

# Wild

Leicestershire  
and Rutland

Membership magazine

Summer 2023

## WONDERFUL WASPS

Why these incredible insects  
deserve to be loved

## COMMON GROUND

The fascinating history of  
Loughborough Big Meadow

# *Awesome* orchids

Where to admire them  
and what to look for



**Leicestershire  
& Rutland**  
Wildlife Trust





# Welcome

## Nature makes us better



As warmer weather arrives and with longer days, I find I have more time to spend outdoors. It doesn't take long to feel the benefits from being regularly surrounded by nature. Each season brings something unique. For me seeing

our wildlife in the early mornings and late evenings of summer is a real highlight. I am lucky to be able to walk straight out into the countryside from my home, but for many getting their fix of nature can prove much more of a challenge.

In the recently published 'Environmental Improvement Plan' the Government sets a target that everyone in England should live within a 15-minute walk of woodlands, wetlands, parks, or rivers. Research shows that people who live in greener neighbourhoods tend to be happier, healthier and live longer lives. The Government's ambition is important for all these reasons and, of course, the benefits to wildlife itself.

The Environmental Improvement Plan includes a range of other targets too, such as halting the decline in wildlife populations by 2030, reducing water pollution and increasing tree cover. There's lots to be encouraged about, but when we look at the state of nature, we really need to be aiming beyond simply stopping the damage and seize genuine ambitions around nature's full recovery. I want us to leave a wildlife-filled legacy.

Of course, setting targets is easy. The challenge lies in ensuring we have the resources, infrastructure and commitment to deliver it. Having signed up to these ambitions at the recent UN Nature Summit (COP15), we now need to show international leadership by delivering this.

I hope you all get the opportunity to enjoy our stunning wildlife over the summer.

*Mat Carter*

CEO



PETER CAIRNS // 2020 VISION



SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY © JIM HIGHAM

BOB ROBERTS

## Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*

**WILD Leicestershire and Rutland** is the membership magazine for **Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust** and is free to members.

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Protecting and enhancing the wildlife and wild places of Leicestershire and Rutland and engaging people with nature.

*Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust*

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JOHN HAWKINS/SURREY HILL PHOTOGRAPHY



TIM SEXTON

# Contents

## 4 Wild news

Delve into news and stories from LRWT and around the country.

## 10 Your Wild Summer

Stir your wild side as you explore nature this summer.

## 12 Common ground

Chris Hill reveals the cultural significance of Loughborough Big Meadow.

## 16 Wild summer walk

Discover the unrivalled floral diversity of Cloud Wood.

## 18 Awesome orchids

Delicate orchids are nature's marvels. What to look out for.

## 20 Wonderful wasps

Picnic spoiler or ecosystem superstar? You decide!

## 22 Loving my job!

Sophia Attwood-Clarke on turning her passion into a career.

## 26 Wildlife gardening

Kate Bradbury shows us how to help garden wildlife on a budget.

## 28 My wild life

In conversation with butterfly recorder Alistair Lawrence.

## 30 Grass roots

Explore the remarkable diversity of our precious grasslands.

## 34 Events and activities

Get out and about with our guide to events and activities.

## 6 ways to get involved with your local Wildlife Trust

**Gift membership** Help someone feel more connected to nature by signing them up as a member.  
[lrwt.org.uk/gift-membership](http://lrwt.org.uk/gift-membership)

**Legacy** You can include a gift in your Will for wildlife and the future of our local natural world.  
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**Wildlife Watch** Inspire a wild child by signing them up for our junior membership, Wildlife Watch!  
[lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-watch](http://lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-watch)

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[lrwt.org.uk/donate](http://lrwt.org.uk/donate)

**Businesses** Become a corporate supporter of LRWT and make wildlife part of your business.  
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# WILD NEWS

All the latest local and national news from The Wildlife Trusts



## Forest School ignites a lifetime passion for nature

Our new short film celebrates the powerful, positive benefits that Forest School has on children and, in turn, nature. It focuses on a group of children from Charnwood Primary School in Leicester, taking part in a programme of 10 Forest School sessions, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

Forest School helps children of any age connect with and learn about the natural world through games, practical hands-on activities and exploration. Sessions also aim to improve mental wellbeing – developing self-esteem, boosting confidence and building resilience.

The film shows what a fun and joyful experience learning outside can be, and how much the children benefit from time in nature. This time gets the children thinking about how important wildlife is, and what they can do to protect and look after wild spaces.

Taking part can also help children to flourish back in the classroom by

developing key skills like speaking and listening. At Forest School, children who may not usually speak up in class have the confidence to talk and have their voice heard, while those that usually speak more, have to learn to listen to their peers.

Last year we were able to expand our Forest School work thanks to the generous support of several other

funders: Melton Building Society, Howard Watson Symington Memorial Charity and the Central England Coop. This allowed us to continue our work in Leicester city as well as reach out to schools in the Melton and Market Harborough areas of Leicestershire. Here, we ran 65 sessions with 144 children from seven different schools.

We are now in our last year of support from players of People's Postcode Lottery but will be continuing to run our popular Wild Tots groups and Forest School sessions for home-educated children, as well as sessions with a number of schools across our two counties.



### Find out more

about our Forest School work at [lrwt.org.uk/for-teachers](https://lrwt.org.uk/for-teachers) and [wildforestschool.org.uk](https://wildforestschool.org.uk) from where you can find a link to watch our short film.

We are always looking for volunteers to help us run sessions, in both termtime and the school holidays. For more information, please head to [lrwt.org.uk/volunteer-opportunities](https://lrwt.org.uk/volunteer-opportunities)



## New oaks for Ketton Fields



Members of the Ketton Green Spaces Group have planted four oak saplings in Lower Priory Field, Ketton. This work is part of a plan, agreed with LRWT, to help re-establish the wood pasture that would have existed in the field long ago. The saplings were grown from acorns collected from the ancient Bowthorpe Oak in east Rutland, and will add a younger component to the rich tree collection on site.

The costs of the young oak trees and fencing materials to protect them from grazing were met by a grant from The Tree Council's Branching Out Fund.



## Blooming marvellous

Four nature reserves along the River Soar are to undergo improvements as part of the Airwick Botanica project. Cossington Meadows, Mountsorrel and Rothley Marshes, Loughborough Big Meadow and Wanlip Meadows will receive new and replacement fencing to help improve the safety and effectiveness of livestock grazing on the meadows, which is essential for maintaining their wildlife value.

Yellow-rattle seed will be sown on some of the grasslands. This semi-parasitic flower feeds off the nutrients in the roots of nearby grasses, reducing their vigour and enabling more delicate wild flowers to push through. This should create more

floral diversity, whilst also facilitating better cattle grazing.

Amy Taylor is a Farm Advisor with local partner Trent River Trust: "The locations we have been scouting need to be sunny as most of the meadow species we are targeting prefer a sunny spot. We also need to make sure the locations work for the farm and business too, which ensure the project complements the rural economy. We have selected most of our sites for delivery in 2023, where the flowers will be sown in the spring and autumn sowing windows."

All the reserves are close to and well used by local communities, including Leicester and Loughborough.

They provide floodplain connectivity, reduce downstream flooding and, due to their proximity to each other in the Soar and Wreake catchment, will be important in the future creation of a Nature Recovery Network across Leicestershire.

In Leicester, the Airwick Botanica project is already helping connect people and pollinators through an expanding network of pollination corridors (pictured) along the city's roads, parks, and other green spaces. Leicester City Council is due to release a new grassland strategy outlining its commitment to growing these pollination corridors over the long term.



## Good newts day

Great crested newt numbers have dramatically declined over the last 60 years. Since 1900 around half the country's ponds have been lost and with them suitable newt habitat.

The Government's district level licensing scheme aims to push back against habitat loss by creating a network of interconnected great crested newt habitat at a landscape scale, funded by developers and at no cost to landowners.

Holwell Nature Reserves has benefitted from the scheme and last winter Nottingham-based EMEC Ecology set about restoring two ponds on the reserve for the benefit of the newts and other wildlife.

The works would not have been happened without the heroic efforts of our volunteers, who prepared the area for the digger to get on site. While the banks are still a little rough around the edges the new ponds bring optimism for the arrival of new vegetation, birds, mammals, invertebrates and, of course, great crested newts.



# UK NEWS



UK UPDATE

Bottlenose dolphins are a regular sight in UK seas

## From flukes to flu: our 2022 marine review

**A** year of exciting marine sightings included a species completely new to science. *Pseudumbellula scotiae* is a deep-sea coral that was discovered 240 miles off Scotland's west coast, at depths of up to 2,000m in the Rockall Trough. There were also several species spotted in UK waters for the first time, with Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteers discovering the first official record of a sea slug named *Babakina anadoni*. Another sea slug found in Cornwall, *Corambe testudinaria*, was also new for the country, whilst Manx Wildlife Trust recorded the first ever swordfish off the Isle of Man.

Whales and dolphins delighted people from Scotland to Scilly, with sightings of pilot, fin, minke, and humpback whales showing how populations are recovering following bans on commercial whaling. Two new orca calves were spotted off Shetland in January, whilst volunteers recorded over 80 sightings of minke whales off the Yorkshire coast in a single morning in August. Monitoring by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust also suggests that bottlenose dolphins are now present off Yorkshire year-round.

In more distressing news, seabird colonies around the UK were devastated by our worst ever outbreak of avian flu,

caused by intensive poultry farming. Tens of thousands of seabirds were killed by the disease, including terns, gulls, gannets, and skuas. Research shows that as much as 13% of the UK population of great skuas — 8% of the global population — have died.

Unfortunately, avian flu was just one of the issues putting pressure on our sensitive sea life. There were multiple reports of people disturbing marine animals, from jet skiers ploughing through colonies of seabirds to beachgoers distressing seals by getting too close. Pollution continued to be a major problem, with several oil spills including 500 barrels leaked from a cracked pipe off North Wales. A study of dead Manx shearwaters on Skomer island found the majority had eaten plastic, with adults feeding pieces to chicks. Scientists fear that 99% of seabirds may have plastics in their stomachs by 2050.

However, it wasn't all doom and gloom for our seas, as Wildlife Trusts embarked on many projects to restore coastal habitats. These wild places often have a vital role to play in sequestering and storing carbon, as well as sheltering wildlife. Several Wildlife Trusts started projects to plant seagrass meadows, which can absorb and store carbon up to

35 times faster than tropical rainforests. Essex Wildlife Trust created a toolkit for restoring saltmarsh, another key habitat, to inspire and guide similar projects around the UK.

The UK will become the first nation to produce a complete map of its blue carbon stores. The Blue Carbon Mapping project — led by the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) in collaboration with The Wildlife Trusts, WWF and RSPB — has begun the task and will publish results this summer.

Wildlife Trusts also helped empower young people and local communities to save our seas. Projects ranged from art students cleaning beaches with Durham Wildlife Trust, to Cheshire Wildlife Trust training teachers to deliver lessons on wildlife in the Dee Estuary.

Discover more about these and other stories in our full 2022 marine review: [wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-2022](https://wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-2022)



BREACHING DOLPHIN © JOHN MACPHERSON; BABAKINA ANADONI SEASLUG © ALLEN MURRAY



UK UPDATE

# The Great Big Nature survey launches

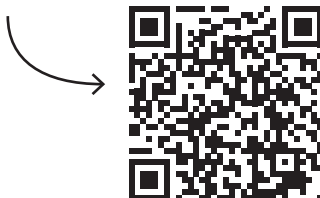
To help us understand how much nature matters to you, The Wildlife Trusts are launching The Great Big Nature Survey this spring. We want to hear your views on some of the most important issues affecting nature and wildlife, and your relationship with the natural world. How often do you get out into nature? Should people try to control nature to better protect it? How important are green spaces to you? What roles should people, business, and government have in looking after nature? Should local communities be at the centre of nature conservation on their doorstep?

Whatever your views on nature, however important (or not) it is to you, make your voice heard by taking The Great Big Nature survey today. With respondents from a variety of backgrounds and with many different

experiences in and views of nature and wild places, The Great Big Nature Survey will reveal what people in the UK and islands really think about nature and how we, as a society, should protect it. Results will also help The Wildlife Trusts to hold governments to account over environmental policies and priorities.

After you've completed the survey, why not share it with your friends and family?

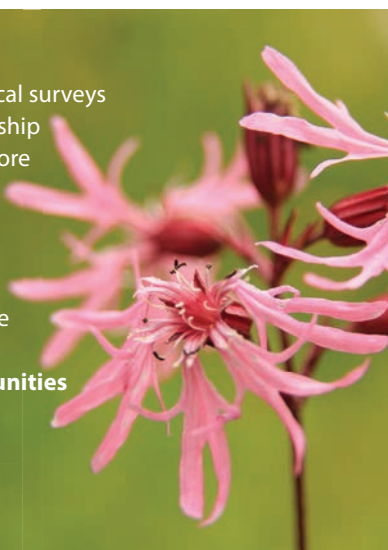
Take the survey at [wildlifetrusts.org/great-big-nature-survey](http://wildlifetrusts.org/great-big-nature-survey) or scan the QR code



## Can you help?

We are looking for volunteers to take part in botanical surveys as part of the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme Grasslands Project. The project aims to restore grasslands through changes in management methods. We are resurveying sites to look for any differences in flora that have occurred over the past two years. Surveys will run from June to mid-July at various locations. Full training is given, though some experience of plant identification would be useful.

Find out more at [lrwt.org.uk/volunteer-opportunities](http://lrwt.org.uk/volunteer-opportunities) or email Isabel Raval on [iraval@lrwt.org.uk](mailto:iraval@lrwt.org.uk)



## More than Meets the Eye



Loughborough Naturalists' Club have published their most ambitious wildlife survey, covering the Grace Dieu and Cademan area. Club members have gathered records of 3,400 species of animals, plants and fungi, even rediscovering plants in the process!

*More than Meets the Eye* by Stephen Woodward & Helen Ikin is beautifully produced and illustrated. Preview at [loughboroughnats.org/more-than-meets-the-eye](http://loughboroughnats.org/more-than-meets-the-eye) The 310-page book is available from the Friends of Grace Dieu Priory, price £18. Contact Ann Petty at [annpetty1948@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:annpetty1948@yahoo.co.uk) or on 01530 831895.

## UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



### 1 Hen party

The Northumberland Hen Harrier Protection Partnership, of which Northumberland Wildlife Trust is a member, announced a bumper breeding year for hen harriers in the county. Last year the partnership monitored nine nests, seven of which were successful — fledging a total of 26 chicks. This is eight more than in 2021 and brings the total since 2015 to 106 fledged birds. [wtru.st/26-harriers](http://wtru.st/26-harriers)

### 2 Give peat a chance

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has been awarded a £100,000 Discovery Grant by Natural England to protect and restore the county's peatlands. Peatland is a vital habitat, not just for wildlife but also for storing carbon. The grant will allow the Wildlife Trust to identify mechanisms to restore the region's peatlands, so they can absorb and lock away carbon. [wtru.st/Derby-peat-grant](http://wtru.st/Derby-peat-grant)


### 3 Mr Blean

Kent Wildlife Trust has welcomed a male bison into the herd at West Blean and Thornden Wood. The bull's arrival was delayed by post Brexit complications, but he has now joined the three females that were released in July, and the calf born in September. The bison have 50 hectares to roam as part of the Wilder Blean Project, a joint wilding initiative. [wtru.st/bison-bull](http://wtru.st/bison-bull)



RAGGED ROBIN © KIERON HUSTON; BISON © EVAN BOWEN



**Simon Barnes** @simonbarneswild

## The plants that shaped us



Perhaps the most exciting thing in life is ignorance. That's because ignorance is an open door: walk through it and learn. And the more you learn the more doors you find, waiting for you to walk through. Until very recently I was shockingly — stupidly — ignorant about plants, considering them just the soft furnishings of the wild world.

But then I realised that, roughly speaking, everything that lives on earth is either a plant or depends on plants. What have plants ever done for us? Well, there's oxygen, water, food...

We humans are as dependent on plants as the cow in the field or the butterfly flying past her nose. Plants are the only living things that can use the energy of the sun to make food. Plants have shaped human history. So I made a list of the significant plants of human history: wheat, rose, potato, tobacco, cannabis, grass, oak... and soon I realised that there was no escape. I would have to write *The History of the World in 100 Plants*. So let's look at two UK plants that made the book.

Edward Stone, an 18<sup>th</sup> century clergyman, was walking along the river while suffering from ague: probably a rotten, feverish cold. Perhaps his condition had rendered him slightly daft, for he nibbled on a piece of willow bark. He reckoned that, since both willows and fevers are associated with wet places, the one must have been put there to cure the other. And it worked: he got better and wrote a paper to the Royal Society in London.

It worked because willow bark contains salicin. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century synthetic salicin was developed, and this was adjusted, so that it caused fewer digestive problems. The medicine firm Bayer marketed it — and called it aspirin.

Our second plant is a familiar one. These days the beauty of wild places is obvious to us all, but that wasn't always the case. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a well-tended garden was regarded as the ultimate form of living beauty: cultivated, civilised and tamed. Outside was just wilderness.

That changed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when, and not by coincidence, the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic Movement both began. People began to appreciate the glories of untouched, unspoiled nature. The great emblem of that change was the daffodil, as celebrated in the poem by William Wordsworth:

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in  
sprightly dance*

The modern understanding of nature as something wonderful and fragile dates back to that time. Wordsworth's daffodils made this understanding vivid for all time.

But there are things to learn about almost every species of plant: the poppies that grow on ground disturbed by ploughs or by bombs, orchids that excite human passions, grape and barley that get us drunk... and on and on and on, because without plants we are nothing. We wouldn't even exist.

Orchids are a stunning sight from this time of year. Discover some of the best nature reserves for spotting them – turn to page 18 or visit:

[wildlifetrusts.org/where\\_to\\_see\\_orchids](http://wildlifetrusts.org/where_to_see_orchids)

### THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 100 PLANTS

Simon explores the stories of more of the plants that shaped us in his latest book, *The History of the World in 100 Plants*. As humans, we hold the planet in the palms of our hands. But we couldn't live for a day without plants. Our past is all about plants, our present is all tied up with plants; and without plants there is no future. From the mighty oak to algae, from cotton to coca, discover a hundred reasons why.

**Simon Barnes** is the author of many wild volumes, including the bestselling *Bad Birdwatcher* trilogy, *Rewild Yourself*, *On The Marsh*, and *The History of the World in 100 Animals*. He is a council member of World Land Trust, trustee of Conservation South Luangwa and patron of Save the Rhino. In 2014, he was awarded the Rothschild Medal for services to conservation. He lives in Norfolk, where he manages several acres for wildlife.



# News from #teamWILDER

How we've been inspired by our members, volunteers and supporters



ANDY ROUSE/2020/VISION

## Otter spotters

Recent otter sightings have been causing quite a stir at Rutland Water. "We're getting sightings almost every other week," explains Species and Recording Officer Tim Sexton. "The most seen on one day is eight!"

There are believed to be up to three families on the western side of Rutland Water, with others potentially present at the eastern

end of the reservoir where otter spraint is regularly found on the dam wall. The best chance of seeing the otters on the nature reserve is between Lagoons 2 and 3, from Buzzard, Crake, Lapwing and Shoveler Hides.



We'd love to know if you see any otters. Tweet us any photos @LeicsWildlife

## Make a difference



Everyone can help to bring back nature and tackle climate change by taking small actions that together add up to big changes. Nextdoor Nature is encouraging communities to get involved with transformational micro-projects that help nature thrive and make the places where we live, work and visit greener.



Fee Worton, our Nextdoor Nature Community Organiser, explains: "We are on a mission to create a 'Wilder Leicester', where wildlife is thriving, and everyone benefits from a healthy environment. We want to see more wildlife-friendly areas and more people involved in taking action for nature. Nextdoor Nature will help LRWT connect with people across the city of Leicester, giving communities the skills, tools, and

opportunities they need to make a difference."

If you live in Leicester and have an idea that will help nature thrive in your area, or you know of a local community group who could benefit from our help, we want to

hear from you! Ideas could be at any scale, such as transforming a disused green space into a safe and attractive place to play, or starting a community group that wants to create an urban wildlife safari across the city. Anything is possible when we work together.

Let's take action for nature now! You can contact Fee by email at [fworton@lrwt.org.uk](mailto:fworton@lrwt.org.uk) or on 07754 141785. Or to find out more about Nextdoor Nature please visit [lrwt.org.uk/nextdoor-nature](http://lrwt.org.uk/nextdoor-nature)

## Ravens on the radar

Several of you emailed in to share your experiences of ravens in response to our '6 places to see ravens' feature in the last issue.

Fiona West and Steve Pearson live in Barnack, near Stamford, and have observed ravens around the village for the last four years. "We often saw an adult around the pub early in the morning, presumably looking for the previous night's food droppings. We even thought we saw the progeny being shown the ropes around the pub!"

Stephen Gould of Kibworth often walks the countryside of southeast Leicestershire with friends. One route, from Burton Overy to Kings Norton passes through Black Spinney. "The copse sits at the top of a hill some 165m high. We have travelled this route several times over the last few years and on most occasions have heard the very deep, coarse call of what we think is a raven."

It is reassuring to hear reports like this, confirming that these charismatic birds are indeed making a comeback in our region.



ANDY KARRAN





# Your wild summer

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

PETERCARN/200VISION

## SUMMER SPECTACLE

### And the beat goes on...

Guess how many beats per second a great spotted woodpecker makes with its beak. Five? Ten? Try 40! The great spot is one of three native woodpeckers and by far the best drummer. Its frantic drumming helps attract a mate, with beats rasping out across woodlands from January to June. Lesser spotted woodpeckers look similar but are a lot smaller and a lot rarer – just 3,000 breeding pairs remain in the UK. No problem finding a green woodpecker though. The largest of our woodpeckers is a common garden visitor, often seen on lawns hunting for ants and other titbits. Listen out for its laugh-like 'yaffle'.

#### SEE THEM THIS SUMMER

- **Charley Woods** Listen out for drumming great spots and green woodpeckers in this mosaic of woodlands.
- **Narborough Bog** All three species of woodpecker have been recorded in this diverse woodland.

There's no headaches for these head bangers! Woodpeckers withstand the rapid deceleration that comes with quick-fire drumming thanks to their compact skulls and close-fitting brains.

## A big thank you!

Money from your membership goes towards protecting essential habitat for birds such as woodpeckers. From them – and us – thank you!



# Nature's calling

Reawaken your wild side this summer

## Glow up!

Glamorous... simply glowing! There's no missing the glitz of a glow-worm on a sultry summer's evening. Only the wingless females go in for the lightshow, hoping to lure males who have big, photosensitive eyes.

Glow-worms are in fact beetles, not worms. The males look the part, while the females appear much like their grey-brown, segmented larvae. The larval stage of the lifecycle is anything but glamorous. Voracious predators of slugs and snails, they paralyse their victims with a toxic bite that slowly dissolves them ready for ingestion – a far cry from the innocent twinkle of the glow-worm's courtship!

Larvae live for up to three years before transforming into adults for just a few weeks. They prefer chalk grasslands, so this is the best place to look for them. Visit on a warm, calm evening in late June or early July, avoiding nights with a fuller moon when

### Did you know?

Glow-worms generate light through a chemical reaction in their abdomen. Looking for a mate is a fulltime job for adult glow-worms who do not eat during this final stage of life.

they are less likely to glow. The darker it is the better, so resist using a torch, allow your eyes to adjust, then scan for their faint greenish glow.

Please take care in the dark and go with someone else if possible.

### FIND THEM THIS SUMMER

► **Ketton Quarry** Visit by day for a kaleidoscope of butterflies then hang around for nightfall and the bioluminescent afterparty courtesy of your glow-worm hosts.

► **Stonesby Quarry** This tiny reserve is big on orchids and butterflies, including large skipper, brimstone and painted lady. A small colony of glow-worms has also been recorded here.



Insects are in decline, but you can play a part in reversing their fortunes. Find out how: [lrwt.org.uk/action-insects](http://lrwt.org.uk/action-insects)

THOMAS JOHN ELLIS

## 30 Days Wild

Go wild this June! Take part in The Wildlife Trusts' annual 30 Days Wild challenge. Do one 'wild' thing every day throughout June to feel happier, healthier, and closer to nature. Here are some ideas to get you started. Sign up and receive a free pack at [lrwt.org.uk/30dayswild](http://lrwt.org.uk/30dayswild)

### Listen to birdsong

Enjoy a mellifluous start to the day. Set an early alarm and tune into the notes and trills of the dawn chorus.



CHRIS GOMERSALL  
/2020VISION

### Go on a wild walk

Longer days present ample opportunity for a meadow march, woodland wander, or riverside ramble. Why not visit a nature reserve?



TOM MARSHALL

### Plant wildflowers

Wildflowers are best for native pollinators. Sow wildflower seeds or plant nectar-rich bloomers to help them.



PAUL HOBSON

## Lock up your lawnmowers

Close-cropped lawns are bad for wildlife, so it's time we let them grow longer. No Mow May is a campaign that invites gardeners to go lazy in the name of helping struggling pollinators. Ease off mowing in May (and beyond) and let the wildflowers in your lawn bloom. Learn more at [nomowmay.plantlife.org.uk](http://nomowmay.plantlife.org.uk)



JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

### SEE THIS

Woodlands have sprung to life with carpets of bluebells. Catch the last of the exhilarating displays. Plan your trip: [lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves](http://lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves)

### INSTALL THIS

Get set for summer heatwaves by installing more water butts now. Harvested rainwater is best for watering plants and topping up wildfish ponds, and it saves precious tap water.





# Common GROUND

Wildflower meadows are renowned for their intricate array of grasses and flowers, swaying in the breeze and alive with the industry of colourful insects. Yet many have cultural significance too. Conservation Officer **Chris Hill** explores the fascinating history to Loughborough Big Meadow.





Eye-catching:  
Loughborough Big  
Meadow at its floral  
peak in early June.

Passers-by heading from Loughborough to Stanford on Soar may have noticed a large expanse of grassland stretching either side of Meadow Lane. Many of these casual observers may be unaware of the site's incredible botanical and cultural importance. Those in the know will undoubtedly have experienced the remarkable diversity of plant life on display here from spring to early summer.

Loughborough Big Meadow, often referred to as Nether Meadow in early literature, was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1987 due to its rich and varied botany. Of particular note is the narrow-leaved water-dropwort, a perennial in the carrot family found nowhere else in Leicestershire.

The SSSI covers 64 hectares of which LRWT owns around two-thirds. The River Soar and the Great Central Railway form the northern boundary to the nature reserve, which is the largest remaining example of neutral, unimproved alluvial flood meadow in Leicestershire and one of only 20 Lammas Meadows left in the country dating back to at least 1762.

#### What is a 'Lammas Meadow'?

Lammas Meadows are areas of common land subjected to a highly organised form of traditional management. Originally these meadows would have been divided into plots, with each plot owner entitled to cut the hay from his land, usually from mid-June depending on the weather. Once the hay was cut the meadows were left to re-grow until 'Loaf Mass Day' on the 1st August, when they were thrown open for communal grazing. The word 'Lammas' derives from the loaf mass held to mark the start of the corn harvest, rather than the end of the hay making.

Grazing often continued on Lammas Meadows until Candlemas Day (February 2nd), though the exact period of grazing and type of animal allowed varied from meadow to meadow. At Loughborough Big Meadow, for example, every four acres of land entitled the owner to graze either two to four mares or geldings (depending on age), three cows or up to six calves, or 16 sheep.

The word 'meadow' is used in its original sense, describing an area of grassland that is allowed to flower and set seed before it is cut for hay. This contrasts with pasture, which is grazed on and off throughout the season. These two ways of managing grassland give rise to very different wildflower compositions.





The River Soar borders the Big Meadow.



This is the only site in Leicestershire for the nationally scarce narrow-leaved water-dropwort.

Grassland that has been managed as a meadow over a long period is especially rich in different grasses and other flowering plants. Plants such as great burnet, dropwort, meadow saxifrage and the narrow-leaved water-dropwort only grow in meadows like these. Old pastures, too, have their special plants which are often very abundant.

### Flooded features

All Lammas Meadows are found on floodplains, close to the edge of a river or stream where winter flooding is common. Yet despite regular flooding these meadows never evolve into waterlogged marshes because they sit above free-draining materials such as gravel.

Their most obvious visual characteristic is flatness, presenting a wide expanse of grassland with an apparently dead-level surface. This feature results from the build-up of a considerable depth of alluvium, deposited evenly as silt over the entire surface by the winter floods. At the time of the Domesday Book, they were the most valuable lands of all thanks to this natural fertiliser.

The species-rich grasses and wildflowers that resulted made for good-quality hay, essential for feeding cattle, sheep, and ponies through the winter months. This natural resource is thought

to have underpinned many local communities. Apart from hay for stock (essential for farming, transport, food, and milk), the meadows would have yielded herbs for medicines and cooking.

These silt deposits and the importance of this free annual application of nutrients was reflected in the much higher value placed on meadows over arable land. Only modern agriculture and its reliance on artificial fertiliser sees winter flooding as a disadvantage, downgrading this type of land.

Other well-known Lammas Meadows include Lugg Meadow and Holme Meadow in Herefordshire, and North

### That's your lot

On some meadows individuals always owned the same strip. On other meadows lots were cast before the hay cut to determine who should have what strip for that particular year. At Pixey Mead in Oxfordshire small, inscribed cherrywood balls were used. These are no longer in use but have been preserved as a direct link to the past.

### Proud history

Loughborough Big Meadow has a long and illustrious history. Hay auctioneer and land agent Bob Beeston tells us more.

The meadow was established by the Loughborough Enclosure Act of 1759 to create an area of lowland pasture on which the Charnwood Forest farmers could manage lowland meadow to cut hay. Hay had to be cut and taken off by 1st August (Lammas Day), after which the whole meadow could be grazed in accordance with the 1759 instructions, which give details of the stock permitted. Some farmers did not want to cut the hay from their individual plots, so they put the right to take a cut of hay up for auction. These auctions have continued to this day and last year we had our 139th mowing grass sale.

Meadow at Cricklade, Wiltshire – home to the country's biggest population of snake's-head fritillaries.

### Common values

Commoners no longer work Loughborough Big Meadow, but evidence of their system remains in the form of a few remaining 'dole stones'. Visible across the reserve, these markers would have denoted each commoner's strip.

In the 18th century an Act gave owners the right to enclose their land on condition their new fences would not prevent animals from moving freely about the meadow. Should a commoner take advantage of the Act to enclose his land he would lose his right to pasture his animals on the rest of the Big Meadow. These restrictions seem to have been enough to prevent its wholesale enclosure.



Only unenclosed areas have retained the rich diversity of wildflowers associated with traditional Lammas Meadows. Enclosed strips become permanent pasture while the year-round stocking of animals prevents the required seed-setting. This ends up favouring more vigorous grasses that eventually develop into an impoverished sward.

In 1883, Garton's Auctioneers located at Loughborough Cattle Market began selling hay from the Loughborough Big Meadow to interested parties. This took place annually for 100 years until 1983 when Garton's was sold. In 1960, an articled clerk (apprentice) at Garton's, named Bob Beeston drew up a linen map detailing the owners of the land at Big



**Bob Beeston's linen map gives us a glimpse into the meadow's recent past.**

Meadow. It is a fascinating snapshot of the meadow's intricate history and reveals the many different people involved in its management. In 1965 there were 23 private owners but by 2022 this was down to six. Bob took over the auction when Garton's was sold, and the auction still occurs on the evening of the first Monday of every June. Auction goers pay by the acreage to cut the hay, bale it up, and remove it from the meadow.

### Floral splendour

Loughborough Big Meadow is at its best from May to early July, when many of the wildflowers that thrive on floodplains are in flower. Three species of buttercup (creeping, field, and bulbous) are found here along with yellow rattle, common meadow-rue, common knapweed, great burnet, pepper saxifrage, birds-foot trefoil, and lady's bedstraw.

If you are keen to see the narrow-leaved water-dropwort mentioned earlier, don't



**Kingfishers fish the River Soar.**

leave it too late as they flower quite early, from May to early June. This is also the best time to spot meadow saxifrage and, if you are really lucky, mousetail – an annual plant in the buttercup family that can be found in nutrient-rich areas around cattle troughs and trackways where the vegetation is short.

Those of you that spend a little more time exploring the nature reserve will notice a large expanse of ridge and furrow undulations adjacent to the railway line in the West Field. This was ploughed during and after the Second World War, though it is interesting to note that despite the plough's destruction, species diversity soon returned once ploughing ceased and hay making resumed. Fortunately, fertilisers were never applied, which would have benefitted fast-growing grasses at the expense of wildflowers. Today the low-lying wet parts of the ridge and furrow have both common and brown sedges.

Also running through the West Field is a depression that holds water for long periods during the winter months – ideal conditions for slender tufted-sedge and tubular water-dropwort. The latter can be unpredictable, some

## Visit on a warm, spring day when the plants are in full flower

years proving easy to find and others almost impossible. Look for it in the margins of shallow standing water.

You may see common blue and small heath butterflies on a sunny visit, skylarks soaring high into the wide blue sky above, and possibly a kingfisher with its piping call darting along the River Soar. And if you visit on a warm, spring day when the plants are in full flower and there's a gentle breeze on your face you could very easily imagine the labourers of yesteryear sipping their cider and sharpening their scythes.



**Small heath butterfly**

WENDY CARTER



Come and see for yourself. Plan your trip at [lwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/loughborough-big-meadow](http://lwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/loughborough-big-meadow)



**Mousetail**





# Unwind on a summer stroll around Cloud Wood



Spring flowers carpet Cloud Wood.

Cloud Wood is incredibly diverse. More than 220 species of flowering plants and ferns have been recorded here, and this ancient woodland is well known as a hotspot for fungi and butterflies, as **Andy Neilson** shows us.

Midsummer is the best time to see many of the species that make Cloud Wood so special. Park in the layby along Top Brand then walk the 100m or so south to the reserve entrance. Please be aware of fast-moving vehicles as you walk along the verge.

On reaching the entrance **1**, continue into the wood. This section can be quite wet, even in summer, which is why



Broad-leaved helleborine

pendulous sedge is seen here. Broadleaved helleborines can be found along this path in August.

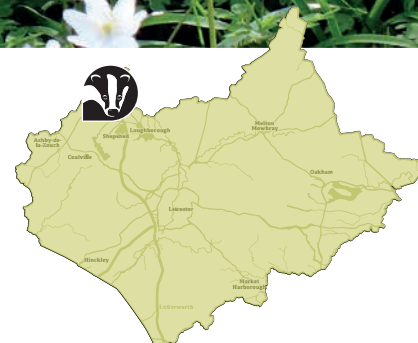
After a short while the path reaches a crossroads. You have reached the main ride system



White-letter hairstreak

for the wood. The rides are higher than the woodland floor on either side because limestone chippings from the adjacent quarry were used to create them back in the 1970s. Lime-loving plants have found this to their liking, resulting in excellent floral diversity along the rides.

Turn right at this first intersection to pass through an area of woodland **2**



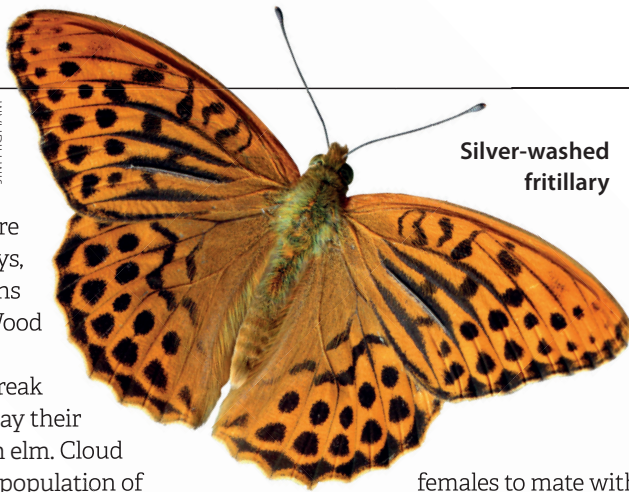
regularly coppiced by our volunteers. Coppicing promotes vigorous regrowth of the shrub layer, which in turn provides more habitat and feeding opportunities. The hazel harvested as a result is used to create stakes and binders for hedgerow management in the local area. We coppice on an 8-10-year rotation; keep an eye out for our most recent work undertaken last winter then look at previous years' work to see how the regrowth changes as the blocks age.

Following the path round, you enter an area where the trees have been left to grow over the ride, making it shadier. This encourages species that prefer these conditions, such as the speckled wood, a delightful butterfly often seen here.

Reaching the next ride intersection **3**, take a moment to observe the elm tree growing on the northeast corner of the



JIM HIGHAM



Silver-washed fritillary

crossroads. Elms are quite rare nowadays, but a few specimens remain in Cloud Wood – great news for white-letter hairstreak butterflies, which lay their eggs exclusively on elm. Cloud Wood has a stable population of these rare butterflies, which spend nearly all their time up in the canopy. Stare intently at the upper branches of any elm trees and you are normally rewarded with short glimpses of the small, brown butterflies flying around. White-letter hairstreaks also love marjoram and will sometimes come down to feed on plants growing along the rides.

Turning south, continue back towards the centre of the wood. On sunny days

## “Perhaps you will get lucky and spot a spotted flycatcher.”

this path is teeming with butterflies like meadow brown, ringlet, comma, and small tortoiseshell. Common blue and brown argus are also abundant at the right time of year. Orchids are represented in great number too. Common spotted-orchids carpet the rides, with a few bee orchids mixed in. If you look hard enough, you will find twayblades and helleborines too. Coppicing favours breeding birds and this area is great for warblers. Keep an eye out for fledgling blackcaps and garden warblers – they look just like their parents, only a bit washed-out!

Continue to the next ride intersection **4** for your best chance of seeing one of the star species for any summer walk at Cloud – the purple emperor. Since 2017 this magnificent butterfly has slowly colonised the wood. It prefers goat willow (sallow) as its foodplant and spends its days flying along rides and clearings, sparring with rival males, and keeping an eye out for any

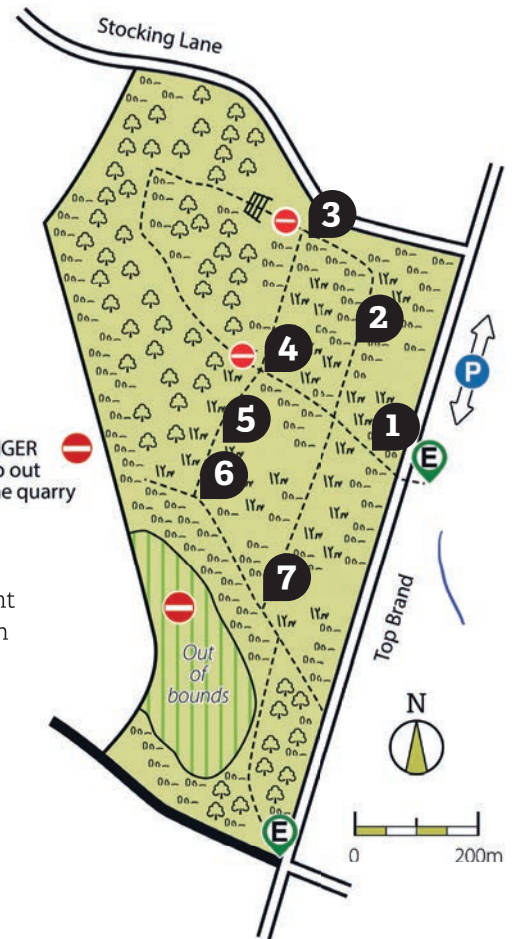
females to mate with. On the wing during July, this enigmatic species will occasionally settle on the path to imbibe minerals and salts from the gravel.

Carry on south to pass through another section of regularly coppiced woodland **5**. Herb Paris (a superb ancient woodland indicator species) can be seen in the recently coppiced blocks. With luck you might also spot the ghostly white shape of a greater butterfly orchid, but please stay on the paths to admire them.

You stand a good chance of seeing two hairstreak species on reaching the next crossroads **6**: white-letter hairstreaks, while the upper branches of the nearby oaks might reward you with a sighting of purple hairstreaks. Purple hairstreaks appear very silvery in flight, while white-letters look brown.

As you continue south you may suddenly get ‘buzzed’ by a large orange butterfly flying at great speed. This is likely to have been a silver-washed fritillary, another of the star species found here. Preferring ancient woodlands with an abundance of violets, these wonderful insects stop to feed only occasionally, making them a pain to get a good look at but extremely rewarding when you do!

The area around the next crossroads **7** was recently coppiced when we took out several ash trees leaning across the path, leaving a more open feel. Ash dieback disease means we are having to take out any trees that pose a risk to visitors. This open area is a great vantage point to observe the various comings and goings of wildlife through the wood. Purple emperors



patrol here, as do silver-washed fritillaries. Hornets can be seen, and flocks of birds move through, feeding on the plentiful flying insects. Perhaps you will get lucky and spot a spotted flycatcher.

Turn north to follow the ride back towards point 1 and the reserve entrance. What else can you find on the way back?

### FACTFILE

Located 1.5km southeast of Breedon-on-the-Hill. From junction 14 of the A42, head south on Top Brand for 1km (towards Griffydam). The reserve is west of the road. There is a squeeze-through barrier and steps which can be avoided.


**Nearest postcode:** DE73 8BG

**Map ref:** SK 417 214

**what3words:** ///rivals.purely.changed

**Parking:** Park in the layby or pull in next to the Sustrans cycle path

**Size:** 33ha

 **For further information,** please see our Nature Reserve Guide or visit [lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves](http://lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves)

RICHARD STEEL/2020VISION



Spotted flycatcher



# Awesome orchids!

Their breath-taking beauty and heady scent leaves us mere mortals awestruck, so it's easy to see why orchids were once highly coveted and hunted for their precious corms.

In Leicestershire and Rutland we have the chance to see on LRWT's nature reserves the magnificent Greater butterfly-orchid, one of the largest in the UK with its creamy white flowers on tall spikes, and the Frog orchid, one of the smallest, sometimes only 4cm high.

We also have the some of the rarest orchids. Leicestershire is the most northern county for the Violet helleborine and the Green-winged orchid; both are Near Threatened on the National Biodiversity Network Atlas of the UK.

Thanks to the work of staff and volunteers managing woodland, wetland, quarry and grassland habitats these orchids are thriving. Here's a quick guide to where you can see common and rare orchids this summer.

CHRIS LAWRENCE

Bee orchid.



# See them for yourself

## Stonesby Quarry

The sight of hundreds of purple-flowered **Pyramidal orchids** dotted among the verdant grass in May and June is awesome. Stonesby Quarry is one of our smallest reserves, and has probably the biggest colony of Pyramidal orchids in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Look out for the **Bee orchid** in June and July. The flowers on this orchid have pheromones that attract male bees to 'pseudocopulate', mistaking the flower for a female bee. Pollen is transferred to the bee which is then deposited at the next flower the bee flies to.

**Where:** Waltham-on-the-Wolds, LE14 4AB

## Cribb's Meadow

In May and June this wonderful grassland reserve is filled with **Green-winged orchids** among the cowslips, an amazing sight. This orchid has clusters of pink-purple flowers on the spike that rises from the ground. Look closely at the hood formed by the flower's sepals and you will see the green veins that give this extraordinary flower its name. **Green-winged orchids** are pollinated by bumblebees. This is one of the few places in Leicestershire and Rutland where you can see these orchids.

Between June and August Cribb's Meadow is carpeted with **Common spotted orchids**. The flowers range from white through pink to purple with darker pink spots and stripes on their three-lobed lips. They appear in dense cone-shaped clusters on spikes that rise up from a rosette of leaves with oval, purple spots.

**Where:** Sewstern, LE15 7RQ

## Lyndon Visitor Centre, Rutland Water

Most people coming to Lyndon are looking for ospreys or wetland birds, but in spring and summer we'd like to suggest you look down instead of up for a few minutes as you walk towards the south shore of Rutland Water.



Pyramidal orchid



Green-winged orchid



Common spotted orchid



Frog orchid

See if you can 'spot' the distinctive rosette of leaves with oval purple spots alongside the path. These rosettes provide the perfect base for the emerging flowering spike of the **Common spotted orchid** between June and August. Dense cone-shaped clusters of flowers range from white through pink to purple with darker pink spots and stripes on their three-lobed lips.

**Where:** Manton, LE15 8RN

## Merry's Meadow

Five different orchids flourish in the extraordinary Merry's Meadow. There are so many wild flowers in this reserve that it will be buzzing with pollinators when you visit this summer.

The purple flowers of **Green-winged orchids** are the first to see here in May and June. This is one of the Near Threatened species of orchid that flourishes on the Trust's reserves. It takes its name from the green veins in the hood formed by the flower's sepals.

Merry's Meadow is probably the last known site in the East Midlands for the **Frog orchid**, often overlooked in a colourful meadow. Between June and August the flower spikes, which could be as small as 4cm, carry between five and 25 green flowers, often tinged with purple or russet brown, that look like small frogs.

The **Common fragrant orchid** is a robust plant seen in June and July. Its densely-packed spikes of purple to white flowers have a long spur trailing from the hood. It produces a heady orange scent that's particularly noticeable in the evenings.

Look out for the dense clusters of pink and purple flowers of the **Heath spotted orchid** with round purple spots on their leaves. This distinguishes them from the **Common spotted orchid**, also flowering here between June and August, which has oval purple spots.





Hey good looking!  
Up close to the  
common wasp.

# Wonderful WASPS

TIM SEXTON

Picnic gatecrashers or ecosystem superstars? Species and Recording Officer **Tim Sexton** argues the latter.

**T**here is a common misconception that wasps are bad, and bees are good. Perhaps it stems from memories of summer barbeques or picnics, where the only thing worse than the British weather to put a dampener on the occasion is the unwelcome arrival of yellow-and-black-striped buzzing insects looking for an easy meal.

Is it the sting in their tail, or perhaps it's just that we don't fully understand how important the wasp's role in the ecosystem is? The truth is that wasps are just as ecologically beneficial as bees and should be celebrated as such. In fact, there are far more species of wasp than bee in the UK – some 9,000, compared to around 270 species of bee. Whilst it could be argued that bees are greater pollinators than wasps, wasps do perform other roles in the environment such as pest control and can be important pollinators too.



## Little and large

British wasps range from tiny metallic chalcid wasps, just a couple of millimeters long, to the queen hornet measuring 3.5cm. Most wasps have fascinating lifecycles and behaviours. Some are expert architects, using paper from chewed-up wood to construct intricate nests up to 2m wide. Some use mud and clay to sculpt tiny pot-like nests. Others cause strange growths to appear on plants and trees, called galls, which develop into bizarre lumps, bumps and even quite elaborate structures that offer protection for their growing larvae. Some are even capable of turning their prey into a zombie!

The vast majority of wasp species are parasitoids, which feed their larvae with other insects, spiders and, in some cases, even bees. They are nature's pest control

service, consuming vast quantities of the creatures that would otherwise become pests on farms or for gardeners, such as caterpillars and aphids. It is estimated that a single colony of social wasps can consume as much as 20kg of prey items in a single season.

As adults, the narrow waist of the wasp's body (the petiole as it is technically called) means that they can only consume a liquid diet. Therefore, the carbohydrates they need for energy must come from sugary liquids such as the sugars produced from their larvae, honey, fruit juices, honeydew, and nectar – which makes them accidental pollinators,



Chalcid wasp  
parasitising a  
moth larva.

TIM SEXTON





Wasps are vital pollinators.



Oak knopper gall wasp

TIM SEXTON

inadvertently transferring pollen between the flowers that they visit. Elsewhere in the world, wasps are specialist pollinators and are the only pollinators of fig trees and hundreds of endemic orchids.



**Social wasps**

The wasps associated with picnics are typically social wasps from the family *Vespidae*, of which there are only around eight species in the country, or just 0.1% of the total number of wasp species. They live in colonies of many thousands that build nests in trees, buildings, animal burrows and even bird nest boxes.

Understanding the lifecycle of social wasps goes a long way to explain why they only tend to bother us in late

in the nest runs dry and the wasps have to resort to late-flowering plants, the honeydew produced from aphids, and sugary drinks served up by humans at picnics. The workers and queens will eventually die off in the autumn and only the new queens will survive the winter.

Encouraging wasps to your garden can help reduce your reliance on chemical pesticides. Planting wildflowers in your garden will provide a good source of pollen and nectar for wasps, bees, and other pollinators and these in turn will help to reduce pests on other garden plants.

**The gall of it!**

Plant galls are best looked for in late summer and autumn. There are more than 900 plant

and produces males and females. When the wasps hatch in early summer, the females from this generation mate with the males and seek out an English oak tree to lay their eggs. When the eggs hatch a chemical secreted by the larvae causes a rapid growth of cells in the tree which



Oak knopper gall

TIM SEXTON

**"Wasps are just as ecologically beneficial as bees and should be celebrated as such."**

summer. In spring, queens, who have hibernated all winter emerge and start to build up their energy reserves from plant nectar, pollinating early flowering plants such as willows. She lays eggs which hatch into sterile female workers.

Throughout spring and early summer, these workers build up the nest and collect food – other invertebrates – for their developing grubs. During the summer the grubs (which require a high-protein diet to grow) breakdown chitin from the insects brought to them by the workers and convert it to sugars, which they excrete. This is then fed on by the workers.

When the queens stop producing grubs in late summer, there is little more for the workers to do. The adults' sugar supply

gall-forming creatures in the UK, including mites, flies, plant bugs, aphids, sawflies and, of course, wasps. The oak tree is host to over 35 different types of gall – more than any other plant species in the country.

The oak knopper gall is the most obvious, caused by the tiny wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*, which only appeared in the UK in the 1970s. The wasp requires two different species of oak to complete its lifecycle – Turkey oak and the English oak.

In spring, females emerge from the previous year's gall, which formed on the acorns of the English oak, then lay their eggs in the male catkins of Turkey oak. This causes a different gall to form

develops into the gall, enveloping the acorn. This will keep the larvae protected as they grow and pupate over winter, ready to emerge in the spring.

Hopefully this snapshot of the incredibly varied world of wasps shows they are insects to be admired, not swatted! Welcome them into your garden and let's celebrate the truly wonderful wasp.

**Create a buzz**  
 Help wasps, bees, and other garden wildlife. Download your free how-to guide at [lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening](http://lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening)





Sophia Attwood-Clarke –  
in her element!



I ♥  
MY  
JOB!

When **Sophia Attwood-Clarke** began volunteering with LRWT she never imagined that one day she'd be the one leading work parties! Sophia tells us how she came to be a Reserves Officer and why she loves her job.

**M**y name is Sophia, and I am a Reserves Officer for LRWT. I coordinate the Midweek and Sunday Volunteer Group (M&SVG) – organising, leading, and supervising habitat management and conservation projects across the Trust's nature reserves and other sites, in conjunction with other staff and volunteers.

I had been working with adults and children with learning disabilities for nearly a decade when I started volunteering with LRWT in my spare time. I cared deeply about what I did, but I wasn't happy and longed to be outdoors. The M&SVG task days were the highlight of my week. Whether pulling our way through a Himalayan balsam jungle

or on my knees in the Cossington mud making willow stakes, I found fulfilment in the physical labour, connecting with the Earth and being a part of the conservation movement.

#### **The seed is sown**

When the pandemic started and the care services I worked in had to close, I quickly obtained a job in the local bakery to cover my rent and bills. The early starts and midday finishes worked to my advantage, as I could clock out and spend what shaped up to be a beautiful summer in nature. The fear of my loved ones getting ill and the prospect of never being able to while away the hours in their company again was debilitating, but my new circumstances fermented the notion that

I needed to be in wild spaces and working for their preservation.

When the traineeship with the M&SVG was advertised, I jumped at the opportunity to turn my passion into a career. Cycling to our office and workshop for the first time in August 2021 is starting to feel like a distant memory. I pulled up, gazed at the Wildlife Trust logo, and let out an audible 'eek!'. I poured my heart and soul into it, and I was successful when I applied for my line manager's role as Reserves Officer in the New Year.

#### **Managing for wildlife**

Nature reserves need managing to halt or reverse successional processes. Left unmanaged, grasslands and heathlands would revert to woodland and we



would lose the wildlife which favours these habitats. Even woodlands must be managed to create and maintain structural diversity and encourage a broad range of species.

Our conservation team are talented and passionate, but small. We simply couldn't keep our reserves in the condition we do without the help of our volunteers. I send an email out each Friday with the task plan for the following week and our volunteers reply to say which tasks they would like to sign up to. No experience is required, as we provide training. Anybody and everybody are welcome. So long as a person is reasonably fit and enjoys being outside in all weathers, I believe they will experience the benefits of volunteering with us.

## We simply couldn't keep our reserves in the condition we do without the help of our volunteers

Research has shown that nature, wildlife and caring for the environment has a positive impact on our mental health. It is a great way to meet likeminded individuals and be a part of a community. Several of our volunteers liken the experience to an outdoor gym session and enjoy the physical benefits. It is also good for skill development and the ideal experience for graduates or those interested in a career in conservation.

### Team effort

The M&SVG operate on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and one Sunday a month across upwards of 37 reserves. Each of our nature reserves



has a unique, five-year management plan. This comprehensive document identifies the site's important features and prescribed management, to which the M&SVG respond as required. Our work is responsive, but there are seasonal tasks too, such as woodland, hedgerow and scrub work in winter, fencing and infrastructure repairs in the bird breeding season, invasive species work in the heat of the summer, and mowing and raking in late summer.

Tuesday to Thursday are all systems go! I try to pack the truck and on-site emergency folder the evening before, as this makes for a calmer start the following day (and means I'm less likely to forget the most important things – like biscuits!). At around about 8am on a task day, I will be getting together the last bits of kit required and ensuring I have the emergency contact and medical information for the volunteers who are joining us. Some volunteers have lifts in the 4x4 Hilux from our Leicester City base to the reserve we are working on, and together we leave at about 8:45am to arrive on site soon after. Once the other volunteers are greeted and briefed, the work begins.

I like to get stuck into whatever it is we are doing, while ensuring that everyone is safe and as comfortable as they can be. Inevitably, rain, cold and heat can make this challenging! I might be using power tools, such as a chainsaw, brush cutter or mower. I light the Kelly Kettles for tea and lunchbreaks (with biscuits!), and we usually wrap things up by 2:45pm. I drive back to the Leicester base, unload and reload for the following day, wash the mugs, refill the water containers, and restock the fire and tea kit. A final email check in the office and it's time for home.

### All in order

Mondays and Fridays are for tool cleaning, maintenance and recording, vehicle and trailer checks, restocking volunteer sundries, first aid kit and PPE checks, the weekly task email and volunteer correspondence, work reports, putting together our bi-monthly newsletter, updating our databases and recording volunteer hours, meetings, and assisting in additional reserve management. I also manage and work closely with a Volunteer Trainee Reserves Officer. This is a six to twelve-month placement, ideal for someone who is looking for a career in conservation as it will equip them with the skills, qualifications, and know-how they need.

I experience a different kind of tiredness at the end of the day working as a Reserves Officer, and I'm sure it is a feeling many can relate to. It's the happy kind of tired you get from hard graft, plenty of fresh air, conversation with wonderful people, and working hard for something you are passionate about.

Get involved!

Learn more about volunteering and the benefits it offers both you and wildlife. Visit:



[lrwt.org.uk/volunteer](http://lrwt.org.uk/volunteer)





**H**

ere at The Wildlife Trusts, we know how important it is that everyone has the opportunity to get out and enjoy nature.

Across the UK, we look after around 2,300 nature reserves to help ensure that no matter where you live, you can enjoy a walk on the wild side. But nature can be sensitive. There are animals that are easily disturbed, plants at risk of trampling. Sometimes we have to impose restrictions to keep wild places wild.

Our communications recently have had a real focus on getting this message out to the public. We know our members are wildlife lovers that truly care about nature, so we wanted to highlight some of the issues that you're helping us prevent by respecting nature reserves and the special species they protect.

# Leading *by example*





Ground nesting birds like nightjars are especially vulnerable



Fungi can be a feast for wildlife

### Paws for thought

Dogs are our most popular pet, with an estimated 13 million in the UK. They bring companionship and joy to their owners. They also lead people to be more active and spend more time in nature, which is great! But unfortunately for both us and wildlife, dogs and nature reserves aren't always compatible.

Even the most mild-mannered of our four-legged friends is still shaped like a predator, and that's exactly how wild animals see them. A dog is a potential threat. Even if the dog doesn't chase birds, squirrels, deer or other animals, its presence can cause them to stop feeding, become stressed, and even temporarily abandon a nest. Many birds nest or feed on the ground, where they're vulnerable. When a dog is off lead and wanders away from the path, it has the potential to disturb even more wildlife.

Man's best friend can directly influence wild places too. Chemicals in flea treatments can leach into ponds, lakes, and rivers, harming wildlife. And dog poo isn't just unpleasant to stand on, it also adds nutrients to the soil. Wee does the same. This can be disastrous for rare plants that are adapted to low nutrient levels. As the soil nutrients increase, these plants are crowded out by nutrient-loving plants like nettles. A recent study on Belgian nature reserves estimated that each year dogs add an average of 11kg of nitrogen and 5kg of phosphorous per hectare. Picking up the poo can reduce these numbers dramatically.



### Slim pickings

Last autumn some Wildlife Trusts had issues with gangs of foragers sweeping through nature reserves, gathering bags of fungi. Wild foraging can be fun and useful (if you know what's safe to eat), but it can lead to problems for wildlife and wild places if done too frequently. Picking mushrooms isn't generally bad for the fungus itself, as they're seasonal fruiting bodies, but lots of people roaming in search of them can lead to plants being trampled and ground compacted. There are plenty of animals that feast on fungi too, from flies to mice and deer — so it's important that some are left for nature's foragers.

### The heat is on

The Wildlife Trusts' *Changing Nature* report highlighted that climate change is increasing the risk of wildfires on our nature reserves. Hot, dry springs and summers turn heathlands, grasslands and forest floors to kindling. A single discarded cigarette or a barbecue is all it takes to ignite a blaze that can destroy acres of vital habitat for wildlife. Rare reptiles, protected plants, endangered insects, and ground-nesting birds can all be lost. But these fires don't just harm wildlife, they also release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere and damage the ability of wild places to help fight the climate crisis. So thanks for packing a picnic instead and helping us spread the message.

We hope this helps explain the need for restrictions in some of our wild places. Many Wildlife Trust nature reserves welcome dogs on leads, but some are so sensitive they need to be dog free entirely — so please check before you travel. Thank you for helping keep our wild places safe and setting a great example for other visitors.



# Wildlife Gardening on a Budget

It doesn't cost the earth to make a wildlife-friendly garden. Indeed, the less money you spend the better for your pocket, wildlife and the planet.

Rather than buying plants grown in peat-based compost and plastic pots, grow them from seed in your own compost and an upcycled container. Take cuttings and dig up and divide plants to propagate more, and if you have too many why not share them with friends and neighbours who might return the favour? It's a good idea to save seeds rather than buy fresh every spring, but don't forget how good birds are at farming — if you've ever watched a goldfinch feeding on knapweed seed you'll know that half of it ends up on the ground to grow into next year's larder. Look out for berrying seedlings such as holly and hawthorn at the base of fences or other spots where birds like to perch, and — with the landowner's permission — dig them up to grow for free in your garden.

It's not just gardening that can be done cheaply. Want a log pile? Keep an eye out for neighbours doing tree work and ask if you can have a log or two. Want a new bird box? Find instructions online to make your own. Other ways to help wildlife require no money at all: let grass grow long around the edges, avoid cutting back plants and start a nice open compost pile at the end of the garden. Nature costs nothing, we just have to let her in.

Get more tips for helping nature at home from [lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening](https://lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening)



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





1



**Grow annuals from seed**  
Pollinator-friendly favourites like sunflowers and cosmos are easy — simply sow in pots of peat-free compost and plant out in early summer.

5



**Be less tidy**  
Let an area of grass grow long, allow leaves to pile up in borders, deadhead and cut back less.

2



**Make new plants from old**  
Dig up herbaceous plants like nepeta and cranesbills and use an old bread knife to slice the rootball in two, with intact stems. Replant and water well.

6



**Make your own habitat boxes**  
From bird and bat boxes to hedgehog feeding stations and even 'toad abodes', there are plenty of instructions online on how to make your own bespoke wildlife homes.

3



**Take softwood cuttings**  
Cut 10cm shoots from shrubs like lavender, remove lower leaves and push into pots of moist, gritty compost. Cover with a plastic bag sealed with an elastic band and keep on a bright windowsill for eight weeks.

7



**Grow your own bird food**  
Home-grown bird food is free: avoid cutting back seed-bearing plants like lavender, knapweed, grasses, sunflower and *Verbena bonariensis*, and watch the birds flock to feed from them.

4



**Make a log pile**  
Neighbours pruning or cutting down a tree? Ask for some logs! Piled up in a corner or beneath a bench they provide an easy, inexpensive habitat.

8



**Enjoy free gifts from birds**  
Birds make great farmers. Keep an eye out for holly and hawthorn seedlings, often found at the base of fences or other 'perches'. With the landowners permission, dig them up and plant in your garden!





# MY WILD LIFE

## “It’s slow and disciplined work”

Alistair Lawrence, Oakham

Alistair Lawrence has travelled the world to photograph birds and butterflies. Since 2004 he’s been recording butterflies at Rutland Water, and this year is helping create a new wildflower meadow beside Lagoon 6. Wendy Tobitt went to meet him.



### You are helping kickstart a new meadow at Rutland Water. How did that come about?

I’m privileged to have Egleton and Rutland Water on my doorstep, it’s such a large and scenically varied reserve, with a lot of wildlife.

For the past six years I’ve enjoyed seeing how Sharples Meadow beside Lagoon 4 has developed into a beautiful wildflower meadow. Then early last year in a chance conversation with Conservation Team Leader Joe Davis, he told me it was hoped to create a new wildflower meadow at the foot of Lax Hill. I was fascinated to hear this and promised to help however I could.

Making a donation to the Trust to help achieve this is my way of saying ‘thank you’ for all the years of pleasure I have got from the reserves, as well as

creating this new habitat for butterflies and other insects.

### How did you get into nature?

From an early age I was keen on gardening and exploring the countryside, which in turn led to an interest in wild flowers. I was fascinated by David Attenborough’s television programme *Zoo Quest to Paraguay* and knew that one day I wanted to see this remote country for myself.

In my teens I took up photography which has been a lifelong hobby and a catalyst for recording the wildlife I see, along with a growing enthusiasm for travel. Over the years I have participated

in a lot of Naturetrek tours and after moving to Oakham in 1992 I joined the Rutland Natural History Society.

In 1996 I made the first of several visits to Paraguay. On one trip I was walking through the forest and became aware of a large, winged creature flapping beside me. At first I thought it was a bird then realised it was a Blue Morpho, one of the largest butterflies in the world. It was amazing!

In 2016 I visited the far south of Ethiopia and whilst in Yabelo arranged for an experienced ornithologist to help me find Prince Ruspoli’s Turaco, a rare bird only found in that part of the country. He knew exactly where to take me and after a long trek I shall never forget the absolute thrill of seeing one perched on a branch.

Experiences like these, seeing birds

“Seeing birds and butterflies close-up in their natural habitats intensifies my enjoyment of the natural world.”



## “It will be so interesting to see how the meadow develops”

and butterflies close-up in their natural habitats, intensifies my enjoyment of the natural world.

### What equipment do you have for watching birds and butterflies?

I have two pairs of binoculars, one for birdwatching at a distance and the other to focus down closely on butterflies. In my knapsack I have my camera, notebook and pen, a sunhat in summer, and something to drink.

### How long have you been recording butterflies?

In 1992 I started recording wildflowers and butterflies across the county for the Rutland Natural History Society. Then in 2010 I became the Society's Butterfly Recorder for six years.

Since the late 1990s I have volunteered at Rutland Water and in 2004 started recording butterflies for LRWT. Last year Species and Recording Officer Tim Sexton gave me the transect from the Birdwatching Centre to Sharples Meadow, which I walk most weeks between April and autumn. It's slow and disciplined work watching carefully and noting all the butterflies observed.



Painted lady on verbena.



Small copper subsp. *Caeruleo-punctata*

ALISTAIR LAWRENCE

### Do you have a favourite season?

Every season has its beauty. I enjoy autumn and winter with migrating birds and have spent many hours walking around Rutland Water watching them. You never know what you're going to see – that's part of the thrill. Obviously, spring and summer are great for the butterflies!

### Do you see wildlife in your garden?

I garden with wildlife in mind. I have a pond and get lots of frogspawn. I keep deadwood piles for insects, hedges and trees for the garden birds. White-flowered honesty and garlic mustard are grown specifically for the Orange-tip butterfly. Bees and butterflies feed on foxgloves and *Verbena bonariensis* to name but

## Alistair's favourite butterflies

**Orange-tip:** The male has green marbling on its underwings.

**Red admiral:** It reminds me of tropical butterflies I have seen on my travels.

**Purple emperor:** The male's iridescent colours are magnificent in the sunlight.

**Small copper:** In 2018 I saw a sub-species of small copper (pictured left) at Sharples Meadow with little blue dots on its wings.



Orange-tip butterfly

two, and I have ivy for the overwintering butterflies. Last year I recorded 12 species of butterfly in my garden.

### What are you looking forward to this year?

I'm looking forward to seeing how the new meadow progresses and am very grateful to Reserves Officer Fran Payne for keeping me updated. Fran and her team work very hard to look after the nature reserve.

By spring the soil should be prepared and ready for wildflower seed to be sown. It will be so interesting to see how the meadow, wildlife corridors and bee bank develop in the coming seasons. It will be wonderful to see more butterflies feeding on the wild flowers.



**Contact us** if you or someone you know could feature in a future issue of *Wild*. We're looking for inspiring stories from people like you! Email [info@lrwt.org.uk](mailto:info@lrwt.org.uk)





# Grass *roots*

Grassland officer **Claire Cornish** explores the diversity of grasslands.



Anyone who's ever gardened will know that, left to its own devices, grass gets everywhere. Leave any area for longer than a fortnight and the fine green shoots will emerge, challenging our attempts at neat borders, vegetable beds and gravel. The same is true beyond our gardens. Grass is a supreme survivor. It can grow in most soils: wet, dry, salty, sandy, or even poisonous. As a result, natural grassland can be found almost anywhere — from the coast to the highest mountain tops.

You might think that two fields of grass are much the same, but there's an amazing variety in the types of grassland you can find. The UK has around 160 species of grass, growing in different combinations, alongside different wildflowers, to produce a range of grassland habitats. A coastal grazing marsh is very different to a chalk grassland or an upland hay meadow.

Some of our richest grasslands can contain dozens of different species of grass and flower in just one square metre.

The main factors that shape the species found on a grassland are whether it's in the uplands or lowlands, and the type of soil it grows on. There are calcareous grasslands on shallow, base-rich soils like those over chalk and limestone; acidic grasslands on sands, gravels, and siliceous rocks; and neutral grasslands on clay and loam soils.

Grasslands and people have a long history, with traditional farming practices like hay cutting and livestock grazing shaping meadows as we know them. The richest grasslands have developed under this sort of management over rocks such as limestone or chalk. They can be found from Scotland down to The Lizard in Cornwall, Northern Ireland across to the Lincolnshire Wolds.

#### Full of life

The rich variety of plants is ideal for insects, so healthy grasslands are often buzzing with life. Flowers attract pollinators like bees, beetles and



Grazing animals help maintain areas of open grassland

butterflies, offering protein-packed pollen and sugary nectar. Indeed, grasslands are some of our best places to see butterflies and moths, whose caterpillars chomp on the juicy stems and leaves of grasses and other plants. Some species are particularly picky about their grassland, such as the mountain ringlet, found only on montane slopes in the Scottish Highlands and the Lake District.

The abundant insects in turn attract hungry birds and small mammals, like voles. Strong-billed birds such as sparrows, goldfinches and, in some places, twite also feast on the seeds of plants and grasses. The tussocky structure of meadows provides the perfect nesting cover for birds, including skylarks, yellow wagtails, and larger birds too. Redshanks, lapwings, and especially curlews use the tall herbage to hide their nests.

It's a complicated story underground, where the roots of many species grow deep into the soil to find nutrients, using fungi on their root hairs to draw these up into the plant. These are swapped in turn for the sugary products of photosynthesis from the plant's leaves. This kind of relationship is common in low fertility habitats, but is much rarer for grasslands that have had lots of fertiliser applied, and hardly present at all under arable crops. Some old, unploughed and unfertilised grasslands can be home to spectacular displays of colourful waxcaps — tiny, glistening umbrellas of orange, red, green, or pink.

#### Graze expectations

Left alone, grassland is generally a temporary habitat. Over time it develops into longer grass with brambles or bracken, then scrub, and eventually woodland. These are all important habitats in their own right, but support different species to wildflower-rich grasslands. To stay grassy and open, most grasslands need the influence of grazing animals. In the UK this comes from a variety of herbivores — rabbits and hares, geese, deer, and more often domesticated goats, sheep, cattle, and horses or ponies.

## Grass is a supreme survivor. It can grow in most soils

Grazing can be a by-product of farming for meat and milk, or it can be done purely with wildflower and habitat conservation in mind — sometimes, with the right animals, it can be both. While most grazing will help prevent grasslands developing into scrub, the seasonal timing of grazing and the density of animals play a part in determining the end result. The choice of animal is important too, as different species and breeds have different food preferences and feeding styles. Overgrazing can be very bad for grasslands, preventing flowers from growing and damaging the soil.

Wildlife Trusts across the UK undertake conservation grazing to



Grasslands are home to rare insects like the large blue butterfly



preserve precious meadows and other vital habitats, using livestock to replicate more traditional farming methods, or the herds of large herbivores that would once have shaped the landscape. This is also a key component of rewilding initiatives, which seek to reinstate natural processes. Allowing animals to roam over a large area and browse or graze at will generally reduces grazing pressure. This intermittent grazing, or light grazing over a period of time, can allow a mosaic of scrub, trees and grassland to develop, providing a wider variety of habitats for wildlife.

## The UK has around 160 species of grass

### The grass is greener on the wild side

Grasslands have a big role to play in battling the climate crisis. They have a huge potential for locking up carbon, thanks not only to the diversity of plants but also their relationship with the fungi in the soil. The UK's grasslands hold two billion tonnes of carbon in their soils, but this carbon can be easily released by human activities. From 1990-2006, 14 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> was released as grassland was converted to arable farmland. It's vital that our grasslands are managed sensitively to lock in carbon and keep it in the soil.

Having healthy fungal networks in the soil also reduces the need for fertilisers, which are often produced using carbon-emitting manufacturing processes. Deep rooted scrub, trees and grassland are better at combatting field run off triggered by the high intensity rainfall we are all experiencing in our climate emergency. Bare ground left over winter

in arable systems has a loose surface that can be swept away into our rivers and seas, carrying with it high levels of nutrients that throw nature off balance.

### Grow your own grassland

The state of UK grassland is in flux. The loss of the basic payment scheme for farmers, dramatic changes in weather patterns and rising costs are creating pressure on the livestock industry. Some are opting for smaller animals and lower input systems, some for more ploughing and reseeded, while estates may opt for rewilding options.

The Wildlife Trusts are helping to safeguard and enhance our native grasslands. We are working to restore meadows, both on our nature reserves and with farmers and landowners, as well as introducing wildflowers and pollinator friendly habitat into school grounds and urban areas, and providing inspiration and advice for anyone wanting to change the grasslands in their local area.

Grasslands are so ubiquitous, we often take them for granted. Nearly any grassland, if given the chance, can offer much to the smaller creatures that live near us: the birds, mice and voles, the butterflies, moths, spiders, beetles and flies, not forgetting the tiny soil fauna and fungi that help power the whole system. Even a private garden can make a difference to local wildlife, so let some of your grass grow longer and leave wildflowers to flourish. Try 'No Mow May' in 2023, then sit down for a few minutes and watch your own tiny Eden.

## Grassland varieties

Here are just three of the types of grassland you can find in the UK.

### Coastal grazing marsh

Occasionally flooded grassland, crisscrossed with ditches of fresh or brackish water, and seasonally grazed by livestock.

Perfect for breeding waders and wintering wildfowl.

**See it for yourself at:** Howlands Marsh, Essex Wildlife Trust



### Lowland chalk grassland

Thin, low nutrient soil over chalk rocks promotes a huge diversity of plants. Regular grazing keeps the grass short. Famed for its orchids and butterflies.

**See it for yourself at:** Coombe Bissett Down, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust



### Northern upland hay meadows

Found in sub-montane climates, where non-intensive hay production creates dense grasses and herbs.

**See it for yourself at:** Bowber Head Farm, Cumbria Wildlife Trust



Get tips for making the most of your green space at [wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)





### Wildlife Watch Members Hub

Head to the Family Members Hub to keep up to date with Wildlife Watch, including all the latest events and to book: [lrwt.org.uk/family-members](http://lrwt.org.uk/family-members)

Sign up to our Go Wild Family e-newsletter for details of upcoming events and wild activities delivered straight to your inbox: [lrwt.org.uk/learn-and-discover/families](http://lrwt.org.uk/learn-and-discover/families)

### Wild Play sessions

Go wild this summer on one of our Wild Play sessions, suitable for children aged 2-12 (unless indicated otherwise). Booking essential.

#### ● Wild Play at Attenborough Arboretum, Knighton, Leicester Weds 31 May – Fabulous Flowers:

Explore wild flowers through games and crafts. Ages 4-12.

**Weds 26 July – Mud and Worms:** Make models and seed balls or try worm charming!

**Weds 2 Aug – Sticks:** Make items from wood and discover more about trees. Ages 4-12.

**Weds 9 Aug – Minibeasts:** Hunt for minibeasts and join in crafts and a quiz trail.

**Weds 16 Aug – Dens:** Build a shelter and join in the games.

**Tues 22 Aug – Fire:** Learn how to safely make a fire and cook something yummy. Ages 4-12.

Sessions last 90 minutes. Times vary, so please check when booking. £9.50 per child.

#### ● Wild Play at Burbage Common

**Tues 30 May – Mud and Worms:** Make models and seed balls or try worm charming!

**Tues 25 July – Ponds and Water:** Try pond dipping, boat making and land-based water play.

**Tues 8 Aug – Minibeasts:** Hunt for minibeasts and join in crafts and a quiz trail.

**Tues 22 Aug – Fire:** Learn how to safely make a fire and cook something yummy. Ages 4-12.

Meet outside the Burbage Common Visitor Centre Café (or for Ponds and Water meet at the pond by the Extension Car Park). Sessions run from 10-11.30am and 12.30-2pm on each date. £5 per child. Call Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council to book on 01455 255728. These Wild Play sessions are in partnership with and subsidised by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

## Green Influencers made a difference for wildlife

This spring saw the end of an amazing two years of the Green Influencers Scheme youth project here in Leicestershire.

The Green Influencers Scheme is a youth-led project set up to support 10-14-year-olds to take environmental social action in their local area. The LRWT Green Influencers Scheme was one of 44 schemes across the UK, funded by The Ernest Cook Trust and the #iwill Fund. The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help young people access high quality social action.

Since 2021, nine groups of young people across Leicestershire have taken the lead to plan and create a range of projects that have changed their school grounds,

local green spaces or educated other people about how to protect our environment.

These projects were the first time the 113 young people involved had participated in meaningful youth-led social action. They have gained skills in team working, budgeting, campaigning, project planning, practical conservation and even video production and editing.

Check out the Leicester Kingfisher Woodcraft Folk 'Litter stoppers' video on our YouTube channel: [youtube.com/@lrwt56](https://youtube.com/@lrwt56)



From the young people involved...

**"It is a unique experience and it is very fun!"**

**"I know a bit about nature and am learning more"**

**"I feel amazing for doing something like this"**







# Events & Activities

May – September 2023

## Feel inspired and get connected with nature on one of our events

To allow for flexibility, please be aware that our full events programme has moved online. Check there for further details, including how to book, prices, times, and venue. Anyone booked on an event or volunteering activity will be notified of any changes. New events are constantly being added, so check regularly for the latest updates: [lrwt.org.uk/events](http://lrwt.org.uk/events)

## Local groups

### Charnwood Local Group

**Indoor meetings:** Woodhouse Eaves Village Hall, 50 Main St, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough, LE12 8RZ. Admission £2.50 members, £3 non-members, children free. Check website for walk events. Contact Kate Moore on **01509 891005**, [katemoore123@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:katemoore123@yahoo.co.uk)

### Great Bowden Local Group

**Indoor meetings:** The Village Hall, The Green, Great Bowden, LE16 7EU. Admission £4. Contact Bruce White on **01858 467976**.

### Melton Mowbray Local Group

**Indoor meetings:** United Reformed Church, 2 Chapel St, Melton Mowbray, LE13 1LZ. Admission £1.50 members, £2 non-members. Contact Peter Dawson on **01664 852119**, [peter.dawson69@ntlworld.com](mailto:peter.dawson69@ntlworld.com)

### North West Local Group

**Indoor meetings:** Ashby Methodist Church, 5 Burton Road,

Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 2LF. Admission £3. Contact David Maltby on **01530 222934** or Margaret Mabey on **01530 412410**.

### Rutland Local Group

**Indoor meetings:** Volunteer Training Centre, off Oakham Road, Hambleton, LE15 8BP. Admission £2. Contact Becky Howard on **07908 252271**.

### Leicestershire & Rutland Badger Group

Meetings held online via Zoom. Contact Dr David Duckett on **0116 259 7231**, [info@badgergroup.org.uk](mailto:info@badgergroup.org.uk)

### Leicestershire & Rutland Bat Group

Join one of our bat walks or surveys. Please wear warm clothes and appropriate footwear and bring a torch. Some bat detectors will be available but if you have your own, please bring it. Events may be cancelled in adverse weather. Walks are free to bat group members and £3 for others. Booking essential by emailing [batevents@outlook.com](mailto:batevents@outlook.com)

## MAY

### Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Lyndon Visitor Centre

Weds 3 May, 10.30am – 12.30pm  
**Wildlife Book Club**

If you love both reading and wildlife, the Trust's Wildlife Book Club is for you! Free to join and open to everyone.

### Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 5 May, 9.30am – 12.30pm  
**Guided Walk with Jeff**

Your guide, Jeff Davies, has a wealth of wildlife experience and knowledge, which will make your morning's walk both enjoyable and informative. £10pp (£5 Annual Permit Holder).

### Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Volunteer Training Centre

Sun 7 May, 5-8am  
**International Dawn Chorus Day**

Join our bird expert to identify what you can hear and experience the reserve at this wonderful time of day. Followed by breakfast overlooking Lagoon 4. £20pp (£16 Annual Permit Holder).

### Cossington Meadows

Mon 8 May, 8am

#### **Birdsong Walk**

Join Andy Neilson to tune into the morning birdsong.

### Charnwood Local Group

Weds 10 May, 7.30pm  
**The Butterflies (and a few Moths) of VC55**

County Butterfly Recorder Richard Jeffery talks on the local butterflies and day-flying moths to look out for.

### North West Local Group

Fri 19 May, 8.30pm

#### **Bat exploration of Dimmisdale**

Enjoy an evening bat searching. Bring a torch and warm clothes.

### Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 5 May, 9.30am – 12.30pm

#### **Guided Walk with Jeff**

See 5th May for details.

### North West Local Group

Sat 20 May, 10am – 4pm

#### **Arts and craft exhibition**

Exhibition and sale by talented members and friends.

### Loughborough Big Meadow

Weds 24 May, 10am

#### **Botany of Loughborough Big Meadow**

Join Chris Hill on a walk to explore these botanically diverse meadows.

### Leicestershire & Rutland Bat Group

Sat 27 May, 9.30pm

#### **Walk at Watermead North Country Park**

Search for Daubenton's bats as they move up the canal.



### Badger Watches at the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Dates: May 2, 6, 9, 13, 17, 20, 23, 27 & 30; June: 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 24 & 27

Badger Watches start just before dusk and last around two hours. Not only do you have a chance to see badgers but also other nocturnal creatures such as tawny owls, barn owls, bats and foxes. Cameras allowed but no flash photography please. £10pp.



## JUNE

**Rutland Water Nature Reserve:  
Lyndon Visitor Centre**

Weds 7 June, 10.30am –  
12.30pm

**Wildlife Book Club**

See 5th May for details.

**Rutland Water Nature  
Reserve: Anglian Water  
Birdwatching Centre**

Fri 9 June, 10am – 12pm

**Livestock safari**

Fran Payne takes us on a walk  
to meet the livestock helping  
to manage our grasslands.

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Mon 12 June, 9pm

**Dusk survey of soprano  
pipistrelles**

Braunston-in-Rutland Church,  
LE15 8QS.

**Holwell Nature Reserve**

Tues 20 June, 10am – 12.30pm

**Restoration and Renewal:  
The Future of Holwell**

Wild Walk led by Peter Dawson.  
Meet at Brown's Hill Quarry  
parking area.

**Rutland Water Nature Reserve:  
Volunteer Training Centre**

Weds 21 and Thurs 22 June,  
10am-4pm

**Botanical Illustration  
Workshops with Dawn Wright**

Try your hand at art while  
connecting with nature on our  
course with professional botanical  
artist Dawn Wright CBI FSBA. For  
beginners and improvers alike.  
£90pp, with art packs available  
at additional cost.

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Fri 23 June, 9pm

**Dusk survey of soprano  
pipistrelles**

Braunston-in-Rutland Church,  
LE15 8QS.

**Osprey Cruises on Rutland Water**

Dates: May 20, 24, 27 & 31; June 3, 14, 17, 21 & 24; July 4, 12, 14,  
15, 19, 26 & 29; Aug 1 & 12

Take a guided trip with members of the Osprey Team aboard the  
Rutland Belle. With luck, you will enjoy breath-taking views of the  
birds diving for fish, making it a trip to remember. Eager to learn  
even more about these magnificent birds? On the day of each  
cruise there is an optional talk based at the Lyndon Visitor Centre,  
starting at 2pm and lasting for about 30 minutes.

The 90-minute evening cruises leave from Whitwell Harbour on the  
north shore of Rutland Water (LE15 8BL). Adults £27, Under 16s £18.

**North West Local Group**

Fri 23 June, 9.45pm

**Glow-worm search**

Look for the rare glow-worms  
of Albert Village.

**Rutland Local Group**

Sat 24 June, 2pm

**Bloody Oaks Quarry visit**

Explore this limestone grassland  
nature reserve. Meet at the  
reserve. No need to book and  
free to attend.

**Melton Mowbray Local Group**

Sun 25 June, 11am – 4pm

**Holwell Nature Reserve  
Open Day**

Enjoy guided walks, refreshments,  
plant and book stalls, and a  
tombola.

## JULY

**Rutland Water Nature Reserve:  
Lyndon Visitor Centre**

Weds 5 July, 10.30am – 12.30pm

**Wildlife Book Club**

See 5th May for details.

## AUGUST

**Rutland Water Nature  
Reserve: Lyndon Visitor  
Centre**

Weds 2 Aug, 10.30am – 12.30pm

**Wildlife Book Club**

See 5th May for details.

**Cloud Wood**

Fri 7 July, 10am

**Butterfly Walk**

Discover the many butterflies  
of these woods. Walk led by  
Andy Neilson.

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Fri 14 July, 9.15pm

**Swift and bats at St Peter's  
Church, Stonesby**

Watch Natterer's bats emerge,  
and swifts return.

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Sat 22 July, 9.30pm

**Walk at Zouch**

A walk through fields and  
along the River Soar near  
Ashby de la Zouch.

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Fri 4 Aug, 9pm

**Walk at Moira Furnace**

A walk along the canal and  
through the furnace plantation.

**Charnwood Local Group**

Weds 9 Aug

**Butterfly walk led by  
County Butterfly Recorder  
Richard Jeffrey.**

Location and time to be  
confirmed at [lrwt.org.uk/events](http://lrwt.org.uk/events)

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Sat 19 Aug, 8.30pm

**Walk around Aylestone  
Meadows**

Walk past the meadow and  
back along the canal towpath.

## SEPTEMBER

**Cossington Meadows**

Weds 6 Sep, 8pm

**Barn Owl Walk**

Chris Hill takes us out at sunset  
to search for owls.

**Leicestershire & Rutland  
Bat Group**

Sat 9 Sep, 7pm

**Walk at Lyndon Nature Reserve**

Search for pipistrelles,  
Daubenton's, and perhaps  
noctules.

Check  
online  
for the full and  
latest programme  
of events





#30DaysWild  
1-30 June

# Let's go

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[lrwt.org.uk/30dayswild](http://lrwt.org.uk/30dayswild)