

# A Welcome to Welcome to Mildlife



## Hello from BBOWT

Hello, and a heartfelt thank you for becoming one of BBOWT's latest members. Your support will help us achieve more for the wild places and wildlife we cherish.

By joining us you are making an important contribution to local wildlife at a pivotal moment. Nature faces unprecedented pressure from development, farming and climate change. At the same time we need nature more than ever before. But change is in the air and we are best placed to lead nature's recovery locally.

We already work with unwavering determination to protect safe havens for wildlife, from water voles to the majestic barn owl. Now we are taking this passion beyond our reserves to secure a better future for wildlife in the wider countryside, while at the same time tackling the climate crisis.

BBOWT is helping other landowners to play their part, and we have bigger, wilder ambitions for our future as we champion a landscape-scale approach to this transformation. Together we will make sure that wildlife touches everyone's lives once again, no matter if they live in town or country.

The stakes have never been higher but we are confident that, with your help, we can secure nature's recovery. Thank you for making such a positive commitment to local wildlife. We want you to know you are making an appreciable difference to nature's prospects at this crucial time.



Estelle Bailey Chief Executive

#### **Meet the team** - A few of the many dedicated wildlife enthusiasts who help to make BBOWT a success.

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).

Don't forget



Adriana Alberts Membership Team One of the helpful and friendly Membership Team at BBOWT HQ.



Martyn Lane Senior Land Manager Leads conservation work on our Oxfordshire nature reserves.



Lynn Hughes Learning Manager (East) Inspires children to local wildlife.



Charlotte Karmali Volunteer Warden at Finemere Wood Organises work understand and love parties of 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

Your

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? The Events section of our website has information on all our forthcoming wildlife-themed events - go to bbowt.org.uk/events. Your regular Wild Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire magazine will also highlight interesting events throughout the year.

How do I book onto an event? You

can book onto one of our events by signing up online under the specific event page or by contacting the Membership Team.

#### 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 get in touch via 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



We have more than

individual members



The number of education centres we run, visited by thousands of school children

Each year we review 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



## 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

as 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!

We run a programme of events throughout the year which you are



welcome to take part in. There are activities for all ages and abilities, bringing you closer to nature. Enjoy a fascinating guided tour of a nature reserve, led by an expert in local wildlife, bring your child to a hands-

on activity session or join an online talk from home to discover more about nature.

Events are a great way to learn about local conservation and the

wildlife that thrives in our area, while of course meeting other like-minded members.

Visit **bbowt.org.uk/events** and have a browse! We look forward to meeting you.

#### Stay 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 Wild Berkshire Buckinghamshire and



#### Journey of discovery

Two members share their experiences of taking part in an 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.

Oxfordshire magazine three times a year (at the end of March, July and November). It is a great way to catch up on all the latest news and to see what a difference your support is making for local wildlife. We offer a digital version of the magazine, which you can sign up to on our website at bbowt.org.uk/publications.

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, you can do so on our website at bbowt.org.uk/ **newsletter** or by contacting us.

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

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#### 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. The Watts family,

who run the Lincolnshire Fens farm, are dedicated to managing their land in a wildlife-friendly way. As much bird food as possible is grown in the local area and packaged on-site. When you order use the code WTNMF to get 10% off your first order. What's more, 4% of every purchase made by a customer living in our area is donated to BBOWT. Order online at vinehousefarm.co.uk or phone 01775 630208.



#### 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% of the order value when you order online. For full details on how to order please visit 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 – it's as easy as that. Sign up at ecotricity.co.uk/for-your-home/ quote-and-switch?partner=BBOWT



#### **Insurance that pays** out for wildlife

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

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



#### DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY



**BBOWT** takes the privacy, **REGULATOR** 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 **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:

#### bbowt.org.uk/fundraising-

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 Senior Land 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 makes 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.

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 vigorous grasses under control, working with a local farmer who brings in cattle once the wild flowers have set seed.

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

Yoesden is a precious fragment of chalk grassland

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

### Your garden can become a magnet for local wildlife.

wildflower meadow – start afresh from seed or 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.

Ponds are

haven for

#### 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.

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 homes. 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 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?

bird hides and interactive Nature Detectives Trail to try, there's lots for young and old alike.

#### Finemere Wood (Bucks)

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.

#### **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 familyfriendly 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 warden for current highlights.

With a visitor centre, picnic area,

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

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 nationallyimportant 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 a great place 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.

#### **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)

Five-spot Burnet moth 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 bbowt.org.uk/reserves

#### **Walkers**

Dancersend with Pavis Woods (Bucks)

Lose yourself in this tranguil 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 Berkshire's largest tract of heathland. Once an airbase, the roar of US Air Force planes has been replaced by the songs of 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.



one chances are it will be scrambling into the water, scuttling away into the undergrowth or darting headlong into a

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

We work with landowners to create favourable conditions for water voles with opportunities taken to enhance sites. This might include fencing off a

#### We work with landowners to create favourable conditions.

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.



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

## 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 guardians. 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.



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 nature.

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. Visit **bbowt.org.uk/events** and find activities 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



#### 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 is cutting 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. Together with other wildlife NGOs BBOWT is campaigning 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



## Fancy getting even more involved?

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



#### Become a volun

Volunteering with BBOWT is the perfect way to help local wildlife, have fun, maybe 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

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

Gifts in Wills are especially valuable to BBOWT and the wildlife we care 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

BBOWT, please visit bbowt.org.uk/legacy. Or request a hardcopy of the bbowt.org.uk or calling 01865 788300.

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. You can order recycling envelopes at: recycle4charity.co.uk/register/C55659

I love the flexibility

of volunteering with

BBOWT. I've been

doing things I never

thought I'd do.

Do you help wildlife in your home patch? Every action, no matter how small, makes a difference. Tell us what you're doing and join the Team Wilder community! Visit bbowt.org.uk/team-wilder

#### Leave a gift in your Will

**Invest in wildlife** 

commitment to wildlife

by becoming an Investor in Wildlife. Contact our

Demonstrate your company's

for. They can help us to seize opportunities to acquire new reserves, often conservation work.

If you would like more information on leaving a gift in your Will to BBOWT Guide to Making a Will booklet by emailing us at membership@



