



# GREEN CHAMPIONS



## Health - Naturally

Sunshine and health - While too much sunshine is undoubtedly bad for your unprotected skin, (please follow all the guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/> ) sunlight exposure is also beneficial in many ways because it allows the body to create more vitamin D, which can reduce the risk of cancer and lower blood pressure among other health benefits. Morning exposure to sufficient daylight is also important for healthy sleep cycles. So, while excessive exposure is unwise, so too is keeping yourself indoors without any sunlight at all.



## Noticing Nature



A shaded lamp and a waving blind,  
And the beat of a clock from a distant floor:  
On this scene enter-winged, horned, and spined  
A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore;  
While 'mid my page there idly stands  
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands ... Thomas Hardy

## Learn more - Moths

Hawk-moths can be very striking like the bright pink and orange Small Elephant Hawk-moth. But did you know the Death's-head Hawk-moth can squeak like a mouse? That the Mother Shipton moth has a witch's face on its wing or that the caterpillar of the Puss Moth can shoot acid out of its bottom? You can learn more here: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/why-moths-matter/mothsmatter>



Guides to moth ID:  
<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/identify-moths>



# City of Nature Programme update

Does money really make the world go around?

One of the greatest challenges facing the long-term maintenance and recovery of the natural environment including public parks and green spaces, is the issue of how to fund necessary interventions.

In July the City of Nature Alliance had a workshop to look at how we can make Birmingham “A Valued - City of Nature”. The valued actions from the City of Nature Plan are:

- Share information demonstrating the wider environmental, social, and economic value of green space through a Natural Capital Account.
- Use Biodiversity Net Gain and the planning and development process to improve access to good quality green spaces.
- Develop a diversity of funding streams for green spaces ranging from: supporting communities to crowdfund and secure grants, through to building relationships to secure large scale business contributions and everything in between.
- Increase Council income through commercial activity.
- Increase social value for green spaces through the Councils procurement processes.

Historically the economic model adopted by all cities has been a linear one resulting in the maintenance of parks being registered as nothing but a cost; with their value not being captured. In this City of Nature plan is moving away from that model towards a circular economy one, that better fits how the city will need to meet its twin challenges of levelling-up and climate change.



Please contact us at [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk) if you would like to find out more about the City of Nature Programme, Green Champions, Young Green Champions, the City of Nature Alliance or the Ranger Service Wild Heart - Healthy Parks Programme.

## Come and Connect with City of Nature Team



Please come and join us online on Friday 23rd August 2024 1pm - 2pm for a short “Lunch and Learn” about being or becoming a heritage volunteer.

If you receive this Newsletter by email you will already have been sent the link to join, please don't forget to put a note in your diary : )

If not you can get the link by emailing us on [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk) and we will email you the link.



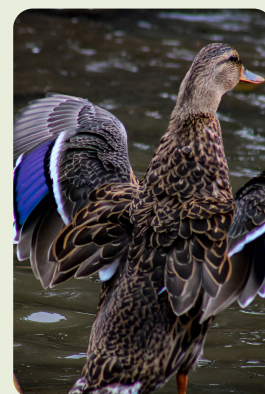


# Nature's Calendar - August: Full of winged things

On warm August days, where we have long grasses in our parks and gardens we can often here the sound of crickets and grasshoppers chirping loudly. In the summer the insects fill the gaps birdsong that decreases in the warmer months. But instead of using their vocal skills to attract a mate, crickets chirp by rubbing their wings together. Grasshoppers have a different technique and rub their back legs on their wings – a bit like running a bow across violin strings – to create a rattling noise. Stop and listen when you visit meadows, grassland and heathland and you're likely to hear this wonderful soundtrack of summer. Top tip: if you manage to catch a glimpse of one of these insects, but don't know if it's a cricket or grasshopper, look at its antennae. Grasshoppers have short, stubby antennae, while crickets have long, thin, elegantly curving antennae that are sometimes even longer than their body.



Visit your local pond or lake in summer and you might notice something odd – all the brightly coloured male Mallard ducks seem to have disappeared! In fact, they are still there but in disguise. Males lose their showy green breeding plumage and grow new brownish feathers (called their eclipse plumage) once the breeding season is over, making them resemble females. Look closely though and you can tell the difference – males still have their greenish-yellow beak, while females have a brownish-orange beak. Unlike most birds, ducks moult all of their wing feathers in one go, which means that they are temporarily unable to fly until the feathers grow back. This quite literally makes them sitting ducks for predators, and so it pays to have plumage a little more low-key that will help them blend in.



<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/natures-calendar/natures-calendar-august>



## The grassland harvest of August meadows

Birmingham City Council is continuing it's A to Bee roads pilot:

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/2923/a-to-bee-roads>



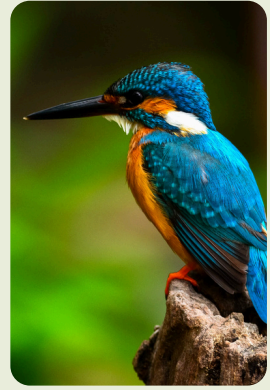
Knapweed continues to provide food for pollinators with its almost thistle-like purple-pink flower. It's a favourite of many different butterflies including the marbled white and meadow brown. Many wildflowers continue to bring vibrant colour to meadows, grasslands and verges, and play a vital role in supporting bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

We are now making decisions about when to mow the areas that have been left uncut so far. Some areas have already started to die back after producing seed some have not shown much diversity this year but may improve naturally as we continue with the A to Bee road management in future years. We are still mowing around the edges of central reservations and islands to ensure tall plants don't cause a visual obstruction. But you may also see some verges being mown as we move towards the autumn. We will continue to keep you updated.



# Birmingham's River Cole - Kingfisher Country Park

This month we complete our journey along the River Cole corridor in Birmingham in to Kingfisher Country Park. The most easterly park along the River Cole in Birmingham is Norman Chamberlain Playing Fields., Packington Avenue, Birmingham B34 7RB. This park is named after the prominent city councillor and soldier Norman Chamberlain - cousin of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain - who died serving his country during World War One.



It forms part of the larger Kingfisher Country Park, which was opened in July 2004 to create an 11km green corridor along a stretch of the River Cole valley. This has substantially improved the area for people and wildlife.

The park includes Shard End a man-made lake which was created in the remains of an old gravel quarry. Fishing is allowed (with a licence) on the lake, which also attracts wildlife, insects and on a warm sunny day is an ideal spot to sit and relax. There is also play equipment for children and basketball courts and an area for football. The River Cole runs along the southern section of the park and kingfishers and herons are a common sight, feeding on fish in the river. Water voles and mink are both associated with the river. Otters have also been recorded at the lower reaches of the Cole.



[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory\\_record/9138/norman\\_chamberlain\\_playing\\_fields](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9138/norman_chamberlain_playing_fields)



## August - Folklore and Traditions:

Lammas end of July - 1st August.

Traditionally, Lammas marked the end of the growing season. Lammas is now recognised as a Christian holy day, and is celebrated by the Church as such. 'Lammas' was the medieval Christian name for the holiday and it means 'loaf-mass', as the day on which loaves of bread were baked from the first grain harvest and laid on the church altars as offerings.

Earlier Pagan celebrations often took place on the last day of July and again marked the first grain harvest. The success of the harvests determined the quality of life through the long winter months. The Celtic harvest season, occurring  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a year after Beltane, began when the first crops were gathered at Lughnasadh, named after the Celtic sun god Lugh. Corn dollies made from the straw of the first harvest would be kept safe through the winter and then buried in the spring with the sowing of the fields.

World religions have days of remembrance and or celebration in most months, not all these events have a connection to the natural world. There are also national days and celebrations of other things connected to nature like food with 30th August in the USA being National Toasted Marshmallow Day and others focus on animals such as World Elephant Day which is 12th August. But in this folklore and traditions spot, the focus is very much on when the natural world is the root of what is being done by humans. This means that traditions and folklore can be very different around the world especially in different hemispheres. In the Southern Hemisphere, the month falls during winter. In many European countries, August is the holiday month for workers and numerous religious holidays occurred during August in ancient Rome.





# Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

## Focusing on: Kings Heath Park

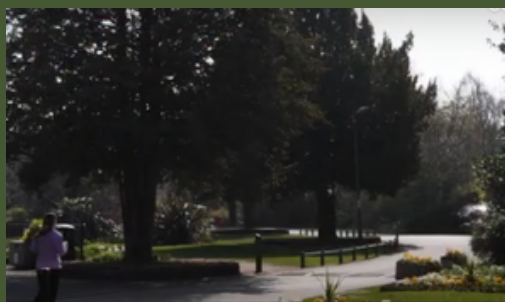
Kings Heath Park, Vicarage Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TQ.

It is a unique horticultural gem, often praised for the beauty of its extensive grounds. Spread around a Grade 11 listed nineteenth century house with a connection to the romantic novelist Dame Barbara Cartland, the 35-acre green space boasts seasonal bedding schemes, herbaceous borders and alpine outcrops of the highest quality.

The area within the park known as the Television Garden was created for the ATV programme Gardening Today (later titled Garden Time) in 1972, as a partnership between Birmingham City Council and the TV company which ran until 1995. More recent high-profile gardening links have been with Pershore College (until 2011) and Bournville College, and (starting in 1996) BBC Gardeners' World. The Television Gardens, now looked after by local therapeutic gardening charity Thrive Birmingham, are open to the public twice a month between April and October.

The Park has:

- Two car parks.
- Benches throughout the park.
- Two playgrounds.
  - one with swings, slide and a seesaw.
  - one with zip wire and climbing frame for older youngsters.
- A 2 kilometre walking route.
- Bowling Green.
- Cartlands Tearooms, an independent family-run tearoom accessed through the main house.
- Birmingham Parks and Nurseries - Plant and floral sales.



[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory\\_record/9125/kings\\_heath\\_park](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9125/kings_heath_park)

## How does your garden grow?

August is usually one of the hottest months of the year, making watering essential. Try to use grey water wherever possible, especially as water butts may be running low if it has been a dry summer. August is traditionally holiday time, so you might need to enlist the help of friends and family to look after the garden while you are away. When you are at home, take the time to prune summer-flowering shrubs such as lavender once they've finished flowering. It is also a good time to gather seeds. Collect ripe seed on a dry day, as soon as the seed heads (e.g. capsules or pods) ripen. This is often indicated by a colour change from green to brown, black or red, but must be before they open and shed their contents. Find out more jobs for the August garden from the RHS:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/august>



# Fungi in Birmingham's green spaces

Fungi are everywhere but spend most of their lives hidden from view underground or inside wood only emerging to make their spore producing structures such as mushrooms. They play a vital part in the ecosystem including being major recyclers, breaking down plant material so that it can be reused.

Birmingham's green spaces are a great place to look for fungi. Many species live in symbiosis with trees so the wide variety of species of trees planted in parks and other green spaces can encourage a high diversity of fungi. Particularly good trees include Birch, Oak, Beech, and Hornbeam. Woodchip mulch in flower beds is another excellent fungus habitat. It supports a wide variety of species including the colourful Redlead Roundhead and Verdigris Agaric.

Although most fungi are found in autumn they can turn up at any time of the year. Species like the Scarlet Elfcup and Black Morel appear in spring. Rust fungi are common on plant leaves in the summer and a few species like the Velvet Shank can survive cold weather in winter. Fungi are very dependent on the weather so a wet summer can lead to many species appearing early.

Fungi can turn up in the most unexpected places. The beautiful Coral Tooth is one of Britain's rarest species. It is usually associated with ancient Beech trees in places like the New Forest but in 2020 It was found in a Birmingham Park. This is the only time it has been recorded in the West Midlands. So, it is always worth looking out for fungi because you never know what you might find! If you do find something interesting, the iNaturalist app is a great way to record and identify fungi.

The West Midlands Fungus Group was founded in 2022 to encourage a greater interest and understanding of fungi. One of the ways we do this is by leading fungus forays around the West Midlands. We have assisted with fungi walks for several friends' groups including the Highbury Park, Key Hill and Warstone Lane Cemeteries, Holder's Wood and Dawberry Fields.

If you would like to organise a fungus walk in your local green space do get in touch. Our email address is: [Westmidfungi@gmail.com](mailto:Westmidfungi@gmail.com)

**Lukas Large, chair of the West Midlands Fungus Group**

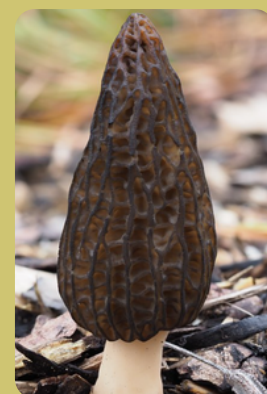
Photos by: Lukas Large



Coral Tooth



Redlead Roundhead



Black Morel

## 4th August - The end of Love Parks Week....

The end of love parks week doesn't mean that we have to stop loving parks, oh no, the love must continue!

Why? Because:

**Healthier communities** – parks encourage physical activity, reduce stress, and provide spaces for social interaction, leading to happier and healthier residents.

**Stronger communities** – well-maintained parks become hubs for community events, fostering a sense of belonging and pride.

**Sustainable future** – parks act as natural filters, improving air and water quality while mitigating climate change impacts.

But you knew that.





# 12th August - International Youth Day

International Youth Day is observed annually on August 12. It is meant as an opportunity for governments and others to draw attention to youth issues worldwide. During IYD, concerts, workshops, cultural events, and meetings involving national and local government officials and youth organizations take place around the world. IYD was designated by the United Nations in 1999

This year the UN ask us to join them in celebrating the power of youth and digital innovation on International Youth Day 2024! Discover how young minds are harnessing technology to create sustainable solutions for our world's most pressing challenges.

The theme for International Youth Day 2024 is "From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development." This theme highlights the key connection between digitalization and accelerating the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the crucial contributions of young people in this transformative process.

While challenges such as digital divide persist, young people are often considered "digital natives," being at the forefront of adopting and innovating with new technologies. They form the largest demographic of users and developers shaping digital trends globally. As the 2030 deadline for the SDGs approaches, youth remain an essential demographic group in leveraging the transformative power of technologies to address global challenges.



## International Bat Day Night

This annual celebration of bats sees bat events for the public taking place across the country. This year (2024), International Bat Night is 24-25th August!

Have a look at The Bat Conservation Trusts International Bat Night Pack which you can download here: [Bat Pack](#) You will find ideas on how to celebrate bats, help bat conservation, further resources and more! You will find lots of useful hyperlinks throughout the document or you can print the packs or bits of it. These are only suggestions - the main thing is that you celebrate bats your own way. Bat groups, park rangers and community groups organise fantastic bat walks and talks at dusk, as well some day time fun days!

This celebration of bats is held by bat groups and the Bat Conservation Trust, to coincide with International Bat Night (formerly European Bat Night) which is organised by Eurobats. We aim to encourage thousands of people across the country to see and hear bats in their natural environment by taking part in a range of events organised by local bat groups, wildlife trusts, countryside rangers and other organisations across the country.

<https://www.bats.org.uk/support-bats/international-bat-night>



# Birmingham City of Nature - Actions for the city

Green spaces that are accessible for those with additional needs and those who may need support (F4)

To be able to 'level-up' environmental justice in terms of the city's parks offer to our citizens, we want Birmingham City Council Street Scene, which includes the management of green spaces, to introduce the Birmingham Future Parks Standard. By assessing each park against a standard under the same 5 themes as city wide. At a local level we ask if the park is:

- **Fair** - is it welcoming, accessible, clean and safe?
- **Green** - are there different trees and plants, are there habitats for wildlife, is it managed sustainably?
- **Healthy** - are there walking routes, quiet areas, activities, is the park used for social prescriptions; and play value?
- **Involved** - can you find out what's happening in your park, can you influence what is happening?
- **Valued** - do we know the worth of what the park provides, is that shared, are there ways to raise extra funds



## Earth Stories - Memories, Hopes and Happenings

### Are you ok?

Reaching out to the person next to you to ask "Are you OK?" is a simple yet meaningful gesture that can help promote our mental health.

This idea was at the heart of the "Friendship Bench Initiative", developed in Zimbabwe and supported by the World Health Organization, to provide safe places in communities for people to talk together. "Talking therapy" can help people who experience conditions like anxiety and depression. The therapy is delivered outdoors. Community health workers, who are mainly grandmothers, sit with their clients on wooden benches in discreet, safe community spaces, delivering one-to-one counselling sessions. This is provided to people with mild to moderate mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, known locally as 'kufungisisa,' which translates to "thinking too much." <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/spotlight/friendship-bench-community-led-approach-to-mental-health-care>

I am not really a trained community health worker although I am of the age and have completed many and various courses that would put me in a good position to offer this "therapy". But instead I am going to go out through August and simply talk to people sitting on their favourite benches in an outdoor setting. I want to record some of these conversations so I can share them with you and encourage you to consider the Friendship Bench idea in your local green space. Exercise is very good for our health but so is conversation. So I am going to start with the question "Are you OK?" and we'll see where it takes us. If you want to share a conversation or find out more about this idea please email me at: [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk)

**Debbie Needle - Community Facilitator - Urban Nature Development Project**





# Birmingham's Route to Zero - Climate Action

National Allotments Week 12th to 18th August 2024

As we celebrate National Allotments Week 2024, we look to the future with a commitment to nurturing biodiversity. Allotments are more than just places to grow food; they are vital ecosystems that support a wide array of life. Together, we can ensure that our green spaces continue to thrive, providing benefits for people and wildlife alike. Let's make National Allotments Week 2024 a landmark event for environmental stewardship and community spirit! <https://thenas.org.uk/NAW-24>

Food is one of the four key areas of action to address when we discuss reducing our carbon footprints. It is central to all our lives: it provides us sustenance and nutrition; connections, memories and culture are formed around food; it also provides opportunities for enjoyment and the learning of skills. However with it playing such a feature role in our lives, it also means that our food choices can have a big impact on our carbon footprints.

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero Plan you can contact the team on:  
[routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk)



## Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with us for nature's recovery across Birmingham and the Black Country; protecting, restoring and creating wildlife-rich, accessible spaces that benefit people and wildlife. Get involved and find out more about their events in Birmingham and the Black Country.

<https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/>



## BOSF - Find you local Friends of Open Spaces Group

BOSF offers opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. They produce regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. They can also put you in touch with other groups who have experiences that might be useful to you.

<https://bosf.org.uk/members/>



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Check our website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/>



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