

WildAvon

NATURAL SOLUTIONS

How restoring natural habitats can help tackle the climate crisis

SAVE OUR SWIFTS

Why these masters of the air need our help

SPRING SPECTACLE

Nature's sopranos

Our best spring reserves for hearing the UK's finest avian songsters



Avon

Welcome



Welcome to your spring *Wild Avon* magazine, our chance to connect you with the best ways to enjoy this season's wildlife and wild places and bring you up to date with the work we've been doing to support them. Much as I love the stark beauty of winter and the chance it gives to tune into a different rhythm in nature, I am glad to have reached the lighter days of spring. The nesting birds I hear from my office window display a gathering energy that many of us feel. And this year that energy is needed more than ever to focus on restoring our depleted natural world.

As we reach the first quarter of 2020, there is no doubt of the ever-growing urgency felt by individuals, organisations and businesses to face up to the severity of the ecological crisis we're in. Despite enjoying the sounds of those nesting birds, I know how few are left in our towns, cities and countryside compared to when I was growing up. And the same decline faces our insects and much-loved mammals like dormice and hedgehogs. You can read about swifts on pages 22–27 – both their beauty and the barriers they now face to survive.

On the world stage there are huge moments ahead this year which give a last chance to reset and restore our environment, including the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference – known as COP26 – in Glasgow in November. Before that, new Agriculture and Environment Bills passing through parliament are setting out the way forward for farming and environmental protection.

But just as important are the things happening locally which herald significant change. In Bristol, I joined the Mayor in declaring an ecological emergency in February – the first city to do so. Avon Wildlife Trust pushed for this to happen and will be part of the action this sets in motion to create wildlife-rich spaces in every neighbourhood. You can read more about this and how you can play your part in helping solve this ecological emergency on pages 16 and 21.

We have made further changes to *Wild Avon* to bring you some longer features and more tips and ideas on how to experience the best of our nature reserves and spring nature activities. I hope you enjoy it and thank you for your support.

Ian Barrett

Chief Executive of Avon Wildlife Trust

Follow me on twitter @IanBarrettSW



NICK TURNER

Avon Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*

Wild Avon is the membership magazine for **Avon Wildlife Trust**, your local wildlife charity, working to secure a strong future for the natural environment and to inspire people to care for it. With the support of over 17,000 members and 1,150 volunteers, the Trust cares for over 30 nature reserves, runs educational and community programmes, advises landowners, and campaigns on issues that threaten wildlife habitats.

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

Facebook @avonwt

Twitter @avonwt

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DAVID TIPPLING 2020VISION



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STEVEN WILLIAMS

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Volunteer Could you donate your skills and time to look after wildlife? A wide range of indoor and outdoor tasks need doing.
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer)

Donate From helping us continue protecting Avon's badgers, managing beautiful nature reserves and supporting insects to thrive, supporting our fundraising helps us do more for wildlife.
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/donate](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/donate)

Campaign You can play a vital role in raising awareness and lobbying on urgent issues like reversing insect decline, calling for new, strong environment laws and putting nature into recovery.
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/campaign](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/campaign)

Local groups Join one of our network of local groups and help make a difference to wildlife close to where you live. Email us: enquiries@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Adopt a species Choose to adopt a badger or a bumblebee to support our work protecting these wonderful wild animals.
[avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/adoptaspecies](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/adoptaspecies)

Leave a legacy If nature has given your joy in your life, help ensure a future by leaving a legacy in your will. Contact Emily Millington: **0117 917 7270**
emily.millington@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk



Your wild spring

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



A bumblebee flies to a bluebell. Some carry back as much as 75% of their body weight in pollen and nectar

Thank you

Thanks to your membership,
we are working to help
pollinating bees and
wonderful wildflowers to
flourish across our region



SPRING SPECTACLE

Pollinating insects

Listen out for the buzz and gentle flutter of wings as flying insects pollinate wildflowers on spring days. Bees, butterflies and hoverflies all feed on the nectar of bluebells, and the beautiful flowers provide them with a valuable food source as they flower earlier than many other woodland or meadow plants. Bees have a clever way of 'stealing' the nectar from bluebells by biting a hole in the bottom of the flower, reaching the nectar without the need to pollinate the flower. Bluebells themselves can reproduce either by seed through pollination or by sending out new roots and bulbs – a process known as 'natural vegetative propagation'.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

- **Dolebury Warren's** limestone grassland is a haven for wildflowers and the bees and butterflies that depend on them for nectar and pollen.
- **Walton Common** – enjoy views of the Gordano Valley on this nature reserve rich in wildflowers like thyme, marjoram and rock rose.
- **Urban wild spaces** – watch out for bumblebees in your local park, green space or allotment.



Native bluebells have petals which curl back at the tip and the flowers grow on one side of drooping stems

Visit a bluebell wood

Late April and early May are great times to enjoy your local bluebell woods. The carpets of flowers covering the woodland floor with their delicate scent and a gentle breeze rippling the sea of blue spires is a wonderful treat for all the senses. Thanks to your membership, Avon Wildlife Trust is protecting many beautiful bluebell woods, providing important habitat for small mammals, butterflies and birds like chaffinch and chiffchaff.

SEE IT THIS SPRING

- **Prior's Wood** With its gentle paths and canopy of oak, hazel, beech and small-leaved lime trees, this woodland is a treat to visit and in spring the floor is a sea of bluebells.
- **Weston Big Wood** If you're lucky you might spot a woodpecker or nuthatch as you wander the paths, or hear them in the trees.

JOSH RAPER – CONSERVATION MEDIA



CHRIS LAWRENCE

URBAN FIELDCRAFT

Slow worm city slickers

Sometimes mistaken for worms or snakes, slow worms are actually legless lizards and, like lizards, they have eyelids and can shed their tails (which then regrow). Although these wonderful reptiles are in decline nationally because of loss of habitat, they have adapted to urban life, where derelict industrial sites and disused or untidy parts of allotments make the perfect homes for them. Sheets of old metal or carpet might look unsightly to our eyes, but slow worms love to lie underneath to shelter and hide from predators like rats, foxes, cats and sometimes magpies.

How to SPOT A SLOW WORM

- **Size it up** Slow worms are much smaller than snakes and have smooth, golden-grey skin. Males are paler in colour and sometimes have blue spots, while females are larger, with dark sides and a dark stripe down the back.
- **Go under cover** Gently look underneath old metal or carpet you see along paths. You might see one or more slow worms – but remember to leave them undisturbed and don't try to pick them up.



SEE THIS

Look out for the darting flight of swallows returning in April from their winter visit to Africa, and swifts in early May with their piercing call on the wing.

DO THIS

Look out for a spring or summer bird or wildlife identification day to enjoy learning more about Avon's beautiful birds, native and visiting. Look at our website events page for courses avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

MARK HAMLIN

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Butterflies

Get to know more about the array of beautiful insects you might spot when out for a walk, or in your park or garden this season.

The flutter of wings

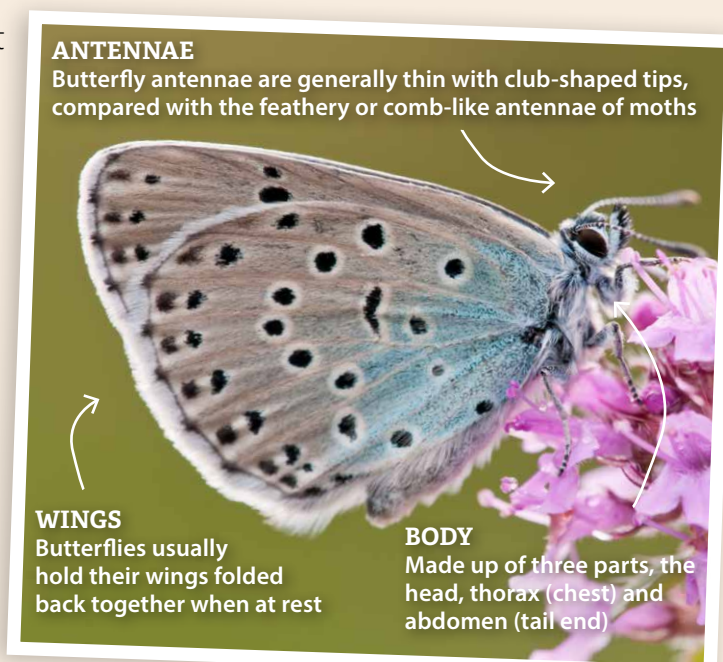
As we come into late spring and early summer, caterpillars will begin to emerge from their chrysalises as butterflies, ready to fill our landscape with colour. With a fascinating life cycle, this family of invertebrates is well worth getting your teeth into!

What to look for

In the UK we have 59 species of butterflies – 57 resident species and two regular migrants, the painted lady and clouded yellow. Butterflies can be found in almost any habitat as each species has different food plants of choice. In Avon, our wildflower-rich calcareous grasslands are great places for butterfly spotting, as well as rides and glades in our woodlands.

Know the difference

There is no hard and fast rule that differentiates butterflies and moths, but there are a few clues you can look for. Butterfly antennae are generally thin with club-shaped tips, compared with the feathery or comb-like antennae of moths. Butterflies are diurnal (meaning they are active during the day), while a lot of moths are nocturnal. While at rest, butterflies usually fold their wings back, while moths flatten their wings against their bodies or spread them out in a 'jet plane' position.



ANTENNAE

Butterfly antennae are generally thin with club-shaped tips, compared with the feathery or comb-like antennae of moths

WINGS

Butterflies usually hold their wings folded back together when at rest

BODY

Made up of three parts, the head, thorax (chest) and abdomen (tail end)

ROSS HODDINOTT / 2020/VISION

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

- **Walton Common** This grassland and woodland reserve with beautiful views of the Gordano Valley is famed for its wildflowers and butterflies.
- **Dolebury Warren** Wildflowers carpet the grassy ramparts and limestone slopes, attracting rare butterflies, so plenty to spot here if you visit.



Reserve information and maps

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves



CHRYSALIS

Moths make cocoons and butterflies make chrysalises. The former are silky and the latter are silk-less

LES BINNS

Top tips 3 SPECIES TO SPOT

Brimstone

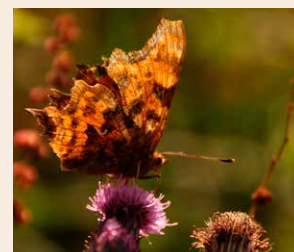
When these butterflies roost among foliage, the angular shape and strong veining of their wings closely resemble leaves.



VAUGHN MATTHEWS

Comma

The scalloped edges and cryptic colouring of their wings help hibernating adults remain unseen.



REBECCA ADDY

Pearl-bordered fritillary

One of the earliest of the fritillaries to emerge, they can be seen as early as April in woodland clearings or on rough hillsides with bracken.



TOM MARSHALL

HEAR THIS

Listen out for the song of the chiffchaff which returns to the UK in early spring. Its call is a lively, repeated 'chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff, chiff-chiff-chaff'.

FORAGE FOR THIS

Young nettles and wild garlic leaves make delicious soup or pesto. The leaves of both plants are at their best in mid-spring when they are tender and full of flavour.

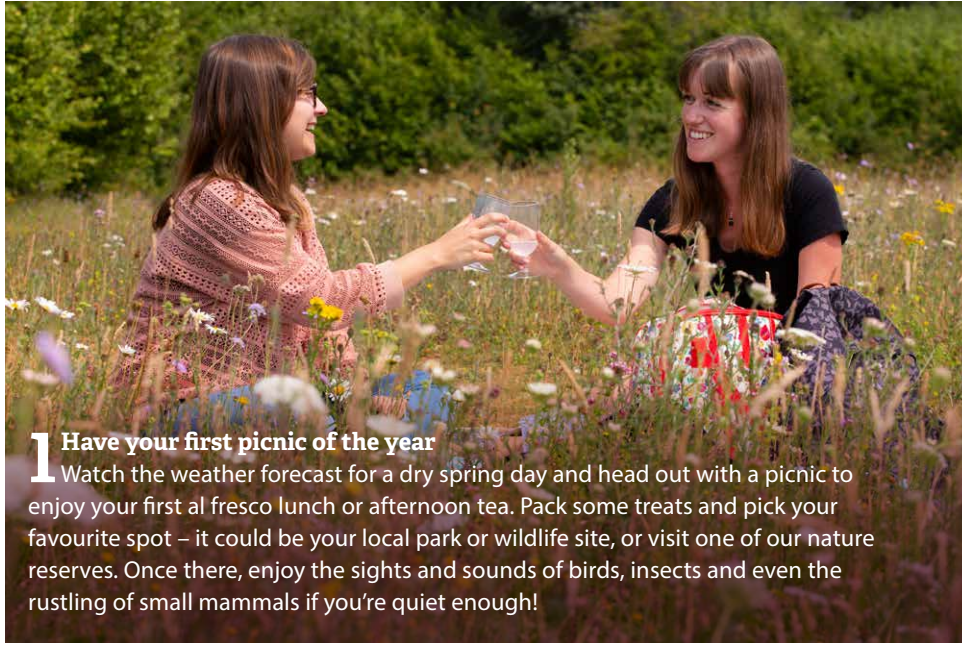


HARRY GREEN

NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Seven ways to enjoy nature this spring

Why should kids have all the fun? Reignite your love of nature with these really wild things to do



JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

1 Have your first picnic of the year

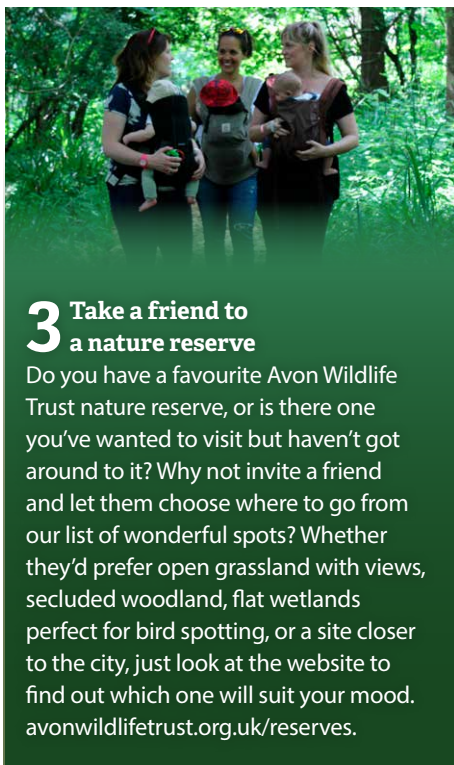
Watch the weather forecast for a dry spring day and head out with a picnic to enjoy your first al fresco lunch or afternoon tea. Pack some treats and pick your favourite spot – it could be your local park or wildlife site, or visit one of our nature reserves. Once there, enjoy the sights and sounds of birds, insects and even the rustling of small mammals if you're quiet enough!

2 Go pond hunting

From March onwards, after a dormant winter, ponds burst into life and in spring these watery habitats are teeming with wildlife. Spend some time looking closely at the huge variety of wild plants and animals living in or on the fringes of these wildlife havens. By early spring, frogspawn and toadspawn usually appear – frogspawn a cluster of jelly-like eggs and toadspawn in long ribbons. In early summer but sometimes later, the tadpoles have grown legs and fully absorbed their tails and are ready to leave the water as tiny froglets.



NIAL BENNIE/2020VISION



3 Take a friend to a nature reserve

Do you have a favourite Avon Wildlife Trust nature reserve, or is there one you've wanted to visit but haven't got around to it? Why not invite a friend and let them choose where to go from our list of wonderful spots? Whether they'd prefer open grassland with views, secluded woodland, flat wetlands perfect for bird spotting, or a site closer to the city, just look at the website to find out which one will suit your mood. avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves.

4 Plant your own wildflowers

It doesn't matter if you have a garden, a windowsill or a tiny patio – you can plant wildflowers in beds, containers or window boxes to create a beautiful mini-wildflower meadow to enjoy all spring and summer. Why not use a quirky container, like an old teapot, kettle or tin? Line with an old woolly jumper cut to size and plant up your selection of wildflowers using peat-free compost. **Visit the wildflower nursery at our Grow Wilder site (formerly Feed Bristol) to browse and get friendly advice from our team – open on weekdays and the first Saturday of every month 10am-4pm.**



ABI PAINE

5 Enjoy spotting cowslips

These well-known spring blooms are easy to identify with their cup-shaped, yellow flowers growing in nodding clusters on tall stalks. See them growing in open areas of woodland, meadows and on roadsides. After decades of worrying decline, cowslips are returning to unsprayed road verges and banks.



NIAL BENNIE/2020VISION

Spring and summer events

Take your pick from this selection of some of the best seasonal activities, courses and events close to you



6 Feed the birds

As birds nest and hatch their young this spring, help them by providing suitable food to sustain their energy. As well as putting out leftover food like grated cheese, cooked rice, dried fruit and chopped nuts, mealworms are a brilliant food to provide in the breeding and fledgling season.

BOB COYLE

Nature
craft

7 Build your own bee hotel

You will need:

- An untreated wooden plank, at least 10 cm wide.
- Plenty of hollow stems of different diameters (including the bees' preferred 3-5 mm), such as bramble, reed or bamboo.
- Saw, drill, screws and secateurs.
- A mirror fixing to hang the finished nest up.

Building your bee hotel:

- 1 Cut the plank into four to make a rectangular frame that the stems will sit inside.
- 2 Drill guide holes for the screws (to stop the wood splitting) and assemble the frame.
- 3 Snip your stems into lengths to fit the frame (as wide as the plank), discarding any bent or knobby ones. It's a good idea to include some really big stems (cut with a fine saw), even though they're no use to the bees; they speed up the assembly stage, look attractive and help shelter lacewings and ladybirds over winter.
- 4 Lay your frame on a tilted surface and carefully pack it with stems. Only as you add the final few does the whole thing suddenly lock solid.

Hanging your bee hotel:

- Hang your hotel on a sunny wall, sheltered from rain.



1 City Nature Challenge

25 April, 10:30am-2:30pm
Newbridge Slopes, Bath
Come and join in with the region's challenge to record as many different wildlife species as we can in one weekend!

2 Wildlife Watch Club for 5-10 year olds

2 May, 10am-12pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol)
From microscopic marvels to tiny tadpoles, find out what's lurking in the pond this year? Booking essential online, and other dates available throughout the year.

3 Spring celebration, vegetable and plant sale

2 May, 9am-5pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol)
Come and join a bountiful spring community celebration and stock up on wildflowers and edible plants for the year.

4 Avon Wildlife Trust's 40th birthday party!

3 May, 2pm-5pm
Folly Farm Centre
Join us to celebrate the Trust's 40th birthday with nature activities, guided wildlife walks and refreshments.

5 Wildflower identification course

9 May, 10am-4pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol)
Discover more about amazing local wildflowers and learn how to identify what's around you on our one-day beginner's course.

6 Bath Festival of Nature

30 May, 11am-6pm
Green Park, Bath
Come and visit the Avon Wildlife Trust marquee at Bath's nature festival.

7 Bristol Festival of Nature

6 & 7 June, 10am-6pm
Millennium Square, Bristol
Come and visit the Avon Wildlife Trust marquee at Bristol's nature festival.

8 Illustrated nature journalling course

19 June, 10am-4pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol)
Discover how to create your own nature journal through sketching and writing. This workshop will get you started using simple techniques, and give help and ideas to help you continue your journal.

9 Grow Wilder summer celebration

20 June, 12pm-5pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol)
Music, café, free wildlife activities for families and a chance to visit our wildflower nursery, buy plants and see wildlife-friendly food growing in action.

10 Improve your garden for wildlife course

3 July, 9am-4pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol)
Learn how to help your local wildlife with this practical one day course on wildlife gardening. Leave with advice for your own garden.



Browse more events

or book on our website
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events



Discover Folly Farm

Folly Farm is a 250-acre nature reserve with stunning views over the Chew Valley. Avon Wildlife Trust has owned and managed the site since 1986. Take a walk this spring to enjoy shady woodland, open grassland and gentle hills.

Historically, there is evidence that it was once a medieval deer park, and in the eighteenth century was a 'ferme ornée' – an ornamental farm with features designed to retune the senses of visitors from the city. For example, waterfalls were placed near footpaths to allow guests to hear running water. Some features of the ferme ornée can still be seen today, like the watercourse which runs down the lush wooded valley.

There's a sense of tranquillity and gentle beauty

Now, Folly Farm is managed as a mosaic of habitats to encourage a wide range of wildlife. At the top of the site, you'll find stunning hay meadows, which at the height of summer are full of wildflowers

and pollinators: a wonderful place to linger and enjoy the sights and sounds of insects and birds. Look out for black knapweed, ox-eye daisies and bee orchids, with the delicate purples and whites stretching across the meadows. On the steep slopes that form the wide amphitheatre shape of the site, there are patches of dense scrub for beautiful birds like blackcaps, white-throats and thrushes to perch on and nest in. Dowlings Wood, in the south-eastern corner of the



NAOMI FULLER



BEVIS WATTS

Wild garlic

Thank you
 Thanks to your support, we can look after Folly Farm for the barn owls, badgers, butterflies and other wildlife that depend on it.

stepping stones across the landscape for animals to shelter in and move between. Creatures that benefit greatly from the woodland at Folly Farm are our resident badgers. There are several active setts on the site, and it's a great place to sit quietly on a summer's evening and watch for snuffling badger cubs emerging to feed as the sun goes down. We have an observation point set up just off our 'access for all' trail, so you can easily spot the badgers without disturbing them.

A glimpse of history in a living landscape

For centuries, parts of Folly Farm have been grazed by animals. We are now moving towards a more naturalistic way of managing this grazing to create a good balance of natural habitats, using more traditional, wilder livestock breeds. In December, we introduced four Exmoor ponies and we are already beginning to see the positive impact they are having on the scrubby slopes, as they trample paths through brambles and munch on tough plants like tufted hair grass and thistles. This will help a more diverse range of wildflowers to thrive on the hilly grassland and give colour, beauty and a food source for insects in the years ahead. Seeing these ponies roaming the hillside brings a wilder look to the nature reserve and gives a glimpse of how grassland landscapes would have been looked after in the past. ■



DANNY GREEN/2020VISION

site, is a beautiful patch of woodland which in springtime is a carpet of bluebells, primroses and early purple orchids. You can also spot the understated but equally magnificent wildflower, herb paris.

Mosaics of habitats, as we have at Folly Farm, are crucial for nature's recovery in our increasingly fragmented landscape. Hedgerows form corridors linking to neighbouring land so wildlife can move around the area. Together with our volunteers, we have planted long stretches of new hedgerow over the last year. In addition, our wooded areas join up with other woodlands around the area to act as

DID YOU KNOW There is a lime kiln on maps from the 1600–1900s in what is now a hay meadow at the top of the site, indicating **woodland management** took place at Folly Farm over 400 years ago!



BEVIS WATTS

NOW YOU DO IT

1 Visit Folly Farm

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Location: Stowey, Pensford, Bristol, BS39 4DW

How to get there: A free car park is at the reserve.

Opening times: Free entry all year round, dawn til dusk.

Access: 'Access for all' trails allow access for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There are permissive paths all across the site with a public footpath running through the top. Some paths on hill sides can be slippery and muddy.

Phone: 0117 9177270

Email: enquiries@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Website: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/folly-farm

TOP WILDLIFE TO SPOT

Badgers: on a still spring evening, look out for the Folly badgers foraging at dusk. Good views from the observation point on the 'access for all' trail.

Herb paris: its crown of understated, green flowers can be found blooming in Dowlings Wood in May and June. With its whorl of four egg-shaped leaves, it is known as the 'herb of equality' because all its parts are considered equal and harmonious.

Barn owl: these silent predators have specially adapted primary flight feathers, which have a serrated leading edge to disrupt turbulence and prevent them from making any noise. Look out for them floating along hedgerows at dusk.

Ant hills: an indicator of old grassland that has escaped the plough, these can be seen throughout the rare grassland at Folly.

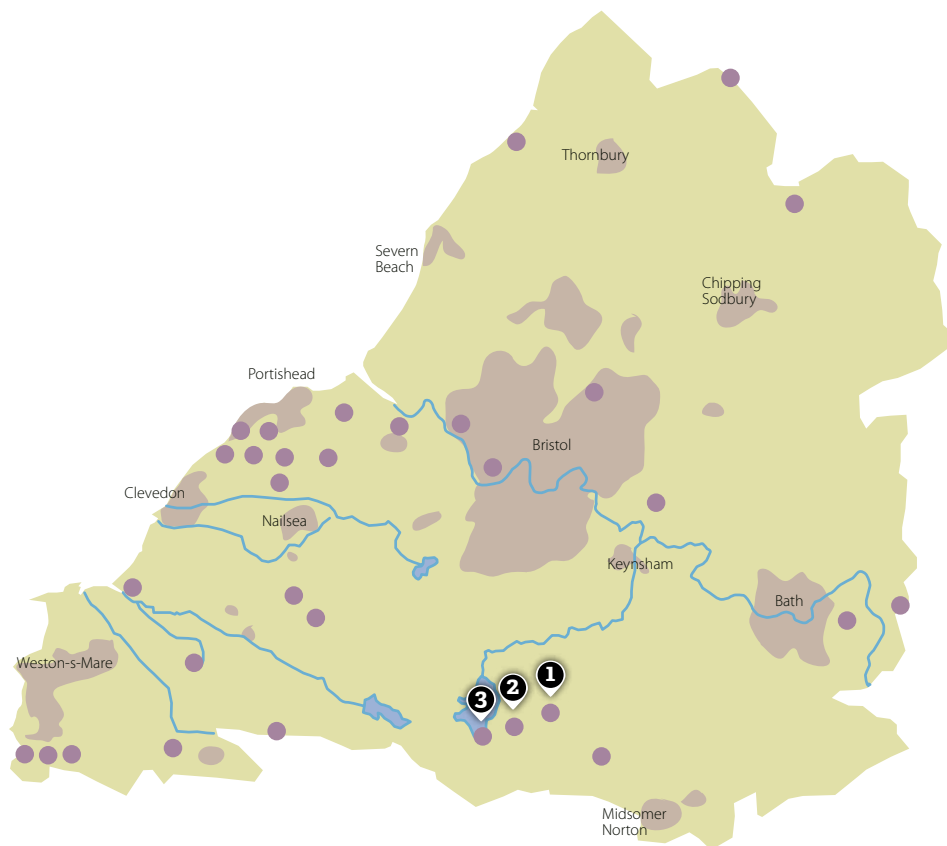
THINGS TO DO

➤ Walk up to the top of East Hill (turn left as you leave the car park and follow the path) and enjoy **panoramic views** of Chew Valley below and back towards Dundry Hill and Bristol.

➤ Stop and stare in wonder at the spectacular **Folly Oak** (in the field in front of the Folly Farm Centre). This magnificent tree with its beautiful spreading branches is over **400 years old**.

➤ Catch a glimpse of our lovely wild **Exmoor ponies** with their shaggy coats and manes. They are quite hard to spot as they enjoy hiding in the midst of scrub and bramble to munch away together!

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



2 Burledge Hill Nature Reserve

Why now?

This wildflower-rich grassland on the north-eastern fringes of the Mendip Hills, overlooking Chew Valley Lake, is only a short distance from our Folly Farm nature reserve and a wonderful small nature reserve to visit. Rare meadow flowers including cowslip, lady's mantle, saw-wort and devil's bit scabious grow on this site through the summer months. Butterflies are also abundant in summer and birds such as willow warbler, garden warbler and whitethroat can be heard singing from the scrub areas.



Look down to Chew Valley Lake

Know before you go

Location: Sutton Hill Rd, Bishop Sutton, Bristol BS39,

Open: Free entry all year, dawn to dusk

Wildlife to spot: willow warbler, garden warbler and whitethroat

Find out more:

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

The lowdown

We've been busy doing much needed grassland restoration work at Burledge Hill. Our dedicated group of volunteers have worked with us through the winter to help keep the wildflower grassland on site open and connected to nearby habitats. The balance of grassland, scrub and woodland is really important to maintain a range of wildlife here. As well as the practical work done by the volunteers, we also have grazing cattle who help keep the right balance of wildflowers and other plants. If you visit Burledge Hill this spring and summer, you'll be rewarded with splashes of colour from the wildflowers that grow across the hillside.

3 Chew Valley Lake

Why now?

Interesting birds can be seen at this reserve all year round, including in spring and summer. Breeding birds include great crested and little grebe, gadwall, tufted duck, shoveler and pochard. Hobbies often feed over the area in late summer and ospreys are sometimes spotted later in the year, stopping at the lake on their migration journey to West Africa from their stronghold in Scotland. When the water level falls in the hotter months, the mud attracts waders such as dunlin, ringed plover and green sandpipers.



Spot birds and dragonflies here

PETE HERIDGE

Know before you go

Location: Herriotts Bridge, West Harptree, Bristol BS40 6HW

Open: Although there is no access directly onto the reserve because it's such a delicate habitat, you can stand on Herriott's Bridge overlooking the reserve and get excellent views of the birdlife.

Wildlife to spot: Birds all year round. Dragonflies and other aquatic insects during summer months

Find out more:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/chew-valley-lake

The lowdown

Now a freshwater lake teeming with birds – with over 260 species recorded – Chew Valley Lake was lush farmland and fields until the 1950s. When a new reservoir was needed to supply drinking water to the growing city of Bristol, 1,200 acres of land was flooded with 4,500 million gallons of water from the Mendip Hills. As well as being a haven for birds all year round, the lake is now a popular place for fishing, sailing and walks, with accessible paths stretching along large parts of the lake's shore.



Plan your next great day out at our nature reserves:

avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves



**Melissa
Harrison**

Discover your secret garden

“ When I lived in central London I had my very own Secret Garden: a tiny pocket park a couple of streets away. That’s even what I called it, as its real name was long and humdrum and totally failed to capture how magical the place felt to me. An overgrown and largely overlooked half-acre created from the abandoned grounds of a long-gone Victorian villa, there was a pond, a single redwood, an old statue and winding paths lost under ivy, brambles and bindweed. I found frog spawn in spring, and sometimes a heron visited. Long-tailed tits chirruped in the branches overhead and when it snowed neat lines of fox prints led to a den deep beneath the brambles. For years my Secret Garden was a refuge from the city and a source of inspiration, even becoming a key location in my first novel, *Clay*.

For the two decades I spent in the capital I relied on contact with nature to help make urban life not just survivable, but enjoyable. Finding special places like my Secret Garden proved transformative, keeping me connected to weather, wildlife and the ancient cycle of the seasons – all things modern life can ameliorate or sometimes erase. Even in my twenties I instinctively knew I needed nature, and now the science is bearing it out: spending time in wild places eases stress, regulates our emotions, boosts our immune systems and improves both physical and mental health. None of that should come as a surprise, given that we evolved in nature, rather than separately from it.




We fare less well in myriad ways the further removed we allow ourselves to get.

Creating a life that’s connected to nature doesn’t have to mean moving to deep countryside, going on long hikes in technical clothing, getting in the car and driving to a national park or learning long lists of Latin names for birds (though you can do all those things if you like!). Nor is connecting to nature something we should experience as a duty – one more thing to fit into an already busy life.

All it requires is a little curiosity about the wilder world around you – whether that’s your garden, park, local beauty spot or nearest Wildlife Trust reserve – as well as an ongoing interest in what’s living there, and a willingness to find out what it looks, sounds, feels and smells like during all four seasons of the year.

To connect with a special place in this way taps into age-old instincts, answering deep, subconscious, but often unmet needs. Over time, your attention will be repaid tenfold, it deepens and enriches your daily life, filling it with wonder.

 The Wildlife Trusts are looking forward to the release of *The Secret Garden* in cinemas this spring. Search for your own secret space at your nearest Wildlife Trust nature reserve. Visit wildlifetrusts.org/nature-reserves


A LITTLE BIT WILD

Find your connection

Create an ongoing relationship with your special place in a way that works for you – drawing, meditating, writing or even going for a run. Be inspired by our 30 Days Wild Challenge! wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild

Melissa Harrison is a nature writer and novelist, and editor of the anthologies *Spring, Summer, Autumn* and *Winter*, produced in support of The Wildlife Trusts.

6 places to hear Spring singers



Spring is a time of change. For our feathered friends, thoughts turn from survival to more amorous pursuits. As birds across the UK search for a mate, the landscape fills with song, the chorus growing as summer visitors arrive from farther south. Almost any garden, park or nature reserve can offer a seasonal symphony, perhaps with the warble of blackcaps, the melodic voice of the blackbird and the flourishing finale of chaffinches. But to hear some of our most celebrated singers, you may have to venture slightly farther afield. This spring, why not seek out the incomparable song of the nightingale, the cascading chorus of a wood warbler or the simple but splendid call of the cuckoo.



WOOD WARBLER BY ANDY ROUSE/2020VISION



Hear the symphony for yourself

1 Ayr Gorge, Scottish Wildlife Trust

In spring this wooded ravine comes alive with bird song, including warblers like chiffchaff and blackcap. Listen for the strange song of the dipper along the river.

Where: Failford, KA5 5TF

2 Gilfach, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

In late spring the oak woodland echoes with the beautiful song of the wood warbler, an accelerating cascade often likened to the sound of a spinning coin.

Where: Rhayader, Powys LD6 5LF

3 Catcott Complex, Somerset Wildlife Trust

Ditches and reedbeds resound with the chattering of reed and sedge warblers and the explosive bursts of Cetti's warbler song. You might also hear the insect-like reel of a grasshopper warbler.

Where: Near Burtle, TA7 8NQ

4 The Roaches, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

The woodland at Back Forest is a great place to hear the soft song of the redstart and the distinctive call of the cuckoo, as well as warblers including wood warbler.

Where: Roach End, ST13 8TA

5 Grafham Water, Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants

Follow the Nightingale Trail for your chance to hear the iconic song of this secretive summer visitor.

Where: Grafham, PE28 0BH

6 Woods Mill, Sussex Wildlife Trust

Listen for the beautiful song of the nightingale. There's also the rare chance to hear the soft purr of the turtle dove, which sadly is the UK's fastest declining bird.

Where: Near Henfield, BN5 9SD

A chorus close to home

Avon Wildlife Trust is running guided walks and events this spring and summer, including dawn chorus walks to experience the joys of birdsong. Search our website to see what's near you at [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events)

WILD NEWS

All the latest regional and national news from The Wildlife Trusts



Bristol's declaration signals a new approach to nature's recovery

TOBY PICKARD

REGIONAL

Bristol declares ecological emergency

Bristol has become the first city to declare an ecological emergency, signalling a new approach to nature recovery and restoring wildlife-rich spaces. The declaration was made by Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees and our CEO Ian Barrett, with the support of other organisations, at a cabinet meeting at the beginning of February. Standing alongside the declaration of a climate emergency made by Bristol City Council in November 2018, the ecological emergency declaration recognises the scale of wildlife decline and the serious degradation of the natural environment which we now face.

Recent international reports, including the 2019 State of Nature, have painted a picture of plummeting wildlife populations, where 41% of UK species are

in decline and 15% at risk of extinction. In Bristol, the city's swift and starling populations are a fraction of what they were, with a 96% decline in numbers of these once-common birds between 1994 and 2014.

Avon Wildlife Trust's chief executive, Ian Barrett, has worked closely with the Mayor and council to highlight the ecological crisis facing the city and to shape the emergency response. Already, ambitious nature targets for the city have been set out in the One City Plan, including increasing tree cover and wildlife abundance in Bristol by the 2040s. The February declaration paves the way for a much quicker pace of change and new citywide strategies and funding to create

and restore places for wildlife in every neighbourhood. City organisations and businesses have pledged to commit to action and others are being urged to play their part. And we're encouraging people of all ages to volunteer, take practical action in schools, workplaces, gardens and parks, and to join as members. The Trust will continue to work closely with the council, city organisations and local communities to turn this pioneering declaration into a clear action plan for restoring the city's nature.



Turn to page 21 to read more about how we're tackling ecological emergency and how you can help.

Last year we successfully vaccinated 15 adults and cubs



RICHARD HOPKINS

Thanks to you, we've raised over **£24,000** to fund our badger vaccination programme, helping us protect badgers this year and next.


REGIONAL

New Government policy means an end in sight for badger culling

As our conservation team gears up to continue the badger vaccination work we started last summer, the Government has announced a significant policy change in the fight against bovine TB – signalling the phasing out of badger culling and the scaling up of badger vaccination.

The new approach promises funding and the scaling up of both badger vaccination and cattle vaccination, and support for farmers to take action on farms to stop infection. This is positive news and means the future is more hopeful for these wonderful mammals.

The changes won't be immediate, and culling will continue in some new areas over the next few years – including potentially in Avon. We're continuing our vaccination programme and getting ready to revaccinate last year's adults and vaccinate cubs born this year. We'll start surveying the site soon to find out where the badgers' main setts and routes are, and from June onwards we will set up humane traps which allow us to carefully vaccinate them.

 **Find out more about our work to vaccinate badgers**
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/saveourbadgers

REGIONAL

Ash dieback

Ash dieback – a devastating disease which is predicted to severely affect or kill over 90% of ash trees nationally – is now affecting trees across our region, including in all of Avon Wildlife Trust's wooded nature reserves. We are now preparing for its effects and our land management team are felling and removing trees at several nature reserves. Spread by a fungus, the disease stops trees being able to draw nutrients into their upper branches, meaning there is a risk of branches or even whole trees falling, often without any warning signs.

Sadly, ash dieback is set to affect 90% of all ash trees



MARK HAMBLEN / 2020VISION

If you're out for spring and summer walks you may see our team at work and find some footpaths closed. We're sorry about this but we need to keep people safe when doing this essential tree work.

 **Find out more about ash dieback and how we're tackling it here**
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ash-dieback

Together we're stronger

Here are some of the ways your membership has been helping to protect your local wildlife

30 nature reserves

With your support, each of our reserves is an exceptional place for wildlife. And as we build nature's recovery across our region together, the role of our nature reserves as refuges and stepping stones from which wildlife can spread is more vital than ever.

13,742 species are known about in Avon and **52% have been found on our nature reserves**. This is fantastic news and your support is helping us monitor and record wildlife species in more detail.



You helped lapwing

We created new 'scrapes' – shallow, water-filled dips – at our Gordano Valley nature reserves last year and five breeding pairs returned to raise their chicks. We'll keep you posted on this year's lapwing visitors.



You helped create new habitats

In the last three years we've planted 12 hectares of wildflower-rich grasslands to help pollinating insects – that's the size of 12 rugby pitches!



A bottlenose dolphin leaps clear of the water in the Moray Firth

UK UPDATE

A big splash for UK seas – our 2019 marine review

Together, the Wildlife Trusts form the UK's largest marine conservation organisation. Our Living Seas teams are the eyes and ears of the UK's coast. Throughout 2019, with the help of over 5,000 volunteers, they did wonderful things for the wildlife in our seas.

Careful monitoring revealed some fantastic good news stories around our shores, from bumper breeding seasons to amazing discoveries.

A new citizen science project logged 320 sightings of cetaceans off Yorkshire's east coast, including minke whales, bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoises. There was good news for seals too, with Cumbria Wildlife Trust counting a site record of 483 grey seals at South Walney, including seven pups. Elsewhere, an individual seal, nicknamed Tulip Belle, was discovered commuting between the Isle of Man and Cornwall.

Lara Howe, Manx Wildlife Trust's marine officer, says: "It shows that seals will swim great distances for food and a place to pup, highlighting the importance of a network of Marine Protected Areas around the UK, so that wherever marine wildlife goes there are healthy seas to support them."

Our fight to secure this network saw a huge victory last summer, with the designation of 41 new Marine Conservation Zones.

2019 also saw a welcome boost for some of our struggling seabirds. On Handa Island, Scottish Wildlife Trust counted 8,207 razorbills, the highest number since 2006, though the population is sadly still in trouble. In North Wales, Sandwich terns had a bumper year, with 800 chicks fledging compared to just 180 in 2018.

Sadly, it wasn't all good news. Several Wildlife Trusts reported an increase in disturbance. Jet skis, kayakers, boats and drones have all been recorded causing distress to marine wildlife like dolphins, seals and seabirds.

Plastics, ocean litter and discarded fishing gear also continue to devastate marine wildlife, though Wildlife Trusts around our shores cleared up huge amounts of litter, including 2.5 tonnes picked up by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust.

All of this was made possible by the fantastic support of all our volunteers and members. For more amazing stories head to wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-19

2019 IN NUMBERS

■ Over **5,000 volunteers** supported coastal Wildlife Trusts with beach cleans, surveys and shore-based events.

■ More than **200 sharks, skates and rays** were tagged as part of Ulster Wildlife's SeaDeep project, helping us monitor these vulnerable animals.

■ Two giant gobies were among **1,310 species recorded in just 24 hours** as Devon Wildlife Trust's Wembury Marine Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary.

■ **27 tonnes** of litter and fishing gear were collected by fishermen for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Fishing 4 Litter.



Get involved

We need to put nature into recovery on land and at sea. Join us on our campaign for a wilder future: wildlifetrusts.org/wilder-future

UK UPDATE

100 miles wilder

Space for nature should be at the heart of our planning and farming systems. This is the only way we can create a Nature Recovery Network, enabling wildlife to thrive across the landscape and bringing nature into our daily lives.



But current proposals for developing the land between Oxford and Cambridge do not have nature at their heart. Without proper assessment, government cannot know whether the area

could support the current proposals for housing, road and rail and stay within environmental limits for nature, carbon and water.

Special habitats are under threat, including ancient woodland and grazing marsh, which supports rare and declining wading birds like curlew and redshank.

The Wildlife Trusts have created an alternative vision for this land: 100 miles of wilder landscape in which people can live, work and enjoy nature. By protecting and connecting the wildest places, we can introduce a new way of planning that has nature and people's wellbeing at the centre. Find out more wildlifetrusts.org/100-miles-wilder

New leader for The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts are delighted to welcome Craig Bennett as their new Chief Executive Officer.

One of the UK's leading environmental campaigners, Craig joins The Wildlife Trusts from Friends of the Earth, where he was Chief Executive.

In a conservation career spanning over 20 years, Craig has led a movement to end peat cutting on important moorlands, helped secured better wildlife legislation through The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and, more recently, led successful campaigns to highlight climate change and to protect and restore



bee populations.

Craig Bennett says: "The Wildlife Trusts are an extraordinary grassroots movement that is uniquely placed to work with local communities to make this happen and ensure a wilder future, and I could not be more pleased to have been asked to lead them at this incredibly important moment." wildlifetrusts.org/new-leader

An insect apocalypse

A new report, *Insect Declines and Why They Matter*, commissioned by an alliance of Wildlife Trusts in the south west, concluded that drastic declines in insect numbers look set to have far-reaching consequences for both wildlife and people. The report concludes: "if insect declines are not halted, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems will collapse, with profound consequences for human wellbeing."

wildlifetrusts.org/urgent-action-insects



UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Inspirational youth

Over the last year, over 2,800 young people aged 11-25 rolled up their sleeves to help nature thrive in their local area. The Grassroots Challenge project, led by Ulster Wildlife, gave young people the opportunity to unleash their passion, creativity and potential to make a real difference to their environment and community. ulsterwildlife.org/news/inspirational-youth

2 Attenborough appeal

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust launched an appeal to raise £1 million to safeguard Attenborough Nature Reserve, a wild oasis at the edge of Nottingham that's home to large numbers of wildfowl. The appeal was supported by Sir David Attenborough and raised over £900,000 in the first month. nottinghamshirewildlife.org/lifelineappeal

3 Spooky sighting

A ghost slug was discovered in the gardens of Devon Wildlife Trust's Cricklepit Mill. The origins of this mysterious species are uncertain, but it's thought to be a native of Ukraine. Since ghost slugs were first discovered in the UK in 2007, there have been a scattering of sightings, mainly from South Wales. It's a predator of earthworms and may cause problems for our native worms if it becomes established.

devonwildlifetrust.org/news/ghost





VAUGHN MATTHEWS

We bet you didn't know...

A total of 6,108 species of wild animals and plants have been discovered at our nature reserves. We'll tell you more about some of these in your next magazine.



Our four new Exmoor ponies are hardy through the seasons, living wild on our Folly Farm reserve

TIM CURELY

REGIONAL

Introducing our new conservation officers

Four Exmoor ponies have arrived at our Folly Farm nature reserve to help us manage the beautiful wildflower grasslands. This sturdy native breed is excellent for conservation grazing because it thrives in tough terrain, including steep slopes, boggy areas and places with cold and wet weather. The ponies were brought from Exmoor by the Moorland Mousie Trust – a charity dedicated to protecting Exmoor ponies – and have got straight to work eating tough grasses, bramble and gorse. By munching away and keeping tougher plants from dominating, the hilly grasslands at Folly Farm will get more light, which will allow the wonderful array of wildflowers, like the delicate mauve heath-spotted orchid and devil's

bit scabious and the tall spikes of yellow rattle, to flourish in the future. Our ponies are all named after cheeses, so we're getting to know Wensleydale, Halloumi, Stilton and Mozzarella – our very own Folly Farm cheeseboard!

If you're visiting Folly Farm you're welcome to see the ponies, but it's important not to feed them or try to stroke them. Feeding them could make them ill and going too close could frighten them and lead to an injury.

 **Read more about our new ponies and the conservation grazing they're doing** avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/exmoor-ponies


REGIONAL

Cracking wildlife pond, Gromit!

Already home to Shaun the Sheep, Wallace and Gromit and the iconic Morph, Aardman Studios in Bristol has made space for a host of wildlife, thanks to amazing efforts by young conservationists. A group of young volunteers, helped by Avon Wildlife Trust's Our Bright Future youth engagement team, worked hard in cold, muddy conditions to restore an overgrown pond in Aardman Studios' garden and have transformed it

into a wonderful wildlife haven for frogs, newts, toads and a host of other city wildlife.

Transforming this space helps connect patches of land and wild spaces right across Bristol for wildlife to thrive. It's a small but vital part of the Nature Recovery Network we need to create together.

 **Read more about the pond project** avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/aardman-pond



UK HIGHLIGHTS

Rare bee recorded for the first time in 13 years!

A yellow-faced bee has been spotted at our Grow Wilder site (previously called Feed Bristol) in north Bristol recently – the first time this species has been recorded in the Bristol area since 2007. It's a small, mostly black bee with yellow (or sometimes white) markings on its face. This is a fantastic find for our team at Grow Wilder and shows how well this urban site is doing at attracting back wildlife of all kinds. Yellow-faced bees collect pollen from wild mignonette and the weld plant and live in open habitats including grassland, coastal marshes and gardens. Let's hope more can flourish in wild spaces across the region and their numbers grow.



STEVEN FALK

Yellow-faced bee

Adopt a bumblebee

You can play your part in helping Avon's insects and adopt your very own bumblebee. Our adoption packs are now available to buy, and we'll send you a factsheet about bumblebees in our region, your own adoption certificate and a cuddly bumblebee. Every penny received from adoptions goes towards supporting threatened wildlife and habitats – including bees and the wildflower meadows and grasslands they need to flourish. It's the perfect present for children and families. Find out more: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/adoptaspecies

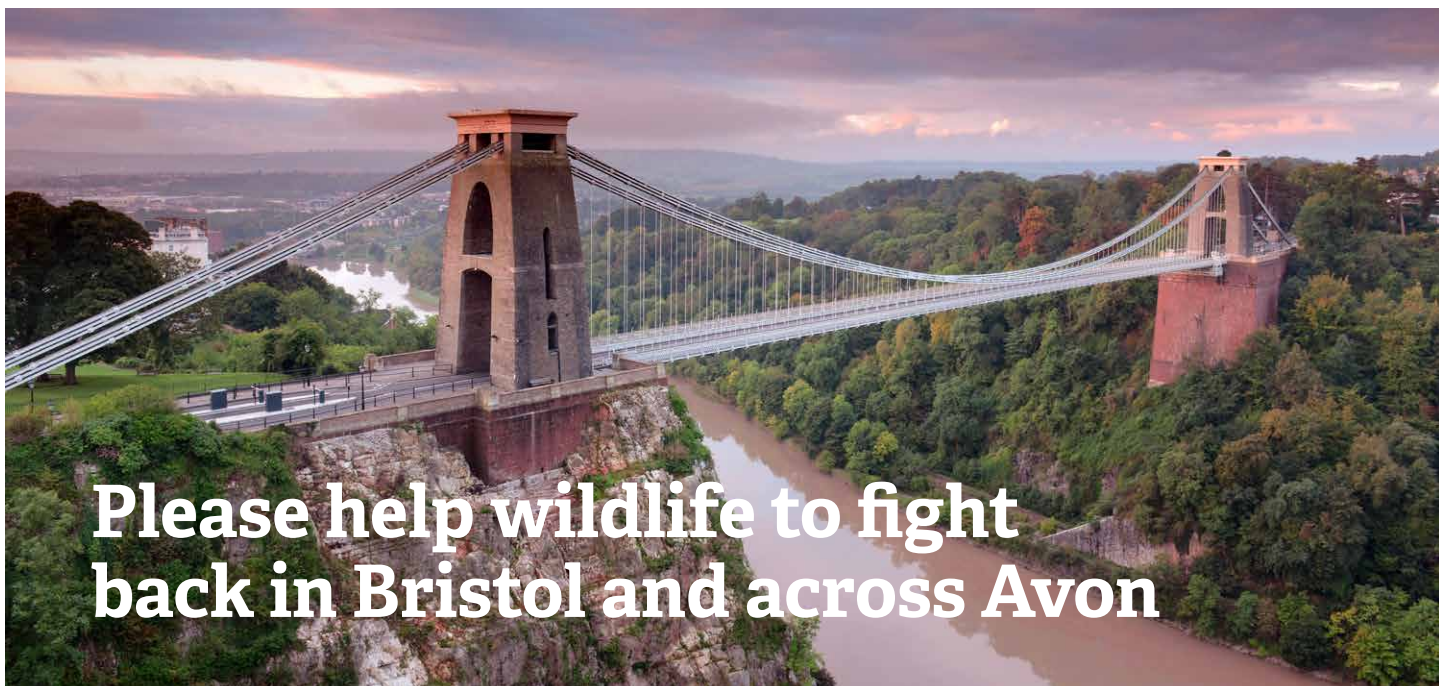
FOCUS ON... Ecological Emergency Appeal



“Nature urgently needs our help to recover – and it can be done.”

Sir David Attenborough

TOM MARSHALL



ISTOCK - KIZICH34

Please help wildlife to fight back in Bristol and across Avon

Ecological emergency declared

In February, our Chief Executive Ian Barrett joined the Bristol Mayor in declaring an ecological emergency in the city. Wildlife is struggling to survive throughout the UK, and 41% of species – from butterflies to hedgehogs – are currently in decline. We are working with other local authorities and partners to make sure that action is taken throughout Avon.

What's the problem?

The UK has lost over 400 species in the last 200 years, and a further 15% of

the country's species are currently at risk of extinction. Human intervention is causing the declines, as changes in climate, pollution, and the way land is used are reducing space, habitats and food sources for wildlife. The potential impact on human life is dramatic – clean air, clear water, healthy soils, food crops, natural flood defences and beautiful places that support our wellbeing all rely on a thriving natural world.

What we're doing

A new approach to nature recovery across the West of England is needed. We are leading and participating in a range of projects – in Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, as well as in Bristol itself – to improve ecological awareness and deliver more wildlife habitats:

West of England Nature Recovery Network – expanding and connecting wild spaces

B-Lines – creating pollinator habitats throughout Avon, currently improving Bristol and Bath's city fringes

My Wild City – transforming eight of Bristol's local wildlife sites

With over 100,000 new homes planned locally by 2036, we need more support to lead wildlife's fight back. We want to accelerate the pace of change by creating more wildlife-rich spaces, and securing commitments from councils, planners, businesses, organisations, community groups and residents to support wildlife.

How you can help

We have launched an appeal to increase our impact, and are asking members, supporters and volunteers to manage their gardens to attract wildlife, buy local produce, and donate towards this appeal:

£15 could help us plant wildflower seeds

£25 could buy tools for our B-Lines project volunteers

£100 could help us host meetings to influence organisations, businesses or community groups to make changes that support wildlife.

Time is running out for some species



Pearl-bordered fritillary

DONALD SUTHERLAND

To find out more ways that you can help, and donate to this vital appeal, please visit avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ecoemergency

Swifts epitomise British summertime with their screaming flight. But as fewer of these miraculous birds return to our skies each year, **Sarah Gibson** reveals how we can help them

The secret lives of **SWIFTS**

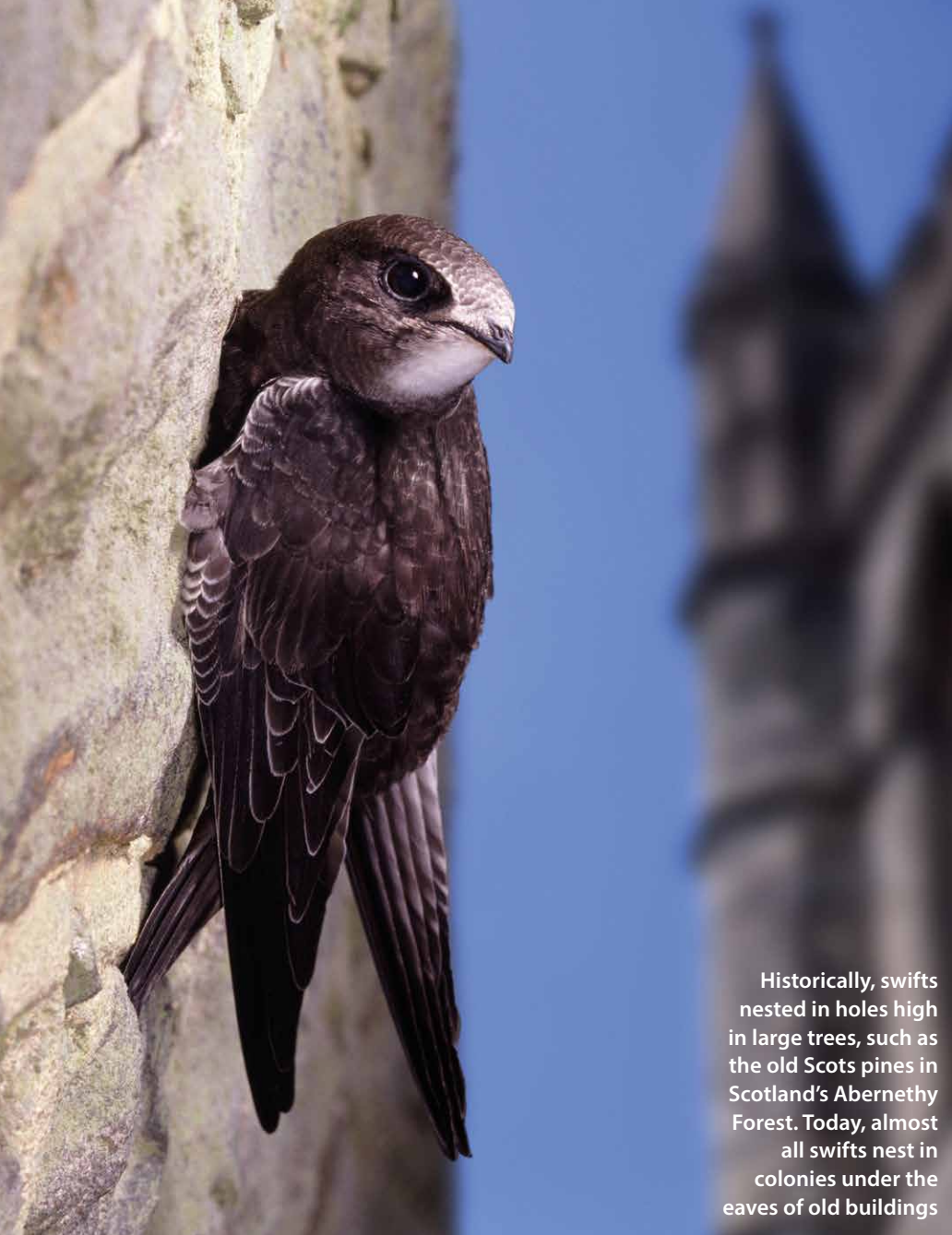


Sarah Gibson

works for Shropshire Wildlife Trust. She's met swift experts across Europe, raises local awareness of the birds' plight and revels in the aerial skill of these awesome birds.

Swifts are creatures of the air: they drink, feed and sleep on the wing. They spend just three months of the year in the UK, arriving in early May and leaving in early August, and are not thought to land between one breeding season and the next





Historically, swifts nested in holes high in large trees, such as the old Scots pines in Scotland's Abernethy Forest. Today, almost all swifts nest in colonies under the eaves of old buildings



Swifts are not the quietest birds. Nor are they given to skulking in the undergrowth. They live their entire lives in the open air, scything past on crescent wings, often making piercing screeches. Yet, like many people, I never used to notice them.

There had been swallows nesting in a barn near my old home in the Welsh borders. I'd see them swooping over the stable door, beaks stuffed with insects for their chicks. Later, I'd watch the fledglings practise flying in the safety of the barn. When I moved to a nearby market town, I missed that closeness... until I found swifts.

There was a pair nesting in the eaves of the house next door. They would storm down the narrow gap between the buildings with a rush of wings, and perform a handbrake turn to enter their nest hole. Blink and you'd miss them. Sitting in the garden on fine, still evenings,

I watched them gliding through the air, snapping up insects, until the light drained from the sky and the first bats emerged.

Life on the wing

Swifts are incredibly aerial birds, living entirely on the wing for years at a time, rarely touching ground for even a moment. They catch all their food in the air: aphids, flies, spiders, beetles, mayflies; even small moths and dragonflies, whirled into the sky, carried on the wind. Swifts drink and bathe, sleep and even mate on the wing. They fly closer to the sun than any other bird, feeding and resting at altitude.

Swifts spend most of their lives in Africa, but they journey thousands of miles to breed in a vast swathe across the world, from the westernmost fringes of Europe,

eastward to China. Around the globe there are estimated to be somewhere between 95 million and 165 million of them sailing across the skies, justifying their English name of 'common swift'.

You may wonder why these well-travelled birds come to the UK when so many of our summer days are rain-soaked, making it difficult, you might think, to catch the insects they need to feed their young. The answer must be that, apart from the occasional particularly bad year, it works for them – and has done for millions of years. In fact, our northern summers have a great advantage for swifts and many other kinds



Swifts have very short legs, an adaptation to their aerial lifestyle, so they are ungainly on land

SWIFT ON BUILDING: KIM TAYLOR / WARREN PHOTOGRAPHIC
GROUNDED SWIFT: MARK TAYLOR / WARREN PHOTOGRAPHIC

FACT FILE

Common swift*Apus apus*

APPEARANCE: Sooty brown, see guide to identification overleaf

SIZE: 16–17cm; wingspan 42–48cm
Weight: 36–50g

DIET: Flying insects and airborne spiders

HABITAT: Adapted entirely to life in the air, they depend on insects rising from woods, wetlands, meadows and gardens

IN THE UK: Starts arriving from last week of April and departs late July into August

DISTRIBUTION: Breeds throughout Europe as far north as Lapland and the Arctic Circle, reaching east across Asia to China

UK POPULATION: 87,000 pairs

LIFE SPAN: The average lifespan of a swift is eight years, but a ringed individual in Switzerland lived to 21

STATUS: Declining

Swifts migrate between the UK and their wintering grounds south of the Sahara. They are the UK's fastest birds in level flight, reaching speeds of up to 69.3 mph

Swifts are incredibly aerial birds, living entirely on the wing for years at a time

of insectivorous birds – long daylight hours, which enable them to forage for 16 hours a day at the season's peak.

Swifts have several unusual adaptations that enable them to cope with our bad weather. The eggs and chicks of most small birds are vulnerable to chilling, so extended forays by the parent birds to feed themselves during incubation and brooding can cause the nest to fail.

Swift embryos, by contrast, are resistant to cooling, except at the start of incubation. Chicks can become torpid (a state of lowered metabolism) to conserve

energy, enabling the parent birds to feed elsewhere, until the weather improves. Once they are a few weeks old and have fat reserves, swift chicks can survive several days without nourishment, greatly enhancing their chances of fledging in variable weather conditions.

Home sweet home

Swifts make their nests in crevices in walls, under roof eaves or inside pantiles (S-shaped roof tiles). Gathering materials takes time – all the feathers, wisps of grass, tree seeds and flower sepals must be found on the wing, blowing about in the air. Inevitably, scraps of plastic are now often found woven into the nest, a shallow dish that is glued together with the birds' saliva.

Finding a nesting hole is the most crucial thing a swift has to do. Most individuals do not breed until their fourth year, but the young birds still make the

migration journey and start looking for a safe, dark hole. Once they have found one, the young birds pair up and start to bring in feathers and other nest materials.

The apparent joie de vivre of young swifts is breathtaking. You hear them before you see them, screeching over the rooftops in gangs of seven or eight, racing circuits around buildings. As the poet Ted Hughes put it:

*Their lunatic, limber scrambling frenzy
And their whirling blades
Sparkle out into blue*

Hughes also wrote the much-quoted lines about the swifts' return:

*They've made it again,
Which means the globe's still working,
the Creation's
Still waking refreshed, our summer's
Still all to come*

This anxiety about whether or not 'our' swifts will return each May is →

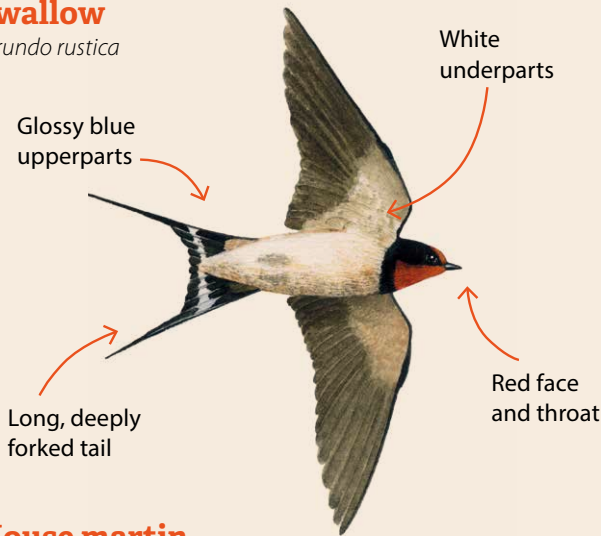
How to distinguish swifts

Swifts are not hirundines (the family of birds that includes swallows and martins), but they have a similar appearance and lifestyle, so are often confused with them

Swifts usually feed at around 50-100m, higher than swallows and martins

Swallow

Hirundo rustica



Common swift

Apus apus



House martin

Delichon urbicum



Sand martin

Riparia riparia



something most swift-watchers can relate to, but concerns have escalated since Ted Hughes's poem was published over 40 years ago, with a massive and alarming 57% decline in numbers in the UK recorded between 1995 and 2017.

For thousands of years, swifts have lived alongside us, because the homes and other buildings we constructed for ourselves have also suited them. Today though, we are making it much harder for these birds to survive. Reduced abundance of insects is highly likely to be a factor – many other species of insectivorous birds are also in decline – but swifts are also up against a catastrophic loss of nesting cavities. Renovation of old buildings almost always results in access to their holes being blocked, while new housing tends to be sealed completely against nature. Modern building materials, such as plastic soffits (part of the eaves), offer little potential

for future weathering and gaps opening up. We need to accommodate nesting swifts – and urgently.

Meet the swift champions

Thankfully, an inspirational movement of swift champions is coming to the rescue across the UK. Around 90 small groups are taking action locally. They run surveys to find swift breeding sites, work to prevent nesting holes from being blocked, install nestboxes, share information and help raise awareness through walks and talks – all with the support of their communities.

Several of these groups work in partnership with their regional

As traditional nest sites become increasingly scarce, you can help by fitting a wooden nest box to the outside of your home

Renovation of old buildings almost always results in access to swift nest holes being blocked



Swifts like high, deep crevices to nest, but as many old buildings have been lost and roof spaces filled, their numbers have declined

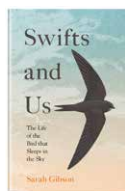


Wildlife Trusts, which are perfectly positioned to assist grassroots action, such as nestbox schemes in church belfries and public buildings. The Wildlife Trusts also advocate the use of swift nest bricks – and nature-friendly green spaces – in new housing developments. Several Trusts are campaigning directly with local authorities and working with planners to get the installation of swift nesting bricks (a brick with a hole behind which a nest box is fixed) written into local planning policy and building conditions.

North Wales Wildlife Trust is particularly active on behalf of swifts. Ben Stammers, the Trust's people and wildlife officer, is passionate about the birds and, since 2014, has raised funds to install more than 300 nestboxes on schools, houses, university buildings, a community pub, a doctor's surgery, a theatre and a chapel in the area. More than 60 people have been trained

as surveyors and, so far, 500 swift records have been submitted to their database. Dozens of talks, walks and other events have engaged more than 1,000 local people.

Ben sums up what it means to him: "Seeing joy in people's faces when they watch swifts on their own patch is so uplifting. I hope swifts can become an inspiration for how we can share our living space with wildlife, to the benefit of us all. If we can't find ways to help a species as fascinating and charismatic as the swift – and one so dependent on us – what hope is there?" I feel sure that's a sentiment we can all agree with. 🍷



Swifts & Us: The life of the bird that sleeps in the sky by Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Sarah Gibson will be published by William Collins this spring.

GET INVOLVED

Five ways to help swifts



- 1** Ensure nesting holes are kept open when carrying out roof renovations or insulation
- 2** Put up a swift box on your house. Make sure it's at least five metres high
- 3** Stop using garden chemicals to support a healthy insect population
- 4** Keep records of swifts entering holes in buildings and tell your local record centre
- 5** Find out more about swifts and how you can help protect them at wildlifetrusts.org/swifts

Natural Carbon SOLUTIONS

BY JOANNA RICHARDS

We face a climate emergency. Extreme weather events are on the increase and the impacts of a warming climate are becoming evident on our beloved wildlife, with some UK species being pushed to the furthest limits of their natural ranges. To tackle a crisis of this scale, it is imperative every tool in the box is used, and this includes the natural solutions offered by our planet. Over half of all carbon emissions released into the atmosphere by humans are re-absorbed by the Earth's natural systems. And yet, many of these systems are broken, the habitats providing them damaged and degraded. Restoring these systems would allow even more carbon to be absorbed – and The Wildlife Trusts are playing a leading role in helping this happen.

At sea, the Trusts fought for the Marine Act 2009: properly implemented it restores our most important carbon absorber and the wildlife that lives within it, including kelp and phytoplankton. On land, 9% of the UK's surface is a huge carbon store with carbon locked up in wet peat. Carbon is also stored in organic rich soils, especially those under grasslands and woodlands. For decades, The Wildlife Trusts have pioneered peatland restoration and sustainably managed woodlands and grassland meadows. This work continues, thanks to our supporters, helping in the fight against climate change.

Saltmarsh

Like peatlands and grasslands, intertidal saltmarsh provides an important carbon store in its soils. Saltmarshes also act as a buffer against coastal erosion – although this and rising sea levels is leading to the loss of this habitat, with only 15% of its historic range remaining.

Woodland

As they grow, trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere, storing it in their trunk, boughs and roots and as organic matter in woodland soils. So, new woodland creation – through natural regeneration for example – helps to combat climate change.

Peatland

Peatlands cover just 3% of the earth's surface, but store more carbon than any other habitat on land (more than twice the carbon of all the world's forests put together). But when damaged, as in the UK, they release carbon, contributing to climate change – so restoration is essential.

Seagrass meadows

These aquatic flowering plants are responsible for around 10% of all carbon buried in the ocean, despite covering less than 0.2% of the ocean floor. They store carbon 35 times faster than rainforests, but estimates suggest that globally we are losing an area of seagrass the size of two football pitches every hour.

Urban

Urban greenspaces help make cities better in a world that's getting hotter. Young street trees take up carbon dioxide and urban woodlands help control the local climate by providing shade and reducing the street temperature. Pleasant greenspaces can also encourage people to walk and cycle rather than jump in a car!

Grassland

Healthy grassland soaks up and stores carbon in its roots and the soil. Grasslands that are undisturbed by arable agriculture and protected from soil erosion through sustainable management are important stores. Yet in the UK, we've lost 97% of our semi-natural grasslands and they continue to be at risk.

Seaweed and kelp forests

Kelp grows incredibly quickly, sucking up carbon as it does. These underwater forests provide critical short-term carbon stores. When they die, bits of kelp sink into the deep sea, where they remain for a long time.

Marine sediments

Phytoplankton – miniscule marine algae – absorb carbon as they grow. When they die, some of the carbon they've taken up sinks to the ocean floor, where it can remain for thousands of years.

Gardening for moths and butterflies

By day and by night, gardens large and small can provide a haven for Britain's beleaguered butterflies and moths. **Kate Bradbury** suggests nine ways to support all the stages of their life cycles

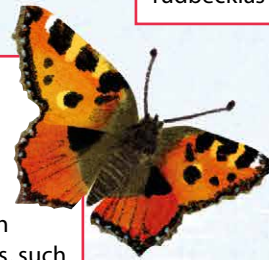


Grow nectar-rich flowers

Make sure something is in flower from March through to November, starting with primroses, bluebells and forget-me-not in spring, then alliums, lavender and scabious in late summer, and late-flowering *Verbena bonariensis*, sedums and rudbeckias in autumn.

Plant some climbers

Bare fences and walls are a wasted opportunity to help butterflies. Cover them with plants and provide nectar-rich flowers and shelter for species, such as brimstones, to hibernate. If you grow hops, comma butterflies may lay their eggs on its leaves.



Provide caterpillar foodplants

Butterflies need the right plants to lay eggs in your garden. Grow cuckooflower for caterpillars of the orange-tip butterfly, nettles for peacocks, small tortoiseshells and red admirals, and holly and ivy for the holly blue.

Add a window box

If you don't have a garden or your space is small, grow nectar-rich flowers in pots, window boxes or hanging baskets. Choose low-growing primrose and lavender for pots, and nasturtiums for baskets.



ILLUSTRATION: HANNAH BAILEY, PHOTO: SARAH CUTTLE

Butterflies and moths have suffered huge declines in recent years. This is largely due to habitat loss, but agricultural pesticides and climate change have made life even more challenging for many species. Happily, there's plenty we can do to help them on our own patch, no matter its size. The UK's gardens take up more space than all of its nature reserves put together, so if we all gardened with butterflies and moths in mind, we could help slow, or even reverse, some of these declines.

We tend to feel more fondly about butterflies than moths, which can be viewed with ambivalence as they fly at night and a few species eat our clothes. But not all moths fly at night – the six-spot burnet and hummingbird hawkmoth can be spotted during the day – and many of them are just as beautiful as their day-flying cousins. Only about five of our 2,500 species eat clothes and moth caterpillars are an important source of food for nesting birds,

hedgehogs and amphibians. So by gardening for moths, we can also help other wildlife.

As adults, most butterflies and moths drink nectar, but their caterpillars eat leaves and other plant material. To make them truly welcome in our gardens, we need to support all stages of their life cycle by growing nectar-rich flowers for the adults and foodplants for the caterpillars. We also need to accommodate the stage in between caterpillar and adult – the chrysalis (butterfly) or cocoon (moth). Many species spend the winter in this vulnerable stage so leave a little patch to grow a bit wild for them. Making space for butterflies and moths to feed, breed and hibernate in our gardens will make all the difference to these struggling pollinators. 🍷



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



Discover more ways to welcome moths and butterflies into your garden on our website: wildlifetrusts.org/butterflygarden

Avoid cutting down plants in autumn

Some butterflies, such as orange-tips, overwinter as chrysalises, which makes them vulnerable to tidying. Leave plants intact over winter and clear them in spring instead. Always check for chrysalises just in case!

Plant a mixed native hedge

If you have space, plant a native tree or two. Many moths lay their eggs on the leaves of willow, dog rose, birch and hawthorn. Grow a climber, such as honeysuckle, through the hedge to make it even more moth-friendly.

Grow night-scented plants

Plant groups of common jasmine, evening primrose, honeysuckle and night-scented stock together, so that moths can find them more easily.

Leave some weeds

Many moths lay their eggs on the leaves of nettles, brambles, dock and dandelions. Even leaving weeds at the back of borders, where you can't see them, will make a difference.

Don't be too tidy

While some moths breed in long grass, many caterpillars and pupae spend winter hibernating in grass or among leaf litter and other plant debris. Leave things where they are in autumn and winter, and tidy up in spring instead.

MY WILD LIFE



Ainsley Dwyer

Ainsley is doing a Wild Paths placement with Avon Wildlife Trust – a nine-month training programme which gives people from diverse backgrounds a chance to gain skills and access a career in conservation and natural heritage



As a child I was lucky to be near countryside and could walk home from school

through fields and farmland. Being close to nature was part of my experience growing up. I first realised I wanted a career in conservation when I was in sixth form. I went on to study zoology at university – thinking that would give me plenty of options.

I faced some challenges when I was trying to pursue a career in conservation.

I quickly realised after university that it was more about experience than qualifications. A lot of the jobs I was looking at needed

a minimum of a year or two's experience with all the accreditations behind your name. I didn't get the experience when I was at uni so I couldn't get those jobs and needed to work as well to make money.

The application and selection process for the Wild Paths traineeship was different to the traditional method. The selection day was fun because it didn't feel like everyone had to fight to show they were the best. It felt really balanced and nice; I could just be myself.

Being here with Avon Wildlife Trust, I have gained lots of key practical skills like

chainsawing which is quite important in land management work for doing things like tree coppicing. I've also learnt how to do scything which is almost meditative. When you get in the swing of it and move your body just right, it's an effortless swipe through the grass. We had a training session with Andi Rickard - she's the UK champion! I've learned how to do brushcutting – like strimming but with a big blade.

I already had a bit of experience of leading groups from a previous volunteer conservation role. I wasn't very confident in it when coming here as it had been a



Learning to use traditional and power tools is part of the training

while since I'd done it, so it was nice to be in that kind of setting again.

I feel more confident about a lot of things now.

It's difficult to apply for loads of jobs, trying to get into conservation and not get very far. It makes you feel a bit rubbish and I guess this is confirmation that I'm on the right path, doing the right things around the right people. I feel more confident in the tasks too. Doing stuff that's technically difficult is building my confidence. And my species identification has improved. It's good to be out in nature, see a tree then know exactly what it is based on the bark or buds. It's a great team, the people here are really good to work with and I know if I have a question, they'll fully answer it.

I love being outside every day – learning, observing and building skills

My highlight so far has been when we get together with the other trainees from different wildlife trusts for residential trips. It's great to hear their stories and learn what they're struggling with. We can give each other help and tips with the placement and then get back out and carry on with it when we get home. We were in Dorset for one of them in a farmyard. It was beautiful. We went for a walk to start with and ended up all swimming in a river in November!

I love being outside every day. Before this I was working in an office which depressed and drained me quite a bit. I would go to work then come home and be so tired I wouldn't really do anything else. Now at the end of the day my body is knackered, but my mind is good to go, and I can take other stuff in. I'm not cut out for offices!

One of my favourite landscapes is Avon Wildlife Trust's Dolebury Warren reserve.

It's acidic grassland heath mixed with limestone calcareous grassland which is a really strange mix so there are loads of different species there. It's open on a hilltop with an amazing view and there's woodland there too so it's got a bit of everything. Loads of crazy fungi too!

I'm not completely sure what the next step for me is. Hopefully working in conservation and getting paid for it. I like the lone working aspect, but I also like leading groups. There are so many options, so this is good because I'm trying a lot of different things. Through this I'll know what I'll want to do.

Since starting the Wild Paths traineeship, my understanding of wildlife, conservation and the challenges facing the natural world has changed – it's much more complex than I thought. We can have a positive effect, but it's really complicated and not many people get the chance to actually look into it all. It's only through doing this I now understand issues facing UK conservation on a practical level.



 **More information about Wild Paths**
dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/WildPaths

Wild Paths

The Wild Paths programme is running at four other Wildlife Trusts in addition to Avon Wildlife Trust and is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Each Trust offers a full work-based training plan over the nine-month placement and a bursary of £1000 per month, to pay for rent, bills and food whilst trainees are on the placement. Launched in 2018, Wild Paths aims to deliver 30 placements across three years.

Ainsley's advice for others thinking of a career in conservation

"Networking and volunteering are important. If you put yourself in situations where people are doing things you want to be doing, then there's a chance that you'll get in. Experience is important as well as education. You can learn things in a classroom but if you spend a day doing them rather than just learning about them it solidifies it all in your brain."

Madeleine Yarwood, our other Wild Paths placement, shares her highlights



"Wild Paths is such a fun, enlightening and amazing experience. I'm learning so much and am especially loving spending so much time in the woods; learning about how best to manage them and having a great (but sometimes challenging) time using a chainsaw! I feel extremely well supported and never would have imagined having such a fruitful experience being made available to me."

WHAT'S ON

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



You're invited to Avon Wildlife Trust's 40th birthday celebration at Folly Farm

Sunday 3rd May 2020, 2pm-5pm



TOP PICK
Grow Wilder Summer Celebration

20 June, 12pm-5pm
Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol), Stapleton, Bristol. Music, café, free wildlife activities for families and a chance to visit our wildflower nursery, buy plants and see wildlife-friendly food growing in action. We will also be celebrating 30 Days Wild, having a 40th birthday picnic with our My Wild Child families and hosting the Get Growing Trail.

APRIL

Troopers Hill Walk

Saturday 4 April
2pm-4pm

Meet at Bath Hill East car park (BS31 1HH) at 1:30pm for car-sharing, or at the reserve entrance (Malvern Rd, BS5 8JA) at 2pm.

Please park considerately in residential streets. This local nature reserve supports rare plants and wildlife as well as giving a tantalising glimpse of Bristol's industrial history. We will be guided by Rob Acton-Campbell, one of the reserve's founder members. £2 donation PP for the Friends of Troopers Hill. BE as numbers are limited. **K**

Find out more: 0117 909 9667

There's a Tapir at the Door!

Friday 17 April
7:30pm-9:30pm

Baptist Church Hall, High Street, Keynsham BS31 1DS.

An account of life in the Peruvian Amazonian region of Manu National Park with Gary Prescott, 'The Biking Birder!' Adults £2.50, under 16s £1. Sales of bird food, seasonal items, second-hand books, greeting cards. Refreshments available during break (donation requested). Free parking in Ashton Way car park. **K**

Find out more: 01225 874259
keynshamawt@gmail.com

Dave's Dawn Chorus at The Shallows, Saltford

Sunday 19 April
4:30am-8:30am

Meet at The Shallows car park BS31 3EX for a magical four hours.

Our Chairman Dave Sage once again leads this popular field trip. Please wear warm clothes and sturdy shoes, and preferably bring binoculars and a hot drink! Voluntary donation of £1 PP on the day. **K**

Find out more:
0117 940 7968

What's Happening on Walton Common

Friday 24 April
7:30pm-9:30pm

Folk Hall, 5 High Street, Portishead BS20 6PR.

An illustrated talk about our local nature reserve by Dave Horlick. Entry £2 for all adults and £1 for children and students, includes tea or coffee during the evening. **P**

Find out more:
01275 843160

Flag Day

Saturday 25 April

A street collection on behalf of Avon Wildlife Trust in Portishead. **P**

MAY

A Wild Flower and Tree Walk in Weston Big Wood

Portishead
Sunday 3 May
10am-12pm

Meet at the Valley Road entrance for a slow, 2-mile walk with a stepped hill at the start, led by Dr Bill Dixon.

Sturdy footwear advised. Free, no need to book but donations to AWT welcome. A booklet about the wood is available to purchase for £5. **P**

Find out more:
01275 849200

Arnos Vale Cemetery Walk

Saturday 9 May
11am-1pm

Meet at the cemetery at 11am, or at Bath Hill East car park (BS31 1HH) at 10.30am for car-sharing.

This wildlife-themed tour is led by an Arnos Vale guide. The cemetery is full of deliberately-untouched areas waiting for us to discover. We will end the 2-hour tour with a visit to the cafe (cost not included). £6 PP tour charge. **K**

Find out more:
0117 909 9667



PHILIP PRECEY



STEVE NICHOLLS



PAUL HARRIS/2020VISION



VAUGHN MATTHEWS

TOP PICK

A Butterfly and Wildlife Walk on Walton Common

Sunday 10 May
11am-1pm
Meet at the layby past the last cottage on the coast road in Walton in Gordano Village. Led by warden Dave Horlick. Initially a steep walk but then fairly flat. Sturdy footwear advised. Free but donations to AWT welcome. **P**

Find out more: 07805 769046



JOHN DUNKELMAN



BEVIS WATTS

A Butterfly and Wildlife Walk on Walton Common

Sunday 10 May
11am-1pm
Meet at the layby past the last cottage on the coast road in Walton in Gordano Village. Led by warden Dave Horlick. Initially a steep walk but then fairly flat. Sturdy footwear advised. Free but donations to AWT welcome. **P**

Find out more: 07805 769046

Coffee Morning and Plant Sale

Saturday 16 May
10am-1pm
36 St Peters Road, Portishead, BS20 6QT. We will have homemade cakes handicrafts, books and puzzles for sale. Entry Free. **P**

Find out more: 01275 843160

Key

- Wheelchair friendly
- Family friendly
- Dog friendly

Abbreviations

- BE** Booking essential
- RI** Refreshments included
- WP** Weather permitting
- PP** Per person

JUNE

Nightjars at Stock Hill

Tuesday 2 June (WP, or Wednesday 3 June)
8:30pm-10:30pm
Meet at Stock Hill Wood car park, BA5 3AS, or at Wellsway School, BS31 1PH at 7:30pm if you wish to go by minibus.

This 2-hour evening field trip is led by nightjar expert Chris Craig. We will learn all about nightjars, hearing and (hopefully) seeing them too. Please wear subdued/dark clothing and walking boots, and if possible bring binoculars, a torch and insect repellent. Donation of £3 PP to the Black2Nature charity (pending registration). Tour BE as numbers are limited. **K**

Find out more: 0117 909 9667

Grow Wilder

Saturday 20 June
2pm-4pm
Meet at Grow Wilder site BS16 1HB, or at the Bath Hill East car park in Keynsham, BS31 1HH at 1:20pm for car-sharing.

Our guide is AWT expert Matt Cracknell and we will discover how wildflowers and wildlife are so important for our wellbeing. Donation of £4 PP. **K**

Find out more: 0117 909 9667



JOHN BRIDGES



PHILIP PRECEY



CHANTAL

VOLUNTEERING DAYS

Volunteering on conservation projects is a great way to make a real difference to wildlife, to get fit and healthy and to meet some wonderful people. There are plenty of volunteering opportunities at Avon Wildlife Trust including:

Pollinator Corridors

Meet at Trust HQ (Thursdays).

Wildlife Action Group (WAG)

on Trust reserves – meet at Trust HQ (Wednesdays and Fridays).

Wild City Action Team (WCAT) every Tuesday.

Reserve-based groups at Browne's Folly, Folly Farm, Willsbridge Valley, Purn Hill, Hellenge Hill (W-s-M), Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock, Walton Common, Dolebury Warren and the Gordano Valley Group.

Grow Wilder in Stapleton.

Communities and Nature in Twerton and Whiteway, adhoc sessions in Bath.



PETER CARRINS

 Please go to: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer) for dates and work programmes or email

volunteer@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

For conservation, events and office volunteering opportunities please go to [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) or call **0117 917 7270**.

APRIL**Goose Green Workday**

Saturday 18 April

10am-12pm

Please meet at the bridge on the reserve, west of Oak Close, north Yate, BS37 5TN.

We shall be undertaking reserve maintenance on this local grassland and wetland nature reserve, such as path clearance plus litter picking. Please wear walking or wellington boots and bring some gloves. **S**

Prior's Wood

Sunday 26 April

10am-12:30pm

Meet at the grass verge opposite the entrance to the Children's Hospice (BS48 1PE), ST 493738. PLEASE DO NOT USE THE

HOSPICE CAR PARK. To reach the parking area, turn off the B3128 at The Downs School entrance.

Follow the drive for about 1 mile then turn left at the sign for the Children's Hospice (Charlton Farm).

General reserve management required for the bluebell season at this stunning woodland. Please wear waterproof clothes and sturdy footwear and bring a drink. **GCG**

MAY**Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve**

Saturday 2 May

10am-12pm

Meet at the Shire Way entrance to the woodland, south Yate, BS37 8US.

This workday will be a deep

spring clean of the reserve, maintenance of paths and possibly planting out native plants in a grassland area. Please wear stout footwear. **S**

Middle Hill Common

Sunday 31 May

10am-12:30pm

Park on the roadside on Valley Road beyond the bend southwest of the Police HQ and past Blackberry Lane, ST 444751 approx. To reach this location come up Valley Road from the B3124. Turn left at the roundabout outside Police HQ then continue for about 400m and past Blackberry Lane on the left hand side of the bend. We will meet on Blackberry Lane.

Maintaining the permissive bridleway and pedestrian access on this limestone grassland. Please wear waterproof clothes and sturdy footwear and bring a drink. **GCG**

JUNE**Tickenham Hill**

Sunday 28 June

10am-12:30pm

There is limited parking at the reserve on the right hand side of Cadbury Camp Lane West ST 443723. To reach this parking, come up Hill Lane (which is on the north side of the B3128, almost at the western end of

the Tickenham boundary) for about 1km. Hill Lane changes to Cadbury Camp Lane West part way up the hill and is a private lane with restricted access. Take care as the lane is narrow with sharp bends and speed bumps.

Bracken control to support the species diversity and Dexter grazing and help restore this species-rich grassland. Please wear waterproof clothes and sturdy footwear and bring a drink. **GCG**

JULY**Wapley Bushes Summer Fruit Tree Pruning**

Sunday 12 July

10am-12pm

Meet at the Shire Way entrance to the woodland, south Yate, BS37 8US, at 10am.

As well as pruning stoned fruit trees, such as plums and gages, we shall be attending to odd jobs on the reserve. **S**

Weston Big Wood

Sunday 26 July

10am-12:30pm

Meet in the large lay-by on Valley Road, Portishead, just below the quarry, ST 451741. Valley Road is off the B3124 and leads to the Police HQ.

Please wear waterproof clothes and sturdy footwear and bring a drink. **GCG**

Local group and volunteering contacts

(CV)	Chew Valley	Andy Davis	01275 332601
(GCG)	Gordano Valley	Sarah Kennedy	01275 817565/ 07853 248476
(K)	Keynsham	Cynthia Wilson	01225 874259
(P)	Portishead	Cynthia Dorn	01275 843160
(S)	Southwold	Tim Fairhead	01454 323608



If you would like to get involved or start a new group, please contact Melissa Gault **0117 917 7270 (ex 305)**.

For a full list of our up-to-date events and booking forms please visit the website: [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/events)

You can also follow us on Twitter and Instagram to find out how our events go:



@avonwt



@avonwt



@avonwt

GROW WILDER

Be inspired by
this wildlife gardening
and urban food
growing hub.

Feed Bristol has become 'Grow Wilder'

GROW WILDER:

Take action for nature by exploring our wildflower nursery, courses and events programme.

WHAT TO ENJOY THIS SUMMER:

- **2nd May Veg and Wildflower Plant Sale.** To start off the spring and summer season, our wildflower nursery is hosting a veg and wildflower plant sale. The new cafe will be up and running.
- **20th June Summer Celebration.** Join us to welcome in the summer season at Grow Wilder! We'll also be celebrating 30 Days Wild, and having a 40th birthday picnic with our My Wild Child families and hosting the Get Growing trail.

*Open weekdays and Saturdays, 9am-5pm,
from April to October. Cafe opening soon!*

Like us on Facebook @AWTGrowWilder to keep up to date with all our courses and events.

 [avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/
growwilder](http://avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/growwilder)



**Grow
Wilder**

181 Frenchay Park Road, Bristol BS16 1HB

Folly Farm

Avon
Wildlife Trust 

AVON WILDLIFE TRUST'S **HIDDEN GEM**



Only 20 minutes from Bath & Bristol, **Avon Wildlife Trust's 250-acre ancient woodland reserve** is a very special site, located in the heart of the Chew Valley, with far reaching views over the lake & rolling hills beyond.

SPRINGTIME AT FOLLY



Wild Exmoor ponies

Keep an eye out for our four recently adopted Exmoor ponies. Fondly known as Stilton, Wensleydale, Halloumi and Mozzarella.



Beautiful wildflowers

Take a walk through stunning natural meadows and woodlands, slipping into a landscape unchanged for centuries. Folly has signposted walks of varying distances and an 'access for all' trail, ideal for wheelchairs and pushchairs.



Spring lambs

As a working farm, Folly is overrun with adorable prancing lambs as the season warms up. Kids and adults alike can delight in fields full of lambs enjoying the springtime sunshine.

FOLLY FACTS

Inspiring landscape

Parts of the reserve and Dowling's Wood have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Folly Farm is an excellent example of traditionally managed wildflower-rich grassland, now a rarity in Britain.

Available to hire

Meetings, away days, retreats and weddings are hosted at Folly Farm. Boasting unique nature inspired function rooms & accommodation.

All profits Gift-Aided...

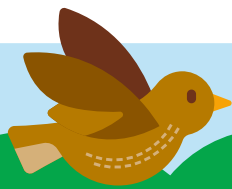
directly to the Avon Wildlife Trust, making Folly Farm the ideal location to host functions whilst continuing to support your local wildlife charity.

Get in touch ~ 01275 331 590 ~ info@follyfarm.org



Find out more

Plan your visit at follyfarm.org

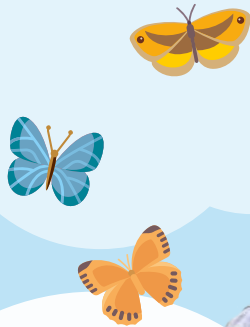


1 – 30 June



#30DaysWild

Are you ready for #30DaysWild?



Can you do something wild every day for 30 days?

Nature needs us more than ever... so take the challenge and share your love of wildlife this June.



wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild