

The member magazine for Kent Wildlife Trust

WilderKent

Spring 2022

4 PAGE FEATURE: WILDER CARBON

How this groundbreaking nature restoration scheme will tackle the climate and nature crises

YOUR WILD SPRING: WATER VOLES

The UK's fastest declining mammal and its green thumbs

THE VERGE OF SUCCESS

How roadsides can become wildlife havens

WILDER WOODS

Bison are *coming to Kent*

This keystone species will transform West Blean and Thornden Woods



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Protecting Wildlife for the Future





Welcome

to the spring edition of **Wilder Kent**

I'm sure you'll agree that this edition of Wilder Kent has another fantastic front cover. Until this year, bison wasn't a species that you or I will ever have been able to see in the UK...

Our Wilder Blean project will be the first UK-based venture to use European bison as 'ecosystem engineers' to create a landscape that offers more opportunities for wildlife than humans ever could. This groundbreaking project will contribute to the international conservation breeding programme of this endangered mega-herbivore (read more on pages 16-17).

Also, thanks to hard work across the Trust, and our relationships with Wildwood Trust, Paradise Park and Natural England, we will soon re-introduce red-billed choughs to our skies! This fabulous bird has been missing from Kent's wildlife for about 200 years and its reintroduction is now possible due to our success in restoring chalk grassland across Kent (see pages 14-15).

At their core, these projects focus on biological diversity and abundance. Bison help other species thrive by keeping the woodland ecosystem dynamic and increasing structural complexity. Choughs require a landscape containing high-quality environments with an abundance of insects – their presence will be a visible symptom of conservation success.

Unfortunately, insect populations are under threat globally. We need to protect critical sites, like Swanscombe

Peninsula, for insect populations (see page 36), track population decline (read about our Bugs Matter surveys on page 18) and scale up effective conservation management. This means working with farmers (read about our Farmer Clusters on page 38), restoring the right habitats in the best possible way and scaling-up financing for native habitat restoration.

Regarding this last point, I explain what Wilder Carbon is going to start to do on pages 22-25 before profiling our first two projects that are going live this spring in Kent and Somerset. These exciting new land restoration schemes will follow wilding principles and result in significant wildlife benefits. They will be funded over multiple decades by carbon finance – a potential game-changer.

There's plenty of exciting stuff going on elsewhere in the Trust as we reopen after lockdown measures. The role of our ever-important volunteers in our Visitor Centres is discussed on page 28, and our revitalised Corporate Partnerships Programme is featured on page 30.

Please consider getting more involved with Kent Wildlife Trust, as an individual, business, or both. Together we can, and will, make a real difference for nature in Kent.

We look forward to hearing from you! 🍷



Evan Bowen-Jones

Chief Executive of Kent Wildlife Trust

Follow me 🐦 @EcoLlogik



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CONTACT US - WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU 🦋

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Let's be wilder together

Follow us on social media for updates and to share nature photos and your thoughts with us!

JUST SEARCH FOR

Kent Wildlife Trust



✉ DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

Keep informed of all our latest work, news and events. Email info@kentwildlife.org.uk with your member ID and up-to-date email address and we'll do the rest.

Comments from the Leadership Team

WILDER BLEAN

Bison are coming to Kent!

Page 16

Introducing bison to West Blean and Thornden Woods is such an exciting opportunity to engage people, both locally and more widely, in the innovative approach that Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust are taking in the fight against the climate and nature crises.

These extraordinary animals will reinstate ecological processes that have been missing from our woodlands for thousands of years. How these beautiful creatures naturally manage a woodland that benefits a whole host of other wildlife, helping them to thrive, is truly amazing.

Having been lucky enough to share the same space as bison during a trip to the Netherlands, I can honestly say I feel privileged to be part of the team bringing them to our woodland and I am really excited that we will be sharing this with the people of Kent. 🍷



Keeley Atkinson

As Head of Wilder Engagement, Keeley engages and empowers people to take action to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. She is an advocate for improving people's knowledge about the climate and nature crises to have a positive impact on nature's recovery.

ROADSIDE NATURE RESERVES

On the verge of recovery: discover our roadside wildlife havens

Page 20

Through Kent Wildlife Trust's Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) project, around 140 RNRs have been designated all over Kent, covering an area of 43.5 hectares and a length of 78 kilometres.

These RNRs are found on both urban and rural verges, on some of the busiest high speed roads in the county and also on quiet country lanes.



Road verges are vital habitats which are home to a wide range of flora, including many species of orchid such as the rare lizard orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum*. RNRs are so important for providing forage for pollinators, especially Kent's rare bumblebees like the shrill carder, *Bombus sylvarum*, as well as other rare bee species which have all been found on Kent Wildlife Trust RNRs. You can read more about the importance of protecting our roadside verges on page 20. 🍷



Simon Bateman-Brown

As Head of Land Management, with over 25 years of experience in conservation,

Simon works with Area Managers and Wardens to ensure that the 80+ reserves managed by Kent Wildlife Trust are maintained in the most effective way possible.

In collaboration with Bethany Pateman, Wilder Road Verge Officer

CHOUGH REINTRODUCTION

We are almost ready to welcome choughs back to Kent!

Page 14

My journey with choughs started 40-something years ago, spending summers with my grandparents on Anglesey, sitting on the cliffs at South Stack and being captivated by the sight and sound of these incredible birds.

Track forward 20 years and I found myself working on chalk grassland projects along the Kent coast, restoring habitat and reintroducing grazing. As you'll see in this edition of the magazine, the successes of Kent Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and White Cliffs Countryside Partnership around Dover and Folkestone has restored precious chalk grassland habitat to a



level that will enable choughs to return to this coast. This project is an amazing conservation success story and one that traces a very personal line for me. 🍷



Paul Hadaway

As Director of Conservation, Paul develops and implements conservation and green

space policies and drives nature-based solutions across Kent.

YOUR • WILD spring



Water vole *Arvicola amphibius*

Found along our waterways, the water vole is similar looking to the brown rat... but fluffier! Unfortunately, this species is the fastest declining mammal in the UK and faces possible extinction due to habitat loss and predation by the invasive, non-native American mink.

Water voles live along rivers, streams and ditches, around ponds and lakes, and in marshes, reedbeds and areas of wet moorland. If you know what clues to look for, you might be able to spot these tiny, quick mammals. For instance, look out for burrows in riverbanks with a nibbled 'lawn' of grass around the entrance – this indicates the presence of water voles who are very dedicated gardeners and their very own lawnmowers!

Nibbled grass and stems around the water's edge, showing a distinctive 45-degree angle cut at the ends, also hint that you might be in the company of water voles, who like to perch on one spot while they munch. You can also identify water vole 'latrines' by the rounded, cigar-shaped droppings that fill them.

Be careful not to disturb water voles – these animals start to breed in spring and have three to four litters per year of up to five young. Minor disturbances can be very disruptive to this delicate cycle of life so consider their vulnerability while out and about.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Protected under the UK's
Wildlife and Countryside Act.

A Priority Species under
the UK's Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.



Look out for small burrows in riverbanks with a nibbled lawn...

IDENTIFY THEM

The water vole has chestnut-brown fur, a blunt and rounded nose, small ears and a furry tail. It is much bigger than other vole species.

The similar brown rat is larger with grey-brown fur, a pointed nose, large ears and a long, scaly tail.

STATISTICS

Length: 14-22cm

Tail: 9.5-14cm

Weight: 150-300g

Average lifespan: 0.5-1.5 years 🐹

KENT WILDLIFE TRUST AGM

64th Annual General Meeting 2022

Notice is hereby given that the 64th Annual General Meeting of Kent Wildlife Trust will be held at Tyland Barn, Chatham Road, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3BD on **Saturday 23 July 2022, commencing at 1pm.***

Members are invited to participate in the meeting online. Provision will be made for a limited number of members to attend in person, subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

Register for the AGM here:



kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/notice-64th-annual-general-meeting-2022



*If you would like to attend the AGM and have specific access requirements, please contact us at Engagement@kentwildlife.org.uk or by telephone on 01622 357900 so that we can discuss how to support you on the day.

AGENDA

- 1 Welcome and apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of minutes from the 63rd Annual General Meeting held in 2021
The draft minutes will be made available in advance on our website.
- 3 Matters arising from the 2021 AGM minutes
- 4 Presentation of the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the Year ended 31 December 2021:
 - i. Report on the year by Chairman Dr Chris West and CEO Evan Bowen-Jones
 - ii. Report on the accounts by the Hon. Treasurer Nigel Steele
 - iii. Questions
The Annual Report and accounts will be made available in advance on our website. Members will be invited to submit questions in advance.
- 5 Appointment of Auditors
- 6 Election, re-election, and retirement of Council members

GET INVOLVED

Join the 2022 Wilder Kent Awards!

The Wilder Kent Awards acknowledge the work of people who are **taking positive action to restore and reconnect with nature.**

We have several categories this year:

- Nurseries
- Schools
- Colleges
- Community groups

And two brand-new categories:

- **Universities**
Be one of the first universities to receive a Wilder Kent Award.
- **Villages, Towns & Cities**
We're encouraging active town, city and parish councils to help create a wilder environment for their communities.

Why enter?

It's free and, once you've signed up, you'll receive a digital booklet with tips and ideas on engaging your students, peers, and communities. Getting involved has many benefits including:

- Improving your health and wellbeing
- Safeguarding nature and wildlife for future generations
- Learning new skills and getting creative



SIGN UP NOW



Scan the QR code to find out more and sign up to the Wilder Kent Awards.



Application deadline:
31 May 2022



Sophie Pavele

  @sophiepavs

Seas of surprise

“As I write, it's a moody, overcast Tuesday afternoon. Desk days like these make me crave the sea. I want to be fully in it, head and all, with (ideally) the sunshine piercing through the water. I'm lucky enough to have boomeranged home to Devon after university, and the southwest coast has lodged itself deep in my heart. I think of the sea daily, envisaging myself on, in or indeed under it...if possible!

One of my favourite things about British coastlines is that they are never the same. The rhythm of the tide brings new sights, smells, colours and characters to our shorelines four times a day.

Give me a spare spring hour and you may find me walking barefoot along the local beach, looking for snakelocks anemones at low tide. Aside from their striking green and purple colour, I love how it takes barely any water for them to sway their thick tentacles like hula skirts, dancing in their rockpools like a couple of TikTokers.

On this same beach, a colony of breeding kittiwakes nest on the sandstone cliff face, resting after a challenging winter in the Atlantic. As one of our most endangered seabirds, seeing them so free as they wheel with abandon about the clifftops, diving for food to feed their growing chicks, is a sight to raise even the gloomiest spirits.

But for me, nothing quite compares to the sighting of a fellow mammal in the water. Last summer, I had a particularly memorable encounter with a grey seal — the larger of

our two native species. I was paddleboarding on a calm April afternoon, — the water had this glassy appeal. Paddling in random circles and enjoying the rare absence of swell on this particular stretch of coast, I adopted a downwards gaze. And then, there he was. About 10 feet away from me: an enormous bull grey seal. He was 'bottling' as seals do, with only his (gigantic!) head above the water, whiskers twitching, eyes watching. I stopped breathing, just in case. Then, as quickly as he had surfaced, he disappeared below the waves. Off on some covert assignment, no doubt.

Rather incredibly, the UK is home to 40 per cent of the world's population of grey seals. Perhaps they enjoy the variety of the coast as much as I do? I think of this moment often and look forward to being surprised yet again by the beauty of the British seas this spring. ”



OCEAN UPDATES

Discover more about our seas by signing up to our marine mailing list!

You'll get an exclusive monthly newsletter packed with marine conservation news from around the world, exciting wildlife sightings from our amazing UK seas, and updates on the latest developments in protecting our oceans.

wildlifetrusts.org/marine-mailing

Sophie Pavele

A science communicator and Ambassador for The Wildlife Trusts. Her first book *Forget Me Not: Finding the Forgotten Species of Climate Change Britain* will be published 9 June 2022 (Bloomsbury).

Find inspiration to get outdoors and discover your own spring surprises with our selection of seasonal spectacles!



[wildlifetrusts.org/spring-wildlife](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/spring-wildlife)

Six ways to enjoy nature this **SPRING**

1 Admire the wildflowers

Hopefully you managed to experience the fleeting presence of snowdrops earlier this year, a final sprinkling of white across our landscape before winter came to a close.

However, if you didn't manage to see these brilliantly bright flowers, don't worry – as we dive deeper into spring, there will be more and more beautiful plant life to admire across our county.

This season, look out for the emergence of daffodils and tulips, painting a sudden brushstroke of colour across Kent. And in April, stroll alongside the carpets of bluebells which decorate Kent's woodland floors.

Remember to post pictures of your spring views on social media and tag us so we can share the beauty of Kent far and wide.



Bluebells



Lapwing

2 Look out for birds returning home

As the winter months blur into spring, many migratory bird species travel huge distances. For example, swallows fly over 5,000 miles from South Africa to the UK!

Visit our sites to catch a glimpse of some beautiful species and welcome them home. Try to spot lapwings at Oare Marshes, graylag geese at Sevenoaks and skylarks at Nashenden.



Check out all our reserves here:

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves

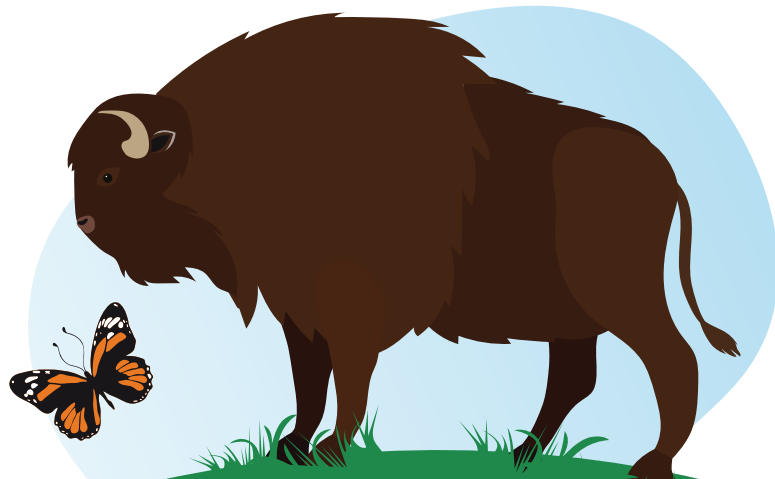
3 Celebrate the bison arrival

Later this spring, four European bison are travelling from across Europe to West Blean and Thornden Woods, Kent. Come explore this ancient woodland and see if you can spot these magnificent animals roaming around their new home. You might also catch sight of the other species involved in this wilding project: Exmoor ponies, longhorn cattle and Iron-Age pigs.



We will be organising lots of exciting events to celebrate the arrival of bison to England, so keep an eye on our Events page in the coming months: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Find out more about this project on pages 16 and 17 of this magazine.



4 Get creative with spring activities

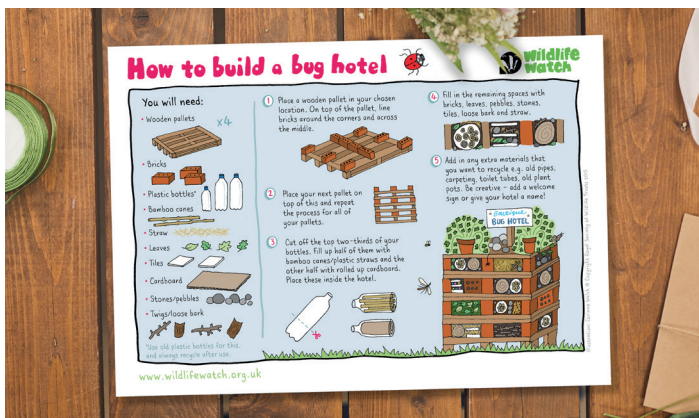
There are so many activities to get involved in this spring, from craft projects and wildlife-friendly gardening to bird spotting and rockpooling!

Why not pop outside and support your local wildlife by building a bird feeder or a bug hotel? You could even create a seed bomb to launch into your garden, resulting in an explosion of wildflowers to brighten up your lawn.

Download a bird identification sheet and see how many species you can spot at your local green space. Go rockpooling to discover the incredible variety of aquatic life at the beach. You could even take photos or draw pictures of your findings to decorate your home or post on social media (remember to tag us!).



Find helpful instructions and resources for all of these activities here: wildlifewatch.org.uk/activities



Oystercatcher

5 Take a trip to the beach to spot incredible wildlife and soak up those precious rays

Visit your local beach to welcome back the sunshine, listen to the soft crashing of the waves and breathe in the fresh, salty air.

Why not visit the incredible mosaic of habitats, including Kent's only ancient dune pasture, at Sandwich and Pegwell Bay? This coastal haven is home to an amazing array of wildlife: nightingales, cuckoos, oystercatchers, a myriad of butterfly species, and even seals during the colder months.



6 Celebrate Earth Day

The first ever Earth Day took place in America in 1970 when approximately 20 million people called for urgent action to protect our planet and protested environmental issues, such as oil spills and air pollution. Since then, this annual event has taken place internationally, resulting in a cascade of environmental legislation and accompanied by an increasingly urgent rallying cry for action.

As the impacts of the climate and nature crises increase exponentially, each Earth Day becomes ever more important. On April 22, take a moment to celebrate the incredible world around us and do something to protect it: go to a protest, write to your MP, protect your local wildlife. 🌱

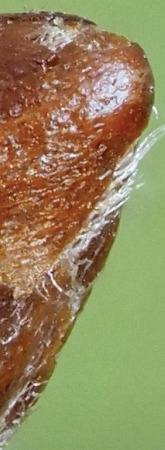
6 places to see beetles



ACORN WEEVIL © ALAN PRICE/NATUREPL.COM

Acorn weevil

Find out how you
can help beetles
and other insects at
[wildlifetrusts.org/
action-for-insects](https://wildlifetrusts.org/action-for-insects)



Did you know that there are over 4,000 species of beetle in the UK? These incredible insects come in a huge array of shapes and sizes. There are broad-bodied ladybirds, slender rove beetles, longhorn beetles sporting oversized antennae and weevils with oddly elongated faces.

Many of our beetles have fantastically evocative names to match their looks or lifestyle. Head out on a beetle search and you could meet tigers, stags, wasps and even minotaurs!

Beetles fill vital roles in nature, including pollination, predation, and the recycling of dead wood, dung and dead animals. One of the best things about beetles is that you can find them almost anywhere, from parks and gardens to meadows and moorlands, and even beneath the surface of ponds. But some places are beetle hotspots — here are six of our favourite places to see beetles in Kent...



See the spectacle for yourself in Kent

1 Holborough Marshes

Lying along the edge of the River Medway, this patchwork of wet fields and scrub is crisscrossed by an extensive ditch network. It is home to lots of rare and unusual wildlife, including a diverse range of wetland beetles. Scuttling along the muddy edges of the waterways, you might spot the metallic green ground beetle, the green-socks peacock or perhaps even the great diving beetle!

2 Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve

This former quarry has become a haven for wildlife and you might be able to spot some rhinoceros beetles amongst the reeds and grasses. These charismatic beetles look like mini versions of stag beetles, and the males sport a prominent horn which gives them their name.

3 Darland Banks

Some of our most rare and threatened species thrive on this restored chalk grassland, just a stone's throw from one of Kent's biggest urban areas. One resident species is the glow worm which, contrary to its name, is a type of beetle. Unfortunately, the widespread use of slug pellets in gardens is largely responsible for bringing this species to the verge of extinction.

4 Hothfield Heathlands

If you find yourself walking along the sandy paths of this reserve from May onwards, you might be rewarded with the sight of the metallic green wings of the green tiger beetle taking to the air. These ferocious beetles hunt on the bare ground and quickly take wing when disturbed.

In the winter months, if you look hard enough, you could also spot the finger-sized holes made by the minotaur beetle. These holes lead into deep chambers where the adult beetles roll piles of rabbit and cattle dung to feed their larvae.

5 Old Park Hill

Common red soldier beetles (colloquially known as "bonking beetles") can often be found in large numbers on flowers like cow parsley and wild parsnip. These red coated beetles (hence their military title) spend most of their short lives in pairs (hence their nickname).

6 Fawke Common

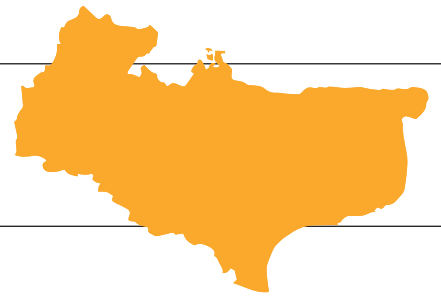
This site is owned by the Knole Estate and managed by Sevenoaks District Council in conjunction with Kent Wildlife Trust. Rare adults of the black-headed cardinal beetles can be seen from April to June, usually on flowers near the edges of woods and mating early in the season. Their carnivorous larvae live underneath dry bark, where they feed on other insects... or each other! 🐞

Did you spot any beetles?

We'd love to hear how your search goes.

Please tweet us your best photos! [@kentwildlife](https://twitter.com/kentwildlife)

KENT NEWS



PROJECT SUCCESS

Down to Earth

The Down to Earth project in Romney Marsh comes to an end this year. This fantastic project, awarded by Sports England's National Lottery Fund, has enabled women in Romney Marsh to get active in nature, learn new skills together and pass their knowledge onto others.

Since the start of 2021, this project has involved over 120 outdoor nature-based activity sessions for the local community, with more than 130 women and their children participating.

74 volunteers have put in more than 500 hours to provide these activities, from wildlife walks and Forest School to beach cleans and conservation tasks, as well as online courses due to Covid-19 measures.

The project has left a legacy for many women and families living in Romney Marsh, and many of these new

volunteers reported positive changes to their regular physical activity and increased happiness and satisfaction in life. As a direct result of this project there is now:

- A Romney Marsh litter picking group which uses our Romney Marsh Visitor Centre as a base
- A casual community walking group run by a trained Down to Earth volunteer
- A wild swimming group run as a casual community group thanks to training given to volunteers via the project
- A women's wellbeing group run by our Nature and Wellbeing Officer from the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre.

These are all fantastic outcomes, especially when you consider how Covid-19 impacted all our lives in 2020 and 2021. 🐦



If you'd like to know more about volunteering, check out our webpage: kentwildlife.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering

PROJECT UPDATE

Sevenoaks Greensand Commons

The Sevenoaks Greensand Commons project aims to restore the social and natural heritage of the Greensand Commons. The project is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other partners.

Over the past year, Crockham Hill Common, owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by Sevenoaks District Council, has been transformed through increased management of its mosaic landscape, including precious heathland habitat that is rarer than rainforest!

Areas of heather were becoming over-shaded and out-competed by conifers, birch and invasive rhododendron. Kent Wildlife Trust's volunteers have been helping by removing these. You can read more about community-led conservation at Crockham Hill on page 44. 🐦



For more information, contact Andrew: andrew.willmore@kentwildlife.org.uk



**SUPPORT US**

Volunteer Task Force

We truly value the time and commitment of all our volunteers which is why we set up the Volunteer Task Force. Representing and working with volunteer teams, the Task Force shares information and feedback about the volunteering process, ensuring that everyone understands the direction of the Trust and can share their viewpoints in the Trust's decision-making processes.

So far in 2022, the Volunteer Task Force has been working on three key areas of the Kent Wildlife Trust Volunteer Programme: communications, health and safety and training.

The Task Force attended a workshop with staff to discuss current communication channels and brainstorm ideas for new communication and marketing methods.

The group has also created a plan to adapt the current staff health and safety competency framework and roll it out to volunteers. This will allow the volunteer team to review training needs and produce courses to suit all volunteers. 🐸



To find out more, visit

kentwildlife.org.uk/volunteertaskforce

PROJECT UPDATES

Our work in south east Kent

From Ian Rickards, Area Manager

The **Ashford Access Project** (funded by Ashford Borough Council) is creating opportunities for people to access their local reserves whilst protecting important habitats and species. For example, we will be working with mountain bikers to build new all-weather paths, removing pressure from fragile habitats.

Precious Peatlands is coordinated by The Wildlife Trusts, and funded by an anonymous donor. The project will facilitate the restoration of peat and bog habitat at Hothfield Heathlands. We will be reducing scrub, controlling water levels, improving infrastructure for our conservation grazers and



Frog orchid

upgrading paths to reduce damage to sensitive habitats.

Coombe Down is the last known location for frog orchids in Kent. Funded by Kent Wildlife Trust members through an appeal in 2019, restoration work will begin this autumn to allow the reintroduction of conservation grazing and join up our amazing network of chalk grassland sites in the Dover area. 🐸

ANNOUNCEMENT

Lydden Temple Ewell is a "moth haven"

A report from Butterfly Conservation has identified our reserve, Lydden Temple Ewell National Nature Reserve, as the best place for straw belle moths in the UK.

This beautiful moth lives on only nine sites in the country, three of which are managed by Kent Wildlife Trust (Lydden Temple Ewell, Darland Banks and Queendown Warren). The straw belle is classed as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.



We are almost ready to **welcome choughs back to Kent!**

2021 was an eventful year for the Chough Project and 2022 is set to be even busier!



Paul Hadaway

As Director of Conservation at Kent Wildlife Trust, Paul develops and implements conservation and green space policies and drives nature-based solutions across Kent.

Project Timeline

The teams at Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust have been working hard to prepare for the reintroduction of choughs to Kent in 2022. These charismatic birds have been missing from Kent's wildlife for over 200 years and are finally returning this summer.

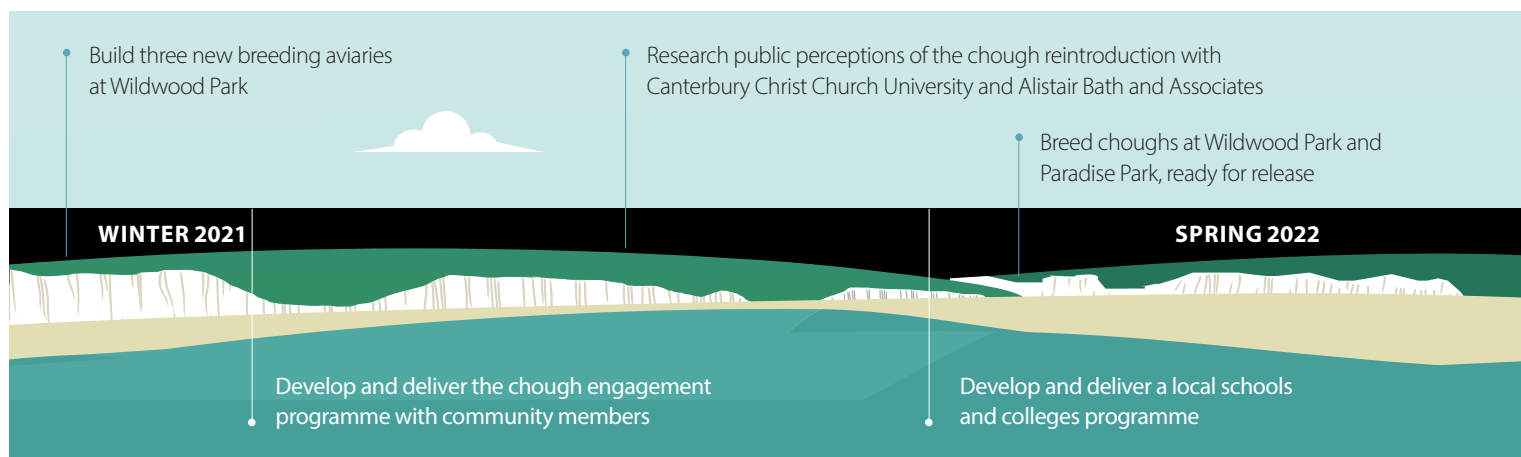
Key milestones:

- Thousands of people visited an aviary of choughs that we hosted with English Heritage last summer at Dover Castle.
- Our fundraising appeal for the chough reintroduction **raised an incredible combined total of £105,284.65**, making this project possible.
- We have made significant progress in organising the logistics of the chough release, including working with local landowners and obtaining a release license from Natural England.

Choughs: a conservation success story

The reintroduction of choughs is possible because of years of conservation success – Kent Wildlife Trust has been working with many other organisations to restore chalk grassland habitat and conservation grazing management across the county.

A key priority for the Chough Project is to maintain and create more chalk grassland. With the chough as our flagship species for chalk grassland in Dover, we are supporting other landowners to adopt naturalistic grazing, using animals whose behaviour mimics those that were once wild in the landscape. Our grazing species include ponies, sheep, cattle and pigs.





Chalk grassland provides the perfect habitat to a variety of insects such as the Chalkhill blue butterfly



CHOUGH APPEAL

Restoring grassland

One study showed that restoring semi-natural grasslands, including chalk grasslands, could sequester (lock up) **11.6 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year**, equivalent to the annual carbon emissions of **nearly seven average-use passenger vehicles**.

Ecosystem heroes

Grazing livestock at low densities on chalk grasslands can increase soil organic matter and carbon storage, as well as improve water retention, soil structure and reduce soil compaction – all of which help to mitigate the impacts of the climate emergency.



Why is grazing key?

Choughs use their long, curved beaks to feed on insect larvae found in soils and animal dung. Unfortunately, the routine use of worming treatments in grazing animals has led to a massive drop in soil larval biomass.

Conservation grazing, habitat restoration at scale and reconnecting functioning chalk grassland provides the opportunity to return these amazing birds to Kent.

Prior to the reintroduction, we have undertaken significant habitat and foraging feasibility studies which show we have sufficient areas for these birds to feed. Despite this, we still need to undertake additional actions to ensure their return is successful and permanent.



How will we ensure the choughs' successful return?

- Any successful reintroduction project needs to take place over several years. The chough captive-breeding programme will provide a safety net that can add birds into the population as needed.
- The use of nest boxes and supplemental feeding will assist choughs in search of nest sites and food.
- The improvement of soil health, through closely managed grazing, will make the soil more resilient to the impacts of drought, minimising impacts to choughs.
- The close monitoring of choughs, including nest site selection and feeding preferences, will help inform our understanding of choughs and the broader habitat they rely on. 🐦



Select birds for release based on behavioural and physical characteristics

SUMMER 2022

Release first cohort of choughs in Dover!

Get involved in the Chough Project

Have a look at upcoming events on our webpage: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

To donate, visit:

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/choughappeal

Sign up to our project newsletter:

eepurl.com/hGGxMf

Email us:

chough@wilderkent.org.uk

Bison are coming to Kent

An update from Wildwood Trust



Vicki Breakall

As Conservation Officer, Vicki manages Wildwood Trust's conservation grazing projects, oversees research collaborations and provides support to numerous conservation programmes.

.....

The long-awaited arrival of European bison to West Blean comes at a time when 'wilder' approaches to nature conservation are being recognised as incredibly powerful tools in the fight against the climate and nature crises. An initial herd of four bison, led by a matriarch, will reinstate ecological processes that have been missing from our woodlands for thousands of years.

European bison have a very special conservation story to tell. In the 1920s, they became extinct in the wild; only a handful of individuals remained in captive collections. However, thanks to an extensive conservation breeding programme, there are now estimated to be between 7,000 and 8,000 bison worldwide.

The bison for the Wilder Blean project have been sourced by Wildwood Trust from this international conservation programme and individually selected according to their genetic diversity and suitability for the project. Wildwood Trust have cared for bison as part of this breeding programme for over 12 years so are experienced in looking after these magnificent animals and fully understand the incredible ecological benefits they will bring to the Blean.

The partnership between Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust showcases what can be achieved when like-minded organisations join forces. Projects like this are at the heart of Wildwood's mission to protect, conserve and rewild British wildlife. Wilder Blean is only the beginning for this partnership, with other collaborative projects already in the pipeline, including the reintroduction of red-billed choughs to Kent.

With a shared vision of a Wilder Kent, Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust are working together to create a brighter future for Kent's wildlife. 🐾



Support the Wilder Blean Project

The Wilder Blean project is the first of its kind in the UK and marks the beginning of a new era of conservation. We are no longer just looking back at what we had but looking forward. We are handing the reins back to nature, and we can't wait to see where she takes us.

This unique wilding project offers potential for improving the diversity and abundance of species in West Blean and Thornden Woods, along with a host of positive environmental benefits, such as locking up carbon and tackling flooding and drought. Kent Wildlife Trust is incredibly grateful for the financial support of the People's Postcode Lottery, but we would really appreciate your help as well. Your support - no matter how big or small - can help us deliver this project. Thank you to everyone that donates, engages, and supports this groundbreaking project.

GET INVOLVED



To learn more about our Wilder Blean project and find out ways in which you can help, please visit

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderblean

An update from Kent Wildlife Trust



Simon Bateman-Brown

As Head of Land Management, with over 25 years of experience in conservation, Simon works with Area Managers and Wardens to ensure that the 80+ reserves managed by Kent Wildlife Trust are maintained in the most effective way possible.

The excitement at Kent Wildlife Trust is rapidly mounting as we count down the weeks until four bison arrive at West Blean and Thornden Woods.

European bison are Europe's largest living wild land mammals. They primarily eat grass but also feed on bushes, brambles and trees, consuming up to 60 kilograms every day. They once roamed across the entire continent but intensive hunting and habitat loss eventually led to bison disappearing from the wild entirely.

European bison are considered a keystone species and will play a very important ecological role at West Blean and Thornden Woods. The introduction of bison not only helps the recovery of this species itself, but benefits nature in many other ways. In addition to consuming great quantities of grasses and feeding on shrubs, European bison remove the bark from trees, break open dense undergrowth and create bare soil patches and sand pits where a myriad of plant life can thrive. Bison also disperse nutrients and seeds, and breeding birds often use bison winter fur as nesting material.

As the diversity of the landscape and vegetation increases, a range of habitats will be created, allowing a cascade of other incredible species to flourish, including grazers, small mammals, birds and invertebrates.

This project will demonstrate the incredible potential of natural management solutions in woodland habitats, particularly at sites like West Blean where human intervention and recent mechanical management have been viewed as the only effective methods for many years.

Before, the woodland would be managed using chainsaws, harvesters and tree shears. Now, this ancient woodland can be managed with European bison, minimizing the need for direct human intervention and reducing the impact and disturbance to wildlife that these activities cause. 🐾

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



INSECT NUMBERS IN DECLINE

Bugs Matter update

Significantly fewer insect numbers recorded in our national citizen science survey.

Understanding insect population trends is the first step in halting and reversing catastrophic declines. By becoming a citizen scientist, you can generate crucial evidence to help us figure out how to protect our precious invertebrates.

Last year, we asked citizen scientists across the country to record the number of bugs accidentally squashed on car number plates. This was part of the **2021 Bugs Matter survey**.

Initial findings of this survey show that **significantly fewer insects were recorded nationally in 2021 compared to a baseline survey carried out in 2004 by the RSPB.**

A full report will be published in the coming weeks. Its contents will contribute to growing evidence that insect numbers are declining worldwide, a situation which has catastrophic consequences for the survival of our own species and the natural world, unless we act now.

Why do bug splats matter?

The Bugs Matter survey is based on the 'windscreen phenomenon' - a term given to the observation that people tend to find fewer insects squashed on the windscreens of their cars today compared to several decades ago.



Common leaf weevil

LEAF WEEVIL © VAUGHN MATTHEWS



Bugs Matter is a national partnership project between Kent Wildlife Trust and Buglife. We want to run the Bugs Matter survey every year to better understand local differences in insect populations and help target efforts to save them.

In the back of this magazine, you'll find your very own splatometer and links to download the Bugs Matter app. Cut the splatometer out to use in this year's survey, kicking off in June. We need citizen scientists like you to use the splatometer to count the number of bugs squashed on your number plates after each journey, and record these findings in our Bugs Matter app. Your participation is vital to us so, if you took part last year, thank you and please keep your app and join in again this summer.

Insects pollinate 75% of our food crops and are the main food source for many birds, small mammals, fish and reptiles. Without them, life on earth would collapse. By becoming a citizen scientist, you can help us understand more about our insect populations to inform conservation action. 🌱



For more information on Bugs Matter and the app, please visit: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/bugs-matter

BOOK REVIEW

Grass, Soil, Hope by Courtney White



Alison Ruyter

As a Nature Reserve Warden and Manager at Kent Wildlife Trust, Alison specialises in conservation grazing and linking landscapes to promote wildlife recovery.



To suggest a book or topic for a future review please email comms@kentwildlife.org.uk

During a recent family debate, I found myself in the unusual position of arguing for hope in our fight against the climate and biodiversity crises. **Courtney White's Grass, Soil, Hope has to take credit for that.**

Sometimes, everything can feel overwhelming: flooding, drought, poor air quality, economic pressure, ecosystem collapse. It is no wonder that 'climate anxiety' is now a well-known phenomenon. A recent worldwide study of 10,000 people aged 16 to 25 found that 60% were "very worried" or "extremely worried" about the crises.

The most common terms used by interviewees were "sad", "afraid", "anxious", "angry" and "powerless" (Hickman et al., 2021).

Grass, Soil, Hope is a ray of light in a storm. Courtney White tells incredible stories about ordinary people who are already out there driving the solutions.

The stories include accounts of fixing river catchments to prevent flooding and drought, using carbon capture in food production and restoring native species to build ecosystem resilience. Some examples are vast while others are tiny back garden projects, showing that we all have a role to play in fighting the crises.

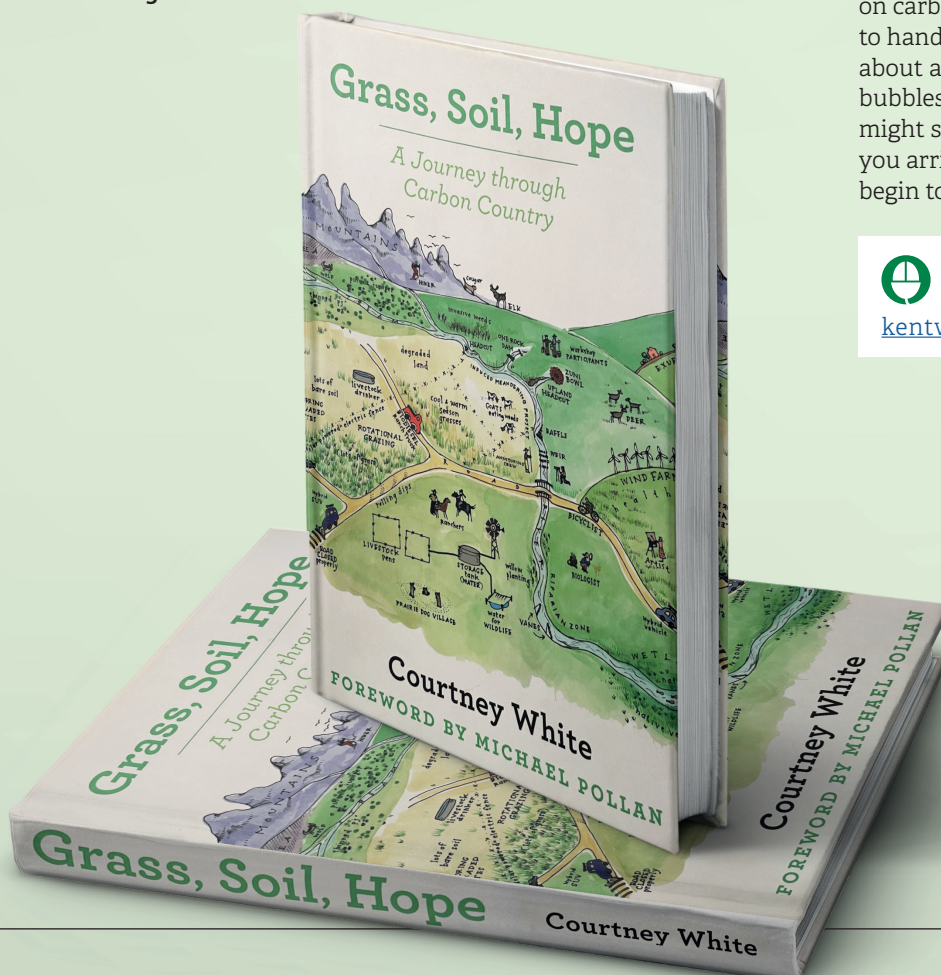
“ Grass, Soil, Hope is a ray of light in a storm... ”

Each microchapter of this book is preceded by an exploration of the topic, with examples of global positive action, the science behind them and how these projects capture carbon. There is something very comforting in knowing that others are doing the same things as Kent Wildlife Trust, albeit at different scales, such as helping beavers to thrive so they can engineer healthy ecosystems, encouraging appropriate grazing for biodiversity gain, and experimenting with cover crops to improve soil health.

Courtney White takes time to cover the basics of these issues with a comfortable style that is clear and easy to follow. Unlike many books which focus on carbon, you do not have to read with a thesaurus to hand! Occasionally the author's enthusiasm about a potential new reality for our natural world bubbles over into utopian descriptions that you might start to feel are impossible but then, boom, you arrive at another amazing microchapter, and begin to let yourself believe. 🌱



Grass, Soil, Hope is available to purchase from our online shop at kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/shop





On the *verge* of recovery

Discover roadside havens with wildlife-friendly verge expert, Mark Schofield.

Road verges make up 1.2% of the UK, some 2,600km² — that's an area the size of Dorset! This county-sized tract of land, hidden in plain sight, is home to over 700 species of wildflowers, representing 45% of our native flora. In many cases, verges act as vital corridors for wildlife and they are often the final habitats for scarce or declining wildflowers, such as sulphur clover, spiked rampion, Deptford pink and perennial flax.

The safety of road users demands that verges are maintained with shorter turf on approach to bends and junctions, and with safe pull-over zones. However, beyond these requirements, there are huge opportunities to create more space for nature — opportunities that are all too often missed.

Many verges are mown too frequently and the cuttings left in place, which creates a physical barrier to growth and

increases the soil fertility as the cuttings decompose. This gives an unnatural advantage to the most competitive plants. Spoil from ditch clearance is often spread across verges with similar effect.

Conversely, too little mowing can also be a problem; many verges are left unmown and the strips of grassland are lost as they grow into scrub. Scrub is great for wildlife, but a mix of habitats which include scrub and wildflower areas is far better.

A road verge that is well managed for wildlife can form multiple worlds, each offering different niches for wildlife. Tall, wide, diverse, native hedgerows at the back of the verge, complete with trees, can blur into infrequently trimmed tall herbs and tussocks as well as grassland meadows mown once or twice a year.

Here, mowing is best done in late summer to allow seeds to ripen and insect lifecycles to complete, or even later where soil is poorer.

Removing cuttings simulates wild grazing and reduces fertility in the soil, maintaining more natural conditions that support a wider diversity of wildflowers and the invertebrates that rely on them. Open drainage ditches can add habitat for aquatic and marginal plants too.

Verges near you may be crew-cut strips that flank suburban crescents and cul-de-sacs, or they might be overgrown rural lane sides. Your local highways authority (typically your county council or unitary authority) will have these managed under contract. A local petition may be able to reduce the frequency of cuts in your area, delivering cost savings and lowering the carbon footprint for public services. Collecting the cuttings is the main challenge cited by authorities, but affordable machinery exists to achieve this and it has been implemented with success by some councils.

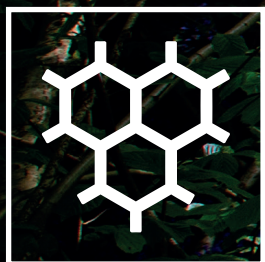


There are roadside nature reserves across the UK that set the standard for roadside habitat but we must call for better management of the rest of our verges if we want to achieve a national Nature Recovery Network. 🌱



For advice on where to start, visit wildlifetrusts.org/verges or contact Bethany Patemen, our Wilder Road Verge Officer: bethany.pateman@kentwildlife.org.uk

PROJECT UPDATE



Wilder Carbon

Native habitats. Natural solutions.



Evan Bowen-Jones
As Chief Executive of Kent Wildlife Trust, Evan has a 25 year professional conservation background that encompasses implementation of species and landscape-level conservation projects.

Carbon offset schemes allow individuals and companies to invest in environmental projects around the world in order to balance out or cancel their carbon emissions.

But carbon offsetting done badly can provide a license to pollute. Large corporations can pay for offsetting projects to compensate for their emissions and then continue to emit at the same, or increasing, rates.

Many offsetting projects provide an ineffective solution to the climate crisis by enabling the continuation of excessive emissions as well as negatively impacting biodiversity.

It is now internationally acknowledged that solving the nature crisis (the ongoing loss of biodiversity that organisations like Kent Wildlife Trust were originally established to protect) is a critical part of tackling the climate crisis. Climate change is one of the greatest drivers of biodiversity loss. In other words, these crises are linked and must be tackled in tandem.

The mission of conservation organisations has never been more important to society.

Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) provide a sustainable, ethical and cost-effective offsetting method to confront both crises. NCS involve restoring and wilding* our natural landscapes, leading to reductions in carbon emissions and improvements to biodiversity.

It is vital to note that, in order to tackle both crises, NCS must be implemented in parallel with active emission reductions. This is the premise of Wilder Carbon: premium quality, ethical investment in local nature.

Wilder Carbon in its simplest terms

Kent Wildlife Trust has designed Wilder Carbon as an exemplary delivery mechanism for NCS in the UK. Trusted Deliverers (environmental organisations) will 'wild' areas of land and sell credits to businesses seeking to offset their emissions in an ethical, cost-effective way.

Trusted Deliverers must meet the Standards by restoring our landscapes using conservation management techniques that result in measurably greater biodiversity, whilst measurably sequestering (absorbing) carbon.

Crucially, Wilder Carbon will only be open to Approved Buyers: businesses who meet our rigorous Standards by demonstrably reducing their emissions. You can read our Standards here: wildercarbon.com/publications/the-wilder-carbon-standard

As the urgency surrounding the crises increases, the pressing need for these kinds of high integrity NCS projects is materialising, presenting the greatest opportunity we have ever seen to ramp up nature recovery.

*** WILDING**

i A 'hands-off' approach to ecological restoration. Rather than trying to preserve a particular habitat in a stable state, wilding is more concerned with the promotion of natural processes and ecological functions. This is non-prescriptive conservation that inherently promotes biological diversity and abundance. These natural processes produce resilient ecosystems that can adapt to climate change and deliver stable carbon capture.



For more information about Wilder Carbon, visit wildercarbon.com



The foundations of Wilder Carbon

1. Our Technical Standards Board (an independent panel of experts from various sectors) developed the Wilder Carbon Standards last year. These enable projects to be certified and matched to ethical buyers and investors.
2. The recommended Carbon + Habitat Tool will help us develop projects aligned to the Standards by examining the full spectrum of carbon-rich habitats and estimating the potential carbon lock-up and biodiversity uplift of a given habitat if restored.

We have conservatively estimated that by 2030, the equivalent of 17 years of UK carbon emissions from aviation (676 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) can be locked up through restoring native habitat, but only if we start now.

Crucially, our modelling suggests that this can be achieved without impacting productive farmland, which is often cited as a potential drawback of NCS as a conflict of national strategic interests.

In 2022, we will take the following steps:

- Selling carbon EUs (credits) from our first two pilot projects: Heather Corrie Vale and Honeygar
- Working with partners to advocate for policy change that overcome current barriers to implement high integrity NCS at scale
- Accelerating the development of projects with more Trusted Deliverers
- Working with land managers and landowners through the new "conservation covenant" mechanism in the Environment Act (find out more about this on page 38)
- Refining and formalising our independent Monitoring, Reporting & Verification mechanisms
- Launching a new High Integrity Registry which will transparently trace carbon credits from projects to approved, ethical buyers

Why do we need to link carbon financing and conservation activities?

Never before has our work been so crucial; never before has the challenge been so great. Our ambition, and that of all conservation agencies across the UK, has had to increase exponentially due to the scale of the crises we are facing. But we need the money to realise these ambitions, and it is not going to come from the UK Government.

The Government is now asking the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs to raise £500 million per year for nature restoration, increasing this contribution to £1 billion from 2027. The Government anticipates that this money will come from the private sector, with much of it expected to be through the voluntary carbon market via offsetting. 🍷



Heath fritillary

PATHFINDER PROJECT

HONEYGAR

Honeygar is an important, ambitious and pioneering Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) project to restore nature, addressing the biodiversity and climate crises.

The vision for Honeygar is that, through rewetting peat soils, SWT will turn the land from a carbon emitting site to a carbon sink (sequestering more carbon than is released), allowing habitats to form and a range of species to return. Wilder Carbon will provide the funds for SWT's long-term protection of Honeygar for nature and the climate. SWT are fundraising now to initiate the immediate restoration of Honeygar.



Simon Clarke

As Head of Nature Recovery at Somerset Wildlife Trust, Simon pioneers the development and delivery of the Trust's Nature Recovery Network strategy.

Honeygar

Somerset Wildlife Trust has owned and managed land on the Somerset Levels and Moors for over 50 years.

Honeygar Farm, located in the midst of the Avalon Marshes, is an intensively grazed piece of farmland nestled amongst the Trust's existing nature reserves and partner sites. Supported by Wilder Carbon, Somerset Wildlife Trust can 'wild' Honeygar, transforming this agricultural land into a thriving, biodiverse wetland once more.

Honeygar is the missing link which, when restored, will provide a vital element to this landscape, connecting existing wildlife corridors and enabling animals to move through the landscape more freely.

Honeygar will enhance ecological connectivity, not only to nearby nature reserves, but also west along the River Brue to Somerset's coastal network, east towards Glastonbury and north to the Mendip Hills.

The peatlands of Honeygar have been drained for centuries to enable human settlement and agriculture. Rewetting the peat soils is a priority at Honeygar; this will reverse the damage caused to the soil from intensive agricultural management and turn the site from carbon emitter to net carbon sink, allowing vegetation to develop more naturally and encouraging wildlife to return.

The work that Wilder Carbon has put behind its Carbon + Habitat Tool is of enormous significance in

terms of our ability to measure and monitor carbon flux across the Honeygar site. By working with Wilder Carbon, we can respond positively to climate change and allow nature to recover.

Imagine having a network of similar pioneering sites across the UK, supported by Wilder Carbon, and the impact that this could have on achieving our carbon targets and reversing biodiversity decline.

What we do, how we do it and the critical data gathered at Honeygar can be used to inform ongoing management or interventions. This work can provide learning and knowledge that can be shared with other landowners and land managers across the Avalon Marshes, Somerset and beyond. 🐝



PATHFINDER PROJECT

HEATHER CORRIE VALE

This former golf course is transforming into a biodiverse, wildlife-abundant woodland, which will sequester significant carbon.

This increased carbon sequestration will generate Wilder Carbon credits to fund a further 50 years of sustainable land management, allowing us to secure even more sites for nature restoration and binding together Kent Wildlife Trust's work over the next few decades.



Simon Bateman-Brown

As Head of Land Management, with over 25 years of experience in conservation, Simon works with Area Managers and Wardens to ensure that the 80+ reserves managed by Kent Wildlife Trust are maintained in the most effective way possible.

Heather Corrie Vale Wilding Project

This picturesque site in the Darenth Valley is an extremely valuable part of Kent's Nature Recovery Network.

In the short time since this area was last intensively managed in 2018, the land has started to recover and increasing numbers of small mammals, invertebrates and birds have come to forage, nest and breed.

Species that have been spotted on the site include the brown long eared bat, pipistrelle bat, badger, speckled wood, holly blue, red admiral, common darter, carder bee and boar.

Our aim is to create a site that is managed through natural processes in order to sequester greater levels of both soil and above-ground carbon, whilst improving the site for wildlife.

We will do this by introducing longhorn cattle to graze. This will evolve the habitat from the largely open space that it is now, through to scrub establishment, eventually leading to the majority of the site being native scrub or secondary/mature broadleaf woodland within 50 years. This ever-changing habitat will provide ideal conditions for a vast range of species, allowing wildlife to flourish. 🐾

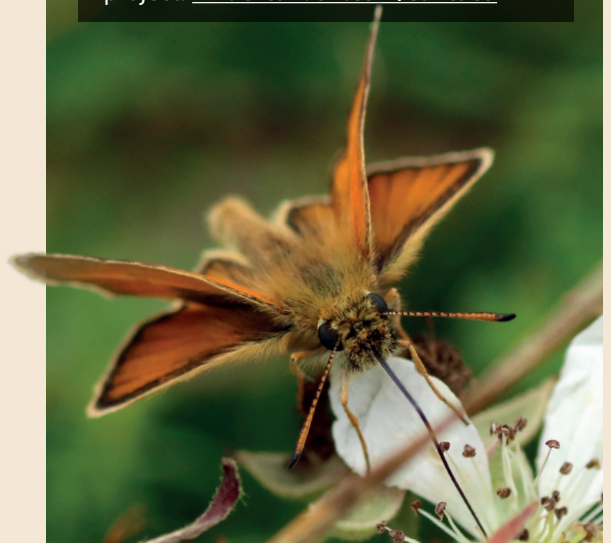
SUPPORT WILDER CARBON

Support nature recovery on your doorstep and contribute to tackling the global crises.

GET IN TOUCH



Become an Approved Buyer or talk to us about how your land could be used to deliver a Wilder Carbon project: wildercarbon.com/contact



Spring Wildlife Gardening

Our gardens come alive in spring. Ponds fill with amphibians, borders buzz with the season's first bees, and everywhere, from trees and hedges to fences and roof panels, birds are busy singing to defend territories, mating or feeding young. It's an exciting time of year!

While all of this goes on around us, there are things we can do to make our gardens even better for wildlife. First, take a look at your borders — in early spring they should be carpeted with flowers such as hellebores, lungwort,

primroses and other primulas, as well as bulbs like crocus and snake's head fritillary. Later, grape hyacinths, alliums, cranesbills, bugle and cuckooflower take centre stage. The early flowers are the most important because they provide food for pollinators emerging from hibernation — remember that daffodils and tulips are usually ignored

by bees. Make a note of which flowers you have, and fill gaps with pollinator favourites.


Ponds are full of mating amphibians and invertebrates so are best left alone. However, it's important to check that wildlife can enter and exit your pond safely — add a log or large stone to help wildlife access the water. If you don't have many plants in the pond you can add more now, as long as you don't disturb the water too much. Aim for a mix of floating, submerged and deep-water plants, with around two-thirds of the pond surface covered. Plants absorb nitrates from the water and therefore inhibit the growth of algae. They also provide hiding places for tadpoles and other larvae so they can avoid predators



Kate Bradbury

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





such as diving beetles and dragonfly nymphs. Choose native marginals such as brooklime and water forget-me-not, floating plants such as frogbit and oxygenators like hornwort and water crowfoot.

Around the pond, think ahead to summer, when froglets and toadlets may be exiting the water for the first time. Let the grass there get long and grow plants to protect them from predators. Cranesbill geraniums and birds' foot trefoil work well around ponds, providing plenty of shelter for amphibians big and small.

If you have a meadow then cut it back in early spring and remove clippings, then let it grow until autumn. As well as providing wildflowers for pollinators, the long grass will provide food for caterpillars and shelter for beetles and other invertebrates, plus amphibians, small mammals and even hedgehogs. 🐾

Visit our Open Gardens in Kent



Learn all about wildlife-friendly gardening from our Wild About Gardens team at one of our upcoming events or by contacting maureen.rainey@kentwildlife.org.uk

You can read about our events in more detail on page 37 of this magazine.

Get more wildlife-friendly gardening tips at wildlifetrusts.org/gardening

VOLUNTEER WITH US

Volunteers are the heart of our Visitor Centres

**Sarah Tee**

Sarah Tee is Kent Wildlife Trust's Public Engagement and Visitor Management Trainee, based at the Trust's Romney Marsh Visitor Centre.

The Romney Marsh Visitor Centre in New Romney and the Jeffery Harrison Visitor Centre in Sevenoaks welcome visitors all year round. The centres are community hubs which provide information, offer hot drinks and light refreshments, and sell local produce, souvenirs and artwork, all of which raise funds for Kent Wildlife Trust. Events, art groups and walking groups are also run from these centres.

You can support Kent Wildlife Trust by giving the gift of your time and joining a volunteer team at one of our visitor centres! These roles will enable you to socialise with your community, share your existing skills and maybe learn some new ones! Most importantly, you can make a genuine impact; your contributions will help us create a Wilder Kent and pave the way towards a brighter future for our wildlife and communities.

Volunteering also provides incredible mental health benefits. In fact, the NHS has recognised the positive impact that volunteering can have on mental health. The physical activity involved in some roles can cause endorphin boosts which improve mood. Taking part in voluntary work can improve your self-esteem, instill a sense of purpose and help you feel valued.

Kent Wildlife Trust considers its volunteers to be highly valuable members of its team. Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how big or small.

Our indoor volunteer roles involve interacting with visitors at our centres and assisting in the day-to-day running of the gift shops and cafés — perfect for anyone looking to volunteer in a role that is less physically demanding.

We also have lots of outdoor volunteering roles. For example, we have a dedicated team of volunteers who grow fruits and vegetables on our sites, helping nature to thrive.

The Romney Marsh Community Garden provides a great example of how growing produce can benefit wildlife. Native wildflowers have been planted around the plots to attract insects which, in turn, pollinate growing fruits and vegetables. The produce from the garden is 100% organic; no chemical fertilizer, pesticides or herbicides are used. The garden relies on native predators and practical techniques, such as covering plants, to control pests so there is no risk of environmental contamination.



Weaving a new willow shelter at
Sevenoaks wildlife reserve

SHOP AT OUR VISITOR CENTRES



Jangneus cloths are sold in our visitor centres. The cloths are made from natural and renewable materials. They are also 100% biodegradable so after their long and useful lives, they can go straight onto the compost heap!

Bison Adoption Packs include a certificate, bison photograph, fact sheet and a bison soft toy. By buying an adoption pack you will be helping the Wilder Blean project. Learn more on pages 16 and 17.



“The great thing about volunteering is that it can be flexible around your day-to-day life. This means you can fit it around your education or current employment. It is also a great networking tool because you will often meet lots of individuals who work in conservation. Looking back on my time as a student, I wish I had started volunteering much sooner - I may well have started my career with Kent Wildlife Trust much earlier in my life!”

Sarah Tee | Public Engagement and Visitor Management Trainee

Your help is always
welcome, and
your contribution
will make a huge
difference.

At Sevenoaks, the Elemental Garden and Wild Area is maintained by volunteers — no gardening experience is needed and all tools are provided. Volunteering in the garden is a great way to exercise and unwind in a pleasant outdoors environment and gives you the chance to meet like-minded people. The garden volunteers have become a very close community and always welcome new members.

Erica volunteers once a week at Sevenoaks Visitor Centre: “It is a relaxed, friendly environment

with beautiful surroundings where you can socialise with like-minded people.”

All in all, the best advice to anyone considering a volunteer role would be to do it! There is something to suit everyone! 🐾

Become a volunteer!



If you are interested in volunteering, visit kentwildlife.org.uk/volunteering, pop into one of our visitor centres and chat to a member of staff, or read about existing roles on page 43.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

Our Corporate **Partnerships**



Lucie Bolton, Corporate Partnerships Manager, and Tamarin Ward, Director of Fundraising, Marcomms and Advocacy, with Jonathan Neame

Shepherd Neame

Faversham-based brewery Shepherd Neame has chosen Kent Wildlife Trust as Charity of the Year for 2022. Working in partnership with businesses like Shepherd Neame provides vital funds for our work and enables us to reach new audiences who may not be aware of our nature reserves, projects or education opportunities.

We are delighted that Shepherd Neame has decided to support the Trust this year and look forward to working alongside their staff and customers. We are particularly excited to work together on creating some wildlife-friendly pub gardens.

“We always aim to do the right thing for our communities and the local environment. In addition to raising money for the charity during the year ahead, we hope that our team members will get involved with some of the many volunteering opportunities on offer across the county.”

Jonathan Neame, Chief Executive of Shepherd Neame

As part of its fundraising activities, Shepherd Neame has teamed up with Pennies, the digital charity box. Customers drinking and dining at selected pubs are invited to make a 25p donation to charity when they spend over £30 and pay on a card via chip and pin. Every penny given goes to charity: 90% to Kent Wildlife Trust and 10% to Pennies.

Work for Good

Many small businesses are looking for ways to support nature and wildlife in Kent. This is why we have partnered with Work for Good.

Now, when businesses pledge a portion of their sales to Kent Wildlife Trust, Work for Good take care of the legal requirements of commercial participation agreements, saving us precious resources.

Our Corporate Supporter, Court Barn Escapes, has recently pledged to donate through Work for Good.



Waitrose

Waitrose and Partners, through their Community Matters programme, have been supporting local charities under the theme of 'Environment'. We have recently received donations from Waitrose Beckenham, Waitrose Sevenoaks and Waitrose Canterbury. [🔗](#)

Become a Corporate Member

You can directly support local wildlife conservation today.

Ask your employer to become a Corporate Partner.

It's easy, all they need to do is contact Lucie Bolton, our Corporate Partnerships Manager: lucie.bolton@kentwildlife.org.uk



Or visit our corporate webpage for more information: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/support-us/become-business-member



CHALKHILL BLUE © PATRICK JEFFERIES



Right Tree Right Place

When it comes to tackling the climate crisis, sometimes it's hard to see the wood for the trees, as Barnaby Coupe explores...

**A note from Evan Bowen-Jones,
Chief Executive of Kent Wildlife Trust:**

As Barnaby Coupe explains in this article, planting trees is not the only answer to solving the climate crisis. There are many other incredible habitats which have extraordinary value for wildlife and will play a large role in addressing the climate crisis too.

The Wilder Carbon project provides a solution: we can restore these vital habitats and reduce our emissions by implementing high-quality, ethical Natural Climate Solutions.



Read more at wildercarbon.com and on pages 22-25 of this magazine.



For many people, trees and woodlands are emblematic of our deepest connections with nature. They are a constant in our culture and histories, from the Hundred Acre Wood to the adventures of Robin Hood, and with good reason. Our native woodlands are vibrant, wild, and shrouded in mystery — the perfect place for nature to thrive.

Ancient native woodlands in particular hold a wealth of life, with a complex weave of ecological networks and relationships between a huge array of diverse species. For example, the mighty oak, a staple of British woods, provides habitat for more than 2,300 species, from woodland birds to fungi. These long-standing woodlands also possess trees of varying ages, with old trees offering nest holes for birds like redstarts and pied flycatchers, dead and dying trees providing essential habitat for fungi and insects like stag beetles, and young trees and dense, thorny scrub creating nesting sites for warblers and nightingales. Stag beetles as well as nightingales, are some of the most threatened species in the UK so having wilder, natural woodlands which contain these habitats are critical for their continued survival.

Yet, as we are now seeing the impacts of a changing climate, our woodlands are receiving increased interest in another of their magical properties — the ability to take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and lock it away for centuries in their branches, roots, and within the soil. As a result, trees have increasingly been put forward as a win-win solution for nature and the climate, but are trees always a silver bullet?

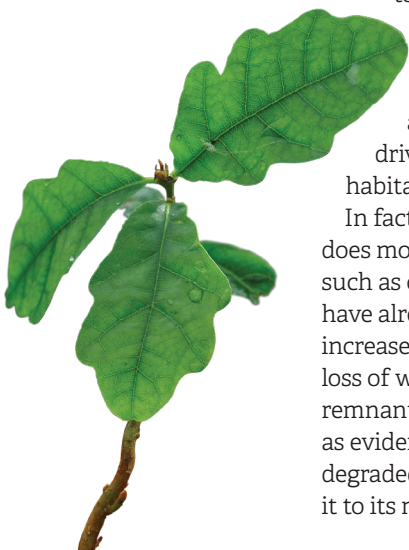


Many birds, like pied flycatchers, depend on diverse, native woodlands

Heroic habitats

While important, trees are not the only answer to solving the climate crisis. Habitats such as chalk downland, hay meadows, peatlands, and heathland all have extraordinary value for wildlife and will play a large role in addressing the climate crisis too. Yet, in the drive to plant more trees, it is precisely these habitats that can be put at risk.

In fact, planting trees on the above habitats often does more harm than good. Trees planted on habitats such as our flower-filled meadows, most of which have already vanished in the past century due to increased agricultural intensification, can lead to a loss of wildlife, and further threaten the precious remnants that remain. Yet this bias for trees remains, as evidenced in a recent decision to replant an area of degraded heathland with conifers rather than restore it to its natural state.



Shallow peat soil is particularly at risk from tree planting, and creating new woodlands in these areas can release more CO₂ through soil degradation than the trees end up taking in. Multiple examples of this were seen in the mid-20th century when vast areas of peatland were drained, ploughed, and assailed with single-species plantations of non-native conifers in a short-sighted bid to increase timber resources.

Right tree, right place

This approach to planting trees has been rightly castigated by the majority of environmentalists and foresters alike, yet we are still seeing examples of this happening today in the increased drive to plant trees to address the climate crisis. In just one example from last year, 100 acres of bog, heath and grassland were destroyed to plant trees. So what's the answer? Have we learnt from the mistakes of the past?



Fallen trees can provide an essential habitat for beetles



Jays play a vital role in natural regeneration, carrying away acorns and caching them in the ground



Barnaby Coupe
As the Land Use Policy Manager at The Wildlife Trusts, Barnaby leads on the development of tree and woodland policy.

We know that trees are not just carbon-capturing machines. They are part of a living, breathing ecosystem. When creating new woodlands, it has to be the right tree, in the right place, working with the environment around it. By ensuring that the right tree is planted in the right place, large areas of new, highly biodiverse, native woodland can be created as part of a joined-up system which benefits other habitats for nature, whilst drawing down carbon at the same time.

Wilder woodlands

One way to get around the issue of where to plant trees is to let trees plant themselves. After all, planting trees does not create a woodland. Forests are diverse and dynamic environments which have developed over years, decades and millennia. Their complex ecological networks are both above ground and within the soils, involving a huge array of interdependent relationships between many species. And these systems were operating long before the development of wooden stakes and plastic tree guards.

Natural regeneration is the best way of creating new, natural and wilder woodlands for wildlife. This is particularly powerful when expanding ancient semi-natural woodland, as it allows the expansion of the entire woodland ecosystem, where new saplings can take advantage of symbiotic relationships with networks of fungi in the soil. With time and patience, this can result in stunning woodlands for wildlife, such as Brampton Wood in Cambridgeshire.

Not only is it more cost effective than planting, but natural regeneration is also the best way of creating woodlands that are resilient to a changing climate. It allows these habitats to develop a dynamic age-structure, genetic variation, and associated ecologies, where trees that grow to maturity will be best suited to their local micro-climatic conditions, such as soil type, water availability, and sunlight. All of this makes them more resilient to external pest and disease threats.

Branching out

- If you are considering planting a tree in your own garden or pursuing a small woodland creation project, check out our guide to tree planting at wildlifetrusts.org/plant-a-tree
- If you're considering a larger woodland creation project, then check out our guidance on suitable sites for tree planting at wtru.st/tree-chart
- You can also get in touch with the team at Kent Wildlife Trust who can help with any specific queries you may have when considering how best to go about a new tree planting project.



A nuanced approach

Now, natural regeneration won't be possible everywhere, and in some locations it will need a great deal of support to get going. It is clear that expanding the UK's network of native tree and woodland cover will have a huge role to play in rebuilding ecological networks, delivering nature's recovery, and tackling the climate crisis, and if we are to increase woodland cover in this country significantly then we will need to look at planting more trees.

But we must not forget about the other habitats across the UK. Restoring the UK's peatlands will be critical to meeting our climate ambitions, and the protection and restoration of our other threatened habitats are crucial if we are to bend the curve on biodiversity loss. A nuanced approach is required; one which creates more, bigger, better, and more joined-up woodlands, hedgerows, trees and scrub, thriving with wildlife and accessible to people, while also ensuring protection of other vital habitats where tree planting may be more damaging than helpful. 🌿

SUPPORT US

Help us to save Swanscombe



Nicky Britton-Williams

As Senior Wilder Towns Officer at Kent Wildlife Trust, a large part of Nicky's job involves working with local communities, councils and developers to ensure that planning processes and developments contribute to our vision of creating a Wilder Kent.

Our campaign to save the Swanscombe Peninsula is essential; we cannot allow one of the UK's most precious wildlife sites to be destroyed and replaced by a theme park.

If the London Resort development goes ahead, it will devastate local wildlife, prevent local access to priceless green space AND set a dangerous precedent that such development projects should be prioritised over sites of incredible biodiversity.

Swanscombe Peninsula is one of the UK's richest wildlife sites, home to a vast array of birds, beautiful flowering plants, charismatic water voles, and over 2,000 species of insects and other invertebrates.

In November, our partnership of conservation charities - Kent Wildlife Trust, Buglife, CPRE Kent and RSPB - successfully ensured that Swanscombe Peninsula was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), responded to London Resort Consultations, and rallied with the local community to save this site. However, despite its formal protection, Swanscombe Peninsula continues to be threatened with destruction by one company's quest to build a theme park, no matter the cost.

The construction of London Resort will drastically set back both the UK's progress towards net zero and our target to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030.

We have a long way to go as a county, and a nation, if we are going to deliver positive outcomes for nature. These efforts must start by ensuring that our network of protected sites is not lost forever, buried under impermeable concrete.



Distinguished jumping spider

To achieve this, we must work to present our case to the Planning Inspector, and then to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Unprecedented delays caused by the developer have made this campaign tricky to navigate. We are now preparing to speak up for wildlife during the intensive examination process, which has produced thousands of pages of documents.

To make sure that we are properly prepared to tackle such an exhaustive examination, we need the support of experts and specialists to help us stand up for this precious wildlife site. Together with Buglife, CPRE Kent and the Save Swanscombe Peninsula campaign group, we have been urgently raising funds to cover the cost of specialist barristers and advisors. 🐛

Join the fight



We need your help in this David and Goliath fight to save one of our most precious wildlife sites from destruction. Find out more at kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/save-swanscombe

Wild about *open* gardens



Gardens cover 5% of all land in the UK; that's more than all National Nature Reserves combined. If we can encourage gardeners to manage their green spaces in a more nature-friendly way, we will make incredible progress towards ensuring that 30% of our land and sea is connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030. **So, how do we do this?**

Our Wild About Gardens team has witnessed a massive increase in requests for gardening advice over the last couple of years. This is great news, but there are still many people with hesitations about changing their own gardens to become more wildlife-friendly:

“ I just don't believe you can have those beautiful plants without resorting to pesticides. ”

Last year, our brilliant Wild About Gardens volunteers came up with the idea of showcasing nature-friendly gardens which are beautiful, productive and welcoming to all. After all, if you learn to love something, you want to protect it.

The response to our first open gardens scheme was far better than we ever could have dreamed. We spoke with members of the “stripey lawn brigade” and encouraged many of them to make daisy chains with their children and ditch harmful pesticides.

By the time you read this, our 2022 open gardens season will have begun. We will be showcasing some favourites from last year, plus stunning new additions in Shorne village, Sheppey and Lydden near Dover.

Timed tickets will allow plenty of space and time for visitors to chat to garden owners and volunteers, and obtain tips and advice. We are hoping to include stalls where you can browse a selection of plants, propagated sustainably by our volunteers.

We are pleased to welcome volunteers from our partner organisations: Kent Bat and Mammal Group, Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group, and Butterfly and Bumblebee Conservation Trusts.

We need your help to spread the word: please tell your neighbours and friends about our events, bring them along, or buy tickets as gifts. Let's help build all-important corridors for nature across our county and help wildlife to thrive.

Ticket prices remain at £5 per guest to make the events as inclusive as possible. 🍷



Find out more information and book onto an open garden event here:

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens

Open Garden Map

- 1 **Wateringbury**
Sunday 10 April
- 2 **Gravesend**
Sunday 8 May
- 3 **Shorne**
Sunday 29 May
- 4 **Minster**
Sunday 19 June
- 5 **Lydden**
Saturday 25 June
- 6 **Doddington**
Sunday 31 July
- 7 **Great Chart**
Sunday 31 July
- 8 **East Farleigh**
Saturday 20 August



2021 ENVIRONMENT BILL

What does the Environment Bill mean for farming, food and wildlife?



Rory Harding

As Senior Farmer Cluster Officer, Rory works with farmers across Kent to integrate nature into everyday decision making. Coming from a beef farming family in East Sussex, Rory wants to show how farmers can be at the heart of nature restoration in Kent.

In November 2021, the UK Parliament passed the Environment Bill into UK law.

The resulting 'Environment Act 2021' provides a broad framework for environmental governance, as well as targets, plans and policies to improve waste and resource efficiency, air quality, nature, biodiversity, and much more.

For the past 26 years, EU legislation has shaped the UK's approach to environmental protection. In the wake of Brexit, this new Act aims to maintain the UK's commitment to protecting the environment. It represents a significant shift in environmental policy.

The 2020 Agriculture Act, which sits alongside the Environment Act, introduced Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs). These enable farmers to receive subsidies for farming practices which improve 'public goods' (including water resourcing, biodiversity restoration and carbon sequestration), rather than focusing solely on food production.



Large skipper

What is included in the Environment Act that is relevant for farming?

Nature Recovery Networks

- Legally binding targets to encourage net biodiversity increases and legislation to support Nature Recovery Networks.
- Local authorities have been tasked with working on local nature recovery strategies to tie into these networks.

Net Gain

- All new development projects must result in a net increase in biodiversity, either within the boundaries of the development or off-site.
- This provides an opportunity for farmers to benefit from this net gain legislation by receiving income to make permanent land use changes for wildlife. This means that farmers can receive net gain income, ELM subsidies, and funding for carbon sequestration (if participating in carbon markets).
- Conservation covenants will be a vital step.

i Conservation covenants are voluntary agreements between a landowner and a third party which enable landowners to make long-term conservation commitments.

What next?

We will use the new Act to achieve the best outcomes for people and wildlife. Through our consultancy and Farmer Clusters, we will help farmers and landowners navigate the array of options available and support them in making game-changing decisions for wildlife across their farms.

Working with local authorities and farmers to effectively plan and map Kent's Nature Recovery Networks will also be a crucial element in connecting and restoring habitats at scale.

Time to roll up our sleeves! 🍷



Farmers from the Darent Valley Farmer Cluster visiting Preston Farm to learn about the implementation of Nature-based Solutions

Come along to a WILDER KENT SAFARI

This spring, join us on a **Wilder Kent Safari** to discover the wilding stories of our reserves.

At West Blean and Thornden Woods, learn about the latest developments in the Wilder Blean project with our experienced tour guides. All we need now is our European bison, Exmoor ponies, Iron-Age pigs and longhorn cattle!

Visit Ham Fen to see the impact of a beaver wilding project that started over twenty years ago. Look for evidence of gnawed tree stumps, dams and lodges, and learn about how beavers have been restoring the waterways of Kent's last fen.

Stop by Oare Marshes to trace the rich history of the area. You can learn about how Kent Wildlife Trust are using grazing animals to maintain biodiversity for years to come.

Brand new in 2022: join our guides to discover the choughs' fascinating links to Kent, explore West Blean by bike, or try a photography safari! 📷



To book or find out more about our safaris, visit: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/safaris

Check out the dates of our upcoming safaris on page 46!

BEAVER © NICK UPTON

New pond dipping platforms at Tyland Barn: Work is underway!

In February at Tyland Barn, work began to remove the old pond dipping platforms and replace them with brand-new, nature-inspired platforms which have been designed to improve accessibility and complement the natural environment.

The pond is an integral part of Tyland Barn Nature Park, providing an aquatic habitat for wildlife and supporting many other species in the ecosystem. The pond enables the Trust to host educational events and activities, as well as fun family sessions. In early spring, visitors may encounter frogs or newts. In summer, beetles, dragonfly nymphs and snails might be spotted.

Kent Wildlife Trust is extremely grateful to Biffa Award for their generous funding of £48,073, as well as The Cobtree Charity Trust and the Blakemore Foundation for their incredible support. 🐾



Keep an eye on our social media to keep up to date with this project and find out about upcoming events to celebrate the opening of the new platforms.

Check out our upcoming events on page 46!



Rachel Maidment, Biffa Award Grants Manager, said:



At Biffa Award we love supporting projects which provide opportunities for people to spend time in nature while observing and learning about wildlife, just like the creation of these new pond-dipping platforms at Kent Wildlife Trust's Tyland Barn. We can't wait to see the finished project in 2022.

UK UPDATE

Wally the Walrus made a surprise visit to our shores in 2021

The weird, wonderful & worrying

OUR 2021 MARINE REVIEW



etaceans (warm-blooded aquatic mammals like dolphins) take centre stage in our round-up of marine news from the last

12 months, with success stories, tragic tales, and strange sightings. There was hope for humpback whales, with strong numbers recorded around the southwest and further sightings in Scotland. One individual, named Pi, delighted whale watchers on the Isles of Scilly for over two months. The surge in sightings in recent years reflects populations recovering after bans on commercial whaling.

It wasn't all good news though, with large numbers of seals and cetaceans reported stranded across the UK, including a minke whale calf that tragically had to be put down after stranding in the Thames. In Cornwall alone, over 170 cetaceans and 247 seals were stranded, with a further stranded 51 cetaceans recorded in Devon. Many of these animals showed signs of injury from fishing gear or propellers, including a humpback whale off Looe Island that was caught in fishing lines. One of the stranded animals in Cornwall was a striped dolphin, which are common in the Mediterranean but seldom seen around the UK.

This wasn't the only surprising cetacean sighting in the south of the UK. Two orcas from the Hebrides made a scene-stealing appearance near the cliff-top Minnack Theatre in Cornwall — the most southerly sighting of this group of killer whales in over 50 years — and white-beaked dolphins, usually found in subarctic waters, were seen in Essex for the first time since 2000.

Whales and dolphins weren't alone in popping up in unexpected places. 2021 saw two walrus recorded in the UK, with one, nicknamed Wally, spending weeks in south Wales and then the Isles of Scilly; and a second (known as Freya) briefly visiting Northumberland before being spotted in Shetland. There was also a pufferfish found washed up on a Cornish beach, an oceanic species that rarely comes this far north.

These unusual sightings provide further evidence of the impacts of climate change on our seas. Temperature changes can cause disruption to feeding habits and breeding cycles, driving animals to move out of their usual range, while others are shifting their distribution completely. The ringneck blenny, a small fish normally found in the Eastern Atlantic or Mediterranean, has become common in Cornwall's Fal estuary, with further signs of breeding in the English Channel.

Our marine life faces many threats in addition to climate change, including disturbance from recreational activities. Cornwall Wildlife Trust reported that disturbances of marine wildlife have tripled since 2014, with an increase of jet skis and motorboats a major cause for concern. Elsewhere, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales witnessed a seal pup being abandoned after people got too close to it. Surveys by Dorset Wildlife Trust recorded damage to the seabed caused by the anchors of large cruise ships, moored off the coast due to the pandemic.

But there was also plenty to celebrate last year, with good news for kelp forests, seagrass meadows, oyster beds and many

more habitats and species. In March, a new byelaw was passed to stop damaging fishing practices off the Sussex coast. To speed up the area's recovery, the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project will restore a vast 200km² of kelp forest, providing feeding and nursery grounds for molluscs, shrimp, and cuttlefish.

Seagrass habitats also got a much needed boost. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust transplanted seeds and plants to areas where seagrass has previously flourished, while Manx Wildlife Trust discovered a new seagrass meadow. Cornwall Wildlife Trust mapped seagrass regrowth in areas where moorings had been removed, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust carried out the first surveys of seagrass on mudflats off Walney Island for over 20 years.

There are even more sea success stories in our full round-up, which you can read at: wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-21

Ocean oddities

- Adders took to the surf: snakes were seen paddling in the waves on Wembury Beach, Dorset and off the coast of Anglesey, North Wales.
- Devon Wildlife Trust reported a surge of compass jellyfish, believed to be caused by the July heatwave.
- Scottish Wildlife Trust rangers were wowed by a white puffin on Handa Island. The pale puffin lacks pigmentation in its feathers due to a genetic condition called leucism.



Chiff chaff

Failing farmland wildlife

This January, the Government announced new schemes to reward farmers in England for supporting nature's recovery. Farmland accounts for a huge proportion of our land use, so it's imperative that we have policies that support farmers to help nature. The latest announcement

includes a lot of the right rhetoric, but still lacks any clear details or urgency. The published documents failed to provide details on eligibility, the determination of priorities, or how Government will ensure these schemes achieve target outcomes. Read more at wtru.st/farm-reform 🐾

Welcome to the team!

The Wildlife Trusts are delighted to announce that GP and TV presenter Dr Amir Khan, and naturalist, TV presenter and author Iolo Williams, have become vice presidents of the charity. We also warmly welcome award-winning TV presenter Maddie Moate, and The Vamps' lead guitarist, James McVey (pictured), as wildlife ambassadors. These nature enthusiasts will use their voices, influence and audiences to help The Wildlife Trusts shine a spotlight on the urgent need for nature's recovery in the UK. Meet our new vice presidents and ambassadors at wtru.st/new-voices 🐾



James McVey, lead guitarist for The Vamps

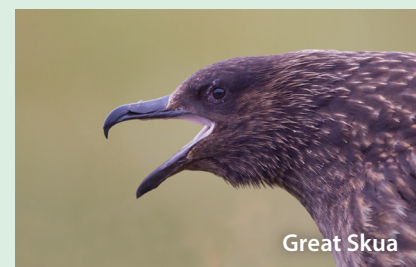
UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Seabird power

The Scottish Wildlife Trust has joined forces with alternative rock band Sea Power to raise awareness of the urgent need to tackle the nature and climate crises. The Wildlife Trust worked with the band to create a new video for their classic track "The Great Skua," featuring footage of seabirds on Handa Island Wildlife Reserve. wtru.st/seapower



Great Skua

2 A city sanctuary

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust welcomed plans for a new 'Green Heart' in Nottingham city centre, after putting forward a bold ambition to transform a derelict former shopping centre into wildlife-rich greenspace. The vision is billed as a blueprint for sustainable city centres in a post-COVID world. wtru.st/green-heart

3 Wild in Wales

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust has purchased a 164-acre farm in mid-Wales, with plans to transform it into a haven for wildlife. Initial steps to bring nature back to the former livestock farm will include scrub development to provide shelter for wildlife. The Wildlife Trust will work with neighbours, local farmers and landowners to create more space for nature in the region. wtru.st/mid-wales-farm 🐾



CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND YOURSELF

Wilder Wellbeing at Kent Wildlife Trust

There is extensive evidence proving that spending time outdoors (even just two hours a week) **can help us feel less anxious, more relaxed, and happier.**

Kent Wildlife Trust believes that everyone in Kent should be able to access nature to improve their wellbeing. That is why, over the last three years, we have been working hard to create a Green Social Prescribing offer.

We began with the Take Root Project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, which aimed to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst older people in Sevenoaks through wellbeing walks and six-week nature-based programmes. This project concluded in June 2021 and evaluation has shown the project to be a success: **100% of participants improved all their self-assessed wellbeing measures by an average increase of 35%!**

We learned so much from this project and we have used participant feedback to shape our Wilder Wellbeing programmes. These programmes are made up of two-hour weekly sessions, running for six weeks, at a nature reserve. Each programme is adapted to the individuals attending and based around the six ways to wellbeing: **Take Notice, Connect, Be Active, Give, Keep Learning, and Care for the Environment.** The programmes include mindfulness and relaxation exercises, such as breathing techniques, birdwatching, walking, natural crafts and sketching.

We currently have programmes running in Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Blean, Ashford, and Allhallows, and we are working to expand to more areas. 🌿

Get involved:

Find out more by contacting Vicky:



vicky.aitkenhead@kentwildlife.org.uk



Feedback from participants

“ Having two hours enjoying nature in such a slow and up-close experience, no major mission to complete, just being, encouraged me to use my senses to enjoy what is around me. ”

“ I have really enjoyed becoming one with nature and noticing the birds, plants, and other living creatures around me. I also enjoyed realising that stopping for a moment brings so much joy. ”

Wilder Volunteering

CREATING A WILDER KENT

The best volunteer view competition

With eyes and ears across the county, we know volunteers are the most likely to encounter spectacular views and wildlife. We would love to find out who has the best view in 2022!

Send a picture of your favourite view to volunteering@kentwildlife.org.uk, making sure to tell us where you took it and what your volunteer role is.

Here is a picture (right) taken by Alana Skilbeck, our Wilder Kent Volunteer Officer, over the Christmas Holidays. 🍷



Sandwich and Pegwell Bay



Covert Wood

Have you thought about volunteering with us?

Are you passionate about customer service and want to enthuse the public about our sites?

Our visitor centres are looking for chatty people to help with the day-to-day running of the Sevenoaks and Romney Marsh Visitor Centres.

Do you enjoy completing surveys but struggle finding time to volunteer?

The H2O: Source2Sea project is seeking volunteers to take part in a new RiverSearch Citizen Science project within the Stour catchment. We need RiverSearchers to monitor the health of our freshwater habitats by selecting a local monitoring point to survey once a month.

Do you adore the outdoors and visiting local reserves?

We need people to check on our various conservation grazing animals once a week. We are looking for volunteers local to the Medway towns and West Blean and Thornden Woods in particular.

Do you enjoy chatting to people and exploring your local coastline?

We are looking for Wilder Coast Volunteers at Oare Marshes. You will be engaging with visitors to raise awareness about how to use the site responsibly. 🍷



All current volunteering opportunities can be found here: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering-opportunities



Keeley Atkinson

Head of People Engagement for a Wilder Kent

When did you start working for Kent Wildlife Trust?

January 2019.

Describe yourself in 3 words?

Loud, outgoing, friendly.

Have you volunteered before your current role?

No, but I have always worked in people-facing roles. I really appreciate how important volunteers are for this organisation and many others. I am currently working with Alison Ruyter, one of our Area Managers, to become a Volunteer Livestock Checker!

What has been your best encounter with wildlife?

This year I was lucky enough to visit a red kite feeding station in Wales. It was spectacular to see these once endangered birds up close.

What's the best thing about KWT volunteers?

They are passionate, hardworking and committed to the cause.

Tell us a joke?

What do you call a cow spying on another cow?
A *steak out!* 🍷



We are looking for Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers to take a turn in the hot seat. Email volunteering@kentwildlife.org.uk if you are interested in being interviewed!

TEAM UPDATES

Mental Health First Aid at Kent Wildlife Trust

We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health, and it is ever changeable depending on what is happening in our lives.

Learning to recognize when a person may need additional support makes a huge difference to anyone experiencing mental ill health. This is why **26 of our staff members have now completed Mental Health First Aid training**.

Our staff attended a two-day course run by Mental Health First Aid England and were trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental ill health, effectively support someone through empathy, and signpost to relevant support services.

We meet many people in our various roles at Kent Wildlife Trust so trained staff will be able to effectively support colleagues AND utilise this training across all walks of life. 🍷



Feedback from a staff member



It's really refreshing to work for an organisation where mental health is spoken about so openly and freely. By breaking down barriers, I feel confident that my colleagues would be open and honest in discussing any matters without fear of judgement.



NATURE PICTURE © KIRSTY LEE, HEATHLAND PLANT SPECIES © ANDREW WILLMORE

Community-led conservation and archeological finds at Crockham Hill

Crockham Hill Common is a picturesque site in Westerham, West Kent, with pockets of lush heathland habitat.

This mosaic landscape is included within the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project which aims to restore the landscape, social and natural heritage of this area.

We worked in partnership with the owners of Crockham Hill, Squerryes Estate, to restore the invaluable heathland habitat. By training volunteers in practical conservation skills, the local community has been empowered to restore the land.

After some archaeological survey walks across Crockham Hill Common, we identified two possible rabbit pillow mounds, potentially medieval in origin. We hope to better date these structures and work with commons volunteers to conserve them! Understanding the importance of these ecosystems and the relationships between people and land has reinvigorated the community to protect it once again. 🍷



To join our team of volunteers, please contact Jo Bradley on **07710 143711** or email joanne.bradley@kentwildlife.org.uk

To discuss events and activities on the Commons, please contact Aimee Howe on **07701 362120** or email aimee.howe@kentwildlife.org.uk

For any other information, please contact Andrew Willmore, Project Manager, on **07720 093128** or email andrew.willmore@kentwildlife.org.uk

Wilder Holiday Club is here!

We have launched our brand-new Wilder Holiday Club, full of fun activities designed to engage your child with nature.

What are we doing?

Wilder Holiday Club is suitable for children aged 5-11 years and will run at **Tyland Barn, Maidstone, ME14 3BD from 9.30am-3.30pm**. One full day will cost £40 per child and will run on the following dates:

Holiday Club dates

June: Wednesday 1

July: Tuesday 26, Wednesday 27, Thursday 28

August: Tuesday 2, Wednesday 3, Thursday 4, Tuesday 9, Wednesday 10, Thursday 11, Tuesday 16, Wednesday 17, Thursday 18

Booking is essential.


Activities include mini beast identification, scavenger hunting, storytelling, planting, making bird feeders, arts and crafts, wood whittling, mallet making, den building and... one of the all-time favourites...pond dipping! And, if the English summer gives us some chilly days, we will get the campfire going.

As well as entertaining nature-based activities, we also incorporate our Forest School ethos and allow plenty of time for children to simply explore nature, make new friends and let imaginations run wild.

Some of the benefits of outdoor activities, play and learning for children include improvements in:

- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Social skills
- Motor skills
- Language and communication skills
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical health
- Creative and critical thinking
- Assessing risk and learning self-control
- Motivation
- Curiosity and enthusiasm to learn 🌱

For further information and to book your place, please check out our website:

 kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-holiday-club

If you have any questions about Holiday Club, please email holidayclubs@kentwildlife.org.uk

WHAT'S ON?

Scan the QR code to view all our events and book, or visit kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events



STUDY DAYS

This box contains a list of the study days taking place in May.

To find all of our upcoming study days, visit

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/explore/education/wildlife-study-days

Woodland Mosses for Beginners

1 May 2022

10am – 3/4pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Learn more about the complex lives and identification of mosses.

Broad-leaved Trees in Spring

8 May 2022

10am – 3/4pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Learn to identify trees and shrubs by their flowers and leaves.

Responsible Beginners' Beekeeping

14 May 2022

10.30am – 4pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

An introductory course for anyone interested in learning more about bees and the craft of beekeeping.

Beginners' Birdwatching

14 May 2022

10am – 4pm

☀️ PP

Sevenoaks, TN13 3DH

Learn how to identify birds on this introductory course, followed by an outdoor session to look for birds of woodland and wetland.

An Introduction to Ferns

15 May 2022

10am – 5pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Discover how to recognise woodlands ferns using leaf shapes and other distinctive features.

Reptile Ecology and Survey Techniques

21 May 2022

10am – 4pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Discover how to identify reptiles and learn about their habitat requirements then search for reptiles in a nearby nature reserve.



Introduction to Solitary Bees

22 May 2022

10am – 4pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Introduction to the ecology and identification of solitary bees, with a mixture of classroom and field sessions.

A Morning at Ham Fen

22 May 2022

10am – 3pm

☀️ PP

Ham Fen Nature Reserve

An exciting opportunity to visit Kent's last remaining Fen.

Introduction to Orchids

28 May 2022

10am – 4pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

What do you know about wild orchids: their life cycles, how they are pollinated, relationships with fungi, where to find them, and how to identify them?

April 2022

Easter Family Activities

16 April 2022

10am – 3pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Wilder Kent Safari: Mindful Photography

30 April 2022

11am – 1pm

☀️ PP

West Blean & Thornden Woods

CT9 7NZ

May 2022

Wilder Kent Safari

4 May 2022

10am – 12pm

☀️ PP

Oare Marshes, ME13 0QA

Workshop: Wooden Spoon Whittling

19 May 2022

10am – 3.30pm

☀️ PP

Romney Marsh Visitor Centre,

TN28 8AY

June 2022

Wilder Kent Safari

4 May 2022

10am – 12pm

☀️ PP

Oare Marshes, ME13 0QA

Wilder Holiday Club

1 June 2022

9.30am – 3.30pm

☀️ PP

Tyland Barn, ME14 3BD

Join us for nature-based activities and fun.

Wilder Kent Safari: Photography

17 June 2022

2pm – 6pm

☀️ PP

West Blean & Thornden Woods,

CT9 7NZ



Family Rock Pooling and Nature Explorers

Lower Leas Coastal Park,

CT20 2JP

Join us for family fun on the coast throughout May - August. You can find all events at: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Nature Tots

Every Tuesday and Friday at Tyland Barn, every Friday at Sevenoaks and every Thursday at Romney Marsh from 19 April to 27 May (term time only).

Enjoy a variety of sensory and learning experiences with your child at Nature Tots, an outdoor playgroup based on Forest School. For ages 2 - 5 years with an accompanying adult.

For details, please visit: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/explore/nature-tots

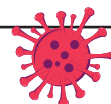
COVID-19 AND OUR WILDLIFE EVENTS

Lots of events have been affected by Covid-19 restrictions.

We are working hard to bring our wildlife and study days to you but only where they can be conducted safely on site or remotely online.

As this is a continuously changing situation, please check our website regularly for further information on the events listed here and the latest updates, cancellations or precautions.

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events



Key

PP Per person

☀️ Fees or donations apply

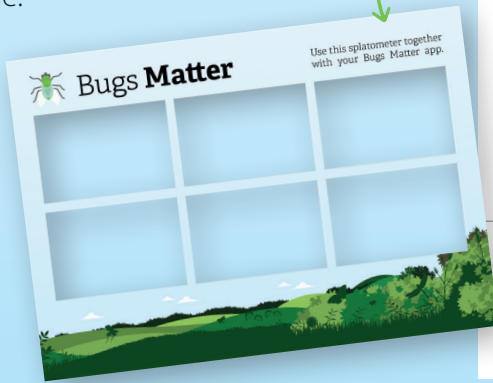
Please note that booking is essential for our events.

TAKE PART IN OUR SURVEY

Your **splat**meter for this year's Bugs Matter survey

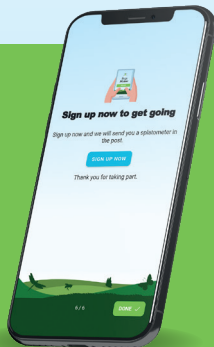
Bugs Matter is a national partnership project between Kent Wildlife Trust, Buglife, and a number of other Wildlife Trusts. We need as many people as possible to take part in this summer's UK-wide survey, which kicks off in June.

By becoming a citizen scientist, you can help us understand more about our insect populations. You will be generating vital evidence to inform conservation action to halt and reverse their declines.



Here's how to get involved:

- 1 Download the free Bugs Matter app and sign up.



- 2 Cut out the below splatmeter, stick it onto some card, and carefully cut out the windows with a sharp knife. Before making a journey in a vehicle, clean the front numberplate.
- 3 At the end of the journey, place the splatmeter over the numberplate and count the bugs you can see in the holes.
- 4 Submit your count along with a photo via the app.

You can find a full tutorial on the app. 📱



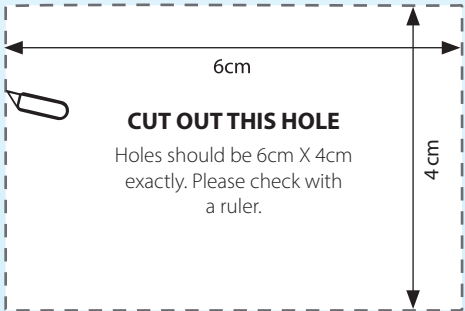
Find more information about the Bugs Matter project here: kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/bugs-matter



CUT ALONG THIS LINE



Bugs Matter



Can you do something



#30DaysWild

1-30 June



Wild

every day for

30 days?

#30DaysWild is the UK's month-long challenge from The Wildlife Trusts



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Last year, over 750,000 people went **WILD** in June. Join them by making time for nature every day for 30 days.



Sign up
to receive your
free pack
to help you go
WILD



Scan with your
phone camera
to sign up →



wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild