

The member magazine for Avon Wildlife Trust

Issue 118 • Spring 2022

WildAvon

THE VERGE OF SUCCESS

How roadsides can
become wildlife havens

BRINGING THE STRATEGY TO LIFE

Looking at the next
10 years in detail

WILDLIFE SPOTTING

Beetling About

Six places to see these
mighty minibeasts



Avon
Wildlife Trust

Welcome



to your spring *Wild Avon* magazine, preparing you for a wild spring and summer ahead. We have lots of exciting events and courses for you to get involved with, as our teams have scaled up engagement activities. See the leaflet enclosed for the full line up.

We have some great suggestions for how you can immerse yourself in nature as wildlife starts to reawaken from its winter slumber. This could be visiting one of our fantastic nature reserves, such as Prior's Wood or Burlledge Hill, taking on a nature craft to benefit your mental wellbeing or visiting one of the many places in the local area and the UK at large that are known for being home to different varieties of enigmatic beetles.

Last year, we announced the launch of our new 10-year strategy for nature's recovery, working together with our members, volunteers, community groups, businesses and other partners to bring wildlife back across our landscape. In this issue, we take a deep dive into what your support is helping to achieve within the three main goals of the strategy: managing 30% of land and sea for the benefit of wildlife to ensure nature's recovery, empowering 1 in 4 people to take action for wildlife in their local area and restoring 1,000 hectares of habitat to provide nature-based solutions to the climate crisis. Turn to page 16 to find out more.

This year, we are pushing forward with our plans to create a hub for community engagement in the heart of Bristol at our Grow Wilder site. The site is already making a huge difference across Bristol, as seen on *Countryfile* in January, but we need to do more to reach our ambitious target of having 1 in 4 people taking positive action for wildlife across our area. The site will also work as a model for further spaces for engagement across the whole of Avon, to enable large-scale change in communities from Charfield down to Radstock and from Weston-super-Mare across to Freshford. Head to page 28 to find out how you can help to make this vision a reality for local communities and for wildlife.

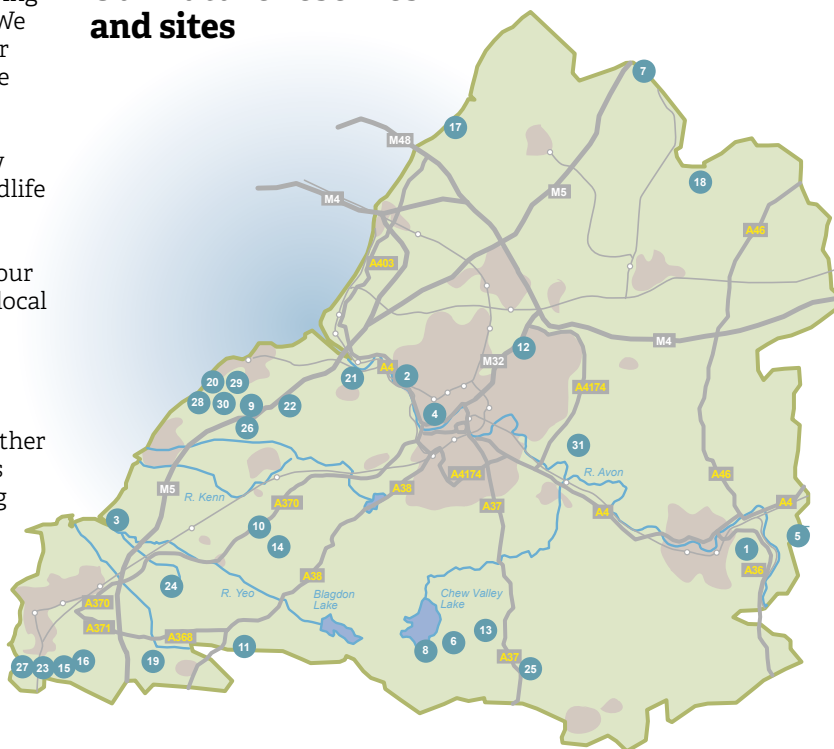
Thank you for your continued support of local wildlife as a member of Avon Wildlife Trust.

Ian Barrett

Chief Executive of Avon Wildlife Trust

Follow me on twitter @IanBarrettSW

Our nature reserves and sites



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Avon Wildlife Trust Get in touch

Wild Avon is the membership magazine for **Avon Wildlife Trust**, your local wildlife charity, working to secure a strong future for the natural environment and to inspire people to care for it. With the support of over 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.

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Follow us on social media for the latest news and events. Please share your wildlife pictures and experiences! You can also subscribe to our monthly newsletter online through our website to hear about our latest news and events.

Facebook @avonwt

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NICK TURNER



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STEVE NICHOLLS

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6 ways to get involved with your local Wildlife Trust

Increase your membership donation

Do even more for local wildlife, so that we can all benefit from nature on our doorstep: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/increasedonation](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/increasedonation)

Become a Patron We need dedicated individuals who can donate £1,000 per year (£83 per month) or more. Be at the heart of our work today: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/become-patron](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/become-patron)

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

Fundraise Set yourself a challenge to fundraise with family and friends to help wildlife in our region. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/fundraising](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/fundraising)

Gift donation

Show someone you care about them and the wildlife they love by making a gift donation in their name for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries or just because. [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/giftdonation](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/giftdonation)

Include a gift in your will

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

Limestone grassland

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

A good limestone grassland can host around 40 different plant species in a single square metre, some of which represent the sole food source of an insect species.



Thank you

Thanks to your membership, we are helping to safeguard the future of some of the many rare, specialist species that rely on limestone grassland habitat for survival.

SPRING SPECTACLE

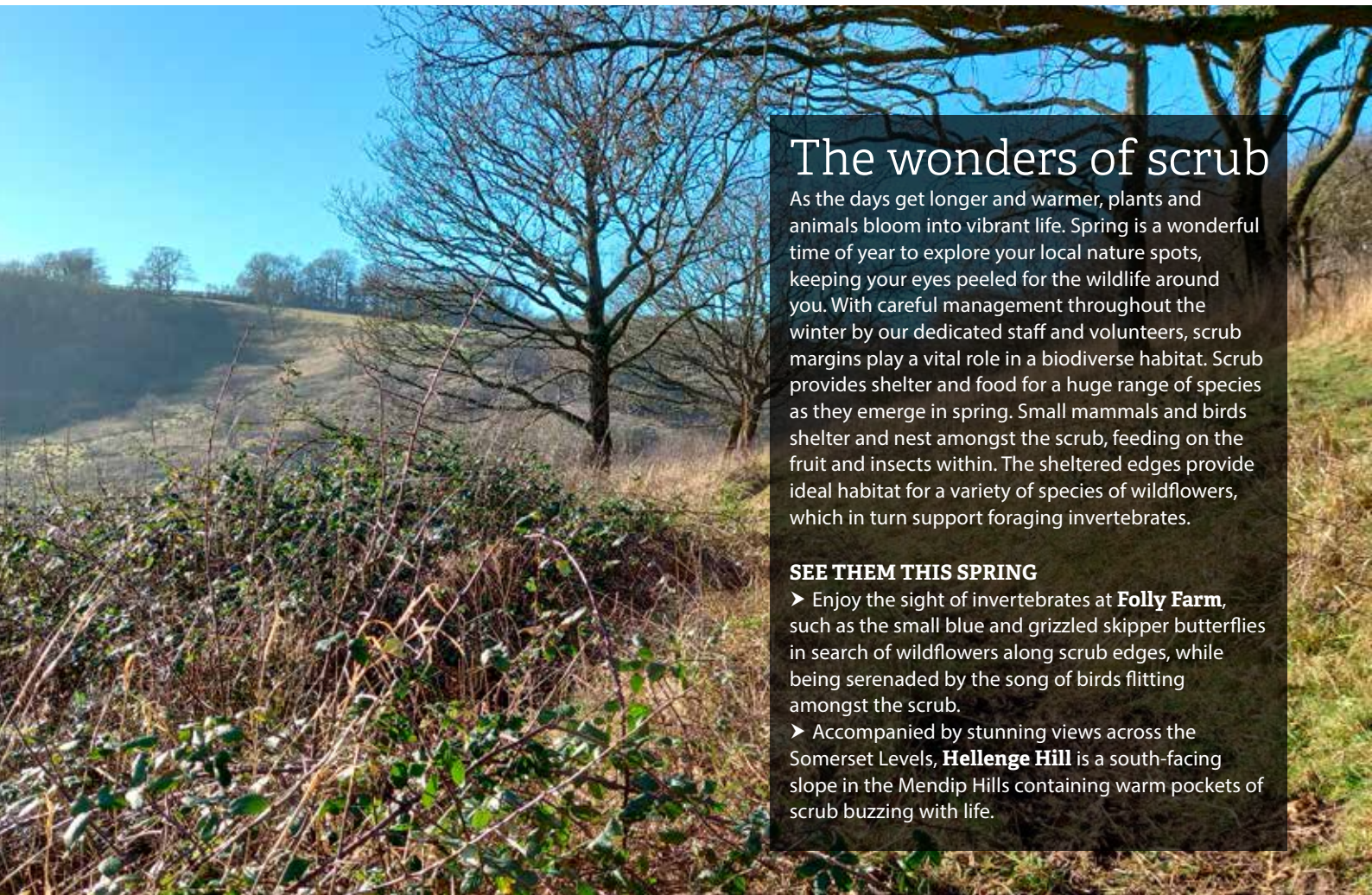
If you're a lover of wildflowers, then you are lucky to live in Avon as our area specialises in limestone grassland. The nature of the underlying bedrock means that the soils of limestone grassland are naturally alkaline, thin and nutrient-poor. These conditions are ideal for a diverse suite of wildflowers that thrive in growing in these highly stressful conditions and would be outcompeted in richer soils by grasses, thistles and docks.

In late spring, limestone grassland comes alive. One defining feature is its beautiful scent, due to abundant wild thyme, marjoram and salad burnet. Wildflowers are also important food sources for invertebrates.

Grazing is crucial for maintaining limestone grassland as it allows light to reach smaller wildflower species, creating a diverse grassland structure which suits the needs of different insect lifecycles. It also creates patches of bare earth which provide sites for nests, eggs and larvae of burrowing insects and basking spots for them to warm themselves.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

- **Hellenge Hill** is teeming with wild rabbits whose grazing has created the perfect conditions for several rare and minute plant species to thrive, including honewort, which relies on ants for pollination.
- **Walton Common** is home to our adorable Dexter cattle who graze the site in Gordano, helping to create a mosaic of species-rich grassland, replete with wild marjoram and interesting scrub which hosts an abundance of rare wild roses.
- **Dolebury Warren** is a great site for wildflowers if you can tear yourself away from the breath-taking views of the ancient hillfort. The scene underfoot, abundant yellow kidney vetch and starry white carpets of eyebright and fairy flax, is worth it.



The wonders of scrub

As the days get longer and warmer, plants and animals bloom into vibrant life. Spring is a wonderful time of year to explore your local nature spots, keeping your eyes peeled for the wildlife around you. With careful management throughout the winter by our dedicated staff and volunteers, scrub margins play a vital role in a biodiverse habitat. Scrub provides shelter and food for a huge range of species as they emerge in spring. Small mammals and birds shelter and nest amongst the scrub, feeding on the fruit and insects within. The sheltered edges provide ideal habitat for a variety of species of wildflowers, which in turn support foraging invertebrates.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

- Enjoy the sight of invertebrates at **Folly Farm**, such as the small blue and grizzled skipper butterflies in search of wildflowers along scrub edges, while being serenaded by the song of birds flitting amongst the scrub.
- Accompanied by stunning views across the Somerset Levels, **Hellenge Hill** is a south-facing slope in the Mendip Hills containing warm pockets of scrub buzzing with life.

FRANCES CLINCH



Many goats have tufts of hair under their chin called beards and have very “dog like” personalities, being very playful.

URBAN FIELDCRAFT

Scrub-loving goats

Nestled in South Bristol next to a large roundabout in Hartcliffe is a hidden wonder: Hengrove Mounds. Once a landfill site, nature has now reclaimed what was always hers on this small area of wild land. With a diverse array of wildflowers, this site is sure to brighten your day as we move through the year. The site's scrub encroachment has been kept in check by our dedicated Wild City Action Team. Now we plan to use a model of introducing goats to the site, who act as nature's brushcutter. Goats love to eat scrub before grass and are perfect for increasing grassland habitat, promoting wildflower growth and achieving a mosaic of habitats. Although not wild anymore,

the Old English Goat is likely descended from ancient ancestors that came across the land-bridge from Europe with the first farmers.

How to meet the goats in the city:

➤ Urban goat farmer

“Street Goat” provide opportunities for individuals and families to become part-time goat farmers, working as a collective to produce their own milk that works out cheaper than shop bought milk per litre! This locally-sourced, fresh, organic milk connects people from a variety of backgrounds to their land and food.

➤ **Emotional intelligence** Studies have shown goats are more drawn to happy faces.

ALEX GATTI



GROW THIS

Get ready for summer by growing strawberries in the garden or from a hanging basket. Why not pick up a wild strawberry plant from Grow Wilder?

SEE THIS

In early spring, great crested grebes perform their beautiful courtship ritual on lakes and reservoirs across the country. If you are lucky, you might be able to spot their famous "weed dance".

KIERON HUSTON

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Red kite

Seeing a red kite soaring high in the sky is a true delight! Once very rare, thanks to successful reintroduction projects these wonderful birds can now be seen in lots of places in the UK.

What to look for

You are most likely to spot a red kite because of its very large, elegant, wingspan, which is nearly two metres wide. Their red body plumage, dark forked wing tips and pale outer wings also make them recognisable if you see them from below. Their pale grey head has a yellow beak ending in a dark hook, evolved for tearing meat. The eyes are a striking pale colour with excellent long-distance sight, and although largely silent, their call is a thin, buzzard-like mewing of "weoo-weoo-weoo", rapidly repeated. The long, forked, rusty tail is used to stabilise and steer the graceful soaring and you may also notice the twisting motion in flight from a distance.

Diet

Carriion and invertebrates such as beetles and earthworms form the bulk of their diet, but they are opportunistic and occasionally take small prey such as fledgling birds, mice or voles. Their feet aren't generally strong enough to kill larger prey, despite having long, sharp talons. They fly low over wooded valleys, pasture and open countryside as well as in suburban areas and towns. They hunt mainly using the element of surprise instead of speed, although they occasionally make swift, twisting chases to catch live prey.



JOHN BRIDGES

From persecution to a bright future

In the 16th and 17th centuries, red kites were one of the most common birds of prey in England. Numbers plummeted during the 19th century, due largely to egg collectors and bounty hunters robbing up to a quarter of nests annually, as kites were seen as disease-carrying vermin and considered a threat to livestock. By the turn of the last century people were becoming deeply concerned about the disappearance of kites. Early nest protection efforts led to more formal initiatives from the 1960s, with a great deal of success. Between 1989 and 1994, 93 Spanish kite chicks were released into the Chiltern Hills. An estimated 1,800 pairs are now breeding across the UK.

WHERE TO SEE THEM:

- **Bristol and Bath:** Seen fairly regularly soaring over the city skylines, with the potential for nesting sites in the cities' vicinities in the not-too-distant future.
- **Woodlands and grassland mosaics:** Avon's mosaic of wildlife habitats and corridors, including ancient tumbledown woodlands, open, species-rich grassland, wetlands and scrub of different age structures present ideal nesting and hunting opportunities for these beautiful birds.

Signs of red kites in nature

Territorial pairs

In spring, territorial pairs are seen in wooded areas in which they intend to nest, chasing each other through the canopy.



GUY EDWARDS

'Stag-horned oaks'

Look out for old oak trees whose upper branches look like stag horns, as these provide a perfect, open perch for red kites.



DIETMAR NILL

Competition

The sight of fleeing buzzards, crows or even other kites can be a sign of a protective nesting pair.



ANDY ROUSE/2020VISION



Did you know many juveniles travel as far as Spain or Portugal in the autumn, but then settle the following spring in the area they were born?

DO THIS

Plant wildflowers! Add colour and beauty to your garden or window box and create a vital habitat for wildlife. Plant now for a wonderful, wild mini-meadow by summer.

SEE THIS

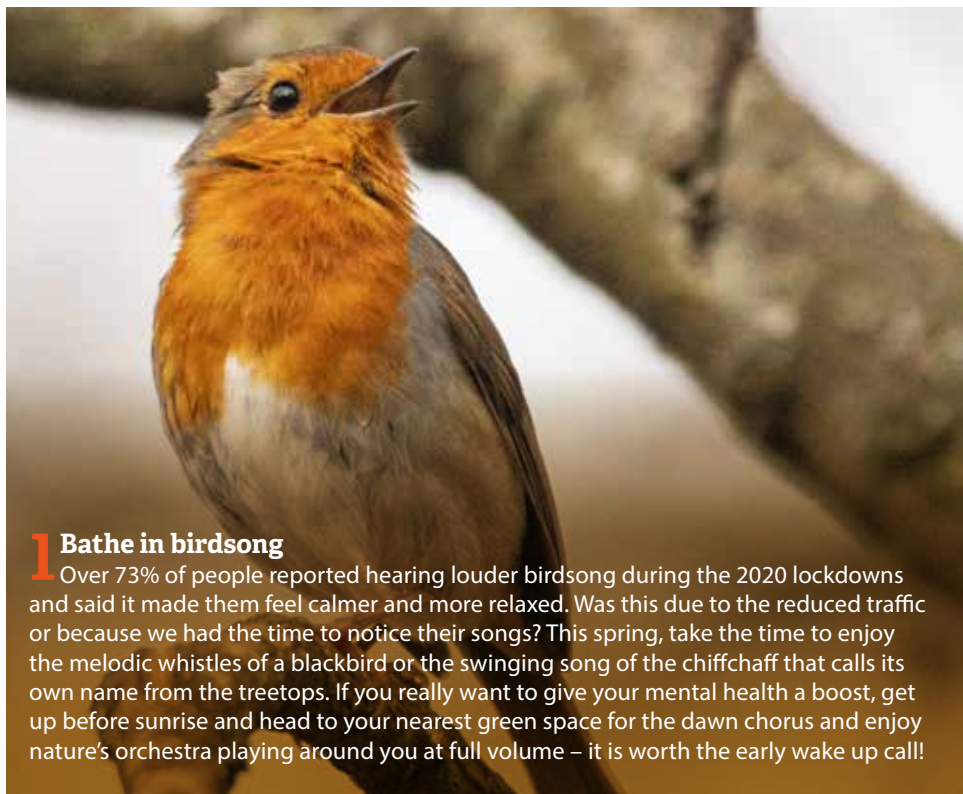
After their mass migration from Africa, swifts start to return to the UK at the end of April. Can you be the first to spot one? Keep your eyes peeled for those long curving wings and listen for that screaming call.



NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Six ways to enjoy nature this spring

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



1 Bathe in birdsong

Over 73% of people reported hearing louder birdsong during the 2020 lockdowns and said it made them feel calmer and more relaxed. Was this due to the reduced traffic or because we had the time to notice their songs? This spring, take the time to enjoy the melodic whistles of a blackbird or the swinging song of the chiffchaff that calls its own name from the treetops. If you really want to give your mental health a boost, get up before sunrise and head to your nearest green space for the dawn chorus and enjoy nature's orchestra playing around you at full volume – it is worth the early wake up call!

2 A wild spring splash around

Wash off those winter cobwebs with a spring splash. Swimming in colder water such as the sea, even just for short periods of time, results in lots of fantastic benefits such as reducing levels of cortisol (the 'stress hormone') and increasing levels of dopamine (the 'happy hormone') and improving circulation. Why not visit Clevedon's Marine Lake to give it a try?



GEORGE COOK

GEORGE COOK

3 Record wildlife sightings on your phone

Help record wildlife and improve your identification skills using your phone and the iNaturalist app. This incredible piece of software will help you identify flowers, birds, insects and all sorts of other wildlife from the photographs you take with your phone. It will then log these sightings as an official wildlife recording. Get used to practising with the app before the City Nature Challenge 2022 from 29 April – 3 May, where cities across the globe see who can record the most wildlife.



GEORGE COOK



4 Find the 'spring messenger'

Lighting up forest floors and park edges is the lesser celandine. One of the first flowers to bloom after winter, the flower also has another name: the spring messenger. The appearance of these low growing, yellow, star-shaped flowers shows that spring has really sprung.

5 Spring stargazing

There is nothing quite like a clear night sky. Contemplating the incredible number of stars and their distance away from us is simply mind boggling. The feeling of awe we get when we immerse ourselves in nature, particularly when gazing up at the cosmos, has been shown to make us happier. Get out and marvel at the stars this spring – can you spot Leo the Lion?



DAVID NOTON

6 Build a birdsong recorder

Spring is the best time of year to hear birdsong and with this craft you will be able to record all the wonderful spring songs with your own parabolic birdsong recorder. The large plastic bowl will act like a big ear, funnelling sound into your recorder.

Nature
craft



GEORGE COOK

You will need:

An old plastic bowl or plant pot, a sound recorder (mobile phone or microphone), handle from an old brush or broom, U-shaped nail or blue tack, a small piece of wood to fit inside the pot and a drill and screws (adult supervision needed).

How to build:

- ✓ Place your piece of wood inside the plastic bowl. It needs to fit snugly inside, so cut it to the right size for your bowl.
- ✓ Using the drill and screws, screw the old handle into the back of the bowl and into the piece of wood.
- ✓ Now it's time to secure your recording device. If using a small, wired microphone, use a U-shaped nail to hold it into the wood, or fasten your phone into the bowl using blue tack or elastic.
- ✓ Hold your new device out to capture recordings of singing birds!



If you have a go at building your own bird recorder, we would love to see how you get on – tag us **@avonwt**



#30DaysWild

1-30 June

Can you do
something

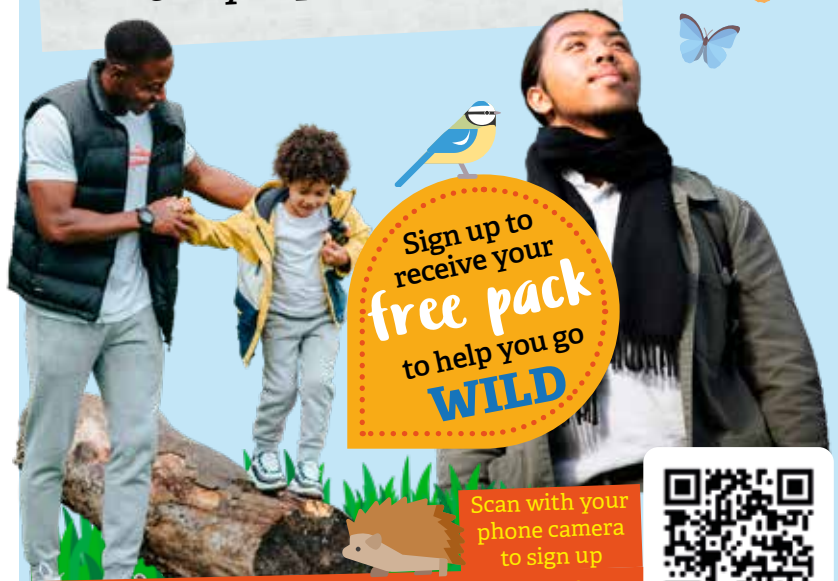


Wild
every day for
30 days?

#30DaysWild is the UK's
month-long challenge from
The Wildlife Trusts



Last year, over 750,000 people
went **WILD** in June. Join them
by making time for nature
every day for 30 days.



Sign up to
receive your
free pack
to help you go
WILD

Scan with your
phone camera
to sign up



wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild



Discover Prior's Wood

Close to Portbury Village, to the south of Gordano Valley, Prior's Wood is the perfect place to take a breather from the bustle of the city. Cloaking a large, limestone ridge, this ancient woodland bursts with wildflowers in spring. It is well known, and filmed, for its spectacular drifts of bluebells.



COLIN VARDELL

Prior's Wood is a beautiful fragment of woodland that once covered the whole of the Easton-in-Gordano to Clevedon Ridge, flanking the Gordano Valley. Today, you can explore the large areas of species-rich woodland, most of which is ancient in origin, with other parts having been planted to create an even more spectacular display. As you move through the woodland, you will find parts that date back to the 1600s and are very close to the type of woodland that developed after the last Ice Age about 10,000 years ago. The core native species you will find there today are oak, ash and hazel. It seems reasonable to assume that over many hundreds of years these species were favoured in woodland management because all three timber species were highly valued for use in ship building. You may also come across small-leaved lime trees which are an indication of a well-established woodland.

In recent times, a big success was ridding the woodland of the invasive rhododendron. There were roughly 11

hectares of rhododendron in Prior's Wood that were planted while the woodland was under the management of the Tyntesfield Estate. Rhododendron is native to south-eastern Asia and Australasia and was introduced in the 1700s and 1800s. It was used extensively by the Victorians as an attractive garden and estate plant and as game cover. Unchecked for several decades, the rhododendron in Prior's Wood had spread and expanded from its original planting area. However, the eradication of the rhododendron has completely transformed the woodland, allowing light to hit the woodland floor that had been darkened by the invasive vegetation for such a long time. We look forward to an increase in biodiversity and will allow the ground flora to regenerate naturally whilst keeping on top of any future rhododendron regrowth.

In the spring the woodland floor is carpeted with wood anemone, lesser celandine and violets, but it is the presence of extensive drifts of English bluebells that make this site so significant. Locally the wood is known as 'Bluebell



JOE MCGORLEY

Thanks
Our members and
dedicated volunteer groups,
help to protect Prior's Wood
and maintain this incredibly
special nature reserve for
people and wildlife.

woodland edges and glades provide a crucial habitat for wildlife, including birds and small mammals. At dusk, bats, including the rare horseshoe bat, may be seen foraging along the woodland edge. Selectively cutting back scrub and coppicing hazel increases the amount of light reaching the ground and leads to greater plant diversity. The reserve is also nationally important for its fungi and many of these can be seen during the autumn.

Prior's Wood is cared for by Avon Wildlife Trust with the help of our supporters and dedicated volunteer groups. It is also experiencing the impacts of ash dieback, a fungal disease confirmed to be affecting ash trees in the UK since 2012. With the spores causing the infection to move large distances

The perfect woodland for spring wildflowers

on the wind, many ash trees in Prior's Wood have now been exposed and are deteriorating. The infection blocks water transport in trees, making them more susceptible to secondary infections. This makes it likely that dead wood will fall out of the canopy – or the tree may suffer complete failure. For Avon Wildlife Trust, this is a significant public safety issue. Trees posing a threat to safety will have to be felled. However, the ash trees away from major footpaths will be left to decline gradually and gracefully, to preserve important dead wood habitat, benefiting wood-boring invertebrates and other species such as bats. In some cases, the widened woodland rides and glades created from felling will introduce more light and structural diversity to the woods, benefiting wildlife. For more information about the impact of ash dieback, head to avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ash-dieback.

Wood' and it has attracted widespread attention for its beauty, featuring in many BBC nature documentaries and national newspapers. Another impressive spectacle for visitors is the white carpet of ramsons (commonly known as wild garlic) that both visually and aromatically dominate the ground flora on the track leading from the stream to the village.

Woodland wildflowers are an important source of food for pollinating insects like bees, butterflies and hoverflies. The

DID YOU KNOW Its name implies that Prior's Wood was once linked with a priory as part of the church estates. Many woodlands owned by the church have a long history of active management. In more recent times it became part of Tyntesfield Estate which was later acquired by the National Trust in 2002. With many of the trees appearing to be around 100 years in age, the First World War is likely to have been a significant period of management as part of systemic felling for the war effort.

NOW YOU DO IT

1 Visit Prior's Wood

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Location: Prior Woods Path, Portbury, Bristol BS20 7UF

Parking information: Limited parking – please respect local residents.

Access: Footpaths run though this site in a circuit, allowing access throughout the woodland and down to the pools. Some of the paths can be muddy, slippery and steep-sided. Keep to the best-used paths and wear appropriate footwear.

Opening times: Open at all times

Best time to visit: April to July, September to November.

Find out more: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/priors-wood

TOP WILDLIFE TO SPOT

➤ **Wildflowers** – Enjoy the bluebell display alongside primroses, lesser celandine and wood anemone. A white carpet of ramsons dominates the track leading from the stream to the village, along with their associated garlic smell.

➤ **Butterflies** – Flowering plants provide a food source for pollinating butterflies, including peacock, speckled wood and brimstone.

➤ **Birds** – In the woodland and scrub, birds begin to build their nests in late March and April. The mewing call of the buzzard, rapping of woodpeckers and warbling of songbirds make the woodland an uplifting place to visit.

➤ **Mammals** – The presence of badger, roe deer and brown hare can be found by looking for tracks.

THINGS TO DO

➤ Spring is the best time of year to listen for birdsong. Easy calls to identify are those of the chiffchaff, which says its name, "chiff-chaff", and the repeated "tea-cher" of the great tit, which sounds like a rusty bicycle.

➤ Visit Bullock's Bottom where the water course has been artificially dammed to create ponds. This may have been part of a planned 'walk' from a country house.

➤ Download the self-guided bluebell walk map at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/priorswoodwalk. This walk takes in glades and a woodland stream. Make sure to take a pit stop at point five on the map for a stunning bluebell display.

More Avon Wildlife Trust nature reserves for a **spring day out**



2 Burledge Hill

Why now?

Elevated above the Chew Valley, Burledge Hill is a great place for a spring walk. Whether it's the tranquil scenes of the landscape or the birdsong and buzz from the grassland and scrub, it's always a rewarding place to visit. Don't forget your binoculars!

Know before you go

Location: Sutton Hill Road, Bishop Sutton, Bristol BS39 5UR

Open: Open at all times.

Wildlife to spot: Buzzard, raven, roe deer, brimstone butterfly, green and greater spotted woodpecker, kestrel.

Find out more:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/burledge-hill

The lowdown

13km south of Bristol in the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Burledge Hill forms part of a north-facing limestone plateau overlooking the Chew Valley with fantastic views of the lake, villages and farmland below. It is



partly designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the rare neutral grassland. On the steeper slopes, cowslips and lady's smock bloom as spring temperatures and light levels increase, and the grassland is managed by grazing cattle through late summer, once flowering plants like scabious, salad burnett and lady's bedstraw have had a chance to set seed. Scrub, secondary woodland and hedge boundaries provide extensive edge habitat that is important for so many species. In the spring you can expect to hear lesser white throats singing amongst the bramble, while brimstone butterflies glide in the warm sunshine. Often the peace is interrupted by the laughing call and the undulating flight of the green woodpecker, which spends most of its time feeding on anthills in the rough grassland, giving a flash of colour as it flies for cover.

3 Brandon Hill

Why now?

The south-facing slope of Brandon Hill is a great place to enjoy those first rays of spring sunshine. This easily accessible green space is an oasis in the city. With far-reaching views across the river to Dundry Hill in the distance, it is a surprising mix of grassland, scrub and woodland with large mature trees growing across the park.



Know before you go

Location: In between Jacobs Wells Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1EA and Park Street, Clifton, Bristol BS1 5NF

Open: Open at all times

Wildlife to spot: Blackcap, bullfinch, long-tailed tit, woodland ground flora, foxes.

Find out more:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/brandon-hill

The lowdown



Created in 1981 in the southwestern part of Brandon Hill, the nature reserve covers an area of five acres. In contrast to the formal landscaping of the rest of the site, the reserve offers a wilder space including a small wildflower meadow, rough grassland, valuable scrub and a small block of woodland, coming to life in spring. Early blooms of blackthorn and hawthorn provide food for early pollinators, creating that welcome buzz that heralds warmer days to come. Celandines and wood anemones bring colour to the woodland floor and in the pond, clumps of shiny frog spawn can be spotted on the surface. Blackcap, long-tailed tit, mistle thrush and bullfinch all breed on the hill and will use the scrub edges; it is worth being patient with your binoculars to see what you come across. The beautiful jay is also a regular visitor and even sparrowhawks can be seen hunting using the woodland edge as cover.



Plan your next great day out at our nature reserves:
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves



Sophie Pavele

  @sophiepavs

Seas of surprise



As I write, it's a moody, overcast Tuesday afternoon. Desk days like these make me crave the sea. I want to be fully in it, head and all, with (ideally) the sun streaking through. I'm lucky enough to have boomeranged home to Devon after university, and the southwest coast has lodged itself deep in my heart. I think of the sea daily, envisaging myself on, in or indeed under it... if possible.

One of my favourite things about British coastlines is that they are never the same. The rhythm of the tide brings new sights, smells, colours and characters to our shorelines four times a day. Give me a spare spring hour and you may find me walking barefoot along the local beach, looking for snakelocks anemones at low tide. Aside from their striking green and purple colour, I love how it takes barely any water for them to sway their thick tentacles like hula skirts, dancing in their rockpools like a couple of TikTokers.

On this same beach, a colony of breeding kittiwakes nest on the sandstone cliff face, coming home after a challenging winter in the Atlantic. As one of our most endangered seabirds, seeing them so free as they wheel with abandon about the clifftops, diving for food to feed their growing chicks, is a sight to raise even the gloomiest spirits.

But for me, nothing quite compares to the sighting of a fellow mammal in the water. Last summer, I had a particularly memorable encounter with a grey seal—the larger of

our two native species. I was paddleboarding on a calm April afternoon, when the water had this glassy appeal. Paddling in random circles and enjoying the rare absence of swell on this particular stretch of coast, I adopted a downwards gaze, unsure what I was really looking for. But then, there he was. About 10 feet away from me — an enormous bull grey seal. He was bottling as seals do, with only his (gigantic!) head above the water. Whiskers twitching, eyes watching. I stopped breathing, just in case. And then as quickly as he had surfaced, he disappeared below the waves. Off on some covert assignment, no doubt.

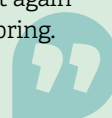
Rather incredibly, the UK is home to 40 per cent of the world population of grey seals. Perhaps they enjoy the variety of the coast as much as I do? I think of that moment often and look forward to being surprised yet again by the beauty of the British seas this spring.



OCEAN UPDATES

Discover more about our seas by signing up for our marine mailing! You'll get an exclusive monthly newsletter packed with marine conservation news from around the world, exciting wildlife sightings from our amazing UK seas, and updates on the latest developments in protecting our oceans.

**wildlifetrusts.org/
marine-mailing**



Find inspiration to get outdoors and discover your own spring surprises with our selection of seasonal spectacles!



wildlifetrusts.org/spring-wildlife

Sophie Pavele is a science communicator and Ambassador for The Wildlife Trusts. Her first book *Forget Me Not, Finding the Forgotten Species of Climate Change Britain* is published 9 June 2022 (Bloomsbury)

6 places to see beetles



Find out how you
can help beetles and
other imperiled insects
at **wildlifetrusts.org/
action-for-insects**



Did you know that there are over 4,000 species of beetle in the UK? These incredible insects come in a huge array of shapes and sizes. There are broad-bodied ladybirds, slender rove beetles, longhorn beetles sporting oversized antennae, and weevils with oddly elongated faces. Many of our beetles have fantastically evocative names to match their looks or lifestyle. Head out on a beetle safari and you could meet tigers, stags, wasps and even minotaurs! Beetles fill vital roles in nature, including pollination, predation, and the recycling of dead wood, dung and dead animals. One of the best things about beetles is that you can find them almost anywhere, from parks and gardens to meadows and moorlands, or even beneath the surface of ponds. But some places are beetle hotspots — here are six of our favourite places to see beetles...

See the spectacle for yourself



1 **Goblin Combe, Avon Wildlife Trust**

Oil beetles can be seen regularly on the woodland edges at this site, usually in association with lesser celandine or bluebells. Bloody-nosed beetles are also quite common. Oil and bloody-nosed beetles exude smelly substances when alarmed so look but don't touch!

Where: Cleeve, BS23 4XR

2 **Charfield Meadow, Avon Wildlife Trust**

At this stunning wildflower meadow you can see red soldier beetles and thick-legged flower beetles. They can be found in among the grasses but are particularly fond of large, spreading flower heads, like cow parsley or hogweed, and are important pollinators of this species.

Where: Charfield, GL12 8EX

3 **Oakley Wood, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust**

In early spring you might find dor beetles bumbling along the woodland floor, or spot a black snail beetle stalking its slow-moving prey — their narrow heads are perfect for poking into a snail's shell. Deadwood provides habitat for many more beetles.

Where: Leamington Spa, CV33 9QP

4 **Balls Wood, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust**

This varied woodland with its sunlit rides is a wonderful place for beetles that depend on deadwood, but it also has an unusually large number of ponds, supporting a range of water beetles. You might even spot the rare poplar leaf-rolling weevil.

Where: Hertford Heath, SG13 7PW

5 **Sydenham Hill Wood, London Wildlife Trust**

London Wildlife Trust's oldest nature reserve is home to many rare and scarce beetles, from metallic jewel beetles and tiny flower beetles to the impressive stag beetle, the largest species in the UK, growing to over 7cm long.

Where: Sydenham Hill, SE26 6LS

6 **Bystock Pools, Devon Wildlife Trust**

Bystock's mosaic of habitats provides a home to many different beetles. Whirligig beetles spin across the ponds, tiger beetles hunt the heathlands and soldier beetles march over meadow wildflowers. If you're really lucky, you could spot the greenish glimmer of a glow-worm on a summer evening.

Where: Near Exmouth, EX8 5EE

Did you spot any beetles?

We'd love to know how your search went.

Please tweet us your best photos! @wildlifetrusts

BRINGING THE STRATEGY TO LIFE

What is the strategy and what's it for?

We have published our 10-year strategy, and there's no doubt it's ambitious. We want to help reverse nature's decline and restore an abundance of wildlife across the region. It'll take hard work from everyone, because it requires change at every level and in every part of society. To help us focus, we have identified three priority areas for our organisation. We are building on a multitude of projects we've been running for years, but with a renewed sense of urgency: the ecological and climate emergencies demand a response that's bigger in scale than anything we've delivered before. With this strategy and your help, nature can recover in Avon.

STEVEN HOLLIS

Nature's recovery

Creating and connecting more space for nature will allow our struggling wildlife to recover.

300m
of hedgerows
created



TOM MARSHALL

Empowering people

If just one person in every four takes visible action for wildlife, it can be enough to change the behaviour of the majority, helping to put nature into recovery.



EVE AND TOM PHOTOGRAPHY

65
volunteers
engaged

Nature-based solutions

Nature can help heal our broken climate: we just need to give it a chance. We will create good quality wildlife habitat to absorb carbon dioxide and reduce local flooding and pollution, bringing back a richness of species at the same time.



20ha
of species-
rich grassland
restored

What's the dream?

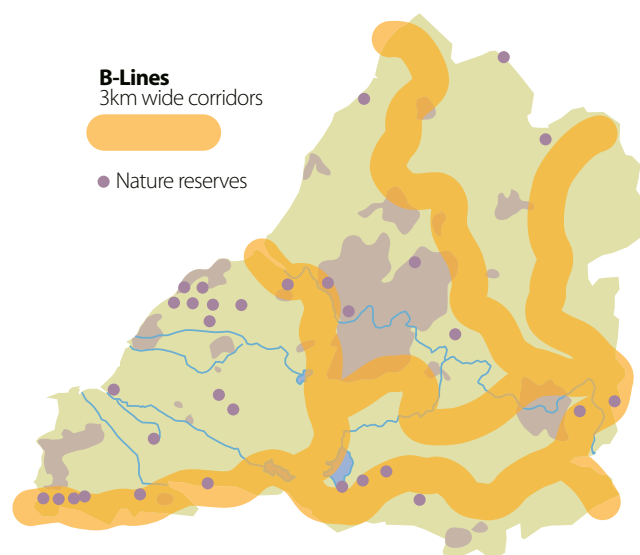
We want to create a virtuous circle where we inspire people to care about nature and support them to help it. As passion grows across communities, amongst landowners and within business, we'll support local wildlife champions to empower others in their

community to make real change, on our own reserves and beyond. That will create more land that is being managed for wildlife, inspiring new people to its wonders and allowing nature to roll up its sleeves and play its part in reversing the climate crisis.

Nature's Recovery



We want 30% of land in Avon to be managed for nature – and we don't just mean our land. Farmers' fields, school playgrounds, gardens and motorway verges must all play a part. We will continue enhancing our special nature reserves with the dream of seeing wildlife spilling out beyond their boundaries. This means working with our newly acquired land and with other Avon landowners to create more space for nature, rewilding large areas and having the courage to take a step back, allowing nature to do more.



Nature's Recovery in action: B-Lines

Pollinator numbers have declined rapidly in the last 50 years, due to loss of wildflower-rich habitat. Changes in land use, including intensive farming, urban spread and new transport links, have had a huge impact. Over 97% of all flower-rich grasslands have been lost in Britain since the 1930s. That's an area the size of Wales. A problem of this size requires a large-scale response. One example of such a response is our project, B-Lines. In partnership with the charity Buglife, our aim is to create a network of

interconnected habitats, helping wildlife to thrive. The B stands for 'biodiversity', each B-Line being a strip of wildflower-rich habitat, creating a network that provides food and the means to move across the landscape for an abundance of wildlife.

We are currently focusing on the West Mendip area, with the support of Biffa Award, the Banister Charitable Trust and the D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust. If you explore this beautiful region, you'll appreciate its stunning variety: there

are species-rich wildflower meadows, calcareous grasslands, acidic heaths and ancient woodlands. By removing scrub, we have been restoring the grassland. Our teams have built dry-stone walls that carve through the landscape, creating a permanent reminder of our rural past. As well as creating habitat for insects, these walls also enable grazing by livestock such as Shetland ponies, ensuring rough grasses don't out-compete more delicate flowers like purple orchids and campion.

The B-Line champions



Volunteers: While the pandemic has meant fewer supporters have been able to join us to help in recent months, over the project period volunteers have been our lifeblood. We have completed 436 workdays with our regular helpers, who have turned up in all weathers – and always with a smile. From building dry-stone walls to cutting hay, they have learnt skills, made friends, eaten unknown quantities of flapjacks and spent a glorious amount of time in nature.



Landowners: Our success at working with landowners demonstrates the importance of thinking beyond our reserves if we are to achieve nature's recovery. Jane Jay, owner of Shiplate Farm, has worked with us since the project's beginnings, and she describes her journey from wildlife novice to conservation farmer as 'meaning the world'. She delights in the drifts of bluebells, thriving seed banks and purple violets. What would the farm have been like without input from the Trust and other experts? 'A lost wilderness,' she says.



Businesses: Nature needs everyone to get on board, and businesses are no exception. Luckily, there's an appetite for wildlife, as proven by drinks company Thatchers Cider. Their land adjoins the Strawberry Line, a popular walking route across Somerset, and they have joined the B-Lines project to create pollinator-rich habitat there. Bare earth and rubble provide homes for mining bees, areas for beetles to hunt and space for butterflies to bask. Excitingly, Thatchers are considering further habitat creation on some adjacent land, including more species-rich grassland and protecting valuable ancient trees.

Empowering people



Our vision is to get 1 in 4 people across Avon taking action for wildlife, as studies show that percentage to be a tipping point for real societal change. Nature needs to be a priority for the whole of society, and we want to bring everyone with us, starting with finding and supporting those 1 in 4 people.

Case Study 1 My Wild City

Imagine a city where streets and communities get together to transform gardens and open spaces. That's the dream behind our My Wild City project in Bristol, now in its third year. From planting for pollinators in our gardens to influencing the space around us, we're out to show we can all help to make a city better for people and wildlife. At the heart of the programme are our Local Wildlife Sites, special wild spaces nestled within Bristol's urban communities. With support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, we're working with Bristol City Council to enable local people to enhance and restore these wildlife havens.

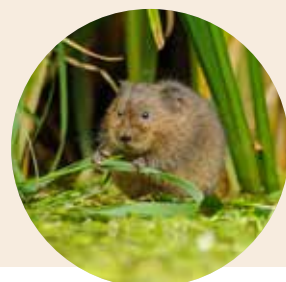


SUSIE PEARCE

THINGS TO SPOT



Fairy doors and story trails installed on Stockwood Open Space by local enthusiast Lauren



Water vole at Lawrence Weston Moor

TERRY WHITTAKER/2020VISION

WildCATS

The WildCATS are our Wild City Action Team. And what a team they are! This roaming group of volunteers meet weekly to improve habitats for nature on the My Wild City sites across Bristol, with their work including scrub clearance, scything and woodland management. We're looking for more people to reinvigorate or establish Friends of Groups across our My Wild City sites so get in touch if you're up for the task on mywildcity@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

'Friends of' groups

Some of the local wildlife sites have their own fairy godmothers, otherwise known as 'Friends of' groups. One such group, **The Northern Slopes Initiative**, have recently won an RHS award for their work on the site. Meanwhile, a new 'Friends of' group has been set up by active south Bristol resident Kelly Sheldrick for her Local Wildlife Sites, **Hengrove Mounds** and **Hawkfield Meadow**, home to the rare carrot mining bee and small blue butterfly.

Staying connected

We're collaborating with organisations across Bristol to support local residents to develop their connection with nature. From family nature play sessions and wellbeing walks, to wildlife recording and practical training.



Case Study 2 Bathscape

The Bathscape Scheme was launched in October 2018 by a range of partners, including Avon Wildlife Trust. If you explore the natural landscape surrounding the city of Bath that makes up the Bathscape, you'll see that it is truly stunning. We are working to ensure it is appreciated and actively enjoyed by as many locals as possible, allowing even more people to find a real connection with nature.

Bathscape successes

In the autumn, Bathscape project volunteers and locals in Bath teamed up to transform the city's **Odd Down** into a wildflower meadow. Poignantly, this field is the unmarked burial site of more than 3,100 people who died whilst working at the Bath Union Workhouse between 1858 and 1899. With over 1,000 bulbs planted, the resulting wildflower meadow will act as a wildlife habitat and a memorial to those who are at rest at the site.

Park life

The Trust has supported some fantastic tree-planting work by Bathscape's Community Action for Nature (CAN) volunteers. Impressively, our volunteers managed to plant over 700 trees in the city's **Pennyquick Park**, with a further 500 planted in **Brickfields Park**. To find out how to volunteer with CAN, check out the Bathscape website: bathscape.co.uk

Next steps

We're bringing all our fabulous work with Avon's communities under one inspiring vision, which we're calling 'Team Wilder'. This will be a movement of people taking action for nature across the region. We will support people to become leaders and activators in their own communities, giving them resources to set up projects to help make a difference to their local environment. Together we will bring about the change we want, and the change nature needs.

Nature-based solutions



The climate crisis and the nature crisis are interconnected. Global warming of just 1.5 degrees could mean 20–30% of species go extinct. Luckily, nature offers many solutions to the climate crisis. Wildlife-rich habitats like meadows, wood pasture, peatlands and wetlands can soak up flood water, clean polluted waterways and lock away carbon dioxide, if we allow them to. New regulations mean businesses and developers must help to reverse the environmental damage they do, creating opportunities for corporate support to pay for nature-based solutions.

Oversight

Targeting areas identified in local nature recovery strategies, we will use our expertise to help landholders and farmers develop new projects that maximise environmental benefits by restoring woodland, wetland and grassland.

On the other side, approved businesses will purchase the resulting credits from the verified projects to meet their regulated or voluntary obligations. This isn't an opportunity for companies with poor polluting records to continue to pollute without guilt: we will only work with partners who meet the required ethical standards. This includes a



DAVID KLAER

commitment to use credits purchased this way to drive genuine environmental improvements.

Partnerships

Key to the success of this strand of our strategy is partnership working. We will



bring together those who want to pay for nature's solutions with those whose land can provide those solutions. Land should be valued not just for the food it can produce but for the clean air created by the right habitats, the flooding they prevent, and the droughts they halt. These are all vital services, and they are worth paying for. Farmers will join with big business with one aim in mind: to release the potential of nature to heal itself.

The Bristol Avon Catchment Market is a world-leading new partnership between Avon Wildlife Trust, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and EnTrade, a Wessex Water business, and will be our first major project in this area.

Case study 3 Early Start Project, Goblin Combe

Our North Somerset reserve at Goblin Combe is a limestone gorge, created by melting ice during the last Ice Age. You'll find magical views across the Mendips and many butterflies, especially during the warmer months. This 6-hectare site is chiefly made up of dense beech plantation, planted in the 1960s, and the habitat beneath the trees is dark and limited in ground flora. By thinning the canopy to provide clearings we will bring more light to the woodland floor, creating a paradise for many birds and mammals.

It's the perfect choice for our first Early Start Project because there's so much potential to improve it. We know we have dormice and bats there already: this is a chance to help them to thrive. Right now, we are surveying the site to assess the baseline condition of the habitat and developing a plan that will translate the potential for change into credits, which will be available to buy on the catchment market.



What's the goal?

It's not just about improving the environment – nature-based solutions also help our communities by reducing the risk of flooding, cleaning up waterways to make them safer for us to use and sequestering carbon to reduce the impact of climate change.

This is just one way to help us get 30% of Avon's land and sea into management for nature within the next decade, and it's

one that needs to be used carefully. But we believe that, in the right hands, it could be powerful. We aim to use it to hit a target of 1,000 hectares of habitat used for nature-based solutions by 2030. Watch this space – it promises to be an exciting one for nature, and for all of us.

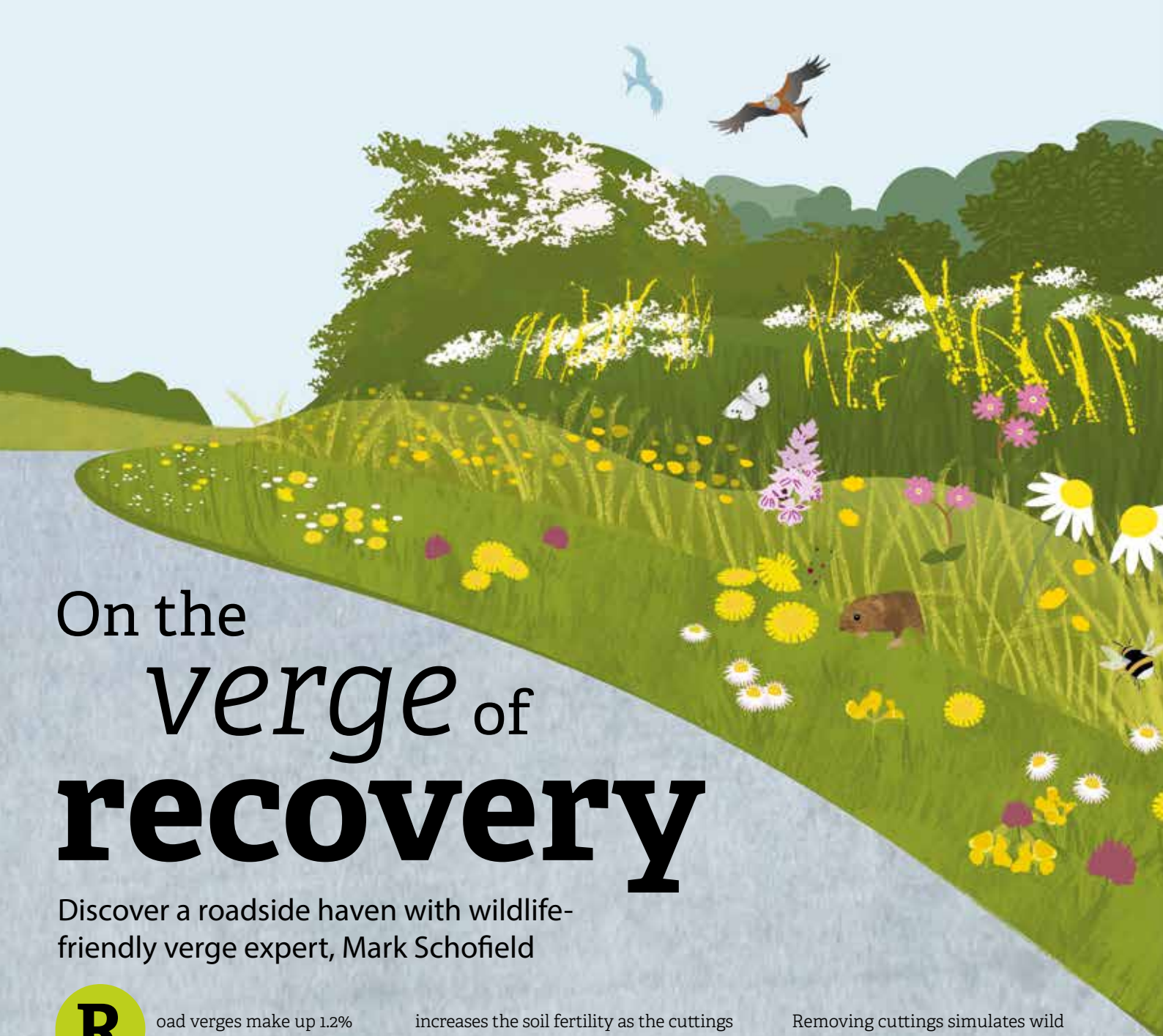
For more information about the catchment market, visit



bristolavoncatchmentmarket.uk



Catchment market map



On the *verge* of recovery

Discover a roadside haven with wildlife-friendly verge expert, Mark Schofield

Road verges make up 1.2% of the UK, some 2,600km² — that's an area the size of Dorset. This county-sized tract of land, hidden in plain sight, is home to over 700 species of wildflowers, representing 45% of our native flora. In many cases, verges act as vital corridors for wildlife and can often be the last stand locally for scarce or declining wildflowers, such as sulphur clover, spiked rampion, Deptford pink, and perennial flax.

The safety of road users demands that verges are maintained with shorter turf on approach to bends and junctions and with safe pull-over zones. However, beyond these requirements there are huge opportunities to create more space for nature. Huge opportunities that are all too often missed.

Many verges are mown too frequently and the cuttings left in place, which first creates a physical barrier to growth, then

increases the soil fertility as the cuttings decompose. This gives an unnatural advantage to the most competitive plants. Spoil from ditch clearance is often spread across verges with similar effect. Conversely, too little mowing can also be a problem; many verges are left unmown and the strips of grassland are lost as they grow into scrub. Scrub is great for wildlife, but a mix of habitats which include scrub and wildflower areas is far better.

A road verge that is well managed for wildlife can be a set of parallel worlds each offering different niches for wildlife. Tall, wide, diverse, native hedgerows at the back of the verge, complete with trees, can grade through infrequently trimmed tall herbs and tussocks to grassland meadows mown once or twice a year, where the cuttings are collected and removed. Here mowing is best done in late summer, to allow seed to ripen and insect lifecycles to complete, or even later where soil is poorer.

Removing cuttings simulates wild grazing and reduces fertility in the soil, maintaining more natural conditions that support a wider diversity of wildflowers and the invertebrates that rely on them. Open drainage ditches can add habitat for aquatic and marginal plants too, but spoil should be disposed of away from the verge where possible.

Verges near you may be crew-cut strips that flank suburban crescents and cul-de-sacs, or they might be overgrown rural lane sides. Your local highways authority (typically your county council or unitary authority) will have these managed under contract. A local petition may be able to reduce the frequency of cuts in your area, delivering cost savings and lowering the carbon footprint for public services. Cutting and collecting the cuttings is the main challenge cited by authorities, but affordable machinery exists to achieve this; and it has been



implemented
with success by
some councils.

There are roadside
nature reserves across the UK
that set the standard for roadside
habitat, but we must call for better
management of the rest of our verges
if we want to achieve a national Nature
Recovery Network.

For advice on where to start, visit



wildlifetrusts.org/verges

WILD NEWS

All the latest regional and national news from The Wildlife Trusts



BEVIS WATTS

Next steps for nature's engineers

The arrival of beavers in Avon in recent years is incredibly exciting when you consider their 400-year absence and the positive ecological and carbon-absorbing effects they bring as habitat engineers – a true keynote species.

We have embraced the potential for beavers to make significant changes to the local river corridor environment through their coppicing, feeding and damming habits – an increase in wetland biodiversity, water quality and flood water catchment over time.

To facilitate the reintroduction of these busy, eccentric rodents, the Bristol Avon and Somerset Frome Beaver Management Group was recently established. It aims to maximise the benefits of wild beavers while also addressing the legitimate concerns of some stakeholders. Membership includes statutory bodies, NGOs, catchment partnerships and representatives from the landowning

and angling communities, as well as local groups.

Natural England has contracted the first baseline survey of beaver populations in the Bristol Avon Catchment, which will be concluded by April, and we hope to share the results via the Beaver Forum, an online event in June. Keep an eye on our website and emails for updates on this.

If you spot a beaver in the wild, please visit our website where you will find a place to log your beaver sighting. We'd love to hear of your sightings as this will be part of the ongoing monitoring of local populations which helps us to learn where and how to work with our aquatic friends. A citizen science element to the ongoing monitoring plan will be developed so there will be more in-depth opportunities.



To find out more about Avon's beavers, visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers)

In
numbers



30ks Wilder

Last year we launched our first virtual fundraiser – **30ks Wilder**, where we asked you to take on **30** kilometres within the **30** days of September to raise **£30** for Avon's wildlife. We were overwhelmed by the response!

Participants raised an incredible **£7,138** for Avon's wildlife, more than doubling our target of **£3,000!** 1,320 kilometres were collectively walked, run, swam or cycled over the **30** days.

Out of **74** sign-ups: **25%** were members, **60%** were non-members and **15%** were staff.

Interested in taking on the challenge this September? Register your interest at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/30ks-wilder](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/30ks-wilder)



CHRIS DAMANT

UWE Bat Project

Citizen scientists needed! The UWE Bat Conservation Research Lab are teaming up with North Somerset Council to monitor North Somerset's bats. Starting again in spring 2022, we need citizen scientists to get involved and help us put out bat detectors across the county. For more information on how to sign up, visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/bat-survey](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/bat-survey)



Flooding at Folly Farm Centre

If you happen to have been to Folly Farm over the last couple of months, you may have noticed a lot more activity than usual – and not the wildlife kind! Sadly, back in February we experienced a significant flood which caused a great deal of damage to the flooring in the buildings at Folly Farm Centre. As a result, we have had to play host to weddings and conferences in some temporary marquees.

Whilst there is no doubt that this was heart-breaking for the Folly Farm team, especially after a difficult couple of years, we have been extremely heartened by

the way the team has pulled together, from how well our disaster emergency plan was put to the test with seamless results, to how generous people have been in holding their much longed-for celebrations in different surroundings. With repairs soon to be complete, we very much look forward to once again welcoming people through our doors. In the meantime, please don't be put off visiting us for your walks or booking your event with us: **follyfarm.org**



Bathampton Meadows

Back in January, the National Trust announced plans for a "green corridor" through Bathampton Meadows, linking the historic city centre to our Bathampton Meadows and Browne's Folly nature reserves. Meadows will be improved to benefit wildlife, including foraging habitat for greater horseshoe bats, wetland habitat for wading birds and increased numbers of wildflowers for pollinators. Bath residents for generations to come will soon benefit from a new route connecting the historic city to the surrounding green spaces, echoing the fashionable Georgian pastime

of spending time in the countryside. The acquisition of this critical green wedge will mean the land is now protected without any threat of future development, to benefit residents, visitors and, most importantly, nature. Our CEO Ian Barrett welcomed this exciting news: "It's fantastic that this vital green lung for Bath has been secured for people and nature and we look forward to working with the National Trust to realise its potential".

Our headquarters is moving



After 37 years at our offices in Jacobs Wells Road, Avon Wildlife Trust has now moved to a new home. Opened by Sir David Attenborough in 1985, The Old Police Station by Brandon Hill had been our headquarters since then. During our time there, we welcomed thousands of volunteers, were inspired by hundreds of dedicated staff and developed plans that saw us acquire reserves from Walborough to Weston Moor. The offices were bursting with character and will hold a special place in our hearts, but as we look to the future, and embrace new ways of working, it's time to move on.

Our delivery teams will now be based at regional hubs so they can work more efficiently and help reduce our carbon footprint, meaning we've been able to downsize. Luckily, we haven't had to move far, with our new headquarters based just the other side of Brandon Hill at 17 Great George Street. Whilst we are sad to say goodbye to the many memories The Old Police Station holds for us, we look forward to continuing our work supporting nature's recovery from our new one.

Our new address is:

**17 Great George Street
Bristol
BS1 5QT**

UK UPDATE

Wally the Walrus made a surprise visit to our shores in 2021

The weird, wonderful & worrying

OUR 2021 MARINE REVIEW

Cetaceans take centre stage in our round-up of marine news from the last 12 months, with success stories, tragic tales, and strange sightings. There was hope for humpback whales, with strong numbers recorded around the southwest and further sightings in Scotland. One individual, named Pi, delighted whale watchers on the Isles of Scilly for over two months. The surge in sightings in recent years reflects populations recovering after bans on commercial whaling.

It wasn't all good news though, with large numbers of seals and cetaceans reported stranded across the UK, including a minke whale calf that tragically had to be put down after stranding in the Thames. In Cornwall alone, over 170 cetaceans and 247 seals were stranded, with a further 51 cetaceans recorded stranding in Devon. Many of these animals showed signs of injury from fishing gear or propellers, including a humpback whale off Looe Island that was caught in fishing lines. One of the stranded animals in Cornwall was a striped dolphin, which are common in the Mediterranean but seldom seen around the UK.

This wasn't the only surprising cetacean sighting in the south of the UK. Two orcas from the Hebrides made a scene-stealing appearance off the cliff-top Minnack Theatre in Cornwall — the most southerly sighting of members of this group of killer whales in over 50 years — and white-beaked dolphins, usually found in subarctic waters, were seen in Essex for the first time since 2000.

Whales and dolphins weren't alone in popping up in unexpected places. 2021 saw two walrus recorded in the UK, with one, nicknamed Wally, spending weeks in south Wales and then the Isles of Scilly; and a second (known as Freya) briefly visiting Northumberland before being spotted in Shetland. There was also a pufferfish found washed up on a Cornish beach, which is an oceanic species that rarely comes this far north.

These unusual sightings provide further evidence of the impacts of climate change on our seas. Temperature changes can cause disruption to feeding habits and breeding cycles, driving animals to move out of their usual range. Some species are shifting their distribution completely. The ringneck blenny, a small fish normally found in the Eastern Atlantic or Mediterranean, has become common in Cornwall's Fal estuary, with further signs of breeding in the English Channel.

Our marine life faces many threats in addition to climate change, including disturbance from recreational activities. Cornwall Wildlife Trust reported that disturbances of marine wildlife have tripled since 2014, with an increase of jet skis and motorboats a major cause for concern. Elsewhere, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales witnessed a seal pup being abandoned after people got too close to it. Surveys by Dorset Wildlife Trust recorded damage to the seabed caused by the anchors of large cruise ships, moored off the coast due to the pandemic.

But there was also plenty to celebrate last year, with good news for kelp forests,

seagrass meadows, oyster beds and many more habitats and species. In March, a new byelaw was passed to stop damaging fishing practices off the Sussex coast. To speed up the area's recovery, the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project will restore a vast 200km² of kelp forest, providing feeding and nursery grounds for molluscs, shrimp, and cuttlefish.

Seagrass habitats also got a much needed boost. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust transplanted seeds and plants to areas where seagrass has previously flourished, whereas Manx Wildlife Trust discovered a new seagrass meadow, Cornwall Wildlife Trust mapped seagrass regrowth in areas where moorings had been removed, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust carried out the first surveys of seagrass on mudflats off Walney Island for over 20 years.

There are even more sea success stories in our full round-up, which you can read at: wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-21

Ocean oddities

- Adders took to the surf as snakes were seen paddling in the waves on Wembury Beach, Dorset and off the coast of Anglesey, North Wales.
- Devon Wildlife Trust reported a surge of compass jellyfish, believed to be caused by the July heatwave.
- Scottish Wildlife Trust rangers were wowed by a white puffin on Handa Island. The pale puffin lacks pigmentation in its feathers, due to a genetic condition called leucism.

UK UPDATE

Splatters matter

The latest results from the Bugs Matter Survey show that significantly fewer insects were recorded nationally in 2021 than 17 years ago. These results add to the growing evidence that insect populations are declining across the world, with potentially catastrophic consequences for wildlife, wild places, and people.

The Bugs Matter Survey, initially developed by the RSPB in 2004 is based on the 'windscreen phenomenon', originating from the observation that people find fewer insects squashed on the windscreens of their cars compared to several decades ago. The survey was revitalised and made more accessible in 2021, when Kent Wildlife Trust created the Bugs Matter App in partnership with Gwent, Somerset, and Essex Wildlife Trusts, and Buglife. The app makes it easy



for anyone with a smartphone or tablet to record the insects on their car, bringing meaningful citizen science to the pockets of thousands. Last year there were nearly 5,000 journeys logged, helping scientists monitor the alarming declines in our insects.

Find out more and get involved at kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/bugs-matter

Failing farmland wildlife

This January, the Government announced new schemes to reward farmers in England for supporting nature's recovery. Farmland accounts for a huge proportion of our land use, so it's imperative that we have policies that support farmers to help nature. The latest announcement

includes a lot of the right rhetoric, but still lacks any clear details or urgency. The published documents failed to provide details on eligibility, the determination of priorities, or how Government will ensure these schemes achieve target outcomes. Read more at wtru.st/farm-reform

Welcome to the team!

The Wildlife Trusts are delighted to announce that GP and TV presenter Dr Amir Khan, and naturalist, TV presenter and author Iolo Williams, have become vice presidents of the charity. We also warmly welcome award-winning TV presenter Maddie Moate, and The Vamps' lead guitarist, James McVey (pictured), as wildlife ambassadors. The nature enthusiasts will use their voices, influence and audiences to help The Wildlife Trusts shine a spotlight on the urgent need for nature's recovery in the UK. Meet our new vice presidents and ambassadors at wtru.st/new-voices



UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Seabird power

The Scottish Wildlife Trust has joined forces with alternative rock band Sea Power to raise awareness of the urgent need to tackle the nature and climate crises. The Wildlife Trust worked with the band to create a new video for their classic track "The Great Skua," featuring footage of seabirds on Handa Island Wildlife Reserve. wtru.st/seapower



2 A city sanctuary

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust welcomed plans for a new 'Green Heart' in Nottingham city centre, after putting forward a bold ambition to transform a derelict former shopping centre into wildlife-rich greenspace. The vision is billed as a blueprint for sustainable city centres in a post-COVID world. wtru.st/green-heart

3 Wild in Wales

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust has purchased a 164-acre farm in mid-Wales, with plans to transform it into a haven for wildlife. Initial steps to bring nature back to the former livestock farm will include scrub development, to provide shelter for wildlife. The Wildlife Trust will work with neighbours, local farmers and landowners to create more space for nature in the region. wtru.st/mid-wales-farm

Bristol's Last Farm



Since Yew Tree Farm was featured on Countryfile on 16 January, the support it's experienced has been fantastic. It took days to get through the kind messages from all over the world. The programme seemed to tap into people's connections with the land that are getting lost, generation by generation, as small, traditional mixed farms are disappearing.

Yew Tree farms in a nature-friendly way, using no sprays or chemicals. The animals are raised organically, and they sell locally – exactly how the farm has functioned for hundreds of years. The farm's slightly wilder landscape, with a late-cut hay meadow, supports huge amounts of wildlife, a few being red-listed species.

Bristol's councillors and mayor have all



OLIVER EDWARDS

agreed to remove the hay meadow – the part that Yew Tree Farm doesn't own – on which there is a proposed development of 200 houses, from the emerging local plan. Catherine, the farm's owner, is working with CPRE, the countryside charity, and volunteers to help identify

Bristol's empty and brownfield sites to avoid building on Bristol's green spaces. The farm is not safe, but they are staying positive and proactive.

A new threat has come from North Somerset, which is looking to build up to the farm's boundary on its greenbelt, which will effectively close a wildlife corridor to the south of the farm.

As we move through spring, Catherine is anticipating one of the best days of the year: the swallows returning to the barns where perhaps hundreds of generations have roosted. Long may that continue. There is always hope.



To find out more about the farm and to show your support, visit its Facebook page: facebook.com/yewtreefarmandshop

Corporate volunteering benefits employees' wellbeing

With multiple lockdowns and working from home mandates over the past two years, many of us have not only been forced to separate from our workplaces, but also our colleagues. This separation has no doubt affected our mental wellbeing and left many of us feeling isolated and lonely, and impacted morale in the workplace.

Our employee engagement days have been the perfect solution to boost team morale, connectedness and wellbeing by getting together for a day out immersed in nature. We conducted a survey of two

groups who had employee engagement days last year and found that, compared to the start of the day, 32% said they felt calmer, 52% felt happier, 58% felt more positive, 37% felt more energetic and 37% felt more relaxed. We also asked if they felt more connected to nature: 27% said they felt deeply connected to nature, 52% said yes and 21% said a little bit.

This goes to show the benefits of corporate volunteering on employees' wellbeing. For more information on employee engagement days and how they can benefit your employees' wellbeing, please visit: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/employee-engagement-days



MY WILD LIFE

Thank
you

to the National Lottery
Heritage Fund for funding
the Wild Paths
traineeship – a skills for
the future project.

Bethan Smith

Bethan Smith is on the Wild Paths placement as a practical conservation and engagement trainee based at Grow Wilder. This 10-month placement is made possible by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and aims to help people gain the skills for a career in conservation.



I have always wanted to work with nature. Visits to see family in Canada as a child, Ray Mears documentaries and picnics in local woodlands sparked a love for all aspects of nature and the environment.

Over the last few years, I have developed a love of wildflowers, as well as a passion for the wildlife that depends on them. After my degree, I went on to study for a Masters in Environmental Management, but I was left hungry for more hands-on experience. As I had been a member of Avon Wildlife Trust for a few years by 2018, it made sense for me to start volunteering at Grow Wilder, the Trust's urban wildlife haven in Bristol.

For me, however, this was a challenging goal because of my chronic low confidence. It was only after getting help for these issues that I felt brave enough to start a placement at the site. I have now been working at Grow Wilder for over three years. To put it simply, it has become my sanctuary.

Being involved with the growing of wildflowers during the pandemic was incredible. The nursery had an abundance of flowers waiting to go to new homes with the local council and other charities, but when the world came to a halt these orders were cancelled. However, there was no way we were going to allow these pollinator lifelines to go to waste. So, we began selling online. At the same time, people had the space to slow down, to think about their gardens and to support nature in their local areas. In total, over 17,000 plants were planted by our customers between March and October 2020.

Grow Wilder brings together a variety of people, from the volunteers that are the heart of the site to the land partners who ensure its sustainability. Not to mention the staff with their amazing wildlife knowledge! I have learnt so much about the importance of wildlife gardening, organic growing and the ecological crisis. My new understanding has even allowed me to start my own wildlife gardening

business, focusing on enhancing wildlife habitats in gardens. Many well-meaning people fail to realise that birds and hedgehogs are absent from their gardens as a direct result of their gardening choices. No wildflowers, no life.

That's why having a hub where the community can meet and learn together is so important. Grow Wilder is a place where you can visit and spend time outdoors in the city – something that is especially valuable to those without a garden, like myself.

On my Wild Paths placement, I have been given the support to gain essential qualifications needed in the conservation sector. My fellow placement friend Fern and I now have a wealth of practical, on-the-ground experience. After years of wondering if I'd ever break into the environmental sector, I feel so lucky to wear the Trust logo.



Find out more about Grow Wilder
at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/
growwilder](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/growwilder)

FOCUS ON... Grow Wilder

“Grow Wilder is a wonderful place and I have spent many happy hours there. I look forward to seeing the vision realised so it becomes a community hub that teaches people how important nature is to our wellbeing and our future.” Clare Beavins, Supporter

To celebrate 10 years of Grow Wilder, we want to kickstart community action to support nature's recovery across Avon



PHOTOS: NICK TURNER

From a decade of transformation to a decade of regeneration

In 2012, we took an unused smallholding in Bristol, and volunteers and local groups transformed it into a community and food-growing hub rich in wildlife, where people can reconnect with nature, learn new skills and improve their health and wellbeing.

Grow Wilder did such a fantastic job of inspiring people that our mission now is to make it our key base to bring about urgent action to restore wildlife. We want to welcome more people to this special place, educating, upskilling and

empowering individuals, communities and businesses to bring about positive change through wildlife-friendly gardening and sustainable food growing. Please donate today to make this vision a reality.

Engaging communities on site

To support our aims, we need to establish a new community space to help engage and inspire more people to actively support nature's recovery. By introducing a new building to the site, we will be able to carry out demonstrations, learning sessions and events all year round, accommodating everyone's needs. Grow Wilder will be a flagship hub from which we will connect people with nature, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to restore and conserve natural habitats of all sizes in the Bristol area and further afield across Avon.

Your donation could make 10x the difference with match funding

We have a fantastic opportunity to secure 10 times the amount we raise for this project through the Landfill Communities Fund, but first we need to

secure 10% through wider support. We are over £50,000 of the way there but we need your help to get to £75,000 so that we can unlock the rest. Then we can all soon benefit from what will be a nature-rich, welcoming, beautiful and thriving wild space in the heart of our city, linking to nature recovery networks across Avon.

£25 will become **£250**

£250 will become **£2,500**

£2,500 will become **£25,000**

Please help with a donation today to help get 1 in 4 people across Avon taking action for wildlife.

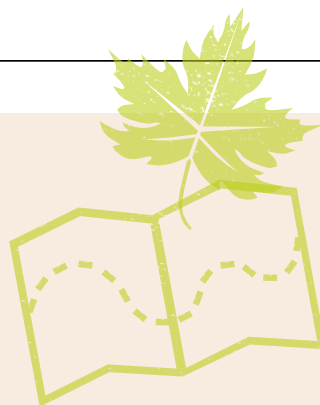


To donate today, visit
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/
TransformGrowWilder

It is a requirement of the Biffa Award Scheme that 10% Third Party funding (i.e. not provided by the recipient) is paid in order to release the grant. Therefore, some funding raised through this campaign may be used as a Contributing Third Party (CTP) payment of 10% to the Landfill Operator to secure the full grant. If we are unsuccessful with this specific bid, all monies will still be used towards this project.



STAY *connected* TO *your* PATCH



Joining your local group, attending talks and volunteering are fantastic ways to get involved in helping wildlife in your local area.

Keynsham Local Group

Keynsham Local Group is taking a break over the summer and will be back with a couple of free activities for children and an in-person talk. Donations of £3 are suggested in support of the work of Avon Wildlife Trust. For booking information visit: keynshamawt.org and contact Liz at keynshamawt@gmail.com to book activities. Planned activities and talks include:

Saturday 24 September Pond dipping for the under-7s at Wellsay School, Chandag Road, Keynsham BS31 1PH from 2pm, two short sessions.

Sunday 25 September River dipping for children 7 and over at the River Chew at Dapp's Hill, Keynsham BS31 1EU from 2pm, two short sessions.

Friday 14 October "Conflict in the Pacific: The Aftermath": How jungles and oceans have swallowed up the aftermath of WWII. With award-winning underwater cameraman and wildlife film producer Michael Pitts, at Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS from 7:30pm–9:30pm.

Portishead Local Group

Portishead Local Group has a number of events lined up this year, however it will also be taking a break over the summer. Non-members are welcome to all events. Planned events include:

Friday 22 April "Local Reserves from the Air – my Drone Journey": An illustrated talk by Peter Speight. 7.30pm at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entry £2.

Saturday 7 May Butterfly and Wildlife Walk on Walton Common, led by David Horlick. Meet at 11am at the layby past the last cottage in Walton-in-Gordano village. Initially a steep walk but then fairly flat. Duration about two hours and advise sturdy footwear. For more information, contact 07805 769 046.

Saturday 14 May Plant sale and coffee morning with refreshments and much more, from 10am–1pm at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street,

Portishead BS20 6PR. We will also have homemade cakes, handicrafts, books and puzzles for sale. Free entry.

Friday 23 September "Mendip's Special Butterflies": An illustrated talk by Peter Bright. 7.30pm at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entry £2.

Saturday 8 October Autumn Fair at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR from 10am–1pm. We will have plants, books, cakes and crafts for sale, tombola, white elephant stall. Free entry.

Friday 28 October "RSPB Ham Wall – a volunteer's story – 25 years on": An illustrated talk by Bob Buck. 7.30pm at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR. Entry £2.

Saturday 5 November Jumble sale at Avon Way Hall, Avon Way, Portishead BS20 6LT, 10am–11.30am. For jumble collection locally before the event, please ring 01275 843160 or 01275 843865. Entry 20p.

Friday 25 November "Rewilding on Trendlewood Park": An illustrated talk by Andrew Town. 7.30pm at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR.

Southwold Local Group

Saturday 7 May Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve Workday. This workday will be a combination of a deep spring clean of the reserve and planting out native flower plug plants in a grassland area. Please wear stout footwear and bring your own gloves if you can. Meet at the Shire Way entrance to the woodland, South Yate, BS37 8US, 10.00am.

The Gordano Conservation Group

This active volunteering group continues to meet on the last Sunday of the month at various reserves from around 10am until 1pm. All are welcome, with no need to book – you can simply turn up on the day! For more information on this volunteering opportunity, visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events



Volunteering!

Volunteering on conservation projects is a great way to make a real difference to wildlife, to get fit and healthy and to meet some wonderful people. There are usually plenty of volunteering opportunities at Avon Wildlife Trust, but due to coronavirus we have been reviewing our events on a monthly basis. With our teams back from furlough, we are working hard to put plans together so that we can run these again safely or bring opportunities online. To learn about opportunities to get involved, sign up to receive our volunteer newsletter: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteernews, or find out more on our events page: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events



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

Chew Valley

Andy Davis: 01275 332 601

Gordano Valley

Sarah Kennedy: 01275 817 565/
07853 248 476

Keynsham

Kathy Farrell: 07850 508 702

Portishead

Cynthia Dorn: 01275 843 160

Southwold

Tim Fairhead: 01454 323 608

Spring Wildlife Gardening

Our gardens come alive in spring. Ponds fill with mating amphibians, borders buzz with the season's first bees, and everywhere else, from trees and hedges to fences and roof panels, birds are busy singing to defend territories, mating or feeding young. It's an exciting time of year.

While all of this goes on around us, there are things we can do to make our gardens even better for wildlife. First, take a look at your borders — in early spring they should be carpeted with flowers such as spring-flowering hellebores,

lungwort, primroses and other primulas, and bulbs like crocus and snake's-head fritillary. Later grape hyacinths, alliums, cranesbills, bugle and cuckooflower take centre stage. The early flowers are the most important as they provide food for pollinators emerging from hibernation — remember that daffodils and tulips are usually ignored


by bees. Make a note of which flowers you have, and fill gaps with pollinator favourites.

Ponds are full of mating amphibians and invertebrates, so are best left alone now. However, it's important to check that wildlife can enter and exit your pond safely — add a log or large stone to help wildlife access the water safely. If you don't have many plants in the pond you can add more now, as long as you don't disturb the water too much. Aim for a mix of floating, submerged and deep-water plants, with around two-thirds of the surface of the pond covered. Plants absorb nitrates from the water and therefore inhibit the growth of algae. They also provide hiding places for tadpoles and other larvae from



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





predators such as diving beetles and dragonfly nymphs. Choose native marginals such as brooklime and water forget-me-not, floating plants such as frogbit, and oxygenators like hornwort and water crowfoot.

Around the pond, think ahead to summer, when froglets and toadlets may be exiting the water for the first time. Let the grass there grow long and grow plants to protect them from predators. Cranesbill geraniums and birds' foot trefoil work well around ponds, providing plenty of shelter for amphibians big and small.

If you have a meadow then cut it back in early spring and remove clippings, then let it grow until autumn. As well as providing wildflowers for pollinators, the long grass will provide foodplants for caterpillars

and shelter for beetles and other invertebrates, plus amphibians, small mammals and even hedgehogs.

Get more wildlife-friendly gardening tips at



wildlifetrusts.org/gardening

HYBRID TEAM WORKING

TEAMS IN NATURE

CONNECT AND CREATE

UNIQUE CONFERENCE AND MEETING SPACES



Folly Farm is located within Avon Wildlife Trust's 250-acre nature reserve, offering a special meeting location.

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Offering flexible meeting spaces, delicious wholesome food, organic refreshments, comfortable accommodation and stunning views.

**Find out more and book at
[follyfarm.org](https://www.follyfarm.org)**