

# Tern – Summer 2024

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## Welcome from the Chief Executive

We associate wildlife with the countryside, but for those of us living in towns and cities, nature is often closer than you think. Crucially, where urban green spaces are open to local people, they are often more accessible. Our new Norwich nature reserve, NWT Sweet Briar Marshes, is a case in point – around 25,000 people live within a 15-minute walk away. Not only does the reserve offer a nature boost to an urban population; it also allows us to inspire even more people to care about Norfolk’s wildlife.

Our engagement team have done a fantastic job working with the local community to shape our shared vision for this wonderful space, which I’m delighted to announce is now open to visitors ([page 4](#)). Our new partnership with Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists’ Society will allow us to delve deeper into the unique ecosystem at Sweet Briar Marshes so we can ensure it continues to thrive – read more on [page five](#).

There is a wealth of other important stories in this issue of Tern. Our central article focuses on our ambition to see thriving and abundant nature all around — and explains how we're working towards this goal every day ([page 12](#)). We learn how a farm in Norfolk is now abounding with wildlife thanks to the owners' habitat creation work ([page 20](#)), and three NWT volunteers and members encourage us to join them on walks at some lesser-known reserves ([page 19](#)).

Have a wonderful summer — and as always thank you so much for all your support.

## Membership, contact and publication details

### Our members make a difference

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is a charity dedicated to all aspects of wildlife conservation in Norfolk. Our members help us to create a county where there is space for nature to thrive and more people are inspired to take action for nature.

Thank you so much for being a member. Why not give the gift of wildlife to someone else? A gift membership is a unique present for wildlife watchers, outdoors enthusiasts, or families keen to explore Norfolk further. We can even post a welcome pack with a message directly to the recipient on your behalf. They will also receive three copies of Tern each year, access to local events, and be able to explore NWT nature reserves for free. Visit our website to buy your gift or call **01603 625540**.

If you're not already a member of NWT, please join us today by visiting our website, calling our friendly team using the details below, or asking a member of staff at one of our visitor centres. Help us create a wilder Norfolk for all.

[norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/membership](http://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/membership) or **01603 625540**

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Editor: Vicky Boorman

Designer: Hannah Moulton

### Contact information

Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY, UK

Phone: 01603 625540

Email: [info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

Website: [norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

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## Wild News

Highlights from Norfolk and national news from The Wildlife Trusts

### New habitat for rare Brecks wildlife

Work to create a more biodiverse habitat on Mere Farm, newly acquired land surrounding NWT Thompson Common, is progressing well. At the start of the year, staff and volunteers planted over 1,400 trees such as blackthorn, spindle and buckthorn. Meadow creation has also begun, using native grasses and wildflowers, enhanced with seed from Thompson Common.

Excitingly one of the six pingos we restored last year is now full of flowering common water-crowfoot. This pretty plant is an early pioneer species and an indicator of good water quality. It is possible it has grown from germinated seeds that have laid dormant for years.

Kyle Jennings, NWT Brecks Reserves Manager explains: 'After lots of forward planning, it's been exciting to see Mere Farm start to take shape. The pingos we created have been holding water and there was a good organic layer excavated, so we are really looking forward to seeing more aquatic plants begin to emerge and the ponds fill up with wildlife.'

This is all part of an initiative to expand ancient habitat in the Brecks for the rare northern pool frog, funded by Natural England's Species Recovery Programme. Alongside the Woodland Trust and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC), our Pool Frogs and Pingos project will create a tapestry of wildlife habitats, allowing the existing population of pool frogs to expand its range and increase in number.

Formed at a time when woolly mammoths roamed the land, pingos are shallow, fluctuating pools created by small hillocks of ice melting and making depressions in the soil. The Mere Farm pingos even had the thumbs up from Swedish pool frog expert, Per Sjögren-Gulve who visited Thompson Common to assess the newly created habitat with our project partners ARC, during a recent visit to the UK.

## **Building foundations for the future**

We are delighted to have been granted £241,642 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with thanks to players of the National Lottery, towards an exciting project that helps us scale up our impact and build a stronger, more resilient organisation.

To successfully deliver our strategy, 'A Wilder Norfolk for All', we need to build solid foundations, raise our ambitions and, most importantly, we must involve everyone to achieve the best outcomes for nature.

The funding will support our new Building Foundations for the Future project, as we look to empower more people from all backgrounds to value and act for nature locally.

Natalie Bailey, our Director of Engagement, said: 'From making changes to our internal systems to help us work more efficiently and launching a new website, to carrying out audience research and developing our youth programme, the benefits of our Building Foundations for the Future project will be felt in every corner of the organisation. Crucially, they will be felt throughout Norfolk's communities too — as we support more people to enjoy, be inspired by and act for Norfolk's nature.'

## **Introducing our new website**

Over the past year we have been beavering away behind the scenes giving our website a facelift.

Due to be launched this summer, our new site will offer a fresh design, revamped content and a more streamlined structure, which we hope will make it nice and easy to find what you are looking for!

In addition to providing visitors to the site a better experience, we will be benefiting from some whizzy technical connections between our website and other NWT systems, helping us to work more efficiently and effectively. The new website will also provide flexibility for those needing to access our site in different ways, such as by changing the language and layout of content.

As soon as our new site is live, we'll be happy to hear your thoughts and will provide a few ways to get in touch with us with your feedback so that we can continue to provide you with a great online experience.

## Cromer goats join grazing team

Twelve rare breed goats are settling into a new way of life after retiring from their conservation role on the north Norfolk coast and joining our grazing herd.

The goats were previously deployed by North Norfolk District Council to graze vegetation along the coastal cliffs and slopes of Cromer.

Laura Davey, from NWT's Nature Conservation team said: 'The goats are currently in the Brecks, assisting the ponies and reserves team in managing the heathlands there. Along with another six young goats we purchased last year, they are settling in very well and have formed a happy little herd. In the next few years, we hope to introduce them to one of our herd of Billy goats, to increase the numbers of these important grazing animals. All our goats are registered with the Bagot Goat Society, so each will help boost this rare breed.

'Conservation grazing is an important tool for the management of the reserves. The livestock naturally maintain the sward height of the grass and other scrub to allow rare plant species to thrive. While the cattle, sheep and ponies prefer to graze the grass and smaller plants, goats will browse hedges and trees as well as grass.'

**Read more about Laura and her work on [page 8](#).**

## General election

With a general election expected in 2024, The Wildlife Trusts have been investigating how much nature matters to our supporters and the general public, and whether the nature policies set out by political parties will influence how they vote.

Two nationwide surveys revealed that environmental charities are supported by a large and politically diverse range of people — with voters feeling similarly connected to nature, regardless of where they identify on the left to right wing spectrum.

Results from Wildlife Trust supporters indicated that 61 per cent would vote based on environmental policies and a further 32 per cent are considering doing the same. Of all those surveyed (including non-supporters), only seven per cent didn't believe that nature loss or climate change were a serious threat to humanity.

The upcoming general election will be vital for our natural world, and these results suggest that voters are calling on all political parties to make bold plans to restore nature, tackle water pollution and halt climate change.

Please help make sure nature restoration is a priority by voting with wildlife in mind.

## Come in and discover NWT Sweet Briar Marshes

**We're delighted to announce that our new Norwich nature reserve, Sweet Briar Marshes, is now open.**

The 90-acre wildlife haven sits by the river Wensum in the northwest of the city and forms a ribbon of green through an otherwise urban environment, providing a nature burst for nearby residents.

We bought Sweet Briar Marshes in 2022, thanks to support from our project partner Aviva, The Geoffrey Watling Charity, The Paul Bassham and Leslie Mary Carter Charitable Trusts alongside others, and with generous public donations. We are grateful for funding from Biffa Award, as part of the Landfill Communities Fund, which has paid for the essential infrastructure needed to introduce cattle to the marshes.

Over the last year we've been working with the local community to develop a shared vision and getting the site ready to welcome visitors. An accessible path now runs through the nature reserve, as well as several natural mown trails. Facilities to help visitors get closer to nature such as wildlife-watching screens, further paths and more onsite information will form the next phase of work. Other priorities identified during the community consultation, such as providing a small amount of accessible parking and toilets close by, will take longer as they'll need more planning, further design and consultation.

Summer is a fantastic time to visit Sweet Briar Marshes. Listen out for the song of tiny willow warblers and watch swallows swoop and glide, feeding on the multitude of insects that rise from the flower-filled meadows. They are often joined by the city's swifts, identifiable by their high-pitched screams. You might also glimpse the iridescent blue of a kingfisher, flashing low and fast over the nearby river.

### **We've got lots of events at Sweet Briar Marshes over the summer**

Keep an eye on our website for more information and to find out more about the nature reserve.

[norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/SweetBriar](https://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/SweetBriar)

### **Delving deeper into the ecology of NWT Sweet Briar Marshes**

A new partnership with Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society (NNNS) will help us discover more about the unique ecosystem at our newest urban nature reserve.

Naturalists and scientists from NNNS will be visiting Sweet Briar Marshes regularly over the next two years to collect data from the site. 'Each of our County Recorders will be collecting using different methods such as nets, pitfall traps, binoculars and magnifying lenses to identify species,' says Professor David Harper from the society. 'We are confident that over two years we can double or treble the species records for such an important site.'

Nature Conservation Manager for NWT, Steve Collin, adds: 'Establishing which species we have on site, known as an ecological baseline, is especially important for a new nature reserve as it informs our conservation management and allows us to measure change. For example, data gathered on aquatic and semi-aquatic animals such as newts and water voles will determine how we manage the dyke and ditch system; and research into grassland-reliant species such as butterflies will affect where we move our grazing herd. Monitoring also gives an early warning of problem invasive species so we can remedy at an early stage; and identifying rare species allows us to better protect them.'

The new research project will enhance the ecological baseline established from previous monitoring at Sweet Briar Marshes by other groups and experts including Norfolk Wildlife Services, which revealed an amazing diversity of wildlife for an urban reserve. Surveys so far include evidence of nearly 1,000 species of invertebrate, over 200 species of flowering plant such as musk mallow, wild carrot and water mint and more than six types of bat.

## Get involved

Norfolk Naturalists are looking for volunteers to help with monitoring at Sweet Briar Marshes and other places across Norfolk. Contact John Worthington-Hill at [joworthingtonhill@gmail.com](mailto:joworthingtonhill@gmail.com) for more information.

## Nature photography competition 2024

### **Our annual photography competition is back!**

Have you taken an amazing photo of wildlife or a wild place across Norfolk? If the answer is yes, we want to see it! Our nature photography competition is free to enter and open to all ages, with the winning images set to form our 2025 Norfolk Wildlife Trust calendar and feature in an exhibition at NWT Cley Marshes.

We're also excited to announce that leading optics manufacturer, ZEISS, is generously sponsoring this year's competition. ZEISS has a reputation founded on exceptional optical performance and providing innovative, high-quality equipment for a wide range of needs: from thermal imaging cameras for observing nature in the twilight hours to compact binoculars for everyday use.

Our lucky winner will receive a pair of ZEISS Conquest HD binoculars, and two runners up will each win a ZEISS Secacam trail camera.

'We are thrilled to once again be sponsoring the Norfolk Wildlife Trust photography competition. There were some wonderful entries last year and ZEISS is always keen to support initiatives that encourage people to get out in nature and witness its beauty. We are excited to see the entries for this year's competition.'

**Chris Howard, Head of Sales and Service at ZEISS**

### How to enter

To enter, simply send us up to three of your favourite photos of Norfolk's nature from the last year. We want to see landscapes (especially our nature reserves), birds, mammals, plants, marine life, bugs, people enjoying wildlife — and the rest!

Submit your best images to [norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/PhotoComp](https://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/PhotoComp).

Entries are open 7 June — 31 July.

Please read the competition rules on our website before entering.

## Species spotlight

### A HOP of hope

The large marsh grasshopper *Stethophyma grossum* is not only the UK's largest grasshopper, but one of its rarest. The adults are a vibrant mix of green and yellow with red legs, making it, arguably, our most attractive grasshopper too. Formerly found across southern and eastern England, habitat loss restricted the species to a few areas of the New Forest and Dorset. It is dependent upon healthy functioning peatlands and is now mostly confined to valley mires (lowland peatbogs) in England, although it was formerly found in a wider range of habitats.

Despite its size, it is often heard before it is seen. Most grasshoppers stridulate, by rubbing a row of pegs on their hind legs against their wings, this creates their familiar vibrating 'song'. However, the male large marsh grasshoppers call by flicking their back leg off the edge of their wing, which produces a distinctive loud click.

The large marsh grasshopper was last seen in East Anglia in 1968, but since 2018 a partnership project involving NWT and led by Citizen Zoo, has seen NWT help release more than 5,000 of these rare grasshoppers across suitable sites in Norfolk. The partnership called 'Hop of Hope' saw Citizen Zoo volunteers, known as 'Citizen Keepers' rearing grasshopper nymphs at home from the eggs of a small number of captive adults. The pilot release site is now home to a firmly established and self-sustaining population, and thanks to a recent grant from Natural England's Species Recovery Programme, we are looking forward to working alongside Citizen Zoo to help broaden this fantastic insect's range further. Over the coming years the partnership intends to replicate the project's initial success by carrying out more introductions at suitable wetland sites across the county, including the Norfolk Broads.

**Are you interested in getting involved in the Hop of Hope project and becoming a Citizen Keeper?**

Please email [hello@citizenzoo.org](mailto:hello@citizenzoo.org) for details.

Find out more about the project and Citizen Zoo at: [citizenzoo.org/hop-of-hope](https://citizenzoo.org/hop-of-hope)

## Wildlife roundup

**By Robin Chittenden – Wildlife photographer and writer**

### Winter highlights

Yet another new bird for Norfolk was found this winter. This time it was a drake black scoter, which originates from North America and was spotted among the huge flock of common scoter feeding in Holkham Bay. Black and common scoter look very similar. Both drakes are black, and both females and young birds are brown — and even harder to tell apart. A closer look would show that the drake black scoter has a more swollen bill, the swollen part of which is yellow and orange. The females have, and I quote from the Collins Bird Guide, 'a trifle more pronounced hook on bill tip'. This may be fine for identifying them if they were on your local duck pond, but in the UK they are usually way out at sea, where they dive for food, mostly molluscs and particularly mussels. In the case of the Holkham bird it was picked out from a flock of several thousand common scoter — most of the time just dots in the distance. Factoring in that they can 'disappear' behind choppy waves and vanish for a minute or more when diving, meant it was one tricky bird to spot.

Although most seabirds feed most of the time offshore in winter, small numbers, occasionally, end up on inland lakes and waterways. This winter there seemed to be more than normal. West Norfolk did particularly well with a long-tailed duck on the pits at RSPB Snettisham and at NWT Holme Dunes on the Gore Point channel. Another spent a month or so on the River Great Ouse Relief Channel between Downham Market and Stowbridge. A black-throated diver was also on the pits at RSPB Snettisham and at NWT Holme Dunes on the Gore Point channel. Another was spotted on the Hardwick flood lagoon at King's Lynn but was sadly later found dead. In east Norfolk it was all about great northern divers with birds seen at Barton Broad, Rollesby Broad, Ormesby Broad and Whitlingham Country Park on the Great Broad.

Birders at NWT Cley Marshes were delighted when a red-breasted goose chose to overwinter there back in 2021/22. There is something about the ruddy mahogany colour of the breast that is pleasing to the eye. It was a surprise that the species also chose to spend this winter again in Norfolk. Not only that, but there were also two or three birds and perhaps more. In the UK there were several spotted, including three at one site in Essex. This was an unprecedented arrival. What could be driving more to winter here than ever before? In severe winters they are normally pushed south along the Black Sea coast as far as northern Greece. Could it be that disturbance in their normal wintering range in Ukraine could have encouraged a westwards dispersal?

An old friend to NWT Cley Marshes, the long-billed dowitcher, returned in March. And what was presumably the same bird, popped in at Breydon Water for three days in February having spent most of that month at SWT Carlton Marshes. It is still hanging around with black-tailed godwits, perhaps because it thinks it is one? Last winter this long-billed dowitcher stayed until May, by which time it had moulted from its grey winter plumage to the warm orangey glow of summer.

## Wildlife to look for in summer

**We all love to see butterflies and dragonflies, but beetles are often overlooked. Reserves Officer Robert Morgan picks his 'fab four' to spot this summer.**

**Wasp beetle** is a long thin beetle and, as you might expect, is striped black and yellow like a wasp. It even mimics the jerky flight of the wasp, but it is perfectly harmless.

The **maybug** is likely to be seen on a warm June evening flying around the tops of trees. This large brown beetle with comb-like antennae goes by many aliases, most commonly cockchafer or doodlebug, but in Norfolk it is often known as the kitty witch.

The metallic-green **thick-thighed flower beetle** can be found throughout the summer on tall flower heads, feasting on pollen. It is the male beetles that have the rather strange balloon-like thighs.

The **devil's coach horse beetle** punches well above its weight. Pitch black and covered in tiny hairs, it spends the days under stones and debris, emerging only after dark. When threatened it cocks its tail like a scorpion, emits a foul-smelling substance, and powerful jaws deliver a painful bite. However, this voracious predator is the gardener's friend as it eats many pest species, including slugs.

## Profile

### Laura Davey, Conservation Stockperson

**Laura describes how she got into working with animals, what her job entails and the best and most challenging aspects of the role.**

I've always loved animals and as a child spent lots of time outdoors, horse riding and dog walking. My degree was in wildlife conservation and ecology. I considered becoming a vet, but a day's work experience confirmed that I wanted a more outdoor-based job.

My first experience of conservation was volunteering with the National Trust at Box Hill in Surrey. I then worked as a warden in a country park in Hampshire, where they had ponies, cows and sheep on site. Grazing work was my favourite part of the role, so I jumped at the chance to do it full-time when the job at NWT came up. It also gave me the excuse I'd been waiting for to move back to Norfolk, which is where I grew up.



Ensuring the welfare of our grazing animals is a key part of my role. We have around 400 animals (ponies, cows, sheep and goats) across our reserves, so we keep busy. Animal welfare jobs include overseeing visits from the farrier, regular wellbeing checks and nursing animals back to health where needed.

A considerable amount of my time is also spent ferrying animals around! We must balance conservation needs with the welfare of the herd. For example, each spring we move our British Whites off Beetley Meadows so they don't eat and trample the fresh buds of green-winged orchids. They'll be heading up to Holt Lowes and then onto Hickling when the ground there has dried up enough to provide good grazing. We also move animals within a site in line with our conservation management plans — this creates a mosaic of habitats, perfect for wildlife.

My favourite part of the role is spending time with animals, particularly the Konik ponies. The sheep make me laugh — they are smart and not smart at the same time! They'll fear a bucket lying on its side rather than upright but can sense if you're trying to move them from a mile off.

It is worth remembering that our grazing animals are not tame. Occasionally we've had people trying to pet or feed them, which is dangerous both for the animals and people. We ask visitors to enjoy our conservation herds from a distance so they can be left in peace to create habitat to benefit Norfolk's wildlife.

I love being part of such a natural and ancient way of habitat creation. What a herd of animals can achieve in a month in terms of benefiting wildlife is incredible.

## Meadows Appeal – Power to the flower

### An appeal for more meadows

I'm sure, for many, an idyllic pastoral scene would include a flower-rich meadow being gently swayed by a light breeze under a warm blue sky. This rather romanticised vision is understandable, for an ancient meadow in full bloom is uncompromisingly beautiful. Sadly, it is now a rare sight in our modern countryside.

Since the 1930s it is estimated that the UK has lost a staggering 98.5 per cent of our wildflower meadows. In Norfolk, a county of intensive arable farming, this rate of loss has been particularly heavy, and traditional meadows have effectively disappeared across the county.

Meadow is a term used for a piece of wildflower-rich grassland, especially one cut for hay or regularly grazed. The 20th century changed farming; fertilisers and herbicides 'improved' grazing meadows, and with better drainage and irrigation a monoculture of tall, lush grass developed. In addition, the use of machines in farming meant there was no need to grow vast quantities of hay to feed workhorses and, as a result, the management of traditional meadows declined.

Most of the remaining wildflower-rich meadows, along with many of our heaths and commons, were ploughed up for wheat or root crops during the Second World War, an understandable attempt to feed a starving nation. Many were never returned to grassland, and the touch of a plough, even on a single occasion, can have a devastating effect on the diversity of grassland plants.

The loss of wildflower meadows is a clear example that we take nature for granted at our peril, for within a lifetime they have virtually disappeared. This is part of a tragic picture for some of our most loved flora and fauna, many of which are clinging on to life in isolated patches of this ancient habitat.

Many of the former ancient meadows would have been in use for hundreds of years, and as a result developed complex communities of plants, fungi and invertebrates. This forms an ideal home and provides food for a great number of birds and mammals too. It is astounding, even in a newly created meadow, the high level of biodiversity it can support, from the teeming life in the soil through to the swallows and skylarks in the air above. The few ancient meadows left can host over 40 species of plant in one square metre.

Meadows are not only pleasing to look at, but they are also vital stepping stones for wildlife. Increasing the variety and abundance of plants and flowers in our nature-poor grasslands will lead to an associated increase in butterflies, bees and other pollinating insects and, in turn, support mammals and creatures right up the food chain — including us humans. Insect pollinators are vital for ecosystem health and food security, with 75 per cent of crop species, and over 80 per cent of flowering plant species being dependent on insect pollinators.

Despite our love of wildflower meadows, and our better understanding of their value, we have still managed to remove a further 8,000 square km of meadows across the UK in the last 25 years. However, Norfolk Wildlife Trust is working hard to reverse this alarming trend.

In the wildlife-rich Brecks, we are creating new grassland on previously arable land at Mere Farm, purchased with the help of our generous members and supporters. At first, the soil was choked with dominant weeds and artificial fertiliser. We are now restoring it to species rich meadow using native grasses and wildflowers sourced from the unspoiled and uniquely wild NWT Thompson Common.

The relics of our once rich countryside can be found in some unlikely places. In a few areas our county's lost meadows have survived. Along the quiet lanes of Norfolk, they now appear as roadside verges, with many forming a network of miniature nature reserves. NWT's Ben Newton, Wilder Landscapes Advisor, has been collecting mowed 'green' hay each summer from selected verges.

This seed-laden hay has helped local communities and landowners to create new wildflower meadows in previously nature-depleted fields (see p38). Norfolk's churchyards contain many of the last remaining patches of meadow in our towns and villages. As part of our Churchyard Conservation Scheme, we provide expert wildlife surveys and advice to churches, helping them to restore existing and create new 'mini meadows'.

Returning meadows to their rightful place, at the heart of our countryside, is not just a beautiful addition to our lives, but essential if we want to ensure future generations enjoy living in a healthy and vibrant environment.

*Increasing the number of meadows in Norfolk will give a lifeline to a wide variety of butterflies including small copper, meadow brown and ringlet.*

**Help us raise £30,000 towards creating and restoring meadows across Norfolk and we'll turn your donations into daisies, your gifts into grasshoppers.**

With your support we can create new meadows on our nature reserves, bring meadows back to life in churchyards across the county and work together with our communities as new meadows spring into life on farms, village greens and community spaces.

Donate today to bring the joyful sights and sounds of summer back to our countryside by visiting:

[norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/meadowsappeal](http://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/meadowsappeal) or donate by calling **01603 625540**

## Hedgerows: Wildlife havens and highways

Hedgerows are a fantastic feature of our landscape for people and wildlife. Looking after our hedges supports creatures such as birds, hedgehogs and pollinators, all of which use the fruits and shadowy nooks as a vital source of food and shelter as they travel through our landscape.

The Bronze Age saw the widespread adoption of agriculture in Britain, with hedges used to mark boundaries and enclose land for livestock. Later agricultural intensification saw the removal of around half of Britain's hedgerows by 1970 — a real loss for our wildlife.

Thankfully, in recent years there has been an increased appreciation of the economic and ecological benefits of hedgerows and this, coupled with the availability of stewardship (funding available to farmers and land managers) and grants — has led to a growing interest in hedge planting and sustainable hedge management.

A huge range of wildlife uses hedges such as nesting birds, hibernating hedgehogs and small mammals. Barn owls and bats often hunt along hedgerows, and insects like beetles and butterflies can be found living within them. More than 500 plant species, 60 species of nesting bird, hundreds of invertebrates and most of the UK's small mammal species have been recorded as being supported by hedgerows.

## How to look after your hedges to benefit wildlife

### **Ben Newton – Wilder Landscapes Advisor**

The goal is to create, and maintain, a thick dense hedgerow, which will have the highest value to wildlife as well as maximising benefits to people and the wider environment.

Hedges are dynamic, living organisms, just like the individual plants from which they are created, and they follow a natural lifecycle.

Good management can prolong this lifecycle but, however good the management, the hedge will require some rejuvenation eventually, which usually takes the form of hedge laying or coppicing.

### **Cut hedges gradually higher and wider**

If you always cut your hedge to the same height and width, the hedge will produce less flowers and fruit and therefore have a reduced value to wildlife. The health of a hedge stem is also reduced if it is cut to the same exact point each year, as can be seen when hedges produce 'knuckles' at the end of a stem after repeated cutting to the same point.

Many hedge species, such as hawthorn, produce fruit on the second-year growth, so a good solution is to allow the hedge to increase in height and width slightly each year, say by 10cm, and then after a few years the hedge can be cut back to its desired size.

### **Avoid trimming every year**

The good news is that it is better for the hedge to be cut every two, or preferably every three years, rather than annually. This increases flower and berry abundance within the hedge. Perhaps part of the hedge could be cut each year on rotation, so that each section is cut once every three years?

## Trim at the best time of year for wildlife

January or February is the best time of year to trim a hedge. This allows wildlife to feed on berries and fruit through the challenging winter months. Hedges should not be cut during the bird breeding season — from 1 March to 31 August — because cutting at this time can disturb or destroy nests, eggs, or chicks, which are protected by law.

## Hedgerow trees

If you have space, having the occasional fully grown tree within your hedge is particularly valuable for wildlife. Over half of priority nature conservation species associated with hedgerows depend on hedgerow trees.

## Bringing back Norfolk's wildlife

Words by Helen Baczkowska, Nature Recovery Senior Manager

**Wildlife, as readers of Tern know well, can be everywhere. From the blue tits and blackbirds in our own gardens, to the orchids growing on our nature reserves and the fleeting glimpse of a roe deer on a country walk. Yet many species are still struggling, and Norfolk Wildlife Trust's ambition is to reverse the loss of nature in our county and instead see thriving and abundant wildlife all around us. We call this 'nature recovery' and firmly believe that everyone, no matter where they live, can play a part.**

In 2010, the UK government published a report called Making Space for Nature, which concluded that we need wild spaces to be 'bigger, better and more joined up.' Many decades of research have shown that larger and connected habitats mean not only more species, but more individuals of each species. The result is not only more wildlife, but healthier populations that are more resilient to threats such as climate change. Across Britain, The Wildlife Trusts are calling for at least 30 per cent of our land and sea to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030. Scientists say that 30 per cent is the bare minimum that nature needs to start recovering. We are far short of this right now, but our work is contributing to this figure every day.

On our nature reserves, we restore and create habitats daily. The excavation of 'pingos', natural ponds filled in a few decades ago, coupled with the seeding of wildflower meadows and tree planting at Watering and Mere Farm in the Brecks is a great example of this (read more on p4). Native plants are already returning to the ponds, while dragonflies, bats and birds hunt above them. Both our nature reserves and the privately owned County Wildlife Sites we support are some of the best refuges for wildlife in the county. Ensuring they are well cared for is key to our nature recovery work and these precious places are not just important as they stand — they are also reservoirs of nature for the future. As the landscapes around them are restored, plants and amphibians, birds, insects and mammals can spread out, creating new and stronger populations.

We put nature's recovery at the very heart of new projects outside of our nature reserves too. For example, we are restoring Norfolk's peatlands as part of the Fens East Peat Partnership, and support a growing number of schemes where landowners work together to create and connect habitats across many acres. These initiatives are not just great for wildlife, but people can also benefit. Restored peatlands or river valleys and carefully sited new woods can hold back water to help flood control, whilst re-wetting dry peat or planting trees can store carbon, supporting national efforts to combat climate change.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is not alone in seeking nature's recovery and we work with partners to advocate for wildlife on land and in the sea. This can mean objecting to damaging development proposals, such as the Norwich Western Link road, but more often means influencing plans that affect the future of Norfolk. These range from strategies on housing or quarries, to neighbourhood plans, created by parish or town councils. Norfolk's wonderful marine environment includes unique areas like The Wash, with its abundance of wading birds and the chalk reef of the North Norfolk coast, where crabs and sea anemones can be spotted at low tide. Ensuring these places are protected and their wealth of wildlife appreciated is vital. Nature, on land and in the sea, must be at the heart of all decisions about the future of our beautiful county.

### Case study – Jubilee Meadow Makers, Stoke Holy Cross

In 2022 Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council was gifted a piece of a former arable field, littered with debris from the nearby new housing. Under the Claylands Wilder Connections project, we helped the newly formed Jubilee Meadow Makers with advice on improving the site for wildlife and supplied them with green hay and wildflower seed to create a meadow. They also planted hedgerows and a copse alongside. Importantly they have also created an area where the local community can sit and enjoy wildlife on their doorstep.

### Case study – Silfield Newt Reserve

Silfield Newt Reserve, a County Wildlife Site, was created in the 1990s to provide habitat for great crested newts when the A11 was built around Wymondham. In recent years the site had been neglected and we are now working with National Highways, under their Networks for Nature scheme, to restore it. Great crested newts have already started breeding in ponds that have been cleared of silt and the cutting back of scrub has opened up meadow areas for bees and butterflies to thrive.

### Case study - Fens East Peat Partnership

The Fens East Peat Partnership (FEPP) is restoring peatland sites in the Fens of Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The work is part funded from the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, administered by Natural England.

Once waterlogged peatlands have been drained for agriculture, urbanisation and by peat extraction, it leads to the loss of specialised native species and rich vegetation. Dry and exposed peat also stops storing and taking up carbon and instead emits CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.

As part of the FEPP, we are helping to restore nearly 200 hectares of peatlands at Barton Bendish and Stoke Ferry. Designs for re-wetting the soils and carefully managing the land will not only lead to the capture of more carbon, but to new marshes and reedbeds for wildlife.

The FEPP members are Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, The National Trust, RSPB and Natural England.

### Join us to help nature's recovery

Here's a few ideas to get you started:

**Start small in your garden, allotment or on your balcony.** Wildlife-friendly gardens at home contribute to better connected spaces for nature. Find out more: [wildlifetrusts.org/gardening](https://wildlifetrusts.org/gardening)

**Do you manage a farm or County Wildlife Site?** Find out about our work with landowners across Norfolk and how we can help you create a wilder Norfolk. Email: [info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk) for more information.

**At work** - make space for a nature garden to encourage colleagues to help wildlife, or consider joining our Investors in Wildlife corporate membership scheme. Email [james.hogg@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:james.hogg@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk) to find out more.

**Work together with your community, school or local clubs** by encouraging others to care for nature. Maybe your street or your village could run a swift project, plant wild flowers on a playing field, or help with the care of the churchyard. Read about our Wilder Community Workshops on p45.

**Volunteer for us** — whether it is joining a work party on a nature reserve or helping in our offices, volunteers all contribute to our work.

We also work with farms, communities and schools. In the South Norfolk Claylands, we have supported communities to plant several miles of new farm hedges, restored ponds and created acres of meadows that are now busy with bees, grasshoppers and crickets. Our advice and events such as Wilder Communities Workshops give people the skills and knowledge to enhance nature where they live and work. Across Norfolk you are revitalising village ponds, attracting wildlife into churchyards and planting new woods, meadows and community orchards. More schools are introducing nature areas in their grounds, thanks to support from our Wilder Learning team.

Recent years have seen a rise in understanding how engaging with the natural world helps people as well as nature. Many of us find watching wildlife a restful, absorbing experience, whether in our own gardens or from a hide on a nature reserve. Research shows that being among trees or meadows releases brain chemicals that ease anxiety or distress; the smell of soil after rain, known as ‘petrichor’, has the same effect — which might explain why muddy children look so happy! For us, the message is clear — nature recovery is not just about wildlife, but about people too and bringing back wildlife will benefit us all.

## Remembering Brendan

Words by **Nick Acheson** - Author and NWT Ambassador

**How, in a few short paragraphs, can we honour the life and legacy of our former CEO Brendan Joyce OBE? In the century of Norfolk Wildlife Trust’s existence, only our founder Dr Sydney Long looms as large over our development and achievements.**

Brendan, who died at the start of the year, was CEO for almost a quarter of our history, from 1995 to 2018, and led the growth of NWT from a small, local organisation to a nationally recognised force for nature. The projects which Brendan conceived and led — with his customary energy and determination — are too many to list in full. Better perhaps to focus on the philosophy that inspired them. In *Wild and Wonderful Norfolk*, our 2016 publication celebrating 90 years of NWT action for nature in the county, Brendan was quoted at length. ‘I have always seen the trust as risk-taking,’ he said, ‘something developmental, seeking to expand and always looking for the next project.’

This vision is evinced by our many achievements under Brendan’s leadership, the first of which was *Securing the Future*, an ambitious five-year project — enabled by the Heritage Lottery Fund — which saw habitat restored and visitor access enhanced on 26 nature reserves.

Under Brendan's stewardship our network of reserves increased enormously, with many important sites secured for conservation, hundreds of acres of habitat restored, and numerous reserves buffered and expanded. They include Grimston Warren, Rising Heath, Upton Broad and Marshes, Cley and Salthouse Marshes, Thompson Common, Brett's Wood, the Wissey Wetlands and Hickling Broad. 'There is something very satisfying about land acquisitions,' Brendan said in his farewell speech, 'and I feel lucky to have led on over 25 acquisitions, covering some 2,600 acres.'

This era of ambition and excitement was backed by sound financial management. 'Get the money in,' Brendan said, 'then spend it wisely and to best effect.' NWT membership trebled under his leadership, and a dedicated team secured vital grants and donations to invest in land purchase, management and reversion.

'I view education with the same importance as the land management function,' he said. 'Education is a means of achieving our long term aims.' During his tenure, the reach, the quality and the scale of our workshops, publications, projects and work with schools grew exponentially. Nowhere is this more true than at Cley and Salthouse Marshes. When Brendan arrived at NWT, Cley's paths and hides were disintegrating. First he secured the funds for new hides and boardwalks. Later, seizing a major funding opportunity, he led the construction of the award-winning visitor centre at Cley. The complex was completed a few years later with the delivery of the Simon Aspinall Wildlife Education Centre, where thousands of people have learned about the natural world and many have joined the ranks of NWT members.

Everyone who worked with Brendan has anecdotes about him. Our longest-serving wardens remember a time before his arrival when cash was in such short supply that bent nails had to be hammered back into shape for re-use. All of them speak with awed respect of the financial security achieved through Brendan's commitment and grit. Past and present members of what is now the Senior Leadership Team recall the glint in Brendan's eye when he hit on a bold new idea; and the irresistible enthusiasm with which he would see it through.

He was remarkable and he is rightly remembered with respect, with loyalty, and with love by the army of members, staff, volunteers, donors, funders, trustees and project partners who were carried along by his energy. Leaving NWT was a big wrench, Brendan said, 'not least because of my commitment and belief in what this organisation does, but also because of the many people I have met and become friends with along the way. I will especially miss the fantastic team of staff to whom, I believe, most of the credit is due.'

He was tireless in his devotion to the wildlife and wild landscapes of Norfolk and beyond. They were the life's mission of a thoughtful, talented man. As Kevin Hart, NWT Director of Nature Conservation, said at Brendan's deeply touching funeral, 'Many people leave behind a legacy. Brendan leaves a landscape.'

We are profoundly grateful for Brendan's years of friendship and leadership, and for his vision for a better future for wildlife in Norfolk, and we extend our thoughts to his family and the many friends who mourn him.

## A wilder Norfolk: your legacy

**NWT members, Jan and David Midlane have chosen to leave a legacy to Norfolk Wildlife Trust. They know the Trust will use their gift to protect the natural environment for future generations.**

We have been fortunate to have lived in many beautiful places in the UK and France, but since we moved to Norfolk 15 years ago, we have found our 'home'. There are so many wonderful and wild areas, it is difficult to choose a favourite—Holme Dunes and along the coast to Cley have got to feature, as have The Broads and the magical Foxley Woods. However, it is sometimes the unexpected tiny gem that we discover that delights us most.

We have gained so much from being able to enjoy nature and the outdoors. We hope that by leaving a legacy to NWT, we can help to preserve and increase the opportunities for everyone, regardless of income, to be able to access such precious resources. Maybe it is idealistic to expect less greed and materialism, but if we can protect as much of the natural environment as possible then there will always be hope. It must be better to leave the 'real thing' for future generations to experience rather than a 'digital' representation.

Both of us love the sea and coastal areas, but then the woodlands and the rivers call — it is all life and all miraculous and we are so lucky to have access to such a variety of natural environments.

Sometimes one can feel overwhelmed by the climate crisis, so maybe it is better for us to concentrate our efforts locally where we know we can make a difference. If this happened across the world then small community projects that engage local stakeholders might create a real force for change.

We have confidence that Norfolk Wildlife Trust will do the right thing with our legacy. Their level of communication is second to none and the staff and volunteers we have met are incredibly knowledgeable, passionate about the environment and welcoming to all.

The targets of increasing land acquisition, education and understanding and offering careers in conservation is absolutely the correct balance. Without wild places we have nothing, without education, understanding and committed people at all levels, no way of taking things forward. It gives us great satisfaction to know we are helping to protect something we love from the ravages of the modern world, for the wellbeing of people and the planet. The thought of a future without, for example, an oak or a curlew, without natural spaces, without harmony is not one we wish to contemplate.

**Once you have taken care of your loved ones, please consider including a gift to Norfolk Wildlife Trust in your Will.**

Every penny Norfolk Wildlife Trust receives from gifts in Wills helps us care for wildlife and plan for the future of our nature reserves covering some 12,000 acres across the county.

If you would like to discuss leaving a gift to Norfolk Wildlife Trust or would like to let us know that you have remembered us in your Will, please do not hesitate to contact us on **01603 625540** or [legacies@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:legacies@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

## The buzz about bees

**West Norfolk Reserves Manager, Ash Murray, gives the lowdown on bees in Norfolk and our work to support these vital pollinators.**

Bees are a vital part of our ecosystem — the intricate web of life that we depend on. They are extremely important pollinators, and without them many species of plant would decline, including those grown for food. Bees also provide an important insight into the health of our environment. Put



simply, the more diverse, healthy and well connected a landscape is, the more pollinators it will support.

Norfolk is home to over 70 per cent of the total bee species found in the British Isles, in fact we have more than 260 species. Our county is particularly important for wetland and heathland bees, such as the common yellow-faced bee, which is widespread here, but very localised elsewhere in the country.

The bees you find in Norfolk also give a fascinating insight into how the landscape was formed. Many species are adapted to specific plants and, where these plants themselves are reliant on a particular soil type, bee distributions can accurately mirror the underlying geology.

Although there are no bees specific to Norfolk, we do have specialties, which means a significant proportion of their population can be found here. One example is the sea aster mining bee, which is restricted to saltmarshes and other coastal habitats. The population on the Norfolk coast is of international importance, representing a significant proportion of the species' global entirety.

Sadly, there has been a dramatic decline in the total number of bees found in Norfolk over the years. Around 19 species have disappeared, two of which are thought to be extinct nationally. The most significant factors behind this worrying downward trend are habitat loss, increased pesticide use, disease and climate change.

## **What is Norfolk Wildlife Trust doing to help bees and other pollinators?**

### **Nurturing a diversity of plants**

Bees require pollen and nectar from flowering plants. Some are generalists and can forage from a range of flowers, whilst others are more specialised. Some bee species are entirely restricted to our reserves because these are the last places that support the flowers or physical conditions they require. The small sandpit mining bee only occurs at NWT Roydon Common in Norfolk, but since we've restored the dry heathland here, the species has expanded rapidly.

### **Creating perfect habitats**

Many bees require bare ground to nest in or for basking. Atmospheric nitrogen pollution from industry acts as fertiliser and this, combined with climate change, supports the growth of vigorous, bulky species of plants, leading to a loss of bare ground. Changes in the wider countryside during the last 100 years have also exacerbated this issue.

We create little 'cliffs' and bare open patches across our sites, providing nesting and basking habitat for bees, as well as other sun-loving invertebrates.

### **Bigger is better**

Bees need a source of pollen and nectar throughout their flight period. Some species that feed on a small range of plant species require large expanses of suitable habitat. We purchase land adjacent to our nature reserves to create large swathes of habitat for bees and other species to move and expand — a key part of our nature recovery strategy.

### **Surveys and monitoring**

Staff and volunteers carry out surveys on our reserves to better understand which bee species are present to enable us to better protect them.

Two of our members are currently looking at cleptoparasitic flies and individual bee species at Grimston Warren and Roydon Common. We also host external researchers on our sites who are working to better understand the issues facing our bees and how we can help to protect them.

## Garden bees

Gardens can be home to a significant number of bee species. Here are three to get you started:

### **Buff-tailed bumblebee**

A large bee, and one of many similar looking species. Often found furtling about flower beds even in very urban areas.

### **Red mason bee**

One of the commonest mason bees, ruddy in colour it is the most likely candidate for your bee hotel.

### **Common carder bee**

The commonest of our 'brownish' bumblebees and loves a lawn of dandelions.

Find out how to help bees and other pollinators in your garden [wildlifetrusts.org.uk/actions](http://wildlifetrusts.org.uk/actions)

## Discover

### Make a date with nature

Close your eyes and picture a summer's meadow. What do you see? Wildflowers gently swaying in the breeze? Butterflies flying from flower to flower feeding? Grasshoppers jumping? An area full of life? This summer we are asking people to go in search of their local wildflower patch, whether this be in their garden, a roadside verge or a local green space and look for three insects associated with meadows:

### Six-spot burnet moth

The six-spot burnet is a medium-sized, day-flying moth, commonly found in grasslands, woodland rides and sand dunes, where the caterpillars feed on common bird's-foot trefoil. The adults feed on the nectar of knapweed, thistles and other grassland flowers

### How to identify

The six-spot burnet is glossy black with red spots on its long, narrow wings. There are six similar species of burnet moth in the UK: there is only one with six red spots on each forewing; the other common species have five spots.

### Did you know?

The red spots of burnet moths indicate to predators that they are poisonous: they release hydrogen cyanide when attacked.

### Common blue

The common blue is a small blue butterfly that flies throughout the summer between April and October. The most widespread of the blue butterflies, it is found in a variety of habitats, including

heathland, woodland rides, grassy meadows, parks, large gardens and waste ground. The caterpillars feed on clovers, restharrow, common bird's foot trefoil and related plants.

### How to identify

The male common blue has bright blue wings with a brown border and white fringe. The female is brown with a blue 'dusting' near the body. It has orange spots on the underside of its hindwings, whereas the similar holly blue has black spots. It is larger than the silver-studded blues, and brighter than the chalkhill blue.

### Did you know?

In bad weather and at night the common blue roosts, head down on a grass stem. Often several of these butterflies may be seen together on a single stem of grass.

### Meadow brown

The medium-sized meadow brown is one of the most common grassland butterflies, on the wing in the summer, from June to September. It can often be found in parks, gardens and cemeteries. It even flies in dull weather when other butterflies are inactive.

### How to identify

The meadow brown is mainly brown with washed-out orange patches on the forewings. The best way to tell apart the 'brown' butterflies is by looking at the eyespots on their wings. The combination of large, orange patches on the forewings only, one eyespot on the forewing and none on the hindwings, is unique to the meadow brown. The meadow brown also has only one small white 'pupil' in the eyespots, instead of two like the gatekeeper.

### Did you know?

Males are much more active than females, spending their time patrolling and investigating other butterflies that come near their perches. Unless feeding or egg-laying, females spend much of their time on the ground, hidden among the grass.

### Log your sightings

Keep your eyes peeled and please submit your records online by visiting:

[norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/spottersurvey](http://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/spottersurvey)

## Explore

### Volunteer-led walks

Our volunteer-guided walks are perfect for those who may be new to nature, but want to learn more.

### Sparham Pools

**Zelda Eady, NWT member and volunteer, walk leader, Sparham Pools**

'I love this walk as it is varied and changes throughout the year. In addition to being close to freshwater, the walk takes you through original heathland, a grove of evergreen bushes and past

mature deciduous trees. The north side of the walk is slightly elevated, so you can see down into the tree canopy. The path then passes through gorse bushes, which look and smell delightful — particularly in late spring.

‘The freshwater habitat is ideal for bird watching with sightings of kingfisher, great crested grebe and little grebe, as well as a variety of other waterfowl, most of the year. In the summer, you will catch glimpses of several species of damselfly and dragonfly — there is even a resident terrapin! In the autumn there are plenty of mushrooms to spot.

‘What I enjoy most about leading guided walks is meeting like-minded people and often learning from them.

‘I became an NWT volunteer at the end of the pandemic to get out of the house and meet others regularly. I love being in nature and value the unique Norfolk countryside.’

Sparham Pools is a circular walk around a 12-acre lake created from disused gravel pits in the Wensum valley.

## **Buxton Heath**

### **Dawn Bullock, NWT member and volunteer, walk leader, Buxton Heath**

‘Buxton Heath is a little-known spot, so it is usually quiet, but there’s so much to explore. Walks take around 1.5 hours at a relaxed pace with time to stop and spot wildlife. There’s a great mix of open spaces, heathland, boggy areas and woodland, which makes for a diverse mix of wildlife. I’m new to this site and I’m enjoying the bright yellow flowers on the gorse bushes currently, but I’ve been assured that there are uncommon orchids and silver-studded blue butterflies to spot in the warmer months. I’m currently learning about birds and their calls. I’ve managed to identify nine different species in one walk, including a barn owl.

‘I decided to volunteer for NWT as I’m experienced in hosting walks, and I have a keen interest in conservation and the environment. I spend hours at a desk for my day job so being outside is a great antidote! I enjoy meeting new people and introducing them to a beautiful area they often didn’t know existed.’

## **Wayland Wood**

### **Susan Hames, NWT member and volunteer, walk leader, Wayland Wood**

‘Wayland Wood is a small fragment of the wildwood that covered most of England after the last ice age. The area is crisscrossed with tracks, and a circular walk takes around one hour, although many visitors linger longer. Several species of birds and butterflies call Wayland Wood their home, as do muntjac and fallow deer, foxes and badgers. Many rare and beautiful flowers can be found growing along the tracks. Bluebells, yellow star of Bethlehem, primroses and wood anemones during the spring and wood avens, orchids and lords-and-ladies in summer. Mushrooms adorn every imaginable nook and cranny in autumn and into winter too.

‘Nature has always held a special place in my heart, and more so after a prolonged bout of serious ill health. Being alone in nature was a life saver for me, and I aim to help others experience the natural world as I did back then, through my walks and events.’

Susan is leading free Forest Bathing sessions at Wayland Wood each Monday in June as part of **30 Days Wild**. To book and find out more visit:

## Take action

### Nature-friendly farming

**Fir Grove is a family-owned, 92-hectare farm, in Wreningham. Over the last 20 years, there has been an increased focus on managing the land to benefit wildlife.**

The farm was taken out of intensive arable production in 1989, followed by the planting of 28 hectares of native woodland and a work programme put in place to enhance grassland and meadow.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust has been providing advice and practical support to farmers Vic and Rachael Long to help with the transformation of grassland into meadow. In recent years this work has formed part of the Claylands Wilder Connections project, which brought together conservation experts, local communities and landowners to develop much needed new areas for wildlife in the South Norfolk Claylands.

Vic Long tells us more: 'Our relationship with Norfolk Wildlife Trust started in around 2010 when Henry Walker from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group introduced us to Helen Baczkowska from NWT, with a view to working to improve an old meadow near the farmhouse. The meadow had never been cultivated and was a good example of traditional grassland. We made a management plan to improve its diversity. This involves using green hay to bring seed from small uncut areas, mostly Roadside Nature Reserves, and spreading on the scarified meadow.

'The headline species we were aiming to propagate was the rare sulphur clover, and after only one year we had success with a few plants. Now, 13 years later, there is sulphur clover across most of the field. Other species include oxeye daisy, cowslip and bird's-foot trefoil, with the introduction of yellow rattle helping to suppress the grass, allowing the new plants to establish. There is a noticeable increase in insect activity over the meadow and adjacent fields. Working with the team from NWT has been fundamental, bringing their knowledge and enthusiasm to the project.'

Since the meadow enhancement began at Fir Grove, and with the contribution of better hedgerow management and the proximity of Long's Wood, Rachael and Vic have noticed an increase in the diversity and quantity of wildlife on the farm.

'Insect life has flourished,' says Vic. 'The meadow receives regular visits from hunting barn owls and other raptors, which we know nest in the woods. We've spotted great crested newts in several of the 19 ponds across the farm — the mix of habitats here providing excellent conditions for the protected species across its lifecycle. Wonderfully, we also have turtle doves around the site in the summer months.'

## Gardening for wildlife

### Gourmet gardening for wildlife

Words by Kate Bradbury.

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

**Grow a garden full of food that both you and your wild neighbours can enjoy.**

Traditionally, fruit and veg growers view wildlife as something that should be prevented from eating the food we grow for ourselves. We net berries to protect them from birds, remove 'cabbage white' caterpillars from our brassicas. We lay traps for things like earwigs and expose soil grubs so that birds might feast on them before they can do any damage. Some growers haven't got the memo about insect declines and still use harmful bug sprays.

But what if we learned to share, or even deliberately planted crops that could be used by us and wildlife? I realise I may be in the minority here, but one of my favourite things about growing food is sharing it. I'm happy to share my soft fruit with the birds — my cherry trees produce more than I would know what to do with, and there are enough blackberries, raspberries and tayberries to go around. I laugh at the caterpillars eating my brassicas and I always leave some to flower, along with some 'spare' parsnips and onions, so there's food for pollinators in spring. If I cut only half of my herbs such as mint, oregano, chives and thyme, I can encourage flowers to grow for bees and butterflies, and if I avoid cutting back the mildewed leaves of my courgettes I provide food for 22-spot ladybirds.

There is a line between providing food for wildlife and having your crop destroyed, and only you can decide where that line sits. For me, there's not really a line. I'm happy for other species to enjoy the food I grow and I go out of my way to provide a little bit more for them. I may have a reduced crop, but I never lose a crop — one of the great things about gardening for wildlife is knowing the ecosystem will take care of itself. This means there's always something for everyone.

## **Suitable plants**

### **Brassicas**

Varieties like broccoli and kale will flower after harvesting, providing food for early spring mining bees. Many varieties can be sown or planted out in summer — plant in rich soil and firm well.

### **Courgettes**

Buy ready-grown plants and plant into rich soil in early summer, and keep well watered. 22-spot ladybirds are very polite, leaving the fruit for you and eating only the leaf mildew

### **Oregano**

Plant from spring to autumn in pots or the ground. Leave some unharvested so it flowers for butterflies and bees.

### **Raspberries**

Buy canes in spring or autumn and plant in rich, moist soil. The blackbirds will leave you some, I promise!

### **Broad beans**

Avoid removing aphids and you'll provide food not just for them but for the ladybirds, lacewings and hoverfly larva that eat them. Sow direct in autumn or spring. Stake taller varieties.

### **Rosemary**

Flowering in spring, rosemary provides nectar and pollen for queen bumblebees. Plant at any time of year in moist but well-drained soil.

### **Carrots**

Sow direct in pots or the ground from spring to late summer. Leave some to flower for pollinators.

## Nasturtiums

Sow from spring to summer for a crop of fiery leaves and sweet flowers. Leave a crop for 'cabbage white' butterflies to feast on — you can move caterpillars from brassicas onto nasturtium leaves to protect them.

## Learn with Tern

### Nature recovery – the successful recovery of the buzzard, peregrine and otter

**Words by Nick Acheson, Norfolk Wildlife Trust Ambassador**

'One of the penalties of an ecological education,' Aldo Leopold famously wrote, 'is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen.' Knowing and loving nature — as NWT members do with passion, with generosity and with skill — means being aware of destruction and decline on all sides. The more you know, the more easily you see what's missing.

But this edition of Tern is devoted to nature's recovery. To the many things we all can do — must do — to restore our ravaged landscapes and environment and deliver a fairer, healthier future for humanity and biodiversity alike. It can be hard, as Leopold implies, to find stories of recovery but they exist. As a friend said to me on a recent walk through the dunes of the Holkham National Nature Reserve, 'For nature to recover we need only take our boot off her throat.'

So here are three examples of spectacular recovery, each the result of our quite simply removing our boot from nature's throat. The first of them is the common buzzard. While its name is common, the buzzard was far from common in living memory. In my Norfolk childhood I saw only a single buzzard. Despite being rather innocuous hunters and scavengers, buzzards were systematically eradicated from the lowlands of the UK by 19th century gamekeepers, as were many other bird and mammal predators. They were further hit in the mid 20th century by waves of myxomatosis devastating the rabbit population on which they depend. Their return to the Norfolk landscapes they inhabited for millennia has largely taken place this century. As an NWT colleague once remarked to me, 'Each buzzard is a punch-the-air moment of success.'

Though also persecuted, the magnificent peregrine vanished thanks to the widespread use of organochlorine pesticides through the mid 20th century. These highly toxic compounds bioaccumulated through each layer of the food chain until apex predators — including peregrines — carried doses that either killed them or scuppered their attempts to breed. The disappearance of the peregrine from the UK was near-complete. Happily today — organochlorines long illegal — they have returned. Peregrines can be seen — and heard — nesting in several Norfolk towns.

So too, the otter all but disappeared as a direct result of organochlorine pesticides running into lakes and rivers, poisoning aquatic ecosystems. As a child I never dreamed I could see an otter in my home county. Today I see them regularly. Otters are now found in every Norfolk river and in every mainland county of England. Each one I see is thrilling and always will be.

If we give nature space to recover — if we remove our boot from her throat — she can and will rebound. It takes those of us who know and care, who have a voice, to see the losses and stand up against them. The buzzard, the peregrine and the otter demand it of us.

## Get Involved

### Businesses 'do what they do best' for Norfolk's wildlife

A growing number of companies are contributing valuable expertise, products and services to support our work.

These 'Gifts in kind' are a great way for organisations to support us, donating things that we would otherwise need to pay for out of our core finances.

If you feel your business could help Norfolk's wildlife with in-kind support, please get in touch with James Hogg, Corporate Partnerships Manager, on **01603 625540** or email [james.hogg@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:james.hogg@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

### Foster Refrigeration – Cool to be (in)-Kind

King's Lynn-based Foster Refrigeration (Foster-Gamko) has made a great difference for visitors to NWT Holme Dunes this year. The company wanted to field trial one of their state-of-the-art chiller decks and, having installed it free at Holme visitor centre, after the six-month trial (in which it is predicted to achieve an 80 per cent energy consumption saving) the chiller will be gifted to us for storage and display of our popular snacks and drinks. Together with a generous discount on another product at NWT Hickling Broad, Foster's contribution will be worth more than £20,000.

### Melbek help us stay in touch with wildlife

IT support and connectivity specialists Melbek has taken their support for NWT to new heights! Already members as 'Investors in Wildlife', Melbek has recently conducted a full IT security audit for us, donated nest box camera systems and remote 4G connectivity hardware, and waived rental and data charges, support we value at over £15,000 to date. Melbek has now been enrolled as 'Corporate Partners' for their contribution.

### Bateman Groundworks, keeping our Norfolk show on the road

For many years, Bateman Groundworks has supported NWT at the Royal Norfolk Show by donating aggregate and other materials to help us with the construction of our award-winning stands. This support will continue in 2024, and follows last year when Bateman was also kind enough to fund a brand-new inflatable gazebo for our Wilder Learning team to run a stand in the show's 'Discovery Zone'.

### Make this your wildest June yet! 30 Days Wild

2024 marks a decade of 30 Days Wild, the annual challenge that sees The Wildlife Trusts ask participants to take part in one wild activity each day throughout June. This national campaign has grown from 12,000 sign-ups in the first year to over 500,000 for the 2023 challenge, with this year set to be the biggest, best, and wildest, celebration of nature yet.

We are helping participants of all ages rise to the challenge with lots of exciting events and activities throughout the month. Bring your friends and family to NWT Cley Marshes for the Big Wild Weekend (15–16 June), where they'll enjoy free entry to the reserve, hides and visitor centre. Cley Marshes also hosts our popular wildlife festival, Cley Calling, this year running from 5–9 June and including mindfulness walks, folk music, and some fascinating talks.



Will you join us this year and make your June that little bit wilder? Be sure to keep an eye on our social media for daily inspiration and celebrations of your wild activities and tag us in your posts. We'd love to see what you get up to during June and beyond!

## Help beach-nesting birds

Over half of England's most threatened breeding birds are ground-nesters, including ringed plover, little tern and oystercatcher, all of which breed at NWT Holme Dunes and neighbouring beaches in spring and summer. They are vulnerable to disturbance, rising sea level and predators. Tori Backham, Assistant Warden at Holme Dunes, oversees vital work protecting beach-nesting birds, alongside a team of fantastic volunteers.

'Giving these special birds space to raise their families is so important and there are things you can do to help. Please keep your distance from our fenced-off areas on the beach, be vigilant for tiny chicks that may be feeding on the shoreline and keep your fluffy companions under control.'

## Volunteer at the beach!

We are looking for volunteer beach wardens at Holme Dunes this summer. Your role will involve patrolling the beach, talking to members of the public, and recording nesting activity and reactions to disturbance. For more information, visit [norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering](https://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering) or email [alanm@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:alanm@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

## Workshops for a Wilder Community

We have designed a programme of walks, talks and workshops to support people, communities, parish councils and landowners acting for nature in their local area.

If you want to find out how to create a meadow or restore a pond, learn how to grab a grant for a wildlife project, or be inspired by a community taking action for nature, look no further.

To view the programme visit [norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/events) or request a brochure by emailing [wild@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:wild@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

## From the President

Patrick Barkham, natural history writer and NWT President

Even if you have randomly picked up Tern and chanced upon this page, you'll already know that nature is in crisis. You will know it is up to us, a species that has anointed itself the director and leading actor within the great play of life on Earth, to do something about it. And you'll already be doing something about it.

Thank you for all you are doing to reconnect wildlife and boost its recovery. Feeding the birds, planting pollinator-friendly flowers in window boxes, joining #nomowmay, sowing yellow rattle in lawns, erecting bug hotels, digging a pond, drilling 'hedgehog' holes in fences to allow the passage of small mammals, eschewing weedkillers and slug pellets — all these individual actions help connect wild species with each other, and ourselves.

Every tiny act of reconnection helps. Collectively, Britain's gardens are almost as large as the whole of Norfolk.

I've tried a few flash moves in my garden — planting buckthorn for brimstone butterflies, importing chalk to create a small patch of chalk grassland — but the most effective thing is something I've not

done: tidy up piles of hedge and tree cuttings beside my hedge. These 'messy' (the eye forgives the 'mess' after a short time) slowly decomposing hummocks are havens for wood mice, short-tailed field voles and even harvest mice, as well as lesser stag beetles. Great spotted woodpeckers descend to devour the stag beetle larvae. Nature makes connections with rapid, joyous abandon.

We feel good when we notice nature flourishing around us. But I feel less good knowing that I've not been so quick to connect my little steps with others around me. We can't tell our neighbours what to do with their window box or garden. And we fear sounding self-righteous if we preach about the evils of weedkiller or suggest a neighbour could plant a buddleia beside their paved parking space.

And yet the most powerful way we can reconnect wild places and restore nature is to connect with each other. Wilder gardens and window boxes can of course speak for themselves. Front gardens in particular lead by example. But we can also share wild ideas on social media or even share our wildflower seeds with neighbours. We can join community veg growers or allotment associations. We can volunteer for local groups, or for Norfolk Wildlife Trust. As nature connections deepen, so does our own bond with the nature of which we are part.

I've just read a new book called Wild Service. It's a fairly radical critique of much conventional conservation and a call for us to revitalise traditional concepts of gratitude and service to reframe our relationship with the natural world. When we next see a wren, or a desolate patch of urban land, or a neighbour, perhaps we should ask, 'How can we serve you?'

Considering the answer might just spark new action, and more of those life-giving nature connections.