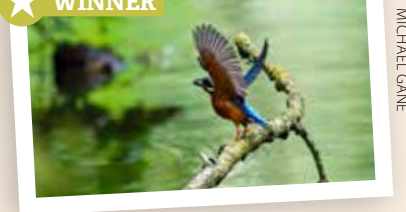
★ WINNER



EMILY MAESTRI

And congratulations to Michael Gane for winning the staff vote with his photo of a kingfisher. Keep an eye on our social media for our next photography competition.

★ WINNER



MICHAEL GANE

FOCUS ON...

Coronavirus Appeal

“We’re in the grips of an unparalleled emergency but nature needs our help now, more than ever. Please donate today to help local wildlife survive long into the future.” Ian Barrett, Chief Executive

Coronavirus has had a drastic impact on the charity’s finances



Lockdown has been difficult

Lockdown has been a difficult time for everyone. For Avon Wildlife Trust, the lockdown has meant cancelled events and volunteering activities and furloughing many of our staff. Understandably, this has had a huge impact on our finances as most of our operations were shut down between April and July. We estimate a drop in income of up to £1 million in this year alone, resulting in potential losses of £280,000.

We’ve made hard decisions

The way we work as an organisation has been challenged with increasing financial pressures. We’ve already made some hard decisions, including reducing our staff team by 20%, resulting in redundancies and the loss of some



NICK LIPTON/2020VISION

talented and passionate colleagues to ensure the safety of our front-line conservation work. This work is essential in striving towards our ambition of securing 30% of land and sea for wildlife by 2030. We will do this by focusing on nature’s recovery on our nature reserves, acquiring new land and working with local people to take action for nature.

We’ve got big plans

We had big plans for 2020 which have been disrupted by coronavirus. By donating today, you could help our vital conservation projects across Avon:

Ecological emergency – We’re working with Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset Councils to fight back against the ecological emergency. We’ve developed an Ecological Emergency Strategy to start taking essential action to bring wildlife back in these areas.

B-Lines – We are working with local businesses, communities and landowners across the region to develop a network of inter-connected, healthy habitats for pollinating insects to move across the landscape and increase biodiversity.

North Somerset Levels and Moors

– This mass of waterways is part of our Nature Recovery Network in Avon and we’re working hard to restore the river systems that feed the wetlands to promote water quality for overwintering birds and restore the peatland habitat to lock up more carbon in the landscape.

Nature needs you now

Throughout lockdown, many of us turned to nature on our doorsteps as a source of comfort and hope. More and more people are now understanding the true value of the natural world and its role in combating the twin climate and ecological emergencies we face. We are confident that with your support we will be able to protect and restore wildlife, encourage more people to take action for nature and help bring wildlife back across 30% of land and sea by 2030. Please help with an **urgent donation** of whatever you can afford today.



To donate today, visit
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/coronavirus](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/coronavirus)

Living on the hedge

BY ANDREW JAMIESON,
SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST

First light and an early winter mist lies softly on the fields. Along the track the low sun is backlighting frosted cobwebs and the frozen stalks of last summer's hogweed. Redwings and fieldfares, as well as our resident thrushes, take flight from the hedges as I approach. I have interrupted their gorging on a bounty of berries. Sloe, haw, hip and holly are all on the menu, these thorny thickets providing a rich larder for birds that have flocked from harsher climes to spend their winter with us.

Other birds take advantage of these hedges at this time of year, too. At sunset, hundreds of chattering starlings will take up their roosting stations deep within the intricate tangle of shrubs and climbers. Here they are protected from whatever the elements have in store over the long winter nights. Insects in various life stages are also holed-up. Some careful exploration and you may find dormant ladybirds tucked deep into bark crevices or the tiny eggs of the brown hairstreak butterfly lodged in the fork of a blackthorn branch. Meanwhile, hidden away at ground level, hedgehogs, toads and newts are using the security of the dense vegetation for their seasonal slumber.

Later in the year our hedge will become a riot of colour, movement and aromatic scents with bees and butterflies visiting the flowers of campion, bramble and honeysuckle. Long-tailed tits, wrens and yellowhammers will be busily raising their broods; shrews and voles will be feeding, sheltering and defending their territories. But all that has yet to unfold, and for now much of life lies waiting.

Thousands of miles of hedgerows such as this criss-cross our country in a familiar and historical patchwork landscape. Rich in wildlife, this network of green highways links the habitats and populations of so many species, all living 'on the hedge'.

Farming on the hedge

Hedgerows are a vital part of the farming landscape, providing food and shelter to countless birds, mammals and insects. Bird food supplier and Wildlife Trust partner, Vine House Farm, provide a haven for tree sparrows and other wildlife in their hedges. Plus, with every purchase made supporting The Wildlife Trusts, the farm is helping wildlife beyond the farm gate. Find out more here:



wildlifetrusts.org/vine-house-farm



Brimstone

One of a handful of UK butterflies that overwinter as adults, tucked away in ivy. They can even be seen flying on sunny days in winter. The caterpillars feed on alder buckthorn.

Hedgehog

Hedgehogs will often choose the base of a thick hedgerow to site their hibernaculum to sleep away the colder months. In milder winters they may be seen out and about as late as December.

Stoat

These fierce predators are active all year round. They use hedge lines to hunt small rodents and rabbits, although when food is scarce may resort to foraging for earthworms.

Fieldfare

Winter visitors from the semi-Arctic regions where they breed, these grey-blue thrushes will often arrive in mixed flocks along with redwings to feed on berries.

House sparrow

Both house sparrows and tree sparrows use dense hedges for roosting spots, protection from predators and even as nest sites when favoured holes and crevices aren't available.

Ivy

This late-flowering evergreen has much to offer wildlife in autumn and winter. Autumn nectar sustains bees, juicy berries feed birds long after other fruits have been snapped up, and dense foliage provides a home for hibernating bats and insects.

Dormouse

Well-managed hedgerows are vital corridors for many species and none more so than the dormouse. As well as a secure hibernation site, the hedge will provide them with many of the fruits, nuts and insects in their diet.

Orange ladybird

This distinctive ladybird is among the many insects that hibernate in leaf litter at the base of hedges. Other species of ladybird will be under bark or nestled within thick beds of lichen.

Caught on Camera

Revealing the hidden wildlife on our nature reserves

TRAILCAM FROM SCOTLAND: THE BIG PICTURE BY ZAN NATUREP



With the use of trail cams, Gordon has got up close and personal with many wild species

WOLF © GORDON BUCHANAN, WILDCAT © ELLIOT SMITH



Gordon Buchanan

The power of trail cams

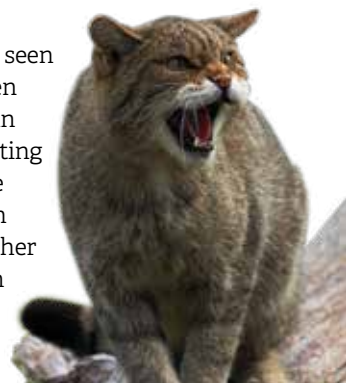
In the early days of my career, as I wiled away many hours waiting for wildlife to show up I would have this nagging desire. More of a wish than a desire, given that what I longed for was impossible. I wanted to be invisible. With invisibility my job would be so much easier. I could get closer to animals to observe their behaviour. Filming wildlife would be much less time consuming and much more revealing.

Although technology has marched on a startling pace over the past three decades, I think invisibility is going to be beyond even the most talented tech boffins. But in many ways camera traps are the next best thing when it comes to wildlife watching. They never tire, get cold, fall asleep or have families that they need to get back to!

I first used camera traps with real success back in 2007. I realised immediately

their value for filmmakers, zoologists and conservationists and have continued to use them to this day. They have given me views of creatures that would have been impossible to see in any other way. Giant otters and jaguars in South America, snow leopards and tigers living at high altitude in the Himalayas. Red pandas, wolves, leopards and elusive Scottish wildcats and pine martens closer to home.

The worlds of secretive, seldom seen animals have been opened up to us in startling and exciting ways. I now while away moments in nature with another wish... I just wish I had more camera traps!



The Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales

The Mid Wales Red Squirrel Partnership was set up in 2002 after sporadic sightings and records. Before camera traps, red squirrels were extremely hard to detect in mid Wales. They're in fairly low numbers, and live almost exclusively in forestry plantations with very little human activity. Camera traps have been a revolution in this project, allowing uninhabited areas for red squirrels to be surveyed in a non-invasive way with minimal disturbance. Cameras are set up where chewed pine and spruce cones are found to see if it was a red or grey squirrel.



Trail cams have made monitoring red squirrels in Wales much easier

Alderney Wildlife Trust

Alderney have been using trail cams to record water rails around their ponds. The cameras were used to show how accurate an acoustic method was at counting the birds with the aim of finding how many overwinter in Alderney. They found 34 rails using the acoustic method, which was many more than expected and cameras confirmed these numbers. The trail cams have also revealed some interesting insights into the life of a water rail, including a courting pair on Valentine's Day and autumn footage of young birds stretching, hopping and getting ready for big migration flights. It is fairly unusual to observe this behaviour as the rails are so secretive.



Trail cams have given us a glimpse into the lives of the elusive water rail

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Camera traps have been an essential tool in helping Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Stuart Edmunds prove the presence of pine martens in the county, where they were presumed extinct for decades. Although there were reported sightings as far back as the 1960s, they were impossible to verify until Stuart began using camera traps. The first Shropshire pine marten appeared on camera in July 2015, in woodland previously deemed unsuitable habitat for the evasive mammals. Pine martens are usually betrayed by their scat, but camera traps have now recorded them inhabiting several woodlands across south Shropshire, despite no scat being found. Camera traps can also be used by bait stations, where martens are encouraged to give a clear view of their chest "bib" pattern, which is an essential way of telling individuals apart. Without camera traps, we wouldn't have realised there are pine martens living across the wider landscape at all. They are now a key tool in monitoring the population and distribution of martens in Shropshire and beyond.



Pine martens have made a comeback in Shropshire

Kent Wildlife Trust

Kent have been using trail cameras at Ham Fen for the past few years to enable them to view the activities of reintroduced beavers, an animal that is crepuscular — mostly active at dawn and dusk. The footage has allowed them to watch the construction of a dam, observe the beaver coppicing trees and feeding on the branches, and revealed a little of the interactions between individuals. They've watched adults grooming each other, seen a family group stripping bark from branches on the bank of the stream

and observed the interesting interaction between a young beaver and a large adult when they met nose to nose in the stream — the adult made a huge tail splash and disappeared under water!

As well as providing some very interesting and entertaining viewing, the images and videos obtained from the trail cameras are helping Kent Wildlife Trust build a better picture of the activity of these elusive animals and understand more about the group dynamics at Ham Fen.



Kent have been watching their reintroduced beavers build a dam!



Behind the wild scenes

See more photos and footage from trail cams and webcams across the UK and find out how to set up your own.



[wildlifetrusts.org/
caught-on-camera](http://wildlifetrusts.org/caught-on-camera)

RED SQUIRREL © WTSWW; BEAVER © KENT WILDLIFE TRUST; PINE MARTEN © SHROPSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST; WATER RAILS © ALDERNEY WILDLIFE TRUST

WHAT'S ON

For up-to-date event listings and to book, visit our website
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events)



Annual General Meeting

You are warmly invited to join us for Avon Wildlife Trust's Annual General Meeting online, on Wednesday 11 November at 6pm. Please book your place at: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2020](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2020)

We hope you can help us to celebrate all we have achieved for local wildlife over the past year, thanks to our generous members, volunteers and supporters.

We will acknowledge the hardship we have faced due to the coronavirus pandemic, share our plans for the future and show what's been achieved through our work raising awareness about the ecological emergency and working with councils, organisations and individuals to inspire collective action throughout our region. Please join us online to find out more about this work and how you can support us.

JAMIE HALL

Avon Wildlife Trust's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Wednesday 11th November at 6pm via Zoom.

The meeting is for the following purposes:

1. To receive the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees and audited Financial Statements, together with the Auditors' report, for the year ended 31 March 2020.
2. To re-appoint Mr Simon King as President of the Trust (recommended by the Board of Trustees).

Notes

Under the Companies Act 2006 the serving Auditors, Messrs Burnside, are deemed re-appointed and continue in office.

Audited Accounts and Trustees' Annual Report will be available on the website 28 days before the event and are also available on request from Georgia.Moore@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Members are entitled to appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote at the meeting on their behalf. *Members are particularly encouraged this year to submit a proxy form to minimise the risk of any confusion arising by reason of the meeting being held via Zoom.* A proxy need not be a Member. To be valid a proxy appointment form must be received by the Trust no less than 48 hours before the time of the meeting. For a proxy form please contact Georgia.Moore@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

There are no elections for Trustees this year as there are no vacancies for elected positions on the Board.

Come to the AGM – Members, volunteers and friends of Avon Wildlife Trust are welcome. It would help arrangements if you could please confirm your attendance at the AGM by visiting [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2020](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2020)

AUTUMN AND WINTER EVENTS

Take your pick from this small selection of seasonal activities, events and online opportunities. We will be reviewing our events on a rolling basis to make sure we can run them safely, so do keep an eye out on our website.

My Wild Child sessions for families with toddlers

Weekly self-guided video sessions for families with under-fives, exploring different sites around Bristol and learning about nature and wildlife.

Find out more:

[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildchild](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildchild)

Wildlife Watch Club for 5-10 year olds

Grow Wilder, on the first Saturday of every month

From the habits of our feathered friends, learning about insects and the wonders of pond life, this nature club is perfect for the budding nature-lover.

Booking essential online and places limited: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events)

Carr's Wood autumn adventure

29 October, 13:00-15:00

Carr's Wood, Bath

Join us for an afternoon adventure through Carr's Wood. A beautiful spot on the edge of Twerton.

Volunteering day at Twerton Roundhill

3 November, 10:30-14:30

Twerton Roundhill, Bath

Join Bathscape's regular Community Action for Nature (CAN) in a scrub clearing and hedge laying activity to help improve the landscape, habitats and wildlife of Bath.



ISTOCK

Grow Wilder open weekends

Weekends 10:00-16:00 until the end of October

Grow Wilder, Stapleton

Visit our urban wildlife hub to purchase wildflowers, and enjoy a hot drink and cake. You can also explore our nature trail and activities for families.

Find out more:

[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/growwilder](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/growwilder)

STAY *connected* TO *your* PATCH



Our local groups and volunteering sessions offer a valuable opportunity to help wildlife in your local area, while connecting with others who also have a passion for nature and wildlife. While we normally have a whole list of events for you to join, this year is a little different so we thought we'd bring you an update from each group instead.

Keynsham Local Group

Our Keynsham Local Group talks are not going ahead in the normal way, however we are excited to offer members online talks each month on the 2nd Friday of each month, until April 2021. We hope that you will join us for our talks which will have very varied topics, including:

Lynx & Lammergeier of Southern Spain

13 November Julian Sykes

History & Wildlife of Newton St Loe & Newton Park

8 January Robert Hargreaves

Wildlife of the Dorset Coast

12 February Ed Drewitt

After each talk we will be holding a short social for local members to connect with each other.

Each month we are also hosting a socially distanced walk to get together with local members. Numbers on these walks are very limited so please e-mail us and we will put you on our contact list: keynshamawt@gmail.com

For more information please visit our website keynshamawt.org or the Avon Wildlife Trust events page avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events. You can also subscribe to our e-newsletter on our website.

Portishead Local Group

Portishead Local Group arrange local wildlife walks and run monthly meetings with talks about wildlife that are well attended by mostly local members, although all are welcome. We also run fundraising events such as Jumble Sales, Plant Sales and an Autumn Fair with help from a loyal band of amazing volunteers. We've had to cancel these this year, but we will be reviewing the situation as we move forward into spring. We very much look forward to seeing you all again. In the meantime, our brilliant craft couple have continued to work and find passing



TERRY WHITTAKER/2020/AVON

customers for their wonderful creations, in an effort to continue support for the Trust.

Southwold Local Group

Most of the Southwold Local Group activities are practical work days on local sites and site visits. While these have been cancelled for the foreseeable future, some of our members have been busy working closely at the Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve, to get consent for and commission tree felling work to help prevent the spread of ash dieback and to clear safe paths.

Chew Valley Local Group

With events being cancelled for the rest of the year, the Chew Valley Local Group have been raising money for Avon Wildlife Trust by selling plants, flowers and now apples from the Folly Farm reserve, from outside tables. So far we've raised over £100! Once restrictions are lifted, we hope to hold the below meetings on Thursday evenings from January to March:

Snow leopards

January 28 Peter Brownlee, BBC film editor

Birds and scenery of Morocco

February 25 Mike Landen and Mark Watson

Woodland Trust

March 26 Rosie Walker



Volunteering!


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 usually plenty of volunteering opportunities at Avon Wildlife Trust, however due to coronavirus, we have had to cancel all of our sessions since March. With our teams back from furlough, we are working hard to put plans together so that we can run these again safely. To learn about opportunities to get involved, sign up to receive our volunteer newsletter:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteernews

PETER CAIRNS/2020/AVON



 If you'd like to find out more from our local groups, get in touch:

Chew Valley

Andy Davis: 01275 332 601

Gordano Valley

Sarah Kennedy: 01275 817 565/
07853 248 476

Keynsham

Kathy Farrell: 07850 508 702

Portishead

Cynthia Dorn: 01275 843 160

Southwold

Tim Fairhead: 01454 323 608

Big gains in small spaces

A garden that might seem small to us can be a huge space for wildlife. **Kate Bradbury** reveals how you can optimise your space for wildlife.

Home sweet home

You don't need a large garden to hang a bee hotel, only a wall or fence. Erect bird boxes in the eaves for sparrows or swifts, or place a tit box 1-2m from the ground.

Layer bulbs in pot

Layer alliums and crocus in the same pot. Crocuses flower in March, then the alliums will grow and the crocuses die down, creating food for bees for longer in the same pot.

Grow climbing plants

Clothe every inch of your space with plants to provide shelter for insects. You might find night-flying moths resting here during the day!

Feed the birds

Hanging feeders of sunflower hearts, mixed seed and fat balls can save the lives of birds in winter and also help in the breeding season.

Wildlife gardening needn't just be for those with large gardens. Any space, no matter how small, can be used to create habitats for wildlife. Put together, our gardens take up more land than all of our nature reserves combined. So you might not think your garden has much potential as a wildlife habitat, but taken as part of a much wider network of linked spaces, yours could be one small but vital piece in a vast jigsaw of connected habitats.

Small spaces add up for wildlife because they contribute to 'wildlife corridors', which enable wildlife to travel, often between other habitats. You might have a small garden close to a park. By digging holes beneath your fences on either side you will be creating a corridor for hedgehogs to reach the park, potentially opening up huge new spaces for them (especially if your neighbours do the same). You might grow a few flowering plants on a balcony. These could provide a stepping stone of nectar, enabling butterflies and other insects to travel greater distances in search of a mate. These

corridors are important because they enable wildlife to increase their populations and adapt more easily to climate change. Some species are already shifting in a northerly direction — if there are no corridors or stepping stones to help them on their way, they'll have less chance of surviving.

You can tailor your garden to meet your needs as much as those of wildlife. No room for a pond? Try a little container pond, instead. Worried trees will grow too big for your space? Consider shrubs such as hazel, guelder rose and spindle. You can grow plants that flower over a long period to provide as much nectar and pollen as possible, such as perennial wallflower, catmint and salvias. Even just letting the grass grow in one patch. Anything you do will make a difference.



Kate Bradbury is passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone and Everything* in association with The Wildlife Trusts.

Gardens of all sizes can help save our struggling insects. Get a free guide to helping insects at home:

 [wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects)

Add water

Container ponds and birdbaths are great for bringing wildlife into small spaces.

Wild highways

Hedges shelter wildlife and offer access to your garden, but if you have fences, a hole in, or beneath, them on either side provides a lifeline to mammals and amphibians.

Grow caterpillar food plants

Even small gardens have room for a few caterpillar foodplants. Try foxglove, primrose, hops, honeysuckle and red campion, or nettles in larger spaces.

Let long grass grow

Even the smallest patch of long grass will provide shelter and food for a range of species. You should get wildflowers popping up, too.



MY WILD LIFE



Georgia Moore

Georgia is Supporter Care Manager at Avon Wildlife Trust, working to connect members with nature from home, as well as making sure your kind donations are making a difference to Avon's wildlife and wild spaces.



I first learnt of Avon Wildlife Trust at the age of 8 when on a school trip to our local nature reserve, Willsbridge Valley. I was in awe of this natural oasis hidden among a housing estate on the edge of Bristol. We tramped through the woodland and wildflowers and peered our eager young faces over the ponds, filled with tadpoles and swarming with water striders and dragonflies. I distinctly remember this experience as a key moment in sparking my love for nature and a passion for standing up for wildlife.

That is why, when I saw this role advertised online, I jumped at the chance to work for such an amazing charity. I feel so lucky to be able to work for a cause that I truly care about and have daily contact with the amazing members that are helping to bring wildlife back across the region. It is great to know that my job each day is to make those doing fantastic things for local wildlife feel important – because

you are. Our community of members is really special, from our founding members who have been with us since 1980 to those who are receiving this as their first members' magazine, you are all making a difference to the future of Avon's natural landscape. Thank you.

I have been astounded by the generosity and dedication to wildlife so many of you displayed throughout the difficult period of lockdown. Whether it was donating to our ecological emergency appeal to help wildlife fight back in the face of adversity, supporting our wildflower nursery, Grow Wilder, by purchasing plants to make your gardens even more wildlife friendly, or inspiring a love for nature in others by sharing your wild experiences in our competition, it all makes a huge difference. You have helped the Trust get through a very difficult time by continuing your membership donation. So, thank you for being there for Avon's wildlife as nature

has been there for all of us during a time when we needed it most.

With the twin threat of the climate and ecological emergencies, as well as the uncertainty for nature in the proposed economic recovery, wildlife needs us now more than ever. You are already doing so much as a member of Avon Wildlife Trust. Together, we are bringing nature back to our doorsteps. If you would like to do more to accelerate this change, there are so many ways you can get involved. You can donate, fundraise, volunteer, write to your local MP or include a gift for the future of wildlife in your will. For more information about ways to get more involved with what we are doing as a Trust or for any questions you might have, please do get in touch and I will do everything I can to help.



Contact Georgia with your questions and ideas by email to Georgia.Moore@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Supporting your business

TOWARDS A GREENER FUTURE



The economic recovery offers an opportunity for businesses to re-evaluate their impact on the environment. Here's what we've been doing...

Coronavirus has led to a universal revolution of the way we think about business practices in the UK. With many of us working from home or experiencing quieter commutes, the environmental benefits of changing the way we work have been evident. It has also influenced our relationship with nature as we have taken the time to notice what is on our doorstep.

For Avon Wildlife Trust, this new way of working has seen many of our staff working from home and a move towards location flexibility across our sites at Head Office, Grow Wilder, Folly Farm and home working. This will have tangible benefits for nature as we lower our organisational carbon footprint, as well as improving staff wellbeing by offering people the flexibility they need for a sustainable work/life balance.

Within our Folly Farm nature reserve, we have a fully sustainable, award-winning, and eco-friendly conference centre. Folly Farm Centre focuses on education and operates by green business practices - harvesting rainwater, filtering wastewater through a reed and willow bed, using a biomass boiler for heating, and solar panels to supplement electricity supplied by an eco-friendly supplier.

Companies and teams can hold residential or day conferences and meetings here, where they can embrace nature and its positive effect on teams. We offer activities such as sheep herding and woodland skills to strengthen teams and

aid mental wellbeing. Holding an event at Folly Farm Centre will help your company reduce its carbon footprint by supporting a sustainable venue, creating a lasting, positive impact for the environment.

In the face of lockdown, Grow Wilder launched a local food initiative by growing vegetable plants that people could plant in their own gardens and allotments. Similarly, other food growing businesses on site set up veg box schemes to feed Bristol directly. This provided financial support to the Trust and proved the importance of local nature-friendly food systems as a way of tackling both the ecological and climate emergencies.

Grow Wilder is a place that can support other businesses. Fundamentally, the site serves as a space where people can interact and engage with nature. One aspect of this comes through hosting corporate days focused on wellbeing. By encouraging staff to engage with the land in a productive way, it can promote pro-nature behaviours and connectedness between colleagues, as well as using your company's time and money to support local wildlife.

Benefits from the site can also be brought back to your business. Our wildflower nursery grows locally-sourced wildflowers that can be grown in green spaces. Creating a meadow near your office, in window boxes, on your roof or in your car park creates an amazing opportunity to bring nature to where you work, aiding nature's recovery and improving the wellbeing of your staff.

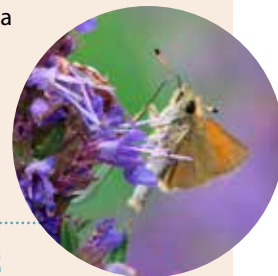
REBUILDING FOR NATURE

This year has no doubt been the toughest for some time for just about every type of business. However, there has never been a better time to make a change for good as we seek to rebuild. Nature will have been a great source of comfort for your staff, colleagues, customers and clients. More people than ever were able to enjoy and find solace in our beautiful countryside and nature reserves. You can show them your business cares by making nature's recovery part of yours.

Whether your business is big or small, there are many ways you can use your business for good:

- Become a business member
- Offset your carbon usage
- Use one of our sites to get your staff together to regroup and recharge
- Reach our supporter base by sponsoring a project, campaign or event

Together, we can achieve more for the wonderful wildlife and beautiful landscapes across our region. Supporting Avon Wildlife Trust shows your company's commitment to protecting the natural environment and creating wildlife-rich spaces for people to enjoy. Join with us in making Avon a better place to live and work, because when our natural world thrives, we thrive.



FIND OUT MORE



Get in touch with the team today at mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or 0117 917 7270 to discuss the best options for your business. No matter the size or ambition of your company, we have lots of ideas to share.

Create a wilder future for generations to come

*A gift in
your will, no
matter the size,
could make a
real difference*

Did you know you can include a gift of 1% to Avon Wildlife Trust in your will that could protect local wildlife long into the future, while leaving 99% of your estate to those close to you? Our new resources make it easier than ever to create a will that works for wildlife.

Visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/giftinwill
Contact Georgia Moore on
Georgia.Moore@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or 0117 917 7270