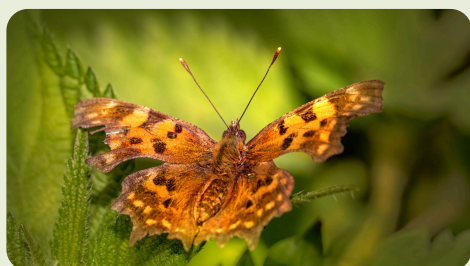


# GREEN CHAMPIONS



## Noticing Nature

July rolls in with thunder's cry,  
Dark clouds chase across the sky.  
Rain-soaked roses bow then rise,  
As nature breathes in wilder skies.  
- by Arden Wrenfield



## Health - Naturally

Spending time in nature has well-known benefits for our mental and physical health — but when we talk together in green spaces, something special happens. Natural settings help us feel more at ease, opening up gentler, more honest conversations. Without the pressure of a formal room or screen, we walk, pause, reflect — and listen better. Nature offers calm, perspective, and a shared sense of belonging. Whether it's a chat on a park bench or a slow stroll under trees, talking in nature helps strengthen both our wellbeing and our connections with others. If you feel you need to explore talking therapies you can find out more here: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/benefits-of-talking-therapies/>



## Learn more about - Bee Keeping

Beekeeping offers a fascinating and rewarding way to connect with nature. Beekeeping also encourages greater awareness of seasonal changes, weather patterns, and local ecosystems. It fosters patience, observation, and care — valuable qualities for anyone working to support nature.



For communities, bee projects can be a brilliant way to bring people together. They offer opportunities for education, wellbeing, and local food production (plus, there's the honey!). Whether on allotments, in parks, or on rooftops, responsible beekeeping can be part of a greener, more connected city — where people and pollinators thrive side by side. Find courses in Birmingham here: <https://birminghambeekeepers.com/learn/>



# City of Nature Programme update

July brings long days, warm evenings, and a growing sense that Birmingham is blooming — not just with flowers, but with connection, creativity, and community. The City of Nature Plan continues to thrive as part of everyday life, helping residents across the city connect with their green spaces, each other, and the bigger picture of a healthier, wilder Birmingham. The actions in the plan are not only delivered by Birmingham City Council but also by both local and national organisations working together across the city:

## **WASH - Ward End Park - <https://nortonhall.org.uk/wash-project/>**

The vision is that the WASH (Washwood Heath Adaption & Sustainability Hub) is that the Dolphin Centre on the edge of Ward End Park will become a 'go to' centre, bringing the community together to connect with nature and act on climate change. Norton Hall secured a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund to deliver the WASH over five years. Other donors are contributing around a quarter of the funding required. They are creating the WASH in partnership with Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT), New Leaf Sustainable Development, and the Friends of Ward End Park.

## **Blossoming Balsall Heath - <https://youtu.be/Go2JRtv9IAQ?si=ICM8cgBdFhD9CLVy>**

The National Trust's Blossoming Balsall Heath project in Birmingham aimed to create a "blossom neighbourhood" by planting 300 trees in Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook. This initiative, part of a wider National Trust campaign, has involved community engagement, including residents, schools, and local groups, to enhance the area's natural beauty and increase access to nature. A new space, "The Blossom Branch," was established on Ladypool Road to serve as a hub for learning and participation and is now closed, but community connections continue a new initiative is being developed for this year.

## **Nature Towns and Cities**

This coalition will help to put nature, green infrastructure and heritage at the heart of local decision-making, focusing on those areas that will benefit the most. Over the next 10 years the organisations behind Nature Towns and Cities are aiming to help 5 million more people across England enjoy better access to green and blue space close to home, and 1 million more children to be able to play in nature on their doorstep. Birmingham has applied for the foundation accreditation through the work already achieved during the development of the City of Nature Plan. We should know if we have been successful in time for the August edition.

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



**Please email us at [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk)** If you don't already receive this newsletter directly by email and would like to.

**The City of Nature Online** - There will be opportunities to join webinars, workshops and online meetings covering a range of subjects, throughout the year.

**We will post events on Naturally Birmingham social media and email out through the Green Champion mailing list.**

**If you would like to find out more about:**

- Birmingham City Council's City of Nature Plan
- Green Champions Volunteering Programme
- Young Green Champions for Schools
- The City of Nature Alliance
- Ranger Service Healthy Parks Programme

Please email us at [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk)

**If you want to sign up as a Green Champion please complete this form:**

**<https://forms.office.com/e/Va1UFkAe4B>**





# Plastic Bag Free Day - 3 July



Plastic Bag Free Day is a global reminder of the impact single-use plastics have on our environment. Plastic bags are used for minutes but take hundreds of years to break down — polluting waterways, harming wildlife, and contributing to microplastic pollution.

As Green Champions, you can help drive positive change not only in your home but also in your workplace, school or in your community. Start by switching to reusable cloth or jute bags and encouraging others to do the same. Talk to local shops and community groups about reducing plastic bag use and promoting sustainable alternatives.

You can also think further about plastic bags and include food at home and the bags that food comes in when you buy it. Can you reduce the use of these by making different choices when you purchase food and using reusable food storage containers and waxed cloth food covers. Why not organise or join a local litter pick to that highlights the plastic waste you removed from parks and green spaces.

You can also raise awareness through social media, and events — sharing facts, simple swaps, and success stories. Small actions, when multiplied across communities, can create big impact. Let's make Birmingham greener and cleaner — one bag at a time.

#PlasticBagFreeDay #GreenChampions #CityOfNature

## Do National Awareness Days Matter?

We know if you are reading this newsletter you are taking green actions everyday.

National awareness days give us a powerful opportunity to focus attention, spark conversation, and inspire action around the issues that matter. Whether it's Plastic Bag Free Day, World Bee Day, or Mental Health Awareness Week, these dates act as reminders — helping us pause, reflect, and re-engage with causes we care about and share them with others.

For Green Champions, they're a chance to connect with your community, raise awareness, and lead by example. Even small actions like sharing a fact, hosting a walk, or encouraging a local group to get involved in citizen science can have a ripple effect far beyond the day.

These days / weeks and month create moments of collective energy. They make it easier to start conversations, try something new, or challenge old habits. They also help align local action with global movements.

When we take part in national or global campaigns, we show that change is not only possible locally but that we're also part of something bigger.

They can also help us stay connected to wider issues and impacts. We may not live near the sea, or have ever visited a rain forest or experienced the more extreme impacts of climate change but we must stay aware of these.



# Don't step on a Bee Day - 10<sup>th</sup> July



Don't Step on a Bee Day" is an awareness day held annually on July 10th.

It encourages people to appreciate the vital role bees play in our ecosystem as pollinators and to take steps to protect them. The day serves less as a reminder to avoid stepping on bees, something I am sure you would never do, and more to be mindful of creating safe, bee-friendly environments. But it grabs people's attention!

Bees face various threats, including habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate change.

## How to Help:



Bee mindful:

- Obviously avoid stepping on bees. They can get drowsy sometimes and can't move out of the way quickly.
- Support local beekeepers: Buy honey and other products from local beekeepers.
- Plant bee-friendly flowers: Provide bees with a source of food by planting wildflowers and other pollinator-friendly plants.
- Create a bee-friendly garden: Leave patches of wildflowers, provide a water source, and avoid using pesticides.
- Spread awareness: Share information about the importance of bees and how to protect them.



Bee the change bees need.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2023/07/types-of-bee-in-the-uk>

# National Marine Week 6th July - 10th August 2025

National Marine Week 2024's theme was "**Sea**" *the Connection* and The Wildlife Trusts highlighted how as an island nation we are all closely connected to the sea and why a healthy thriving marine environment matters. National Marine Week 2025 theme is the 'Secrets of our seabeds' We have incredible seabeds off our coasts - from delicate cold-water corals to internationally important chalk reefs, to muds full of life! There are so many beautiful underwater worlds to discover.

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/national-marine-week>



David Attenborough often speaks about the vital importance of the ocean, emphasizing its beauty, power, and the critical role it plays in supporting all life on Earth. He highlights the ocean's influence on climate, its vast biodiversity, and its dependence on human actions for its health. He believes that the ocean's fate is intrinsically linked to the future of humanity. He calls for a new, more sustainable relationship with the ocean, urging humans to recognize its importance and protect it for future generations. He believes that if we save the sea, we save our planet.

During his most recent documentary titled **Ocean**, 99-year-old David Attenborough talks about his life and love for the deep blue. His message was even more clear: *protect our oceans now or there will be nothing left to protect, including ourselves.*



# Love Parks Week - 25 July to 3 August 2025.



Love Parks Week is a “Keep Britain Tidy” campaign.

In 1954 The National Federation of Women’s Institutes passed a resolution to “Keep Britain Tidy” and in 1960 the Keep Britain Tidy charity was registered. In 1996 the Green Flag Award launched in England. With awards given to seven parks in the first year. Keep Britain Tidy won the contract to deliver the Green Flag Award in 2009.

In 2008 The Big Tidy Up launched. For ten years, this volunteer army make a huge difference and has evolved into our Great British Spring Clean campaign.

Together with Love Where You Live and Love Your Beach they now run the **Love Parks Week** campaign and this is your park’s chance to shine and you can organise events to showcase your park's fantastic facilities or highlight the work you are doing to help to improve your park.

Birmingham City Council made the decision not to enter it’s parks for Green Flag awards this year. That doesn’t mean they are no longer aspiring to have Green Flag parks, instead for now they are working on raising the standard of all Birmingham’s parks using the Green Flag standard as a guide to do this.

You can find out how the Green Flag Award works here:

<https://www.greenflagaward.org/how-it-works/>

You can also find out more about the Birmingham Future Park Standard here:

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/birminghams-future-parks-standard/>

The **Love Parks** - week long celebration is the perfect opportunity to engage your local community, boost park pride, find more volunteers and get everyone enjoying your amazing green spaces!

If you help take care of a park in your area, sign up now to receive a free resource pack in mid-June. The pack will have ideas and tools to help you promote Love Parks in your area

[Request your resource pack](#)

**Find out about running events in Birmingham parks here:**

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/165/holding\\_events\\_in\\_parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/165/holding_events_in_parks_and_open_spaces)

## Why We Love Parks

Parks and green spaces are amazing! Here’s three great reasons why we ‘Love Parks’:

- **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.

Discover fun events happening near you by checking the Love Parks interactive map:

<https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/love-parks>



## Saint Swithin's Day - 15<sup>th</sup> July

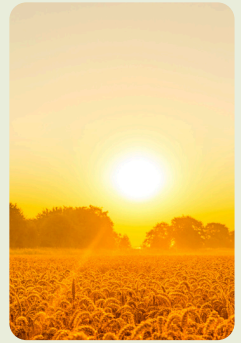
We all look for a good balance of sunshine and rain to enjoy nature, help food crops grow and produce a good harvest and give outdoor events a chance of success. But we know the global temperatures are rising and June 2025 was particularly dry with threats of water shortages and hosepipe bans. This often leads to conversations that include "We could do with some proper rain".

But what if it rained non-stop for the next 40 days? Well, 15 July is St Swithin's Day. It takes place every year on this date, and according to traditional folklore, whatever the weather is like on St Swithin's Day - whether rain or sunshine - it will continue for the next 40 days and 40 nights.

Swithin was a man born in or around the year 800. He became Bishop of Winchester. Unlike other religious figures, he asked not to be buried in a prominent place within Winchester Cathedral, but outside in a simple tomb "where the sweet rain of heaven may fall upon my grave". The legend says after his remains were moved inside there was a great storm and it rained for many weeks after.

Although we still talk about it, No one takes the prediction seriously and there is definitely no statistical evidence to support the claim.

Weather experts say that since records began in 1861, there has never been a record of 40 dry or 40 wet days in a row following St Swithin's Day. However there is always a first time.



## National Meadows Day - 5<sup>th</sup> July

National Meadows Day occurs on the first Saturday of July each year, celebrating the beauty and ecological importance of meadows across the UK. It is an initiative aimed at raising awareness about the vital role meadows play in supporting biodiversity, providing habitats for wildlife, and enhancing the landscape. Meadows are rich ecosystems that are home to a variety of plants, insects, and animals, many of which are endangered.

We already have many Birmingham parks that have established meadows but we will also be identifying new areas that would benefit from changes in mowing regime or can be enhanced through planting of wildflowers and spring bulbs – these will be part of Birmingham's Buzzing Parks. The Buzzing Parks will initially focus on enhancing parks in those wards without existing designated nature conservation sites within them.

### Why are we doing this?

Learnings from the No Mow May trial showed us that the benefits of stopping mowing for 4 weeks alone are limited because:

- later flowering species will not flower
- a wide range of wildlife such as some butterflies and moths use the longer grasses as a food plant for their caterpillars

We also know that stopping all mowing of previously mown grass means some grasses will be lost – as they only survive because repeated cutting replicates grazing by herbivores.

This new approach ties into our Nature Recovery Network which is made up of all the ecologically rich sites we have in the city, including the parks and open spaces that connect these together. Our network of grass and tree lined central reservations act as corridors for the movement of wildlife, connecting parks and open spaces together, often through more built-up areas.



# Natural England supporting nature in Birmingham



Natural England is actively involved in Birmingham through various projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing the natural environment and connecting people with nature. They are working to restore habitats, improve access to green spaces, and understand barriers to engagement with nature in the city. Here are a few of these projects:

## Nature Recovery Projects:

- Purple Horizons:
- This is a major, multi-partner project focused on restoring and connecting heathland, grassland, woodland, and wetland habitats in the West Midlands, including areas near Birmingham.

<https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2024/12/04/purple-horizons-nature-recovery-project-helping-a-post-industrial-landscape-bloom-and-buzz/>

## Addressing Barriers to Accessing Nature:

- Research on Barriers:
- Natural England has conducted research to identify social and cultural barriers that prevent people from accessing and engaging with green spaces in Birmingham.
- Focus on Inclusion:
- They are working to address these barriers, focusing on the need for diverse and inclusive green spaces, amenities, and activities that cater to different needs.
- Promoting Environmental Justice:
- By understanding these barriers, Natural England aims to promote environmental and health justice, ensuring that everyone has access to nature.

## West Midlands Nature Reserves:

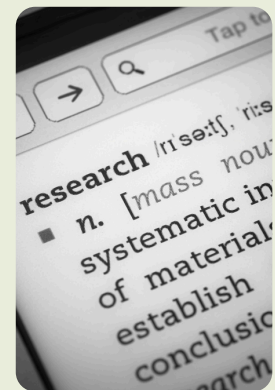
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-midlands-national-nature-reserves/west-midlands-national-nature-reserves>



## Consultation:

- Natural England is consulted on development proposals that might affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or require environmental impact assessments.

Overall, Natural England is playing a significant role in Birmingham by working to improve the natural environment, connect people with nature, and ensure that the city's green spaces are accessible and beneficial for all.





# National Bog Day - 28<sup>th</sup> July

This annual event, in celebration of bogs, fens, swamps & marshes is an opportunity to raise awareness of peatlands – the benefits they provide, the threats they face and the ways we can all help protect them. The IUCN UK Peatland Programme exists to promote peatland restoration in the UK and advocates the multiple benefits of peatlands through partnerships, strong science, sound policy and effective practice.

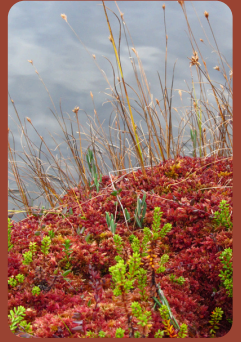
Peat is not commonly found in Birmingham itself, but it is a significant feature of the wider UK landscape, particularly in areas like Scotland and upland regions. Peatlands are areas where peat (a soil formed from dead and decaying plant matter) accumulates, and they are important for carbon storage and biodiversity.

While Birmingham doesn't have significant peatlands, it is a location where peat-based products are used and where initiatives are underway to promote peat-free alternatives. There's a growing movement to switch to being peat-free in gardening and amenity horticulture, with products like composted green waste gaining popularity.

There are still plenty of opportunities to find out about peatlands and the work being done to protect and restore them. See the [Events](#) pages or [Peatland Project Map](#) to find out about peatlands you can visit or help protect.

Birmingham does however have areas of bog habitat the most famous is probably Moseley Bog: <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/moseley-bog-plan-visit> because of the Tolkien connection.

But Sutton Park is home to the carnivorous plant *Drosera rotundifolia*, also known as Round-leaved Sundew. These plants are found in the wetter areas, including the bogs along the valleys of the streams. They are part of a diverse collection of wetland plants in our National Nature Reserve, which also includes Bog Asphodel, Cross-leaved Heath, and Cranberry. [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/405/sutton\\_park](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20089/parks/405/sutton_park)



# International Day of Friendship - 30<sup>th</sup> July

**Our world faces many challenges, crises and forces of division such as poverty, violence, and human rights abuses among many others that undermine peace, security, development and social harmony among the world's peoples. To confront those crises and challenges the people and planet face, their root causes must be addressed by promoting and defending a shared spirit of human solidarity that takes many forms the simplest of which is friendship.**

**Through friendship by accumulating bonds of camaraderie and developing strong ties of trust we can contribute to the fundamental shifts that are urgently needed to achieve lasting stability, weave a safety net that will protect us all, and generate passion for a better world where all are united for the greater good.**

## Global Actions to Promote a Culture of Peace

- foster a culture of peace through education;
- promote sustainable economic and social development;
- promote respect for all human rights;
- ensure equality between women and men;
- foster democratic participation;
- advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity;
- support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge;
- promote international peace and security.



# Urban Nature Development - In Your Neighbourhood



**Children thrive in nature — and when children connect with nature, nature thrives too.**

Urban nature development is not just about planting trees or creating green spaces; it's about nurturing relationships between people and place. For children growing up in cities, access to nature is more than a nice-to-have it's vital. Studies show that time spent in green spaces improves mental wellbeing, physical health, concentration, creativity, and emotional resilience. Nature provides a calm counterbalance to busy urban life. It sparks curiosity, encourages movement, and invites wonder. But the benefits don't stop there. When children build a connection with the natural world whether it's through bug-hunting in a local park, growing vegetables at school, or spotting birds from their balcony they also begin to care. They notice. They ask questions. They want to protect what they've grown to love.

This sense of care is the foundation of environmental stewardship. When children see that nature belongs to them and that they belong to it they become advocates for their local green spaces. They pick up litter. They remind adults not to trample the wildflowers. They bring their families to community events. In doing so, they contribute to the health and future of urban nature.

As Green Champions, you play a vital role in this cycle. By supporting schools, parks groups, and local organisations, you help create opportunities for children to experience the joy and value of nearby nature. You help make sure green spaces are not only safe and accessible, but welcoming and alive with activity.

Urban nature development means thinking beyond conservation it's about connection, inclusion, and creativity. It means asking: how can every child, in every neighbourhood, feel that nature is part of their world? That might be through storytelling under trees, art made from natural materials, or simple moments like watching bees visit the same flower each morning. These experiences are seeds. Given time and care, they grow into lifelong relationships with the environment.

By investing in children's connection to nature, we're also investing in the future of our parks, woodlands, rivers, and urban wild spaces. It's a partnership. When we invite children into nature, nature becomes stronger not just in biodiversity, but in meaning, memory, and care.

And that's how we grow greener cities — together.



# Wildlife in July: vibrant and abundant Out and About

**July is a vibrant and abundant month for wildlife in the West Midlands.**

With long, warm days and nature in full swing, it's a perfect time to get outdoors and notice the life unfolding all around us in parks, gardens, woodlands, canals, and even roadside verges.

Bees and butterflies are at their busiest now. Look out for species like the peacock, red admiral, and meadow brown butterflies fluttering through wildflower-rich meadows and grasslands. In more urban areas, lavender, buddleia and even pots of herbs can become buzzing hotspots for pollinators. Bumblebees and solitary bees continue to forage, playing a vital role in supporting both wild and cultivated plants.

Birdlife is also active. Many birds are raising their second brood of the season, so it's important to give them space and avoid disturbing nests. Swifts scream through the skies above towns and cities many will begin their long migration next month. In greener spaces, you may hear blackcaps, chiffchaffs, and wrens still singing from the trees.

Young mammals are starting to emerge. Fox cubs become more visible as they begin to explore with more independence, and you might spot young rabbits on grassy verges early in the morning. Hedgehogs are also active at dusk they need access to gardens and wild areas with plenty of insects and shelter.

Ponds and waterways are rich with life. Dragonflies and damselflies dart over the surface in dazzling colours look for the broad-bodied chaser or the banded demoiselle along canals and slow-moving streams. Frogs and newts may be seen basking near the edges of water or hiding in the damp undergrowth nearby.

In woodlands and shady places, ferns and mosses flourish, while brambles begin to flower a promise of blackberries to come. Wildflowers like meadowsweet, knapweed, and yarrow are in bloom, providing essential nectar for late-summer pollinators. Find your local park: <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/findapark>

For Green Champions, July is an excellent time to host guided walks, community spotting challenges, or simply encourage people to slow down and really look. Wildlife thrives where people care and noticing is the first step to protecting.

So whether you're walking through a park, resting in your garden, or just taking a moment on your lunch break pause, look closely, and let July's wild world reveal itself to you.

**You can find out more about identifying wildlife and helping to support the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust here:**

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





# Nurturing Nature - In your Garden

**July is a glorious time in the garden — a month of colour, scent, and buzzing life. With long days and warm evenings, nature is in full flow, and our gardens can become thriving mini-habitats for wildlife without much effort.**

Whether you have a large garden, a small courtyard, a few pots on a balcony, or a shared community space there are plenty of simple ways to support nature at this time of year. From planting pollinator-friendly flowers to creating shady retreats and water sources, every small action helps. In July, a little care goes a long way for both your garden and the creatures that call it home.

## 1. Let flowers flourish

Allow wildflowers, herbs, and flowering shrubs to bloom for as long as possible. Plants like lavender, catmint, cosmos, and marjoram are magnets for bees and butterflies.

Avoid deadheading everything immediately — let some flowers go to seed to provide food for birds later in the summer.



## 2. Add water

A shallow dish of clean water, refreshed daily, can make a big difference to visiting birds, bees, and hedgehogs especially during dry spells. Add pebbles or twigs so insects can land safely and drink without drowning.

## 3. Leave the lawn a little longer

If possible, let parts of your lawn grow wild. Even small patches of unmown grass support caterpillars, beetles, and nesting solitary bees. If you prefer a tidy lawn, try a "mow-high" approach to leave shelter at the base.

## 4. Create cool, shady corners

Wildlife needs places to rest and hide from the heat. Dense shrubs, log piles, hedges, and overgrown corners offer perfect cover for frogs, insects, and small mammals. A shady spot under a bush might become a favourite resting place for a hedgehog.

## 5. Avoid chemicals

Pesticides and herbicides harm more than pests. Try natural alternatives and embrace a slightly wilder garden. A few aphids mean more ladybirds and hoverflies — both great garden allies.

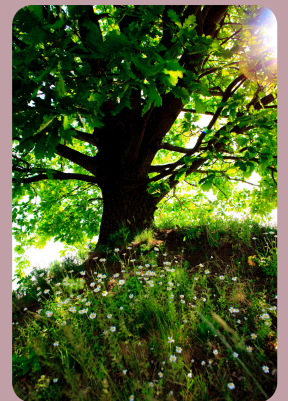
## 6. Grow your own

If you're growing vegetables or fruit, keep the patch pollinator-friendly. Companion planting, water-saving mulches, and sharing surplus with neighbours all support a healthy garden ecosystem.

## 7. Slow down and observe

Sometimes the best thing you can do is simply pause and watch (or snooze). Notice which flowers are busy with bees, which birds visit the feeders, and which corners are full of life.

This gentle attention deepens your connection with your space — and helps you spot what's needed next.



# Young Green Champions - Budding Eco Warriors



Birmingham's youngest nature heroes are stepping up -  
and they're bringing big ideas in small wellies!

Across Birmingham, a new generation of Green Champions is growing — curious, caring, and full of energy!

Our Young Green Champions are proving that age is no barrier when it comes to making a difference for the planet. Whether they're planting seeds, litter-picking in their local park, creating bug hotels, or sharing nature facts with friends, these budding eco warriors are leading by example.

Their enthusiasm is infectious. Children bring fresh eyes and big ideas to environmental action, reminding us that caring for nature can be fun, creative, and full of hope. Schools, families, and community groups all play a vital role in nurturing their passion.

By giving children the chance to connect with the natural world, we're growing more than just plants — we're growing future protectors of our planet.

Let's celebrate our Young Green Champions — and keep creating space for them to shine.



## The passionate people propagating play

Across Birmingham, a quiet revolution is taking place — led by passionate people who understand that play is more than just fun; it's fundamental to childhood, wellbeing, and connection with nature. From city parks to community gardens, these play champions are creating space for imagination to flourish.

In addition to schools and nurseries organisations like Roam, Ecobirmingham, The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, The Active Wellbeing Society, Birmingham Settlement, Norton Hall the Pod in Nechells and the Springfield Project, to name just a few, are leading the way, bringing outdoor play opportunities to families and children in urban areas. Whether it's nature-based play sessions, mud kitchens, den building, or simple free play in green spaces, their work gives children the chance to explore, learn, and grow with confidence.

In local parks, Friends of Groups and Birmingham PlayCare Network support playful landscapes where children can run wild, climb trees, and make memories. Their creativity helps turn everyday places into magical playgrounds. By encouraging unstructured play, these organisations aren't just creating joy — they're helping to build healthier, happier communities.

The power of play is real — and thanks to Birmingham's dedicated playmakers, it's thriving in the heart of our city.

See the next page for links





**Here are just a few of the organisations working with children and young people in Birmingham who have helped to grow the City of Nature Plan over the years**

- Roam - <https://www.roam.org.uk/>
- Ecobirmingham - <https://ecobirmingham.com/product-category/family-activities/>
- TAWS - The Active Wellbeing Society - <https://theaws.co.uk/our-approach/place-based-work/>
- Birmingham Settlement - <https://www.birminghamsettlement.org.uk/2025/03/new-forest-school-at-the-nature-wellbeing-centre/>
- Norton Hall - (Washwood Heath) - <https://nortonhall.org.uk/>
- The Pod - (Nechells) - <https://www.nechellspod.com/>
- Free at Last - (Nechells) - <https://freeatlast.co.uk/>
- The Springfield Project (Sparkhill) - <https://www.springfieldproject.org.uk/>
- Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust - <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/NatureTots>
- Botanical Gardens - <https://birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/the-gardens/explore/childrens-garden/>
- Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens - <https://www.castlebromwichhallgardens.org.uk/calendar/tree-tots-stay-play/2025-04-25/>
- Community Environmental Trust (CSV) - <https://environmentaltrust.org.uk/>



**There are also many others supporting outdoor play across the city, check social media for local groups.**

## **World Nature Conservation Day - 28<sup>th</sup> July**



The theme for World Nature Conservation Day in 2025 is "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet" (according to Earth.com) This theme emphasizes the critical need for innovative financial solutions to protect our planet's biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods for local communities. The focus on conservation finance highlights the importance of investing in both people and the planet, encouraging partnerships between governments, businesses, organizations, and local communities to create sustainable funding models for wildlife protection. This is especially important as traditional funding sources are often insufficient to meet the growing needs of conservation.

World Wildlife Day is celebrated on March 3rd each year and the 2025 theme was also chosen to underscore the need to mobilize financial resources to support conservation efforts, especially as over a million species face the threat of extinction.

Historically the economic model adopted by all cities for urban nature management has been a linear one resulting in the maintenance of parks being registered as nothing but a cost; with their value not being captured. The City of Nature plan moves 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. In addition, the city has developed a Sustainable Finance Framework allowing for the development of long-term investment into the city's blue and green infrastructure.



# Out and About in July with the the City's Park Rangers

## Get Active in Aston, Newtown & Nechells Parks!

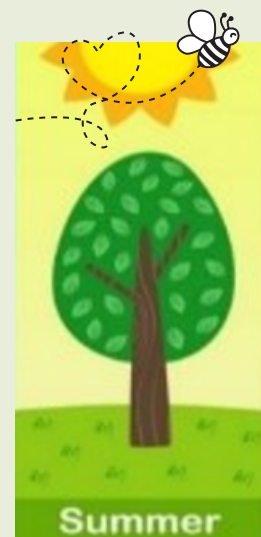
Do you live in or near Aston, Newtown or Nechells ward and are you looking for a fun, rewarding way to enjoy the outdoors and give back to your community?

You can join our Park Rangers to help care for your local green spaces whether it's planting for pollinators, litter picking, or creating wildlife-friendly areas, your time makes a difference. Or bring the whole family and take part in our free nature-inspired activities perfect for all ages!

Come along, get stuck in, and help make our parks better for both people and wildlife

- No experience needed – just enthusiasm!
- Wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear.
- **Check for cancellation in bad weather.**

For more information please email [Lickey.hub@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Lickey.hub@birmingham.gov.uk)



**Wed 9th July** : Mount Street, Nechells (B7 5QT) 11.15 -12.45 Meet by the playground.

**Nature Surveying** : find out what lives in this little oasis for wildlife in Nechells.

**Thurs 10th July**: Yellow park , Newtown (B19 2LA) : 11.15- 12.45. Meet by the playground.

**Practical Volunteer Session.**

**Fri 11th July** : Salford park, Nechells (B6 7TG) 11.15 start Meet by the notice board.

**Waterfowl Walk around the pool.**

**Tues 15th July** : Yellow Park, Newtown (B19 2LA) 11.00-12.30 Meet by the playground.

**Practical Volunteer Session: raised bed care.**

**Wed 16th July**: Georges Park, Lozells (B19 1PP) 11.15-12.30 Meet by the playground.

**Practical volunteer session: Flowerbed Care.**

**Thurs 17th July**: Burbury Park, Newtown (B19 2UP) 11 am -12.30 **(This walk leaves the park)**

**Mindful Nature Walk to find out how nature spotting can help calm your mind!**

Meet by the playground 11am & walk to New John Street West POS and back.

**Fri 18th July**: New John Street West Public Open Space 11.15- 12.30

**Practical Volunteer Session.** Meet by the entrance by the church off Bridge Street West.

**Tuesday 22nd July**: Aston Park (B6 6JD) 12.30- 2pm meet behind Aston Hall near the old fountain.

**Park Fun! - Family activity Get out and about and have fun in the park with the rangers.**

**Wed 23rd July**: Bloomsbury Park family activity, Nechells B7 4NY. Meet by the playground 12.30 -2pm

**Park Fun! Get out and about and have fun in the park with the rangers.**

**Thursday 24th July**: Eliot Street to Salford Park and back 11.30 start **(This walk leaves the park)**

**Nature Walk** - Meet by the notice board at Eliot Street park (Old lady park) Nechells, B75LX.

**Tuesday 29th July** : Salford park, Nechells (B6 7TG)

**Waterfowl Walk around the pool.** Meet 11.15 by the notice board.



 Birmingham City Council

# The City of Nature Plan -

## How it started vs. How it's going



The "how it started vs. how it's going" trend on social media uses paired images (or text) to illustrate a progression, often highlighting a positive change or outcome. Like most things this isn't really a new idea - before and after pictures have been around for a long time. But it's not easy to capture in a single image how green infrastructure in Birmingham was doing when the Future Parks Accelerator project began in 2019. However that doesn't mean we don't know **how it started**.

- In 2016-17 a parliamentary Inquiry titled 'The Future of Public Parks' found that the value of parks and green spaces was well documented but not well (or widely) understood; so not fully protected in policy.
- The Inquiry also found that as a non-statutory service parks have often been seen as non-essential services and have suffered disproportionately with budget reductions imposed following the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures.
- Although Birmingham has over 600 green spaces, as we engaged with communities across Birmingham, we became very aware that some people face significant barriers in accessing green spaces or making full use of facilities on offer.

In response to these challenges Birmingham became the first city in the UK to develop a tool to highlight the inequalities in accessing green space. We called the ambition to achieve equitable access to green spaces achieving environmental justice.

The Naturally Birmingham Future Accelerator Programme explored these challenges through four case studies: **Children's services, Housing and development, Health and wellbeing and Skills and education**.

To ensure that opportunities through these themes were developed by those with the greatest experience and real life understanding of the challenges faced in these areas a cross organisational team was brought together to tackle the challenges. It became obvious that people needed parks and parks needed people and it wasn't just about how to preserve what we have; it was going to be how do we improve what we have and increase the amount of green space people have access to.

**How is it going?** The City of Nature Plan has been in place for three years now. From February 2022 to February 2025. Over these years baseline data was gathered, mechanisms were tested, relationships have been developed and progress has been made across the Red Wards. Now is the time to move from the FPA project transition phase to role out and scale up to the city wide day to day operating model that will delivery the City of Nature actions.

For the next two years we will continue to use the findings from the pilot to work with other council departments, community organisations and the City of Nature Alliance of third sector organisations to focus delivery of improvement in green spaces in: Balsall Heath West, Nechells. Gravelly Hill. Pype Hayes, Castle Vale wards. Three of these wards - Balsall Heath West, Nechells and Castle Vale are in the top five areas of most need of environmental justice; the other two are geographical neighbours making a central north south spine of the city. Before reviewing the programme of work in 2027 and moving to the next stage of delivery from 2028 to 2032.

You can read the City of Nature Plan here:

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our\\_future\\_city\\_plan\\_ofcp/3050/birminghams\\_city\\_of\\_nature\\_plan](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our_future_city_plan_ofcp/3050/birminghams_city_of_nature_plan)

# Earth Stories - Memories, Hopes and Happenings

## And suddenly we are in the second half of the year.

Everything feels fuller - the trees are in their summer clothes, flowers bloom with abandon, and the air carries the sound of bees, birds, and sometimes even laughter drifting from parks and gardens. It's a time when nature feels generous and open but just a bit faded around the edges and I find myself drawn to pause more often and linger longer using all my senses to notice it before summer starts to turn towards autumn.

For me, there's something quietly magical about the stillness of a July evening, that soft golden light just before dusk, when the swifts are swirling and the world slows down a little. My own garden is filled with the smell of honeysuckle, roses and pinks. There's beauty in the drama of a summer storm too, counting the seconds between the flash and the first crack of thunder to know how far away it is. Does that work? The heavy clouds weighing down the sky, the breeze that travels in front of the sudden downpours that refresh the soil and the soul. Nature gives us so many moments, small and gentle, but also powerful if we let it.

As Green Champions, Parks officers and members of the City of Nature Alliance, we all know that summer is a time of activity. Community groups are out in parks, children are discovering the joy of wildflowers or pond dipping, and neighbours are meeting in green spaces for picnics, planting days, or just a quiet chat on a bench. These shared experiences strengthen not only our connection to the natural world, but to each other and that's something worth celebrating.

That's why, as we soak in the joys of July, I'd like to invite you to help us create something really special for August - a bumper "Fun in the Sun" edition of the newsletter, filled with your stories, pictures, and reflections on summer in your part of the city.

Whether it's a favourite memory from your local park, a wildflower you've spotted for the first time, an intergenerational gardening project, a child's discovery of a beetle, or just a perfect summer moment we'd love to hear about it. No story is too small. Nature is personal, and when we share our moments, we help others to notice theirs too.

You can send dates for August events, photos, short reflections, past event updates, creative activities, or even a summer nature tip or two — anything that captures the joy of connecting with the outdoors in this warm and welcoming season.

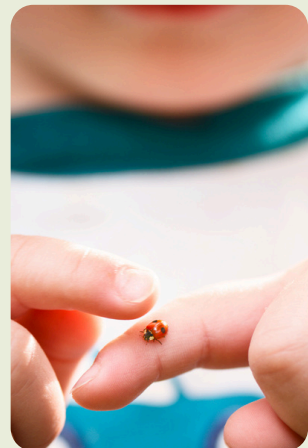
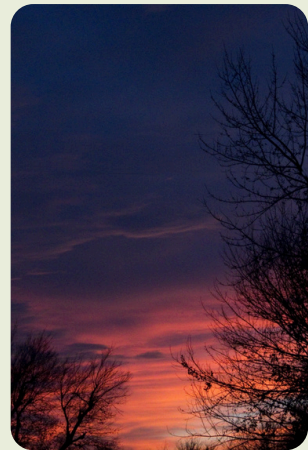
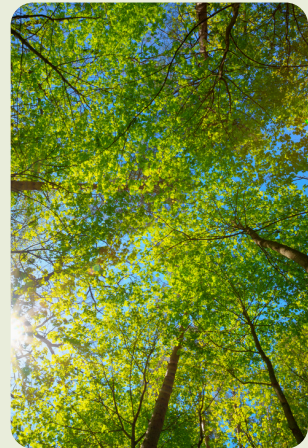
Let's fill August with celebration, colour, and connection — a collective snapshot of what nature means to our communities in the heart of summer.

Meanwhile I wish you a July full of wild beauty, soft sunshine, dappled shade and plenty of reasons to smile.

Best wishes

Deborah Needle

Editor – City of Nature Green Champion Newsletter





# Birmingham City Council's Route to Net Zero

Net zero is the idea of reducing our emissions down to zero or as close as possible to prevent further temperature increases. To find out more about BCC's Net Zero journey visit BCC website:

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50282/climate\\_change/2641/what\\_is\\_climate\\_change\\_and\\_net\\_zero/4](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50282/climate_change/2641/what_is_climate_change_and_net_zero/4)

To keep up to date you can receive the BCC **Greener Birmingham Bulletin** by email go to :

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20179/news\\_and\\_media/201/sign\\_up\\_for\\_regular\\_email\\_updates\\_from\\_birmingham\\_city\\_council#:~:text=Subscribe%20to%20the%20Birmingham%20Bulletin,on%20a%20range%20of%20topics](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20179/news_and_media/201/sign_up_for_regular_email_updates_from_birmingham_city_council#:~:text=Subscribe%20to%20the%20Birmingham%20Bulletin,on%20a%20range%20of%20topics)  
scroll down and select the **"Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero"** option.



## Natural England - Health and Environment

Natural England have Health and Environment Lead roles to support and create connections between any Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises, health practitioners, Community Wellbeing Roles, or local authorities interested in increasing the offer of Green / Blue Social Prescribing. To receive the West Midlands Natural England newsletter please contact: [Amber.Marquand@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Amber.Marquand@naturalengland.org.uk)



## Birmingham TreePeople - Urban Forest Volunteers

Birmingham TreePeople, organise and oversee the Urban Forestry Volunteer Scheme in the city. It was originally set up as part of the Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme by Birmingham City Council's Tree Officers in 2016, and is now one of the largest of its kind in the UK. For more information contact:

<https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/about-us/urban-forest-volunteers/>



## 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 those 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.

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



Follow Naturally Birmingham on: @NaturallyBirmi1



More Information on : <https://naturallybirmingham.org/>

