



GREEN CHAMPIONS



Health - Naturally

As the days start to shorten in can be tempting to snuggle down and hibernate. But we know exposure to natural environments has been proven to lower cortisol levels, which helps reduce stress and anxiety. The calming sights and sounds of nature can also act as a form of meditation, promoting relaxation and mindfulness. We also still need physical activity especially outdoors in natural light, to help regulate our circadian rhythm, improving the quality of sleep. Exposure to daylight in autumn can also help combat seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which can be triggered by shorter daylight hours.



Noticing Nature

In the month of October, a season's tale unfolds,
As nature's palette shifts, vibrant colours behold.
The weather turns cooler, a crispness fills the air,
Leaves cascade like confetti, a dance without care.
- Catherine Pulsifer

Learn more - Seed gathering

The autumn equinox is the official start of The Tree Council's Seed Gathering Season.

Seed gathering is fun, free and easy. Wherever you live, whatever your age, you can get involved. You don't need to be a tree expert or have any special equipment – just a love of trees and nature and lots of enthusiasm!

Each Seed Gathering Season, the Tree Council runs free online talks, including a seed gathering masterclass, top tips and an insight into the wonderful world of seeds.

There's still time to get tickets:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/thetreecouncil/1375296>



City of Nature Programme update

City of Nature Alliance Communicating Workshop - Building Connexions

I like this quote from George Bernard Shaw "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place," why? because it serves as a reminder that effective communication is different to just communicating .

In the workshop we considered that effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose. When we communicate effectively, both the sender and receiver feel satisfied. That is so important.

When you look at the definition of communication it will say something like: the imparting or exchanging of information. To me the imparting of information may be informing but not enough to count as communicating.

We looked at communication in many forms, including verbal and non-verbal, written, visual, and listening. It can occur in person, on the internet (on forums, social media, and websites), over the phone (through apps, calls, and video), or by mail. It is well known that for communication to be effective, it must be clear, correct, complete, concise, and compassionate. These are often called the 5 Cs of communication. I would like to add another "C" to the list - Connected. By this I mean connected by an invisible "wire" that runs through all those that are communicating, like the fungal mycelium in the forest feeding information back and forth.

<https://blog.walkingmountains.org/curious-nature/tree-mycellium>

I talked about how recently I have become very aware of the role laughter and smiling plays in communication, this is something I really want to explore further: published by Robert Provine in November 2000 he said *"After 10 years of research on this little-studied topic [the science of laughter], I concluded that laughter is primarily a social vocalization that binds people together. It is a hidden language that we all speak. It is not a learned group reaction but an instinctive behaviour"*



Please contact us at 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 Thursday 31st October 2024 1pm - 2pm for a catch up on what has been happening in October and hopefully some laughter.

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 and we will email you the link.



Nature's Calendar - October: A Month of Change

October in the UK marks the full arrival of autumn, bringing with it a host of wildlife activity as the landscape transforms. As temperatures drop and days shorten, many species prepare for winter, while others take advantage of the changing conditions to thrive. From birds migrating to fungi fruiting in the damp undergrowth, October is a month of dynamic change and excitement in the natural world.

October can be a prime time for birdwatching, as many species embark on long migrations. Birds from Scandinavia, Russia, and even further afield arrive on British shores to escape the harsh northern winters, while others leave the UK for warmer climates.

- **Redwings and Fieldfares:** These thrushes arrive in large numbers from Scandinavia and Iceland. Redwings, with their distinctive red underwings and creamy eye stripes, can be seen in flocks across the UK, often feeding on hedgerow berries. Fieldfares, with their speckled chests and gray heads, also join them, forming mixed flocks that descend on fields and woodlands.
- **Swallows and House Martins:** These summer visitors begin their long journey back to Africa during early October. It's a time when swarms of these agile birds can be seen flying south, often gathering in large numbers before making the cross-continental flight.

However the UK's bat species, such as the pipistrelle and the noctule, are getting ready for hibernation. As temperatures drop, insect populations decrease, signalling to the bats to seek out roosting spots in caves, trees, or buildings where they will spend the colder months.



Redwing



Fieldfare

Grassland meadows - Autumn Mowing

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

Now the strips of meadows have completed their growing cycle for this year you will see the tall meadow plants in the central strip of central reservations had turned completely brown and flopped over, so they are now being cut. This helps to give a more managed appearance through the winter months. However, the Autumn cut is particularly useful on fertile ground, to use up the nutrients. cutting between the end of August and late November removes surplus growth and helps to keep grasses at bay, letting any wildflowers in the grass thrive.

Established perennial and mixed meadows can be cut at several specific times in the year. There are three main timings, depending on how vigorous the grass is growing and which wildflowers we want to encourage. Carrying out one or more of these cuts will keep these meadow strips in good shape. As these strips become more established over the years the management may change to encourage as much biodiversity as possible for these urban meadows. It will be important to monitor the species that will start to appear in spring and throughout the year to inform us what work needs to be done.



Birmingham's Rangers - Healing the heart of the city

As part of the ongoing review of Council services, to deliver savings across the next two years, the focus of every service with the Council has been under review, and the Ranger Service is no

exception to this process. As a result of the review changes have been made to how the Ranger Service operates. They are continuing to carry out Health and Safety inspections across the city's parks and open spaces. But, the rest of their time is focused on delivering nature based health interventions in the wards most in need of action to level up environmental justice scores as per the 25 year City of Nature Plan. The Wild at Heart - Healthy Parks project includes parks within Bordesley & Highgate, Balsall Heath West, Nechells, Gravelly Hill, Pye Hayes and Castle Vale wards. The project is being funded by BCC's Public Health Department and is being delivered in partnership with local groups and the City of Nature Alliance. Recently the Rangers help to support the Healthy Environmental Fun Day in Bloomsbury Park organised by Birmingham Open Spaces Forum who are supporting the formation of Friends Groups for Nechells Parks. There will be a programme of actives across these wards throughout October you will be able to find out more here:

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/out-and-about-with-birminghams-park-rangers/>



October - Folklore and Traditions:

Ancient Celts marked Samhain (pronounced sow-win) as the most significant of the four quarterly fire festivals, taking place at the midpoint between the fall equinox and the winter solstice. During this time of year, hearth fires in family homes were left to burn out while the harvest was gathered. After the harvest was complete, celebrants joined with Druid priests to light a community fire and participants took a flame from the communal bonfire back to their home to relight the hearth. Early texts present Samhain as a mandatory celebration lasting three days and three nights starting on October 31st however some documents mention six days of drinking alcohol to excess, typically mead or beer, along with gluttonous feasts, I don't recommend that version. Through the middle ages the celebrations of the fire festivals became less communal and more personal with Samhain fires nearer farms becoming a tradition, to protect families from fairies and witches. Carved turnips called Jack-o-lanterns began to appear, attached by strings to sticks and embedded with coal. Only later did tradition switch to pumpkins.

In the 9th century, Pope Gregory renamed Samhain All Saints' Day, on November 1 and All Souls' Day would follow on November 2. The new holiday didn't however do away with the pagan aspects of the celebration and October 31 became known as All Hallows Eve, or Halloween, the night before All Saints Day and contained much of the traditional pagan practices. Trick-or-treating although thought of as American custom is said to have been derived from ancient Irish and Scottish practices in the nights leading up to Samhain. Pranks also have a tradition in Samhain, though in the ancient celebration, tricks were typically blamed on fairies.



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Focusing on: Small Heath Park

Small Heath Park, Small Heath, Yardley, Birmingham, B10 0PL

- Entrances off Coventry Road, Wordsworth Road, Waverley Road and Tennyson Road
- Nearest bus stops on Coventry Road and Waverley Road
- Small Heath Train Station is a five minute walk away

This 43-acre park is situated about a mile from Birmingham city centre and has a traditional Victorian-style. There is a community feel to the park and various events are hosted here, including funfairs and annual Eid celebrations.

Its history as a park dates back to the late 19th century. The Small Heath estate was placed in trust to Birmingham in 1876 by wealthy philanthropist Louisa Anne Ryland. She had become a millionaire on the death of her father Samuel Ryland, whose fortune was made in the wire drawing industry. She went on to donate more than 80 acres of land that were used to create public parks, as well as making large donations to hospitals and educational organisations.

Facilities at the park

- Children's playground
- Toddler's play area
- Basketball courts

Toilets

No toilets on site

Points of interest

- Lake with island
- Close to the Grand Union Canal and River Cole which offer extended walks
- Victorian bandstand

Other features

- Wooded area
- Open green space ideal for sports
- Network of walking and jogging routes on tarmac paths



https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9156/small_heath_park

Park friends group

The Friends of Small Heath Park can be contacted via their [Facebook page](#) or by emailing foshpv@gmail.com.



How does your garden grow?

October is a good time to think about your soil. If it's heavy clay you can dig it over so the winter frosts can break the clods down into a fine tilth. Or sow green manures on vacant areas to protect the soil over winter. There is also still time for planting, Plant out spring cabbages. Remember to net them for protection from pigeons. Finish planting autumn onion sets for a crop in early to mid-summer next year. Try plant garlic cloves. Plant drifts of spring bulbs informally in a lawn, including crocuses, daffodils and fritillaries. Lift tender cannas to avoid frost damage, dry off the tubers and store in cool dark conditions until spring. Plant up cheery pot displays with winter colour, such as heathers, cyclamen and winter pansies. Lift and pot up tender perennials,



<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/grow-your-own/in-month/october>

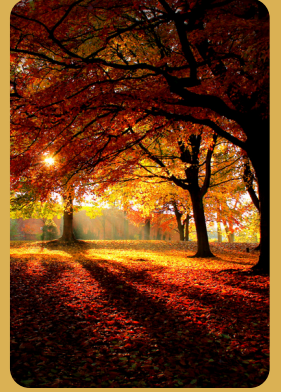


Autumn when nature prepares for winter

Autumn Colours and Trees

While the wildlife is busy preparing for winter, the trees provide a stunning visual backdrop. October is the peak time for autumnal colour as leaves turn brilliant shades of gold, orange, and red before they fall.

- **Oak, Beech, and Sycamore:** These native species are some of the most striking in autumn. Beech trees, in particular, offer a golden canopy, while oaks turn a deep orange-brown. Sycamores, with their large lobed leaves, provide a burst of yellow, adding to the vibrant tapestry of the countryside.
- **Acorns and Beech Mast:** October is the time when these trees drop their seeds, providing a valuable food source for wildlife like birds, squirrels, and small mammals. Oak trees drop acorns, and beech trees release mast, both of which are essential for sustaining wildlife through winter.



Insects and Pollinators

While many insects begin to die off as the colder weather sets in, October is still a busy time for certain species.

- **Bees and Wasps:** Late-flowering plants like ivy provide nectar for bees, wasps, and hoverflies before they retreat for winter. Bumblebee queens can be seen feeding heavily in preparation for hibernation, while many wasp colonies begin to die off as their food sources diminish.
- **Butterflies:** Some butterfly species, like the red admiral, are still active in October, taking advantage of the last of the autumn sunshine and nectar sources. These late-season butterflies may attempt to hibernate over winter or migrate to warmer climates.



Red Admiral

Traditionally it's time for the great autumn clear-up, when leaves are raked and perennials cut back. But experts are advising gardeners not to tidy up too much. Some of the debris could be left to provide food and shelter for overwintering insects, birds and mammals, so before you start raking and clearing away spare a thought for wildlife. Insects and invertebrates will love the dark, damp nooks and crannies that it has to offer. In turn, this will encourage birds such as robins and sparrows to visit your garden to forage for worms and bugs in the leaf layer. Gather the leaves and dead organic matter from your garden or outdoor space and arrange them in a pile – don't worry if your pile looks rustic, as long as it is large enough to allow wildlife to burrow within the materials, animals will love it!



World Earth Worm Day - 21st October

In 2016 the Earthworm Society of Britain (ESB) nominated 21st October as World Earthworm Day to give the world an opportunity to celebrate these ecologically vital and under-appreciated animals. An October date was chosen in order to honor the father of earthworm ecology, Charles Darwin, as this is the month that his book 'The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Actions of worms' was published.

Since that first World Earthworm Day on Friday 21st October 2016, they repeated the tradition on the same day each year and celebrated why #EarthwormsAreImportant with an ever-growing number of supporters and partners. Earthworms continued to take the centre stage on 21st October every year since. <https://www.earthwormsoc.org.uk/worldwormday>



October - Black History Month



Reclaiming Narratives: The Inspiring Theme for Black History Month 2024.

“In today’s world, stories are powerful tools that shape how we understand our past, present, and future. For too long, the history of Black communities has been told through lenses that often misrepresent, oversimplify, or entirely overlook the rich and diverse experiences of those who lived it. But 2024 is set to be a transformative year as Black History Month UK has unveiled its compelling theme: Reclaiming Narratives.”

The Black History Month UK theme is not just about revisiting history; it’s about Black communities taking ownership of stories that define their culture, contributions, and identity. It’s a call to action for Black communities across the UK to step into the role of storytellers, historians, and custodians of heritage. For far too long, Black histories have been narrated by others, leading to distorted portrayals that fail to capture the full breadth and depth of experiences.

Reclaiming Narratives is more than just a theme it’s an invitation from the Black History Month to every member of the Black community to take part in shaping how stories are told. It’s about ensuring that all voices are heard, experiences acknowledged, and contributions celebrated. This theme encourages all of us to shine a spotlight on the untold stories, the unsung heroes, and the everyday individuals who have made an indelible impact on communities.

<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/bhm-intros/reclaiming-narratives-the-inspiring-theme-for-black-history-month-2024-2/>



As part of our City of Nature Earth Stories project 2021, we heard people’s stories directly from them through their own words and pictures. It helped us to understand how people were connected to the natural world in very different and individual ways. Hearing people’s voices is particularly powerful, we would also love to hear your stories.



19th October - World Singing Day

Each year on the 3rd Saturday in October, people all over the world gather in groups of all sizes in schools, pubs, parks, plazas and homes to sing and celebrate our common humanity.

People of all ages, backgrounds and singing abilities can join in and sing.

That includes you.



World Singing Day is not religious or political, and encourages people to put aside their differences and celebrate what we all share as human beings. World Singing Day is for everyone, regardless of your race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, singing ability, and age.

World Singing Day is a joyful community experience for musicians and non-musicians alike, from shower singers to celebrities, as they gather in their communities and sing together without the pressure of performing. World Singing Day is not a competition, and no rehearsals are required.

Anyone can join in the fun. <https://worldsingingday.org/>



Birmingham City of Nature - Actions for the city

Green spaces that are managed to ensure they are appealing to our diverse communities (F3).

A Fair City - We will make sure every citizen has access to good quality green space wherever they live and that there is fair access to training and green jobs and our workforce reflects our diverse communities.

We will identify up to 400 more public green spaces. We will deliver green spaces that are accessible for those with additional needs and those who may need support. Environmental justice is at the heart of what a fair city would look like. It is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This will need good quality green spaces close to where people live, through the adoption of the Birmingham Fair Parks Standard process.



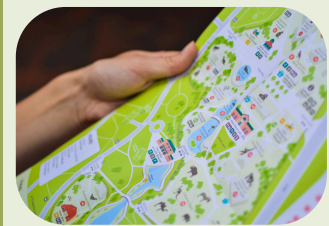
Earth Stories - Memories, Hopes and Happenings

World Habitat Day - first Monday of October each year

World Habitat Day is recognized by the United Nations to reflect on the state of towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. The day is also intended to remind the world that everyone has the power and the responsibility to shape the future of towns and cities. On 7 October 2024, under the theme "Engaging youth for a better urban future", it focuses on involving young urban residents in planning through participatory processes and local leadership.

During my time delivering environmental education one thing I have realised as I have got older is how quickly time passes. Toddlers zoom up into primary school pupils, race on to be teenagers, going to college, finding work and starting families of their own. All that can happen in just 25 years - 6 to 16 is just 10 years. And at the other end of the generations many of my colleagues are leaving work or preparing to. They say time waits for no one and it certainly doesn't. We often make plans based on our experience of the past and our hopes for the future. Although many things we want will be exactly the same as the next person, we are all humans after all, many things won't be the same and we need to be able to keep that in mind. I don't want to worry anyone but even if we speak to a 16 year old today to involve them and ask them what they would want our towns and cities look like, they may be in their 30s by the time the city they helped to plan is built. The answer is we must all keep talking and listening and learning and hoping and exploring all the time. From Teeny Explorers, to Eco Clubs, to college courses, degrees, masters and on. We need to plan our futures together for everyone. Let's keep communicating or maybe we need to start communicating, whatever we are doing now let's do more. There are lots of ways you can get involved. For Tyseley and Hay Mills residents check out the Liveable Neighbourhoods project:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20008/planning_and_development/2948/tyseley_and_hay_mills_liveable_neighbourhoods_project/2



Debbie Needle - Community Facilitator - Urban Nature Development Project



Birmingham's Route to Zero - What's the problem

The West Midlands Combined Authority and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games are pleased to offer this Carbon Literacy training, freely, to anyone across the West Midlands, as part of the Games' sustainability ambition to create a carbon neutral legacy for the region.

The Carbon Literacy training has been developed to empower you to make a positive impact on climate change and help to influence others around you to drive action. You'll learn about the science behind climate change, how it's affecting both the world and our region, how you can influence others to take action and what you can do personally.

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment-energy/carbon-literacy-training/>

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero Plan you can contact the team on:
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. You can register your group to receive regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. If you want to start a group to care for a green space near you they can support you to do that. Get in touch with the team.

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



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



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