

A Welcome to Welcome to Mildlife





Getting to know us

We're thrilled you've decided to join BBOWT! Here are a few things you might like to know about us and your membership

Your

How do I get in touch to make a change to my membership details – for example, my subscription amount or address? questions

You can easily update answered your contact details, the amount you donate and anything else to do with your membership by getting in touch with our Membership Team (see contact details at the bottom of this page).

What is Gift Aid and how does BBOWT benefit from it?

Gift Aid is a tax relief that enables UK charities to reclaim an extra 25% in tax on every eligible donation made by a UK taxpayer. This means BBOWT can claim 25p for every £1 donated at no extra cost to you. If you would like to know more or change your Gift Aid status please get in touch with the Membership Team.

How can I find out what events are being held near me?

The Events section of our website has information on all our upcoming wildlife themed events - bbowt.org. uk/events. Your regular Wild Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire magazine will also highlight interesting events throughout the year.

How do I book onto an event?

You can book onto one of our events by signing up on the specific event page on our website, or by contacting the Events Team at events@bbowt.org.uk

Who can I talk to about a specific wildlife issue?

If you have any queries about wildlife please get in touch by calling 01865 775476 or emailing wildlifeenquiries@ bbowt.org.uk.

BBOWT in numbers

The number of hectares we manage, across more than 80 nature reserves

We care for

of the UK's remaining floodplain meadows





We have more than

individual members



volunteers support our work

The number of education centres we run, visited by thousands of children and learners

How to get in touch

Contact our membership team by email, phone or post:

membership@bbowt.org.uk 01865 788300

☑ The Lodge, 1 Armstrong Road, Oxford, OX4 4XT.



Make the most of your membership

We like to keep in touch, so you can choose how we contact you and take part in fantastic wildlife-themed events we put on every year.

s the only charity dedicated solely to the wildlife of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, our roots are local. In fact, BBOWT is all about local people coming together to make a difference for local wildlife. It's good news for nature and everyone is better off when they're a bit wild.

Our members are the lifeblood of BBOWT, which is why we want you to be as happy and informed as possible, so that you too can discover the incredible wildlife that's right on your doorstep.

Staying in touch

We'll send you a copy of Wild Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire magazine three times a year (at the end of March, July and November). It is a great way to catch up on all the latest news and to see what a difference your support is making for local wildlife. We offer a digital



version of the magazine, which you can sign up to on our website at **bbowt.org.uk/publications.**

We may also get in touch a couple of times a year to let you know about other opportunities to support

BBOWT. These may include appeals to purchase a piece of land that will benefit local wildlife.
You can opt out of any form of communciation by contacting our membership team.

If you haven't yet

If you haven't yet signed up for our regular

email newsletter, you can do so on our website at **bbowt.org.uk/newsletter** or by contacting us.

If you wish to change anything about the content you receive or the method of communication, then please get in touch with us or complete the Data Protection form enclosed with your Welcome Pack.



Membership Team

Journey of discovery

Two members share their experiences of taking part in an event and what becoming a member means to them.

I'm very grateful that my membership was bought for me as a gift. It's given me an incentive to explore my local wildlife and learn about the work BBOWT does on a daily basis.

Although I'm not a nature expert I have always loved wildlife. The guided walk was very interesting and reminded me of the wildlife I grew up with. It's been a great opportunity to get out and learn more about the wildlife that surrounds me.

Serena Millen **Events Officer** Part of our amazing Events Team who run online and in person events across our three counties



Let's get together!

We run a programme of events you are welcome to take part in. There are activities for all ages and abilities, bringing you closer to nature. Enjoy a fascinating guided tour of a nature reserve, led by an expert in local wildlife, bring your child to a handson activity session or join an online talk from home to discover more about nature.

Events are a great way to learn about local conservation and the wildlife that thrives in our area, while of course meeting other like-minded members.

Visit bbowt.org.uk/events and have a browse - we look forward to meeting you!



Chinnor Hill, Oxfordshire.

Great deals for you and wildlife

Take advantage of these opportunities to help local wildlife while you shop and enjoy a few discounts just for you too. For full details of all our membership benefits, visit bbowt.org.uk/shop/product-partners



15% discount at Cotswold Outdoor

We are delighted to offer you 15% off at Cotswold Outdoor. They offer an extensive range of outdoor clothing equipment and accessories. Use the code AF-WILDLIFE-M5 to claim your exclusive discount in store or online.



Save 10% on **NatureBureau** books

NatureBureau uses their expert knowledge in biodiversity and conservation to publish ecology and natural history books under their imprint, Pisces Publications. Order online at www.naturebureau. co.uk/bookshop. Remember to enter the code "BBOWT10" in the 'coupon or voucher code' box on the checkout page.



help BBOWT too

Sign up for green electricity or gas from renewable energy company Ecotricity and you'll benefit BBOWT as well as the environment! Switch to Ecotricity and they will donate up to £60 to us – it's as easy as that!



Food for birds and a boost for BBOWT

Get your bird food from Vine House Farm and help BBOWT at the same time. The Watts family.

who run the Lincolnshire Fens farm, are dedicated to managing their land in a wildlife-friendly way. As much bird food as possible is grown in the local area and packaged onsite. When you order use the code BBOWTNM10 to get 10% off your first order. What's more, BBOWT receives £10 for every member who becomes a new customer of Vine House Farm. Order online at vinehousefarm.co.uk or phone 01775 630208.



Data Protection and Privacy



BBOWT takes the privacy, security and wishes of its members very seriously. We adhere to all legislation and regulations, governing charities and fundraising. Please read our Privacy Policy (available on our website at bbowt.org.uk/privacy).

This details in full how we use your data; from processing your membership to getting in touch. We are committed to fundraising and communicating in an honest and transparent way. We are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and comply to their Code of Fundraising Practice. For more information please see our Fundraising Promise on our website: bbowt.org.uk/

fundraising-promise.

In your Welcome Pack, you will find a Data Protection form that gives you the opportunity to change the ways we communicate with you, or which communications you wish to receive. Please let us know of any changes you wish to make by returning this form or getting in touch with the Membership Team by email or phone.

Earthly paradise



The spectacular chalk grassland wild flowers of Yoesden support an

extraordinary diversity of butterflies. Your membership will help us continue to protect this special place, says Buckinghamshire Senior Land Manager, Mark Vallance

n a sunny day, there is no better place to be than a wildflower meadow. With just the low thrum of insects for company, these precious habitats are the antidote to our hectic lives.

Chalk grassland

Yoesden is one of these special places, a remnant of chalk grassland inaccessible to the plough and untouched by modern fertilisers. Sheep have grazed here for centuries and together with the thin soil, this has helped control fastgrowing grasses, ensuring an

donis blue butterfly

extraordinary tapestry of wild flowers that makes Yoesden a haven for butterflies.

Chalk grasslands can contain up to 40 plant species per square metre, providing a bountiful display. The show starts in spring when the slope is brought to life by clumps of pale yellow cowslips. Soon after, the patches of hawthorn scrub glow their brilliant white. The floral climax arrives in June when pink and purple orchids, including fragrant, pyramidal and common spotted, contrast with yellow kidney vetch and bird's-foot trefoil, creating a riot of colour across the grassland.

Haven for wildlife

Yoesden was saved in 2015 and the site was extended in 2016 thanks to our generous members and other supporters. Now one of our finest nature reserves, this steep slope is home to butterflies as varied as grizzled and dingy skippers, green hairstreaks and the three blues: small blue, chalkhill blue and Adonis blue. The vivid Adonis blue is the

key species here and Yoesden is its most northerly site. You're sure to catch a red kite circling overhead, while the fragrance of wild thyme and marjoram permeates the air. On a summer's day, listen closely and you may catch the repetitive 'song' of male great green bush-crickets as they rub their forewings together to attract a mate.

Fragrant orchids and horseshoe vetch

at Yoesden

Long-term care

BBOWT is protecting this magical place by selectively removing scrub to maintain the mosaic of scrub and grassland. Many species rely on scrub for food and shelter, so this needs to be done in a balanced way. We also continue to graze the meadow to keep vigorous grasses under control, working with a local farmer who brings in cattle once the wild flowers have set seed.

With the future of Yoesden secured, this patch of earthly paradise will be around for generations to come. Come and see for yourself and bask in the glow of a pristine chalk grassland at its very finest.

An extraordinary tapestry of wild flowers makes Yoesden one of the best sites in the Chilterns for butterflies.

> Yoesden is a precious fragment of chalk grassland

For full visiting information for Yoesden and all our other nature reserves please visit bbowt.org.uk/reserves



than all the land protected for nature, so helping wildlife really does begin at home. Wildlife gardening doesn't mean just letting your garden grow wild – you can have a beautiful garden and help nature at the same time.

Greener backdrop

Start with plants. Berry-producing trees and shrubs such as dogwood, berberis and pyracantha provide food for birds, especially in winter. Climbing plants like honeysuckle have nectarrich flowers for bees, while evergreens such as ivy also offer year-round shelter. Replace fences with hedges to create nesting sites and allow hedgehogs to move freely between gardens to forage.

Your garden can become a magnet for local wildlife.

Butterflies and bees love nectar-rich flowers like verbena and scabious. Simple flowers make it easy for insects to reach the nectar. Many cottage garden favourites are ideal.

into a mini wildflower meadow – start afresh from seed or plant plugs of flowers like cowslip, oxeye daisy and meadow crane's-bill.

Tight on space? Then potted lavender or marjoram are great for bees and butterflies.

Pond life

Ponds attract more wildlife than any other garden feature. If you've got no room for a big pond, you could create a mini pond from an old washing-up bowl or bucket.

Fill your pond with rainwater and native pond plants, then watch and wait. Frogs, newts and even dragonflies will soon arrive. Birds and mammals will use your pond as the local watering hole.

Right at home

A pile of logs in a shady corner will help rare stag beetles breed and shelter toads and slow worms. Spiders and solitary bees seek out nooks and crannies. Put up bird boxes. Many gardens are also suitable for bat boxes or swift boxes - also available as 'bricks' to replace standard ones.

Attract more wildlife



Flower power Sow traditional cornfield annuals like cornflower, corn marigold and poppies.

Ponds are

naven for



Rotten luck Compost heaps provide a natural supply of nutrients and a home for insects and spiders.



Bug bonanza Hollow stems and drilled holes provide hidey holes for solitary bees and other bugs.



Feathered nest Bird boxes offer instant homes. Locate them in a quiet area, out of direct sunlight.

Don't forget to keep feeding the birds and topping up bird baths. For more wildlife gardening tips visit bbowt.org.uk/actions.



Best nature reserves for...

Looking for ideas but unsure where to begin? Here's some inspiration to get out there and discover the best of our local wildlife





Wild flowers

Inkpen Crocus Field (Berks) From late February to early April this field is awash with more than 400,000 purple and white blooms. Britain's biggest display of wild crocuses is believed to be the result of bulbs brought back from the Mediterranean by Knights Templars in the 12th century.

Bernwood Meadows (Bucks) These traditional hay meadows, a remnant of medieval ridge and furrow meadow, offer a riot of colour from April to July. More than 100 plant species thrive here, from lady's bedstraw with its tiny yellow flowers to rare green-winged orchids.

Iffley Meadows (Oxon) Every spring thousands of delicate purple, pink and white chequered snake's-head fritillary flowers nod gracefully in the breeze. This exotic-looking flower is the emblem of Oxfordshire, symbolising its relationship with the Thames. Why not bring a picnic and watch the river lazily flow by?

Families

Nature Discovery Centre (Berks) The stunning lakeside visitor centre is full of interactive wildlife and natural history displays, while



outside there's a network of familyfriendly footpaths to explore. Wear the little ones out in the Adventure Playground, feed the waterfowl then relax in the Lakeside Café.

Warburg Nature Reserve (Oxon) Warburg is one of BBOWT's flagship nature reserves, a magnificent place alive with wildlife – ask the warden for current highlights. With a small visitor centre, picnic area, bird hides and interactive Nature Detectives Trail to try, there's lots for young and old alike.

College Lake (Bucks) Nature reclaimed this workedout chalk quarry and created an

outstanding centre for wildlife, which gives nature-lovers of all ages easy access to an amazing range of wild plants and animals.

Explore the interactive displays in our visitor centre and around the reserve

then enjoy delicious food and drinks in the café.

> Try our circular Wildlife Walk at College Lake - just follow the lapwing waymarkers around

the lake!

Above: Lapwing at College Lake

Birdwatchers

Chimney Meadows (Oxon)

A tranquil corner of the Upper Thames converted from a commercial farm to a rich mosaic of wildflower meadows. Its nationally-important wetlands are home to wading birds like curlew, while feeding cormorant, little egret and kingfishers are often glimpsed.

Thatcham Reedbeds (Berks) There aren't many places you can still hear the call of the cuckoo or the rich song of the nightingale,

but these reedbeds

offer a good chance. The reeds are home to water rail, reed bunting and warblers like the Cetti's warbler. Look out for bitterns too.

Upper Ray Meadows (Bucks) The River Ray is one of the best areas in central England for locally scarce wading birds. The first curlew usually return to the Upper Ray Meadows in late February, and by early spring lapwing and curlew can be seen

performing displays across the reserve.



Chimney Meadows. Left: Look out for bitterns at Thatcham Reedbeds.

Dancersend with Pavis Woods (Bucks) Lose yourself in this tranguil haven nestled within two sheltered Chiltern valleys. The extraordinary tapestry of woodland and meadows has been a nature reserve since the 1940s. The recent addition of wonderful beechwoods means there's now even more to discover.

Above right: Orchids at Dancersend.

Greenham and Crookham **Commons** (Berks)

Explore Berkshire's largest tract of heathland. Once an airbase, the roar of US Air Force planes has been replaced by the songs of rare birds, including nightjars, woodlarks and Dartford warblers, that thrive among the heather and



Hartslock

Hartslock (Oxon)

Let your spirit soar at this jewel on the edge of the Chilterns. Admire views across to the Thames while you watch swallows skim the pasture or red kites circle overhead. In summer Hartslock reveals its real treasure - a visual orchestra of orchids and butterflies.

Tramper Hire Limited mobility needn't mean missing out on nature! Find out which of our nature

reserves are suitable for less-mobile visitors, either with a robust mobility scooter or a robust wheelchair and an assistant. Three of our flagship nature reserves have Trampers available to

borrow free of charge - the Nature Discovery Centre (Berkshire), College Lake (Buckinghamshire) and Warburg Nature Reserve (Oxfordshire). Visit our website bbowt.org.uk/tramper-hire for more information about our accessible reserves and how to book a tramper.



Remote wilderness

Foxholes (Oxon)

Revel in this cool deep wood filled with birdsong, bluebells and flashes of butterflies flitting among the trees. Because Foxholes is ancient woodland it is a haven for bats. Seven species have been recorded here, many of them using old woodpecker holes in trees as their roosts.

Moor Copse (Berks)

The River Pang meanders through the woodland, where in spring bluebells carpet the ground with stunning effect. Then in summer the restored floodplain meadows teem with wild flowers from which seed has been harvested to restore other nearby meadows.

• For visiting reserves information, please consult Your Wild Guide nature reserve handbook. You can also find all the details you need at bbowt.org.uk/reserves



look as if they're on important business. If you are lucky enough to glimpse one chances are it will be scrambling into the water, scuttling away into the undergrowth or darting headlong into a

While once a common sight, water voles have declined by more than 90% since the 1970s. Changes in farming practices and land use have seen losses of the lush waterside vegetation that water voles rely on for food and cover. The sharp decline coincides with the spread of their most voracious predator, the American mink.

Local recovery

It's not all bad news for our industrious water voles though. BBOWT's Water Vole Recovery Project was set up in 1998 to conserve local water vole populations with some very encouraging results. By 2018, the total area of water vole activity in our three counties reached 233 square miles; a remarkable increase of 78% over 10 years, and a result that validates our approach.

So how have we done it? To conserve water voles we first need to know where sites for water vole burrows, droppings, feeding signs and footprints.

We work with landowners to create favourable conditions for water voles with opportunities taken to enhance sites. This might include fencing off a

We work with landowners to create favourable conditions.

watercourse or reducing trees and scrub to allow grasses, reeds and herbs to flourish. We also work to monitor and control mink by providing advice and special mink monitoring rafts

to land managers.

By helping the remaining colonies to flourish and spread they may eventually <u>link up t</u>o create larger and, crucially, more robust populations that are more sustainable in the long term. In time we hope that the distinctive 'plop' of a water vole diving into the water will be a common sound once more.

Water vole field signs

- Riverbank burrows, often with a nibbled 'lawn' by the entrance.
- 'Latrines' of rounded, Tic Tac-sized droppings.
- Piles of nibbled vegetation with the ends cut at a 45 degree angle.



• Find out more about the Project and where to see water voles at bbowt.org.uk/water-vole-recovery-project

An early fascination with nature will last a lifetime. Making the most of your family membership is the perfect way to ignite that passion

nstil a love of nature from an early age to create tomorrow's wildlife guardians. Your family membership is an easy and fun way of starting their lifelong interest in nature – and they can look forward to receiving all sorts of wildlife-themed goodies too!

★ Four issues a year of Wildlife Watch, full of fun facts, things to do, wallcharts and more ★ The Wildlife Watcher's Handbook – a pocket-sized guide to being a 'Wildlife Watcher' ★ Membership card, badge, poster and stickers ★ Fun family events – everything from craft workshops to pond dipping.

Get out there!

Throughout the year and whatever the weather, BBOWT puts on many exciting family focussed activities. They are a great introduction



to wildlife, with hands-on activities and awe-inspiring talks and demonstrations to get the youngsters in your lives genuinely enthralled by nature.

Pond dipping, bug hunting, bird watching, den building or perhaps a magical wildlife-themed story time – there's lots going on for all age groups and interests. Discover how fascinating nature can be and how you too can help local wildlife. Visit bbowt.org.uk/events and find activities to bring out your family's wild side!

• Discover more and sign up to our Family Fun e-newsletter at bbowt.org.uk/family-days-out

More Wildlife Watch activities!

For more awesome facts, stories and activities that help children connect with nature, visit wildlifewatch.org.uk



A voice for nature

Wildlife can't speak, which is why we campaign tirelessly on its behalf

Development: Increasing development pressures mean we have to ensure wildlife is fully considered within the planning system. BBOWT responds to strategic planning consultations, comments on selected planning applications that pose a risk to wildlife, and provides advice to planners, developers and consultants.

Natural climate solutions:

BBOWT works in our nature reserves and beyond, across our Living



Landscapes and into the wider countryside. We are working with landowners and farmers to deliver nature-based solutions to the nature and climate crisis. This will enable us to restore nature at a landscape-scale, helping to halt the loss of wildlife, and at the same time tackling climate change locally.

High Speed 2: The High Speed 2 (HS2) railway line is cutting through our region. BBOWT campaigned throughout the approval process for changes to reduce its impact on wildlife; our evidence helped to secure new barn owl and bat habitats along the route.

Get involved

Be a Wildlife Ambassador:

Join our community of more than 900 Wildlife Ambassadors who help us stand up for wildlife. Sign up to receive updates on how you can get involved, tips about how you can support our campaigns, plus the latest news from BBOWT. To sign up as a Wildlife Ambassador and find out more about lobbying your local MP, visit bbowt.org.uk/campaigning-wildlife.



• For more on our current campaigns please visit bbowt.org.uk/campaigning-wildlife



Here are some other ways to help us and your local wildlife



flexibility

of volunteering

I never thought

I'd do.

Become a volunteer!

Volunteering with BBOWT is the perfect way to help local wildlife, have fun, maybe get fit too, learn new skills and meet other volunteers at social events. To find out more about the ways in which you can I love the

volunteer visit bbowt.org.uk/volunteer. If you have a particular role in mind, please email volunteering@bbowt.org.uk and tell us what you would like to do. Or if you would like to discuss further, call us on 01865 775476 and ask to speak to our Volunteering Administrator.

with BBOWT. I've been doing things





∬ Fundraise for BBOWT

Whether you fancy organising a bake sale, taking on a Tough Mudder, or even doing a marathon, you can help raise essential funds and make a real difference for wildlife.

Go wild, raise money, and help the wildlife you love! Visit bbowt.org.uk/wildpack for more details and to order your fundraising pack.



Recycle ink cartridges for BBOWT

Make money for BBOWT and get rid of your old inkjet cartridges! We receive £1 for every cartridge recycled with us through Recycle 4 Charity.

You can order recycling envelopes at recycle4charity. co.uk/register/C55659





Right: Charlotte Karmali

Volunteer Warden at Finemere Wood

A vital volunteer who organises work parties of enthusiastic volunteers.

Leave a gift in your Will

Gifts in Wills are incredibly valuable to BBOWT, as they help us nurture and protect valuable wild spaces, so that local species can thrive in the years to come. If you would like more information on leaving a gift in your Will to BBOWT, please visit bbowt.org.uk/legacy. You can also request a hardcopy of the BBOWT Guide to Making a Will booklet by emailing us at legacies@bbowt. org.uk or calling 01865 788300.



We are also offering a limited number of free Wills to our supporters, Farewill through a partnership with Farewill, the UK's largest Will-writing service.

Visit farewill.com/bbowt-web and enter the following voucher code BBOWT-WEB at check-out.

Nature is sending an SOS

Will you answer the call? Help bring nature back



Give to our Nature Recovery Fund today



Scan the QR code to give or text **RECOVERY** followed by your chosen



bbowt.org.uk/sos



For nature Wildlife is



For climate Our climate is



For people We all need



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