Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire



A Welcome to Wildife



Hello from BBOWT



Hello, and a warm welcome from all of us at BBOWT! As a new member you are making a valuable contribution towards protecting our local wildlife. It's your support that makes us tick.

As nature's local champions we work hard to create safe havens for the precious wildlife we love, from riverside otters to swooping barn owls. We're helping other landowners do the same, too, so

we can all make progress towards a wider countryside that's

My journey with BBOWT began more than 20 years ago as a volunteer stock watcher at Aston Clinton Ragpits, a nature reserve that together with nearby Dancersend with Pavis Woods I continue to visit whenever I get the chance. I've come to love these special places and have learned so much through them, not least how to encourage wildlife into my own garden.

As a long-time member, volunteer and now Chair of BBOWT, I can proudly say BBOWT is in great shape and I'm genuinely excited for the future. I hope you are proud too, because your support is what gives us the resources and authority to achieve all of what we do.

Thank you for making such a positive commitment to being part of nature's recovery. You are making the difference we need to ensure our local wildlife thrives once again.

Barbara Muston Chair of BBOWT

Don't forget!

As a new member to BBOWT you are in a unique position to offer insights and ideas that can help us improve your membership experience. Please let us know your thoughts by completing and returning the survey that was included in your Welcome Pack and/or email (if you gave us your email address).

enthusiasts who help to make BBOWT a success.



Adriana Alberts friendly Membership Team at BBOWT HQ.



Martyn Lane Membership Team Senior Reserves Manager One of the helpful and Leads conservation work on our Oxfordshire nature reserves.



Education Manager



Finemere Wood enthusiastic volunteers.

Getting to know us

We're thrilled you've decided to join BBOWT! Here are a few things you might like to know about us and your membership.

How do I get in touch to make a change to my membership details - for example, my subscription amount or address?

questions You can easily update your contact details, the answered amount you donate and anything else to do with your membership, including how to add children to a Family Watch membership, by getting in touch with our Membership Team (see contact details below).

How can I find out what events are being held near me? Look inside your Welcome Pack for your What's On Diary which has information on all our forthcoming fantastic wildlife-themed events. You can also search by county, audience and keyword using the Events page of our website at www.bbowt.org.uk/events

How do I book onto an event? You can book onto one of our events by contacting the Membership Team Your

or by signing up online under the specific event page.

What is Gift Aid and how does **BBOWT benefit from it?** Gift Aid is a tax relief that enables UK charities to reclaim an extra 25% in tax

on every eligible donation made by a UK taxpayer. This means BBOWT can claim 25p for every £1 donated at no extra cost to you. If you would like to know more or change your Gift Aid status please get in touch with the Membership Team.

Who can I talk to about a specific wildlife issue? BBOWT has a Wildlife Information Service (WIS) with dedicated points of contact for each county. If you have any queries about wildlife please email info@bbowt.org.uk or call 01865 775476.

BBOWT in numbers

The number of hectares we manage, across more than 85 nature reserves

We care for of the UK's remaining floodplain meadows





The number of schoolchildren that visited our education centres, last year

Each year we review 15,000+
planning applications

How to get in touch

You can get in touch with us at membership@bbowt.org.uk or by calling **01865 788300** during office hours. Write to: Membership, BBOWT, 1 Armstrong Road, Oxford OX4 4XT.

Join us on social media









Meet the team - A few of the many dedicated wildlife



Lynn Hughes Inspires children to love Organises work parties of

Getting to know you

We like to keep in touch, so you can get the most from your membership and take part in fantastic wildlife-themed events we put on every year

s the only charity dedicated uniquely to the wildlife of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, our roots are local. In fact, BBOWT is all about local people coming together to make a difference for local wildlife. It's good news for nature and everyone is better off when they're a bit wild.

The lifeblood of BBOWT is its members, which is why we want you to be as happy and informed as possible, so that you too can discover the incredible wildlife that's right on your doorstep.

Let's get together!

BBOWT invites every new member to join one of our regular new member

events. Enjoy a fascinating guided tour of a nature reserve, led by an expert wildlife officer or one of our incredibly knowledgeable volunteers.

New member events are a great way to learn about local conservation and

the wildlife that thrives in our area, while of course meeting other likeminded members. These special days are our way of saying 'thank you' – for making a positive change for wildlife and wild places near you.

Look out for your personal email invitation over the next few weeks or look in your Welcome Pack for the next three events. We look forward to meeting you.

Stav in touch

Our regular communications help to keep you up-to-date with everything that's going on at BBOWT.

We'll send you a copy of Wildlife News magazine

and our What's On guide to events three times a year (at the end of March, July and November). They are a great way to catch up on all the latest news and to plan ahead from our packed programme of wildlife events and activities. We also offer a digital version of Wildlife News, which you can sign up to on our website at www.bbowt. org.uk/publications. What's On is also online at www.bbowt.org.uk/events

We may also get in touch a couple of times a year to let you know about other opportunities to support BBOWT. These may include appeals to purchase a piece of land that will benefit local wildlife.

If you haven't yet signed up for our regular email newsletter, then please do so on our website or contact us to sign

If you wish to change anything about the way we contact you, whether the means or the content, then please use the sheet enclosed with your Welcome Pack or get in touch with us.

How to get in touch

You can get in touch with us at membership@bbowt.org.uk or by calling **01865 788300** during office hours. Write to: Membership, BBOWT, 1 Armstrong Road, Oxford OX4 4XT.

Chinnor Hill, Oxfordshire.

Top left: Members enjoy a guided walk around Warburg Nature Reserve.

Great deals for you and wildlife

Take advantage of these opportunities to help local wildlife while you shop and enjoy a few discounts just for you too.



Food for birds and a **boost for BBOWT**

Get your bird food from Vine House Farm and help BBOWT at the same time. Vine House Farm is no

ordinary bird food supplier as they test all their food on the wild birds at their farm. The Watts family, who run the Lincolnshire Fens farm are dedicated to managing their land in a wildlifefriendly way. As much bird food as possible is grown in the local area and packaged on-site. What's more, 4% of every purchase made by a customer living in our area is donated to BBOWT. Order online at www.vinehousefarm. co.uk or phone 01775 630208.

COTSWOLD

15% discount at **Cotswold Outdoor** We are delighted to

offer you 15% off at Cotswold Outdoor. They offer an extensive range of outdoor clothing equipment and accessories, both in store and online. Please see the information included in your Welcome Pack.



Save 10% on **NatureBureau** books

NatureBureau uses their expert knowledge in biodiversity and conservation to publish ecology and natural history books under their imprint, Pisces Publications. Save 10% on NatureBureau's books and they'll give BBOWT a further 20%! NatureBureau donates 25% of the profits on any of their books to BBOWT when you order online. For full details on how to order please visit www. bbowt.org.uk/shop-wildlife

ecotricity Go green and help BBOWT too

Sign up for green electricity or gas from renewable energy company Ecotricity and you'll benefit BBOWT as well as the environment! Switch to Ecotricity and they will donate up to £60 to us and it's as easy as that. Sign up at www.ecotricity.co.uk/for-your-home/ quote-and-switch?partner=BBOWT



Insurance that pays out for wildlife

NFU Mutual donates £10 NFU Mutual to us each time a BBOWT supporter takes out a new

general insurance policy through them. NFU Mutual has been part of the rural community since 1910 and prides itself on providing a personal and friendly service. For more information, please contact NFU Mutual Oxford Agency at www.nfumutual.co.uk/oxford. Please state 'BBOWT' when enquiring.



Journey of discovery

Two members share their experiences of a recent new members event and what becoming a member means to them.

I'm very grateful that my membership was bought for me as a gift. It's given me an incentive to explore my local wildlife and learn about the work BBOWT does on a daily basis.

> Although I'm not a nature expert I have always loved wildlife. The guided walk was very interesting and reminded me of the wildlife I grew up with. It's been a great opportunity to get out and learn more about the wildlife that surrounds me.

DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY



BBOWT takes **REGULATOR** the privacy, security and

wishes of its members very seriously. We adhere to all legislation and regulations governing charities and fundraising. Please read our Privacy Policy (available on our website at www.bbowt.org. uk/privacypolicy or by request). This details in full how we use your data; from processing your membership to getting in touch.

We are committed to fundraising and communicating in an honest and transparent way and are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and adhere to their Code of Fundraising Practice. For more information please see our Fundraising Promise on our website at www.bbowt.org.uk/

fundraising-promise

In your Welcome Pack you will find a sheet that gives you the opportunity to change the ways we communicate with you, or what we communicate about to you. Please let us know of any changes you wish to make using this or by getting in touch with us by email or phone.

Earthly paradise



The spectacular chalk grassland wild flowers of Yoesden support an

extraordinary diversity of butterflies. Your membership will continue to protect this special place, says Buckinghamshire Nature Reserves Manager **Mark Vallance**

n a sunny day there is no better place to be than a wildflower meadow. With just the low thrum of insects for company, these precious habitats are the antidote to our hectic lives.

Yoesden is one of these special places, a remnant of chalk grassland inaccessible to the plough and untouched by modern fertilisers. Sheep have grazed here for centuries and together with the thin soil, this has helped control fast-growing grasses, ensuring an extraordinary tapestry of wild flowers that make Yoesden a haven for butterflies.



Tranquil haven

Yoesden was saved when it came up for sale in 2015 thanks to our generous members and other supporters. Now one of our finest nature reserves, this steep slope is home to butterflies as varied as grizzled and dingy skippers, green hairstreaks and the three blues: small blue, chalkhill blue and Adonis blue. The vivid Adonis blue is the key species here and Yoesden is its most northerly site.

Chalk grasslands contain up to 40 plant species per square metre. The show starts in spring when the slope is brought to life by clumps of pale yellow cowslips. Soon after the patches of hawthorn scrub glow their brilliant white.

The floral climax arrives in June when pink and purple orchids, including fragrant, pyramidal and common spotted, contrast with yellow kidney vetch and bird's-foot trefoil to create a riot of colour. Listen closely and you may catch the repetitive song of male great green bush-crickets as they rub

their forewings together to attract a mate. You're sure to catch a red kite circling overhead, while the fragrance of wild thyme and marjoram permeates the air

Fragrant orchids and horseshoe vetch

With the long-term future of Yoesden secured, this patch of earthly paradise will be around for generations to come. Come and see for yourself and bask in the glow of a pristine chalk grassland at its very finest.

Long-term care

Scrub removal BBOWT is protecting this magical place by selectively removing scrub to maintain the mosaic of scrub and grassland. Many species rely on scrub for food and shelter, so this needs to be done in a balanced way.

Grazing We also continue to graze the meadow to keep rambunctious grasses under control, working with a local farmer who brings cattle on site once the wild flowers have set seed.

An extraordinary tapestry of wild flowers make Yoesden one of the best sites in the Chilterns for butterflies.

Yoesden is a precious fragment

• For full visiting information for Yoesden and all our other nature reserves please visit **bbowt.org.uk/reserves**



ardens cover a greater area than all the land protected for nature, so helping wildlife really does begin at home.

Gardening for wildlife doesn't mean letting your garden grow unkempt.

Greener backdrop

Start with plants. Berry-producing trees and shrubs such as dogwood, berberis and pyracantha provide food for birds, especially in winter. Climbing plants like honeysuckle have nectar-rich flowers for bees, followed by berries, while evergreens including ivy offer year-round shelter. Replace fences with hedges to create more nesting sites and so hedgehogs can move freely between gardens to forage.

Butterflies and bees love nectar-rich flowers like verbena and scabious. Opt for plants with simple flowers that make it easy for butterflies to get at the nectar. Many cottage garden favourites are ideal.

Consider converting an area of your lawn into a miniature wildflower meadow – start afresh from seed or

Your garden can become a magnet for local wildlife.

plant plugs of flowers like cowslip, oxeye daisy and meadow crane's-bill. Tight on space? Then plant pots with butterfly-friendly blooms such as lavender or marjoram.

Pond life

Ponds draw in more wildlife than any other garden feature. If you don't fancy a complicated freeform pond use any number of preformed alternatives or create a mini pond from an old washing up bowl or bucket.

Fill your pond with rainwater and suitable pond plants then watch and wait. Frogs, toads and insects such as dragonflies will be joined by passing birds and mammals using your pond as the local watering hole.

Right at home

A pile of logs in a shady corner or standing dead wood will feed beetle larvae, help rare stag beetles to breed and shelter the likes of toads and slowworms. Spiders and solitary bees seek out nooks and crannies, while hollow stems left over winter give shelter to insect larvae and pupae.

Put up bird boxes. Many gardens are also suitable for specialist dwellings such as bat boxes or swift boxes, also available as 'bricks' to replace standard bricks.

Don't forget those everyday wildlife gestures either: feeding birds and topping up bird baths, for example. Over time your garden can become a magnet for local wildlife.

For more wildlife gardening tips visit bbowt.org.uk/actions



Attract more wildlife

Flower power Sow a dazzling display of traditional cornfield annuals like cornflower, corn marigold and poppies.

Rotten luck Compost heaps provide a natural supply of nutrients – and a home for insects and spiders!

Bug bonanza Make a bug hotel. Hollow stems and drilled holes provide hidey holes for solitary bees and other bugs.

Feathered nest Bird boxes offer instant accommodation. Locate them in a quiet area, out of direct sunlight and wind.

Best nature reserves for...

Looking for ideas but unsure where to begin? Here's some inspiration to get out there and discover the best of our local wildlife





Wild flowers

Inkpen Crocus Field (Berks)

From late February to early April this field is awash with more than 400,000 purple and white blooms, Britain's biggest display of wild crocuses, believed to be the result of bulbs brought back from the Mediterranean by Knights Templars in the 12th century.

Bernwood Meadows (Bucks)
These traditional hay meadows,
a remnant of medieval ridge and
furrow meadow, offer a riot of colour
from April to July. More than 100
plant species thrive here, from lady's
bedstraw with its clusters of tiny yellow
flowers to rare green-winged orchids.

Iffley Meadows (Oxford)
Every spring thousands of delicate purple, pink and white chequered snake's-head fritillary flowers nod gracefully in the breeze. This exotic-looking flower is the emblem of Oxfordshire, symbolising its relationship with the Thames. Why not bring a picnic and watch the river lazily flow by?

Families

Nature Discovery Centre (Berks)
The stunning lakeside visitor centre is
full of interactive wildlife and natural
history displays, while outside there's



a network of family-friendly footpaths to explore. Wear the little ones out in the Adventure Playground, feed the waterfowl then relax in the Lakeside Café.

Warburg Nature Reserve (Oxon) Warburg is one of BBOWT's flagship nature reserves, a magnificent place alive with wildlife – ask the resident

Listen out for warblers, song thrushes and bullfinches as you follow the family-friendly Wildlife Walk.

warden for current highlights. With a visitor centre, picnic area, bird hides and interactive Nature Detectives Trail to try, there's lots for young and old alike.

Birds, butterflies, bats and more than 200 species of wild flowers bring this wild old woodland to life. Listen out for warblers, song thrushes and bullfinches as you follow the family-friendly

Wildlife Walk. Finemere is a great introduction to wildlife spotting.

Above: Purple emperor at Finemere Wood.

Birdwatchers

Chimney Meadows (Oxon)

A tranquil corner of the Upper Thames converted from a commercial farm to a rich mosaic of wildflower meadows. Its nationally-important wetlands are home to wading birds like curlew, while feeding cormorant, little egret and kingfishers are often glimpsed.

Thatcham Reedbeds

(Berks)

There aren't many places you can still hear the call of the cuckoo or the rich song of the nightingale, but these reedbeds offer a good chance. The reeds are home to water rail, reed bunting and warblers like the Cetti's warbler. Look out for bitterns too.

College Lake (Bucks)

This former chalk quarry is now one of the best places for water birds.

Take your pick of the many hides that overlook the lake then settle down for the show: waders including lapwing and redshank, common terns nesting on the islands or in winter, wildfowl such as wigeon and teal.

Five-spot Burnet moth

Remote wilderness

Foxholes (Oxon)

Revel in this cool deep wood filled with birdsong, bluebells and flashes of butterflies flitting among the trees. Because Foxholes is ancient woodland it is a haven for bats. Seven species have been recorded here, many of them using old woodpecker holes in trees as their roosts.

Moor Copse (Berks)

The River Pang meanders through the woodland, where in spring bluebells

carpet the ground with stunning effect. Then in summer the restored floodplain meadows teem with wild flowers from which seed has been harvested to restore other nearby meadows.

Yoesden (Bucks)

Red kites and buzzards wheel overhead, the thrum of crickets fills the air, chalk fragrant-orchids flower and clouds of gatekeeper butterflies spring up from wild marjoram – this is Yoesden, a pristine slope untouched by modern ploughing or intensive grazing.

For visiting information such as how to get there, please consult *Your Wild Guide* nature reserve handbook. You can also find all the details you need at **www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves**

Walkers

Chimney Meadows. Left: Look out for bitterns at Thatcham Reedbeds.

Dancersend with Pavis Woods (Bucks)

Lose yourself in this tranquil haven nestled within two sheltered Chiltern valleys. The extraordinary tapestry of

woodland and meadows has been a nature reserve since the 1940s. The recent addition of wonderful beechwoods means there's now even more to discover.

Above right: Orchids at Dancersend.

Greenham and Crookham Commons (Berks)

Explore the wide tracks through Berkshire's largest tract of heathland. Once an airbase, the roar of US Air Force planes has been replaced by the songs of the rare birds, including nightjars, woodlarks and Dartford warblers that thrive among the heather and gorse.



Hartslock (Oxon)

Let your spirit soar at this jewel on the edge of the Chilterns. Admire views across to the Thames while you watch swallows skim the pasture or red kites circle overhead. In summer Hartslock reveals its real treasure – a visual orchestra of orchids and butterflies.

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look as if they're on important business. If you are lucky enough to glimpse one chances are it will be scrambling into the water, scuttling away into the undergrowth or darting headlong into a burrow.

While once a common sight, water voles have declined by more than 90% since the 1970s. Changes in farming practices and land use have seen losses of the lush waterside vegetation that water voles rely on for food and cover. The sharp decline coincides with the spread of their most voracious predator, the American mink.

Local recovery

It's not all bad news for our industrious water voles though. BBOWT's Water Vole Recovery Project was set up in 1998 to conserve local water vole populations with some very encouraging results. By 2018 the total area of water vole activity in our three counties reached 233 square miles, a remarkable increase of 78% over just the last 10 years and one that validates our approach.

So how have we done it? To conserve water voles we first need to know where water vole burrows, droppings, feeding signs and footprints.

We work with landowners to create favourable conditions for water voles with opportunities taken to enhance sites. This

We work with landowners to create favourable conditions.

might include fencing off a watercourse or reducing trees and scrub to allow grasses, reeds and herbs to flourish. We also work to monitor and control mink

by providing advice and special mink monitoring rafts to land managers.

By helping the remaining colonies to flourish and spread they may eventually link up to create larger and, crucially, more robust populations that are more sustainable in the long term. In time we hope that the distinctive 'plop' of a water vole diving into the water will be a common sound once more.

Water vole field signs

- Riverbank burrows, often with a nibbled 'lawn' by the entrance.
- 'Latrines' of rounded, Tic Tac-sized droppings.
- Piles of nibbled vegetation with the ends cut at a 45 degree angle.



Wild young things! An early fascination with nature will last a lifetime.

Making the most of your family membership is the perfect way to ignite that passion

nstil a love of nature from an early age to create tomorrow's wildlife quardians. Your family membership is a convenient, not to mention fun, way of starting their lifelong interest – and they can look forward to receiving all sorts of wildlife-themed goodies too!

4 issues a year of Wildlife Watch, full of fun facts, things to do, wallcharts and more ? The Wildlife Watcher's Handbook – a pocket-sized guide to being a 'Wildlife Watcher' Membership card, badge, poster and stickers Fun family events everything from craft workshops to pond dipping.

Get out there!

Throughout the year and whatever the weather, BBOWT puts on many exciting family focussed activities. They are a great introduction to



wildlife, with hands-on activities and awe-inspiring talks and demonstrations to get the youngsters in your lives genuinely enthralled by the nature all around us.

Pond dipping, bug hunting, bird watching, den building or perhaps a magical wildlife-themed story time - there's lots going on for all age groups and interests. Discover how fascinating nature can be and how you too can help local wildlife. Look inside your What's On guide for all the latest events to bring out your family's wild side!

 Discover more and sign up to our Family Fun e-newsletter at bbowt.org.uk/family-days-out

What do vou think? We'd love to know your first impressions of becoming a family member. Let us know what you think! Please complete the survey in your Welcome Pack or welcome email.

A voice for nature

Wildlife can't speak, which is why we campaign tirelessly on its behalf

High Speed 2: The High Speed 2 (HS2) railway line will cut through our region. BBOWT campaigned throughout the approval process for changes to reduce its impact on wildlife; our evidence helped to secure new barn owl and bat habitats along the route.

Badgers and Bovine TB: We oppose the badger cull and have



contributed to research demonstrating how vaccination is more effective in halting the spread of bovine TB. BBOWT vaccinates badgers in some of our west Oxfordshire nature reserves and areas of West Berkshire considered high risk for infection.

Development: Increasing development pressures mean we have to ensure wildlife is fully considered within the planning system. BBOWT responds to strategic planning consultations, comments on selected planning applications that pose a risk to wildlife, and provides advice to planners, developers and consultants.

Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor: The Government's

plans for development within this Corridor include doubling rates of housebuilding and delivering a new Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. BBOWT will campaign for nature to be central to these plans to ensure the best possible outcome for wildlife.



For more on our current campaigns please visit bbowt.org.uk/nature-matters

• Find out more about the Project and where to see water voles at bbowt.org.uk/water-vole-recovery-project

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Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire



Fancy getting even more involved?

Here are some other ways to help us and your local wildlife



Become a volunteer

Volunteering with BBOWT is the perfect way to help local wildlife, have fun and possibly get fit too, learn new skills and meet other volunteers at social events.

If you have a particular role in mind, please email volunteering@bbowt.org.uk and tell us what you would like to do. Or if you would like to discuss further, call our head office on 01865 775476 and ask to speak to our Volunteer Coordinator.

To find out more about the ways in which you can volunteer visit: **bbowt.org.uk/volunteer**



I love the flexibility of volunteering with BBOWT. I've been doing things I never thought I'd do.

Leave a gift in your Will

Gifts in Wills are especially valuable to BBOWT and the wildlife we care for. They can help us to seize opportunities to acquire new reserves, often providing the crucial cash deposit needed to secure a piece of land. They also enable us to look ahead with confidence when planning our long-term conservation work.

If you would like more information on leaving a gift in your Will to BBOWT, please visit **bbowt.org.uk/legacy**. Or request a hardcopy of the *BBOWT Guide* to *Making a Will* booklet by emailing us at **membership@bbowt.org.uk** or calling 01865 788300.

Invest in wildlife

Demonstrate your company's commitment to wildlife by becoming an Investor in Wildlife. Contact our Corporate Partners team at partnerships@bbowt.org.uk to learn more.

Recycle for BBOWT

Make money for BBOWT and get rid of your old inkjet cartridges! We receive £1 for every cartridge recycled with us through Recycle 4 Charity. See the envelope included in your Welcome Pack. Order more envelopes at recycle4charity.co.uk/register/C55659 or call us on 01865 788300.

Fundraise for wildlife

Whether you fancy organising a bake sale, taking on a Tough Mudder or even doing a marathon, you can help raise essential funds and make a real difference for local wildlife. Visit **bbowt.org.uk/wildpack** to download our fundraising guide.

