

# BIODIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE IN WARWICK DISTRICT

WINTER 2024/25



Welcome to the winter edition of our seasonal biodiversity newsletter, with a special focus on trees, woodlands and hedgerows, timed to coincide with tree planting season.

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## BIODIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2024 - WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

The 2024 **Biodiversity Photography Competition** closed on 8th September, with a fantastic range of entries celebrating the theme of “*All Things Bright, Beautiful, Great and Small.*”

Shortlisted entries were featured on our Facebook page for public voting, and the winners were announced:

- **Over 18s Category:** Garry from Barford
- **17 and Under Category:** Charles from Warwick

Both winners received a £100 gift voucher as their prize. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make this year’s competition such a success!



GARRY FROM BARFORD



CHARLES FROM WARWICK

# MONOLITH TREES

A “monolith” is a tree that has been reduced to its main stem and left standing to naturally decay, typically after a dead or dying tree has been felled.

While we occasionally need to remove trees in our parks and open spaces to ensure safety or prevent the spread of disease, we aim to leave monolith trees or other deadwood in place whenever it's safe and appropriate. Deadwood plays a vital role in our ecosystems, offering a rich habitat and food source for a wide variety of plants, fungi, and animals.

You can spot examples of monolith trees in places like Jephson Gardens, St Nicholas Park, Abbey Fields, and other locations throughout the district.

In addition to monoliths, we've also created “tree poles” by uprighting branches in the ground and drilling holes to provide homes for solitary insects, such as bees and wasps. We sometimes leave large branches on the ground to decompose, enriching the soil with nutrients and offering rotting timber for animal nests. These fallen branches also provide fun climbing opportunities!

By preserving these natural features, we're helping to support biodiversity and create thriving, sustainable habitats for local wildlife.



Monolith Tree In St Nicholas Park



Community Orchard Planting At The Saltisford Canal Centre, Warwick

## COMMUNITY-DRIVEN TREE PLANTING ACROSS WARWICK DISTRICT

**This tree planting season, community-driven initiatives are thriving across Warwick District, thanks to funding from Warwickshire County Council and Warwick District Council.**

A new community orchard has been planted at the Saltisford Canal Centre in Warwick, with plans for additional orchards at Crown Way in Lillington, Tapping Way in Warwick, and St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Whitnash. In total, 73 fruit trees - including apple, pear, damson and plum - will be planted across these locations. Local community groups will help care for the young trees, supporting their growth and long-term success.

Alongside this, tree planting is also planned at council-owned housing sites across Brunswick,

Kenilworth, Lillington, Milverton, Whitnash and Woodloes. A variety of native trees will be planted, including birch, cherry, hawthorn and maple. Many of these trees will be fitted with watering bags to help them establish, and the local community is encouraged to help keep the bags topped up with water, particularly during dry spells.

Tree planting brings numerous benefits to the community, from reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality, to creating habitats for local wildlife and enhancing public spaces for everyone to enjoy.

If you're interested in tree or hedgerow planting in your local area, please see our section on funding opportunities on the next page.

## MEADOW MANAGEMENT - WATCH OUR NEW VIDEO!

**In our previous newsletter, we highlighted the dramatic decline of grassland meadows since the 1930s, their incredible value to both people and nature, and the efforts we've made over the last 20 years to expand meadow areas across our parks, open spaces, and cemeteries.**

Now, you can see meadow management in action by our grounds maintenance contractor, **idverde**, by watching [this short video](#).

# ANCIENT AND VETERAN TREES



The UK is home to thousands of ancient and veteran trees, which are not only vital to our heritage and sense of place, but also support a rich array of wildlife. These trees provide food and shelter for countless plants, animals, and fungi, including many rare and threatened species.

Examples of ancient and veteran trees can be found in Abbey Fields, Priory Park, and Jephson Gardens, as well as in Stoneleigh Deer Park, which is home to Warwickshire's oldest sweet chestnut tree.

While the terms "ancient" and "veteran" trees are often used interchangeably, they actually refer to different stages of a tree's life. A **veteran tree** is one that has features such as wounds, decay, or other "scars" of age, but not necessarily a great age. In contrast, an **ancient tree** is typically very old and has reached a stage of significant age and size. Some veteran trees may not yet be ancient, but they still provide valuable habitats due to their unique features, such as fungal fruiting bodies, deadwood, and hollowed trunks.



Warwickshire's Oldest Sweet Chestnut,  
The Stoneleigh Deer Park Golf Course, Steven Falk

Both ancient and veteran trees are considered irreplaceable habitats, requiring specific growing conditions and time to develop their unique features. Protecting these trees ensures that they continue to provide vital ecological benefits for future generations.

If you've spotted an old or notable tree, please consider adding it to The Woodland Trust's **Ancient Tree Inventory** – a national map documenting the UK's oldest and most important trees.

## FUNDING FOR TREE AND HEDGEROW PLANTING

### [The Woodland Trust – Free Trees for Schools and Communities](#)

Choose from a variety of tree and hedgerow packs to suit your requirements. Currently taking applications for tree packs to be delivered in March 2025 for immediate planting. Closing date for applications is 13th January 2025



### [The Woodland Trust – MOREwoods scheme](#)

Want to plant 500+ trees on at least half a hectare? Apply for saplings, advice and funding with the MOREwoods scheme.

### [The Woodland Trust – MOREhedges scheme](#)

Apply for saplings, advice and funding for new hedging projects of 100 metres or more with the MOREhedges scheme. Not suitable for replanting or gapping up existing hedgerows.

### [Warwickshire County Council – Community Micro Woods](#)

Inspired by the planting method of Japanese botanist Dr Akira Miyawaki's, funding is available to create miniature community woods. The deadline for applications has been extended to 31st December 2024. If you know of an area of land roughly the size of a tennis court that could be transformed into a miniature woodland please get in touch at [naturalcapital@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:naturalcapital@warwickshire.gov.uk)

### [Warwickshire County Council – Community Orchards](#)

To help reverse the decline of traditional orchards, we're encouraging communities to plant a variety of fruit and nut trees in underused green spaces. You can get started with as few as five trees! If you know of a space that could benefit from fruit trees, please get in touch at [naturalcapital@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:naturalcapital@warwickshire.gov.uk). The deadline for applications has been extended to 31st December 2024.





# OVER 150,000 SPRING BULBS PLANTED FOR EARLY POLLINATORS

**This autumn, more than 150,000 spring bulbs were planted across parks and open spaces in the district. These vibrant displays of daffodils and crocuses will bloom in early spring, providing essential food and nectar sources for bees, wasps, and other insects as they emerge from hibernation.**

Some of the sites where bulbs have been planted

include Castle Farm, Eagle Recreation Ground, Myton Green, St Fremund's Way, and Tapping Way.

With the decline of certain insect species, particularly bees, and the growing trend of species emerging earlier from hibernation due to warmer temperatures, these early blooms are a vital resource for their survival.

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP NATURE AT HOME

**Prune Hedgerows Later in Winter or Early Spring:** Delay pruning hedges until late winter or early spring so wildlife can benefit from the insects and fruits available during the colder months. Consider cutting hedges on a 2-to-3-year rotation, targeting different sections each year. This allows berries and nuts to grow, providing an important food source for wildlife.

**Turn Pruned Wood into Habitat Piles:** If you do need to prune in winter, use the wood to create habitat piles. Bury some of the wood or place it in open water to benefit invertebrates, which rely on decaying wood for shelter and food.

**Leave Fallen Leaves:** Fallen leaves make an excellent mulch and provide a habitat for beneficial garden minibeasts. For a tidy lawn, simply rake them under trees and shrubs.

**Top Up Bird Baths and Feeders:** In late winter (January to February), food and water can be scarce, so keep bird baths and feeders topped up. Use squirrel-proof feeders, position them near trees or shrubs (but out of reach of cats), and keep bird baths ice-free by floating a small ball on the surface to prevent ice from forming.

**Plant a Tree or Shrub:** Winter is a great time to plant trees or shrubs. Choose species that provide food for wildlife, such as guelder rose, wayfaring

tree, or spindle, which offer nectar and berries in winter and are suitable for smaller gardens.

**Install a Water Butt:** Install a water butt to collect rainwater for your garden. This saves money on your water bills, reduces flooding by capturing excess rainwater, and provides non-chlorinated water that many plants prefer.

**Create a Rain Garden:** A rain garden can be created from water overflow from water butts or drainpipes. It's a sustainable way to manage drainage while providing valuable wildlife habitat. [Learn how to make a rain garden.](#)

**Create a Mini Pond:** If you have limited space, try adding small shrubs in patio pots and creating a mini pond. Be sure to include a way for wildlife to get in and out safely. [Learn how to make a mini pond.](#)





# NATIONAL HEDGEHOG MONITORING PROGRAMME



**The National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme (NHMP) is a three-year pilot project aimed at tracking the number and distribution of hedgehogs across the UK. The goal is to better understand their population health and conservation status. Sadly, hedgehog numbers have declined significantly in recent decades, and understanding where and why they are struggling is crucial to reversing this trend.**

The NHMP is a joint initiative of the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and The British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS), with local implementation by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT). In September, staff and volunteers from WWT installed 30 wildlife monitoring cameras across gardens, cemeteries, and parks in the Brunswick area of Leamington Spa.

Locations included Eagle Recreation Ground and Leamington Cemetery. Brunswick was selected as a national monitoring site following reports of frequent hedgehog sightings from local residents. The cameras were set up for 30 days, capturing a range of images of hedgehogs and other wildlife.

## **Help Needed!**

The success of this project relies on the support of the public to analyse the camera footage. Volunteers can contribute by reviewing the images, identifying and logging the animals they spot, and spending as much or as little time as they wish on the task.

If you'd like to get involved, please visit [www.mammalweb.org](http://www.mammalweb.org) for more information.

# HEDGE LAYING: A TRADITIONAL SKILL FOR WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION

**Hedge laying is an age-old countryside skill that has been practiced for centuries. This technique plays a vital role in preserving hedgerows, which offer numerous benefits for both people and nature. Hedgerows provide important refuges, food sources, and wildlife corridors, while also helping with flood risk management, improving water quality, and reducing soil erosion.**

The process of hedge laying involves partially cutting through and bending the stems of shrubs

or small trees near ground level—without breaking them—to encourage new growth from the base.

We run an annual hedge laying programme for hedgerows in our parks and open spaces, with work typically taking place in November and December.

To see the process in action, be sure to subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) and keep an eye out for an upcoming video showcasing hedge laying in action!





# RADFORD ROAD BRIDGE - NEW BIODIVERSITY MEASURES



**The replacement of Radford Road pedestrian bridge in Leamington Spa is nearing completion, with landscape works planned for the coming months.**

The bridge crosses the River Leam, connecting Radford Road to the Leam Valley Local Nature Reserve and Newbold Comyn. As part of the biodiversity enhancements, swallow boxes will be attached to the bridge, and bat boxes will be installed on nearby mature trees. Additionally, log piles will be placed in tall vegetation to provide shelter for invertebrates, hedgehogs, and other wildlife.

Existing habitats will be preserved, and over the next few months, small areas of wildflower meadows and native scrub woodland will be created. The project is set to deliver a net biodiversity gain of more than 10%.

## WARWICKSHIRE'S LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

**A big thank you to everyone who took part in the recent consultation exercise to help shape Warwickshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The results are now being collated and further updates will be published soon on the [LNRS website](#). We'll also share more information in upcoming editions of this newsletter.**

Local Nature Recovery Strategies were introduced under the Environment Act 2021 as part of efforts to reverse the decline of nature.

These strategies will help identify and prioritise opportunities for nature recovery, focusing on key areas, species or habitats.

## SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE LOCAL PLAN - HAVE YOUR SAY!

**The next phase of consultation (Preferred Options) on the South Warwickshire Local Plan is due to be launched in January 2025. A key focus of the new plan is to create a biodiverse and environmentally resilient South Warwickshire, and we'd love to hear your views on the emerging policies.**

To stay informed and be notified when the consultation goes live, please register or subscribe for updates at [www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/](http://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/)

# WELCOME DEB MERRICK - NEW GREEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER FOR BIODIVERSITY

Hello, I'm Deb Merrick and I've recently joined Warwick District Council as the Green Space Development Officer for Biodiversity. In my role, I'm working on key actions from the Biodiversity Action Programme, including creating ponds, planting hedgerows and establishing roadside wildflower meadows. Engaging with local partners and communities is a central part of my work.

I bring over ten years of experience in green space management, and I also volunteer as a Green Flag Award judge for Keep Britain Tidy. My background includes roles in countryside stewardship, as a countryside ranger, and in environmental education. I'm passionate about encouraging young people from all backgrounds to connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors in a sustainable way.



## LOCAL NATURE ACTION PLANS

**Under the Environment Act 2021, all public authorities, including Town and Parish Councils, have a duty to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This strengthened “biodiversity duty” requires councils to set policies and objectives that support nature conservation. Town and Parish Councils play a vital role in engaging local communities and driving local action.**

In Warwickshire, the Local Nature Partnership, in collaboration with the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC), has developed a [step-by-step guide](#) to help Town and Parish Councils create their own [Local Nature Action Plans](#). These plans aim to recognize and enhance local biodiversity, helping councils improve their natural assets and contribute to broader conservation goals.

## WINTER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

[Coventry and Warwickshire RSPB group events](#), throughout winter 2024/25

[Foundry Wood events and activities](#), Princes Drive, Leamington Spa, throughout winter 2024/25

[Volunteering opportunities with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#)

[Warwickshire Country Parks events and activities](#), throughout winter 2024/25

[Warwickshire Wildlife Trust events](#), throughout winter 2024/25

**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](#).**

