

Wildlife

Issue 112 • SPRING 2019



Avon



A Nature Recovery Network for Avon

Connecting our landscapes

Meet five wildlife champions

A look at our wildflower nursery



Includes UK News & Stories

Welcome



JON CRAIG

Ian Barrett
Chief Executive

Dear member



Welcome to this edition of *Wildlife* magazine, which takes you through the spring and summer months with their lighter evenings and wildlife delights to enjoy. As I travel across our region in my role, to our nature reserves, through farmed countryside and to urban green spaces, I'm struck by how varied the landscapes are. Within Avon we have ancient woodlands, beautiful wildflower-rich limestone grassland and have three percent of the UK's precious wetlands in the North Somerset Levels and Moors. Yet though these are beautiful and valuable habitats, they are less connected than ever before and are often little more than isolated refuges for wildlife.

We are focusing our efforts – both the on-the-ground work we do across Avon, and our joint campaigning with The Wildlife Trusts movement – on creating and rebuilding these lost connections for wild plants and animals. And we're calling for the Government to take action through a new, strong Environment Act to reverse the disconnection and decline of nature. This issue of our *Wildlife* magazine looks at the need for this Nature Recovery Network (pages 8-9). Our map highlights the benefits it will bring for wildlife and the stark realities facing many much-loved species like hedgehogs, bats and glow worms if we don't work together to build nature's recovery. We also show that, thanks to generous gifts, we're able to manage new areas of land around our Goblin Combe nature reserve and on the northern edge of the Mendips (pages 10 and 11).

I'm constantly inspired by the passion and energy of people playing a role in their own communities to support wildlife. In this edition we meet five brilliant wildlife champions and get a glimpse of the changes they're leading locally (pages 14-15). The wildlife nursery at our Feed Bristol site is an important part of our work to create Avon's nature recovery network. We get to see the specialist work of the team and volunteers in sowing, propagating and selling a huge range of native wildflowers – which are then planted across our region (pages 22 and 23). And we point out some delightful and intriguing wildlife to watch out for as you enjoy the spring and summer (pages 24 and 25).

Above all, thank you for continuing to support local wildlife as members, volunteers and supporters. You are already playing a part in building a wilder Avon – a place where wildlife can thrive and people can enjoy it.



Your magazine

Edited by Naomi Fuller
Naomi.Fuller@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Layout by Kevin Lester: kevinlester.com

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Wildlife Champion: Claudia Bonney
Wildflower nursery: Nick Turner

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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 over 18,000 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.

Trust Office
32 Jacobs Wells Road, Bristol BS8 1DR
0117 917 7270
mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Folly Farm Centre
Stowey, Pensford, Bristol BS39 4DW
01275 331590
info@follyfarm.org
follyfarm.org

Feed Bristol
Frenchay Park Road, Bristol BS16 1HB
0117 965 7086
feedbristol@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/feedbristol



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Keep in touch!

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A Light Exists in Spring

by Emily Dickinson

A light exists in spring
Not present on the year
At any other period.
When March is scarcely here

A colour stands abroad
On solitary hills
That science cannot overtake,
But human nature feels.

It waits upon the lawn;
It shows the furthest tree
Upon the furthest slope we know;
It almost speaks to me.

Then, as horizons step,
Or noons report away,
Without the formula of sound,
It passes, and we stay:

A quality of loss
Affecting our content,
As trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a sacrament.



PHOTOS: CENTRE: DAN I COX; TOP LEFT: KATRINA MARTIN; BOTTOM LEFT: MATTHEW ROBERTS; TOP RIGHT: PENNY DIXIE; BOTTOM RIGHT: PEXELS

Make room for nature this June by doing one wild thing a day for 30 days. Sign up for the Wildlife Trusts' annual campaign and get your free 30 Days Wild pack with goodies including a wallchart, an interactive booklet and seeds, and receive inspiring emails with invites to events. Create your own Random Acts of Wildness: take a wild walk at lunchtime, listen to birdsong or talk to a neighbour about nature. And do share your ideas and activities on social media with **#30DaysWild**.



Learning film

We've recently launched a new short film that celebrates the importance of lifelong learning about nature and wildlife. The film touches on our work connecting children, families and young people to the natural world and is told through the experiences of three wonderful narrators: a 10-year-old Bristol boy who goes to one of our nature clubs, a young woman on a conservation placement at our Feed Bristol site, and a dad and his young son at our Wild Play sessions.

We were lucky to work with a fantastic creative team at Bristol-based film company Immediate Media, who produced the film and made it come to life. We screened the film in March at the Clifton Observatory with some of our supporters, and we were pleased to have TV presenter Naomi Wilkinson hosting the event and leading a discussion



BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

about why learning through nature is so important. You can watch the film on our website, so do take a look. Thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery for supporting our work with young people and wildlife. You can watch our new film on our website avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/learning.



Children explore nature at our Wildlife Watch Club

We're very excited about the launch of our first Wildlife Watch Club for many years, which is giving children a chance to explore nature, get close to local wildlife and learn about their natural world and how they can help protect it as they grow up. The first club is running at Bridge Learning Campus in Hartcliffe, Bristol, where we're working closely with teachers to run fun, weekly sessions. We're looking forward to the children's ideas and activities as they become nature detectives in their neighbourhood. Thanks to Western Power Distribution for generously supporting our Wildlife Watch Club and enabling children to have this opportunity.

Prior's Wood bluebells – as seen on TV!

Above the carpets of bluebells at our Prior's Wood nature reserve last May, film cameras dangled on wires between the beech trees and microphones nestled below to pick up every swaying movement and gentle rustle of the blue flower spires across the woodland floor. The beautiful ancient woodland was filmed as part of the major Netflix series *Our Planet*, which was released to a global audience on 5 April. Prior's Wood features at the start of the episode on forests. The eight-part documentary series, narrated by David Attenborough, has already been watched by millions worldwide and showcases the planet's most precious species and fragile habitats. We are delighted that an Avon landscape will be seen as part of the spectacular series. Our Land Management team worked with the filmmakers, Bristol-based Silverback Films, to ensure they captured the bluebells at their peak and were sensitive to the habitat as they worked.



Elisabeth Oakham, Assistant Producer at Silverback, said:

“ We really wanted the opening sequence to reflect a journey through the most beautiful deciduous and evergreen forests on *Our Planet*. Our goal was to showcase the amazing diversity of woodlands in a few quick shots. Prior's Wood was chosen to represent a gorgeous and iconic English wood, with its ancient oaks and carpet of bluebells – and it didn't disappoint! The forest put on a spectacular bloom that showcases the habitat perfectly, and visually more than holds its own against other forests across the globe. ”



HUGH CLARKE

WILD SERVICE

Wild Service ensure bats protected in Bristol harbourside development

Wild Service – the ecological and land management consultancy of Avon and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts – has provided ecological services as part of the redevelopment of the derelict McArthur's Yard site on Bristol's harbourside. Contracted by the site's developers, The Guinness Partnership and Nash Partnership, Wild Service's habitat management team conducted careful scrub clearance to allow access before carrying out detailed ecological surveys to identify the wildlife and habitat. Bat activity surveys showed a small population of common pipistrelle bats roosting in the old buildings. Lead ecologist, Dr Elizabeth Pimley, obtained a special licence from Natural England permitting work to continue in accordance with a mitigation strategy to ensure no bats were harmed during demolition works. Bat boxes were provided as alternative roosting features for the pipistrelles and lighting on the site was designed to avoid disturbing bat foraging routes. To find out more about the consultancy services offered by Wild Service contact Dr Elizabeth Pimley: elizabeth.pimley@wildservice.net

Summer appeal Thanks for your support!

A HUGE thank you to everyone who donated to the Nature Reserves Fund last summer. In total you've raised nearly £18,000, which is an incredible response.

Throughout the last six months, donations have helped our volunteers get out and lay hedgerows, which provide valuable shelter and connective pathways across the landscape for bats, birds, bees, dormice and other wildlife. You've also helped our volunteers to coppice areas within Prior's Wood, allowing light to reach the woodland floor and helping wildlife flourish.

Support for our appeals ensures that vital conservation takes place across our region. Thank you.

We hope you'll take a moment to support our Nature Recovery Appeal. To make a donation please visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturerecovery.

You've raised
£18,000
for wildlife

Avon young people raise their voice at Westminster

Two young people from Avon joined 50 others from across the UK to meet MPs at Westminster on 5 March to voice their concerns about the environment, and press for the changes they want to see for nature and wildlife. Cat (16) and Leilah (18), represented young people from our region and met several MPs, including Bristol East MP Kerry McCarthy and Bath MP Wera Hobhouse, who listened to what they had to say. "It was really good to be able to convey our passion for the environment and our personal viewpoints to people who are able to make important decisions, and actively feel like we are able to do something," said Leilah. The event was organised as part of Our Bright Future - a partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environment sectors through 31 projects across the UK.



Cat and Leilah with Kerry McCarthy MP



Clevedon School students

New homes for barn owls

A group of sixth-form students from Clevedon School have been out of the classroom and onto our Weston Moor nature reserve to prepare for their project to build five new barn owl boxes to go up on the site. Our existing boxes have become too weather-worn to offer the birds protection, so the students are building some brand new nest boxes in their design and technology lessons.

Chris Sperring from the Hawk and Owl Trust joined them on their first visit to Weston Moor and painted a vivid picture of barn owls, spelling out the drastic decline in this beautiful species which has led to just 3,500 left across the UK. He highlighted to the students just how important it is to create habitats and nesting opportunities for these silent flyers - 85% of UK barn owls now nest in manmade boxes because natural nest sites in barns and other farm buildings are in such short supply.

Avon Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes Manager, Tim Curley, showed the students around Weston Moor where we hope that, once installed, the new barn owl nest boxes will attract two or three breeding pairs to the Gordano Valley. The students will be back on the reserve with Tim soon to put their barn owl boxes up.

Natural Selection

We are working with Bristol Museum and Art Gallery as it unveils Natural Selection (1 June-15 September 2019). This new exhibition, by artist Andy Holden and his ornithologist father Peter, explores creativity in birds, including a human-scale bowerbird nest and videos on nest-building and the history of egg-collecting. It's a fascinating angle on wildlife and we're building on this with young people in Henbury, to open their eyes to the wealth of local wildlife. Young people from the 169th Bristol Scout group have worked with us to build bird boxes for Blaise Castle estate. Later in the year, after visiting the exhibition, they will use the natural world as inspiration for some wild art at Blaise Castle estate. Through this work, we are helping these young people strengthen their connections to nature and wild spaces.



#WilderFuture Campaign News

It's time to join our campaign for a Wilder Avon

We need public support to bring about nature's recovery here in Avon and right across the UK



Our national campaign with all 46 Wildlife Trusts across the UK continues to press for action to reverse nature's decline and deliver a restored natural world through a strong Environment Act. Against a backdrop of political uncertainty, we need a political commitment to delivering the Government's ambition set out in the 25-year Environment Plan, to restore wildlife and create a greener country for everyone.

Environment Bill

The Government published a draft Environment Bill before Christmas after successful lobbying by The Wildlife Trusts and our partners in the Greener UK coalition. The draft Bill set out initial plans for the new environmental watchdog – the Office for Environmental Protection – which will replace our environmental governance system after we leave the EU. So far, the plans fall far short of what is needed, with the watchdog lacking independence and having weak

enforcement powers. We will be looking carefully at part two of the Bill, which is expected this spring, to see whether the right changes have been made. It is also vital that the Bill drives the creation of Nature Recovery Networks to create more space for nature and to join up important places for wildlife through new green corridors.

Making the case to MPs

Across the UK, more than 1,400 people have contacted their MPs – including 10 of our region's 11 MPs – to put forward the case for nature, asking them to support the Wilder Future campaign.

If you would like to join us in calling for better laws that bring about nature's recovery, then please consider speaking to your MP.

What new laws should contain

■ A nature recovery network

A joined-up network of existing and new habitats that provides space for wildlife to recover and allows people to thrive.

■ Legally-binding nature targets

For example, clean air to breathe in our cities – which politicians must report on regularly and ultimately achieve.

■ A nature watchdog

That is truly independent from Government to hold them to account on decisions that destroy nature – and helps people challenge this behaviour.

What you can do



Join in

Look out for information about a national lobby of

Westminster on 26 June organised by Greener UK – a chance to raise your voice and call for politicians to act.



Show your support

The more people show they care about bringing

back nature, the stronger our case becomes. Visit wildlifetrusts.org/wilder-future, where you can find out how to help. Share your favourite places and what wildlife means to you using the #WilderFuture hashtag.



Take action for nature in your daily life

Come and see us at the Bath and Bristol Festival of Nature in June to find out what you can do at home or in your community; visit our wildflower nursery at Feed Bristol and plant your own wildflowers; get involved with your local park or green space; volunteer with us.

A Nature Recovery Network for Avon

Our Avon region stretches from the Severn Estuary in the east to the rolling Cotswold hills in the west, the beautiful Mendips in the south and the woodland and meadows of South Gloucestershire in the north. Within the 520 square miles that stretch between are cities, towns and villages supporting a human population of over one million – expanding urban landscapes surrounded by farmland and open countryside.

Our wildlife needs more space to thrive

Though these urban and rural landscapes provide shelter for many wild plants and animals, our wildlife needs more space to thrive. And valuable though they are, we need more than the patchwork of our 30 nature reserves for this to happen. The only route to nature's recovery is through the creation of a nature recovery network – an interconnected network across the four counties of Avon and beyond, where wild plants and animals don't simply survive in diminishing numbers but can thrive, moving from place to place, living, feeding and flourishing into the future.

“If nature is to recover in Avon, it needs more spaces which are bigger, better and joined up across a network”

Calling on national Government to create this joined-up network right across the UK and Northern Ireland is a major priority for the Wildlife Trusts' Wilder Future campaign (see page 7 for news on this) and here in Avon, local authorities, individuals, communities, politicians and businesses all have their part to play to connect the hundreds of wild spaces across our region. Mapping this nature recovery network is a vital first step, so that decisions on housing and development, farming and land management can be guided by it.

Lapwing – Gordano Valley

Lapwing are found in the Gordano Valley on our nature reserves, as well as on adjoining land. Over winter, flocks can be seen across the wetland habitats of South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. Flat, wet, open landscapes are essential for lapwing to feed and shelter in, but these are now rare, as land is built on and drained for farming. We've created wetter areas on our nature reserves to attract back breeding pairs of lapwing, but across Avon they need more of these spaces for their numbers to rise.



Greater horseshoe bats – The North Somerset Levels

Greater horseshoe bats use landscapes across Avon to travel between roost sites and feed on insects. They roost in different areas depending on the season, including in the coombes, woods, buildings and caves of North Somerset. Flying very close to linear landscape features, such as tall hedge-rows, rivers and streams, protects them from predators and helps them to navigate. These are the highways and byways bats need to thrive.



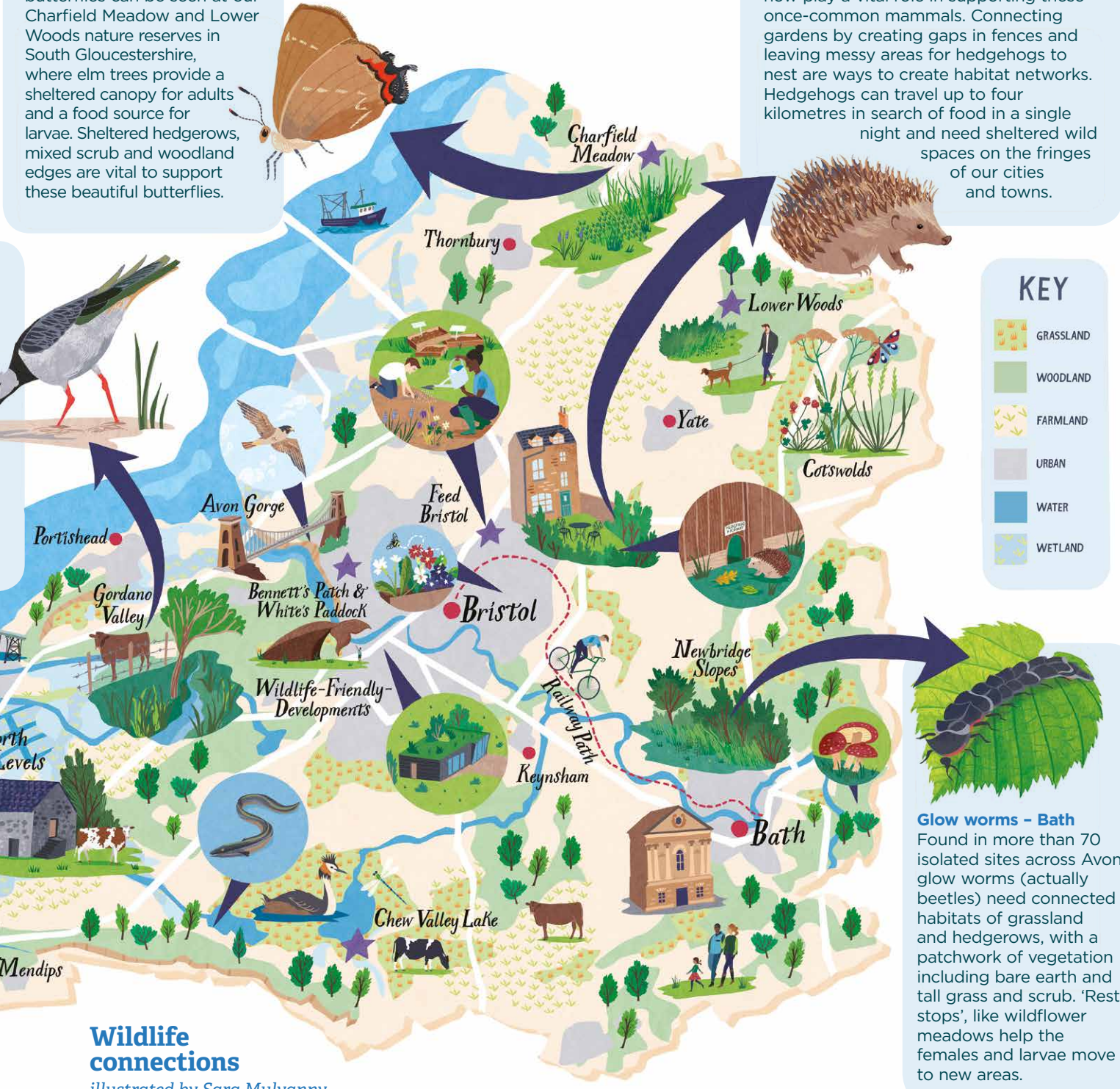
Work on mapping Avon's nature recovery network is well underway, led by the West of England Nature Partnership (of which Avon Wildlife Trust is a key partner), and identifies where wildlife is abundant or scarce, where it should be in future and the places where the greatest benefits can be achieved for wildlife and people. And together with our partners and volunteers, we're improving existing habitats and creating new ones for species including bats, butterflies, hedgehogs and wetland birds – working on joining up areas of woodland, hedgerow, wet meadow, grassland and spaces on the fringes of towns and cities. **Here's how just some of Avon's wonderful wildlife depends on a connected landscape.**

White-letter hairstreak butterflies - South Gloucestershire

White-letter hairstreak butterflies can be seen at our Charfield Meadow and Lower Woods nature reserves in South Gloucestershire, where elm trees provide a sheltered canopy for adults and a food source for larvae. Sheltered hedgerows, mixed scrub and woodland edges are vital to support these beautiful butterflies.

Hedgehogs - Bristol

Hedgehog populations in rural areas have fallen dramatically and urban environments now play a vital role in supporting these once-common mammals. Connecting gardens by creating gaps in fences and leaving messy areas for hedgehogs to nest are ways to create habitat networks. Hedgehogs can travel up to four kilometres in search of food in a single night and need sheltered wild spaces on the fringes of our cities and towns.



KEY

- GRASSLAND
- WOODLAND
- FARMLAND
- URBAN
- WATER
- WETLAND



Glow worms - Bath
 Found in more than 70 isolated sites across Avon, glow worms (actually beetles) need connected habitats of grassland and hedgerows, with a patchwork of vegetation including bare earth and tall grass and scrub. 'Rest stops', like wildflower meadows help the females and larvae move to new areas.

Wildlife connections
illustrated by Sara Mulvanny

Wildlife without connections – a story of decline

- **Greater horseshoe bats** – have suffered a 90% decline over the last century. In Avon, we have just under 20% of the remaining numbers.
- **Glow worms** – Gone from a significant number of sites over the past 30 years.
- **White-letter hairstreak** – numbers have fallen by 93% over the last 40 years.
- **Lapwing** – 49% decline in lapwing between 1987 and 1998; in Avon, an 88% decline.

- **Hedgehogs** – 40% decline in hedgehogs over the last decade – 1.5 million left, compared to 30 million in 1990s.

Nature Recovery Appeal
 Help us create more connections for wildlife across Avon by supporting our Nature Recovery Appeal
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturerecovery



Land gifts help connect more space for wildlife

Goblin Combe

Two generous recent land gifts mean the Trust is now better able to work across larger areas of landscape in North Somerset, both around our Goblin Combe nature reserve near Cleve and at Hutton Hill on the northern edge of the Mendips.

Goblin Combe

Thanks to the generosity of two retired Bristolian brothers, our Goblin Combe nature reserve is significantly increasing in size, with a beautiful and valuable piece of woodland being joined onto the existing site. The brothers have given 75 hectares of land to the Trust to own and look after permanently. This wonderful gift represents the biggest new nature reserve Avon Wildlife Trust has had for twenty years and gives us exciting opportunities to work in this landscape and create even more space for wildlife to feed, shelter and thrive.

The land is a plantation woodland of mixed coniferous and deciduous trees, planted about 50 years ago. Avon Wildlife Trust has been managing around 15 hectares of woodland and grassland here for some time, coppicing and maintaining the woodland so that wildlife, including dormice and bats, can thrive. As our Wilder Future campaign calls for Nature Recovery Networks of habitats and nature-rich land right across the country, this gift is an important way to create just such a network in the North Somerset landscape.



Brown long-eared bat



Dormouse

BAT CONSERVATION TRUST

JOE MCSORLEY

“ **Joining up nature reserves, woodlands, hedgerows, meadows and other pockets of land across wide areas is the only way to enable wildlife to thrive and to reverse the devastating declines of so many of our wild plants and animals. We are extremely grateful for these gifts of land to the Trust, which ensure this is a living landscape for generations to come.** ”

Ian Barrett, Chief Executive, Avon Wildlife Trust



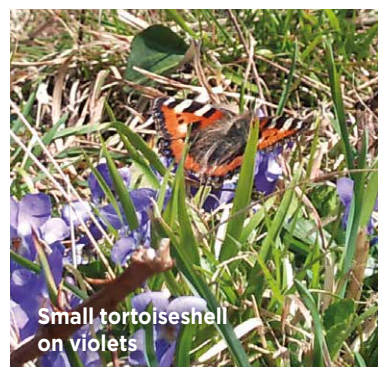
Burnet moth on Knapweed



Male common blue



Dexter cattle



Small tortoiseshell on violets

Hutton Hill

Throughout his life, local builder and landowner, Bernard Cole, lived on the edge of the Mendips at Hutton, near Weston-super-Mare. When he died last year, he left a valuable piece of land – Hutton Hill – to Avon Wildlife Trust, which is now a vital link in a connected pastoral landscape dominated by fields, hedgerows and small woods.

The land covers nearly 20 hectares and includes semi-improved grassland – land which, though grazed in the past, contains important wildflowers and grasses – as well as a band of woodland to the north of the site. The Trust’s Land Management team have so far only been able to do limited monitoring, but they believe that both the grassland and wooded areas support a range of important wild plants and animals, including greater and lesser horseshoe bats. The site is very close to parts of the North Somerset and Mendips Bat Special Area of Conservation, which is a

designated protected zone for the rare bats.

Hutton Hill is close to other Trust nature reserves, including Hellenge Hill, Purn Hill and Walborough, and together they protect key areas of habitat on what is an almost continuous link of wildflower-rich grassland along the first ridge of the Mendip Hills. In addition, the agricultural buildings will allow the Trust’s Land Management team to have a useful base in this part of North Somerset.

Hutton Hill is currently in an environmental stewardship scheme, run by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which provides payments to landowners for environmental benefits they deliver. The Trust will continue to manage Hutton Hill in line with this agreement and, in the longer term, will work to blur the boundaries between the woodland and grassland to create an interesting mosaic of habitats.



Comma butterfly

JOE CLARKE

Thank you to these generous benefactors whose gifts will enable wildlife to flourish in the decades to come. If you are interested in remembering Avon Wildlife Trust in your will, please get in touch with Julian Hall, Director of Fundraising – julian.hall@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Our extended Goblin Combe reserve is open to the public and accessible by a network of paths. There is a public footpath running through Hutton Hill (see page 30), where we intend to increase public access once the land transfer is complete.



Wild Businesses



Working in partnership to create a wilder future for Avon

A new partnership with Wessex Water has resulted in a fantastic year of collaboration, with nearly 100 staff working with us to create better and more joined up wildlife sites across Avon. Every volunteer team we've worked with from the company has been enthusiastic, energetic and has embodied a range of skills that have been put to good use.



Wessex Water scything



Wessex Water volunteers at Newbridge Slopes

“ Wessex Water has had a great first year working in partnership with Avon Wildlife Trust, with teams of our staff volunteers getting involved in valuable environmental work in and around the Avon area. Projects they have worked on include step building at Newbridge Slopes, grassland management at Tickenham Hill, planting and site work at Feed Bristol, as well as helping create the wonderful MS Therapy Centre Wildlife Garden at Bradley Stoke. ”

Jennifer Staton, Community Engagement Coordinator, Wessex Water

A corporate work day with Avon Wildlife Trust doesn't only provide a unique day out of the office. Collectively, our corporate volunteers are helping us to create recovery networks across the region, providing food, shelter and valuable habitats for a whole range of wildlife. In 2018, over

500 corporate volunteers took hands-on practical action with us to protect wildlife in the West of England, from scything wildlife-rich grassland to planting orchards, and from creating pollinator-friendly urban habitats to cleaning up our local beaches.

These partnerships are hugely valuable to us and the wild places we want to protect, but they also provide unforgettable experiences for the employees who take part. We build in time to our programmes so that participants can take notice of and connect with the landscape they are in and really feel the benefits of being outside in nature.

“ Everyone enjoyed being outdoors, working together to do something productive for the community. The team's calm approach and the structure of the day really demonstrated how spending time in nature can have a positive impact on our wellbeing. ”

Emma Dowden, Chief Operating Officer at independent UK law firm Burges Salmon

If you'd like to reward your team with a meaningful and enjoyable day in a nature-filled environment, get in touch to find out what we have on offer this year. While you're helping us to create a wilder future for Avon, your team will be having fun, working together in new ways and maybe even learning new skills.



Wessex Water volunteers

For more information about corporate partnerships and opportunities for your teams to get involved, contact Calum Edser, Fundraising Manager, on 0117 917 7270 or Calum.Edser@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

People and wildlife community engagement

By Nicole Daw and Hannah Welsh,
People and Wildlife Officers

We've been engaging with people of all ages across Avon, supporting them to take action and planning projects together to create wildlife-rich spaces in our towns, cities and neighbourhoods.

Students researching attitudes and action for nature

Young people are increasingly using their voice to let people know how much a healthy, natural environment means to them. The school strike for climate movement has seen thousands of young people around the world campaigning for a better future for our planet. We've been working with a University of Bristol student team from the Bristol Consulting Society to gauge the current relationship with nature amongst students in the city. Surprisingly, a questionnaire completed by 212 students in Bristol, demonstrated a disconnect between value and action, with 95% of students saying that nature is important to them, yet only 10% taking any kind of political action through campaigning or demonstrating.

This could be explained by a lack of knowledge about environmental regulations in the UK, with only 27% of students aware of the Government's 25-year environment plan. This is exacerbated further by the perception of the crisis, with 90% somewhat or very well informed about global issues vs only 55% somewhat or very well informed about UK issues. Local green spaces are clearly of huge importance however, and most Bristol students (70%) interact with nature on a day-to-day basis, with 90% of students saying they spend time in nature to improve their mental health. This project has provided some valuable insights into how the student population perceives the natural world and will influence how we engage with the next generation to provide the knowledge and skills needed to create a Wilder Future for us all.



Wild Walcot

Wild Walcot garden is one of those places that make people smile as they walk by. A once bare corner at the entrance to Bath's Artisan Quarter, it is now a riot of colour – bright yellow with daffodils in spring and blooming throughout summer with pollinator-friendly plants, making it a haven for bees and butterflies. Whether swelteringly hot or a cold crisp day, there are invariably people



sitting on the bench with their lunch enjoying Wild Walcot.



The garden was the group's first step to creating a wildlife-rich, green corridor along Walcot Street. Its success has been recognised two years running by the Bath in Bloom Awards, including a 2018 Gold Award. The group has been extending the green corridor with our

Bags for Life project, with local traders making tote-bag hanging baskets, wildflower meadow planting in Hedgemoat Park and plans to collaborate with St Swithin's Church. The Wild Walcot Group are an inspiring bunch – resourceful, passionate and, most



importantly, they have fun! In 2017,



13-year-old Poppy attended the first gardening sessions and is now a committed member of the steering group. Poppy became our first junior Avon Wildlife Trust Champion. Read her interview on the next page.

Meet five Wildlife Champions

By Elisabeth Winkler,
Communications Assistant

ALAN ELMS

It takes more than one organisation to transform a city into a nature-rich environment and this is where our Wildlife Champions come in. They share our vision for My Wild City, harnessing people-power to nurture nature-rich cities, towns and neighbourhoods and create connected pieces of land, allowing wildlife to move from place to place. Here is a selection of our Champions, discussing what inspires them and giving some tips.

Rob Acton-Campbell, Friends of Troopers Hill, Bristol

“ I open the curtains in the morning – how could I ignore the Hill? The view has inspired us since we moved here in the 1990s. Yellow broom in spring, purple heather in summer then autumn colours. We learned about its needs by inviting ecologists on walks. Bristol City Council are good landowners. There’s a bit more chasing since the cuts, but they appreciate we are doing our bit and they sign as co-partners for funding applications.”



Tips: “We don’t make any land management changes on Troopers Hill without checking with the locals. Organising events is a good way to meet future volunteers. As well as social media, we put up posters on the Hill. People come to events such as fungi forays, dawn chorus walks, the five-mile Avon Wildlife Corridor walk, and stargazing – despite its city location, Troopers Hill is a Dark Sky Discovery site – and get interested in joining us.” troopers-hill.org.uk

Ben Barker, BS3 Wildlife Group, Bedminster, Bristol

“ It all started with the Avon Wildlife Trust’s winter garden bird project. When it ended about eight years ago, some of us wanted to continue. Then we added butterfly surveys, and even more people joined us. My main project is working with city-wide groups to reduce social isolation. The My Wild Street idea is good because people talk to each other – which studies show helps reduce people becoming clinically depressed. Our activities, including a Good Front Gardens award, help people connect – it’s not just about the butterflies.”



Tips: “Talk to your local magazine. Our local editor is interested in wildlife and happy to publish wildlife photos – he awards a tenner for the best one. The word ‘volunteering’ can put people off because it sounds as if it commits you forever. But taking a photo of an unusual spider and posting it on our Facebook page is volunteering. I call volunteering ‘BS3 helping others’.”

Claudia Bonney, Mrs Tiggywinkle, Bishopston, Bristol

“ I will never forget the first night in our new home. A mother hedgehog and her babies in our city garden – what a surprise. So, I researched how to help and signed up to Hedgehog Street. Hedgehogs are the most beguiling creatures. One visited every night at 6pm on the dot for his bowl of dried cat food and saucer of water (they are lactose and gluten intolerant). Neighbours began making feeding and hibernation stations, putting ramps in ponds and stopped using slug pellets. We ran a hedgehog survey with Avon Wildlife Trust; people were awarded tiny green plaques to go over the hedgehog holes they had created, so the hogs can now happily roam from garden to garden. The

biggest obstacles to finding food and a mate are manmade barriers and fences. ”



Tips: “A good wildlife-friendly vet will not charge for consultations if you find an injured hog. Ours has nursed several hedgehogs back to health and re-released them locally. I write updates from Mrs Tiggywinkle – people seem to like advice from a hedgehog. So, if you love wildlife, don’t assume someone else is in charge – have a go and make a big difference!”

Grenville Johnson, St George in Bloom, Bristol

“ It has been a magical and unexpected journey. It started with my retirement as a head teacher and my vision of turning our tiny garden into an Italianate paradise. I am an amateur gardener, yet amazingly the garden went on to win awards (*victorianhouse.garden*). As chair of the local residents’ association, I found that locals wanted our road to be cleaner – and greener. With the support of our local councillor, we planted up unadopted land and replanted the street with rowan trees. I set up St George in Bloom in 2014, and



working with Bristol City Council and others, we are planning to create a new bee and butterfly area in St George park in 2019. Several years ago, we created a ‘pollinators’ garden’ on council land next to a Sikh temple, as well as planting up a neglected traffic island and a shopping centre. These areas are now buzzing with wildlife. ”

Tips: “It is never too late to put things right. So, make it fun, have a set of aims and principles, take small but positive steps, keep photographic reports of before and after, celebrate success on social media and, if you are applying for funding, get a bank account. Work with local businesses – it is to their advantage to have a lovely environment. The journey is worthwhile and has such a positive impact. Not only for wildlife: green spaces provide benefit to health and wellbeing, as I found out myself last year when I was ill.”
stgeorgeinbloom.org.uk

Poppy, aged 13, Wild Walcot, Bath

“ Wild Walcot is at the end of our road. I’d walk past and see people working outside and it looked fun. There was a notice about volunteers, so I turned up. That was 18 months ago. It is so much fun – we plant lots of things and are really involved in proper decisions on what to plant and where, and I get to learn about and use power tools. We build planters and get to paint them, too. Wild Walcot is amazing. It was only a few bushes and now it’s a garden with flowers for insects and things to eat like

carrots and spinach. It is brilliant because we are different ages and all get on well. ”



Tips: “Find something you enjoy. Have fun. If you are enjoying yourself, it is not like work!”
wildwalcot.com

My Wild Community



We have a huge and wonderful community online – with over 7,500 people who subscribe to our monthly eNewsletter, 18,000 members and over:



12,485
followers
on Twitter



5,238
followers
on Facebook



2,069 followers
on Instagram

Here are some of the photos and stories they shared with us over the autumn and winter months.



Clevedon School Sixth Form @Clevedon6Form
Clevedon Sixth Form Barn Owl Nestbox
Project phase 2 begins... measuring the timber!



Amanda Threlfall @amanda.threlfall
And they keep going! Two common darters today.



Daniel Hauck @haucksie
Loved all of the different coloured leaves on this tree.



Mil Wilson @milw98
This beautiful nest was found whilst clearing blackthorn from a fence line along the barn owl corridor at Clapton Moor.



Rachel White
My 6 year old daughter received her welcome pack today and promptly produced this picture.



Michael Green @intrepidforager
A corner of the ID table at yesterday's #UKfungusday event from @foreverfungi featuring classic autumn species.



Jennifer Staton @jlstat
Thanks Clare @follyfarmcentre for showing me round earlier. Birdsong and 360 beautiful views! @avonwt what a way to spend a Monday!



Tim Clarke, Volunteer Warden
The whales at Bennett's Patch nature reserve look like they've swum into Arctic waters with the covering of snow they had!



Heather Lampard @heather_lampard
Always transported back to my childhood when I see conkers. I used to collect as many as I could – the shinier the better!

We'd love to see your pictures from your wildlife adventures over spring and summer. Sign up for 30 Days Wild, get involved with your community and follow us/share your story on social media @Avonwt, #30DaysWild.

Sign up to our newsletter at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

What's on?

Wildflower Nursery Open Saturdays

Each first Saturday of every month from 6 April to 2 Nov 10am-4pm
(and weekdays through the year)

Come and choose from our wonderful native wildflowers and bring colour, beauty and wildlife to your garden. Our demonstration planters will inspire your gardening and our friendly team can help you select plants.

Look round our Feed Bristol site - enjoy a space rich in wildlife and connect with nature. Everyone welcome!

First
Saturday
of the
month



JANE SHEPPARD



NICK TURNER

Festival of Nature

The Festival of Nature is the UK's biggest free celebration of the natural world. Nature-lovers of all ages will find something to satisfy their curiosity as we discover wildlife secrets in the heart of the city. Interactive activities, live entertainment, walks and talks will run throughout the festival.

Avon Wildlife Trust will be at the Bath (Saturday 1 June) and Bristol (Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 June) Festival of Nature. Do come along to join in.

Festival of Nature is run by The Natural History Consortium.
Find out more at bnhc.org.uk/festival-of-nature



FESTIVAL
OF NATURE



Wild Wednesdays at Says Court Solar Farm

Badminton Road, Frampton Cotterell, BS36 2NY
Wednesdays during school holidays throughout the year.

Find out all about local wildlife as you explore your way around the Says Court Solar Farm. Put your nature detective skills to the test and enjoy a range of wildlife-themed activities perfect for the whole family. Each session will have a different theme, for example:

- birds
- wildflowers
- owls and bats
- bug hunting

Here are some dates, but keep an eye on our website for booking links as they go live: 31 July, 7 August, 14 August, 21 August and 18 September



NICOLE DAW

EVENTS

APRIL

Friday 26

Land of Fire and Brilliant Birds

Illustrated talk by Phil Mugridge at Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entrance £2, Children/students £1 including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30. 01275 843160. **(P)**

Sunday 28

Wild Flower and Tree Walk, Weston Big Wood, Portishead

Led by Dr Bill Dixon. Slow 2-mile walk with stepped hill at start. Meet at Valley Road entrance. Sturdy footwear advised. Free but donations welcome. Booklet £5. 10:00 - 12:00. 01275 849200. **(P)**

MAY

Saturday 18

Coffee Morning and Plant Sale

36 St Peter's Road, Portishead BS20 6QT. Please ring with offers of plants, cakes, etc. 10:00 - 13:00. 01275 843160/843865. **(P)**

Saturday 18

Ham Wall RSPB Reserve

Guided by an RSPB walk leader. See how many members of the heron family you can spot. Meet at Wellsway School, Keynsham BS31 1PH at 13:00, or at the reserve at 14:00. Booking needed for minibus £7 and tour £4. 14:00 - 16:00. 0117 909 9667. **(K)**

JUNE

Tuesday 18

Orchids at Chancellors Farm

A car-sharing trip to these wonderful hay meadows renowned for orchids and a wide range of other species, led by a Somerset Wildlife Trust guide. Booking needed as numbers limited. 10:30 - 12:30. 0117 909 9667. **(K)**

Saturday 29

Bristol Swifts

Swift experts Jane and Mark will show us the colonies around their home - nest boxes, cameras and swifts on the wing. Meet at Wellsway School BS31 1PH at 09:30 for minibus or at location (to be advised) at 10:15. Booking needed. Minibus £3, donation to Swift Rehabilitation Fund £4. 10:15 - 12:15. 0117 909 9667. **(K)**



LIANNE DE MELLO



DAVID TIPLING

JULY

Sunday 14

Beach clean at Portishead

Remove rubbish to help protect our marine wildlife. Meet at Wellsway School BS31 1PH at 10:30 for minibus or location at 11:00. Booking needed for minibus £3. Suggested donation to Turn the Tide £7. 11:00 - 13:00. 0117 909 9667. **(K)**

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 12

British Owls

Talk by local wildlife expert Ian McGuire at Shire Way Community Centre main hall, Shire Way, South Yate BS37 8YS. 19:30 - 21:30. 01454 323608. **(S)**

Friday 27

Madagascar: The Eighth Continent

Illustrated talk by Duncan and Deborah Armour at Folk Hall, High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. 19:30 - 21:30. 01275 843160. **(P)**

Sunday 29

River Dipping in Keynsham

Our annual wildlife and pollution survey, a family event led as usual by Dave Sage. Meet at Dapp's Hill Bridge BS31 1XE. Accompanied children especially welcome. Fishing nets, etc., provided, but please bring your own wellington boots! Booking not needed. 14:00 - 17:00. 0117 940 7968. **(K)**



ROSS HODDINOTT



LANNE DE MELLO



CHRIS LAWRENCE



OLIVER SMART

OCTOBER

Friday 11
Galapagos - Islands that Changed the World
 Talk by Michael Pitts, award-winning underwater cameraman, at Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Free parking in Ashton Way car park. Adults £2.50, under 16s £1. Refreshments available. Sales of bird food, second-hand books, greetings cards. 19:30 - 21:30. 01225 874259. **(K)**

Saturday 12
Autumn Fair
 Folk Hall, High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. 10:00 - 11:45. For offers of help or contributions please ring 01275 843160/843865. **(P)**

Thursday 24
Wildlife and People of Sri Lanka
 Illustrated talk by David Hedges at Old School Room, Chew Magna BS40 8SH. Entry £2.50, refreshments included. 19:45 - 21:45. 01275 332601. **(CV)**



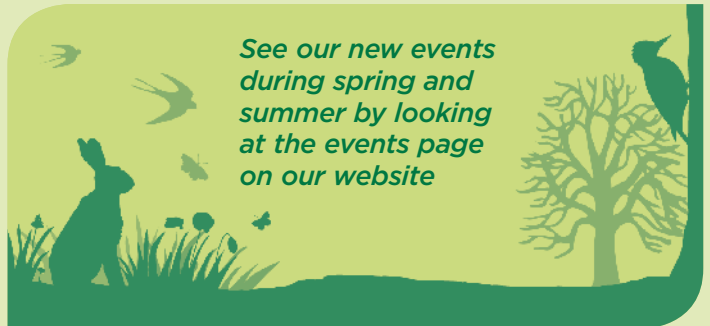
ROSS HOODNOTT

Friday 25
Doorstep Wildlife and Beyond the Garden Gate
 Illustrated talk by Colin Higgins (known as Higgy) at Folk Hall, High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entrance £2, children/students £1, including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30. 01275 843160. **(P)**

Thursday 31
Halloween Owl Prowl
 Ian McGuire will be leading us on this nocturnal walk around Wapley Bushes NR. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the nature reserve, South Yate (opposite road entrance to Cherington) BS37 8US. Accompanied children very welcome. Please wear warm clothes, with a Halloween theme if you like, and sturdy footwear. Bring a torch too. 19:00 - 21:00. 01454 323608. **(S)**

NOVEMBER

Friday 8
Mud, Sweat & Tears - Tales from a BBC Wildlife TV producer
 Illustrated talk by Paul Williams at Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Free parking in Ashton Way car park. Adults £2.50, under 16s £1. Refreshments available. Sales of bird food, second-hand books, greetings cards. 19:30 - 21:30. 01225 874259. **(K)**



See our new events during spring and summer by looking at the events page on our website

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 Avon Wildlife Trust including:

Pollinator Corridors

Meet at Trust HQ (Tuesdays and Thursdays).

Wildlife Action Group (WAG) on Trust reserves – meet at Trust HQ (9:45am Wednesdays and Fridays).

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

Feed Bristol in Stapleton.

Communities and Nature in Twerton and Whiteway, Bath.

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

For conservation, events and office volunteering opportunities please go to avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or call 0117 917 7270.

Here is a selection of other conservation groups:

May

Saturday 4 - Wapley Bushes LNR

Working with Dodington Parish Council on a deep spring clean, and planting out native plants in a grassland area. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate BS37 8US. Please wear stout footwear. 10:00 - 12:00. 01454 323608. **(S)**

June

Sunday 30 - Clapton Moor

Re-painting bird hide. Meet in car park at entrance to reserve on Clevedon Lane, about a mile west of Clapton-in-Gordano. ST 461733. 10:00 - 12:00. 01275 817565/07853 248476. **(GCG)**

July

Sunday 14 - Wapley Bushes Summer Fruit Tree Pruning

As well as pruning stoned fruit trees such as plums and gages, we shall be attending to odd jobs on the reserve. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate BS37 8US. 10:00 - 12:00. 01454 323608. **(S)**



SHIRLEY FREEMAN

Sunday 38 - Weston Big Wood

Ragwort-pulling in the hay meadow to allow a hay cut to be taken on the site. Meet in large lay-by on Valley Road (off B3124) just below the quarry. ST 451741. 10:00 - 12:00. 01275 817565/07853 248476. **(GCG)**

September

Sunday 8 - Wapley Bushes LNR

We shall be undertaking the annual stream clearance and other maintenance work. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate BS37 8US. 10:00 - 12:00. 01454 323608. **(S)**

Sunday 29 - Clapton Moor

We will be using scythes to clear the Clapton Circuit. Meet in car park at entrance to reserve on Clevedon Lane, about a mile west of Clapton-in-Gordano. ST 461733. 10:00 - 12:00. 01275 817565/07853 248476. **(GCG)**

October

Saturday 5 - Kennedy Way Pond

Carrying out general management work, including vegetation clearance. Meet at the pond, Link Road, Yate Shopping Centre. Parking is available at Yate overflow car park, also on the eastern side of Link Road BS37 4AY. 10:00 - 12:00. 01454 323608. **(S)**

Saturday 26 - Kingsgate Park NR Ponds

Undertaking maintenance of this important amphibian site, including cutting back vegetation. Meet at Scott Way entrance to the Park, Scott Way, Yate BS37 4NW. Parking available at entrance of Shackleton Avenue. Please wear gloves and wellington boots. 10:00 - 12:00. 01454 323608. **(S)**

Sunday 27 - Walton Common

Scrub control on this lowland calcareous SSSI grassland. Meet on verge of coast road, Walton Street, beside Clevedon Golf Course, above Walton-in-Gordano. ST 423735. 10:00 - 12:00. 01275 817565/07853 248476. **(GCG)**

For a full list of our up-to-date events and booking forms, please visit the website: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on.

You can also follow us on Twitter and Instagram to find out how our events go: Twitter (@avonwt) Facebook (/avonwt), Instagram (/avonwt)



Local group and volunteering contacts

(CV)	Chew Valley	Philippa Boye	01275 332843
(GCG)	Gordano Valley	Sarah Kennedy	01275 817565/ 07853 248476
(K)	Keynsham	Cynthia Wilson	01225 874259
(P)	Portishead	Cynthia Dorn	01275 843160
(S)	Southwold	Pauline Wilson	01454 310540

If you would like to get involved or start a new group, please contact Melissa Gault 0117 917 7270 (ex 305).

Species Spotter

Bats

By Eric Heath,
Head of Land Management

Browne's Folly

Bats capture our imagination: elusive, mysterious and the only mammals capable of sustained flight. However, these busy insectivores are often misunderstood, possibly due to the popularity of vampire stories. So, armed with some information (and possibly a bat detector), we can learn to appreciate the fragile beauty of a bat foraging around a garden or park on a still summer evening.

There are 17 species of bat which breed in the UK – that represents a quarter of all our native mammals – and all but one of these bat species have been recorded in Avon. However, they are some of our most elusive species because they are nocturnal, and also hibernate over the coldest months of the year.

The most common group of bats is the pipistrelles, and the common pipistrelle is the most frequently seen. These tiny bats weigh around the same amount as a 20p coin. They emerge

from their roosts around 20 minutes after sunset and will spend most of the night out foraging for food. Their diet is mostly made up of moths, midges and flies – a hungry pipistrelle can eat up to 500 of these in an hour!

In order to catch this number of prey, bats need to move across the landscape from their roosting sites to their favourite places to eat. In general, bats are sensitive to light pollution and some species will avoid any areas with artificial lighting. Bats do not particularly like flying in the open, so will stick to the edges of

fields and gardens, using hedgerows, streams and woodland edges to navigate around the countryside. It is particularly important that hedgerow networks are kept intact, as gaps as little as ten metres wide can be enough to prevent some bats from crossing them.

The best time to see bats is just after sunset when there is still light in the sky. They are easiest to spot in silhouette, so make sure you have a clear view of the sky, and stick to the edges of fields or sheltered areas in parks where bats are most likely to feed and fly.



Greater horseshoe bat



Brown long-eared bat

TOM MARSHALL



Daubenton's bat

DALE SUTTON



Lesser horseshoe bat

JIM MULLHOLLAND



Hedgerow

Wildflower Nursery *Seeding Avon's nature recovery*

By Naomi Fuller, Communications Manager

As spring sunshine warms the ground and primroses, cowslips and celandines brighten up hedgerows, woodland edges and gardens, many of us start to think about wildflowers, looking forward to enjoying their scents and colour through the summer months ahead. But for Avon Wildlife Trust's Wildflower Nursery team, wildflowers are at the centre of their planning and activity all year round, as they do the specialist work of growing more than 100 different types of wildflowers in harmony with the seasons.

Over the five years since it was set up, the wildflower nursery, based at our Feed Bristol site, has steadily developed into a pioneering operation, dedicated to gathering, propagating, growing and selling native wildflowers which have local origin. Shaun Waycott and Rachael Dodd look after the nursery, lovingly tending the wonderful array of wildflowers and managing an enthusiastic team of volunteers and placement students year-round in all weathers.

Inside the polytunnels, Rachael and Shaun check on trays of wildflower seedlings including self-heal, fennel and ox-eye daisies, which are safe from frost and predators. The hundreds of tiny seedlings emerging have been grown from seeds collected from last year's plants here on the Feed Bristol site, or gathered carefully from Avon Wildlife Trust nature reserves.

"We collect seeds over several months – from June for spring flowers like primroses, right through to October for later-flowering plants like devil's-bit scabious," explains Shaun. "The trick is to get seeds when they are as ripe as possible, without leaving it too late."

Once collected, the seeds are

carefully dried and cleaned before being stored and then sown to enable a continuing stock of wildflower plants to grow from year to year.

"Our own collected seeds are fresh, quick to germinate and give us great results," says Shaun, an experienced grower and landscaper.

Saving wildflowers for the future

The nursery received a grant from Kew Gardens' Grow Wild project to progress

their Living Seed Banks of locally-collected species, so playing a role in making sure important varieties don't disappear.

Pointing to the dark, glossy leaves of small betony plants, Shaun explains how a small number of seeds were collected from Avon Wildlife Trust's Weston Big Wood nature reserve, where betony, with its spikes of delicate pinkish-purple flowers, grows wild. Together with their team of volunteers, Shaun and Rachael carefully germinated the seeds to produce this year's plants.



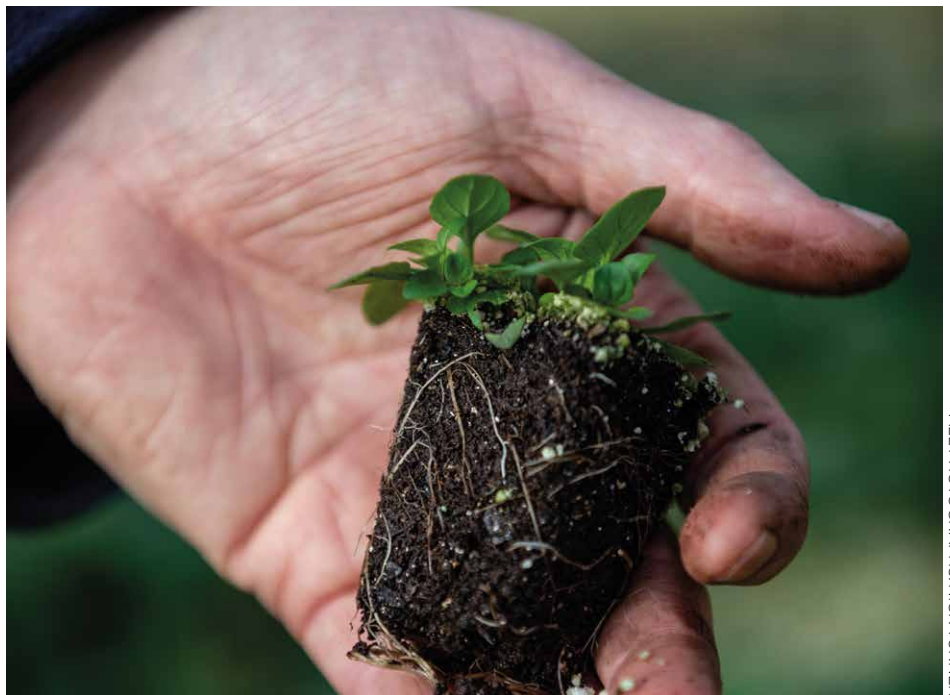
“Betony is one of those wildflowers which stagger their germination,” says Rachael, who has worked at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, Cambridge University’s Botanic Gardens, and the world-famous Great Dixter gardens in East Sussex. “It’s one of the differences between growing cultivated plants and wildflowers, and it’s fascinating to watch and wait to see how plants behave. Some, like the wildflower tall melilot – not a native wildflower – take two years to germinate, so patience is needed.”



A growing and selling season

The wildflower nursery gears up for a busy season from spring and through the summer, selling smaller plug plants and larger, more established wildflower plants to commercial gardeners, businesses, community groups and members of the public keen to include wildflowers in gardens and open spaces. Customers can choose from a diverse array of wildflower plants, which will grow well in planters and back gardens and have a delicate beauty often lacking in the uniform trays of cultivated bedding plants on offer at garden centres.

“We’re inspired by the plants we grow here and love sharing that inspiration with other people,” says Shaun. “We enjoy helping people choose their plants and grow their knowledge, recommending plants that will flourish.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: NICK TURNER

“It’s not just the plants getting out across Avon, it’s all the people getting inspired”
 Shaun Waycott, Wildflower Nursery Project Manager

Wildflowers from our nursery are now growing across Avon, both in countless gardens and other spaces, including at...

- Wild Walcot garden, Bath
- Hedgemoor Park, Bath
- MS Therapy Centre wildlife garden, Bradley Stoke
- Triodos bank, Bristol
- My Wild Street – a street in Easton, Bristol
- St Michael’s Hospital garden, Bristol
- Blooming Whiteway project, Bath
- Bennett’s Patch and White’s Paddock, AWT nature reserve

People often think that wildflowers are tricky to grow in average back gardens, but in fact most will thrive and be happy in those soils.

“Everybody’s talking about pollination and how crucial it is to support pollinating insects. Well, wildflowers provide a rich food source, through their pollen, nectar and often leaves and roots, for insects like solitary bees,

hoverflies, moths and butterflies – some of which depend on just one or two plants for their survival.”

The wildflower nursery is at the heart of the wildlife-rich habitat created at Feed Bristol – a space dedicated to supporting wildlife and giving people of all ages and backgrounds a chance to enjoy, connect with and learn more about nature.



Placement opportunities

We have two placement positions at our wildflower nursery for people to learn new skills and help produce and tend the wildflowers. Email volunteer@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Visit

Our wildflower nursery is open to buy and get advice on wildflower plants first Saturday of every month from 6 April to 2 November 2019, as well as weekdays, from 10am to 4pm.



What to watch in spring and summer

By Louise Treneman,
Living Landscape Assistant
Jenny Greenwood,
Monitoring Officer



Barn swallow

RAY HENNESSEY

The spring and summer months are a delight of sights and sounds, from the calling of the cuckoo to the delicate beauty of wildflowers and the daring aerial stunts of swifts and swallows. Here are a few of the wildlife highlights to enjoy as the days lengthen.



Cuckoo

ANDY MORFEW

May

The cuckoo arrives back on our shores in late spring after a winter in Africa. These birds are surprisingly hard to spot, considering they are roughly the same size as a dove, but their distinctive call makes them easy to pick out of the spring soundscape. Listen out for a deep, insistent, two-syllable call, and if you're lucky you may catch a glimpse of one perching in the open during the breeding season. Similar in colour to wood pigeons, cuckoos can be distinguished by their long tails and pointed wings. Our Dolebury Warren nature reserve is a good place to listen out for cuckoos, and they have even been heard in Eastville Park in Bristol!



Herb Paris

JOE MCGORLEY

June

Herb paris is an ancient woodland indicator that grows in damp woodlands, predominantly on chalky soils, which are widespread in Avon. The four broad, oval leaves set in a cross are quite distinctive, with the flower emerging from the centre of the whorl on an upright stem. Look out for a star of four narrow, yellow-green petals and four green sepals, topped by a dark berry and a crown of eight golden stamens. This understated flower can be seen at our Prior's Wood and Weston Big Wood nature reserves.

July

Few people can fail to be impressed by the flight of adult dragonflies in the summer months. Early July is the best time to see four-spotted chasers, when males are often



Four-spotted chaser

ROSS HODDINOTT



Robin's pincushion

LES BINNS

found perching on vegetation overlooking the water or engaged in territorial flight. This is a relatively large species, with a brownish abdomen. Two wing spots on each wing, with a further dark patch at the base of the hindwing, distinguish it from similar species. Rivers, ponds and ditches are the best places to spot dragonflies, which can be seen flying into early October. Our Puxton Moor reserve hosts a particularly impressive array.

August

August can often be regarded as a month lacking in wildlife interest as the birds have gone silent and the main flush of wildflowers has gone to seed. However, devil's-bit scabious is a stunning purple flower that continues to bloom right into early autumn. Look out for a globular, deep purple flower

and oblong-shaped leaves that sit in opposite pairs on the stem. This flower can be seen in damp woodland glades or grassland and meadows that have not been cut for hay.

September

Look carefully at a wild rose in summer and you may find it covered with a number of vivid red to green fibrous balls, known as robin's pincushions. These strange growths, called galls, are not a normal part of the plant, but are stimulated to grow when a wasp lays its eggs in a leaf bud in spring. Although they can be spotted throughout the year, robin's pincushions are particularly vivid in late summer, as the feeding larvae grow inside the gall and stimulate the growth of the tissue until the autumn.



Devils-bit scabious

AMY LEWIS

Around the reserves

By Joe McSorley and Tim Curley,
Living Landscape Managers

Our volunteers have worked hard with us over the winter months to tackle important work on our nature reserves, ensuring these habitats are thriving over the coming year. We've improved different types of habitat for wildlife across our reserves and focused on ensuring the sites are accessible for people to enjoy too.

Puxton Moor

CHRIS DAVIES

Puxton Moor

Our work on Puxton Moor over the last few months has focused on improving this important wetland for wintering waterfowl and wading birds like snipe and redshank. We've worked on the ditch network - a vital part of this landscape - and used heavy machinery to dig new 'scrapes' - shallow depressions - into the wetter fields. These scrapes, gently sloping to hold seasonal water, provide feeding opportunities for the birds, and will greatly improve their roosting and feeding sites, holding surface water for longer in winter and spring, while the surrounding farmland is more rapidly drained. This work has been generously funded by The Banister Charitable Trust.

Prior's Wood

The Land Management team and volunteers were busy at Prior's Wood, cutting-in a new coppice coup - a forest area designated for wood harvesting. This ancient woodland management technique involves cutting back to ground level both the



Puxton Moor scrapes

CHRIS DAVIES

trees and the plants growing in their shade (understory) to allow fresh growth. In the early stages of a coppice coup, the woodland floor is flooded with light and warmth, encouraging ground flora such as bluebells, wood anemone and violets. As the area matures, the regrowth will become more dense and scrubby, providing shelter for nesting birds and small mammals. Meanwhile, the left-over wood has been stacked - this will eventually become a great habitat for invertebrates and fungi.

Folly Farm

Over the last decade, we have been restoring steeply-sloped grassland, rich

in spring and summer wildflowers and fantastic for pollinating insects. During the winter the delicate wildflowers have set seed, so with our volunteers we've been doing tasks which will give the wildflowers the best chance to thrive. Some of this has been tending to scrub, which if left unchecked can encroach on areas where wildflowers are trying to grow. We've been careful not to remove too much, and have left plenty of brambly scrub, particularly around the woodland, where nesting birds can shelter this spring. This year we used a robotic scrub mower for large areas of woody regrowth, which would otherwise have taken weeks to clear with brush-cutters and hand tools. We will follow this with grazing to keep the areas open for wildflowers so the slopes will have abundant scabious, knapweed and orchids through spring and summer.

Charfield Meadow

This small but special nature reserve is a wonderful combination of wildflower-rich grassland surrounded by a wooded hillside, and an important habitat for pollinating insects in South



Prior's Wood bluebells



Flail cutter

STEVE NICHOLLS

Gloucestershire. As with Folly Farm, we need to keep a careful balance between the wildflower areas and the areas of scrub on the site, and over the winter cleared areas where blackthorn, plum and willow trees would have shaded cowslip-rich areas in the spring. Thanks to funding from Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society, we were able to fence the redefined grassland, meaning the site can be grazed by livestock which will help the wildflowers to thrive by keeping down the more vigorous plants.

Goblin Combe

We've been grazing this site with friendly goats, who nibble fresh ash, birch and bramble popping up on the calcareous grassland. To make the most of their willing assistance, we recycled fencing from our Prior's Wood reserve to fence a second field, allowing the goats to graze on previously out-of-reach areas. Turkey oak saplings had seeded themselves amongst the wildflower-rich area and we needed to remove them to prevent

Birds like snipe and lapwing use their long, probing bills to find insects and earthworms in the mud, so we've created wet, shallow areas of ground on our Gordano Valley reserves to suit these winter waders.



them shading out the wildflowers. This important limestone grassland site now looks stunning and is well worth a visit this spring and summer. Our work over the winter here, and across our other reserves, helps to ensure they are strong habitats in a connected landscape, allowing wildlife to move, shelter and thrive.

Dolebury Warren

As with several of our other reserves, keeping the wildflower-rich slopes of this reserve open for wildflowers like scabious and eyebright to thrive, means that sometimes we need to remove saplings and scrub which have started to grow. Together with our volunteers, we've done some clearing, including

on walking routes where bramble was blocking paths. The site is now even more accessible for bracing walks.

Burledge Hill

This reserve, with views over the Chew Valley, is one of the region's most diverse sites for grassland wildflowers and wild ant colonies. The site can be a challenge because the terrain is often steep and narrow, with anthills providing a trip hazard to livestock and volunteers. This winter, we cleared the edges of less accessible fields and carved a new route through a wood pasture - a woodland with semi-mature oaks where livestock graze - which will reduce the cattle's impact on popular public paths.



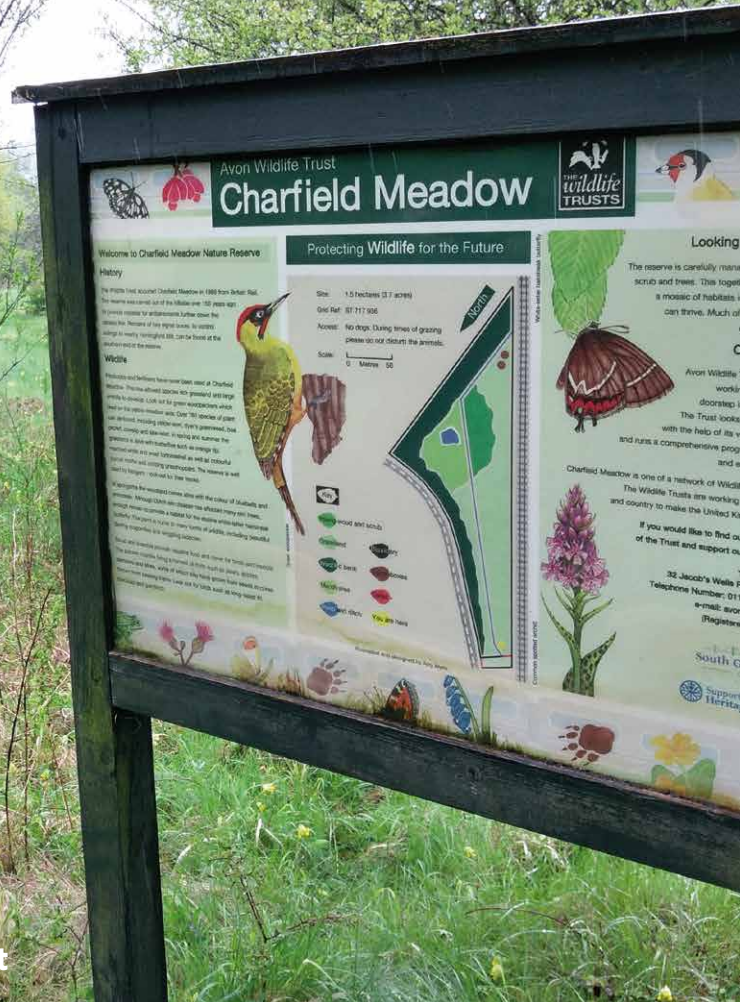
Charfield Meadow



Goats at Goblin Combe

A walk with the Warden Charfield Meadow

By Charlotte Targett, Living Landscape Assistant



JOE MCSORLEY

At the beginning of February with the snow falling thick and fast, the narrow country lanes leading to Charfield Meadow were inaccessible. So, instead of battling the elements to install fencing, we talked to Fen Marshall, our volunteer warden, about why this is one of Avon Wildlife Trust's hidden gems.

Fen has been volunteer warden at Charfield Meadow for the last seven years. He is a pillar of the local community, also being warden for the parish church.

"The Trust bought Charfield from British Rail (I believe for £1) in 1988," says Fen, making it one of the Trust's oldest reserves. Formerly, the site was used to extract aggregate during the construction of the railway, and was later the location of a signal box, the remnants of which can still be seen today. After the railway was built, we

believe the site was left, more or less, to its own devices. This is one reason why Charfield Meadow, despite its tiny size, is so rich in biodiversity. The site is only one hectare, half being scrubby woodland on a steep bank, the other half being species-rich, unimproved neutral grassland. There is a pond on the woodland edge, which Fen tells us was dug by the previous warden, Alan Burberry, in 1992. You can do a short loop of the reserve, which takes in all of the habitats within this small area. "Following the work by the

volunteers, the path around the reserve is much easier and clearer, with steps up the steep bank near the pond. The working parties have also created more grassland by removing the encroaching brambles."

This year our Wildlife Action Group volunteers have spent a lot of time at Charfield. Once a year the meadow needs to be cut using scythes to prevent vigorous grasses from out-competing the wealth of wildflowers. But cutting is not enough. Traditionally, meadows are cut for hay each year



Apples

ROSS HODDINOTT



Slow worm

FEN MARSHALL

and then aftermath-grazed by livestock over autumn and winter to achieve a tight sward (short grass length) ready for spring, when the wildflowers again begin to grow. However, due to the age of the fences at Charfield, they are no longer able to contain livestock, meaning we weren't able to carry out the important aftermath graze this year. But, with grant support from the Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society and the hard work of our volunteers, we have been able to begin fencing off the grassland so that next year we can reinstate grazing.

A tranquil haven

I asked Fen what he thinks are the best bits of the reserve. "It's very quiet, except for the sudden roar of a passing train, which seems to enhance the peace once it's gone past! It's always different and I'm always spotting something I haven't seen before. It is interesting at any time of year, even February has some lovely orange cup fungus, but I like it in May when the cowslips are at their best. Later in the summer there is a much greater variety of plants and the insects are worth seeing, such as dark bush crickets in large numbers and a good variety of butterflies. You often catch a glimpse of slow worms and grass snakes under the sheets left out for them ... and I usually disturb a deer or two on my visits."

There is an abundance of blackthorn, hawthorn and spindle scrub which supports a wealth of tits, small mammals, blackbirds and thrushes through autumn and winter. "There are a few fruit trees and one apple produces a wonderful crop every other year. It's probably grown from a core discarded many years ago by a passenger eating their lunch on a steam train going past. They're lovely!" It really is a gem at whatever time you visit.



Female azure damselfly



Common blue butterfly

Did you know?
Cowslips were traditionally picked on May Day to adorn garlands

“ It is interesting at any time of year, even February has some lovely orange cup fungus, but I like it in May when the cowslips are at their best ”



The pond



Fen Marshall and Verity

Facts

- The abundance of anthills on the grassland make it a fantastic site for green woodpeckers (their local name 'yaffle' is due to their call), which gorge on the ants within.
- The anthills are also an excellent place for common lizards to bask on warm spring and summer mornings before scurrying off into the tussocks to hunt.
- The wooded bank supports a number of young elm trees, which are the food plant for white-letter hairstreak butterflies.

Great for

- A quiet, secluded walk
- Butterflies
- Spring wildflowers, including cowslips and forget-me-nots
- Summer wildflowers, including betony and saw-wort

Further information

- avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/charfieldmeadow

Seasonal stroll

Hutton Hill

By Ian Barrett, Chief Executive



LES BINNS



Ancient woodlands hug the flanks of Hutton Hill, while the open top forms part of a continuous chain of limestone grassland stretching along the Mendip ridge from the coast at Walborough. Views from the summit are spectacular, with a wide panorama encompassing the North Somerset Levels, out over the Severn Estuary to the island of Steep Holm and beyond.

This circular walk sets out from the medieval village of Hutton and returns through the lush shade of Canada Coombe. A short detour will also allow walkers to visit the Trust's reserve at Hellenge Hill, which supports rare plants such as honewort and Somerset hair-grass that are only found on the warm, southern scarp of the Mendips.



For spectacular views



OS grid ref: ST351586

Walk details

duration: 2 hrs

grade: moderate with some steep sections

Key to map

woodland

walk

point of interest

car park

scale

200m

Did you know?

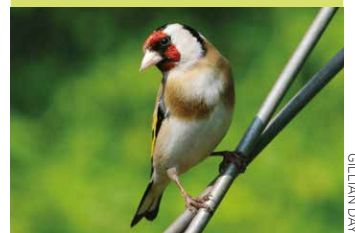
Violets are the food plants of dark green fritillary caterpillars

Look out for:



LESBINS

Dark green fritillary



GILLANDAY

Goldfinch



ANDREW KERR

Grizzled skipper



STEFAN JOHANSSON

Skylark

The walk route

From the Village Pound (1), follow the footpath diagonally across horse paddocks until you reach the edge of Hutton Wood (2). From here the path climbs steeply up through shaded woodland, with glimpses of Brean Down and Steep Holm through the trees to the west. Look out for groups of goldfinches and other small birds flitting amongst the trees. At the top of the hill (3) you have a choice of routes. The main walk continues through the kissing gate to the left across open grassland. Those wanting a longer walk can turn right at this point to visit the Trust's Hellenge Hill reserve, 10–15 minutes away along the Bleadon Ridge, returning by the same route. Continue along the path, which is now marked as part of the Mendip Butcombe Brewery Trail, reaching the woodland again at (4). Look out for the former hazel coppice in the wood to your left beneath a tall canopy of ash trees. This part of the footpath takes you through the land that has been left to the Trust at Hutton Hill, through a small grazed section of tall hawthorn woodland, with open grassland through the trees to your right. Stay on the path through the wood and through another kissing gate. The small pits visible beside the path are the remnants of 18th century ochre mining, which also led to the discovery of nearby caves containing the bones of mammoths and hyenas. Follow the path gently downhill, with views through the trees opening up to your left as you descend. The path drops out onto a quiet road at Canada Coombe (5); turn downhill to the left, looking out for the abundant hart's tongue fern enjoying the shade beneath the patches of exposed rock along the coombe sides. When the road comes out of the woods (6) take the footpath over the stile to your left and cross the field diagonally towards the sea, with Uphill and Steep Holm prominent in front of you. Continue through the gate and follow the path along a track, with ancient barns on your left, which eventually comes out on Church Lane near the entrance to Hutton Court. The "Manor of Hutton" was mentioned as early as 1298 and the current building is thought to date from the 15th century.

How to get there

By bus: Hutton can be reached by direct bus from Weston-super-Mare

By car: Park sensibly near the church on Church Lane in Hutton

Access

OS Grid Reference ST351586





BREXIT UPDATE

Shaky start for new Environment Bill

The Government has published a draft Environment Bill. We say they could do much better

Just before Christmas, the Government faced the first real test of their commitment to our natural world as the long-awaited part one of the draft Environment Bill was published. It was a result of successful lobbying by The Wildlife Trusts and our partners in the Greener UK coalition.

This draft Bill aims to create a replacement environmental governance system after we leave the EU. Published alongside this was a policy note setting out the Government's ambitions for part two of the Bill, expected in Spring 2019.

The Wildlife Trusts have fought hard for the Government to

recognise the need for an ambitious Environment Bill to help our natural world recover. However, in their current form the Government's plans fall well short of what is needed.

We need the new environmental watchdog to be much more independent and able to hold the

“ The plans fall short of what we need to tackle the challenge ”



TOM MARSHALL

Surveys show that thousands of once-common species are declining sharply

whole Government to account to begin to match the environmental enforcement powers currently held by the European Commission and European Court of Justice.

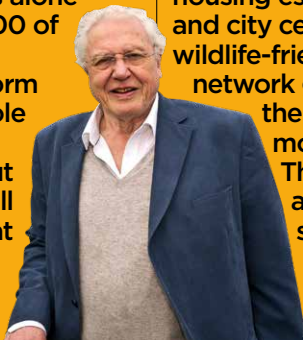
Have
your say

Turn to page 7
to change the Bill
for the better

“Every space in Britain must be used to help wildlife.”

Sir David Attenborough

The UK has thousands of nature reserves – the Wildlife Trusts alone look after 2,300 of them. These reserves perform an essential role in species protection. But wildlife has still disappeared at an alarming rate.



For wildlife to recover and thrive, parks, housing estates, farms and city centres must be wildlife-friendly: a network giving wildlife the freedom to move around. This can be achieved with a strong Environment Act.

Main pic above:
a pyramidal orchid about to disappear on a site in Kent being cleared for development

What's more, it is vital that the Bill makes it a statutory requirement to produce Nature Recovery Network maps. These must influence decisions both about built development and about farming to give wildlife room to manoeuvre.

As part of our Wilder Future campaign we are encouraging our supporters to meet with their MPs and ask them to stand up for wildlife and create a bold visionary piece of legislation proportionate to the vast environmental challenge we face.

Unless Ministers and MPs improve upon this draft Bill, we will continue to see a decline in our wildlife and the health of our ecosystems for generations to come.

“

A network to put nature into recovery



While the political battles rage on, wildlife faces its ongoing battle to survive. Despite political upheavals, there are some things that are certain: nature needs our help, butterflies don't recognise borders and wildlife won't recover if we don't act now.

Wildlife Trust members have formed a movement and fought off thousands of risks to wildlife. Hundreds of wildlife sites are still here because we've saved them: Askham Bog in York, Rampisham Down in Dorset, Eithinog in North Wales.... We've campaigned to end the use of pesticides that all but killed off our otters, and helped bring otters back. We've secured over a hundred Marine Protected Areas. As charities, we care for over two thousand wildlife refuges and we've started to piece things back together with landscape scale initiatives.

This is all great stuff, but we have been swimming against the tide. Much stronger laws are needed to halt and reverse nature's decline. This is the only sure way to remove barriers to the free movement of wildlife across our islands.

So the solution we are calling for is this: statutory Nature Recovery Network maps. These would map out how to join-up important places for wildlife that are currently isolated, identifying where habitat needs to be put back. These would result in better planning decisions and better targeting of farm support and funds from developers. After all, we are part of nature, so this will also benefit us through reduced flooding, cleaner air and better health.

With your help we can ensure that the Westminster Environment Act planned for 2019 is improved to make provisions for this. But individual actions are also important. Wherever you live, you can help create more space for nature. Why not install a bee brick in your wall or have flowers in a window box as a service station for a passing pollinator?

Together we can create a Wilder Future.

Stephanie Hilborne OBE

Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts
@stephillborne

The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Rd, Newark, Notts NG24 1WT

Website: wildlifetrusts.org **Tel:** 01636 677711

Email: enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org

Twitter: @wildlifetrusts

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Latest UK-wide
news and issues:
wildlifetrusts.org/news

In memory



DAVID TIPLING, 2020 VISION

Richard Bland

In October, the death was announced of well-known Bristol naturalist Richard Bland, who was an Avon Wildlife Trust trustee between 1998 and 2007. Richard's passion and curiosity about the natural world ran throughout his life. After moving to Bristol to teach history at Clifton College, he became a leading member of many local



groups, harnessing his passion for and expertise in birds by organising local and national bird surveys over many years and helping to build up a picture of the bird life across Avon and the UK.

During and after his time as an AWT trustee, Richard led many tree and wildflower identification walks on our nature reserves, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with new groups of nature-lovers. As a trustee, he helped guide the Trust in our conservation and community work across the region, bringing a warmth and wisdom to the role. We are very grateful for the contribution Richard made to AWT and were privileged to work with him over so many years.

Margaret Elizabeth Ford

Avon Wildlife Trust member and great-great-grandmother Margaret Ford was a Portishead Local Group committee member and a volunteer warden of Weston Big Wood nature reserve.



DONALD SUTHERLAND

A supporter of the Trust's fundraising events, she helped at November's jumble sale a month before she died, aged 91, on 23 December 2018. A retired French teacher with an interest in languages, travel and playing music, she loved her garden with its fruit trees, soft fruits and vegetable plots and, as a keen cook, she made the most of her produce. She marvelled at the visiting wildlife: birds, including rare migratory ones blown off-course, tadpoles becoming frogs in her pond and the bats which made a home under her carport roof. Her sense of humour and independent spirit will be missed.

Gifts in wills – protecting Avon's wildlife for generations to come

Do you remember what inspired you to fall in love with nature? Perhaps it was spotting a hedgehog in your garden for the first time, or chasing butterflies on a family holiday, or maybe there's a tree on a nature reserve that holds a special place in your heart.

Everyone has their own stories about falling in love with nature. But we need to ensure that future generations have theirs.

Including a gift to Avon Wildlife Trust in your will, no matter what size, will help us to protect Avon's

wildlife for generations to come. Gifts in wills are more important than ever, as they provide us with the flexibility and resilience to continue our work and maintain Avon as an amazing place for nature and wildlife.

If you would like more information about including a gift to Avon Wildlife Trust in your will, or have already done so, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Calum Edser, Fundraising Manager, at calum.edser@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or on 0117 917 7270.



With your help, nature can recover

Imagine a place where otters are splashing in rivers, hedgehogs are snuffling across your garden, goldfinches, wrens and sparrows flock across the sky and where the amazing benefits wildlife has on our daily lives are felt by everyone.

Climate change, agricultural challenges and housing are fragmenting our wild places, making it harder for our cherished wildlife to find enough food and shelter to thrive.

But you can help create a wild place where our wetlands, meadows and woodlands are all connected, creating a Nature Recovery Network that allows all creatures to move across our landscape, adapting to the challenges they face - creating a network of thriving wild plants and animals.

Nature is recovering with the help of people like you, who love and value wildlife. We've seen our first hedgehog at Feed Bristol - only seven years ago it was a forgotten green field and now it's a haven for wildlife. Lapwing are returning once again to the amazing wild wetlands in the Gordano Valley, and bats are thriving across the North Somerset Levels and Moors.

But for wildlife to truly flourish we need to do more.

We need to continue to protect and care for nature reserves, to bring green back into our cities, to educate people about the importance of wildlife and inspire them to love and protect wildlife. Nature should be accessible to everyone. The opportunities are endless, and we know what we need to do.



JOHN BRIDGES

Your £35 could help plant an orchard tree, providing a larder for birds to help them survive the winter.



Your £50 could help manage scrub to revitalise wildlife meadows and protect species.



JOE MIDDLETON

Your £100 could help create protective pathways, giving creatures ways to safely cross the landscape.

Make a donation today and help create a network of precious green spaces of plentiful food and shelter for all our local wildlife.

To read more about our Nature Recovery Appeal please visit the website.
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturerecovery

Gift Aid £1 +25p

Thank you to over 1,000 members who updated their Gift Aid details with us.

UPDATE YOUR GIFT AID TODAY

You can boost the value of your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate - **at no extra cost to you!**

VISIT: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/giftaid

UK Tax Payers - already declared Gift Aid?

If you've declared Gift Aid with us in the past but did not return the form sent with the Autumn 2018 magazine, please renew your declaration online. We are legally obliged to update declarations.

Non-UK Tax Payer/not eligible to give Gift Aid?

If you are not eligible, or hold a declaration with us that you now wish to cancel, please visit the online form to update us.

Changing name or address

Please notify us if there is a change to your name or home address online: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/contact_us.



Amazing fundraising efforts

Our Chew Valley local volunteer group has raised an amazing £1,500 to support Avon Wildlife Trust through fundraising events, including a jumble sale. We're grateful for all the energy and efforts of members of the group and our Chief Executive, Ian Barrett, and Director of Conservation, Amy Coulthard, were delighted to visit the group in January to hear an interesting talk and accept the donation. Well done and thank you!

£1,500



1st - 30th June



30
DAYS
WILD

Do
Something
Wild
this June!

Can you go
wild for 30 days?
Make time for nature,
explore wild places near you
and share your love of wildlife
with the world this June

#30DaysWild

wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild