

# Wildlife

Issue 98 • WINTER 2013



Avon

## The urban issue



**Chris Baines**  
at the AGM

**Wildlife Photographer**  
of the Year

**Jolly Folly Apple Day**  
Wild events



Includes  
UK news &  
stories

Protecting Wildlife for the Future

# Welcome



**Dr Bevis Watts**  
Chief Executive,  
Avon Wildlife Trust

“ We live in the fastest growing City Region in the country, one that is tasked with delivering 100,000 new jobs and tens of thousands of new homes by 2030, possibly increasing the population by a further 15 to 20% in that period.

We also live in a region that will be host to *Bristol European Green Capital 2015* which provides us with an opportunity to show that we can reconnect people with wildlife and reconnect our economy and our natural environment, the fundamental source of all economic value.

For these reasons we made the theme of our recent annual general meeting *urban wildlife* and have dedicated this issue to that topic. The leading environmentalist and Vice President of the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, Chris Baines, was the main speaker at the Annual General Meeting and inspired us all with case studies of how we can care for nature differently in our urban environments. So, as we move towards 2015 you will see the Trust increasing its work to advocate creating homes for wildlife in our urban spaces and inspiring people to do so.

One new development, which we hope will inspire many more people to learn about wildlife and care for it, is the Trust becoming the Wildlife Partner for the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition in Bristol which is the most visited annual exhibition (20,000 visitors in 2012). This year the world's most amazing wildlife pictures will be combined with a natural history exhibition that includes stories of the Trust's work and its relevance to a number of species and conservation issues. This is a huge opportunity for the Trust to promote its work and the importance of supporting local wildlife to thousands of people so please do visit the exhibition yourself and encourage non-members to visit and find out more.

In this magazine you can also read about urban wildlife sites you may not have yet discovered, be inspired by the wildlife photographs that can be taken in your own neighbourhood or plan things to do in your garden to help wildlife.

We continue to support wildlife across every aspect of our region's landscape from advocacy against the badger cull to restoring precious grasslands. 2013 has been a year of significant change at the Trust and we have exciting aspirations for the Trust as we move into 2014. Please continue to support us in those aspirations and enjoy a very happy new year!

”



BERTIE GREGORY

Peregrine

## Your magazine

Avon Wildlife Trust is your local wildlife charity working to secure a strong future for the natural environment and to inspire people. With the support of 16,000 members, the Trust cares for 35 nature reserves, it runs educational and community programmes, advises landowners, and campaigns on issues that threaten wildlife habitats.

Edited by Dagmar Smeed  
Design by Kevin Lester  
Print by Burleigh Portishead  
Front cover images:  
Urban fox: Bertie Gregory  
AGM: Barbara Evripidou  
'Eye of a toad': 039 ©Mark Steichen (Luxembourg)  
Jolly Folly Apple Day: elanimages.co.uk  
All uncredited photos  
© Avon Wildlife Trust  
*Thank you to all contributors, especially Elan Images, Sam Hobson, Joe McSorley, Joe Middleton and Oliver Smart.*

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

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

**Portbury Wharf**  
A&W Building, The Docks,  
Newfoundland Way, Portishead  
BS20 7DF  
01275 817710

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Trustees of Avon Wildlife Trust.



Wildlife magazine is printed using 100% renewable energy on 100% recycled paper.

Registered charity no. 280422  
Registered company no. 1495108

# In this issue



## Wild news

- 4 ■ Our latest news and project updates
- 5 ■ Save money to save meadows, with Triodos

## Feature

- 8 ■ Chris Baines and the AGM
- 10 ■ Gardening for wildlife
- 11 ■ Wildlife Photographer of the Year

## Inspiring people

- 12 ■ Wild Schools
- 13 ■ Local groups
- 14 ■ Communities and Nature

## Ways into wildlife

- 15 ■ Winter wonders
- 16 ■ Around the reserves
- 18 ■ Best places for urban wildlife
- 20 ■ Seasonal stroll – CREATE urban walk

## Look out for...

- 22 ■ Urban animals

## Spotlight on...

- 24 ■ Guest members... the Hull Family

## Feature

- 25 ■ The Folly Farm Centre

## Across the UK

- 26 ■ UK News
- 29 ■ A forest full of fun
- 30 ■ A long old job
- 32 ■ Living seas
- 34 ■ Comment: Ecotherapy

## Avon Wildlife Trust

- 35 ■ Who's who

## Postscript...

- 36 ■ A word from Ed



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for the latest news and competitions. Please share your wildlife pictures and experiences! Teachers can check out the blog at [wildschools.org.uk](http://wildschools.org.uk) and follow @wildschools. Go to the website to sign up for eshots and event alerts!



[Twitter.com/avonwt](https://twitter.com/avonwt)  
[Facebook.com/avonwt](https://facebook.com/avonwt)

*At once a voice arose among  
 The bleak twigs overhead  
 In a full-hearted evensong  
 Of joy illimited;  
 An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
 In blast-beruffled plume,  
 Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
 Upon the growing gloom.  
 So little cause for carolings*

*Of such ecstatic sound  
 Was written on terrestrial things  
 Afar or nigh around,  
 That I could think there trembled through  
 His happy good-night air  
 Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
 And I was unaware.*

*The Darkling Thrush, Thomas Hardy*



# Roundhouse opens



BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

Trustee Cecile Gillard officially opens the roundhouse

## Children from New Fosseway School, volunteers and funders were amongst the guests at the official opening of the Feed Bristol roundhouse in November.

The roundhouse, which received a £9,660 grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Awards for All, is a space for education workshops, cooking, community activities and volunteers.

Feed Bristol has engaged with 340 volunteers in wildlife-friendly food growing, helping people into work, giving them the confidence to start up their own allotments and businesses, and a total of 13,506 people through a range of activities, workshops, training days, and events.

It was also used as a case study for the successful Bristol European Green Capital of the Year 2015 bid and is a finalist in the Local Food Recognition Awards 2013.

Chief Executive Dr Bevis Watts, commented: "This latest addition to the Trust's Feed Bristol site will allow the team to extend our educational, training and community engagement activities."

"There is a real and growing demand for Feed Bristol to run more workshops, and especially those which help people prepare, cook and preserve vegetables, and which help them to learn about the importance of nature to our food provision and our health and wellbeing."

Feed Bristol collaborated with Shift Bristol, a local organisation that provides training in sustainable building and systems.

## Putting fun into fundraising

### Strong volunteers, members and staff joined forces in September to form The Ruddy Darters dragonboat team to raise money for the Trust's work.

The Ruddy Darters, named after the dragonfly, took part in Bristol's annual charity dragonboat race. It was a fantastic day, with over 40 teams, all raising money for charities around the region.

The team came a proud 26th, knocking a grand total of six seconds off their time and raising more than £1,500 for the Trust. Next year we'd like to enter more teams so if you'd like to organise one of your own please contact Community Groups and Partnerships Manager Julie Doherty.



Trust team paddles for cash

# Crayfish conserved

**A pioneering project to protect native white-clawed crayfish is coming to an end in December.**

The Trust's Species Officer Lydia Robbins has led 14 translocations, moving thousands of crayfish from threatened populations to 'Ark' sites.

It was part of the South West Crayfish Project, a multi-agency initiative which included the Trust, Buglife and the Environment Agency.

A recent translocation involved the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Ministry of Defence land.

Lydia, who was interviewed about crayfish on ITV 1's *Countrywise*, commented: "Establishing Ark sites is our best chance of ensuring that the south west native crayfish have a brighter future. We hope that the crayfish will thrive in their new homes."

Crayfish are under threat, mainly as a result of the introduction of non-native American signal crayfish in 1976 and the spread of crayfish plague. It is estimated that 70% of the region's white-clawed crayfish population has been lost since the 1970s.



Species Officer Lydia Robbins, with crayfish

RYAN BURRELL



JOANNE DORNING

## Urban foxes on film

**Bristol University PhD student Jo Dorning is studying urban red foxes in Bristol's Stoke Bishop, Sea Mills and Westbury-on-Trym.**

Part of The Bristol Fox Group, her work explores the urban red foxes' social behaviour and space they use. She has installed motion-sensing wildlife cameras in residents' back gardens to find out which gardens each fox visits, how regularly, how long and what they do in each foraging patch.

Residents are asked to complete a short survey, and receive an electronic copy of the best pictures of the foxes and other wildlife in their garden.

Jo commented: "Wildlife cameras are a fantastic way of finding out just how many animals are visiting your garden day and night. Badgers, foxes and all manner of birds will be caught on camera performing more natural and sometimes bizarre behaviours than we could ever expect to see in person."

## Save money to save meadows!

**Supporters are helping to raise money for the Trust's work for meadows by opening a savings account with Triodos Bank.**

The ethical bank is donating £40 to the Trust for every savings account opened. The money raised could help us:

- Buy wildflower seed and hand tools for volunteers;
- Make farm visits to advise and support landowners;
- Run workshops for schoolchildren.

Triodos Bank, which has offices in Bristol, only lends savers' money to organisations working to benefit people or the environment.

The initiative covers a range of products including saving ethically online, placing funds into a bond or moving to an ethical ISA.



MARK SMITH F.W.A.G.

Open an account with Triodos Bank, deposit £100 or more and they'll donate

**£40**  
to us\*

\*The donation can only be paid if applicants complete an online application form having visited this website by either clicking on a link supplied by the Avon Wildlife Trust, or by typing the URLs [www.triodos.co.uk/avonwildlife](http://www.triodos.co.uk/avonwildlife) in their browser address bar. The donation will be paid after the balance of the account reaches £100. One donation made per customer (one donation made in the event of joint account opening). Triodos reserves the right to decline any application. This offer may be changed or withdrawn without notice at any time. Thank you for your support.

# Planning and policy



## The Trust has responded to the final consultation on National Grid's preferred route for its Hinkley Point C Connection.

We are particularly concerned with the lack of information available on biodiversity impacts, especially as the planning application is due to be submitted early in 2014.

We've highlighted the potential damage of under-grounding through Portbury Wharf nature reserve and the Trust is discussing this further with National Grid.

The Trust has also objected to the proposal for the South Bristol Link Road as there is insufficient information and the potential impacts on designated sites, species and habitats.

The Wildlife Trusts have expressed their concerns, alongside a large cross-section of environmental and conservation groups including Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, over the Government's headlong rush into fracking. We've stated that 'a dash for shale gas and oil extraction is incompatible with our responsibility to address climate change and to protect wildlife and the natural environment'.

The Trust has published its own statement on fracking, which is available on the website with other planning and policy statements.

# Operation Splatter

## Wildlife lovers are being asked to help cut the amount of road-kill in the UK by reporting any animal body they find.

Scientists at Cardiff University are creating a road-kill map of Britain in the hope it can cut wildlife casualties. The project, called Operation Splatter, is asking the public to sign up as 'splatter spotters' and send their findings via social media.

'Splatter spotters' report their road-kill sightings on Facebook and Twitter @projectsplatter and data is collated to establish whether there are any trends or hotspots. It is hoped the road-kill Map could lead to work to reduce the number of wildlife killed on Britain's roads.

Dr Sarah Perkins, who is leading the research project, commented: "A few years ago it was fairly common to see a dead hedgehog at the side of the road, now this is a rare sight.

**AWT**  
**ecological consultancy**  
**Working for wildlife**



The Trust's Consultancy offers a comprehensive range of ecological services to benefit both wildlife and the interests of clients, and any profits go to support the charitable work of the Trust.

- Ecological impact assessments and mitigation
- Protected species and habitat surveys
- Biodiversity Action Plans and site management plans
- Phase 1 habitat survey
- Habitat creation and restoration
- BREEAM and code for Sustainable Homes ecology assessments

**To find out more**  
Email enquiries@awtecologicalconsultancy.org.uk  
Contact Sarah Dale, Principal Ecologist 0117 917 7273  
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/consultancy](http://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/consultancy)



Hedgehog

Whilst you might think that this is a good thing, actually it is a sign that there are far fewer hedgehogs around than there used to be. Highlighting their decline in this way means we can try and put things into place to raise awareness and help them as numbers are now dangerously low for the UK's only spiny mammal."

# March for badgers

**Staff, volunteers and members were due to join the Badger Cull Protest in Bristol on 30 November – as *Wildlife* went to print.**

Organisers expected the march on College Green to be the biggest to date, because of the city's proximity to trial cull sites in Gloucestershire and West Somerset.

The Wildlife Trusts are opposed to the badger cull, and have urged supporters to sign the e-petition to Government, and to write to their MPs and MEPs.

Our position is that culling doesn't work and can increase Bovine TB through the perturbation effect, and instead endorse vaccination of badgers and cattle, and improving controls on cattle movement and standards of animal husbandry.

The Wildlife Trusts are sympathetic to farmers' plight and work closely with landowners (see page 28).



DARIN SMITH

## Salute to Sue

**Office volunteer Sue Stevens retired in October following 24 years' service. And she has been shortlisted for the Bristol Award at the Bristol Green Volunteers Awards.**



RYAN BURRELL

Sue supported finance, administration and membership activities at the Trust's main offices in Bristol.

Chief Executive Dr Bevis Watts commented: "Sue has made an incredible contribution to the Trust and she has been shortlisted for the Bristol Award, which seeks to recognise volunteers that have made an extraordinary voluntary contribution to environmental organisations in the city."

The Trust benefits from the support of more than 800 volunteers, including others who have been shortlisted in the Bristol Green Volunteers Awards. All are vital to all areas of the charity's conservation, education and community work.

Other recent Trust awards and accolades include Corporate Social Responsibility World Leader (Bronze) 2014 and Green Apple Environment Award (Gold) 2013; Feed Bristol was a finalist in the Local Food Recognition Awards 2013; multiple nominations for the Bristol Green Volunteers Awards; and retired Acting Chief Executive Pat Ellingham is also short-listed in the Bristol Post's prestigious Gold Star Awards.

Please email [mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) or call 0117 917 7270 if you are interested in volunteering in the office, on reserves, or at events.



ELANIMAGES.CO.UK

## Wild days and nights

Event highlights have included Jolly Folly Apple Day, Family Owl Prowls with expert and broadcaster Chris Sperring and a Halloween drumming workshop with fun wildlife musicians Poco Drom. Future events include Easter treats with Poco Drom, Dawn Chorus at Prior's Wood and Gorge-ous Peregrine Walk with Ed Drewitt, Badger Watch and Midsummer Night Safari with Chris Sperring. We are also taking part in the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* activities and local volunteer groups are organising their own walks, talks and other events. See the centre pages for listings and go to our website homepage to sign up for eshot alerts.

## Call for email addresses

**More than one-third of our members have given us their email addresses... but we want more!**

The Trust regularly sends out eshots to members and supporters to share news and important issues such as the badger cull and to let people know of events. It is the single most cost-effective way we have of communicating to our supporters.

Please email [mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) adding the subject line: sign me up!

Also to be in with a chance of winning a *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* goodie bag, and admission to the exhibition for you and your family

(maximum five) please email a caption to the following picture of Chief Executive Dr Bevis Watts and Bellatrix the owl by 30 January 2014. Please go to website for T&C.



ELANIMAGES.CO.UK

# Chris Baines... urban (wildlife) warrior

Leading UK environmentalist and broadcaster Chris Baines urged his audience at the Trust's AGM in September to fully understand the importance of urban gardens for wildlife and take action to halt nature's decline.

**C**hris, who is best known for his wildlife gardening programmes on television and on radio, is Vice President for The Wildlife Trusts, which has 800,000 members across the UK.

He was speaking at the M Shed museum, overlooking the Floating Harbour in the heart of Bristol – itself famous for its urban wildlife and as home to the BBC's Natural History Unit.

The challenge followed the announcement in June of Bristol as the European Green Capital of the Year 2015 and the Wild about Gardens project he launched with The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).

And in May this year the State of Nature report, compiled by 25 wildlife organisations, found that nature is in trouble with 60% of the 3,148 species studied in decline.

Hedgehog numbers have reduced by a third since the millennium and tortoiseshell butterflies, once common in gardens, have dropped by 77%. Other once common species in decline include starlings, frogs and sparrows.

Reasons for the general drop in wildlife numbers include loss of habitat and increased fragmentation.

Chris argued that urban gardens had become increasingly important for wildlife, supporting more biodiversity than the wider countryside. He cited his own garden, the tree canopies in cities and towns across the UK and provided some truly inspiring examples.

Members and guests from partner organisations were intrigued to learn about London's urban forest that had grown in the abandoned high-rise Heygate Estate. Some 450 plane and other majestic trees had been left to flourish and provided a wildlife-rich habitat in the Elephant and Castle area of Southwark.

Enlightened developers, instead of cutting trees down or chopping through roots, recognised their intrinsic and financial value – even gently blowing earth away from roots when installing water, cable and other services. Attractive planting,

as all estate agents knew, would also increase the selling price of people's homes.

Doing things differently was a recurring theme, and included creating urban parks on rooftops.

He also warned the audience of climate change and how rising temperatures would kill the elderly, the sick or the very young. A simple way to combat this would be to plant more trees to create natural shade, rather than relying on energy-consuming air conditioning. Trees provide us with clean air and a sustainable urban drainage system thus reducing flooding.

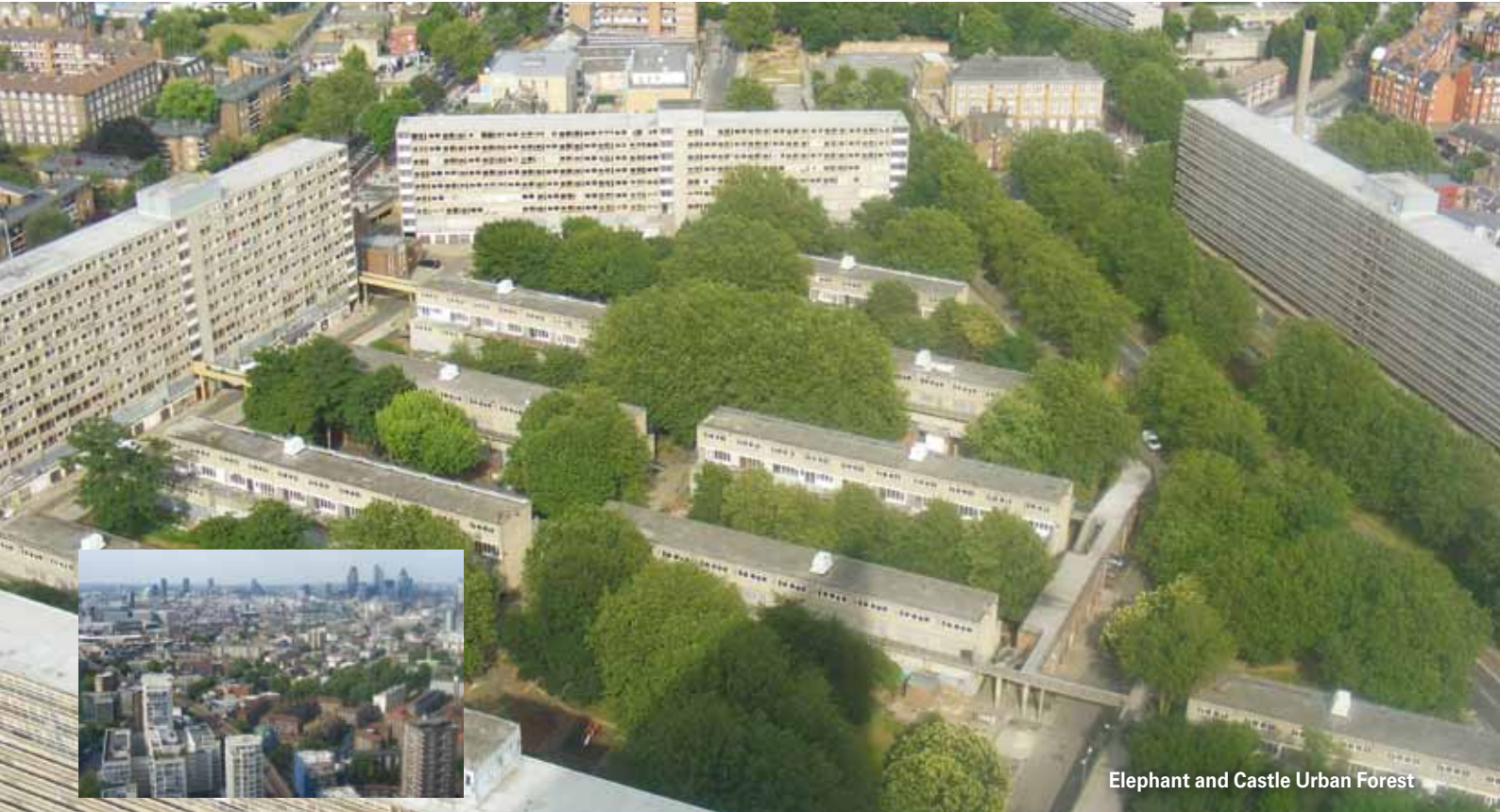


AGM audience members

By making our urban areas more wildlife-friendly we can give nature a chance of recovery. This is especially important as wildlife has become more dependent on urban areas for its very survival.

Chris spoke about the many species of birds and butterflies attracted to his garden. He also reminded the audience of the benefits a wildlife-rich garden gives us, the enjoyment of watching birds at a feeder, and as an antidote to the pressures of modern living.





Elephant and Castle Urban Forest

One of the first in the UK to champion urban wildlife, Chris identified the important role played by gardens, parks, allotments and even flower boxes, in cities and towns. His was the first wildlife garden at Chelsea Flower Show in 1985 and his book *How To Make A Wildlife Garden* has been continuously in print for 28 years.

Chris said: "There are many simple ways in which we can make our urban areas naturally richer and help them connect to form green corridors and larger networks and habitats for wildlife."

These include providing nest boxes, birdfeeders, log piles, nectar plants, fruiting shrubs, wall climbers and ponds (please see page 10).

Chris added: "By improving habitats for wildlife, the plants and animals that we attract will also bring us more pleasure and secure our own future prosperity in return. It's a win-win situation."

Chief Executive Dr Bevis Watts, who has been working with partner organisations such as Wessex Water and Bristol

Water and the Local Enterprise Partnership, commented: "Our wildlife is in decline and faces further threat as we live in the fastest growing City Region in the UK, one that is targeted for huge growth in jobs and housing in the coming years which will potentially grow the population of the region by 20% by 2030.

"There is a huge potential to do more to support wildlife in our urban spaces across the former county of Avon, and we must all take action to protect and restore natural habitats and create new ones, also bringing benefits for people, for our economy and for our health."

The event also included an address from Darren Hall, Green Capital Partnership Manager, who encouraged attendees to work together, and with other organisations, to make the most of the city's status as European Green Capital of the Year 2015 by stepping out of our own comfort zones, and doing something different to create real opportunities for change.

SEE | WEBSITE



Chris Baines is pictured with Chair Roz Kidman Cox and Chief Executive Dr Bevis Watts, with far left Mark Carwardine and far right Darren Hall, Green Capital Partnership Manager

AGM PHOTOS: BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

# Making gardens a wildlife haven this winter



Garden pond

## We heard one of the UK's top environmentalists Chris Baines tell us of the vital importance of gardens at the Trust's Annual General Meeting (page 8).

Former Trustee Richard Bland highlighted gardens in his article on top urban places to visit (page 18). And who wouldn't enjoy meeting a hedgehog nose-to-nose or watching robins feed in their own back garden?

Here are our top ten tips:

- 1** Always check bonfires before lighting and compost heaps before turning. A heap of unwanted sticks and leaves makes for a perfect 'des res' for hedgehogs, slow worms and grass snakes.
- 2** Resist the urge to prune ivy, such an important nectar source, and hollow-stemmed plants which could be home to insects.
- 3** Be inspired by *The Great British Bake Off* to make bird food cakes. Use different recipes to attract a wider variety of birds – starlings prefer peanuts, tits tuck into insects and finches favour berries. Melt suet into coconut shell or similar moulds.
- 4** Smaller birds such as wren like finely chopped bacon rind. Scatter song-bird feed with over-ripe apples on to the ground for blackbirds and thrushes. Place feed on a wire mesh just off the ground for robins and dunnocks.
- 5** Use the winter months to plan which seeds to plant, ensuring your garden offers a good food source for pollinators throughout the year.
- 6** Call the Trust for a *Vine House* catalogue – packed with quality products that also generate funds for Wildlife Trusts.
- 7** Talk to your neighbours and see whether you could create a mini wildlife corridor linking gardens with parks, allotments, and the wider countryside.
- 8** Encourage children to go outside and help make their own patch for wildlife.
- 9** In late winter clean out bird boxes and build new ones ready for spring.
- 10** A basin of water will help many wildlife species, and when the temperatures drop be prepared to use a warm pan to gently melt ice on ponds.

Enjoy the wildlife your garden will attract, from butterflies and birds, to frogs and hedgehogs – also working with nature to keep unwanted pests under control. For more suggestions go to [wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk), the joint initiative from The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society championed by Chris Baines. See the spring issue of *Wildlife* for news of our ambitious new wildlife gardening scheme.



Sunflower



Insect house



Ivy and insect

PHOTOS: BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

# WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

## Wildlife Partner



Harvest gold

### For the first time ever, the touring exhibition of *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* has a Wildlife Partner in Bristol – Avon Wildlife Trust.

**T**he competition showcases extraordinary images celebrating the drama, beauty and splendour of the natural world. Judged by an international jury of photography experts, which has included Trust Chair Roz Kidman Cox, the images were selected for their creativity, artistry and technical complexity.

As Wildlife Partner the Trust benefits from a raised profile, with our logo featured on promotional materials from posters to leaflets; opportunities to promote membership; and taking an active role in the museum's *Get Wild About Your City* displays, educational activities and events (see centre pages for details).

Commenting on the exhibition, Julie Finch, Head of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives said: "Each year these thought-provoking and stunning images draw visitors to the city far and wide. In addition to the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition, visitors will also be able to discover 'Bristol Wildlife' and get wild about their city with a special display of rarely seen specimens from our natural history collections, celebrating the city's unique wildlife. The exhibition is offering more than ever and we are proud to bring it back to Bristol, especially at a time when we are preparing for Bristol Green Capital 2015."

Trust Chief Executive Dr Bevis Watts commented: "We hope this new combination of the prestigious *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition, a natural history exhibition and stories about local wildlife really inspires more people to learn about wildlife, take action to protect it and care about local conservation issues.

"Many will be amazed at how much rare wildlife and important natural habitats there are in our area. We hope Avon Wildlife Trust's involvement in this new partnership helps the most exceptional wildlife photographs from across the world to connect people to nature in their neighbourhood."

The annual competition is owned by the Natural History Museum and BBC Worldwide. The touring exhibition is sponsored by Edge Tax consultancy at M Shed.

The *Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2013* exhibition will be hosted at M Shed museum, on Princes Wharf, and runs to 23 February 2014. For details including opening times please go to [mshed.org](http://mshed.org) or call 0117 352 6600.



Badger dream scene

Resurrection



088 @MARSEL VAN OOSTEN (THE NETHERLANDS)



040 @LUKASZ BOZYCKI (POLAND)

100 @ETIENNE FRANCEY (SWITZERLAND)

# Spawn to be wild... eels in streams and rivers

**M**any species that we know and love here in the south west can claim to have interesting and complicated life cycles, but none are quite as mysterious as that of the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). They are in fact a type of catadromous fish – that is, they migrate from fresh water into the sea to spawn.

For centuries this eel's life history was not understood, even amongst the many fishermen who regularly caught both the larvae and the more mature stages without realising they were related.

Then in the early 1900s a Danish researcher concluded that the Sargasso Sea, in the western Atlantic near the Bahamas, was the most likely spawning ground and that the larvae slowly drift towards Europe on the Gulf Stream. We now know that after a journey of a year or more, the larvae metamorphose into transparent 'glass eels', enter estuaries and start migrating upstream.



Cathy helps launch the eel project

After entering fresh water, the glass eels metamorphose into elvers, miniature versions of the adult.

And this is where the trouble begins. Sluices, weirs, flood defences – these all seriously hamper eels' migration upstream to a suitable site where they can mature and grow, sometimes to as much as a metre in length, before they begin their migration back to the Sargasso Sea to spawn.

Sadly the European eel is now endangered, but the good news is that Bristol Water and the Environment Agency have come up with a solution to help the eels' migration upstream.

Eel passes, that look a bit like a large upside-down brush, allow the elvers to navigate up through weirs to a specially-designed trap, the first of which has been operational for just a few months at Bristol Water's Blagdon pumping station.

This captures the elvers every night so that they can be safely released into the lake the next morning.

Children from Ubley Primary School joined us to launch a fantastic new project which will help raise awareness of this strangely charismatic creature.

We are also delighted to announce that four schools in the Congresbury Yeo river area will rear elvers in a tank in their classrooms for several weeks whilst learning about the local water courses and how they can help to protect them for



Children from Ubley Primary School

wildlife, before releasing elvers into Chew Valley or Blagdon lakes.

Maybe in 25 years' time their children might be watching the offspring of these elvers as they arrive here after their very long journey all the way across the Atlantic Ocean!

Cathy Mayne



Looking for an inspirational learning day for your students? Folly Farm Centre has a range of day and residential programmes suitable for all ages and throughout the year. Day visits start from £8 with residential courses from just £65 per child. For more details please go to [wildschools.org.uk](http://wildschools.org.uk) or contact the learning team by emailing [schools@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:schools@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) or calling 0117 980 0391.

## Do you want to try wildlife filmmaking in your school grounds?

Our Wild Schools Film Challenge kit boxes have all the equipment your school children need to create their own films. Boxes are free to borrow to schools throughout the Avon area. Go to [wildschools.org.uk](http://wildschools.org.uk) for more details and to book your kit box.

# New role, new vision for Julie

I'm thrilled to have recently become the Trust's Community Groups and Partnerships Manager, and particularly at such an exciting time. Now that Bristol has been awarded the European Green Capital of the Year 2015 status, this really is our time to influence and inspire people across the West of England, to work together and support the wildlife in our area.

In the first few months of the job I've been getting to know our brilliant local groups, made up of members who want to get actively involved in supporting the aims and objectives of the Trust. The dedication of these members, their breadth of knowledge, their interest in the local natural environment and their baking ability is inspiring! The work they do to support our charitable aims and objectives is invaluable, whether it's raising money through events and cake sales, providing talks for the local community or arranging walks, it all helps to highlight the need for every one of us to play our part to protect wildlife for the future.

This October we held a conference for all the local group members to meet each other and discuss how we could work more effectively together. We are keen to build a coordinated network of people across the region, who have similar aspirations for their local natural environment, to support the work of Avon Wildlife Trust. Through skill-sharing, effective communication and mutual support I hope that we can create an active community that will really make a difference.

We are also setting up a new project called Feed Folly at Folly Farm. Based on the Trust's successful eight-acre urban food-growing project, Feed Bristol, the project invites local people to get involved and find out about wildlife-friendly gardening. Everyone is welcome to enjoy the natural environment, whilst growing tasty food and improving their health and wellbeing.

A team of regular volunteers, currently being recruited, will help manage food-growing plots at Feed Folly. Volunteers will need some horticulture experience but training is given, as well as a share of the harvest.

All excess produce will be used by chefs at Folly Farm Centre for school groups and other visitors, helping to keep the food local and adding to Folly Farm's environmental credentials.



ELANIMAGES.CO.UK

Julie Doherty at Folly Farm

Email [juliedoherty@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:juliedoherty@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) or call 0117 980 0391 if you are interested in volunteering at Feed Folly, want to join a local volunteer group or set up a new one, or have any great fundraising ideas or offers of help.



BARBARA EVRIPIDOU

Judy Copeland Local Groups Officer at the AGM



ELANIMAGES.CO.UK

A hedgehog was guest at a Keynsham Group event

# Communities and Nature



## Engage Easton

It has been an exciting time for Project Officer Matt Harcourt, working with residents and starting projects in Easton, Bristol. In September we made fantastic bird boxes with local communities in so-called 'pocket parks'. Matt has also been supporting the newly-formed Friends of Belle Vue Park, who are giving their local green space some much-needed love and attention, by helping with a park clear-up day and planting spring bulbs as part of the joint RHS and The Wildlife Trusts campaign *Wild about Gardens*.

Alongside the charity Food Cycle, which offers a free Sunday afternoon meal to the community from food diverted from landfill, Matt has also been working with volunteers clearing the Easton Community Centre garden which was overgrown and previously used for anti-social behaviour. On a wet Sunday in October many brave volunteers transformed the garden, filling 16 bags of rubbish, pruning, weeding and clearing – uncovering lots of treasures including a wildlife pond.

## Roots Project – five ways to wellbeing

The CAN team has joined forces with the Inner City Health Improvement team from Public Health and the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project to offer a year-long series of wildlife walking activities for refugees and asylum seekers.

Bristol City Council's *five ways to wellbeing* is a programme based on five simple actions that are scientifically proven to increase happiness and overall wellbeing.

These 'five ways' are:

- **Connect**
- **Learn**
- **Notice**
- **Active**
- **Give.**

Three events have taken place so far, the latest at the Trust's Folly Farm nature reserve and centre.

It was a wet and grey morning, but the sun came out to greet the group as they arrived. With a brief introduction and



Planting snowdrops in Weston-super-Mare

history of Folly Farm, we headed towards the orchard. Along the walk (**Active**) they spotted two pheasants, a glistening winged damselfly (**Notice**) and asked questions about the different berries along the hedgerow, from rosehips and haw berries, to sloe berries (**Learn**).

The orchard was brimming with apples, everyone smiled, grabbed a bag and started picking. There was one tree with bright red apples which everyone gravitated towards. Most apples were out of reach, but a family took the initiative to borrow a crutch from one of the group to use as an extendable apple picker to ensure enough apples were picked for everyone to try (**Connect**).

After lunch, the group helped the chef make apple chutney, apple cake and crumble. Many questions were asked, and tasting sessions were enjoyed. Both the apples picked and the food made, contributed towards the Jolly Folly Apple Day (**Give**).

Our special thanks go to Richard, the minibus driver, who helped carry and lift the heavy apple bags and transported them back to Folly Farm Centre!



Preparing food

SIMON JOHNSON



Gathering apples at Folly Farm

## Winter wonders

Folly Farm – view across barn owl corridor

GATEHOUSE

### Fieldfare

One of the great delights of winter is the arrival in our gardens of these large, boldly-attired thrushes from Northern Europe. Directed in on cold fronts from the North East, they visit our gardens to garner the few degrees of extra warmth and protection from the wind that our urban lifestyle provides, and feast on the red berries and apples that we fail to harvest in our gardens.



WILSTOCK

### Frogs

With the demise of so many ponds in the countryside, urban wildlife ponds in gardens are increasingly becoming a key habitat for our native common frog. Frogs return to ponds in late February or early March to mate and there can be hundreds of frogs in one pond. The best way to experience them is to venture out after dark and listen to the croak of wooing males.



### Conifers

Britain only has three native evergreens, Scots pine, yew and juniper, and none of them are particularly common across our urban landscape. Non-native conifers are common and provide a useful wildlife service. The warm, dry, windproof interior of a conifer bush is a safe haven for small birds and mammals and provides a stable environment for year-round insect food sources.



GATEHOUSE

### Wood mouse

Despite their name, wood mice are common in towns and cities and the mixed habitat of our wildlife gardens gives them food and shelter. Although they're known to visit our houses they're much happier in outbuildings and sheds where they're out of the wind, have ready-made escape routes through gaps and crevices but can find seeds and organic matter to eat.



DARIN SMITH

### Snowdrops

One of the first signs that winter is on the wane is the arrival of little droplets of white among the bare undergrowth. Snowdrops are desperate to emerge and flower before the vegetation around them gets too lush and the shrubs become too shady. Nothing brightens the spirit more at this harsh time of year than the bridal white and emerald green that snowdrops provide.



MIKE DIMERY

### Velvet shanks

Winter is often thought to be a time of torpor with all new growth tucked up tight, waiting for the first signs of spring. Velvet shanks thrive in winter, growing on the decomposing wood and old tree stumps. Their name reflects their woolly stems and their bright orangey hue is recognisable from a long way away, making them easy to spot in parks and on urban rambles.



# Around the reserves

Volunteers having lunch after hay-cutting

It's been a busy few months for wildlife in the countryside and in our cities. Avon Wildlife Trust manages several urban nature reserves in and around Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare that are both wonderful oases for wildlife, and tranquil getaways for people. Some are remnants of old farms such as Stockwood Open Space or forgotten landscapes like Lawrence Weston Moor, and others are artificially-created wild homes for urban wildlife to thrive like Brandon Hill.

**A**von Wildlife Trust was the pioneer of urban conservation and **Brandon Hill Nature Park** in Bristol was the first ever urban nature reserve when it was established in 1981. Management work was undertaken in a section of the park to create examples of typical local habitats in an urban setting.

Works included the creation of a wildflower meadow through wildflower seeding and plug planting, which is hay-cut every year late in the summer, a wildlife pond which volunteers have recently been clearing for the newts and frogs, a heathland area, the planting of a hedge, and the creation of a butterfly garden which the Brandon Hill Group has recently cleared of encroaching bramble. Not many people know that Brandon Hill is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), as the site contains a Civil War fort and ramparts from the English Civil War. In 1653, the site saw fierce fighting when Cavalier troops stormed the city to take control from the Roundheads, a far cry from today's peaceful urban nature reserve.



Brandon Hill



Joe and Joe

Sandwiched between the M5 Motorway and the houses of Lawrence Weston is the forgotten oasis of **Lawrence Weston Moor** nature reserve. It is one of the last remaining fragments of the old levels and moors in the area, and the network of ditches and rhynes supports fantastic populations of dragonflies, newts, and water voles. We hay-cut the wet meadows at the end of every summer, and volunteers have just been clearing vast areas of reeds that we cut on rotation to encourage new growth and diversify the age structure for birds and small mammals.

**Stockwood Open Space**, celebrating 30 years under joint Trust and city council management, used to be an old farm, and wildflower meadows, historic hedgerows and ancient woodlands are still visible today. Wildlife includes cowslips, glow worms and butterflies such as marbled whites and large skippers. Volunteers cut hard-to-reach old meadows





oblivious of the tourists nearby, and our Weston-super-Mare Volunteer Group has been busy clearing bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn that encroach on the rare grassland plants and flowers including rock-roses and green-winged orchids.

Whilst in the east of the county, the sheep at **Brown's Folly** have one of the best views of the city of Bath this winter, as they graze the grassland on the steep limestone slopes. And just a stone's throw from the hustle and bustle of Bath, herons, cormorants and kingfishers dive into the lakes in search of fish at **Bathampton Meadow** alongside the River Avon.

In the rest of the old county area of Avon our volunteers armed with scythes, billhooks and saws, have been hard at work hay-cutting, clearing scrub and hedge-laying at **Folly Farm, Pill Paddock, Weston Moor, Clapton Moor and Max Bog**. Overlooking the Chew Valley at **Burledge Hill**, volunteers have been hard at work clearing bramble thickets, hawthorn and blackthorn. The site is full of hundreds of old ant hills, as well as humps and divots from ancient quarrying giving the field its name 'Humpy-tumps'.

Throughout the autumn we cut reeds, alder and willows in the wet pools, islands and reedbeds of **Blake's Pools, Littleton Brick Pits** and **Chew Valley Lake**. This provides ideal habitats for wintering waders and wildfowl. At **Portbury Wharf**, near Portishead, we brought in machinery to lower the nesting island in the North Pool to just above water level, and then cover it in stone, to create an ideal habitat for waders. Lapwing have already been spotted on the island.

And now, outside of the bird-nesting season, we have started woodland management at **Prior's Wood** in Portbury, including clearance of non-native rhododendron and larch to restore it to native broadleaved woodland.

Elsewhere we are tackling the encroaching bramble and scrub from all our rare wildflower-grassland reserves as part of the habitat management programme in the cold winter months.

by hand where the council's machinery can't reach, to allow the wonderful plants from orchids to corky-fruited water dropwort to thrive.

On the edges of Bristol in the quiet and peaceful **Willsbridge Valley**, volunteers have been busy clearing and monitoring ponds that have been full of invasive weeds, clearing scrub from the grassland areas and trimming back trees and plants overhanging the paths. We have also started to help manage **Manor Woods Valley** Local Nature Reserve in Bishopsworth. At time of writing volunteers are due to be busy in December clearing scrub in the old apple orchard to give the fruit trees more light.

In the south, **Walborough** and **Purn Hill** nature reserves provide perfect getaways for walkers escaping the busy seaside town of Weston-super-Mare. Cattle graze the slopes



Volunteers reed cutting with scythes at Lawrence Weston

# Best places for urban wildlife

Bristol Harbourside

## Richard Bland, former Trustee of Avon Wildlife Trust, and former President of the Bristol Naturalists' Society.

It is well known that the more varied the habitat, the greater the biodiversity. The variety of habitats within the city of Bristol is astonishing. Go to Chittening Wharf in winter at high tide to see hundreds of ducks and waders enjoying the huge bounty of the Severn mud. You can see 200 species in a good year here, and no two days are ever the same. Saltmarsh is both the wildest, and one of the rarest, habitats in the country.

Then there are the five Gorges, their sheer cliffs lined with ancient woodland. The Avon Gorge is the most spectacular, and best known. It holds 19 micro-species of whitebeam, and is home to the peregrine, the spiked speedwell and the Bristol onion. There is also the Trym Gorge at Blaise, famed for its ravens and its cedar trees; the Frome Gorge from Fishponds to Snuff Mills, with breeding dippers; the Upper Avon Gorge at Brislington with a large heronry; and the St Anne's Gorge carved by the tiny Brislington Brook with kingfishers and a massive ancient plane tree. These gorges carve into the urban areas around, are often secret, and all are open to the public.

There are many former rubbish tips in the flat marshy lands around Avonmouth that are useless for building. Lawrence

Weston Moor has a wonderful group of old pollard willows, reed bunting, and mistletoe. Kings Weston tip, with two motorways and associated spaghetti roaring over it, is a botanical wonderland, and still holds skylark and kestrel.

Brandon Hill, the oldest public park in Britain, and the Downs, are both wild and accessible to all, as are cemeteries such as Canford, Greenbank and Arnos Vale.

These are a few of the unusual places but there are also fields and hedges, there are hundreds of walls with their own special plants, like the fig trees in Castle Park, there is the New Cut through which 33 feet of tide pours twice a day, changing the habitat hour by hour, and the Floating Harbour nearby.

But the largest wildlife area in the city is its gardens. Because every garden is unique, each will have literally hundreds of species, mostly unseen, but each playing their vital part in the vast complexity of the ecosphere. There are a million frogs in our ponds, and a winter cold snap will see bird populations doubling or trebling as bird tables ensure over-winter survival. Bristol is blessed with wildlife.



Richard



Harbourside



Arnos Vale



Grand Pier, Weston-super-Mare

SMARTIMAGES.CO.UK

## Great places to spot wildlife in Weston-super-Mare

Tucked into a corner of the Severn Estuary and bordered by the North Somerset Moors and Mendip Hills, Weston-super-Mare is a popular holiday destination.

Within the town there are several excellent urban sites for spotting wildlife. The seafront is the main attraction, with a long promenade, pier and sandy beach.

At the north end, surrounding Knightstone Island, rockier habitats attract wading birds including curlew, oystercatcher, purple sandpiper as well as rock pipits. To the south, narrow tributaries head inland.

Here redshank, waterfowl (particularly shelduck) and gulls can be seen as the tide recedes and exposes mud and an abundance of food.

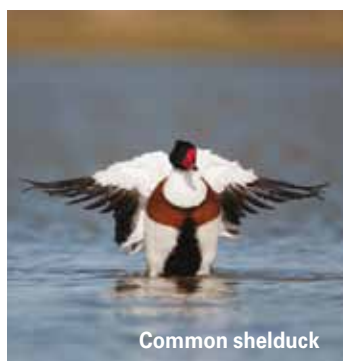
Overlooking the town, Old Town Quarry is a hidden gem. Butterflies abound, foxes play in the early evening light and breeding peregrine falcon, kestrel and raven can also be seen.

Four parks are worth visiting: Clarence Park includes trees popular with birds and insects; Grove Park is good for dragonflies; Ellenborough Park, set behind the seafront lawns and part of a former sand dune system, is an important botanical site and hosts the rare chafer beetle; and the mainly grassland site at Ashcombe Park. Watch out for foraging jays and squirrels, hunting sparrowhawks and roving winter flocks of small passerines too.

*Oliver Smart*



Jay



Common shelduck



Bath skyline

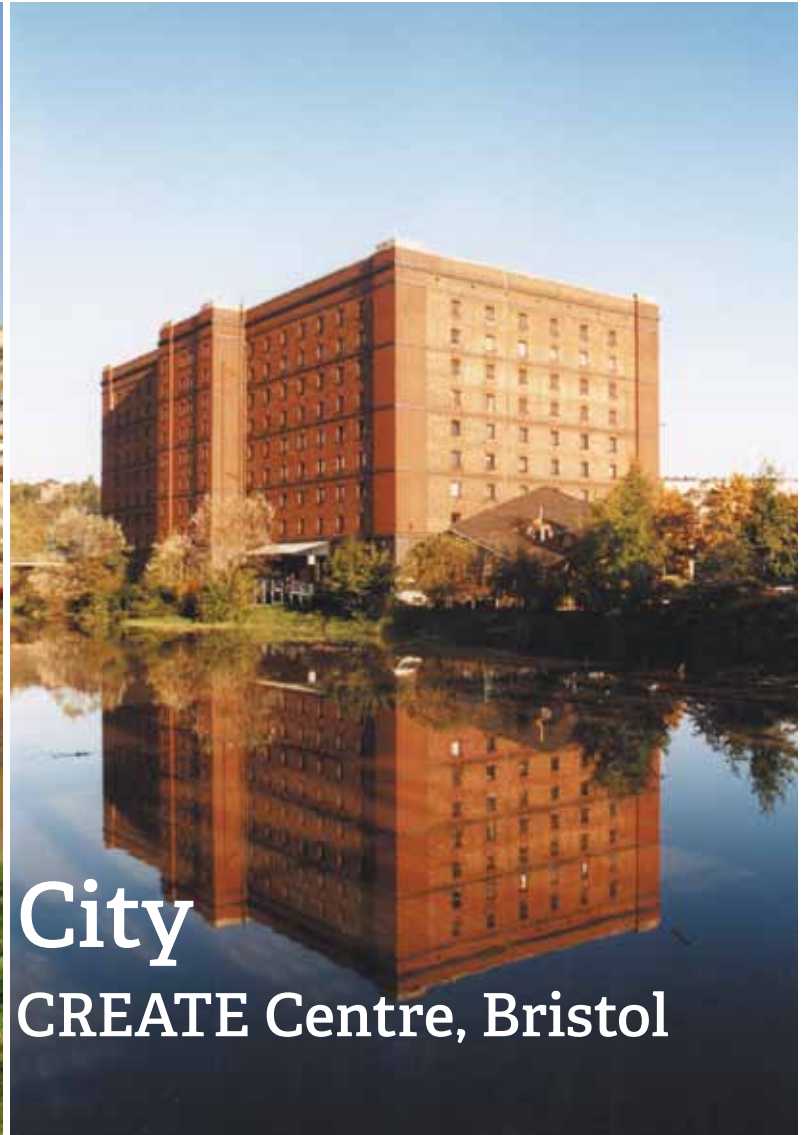
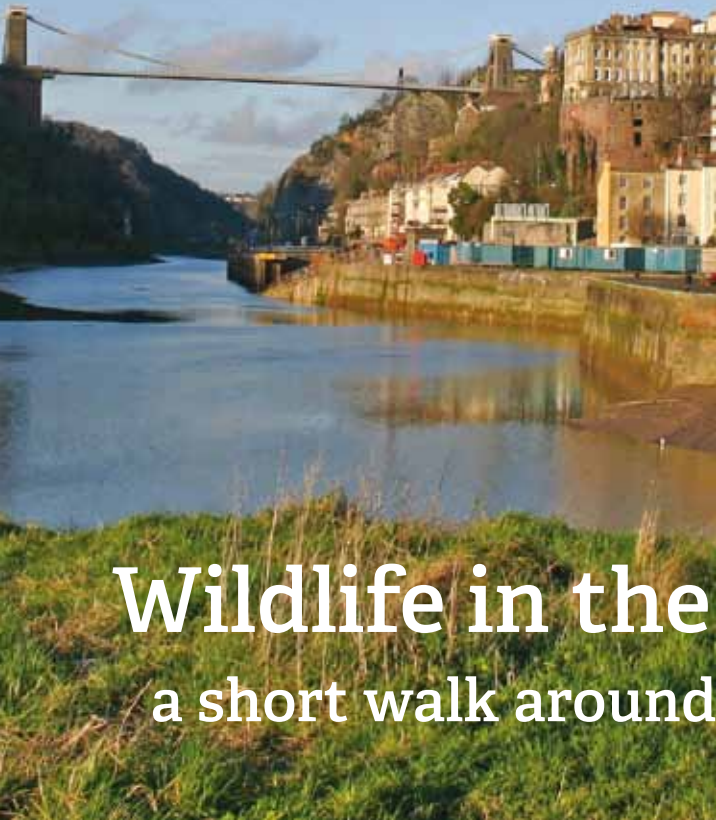
BATH TOURISM

## Bath

Bath has many places to spot wildlife, from the Botanical Gardens to the recently opened Two Tunnels route, and grand vistas of this historic city can be enjoyed from the famous Skyline Walk. The River Avon is home to kingfishers and otters – although you are more likely to see spraint! Colourful mosses, lichens and liverworts are easy to spot on walls – many made of stone quarried from under the Trust's own Brown's Folly nature reserve. For a wildlife spectacle, walk to St John's Roman Catholic Church on South Parade and look up to see peregrine falcons on the spire, soaring over rooftops, and swooping in their hunt for prey. To the uninitiated there are some surprises too, including one favourite spot of the Bath Naturalist Society – the 1.7 hectares of land at Lambridge near the A46/A4 roundabout – where 24 butterfly and over 30 bird species, as well as 130 flowering plants, including bee and wasp orchids, have been recorded. Carrs Woodland is an area of woods, grassland and a brook, west of Twerton. In the 1840s Isambard Kingdom Brunel brought his famous railway to the west country through a spectacular gothic tunnel beneath the wood.

SMARTIMAGES.CO.UK

# Seasonal stroll



## Wildlife in the City a short walk around CREATE Centre, Bristol

The area around the CREATE Centre, between Bristol's Floating Harbour and the New Cut, is home to a rich diversity of habitats and wildlife.

**CREATE**, which was last used by the Trust for its 2012 Annual General Meeting, regularly hosts exhibitions and events, has a demonstration ecohome and a café.

Information for the walk is taken from *Wildlife in the City*, a leaflet produced by Bristol City Council with support from the Trust.

The trail, which is just over a mile long, takes you past saltmarsh, the tidal River Avon, scrub, hedgerow and old harbour walls.

Possible to complete in 30 minutes, we recommend a more leisurely pace to enjoy the varied wildlife including at this time of year, wintering wading birds and cormorants. During the summer, highlights include wildflowers and butterflies. Please take care when near water and tracks can be muddy.



IAN WADE

Heron passing over

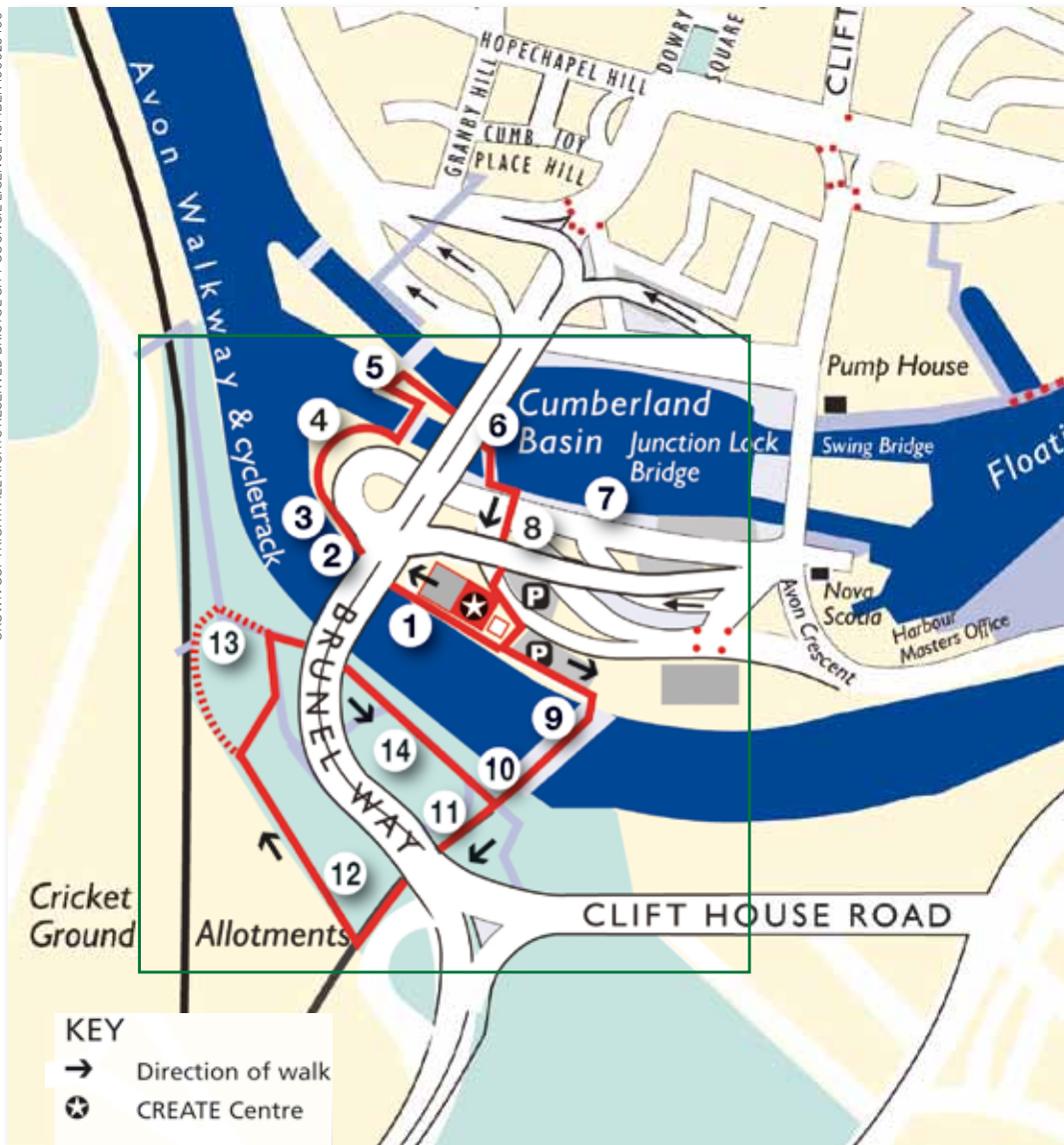


Redshank

OLIVER SMART

# for urban wildlife

CROWN COPYRIGHT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL LICENCE NUMBER 100023406



Look out for...



Grey wagtail



Burnet moth



Cinnabar moth caterpillar

**S**tart at the CREATE Centre ramp, turn right and walk on the road alongside the riverbank. After 52 metres there is a high speed bump. **1.** Look at the sea-tolerant species along the tidal saltmarsh such as blue-green sea couch grass and sea aster.

Follow the riverbank and after 40 metres leave the road and move onto coarse gravel to pass under the main road beside the river. **2.** Look out for cormorants, herons, ducks and gulls and you may even be rewarded with a common sandpiper or redshank.

Go onto the gravel path through the grassland via a slight upward incline. Beware of overhanging branches and keep away from riverside subsidence near the flyover steps. **3.** From this point on there is a great view of the Gorge and gulls, mainly black-headed in the winter and herring gulls.

**4.** Follow the path around the flyover wall, and turn left to go across the steel bridge over the river, choosing either of two routes. **5.** On the quay the old dock walls, and IK Brunel's swing bridge, are home to interesting plant life including polypody, hart's tongue and wall rue ferns. Look out for pied and grey wagtails.

Keep to the right of the bridge pillar to pass under the swing bridge. **6.** Look out for fern grass and during autumn, fungi.

Go over the bridge and turn left to a grassland area including bird's foot trefoil. **7.** After 60 metres turn right and after five metres go onto grass.

Take care when crossing the road, and turn right **8.** – you will see ornamental trees around the car park including non-native silver maple. Weave your way through the traffic-controlling boulders and turn left to go under the flyover and cross the road. You are now passing CREATE. **9.** Head for the railway bridge across the river and look out for kestrels.

**10.** Continue along the tarmac road and turn right onto the bridge.

Look down on the river, and if the tide is out, see the myriad of animal prints.

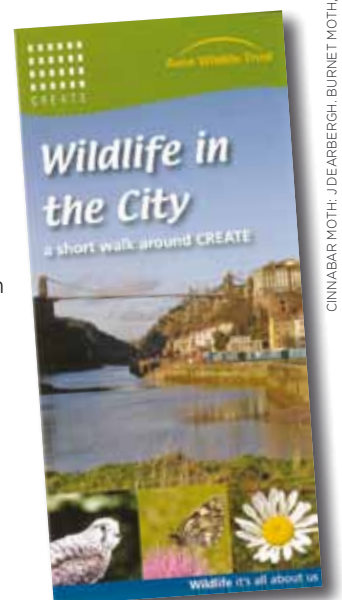
At the end of the bridge go onto a muddy track along the old railway line. **11.** This section of the walk is particularly lively in summer months with butterflies and other insects.

After another 60 metres move onto damp grassland and head right to walk along the hedge **12.** which includes field maple, elder and ash. To your left is a large area of allotments, which are a great habitat for birds and insects, slow worms and small mammals.

After 175 metres there is a tarmac path. Continue across the grass past the railway bridge **13.** where you will see a Norway maple and a lime tree. Turn right and pause to read the information panel. Return along the river to the railway bridge, keeping right of the bridge support.

**14.** There is a row of horse chestnut trees. Go onto the railway bridge, and read the Butterfly Junction information panel. You are now back at CREATE.

Please email [angeladavies@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:angeladavies@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) for your copy of the *Wildlife in the City* leaflet.



CINNABAR MOTH: J. DEARBURGH; BURNET MOTH, GREY WAGTAIL: GATEHOUSE

# Urban animals

Ian Wade is a photographer and author of *Bristol Safari, in search of the city's urban wildlife*, and regular contributor to magazines including *Clifton Life*.

**M**any people think you have to travel to far-off lands like the Masai Mara in Africa or the tropical rain forests of Malaysia to experience truly exciting wildlife and to take great pictures. Closer to home people living in the city or urban areas head out into the British countryside while right under their noses, here in the city, is a world of diverse and intriguing flora and fauna. Indeed, much of the wildlife we photograph and enjoy in the countryside is easier to see in our cities and towns. This is because some creatures are well-adapted to the opportunities offered by city life, like foxes. Others have moved to the city in recent years, like magpies, while the city has grown around colonies of other creatures, especially badgers. Meanwhile many of the natural habitats have been lost from the countryside. British urban environments are just as exciting as our green countryside. All you have to do is be patient, look that little bit harder to discover a new and exhilarating world.



**Red fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*) Widespread in urban areas, they can live up to 10 years. High-pitched vocalisations include quick series of barks, scream-like howls and guttural chattering. A group of foxes is a skulk, leash, troop, or earth.



**Grey squirrel** (*Sciurus carolinensis*) Introduced to Britain in 1876, they're active during the day, foraging for food from nuts, bulbs, and tree shoots, to roots, occasionally taking birds' eggs. Their nest, or drey, is a compact, spherical structure made of twigs, leaves and grass.



**Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) Often seen in Bristol's Floating Harbour diving for fish or holding their wings out to dry. It has a primitive and almost reptilian appearance. In Britain there are 9,000 resident breeding pairs, increasing over winter by 70,000 migrating birds.



**City pigeon** (*Columba livia*) Generally monogamous, with two squabs (young) per brood, there's an estimated European population of 17 to 28 million. Pigeons are 80% of the diet of city-living peregrine falcons. Its wide visual field is around 340°.

ELLIOT SMITH



**Otter** (*Lutra lutra*) Territories range between one and 25 miles, dependent on food and are held against the same sex. The mother cares for pups for up to 13 months. Hunting mainly takes place at night, and day is spent in the holt.



**Pied wagtail** (*Motacilla alba*) A frequent sight in urban centres, they often gather at dusk to form large roosts. Ground nesters, they lay up to six speckled eggs. Recent studies suggest the tail wagging signals vigilance to potential predators.



**Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Our commonest and most widespread duck, there are as many as 130,000 breeding pairs in Britain and an additional 680,000 which over-winter here. It eats seeds, acorns and berries, plants, insects and shellfish.

PHOTOS: IAN WADE



**Garden spider** (*Araneus diadematus*) They feed on flying insects such as flies, wasps and butterflies. The female lays her eggs into a silken egg sac which she protects until she dies – unable to hunt for food. The spiderlings hatch in May.



**Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*) Fiercely territorial over food, a small garden will support a breeding pair. The male will bring the female worms and caterpillars to strengthen their bond. Nearly three-quarters die before they're a year old.

## Best urban wildlife experience wins!

*Bristol Safari, in search of the city's urban wildlife* is published by Redcliffe Press of Bristol, and is priced at £10. It is available from good bookshops and online at [redcliffepress.co.uk](http://redcliffepress.co.uk).

We have four signed copies of *Bristol Safari* to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, please email your best urban wildlife experience to [mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:mail@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) by 30 January 2014.

For more information on Ian Wade and his photography, published work and talks, please go to [ianwadephotography.co.uk](http://ianwadephotography.co.uk).

Terms and conditions: The judges' decision is final, and winning entries will be published on the website, Facebook and Twitter and the next issue of *Wildlife* magazine.



## Our guest members



# The Hull Family... and friends

ELANIMAGES.CO.UK

**We are a family of six – mum Nadia, dad Bill and three children Joseph (eight), Cara (six) and Rufus (four) and Maggie, a beautiful cocker spaniel puppy. We live in central Bristol in a Victorian house with a small corner garden.**

“ Since moving here nine years ago we have been fascinated by the wildlife you can experience in such an urban environment. In the cold winter months we enjoyed watching two foxes take shelter under our garden shed and then to our surprise (but delight) produce three fox cubs who messed about in our garden jumping in plant pots drinking from the bird table and on one occasion having an early morning bounce on the children’s trampoline!

In the summer the children badgered us to plant wildlife-friendly vegetation, particularly in the hope of attracting bees, insects and butterflies, and together we made a bee home from bamboo canes.

Our eldest son was given a bird book at Christmas which he read cover to cover and it has become the reference bible for all the different birds which visit our garden. Last week we saw a sparrow hawk land on the lawn, survey his surroundings then take off again majestically. Although we have been members of the National Trust for several years, as a family we were all keen to learn even more about the natural environment around us so we decided to join the Avon Wildlife Trust.

The children were very excited when their joining pack arrived. They have proudly pinned the Wildlife Watchers badges to their coats and scoured the magazine, planning

which reserves and walks they wanted to visit, the muddier the better. We have invested in magnifying glasses to assist the search for wildlife.

We all enjoyed our recent trip to the Jolly Folly Apple Day. The children, along with two friends, got stuck into apple juice making, breaking up apples with sharp spades and extracting the juice. They also loved the pond dipping, emptying the contents of their nets into plastic trays then looking for as many small creatures as they could to identify and catalogue.

Since our visit the children have tasked us with planting more wildlife-friendly vegetation in the hope of attracting hedgehogs which they learnt all about at Folly Farm.

We are all looking forward to Trust days out over the coming winter months and finding out how we can better appreciate, preserve and foster the natural environment around us. It’s wonderful to watch the children become budding conservationists.

We love the opportunity to escape the city’s roads, traffic and noise and dive into and explore the sanctuaries right on our doorstep. The fact that we can take Maggie to many of the Trust’s nature reserves is a huge bonus.

**Nadia Hull**



# Folly Farm Centre surrounded by nature

**Folly Farm Centre is a venue at the heart of the 250-acre Folly Farm nature reserve at Stowey, close to both Bath and Bristol.**

Owned and managed by Avon Wildlife Trust it is a very special place — a place to learn, explore, and be inspired.

Whether you're seeking a conference or a meeting venue, arranging team-building, training and educational activities, or a wedding in beautiful countryside, Folly Farm Centre offers a wonderfully unique experience.

The centre is equipped with state-of-the-art conference and education facilities and en-suite accommodation ideal for business, education, leisure and wedding guests.

A recent addition to the centre's facilities is the light and airy wagon house, an ideal space for meetings.

The award-winning venue benefits from an attentive and experienced team, who do their utmost to ensure every event and visit is a success.

Folly Farm Centre's Director Andrew Lund-Yates has the support of a committed team including Kerrie Page, who celebrated her marriage here, and Hannah Read.

All profits from the centre are gift-aided to Avon Wildlife Trust, helping to protect wildlife and inspire people.

This is proving especially attractive to corporate and private clients alike — whether it is a company or governmental organisation meeting social and environmental responsibility objectives or a couple wanting a green wedding.



ELANIMAGES.CO.UK

**Andrew Lund-Yates**

The site's sustainability and environmental credentials are also impressive.

But what's most important to guests is its setting. Guests comment on the tranquility and beauty of the reserve surrounding the venue... the ancient woodland and wildflower meadows overlooking Chew Lake.

Not many venues offer guests the chance to explore nature, using the way-marked routes including an access-for-all path suitable for wheelchair users.

By staying at Folly Farm Centre you are close to wildlife, and dependent upon the time of year, you may spot owls, woodpeckers, butterflies or orchids. There's even an active badger sett with a viewing platform nearby.

Please contact the Folly Farm Centre team by emailing [info@follyfarm.org](mailto:info@follyfarm.org) or by calling 01275 331590 for further details or to arrange a viewing.

**folly farm**  
conference centre

*a place for business*

Located in the heart of a 250-acre nature reserve, our award-winning conference centre is an inspiring and unique venue for conferences.



- Four stunning conference rooms, largest room can seat up to 120 delegates
- Accommodation for 45 delegates
- Unique and engaging team-building activities
- Excellent customer service

- Delicious, seasonal and low food-mile menus
- A sustainable venue, working for the environment
- All profits go to Avon Wildlife Trust
- Only 10 miles from both Bath and Bristol city centres



We are a popular wedding and group accommodation venue - so call us today on  
**01275 331590**



# Water voles disappearing

**Habitat loss, mink predation and extreme weather have produced a dramatic drop in just five years**

New maps produced by the National UK Water Vole Database and Mapping Project show that the mammal's range may have shrunk by 22% between 2007-2011 when compared with the previous recording period (2004-2008).

The maps identify areas of England – especially the south west, south east and parts of the north west – where the species is vulnerable to further decline and extinctions. The reasons for the continuing losses are long-term habitat loss, mink predation and extreme weather such as 2012's spring drought.

There are still strongholds in areas with more extensive wetlands, or where the non-native American mink is absent or at low levels. However, some of these have reduced in size since the first mapping period. Wildlife Trusts are also succeeding in restoring water vole populations through targeted conservation efforts in some areas, but this work needs to be sustained and extended to stop the wider decline.

In part, the new data reflects a reduced survey effort due to a reduction in available funding. But

there is clear evidence from some areas that water voles are disappearing fast.

"This latest information is a real cause for concern," said Paul Wilkinson, The Wildlife Trusts' Head of Living Landscape. "Not enough is being done to secure this charismatic species' future. We must protect the remaining strongholds and renew efforts to save this species, through targeted conservation and sustained monitoring. We need to create and maintain large-scale, good quality habitat, good for voles and other wildlife. We must also control mink, and conduct reintroduction schemes. A lack of funding for these crucial projects is a real threat to their success."

The Wildlife Trusts and the Environment Agency are calling for a national water vole monitoring programme to be established. Annually recording populations in key areas would show how this vulnerable mammal is faring over time.

■ Read what The Wildlife Trusts are doing and submit sightings: [wildlifetrusts.org/watervole](http://wildlifetrusts.org/watervole)

**“There is not enough habitat at a landscape scale to support viable populations”**

FRAN SOUTHGATE, SUSSEX WT

## Critical areas for water voles

- 1 South east**  
Despite records across the south east of England, there are no viable long-term populations. Kent Wildlife Trust aims to find isolated populations and reconnect them, allowing populations to expand.
- 2 River Ock and Ginge Brook**  
BBOWT's Water Vole Recovery Project has focused on survey and mink trapping for many years, allowing water vole populations to expand in some areas.
- 3 Devon and Cornwall**  
Water voles are now extinct due to predation by American mink. Habitat restoration on the River Tale in east Devon should allow a future reintroduction.

## AROUND THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS

### BBOWT

Thousands of people raised £270,000 to save Meadow Farm, 28ha of irreplaceable wildflower meadows on the River Ray, where true fox sedge survives in the medieval ridge and furrow fields. [wtru.st/MeadowFarm](http://wtru.st/MeadowFarm)

### BCN

The Trust has launched an appeal to secure another huge piece of the Great Fen Project by unlocking a £1.9m HLF grant. This would increase the area of traditional fen habitat by almost a fifth. [wtru.st/FenJigsaw](http://wtru.st/FenJigsaw)

### CHESHIRE

The Trust is restoring Delamere's lost mosslands thanks to a £250,000 grant from WREN. This rare habitat is home to specialist plants and animals such as the white-faced darter. [wtru.st/DelamereBogs](http://wtru.st/DelamereBogs)

### DERBYSHIRE

The Trust's Woodside Farm meat box scheme is raising funds for wildlife. The meat comes from the Highland cattle and rare breed Jacob sheep that graze the nature reserve. [wtru.st/DerbysMeatBox](http://wtru.st/DerbysMeatBox)

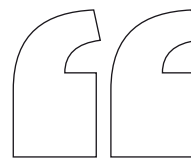
### DORSET

Record numbers of rare silver-studded blue butterflies have appeared at Upton Heath reserve. The species only lives on heathland, limestone grassland and dunes. Dark green fritillaries also did very well. [wtru.st/RareSilvers](http://wtru.st/RareSilvers)

### DURHAM

A survey of otters on the county's streams and rivers has found a population in good health. Of the more than 500 sites surveyed in April, 42% were found to show signs of otter activity. [wtru.st/DurhamOtters](http://wtru.st/DurhamOtters)

Latest UK-wide news and issues: [wildlifetrusts.org/news](http://wildlifetrusts.org/news)



## Accentuate the positive



The Wildlife Trusts are promoting a positive vision for the future of these beautiful islands – Living Landscapes and Living Seas. In many places local people are

getting involved with the work their Trust is doing, and this vision has also inspired decision-makers to embrace the idea of restoring wildlife across the UK.

Far from being harbingers of doom, Trusts are routinely upbeat. We know we can help wildlife to return in greater abundance and diversity for us, our children and grandchildren to enjoy. Our progress is thanks to members who provide Trusts with the confidence and funds to make a difference.

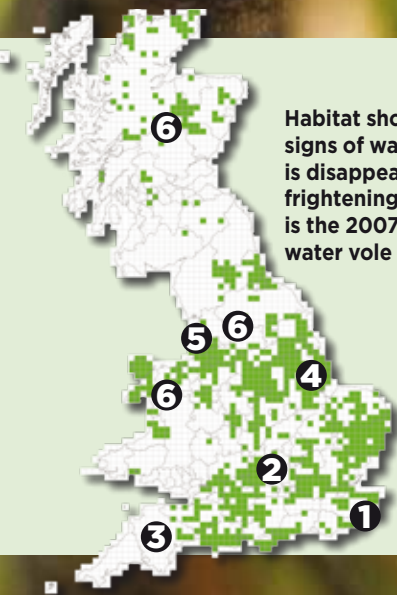
Reversing wildlife decline goes hand in hand with improving our mental and physical health. Both are possible as long as we don't lose any more of what we have left – our remaining flower-rich meadows, purple heaths, romantic woods and wetlands and beautiful seas.

Unfortunately, we rarely value what we have until people threaten to take it away. There were bleak messages in The State of Nature report launched in May (and featured in the last issue), but it reminded people how much our wildlife needs us, and how much we need nature. RSPB led this initiative and The Wildlife Trusts were grateful to play our part, feeding in our extensive knowledge and experience and using our spokespeople to promote it.

I am delighted that in recent years, cooperation between the main wildlife charities has deepened and that social charities such as Mind, are recognising the value of nature to their missions. Together we can create real momentum for change.

**Stephanie Hilborne OBE**  
Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts

There are 47 Wildlife Trusts. With more than 800,000 members, we are the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving all the UK's habitats and species. Contact us on [enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org) or 01636 677711. To join your Wildlife Trust, visit [wildlifetrusts.org/joinus](http://wildlifetrusts.org/joinus)  
**Natural World, The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1WT.**  
**Editor** Rupert Paul **Communications manager** Adam Cormack. **Layout editor** Phil Long  
[twitter @wildlifetrusts](https://twitter.com/wildlifetrusts)  
[facebook.com/wildlifetrusts](https://facebook.com/wildlifetrusts)



**Habitat showing signs of water voles is disappearing at a frightening rate. This is the 2007-11 map of water vole presence**

**4 Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marsh**  
A complex system of drainage ditches make this farming landscape surprisingly good habitat for water voles. Continuous survey effort and support by land managers mean the population is also well documented.

**5 Lancashire Wetlands**  
Farm ditch systems are amongst important strongholds for the species in the north west, but the future of the water vole in these areas relies on sensitive management.

**6 Uplands**  
Headstreams in the Peak District and Pennines, Snowdonia and the Cairngorms are important strongholds, although mink remain a threat even at high altitudes.

### GWENT

The Trust opposes plans for the Circuit of Wales which would see a 350ha MotoGP circuit built in Blaenau Gwent. The development threatens heathland, marshy grassland and peat bog. [wtru.st/GwentMotoGP](http://wtru.st/GwentMotoGP)

### LONDON

Green energy company Ecotricity is donating up to £60 to the Trust for each customer switching their energy supply. This raises funds for conservation and helps develop green energy. [wtru.st/EcotricityDonate](http://wtru.st/EcotricityDonate)

### NORFOLK

Volunteers from a local brewery have built an artificial otter holt at Hickling Broad reserve. Now it has received its first otter visitor. The Trust hopes breeding activity may be filmed there in the future. [wtru.st/HicklingHolt](http://wtru.st/HicklingHolt)

### NOTTS

The Trust celebrated its 50th anniversary with 50 hours of wildlife recording at Attenborough nature reserve. 620 species were spotted over the weekend, including 60 never recorded there before. [wtru.st/AttenbroCount](http://wtru.st/AttenbroCount)

The World Forum on Natural Capital will be held in Edinburgh 21-22 Nov 2013. More on [naturalcapitalforum.com](http://naturalcapitalforum.com)

# Don't cull, say Trusts

While the first pilot badger culls have been carried out in Somerset and Gloucestershire, The Wildlife Trusts continue to vaccinate badgers on their nature reserves and, with farmers, on surrounding land.

The cull, claimed to be the best way to reduce TB in cattle (bTB), is opposed by wildlife organisations, scientists and the public. More than 300,000 people supported a government e-petition against culling. Although sympathetic with farmers, The Wildlife Trusts are firmly against the cull and will not allow culling on our land.

Two years ago Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust began to vaccinate badgers in high bTB risk areas to demonstrate its practicality. There are now 13 Trusts either vaccinating badgers or raising funds to do so. Some are vaccinating in the zone between high and low risk areas – the 'firewall' approach.

We will continue to press for greater emphasis on badger vaccination. But the long-term goal is development of a cattle vaccine alongside other measures to reduce bTB such as improved farm biosecurity, restrictions on livestock movements and breeding genetic resistance in cattle.

■ Latest news, and donate to vaccination projects: [wildlifetrusts.org/badgers-and-bovineTB](http://wildlifetrusts.org/badgers-and-bovineTB)



TOM MARSHALL

A vaccination underway. Trusts believe a cull will only make the spread of bTB worse



The Wildlife Trusts' Joan Edwards (centre) with representatives from other charities

## Shoals of public support for marine protection

More than 350,000 people have called for the designation of a network of Marine Conservation Zones (or MCZs) around the UK. The Wildlife Trusts and other environmental charities presented the pledges to Downing Street in June.

The Wildlife Trusts remain concerned that the Government has failed to commit to the designation of a complete network of MCZs in English seas. An extensive regional consultation in 2010-12 involving a million people recommended 127 sites be set up. So far the Government is only considering 31.

The Government must now make a statement on its next steps. It's hoped the pledges will provide a mandate for swift and effective action. More on [wildlifetrusts.org/mcz](http://wildlifetrusts.org/mcz).

## AROUND THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS

### SCOTTISH

Five newly-born beaver kits have been seen at Dubh Loch, one of the Scottish Beaver Trial sites in Knapdale. Introduced in 2009, the beavers have successfully bred every year of the trial so far. [wtru.st/BeaverKits](http://wtru.st/BeaverKits)

### SURREY

A three-year project to boost the county's dormouse population is now complete. Fragmented woodland habitat was reconnected and hundreds of nest boxes installed. [wtru.st/DormouseBoost](http://wtru.st/DormouseBoost)

### SUSSEX

*Wild About Worthing* is a new project made possible thanks to an HLF grant. Residents will be offered wildlife activities including a Forest School programme and wildlife gardening competition. [wtru.st/WildWorthing](http://wtru.st/WildWorthing)

### ULSTER

Ulster Wildlife has begun mapping barn owls' nesting and roosting sites to help target conservation work. The species has been in decline since the 1930s and is now estimated to number just 50 pairs in NI. [wtru.st/NIBarnOwls](http://wtru.st/NIBarnOwls)

### S & W WALES

Greater butterfly orchids bloomed in record numbers at Caeau Llety Cybi reserve thanks to the long, wet winter. 624 flower spikes were counted this year – almost double the previous best. [wtru.st/OrchidBoom](http://wtru.st/OrchidBoom)

### WARKS

*Help for Hedgehogs* will map hedgehog populations across the county, target conservation activity on hedgehog hotspots and raise awareness of the issues they face. [wtru.st/HelpForHogs](http://wtru.st/HelpForHogs)

# A forest full of fun

The Wildlife Trusts are giving children the space and encouragement to discover the world they live in. Helen Walsh went to visit a Forest School in Sussex

The fire circle is the hub of the session – a place for planning fun, and talking about it afterwards

More on our work with children and young people: [wildlifetrusts.org/discovery](http://wildlifetrusts.org/discovery)

Looking round the circle, Katie asks, “So, what do you want to do today?” A chorus erupts from the children: “Den building!” “Fire making!” “Mud!”

It’s the final Forest School session of the term at Southwater Infant Academy in West Sussex, and it’s learning with a difference. Developed from the Scandinavian model of learning through play outdoors, the Forest School programme gets children outside and exploring nature in their own way and at their own pace. From fire lighting to cooking, woodwork to bushcraft, they learn about the natural world in a safe environment. And by visiting the same space for up to ten weeks, they can build relationships with the environment, the leaders and their classmates.

## Growing imaginations

“It takes time for the children to get the idea that they can say what they want and lead the activities themselves,” says Katie Riley, Sussex Wildlife Trust’s Forest School Officer. She’s running the morning alongside volunteer Bilal and freelance Forest School Leader Rachel Thomas. “Children can make their own decisions here. We facilitate rather than lead the session.”

It might look chaotic at first, but it’s not. Group size is limited to 15, the leaders are qualified and the children clearly understand the boundaries they have. The fire circle cannot be entered when the fire is alight, particular activities happen in specific areas, and leaders

help out with using tools. Yet these restrictions don’t appear as ‘rules’; they’re simply the norm.

The children ask for help when they need it, but busy themselves in imaginative play the rest of the time. From a shallow hole one group invents a mud café. Flinging mud at each other (and anyone who happens to get too close) they happily discuss what they are making: “My pizza is going to have a mud worm on top,” says Harry. “I’m making a mud person,” explains Bryony. Hannah simply says, “I love mud!”



Den building: a perfect chance to develop teamwork and decision-making

## Taking a step back

Observation is key to the success of a Forest School. The leaders are trained to watch the children closely, appreciate different learning styles and personalities, and provide the right support for the individuals they care for.

This is a little at odds with how adults often treat children. It’s in our nature to want to teach them what we know. But it can be stifling for a child to consistently hear what they can and can’t do. It’s certainly not easy letting the child be free to learn, as Bilal, a parent himself, admits:

“One of the hardest things is trying not to do it all myself. It took some self-training, but it’s wonderful to see the children develop.”

Besides imagination, sessions also encourage teamwork and decision-making. The children help each other tie branches together to make den walls. “It’s better than being in lessons,” says Nicholas. They are also in tune with the environment. “I’m using silver birch to make the fire as it’s good for starting it up,” explains Tom.

## Impossible to fail

Extensive research shows that Forest School sessions increase confidence, self-esteem, language skills, and social and emotional development.

“It’s impossible to ‘fail’ at a Forest School,” Katie explains. “There’s just space and encouragement to discover the world. There’s no set place to be at the end of the six weeks, but it’s astonishing what happens. It brings out confidence, increases skills and learning, and produces a comfortableness with the natural world.”

Many modern children are spending their youth indoors in front of screens. Not only are they not getting the exercise and fresh air they need; they are becoming more and more disconnected from the natural world. That’s why the Forest School programme is part of a wider strategy in The Wildlife Trusts: to foster a love and appreciation of the environment in the people who will grow up to be its guardians.

# A long old job

From the 1950s to the 1980s Yorkshire's peat uplands were drained for farming. It turned out to be a disaster. Fixing the damage is Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's toughest challenge yet



**REPAIRED**  
The overhanging edge is gone, to be replaced with a smooth slope. New vegetation will stabilise it

**EROSION**  
This entire gully was once a narrow drainage ditch. All its peat has blown or washed away

**DIGGERS**  
They're special low ground pressure versions, designed to tread lightly on delicate peat

Diggers smooth the exposed sides of eroding gullies at High West Moor above Nidderdale. The restoration work across Yorkshire will last for years

MATTHEW ROBERTS

**H**aze pollution in Singapore hasn't got much to do with the North Yorkshire Moors, you might think. After all, the noxious fumes which shrouded the South Asian city-state last June were caused by the deliberate burning of tropical peatlands in Borneo and Sumatra to create oil palm plantations.

But the unfolding ecological and economic catastrophe in South East Asia - driven by short-sighted biofuel subsidies in the US and Europe - is part of a problem that affects the UK too. Largely as a result of palm oil demand, Indonesia is one of the world's leading carbon emitters. The draining and burning of South East Asian peat forests contributes eight per cent of the world's carbon emissions as damaged bogs release their once-safely stored carbon to the atmosphere.

This is why peatland restoration, through re-wetting, is a critical part of the world campaign to stop catastrophic climate change. Re-wetting has two effects: first, it keeps the remaining stored carbon in the land; second, it re-starts the natural process of taking carbon out of the atmosphere and laying it down as peat. Achim Steiner, Head of the UN Environment



**Rob Stoneman** is Chief Executive of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

all over the world means that, for now, those peatlands emit more carbon than they absorb.

International conservation organisations are urging World Governments to do more. In the UK, the IUCN-UK's peatland programme aims to restore all UK peatlands as an exemplar to the global community. That pressure is having an effect. All four UK country environment ministers have signed a joint declaration to restore our British and Northern Irish peatlands.

But it's one thing talking a good talk, quite another to take action on the ground - which is, of course, where The Wildlife Trusts come into their own, spearheading peatland restoration across the UK. In Yorkshire this work

Programme, calls peatland restoration, "a low-hanging fruit, and the most cost-effective of options for mitigating climate change".

So the world's peatlands could help reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. But past and present damage

started in 2008 with a legacy from Mrs Joyce Mountain allowing Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) to work with the Yorkshire Dales National Park to map out the issues and propose solutions. The scale of damage was huge. Much of the county's upland peat was damaged by massive drainage works during the 1950s to 1980s, funded through agricultural subsidies. Over time, some of the drainage ditches (known as grips) have eroded into huge gullies, or allowed fires to burn deep, leaving vast scars with miles of bare peat eroding into the rivers or being blown off the hillsides.

Our scoping project discovered damage on an immense scale. Of the 65,000ha of deep-peat blanket bog in Yorkshire, 40,000ha (about 150 square miles) needs restoring. There were 3,100 miles of drains, 1,500 miles of eroding gully and at least 400ha of eroding bare peat. Taking on the task of restoring so much land was going to be one of the largest, most expensive projects The Wildlife Trusts had ever undertaken.

Yet the funds were there, through Natural England's agri-environment Higher Level Scheme. But with their staff stretched, and peatland restoration a rather technical discipline, they needed a

## Yorkshire peatland restoration

**3,073**

miles of drains digitally mapped

**17**

restoration sites

**23,932**

hectares of land surveyed

**689**

miles of drains blocked

**577**

miles of gullies reprofiled

**50**

hectares of bare peat re-vegetated

**1,053**

hectares of peatland restored

### HABITAT

Restored peat uplands support scarce birds, reptiles, invertebrates and specialist plants

### CARBON STORE

A healthy peat bog will keep on absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> for thousands of years

### DAM

There's little sign a digger was here, damming the ditch at regular intervals to create peaty pools

### POOL

Sphagnum mosses are already here. When their old growth dies it will fall to the bottom to make new peat

A grip dammed in 2011. Once the diggers have gone, nature can slowly carry on where it left off half a century ago

crack team of dedicated conservation advisors who could work with land managers to survey upland peatlands, assess the damage in fine detail, and set out plans and, ultimately, contracts for restoration.

And so the Yorkshire Peat Partnership was set up, with YWT employing staff and managing contracts for a broad range of partners: the National Parks, Nidderdale AONB, Yorkshire Water, the Moorland Association, the National Farmers Union, the Dales Rivers Trust, the National Trust, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

This team set about surveying the upland peatlands of Yorkshire using geographic information system (GIS) technology, deploying aerial photograph digitisation of grips, gullies, haggings and bare peat. Sites identified for restoration were then 'ground truthed' by workers walking hundreds of miles across the moors with digital mappers to record vegetation, depth and width of grips and gullies, peat depth, slope, and so on. This information was used to set out the right restoration techniques for each site. Finally, these huge datasets allowed restoration plans to be drawn up to allow contractors to start work.

“Restoring peatlands isn't just about wildlife or climate change. It reduces the cost of water too”

By April 2013, the now multi-million pound project had restored nearly a quarter of Yorkshire's damaged peatlands – an area of around 38 square miles. It is estimated that this work has prevented 29,500 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from reaching the atmosphere – the equivalent amount of carbon produced annually by 62,000 UK households.

Partnership with landowners has been critical. Richard Johnson, a landowner in the Yorkshire Dales whose advice and cooperation will allow us to restore 435ha, says: “Working with organisations to deliver restoration can be a challenge. But with cooperation, communication and, often, compromise, the best outcome can be achieved. That's best for Yorkshire's peatlands, and also for those who derive their livelihood from the moorland areas. And that benefits the local economy.”

Of course a restored peatland is richer in wildlife than a degraded one. Birds, reptiles, insects and plants will all benefit. But returning Yorkshire's peatlands to

their previous Sphagnum-dominated state is not just about conservation, or even just tackling climate change. It also reduces the cost of producing drinking water. Seventy per cent of the county's drinking water comes from peaty landscapes. Damaged peatlands give off brown water full of organic matter, which turns into a carcinogen once chlorine is added. Currently, Yorkshire Water has to remove this matter chemically at great cost to water users – us, in other words. It makes more sense to treat the problem at source, which is why Yorkshire Water is already spending millions on restoring peatlands across the county.

More than this, returning pristine blanket bog to the uplands of Britain restores some of our country's essential wildness, and sets an example to the global community.

It could even improve the quality of life in Singapore, and save us all from catastrophic climate change.

# Treasured islands

The Government wants huge amounts of scientific evidence before it will act to set up marine reserves. Here are three Wildlife Trust Island projects providing exactly that



The gannet colony at Les Etacs, with Alderney in the background. Most of the counts are done from the adjacent cliffs, with a telescope

## Gannets in Alderney



**Victoria Warwick-Evans**  
Seabird researcher for Alderney WT

Off the coast of Alderney sit Les Etacs and Ortac; two rock formations which together are home to nearly 8,000 breeding pairs of northern gannets.

Gannets feed on fish such as mackerel, herring and sand-eels. They are threatened by disturbance from offshore developments such as wind farms, and by marine pollution, including a recent and highly-publicised polyisobutylene spill.

This year marks the beginning of a three-year gannet-tagging study on Les Etacs to learn more about these special birds. The Alderney Gannet Tagging Project, run with the University of Liverpool, aims to gain detailed data on the foraging behaviour of Alderney's gannets and use this to create predictive models. This should allow us to analyse the effects of potential changes to their environment.

In June this year project workers caught 27 gannets from their nests. They fitted the birds with a GPS tag and either an accelerometer or a barometer. The GPS tags recorded

location data every two minutes for up to 13 days. Accelerometers allow us to record flying and diving during foraging trips. Barometers measure atmospheric pressure, which gives us altitude. Combining GPS data with behaviour will allow us to pinpoint important marine hotspots for this colony.

We'll analyse the data in detail this winter, but at first glance it looks like the birds might have travelled further from Alderney in 2013 than they did in 2011. Seabird breeding in Alderney (and all around the UK) appears to have been affected by the long cold winter. This behaviour could be the result.



## Sharks in the Isle of Man



**Eleanor Stone**  
Marine officer,  
Manx WT

The Isle of Man is famous for its basking sharks, but there are several smaller shark species in Manx waters too. The Trust has begun new research into these apex predators, working with the Manx government and the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme.

With the help of local anglers, the Isle of Man Shark Tagging Project catches sharks such as tope, spurdog and bull huss, tags them and releases them unharmed. If the shark is caught again, its ID tag will give an indication of how far it has travelled, how much it has grown and how long it can survive. This evidence can then be used to introduce better protection measures.

We need lots of tags out there to get as many re-captures as possible. Luckily, enthusiasm has been high and already we have over 20 anglers trained. Going out with one of our keenest participants I saw two large female tope caught in an hour. Up close they are fantastic animals: big, powerful and perfectly designed for long distance migration. Both tope were measured, sexed, tagged and returned to the sea. Scotland's tagging project



**Dorsal fin tag attached, this fine female tope is ready to go back**

shows that they can travel as far as the Azores and Iceland!

The big factor will be the reporting of recaptures. Please spread the word that if anyone catches a shark with a tag in it, record the shark's length and tag number, release it and report the details to the website on the tag ([tagsharks.com](http://tagsharks.com)). To find out more, contact [Eleanor@manxwt.org.uk](mailto:Eleanor@manxwt.org.uk).



**Careful handling keeps the shark calm**

**The UK is globally responsible for maintaining Manx shearwater populations**



**ISLAND HAVENS**  
Discover the famous Skokholm and Skomer off Wales, Crane Park Island in London, the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Handa island and many more at [wildlifetrusts.org/islands](http://wildlifetrusts.org/islands)

## Seabirds in Scilly



**Sarah Mason**  
Manager, Isles of Scilly WT

The Isles of Scilly (IoS) Seabird Recovery Project is a new, 25-year plan to provide a safe future for our internationally important seabird populations. Funded by the Heritage Lottery

Fund and EU LIFE programme, it's partnered by the IoS WT, RSPB, Natural England, the Duchy of Cornwall and the IoS AONB. The Trust helped design and implement the project, which is run from our new offices on St Mary's.

The Isles have 14 breeding seabird species, around 20,000 birds in all, including storm petrel and Manx shearwater. The project aims to reverse recent declines in these two species by removing invasive brown rats from St Agnes and Gugh, and to encourage residents to improve visitor access to the Islands' natural assets, which will boost local incomes and secure the seabirds' future. Many schoolchildren got involved this summer, and there have been weekly seabird safaris by boat to get locals and visitors up close to these wonderful birds.

More on [ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk](http://ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk)

# The miracle of ecotherapy

Paul Farmer reflects on the mental health charity Mind's partnership with The Wildlife Trusts

**Y**ou might not think that Mind and The Wildlife Trusts have much in common, but by working together we've discovered that we have.

Over the past four years, Mind's Ecominds scheme, with help from the Big Lottery Fund, has supported 14 Wildlife Trust projects that have introduced hundreds of people with mental health problems to ecotherapy. The projects range from nature conservation schemes to community gardens. They've helped people reap the benefits of the natural environment, make new friends, feel part of their communities again, and learn new skills to get back into work.

A wonderful example of the difference this can make to someone is Wayne, who has attended Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's Idle Valley conservation project. Wayne is an ex-serviceman who has been managing post-traumatic stress and depression since leaving active service 14 years ago. He joined the Notts Idle Valley group in November 2010 following a hospital admission, and immediately showed an



**Paul Farmer is chief executive of Mind, the mental health charity**

interest in woodworking and conservation. After a year Wayne's Community Psychiatric Nurse reduced her visits from every week to every two weeks, and then every month. His medication was also reduced, and finally, after a year

and a half, he was discharged by his nurse.

For most of us, the benefits of getting outdoors and doing some exercise are obvious. However, few people think of ecotherapy activities such as gardening or walking as valid treatments for diagnosed mental health problems.

In truth, ecotherapy could be offered on its own as a treatment for short-term conditions such as depression or mild anxiety. With medication or talking treatments it can also help longer-term conditions such as bipolar disorder. Recently, we surveyed a group of GPs

experienced improvements in overall mood after a single Ecominds session, with 48 per cent feeling less depressed.

We have also found that ecotherapy helps people to gain the confidence, skills and qualifications to get back into work. Two in five people who attended an Ecominds project were helped back into employment, training, education or another voluntary position.

Last year more than 50 million antidepressant prescriptions were written out, at a cost to the NHS of £211 million. Currently one in five people are waiting up to a year to access talking

**“ Few people realise gardening or walking are valid treatments for diagnosed mental health problems ”**

and more than half of them said they see ecotherapy as a valid treatment for anxiety and depression. Sadly only 11% felt that they could prescribe it for a condition such as schizophrenia, even though the Ecominds scheme has made a difference to people with such mental health problems. We clearly need to hear more stories like Wayne's, and see more evidence of the impact of ecotherapy.

We published our *Feel Better Outside, Feel Better Inside* report in October. Developed by the University of Essex, the report provides academic research to show the impact of ecotherapy projects on psychological health and wellbeing. For example, we found that 63 per cent of people with mental health problems felt more positive about their lives by the time they left an Ecominds project. In another survey, 76 per cent

treatments. As more traditional treatments such as antidepressants don't work for everyone, and access to talking treatments is patchy across the UK, it is so important that people are given a wider choice of treatment.

That's why we want to celebrate The Wildlife Trusts' fantastic achievements. They have helped more people with mental health problems to access ecotherapy – a holistic treatment that is cost-effective and tailored to an individual's needs. We hope to continue working with them to spread the message about mental health.

■ Read the report and find your nearest Wildlife Trust ecotherapy project at [mind.org.uk/ecominds](http://mind.org.uk/ecominds)  
For a good dose of restorative nature: [wildlifetrusts.org/reserves](http://wildlifetrusts.org/reserves)



The joint Mind/ Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust project at the Idle Valley nature reserve

# Who's who at the Trust

Simon King  
Mark Carwardine  
Mike Dilger  
Philippa Forrester

President  
Vice President  
Vice President  
Vice President

## Trustees

Roz Kidman Cox  
Tony Elgood  
Cecile Gillard  
Dr Steve Nicholls  
Anthony Brown  
Andy Bord  
Martin Brasher  
Keith Taylor  
Alan Dorn  
Lesley Freed  
Jane Memmott

Chair  
Deputy Chair and Treasurer  
Secretary

## Staff

Dr Bevis Watts

Chief Executive

## Conservation team

Dr Lucy Rogers  
Janice Gardiner  
Richie Smith  
Dr Kate Pressland  
Lydia Robbins  
Chris Giles  
Tim Curley  
Joe Middleton  
Bernie D'Arcy  
Joe McSorley  
Anne Halpin  
Siân Parry

Director of Conservation Programmes  
Living Landscape Programme Manager\*  
Living Landscape Project Officer\*  
Living Landscape Senior Project Officer  
Living Landscape Species Officer  
Head of Land Management  
Senior Reserves Manager\*  
Reserves Manager  
Reserves Manager  
Reserves Officer  
Monitoring Officer\*  
Planning and Policy Officer\*

## Consultancy team

Sarah Dale  
Mary Wood

Principal Ecologist  
Senior Ecologist

## Community team

Robin Maynard

Director of Community Programmes (from Jan 2014)

Jo Morris  
Julie Doherty

Learning Development Manager  
Community Groups and Partnerships Manager

Kelly Bray

Communities and Nature Senior Project Officer

Matt Harcourt

Communities and Nature Project Officer

Matt Cracknell

Feed Bristol Project Officer

## Finance and resources team

Jane Davis  
Pat Sandy  
Sam Pullinger  
Gill Hambleton  
Angela Davies  
Rachel Mepsted  
Roy Catford

Director of Finance and Resources  
Finance Officer  
Grant Development Officer\*  
Office Manager  
Membership and Administration Officer\*  
Membership and Administration Officer\*  
Site Assistant – Trust Office\*

## Communications and Development teams

Dagmar Smeed

Director of Communications and Membership  
Marketing Officer

Jade-Alice Preddy

## Folly Farm Centre

Andrew Lund-Yates  
Hannah Read  
Kerrie Page  
Daniel Dacer  
Gabriela Stepkowska

Folly Farm Centre Director (FF)  
Duty Manager (FF)  
Office Administrator (FF)\*  
General Assistant (FF)  
Housekeeper (FF)

(FF) based at Folly Farm \*part-time position

## Leaving a natural legacy

Gifts in wills can help protect some of our most wonderful wildlife from water voles to waxwings.

During Remember a Charity in Your Will Week, broadcaster Angela Rippon (pictured) joined The Wildlife Trusts, to encourage wildlife-lovers to leave a legacy that will help protect precious places and wildlife for future generations to know.

A legacy to Avon Wildlife Trust will help the wildlife treasures on your doorstep.

We care for nationally important wetlands, woodlands, wildflower meadows and urban nature reserves. A gift in a will can play a vital role in allowing this work to continue and protect places under threat.

Someone who remembers the Trust in their will could help create or restore a new nature reserve for flora and fauna to colonise and for people to enjoy; help to protect a specific species; or support our work to educate children and empower local communities to take action for wildlife.

Sir David Attenborough, President Emeritus of The Wildlife Trusts, said: "A legacy to your local Wildlife Trust is a very special gift that can do remarkable things to help the wildlife treasures on your doorstep. Please, consider remembering The Wildlife Trusts in your will."

Many people would like to write or update their will to reflect their current situation but simply haven't had time. A clearly



Angela Rippon with Anna O'Sullivan from The Wildlife Trusts

written will, kept updated throughout your lifetime, is essential to ensure that your wishes are met.

We are grateful to all who have pledged their support so generously to date by remembering Avon Wildlife Trust in their will.

Please contact Dagmar Smeed on 0117 917 7278 or email [dagmarsmeed@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:dagmarsmeed@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk). Thank you.

# Postscript



## An urban landscape for wildlife and people

**Says Ed Drewitt, naturalist, author and broadcaster**

**J**ust the other week I was driving along the Cumberland Basin in Bristol, when suddenly a peregrine dashed passed chasing a pigeon. As the peregrine closed in, the pigeon moved up a gear and fled, leaving the falcon pigeon-less and hanging in the air against the backdrop of the grand Georgian houses of Royal York Crescent and Hotwells. Who would have thought 30 years ago that such a sight was possible?

Most big towns and cities in the west are very green. A bird's eye view of Bristol and Bath reveals a mosaic of parks, open green spaces, rivers, lakes, fields, and trees – some are nature reserves managed by the Trust. Gardens of terraced houses built for factory workers hundreds of years ago form green corridors that join up woodlands and parks. And while the diversity of life may fall in urban areas compared to the bordering countryside, there is still plenty to see, smell, touch, and experience.

On a damp day you may spot (and almost tread on) a slimy, but rather dapper leopard slug, or smell the musty odour of an urban



**Peregrine falcon at Avon Gorge**

fox on a cold, crisp morning.

Spiders may not be everyone's best friend, but expert Mark Pajak recently found several species new to Bristol in his house!

The harbourside water, despite its brownish appearance is remarkably clean. It is home to most species of freshwater fish, and attracts prehistoric looking cormorants, and ever-secretive otters.

**Ed** Even waiting for a train at Temple Meads, Bath Spa or Bedminster will provide a chance to connect with nature, from gulls to pigeons, and lichens to poppies.

Wherever you are in the west, stop for a moment to close your eyes and listen. How many sounds of nature can you hear? Perhaps a robin quietly singing, the ear piercing squeaks of a noctule bat, or the seaside sound of a herring gull.

Whatever you see, hear, or smell, it is sure to connect you with nature and everything wild.

Ed's new book *Urban Peregrines* is due out in spring 2014.