

BIODIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE IN WARWICK DISTRICT

SUMMER 2024



Welcome to the first edition of our seasonal biodiversity newsletter!

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WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL'S NEW BIODIVERSITY ACTION PROGRAMME

In October 2022, Warwick District Council declared an Ecological Emergency and has since been developing a programme with consultants and partners to help protect and enhance biodiversity in Warwick District. The new Biodiversity Action Programme was launched in April 2024 with a vision to create a district that is rich in nature, delivering multiple benefits for wildlife and people.

The programme includes a plan of immediate actions to take between now and 2030 and identifies 8 habitats and 20 species (or species groups) to specifically target and support.

Watch our [short video](#) that explains why we need the Biodiversity Action Programme, how it will help us, how we'll measure its success, and how you can join us on this journey.

To view or download the full programme please visit our [website](#).



BRILLIANT BATS



It's that exciting time of year to keep your eyes peeled for bats!

The best time to spot them is at dusk on a dry, warm evening, and in places where insects are likely to hang out: think woodlands, rivers, gardens, ponds and hedgerows. You could make your garden bat friendly by creating a source of water, such as a pond, bird bath or fountain, leaving an area to grow long and wild, planting night-blooming flowers and aromatic plants to attract insects and keeping cats indoors at night during June and July when pups are making their first attempts at flying.

Bat populations are in decline in the UK, with threats including habitat loss and fragmentation from infrastructure projects, building development and improvement works, pesticides which kill the food they depend on, light pollution and the impacts of climate change. They are amongst the most protected animals in Britain, making it illegal to harm a bat or damage its habitat.

We are lucky to have a variety of bats in the district, including the brown long-eared bat, Daubenton's bat, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and the noctule. Breeding females tend to roost together to retain body heat. As well as in buildings, bats roost in trees, including oak, ash and beech, but any trees with crevices in the trunk, or loose bark will do the trick. Some ideal places to go bat spotting include Abbey Fields, Priory Park, St Mary's Lands, Jephson Gardens, Victoria Park and Leam Valley Nature Reserve.



NO MOW MAY - IT'S A GROWING TREND!



We've been supporting [Plantlife's No Mow May](#) campaign again by suspending grass cutting in parts of the district throughout May and letting grass and wild plants grow naturally.

May is a key month for plants, insects and other wildlife. Warmer soils encourage grass and other plants to start shooting up. Letting wildflowers and weeds bloom provides an important food

source for pollinating insects needing nourishment in the early part of the season to help expand their populations. Dandelions are a particular superfood for bees and butterflies!

[Give us your feedback!](#) Please let us know what you think to No Mow May in Warwick District and whether you took part at home. We'd love to know what wildflowers you spotted, particularly if you found any rarer ones!

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?



Earlier this year, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory in England. It is an approach to development that makes sure habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than before. A similar approach has been in place in Warwickshire since 2014 but under the new system developers are now required to deliver a BNG of 10%.

Where developers are unable to deliver BNG within their developments, they are required to compensate by paying for the creation and/or enhancement of habitats elsewhere. One example of this is Saltisford Fields in Warwick where BNG compensation money is being used to turn poor quality grassland habitat

into species rich grassland. The fields have been sown with yellow rattle and other wildflower seed mixes and receive an annual hay cut in late summer. The cuttings are raked and allowed to dry for several days before being removed - this allows any seeds to drop to the ground.

Species rich grasslands were once a common feature of our landscape but unfortunately have been degraded and lost over time due to intensive farming, development and increased use of fertilisers and pesticides. They are important habitats for a range of insects, birds and other wildlife and provide a natural solution to the climate crisis by locking up carbon.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP NATURE AT HOME...

From building a bug hotel to creating a garden pond, there are lots of simple things you can do at home to help nature over the summer period and beyond.

Bee hotels

The majority of bee species in the UK are solitary bees. They are often overlooked in the world of bees but are actually very important pollinators, vital to our food security and biodiversity.

Solitary bees like to nest underground or in cavities such as holes in logs, bricks and wood. We can help by providing suitable habitats for them in our gardens. A simple way to do this is to tie a bundle of twigs, sticks and bamboo canes together with string and then post the bundle into a hedge/bush or hang in a sheltered place. Alternatively, you can make a more solid frame out of timber and then fill with twigs, sticks and bamboo canes. With any luck, female solitary bees will lay their eggs inside the hotel. They will seal the eggs behind a plug of mud and the young bees will emerge the following year.

[How to make a bee hotel](#)

Planting pollinator friendly plants in your garden will give bees that extra boost. [Bee Friendly Warwick](#) has some great tips on the best plants for pollinators.

Helping hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are one of Britain's most recognisable and much-loved wild animals. They are known as the 'gardener's friend' as they help to control slugs, caterpillars and other invertebrates. Unfortunately, hedgehog populations have declined due to habitat loss and fragmentation depriving them of food and shelter.



Summer is a busy time for hedgehogs! The average hedgehog will roam 2km a night in search of food, mates and nesting sites! We can help to encourage hedgehogs into our gardens and give their populations a boost by doing the following:

- Provide hedgehog highways - 13cm holes at the bottom of garden fences or walls to allow hedgehogs to move freely.
- [Make a hedgehog house.](#)
- Cover drains and holes and place bricks/ramps at the side of ponds to give hedgehogs an easy route out.
- Check for hedgehogs before using strimmers or mowers, particularly under hedges where animals may rest.
- Check compost heaps for nesting hogs before forking over.
- Slug pellets can poison hedgehogs! Try "natural" alternatives such as crushed eggshells or coffee grounds around the plants you need to protect.
- Leave areas of the garden 'wild', with piles of leaf litter and logs. These are an attractive nest as well as a home for the invertebrates (slugs, beetles) that hedgehogs like to eat.

Wildlife ponds

A pond or water feature is one of the single best features for attracting wildlife to your garden. They don't have to be large, even mini ponds, bird baths or bucket ponds will help to provide a source of water for wildlife to drink and bathe. Ponds can be created at any time of year but here's a few top tips:

- Position your pond in a warm sunny area, if possible, where tadpoles, dragonflies and plants will thrive.
- Make sure wildlife can get in and out of the pond easily - create sloped areas or set up a ramp.
- Add suitable plants, both in and around the pond to help wildlife move safely between different areas of your garden.
- Keep your pond topped up - use collected rainwater if possible.

[How to build a pond](#)

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SUMMER...



We work hard all year round to protect and enhance biodiversity in our parks and open spaces from the provision of bug hotels, bird nesting rafts, bat boxes and pollinator friendly plants through to the way we maintain these spaces in terms of grass cutting cycles, tree and hedge maintenance, soil improvement works and managing invasive species.

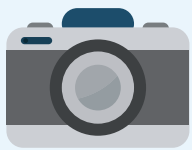
In summer you'll spot the districts beautiful hanging baskets and floral displays as you're walking through town centres or larger parks. Trees across the district will be showing off their greenery and looking their finest. Some will have fruit forming following the spring blossom including apples, plums and pears. The Arboretums at Jephson Gardens and Priory Park are great places to see some of our oldest and most valuable trees, including some rarer species such as black poplar trees (a target species in our Biodiversity Action Programme).

We have introduced areas of unmown grass, wildflower and grassland meadows into some



of our parks and open spaces. They're great for insects such as bees and butterflies and have fabulous displays of colour throughout spring and summer. Some great examples include Abbey Fields and Parliament Piece (Kenilworth), Newbold Comyn and Leamington Cemetery (Leamington Spa) and St Mary's Lands and St Nicholas Park (Warwick).

The Peregrine Falcon chicks at Leamington Town Hall will be starting to fledge from June. [Watch their progress on the 24/7 camera](#). You might also catch a glimpse of the swans and their cygnets on Abbey Fields lake over the summer.



COMING SOON... BIODIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION!

Look out for our biodiversity photography competition due to be launched in July 2024!

This year's theme is 'all things bright, beautiful, great and small'.

Whether you are a seasoned photographer or simply enjoy snapping pictures on your phone whilst out and about, take part in our photography competition for the chance to win a £100 voucher.

We'd love your photos to feature some of the habitats and species being prioritised in our new Biodiversity Action Programme. [Check out our video to find out more...](#)

SUMMER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

[Ecofest](#), Saturday 31st August 2024, 10am – 5pm, Pump Room Gardens

[Friends of Abbey Fields nature walks](#), throughout summer 2024

The Wildlife Trusts [30 Days Wild challenge](#), throughout June 2024

[Volunteering opportunities with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#)

[Warwickshire Country Parks events and activities](#), throughout summer 2024

[Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's Creature Count](#), Friday 14th to Sunday 16th June 2024

If you have nature events and activities happening in Warwick District that you'd like included in future editions of this newsletter please [get in touch](#).

