

The member magazine for Avon Wildlife Trust

Issue 120 • Spring 2023

Wild Avon

Team Wilder

Welcome to a
community making a
difference for nature

CREATING A BUZZ

Support solitary bees this spring

GIVE A DAM

Beavers are branching out
across Avon



Avon
Wildlife Trust

Welcome



to your spring *Wild Avon* magazine, helping you to make the most of these bluer skies and greener surroundings we're starting to see. Thanks to your continued support and donations to our Ash Dieback Appeal, we've spent the colder months undertaking a huge amount of work to mitigate the impact of this devastating disease on our reserves. You'll be

able to read more about this work and the difference you've made on page 27.

You might notice that this edition of your magazine is a little different from past issues – it's a **Team Wilder special**. Some of you may already be familiar with our Team Wilder approach, for example if you attended our members' talk and met some community members online last year, if you came to our AGM or are signed up to receive our email newsletters. For the uninitiated, we hope this magazine will bring it to life and inspire you to join this movement for a wilder future.

So, what is Team Wilder? In short, Team Wilder is a new way of working which aims to inspire and celebrate actions for wildlife, no matter how big or small they are. Anyone can be a part of Team Wilder and improve their patch for the benefit of nature and their neighbours. This is our way of supporting individuals and groups throughout the region, by sharing resources that have been developed by Team Wilder members who are already championing wildlife in their everyday lives. It's a real community, and we can't wait for you to be a part of it.

Throughout these pages, you'll see tips and advice from members of Team Wilder, as well as recommendations from communities and organisations outside of Avon Wildlife Trust. If we want 1 in 4 people to be taking action for nature by 2030 then we need to empower them to share their knowledge and skills, and lend our voice so that we can all speak up for wildlife.

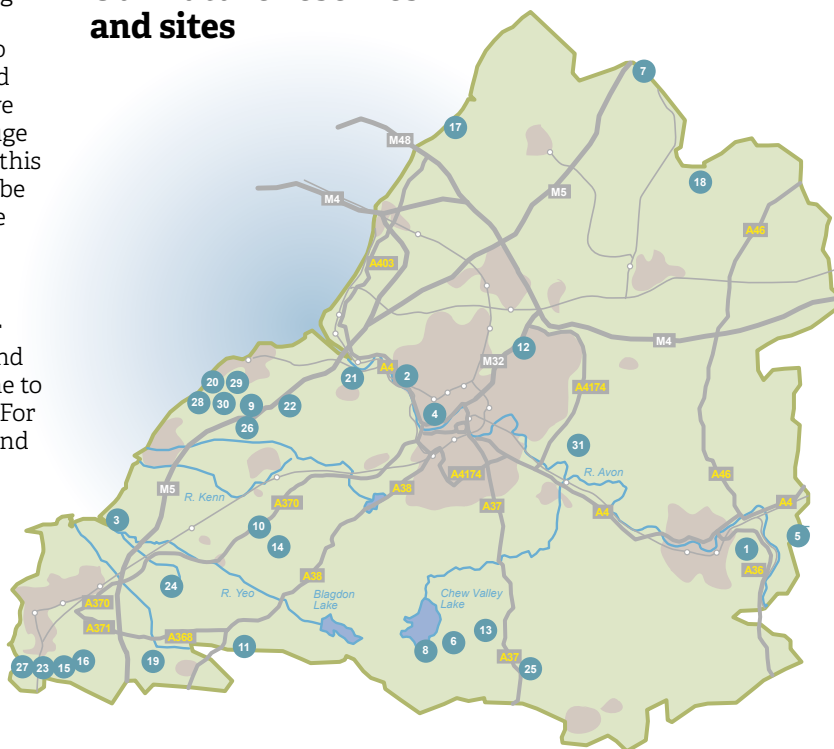
If you've been inspired to join Team Wilder, you can add the actions you've been taking for nature to our Team Wilder map and sign up for motivating emails filled with real-life stories from across Avon. Just visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder

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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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

Be part of Team Wilder
Become a part of our growing community of local people who take action for nature as part of their everyday lives: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder

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

Fundraise Set yourself a challenge or organise an event to fundraise with family and friends to help wildlife in our region: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/fundraise

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

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

YOUR WILD **SPRING** SPECIES AND HABITATS

Your wild spring

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

Did you know that wildflowers from Folly Farm featured in the BBC nature series Wild Isles?



Thank you

Thanks to your membership, we are able to manage many of our meadows using traditional techniques. Seeds from our wildflower meadows have gone on to be used in a number of meadow creation projects around Avon, so your impact continues to bloom!

WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

Wildflower meadows were once commonplace in the countryside, and highly prized for hay production. They are characterised by a diverse mixture of tall grasses and colourful wildflowers, such as white oxeye daisy, purple knapweed and yellow meadow vetchling. They hit their peak in the late spring and early summer, when they buzz with insects attracted by the abundant nectar sources they provide. Meadows were traditionally managed with a late summer hay cut, followed by grazing in autumn, before being allowed to grow tall and lush in the spring and summer. This management allowed plants such as orchids and primroses to persist along with more competitive species.

Wildflower meadows have now been largely replaced by fields comprising just one or two productive grass species, but a few stunning examples can still be found locally.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING AND SUMMER

➤ **Folly Farm** The meadows at this nature reserve are truly stunning at this time of year and are often awash with common spotted-orchids and yellow rattle, bordering unruly hedgerows which help provide further diversity with birds and small mammals that use the habitat.

➤ **The Winterbourne and Frome Valley Environmental Group** This South Gloucestershire community action group has shared its experience of creating a wildflower meadow on Whiteshill Small Common: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-story-winterbourne-and-frome-valley-environmental-group

➤ **West Bristol Climate Action** Clifton Hill has been made wilder thanks to this group, which has shared its knowledge of creating wildflower meadows and floral lawns, getting council permission and project progression.

 avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-community-wildflower-meadows



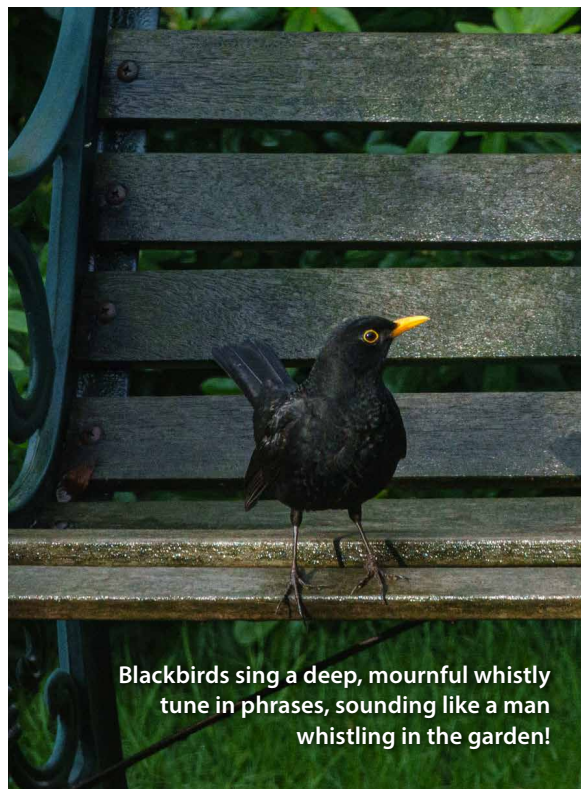
Hedges spring into action

Whether out in the countryside or at the bottom of your garden, hedges provide valuable habitat for wildlife year-round, and in spring they really come to life! White blossom blooms on hawthorn and blackthorn, providing a vital source of nectar for insects. Birds sing from the tallest branches to attract mates or fend off neighbours, and use the dense coverage of fresh green leaves to nest within. Bats emerging from their winter hibernation roosts use these linear features to navigate between foraging sites, while small mammals and reptiles use them as sheltered corridors to move safely around the landscape.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

- **Puxton Moor** Enjoy this low-lying pasture land as it flourishes with the vibrant sights, sounds and smells of spring – from species-rich, watery ditches to hedges that attract migrating birds and a range of insects.
- **Team Wilder** See local examples of native hedges and natural borders, which blend in with the natural environment and allow wildlife to move freely between gardens and local open spaces: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/natural-barriers-team-wilder](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/natural-barriers-team-wilder)

CHRIS GOMERSALL/2020VISION



Blackbirds sing a deep, mournful whistly tune in phrases, sounding like a man whistling in the garden!

URBAN FIELDCRAFT

Beguiling blackbirds

One of the first songs to break the still silence of a spring night is the mellow, whistly tune of the blackbird. Look for them proudly sitting upon a chimney or lamppost as they loudly pour out their song to welcome in the new spring morning, defend their territory or attract a mate. According to Druid legends, their song would put the listener into a trance, enabling them to travel to 'another world' and learn mystic secrets. It has been shown that listening to birdsong can reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing, so this spring take the time to stop and listen to their song, learn their secret and enjoy the soundtrack to the spring.

STEPHANIE CHADWICK

How to help a blackbird

- **Food:** Grenville feeds the birds in his BS5 urban garden with natural cover nearby from the trees, bushes and climbers. Blackbirds love husk-free seed mixes and dried or live mealworms, especially during the breeding and fledging season in spring.
- **Nesting:** A blackbird's nest is a cup shape, made from sticks and grass and then lined with mud. During hot or dry springs, birds can struggle building their nests if they cannot find enough wet mud. Make a little wet, muddy patch in your garden to help them!
- **Water:** Melanie provides water for birds in her BS15 garden. Birds need bird baths to remove parasites. Either a bowl or birdbath will work, and a drip jug above it will attract more birds.



Go to [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-birds](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-birds) for more tips



SEE THIS

Early July is the best time to see four-spotted chaser dragonflies, when males are often found perching on vegetation overlooking the water or engaged in territorial flight.

DO THIS

Go on a bat walk! Pipistrelles emerge from their roosts around 20 minutes after sunset and will spend most of the night out foraging for food, making spotting them a great summer evening activity.

AMY LEWIS

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Solitary bees

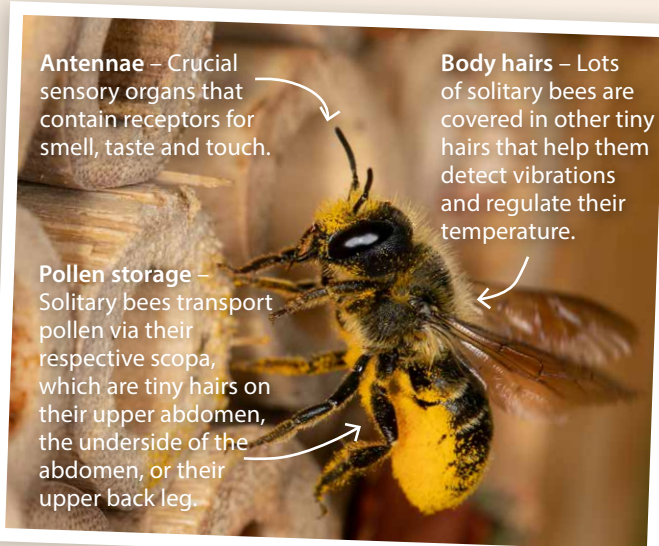
Out of the almost 270 species of bee that exist in the UK, more than 240 are solitary bees, 24 are bumblebees and we have only one species of honeybee.

Home sweet home

Solitary bees prefer to nest alone rather than in a colony, but other aspects of their nesting habits vary greatly. Mining bees account for almost 30% of the solitary bee species, and will nest in the ground. The females burrow into soil or clay and build separate egg chambers in which to deposit their individual eggs, provisioned with pollen. Others will nest in existing cracks, unoccupied beetle holes in wood, mortar in buildings or hollow plant stems. Carpenter bees will burrow into dead wood to make their nesting cavities, and the rare red-tailed mason bee nests in old snail shells.

Pollen collection

The vast majority of solitary bees gather pollen on their back leg hairs or abdomen hairs, known as scopa, rather than the more intricate pollen baskets (corbicula) that bumble and honeybees have developed. This slightly less sophisticated method of pollen collection makes some solitary bees positively triumphant in the pollination game. Yellow-faced bees do not possess scopa to transport pollen; instead, their method of collection involves carrying the pollen internally in their foregut and regurgitating it on their return to the nest. However, about a quarter of solitary bees do not collect pollen at all, but parasitise host bee species, relying



Antennae – Crucial sensory organs that contain receptors for smell, taste and touch.

Body hairs – Lots of solitary bees are covered in other tiny hairs that help them detect vibrations and regulate their temperature.

Pollen storage – Solitary bees transport pollen via their respective scopa, which are tiny hairs on their upper abdomen, the underside of the abdomen, or their upper back leg.

JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

on them to provide for their young, often through subjugation or deception.

Ecosystem role

Solitary bees emerge at different times of the year to capitalise on different flowering plants. Red mason bees are some of the first to emerge and play an important role in pollinating the early flowering fruit trees. Like many other solitary bees, they are polylectic, meaning they collect from a wide variety of plants, and are considered to be highly efficient pollinators. There is, however, the odd exception of oligolectic bees, whose diet is restricted to a single plant, such as the white bryony mining bee. Whatever their diet, solitary bees are inextricably linked to our diverse native ecosystems and agricultural successes.

WHERE TO SEE THEM THIS SPRING:

- Thornbury Orchard, which won a Bee Bold Award in 2022, is a great place to spot solitary bees. There is a wildflower meadow, a bee bank and many bee hotels in signs and trees.
- Our Grow Wilder site just outside Bristol city centre is a great place to spot solitary bees, thanks to the bee hotels dotted around the site and wildlife-friendly gardening areas.

How Team Wilder has supported solitary bees

Tom in BS3 made his **bee hotel** from the clay in his garden, the roof protects it from the rain.



TOM WILLMOTT

David Ward's first bee hotel attempt with cardboard tubes wasn't a success – he discovered that the **bees preferred drilled wooden blocks**.



DAVID WARD

Rhiannon in BS15 grows **pollinator-friendly plants** in pots underneath her bee hotels, placed in direct sunlight.



RHIANNON DOHERTY



Did you know? We're losing many of our solitary bees due to climate change, pesticides and loss of habitats. However, you can make a real difference for them by growing wildflowers or creating nesting areas to bring back the buzz. Find more tips at www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/bee-team-wilder

HEAR THIS

The bullfinch is heard more often than it's seen, and its soft, piping call is a short whistle or fluted note that can have a melancholy ring to it.

MAKE THIS

Common sorrel is a perennial herb that looks a bit like spinach, with arrow-shaped leaves. It has a tangy, tart taste and its juice was traditionally used to remove stains from linen.



NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Six way to enjoy nature this spring

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

1 PLANT WILDFLOWERS

Add some colour to your garden by creating a mini meadow. Wildflowers can provide shelter and food for many different insects and birds and are a fantastic way to add colour to your garden. Visit Grow Wilder for a selection of wildlife flowers that you could grow. Watch them grow over the spring and see what wildlife you can attract to your patch!



LAURA FELICIANO

2 Learn some bird song

Spring is a busy season for birds. They have to defend their territory and find a mate before building a nest and raising their chicks. Because of this, birds are busy singing their hearts out from the crack of dawn. Try using apps such as BirdNet to identify singing birds, or use the RSPB website or www.xeno-canto.com to familiarise yourself with different bird songs before you try and recognise them in the field!



MARK HAMBLIN/2020VISION

3 Visit a bluebell wood

A carpet of bluebells is one of the most beautiful spring sights to enjoy, as the woodland floor is transformed into a sea of purples and blues. From mid-April, the flowers start to emerge, providing an important source of nectar for bees and insects whilst releasing a strong sweet scent that we can also enjoy! Take a stroll to our Prior's Wood reserve this spring and bathe in the beauty of the bluebells!



TILL CRENNER

4 Find Leo the Lion

As the Earth moves around the sun, we're able to see different constellations in the night sky throughout the year. We can see some famous ones all year round, such as Ursa Major, 'The Great Bear', but others we only see in certain seasons. Spring is a brilliant time of year to find the constellation of Leo the Lion. Look for a backwards question mark shape which outlines the lion's head and mane. Can you find it? What other shapes and patterns can you see in the sky?

5 Watch a sunrise or sunset

Are you a morning lark or a night owl? Sunrises and sunsets can be absolutely breathtaking and a beautiful way to start or end the day. Noticing nature's beauty is a way to feel more connected to nature and improve your mood, and what is more beautiful than a sunrise or sunset? Sunrise in the morning can leave you motivated and inspired for the day ahead, while celebrating the end of the day with a sunset can leave you feeling grateful for the day that has passed. Take along your family and friends to share the beauty of nature with others.



JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

Nature
craft

ROSS HODDINOTT/2020VISION

6 Make a wild garlic pesto

The smell of garlic wafting through a woodland is just one of the brilliant smells of spring. Pick some of the leaves and make yourself a nutritious foraged pesto.

You will need:

- ✓ Wild garlic leaves
- ✓ A food blender
- ✓ Your choice of nuts
- ✓ Olive oil

VEGANONBOARD.COM

Creating your tasty foraged treat:

- 1 Pick a few wild garlic leaves – you can identify them by their distinctive smell, as well as their spear-shape with a pointed tip. Only pick what you need and what you can confidently identify!
- 2 Wash them carefully when you get home
- 3 Add the leaves to a food blender with some nuts – pine nuts, almonds or hazelnuts work well
- 4 Add a couple of spoons of olive oil
- 5 Add some squeezed lemon and seasoning to taste
- 6 Enjoy it on a salad, on toast or stirred into pasta!



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

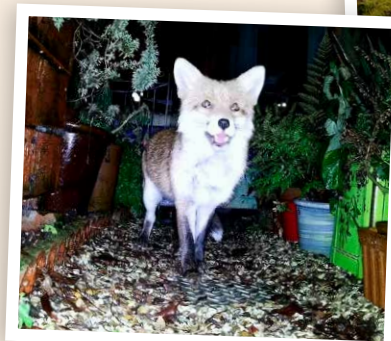
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/actions](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/actions)

Our pick of your photos

We're lucky that so many supporters are also talented photographers! It's been such a joy to see what wonderful wildlife you've been able to capture and how nature has caught your eye. Sharing photos like this is a great way to take action for nature and be part of Team Wilder, as it's a sure-fire way to inspire others:

➤ When Hazel spotted this fallen, twisted cherry tree at our Prior's Wood reserve, she had to stop and take a photo! Isn't nature incredible?

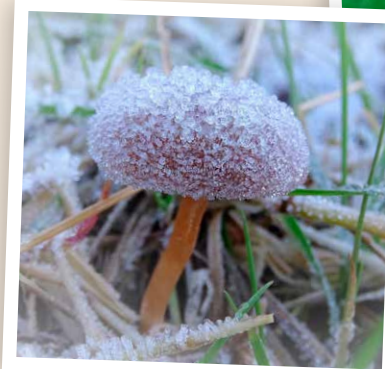
©Hazel



➤ Say cheese! This cheeky fox was captured looking straight at a front garden camera trap in Southville ©Caroline Rigg

➤ Sam snapped this crab spider lurking in their garden, waiting for an unsuspecting insect

©Sam Pomeryl



➤ The frost made this mushroom glisten in the winter sun at Thornbury Golf Course ©Elizabeth Cooksey

➤ This stunning kingfisher sat still long enough for Amy to capture the striking colour and details of its feathers

©Amy Lou Photography



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



Visit Bath City Farm

Set on the hills of Twerton, Bath City Farm is an oasis for people and nature to thrive. Offering wide panoramas over the World Heritage City, this living, working farm is involved in many aspects of community life, as well as being a wonderful wildlife habitat.



JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

Bath City Farm covers 37 acres of old pasture and woodland, brought alive in recent years as an inclusive community resource. It's a great survivor of 20th century housing development with a long and interesting history.

Between the end of World War One and the 1950s, much of the area was acquired by the council and developed as housing, leaving the fields which are now Bath City Farm untouched. Its years as a dairy farm ended in the late 1980s, and through the efforts of local residents, Bath City Farm was born as a charity in 1995.

Brendan Tate Wistreich, Bath City Farm Director, said: "Bath City Farm is a complex web of people and wildlife, coexisting together. We are fortunate to be one of the largest city farms in the country, so we have a tremendous opportunity to practice regenerative models of land management and share them so that we can all find better ways to grow food, whilst living in harmony with nature. We want people to feel part of their food system and be in connection



ROB STEPHENS

with the land. City farms are an ideal place for all ages to cultivate this connection."

At Avon Wildlife Trust, we've been working with the farm on a plan for its ancient fields, as part of our involvement in Bathscape. Bathscape is a scheme funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to national lottery players, which aims to restore and enhance the biodiversity of green areas in and around the city. Grazing with low numbers of animals for many years has created a mosaic of herb-rich grassland, scrub and woodland which supports a tremendous variety of flora and fauna and shows great potential to be even more wildlife diverse.

Thanks

to your support, we are able to work with the farm and other partner organisations at landscape scale, restoring and connecting habitats, and engaging with the local community.



PHILIP PREECEY

periods to benefit the soil's health. Joining the existing old breed sheep will be a few alpacas, a herd of hardy cows and maybe even some Exmoor ponies.

Bath City Farm is a complex web of people and wildlife, coexisting together

As well as a wealth of nature to explore independently, the Natural Pathways wildlife conservation group also provides an opportunity to get involved with the site every Thursday. Led by Avon Wildlife Trust staff, the group takes part in activities such as creating bug hotels, wildflower planting and care of the ponds, to encourage wildlife and enhance participants' wellbeing. The staff and volunteers who look after the farm are committed to supporting people living with poor mental health, learning disabilities and other complex needs, and run a range of projects and volunteering opportunities.



MIKE WILLIAMS

Local entomologist and farm trustee Mike Williams, who regularly studies the wildlife on the farm, has in the last few years counted over 1,000 different species of flora and fauna.

The fields will each take on a different character: a traditional wildflower-rich hay meadow, a wood pasture with open grown oaks, a large rewilding pasture where scrub is already very mature, a particularly calcareous, steep field and an orchard. New fences mean the livestock can be rotated around the fields with consideration for spring and summer flowers, and allow each field to have fallow

DID YOU KNOW The area was first mentioned in the Domesday book when Twerton, known then as Twertone and recorded as having 32 households, was divided into two manors. Explore the farm and the manor boundary line can still be seen today as a bank running down between Upper and Lower Lamb Sleight, as well as Maiden Furlong, fields which to this day have retained their original names.

NOW YOU DO IT

1 Visit Bath City Farm

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Location: Kelston View, Whiteway, Bath BA2 1NW

How to get there: Please walk, cycle or use public transport where possible. There is a small onsite car park with allocated spaces for blue badge holders. The farm is a short stroll or cycle ride from the Two Tunnels greenway. The nearest train station is Oldfield Park. Trains travelling from Bath Spa to Bristol stop at Oldfield Park, which is a 20 minute walk away.

Opening times: Open Tuesday to Saturday, 9am-4pm

Access: The farm is partially accessible by wheelchair, with step-free access to the main buildings, toilets, some animal enclosures and the café. There are baby changing facilities available in the main building.

Email: info@bathcityfarm.org.uk

Website: bathcityfarm.org.uk

TOP WILDLIFE TO SPOT

➤ **Beautiful demoiselle** See these large, bright metallic damselflies fluttering and flitting over the pond on sunny summer days, feeding on small insects. The blue males dance around the green females when courting.

➤ **Great spotted woodpecker** Seen and heard in the woods, drumming on tree trunks to state their territory to other animals. The nest holes are fledgling nurseries, and take around one month to build.

➤ **Palmate newt** Gaze into the pond on a spring day and see these light-brown newts breeding or feeding on invertebrates nearby. The males develop webbed (palmated) hind feet during the breeding season.

➤ **Ivy broomrape** Find this unusual perennial herb flowering in woodland edge and hedgerow habitats during summer. Parasitic on ivy, this holoparasite has no chlorophyll and cannot exist without its host plant.

THINGS TO DO

➤ Buy a nature trail map and wildlife guide from the farm office and get to know the 37 acres of the farm, including pasture, meadow and woodland.

The farm has a wide array of farm animals to visit and enjoy including goats, chickens, ducks, sheep, ponies, cows and pigs.

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



2 Lawrence Weston Moor

Why now?

With the natural world beginning to show signs of shaking the slumber of winter off, early spring wildflowers will begin to pop their heads out, so look out for the beautiful cuckooflower and others across the site. With a diverse bird population, you're sure to get a treat, be it a woodpecker or the rarer Cetti's warbler.

Know before you go

Bring your wellies or waterproof boots as it's a wetland area and paths can get very muddy!

Location: Lawrence Weston Road, BS11 0ST. Near Atwood Drive Allotments, turn left and walk along the path, a rhyme should be on your right. Make a right over the rhyme and go through the metal kissing gate.

Open: Free entry all year, all day

Wildlife to spot: Cetti's warbler, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, buzzard, snipe water vole, noctule bat

Find out more:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/lawrence-weston-moor

The lowdown

Providing the tranquillity of nature beyond the hum of the motorway, Lawrence Weston Moor is home to a wide variety of wildlife. This unique site is a wetland that supports reed beds and damp grasslands on acidic soils, which creates an interesting array of flora and fauna. There's a huge diversity of wildflowers, including the cuckooflower, sneezewort, meadow buttercup and meadowsweet. The reed beds create a great area for wetland birds such as the snipe, so bring your binoculars and see if you can see this distinctive bird.

The ditch network at the site has undergone improvement works through the My Wild City project, thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to make it a more suitable habitat for the nationally-scarce water vole. We've been carrying out surveys with our 'Vole-unteers' and hope to continue to do so in the summer months. If you're sitting still and quiet at the pond area, you may see one or hear the 'plop' sound of them slipping into the water.



CAROLINE RIGGS

3 Community nature reserve

Why now?

An urban or community nature reserve takes an entire block of land with a mixture of dense housing, semi-green spaces and wilder places and doesn't just declare it a nature reserve. It joins up the green spaces, highlights local wildlife and brings the community together to celebrate, share ideas and encourage small but mighty actions for nature.

The lowdown


Every single action for nature can make a big difference, especially when we work together. A single garden can be haven for wildlife, but combining with other green spaces achieves more. We love the Greater Bedminster urban nature reserve. BS3 residents are invited to register their front and/or back garden spaces to be part of their community nature reserve. Neighbours here are incorporating wildlife-friendly elements including water features, bushes, wood piles, bird boxes and pollinator-friendly plants. Sightings of mammals, birds, insects and amphibians in the local green spaces are also shared and celebrated together too.

Tips to create your own community nature reserve:

- The Team Wilder actions map highlights local actions for nature. Upload what you do to inspire others.
- Use or adapt the BS3 form from our website.
- Find people in your community to work with to help reach, collate and share the reserve information.
- Have a long-term view – not everyone will want to get involved from the beginning, and that's ok.
- Celebrate the results you have.
- Over time, you can build up your reserve to also include local green spaces, allotments and parks.



Find out more at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-community-nature-reserve


Simon Barnes
 @simonbarneswild


The plants that shaped us



Perhaps the most exciting thing in life is ignorance. That's because ignorance is an open door: walk through it and learn. And the more you learn the more doors you find, waiting for you to walk through. Until very recently I was shockingly — stupidly — ignorant about plants, considering them just the soft furnishings of the wild world.

But then I realised that, roughly speaking, everything that lives on earth is either a plant or depends on plants. What have plants ever done for us? Well, there's oxygen, water, food...

We humans are as dependent on plants as the cow in the field or the butterfly flying past her nose. Plants are the only living things that can use the energy of the sun to make food. Plants have shaped human history. So I made a list of the significant plants of human history: wheat, rose, potato, tobacco, cannabis, grass, oak... and soon I realised that there was no escape. I would have to write *The History of the World in 100 Plants*. So let's look at two UK plants that made the book.

Edward Stone, an 18th century clergyman, was walking along the river while suffering from ague: probably a rotten, feverish cold. Perhaps his condition had rendered him slightly daft, for he nibbled on a piece of willow bark. He reckoned that, since both willows and fevers are associated with wet places, the one must have been put there to cure the other. And it worked: he got better and wrote a paper to the Royal Society in London.

It worked because willow bark contains salicin. In the 19th century synthetic salicin was developed, and this was adjusted, so that it caused fewer digestive problems. The medicine firm Bayer marketed it — and called it aspirin.

Our second plant is a familiar one. These days the beauty of wild places is obvious to us all, but that wasn't always the case. In the 18th century, a well-tended garden was regarded as the ultimate form of living beauty: cultivated, civilised and tamed. Outside was just wilderness.

That changed at the beginning of the 19th century, when, and not by coincidence, the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic Movement both began. People began to appreciate the glories of untouched, unspoiled nature. The great emblem of that change was the daffodil, as celebrated in the poem by William Wordsworth:

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in
sprightly dance*

The modern understanding of nature as something wonderful and fragile dates back to that time. Wordsworth's daffodils made this understanding vivid for all time.

But there are things to learn about almost every species of plant: the poppies that grow on ground disturbed by ploughs or by bombs, orchids that excite human passions, grape and barley that get us drunk... and on and on and on, because without plants we are nothing. We wouldn't even exist.

Wild daffodils are a beautiful spring sight. Discover some of our best nature reserves for spotting them:



wildlifetrusts.org/wild-daffodils

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 100 PLANTS

Simon explores the stories of more of the plants that shaped us in his latest book, *The History of the World in 100 Plants*. As humans, we hold the planet in the palms of our hands. But we couldn't live for a day without plants. Our past is all about plants, our present is all tied up with plants; and without plants there is no future. From the mighty oak to algae, from cotton to coca, discover a hundred reasons why.

Simon Barnes is the author of many wild volumes, including the bestselling Bad Birdwatcher trilogy, Rewild Yourself, On The Marsh, and The History of the World in 100 Animals. He is a council member of World Land Trust, trustee of Conservation South Luangwa and patron of Save the Rhino. In 2014, he was awarded the Rothschild Medal for services to conservation. He lives in Norfolk, where he manages several acres for wildlife.



6 places to see **woodland flora**

WOOD ANEMONES © MARK HAMBLIN/2020VISION

W

hen it comes to woodland flora, there's one plant that hogs the headlines – and it's easy to see why! Bluebells are undeniably beautiful, carpeting the forest floor in a swaying sea of violet-blue petals. They flower around April and can be an indication that you're standing in an ancient woodland. But they aren't the only wildflowers that grace our woodlands each spring. You could find the ground coated with wild garlic, scenting the air with that unmistakable aroma, or wood anemones with star-shaped flowers balanced atop long slender stalks. Combine these colourful carpets with the soundtrack of singing birds and you have an idyllic spring scene.

See the spectacle for yourself



1 Straidkilly, Ulster Wildlife

As well as the usual collection of beautiful spring wildflowers, including bluebells, this secluded woodland is home to some stranger plant life. You could spot three species of parasitic plant: toothwort, bird's-nest orchid, and yellow bird's-nest.

Where: Carnlough, BT44 0LQ

2 Hetchell Wood, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

This tranquil retreat on the edge of Leeds comes alive with wildflowers in spring. There are carpets of bluebells, wood anemones, and wild garlic. Look out for the pink towers of toothwort, a strange parasitic plant.

Where: Near Wetherby, LS14 3AL

3 Roundton Hill, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Many people visit for the invigorating hike to the hill's summit and its breathtaking panoramic vistas, but each spring the woodland on Roundton's lower slopes becomes swathed in glorious spring flowers, from pretty lesser celandine in March to luminous bluebells in May.

Where: Near Churchstoke in Powys, SY15 6EL

4 Launde Woods, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust

You'll find amazing displays of spring wildflowers beneath the ancient trees of Big Wood, on the west of the reserve. There are wood anemones, bluebells, wood-forget-me-not, sweet woodruff, and primroses to name just a few.

Where: Launde, LE7 9XB

5 Shadwell Wood, Essex Wildlife Trust

The oxlip is a precious gem in a treasure trove of wildflowers gracing the floor of this ancient woodland in north-west Essex. Oxlips are only found in a few pockets of woodland in the UK, where their beautiful clusters of yellow flowers can be seen popping up in April.

Where: Saffron Waldon, CB10 2NB

6 Lower Woods, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

One of the largest ancient woodlands in the south-west, rich in wildflowers like bluebells, wild garlic, and wood anemones. As well as early purple and greater butterfly orchids, keep an eye out for the understated flowers of herb-Paris.

Where: Near Wickwar, GL9 1BX

Did you spot any wildflowers?

We'd love to know how your search went.

Please tweet us your best photos! [@wildlifetrusts](https://twitter.com/wildlifetrusts)

YOUR WILD FEATURE

Be part of Team

Team Wilder is a new approach which aims to inspire and celebrate actions for nature, no matter how small or large. Anyone can be part of Team Wilder and improve their local area for wildlife and people. We have a long history of supporting individuals and communities through engagement activities,



Wilder

volunteering and initiatives like My Wild City. Team Wilder takes everything we've learnt and focuses on individual and community empowerment to create a movement of people taking action for nature.

Everyone should have access to local green space. Get inspiration from Team Wilder local stories and resources, including the challenges and benefits, to make your homes and communities a little wilder.

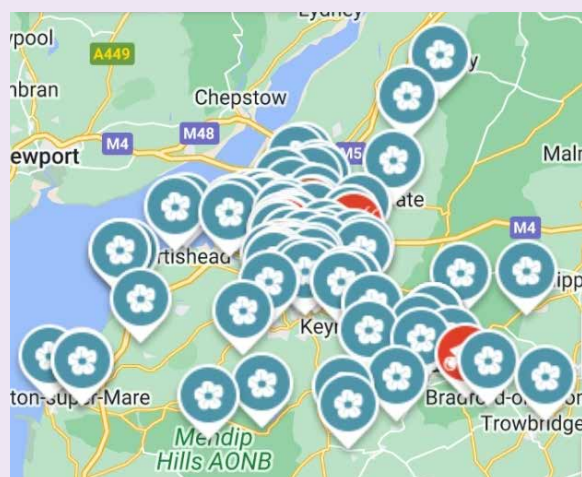


HANNAH BURN

By 2030, we want to have created a much wilder Avon. We want everyone to benefit from living in a neighbourhood enriched by access to nature. We also want nature's recovery to be at the forefront of tackling the climate crisis – providing solutions for improving our food production, clean air, health and wellbeing, recreation, fresh water and many other benefits. How we look after and manage the space around us is key – our gardens, window boxes, allotments and green spaces are connected to the surrounding areas, creating wildlife corridors and nature recovery networks where wildlife can travel, feed and shelter. You can do something for nature at home, in your community, at work or at school. Collectively, these small actions make a big difference. We want to make taking action for nature a 'norm' in every community and area in Avon.

YOU CAN BE PART OF TEAM WILDER BY:

- Signing up to **Team Wilder** emails
- Sharing your actions for nature on the **Team Wilder map** to motivate others
- Sharing your knowledge and advice through **Team Wilder stories**
- Attending **Team Wilder Community Campfire** online and in-person events to connect with others.



GOOGLE MAPS

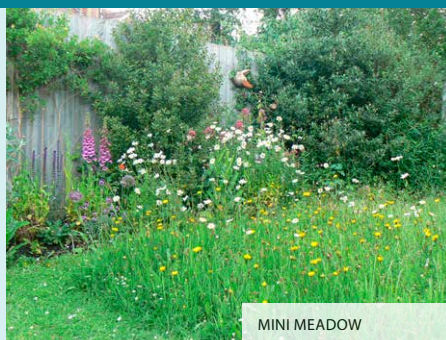
Be part of something

Team Wilder Resources will equip and support you and your community group with local advice to make a difference to nature. You can discover more for yourself at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-resources](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-resources)



POND

TOM WILLMOTT



MINI MEADOW

MELANIE DOHERTY



DEAD HEDGE

TOM WILLMOTT

Wildlife gardening

Wildlife gardening is a way of encouraging and helping wildlife to thrive. You don't need masses of space – containers and window boxes count. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and wildlife gardens can be stunning! Even the Chelsea Flower Show thinks so. They're full of life, they're practical, sustainable and best of all – low maintenance!

Although every species has its own specialist requirements, a good first step is to ensure you provide four key resources: food, water, shelter and breeding space.



www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-gardening-team-wilder

Ponds

Adding a pond is one of the best things you can do for wildlife in your garden or outdoor space. Even a small pond can attract wildlife, including dragonflies, damselflies and frogs. They also become a feeding ground for birds, bats and hedgehogs – who are amazing pest controllers!

After making a mini pond out of an old sink during lockdown, Tom in BS3 upgraded to a larger pond. He cleverly added an old

apple tree branch over the pond, which is used as a perch by dragonflies.

Tom and his family visited Grow Wilder for advice and planted in watercress, water mint, bog plants and more.



www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ponds-team-wilder

Mini meadows

If you have taken part in No Mow May, then you may have discovered a hidden seedbank in your lawn. You can leave all or just part of your lawn. Take action for nature by doing nothing at all or plant in a low maintenance floral lawn!

Benefits of a mini meadow

- Increases the quality of your soil, the health of your plants and reduces pests.
- Allows your pollinators to flourish and you'll see new flowers pop up.
- Helps out bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, wasps, flies and other insects.
- Provides more food and shelter for bats, birds, hedgehogs and more.



www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mini-meadows-team-wilder

Dead hedges and natural barriers

Natural borders and barriers, such as dead hedges, native hedges and willow or hazel barriers are sustainable, blend in with the natural environment, use materials that you may already have on site and are wildlife-friendly. They create important habitats for beetles, hedgehogs, birds and small mammals, providing food, shelter and breeding space, which walls and fences alone don't.

Tom in BS3 created a dead hedge bin cover in his front garden, using existing garden waste. He used support branches or wooden garden stakes to build the hedge walls and adds trimmings and branches over time.

A dead hedge or log pile is particularly effective near a pond, giving frogs and other pond creatures a place to shelter.



www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/natural-barriers-team-wilder

Wildlife Champions We're celebrating a transformational grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. With thanks to National Lottery players, we will help establish a network of 'Wildlife Champions' across the region to support the growing movement of community action for nature.

This project will champion nature in our everyday lives. It will connect practical, community-led activity across the region and give access to free, specialist advice from an ecologist to help residents enhance wildlife habitat. Local champions will be supported by Avon Wildlife Trust to help create a wilder, nature-rich future for us all. Could you be a wildlife champion for your area?



In the community

How to set up a community group

If you're curious about how to establish a group, you can learn directly from others. There are Team Wilder online resources to guide your planning and share advice from communities, e.g. around insurance and different ways to structure your group. To save time, there are links to downloadable policies to consider and adapt for your group.



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-resources-creating-group

Redcatch Community Garden is a community space that has grown from strength to strength, offering social, wellbeing and educational opportunities to everyone in BS4. They shared down-to-earth, real advice about how the community formed, including the challenges when setting up and securing funding. By successfully taking unused local green space, they were able to enrich community spirit and help people reach their potential.



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/case-study-redcatch-community-garden

Funding advice and opportunities

As well as listing live local funding opportunities and larger funding organisations and directories on the 'Team Wilder Find a Funder' page, resources exist to help with applying for funding, financial help like opening a group bank account, whether you need insurance, understanding your local council and tips for success.



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-resources-find-a-funder

Garden celebrations

Blooming Whiteway has created many community get-togethers and projects to enrich local biodiversity for the benefit of people and wildlife. Its 'Gardens Alive' event celebrated and encouraged front gardens to be wildlife-friendly with a competition, free plants and by sharing advice. Local resident front garden contributions were recognised with 'thank you' leaflets, the event was talked about at local events and community gatherings, as well as on signs and digital communications. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to learn and take

part, including improving other local public spaces.



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/case-study-blooming-whiteway-front-garden-awards

Blooming Bedminster and My Wild Bedminster have a lot of experience and knowledge of holding successful 'Good Garden Awards' and 'Secret Garden Trails' in the predominantly urban BS3. Aimed at brightening up the area for everyone, celebrating all contributions to local wildlife, the garden awards share knowledge and advice about local gardening and wildlife wins. They also strengthen community relations as they get people talking and wanting to get involved. The organisers, Ben Barker and Matthew Symonds, plus the many volunteers, have handed out over 35,000 awards since 2005. They were resourceful when creating the leaflets and spreading the word, and also raised money to invest back into the community.



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/case-study-blooming-bedminster



COMMUNITY GROUP



GARDENS ALIVE



GOOD GARDEN AWARDS



SOPHIE BANCROFT

Take action with Team Wilder

Shanti and Puspa's story

Shanti and Puspa live in Newtown, BS2, with their two teenage children. Since moving into the house in 2020, Shanti has really enjoyed her garden, nurturing it every day, bringing happiness to the family and passers-by.

Shanti grew up on farming land in the countryside in Nepal. She worked on the land, learning how to grow rice, wheat, sweetcorn, holy basil and much more. Growing plants was part of her upbringing and taught her where food came from and key gardening skills.

Shanti explains the mental, spiritual, physical and economic benefits of gardening:

- Less screen time for people of all ages.
- Enjoyment, happiness and excitement for all who see the garden.

- Conversations start with neighbours and passers-by.
- Self-satisfaction, knowing you have nurtured life.
- Mental health benefits.
- Food and herb growing, encouraging wildlife.
- Learning where food comes from.

Pots are ideal to grow vegetables and plants on a patio, plus you can easily transport them indoors if needed. All space is available in the garden, especially when growing upwards.

Shanti adds: "Your attitude to growing makes a huge difference to appreciating and nurturing plants and flowers to grow. Choosing to grow something with meaning and purpose also gives meaning and purpose to life, which is infectious to others."



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-shanti-and-puspa-garden-bs2

Wildlife gardening and photography Stephanie's story

"We are all aware of climate change, but it seemed too big a problem to change myself. I was able to make wildlife adjustments to my small garden and saw the benefits quickly".

Stephanie lives in Stoke Bishop, BS9, and has created a wildlife haven in her urban garden, which was previously a mud bath/football pitch for her children! Stephanie has invested time to develop her love for both wildlife and photography, reaping the benefits the green space gives her.

They installed a pond, and within two weeks newts had moved in, before they had added any pond plants. After buying some native pond plants, it took a year for the pond to properly establish. Frogs, hoverflies, common blue and red damselflies and dragonflies are now all pond residents, with welcome visits from birds and mammals.

During lockdown, Stephanie's garden was not cut as she didn't have access to a lawn mower. She noticed many types of grass, clover and dandelions – which the bees loved! She saw beauty in them, rather than seeing them as 'weeds'. Stephanie now cuts her grass annually in August and watches out for ground-nesting bees. In the shaded areas, bluebells, snake's-head fritillary and wild daffodils thrive.



STEPHANIE CHADWICK



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/case-study-tw-wildlife-gardening-photography-stephanie-chadwick-bs9

Greener Streets Grenville's story

Grenville formed a local residents' association in BS5 to help make their street and the local area more green, beautiful and sustainable. After personally reaping the benefits of transforming his small urban garden into a wildlife haven, he wanted to share this joy, wellbeing and knowledge with the community.

The residents' association created their group, received funding, created a constitution and opened a street bank



SOPHIE BANCROFT

account to help one another improve their gardens. Neighbours regularly share wildlife sightings and tips. They also meet up to help celebrate work and support one another by sharing advice, plants and gardening help. The street was also tidied up through the removal of scrap metal and litter.

Beautiful rowan trees were added to the street after they got permission from the council. Trees bring so many benefits to urban areas – cooling the temperature, reducing flooding risk, providing multiple wildlife habitats, food sources and shelter, while being aesthetically pleasing, raising spirits and happiness levels.

Celebrated front garden ideas:

- Green bin covers
- Hanging baskets
- Trees
- Window boxes and containers
- Climbers

Grenville also runs 'St George in Bloom', a local gardening competition, and has branched out to local community spaces. He has enhanced unloved community spaces to include wildlife-friendly habitats.



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-bs5-garden-st-george-bloom

Newtown Nature Hemlata's story

Hemlata, Shanti and Puspas daughter, set up Newtown Nature Club in the summer of 2021. She invited local people to attend her free nature club, aimed at children with their parents, and meeting every Sunday to carry out wildlife-friendly activities in their local park.

She was able to learn gardening skills from her mother, Shanti. By teaching Hemlata some of these techniques, important intergenerational skills and connections to their roots are shared and passed on.

During lockdown, Hemlata and her friends were involved with the youth movement 'Action for Conservation'. They attended online meetings, which struck a chord with their values and desire to do something positive about the climate crisis, so they wrote articles and reflected on current issues.

This support and inspiration prompted Hemlata to apply for funding to make Newtown Nature Club a reality.

Hemlata completed a Leadership Skills course and received funding to help kick-start Newtown Nature. She invested time, reached out to the local community and purchased refreshments, pots, banners, plants, art materials and prizes.

Hemlata's fears that nobody would turn up were eased by her family and friends' support.



HEMLATA PANT



avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-story-newtown-nature-club-bs2

Thank you

Thanks to your continued support, we're reaching more people than ever before and creating a community that is committed to protecting wildlife.

Let's create a wilder Avon together

Share your actions for nature and be part of Team Wilder. Help motivate others to take action for nature by adding to the Team Wilder actions map today at avonwildlifetrust.org/team-wilder

FOCUS ON...

Sharing your actions for nature

A message from
Sophie Bancroft, Team
Wilder Communications
and Engagement Officer



Everything you do for wildlife makes a difference – share what you're doing on the Team Wilder map

Let's bring nature back, together

I hope you've enjoyed hearing from your fellow wildlife enthusiasts from across the region.

I feel very lucky that every week, I get to chat with people like Hemlata and Grenville who are taking practical, positive action for wildlife and people. I also hear, and share, people's concerns about the scale of the challenge we face when we set our hearts on bringing nature back to our doorsteps.

1 in 4 people taking action for wildlife by 2030

That's why the ambition that 1 in 4 people takes action is so important, and why I'm asking for your help.

You may have spotted the recent Bristol 24/7 article which I thought summarised what Team Wilder is all about brilliantly:

"A phenomenon called 'social tipping points'. It means that any kind of movement or initiative would need roughly 25 per cent to spark change.

"Team Wilder started with the fact that the total area of gardens in the UK is greater than protected nature reserves, which means we can all take impact actions no matter how small or large."

Team Wilder connects us

I invite you to take a moment to celebrate your actions. Whether you're planting, pond-digging, protecting or pressing for change – you can shine a light on the difference you're making by adding your action to our Team Wilder map at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-spring-magazine-action



Our aim is to reflect every single postcode area in Avon, so that every neighbourhood can benefit from local inspiration.

Please, help tip the scales in favour of wildlife.

- Share your action for nature in your patch, inspire others and learn from the Team Wilder community.
- We want to hear from the whole team, so to share your action for nature go online using the link below or send back your response slip if you've received one from us.

Thank you. Together, we can bring about the change that nature needs.

Sophie Bancroft,
Team Wilder Communications and
Engagement Officer



Inspire others by sharing your action for nature on our Team Wilder map at avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/team-wilder-spring-magazine-action

WILD NEWS

All the latest regional and national news from The Wildlife Trusts

REGIONAL

Wildlife Champions cornerstone of nature movement

Avon Wildlife Trust has received a grant of over £235,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to help establish a network of Wildlife Champions across the region.

These Wildlife Champions will facilitate a movement of community action for nature, based on peer-led advice and training. This is part of the Team Wilder approach, where people are encouraged to share what they're doing to make a difference for nature, in order to motivate and inspire others with what they've learnt and achieved.

Thanks to players of the National Lottery and match funding from Patagonia's 1% for the Planet commitment, an initial network of at least 12 volunteer Wildlife Champions will co-design work with their local community, focusing on priority areas of social and nature deprivation within our region. These Champions will work with residents to establish what they need to create more space for nature and improve biodiversity in their area, and then tailor training and resources to help achieve the community's goals.

To facilitate this, Avon Wildlife Trust has recruited a Team Wilder Community Ecologist and a Wildlife Champions Programme Assistant, and the project will be led by our People and Wildlife Manager, Irene Correia.

The Wildlife Champions Programme Assistant, Emma Fennell Hodson, will be working with the Trust's Volunteer Manager, Christian Emmerson, to support the development of the Wildlife Champions programme. They will be coordinating the Champions' training and resource needs, ensuring that they are empowered to deliver, and provide leadership for, community-led action for wildlife.



BRON LLOYD-EDWARDS

Team Wilder Community Ecologist, Esther Frizell-Armitage, will be on hand to provide communities and individuals with advice on creating small-scale wildlife habitats in their area. Esther will support the community-led action taking place by providing workshops and training, hosting a regular advisory service to enhance green and blue spaces across the region.

Julie Doherty, Head of Communities and Engagement at Avon Wildlife Trust, said:

"We're delighted to have received this support for our Wildlife Champions project, thanks to the National Lottery players.

"This project is designed to resource and connect community-led activity, and champion nature in our everyday lives. We'll be providing free ecological advice for residents across Avon, and supporting local Champions to help create a wilder, nature-rich future for all.

"At Avon Wildlife Trust, we've got ambitious goals we want to achieve for

nature – 1 in 4 people taking action works out as 250,000 people in the West of England. That's why we need more people on nature's side, being part of Team Wilder and making space for wildlife where they live."

Stuart McLeod, Director England – London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:

"At the Heritage Fund, we're incredibly proud to be playing a role in ensuring our natural heritage and amazing wildlife is safeguarded for generations to come.

"Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, we can support Avon Wildlife Trust to discover and support Wildlife Champions within our communities and help connect these communities with the nature and wildlife that is on their doorsteps."



To find out more, visit
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-champions

UK UPDATE

Bottlenose dolphins are a regular sight in UK seas

From flukes to flu: our 2022 marine review

A

year of exciting marine sightings included a species completely new to science. *Pseudumbellula scotiae* is a deep-sea coral that was discovered 240 miles off Scotland's west coast, at depths of up to 2,000m in the Rockall Trough. There were also several species spotted in UK waters for the first time, with Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteers discovering the first official record of a sea slug named *Babakina anadoni*. Another sea slug found in Cornwall, *Corambe testudinaria*, was also new for the country, whilst Manx Wildlife Trust recorded the first ever swordfish off the Isle of Man.

Whales and dolphins delighted people from Scotland to Scilly, with sightings of pilot, fin, minke, and humpback whales showing how populations are recovering following bans on commercial whaling. Two new orca calves were spotted off Shetland in January, whilst volunteers recorded over 80 sightings of minke whales off the Yorkshire coast in a single morning in August. Monitoring by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust also suggests that bottlenose dolphins are now present off Yorkshire year-round.

In more distressing news, seabird colonies around the UK were devastated by our worst ever outbreak of avian flu, caused by intensive poultry farming. Tens

of thousands of seabirds were killed by the disease, including terns, gulls, gannets, and skuas. Research shows that as much as 13% of the UK population of great skuas — 8% of the global population — have died.

Unfortunately, avian flu was just one of the issues putting pressure on our sensitive sea life. There were multiple reports of people disturbing marine animals, from jet skiers ploughing through colonies of seabirds to beachgoers distressing seals by getting too close. Pollution continued to be a major problem, with several oil spills including 500 barrels leaked from a cracked pipe off North Wales. A study of dead Manx shearwaters on Skomer island found the majority had eaten plastic, with adults feeding pieces to chicks. Scientists fear that 99% of seabirds may have plastics in their stomachs by 2050.

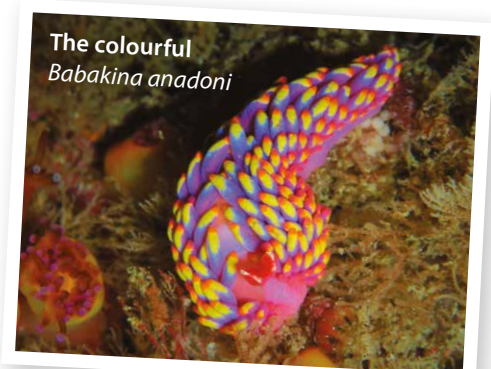
However, it wasn't all doom and gloom for our seas, as Wildlife Trusts embarked on many projects to restore coastal habitats. These wild places often have a vital role to play in sequestering and storing carbon, as well as sheltering wildlife. Several Wildlife Trusts started projects to plant seagrass meadows, which can absorb and store carbon up to 35 times faster than tropical rainforests. Essex Wildlife Trust created a toolkit for restoring saltmarsh, another key habitat,

to inspire and guide similar projects around the UK.

The UK will become the first nation to produce a complete map of its blue carbon stores. The Blue Carbon Mapping project — led by the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) in collaboration with The Wildlife Trusts, WWF and RSPB — has begun the task and will publish results this summer.

Wildlife Trusts also helped empower young people and local communities to save our seas. Projects ranged from art students cleaning beaches with Durham Wildlife Trust, to Cheshire Wildlife Trust training teachers to deliver lessons on wildlife in the Dee Estuary.

Discover more about these and other stories in our full 2022 marine review: wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-2022



UK UPDATE

The Great Big Nature survey launches

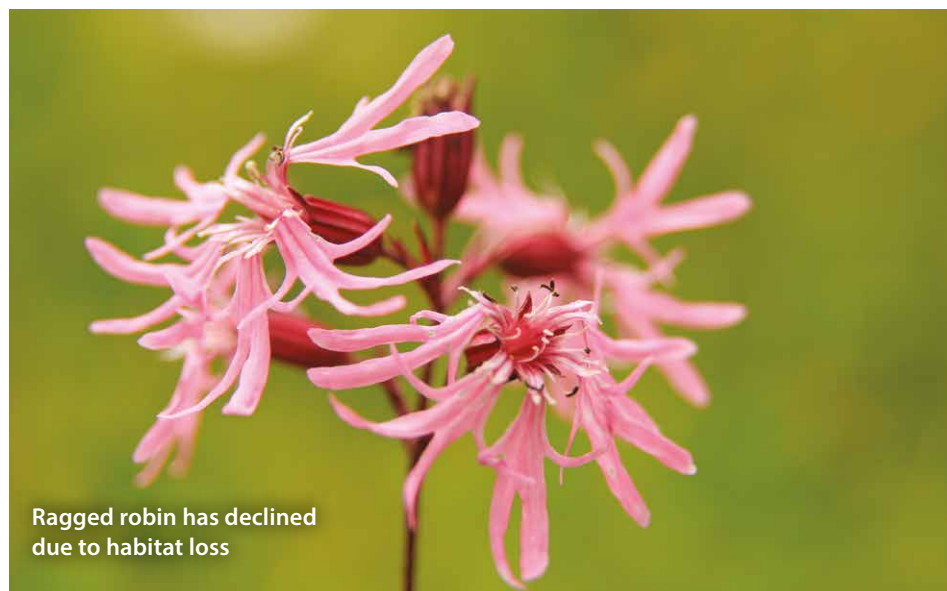
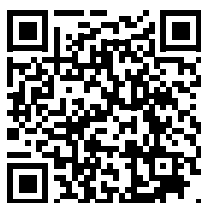
To help us understand how much nature matters to you, The Wildlife Trusts are launching The Great Big Nature Survey this spring. We want to hear your views on some of the most important issues affecting nature and wildlife, and your relationship with the natural world. How often do you get out into nature? Should people try to control nature to better protect it? How important are green spaces to you? What roles should people, business, and government have in looking after nature? Should local communities be at the centre of nature conservation on their doorstep?

Whatever your views on nature, however important (or not) it is to you, make your voice heard by taking The Great Big Nature survey today. With respondents from a variety of backgrounds and with many different experiences in and views

of nature and wild places, The Great Big Nature Survey will reveal what people in the UK and islands really think about nature and how we, as a society, should protect it. Results will also help The Wildlife Trusts to hold governments to account over environmental policies and priorities.

After you've completed the survey, why not share it with your friends and family?

Take the survey at wildlifetrusts.org/great-big-nature-survey or scan the QR code



Ragged robin has declined due to habitat loss

Plotted plants

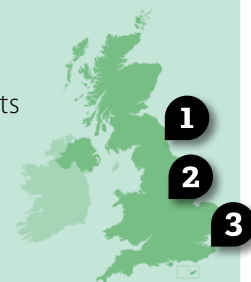
The Wildlife Trusts are co-sponsoring production of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) Plant Atlas 2020, which is published this March. The Atlas is based on more than 30 million records collected by thousands of botanists between 2000 and 2019, providing

an unrivalled picture of the changing distribution and fortunes of plants in Britain and Ireland. This knowledge is likely to provide evidence to help us protect nature across the UK.

Find out more bsbi.org/atlas-2020

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Hen party

The Northumberland Hen Harrier Protection Partnership, of which Northumberland Wildlife Trust is a member, announced a bumper breeding year for hen harriers in the county. Last year the partnership monitored nine nests, seven of which were successful — fledging a total of 26 chicks. This is eight more than in 2021 and brings the total since 2015 to 106 fledged birds.

wtru.st/26-harriers

2 Give peat a chance

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has been awarded a £100,000 Discovery Grant by Natural England to protect and restore the county's peatlands. Peatland is a vital habitat, not just for wildlife but also for storing carbon. The grant will allow the Wildlife Trust to identify mechanisms to restore the region's peatlands, so they can absorb and lock away carbon.

wtru.st/Derby-peat-grant

3 Mr Blean

Kent Wildlife Trust has welcomed a male bison into the herd at West Blean and Thornden Wood. The bull's arrival was delayed by post Brexit complications, but he has now joined the three females that were released in July, and the calf born in September. The bison have 50 hectares to roam as part of the Wilder Blean Project, a joint wilding initiative.

wtru.st/bison-bull





North Somerset rewilding project a success

We're celebrating the results seen from North Somerset Council's rewilding work, gathered by Rewilding Champions that volunteered with us to monitor and survey sites across the area that had been allowed to grow wild. This was made possible thanks to National Lottery players and funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Council, which declared a Climate and Nature Emergency in 2019, introduced a rewilding programme soon afterwards to help improve biodiversity and create habitats across its parks and open spaces. With the help of volunteers, a total of 30,000 young trees were planted and an area of around 400,000m² of tall grass created.

The North Somerset Rewilding Champions project – delivered between July 2021 and November 2022 – saw local residents getting involved in measuring the biodiversity of the sites while learning more about the wildlife on their patch. By the end of the project, 10 of these people became Rewilding Champions.

Throughout the project, the team organised and led:

- 30 public engagement sessions, attended by 372 people, to provide training on techniques to survey plants, grasses, bees and butterflies,

- 70 survey sessions, attended by 139 volunteers totalling around 300 volunteering hours, to help the Council monitor and record biodiversity changes created by rewilding.

The project found a much greater variety and abundance of wildlife within the rewilded areas, including:

- increased flower diversity within tall grass areas compared to those areas which are regularly mown,
- more varied plant species within the rewilded areas,
- an increase in the number of insects recorded,
- an increase of the number of species of insects, known as 'species richness', within the tall grass areas. This was found to be nearly three times higher than within the mown areas.

Irene Correia, People and Wildlife Manager at Avon Wildlife Trust, said: "We want to see 30% of land and water-bodies in the West of England managed for the benefit of nature by 2030 in order to tackle ecological and climate emergencies. Projects that allow our green spaces to grow and thrive naturally – like North Somerset Council's rewilding initiative – are essential in making a difference for wildlife.


"As well as the tangible difference that's been made for plant life, insects

and birds, we've been able to see first-hand what a difference this project has made to the local community. A special 'thank you' must go to the volunteers who've gone on to become Rewilding Champions – their amazing contribution has played a major part in creating a lasting legacy for nature in the area."

Councillor Mike Solomon, North Somerset Council's Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services, said: "The Rewilding Champions project has helped us to deliver an ambitious rewilding programme to significantly transform how we manage our open spaces.

"Thanks to all the residents who signed up to volunteer, including our Rewilding Champions. By creating more habitats for wildlife to flourish and increasing biodiversity, we're helping to mitigate the effects of climate change and address the nature emergency."

Rewilding Champions will continue working with Council officers to help train future volunteers, monitor sites and look for ways to make further improvements across the area.

 If you're interested in getting involved, email your name and contact details to **rewilding.volunteering@n-somerset.gov.uk**

Thank you for your continuing commitment to wildlife and donations to our Ash Dieback Appeal. As a result, our nature reserves team has been able to spend the winter months making real moves forward with mitigating the impact of this devastating disease.

Your generous donations raised almost £5,000 to help keep our wild spaces safe. Specialist contractors worked across several sites to ensure public safety, focusing on areas of high footfall such as paths, roadsides, buildings and car parks. Folly Farm, Weston Big Wood, Dolebury Warren and Hutton Hill on the Mendip ridge have seen significant improvements thanks to your support.

Raising awareness of this disease is just as important as managing its impact. With your donations, we've been able to put up informative signage and interpretation boards about ash dieback on our affected sites, allowing us to close some permissive routes while works are taking place and removing the need for more intrusive management.



ABBIE HALL

Your support tackles ash dieback

The work doesn't stop here. Ash dieback is something we'll need to constantly monitor and manage for years to come. This is imperative for us to ensure the biodiversity of our reserves, by protecting their habitats and looking for opportunities to create new ones from the resulting dead wood. We also need to

continue to keep our sites safe for you, for our hard-working volunteers and for our dedicated staff.

 To help us continue this vital work, visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ash-dieback](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ash-dieback)

Beaver group branches out

The Avon and Frome Catchments Beaver Project is going from strength to strength, as interest in these riparian rodents grows along with their populations in our area.

Given legal protection under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) since October last year, our aquatic architect friends are gradually returning and have upwards of 13 established territories and more than 50 individuals, plus their kits, across the catchment.

Beavers are a keystone species and one of nature's ecosystem engineers. They build dams, dig canals, coppice trees and produce large quantities of dead wood – all of which combine to create and maintain hugely valuable habitats where wildlife can flourish.

Working with Beaver Trust, Natural England and local partner organisations with a shared interest in the health of our river and stream environment, our

Nature's Recovery Officer, Rob Stephens, has begun work to locate areas where beavers may cause potential issues through their engineering activities in the modern, often heavily modified landscape. We're able to do this vital work with thanks to your membership and funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust and the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership.

Well-established techniques, following five decades of experience of beavers living within human populated landscapes in Bavaria, mean the majority of these issues can be managed. Although it's early days for England's beaver renaissance, we will learn to live with these beautiful creatures again, and reap the rewards of their tireless habitat creation work.

 For more information, visit [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers)



ROB STEPHENS



NICK UPTON - CORNWALL WILDLIFE TRUST

MY WILD LIFE



Eric Swithinbank

Eric is a Community Ecologist, a newly created role working as part of the Bristol Community Climate Action project. He will be helping communities in two neighbourhoods to enhance their local green space for wildlife and nature-friendly food production.



Many of my early days were spent exploring Holyford Woods in East Devon, my local nature reserve and a fantastic example of ancient woodland conserved thanks to fundraising by the local community. I remember exploring the Holyford Goyle, and feeling invigorated whilst also at peace and deeply connected to the natural world. I think we are evolutionarily hardwired to appreciate and feel good within healthy natural ecosystems and I wanted to learn more. Discovering how little of this undisturbed habitat remains, I felt inspired to work towards creating more space for nature whilst also sharing that feeling of connectedness I had experienced.

While studying Environmental Science at Plymouth University, I discovered the concept of rewilding and started volunteering for Moor Trees, a fantastic organisation creating native woodland on and around Dartmoor. This led to an eco-skills conservation traineeship with Natural England and then two years as a ranger for the National Trust in East Devon, looking after large sections of the South West Coast Path. I found the

contrast between upland acid moorlands and chalk clifftop meadows fascinating. Here in Bristol, I look forward to learning more about allowing wildlife to thrive within an urban environment and inspiring a diverse range of people from different backgrounds to engage with the natural world.

My new role focuses on utilising all the green space possible (including people's gardens or council-owned land) for the benefit of wildlife and nature-friendly food production. The project is community-led, meaning that at every stage, from planning to delivery and sustained aftercare, the community is the driving force. It's really refreshing to be involved in a project rooted in grassroots people power as opposed to a top-down approach. There has been a lot of noise made about the ecological emergency declared by Bristol City Council and bold targets arising from the government's 25-year environment plan. If we are to meet these, more action is needed from organisations and members of the public. There have been some great initiatives, such as Avon Wildlife Trust's My Wild City project and the fantastic work taking place at Grow Wilder. Now

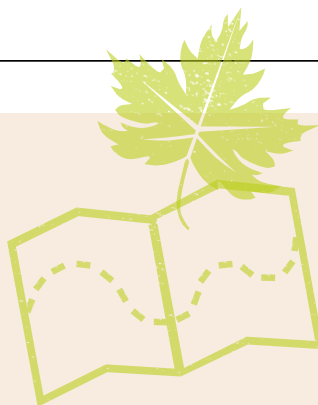
it's time to keep this momentum and take it a step further. I'm hoping my ecological knowledge, practical skills and proactive nature will help me meet with local residents and get on the ground to support the recovery of our wildlife.

My role is a part of the Bristol Community Climate Action Plan – a wider plan co-created with the community that looks to change the way we live. As part of this, I would love to see people taking back ownership of our communal green spaces. This would be a fantastic opportunity for local people to create nature-friendly food growing spaces (in balance with other uses such as amenity and sport) and connect more to the natural world and their food as well as providing a sense of belonging and wellbeing.



We're going to be introducing an 'Ask an ecologist' section to our magazine, where people like Eric will be able to answer your ecology questions. To submit your nature query for consideration, please email communications@avonwildlifetrust.org.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.

Gordano Conservation Group

This active volunteering group continues to meet once a month on Sundays at various reserves from around 10am until 1pm. All are welcome, with no need to book – just bring suitable, waterproof clothing, sturdy footwear and a drink. For more information on this volunteering opportunity, visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events or contact Sarah Beeley on 07853 248476

Sunday 23 April Prior's Wood, BS48 1PE – General reserve management required ahead of the busy bluebell season.

Sunday 21 May Middle Hill Common, BS20 8LA – Maintaining the permissive bridleway and pedestrian access.

Sunday 25 June Tickenham Hill, BS21 6RQ – Bracken control in the lower meadow to help restore this species-rich grassland.

Sunday 30 July Weston Big Wood, BS20 8PG – Ragwort pulling in the meadow ahead of the hay cut.

Sunday 20 August Weston Moor (Taggart's Wood), BS20 8PZ – Clearance work along the footpaths.

Sunday 24 September Clapton Moor, BS20 7RJ – We will be using scythes, tree loppers to clear the Clapton Circuit.

Sunday 29 October Weston Moor (Taggart's Wood), BS20 8PZ – Scrub control on this lowland calcareous SSSI grassland.

Keynsham Local Group

Keynsham Local Group has a number of talks lined up, with a suggested donation of £3 for each event to support Avon Wildlife Trust's work. For more visit: keynshamawt.org and contact Kathy at keynshamawt@gmail.com Planned activities and talks include:

Sunday 23 April Dave's Dawn Chorus – Meet at The Shallow Car Park, Saltford, BS31 3EX, and wear warm, waterproof clothes and sturdy shoes. Taking place from 4.30 – 8.30am

Saturday 23 September Pool Dipping for the Under-7s – From 2pm at Wellsay School, BS31 1PH. Booking is essential, details available at keynshamawt.org.uk

Sunday 24 September Pool Dipping for the Under-7s – From 2pm at The River Chew, BS31 1EU. Booking is essential, details available at keynshamawt.org.uk

Friday 13 October "Taking Action Today for Curlews Tomorrow", with Ellen Bradley from Curlew Action. 7.30 – 9.30pm, Baptist Church Hall, BS31 1DS

Portishead Local Group

Portishead Local Group has a number of events lined up before and after their summer break. Non-members are welcome, 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 April "Wild Brazil", an illustrated talk by Grete Howard about some of Brazil's beautiful wildlife areas

Saturday 20 May Plant sale and afternoon tea. Refreshments and much more from 2 – 4.30pm, free entry

Friday 22 September "Eight-Legged Wonder", an illustrated talk by Mark Pajak about the habitat and lifestyles of spiders

Friday 28 October "Birds of the Severn Estuary", an illustrated talk by Rupert Higgins

Saturday 28 October Autumn fair. Plants, books, cakes, crafts for sale, tombola and white elephant stall, from 10am – 1pm, free entry

Southwold Local Group

Southwold Local Group has a number of events lined up throughout the summer, often volunteering at local nature reserves. For these events, please wear sturdy footwear and bring your own gloves if you can.

Saturday 15 April Goose Green Workday – We shall be undertaking reserve maintenance, such as path clearance and litter picking. Meet at 10am on the bridge, west of Oak Close, BS37 5TN.

Sunday 14 May Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve Workday – A combination of a spring clean and planting out native flower plug plants. Meet at 10am at the Shire Way entrance, BS37 8US.

Sunday 2 July Dodington Parish Council Jubilee Guided Walk – This guided afternoon walk will cover the rich flower meadows and the characteristics of the ancient woodland. Meet at 2pm at the Shire Way entrance, BS37 5TN

Saturday 8 July Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve Workday – A deep clean and cutting back intruding vegetation along the path. Meet at 10am at the Shire Way entrance, BS37 8US.



Volunteering!

We have a range of volunteering opportunities available, from practical conservation to administrative roles. It's a great way to connect with likeminded people while making a tangible difference for nature. To find out our latest volunteering opportunities, why not sign up for our volunteering newsletter? Visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities to sign up and find out more about our current opportunities to get involved.

We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our new Volunteering Manager, Christian Emmerson! Christian joined us at the beginning of January and has loved getting out and about meeting our amazing volunteers.



CHRISTIAN EMMERSON



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

Wildlife Gardening on a Budget

It doesn't cost the earth to make a wildlife friendly garden. Indeed, the less money you spend the better for your pocket, wildlife and the planet.

Rather than buying plants grown in peat-based compost and plastic pots, grow them from seed in your own compost and an upcycled container. Take cuttings and dig up and divide plants to propagate more, and if you have too many why not share them with friends and neighbours who might return the favour? It's a good idea to save seeds rather than buy fresh every spring, but don't forget how good birds are at farming — if you've ever watched a goldfinch feeding on knapweed seed you'll know that half of it ends up on the ground to grow into next year's larder. Look out for berrying seedlings such as holly and hawthorn at the base of fences or other spots where birds like to perch, and — with the landowner's permission — dig them up to grow for free in your garden.

It's not just gardening that can be done cheaply. Want a log pile? Keep an eye out for neighbours doing tree work and ask if you can have a log or two. Want a new bird box? Find instructions online to make your own. Other ways to help wildlife require no money at all: let grass grow long around the edges, avoid cutting back plants and start a nice open compost pile at the end of the garden. Nature costs nothing, we just have to let her in.

Get more tips for helping nature at home from wildlifetrusts.org/gardening



Kate Bradbury

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



1

**Grow annuals from seed**

Pollinator-friendly favourites like sunflowers and cosmos are easy — simply sow in pots of peat-free compost and plant out in early summer.

2

**Make new plants from old**

Dig up herbaceous plants like nepeta and cranesbills and use an old bread knife to slice the rootball in two, with intact stems. Replant and water well.

3

**Take softwood cuttings**

Cut 10cm shoots from shrubs like lavender, remove lower leaves and push into pots of moist, gritty compost. Cover with a plastic bag sealed with an elastic band and keep on a bright windowsill for eight weeks.

4

**Make a log pile**

Neighbours pruning or cutting down a tree? Ask for some logs! Piled up in a corner or beneath a bench they provide an easy, inexpensive habitat.

5

**Be less tidy**

Let an area of grass grow long, allow leaves to pile up in borders, deadhead and cut back less.

6

**Make your own habitat boxes**

From bird and bat boxes to hedgehog feeding stations and even “toad abodes”, there are plenty of instructions online on how to make your own bespoke wildlife homes.

7

**Grow your own bird food**

Home-grown bird food is free: avoid cutting back seed-bearing plants like lavender, knapweed, grasses, sunflower and *Verbena bonariensis*, and watch the birds flock to feed from them.

8

**Enjoy free gifts from birds**

Birds make great farmers. Keep an eye out for holly and hawthorn seedlings, often found at the base of fences or other ‘perches’. With the landowners permission, dig them up and plant in your garden!



Supported by
Avon
Wildlife Trust

2023 WILDLIFE GARDENING COMPETITION

**Are you making your green space more welcoming for wildlife?
Then we want to celebrate you!**

This competition is open to individuals, community groups, schools and food growers with gardens of any size. For more details and to submit your green space, go to:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-gardening-competition

or scan the QR code below



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www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/teamwilder

Artwork by Hannah Dunn

Competition closes 16 July 2023, terms and conditions apply