

Wildlife

Issue 111 • AUTUMN 2018



Avon

Working together for wildlife

Creating a
Wildier Britain

Enjoying autumn
and winter wildlife

Together we raised
£13,000 for our
nature reserves



Includes
UK News &
Stories

Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Welcome



JON CRAIG

Ian Barrett
Chief Executive

Dear member

“

I'm delighted to welcome you to this edition of *Wildlife Magazine*, which is packed full of material on the wonderful wildlife you can find throughout Avon this autumn and winter. There's a month-by-month breakdown of what to look out for (pages 22-23) and an introduction to winter wildlife (page 21), as well as the usual round-up of wildlife, walks and wardens in our nature reserves (pages 24-29). These reserves are the bedrock of our work and we're enormously grateful for all of the support members have given to the Nature Reserves Fund appeal, which raised over £13,000 this summer. I hope you'll be inspired to get out and enjoy Lower Woods (pages 28-29) and our other reserves over coming weeks and months.

This edition of our magazine also celebrates our partnerships and the fantastic range of organisations we work with to protect and restore wildlife in our area. We work with the Bristol Naturalists' Society to track changes in local wildlife (pages 10-11), with the West of England Nature Partnership to ensure wildlife is taken into account in local decision-making (page 7), and with local Bristol organisations such as the fantastic City to Sea, who are leading the way in tackling the problem of marine plastics (pages 8-9). Over the coming year, the Wildlife Trusts will be working with other environmental charities nationally to raise support for strong new wildlife laws through our Campaign for a Wilder Britain (page 6).

We can achieve big things if we all work together for wildlife and it's fantastic to see the range of local businesses and communities getting involved in creating nature-friendly places (pages 14-15). There are ways for all of us to play our part in helping nature recover and as our Wilder Britain campaign takes shape we'll be bringing you more ideas of how you can get involved and take action where you live.

2017/18 was another busy year for the Trust and you'll find our annual impact report enclosed with this magazine, setting out what we've achieved with your support over the last year. We hope you'll be able to join us for our Annual Meeting on 14th November to look back at what we've achieved and our plans for the year ahead. Details of this event and how to book are on page 4.

”

AUTUMN SUNRISE: CLAIRE DAVEY



Your magazine

Edited by Kimberley Hudson:
Kimberley.Hudson@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Layout by Kevin Lester: kevinlester.com

Printed by Action Mailing

Front cover images:

Main photo: Katrina Martin 2020VISION
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Browne's Folly: Nicole Daw

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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 17,600 members and 535 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!

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.



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October

The green elm with the one great bough of gold

Lets leaves into the grass slip, one by one, –
The short hill grass, the mushrooms small milk-white,

Harebell and scabious and tormentil,

That blackberry and gorse, in dew and sun,
Bow down to; and the wind travels too light
To shake the fallen birch leaves from the fern;

The gossamers wander at their own will.

At heavier steps than birds' the squirrels scold.

The rich scene has grown fresh again and new

As Spring and to the touch is not more cool
Than it is warm to the gaze; and now I might

As happy be as earth is beautiful,

Were I some other or with earth could turn
In alternation of violet and rose,

Harebell and snowdrop, at their season due,

And gorse that has no time not to be gay.

But if this be not happiness, – who knows?

Some day I shall think this a happy day,

And this mood by the name of melancholy

Shall no more blackened and obscured be.

Edward Thomas

1878-1917



Spawn to be wild

Bringing wildlife to the classroom

LUCY HELLIER

Classrooms across our region hosted some mysterious wildlife visitors during the summer term, with children getting close to one of nature’s most elusive and enigmatic wild animals – the European eel. As part of our Spawn to be Wild partnership project with Bristol Water, we installed tanks of elvers (young eels) into classrooms in five schools and helped 270 children understand the incredible lifecycle of this critically endangered species – which travels 5,000 miles on its migration route from the Sargasso Sea to our rivers.

“The children cared for the elvers every day in their classroom,” said Avon Wildlife Trust Learning Development Manager, Lucy Hellier. “With the support of us and their teachers, the pupils learnt about how special these animals

are and the threats they face in the UK, such as pollution, habitat loss and dams. They also took action to protect eels by creating videos, writing to supermarkets about plastic pollution, and some even met their local MP.”

After looking after their tanks of eels, the children visited Blagdon Lake to release them, with each child carefully letting their eel swim into the lake to prepare for the next part of its lifecycle. It was clear the children gained a huge amount from their eel experience, with a group of Year 5 girls declaring, “Before the eels came to our class, we thought they’d be a disgrace. But when they settled in we felt our hearts warm up to them.”

Thank you to Bristol Water for their funding support on this valuable project.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Avon Wildlife Trust’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Wednesday 14 November from 5.30pm at The Station, Silver Street, Bristol, BS1 2AG – with the formal AGM beginning at 6pm.

Members are invited to the formal business from 6pm. We will host an event with refreshments and a chance to meet AWT staff and trustees after the AGM business is concluded.

The formal AGM meeting is for the following purposes:

1. To receive the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees and Audited Annual Accounts, together with the Auditors’ report, for the year ended 31 March 2018.
2. To elect as Trustees any persons duly proposed for election.
3. To re-appoint Mr Simon King as President of the Trust (recommended by the Board of Trustees).

It would help arrangements if you could please confirm your attendance by visiting: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2018



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

The Trust’s Annual Review along with full Audited Accounts and Trustees’ Annual Report will be available on the website 28 days before the event and are also available on request from mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Members are entitled to appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote at the meeting on their behalf. A proxy need not be a Member. To be valid, a proxy appointment form must be received by the Trust not less than 48 hours before the time of the meeting. For a proxy form please contact mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Any Member who is not disqualified from acting as a charity Trustee or company director and is interested in becoming a Trustee, should contact Jane Davis, Director of Finance and Resources, on 0117 917 7270 to arrange a meeting. Formal written proposal of any candidate by four Members must be delivered to the Trust office at 32 Jacobs Wells Road, Bristol BS8 1DR no later than 31 October 2018, together with the written consent of the candidate to act as a Trustee. Candidates are required to provide verification of identity and a declaration of suitability and personal interests.

Festival of Nature 2018



In June, the Festival of Nature celebrated its 15th anniversary. The inspiring, free event in Bristol and Bath welcomed more than 12,500 people over two weekends, providing a whole range of wonderful and lively talks, events and screenings that celebrated the natural world. We were delighted to be there alongside some passionate partner organisations and loved seeing all of the interactive, educational and thought-provoking displays that engaged the public throughout the event. Our wildflower nursery team at the Bristol Festival of Nature sold 500 plants and wildflowers grown at our Feed Bristol site, equalling about £1,000 of plant sales in the name of wildlife conservation! Our SWWFL team also signed up 38 new members and we spoke to hundreds of people, asking them what they love about nature and what they can do to protect it. We were impressed with the responses from all ages, and will be working with The Wildlife Trusts to feed their answers into the Wilder Britain campaign, with the aim of protecting places for wildlife throughout our landscapes and cities and reversing the decline of nature in the UK.

£1,000 raised for wildlife



City Nature Challenge: Bristol and Bath top European cities

We joined nature-loving families, individuals and partner organisations across the region to take part in the Bristol and Bath City Nature Challenge at the end of April, competing with 65 cities on five continents to show the wonder and diversity of our region's wildlife over a four-day contest. And the Bristol and Bath effort - co-ordinated by the Bristol Natural History Consortium - was a huge success, with our cities coming first amongst competing European cities. The challenge was to discover and record as much wildlife as possible, building a picture of the wild plants and animals across each region. Our Head of Land Management, Eric Heath, led a wildlife detective session in Town Park, Midsomer Norton where he helped enthusiastic families identify deer footprints, orchids, mosses and fungi, as well as



a range of plants and trees. Our People and Wildlife Officer, Hannah Welsh, also ran a session for families at Newbridge Slopes near Bath's Park and Ride - a site which we have taken over managing from Bath and North East Somerset Council. Hannah's session was well-attended with families uploading all their observations onto iNaturalist, which showed 129 observations and 58 species for the Newbridge Slopes areas.

The data collected has a great impact locally, helping local authorities, land managers and nature reserves make informed decisions about managing the region's wildlife and green spaces. At a national and international level, the data allows researchers and conservationists to monitor species distributions in a changing world.

The Bristol and Bath City Nature Challenge

	9,530 observations	300 observers
	1,000 species	35 events 

Communicating with you

Earlier this year, we contacted our members to ask how they would like to hear from us and received a fantastic response, with over a third of members updating their contact preferences. Thank you for staying in touch!

As existing members, we will continue to send you your *Wildlife* magazine as this is part of your membership, helping us to update you on how your donation is making a difference to local wildlife and how you can interact with nature.

We will also continue to keep you updated about our exciting projects, charitable efforts, fundraising and other information we think may be of interest to you via post, unless you have asked us not to.

If you are not yet receiving our monthly supporters' e-newsletter for news on our projects, reserves, species information, events, fundraising and job opportunities, sign up at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk.



Opt-in for wildlife

Let us know how you'd like us to keep in touch

For volunteering news and opportunities, you can also sign up for our monthly volunteer e-newsletter by emailing volunteer@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk.

To update your contact preferences at any time, simply complete our online form at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/stayintouch. You can also get in touch by phone, email or post: 0117 917 7270; hello@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk; Avon Wildlife Trust, 32 Jacobs Wells Road, Bristol, BS8 1DR.

To view our Privacy Policy, visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/privacy-policy and our Fundraising Policy is available at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beingaccountable.

MALCOM BROWN

Creating A Wilder Britain

Avon Wildlife Trust is joining with The Wildlife Trusts nationally to call on the Government to take action so that nature can recover on our land and in our seas, and to ensure people and wildlife can thrive in future decades.

We are setting out a plan to build A Wilder Britain – a place where the worrying decline in wildlife and habitats is reversed and space for nature is created in housing developments, city centres, farmland, parks, road verges, gardens and other spaces right across the country. The UK Government has set out bold intentions in a 25 Year Environment Plan, which includes aims to clean up our air and water, restore wildlife and create a greener country for everyone. We need to ensure these good intentions become a reality.

As Britain leaves the EU, we face a huge shake up of the environmental rules which have protected species and habitats. And Brexit also means changes to the way farmers are paid through public funds, with a new chance to reward them for bringing environmental benefits – including wildlife abundance – in the way

they look after their land. Now is a critical time to create and join together wildlife-rich landscapes and guarantee their protection in future years - and The Wildlife Trusts are leading the way.

The Wildlife Trusts' plans for A Wilder Britain are contained in a report published earlier this year for MPs and for Environment Minister Michael Gove. The report sets out how to achieve this vision through a Nature Recovery Network – a joined-up system of places that are important for wild plants and animals, providing habitat and the chance to thrive. This approach to creating living landscapes – bigger, better, more connected areas for

wildlife - has been championed by The Wildlife Trusts for many years.

The only way to achieve this positive change is through a new Environment Act to commit this and future Governments to building nature's recovery and society's connection to the natural world. This winter, we'll be joining the 46 Wildlife Trusts around the UK in a major public campaign calling for this new Environment Act and encouraging people of all ages and backgrounds across Avon to get involved. You can read more about the A Wilder Britain report and how to play your part in the campaign on The Wildlife Trusts website www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-recovery-network

“ Now is a critical time to create and join together wildlife-rich landscapes and guarantee their protection in future years ”



NIK POLLARD

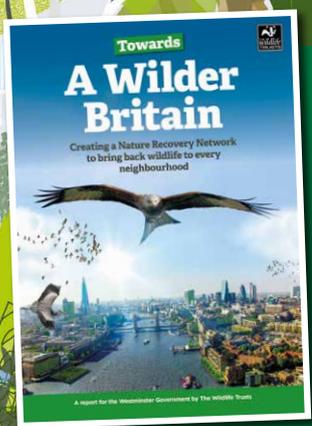
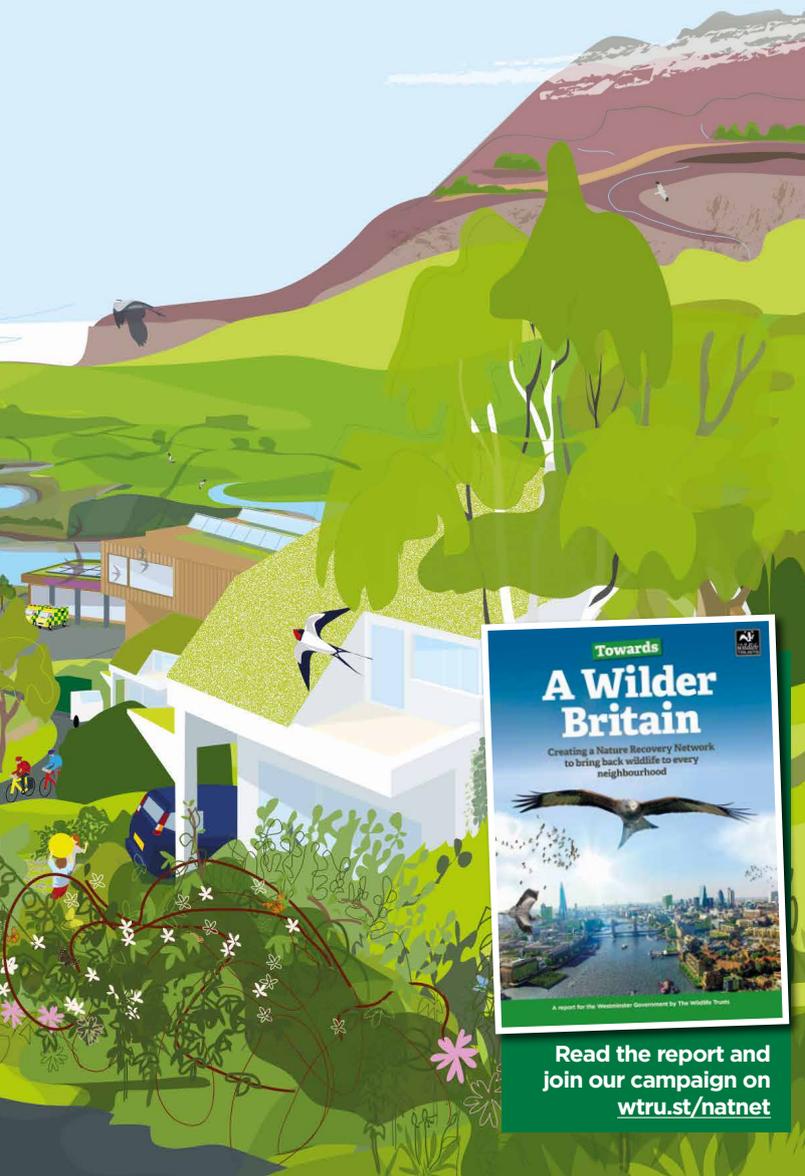
The vision for a Nature Recovery Network

To achieve a truly Wilder Britain which is better for wildlife, Local Authorities would be required to produce local Nature Recovery Maps. These maps would show nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites as well as smaller patches of habitat, which can act as 'stepping stones' and 'corridors' between bigger areas. These maps and the bigger network



KATRINA MARTIN

they show can then be treated as a joined-up whole. For the first time our landscapes would be farmed and developed in an integrated way that benefits people and wildlife.



Read the report and join our campaign on wtru.st/natnet

Working together to enhance our natural environment in the West of England

Locally, the Trust is leading work within the West of England Nature Partnership to map a Nature Recovery Network for the West of England (the old county of Avon). Together with partners, we've been putting the approach set out in the national Towards A Wilder Britain report into action for some time, identifying the areas of landscape and habitat which can help support our wildlife. A clear picture of the network in Avon will help us identify where we should focus our collective efforts on habitat creation and restoration to help restore the abundance of wildlife.

We're also working through the West of England Nature Partnership to ensure that the Nature Recovery Network is protected in local development plans. The Partnership is working with the four West of England Councils and other key stakeholders on a West of England Green Infrastructure Plan. 'Green infrastructure' is a strategic network of green (and blue) spaces and corridors – including parks, allotments, woodlands, lakes and rivers. It benefits us in many ways – from supporting sustainable food production to reducing flood risk and urban heating, and improving our mental and physical health. The Green Infrastructure Plan will set out how future development will make the most of our natural assets at a landscape and local scale and deliver net environmental gains.

It's not enough to agree our priorities for nature and embed them in regional policy. We also need to finance the work to make them happen – and then maintain them. The West of England Nature Partnership is working on a plan to make existing investments (including contributions from developers) go further, and to unlock new funding. This means helping organisations understand how they already rely on, or could benefit from, the natural environment. Our proposed Natural Capital Trust – which takes a more strategic approach towards how we invest in nature – is highlighted as an example of local innovation in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Avon Wildlife Trust hosts and is a key partner of the West of England Nature Partnership - a



West of England Nature Partnership
Joining up the dots for nature

cross-sector collaboration working to enhance our natural environment by putting the value of nature at the heart of local decision-making. To find out more, visit www.wenp.org.uk.

The plastics turning

By Naomi Fuller, Communications Manager

The devastating effects of plastic on wildlife, shorelines, marine habitats and on human communities has been under the spotlight as never before

Over the last year, there's been a dramatic awakening of public awareness and outrage about the sheer volume of plastic waste in our seas, rivers and landscapes, sparked by the unforgettable images from Blue Planet – the most watched programme of 2017. With David Attenborough's commentary, the series' final episode took an unflinching look at the impact of human activity on marine life, showing albatross parents unwittingly feeding their chicks plastic and mother dolphins potentially exposing their new-born calves to pollutants through their contaminated milk.

Pledges for change

In the wake of these shocking images have come high-profile campaigns by environmental organisations and the public, and a raft of measures to tackle the scourge of plastic pollution worldwide, with both Government and businesses vowing to make drastic changes. A £61.4 million fund was announced by the Government earlier this year to tackle pollution, together with a pledge to eliminate avoidable plastic waste by 2042. And companies including Starbucks and Lidl have brought in charges for non-recyclable

plastic cups and bags, while Iceland became the first UK supermarket pledging to go plastic-free on all its own label products within five years.

City to Sea

Bristol-based not-for-profit organisation City to Sea has been at the forefront of campaigning on plastics since its formation in 2015, when founder Natalie Fee took action to reduce the amount of litter flowing from the river Avon to the Bristol Channel. Since then, City to Sea has run campaigns to stop pollution at source, challenging industry to make changes and encouraging individual action. Natalie gives her view on the progress made on the plastics problem:



“Plastic pollution is a significant problem in our water courses and oceans, causing the death of one million seabirds every year. Working with the team from Southern Co-op to do a beach clean at Portishead brought to light the variety of rubbish found along our coast and demonstrated just how much can be achieved in a relatively short amount of time. Being able to work in strong partnerships like this with businesses, employees and volunteers is a vital way we can achieve change together with people across our region.”

Julie Doherty, Avon Wildlife Trust People and Wildlife Programme Manager



MIKE ENDRES

problem: back the tide

“The past few years have been an incredibly exciting time for campaigners working on the solution to plastic pollution. It’s gone from a fringe environmental issue to the most talked about and actionable cause out there – galvanising hundreds of thousands of people to not only sign petitions but to take direct action, like beach cleaning and cutting down on their personal plastic consumption. As a campaigning organisation focused on ocean plastic pollution, we’re doing everything we can to harness the momentum from this tidal wave of media interest and public attention to continue to put pressure on our retailers and government to make lasting changes that stop plastic pollution at source. Our Refill campaign is a great example of a national initiative that, thanks to our partnership with the UK water industry, empowers communities and puts the power to stop plastic pollution in people’s hands.”

The Wildlife Trusts’ marine campaign

We supported The Wildlife Trusts’ national campaign this summer calling for 41 new Marine Conservation Zones to be created, protected areas in English seas to safeguard special areas of the seabed and marine wildlife, including seahorses and living reefs.

Lots of members and supporters locally, raised their voices to call for this important change to the way we protect the wildlife in our seas and the Wave of Support campaign gathered an amazing 22,000 signatures. You can read more about the campaign and the next steps on page 30.

Local action

In our Avon region, we’ve been taking action to tackle plastic pollution on our shorelines with a beach clean in June at Portishead Marina, in partnership with local beach cleaning group Turn the Tide Portishead and staff from Southern Co-op. AWT’s People and Wildlife Programme Manager, Julie Doherty, worked with a committed

group of volunteers to gather five bags of plastic waste, including bags, sweet wrappers and straws, leaving the beach clean from plastic pollution, safer for wildlife and more pleasant for local people to visit. This beach clean day was part of the partnership work we are doing with Southern Co-op to help families get outside and explore their local wild neighbourhoods.

The issue of plastic pollution is now firmly fixed in public consciousness, as well as in the minds of policy makers. As pledges turn into concrete actions by Government, businesses and individuals, the hope is that the tide of plastic can turn back to restore our shores, seas, estuaries and landscapes.



- **UK consumers go through an estimated 13 billion plastic drinks bottles a year.**
- **Environment Secretary Michael Gove: “We can be in no doubt that plastic is wreaking havoc on our marine environment – killing dolphins, choking turtles and degrading our most precious habitats. It is absolutely vital we act now to tackle this threat and curb the millions of plastic bottles a day that go unrecycled.”**
- **Take action yourself to reduce plastic pollution by avoiding disposable plastics. Invest in a reusable coffee cup, shopping bag and food containers – and ditch plastic drinking straws.**

A close look at reed warblers and migration

By Richard Bland and Lesley Cox,
Bristol Naturalists' Society

ROSIE MAPLE

In the next few weeks, millions of birds will be travelling south through the countryside, along the rivers, down the estuaries, flitting silently from feeding place to feeding place. For the most part they travel unseen, unheard and unrecorded, but over the past century the science of ringing has brought to light both the vast scale of migration and, on the basis of birds being subsequently found and identified, demonstrated the whereabouts of many species, mostly in Africa, where they overwinter. One local centre of ringing activity is the Chew Valley Station, where every year ringers catch thousands of warblers, especially the reed warbler. There are hundreds of pairs breeding on the reeds, including one ten-year-old member of the species that was re-trapped there this summer.

The reed warbler is a tiny, inconspicuous brown bird (between a blue and great tit in size) and a summer visitor to Britain. Being warm brown above and buff beneath, its plumage provides perfect camouflage as it raises its chicks amongst the reeds, but its continuous scratchy song is almost unmistakable, and cuckoos appear to locate nests to parasitise with ease. It will breed wherever reeds grow and its numbers have increased steadily over the past few years as new wetlands have been created – some by fishermen, some by farmers, some as a result of rhynes being abandoned. During the breeding season it is easily identified, but once the young have fledged, its song ceases and the bird effectively vanishes from sight. However, there is some evidence to suggest that increased summer temperatures are leading to second broods.

Between July and September, a partial moult takes place. This is completed in Africa and the birds become solitary as the adults' plumage becomes greyer. During migration it can turn up anywhere, including gardens away from water, so it is wise to be alert.

Locally there is a population of about 1,500 pairs – over half at Chew – and surveys show a steady rise of 30% since 1994. Nationally, their greatest concentration is in the Somerset Levels and the Norfolk fens, and the last Atlas showed a 40% increase since 1968. Unlike so many bird stories, this is one of success; a vivid demonstration that, if the habitat is right, the birds will flourish.

If you would like to know more about migration, ringing, or any of the other means by which we gather the information that expands our knowledge of the avian world, or if you would like to come on one of our field trips, please contact the Bristol Naturalists' Society at secretary@bristolnats.org.uk

Become a wildlife expert

- The Bristol Nats are a key partner for the Trust, with members monitoring and recording trends in wildlife in Avon, which helps to inform our conservation work and campaigning
- If you'd be interested in learning species identification skills and helping keep track of changes to local wildlife please contact secretary@bristolnats.org.uk



AMY LEWIS



AMY LEWIS



MARTYN PRATT



Species Spotter

Trees transformed in autumn and winter

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

Few of our native trees are evergreen, meaning that, come winter, most trees will have shed their foliage. Whilst a tree may look a little bare without its leaves, this transformation can reveal other features that were previously obscured. As the general character and growth form of a tree become apparent, so too does the diversity of other organisms which call the tree home.

Trees are an important habitat for many species, providing a range of services which may or may not benefit the tree itself. Many mammal and bird species nest or hibernate in cracks or hollows, and insects breed in the water that collects in small pools on the trunk. The bark surface can provide ideal growing conditions for epiphytic species, which gain their nutrients from water and air, while for many parasites, the tree itself provides (albeit reluctantly) a source of nutrition. In general, suitability as habitat for other wildlife

increases with tree age; cracks and fissures in the bark, decaying wood forming hollows and pools, all provide important niches which can be exploited by a variety of organisms, and successful colonisation by one species may open up a host of opportunities for others.

Here we highlight some of the epiphytes and parasites common in native UK woodlands that are most easily spotted on trees during the winter months.



GILL HAMBLETON

Mistletoe

Mistletoe can be spotted from long distances as dense, round clumps in the branches of trees, particularly apple and poplar. A spindly, much-forked evergreen, the plant produces tiny yellow flowers in February to April and sticky, white berries in November and December. The species is important for a range of insects and birds, including mistle thrush.



JENNY GREENWOOD

Forked veilwort

One of our most common liverwort species, this species forms distinctive light green patches on tree trunks and can be distinguished by its flattened, translucent appearance, thick midrib and forked tips. It grows on a variety of trees. Liverworts are closely related to mosses and were the first plants to colonise land around 500 million years ago.



JYMM - GNU/FREE DOCUMENTATION LICENSE

String-of-sausages lichen

This easily-identifiable grey-green beard lichen drapes itself over branches and trunks of trees. Its straggly, tangled stems form a sausage-like structure that swells at intervals. The stems are roughly 3mm in diameter and can be up to a metre long. Formerly widespread in southern and western Britain, this lichen is now only found in the south west of England, due to a high sensitivity to sulphur dioxide pollution.



Turkey tail fungus

This common bracket fungus is found on almost any kind of dead wood. It has distinctive concentric coloured rings, coming in varied colours, from browns and reds to blues, greys and greens. Whatever variant of colour palette you find, the wavy edge will always be creamy white, distinguishing it from other *Trametes* species. This fungus can be found all year round on deciduous wood.



Polypody fern

Look up high into the branches of a large tree in winter and you may spot the still-green fronds of a polypody. A shade-loving group, they are also found growing at the base of trees and on rocks. Distinguished by two rows of simple, finger-like leafy projections (pinnae) along the main stem, bearing circular clusters of spores, our three native species can be difficult to distinguish as they regularly interbreed.



GILL HAMBLETON

Ganoderma bracket fungi

Another polypore bracket fungus, species of the genus *Ganoderma* cause heart rot in numerous tree species. The bracket is hard with a grey-brown to dark brown upper surface crust and a white underside, which goes brown when bruised. The underside is composed of tiny spore-producing tubes, giving it a porous surface. The larger species can grow to 60cm across.

People and wildlife community engagement

By Hannah Welsh, People and Wildlife Officer

Connecting people with nature is such an important part of the work we do. When children's faces light up when they spot a creepy crawly, and parents have as much fun toasting marshmallows on a fire as their children do, it's a reminder that experiences like these really shape our lives, whether we are five or 50 years old.

Newbridge Slopes

Over the past year we've been out and about connecting different communities to green and natural spaces in the Avon area. In Bath, we spent time with local families exploring the hidden gem of a Local Wildlife Site - Newbridge Slopes. Situated behind the Newbridge Park and Ride, it is a haven for wildlife, but little known about in the local community. Families got involved with scrub clearance, litter picking and other practical tasks, we spent a day recording as many species as possible to help Bristol and Bath compete in the worldwide City Nature Challenge, and had a nature-inspired art and craft day, finished off with cooking over the fire. A dawn chorus in May was chilly and chirpy, and a scout group had great fun running around the slopes learning about the trees and recording species for the City Nature Challenge.



Says Court

Over the other side of Bristol, we continued our work at Says Court Solar Farm. We invited local families to come and explore the farm, learn about renewable energy and discover how the farm is adapting to become more wildlife friendly. We ventured around the fields, catching bugs in the hedgerows spotting butterflies and bees. We learnt



about trees and meadows and owl corridors. Supported by the Hawk & Owl Trust, we had people dissecting owl pellets to discover what the barn owls had been eating and finally introduced them to real owls. "I really love nature!!" one little boy shouted as we walked around the farm. A local school spent a day learning about habitats, renewable energy and exploring the farm. They were most impressed with spotting a deer that startled us, and then dashed away across the fields. The walk home was much more entertaining as they all bounded up the path like a herd of deer.

With thanks to Westerleigh Parish Council for their funding which supports our events and engagement work at Says Court.

Wild Businesses

Being outside is good for business



Businesses get active at the MS Therapy Centre

Over the last six months, our People and Wildlife Officer, Hannah Welsh has led a flourishing project to turn a bare piece of ground into a beautiful wildlife garden for service users and staff to enjoy at the West of England MS Therapy Centre in Bradley Stoke. Hannah worked with patients and staff from the MS Therapy Centre and was supported by an energetic team of Rolls Royce graduates and interns to create the accessible therapy garden, which is attractive to wildlife, as well as providing a wonderful space for people using the centre to receive therapy such as physiotherapy and reflexology.

Amazing efforts from Wessex Water and Rolls Royce corporate groups, volunteer gardeners, carpenters, Elmtree Garden Landscaping and local school children have seen the space turn from a blank canvas into a green and floral garden already buzzing with bees and butterflies. There is now a bug hotel, an archway for climbers (with larch timber from our Folly Farm nature reserve), a sensory herb spiral, wildflower meadows and more. The garden project will provide a vital outdoor space for the centre users and the local community, as well as an important wildlife habitat in an urban area.



Triodos staff have already worked with AWT to transform the front of their HQ into a pollinator-friendly space.

Triodos Changemakers programme

We are very excited to announce a two-year partnership with staff at Triodos Bank in Bristol. Over the last few years, Triodos Bank has embraced our My Wild City project, transforming their outdoor space from barren paved areas to wildlife-rich spaces.

This autumn, we will launch the partnership with a wellbeing session for staff in Brandon Hill park. Throughout the next two years, staff will take part in a range of activities to support nature conservation in the region, while developing a greater connection to nature and the wild places that the West of England has to offer.

Bevis Watts, Managing Director of Triodos Bank UK, said:

“Triodos is already focused on supporting projects that benefit people and the planet. For a bank, we are unusually committed to protecting nature and wildlife. Given our purposes align so well, and our previous work with Avon Wildlife Trust, I'm delighted that we are now committing to a more long-term corporate partnership. It will form part of our ongoing focus on local community charity work and will encourage our staff to get involved with even more of the fantastic work the Trust is doing.”



Burges Salmon at Feed Bristol

This September we worked with enthusiastic employees from Burges Salmon at our Feed Bristol site. Over two weeks, a total of 105 staff helped to create a welcome area for visitors, a demonstration urban garden and an indoor classroom. This inspiring new entrance to the site showcases the abundance of wildflowers and pollinator-friendly plants that can flourish across the city and beyond.

For more information about corporate partnerships and opportunities for your teams to get involved, contact Julie Doherty, People and Wildlife Programmes Manager, on 0117 917 7270 or Julie.Doherty@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

My Wild Community



We have a huge and wonderful community online – with over 7,500 people who subscribe to our monthly eNewsletter, over 17,600 members and over:



12,102
followers
on Twitter



4,886
followers
on Facebook



1,839 followers
on Instagram

Here are some of the photos and stories they shared with us over the summer and for #30DaysWild.



Jo Beal @MissJoBeal My drawing of birdsfoot trefoil in my #drawingdiary of plants throughout the year



Bonnie Hewson Day 2 of #30DaysWild: We found a swarm of honey bees in our garden! We also planted chillies, tomatoes and cosmos in the garden, and we relocated some snails.



Emma Brisdion @embrisdion Feet up. My kind of journey.



Nick Gates @NTGates
Good numbers of drinker moth, large skipper, five-spot burnet at @avonwt Lawrence Weston Moor



The Bug Lady's Big Bug Talks
Day 18 of #30DaysWild: A two spotted ladybird.



Toby Pickard @tobypickardphotography
I had another incredible evening with the badgers last night, with all 3 cubs spending their evening in the field as the sun was setting.



Meriel Harrison @merielharrison
Rain does not stop play in the woods @ LeighWoodsNT @avonwt #30DaysWild



The Bug Lady's Big Bug Talks
Day 24 of #30DaysWild: a common carder bee (I think), it's the last day of #nationalinsectweek. I've had a great time and learnt so much more about our amazing insect.



Daniel Hauck @haucksie
Bluebells standing out from the crowd.

We'd love to see your pictures from your wildlife adventures over autumn and winter. Get involved with your community and follow us/share your story on social media @Avonwt, #StayWild.

Sign up to our newsletter at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

What's on?

Prior's Wood Wild Halloween Cook-Up

Wednesday 31 October 12-2.30pm

Come and stir the Halloween cauldron in Prior's Wood!

We will explore the natural world in the woodland, gather materials for making Halloween masks, go hunting for creepy crawlies and cook up a witches' brew with foraged fodder.

Free and suitable for all ages. Book through our website avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on



October
31

My Wild Child Family Fun Day

Wednesday 31 October 10am-1pm
Netham Park Pavilion, Avonvale Road,
Barton Hill, Bristol, BS5 9RN

Join us to have fun and explore nature and wildlife in the heart of the city in a free event for children, parents and carers.

- Wildlife walks
- Bug hunts
- Make a seed bomb
- Nature storytelling

Thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery for supporting this event.



October
31

Join us at our AGM

Please join our formal AGM followed by our annual meeting celebrating the year. Find out more about Avon Wildlife Trust and help us celebrate all we have achieved for local wildlife over the past year, thanks to our generous members, volunteers and supporters. We will share our plans for the future and discuss how we are joining with The Wildlife Trusts nationally in a major public campaign calling on the Government to take action for nature, so that together we can build a Wilder Britain. Please confirm your attendance by booking through avonwildlifetrust.org/AGM2018

Avon Wildlife Trust AGM, Wednesday 14 November 2018 5.30-8.30pm
The Station, Silver Street, Bristol, BS1 2AG

EVENTS

OCTOBER

Thursday 25 October Chew Valley AGM

followed by talk An Introduction to Forest Gardening, Chew Valley. Talk by Rob Handy. Old School Room, South Parade, Chew Magna, BS40 8SH. Entrance £2.50 or £12 for season (Sept to March). Refreshments included. 19:45 - 21:45, Tel: 01275 332534

Friday 26 October UK Islands, Wildlife and Volunteering, Portishead

Illustrated talk by Colin Baxter at Folk Hall, High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Adults £2, Children/students £1 including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01275 843160



TOBY PICKARD

NOVEMBER

Saturday 3 November Jumble Sale, Portishead

Avon Way Hall, Avon Way, Portishead BS20 6LT. If you have jumble that needs collecting locally before event please phone 01275 843160/843865. 50p entry. 10:00 - 11:30, Tel: 01275 843160

Friday 9 November Fifty Shades of Blue, Keynsham

Talk by Michael Pitts, famous underwater cameraman, will talk about his Emmy Award-winning career, illustrated with images and video clips. Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham, BS31 1DS. Admission £2.50. Children under 16 £1. Sales of bird food, Trust cards etc. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01225 874259

Sunday 18 November
Winter Wonderland Walk in Weston Bigwood, Portishead
Meet at Valley Road entrance, slow two mile walk with stepped hill at start, led by Dr Bill Dixon. Sturdy footwear advised. No need to book, but donations to AWT welcome. Booklet available £5. 10:00 - 12:00, Tel: 01275 849200

Thursday 22 November Fulmar 'The Flying Dustbin' — a Beautiful Seabird in an Ocean of Plastic. Solutions? Chew Valley

Talk by Richard Brock. Old School Room, South Parade, Chew Magna, BS40 8SH. Entrance £2.50 or £12 for season (Sept to March). 19:45 - 21:45, Tel: 01275 332534

Friday 23 November All Spinners and some Weavers: an introduction to British Spiders, Portishead

Illustrated Talk by Francis Farr-Cox, at Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Adults £2, Children/students £1 including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01275 843160

DECEMBER

Friday 14 December A Yuletide Medley, Keynsham

An evening of short talks by local members plus festive quiz and refreshments. Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Adults £2.50, Under 16s £1. Refreshments available during break. Sales of Christmas gifts, second hand books, etc. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01225 874259

JANUARY

Friday 11 January The Wonderful Work of the Woodland Trust, Keynsham

Dr Owen Rogers will talk about the protection and restoration of the UK's woodlands. Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Adults £2.50, Under 16s £1. Refreshments available during break. Sales of bird food etc. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01225 874259

Thursday 24 January China — Birds, wildlife & aspects of conservation, Chew Valley

Talk by Andy Davis and John Aldridge. Old School Room, South Parade, Chew Magna, BS40 8SH. Entrance £2.50 or £12 for season (Sept to March). 19:45 - 21:45, Tel: 01275 332534

Friday 25 January
A Birding Journey through Spain, Portishead
Illustrated Talk by Leonard Clark. Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Adults £2, Children/students £1 including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01275 843160

FEBRUARY

Friday 8 February Walking from John O'Groats to Land's end - Slowly, Keynsham

Joanna Taylor describes her journey down the footpaths and byways of Britain, crossing the length of the land with tent, compass and lots of maps. Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Adults £2.50, Under 16s £1. Refreshments available during break. Sales of bird food etc. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01225 874259

Saturday 9 February
Overwintering Farmland Birds at Elm Farm, Keynsham
Philippa Paget will lead us on a tour of this mixed-use farm, which is rich in wildlife including many birds. Meet at the farm in Burnett, Keynsham BS31 2TF. May be muddy so sturdy boots and warm clothes recommended. Free event 09:30 - 11:30, Tel: 07733 138736



CLAIRE DAVEY



Friday 22 February

Plants of North Somerset's Specialist Habitats, Portishead

Illustrated talk by Rupert Higgins. Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entrance £2, Children/students £1, including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01275 843160

Thursday 28 February

Birdwatching & Bird Conservation in France — more special sites, Chew Valley

Talk by Ken Hall. Old School Room, South Parade, Chew Magna, BS40 8SH. Entrance £2.50 or £12 for season (Sept to March) 19:45 - 21:45, Tel: 01275 332534

MARCH

Friday 8 March

The Amazing Resurrection of the Madagascan Pochard, Keynsham

Peter Cranswick talks about the emergency rescue mission to bring the birds into captivity. Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Adults £2.50, Under 16s £1. Refreshments available during break. Sales of bird food etc. 19:30 - 21:30 Tel: 01225 874259

Saturday 9 March

Jumble Sale, Portishead

Avon Way Hall, Avon Way, Portishead BS20 6LT. If you have jumble that needs collecting locally please ring 01275 843160/843865. Entrance 20p. 10:00 - 11:30, Tel: 01275 843160



PETE EVANS

Sunday 10 March

Spring Trees in Keynsham Memorial Park, Keynsham

Come and see the wonderful specimen trees in this stunning local park, led by Liz Wintle. Meet at Baked Café in the park (BS31 2BL) for a two hour walk. Free event. 10:30 - 12:30, Tel 0117 909 9667

Friday 22 March

The Work by Avon Wildlife Trust in the Gordano Valley, Portishead

Illustrated talk by Eric Heath, AWT Head of Land Management. Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entrance £2, Children/students £1, including tea/coffee. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01275 843160

Thursday 28 March

The Falklands — Conflict and Wildlife, Chew Valley

Talk by Derek Trendell. Old School Room, South Parade, Chew Magna, BS40 8SH. Entrance £2.50 or £12 for season (Sept to March) 19:45 - 21:45, Tel: 01275 332534

APRIL

Saturday 6 April

Willsbridge Valley Wildlife Photography, Keynsham

Wildlife expert Mike Dimery shows us how to photograph birds and butterflies in the Willsbridge Valley nature reserve. Meet by the café BS30 6EX. Optional lunch in café afterwards. Pre-booking necessary, numbers limited. 11:00 - 13:00, Tel: 0117 909 9667

Friday 12 April

The Changing Face of Nature Today, Keynsham

Chris Sperring will discuss our evolving connection with the natural world. Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS. Adults £2.50, Under 16s £1. Refreshments available during break. Sales of bird food etc. 19:30 - 21:30, Tel: 01225 874259



MARK HABELLIN

Sunday 21 April

Dave's Dawn Chorus, Keynsham

Chairman Dave Sage will once again lead this popular field trip to listen to, identify, and rejoice in the magical dawn chorus. Please wear warm clothes and sturdy shoes and preferably bring binoculars and a hot drink. Meet at the Shallows Car Park BS31 3EX. Free event. 04:30 - 08:30, Tel: 0117 940 7968

Friday 26 April

Land of Fire and Brilliant Birds, Portishead

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

Sunday 28 April

Wild Flower and Tree Walk in Weston Bigwood, Portishead

Led by Dr Bill Dixon. Meet at Valley Road entrance. A slow, two mile walk with a stepped hill at the start. Sturdy footwear advised. Free, donations welcome, no need to book. Booklet £5. 10:00 - 12:00, Tel 01275 849200



See our new events during autumn and winter 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:

Saturday 27 October - Kingsgate Park Ponds, Yate

Undertaking maintenance of this important amphibian site including the cutting back of vegetation. Meet at the Scott Way entrance to Kingsgate Park, Yate, BS37 4NW (parking is available at the entrance of Shackleton Avenue). Please wear gloves and wellington boots. Tel: 01454 310328. 10:00 - 12:00 **(S)**

Sunday 28 October - Walton Common

Scrub control on the grassland. Meet on the verge of the coast road Walton Street, beside Clevedon Golf Course above Walton-in-Gordano. ST 423735 Tel: 01275 817565/852627. 10:00 - 12:00 **(GCG)**

Sunday 25 November - Tickenham Hill

Bashing back scrub to restore the limestone grassland. Park on RH side of Cadbury Camp Lane West. Come up Hill Lane (on the N side of B3128 almost at the western end of Tickenham) for about 1 km. Hill Lane changes to Cadbury Camp Lane West and is a private lane with restricted access, narrow with sharp bends and speed bumps. ST 443723. Tel: 01275 817565/07853 248476. 10:00 - 12:00 **(GCG)**

Sunday 2 December - Wapley Local Nature Reserve

Woodland planting of native, local tree species. Please wear walking or wellington boots and bring gloves. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate BS37 8US. Tel: 01454 310328. 10:00 - 12:00 **(S)**



Sunday 6 January - Prior's Wood

Meet at the grass verge opposite the entrance to the Children's Hospice BS48 1PE. Turn off B3128 at the Downs School entrance. Follow the drive for about 1 mile, then turn left at the sign for the Children's Hospice (Charlton Farm) Tel: 01275 817565/07853 248476. 10:00 - 12:00 **(GCG)**

Sunday 27 January - Weston Big Wood Meet in the large layby on Valley Road just below the quarry. Valley Road is off the B3124 and leads to the Police HQ. ST 451741. 10:00 - 12:00 **(GCG)**

Sunday 17 February - Wapley Bushes NR

Planting of native, local tree species. Please wear walking or wellington boots and bring gloves. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate BS37 8US. Tel: 01454 310328. 10:00 - 12:00 **Southwold**

Saturday 16 March - Wapley Bushes NR

Planting of native, local tree species. Please wear walking or wellington boots and bring gloves. Meet at Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate BS37 8US. Tel: 01454 310328. 10:00 - 12:00 **(S)**

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) 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	Julie Doherty	0117 9800394

If you would like to get involved or start a new group, please contact Julie Doherty 0117 980 0394.

Enjoying nature in winter

By Tim Curley,
Living Landscape Manager

This season enjoy autumn colours, magnificent woodland views and fascinating wildlife on walks around our nature reserves

Redwing

JON HAWKINS

As the days shorten, Prior's Wood, once part of the Tyntesfield estate, offers beautiful walks through deciduous and plantation trees. The mature oaks create a striking canopy, while vivid yellows and oranges in the beech plantation herald the onset of winter. Colour can also be found on the woodland floor, as fungi push through the leaf litter. The striking yellow stagshorn grows on rotting timber, and the lilac wood blewit creates rings near the path edges. Roe deer move silently through the wood and, as daylight fades, tawny owls call to establish their territory.

To the south of Bristol lies Chew Valley, characterised by small field systems and ancient hedgerows. The Burlidge Hill and Folly Farm reserves are great places to enjoy the beautiful winter landscape. The far-reaching



Hare

PETE EVANS



Roe deer

MARK HAMBLEN

views of Chew Valley Lake and the Mendip hills are worth a chilly walk to the lookout points.

The mixed grassland and scrub are the remnants of a farmed landscape, and Folly Farm's imposing veteran oaks are relics of a medieval deer park. In colder months these habitats provide much-needed food for songbird migrants arriving from their frozen feeding grounds in central and eastern Europe. The fruit-laden hawthorns attract fieldfares and redwings, and a well-timed walk may provide excellent views of them busily feeding.

During the day, woodcock roost in the wooded hillsides, feeding in the wet grass at night. A chance encounter will flush them into their erratic flight.

In late winter the Gordano Valley is spectacular. Buzzards soar over the limestone ridges and Weston Moor nature reserve stretches out across the peat bog on the valley

floor. This network of fresh water and unimproved grassland is a haven for wildlife, with flocks of teal and widgeon sheltering in the areas of open water.

On more settled days as the winter draws to a close, you may witness the 'pee-wit' calls and dramatic aerial displays of breeding lapwings. These distinctive birds start laying eggs from mid-March and rely on wet areas to raise their chicks.



Lapwing

MARK HAMBLEN

Tips for your visit

If you visit in the early morning, you may see hares boxing and chasing potential mates, a real treat for the patient visitor.

Dress for the weather and the winter months will be a fantastic time to see some great British wildlife.

What to watch in wildlife *through the months*

By Jenny Greenwood, Monitoring Officer and
Charlotte Targett, Living Landscape Assistant



Waxwing

TERRY WHITTAKER

As the summer's soaring swifts, majestic meadows and beautiful butterflies give way to the copper tones of autumn and winter, here are a few of nature's winter wonders to look out for as the days begin to shorten



Angle shades moth

AMY LEWIS

October

Moths can be seen throughout the year, although the range and abundance of species will vary. To see the greatest range, the summer months are best, but many species are on the wing through the winter and you don't even need a light trap to see them. Look out for angle shades – this unmistakable species flies year-round, but numbers peak in August–October when migrants from Europe join the UK's breeding population, boosting numbers. This species can be seen by day resting on walls and vegetation in a range of habitats, such as gardens, grassland, hedgerows and woodland.

November

An iconic sight as autumn turns to winter is the return migration of wintering Bewick's swans arriving from Arctic Russia. Bewick's swans are the smallest species of swan to visit the UK and have been known to clock up an amazing 140,000 migration miles over their 30-year lifetimes. At this time of year, they frequent reserves like Chew Valley Lake before completing the end of their migration by moving up the Severn estuary towards Slimbridge. Bewick's swans can be identified by comparing them to the similar, but larger, whooper swan: Bewick's swans have less yellow than black on their bills.

December

With its striking yellow-orange colouration, the yellow brain fungus is hard to miss against the dull greys and browns of a winter woodland. Also known as witches' butter, this fungus

has no defined shape, appearing as a tough, gelatinous mass of folds and lobes which become darker and brittle upon drying. Appearing on dead tree branches, the fungus can reach 10cm in size. The end of autumn is the best time to see this fungus, although it does appear all year round.

January

In Avon, January is a good time for spotting waxwing, our occasional visitors from the north. These birds arrive on the east coast in early winter, before gradually moving west in search of winter berries like rowan and hawthorn. Sightings in Avon are most numerous during 'irruption' years, after a poor fruiting season in their Scandinavian homelands, and are frequent in urban environments - large numbers were reported in supermarket car parks all over the region last year! They can be recognised by their pinkish-brown bodies, striking head crests and yellow, red and white patched wings. A long black line extends round the eye and a prominent black bib can be seen below the beak.

February

Not all plants lose their leaves in winter - mosses and liverworts thrive during the damp winter months when they have less competition for light from other plants. Fox-tail feather moss is a very common woodland moss, growing on rocks and at the bases of trees, but you are just as likely to find it in loose clumps on woodland floors. A very distinctive species, it resembles a miniature tree, with a long wiry stem bearing small close-packed leaves and a branched, green, bushy top.



Bewick's swan

DEREK MOORE



Yellow brain fungus

CHRIS LAWRENCE



Fox-tail feather moss

CHRIS LAWRENCE

Around the reserves

By Charlotte Targett and Louise Treneman, Living Landscape Assistants

With the harsh winter weather forcing a late spring, followed by an extended period of exceptionally hot weather, our Nature Reserves volunteers have been quite literally out in all weathers this year, carrying out essential tasks such as infrastructure repairs, weed control and hay cuts across our nature reserves.

Bathampton Meadow

TOBY PICKARD

Dolebury Warren

Throughout the spring and summer months, our new Dolebury Conservation Group has been hard at work improving access for visitors to this iconic site. Whilst taking in the glorious panoramic views and the dancing small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies, the volunteers have managed to fix nine stiles, two gates, three dog gates, an interpretation board and several metres of fencing. We have also been hard at work pulling bracken on the areas of rare acid heathland, allowing ling, bell heather, dropwort and bilberry to flourish.

Charfield Meadow

A tiny hidden gem on the edge of the Cotswolds, Charfield Meadow is an area of unimproved grassland with a wooded edge and wet flush, giving a high diversity of species within a relatively small area. Our Friday Group of volunteers have put several days of work into this site throughout spring and summer, installing a flight of steps to allow visitors to access the woodland area and do a circular walk of the site. They have also hay cut the

meadow in order to promote the vast array of wildflowers present on site, such as saw-wort, knapweed, dyer's greenweed and common spotted orchid. The site will also be grazed for a short period, using sheep provided by a local landowner, reinstating the traditional management of this beautiful site.

Bathampton Meadow

This man-made nature reserve bounded by the River Avon on the edge of Bath was created in the 1990s as a flood retention area to mitigate against the construction of the Batheaston bypass. During spring and summer, amongst swathes of knapweed, water mint,

meadow rue and purple loosestrife, our Wildlife Action Group have been hard at work removing tree fences that were planted back when the site was first created. The trees have long since outgrown their protective cages and removing the old fencing has improved the aesthetics of the site. Improving the site means a local grazer is now able to graze cattle across the site. Grazing maintains a varied sward, attracting a wide array of dragonflies and damselflies and providing feeding and nesting areas for wading birds such as lapwing and snipe.

Folly Farm

Whilst taking in the spectacular views across Chew Valley Lake and the Mendips and marvelling at the glorious wildflower-rich hay meadows, our volunteers at Folly Farm have been a hive of activity. Woodchip produced on the reserve during the winter has been laid along paths and in gateways, improving access for visitors. Across the SSSI grasslands, the Wildlife Action Group have been brandishing their newly-sharpened scythes, topping thistles to limit their spread and



Repairs at Browne's Folly

TOBY PICKARD

promote wildflower and grass species such as knapweed, devil's bit scabious and quaking grass.

Old Weston Moor

In the corner of our Weston Moor reserve is all that remains of the original fen meadow. With wet-loving species, such as meadowsweet, marsh valerian and southern marsh orchid, the habitat is invaluable to a range of wildlife. Bracken is encroaching and beginning to dominate the area, so we have been working with our regular band of volunteers to remove it. Pulling the bracken fronds damages the rhizome and reduces the vigour of the plant, allowing for the meadow species to continue to thrive and spread.

Weston Big Wood

In the spring, our Weston Big Wood reserve is carpeted with wood anemones, violets and bluebells. It is a popular site with walkers and therefore requires ongoing management to keep access open and safe for use. Vegetation is cut back around footpaths, and gates and stiles are checked for damage and repaired as needed. We have also done work to replace steps and supporting revetments that have rotted out over years of use.

Burledge Hill

This species-rich grassland, with views overlooking Chew Valley Lake, should not be missed for an autumn stroll! Management on the site is aimed at keeping invasive species at bay, so over the summer our staff and volunteers have been out pulling ragwort and topping creeping thistle to prevent them taking over the grassland. With the extreme summer heat we have had this year you may still spot a few wildflowers that have had a late growth spurt following the return of the rain!

Tools of the trade

Our volunteers have done amazing scything work across our reserves



Folly Farm

A spring delight, the wood anemone grows in dappled shade in ancient woodlands. Traditional management, such as coppicing, lets these flowers flourish by opening up the woodland floor to sunlight.



Weston Moor



Charfield Meadow

IZZY CARPENTER

JOE MCSORLEY



Bathampton Meadow

TOBY PICKARD

A walk with the Warden

Weston-super-Mare

By Joe McSorley, Living Landscape Manager

Volunteers working at Hellenge Hill

We have three wonderful wildflower-rich grassland reserves on the limestone outcrops in the Weston-super-Mare area: Hellenge Hill, Purn Hill and Walborough.

Limestone grassland is a nationally rare habitat and supports a range of flowering species that occur in very few other places. These three reserves are rich in biodiversity from spring through to summer.

At Hellenge Hill and Purn Hill we have regular volunteering groups that meet weekly, undertaking a range of tasks to help keep the reserves in good condition. Over the winter, we'll be clearing areas of scrub to encourage more wildflowers to grow without having to compete with tree saplings, bramble and rank grasses. We'll also be

fixing fences to keep our grazing cattle in and carrying out a range of other tasks that keep the reserves open and accessible to the public.

Our local volunteer group has been co-ordinated by Cynthia Sparks for around ten years. We decided to have a look round Hellenge Hill with her, to

pick her brains on her knowledge and the history of the reserve.

Hellenge Hill is a lovely mix of flower-rich grassland and shrubby gullies that provide a range of habitats for lots of species, including one of our rarer native reptiles, the adder. As a regular visitor to the site with her volunteer

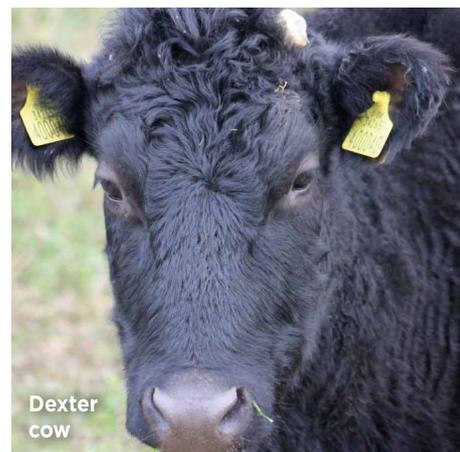
“ The pond is on the maps from at least the early 1800s and is continuously referenced on maps through the following decades and well into the 20th century ”



Burnet moth on knapweed



Flowering gorse



Dexter cow

IAN GAVINOWSKI

CYNTHIA SPARKS

group, Cynthia often sees adders basking in the morning sunlight. "I saw eight here in one day sitting at the hedge line, all curled up and soaking up the sun".

It's not just wildlife that draws the volunteers out every week. There's also a fascinating history of traditional land management in the area. We've recently cleared out an old stone-lined pond on the site that would once upon a time have been a drinking place for the livestock, as well as somewhere to wash horses and farm equipment. These days, we're hoping that with some minor repairs it will retain water and become a wildlife haven for frogs, newts and dragonflies. Steve, one of our regular volunteers, has been looking up old maps and has discovered that the pond is much older than we'd appreciated. These snippets of local history and local wildlife make Hellenge Hill an enticing site to visit, whatever time of year.



Hellenge Hill looking south

CYNTHIA SPARKS



Hellenge Hill pond

ROBIN MILLAR



Cynthia and volunteers

CYNTHIA SPARKS

Facts

- At Hellenge Hill we've recently renovated a stone-lined cattle pond which dates from at least the early 19th century as it appears on maps from the early 1800s.
- The egg yolk yellow rock rose is fairly common in the region on limestone grassland, but Purn Hill is home to the very rare white variety which crops up on the west facing slopes.
- The steeper slopes at Hellenge Hill are home to one of the rarest wild members of the carrot family, a diminutive little plant called honewort.
- Purn and Hellenge Hill sit on exposed limestone outcrops with wondrous views over the Somerset Levels and the Bristol channel. With their elevated viewpoints, they are fantastic sites to watch soaring buzzards and flocks of over wintering thrushes on cold, still days.
- Walborough Nature Reserve has one of the very few saltmarsh habitats in the Severn Estuary and is home to scarce plants including sea clover and sea barley.

Great for

- A family day out
- Fungi
- Reptiles
- Spring flowers
- Stunning views
- Wildflowers

Further information

- avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/walborough
- avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/purn-hill
- avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/hellenge-hill

Seasonal stroll

Lower Woods

By Charlotte Targett,
Living Landscape Assistant

Lower Woods, covering in excess of 270 hectares, is one of the largest areas of semi-natural ancient woodland in the South West. Managed by humans for over 2,000 years, the reserve is now jointly managed by both the Avon and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts.

The reserve boasts 23 separate woods and coppices divided by ancient wood banks and grassy rides and trenches. Turn a corner and you could see mighty ash and oak coppice stools, gnarled and twisted from centuries of repeated coppicing. Turn another corner and you may emerge into one of the hidden meadows just in time to see a roe deer buck hop back into the woodland edge.

Look out for....

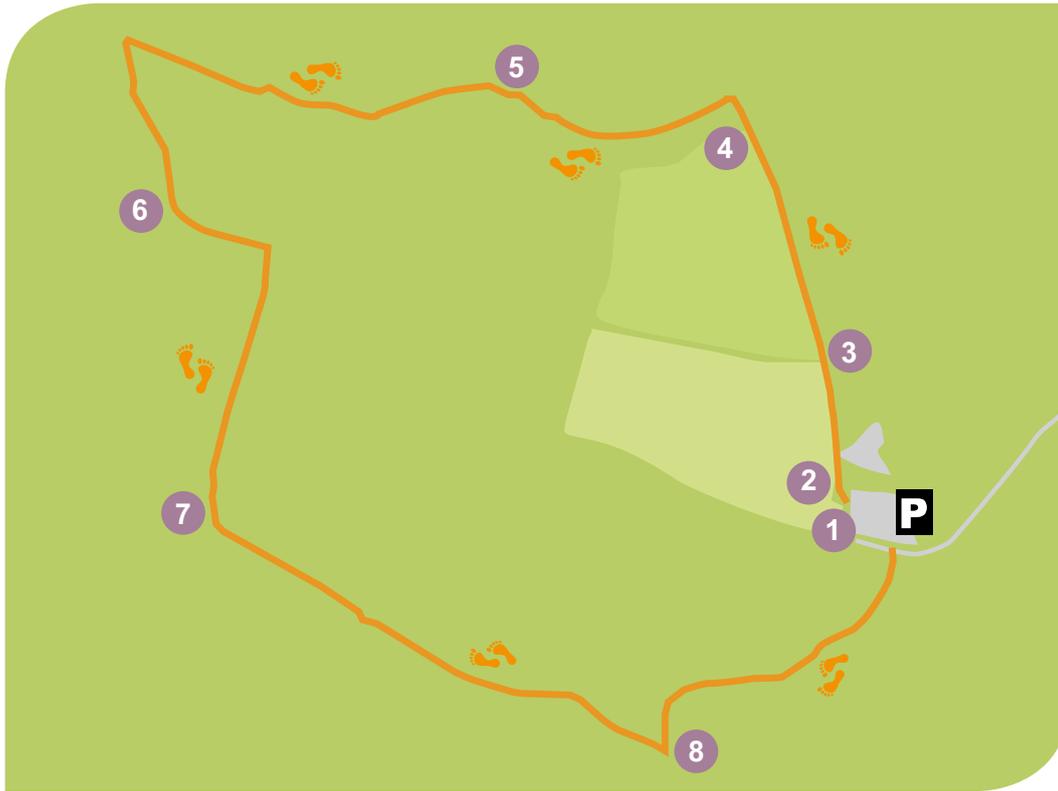
Whilst walking through the denser areas of the reserve, you may be lucky enough to disturb an overwintering woodcock from its daytime roost on the woodland floor. Look out for a stocky brown bird with long bill and pointed wings darting up from the ground and zigzagging away through the trees.

The Little Avon River bisects the reserve, and in places, where the river bank has eroded over centuries, you can see the many different layers of geology making up the site's history. As you cross, look out for fossils such as ammonites, devil's toenails, teeth and bones of sharks, as well as mounds of Cotham marble which have arisen from calcareous algal deposits some 190 million years ago.



Coppiced area
with ransoms

for ancient woodland walks



OS grid ref: ST746 882

Walk details

duration: 1.5 hrs

grade: easy

Key to map

 woodland

 walk

 point of interest

 car park

scale

100m

Did you know..?

Nightingales have been recorded in Lower Woods in spring

The walk route

Several clearly waymarked walks start from the Lodge.

Stanley Walk (red waymarkers) is the easiest, at just one mile long. It starts at the gate (1) into the meadow (2) behind the Lodge, and follows the numerous woodland rides and trenches. This is a mainly level walk on grass and beneath the woodland canopy, but puddles and ruts are likely!

At (3) you pass through Stanley Orchard and on to a small hunting gate (4) which leads into the woodland. Keep your eyes peeled on the ground and you may be lucky enough to find a hazel nut which has been nibbled by a dormouse. At (5) note a large poplar grown to replace ancient oaks felled for timber during the Second World War. Poplars were grown in the woods to supply the Bryant and May 'England's Glory' match factory in Gloucester.

'The Walk' (6), a long straight trench was created by the Badminton Estate in the 1690s to give a clear view from the Lodge to Wickwar Church. Go through Little Stanley Wood and cross the ancient Plumber's Trench (7) which is flanked by wild service trees, an inconspicuous tree for much of the year, but its crimson leaves and fruits in autumn give it away. In East Stanley Wood (8) you may find fairy rings of trooping funnel caps or a patch of autumn crocus – also known as meadow saffron and naked ladies due to the appearance of the purple flowers in autumn in the absence of the leaves which appear in spring.

How to get there

Lower Woods is about a mile east of Wickwar. Main vehicular access to parking at Lower Woods Lodge, via a track off the Wickwar to Hawkesbury road.

Access

Mainly level, but mud and puddles likely.

Visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/seasonalstroll to download a PDF of the walk to keep on your phone

Look out for:



MARK HARBELIN

Woodcock



DARIN SMITH

Dormouse



TAMMY STREETON

Autumn crocus

22,000 support call to protect our sea life

Huge response to six-week public consultation on designating more Marine Conservation Zones

Thank you. In the six weeks leading up to July 20th, 22,000 of you signed up to our Wave of Support campaign, urging Environment Secretary Michael Gove to designate 41 new Marine Conservation Zones in the seas around England. This is the latest triumph in a decades-long battle to secure better protection for the wildlife in our seas.

Until recently, we had no way of protecting nationally important marine sites in England and Wales, and only 0.001% of our seabed was protected. So we campaigned for the Marine and Coastal Access

Act, which passed in 2009 and paved the way for more protected sites in English seas.

After two public consultations and campaigns by The Wildlife Trusts, Government has designated 50 new Zones in English waters. This is a great start, but we need a network

“ We hope to hear the consultation outcome in early 2019 ”



How to draw a shark in the sand. Doing the entire UK is a bit harder

of protected areas covering every kind of habitat and threatened species. This latest consultation could take us one step closer to a

The 47-year fight for marine protection

1971



Lundy, off Devon, becomes Britain's first Marine Protected Area

1990

Skomer in Wales is designated a Marine Nature Reserve



1995



Northern Ireland's Strangford Lough is designated a Marine Nature Reserve

2002

The Wildlife Trusts begin campaigning for a Marine Act



2009



Marine and Coastal Access Act passed in England. Scotland follows in 2010.

2013

First 27 English Marine Conservation Zones designated. Northern Ireland Marine Act passed.



To raise awareness of the need for more MCZs, we drew the UK and its marine life on Filey Beach, North Yorkshire

complete network. The Government has up to a year to decide which of the 41 proposed Marine Conservation Zones they will formally designate. We hope to hear the outcome in early 2019.

Designating a Zone is just the beginning. We need to make sure these sites are managed well. This means restricting damaging activities, such as scallop dredging and bottom trawling, which threaten the wildlife that the site is designated to protect.

Restrictions are already in place for some of the first sites to be designated, such as The Manacles on the southern coast of Cornwall. With enough sites designated and proper management, our seas can thrive again.

2014

Scottish Government designates 30 Marine Protected Areas (plus one more in 2017).

2016

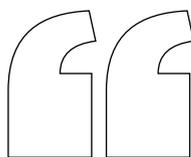
23 more English Zones designated. Four more in Northern Ireland.



2018



Consultation on third tranche of English Marine Conservation Zones.



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

Next job: an Environment Act



You are part of a powerful grassroots movement for wildlife – one that has been central to securing strong laws for wildlife on land and sea since the 1940s. Most recently your support for the latest list of potential Marine

Conservation Zones sent a strong message to Government. Thank you.

But just as we make some progress at sea – and all is not won there either – so we must mobilise again for the wildlife that lives with us on the land.

Out-dated road building proposals scrapped in the 1980s are back on the table – an M4 extension across the Gwent Levels, a bypass across iconic water meadows near Arundel and an “expressway” to dissect and destroy tracts of the Upper Ray valley between Oxford and Cambridge. And all this at a time of great uncertainty about farming and fisheries as we leave the EU.

Facing these new challenges we must be strong, united and determined. We need everyone we can muster to make their dedication to wildlife visible and their voices heard. We need to challenge destructive road proposals and secure an Environment Act that puts nature into recovery.

The Westminster Government is committed to an Environment Act of some kind, but it will be down to us to make sure this is truly ambitious, hard-hitting and cross-government.

Take whatever action you can – make that hole in your fence for hedgehogs, keep your garden unpaved, stop buying peat – and share your actions to encourage others to act too.

Also, please think about who your elected politicians are and let them know that you want laws which set targets for nature’s recovery, maps to identify where habitats must be protected and improved, and strong enforcement.

Join our campaign for a Wilder British Isles!

Stephanie Hilborne OBE

Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts
@stephphilborne

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

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

Email: enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org

Twitter: @wildlifetrusts

Facebook: [Facebook.com/wildlifetrusts](https://www.facebook.com/wildlifetrusts)

Instagram: @thewildlifetrusts

Charity No: 207238

Cover: Short-eared Owl at Worlaby Carrs, Lincs by Danny Green

In memory *Roy Betts*



“ Roy will be sadly missed by all our staff and volunteers, who’ll miss his company on scything days ”

JOE MCSORLEY

It was with great sadness that we learned of the recent passing of one of our longest serving and most respected volunteers, Roy Betts.

Roy began volunteering with the Wildlife Trust way back in the late 1980s, helping us plant out woodland at Taggart’s Wood and helping manage the reed intrusion at Weston Moor. After retiring in the early 2000s, and being local to the Gordano Valley, Roy quickly became a regular on our volunteer workdays on the reserves around that area and further afield.

Over the years, Roy honed his expertise in bramble slashing, with a speed and skill that inspired others. His real passion, however, was in scything, where he became so skilled with his own made-to-measure scythe that even our brushcutters couldn’t keep pace with him, nor match the quality of his work. Roy could effortlessly carve out even rectangles in a meadow with a consistent sward height barely an

inch from the ground in a way that no one else could match.

On scything days, Roy was ever present, whether it was grass, bramble or reeds. With the expansion of our volunteering programme in the early 2010s, Roy joined our Grassland Restoration volunteer group, working on land outside of that owned and managed by the Wildlife Trust. Roy brought the same skill and vigour to our landscape-scale conservation as he happily indulged in his favourite scythe work.

Roy was generous with his time and, as word of his expertise got around, he found himself advising other volunteers on technique and helping out a number of local organisations with a bit of scything to keep paths and meadows in tip top condition.

As a keen mycologist, secretary

of the local fungi group and with an exceptionally wide knowledge of the field, Roy contributed a huge amount to the database of species on our reserves. He often took home fungi samples for closer analysis under a microscope when he couldn’t identify them in the field. He also offered his time to assist with training days and fungi forays, with a remarkable count of almost 100 different fungi species being recorded on one educational foray at our Dolebury Warren nature reserve.

Roy will be sadly missed by all our staff and volunteers, who’ll miss his company on scything days. No doubt when scything season comes around in future years, we’ll think of Roy and his comfortable co-existence with his scythe and remember that we’ll never again match the quality of his work, no matter how hard we try.

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Nature Reserves appeal. Your support helped us raise over £13,000 to continue protecting our nature reserves and investing in their future.

Donations to our Nature Reserve appeal help us to:

- Provide tools and resources for our conservation team and volunteers to manage the land to support wildlife
- Create habitats to support Avon's wonderful wildlife, including water voles, otters and lapwing
- Ensure the wildlife we love and the landscapes we cherish across our region are there for us and future generations to enjoy



You can still donate to our Nature Reserve appeal online by going to mydonate.bt.com/events/naturereservefund or by sending your donation in to our Trust office. With the support and generosity of our members we can continue protecting Avon's wildlife and together.

Volunteer thanks

We are supported at the Trust by hundreds of amazing volunteers, without whom a lot of our work would not be possible. Our volunteers help us in all sorts of ways, including practical conservation, community volunteering and event support, all of which are backed up by a fantastic group of people who volunteer with us in the Trust office.

Our huge thanks and appreciation go to all of the volunteers who support us each week.

Introducing our office volunteers:

Judy Copeland and **Steph Hitchcock** are volunteers supporting volunteers!

Judy liaises with our Local Groups on events and books volunteers to deliver talks, whilst Steph inputs volunteer data from across the Trust.

Liz Reeves started volunteering in 2014 and supports our membership services and reception. **Linda Joy** has helped the Finance and Resources team in multiple areas, most recently grants, since 2015.

Chris Priestman, **Emma Creasey**, **Mary Hemming** and **Mary Jordan** support species monitoring, recording findings from Trust sites with BRERC, the repository for biodiversity and



Judy



Liz



Steph

geodiversity data. **Alison Robinson** is our finance volunteer, starting with us back in 2016.

Rosemary and **David Atkins**, **Tony Wood**, **Joyce Callard**, **Jean Blackwell** and **Marion Breen** join Linda, Mary and Mary in making up our Labelling Club, supporting the distribution of our children's membership magazine.

Yvonne Ellis is our more recent office volunteer, starting in 2017 and

helping the Communications team. We are also very grateful to **Izzy Carpenter**, who gave fantastic support to the Communications team throughout 30 Days Wild.

If you are interested in volunteering with us in our head office reception in Clifton we would love to hear from you! For more details, please visit: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/how-you-can-help/volunteer/office-based-volunteering



YOUR WEDDING, YOUR WAY AT FOLLY FARM



Spring 2019
dates still available
All profits gift-
aided to Avon
Wildlife Trust

Take a refreshing step away from conventional wedding venues and immerse yourself in the rustic charm of Folly Farm - a place of dreams, adventures and simple pleasures.

Hidden in the heart of Avon Wildlife Trust's 250-acre nature reserve, you will find a collection of beautifully restored 18th century barn buildings, a pretty courtyard and an established orchard, all offering a picturesque and unique countryside location for couples to tie the knot.

From a traditional wedding in the oak-beamed barn or glass-roofed atrium, to an outdoor ceremony with far-reaching views across the Chew Valley, or beneath the blossoming apple trees, every wedding is entirely different to the last.

With unrivalled flexibility, couples have the unique opportunity to create a day that truly reflects their style, personalities and their relationship, with endless personalisation options and a dedicated wedding team with a 'can-do' approach to all requests.

Folly Farm can cater for up to 150 wedding guests with farmhouse-style accommodation for 46, plus the option of camping in the paddock in warmer months.

For more information or to book your personal venue tour, call +44 (0)1275 331590 or email weddings@follyfarm.org



Folly Farm is offering all AWT Members, along with their friends and family, a complimentary glass of fizz for the wedding couple when booking a wedding venue tour. Please quote 'AWTMAG18' at time of booking.



PHOTO CREDITS: BETTY BHANDARI PHOTOGRAPHY / RICH HOWMAN

Ways to support your local Wildlife Trust this Christmas

As the days are getting shorter and plans take shape for the festive season, here are some of the ways you can support your local wildlife through the festivities.



Send your friends and family a beautiful wildlife-themed Christmas card published for The Wildlife Trusts by the award-winning eco-friendly publishers Glebe Cottage. We also sell Christmas cards created by local wildlife illustrators and designers such as Fiona Willis.



- Our wildlife calendars make the perfect gift for an inspiring and nature-filled 2019
- Buy a locally sourced and sustainably grown Christmas tree from Avon Wildlife Trust that you get to cut and collect
- Make a donation to our Nature Reserve Fund to help our conservation staff and volunteers manage our reserves over the winter months
- Decorate your space with nature or recycled materials. Orange slices, cinnamon sticks and foliage go a long way!

Avon Wildlife Trust will be partnering with a local landowner to sell a limited number of cut and collect Christmas trees, which we will advertise on our website and you can order via the website in November. Cut and collect over two weekends in December.



Cards and calendars can be purchased online at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/shop.

All proceeds of sales go to Avon Wildlife Trust to help protect local wildlife.



Avon Wildlife Trust

Wildflower nursery Support local wildlife and enhance your garden

Seed for our native wildflower plants is responsibly collected from nature reserves and grown on with help from our community groups to support wellbeing. Our team can offer advice on plant selection for everything from small back gardens to community space designs.

When you visit the nursery you are welcome to explore this unique six-acre site to inspire you about wildlife gardening.

Visit us at:
Feed Bristol
181 Frenchay Park Road
Bristol, BS16 1HB

Watch out:
Feed Bristol is becoming Wilder!



Autumn is the perfect time to plant out perennial wildflowers to establish strong plants and early spring flowering

Visit our wildflower nursery

Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm

Six pots for £10

Native perennial wildflowers

Medicinal and culinary herbs

Sunny, shady or wetland selection



Green veined white on lavender

DAVID O'CONNELL (BURLEY INCLUSIVE)

“ The year I put in my meadow selection pack, my garden erupted with a diversity of insects I had never seen in the city before... ”

Find out more: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/feedbristol

Contact us: feedbristol@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

For updates on courses and events: facebook.com/feedbristol