

# WildAvon

## **ECOSYSTEM ENGINEERS**

How grazing animals play their part in nature's recovery

## **MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE**

Connecting people and wildlife

### **CRACKING CORVIDS**

# *Winging it*

Six places to see ravens



**Avon**  
Wildlife Trust

# Welcome



to your autumn *Wild Avon* magazine, helping you to make the most of what this season has to offer. The worrying heatwaves this summer have caused many people to become more engaged in the climate and ecological crises. Thanks to your support, we are doing everything we can to make these issues a top priority in Avon.

Managing land for the benefit of nature is at the core of what we do, and this issue gives you plenty of insight into how, where and why we do this. You'll be able to find out more about one of our My Wild City sites, Stockwood Open Space, where we've been connecting people in Bristol with their local green spaces thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Its beautiful orchard should be bursting with life at this time of year, so is well worth a visit regardless of where you live in our region. There are also plenty of suggestions of how to connect with nature, such as a bit of a fungi focus on both pages 4 and 9, where there's a guide on how to create a work of art using mushroom ink!

Bringing it back to basics, we'll be giving you a deeper insight into how grazing animals are supporting our work to create a mosaic of habitats across our nature reserves. The ways in which nature is able to promote its own recovery are truly astounding, and we want to do everything in our power to help it thrive.

Ash dieback is sadly something we're having to spend a lot of our time, money and resources on tackling. Not only is it having a detrimental impact on the wildlife that the trees support, but the trees themselves also pose a serious safety risk. We're going to be doing lots of work to mitigate this over the coming months and years, and we'll need your support to do it – head to page 22 to find out how you can help us.

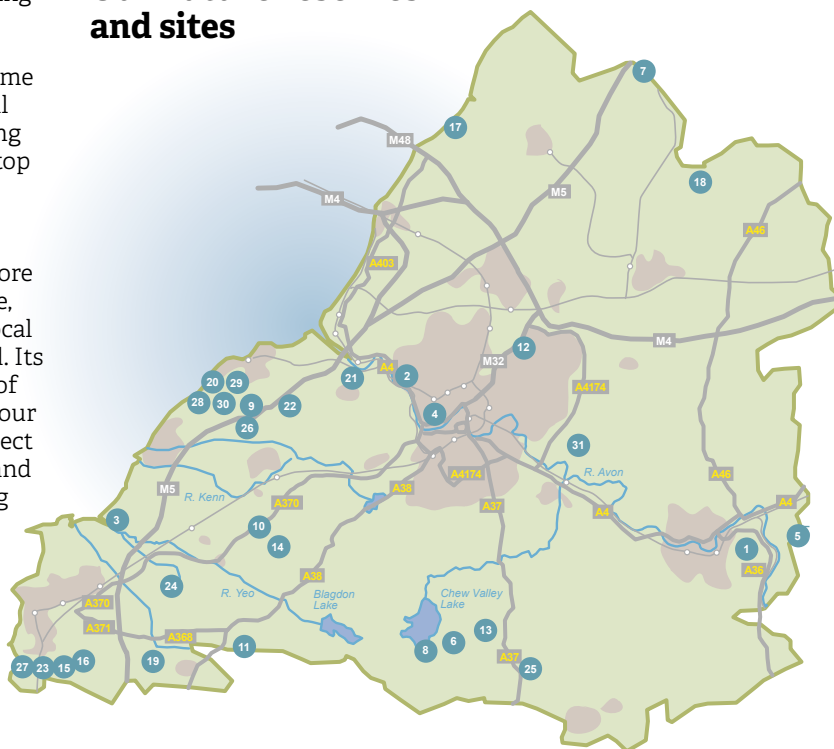
Don't forget that our Annual General Meeting is just around the corner on 10 November. You can find the full details on page 27. We hope to see you there, and thank you for your continued support of local wildlife as a member of Avon Wildlife Trust.

## 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.

### Trust Office

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

**Facebook** @avonwt

**Twitter** @avonwt

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## 6 ways to get involved with your local Wildlife Trust

**Help us** to bring wildlife back across 30% of land and sea by 2030 by increasing your membership donation today, so that we can all benefit from nature on our doorstep: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/increasedonation](https://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/increasedonation)

**Become a Patron** Donate £1,000 or more a year to have a unique opportunity to be at the heart of our work with your generous contribution: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/become-patron](https://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/become-patron)

**Campaign** We need your voice to 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://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/campaign)

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

**Give the gift of land** Help to secure 30% of land for wildlife by 2030 by contributing land or the money to make a purchase: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/gift-land](https://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/gift-land)

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

# Your wild autumn

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

The pink waxcap is commonly known as 'the ballerina waxcap' as it resembles a pirouetting dancer. Hygrocybe means 'watery head' and refers to the moistness of the species.





Thank you

Thanks to your membership, we are able to protect and maintain unimproved grassland and ancient woodland to ensure fungal species continue to flourish across Avon.

#### FLAMBOYANT FUNGI

The fruiting bodies of fungi can be found all year round, from the height of summer to the depths of winter, but the most magical time of year for fungi spotting is, without a doubt, autumn. When the leaves are falling from the trees, providing a carpet of colourful rustling underfoot, visible fungal diversity is at its peak.

**Grassland species** to look out for are waxcaps, which are some of the most colourful and bright mushrooms, and are in the family Hygrophoraceae. Look out for parrot waxcaps, which range from pastel pale to stunning turquoise green, and pink waxcaps, which are a bit rarer. Waxcaps are of conservation concern in this country due to the decline in unimproved grassland habitat.

**Woodland species** worth spotting are the bright red fly agaric or amethyst deceivers, whose purple tones really stand out against the russet backdrop of fallen leaves.

#### SEE THEM THIS AUTUMN AND WINTER

- **Dolebury Warren** This Iron Age hill fort nature reserve offers incredible views, an impressive variety of wildflowers and is a SSSI. It also has 25 species of waxcap recorded to date, including the aptly titled splendid waxcap.
- **Walton Common** Fantastic for grassland fungi spotting, boasting good populations of the beautiful blackening waxcap.
- **Goblin Combe** A stunning reserve supporting masses of biodiversity. Autumnal fungi such as green elf cups, scarlet/ruby elf cups and fly agaric punctuate the natural detritus on the ground.

## Picturesque peatland

As the seasons change, peatlands glow in the autumn light, the low sun creating golden hues in the vegetation and reflections of clouds bouncing off the water's surface. Peatlands are home to a huge array of unusual plants and wildlife, from cotton grass to little owl and hairy dragonfly. As well as supporting wildlife, these now-rare landscapes provide huge ecosystem services, including carbon capture and storage, as well as flood defence. As plants die and slowly decay in waterlogged conditions, the carbon they absorbed during their lifetime is stored within the forming peat. UK peatlands are thought to hold 3.2 billion tonnes of carbon!

► **Clapton Moor** Take in views across the tranquil Clapton Moor reserve and the Gordano Valley from the bird hide. The waterlogged conditions created here by the raised water level support abundant invertebrates, which in turn provide a valuable food source for the visiting waders.

► **North Somerset Levels and Moors** A large portion of the North Somerset Levels and Moors sits on peatland, and we are working with neighbouring landowners and our dedicated teams of volunteers to improve this landscape for wildlife and people alike.

MARK HAMBLIN/2020VISION



Did you know that hedgehog juveniles can be born in autumn and are called hoglets?

JON HAWKINS

### URBAN FIELDCRAFT

## The humble hedgehog

Hedgehogs are gorgeous spiny creatures that do surprisingly well in urban environments. They are known to inhabit waste sites, cemeteries, parks, railway land and gardens, which can make great homes for hedgehogs, provided that they are linked up with sufficient 'road-free' routes. Sadly the hedgehog population has been declining rapidly since the 1950s in rural England. This decline is partly attributed to the frequency of roads, and partly due to lack of food sources in rural locations with the intensification of agriculture. However, these clever creatures have taken it upon themselves to move to more urban environments, where they can find

more food sources. So wherever you live, you can play your part in supporting your local 'hogs!

### *How to help hedgehogs:*

1. Avoid using pesticides! Campaign to your local authority to cease using pesticides which drastically reduce invertebrate populations (which hedgehogs love to eat).
2. Create a 'hedgehog highway' by cutting low holes in your fences for hedgehogs to pass through. Ask your neighbours to do the same so that more of the gardens are linked together!
3. Create wild areas of your garden with high, native wildflowers, offering cover and food for hedgehog visitors. An important part of a hedgehog's diet is slugs, so they can be a real asset to your garden.





## SEE THIS

The iconic sight of Bewick's swans' return migration from Arctic Russia! Over the autumn you may be able to see them at reserves like Chew Valley Lake.

## DO THIS

Autumn is the perfect time to plant your perennial wildflowers from Grow Wilder, allowing them to establish strong plants and flower early in spring.

GILLIAN DAY

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

# Otters

The European otter is a member of the mustelid family, alongside the badger, weasel, stoat, mink, martens and polecat. Mustelids tend to be active at night, therefore the best chance of seeing an otter is at dawn or dusk.



AMY LEWIS

### Three signs that otters have been

#### Footprints

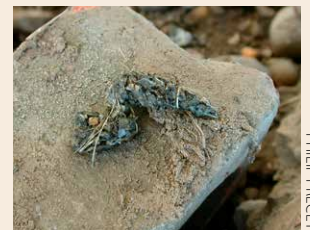
Although otters have webbed feet, they still have a distinct five-toed footprint around 6–7cm long. Look out for these on riverbanks and shorelines.



SUE CROOKES

#### Spraint (droppings)

Otters leave spraints in prominent places to communicate and defend territories. They have a distinct smell and may contain bones.



PHILIP PRECEY

#### Bubbles

Otters are stealthy creatures and if you see a trail of bubbles in the water, this may mean they saw you first!



ANDY ROUSE/2020VISION

#### Food for thought

Otters are semi-aquatic, which means they are adapted to living both in water and on land, and they are found throughout our wetlands, rivers and coastline. They require a clean freshwater course with plenty of bankside vegetation for shelter, as well as an abundant food source. One of the UK's top predators, otters feed mainly on fish – particularly eels and salmonids (salmon, trout, char and grayling). They also eat reptiles and waterbirds, such as coots and moorhens, and on land they will take birds, eggs and small mammals. Otters eat around 2lbs of food each day.

#### Family life

Otters have large territories, covering up to 25 miles of watercourses and encompassing plenty of dense vegetation or wooded areas in which they can rest and create their 'holt'. A holt is an underground burrow used for rearing their young, made in a riverbank or amongst tree roots, or even borrowed from another animal such as a beaver! Otters mate year-round and usually give birth to two or three cubs. The mother, without help from the male, will spend the first 10 weeks or so tending to the cubs within the holt, before encouraging them out and eventually into

the water. The young will stay with their mothers until they're about a year old.

#### Conservation efforts

During the 1950s, otter populations were plummeting, and they were threatened with extinction as a result of hunting and habitat degradation caused by agricultural chemicals leaching into watercourses. Thankfully, in the 1980s, otters became a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and in the early 1990s, the damaging chemicals were banned, leading to an improvement in water quality and an increase in fish populations. Alongside habitat restoration efforts, these actions have resulted in the otter becoming one of the UK's conservation success stories, and with numbers on the rise they can now be found throughout the UK.

#### WHERE TO SEE THEM THIS AUTUMN:

➤ Otters are known to have returned to the River Avon, so visiting a stretch of this river or one of its tributaries might be your best bet if you're looking to spot an otter this autumn. Within Bristol, there have been sightings near Hanham and a spraint discovered on the banks of the Pigeonhouse Stream in Crox Bottom, so these could be good starting points.



**Did you know? Although otters are semi-aquatic, they can only hold their breath underwater for about 30 seconds at a time.**

## HEAR THIS

The courting calls of tawny owls, with the characteristic 'hoo-hoo' coming from the males and a sharp 'ke-wick' from the females.

## MAKE THIS

This time of year is brilliant for collecting materials to create a nature loom! This craft is all about appreciating and connecting with the intricacies and beauty of nature.



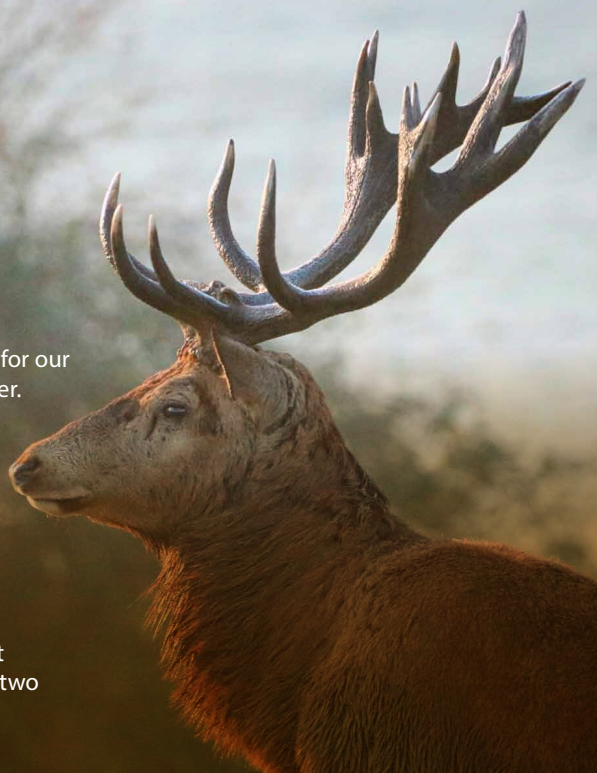
### NOT JUST FOR KIDS

# Six way to enjoy nature this autumn

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

## 1 See the red deer rut

Autumn is the mating season for our largest land mammal, the red deer. After spending the summer in single-sex herds, the rut begins as dominant males start rounding up their group of females. Grab your camera and binoculars and head over to Ashton Court deer park to watch the battle commence! Expect deep roars rumbling right through you and a loud crash as two huge sets of antlers clash.



GEORGE COOK

## 2 Help a hedgehog

Since 2000 we have lost half of our hedgehogs, so they need all the help we can give them! In October and November these adorable animals start their winter hibernation. Help our hedgehogs this autumn by cutting a small hedgehog hole in your fence to allow them to move freely between gardens, report any hedgehog sightings online ([hedgehogstreet.org](http://hedgehogstreet.org)) and check all bonfires before lighting them for any hibernating 'hogs!



GEORGE COOK

## 3 Find a be-dew-elled spider's web

Nature in autumn can be breathtakingly beautiful. Frosty sunrises, dark skies full of stars and forest floors covered in orange leaves. One of our autumnal highlights to find is a delicate spider's web covered in a morning's dew and looking like a carefully sculpted piece of jewellery. Try and photograph it to capture that beauty forever!



GEORGE COOK



## 4 Welcome the winter winged wanderers!

It's always sad when the swallows and swifts return to Africa for the winter. The sky can seem a little empty without them, but they are soon replaced by a number of other feathered friends to enjoy over the autumn and winter. Look out for the returning flocks of redwing and fieldfare, and see if you can spot any new ducks arriving at your nearest lake!

## 5 Create an autumn wreath

Gather up the crunchiest leaves of all shades and colours to create your own nature wreath to welcome in the new season! See how many different colours and patterns you can find in nature to decorate your wreath.





## 6 Paint your own mushroom masterpiece

Create an autumnal masterpiece with mushroom ink! Between April and October, the shaggy inkcap mushroom emerges from the ground in meadows, forests, roadsides and even gardens as a tall white cylinder. However, as time passes the mushroom opens up and begins to completely dissolve into a black inky substance, perfect for painting! Just make sure to take care when picking mushrooms, only touching those you're sure you can identify and washing your hands after handling them.



GEORGE COOK

### You will need:

- ✓ Shaggy inkcap mushrooms! Find them around the places we mentioned above, we'd recommend picking just a couple per painting. Make sure you take care when picking mushrooms and only touch the ones you're sure are shaggy inkcaps. If in doubt, leave them be!
- ✓ A jar
- ✓ Paper, canvas, or any other material you plan to paint
- ✓ A paintbrush

### Creating your 'shroom spectacle:

- ✓ Find a shaggy inkcap mushroom. Take this opportunity to get inspiration from the splendours of nature in autumn
- ✓ Gather ones that have already started to 'ink' around the edges. Only pick what you need, and make sure to wash your hands afterwards
- ✓ Leave the mushrooms in a jar for a couple of days, to allow them to dissolve down into ink
- ✓ Gather your painting materials and use the funky fungi ink to create your own autumn mushroom paintings!
- ✓ Share your mushroom masterpieces with us on social media by tagging @avonwt – we can't wait to see what magic you create!



Visit our website for more actions you can take to help wildlife this autumn:

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

Nature  
craft

## Our pick of your photos

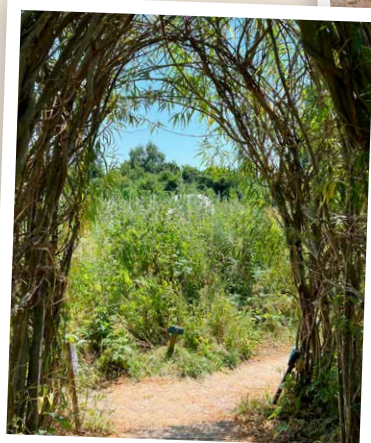
It's been great to see more people getting out and about, enjoying nature these past few months. We've got some talented people amongst our members and supporters, who take their camera along for the ride! Here is just a small selection of what's been shared with us:

➤ How incredible is this shot of a badger, snuffling around a path in daylight! Steph couldn't believe her luck when she spotted one in Backwell  
©Steph Hitchcock



◀ Liz set up a moth trap in her garden in Pill and has been able to see an array of moths, including this striking small magpie moth ©Liz Milner

➤ Another garden visitor, this palmate newt appeared after a rainfall  
©Alan Yeodal



◀ Grow Wilder is filled with inspiring and photogenic scenes, just like this archway captured by Julia when she paid the site a visit ©Julia Wimbush

➤ This cheeky little robin was superbly snapped by Stephanie, who has rewilded her garden to let nature back in  
©Stephanie Chadwick



Send us your photos at [@AvonWT](https://www.avonwt.org.uk) on social media or to [communications@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:communications@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)



# Discover Stockwood Open Space

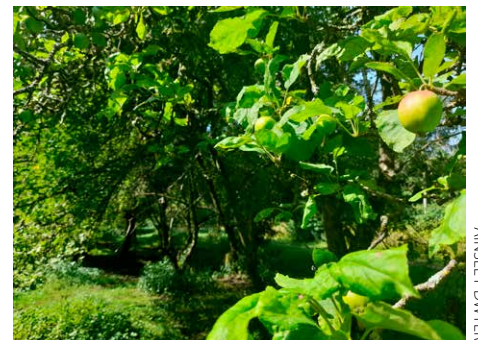
Stockwood Open Space is found in the southeast of Bristol near Brislington. A wonderful gem on the outskirts of the city, it offers spectacular views of Bristol and the surrounding hills. A haven for people and wildlife, Stockwood Open Space also has a very unique orchard with a mysterious origin.



JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

The magnificent orchard of Stockwood has been restored and cared for since 2010. My Wild City has continued the restoration process by running pruning courses and sessions throughout the year, clearing vegetation and keeping access to the trees open. Orchards have played an important role in communities for many centuries, providing a focal point, a gathering space and a place where people and nature successfully work together to create abundant harvests. The orchard is also a great habitat. With dead wood being burrowed into by wood-boring beetles and made into homes by woodpeckers, other birds making use of the fruits, pollinators feeding on the blossom in spring and mammals eating the fallen fruits, it's an all-round haven for wildlife!

There is an area of ancient woodland nestled in this urban wild space which is mentioned in the Domesday book! Ilysngrove wood, as it was referred to, is detailed as having been around since 1086. Some very ancient trees can be



AINLEY DWYER

found here, and with some of the oak trees' diameters reaching over six metres round, they truly are magnificent to marvel at. The hazels show signs of having historically been coppiced, a method of cutting trees on a rotational basis to get differing sizes of timber and allowing the trees to regrow. We have reintroduced this ancient art to the wooded area and, by doing so, we have increased ground floral cover and diversity in the woodland, enabling it to support a more diverse array of invertebrates that rely on that rich and varied ground flora. See if you can spot any hazelnuts as you wander round the woods,



## Thanks

to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which makes My Wild City possible. Thank you as well to our supporters, our volunteers who care for this space, and to the friends group, all of whom are integral in caring for this reserve and helping wildlife and humans thrive together.



TOM MARSHALL

the habitat is healthy for them to thrive in. We have worked on reprofiling the pond and added a fence to discourage dogs from entering, as the flea treatment used on dogs has a detrimental effect on amphibians. We have also added valuable plants such as floating sweet grass and

## A plethora of nature's delights for you to discover

water mint. Take a peek into the pond and see if you can spot this rare creature.

Stockwood is also home to the magical and illusive glow-worm. During a glow-worm walk in July, a big group of locals found not one but two glow-worms on this site. Such incredible, fluorescent creatures seem to be the stuff of fairy tales, but they can be found right here in Stockwood, alongside a plethora of nature's delights for you to discover.

ROSS HODDINOTT/2020VISION



a tasty treat to keep your energy up!

Nestled within the ancient woodland is the rare local plant, Bath asparagus, which puts on a beautiful display of star-shaped white flowers in the summer, which give it its other common name, Star of Bethlehem. By the autumn its flowers will have gone, but it's still a plant to look out for as it is unique to this area.

Stockwood has two pond areas which house the smooth, palmate and great crested newt. The great crested newt is a protected species as it is nationally scarce. It truly is a joy that great crested newts are present at Stockwood and we are doing everything we can to make sure

**DID YOU KNOW** Most of the east side of Stockwood was a municipal tip from 1954 to 1978. Under the surface may lie rubbish and rubble, but this site is a brilliant example of what happens when we let nature flourish and take. From municipal waste space to Stockwood Open Space wildlife haven, nature always finds a way to thrive!

## NOW YOU DO IT

### 1 Visit Stockwood Open Space

#### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**Location:** Stockwood Nature Reserve, Hungerford Gardens, Stockwood, BS14 8XX

**How to get there:** With a few entrances, you can park at The Coots or Ashwell Close for a great panoramic view. There is also an entrance at Hungerford Gardens. The 515 bus passes right next to the entrance from The Coots.

**Opening times:** Free entry all year round, dawn to dusk

**Access:** The site has a concrete path that runs the whole length with some optional paths through the woodlands and orchard which are a little wilder.

**Phone:** 0117 917 7270

**Email:** [mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)

**Website:** [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/stockwood-open-space](http://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/stockwood-open-space)

#### TOP WILDLIFE TO SPOT

➤ **Noctule and pipistrelle bats** – it's easy to tell the difference as the noctule is our largest bat and the pipistrelle is our smallest!

➤ **Southern hawker dragonfly** – pop to the ponds and spot this very inquisitive dragonfly. Males will often fly towards the observer, hovering nearby to have a closer look.

➤ **Song thrush** – they have a varied diet; when the ground is too tough to dig for insects they eat snails instead. To get at the meat inside, they take the shell and bang it against a stone 'anvil'. This behaviour is unique to these birds.

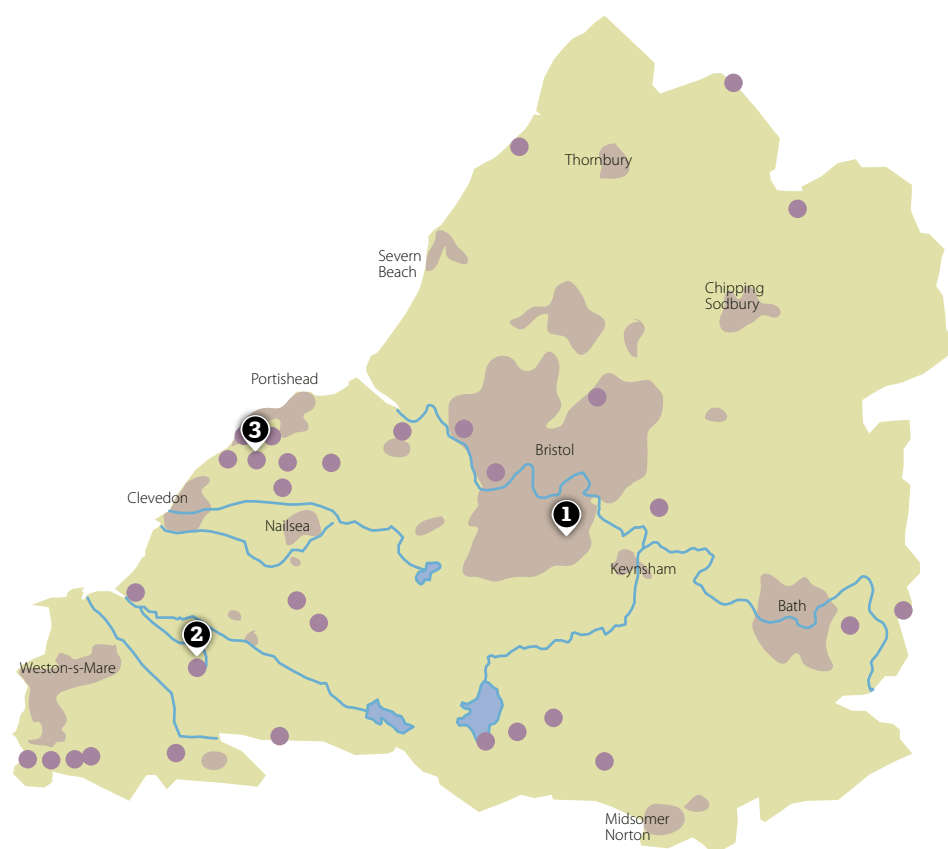
➤ **Tawny owl** – our biggest common owl. The 'ke-wick' 'hoo-hoo' call and response we know so well is often that of the tawny owl. It's actually made by a male and female calling to each other. The female makes a 'ke-wick' sound and the male answers with 'hoo-hoo'!

#### THINGS TO DO

➤ Relax and have a picnic in the orchard, making sure to leave no trace behind. Take time to notice the wildlife which calls this unique place its home. It should be brimming with apples at this time of year.

➤ Walk a loop of the site, taking in the panoramic view, stopping off at the ponds and wandering through the ancient woodland with the coppice coups.

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



## 2 Puxton Moor

### Why now?

Famed for its rich ditch fauna during the summer months, autumn is a great time for overwintering birds at Puxton Moor. There is a good circular route to take you around this quiet nature reserve, but wellies are a must at this time of year!

### Know before you go

**Location:** Puxton Lane, Puxton, BS24 6TH

**Open:** Free entry all year, dawn to dusk

**Wildlife to spot:** Starlings, snipe and sparrowhawk

### Find out more:

**avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/puxton-moor**

### The lowdown

Puxton Moor nature reserve is a large wetland east of Weston-super-Mare, part of the North Somerset Levels and Moors and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site comprises floodplain grazing marsh intersected by ditches, holding a particularly rich assemblage of plant and invertebrate species. In early autumn,



CHRIS DAVIES

you may just catch the last of the dragonflies perching on emergent leaves or hawking and darting over the open water.

It is the scrubby ditch edges and hedgerows that provide much of the autumn and winter interest, however, with winter migrant birds including flocks of sociable fieldfare and redwing stripping the hawthorn and bramble of their berries. In winter, water is also held back on the reserve in order to splash-flood the grassland, providing good conditions for overwintering birds, such as snipe, to forage. Starling murmurations have also been spotted here in recent years.

Wellies are a must when visiting this reserve between October and March. Please keep dogs on a short lead and stick to the footpaths on this reserve to avoid disturbing the birds.

## 3 Weston Moor



NAOMI FULLER

### Why now?

Another wetland site which holds bird interest over the coming months. The adjoining orchards and nearby Taggart's Wood (an active coppice woodland) provide autumn colour and a contrast to the open moor.

### Know before you go

**Location:** Weston Drove, Portishead, Weston-in-Gordano, BS20 8QD

**Open:** Free entry all year, dawn to dusk

**Wildlife to spot:** Redwing, meadow pipit and ancient willows

### Find out more:

**avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/weston-moor**

### The lowdown

Weston Moor, another wetland site and SSSI, is situated at the base of the Gordano Valley, north-east of Clevedon. Surrounded on both sides by slopes containing ancient woodland and steep limestone grassland, the flat levels provide a marked contrast. Situated on deep peat, the site hosts species-rich rush pastures, ditches and fens, as well as orchards on the clayey higher ground.

A footpath runs along the fields north of the Walton Brook, but much of the site has restricted access due to its ecological sensitivity, as wading birds overwinter and breed here. Bring binoculars and you may spot meadow pipit, snipe and reed bunting out over the moor.

Be sure to admire the incredible ancient crack willow when you visit, a sprawling mass of rooting stems, cavities and cracks which provides valuable habitat for many species. Remember to keep dogs on a short lead.



Plan your next great day out at our nature reserves:

**avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves**





## David Oakes

 @David\_Oakes  @doakesdoakes

# Ancient trees



You start by entering your postcode. A few moments later you're rewarded with a map. Your home at the epicentre, with every veteran, ancient, and potentially superstar tree marked accordingly, radiating outward from your front door. This is the Ancient Tree Inventory.

My map shows the remains of the medieval village of Marsden. My oldest neighbour is Tree #158744 — simply “44” to me. It's a pedunculate oak, over 6.5 metres in girth and easily 500 years old. Maybe 600. Maybe more... Chances are that it is the last living survivor of long-lost Marsden.

Type in your postcode and you may discover you live next to one of hundreds of ‘celebri-trees’: perhaps the Tolpuddle Martyrs’ sycamore that birthed the Trade Union movement? Or maybe John Evelyn's black mulberry, supposedly planted by Tsar Peter I as an apology for his drunken antics! Who knows what these trees really saw, but what's important is that they remain.

A tree isn't just one organism, it's a metropolis for life. My Marsden oak can support well over 1,000 species: birds, mammals, invertebrates, lichens, fungi, bryophytes... Every nook of our nation's biodiversity. In fact, the pedunculate oak supports more unique species than any other of our native trees. And the longer they stay in the ground, the more interconnected they become with the life they support. The late, great, Oliver Rackham said: “Ten thousand oaks of one hundred years are no substitute for one five-hundred-year-old oak tree.”

Our ancient trees are often found within ancient forests that have existed since our very first maps. Some could stretch back as

far as the last ice age. Ever since, they have nurtured dense biological multi-species interactions. Without them, we're just dusty skeletons living in housing estates.

This summer, wildfires exacerbated by human behaviour burned across the globe and parts of the UK reached unprecedented temperatures of over 40 degrees. Ironically, the shade of a tree may be your best bet at remaining cool. Through transpiration, the area beneath a tree remains degrees cooler than a similar area shaded by a man-made structure. But even as the country cooked, bulldozers were poised to tear down ancient trees for the government's high speed rail link.

The Cubbington Pear Tree, #74902 on the Ancient Tree Inventory, was voted the 2015 “Tree of the Year”. Over 250 years old, it was then the second oldest wild pear in the country, possessing a girth of almost four metres. Pear trees' fruit and blossom harbour abundant mammal, bird, and invertebrate life. This tree, and the biodiversity it homed, was destroyed in October 2020 so that Birmingham could become 12 minutes closer to London. On the Ancient Tree Inventory, the Cubbington Pear Tree is now simply marked as “Lost”.

Every tree lost is a blow to nature. Every ancient tree lost expedites the collapse of our nation's biodiversity. We have to protect these ancient treasures.

Construction work for HS2 continues to damage and destroy irreplaceable habitats. Find out more and how you can help at



[wildlifetrusts.org/hs2](https://wildlifetrusts.org/hs2)



### PUTTING TREES ON THE MAP

The Ancient Tree Inventory is run by The Woodland Trust and maps over 180,000 of the oldest and most important trees in the UK. You can explore the trees near you, or add your own special trees, at [ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk](https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

**David Oakes** is an actor, podcaster, and ambassador for The Wildlife Trusts. When he's not on set or treading the boards, he's out walking in a glorious wild place talking to experts about the natural world and celebrating it in his podcast, *Trees A Crowd*.



# 6 places to see **ravens**



RAVEN © MARK HAMBLIN/NATUREPL



**R**avens are the largest members of the crow family, as big as a buzzard. They were once found across the UK, but persecution reduced them to small populations in the north and west. Fortunately, ravens have made an incredible comeback and can be seen more widely again, though they are still rarer in the east of England and Scotland. They're often encountered in uplands and on coastal cliffs. You can tell a raven from a crow by its heavier bill, thicker neck, and hoarse, cronking call. In flight, they have a distinctively diamond-shaped tail. On winter evenings, ravens gather in communal roosts that can include hundreds of birds. These are often young ravens, as breeding pairs are busy holding their nesting territory. Look out for their tumbling, acrobatic display flights in late winter and early spring.

## See the spectacle for yourself



### 1 **Browne's Folly, Avon Wildlife Trust**

There are two pairs of ravens that are seen - and heard! - regularly at this site. Standing high above the river Avon with commanding views towards Bath, the extensive remains of Bath stone quarries here provide a rich variety of wildlife habitats.

**Where:** Bathford, BA1 7TW

### 2 **Goblin Combe, Avon Wildlife Trust**

With magical views across Mendip, ravens have been heard at this fascinating reserve, which is characterised by steep hills forming a gorge, cut into the limestone by melting snow and ice during the last ice age. The damp wooded Combe is also home to the rare moonwort fern which grows under the old yew trees.

**Where:** Cleeve, BS23 4XR

### 3 **Blacka Moor, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust**

Ravens are a common sight on this spectacular stretch of moorland and woodland, part of the internationally important wild landscape of the Eastern Peak District Moors. As you search for ravens, keep an eye out for the more easily spotted red deer — the UK's largest land mammal.

**Where:** Near Sheffield, S11 7TY

### 4 **Silent Valley, Gwent Wildlife Trust**

An ancient woodland sanctuary in the South Wales Valleys. With panoramic views across the Ebbw Valley, there's plenty of sky to scan for the distinctive silhouette of a raven. The nature reserve also boasts Britain's highest beech wood!

**Where:** Ebbw Vale, NP23 7RX

### 5 **Cwm Colhuw, Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales**

This mix of grassland, woodland, and scrub is a great place to see the ravens that live on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. You might also spot a peregrine plunging after prey or a kestrel hovering over the grassland.

**Where:** Llantwit Major, CF61 1RF

### 6 **Riverside Valley Park, Devon Wildlife Trust**

You don't have to travel to rural areas to see ravens! They're a daily sight at this park close to the centre of Exeter. Here they perch on pylons rather than rugged cliffs.

**Where:** Exeter, EX2 6LT

## Did you spot any corvids?

We'd love to know how your search went.  
Please tweet us your best photos! @wildlifetrusts



# Grazing animals as ecosystem engineers

These Exmoor ponies have been living full-time at Folly Farm since 2019 and have been invaluable in helping maintain the mosaic of habitats that make this area so special.



CAROLINE LOWE

There are a multitude of grazing animal species which help us manage the land across our reserves. Some are owned and looked after by tenant graziers, while others are living wild and are just as appreciated. From the rabbits at Hellenge Hill and the water voles at Lawrence Weston Moor to the cattle at Walton Common and the sheep at Dolebury Warren, each species of grazing animal eats vegetation in its own way, creating the niches required by different wildlife. Grazing animals create biodiverse habitat mosaics and help maintain our reserves in a natural, carbon-efficient, wildlife-friendly way.



## MEET OUR FOUR-LEGGED CONSERVATION OFFICERS

- **Exmoor ponies** are currently found on Folly Farm and hopefully in other areas in the future
  - **A varied mix of cattle including Dexters and Devon Reds** can be seen on several reserves, including Walborough, Purn Hill, Hellenge Hill, Tickenham Hill, Walton Common, Burlledge Hill, Puxton Moor, Weston Big Wood and Weston Moor
  - **Sheep** graze Dolebury Warren and Clapton Moor
  - **Old English and English heritage goats** help maintain the land at Goblin Combe and Browne's Folly
- There are also wild grazers such as **rabbits, deer, water voles** and **beavers** across our region.



ANDY JONES

**T**he wild fauna that once managed the land naturally in the UK has been largely wiped out through a combination of changing climate and human activity. As recently as 15,000 years ago (a very brief period in evolutionary terms), the landmass now known as the UK was home to, amongst many others, woolly rhinos and woolly mammoths, bison, wolves, bears, sabre-toothed cats, boar, elk, reindeer, tarpan (the extinct relative of horses) and auroch (the extinct relative of modern-day cattle). Only a little further back in time, elephants, cave lions

and cave hyenas were roaming the land. The bones of some of these creatures have been found in caves on one of our reserves in North Somerset, showing that they were once present in Avon.

Much of the UK's remaining wildlife is adapted to the environments that these creatures would have created as keystone, ecosystem-defining species.

To maximise biodiversity and retain habitat for rarer species, we must find proxies to those keystone species that are now absent across the countryside. These proxies take the form of modern-day farm animals, working in tandem with

human activity. For example, cattle graze in much the same way as aurochs would have, goats can function similarly to red deer, and tree felling and coppicing by staff and volunteers mimics the activity of elephants and bison.

By managing the land by directing the efforts of our tenant graziers' animals and encouraging the action of wild animals, we can create the patchwork of landscapes to both boost biodiversity and provide the conditions required by rare flora and fauna.





# Nature helping

**T**aking advantage of the natural action of grazing animals means that we, as land managers, can reduce the need to use equipment and machinery. Ultimately this saves on the expense of purchasing, using and maintaining machinery and, crucially, reduces the carbon footprint of our work. Machinery such as tractors,

brushcutters and chainsaws can replicate the action of grazing animals, but generally aren't able to do as good a job. They also aren't able to replicate the benefits for nature. For example, cattle leave tussocks dotted around that can be a valuable overwintering habitat for insects, and their footsteps create the bare ground required for successful

germination of certain plants. They will also eat the vegetation from above and around anthills (much loved by green woodpeckers) while leaving them largely intact. Conversely, a piece of cutting machinery on a tractor will generally create quite a uniform finish, with no tussocks, minimal bare ground and flattened anthills.

## Case study: Goblin Combe

The limestone grassland areas at Goblin Combe are home to several rare plant species, a beautiful, mixed, wildflower-rich sward and abundant associated insect life. Grazing the site with traditional livestock is difficult due to its steep and uneven terrain, so the site used to be largely maintained by one grazing animal in particular – the rabbit. Rabbits were once so prevalent that they had an impact on place names in the area, such as Warren Lodge and Warren Lane.

Sadly, the rabbit population was drastically reduced by the introduction of myxomatosis to the UK in 1953. Combined with part of Goblin Combe being planted with non-native tree species, the arrival of invasive garden escapees such as cotoneaster and buddleia caused a significant scrub encroachment on the grassland. This scrub needed to be intensely managed by staff, volunteers and contractors.

Enter the goats! Goats were introduced to Goblin Combe in 2019, initially trialled just



ANDY JONES

over the winter months but now present year-round. Their browsing behaviour, combined with agility on steep slopes, has been of great benefit in easing the management of this reserve. The vast majority of their diet is comprised of the leaves and bark of scrub species, so the scrub on steeper areas, which was previously only accessible to specialist teams of people

using ropes, is now successfully tackled by these conservation grazers. The invasive species are being stripped and the bramble on the grassland maintained in a patchwork rather than becoming an impenetrable wall.

There are still some rabbits at Goblin Combe, but in low numbers, so we're doing what we can to encourage them. Rabbits are a keystone species on grassland sites, working as ecosystem engineers and creating valuable diversity. For example, their digging and scraping creates perfect opportunities for wildflowers to colonise, and the short sward they manage seems perfect for the autumn ladies-tresses orchid. We actively encourage the scrub areas around their burrows to develop by supplementing with spiky hawthorn branches which put off the goats, and we have been trialling introducing scrubby stepping stones every 20m for the rabbits to access other parts of the grassland while still feeling safe.





Thank you  
for your support which  
allows us to work with  
nature to facilitate  
its recovery

# nature to thrive



DAVE AND CAROL HORLICK



ROBERT STEPHENS

## What to do if you see a grazing animal at one of our reserves

### ► Please do enjoy watching the animals

do what they're on our nature reserves to do – graze! The breeds we have in areas with public access are docile, and they've always got plenty to eat. Observe the ways in which the different species forage – the cattle wrapping their tongues around clumps of grasses, or the goats purposefully stepping on a bendy branch to bring it down to ground level and then stripping it of leaves and bark.

### ► Please don't feed the grazing animals

– it can lead to bad behaviour, and potentially illness or death. Some animals may get boisterous or pushy around people if they are used to receiving treats from well-meaning visitors. In the case of our Exmoor ponies, if they are overfed on too rich a diet, they could develop a painful and potentially fatal condition called laminitis. You must also keep in mind what food the animals have evolved to eat. Goats' teeth, for example, are

designed for chewing leaf matter and bark, not carrots. If they are unable to chew food into swallowable pieces, they could choke.

### ► Please do keep dogs on short leads

and try to avoid getting close. Dogs have been known to attack our grazing animals, in some instances chasing them, which can cause them to have heart attacks, miscarry from stress, panic and break a leg on uneven ground, or even be chased over a cliff edge.

### ► Please don't leave any dog poo and dispose of the bagged waste away from the reserve.

The bacteria present in dog poo is harmful to other animals, so needs to be completely removed from our sites. Waste bags labelled as biodegradable or compostable will only break down in a commercial composting unit, so any left on the ground or hung on a tree branch could remain for years and be of risk to animals, unless removed.

## A wilder future

If we want to encourage an abundance of wildlife, then that wildlife requires a vast range of niches and habitats. By working with animals to create a mosaic of vegetation and ground conditions, we can cater for a huge variety of species and support nature's recovery. This is a trend we're seeing across the country, so you can expect to see much more in the way of mixed grazing regimes with different species working alongside one another, aided by innovative technology such as GPS collars which show us where the animals have been grazing and help us make sure they don't stray. In a world where more native species are being reintroduced into the wild, we could also see more uncommon behaviour, such as rootling by wild boar, bark rubbing by bison and coppicing by beavers, becoming more prevalent across the UK, creating a vibrant and thriving ecosystem for all of us.



ANDY JONES

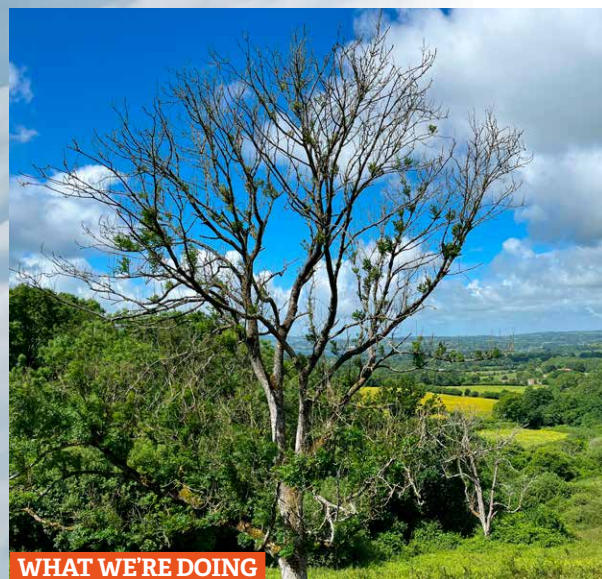


# Ash dieback: Our approach

Ash dieback is a devastating disease which is predicted to severely affect or kill over 90% of ash trees, dramatically impacting wooded landscapes across the UK – including here in Avon. It is a significant public and staff safety issue. The disease, also known as Chalara, is caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (the fungus was previously called *Chalara fraxinea*, hence the name of the disease) which affects the vascular system of ash trees, inhibiting the tree's ability to draw nutrients up into its upper branches. Ash trees are the third most common tree in Britain after oak and birch – there are 80 million of them in the UK.

This stricken tree is growing on the SSSI grassland at our Folly Farm nature reserve. We have been watching its decline over the last couple of years. Far from any footpaths, it will be left to die and provide valuable standing dead wood on the reserve.





#### WHAT WE'RE DOING

To mitigate the impact of ash dieback, we commissioned an arboriculturist to carry out specialist risk assessments across seven of our woodland sites. An initial survey marked out key areas where trees were at risk, which were also a potential risk to visitors to our sites. This was followed by visits to affected sites, so we could group trees according to their risk and highlight those we wanted to keep and those which required immediate removal. Individual plans were produced for each site, meaning that the nature reserves team can now begin to carry out the required works with full knowledge of the scale of the ash dieback and what needs to be prioritised. We'll also be able to use this information for years to come, helping us to consistently manage our woodlands against this disease.

Those trees which aren't a risk to public safety will be left to rot and fall, and the resulting decay will release life-supporting nutrients. They will provide food and a home for hundreds of species such as stag beetles, which rely on deadwood, as well as woodpeckers, which feed on those insects. It's also worth recognising that in some cases the emerging habitat will be more vibrant, more diverse and more welcoming to wildlife than the habitat it replaces.

#### WHERE WE'LL BE WORKING

Ash dieback causes infected trees to become brittle, making them prone to dropping branches, potentially causing injury. For your safety we ask you to stick to the public rights of way and waymarked routes. We will be carrying out essential ash safety removal works over the autumn and winter months. The many diseased ash trees that are not posing a threat to public safety will be left to complete their lifespan. It is essential for your safety that you adhere to any new signage relating to tree management works or changes to footpath access. Reserves which have been significantly impacted by ash dieback and where tree safety work will be taking place are:

- **Browne's Folly**
- **Weston Big Wood**
- **Priors Wood**
- **Folly Farm**
- **Goblin Coombe**
- **Dolebury Warren**
- **Hutton Hill**

**Thanks to your membership**, we have been able to tackle ash dieback proactively, considering both public safety and the impact on our woodlands. We are now able to plan our future work more effectively, identifying areas to leave as refuges and dead wood habitats and realising those opportunities to create rides, glades and more open structures to benefit species that thrive in dynamic edge habitats. There is still more work to do, and your continued support will enable considered management of this disease as we work towards positive change in making our sites more biodiverse and resilient in the future.



# FOCUS ON... Ash dieback

**"It's critical that this vital work is done as soon as possible so we can protect our visitors, including the many school groups who spend time on our sites."**

**Julie Doherty**, Head of Communities and Engagement



Brown fritillary butterfly

TOM HIBBERT



Redstart

MARK HAMBLY/2020VISION

**We need help to control the devastating impact of ash dieback**

## **This deadly disease is having a huge impact**

As you have read in our ash dieback feature, we're doing as much as we can to tackle this disease which is devastating one of the UK's most beloved trees. Losing these trees would have such a detrimental effect on our local wildlife, from the ground up: woodland floor wildflowers thrive on the sunlight that comes through their airy canopy, which support butterflies and other pollinators, who are joined in the sky by bullfinches, who eat the seeds from ash trees, and woodpeckers, owls, redstarts and nuthatches, who all nest in them. We are doing everything we can to mitigate the impact of ash dieback, for people and wildlife.

## **Your safety is paramount**

As well as wanting to do everything we can to ensure the biodiversity of our reserves, keeping our visitors safe is at the absolute core of our ash dieback work. We need to do everything we can to keep visitors safe. We are doing this by felling the trees that pose the greatest

risk to public safety. We want you to be able to get outside and enjoy our reserves, safe in the knowledge that we have done all we can to keep you from harm. Our nature reserve teams will be undertaking a colossal programme of work over the coming months in order to achieve this.

## **Why we need your help**

The work we need to complete to mitigate the effects of ash dieback is expensive and time consuming. From surveying each and every one of our reserves to assess the impact of the disease, planning where we need to fell and where we can allow trees to complete their natural lifecycle, to undertaking all of the land management tasks this creates and removing the diseased trees most likely to cause damage to our sites and to people, it's a huge amount of necessary work which we absolutely need to do as responsible land managers and to ensure that nature can recover. But it's not going to be easy for us.

## **Donate to make a difference**

Anything you're able to contribute to support this vital work will be so gratefully received. Here are some examples of what your money can do:

**£30** could buy personal protective equipment, such as a forestry helmet or chainsaw gloves, needed to safely carry out this vital work

**£300** could remove one ash tree that is at risk of causing harm to our staff, volunteers and visitors

**£3,000** could allow us to hire three tree surgeons and a Mobile Elevated Platform for two days, allowing us to utilise specialists and keep our people away from danger

**Please help with a donation today to help us protect you and restore nature.**



To donate today, visit  
**[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ash-dieback](https://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ash-dieback)**



# WILD NEWS

All the latest regional and national news from The Wildlife Trusts

## £5m

Has been invested by The National Lottery Heritage Fund into Nextdoor Nature, to help The Wildlife Trusts make a lasting impact on communities across the country.

### REGIONAL

## Nextdoor Nature is here!

A ground-breaking new Wildlife Trusts initiative is bringing communities together to rewild their neighbourhoods. Nextdoor Nature will give people the skills, tools and opportunities to take action for nature in the places where they live and work.

It's been made possible by a £5 million investment from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to leave a lasting natural legacy in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Nextdoor Nature will provide solutions to two of the most important issues that we're working to address: the urgent need to create more space for nature, with a goal to restore 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, and the need to make nature a part of everyone's daily life.

At Avon Wildlife Trust, we know that spending time in nature can bring huge benefits to our health and wellbeing, but we don't all have the same level of access to green or wild spaces. Research shows that 85% of people in nature-deprived areas say more natural spaces would improve their quality of life. The importance of this was reinforced by the pandemic, which demonstrated how vital it is to have access to nature in your local area.

Nextdoor Nature will bring a wild touch to the places in Avon that need it most, as part of a UK-wide initiative which aims to improve the lives of people from some of the most disadvantaged areas. This could include establishing wild habitats and green corridors in areas of economic and nature deprivation, rewilding school grounds, or naturalising highly urbanised or unused areas. Most importantly, through Nextdoor Nature, it will be local communities that decide on what happens and drive the change in their neighbourhood.



THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS

The initiative will bring huge benefits for nature, too. One of the big problems facing our wildlife is fragmentation – wild places are isolated and disconnected, preventing plants and animals from moving freely across the landscape. By creating green corridors and wild patches in urbanised areas, we can reconnect our wild networks, creating pit-stops for pollinators, buffets for birds and bats, and highways for hedgehogs.

In Avon we will be working in partnership with Eastside Community Trust, St Mary Redcliffe church and others on this exciting initiative. We've also welcomed Tay Aziz to Avon Wildlife Trust as our dedicated Nextdoor Nature Community Organiser, who will be working closely with these community

groups and others as the project progresses.

Julie Doherty, Head of Communities and Engagement, says: "We humans are key to solving the climate crisis and restoring our natural heritage. The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, but Nextdoor Nature is working to set that right, putting local communities at the heart of helping our wild places to recover and making sure that, no matter where we live, we can be part of this crucial endeavour."



Learn more about this inspiring new project and what it aims to achieve at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nextdoornature](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nextdoornature)

## UK UPDATE

Beavers are making a comeback across the UK

# You made the government give a dam!

**E**ngland has taken a few tentative steps towards seeing a return of beavers to the wild, following new legislation announced by Defra. The legislation will provide legal protections for beavers in England, making it an offence to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or injure beavers, or damage their breeding sites or resting places, without holding the appropriate license. The legislation is scheduled to come into force in the autumn.

These new protections could pave the way for beavers to be released into the wild in England under license, finally making a widespread comeback after being hunted to extinction in the 16th century. This decision echoes the path taken in Scotland, where beavers were declared a European Protected Species in 2019, affording them similar protections to those proposed in England.

The legislation was initially due to be laid in parliament on the 19th of July, but the UK Government held it up at the last minute. Following outrage from nature charities and the wider public, including lots of Wildlife Trust supporters, the decision was reconsidered and the announcement made just a few days later.

Beavers are ecosystem engineers. Their actions create thriving and dynamic wetlands that bring a wealth of benefits to both nature and people, including playing a critical role in adapting to a changing climate. Long-term studies of beavers from the Scottish Beaver Trial and in enclosures in England have demonstrated the improvements they can bring to our rivers and wetlands, making it clear that beavers belong in our landscape.

Commenting on the UK Government's decision, The Wildlife Trusts' chief executive Craig Bennett says: "The widespread return of wild beavers can be a game changer for restoring lost wetlands, benefitting all kinds of wildlife, and helping people by holding water back in the landscape, reducing the risk of wildfires and reducing the risk of flooding downstream. Bringing back wild beavers isn't just a dream, it is a critical part of addressing the climate and nature crises."

Whilst The Wildlife Trusts believe bringing back beavers is essential, reintroducing any ecosystem engineer is a delicate operation. Natural England is developing guidance on the management of beavers, setting out the actions that will or will not require a license. We are urging the UK Government to support ambitious and carefully targeted reintroduction projects, reward landowners who make space for wetlands created by beavers, develop management systems that protect beavers and resolve issues effectively, and support local beaver management groups to deliver advice and assistance.

The news of this legislation came as Wildlife Trusts around England celebrated the birth of beaver kits at enclosed projects on nature reserves. The Welsh Beaver Project, led by Wildlife Trusts Wales, also saw its first kit born at an enclosure at Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's Cors Dyfi nature reserve.

Get the latest on our journey to bring beavers back to Britain at [wildlifetrusts.org/saving-species/beavers](https://wildlifetrusts.org/saving-species/beavers)

## The beaver comeback

2001

Kent Wildlife Trust bring the first beavers back to Britain in an enclosure at Ham Fen.

2009

First beavers officially released into the wild by the Scottish Beaver Trial.

2014

Beavers discovered living wild on the River Otter in Devon. Devon Wildlife Trust begin England's first wild beaver trial.

2017

The Scottish Beaver Trial release more beavers to reinforce the population.

2019

Beavers designated a European Protected Species in Scotland.

2020

Beavers allowed to stay on the River Otter.

2021

Wildlife Trusts release a record number of beavers (17) into fenced areas across the Britain.

2022

Legislation announced to make beavers a protected species in England.





## UK HIGHLIGHTS

## UK UPDATE

## New PM &amp; what that means for nature

Liz Truss has become the UK's next Prime Minister at a critical moment in the fight against the climate and nature crises. In her first speech after winning the contest, the new PM committed to delivering the promises of the Conservatives' 2019 manifesto, on which the party was last elected. This manifesto included a pledge to deliver "the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth", including a subsidy scheme that pays farmers to look after nature and action to achieve net zero by 2050. The environment was not a key topic for debate in this summer's leadership election, though Truss did promise a

new "Great British Nature Survey" — but there were few details of what this would consist of.

Truss has appointed Ranil Jayawardena, the MP for Northeast Hampshire, as her Environment Secretary, replacing George Eustice who had held the role since 2020. Other key appointments include Jacob Rees-Mogg as Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Simon Clarke as the new Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary. For the first time, the Minister for Climate Change — now Graham Stuart — will attend Cabinet.



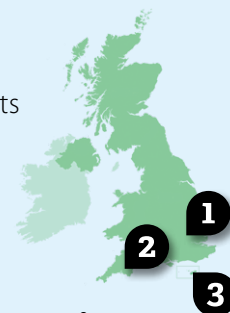
Wildfires are becoming more common due to climate change

## Crisis calculations

The Wildlife Trusts have published a groundbreaking report examining the projected impacts of climate change on our nature reserves. It assesses the risks of a changing climate and what we need to do to help nature adapt. The report shows that extreme weather is already affecting many nature reserves through wildfires, flooding, and drought. Research

finds that by the 2050s, half of our nature reserves will have 30+ days of very high fire risk a year, and 55% will see nearby river flows drop by more than 30% during times of low flow. The report also shares innovative Wildlife Trust projects that aim to reduce the impacts on wildlife. Read the report at [wtru.st/changing-nature](https://wtru.st/changing-nature)

Discover how  
The Wildlife Trusts  
are helping  
wildlife across  
the UK



## 1 Chalk up a win

Two Hertfordshire chalk rivers have been given a makeover to combat low flows and climate change. Work on the rivers Ash and Quinn, led by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, included adding gravel to address historic dredging, and the creation of ponds and ditches to shelter wildlife. This will help the rivers cope with the pressures of climate change.

[wtru.st/two-rivers](https://wtru.st/two-rivers)



## 2 Pining for a comeback

Devon Wildlife Trust is part of a partnership that announced plans for a possible reintroduction of pine martens to the South West of England. The Two Moors Pine Marten Project is exploring the feasibility of bringing these once common mammals back to Exmoor and Dartmoor. At the same time, Kent and Sussex Wildlife Trusts are looking at returning pine martens to South East England.

[wtru.st/two-moors-martens](https://wtru.st/two-moors-martens)

## 3 A tree for all

Alderney Wildlife Trust has been working with the States of Alderney to give every resident a free native tree to plant this year. They can be planted in gardens or at organised sessions, allowing everyone to get involved. As a result, by spring there will be at least an additional 2,000 trees in the ground.

[wtru.st/2000-trees](https://wtru.st/2000-trees)






Thanks to your support of our Spring Appeal in the last edition of Wild Avon, we are even closer to achieving our mission of making Grow Wilder a hub of connectivity, bringing people and nature together, equipped with the skills and knowledge to restore and conserve natural habitats of all sizes.

Combined with the Big Green Give match funding campaign (which raised £10,000 in just four days!) and thanks to your generosity, our total is up over £65k – so close to our target of £75k. Hitting this target has already opened up more funding opportunities, so stay tuned for

more exciting updates as soon as we are able to share. Thanks to you, we are a step closer to realising our ambitious plans for this unique site.

Delays caused by a variety of external factors may have had a significant impact on our plans but Grow Wilder continues to go from strength to strength! The café has been open every weekend over the spring and summer and there's been a busy calendar of events and activities, including a bustling market! On the first Saturday of every month over the warmer months, we brought together local creatives and businesses with a sustainable edge to sell

their products to the local community, so we could support our neighbours while introducing new people to our urban nature haven in the heart of Bristol. Keep an eye on Grow Wilder's social media pages to find out when the next market will be.

 We are always looking for more volunteers to help with site management, food production, the nursery garden and more. Why not come down and have a chat with the team, or contact [growwilder@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:growwilder@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) for more information.

## Avon's beaver discovery story published

Bevis Watts, former CEO of Avon Wildlife Trust and now CEO of sustainable bank Triodos UK, has released his debut wildlife memoir, 'River Journey: Searching for wild beavers and finding freedom', all about his experience of discovering the wild beavers in the River Avon while volunteering for the Trust.

The endangered species has been reintroduced across the UK in conservation trials since the early 2000s, but Bevis's discovery of three generations of beavers in the wild suggests that the once-extinct species may once more be breeding, flourishing and living freely along our waterways.

'River Journey' documents how a month's sabbatical turned into a summer-

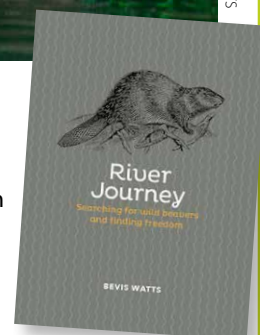
long Swallows and Amazons-style adventure, searching for signs of beavers along parts of the river only accessible from the water.

Bevis set out on dawn pilgrimages along the river, gathering evidence such as teeth marks and paw prints, finding their burrow, planting remote cameras, before eventually having close encounters with the beavers themselves.

Bevis, who also kindly led our beaver walk for patrons back in May this year, was inspired to write the memoir to raise funds for beaver conservation, and all proceeds from the book's sales will be donated to Avon Wildlife Trust and Beaver Trust.



 You can order your copy of 'River Journey' today from **tangentbooks.co.uk/shop/river-journey**





# WHAT'S ON

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

## Join us for our Annual General Meeting

**You are warmly invited to join us for Avon Wildlife Trust's Annual General Meeting at The Royal Hotel in Weston-super-Mare on Thursday 10 November at 6pm. Please book your place at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2022](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2022)**

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

This will be an opportunity to meet new members of the team, hear more about how we are embedding our strategy, and celebrate successes. An update on Avon's recently discovered beavers will be on the agenda, as will the work we've done with councils, communities and individuals to inspire collective action. Please join us to find out more about this work and how you can support us.

The 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 2022.
2. To re-elect as Elected Trustees those persons whose first three-year terms of office come to an end at this AGM, namely Kate Leahy, Ped Asgarian and Ross Fairley.
3. To elect as Trustees any persons duly proposed for election.

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

Audited Accounts and Trustees' Annual Report will be available on the website 28 days before the event and are also available on request from [chrissy.patching@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:chrissy.patching@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)

### Notes

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 a valid proxy, an 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

[chrissy.patching@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:chrissy.patching@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)

New Elected Trustees (ie Trustees elected at the AGM) can either be nominated by the Board of Trustees or by four members of the Trust by way of a formal written proposal delivered to the Trust office at 17 Great George Street, Bristol BS1 5QT no later than 26 October, 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.

Without in any way restricting the members' rights to propose new Trustees in this way, members will note that this year the Board is undertaking an open recruitment exercise for Trustees and will be proposing successful candidates for election at the AGM.

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**.



JON HAWKINS



**Come to the AGM** – Members, volunteers and friends of Avon Wildlife Trust are welcome. It would help arrangements if you could please confirm your attendance by visiting [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2022](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/AGM2022)

## AUTUMN AND WINTER EVENTS

**The weather may be turning colder, but there are still plenty of ways to connect with nature! Here are some of the events we've got coming up over the coming months that you can get involved in. For the most up-to-date information, visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events)**

### My Wild City

Find out more about urban wildlife and how you can take action for nature in your neighbourhood with My Wild City, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund! For events and opportunities please visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildcity](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildcity)

One of the events we'll be holding is **'Creating and maintaining wildlife ponds'** – focusing on ponds in schools and community spaces, this workshop will be a hands-on opportunity to learn where to put a pond, how to build it, what to plant in it, and how to keep it healthy and fantastic for wildlife. For dates and prices, visit our website.

### Wildlife Watch

A nature club for young explorers aged 5–10 years old! Activities are varied and practical, designed to nurture curiosity and learning about the natural world. Supported by the players of the People's Postcode Lottery, this takes place on the first Saturday of every month, from 10–12 at our Grow Wilder site. Please book in advance at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-watch](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-watch)

### My Wild Child

Our outdoor nature play sessions for under-5s and their carers are back, supported by players of The People's Postcode Lottery! Join us during term time at the following sessions for wildlife fun, creativity and exploration:

- The Bommie in Knowle, Bristol. These sessions will be running from 10–11.30am every Wednesday and you can just drop in!
- Grow Wilder in Stapleton, Bristol. These sessions will be running from 10–11.30am every Friday during term time. Please book in advance, details available on the My Wild Child Facebook page: [facebook.com/groups/mywildchild](https://www.facebook.com/groups/mywildchild)

For more information visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/my-wild-child](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/my-wild-child)



# MY WILD LIFE

## Luke Grimshaw

Luke is a Project Manager at Avon Wildlife Trust, working to coordinate the critically important establishment of a nature-based solutions market in the Bristol Avon catchment, which will help generate a vast increase in habitat creation across the region.



I am one of the many who did not start out in wildlife conservation. My degree in Physics and eventual job in IT in London saw me heading down a very different path. Money was good and life was comfortable, however I knew deep down my passions lay elsewhere and that I would need to make a change soon before I saw myself too entrenched on that career path. After spending some time out travelling on a sabbatical, I came to recognise my strong passion for nature and my intense desire to be part of its protection and recovery.

Having worked in the corporate world for five years, I knew that I had skills that would be useful in the conservation sector, but I also knew that I would have to show my value as more than just an IT project manager to flourish in this new sector. Therefore, in December 2019 I quit my job and started out as a volunteer at Grow Wilder.

It was shortly after moving to Bristol at the start of that year that I saw the Avon Wildlife Trust logo on a sign in Brandon

Hill, not long after a minibus of volunteers pulled up outside the old office at Jacobs Wells Road and began emptying tools after a day out clearing scrub on site. From that point on, the organisation stuck firmly in my mind and, looking back, it was clear that I was desperate to connect with nature locally and the communities that made it so special.

Fast forward to Grow Wilder. I was soon helping coordinate the many projects and operations that make the place tick, using my experience in project management and consultancy to prioritise, organise and deliver important activities on site. However, once lockdown hit in March 2020, all plans were put on hold. The site was faced with an exciting opportunity to launch a new online shop to deliver veg plants and wildflowers to the many new food-growing enthusiasts who were looking to grow at home. Soon I was being contracted to lead a whole new operation that over the next two months delivered tens of thousands of plants across the region and nationally, successfully putting Grow Wilder on the map.

Following the enormous success of this operation, I managed to secure myself a full-time post at Avon Wildlife Trust and have since been involved in many projects for the charity. Most recently I have become involved with project managing the setup of the Bristol Avon Catchment Market. This innovative, world-leading project looks to revolutionise the way private investment can be made to establish new habitats, helping us reach our environmental targets for 2030 and beyond.

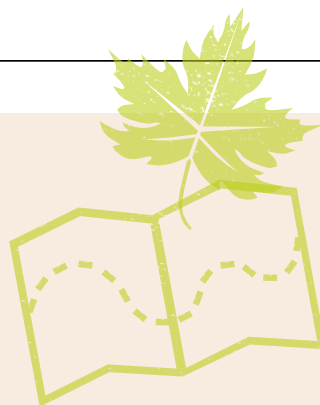
My advice to anyone who is interested in changing career paths is to follow your passions, be tenacious and, most importantly, be useful. The change can be hard and there is an element of luck, but it is entirely possible to find yourself in a new role in this exciting and rewarding sector.



If you're interested in finding out more about the Bristol Avon Catchment Market, visit [bristolavoncatchmentmarket.uk](https://bristolavoncatchmentmarket.uk)



# 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.

## Chew Valley Local Group

All meetings for this group are held at the Old School Room in Chew Magna, starting at 7.45pm. The confirmed events for this autumn and winter are:

**Thursday 27 October** Steart Marshes, a project update by the warden Alys Leaver

**Thursday 24 November** A talk by John Dickson of the Somerset Reptiles and Amphibians Group

**Thursday 26 January** Rewilding Chew by the local Rewilding Group

**Thursday 23 February** Moths by Mike Bailey

**Thursday 23 March** A talk from the Woodland Trust

**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.

## Keynsham Local Group

Keynsham Local group has a number of talks lined up over the autumn and winter period, all taking place from 7.30pm–9.30pm at the Baptist Church Hall in Keynsham. There is a suggested donation of £3 for each event to support Avon Wildlife Trust's work. For booking information visit [keynshamawt.org](http://keynshamawt.org) and contact Kathy at [keynshamawt@gmail.com](mailto:keynshamawt@gmail.com) to book activities. Planned activities and talks include:

**Friday 11 November** 'Somerset Wildlands – decentralised re-wilding in South West England' with Alasdair Cameron, director of Somerset Wildlands

**Friday 9 December** A Christmas celebration, with a series of short talks, festive activities and refreshments

**Friday 13 January** 'Seabirds of the Outer Hebrides' with Bob Medland from Shiant's Auk Ringing Group

**Friday 10 February** 'Reading the signs – what the bug life in your garden reveals about our changing world' with Ray Barnett

**Friday 10 March** 'Climate change under our feet – saving our soil, peat and permafrost' with Emma Brisdon, science communicator and podcast producer

**Friday 14 April** 'Working together for food justice' with Ped Askarian, AWT trustee and Director of Feeding Bristol

## Portishead Local Group

Portishead Local Group are back from their summer break and have a number of events lined up, with non-members welcome to attend! Entrance is £2 for all adults and £1 for children and students. All events take place from 7.30pm at the Folk Hall, 95 High Street, Portishead. Planned events include:

**Friday 28 October** 'RSPB Ham Wall – a volunteer's story – 25 years on', an illustrated talk by Bob Buck

**Friday 25 November** 'Rewilding on Trendlewood Park', an illustrated talk by Andrew Town

**Friday 27 January** 'Coastal Islands and Wildlife', an illustrated talk by Colin Butcher about his visits and conservation work

**Friday 24 February** 'Learning Nature's Ways – changing your thinking about insects', an illustrated talk by Colin Higgins (Higgy)

**Friday 24 March** 'Local Reserves – more views from the air', another chance to see amazing aerial photos taken by Peter Speight

## 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](http://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events)



## Volunteering!

Volunteering on conservation projects is a great way to make a real difference to wildlife, improve your wellbeing and meet some wonderful people. To find out our latest volunteering opportunities, why not sign up for our quarterly volunteering newsletter? Visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities) to sign up and find out more about our current opportunities to get involved.

We've also been able to reignite our Young Volunteers group! If you know someone aged 14–24 who wants to help nature recover, they can sign up at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/opportunities-young-people](http://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/opportunities-young-people) to find out when our next meet up is.



REBECCA NIMMO



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



# Winter

## Wildlife Gardening

Our gardens all but go to sleep in winter, as plants become dormant and most species are overwintering, but there are still ways to help your garden wildlife.



**Kate Bradbury**

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

Hedgehogs and amphibians may be tucked beneath a large pile of leaves or in your compost heap, while insects may be sheltering beneath tree bark, in the folds of spent leaves and

seedheads, or amongst leaf litter. Avoid disturbing these habitats until mid-spring as any interruptions could cost valuable energy that isn't easy to replenish at this time of year; insects may also be vulnerable to fungal diseases if exposed to damp conditions.

Indeed, the best thing you can do for most wildlife at this time of year is to not garden at all! Leave plants in borders to rot down into themselves, avoid clearing leaf litter from your garden's edges (but do sweep leaves off paths and the lawn), and leave habitats such as log piles and compost heaps intact. If you have a meadow or other area of long grass, leave a 'buffer zone' uncut throughout winter, so caterpillars, beetles and other invertebrates can shelter in the thatch.

Of course, not all animals hibernate. Birds battle through the short days and cold nights, searching for food that's often hard to come by. If you have fruit trees, like crab apples, let windfall fruit






remain on the ground so thrushes such as redwings and fieldfares can help themselves. If the ground isn't frozen, you can add to your collection of fruit and berrying trees. Now's the time to buy bare-root trees and shrubs — hawthorn, rowan, holly, apples, crab apples, and pyracantha all produce fruit loved by birds, while birches and alder, along with plants such as *Verbena bonariensis*, lavender and teasels, offer seeds for a wide range of smaller species.

Filling supplementary feeders benefits smaller species like tits, which need to feed almost constantly in the daylight hours. Calorie-rich food such as fat balls, sunflower hearts and peanuts gives them the energy they need to shiver to keep warm at night. Leave scraps of seed at the back of borders for ground-feeding species like wrens. And don't forget

water — not only do bird baths provide drinking water, but by regularly topping up your bird bath you will also help birds to clean their feathers and regulate their temperature, vital on cold winter nights.

Do make sure you keep bird baths and feeders clean, as the number and variety of birds visiting them can spread diseases. Regular cleaning can help keep your garden birds healthy.

Get more wildlife-friendly gardening tips at

 [wildlifetrusts.org/gardening](https://wildlifetrusts.org/gardening)



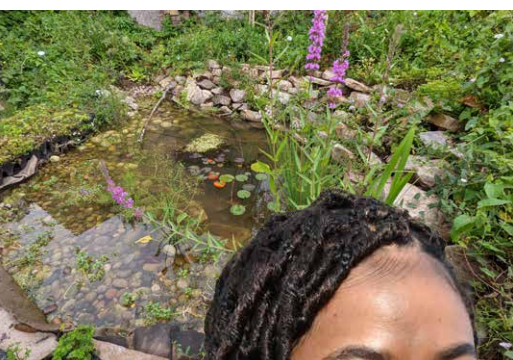


# Join #TEAM WILDER



**Avon**  
Wildlife Trust

Have you made a difference to nature  
at home or near where you live?



No matter how small the action, they all add up to make  
a big impact on the quality of life for people and wildlife.  
Share your experience and learn from others.

Be part of Team Wilder.

[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/  
team-wilder](https://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder)

