

Wild

Winter 2020

Berkshire,
Buckinghamshire
& Oxfordshire

FARMING FOR WILDLIFE

The truly green revolution
poised to speed
nature's recovery

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The magical relationship
between language and nature

WINTER WILDLIFE

Heroic hedges

Discover the wildlife that thrives in our hedgerows

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Welcome

Ready for nature's recovery



The pandemic continues, but with talk of a 'green recovery' there could yet be a silver lining that puts people and the environment first.

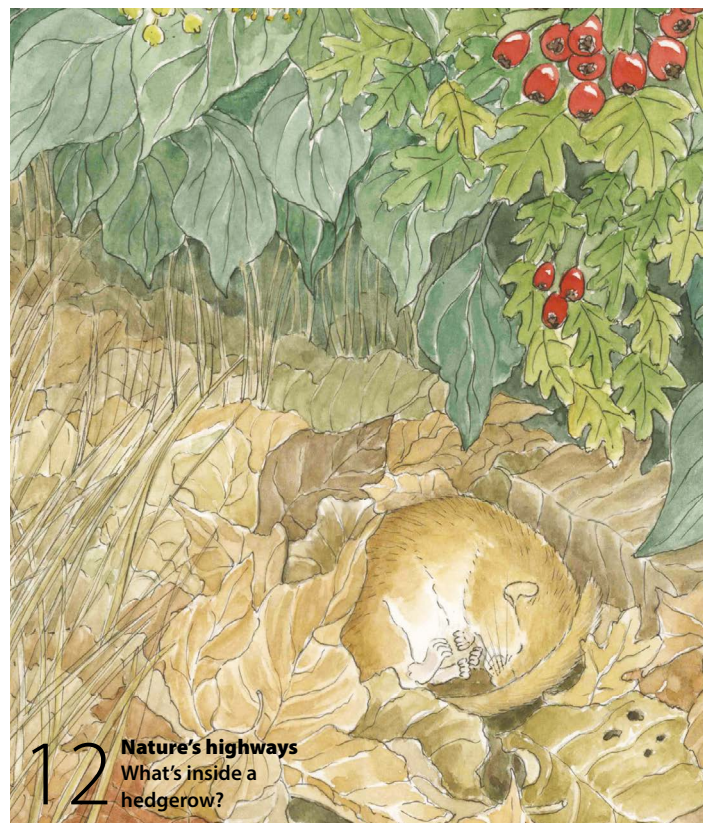
These are unprecedented times and with the Agriculture and Environment Bills currently making their way back through Parliament, nature's recovery now rests in the hands of politicians. We have been fighting hard alongside other Wildlife Trusts to ensure that the bold promises made on securing a future for wildlife come to fruition. We continue to lobby for the best possible outcome.

The Agriculture Bill could transform our countryside. BBOWT will facilitate this truly green revolution at the local level, offering the expertise and vision for a landscape rich in wildlife, for all to enjoy. In fact, we've already started and this autumn launched our new Land Advice Service to help farmers and landowners manage their land in a more nature-minded way. See page 11 for more on this.

It's not all positive news. Following a U-turn the badger cull has been extended to new areas, including Oxfordshire where we have been vaccinating badgers for the past six years. The Government had pledged to end culling in pursuit of a vaccination programme. We were also appalled by HS2 Ltd's recent vandalism of our Calvert Jubilee nature reserve, which flies in the face of the Government's call for a green recovery. We continue to challenge the scheme along with other groups.

Despite these setbacks we look forward to playing a central role in driving the recovery locally. In the meantime, I have been truly humbled by your continued support during this tough time. It makes me realise just how important access to nature is to us all, and boy do we need it more than ever. With the financial outlook uncertain, we need you to continue that faith in us. Thank you!

Estelle Bailey, Chief Executive



Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*

Wild Berks, Bucks & Oxon is the membership magazine for **Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust**

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Wherever you are in the country your Wildlife Trust is standing up for wildlife and wild places in your area and bringing people closer to nature.

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Enjoy the extended version of *Wild Berks, Bucks & Oxon* online at **bbowt.org.uk/publications**



Your wild winter

The best of the season's wildlife and where to enjoy it on your local patch

Thank you

We achieve more by working as one. Your membership helps fund vital conservation and campaign work that protects vulnerable birds. Discover what else we are achieving together at bbowt.org.uk/about

WINTER SPECTACLE

Starling murmurations

Murmurations form when thousands of starlings flock together to perform aerial displays – wheeling, switching, diving – before landing to roost. It's one of nature's breathtakers. But why all the synchronised antics? There's safety in numbers for a start: birds of prey find it harder to pick off individual birds in the constantly moving mass. This buys the starlings time to congregate before settling down en masse to stay warm and share the avian gossip. Murmurations start to form from late autumn and swell in size as winter approaches. The best time to see one is just before sunset.

SEE THEM THIS WINTER

- **Chimney Meadows** Large flocks of starlings and other birds feed together on the meadows.
- **Wells Farm** Starlings are drawn by the crop stubble and wildlife margins of this working farm.
- **Various** Check out the Starling Murmuration Roost Map: starlingsintheuk.co.uk/roost-map

There's very little social distancing going on here! The biggest starling murmurations can number up to 100,000, making for a truly mesmerising sight.

Enjoy a wonder-filled winter

Go for a wander and admire our hardy winter wildlife

Hares apparent

Haring around at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour, these beguiling mammals can certainly move! They are synonymous with farmland and open fields but rely on hedgerows and other cover – and speed – to elude predators.

Dawn or dusk offer the best chances of seeing brown hares. They are easily distinguished from rabbits, being almost twice the size and with a sleeker, sportier build. Their longer, black-tipped ears give them an acute sense of hearing, so to improve the odds of seeing one maintain your distance and employ a trusty pair of binoculars.

From late winter you might catch the ‘mad March hares’ boxing. This isn’t a bizarre courting ritual but

quite the opposite – the female seeing off a persistent male with a bout of fisticuffs!

WATCH THEM THIS WINTER

➤ **Bernwood Meadows Awash with wild flowers in summer, the open vistas of winter offer the best chance catching a glimpse of a hunkered-down hare.**

➤ **Woodside Meadow** Woodside is part of a large complex of wildflower meadows that’s prime territory for spotting this handsome mammal.

 Learn more about Britain’s fastest land mammal at bbowt.org.uk/hare-facts



JIM HIGHAM

Leveret alone
It is normal for baby hares, or leverets, to be left on their own for periods of time. If you find one, don’t be tempted to touch it or your scent really could lead to its abandonment.

Be wilder for 2021

With any new year comes New Year’s Resolutions. Nature needs our help, so why not make a few wildlife-friendly pledges? Could you go peat-free, start composting or commit to keep the birdfeeders topped up? Seek inspiration for your pledges at bbowt.org.uk/actions



BUY THIS

Make Christmas shopping count. Every purchase made through our partners generates income for us. Shop guilt-free at: bbowt.org.uk/shop-wildlife and wildlifetrusts.org/shop

MAKE THIS

Don’t forget our feathered friends this Christmas. They deserve a treat as much as we do. Supplement scarce food supplies with a beautiful bird wreath: bbowt.org.uk/wreath



BEN HALL/2020/VISION

Blowing in the wind

Catkins are slim, usually petal-less flower clusters that stick out or droop from the stem in order to catch the wind. This disperses the pollen far and wide, ensuring good pollination.

Hazel

Hazel catkins appear from January. The female flowers are tiny by contrast but can be made out by their red filaments.



ED MARSHALL

Alder

Alder flowers from February to March. The dangling male catkins mature to yellow, while the female flowers are squat and green coloured.



Silver birch

The male catkins are long and yellow, appearing at shoot tips. Female catkins are shorter and bright green. Both appear from March.



Melissa Harrison

The home patch



When you look back at the spring and summer of 2020, what will you remember? The challenge of home-schooling? The frustrations of domestic confinement? Fear of illness, or perhaps illness itself?

Our shared period of lockdown was a long, strange time, yet for many of us it came with an unexpected silver lining: the opportunity to rediscover (or discover for the first time) the overlooked green spaces around our homes.

Especially in the early weeks, when restrictions were at their strictest, all many of us saw of the outside world was during a brief walk each day. As one of the sunniest springs on record unfolded, we sought out parks, nature reserves and urban green spaces, hungry for contact with the natural world. For some time now we’ve been reading about the benefits of contact with nature to our mental and physical health, but this year it was really brought home to us, as our deepest instincts drove us to listen out for birdsong, plant windowboxes, cherish humble pavement weeds and take daily note of spring’s progress, drawing deep comfort, amid frightening changes, from one of the eternal verities.

So what happens now that many of us are back at work each day, and car trips for leisure are once again allowed? Do we consign the local discoveries we made to the dustbin of memory, filing our wonder-filled walks under ‘strange things we did in lockdown’? Or can we take something crucial from the weeks we spent close to home, using what we learned to transform the post-Covid world?



I’ve written before, in these pages and elsewhere, of the importance of having a ‘home patch’ that we care for and connect to, physically, mentally and emotionally. Knowing where the swifts nest on your street, which oak in the park is always the last into leaf, why the mason bees nest on one side of a nearby building and not the other – these things root us in place and time, in ways that often prove deeply beneficial both to the world around us, and to ourselves.

If, during lockdown, you found yourself seeing your local area with new eyes, don’t turn away from it now. Consider becoming a Friend of your nearest park, or supporting The Wildlife Trusts; look online for Forest Schools who want help connecting kids in your area to nature, or other charities that have been doing unsung work to protect and preserve green spaces where you are.

At the very least, please don’t stop visiting the places you discovered in lockdown, no matter how tempting it is to forget them in favour of somewhere further afield. We need them, just as wildlife needs them: not just grand National Parks, but nearby nature, too.

A LITTLE BIT WILD

It may have seemed as though the birds were singing more loudly during lockdown, but in fact, it’s likely they were able to lower their volume as they had far less noise pollution to compete with. This will have saved them precious energy, and may also have boosted their chances of reproductive success.



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.



Find out about your nearest BBOWT nature reserve: bbowt.org.uk/reserves

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBIN MACKENZIE

WILD NEWS

All the latest local and national news from The Wildlife Trusts

Don't miss out
Sign up to our
e-newsletter at bbowt.org.uk/newsletter for
all the latest news and
updates.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Our hard-working heroes!

BBOWT's Volunteer Awards, announced at our annual conference, celebrate the army of volunteers that help us in so many ways. We weren't able to thank our wildlife heroes in person this year, but that doesn't make us any less grateful!

Particular thanks go to the three recipients of our Volunteer Lifetime Achievement Award: Derek Cutt for his dedication to wildlife conservation and local heathlands, especially at Greenham Common; Bill Crabtree

for his more than 20 years as reserve warden at Woodford Bottom and Lamb's Pool; and Margery Reid, who has been a great help with the Trust's nature reserve monitoring programme.

"Thank you to all of our volunteers who work tirelessly, day in day out," says Estelle Bailey, Chief Executive. "It's truly tremendous what you do for us and for achieving nature's recovery."

Why not join them? Learn more at bbowt.org.uk/volunteer



HOT TOPIC

End of the line

High Speed 2 Ltd has now taken legal possession of a large section of our Calvert Jubilee Nature Reserve. They moved onto site without informing us, despite reassurances they would.

Construction workers will destroy decades of hard work by staff and volunteers who have created a haven for waterfowl and waders. Birds like blackcap nest in the trees and scrub, while reeds at the edge of the lake play host to the magnificent bittern. All five species of UK hairstreak butterfly are found here.

Head of Planning, Policy and Advocacy, Matthew Stanton, says: "We are devastated. We have fought HS2 from the beginning and are grateful to everyone who has



helped to try and stop, and at least delay, this sad day arriving."

BBOWT will continue to scrutinise the Government's plans, while working to minimise the inevitable damage. You can help too, by writing to your local MP and asking them to urge the Government to stop and rethink. More at bbowt.org.uk/hs2

Surveying the land

In spite of the pandemic our amazing volunteers managed to complete the vast majority of this year's wildlife surveys, with some postponing plans and working overtime to get the job done. One of the highlights was at Swains Wood, Oxon, where 650 flowering military orchids were counted – a new record!



KATIE TITFORD

Broken promises

The Government expanded its badger cull this autumn, having promised just six months earlier to support vaccination as a way of controlling bovine TB. Oxfordshire is one of six new areas in the cull. Our badger vaccination programme is a humane and effective alternative that's at least 60 times cheaper. Perversely, the cull will kill badgers already vaccinated by volunteers in government-funded programmes. Visit: bbowt.org.uk/badgers-and-bovine-tb



Ash appeal

Thank you to everyone who responded to our ash dieback appeal. We are resuming our targeted programme of tree works this winter to ensure public safety. Once complete, we will allow affected areas to grow back naturally,

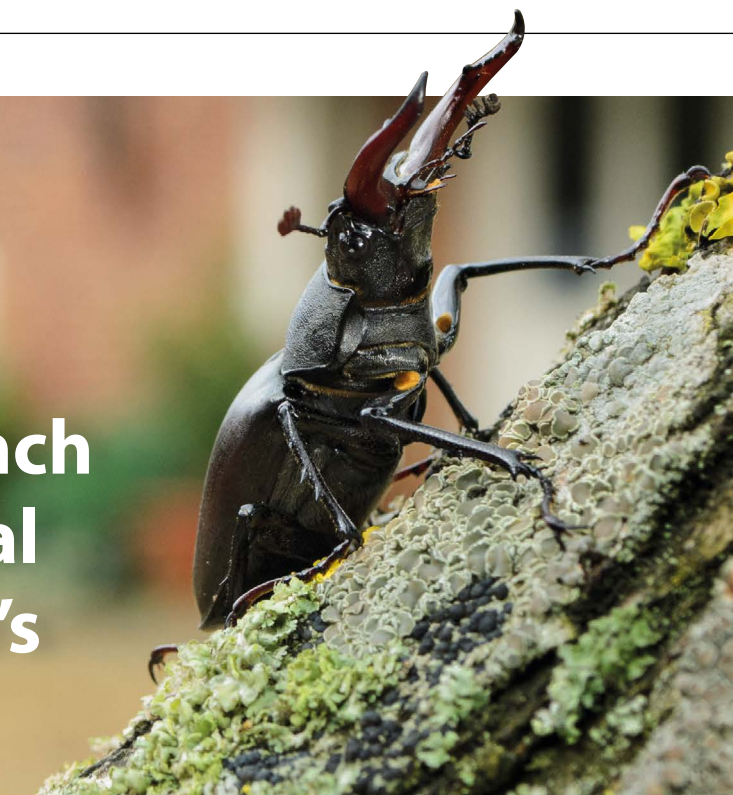


letting nature find a new and healthy balance for our woods. Read more at bbowt.org.uk/ash-dieback

UK NEWS

Stag beetles are one of many species in danger.

Wildlife Trusts launch biggest ever appeal to kickstart nature's recovery by 2030



As we struggle through the worst pandemic in living memory, the importance of nature in our lives becomes clearer than ever. Science shows that humanity's basic needs — from food to happiness — can all be met with a healthy natural environment, where wildlife surrounds us.

But sadly, nature is not all around us, at least not in the abundance it should be. Many of our most treasured species like hedgehogs, bats and basking sharks are all at risk, as well as many of the insects that pollinate our food crops.

Loss of wild places and the breaking up of those that remain into small fragments has had a disastrous effect. Only 10% of land is protected in the UK and much of this is in poor condition. While some areas of the seabed are officially protected, harmful activities such as bottom trawling are only banned in a handful of locations.

All is not lost, as we know how to turn things round: we need to see nature's recovery happening across at least 30% of our land and seas by 2030. This would enable our wild places to connect and allow wildlife to move around and thrive. The Wildlife Trusts are fighting to make this a reality through our new 30 by 30 campaign, and we recently called for a new landscape designation for England called "Wildbelt" that would put land in to recovery for nature and help us reach 30%.

Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts, says: "We've set ourselves an ambitious goal — to raise £30 million and kickstart the process of securing at least 30% of land and sea in nature's recovery by 2030. We will buy land to expand and join up our nature reserves; we'll work with others to show how to bring wildlife back to their land, and we're calling for nature's recovery through a new package of policy measures including big new ideas like Wildbelt."

Wildlife Trusts are fundraising to tackle, on a scale not seen before in the UK, the joint climate and ecological emergency. Restored habitats will capture carbon, helping to tackle climate change, and bring people the health benefits associated with contact with the natural world. There are amazing projects right on your doorstep that need support to take flight.

Craig adds: "The next ten years must be a time of renewal, of rewilding our lives, of green recovery. We all need nature more than ever and when we succeed in reaching 30 by 30 we'll have wilder landscapes that store carbon and provide on-your-doorstep nature for people too. Everyone can support and help us to succeed."



Support our campaign today to bring our wildlife back:
wildlifetrusts.org/30-30-30

THE CHANGES WE NEED

Some examples of projects gearing up to help bring back 30%:

- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is hoping to restore natural processes and healthy ecosystems on a huge scale in their **Wild Peak** project, bringing back more wildlife and wild places.
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust is planning a number of **reintroduction projects**, from beavers to cirl buntings and choughs.
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust is helping to combat climate change at the first ever UK **carbon farm**, which is locking up carbon and bringing back wildlife habitat as the peatlands are restored at Winmarleigh.
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust is planning to restore reed beds, fen swamps and meres, increasing water resilience on **Bourne North Fen**, supporting improved agriculture and water quality — which is good for wildlife — whilst reducing flood risk.



You're our hero!
Yes, you! Your membership means we can protect wildlife-rich gems such as Warburg Nature Reserve.

Where better for a wild walk than the wild woods of Warburg Nature Reserve, a remote and peaceful place

ALISTAR PHILLIPS

Discover the wildlife on your doorstep

Winter is full of wonder! And the best way to experience it? By getting outside to explore one of BBOWT's 86 nature reserves, each alive with awe-inspiring wildlife



MARGARET HOLLAND

1 Warburg Nature Reserve

Postcode RG9 6BJ
Great for... Getting away from it all
Best time to visit All-year round
Size 107 hectares
Map ref SU 721 878

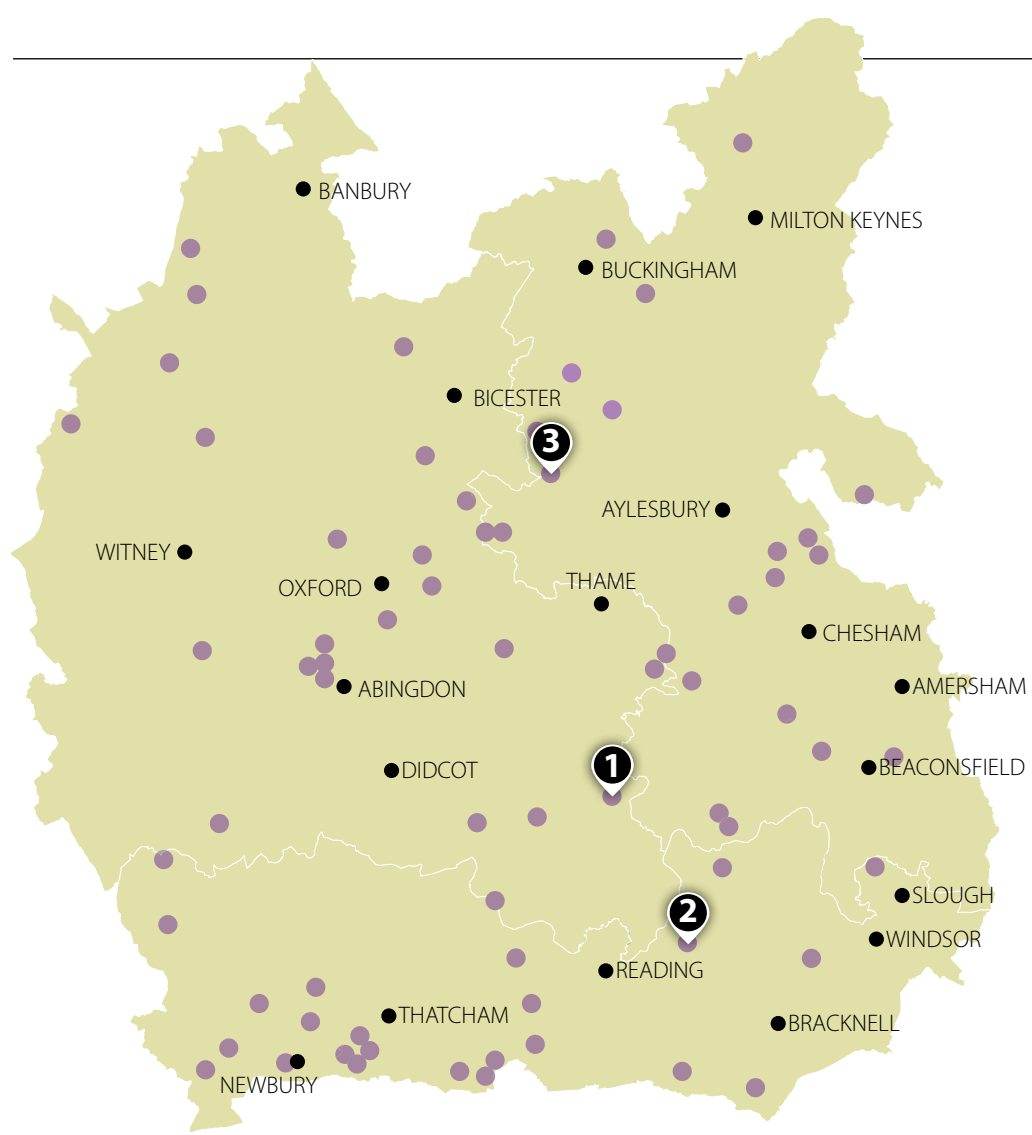
Whether first-time or regular visitor, the gloriously isolated splendour of this very special nature reserve never fails to amaze. Nestled in the enveloping folds of the Chiltern Hills, this is one of BBOWT's richest wildlife gems. Pay a visit and you won't fail to leave feeling recharged, reconnected to nature, and most definitely elated.

So what's all the fuss about? How about the remarkable wildlife that calls it home – thousands of species, from bluebells or the many types of autumn fungi, to majestic birds of prey such as sparrowhawks, tawny owls, buzzards and, of course, the now-legendary red kites.

Pick your winter wander wisely. There's no

beating a frigid, frosty morning, when the valley bottom takes on a magical, Narnia-like appearance. Admire the naked beauty of nature deep in hibernation. Log and leaf piles offer safe retreats for small mammals such as dormice (see page 14), while bats tuck themselves into any nook or cranny they can find; the mature trees offer plenty of hollows, the result of natural decay or the fervid activity of woodpeckers.

Not all of nature is fast asleep. Even in the depths of winter the peace is occasionally disturbed by a line-up of creatures reading like the cast of *Wind in the Willows*: badgers, hares, voles and mice, stoats and weasels. See if you can spot signs of them as you explore the patchwork of woodland, scrub and flower-rich grassland. Or to really blow the cobwebs away why not complete all or part of our 13-mile Henley Wild Walk? You'll return home thoroughly exhausted but happy. Download the leaflet at bbowt.org.uk/henley-wild-walk

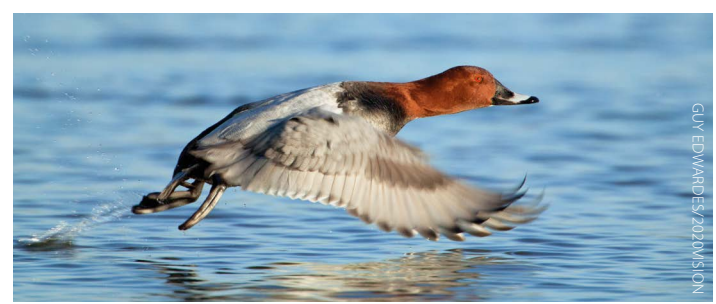


2 Loddon Nature Reserve

Postcode RG10 9AD
Great for... Waterbirds
Best time to visit Winter
Size 14 hectares
Map ref SU 784 760

Binoculars? Check! Woolly hat? Check! Flask of steaming-hot coffee? Check! You'll want to settle in and get comfortable for your trip to Loddon Nature Reserve, a flooded gravel pit that is now a mecca for wintering birds. Look across the water to

catch a glimpse of a snipe or watch one of the many ducks – shoveler, gadwall, pochard and tufted – dabbling or diving. The lake is also popular with birds perhaps more often associated with the seaside: beady-eyed cormorants (often stood with their wings outstretched to dry), and in the summer months oystercatchers and common terns taking advantage of the safety afforded by the small islands that dot the lake.



GLY EDWARDS/2020VISION

3 Rushbeds Wood

Postcode HP18 0RU
Great for... Quiet reflection
Best time to visit All-year round
Size 56 hectares
Map ref SP 673 154

Rushbeds Wood is so named because of the damp and tussocky ground beneath the canopy, which supports a range of moisture-loving sedges, grasses and, yes, rushes. This quieter time of year invites an amble at a more sedate and reflective pace. The woodland looks substantial enough, but most of the original wood was felled just 70 years ago, the few veteran oaks spared the chop now thronged by a new 'wildwood' of ash,

field maple, aspen, hazel and younger oak. Wander through to the stream and peer closely to admire the mosses and liverworts that cloak its steep sides. In spring this area bursts to life with carpets of opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, the golden parts not petals but in fact sepals.



CHRIS LAWRENCE

GO EXPLORE THIS WINTER

Take a virtual stroll
Fancy a wander from the comfort of your armchair? We will soon be launching warden-led virtual tours of some of our most popular reserves and sharing them on our YouTube channel: youtube.com/user/BBOWildlifeTrust

Discover more great days out on our website bbowt.org.uk/reserves

Farming with nature

The way farming subsidies are paid is about to change. In the biggest shakeup in a generation, new policies are sowing the seeds for a truly green revolution, where food production and thriving landscapes, rich in wildlife, go hand in hand. BBOWT has the expertise to help local farmers make the transition. In fact, our work in this area is already underway, as **Director of Conservation Strategy Prue Addison** explains.

The coming years could prove to be a new dawn for British farming

Cornfield flowers like these at College Lake may become a more common sight

More than 70 percent of UK land is farmed in some way, so how it's managed has a major influence on the natural world. Sadly, our track record isn't great, with devastating declines in wildlife driving many species to the brink.

Part of the blame lies with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). For years this EU-wide system of agricultural subsidies prioritised production at the expense of the environment, while recent payments have been based on little more than size of landholding.

Our departure from the EU presents an opportunity to redesign agricultural policies to enable wildlife to recover, while still supporting farmers. The new Agriculture Bill looks set to bridge the disconnect, lifting us from one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world to one where farmers have the resources they need to create healthier soils, vibrant wetlands and all the other things that nature gives us for free.

Working together

This move towards a more environmentally minded approach to land management

presents a golden opportunity for conservationists and farmers to come together, sharing expertise in wildlife and agriculture. BBOWT is keen to play its part, building on its long history of working with farmers and landowners to help them manage their land for the benefit of nature.

Ongoing initiatives have already delivered real improvements for both wildlife and people. For example, our work advising land managers through the Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Sites project, or our involvements in the Catchment Partnerships Programme to coordinate projects and landowners along the Windrush and Cherwell/Ray rivers.



Farmland can offer further benefits to society alongside food production

By cooperating we can speed nature's recovery. It's a compelling reason to bring landowners together to share experiences and encouragement, which is what we do in our role as facilitators to two farmer clusters in Oxfordshire – the Happy Valley Farmers in the north of the county and the Thames Farmers'

Optimism on the ground

The Great Tew Estate is part of the Happy Valley Farmers cluster group and a participant in the ELM scheme trial. Farm Manager Colin Woodward shares his views.

"Training days run through the farmer cluster group have improved our understanding of the biodiversity and habitats along the watercourses, which will help us in future decision making. We know there is likely to be significant change in the agricultural sector but we are optimistic that the ELM scheme will help develop a sustainable future for UK farming as we will have to balance producing food with greater environmental awareness."



We can do it: space for nature and farming

Conservation Group to the west. Participants not only receive conservation advice but have the invaluable opportunity of knowledge

"For too long nature has either been forgotten or wilfully ignored, but the stage looks set for its comeback."

exchange on issues such as improving water quality, or maintaining, restoring and creating native woodland and meadows. Freely sharing experiences of what has and hasn't worked serves as a shortcut to success, with both farmer and wildlife the winners.

CAP no longer fits

Next year farmers enter a transition period as payments move from the CAP system to its replacement, the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. Currently in development, the scheme is based on the principle of 'public money for public goods', or in other words, rewarding farmers for delivering environmental gains that benefit all of society. The ELM scheme will focus on payments for outcomes such as clean air and water, mitigation of climate change and thriving wildlife.

Last year BBOWT joined up with four other Wildlife Trusts (Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, and Herefordshire) to lead one of the Government's trials for the scheme. The two-

year trial will use our collective experiences to shape the final scheme.

The trial will see us work with 100 landowners and farmers across five counties to design whole-farm plans, which will enable simple spatial mapping of public goods (for

New advisory service

This autumn we launched our new Land Advice Service, a paid-for service to deliver farmers and landowners with targeted advice about how to change their land management practices to benefit wildlife.

The service will help farmers and landowners make the transition to the new world of sustainable agriculture by accessing opportunities to fund more sustainable and environmentally friendly methods of land management, like the ELM scheme. We can also identify new sources of income from the private sector, such as biodiversity offsetting, carbon trading, and payment for ecosystem services. And, of course, we can provide advice to proactive individuals wanting to undertake their own independent land management initiatives, such as habitat restoration or even rewilding projects.

Find out more about our Land Advice Service at bbowt.org.uk/land-advice-service

example, soil, water and biodiversity), and identification of where these goods can be created or enhanced. The trial will include essential business planning to help farmers make informed financial decisions on the most appropriate public goods that their land can deliver.

For too long nature has either been forgotten or wilfully ignored, but the stage looks set for its comeback. The once competing interests of food production and wildlife conservation must now work together to bring about a truly sustainable future for farming. 🌱

Living on the hedge

By Andrew Jamieson,
Surrey Wildlife Trust

First light and an early winter mist lies softly on the fields. Along the track the low sun is backlighting frosted cobwebs and the frozen stalks of last summer's hogweed. Redwings and fieldfares, as well as our resident thrushes, take flight from the hedges as I approach. I have interrupted their gorging on a bounty of berries. Sloe, haw, hip and holly are all on the menu, these thorny thickets providing a rich larder for birds that have flocked from harsher climes to spend their winter with us.

Other birds take advantage of these hedges at this time of year, too. At sunset, hundreds of chattering starlings will take up their roosting stations deep within the intricate tangle of shrubs and climbers. Here they are protected from whatever the elements have in store over the long winter nights. Insects in various life stages are also holed-up. With some careful exploration you may find dormant ladybirds tucked deep into bark crevices or the tiny eggs of the brown hairstreak butterfly lodged in the fork of a blackthorn branch. Meanwhile, hidden away at ground level, hedgehogs, toads, and newts are using the security of the dense vegetation for their seasonal slumber.

Later in the year our hedge will become a riot of colour, movement and aromatic scents with bees and butterflies visiting the flowers of campion, bramble and honeysuckle. Long-tailed tits, wrens and yellowhammers will be busily raising their broods; shrews and voles will be feeding, sheltering and defending their territories. But all that has yet to unfold, and for now much of life lies waiting.

Thousands of miles of hedgerows such as this criss-cross our country in a familiar and historical patchwork landscape. Rich in wildlife, this network of green highways links the habitats and populations of so many species, all living 'on the hedge'.

Farming on the hedge

Hedgerows are a vital part of the farming landscape, providing food and shelter to countless birds, mammals and insects. Bird food supplier and Wildlife Trust partner, Vine House Farm, provides a haven for tree sparrows and other wildlife in their hedges. Plus, with every purchase made supporting The Wildlife Trusts, the farm is helping wildlife beyond the farm gate. Find out more here:



[wildlifetrusts.org/vine-house-farm](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/vine-house-farm)

Brimstone

One of a handful of UK butterflies that overwinter as adults, tucked away in ivy. They can even be seen flying on sunny days in winter. The caterpillars feed on buckthorn.

House sparrow

Both house sparrows and their rarer cousins tree sparrows use dense hedges for roosting spots, protection from predators and even as nest sites when favoured holes and crevices aren't available.

Hedgehog

Hedgehogs will often choose the base of a thick hedgerow to site their hibernaculum to sleep away the colder months. In milder winters they may be seen out and about as late as December.

Dormouse

Well-managed hedgerows are vital corridors for many species and none more so than the dormouse. As well as a secure hibernation site, the hedge will provide them with many of the fruits, nuts and insects in their diet.

Stoat

These fierce predators are active all year round. They use hedge lines to hunt small rodents and rabbits, although when food is scarce may resort to foraging for earthworms.

Fieldfare

Winter visitors from the semi-arctic regions where they breed, these grey-blue thrushes will often arrive in mixed flocks along with redwings to feed on berries.

Ivy

This late-flowering evergreen has much to offer wildlife in autumn and winter. Autumn nectar sustains bees, juicy berries feed birds long after other fruits have been snapped up, and dense foliage provides a home for hibernating bats and insects.

Orange ladybird

This distinctive ladybird is among the many insects that hibernate in leaf litter at the base of hedges. Other species of ladybird will be under bark or nestled within thick beds of lichen.

Sleeping on the job

Dormice spend up to half the year hibernating and most of the day sleeping, which makes them very hard to spot!

The tiny hazel dormouse is universally adored, though few of us have seen one owing to the fact they spend most of their lives either hibernating or sleeping. These masters of slumber are even known to snore. This may explain their name, which stems from the French word *dormir*, meaning 'to sleep'.

Dormice tend to stay up in the tree canopy, becoming active at dusk to search for food. What's on the menu varies according to the time of year: leaf buds in spring, insects throughout the summer then berries and, of course, hazelnuts as they fatten up for winter. The super-agile rodents hibernate from

late October, conserving energy by lowering their metabolism and heart rate to an absolute minimum. Safe spaces to sit out winter include logs or leaves at the base of trees – typically coppiced hazel – or just below ground where temperatures remain more stable.

Downward trend

A recent report by People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) reveals UK hazel dormice numbers have halved since the turn of the millennium. The finger points to the same-old culprits: habitat loss and fragmentation, and the increasing impacts of climate change.

BBOWT works hard to create the right habitat for dormice. This includes retaining canopy links in our woodlands, so dormice can move from tree to tree without having to descend to the ground where they are vulnerable to predators. Regular coppicing helps create the mosaic of trees and shrubs dormice need for a varied diet. We also monitor dormice numbers as part of the National Dormice Monitoring Programme, coordinated by PTES. [👉](#)

Go on a nut hunt

You can help monitor hazel dormice too, by searching for nibbled hazelnuts. Look sharp though; this family friendly activity requires some very careful detective work! Download full nut hunt instructions from the PTES website: ptes.org/dormouse-nut-hunt

On the lookout

While hard to detect, we know that dormice inhabit a number of our nature reserves, including Moor Copse, Warburg, and Little Linford Wood, where a spring sighting by trail cam confirmed its presence there for the first time in five years.

Inspection of wooden nest boxes is our main method of monitoring. Similar to bird boxes but with the entrance hole facing the tree, the boxes are positioned a few feet off the ground, preferably on hazel coppice. Dormice use the boxes for breeding and roosting.

Next year we plan to roll out inked footprint tunnels. This new method of monitoring should enable us to detect dormice more accurately, even where nest boxes fail to show any signs.



Inspecting a hazel dormouse nestbox

How to get more from us

Strange times call for innovative measures. With our events programme disrupted by Covid-19 we're doing all we can to bring the wildlife to you. Here's how we can stay in touch with each other

What's going on?

That's what we'd all like to know! With the Covid-19 picture constantly changing, we are still unable to plan ahead with confidence. For now, our events programme remains significantly reduced, with many events moving online. Rest assured we are as keen as everyone to return to a full schedule of walks, talks and activities as soon as it is both safe and practical to do so.

Keep up with the very latest situation by checking the website regularly. Even better, sign up to our free Nature Notes e-newsletter, packed with ideas and news to keep your wild side entertained, inspired and informed.



We will come to you

Thanks to a generous and far-sighted grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund even more of BBOWT – and the wonderful wildlife found on our nature reserves – is coming to you! We are immensely grateful for their extra support during these testing times.

As well as helping pay for essential maintenance work, the grant will fund exciting new ventures such as a high-definition webcam at College Lake, Buckinghamshire. Imagine being able to check in on the wildlife in pristine detail from the comfort of your living room!

Also planned is a series of reserve tours and warden interviews, so you can get behind the scenes of the many wildlife-rich gems that your membership supports.



Looking ahead

Our current Strategic Plan covers the five-year period ending in 2021. In the past year we have made significant progress towards the targets set out in the plan. For example, through our work we have helped improve more than 6,000 hectares of land outside BBOWT's direct management for the

benefit of local wildlife. While there is still plenty to do, we are already planning for the next five years.

We know that nature-based solutions can play a key role in the fight against climate change. This will be a key focus of our work with win-win benefits for both nature and climate. In the coming months

we will develop our new strategic plan for 2021-26, which will build on our work for the nature and climate emergencies and the disconnection between people and wildlife.



Read more in our Annual Review 2019/20, available at bbowt.org.uk/publications

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PHIL LOCKHART

What's in a name?

Words have the power to change the way we view the world. Author Horatio Clare explores the connection between language and nature

Recently a family passed my house, which overlooks a meadow near Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire. 'Look!' said the mother, 'A peacock!'. 'It's a pheasant mum,' her teenaged daughter replied. 'It's a peacock,' repeated the mother, looking hard at the cock pheasant. It was a joyful exchange to witness. Is this not how we all begin with nature, with anything — naming and misnaming, feeling our way towards understanding?

There must have been a great deal of new naming of nature, recently. On a visit to Scotland, our seven-year-old named what might well have been a buzzard a golden eagle. He still confuses carrion crows and jackdaws, but like many of us this year, he is making a start, delighted with collective nouns for the unkindness of ravens we see occasionally, the exaltations of larks on our moors and the murder of crows that patrol the valley.

For months now, teenagers, students and family groups have been appearing in the local woods and fields, absorbing their calm, beauty and perspective. Nature has been vital to us, this hard and awful year;

there seems real hope that the change we have been praying for is afoot: with any luck, renewed relationships with nature and language are being born. Sales of field guides are up, according to Emma Corfield-Walters who runs Bookish in Crickhowell. Emma has been running a mail-order

30% of 8-to-11-year-olds cannot identify a magpie, but 90% of them can spot a Dalek

service throughout the pandemic: 'I'm selling a lot of foraging and identification books, so people are taking this time to learn,' she says.

The depth and richness of all there is to learn will strike the readers of these books the way those of us who love fauna and flora were struck when our passions began. The multitudes of dialects and the varieties of ancient languages of which modern English is comprised speak of an extraordinary cultural and historical relationship between the inhabitants of our isles and the glittering diversity of species they have been home to — and will, with luck, support again.

The precise nature of that relationship is found in our vernacular and demotic terms for animals and birds: humour, close observation, accuracy and a poetic sense of the country characterise these terms, a cornucopia of words for everything from moles to herons. It makes sense that the

creatures we see most often have the most names. The humble woodlouse is a peabug or a nutbug in Liverpool, a ticktock in Bedfordshire, a flump in Southampton, a parson pig on the Isle of Man, a sow-pig in Norfolk and a billybutton in Yorkshire.

Shakespearean England is alive in our local names for species, with the great dukedoms and earldoms of Cornwall, Norfolk, and Yorkshire reliably providing their own takes on the world. When Hamlet announces he knows a hawk from a handsaw he is using East Anglian dialect: a handsaw or hanser is a grey heron on the Broads. If the traditional English summer



Horatio Clare's award-winning books include *Running for the Hills*, *Down to the Sea in Ships* and *Aubrey and the Terrible Yoot*.



Our language is full of magical words for wildlife, like 'ammil' for the fiery light of sun on hoar frost

involves standing heron-still at a window watching water falling from the sky, the national thesaurus has every kind covered, from mizzle in Devon, to picking in Wales, smirr in Scotland (fine, drifting rain), letty in Somerset (the kind of rain that is a let or hindrance to working outside); the heavier stuff is plothing in the Midlands and the northeast, stoating in Scotland (rain so hard it bounces off the ground) and 'raining forks' 'tiyunsdown'ards' in Lincolnshire: raining pitchforks.

Many of these terms have fallen out of general use; they form a corps of specialised knowledge, retained in the vocabularies of older people, and in little-read books. There have been efforts to collect and revive them, notably by Robert Macfarlane in *Landmarks*, which assembled a trove of glossaries of dialect words for landscapes and nature. It delights in terms like 'zwer', an Exmoor word describing 'the whizzing noise made by a covey of partridges as they break suddenly from cover', and 'summer geese' (steam rising in sunlight from a wet Yorkshire moor). Reading it, I resolved to remember and



use the lovely Devonian word 'ammil' — the fiery light produced by sun on hoar frost. To have a new name for a thing is to have sharper and brighter eyes, to have your internal and external worlds enriched (Macfarlane himself loves 'smeuse', a word for a gap in a hedge made by the repeated passage of small animals).

Try as one might, though, without a community of

When Hamlet announces he knows a hawk from a handsaw he is using East Anglian dialect

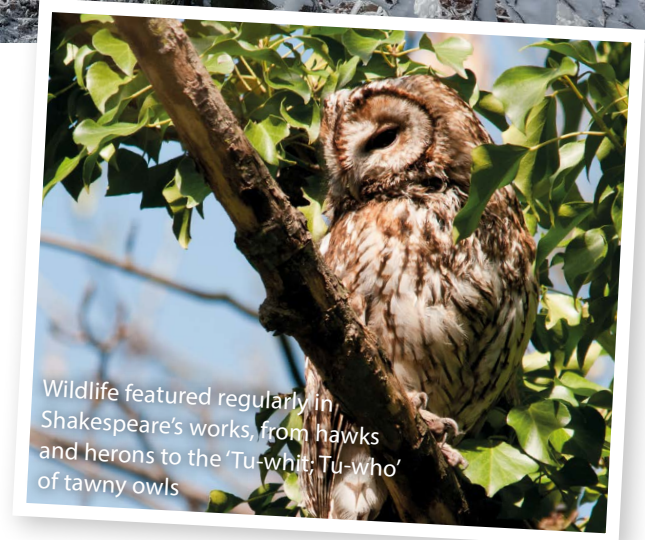
people who also need and use these words, they remain idiosyncratic and obscure, and the objects and effects to which they refer remain marginal or unconsidered. We can still teach them to each other and our children — who could not love the Yorkshire 'mowdiwarp' for a mole? — but language is an organic, natural force.

Apart from the revival of Welsh, the result of huge effort and investment, there are few examples of any tongue or dialect being brought back to prosperity from impoverishment.

In 2017, Robert Macfarlane and the artist Jackie Morris had a mighty success with *The Lost Words*, a book of poems and pictures featuring wrens, bluebells, kingfishers and

acorns, designed to reverse a disconnection between children and nature which came to light with the removal of these words from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. Although the passionate response to the book proves that parents and children still mind about these things, the territory which the book describes, with its collection of formerly numerous birds and common trees, reflects a terrifying decline in wild species, and a concomitant retreat in human interest and understanding of them. What chance does ammil have, if, as one recent survey found, 30 percent of eight-to-eleven-year-olds cannot identify a magpie, but 90 percent of them can spot a Dalek?

Instead of the miracle it would have taken



Wildlife featured regularly in Shakespeare's works, from hawks and herons to the 'Tu-white: Tu-who' of tawny owls

Wildlife around the UK

The Welsh name for the jay is *sgrech y coed*, which broadly translates as 'screecher of the woods'. A fitting name for this forest-dwelling cousin of the crow, so often heard before it's seen.

In Scots, the mountain hare has been known by many names including *whiddie baudrons*, *fuddie*, *maukin*, *cuttie*, and *lang lugs* — a reference to its large ears.

The eider, a sturdy sea duck, is known as the *Cuddy duck* in Northumberland. *Cuddy* is short for Saint Cuthbert, a seventh-century monk that lived on the Farne Islands and bestowed his protection on the eiders that nested there.

In Northern Ireland you might hear a yellowhammer referred to as a *yella yorlin*, a meadow pipit called a *moss-cheeper*, a crane fly known as a *granny-needle* or a black ant as a *pishmire*.

to fix our disconnection from nature, there came the terrible affliction of coronavirus. But the effect may be the same. As traffic decreased, towns and cities fell silent and millions of us worked from home, we began to repair relationships with place, the local and with time that have been broken for decades. I thought I knew this valley in Yorkshire, but it took lockdown for me to really see it.

Day by day, I watched the wrens nesting, the kestrel hunting, and that peacock-pheasant. He established his territory, then crowed and thrummed, broadcasting its potential, drawing in two hen pheasants, one of which then laid eggs, from which hatched chicks, over which the father crooned in a most beguiling manner until the day when they took their first flights, like large drunk bees.

Intrigued, I looked the bird up. 'Pheasant' comes from the Greek 'phasianos', meaning a bird from the land of the river Phasis, which is in present-day Armenia. Well I never! Instead of my diary's usual harried and time-hurrying checklist of events and journeys, commutes and re-schedulings, this year has been charted by the appearance



A recent survey has revealed at least 250 names for the woodlouse

of the first red admiral butterfly, the return of the swallows, the dive and drifts of flocks of swifts, the herons' daily journeys up and down the beck, the appearance of the bats and the evensong of tawny owls.

Human time, which was post-industrial time, dictated by the clock and fought over by apps and notifications, seems to have slipped sideways towards something much more natural, seasonal and slower. In response, the internet has flooded with

Day by day, I watched the wrens nesting, the kestrel hunting, and that peacock-pheasant.

the thoughts and observations of people noticing birds and animals, remarking on the dawn chorus, and taking action.

Mary Colwell, a naturalist, author and producer of David Attenborough's programmes, has begun a campaign to introduce a GCSE in Natural History into the school syllabus. The campaign is attracting widespread support: if and when it is successful, our relationship with nature will have taken a crucial step forward. Coming generations will be able to see and name the world around them in the way many who went before them could not.

My words of the year have been 'essential'

and 'inessential' — how much of our former lives was taken up with the latter, and what new and old things, and what new and old words, will the changed world decide it cannot do without?

Most wonderfully, it seems certain that one casualty of the coronavirus will be the pernicious capitalist cliché that time is money. There is going to be less money around, it seems certain, but more time. And time is not money: time is life, time is

beauty, time is the one true currency we have to spend in this world.

We cannot hothouse a return of the terms and languages we once had for nature, but as we relearn how deeply we need the natural world, our words and phrases for it will return and grow anew. Peacock-pheasant for cock pheasant seems a fine place to start, at least in Hebden Bridge.

A GCSE in Natural History could bring young people closer to nature. Discover more about the campaign to make this a reality.

wildlifetrusts.org/nature-gcse

Big gains in small spaces

Even small gardens can be big news for wildlife. Kate Bradbury reveals how you can optimise your space for wildlife.

Any space, no matter its size, can offer homes for wildlife. Small spaces add up, contributing to 'wildlife corridors' that enable wildlife to travel, often between other habitats. You might have a garden close to a park. By digging holes beneath your fences you will be creating a corridor for hedgehogs to reach the park, opening up huge new spaces for them. You might grow a few flowering plants on a balcony, providing a stepping stone of nectar that enables butterflies to travel further in search of a mate.

These corridors are important because they enable wildlife to increase their populations and adapt to climate change. Without them, they'll have less chance of surviving.

Tailor your garden to meet both your needs and those of wildlife. No room for a pond? Try a little container pond, instead. Worried trees will grow too big? Consider shrubs like hazel, guelder rose and spindle. Grow plants that flower over a long period to provide as much nectar and pollen as possible, such as perennial wallflower, catmint and salvias. Or let the grass grow in one patch. Anything makes a difference.

Get a free guide to helping struggling insects: [wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects)

Home sweet home
Erect bird boxes in the eaves for sparrows or swifts, or a tit box 1-2m above ground. Bee hotels take up very little room.

Layer bulbs in pot
Layer alliums and crocus in the same pot to offer food for bees for longer.

Add water
Attract wildlife with container ponds and birdbaths.

Let long grass grow
Provide shelter and food for a range of species. Wild flowers should pop up too.

Grow climbers
They provide shelter for insects. You might find moths resting here during the day!

Wild highways
Hedges offer shelter and garden access. If you have fences, make holes in or beneath them on either side so animals can pass.

Feed the birds
Save lives! Hang feeders of sunflower hearts, mixed seeds and fat balls.

Grow caterpillar food plants
Try foxglove, primrose, hops, honeysuckle and red campion, or nettles in larger spaces.

ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH BAILEY

6 places to see Hidden forests

Across the UK, hidden forests of lichen are waiting to be discovered. They thrive in almost any environment with enough light, from the rocky mosaics of dry stone walls to the gnarled bark of ancient woodlands. Lichens are fascinating things — not one organism, but a symbiotic coupling of one or more fungus species and an alga or cyanobacterium (or occasionally both). They live in harmony, the fungus providing structure and the other organism making food through photosynthesis. They're often overlooked, but closer inspection reveals a world in miniature, with lichens growing in sprawling shapes like the trunks, branches and leaves of the forests in which many of them grow. It seems as if no two lichens are alike, each patch a work of chaotic art, from moss-green cups to rust-coloured mats. With a searching eye and an open mind, lichens can brighten any walk in the wild.

Usnea florida, a beard-lichen also known as witches' whiskers, is a declining species found mainly on trees in Wales and south-west England

WITCHES' WHISKERS LICHEN © ADRIAN DAVIES/NATURE PL

See the spectacle
for yourself



1 Ballachuan Hazelwood, Scottish Wildlife Trust
One of Scotland's most ancient woodlands, where the hazels and rocks are dripping with lichens and mosses. It's home to over 372 different lichens, including Norwegian specklebelly, octopus suckers and elf-ears lichens.

Where: Near Oban, PA34 4RJ

2 Glenarm Nature Reserve, Ulster Wildlife Trust
This beautiful river valley is home to lichens found nowhere else in Ireland. Look for them decorating the branches of ancient oaks or coating rocks along the Glenarm River, where the rare river jelly lichen is found.

Where: Glenarm, BT44 0BD

3 Eycott Hill, Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Admire the collage of lichens along the dry stone walls, or scour the rocky outcrops to find those orange, leafy lichens that grow best on a bird's favourite perch as they thrive on the extra nitrates from droppings of meadow pipits and wheaters.

Where: Penrith, CA11 0XD

4 Roundton Hill, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
Once the site of an Iron Age hillfort, this impressive landscape supports almost 200 species of lichen. Look for them on the shady underhangs of volcanic rock outcrops.

Where: Church Stoke, SY15 6EL

5 Roydon Woods Nature Reserve, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

This enchanting ancient woodland is known for its wildflowers, but the lichens draping the ageing trees are just as impressive.

Where: Brockenhurst, SO42 7UF

6 Isles of Scilly, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

One of the best places for lichens in the UK. The granite cairns of Peninnis Head offer a good selection, with a backdrop of spectacular sea views. The islands are also home to rare species like gilt-edged lichen.

Did you discover any lichen?

We'd love to know how your search went.

Please tweet us your best photos of the lichens that take your liking! @wildlifetrusts

Your Wild Life. Your Wildlife Trust.

We are committed to our vision of an environment rich in wildlife, valued by all. With your continued support (thank you!) we can see that our mission – to create a living landscape across our towns and countryside and inspire our communities to act for nature – is realised. Here's a snapshot of what we've achieved together this past year...

OUR IMPACT

57,000

people took part in
our **walks, talks**
and **events**

Our **86**
nature reserves
extend to

2,644
hectares

BBOWT nature
reserves cover an
area four times the
size of Gibraltar!

1,382
people took part
in health and
wellbeing activities
on our reserves

We engaged with all

21

MPs in our area,
while **65 local**
councillors signed
our pledge for nature

More than

25,644

memberships &

1,700

fantastic
volunteers
support our work

Thank you!



32,126

people... and counting...
follow us on **social media**

More than

1,400

local people signed
the petition to
stop HS2

We inspire more than

12,000

schoolchildren

through our education
centres and **school visits**

1

visitor, education and
environmental centres help
us inspire a curiosity in nature