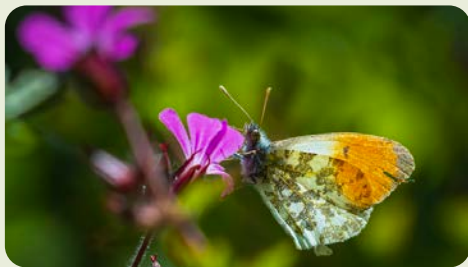


GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

Cherry blossoms fall-
a child's small hands try to catch
spring before it goes.
Haiku - Kobayashi Issa,



Health - Naturally

Healthy communities are sustained by well-functioning ecosystems, which provide critical services such as clean air, fresh water, natural medicines and food security. These ecosystems also regulate diseases and help stabilize the climate. For example, forests absorb over 2.6 billion tonnes of CO2 annually, contributing to climate regulation and reducing the incidence of diseases linked to pollution.

People depend on biodiversity in many ways. Human health relies on ecosystem resources, products and services (such as fresh water, food and fuel sources; the regulation of crop pests and diseases; and the regulation of air, water and soil quality) which are needed for good health and productive livelihoods.



Learn more about - Biodiversity

It's easy to think of nature as something familiar trees, birds, flowers, the spaces we see every day. But the true scale of life on Earth is far beyond what we notice. Scientists estimate there are around 8–9 million species on the planet. Of those, only about 1.5–2 million have been formally identified. That means most of life on Earth is still unknown.

Even in cities like Birmingham, biodiversity is all around us:

- insects in roadside planting
- mosses on walls
- fungi beneath our feet
- birds, mammals, and pollinators moving through green spaces

Much of it goes unnoticed but it is there, supporting the systems we depend on. April is a great time to start looking more closely. The City Nature Challenge invites people across the world to spot, record, and share observations of wildlife in their local area.

You don't need to be an expert. Just curiosity. Every photo, every record helps build a better picture of the life around us and reminds us that biodiversity isn't somewhere else. It's here:

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



3rd April 2026 - World Aquatic Animal Day

Because most humans do not live underwater, it is easy to forget the vast array and variety of aquatic animals that populate the oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, and ponds across our planet.

And yet, beneath the surface, life is everywhere.

Aquatic animals come in extraordinary forms. Some are vertebrates, like fish, turtles, and amphibians. Others are invertebrates — octopus, jellyfish, crustaceans — with bodies and behaviours that can seem almost otherworldly. They breathe in different ways too. Some surface for air, while others extract oxygen through gills or even through their skin. Some live in saltwater oceans, others in freshwater streams and lakes. Each is adapted, in its own way, to the conditions of its environment.

From a sea turtle gliding through open water, to an alpine newt moving quietly through a pond, to an octopus shifting colour and shape, or a jellyfish pulsing with luminous greens and blues — aquatic life reminds us just how diverse and creative life on Earth can be.

Easy to Miss, Essential to Life

Because we don't live in these environments, it can be easy to overlook them. But aquatic ecosystems are not separate from us.

They regulate climate, support food systems, cycle nutrients, and provide habitats for countless species. They are part of the same living systems that sustain all life — including our own.

Even in urban areas, water is never far away.

Canals, rivers, ponds, wetlands — each holds its own web of life, often hidden just below the surface.

A Moment to Notice

World Aquatic Animal Day is an opportunity to pause and look a little more closely.

To recognise that beneath the surface of the water we pass each day, there is a world we rarely see — but one that is full of movement, adaptation, and life. It doesn't require expertise to begin noticing.

A moment by the edge of a pond.

A glance into clear water.

A curiosity about what might be there.

Aquatic animals may live out of sight, but they are not separate from us. They are part of the same living world — one that depends on being seen, understood, and cared for.



April 17th, International Bat Appreciation Day



Each year on April 17th, International Bat Appreciation Day reminds us of the roles bats play in our daily lives. April is also the best time of the year to observe bats, as they are now beginning to emerge from hibernation. The observance is an excellent time to learn about the role bats play in nature. Since bats are considered "insectivorous" creatures, they rid our world of many annoying insects. In one hour, a bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquitoes.

When the sun sets over Birmingham's parks, canals and gardens, another world quietly comes to life. Bats are one of the city's most fascinating – and often unseen – residents. In the UK there are 18 species of bat, and several can be found across Birmingham, including common and soprano pipistrelles, noctules, and Daubenton's bats, which are often seen skimming low over water along canals and lakes. Despite their small size, bats play a big role in our ecosystems. They are natural pest controllers, with a single pipistrelle capable of eating thousands of insects in one night. That's a lot of midges and mosquitoes taken care of while we sleep.

Bats are the UK's only flying mammals and use an extraordinary system called echolocation to navigate and hunt. By sending out high-frequency calls and listening for the echoes, they can detect tiny insects in complete darkness. In Birmingham, bats make use of a wide range of spaces:

- Trees and woodlands in parks
- Old buildings and bridges
- Gardens and green corridors
- Waterways such as canals and ponds

These "edge spaces" are especially important, offering shelter, food, and safe routes through the city.

Things You Might Not Know

- Bats can live for over 20 years, which is long for such small mammals
- They don't build nests – they roost in crevices, roofs, trees, and structures
- In winter, many bats hibernate, slowing their metabolism to survive colder months
- They are a key part of urban biodiversity, supporting balanced ecosystems

All bats in the UK are legally protected, meaning it is illegal to harm them or disturb their roosts.

If you see a bat:

- Enjoy watching from a distance
- Avoid shining bright lights directly at them
- Keep noise and disturbance low near known roosts

If you find a bat on the ground or in distress:

- Do not handle it with bare hands
- Contact a local wildlife rescue organisation for advice

While the risk is very low, bats can carry diseases, so it's always best to avoid direct contact and seek guidance. <https://www.bats.org.uk/>

Bats are a reminder that biodiversity isn't just something we see in the daytime. It continues, often unnoticed, all around us. Next time you're out at dusk, take a moment to look up. A quick flicker across the sky, a change in movement — and you might just catch a glimpse of Birmingham's night-time wildlife at work. Some of the most important parts of nature happen when we're not looking — but they are there, quietly keeping the balance.

City of Nature Programme Update - A Green City

Delivering the City of Nature Plan in 2026 – The Green City Handbook

The Green City Handbook represents the next stage in delivering the Green City Aims set out in the City of Nature Plan. Where the Plan establishes long-term ambition for Birmingham's green infrastructure, the Handbook translates these aims into a practical, operational framework to guide delivery across services, partners and communities.

It is designed to align with the wider City of Nature operational framework and mirrors the structure of the other handbooks, ensuring consistency, clarity and usability.

1. From Vision to Delivery

The City of Nature Plan sets out the Green City Aims, recognising the importance of a connected, high-quality network of green and blue spaces across Birmingham. The Handbook progresses this by identifying the actions, standards and delivery mechanisms required to achieve these outcomes in practice.

2. Green Infrastructure as a City System

Green and blue infrastructure is positioned as essential to how the city functions. It supports:

- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Biodiversity recovery and habitat connectivity
- Improved air quality and urban cooling
- Accessible routes for active travel

The Handbook reinforces the role of green infrastructure as a core system within the city, not a secondary consideration.

3. Operational Standards and Connectivity

Building on existing strategies and practice, the Handbook supports:

- A coherent and connected network of green spaces and corridors
- Consistent standards of management and maintenance
- Integration of green infrastructure into planning, design and development

It provides a framework to ensure that green spaces are not considered in isolation, but as part of a wider, functioning system.

4. Nature Recovery and Enhancement

A key focus is the restoration and enhancement of habitats across the city. This includes:

- Strengthening ecological networks
- Increasing biodiversity within urban spaces
- Supporting nature-based solutions in both existing and new developments

The approach moves beyond protection alone, towards active recovery and improvement.

5. Data, Evidence and Strategic Planning

The Handbook supports the use of mapping, environmental data and natural capital approaches to inform decision-making. This includes tools such as environmental justice mapping and green infrastructure assessments to prioritise investment and action.

It is designed as an iterative framework, evolving as new data, learning and opportunities emerge.

6. Shared Delivery and Long-Term Stewardship

Delivering a Green City requires coordinated action across multiple sectors. Local authority services, environmental organisations, community groups and partners all contribute to the ongoing care and development of green infrastructure.

The Handbook provides a shared structure and language to support collaboration and long-term stewardship.

The Green City Handbook represents a continuation and strengthening of the City of Nature approach. It ensures that green infrastructure is planned, delivered and maintained as a connected system — supporting a resilient, biodiverse and liveable city for current and future generations.



Birmingham Destination Parks Feature - The Lickey Hills

Lickey Hills Country Park is one of Birmingham's most distinctive and much-loved green spaces. With its dramatic viewpoints, extensive woodland and unique geological features, it offers something beyond everyday access to nature a place people travel to, return to, and build lasting connections with.



Rising above the surrounding landscape, the Lickeys provide panoramic views across the city and beyond. Its mix of habitats woodland, grassland and heath supports a wide range of wildlife, while its history and geology add further layers of interest. For many, it is a place for walking, exploring and pausing, offering both activity and quiet reflection within a single landscape.

As a destination park, the Lickeys combine natural beauty with facilities that support longer visits. The introduction of the new café, operated by Grounds Café <https://groundscafe.uk/> is an important part of this. It provides a welcoming space for visitors to gather, rest and extend their time in the park whether after a walk, as a meeting point, or simply as a place to sit and enjoy the surroundings.



Cafés in destination parks play a wider role than refreshment alone. They contribute to:

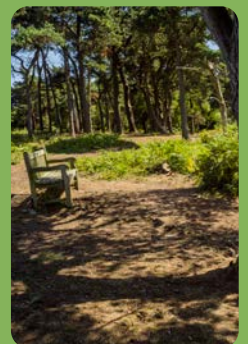
- A sense of welcome and accessibility
- Social connection and informal meeting spaces
- The overall visitor experience
- The long-term sustainability of the park



Like many of Birmingham's destination parks, the Lickeys have experienced the impact of long-term funding pressures. While the landscape itself remains rich and valued, there is an ongoing need to invest in facilities, infrastructure and visitor experience.

The introduction of a dedicated Destination Park approach supports this focusing on:

- Enhancing visitor facilities
- Strengthening partnerships
- Supporting sustainable income generation
- Protecting the character and ecological value of the site



A key part of this approach is collaboration. The Friends of Lickey Hills Country Park play an important role in supporting the park through volunteering, events and community engagement. Their involvement helps to ensure that improvements are grounded in local knowledge and shared care for the space.

Within the City of Nature framework, Lickey Hills Country Park continues to act as an anchor within Birmingham's wider network of green spaces.

The intention is not to change what makes the Lickeys special, but to strengthen and support it ensuring that the park remains welcoming, resilient and well cared for, now and into the future.



A destination park is a place people choose to visit and return to. The Lickeys continue to offer that, with ongoing work to ensure they thrive for generations to come.

Inaturalist - Wildlife Recording app

Every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed. Inaturalist share your findings with scientific data repositories like the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](https://www.gbif.org/) to help scientists find and use your data.



All you have to do is observe. <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

Keep Track

Record your encounters with other organisms and maintain life lists, all in the cloud.

Create Useful Data

Help scientists and resource managers understand when and where organisms occur.

Crowdsource Identifications

Connect with experts who can identify the organisms you observe.

Become a Citizen Scientist

Find a project with a mission that interests you, or start your own.

Learn About Nature

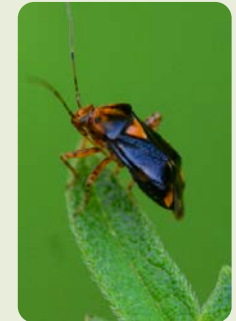
Build your knowledge by talking with other naturalists and helping others.

Run a Bioblitz

Hold an event where people try to find as many species as possible.

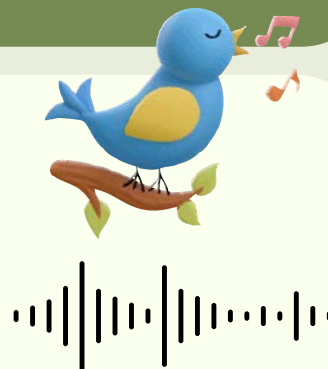
You can find out more about how to use Inaturalist and what is happening in Birmingham by watching this lunch and learn session from EcoRecord:

<https://youtu.be/BXfQ24fivm0?si=E1wVzC17HTuho4cY>



Merlin - Bird Song recognition app

Part of the mission of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is to help people find the answer to “what’s that bird?” They realised sorting through a massive field guide, using search engines, and other resources can make it really challenging to figure out what you just saw, their goal is to make that challenge easier. <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/the-story/>



The Merlin app is designed to be a birding coach for bird watchers at every level. Merlin asks you the same questions that an expert birder would ask to help solve a mystery bird sighting. Notice that date and location are Merlin’s first and most important questions. It takes years of experience in the field to know what species are expected at a given location and date. Merlin shares this knowledge with you based on more than 800 million sightings submitted to [eBird](https://ebird.org/) from birders around the world.

Identify Bird Songs and Calls

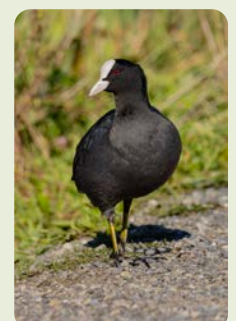
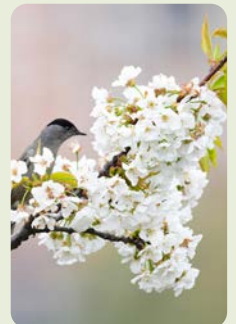
Sound ID listens to the birds around you and shows real-time suggestions for who’s singing. Compare your recording to the songs and calls in Merlin to confirm what you heard. Sound ID works completely offline, so you can identify birds you hear no matter where you are.

Identify Birds in a Photo

Snap a photo of a bird, or pull one in from your camera roll, and **Photo ID** will offer a short list of possible matches. Photo ID works completely offline, so you can identify birds in the photos you take no matter where you are.

Bird ID Wizard—Step-by-step

Answer three simple questions about a bird you are trying to identify and Merlin will give you a list of possible matches. Merlin offers quick identification help for all levels of bird watchers and outdoor enthusiasts to help you learn about the birds in any country in the world.



Ecobirmingham - One Planet Living® framework - Sustainability Tool Kit

As a sustainability charity ecobirmingham support greener, fairer and healthier communities across the city. They deliver grass roots activities, events and programmes through a variety of projects that engage and educate Birmingham residents, helping them to start or continue a more sustainable lifestyle. On their website you will find several online resources including digital walking and cycling maps '[69wards by bike or foot](#)' and [downloadable guides](#), offering tips and advice on funding, planning, designing and running a community garden.

Their online '[sustainability toolkit](#)' is another valuable resource to support individuals across Birmingham to make small changes every day for a big impact. For people and the planet!



Whether you're looking to reduce your carbon footprint, conserve resources, or support local biodiversity, their toolkit offers practical tips and guidance to help you on your journey towards a greener, healthier lifestyle.

Imagine a world where everyone, everywhere, lives happy, healthy lives within the limits of the planet, leaving space for nature. We call this One Planet Living, and we believe it's achievable.

But globally we are living as if we have more than one planet. In fact, [ecological footprinting](#) shows that if everyone in the world consumed as much as the average person in western Europe, we'd need three planets to support us.

The origins of One Planet Living® Using the learning from the [BedZED eco-village](#), Bioregional created the One Planet Living sustainability framework – comprising ten simple principles and detailed [goals and guidance](#) – and developed it together with WWF. Backed by science and many years of hands-on experience, it's a highly flexible framework that is helping organisations around the world to achieve their vision of a brighter, better future. One Planet Living® makes it easy for you to identify gaps and opportunities for more inspiring change. It encourages creative responses to local situations that go beyond tick-box compliance.

The ten principles might look like a template, but they're actually designed to inspire creativity and innovation. Irresistibly simple but wonderfully flexible. A great tool for galvanising teams.

One Planet Living is different from other sustainability frameworks because:

- It puts people first – it's grounded in the reality of how people live their lives rather than box ticking
- It's holistic – nothing will drop through the gaps with our 10 principles
- It's about true sustainability – there's no greenwashing
- It reaches hearts as well as minds - One Planet Living is used to inspire people across the world to get involved in sustainable change



Regular Feature Reminders - Don't miss out!

Many member organisations of the City of Nature Alliance have regular newsletters and updates that you can sign up to receive. They all cover different aspects of living in a Nature City, wildlife, friends of green space groups, tree people, nature and health, therapeutic horticulture and gardening and much, much more. Below you can find links to some of their websites to catch up with what is happening and sign up to their publications - so you never miss out.



Birmingham Parks and Green Spaces - Green Champions

If you want to receive this Green Champion Newsletter and online meeting invites directly via email please complete this form: <https://forms.office.com/e/Va1UFkAe4B> or email the City of Nature Team: Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk

Visit the Naturally Birmingham website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/> To find out more about:

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



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.Harrell@naturalengland.org.uk



BOSF - Birmingham Open Spaces Friends Groups

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. Find out more here: <https://bosf.org.uk/>



Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with BCC 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 here: <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/about>



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 group of its kind in the UK. For more information contact: <https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/about-us/urban-forest-volunteers/>



Thrive - In Kings Heath Park

Thrive has been using social and therapeutic horticulture and gardening to change people's lives since 1979. Discover the different ways to follow what's happening at Thrive, from news and campaigns to advice and developments in social therapeutic horticulture <https://www.thrive.org.uk/get-involved/keep-in-touch>



Birmingham's Park Ranger Service – Nature in the City

Linking People and Nature

April is a time when nature becomes more visible again. Blossom appears, insects emerge, birdsong becomes more constant. But alongside these seasonal changes is something deeper — an opportunity to notice the diversity of life that exists all around us. Birmingham's Ranger Service plays an important role in supporting that connection. This month, rangers will be delivering a range of biodiversity-focused activities across parks and country sites — including guided walks, species identification sessions, volunteer conservation days and community events. These activities help people look more closely at the natural world, from trees and plants to insects, birds and fungi.



A key focus for April is the City Nature Challenge, which invites people to record and share observations of wildlife in their local area. Using tools such as the iNaturalist app, participants can photograph plants and animals, contributing to a global effort to document biodiversity. You don't need to be an expert or have special equipment — just curiosity.



Nature identification is not just about naming species — it's about learning to notice. Rangers support this by helping people to:

- Recognise patterns in plants and habitats
- Listen for differences in birdsong
- Observe insects, pollinators and seasonal change
- Understand how species interact within ecosystems



These small acts of noticing build awareness of the richness of life in the city — even in places we pass every day.

Much of Birmingham's biodiversity exists in familiar places:

- roadside verges and shrub beds
- parks and playing fields
- canals, ponds and wetlands
- gardens and community spaces

These areas form part of a wider ecological network, supporting wildlife movement, pollination and habitat connectivity.



By recording what we see, we begin to understand what is there — and why it matters. Ranger-led activities bring together volunteers, schools, community groups and partners to learn collectively. Through shared observation and recording, people contribute to a growing understanding of Birmingham's biodiversity. This supports not only nature recovery, but also skills, confidence and connection.



Whether through a guided session, a community event, or a quiet moment in your local park, taking time to notice and record nature helps build a clearer picture of the living world around us. By noticing what is already here, we take the first step towards protecting and supporting biodiversity across the city.

Out and About in April with the City's Park Rangers

Get Active in Aston, Newtown & Nechells Parks!

A fun programme of activities are being delivered by the Council's Park Rangers help to help improve your health and wellbeing as well as caring for your parks and open spaces. Activities support volunteering, deliver nature based health interventions to increase physical activity levels and improved mental health.

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

Follow Birmingham Parks and Green Space, Birmingham Open Spaces Online or Naturally Birmingham on social media to keep up to date with what's happening in April.



Check out your park's notice board.

Or visit the Naturally Birmingham Website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/out-and-about-with-birmingham-park-rangers/>

To see all the dates for Ranger led activities in Aston, Newtown & Nechells Parks in April



Get Involved in April with the City of Nature Alliance

The City of Nature Alliance brings together a wide range of organisations, groups, and individuals who care about Birmingham's green and blue spaces — and April is full of opportunities to get involved.

Across the city this month you'll find activities including:

- Birmingham Open Spaces Forum - Birmingham Friends of Open Spaces Groups volunteer days - Various and BOSF events: <https://bosf.org.uk/bosf-events/>
- Activities at Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens - <https://www.castlebromwichhallgardens.org.uk/events-calendar/>
- Ecobirmingham - <https://ecobirmingham.com/events/>
- Thrive - <https://www.thrive.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer>
- The Field Studies Council - <https://www.field-studies-council.org/courses-and-experiences/>
- The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust - <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/events>
- Birmingham Botanical Gardens - <https://birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/whats-on/>
- The Active Wellbeing Society - <https://theaws.co.uk/activity-and-support/>



From wildlife watching and volunteering to walks, workshops, and community events, there's something for all ages and interests. Events and activities are regularly updated, so please check all social media channels for the latest information and joining instructions.

There's always something happening and everyone is welcome.

Earth Day 2026 – Our Power. Our Planet.

Earth Day 2026 carries the theme Our Power. Our Planet. a reminder that the health of our environment is closely connected to the health, stability, and wellbeing of our communities. Environmental conditions are not separate from daily life. They influence: the cost and availability of food access to clean water and energy, public health resilience to extreme weather and the reliability of infrastructure. These are not distant or abstract issues they shape how places function and how people live.

Since the first Earth Day in 1970, collective action has played a significant role in shaping environmental protections across the world.

Community participation has contributed to:

- **improved air and water quality**
- **stronger environmental standards**
- **reduced pollution-related illness**
- **long-term public health and economic benefits**

This reflects an important principle: Environmental outcomes are not shaped by policy alone They are also shaped by the actions of people.

In 2026, environmental protections are under increasing pressure globally. Economic challenges, climate impacts, and changing political priorities are influencing how environmental policies are maintained, adapted, or reviewed. These changes can affect: household costs agricultural productivity insurance and disaster recovery public health systems. At the same time, they highlight the importance of maintaining continuity — ensuring that environmental standards continue to support both people and place.

Earth Week – A Time for Action

From 18th to 22nd April, Earth Week provides an opportunity to take part in actions that support: clean air, clean water, sustainable energy, protected natural spaces and climate stability.

These actions can be large or small, formal or informal. They may include:

- participating in local events
- supporting community activity
- spending time noticing and understanding the natural environment
- contributing to the care of green spaces

Our Power, Our Planet - The theme highlights something simple but important:

The power to shape environmental outcomes is shared

Across communities, organisations, and individuals, participation continues to influence how environments are cared for and sustained.

Earth Day is a reminder that the condition of our planet is shaped not only by systems and policies, but by the collective actions of people, over time.



Wildlife Watching in April – Natures Calendar

April feels different.

Where March just hinted, April begins to show off. Blossom opens fully. Leaves unfold. Insects become more visible. Birdsong shifts from occasional to constant. The pace of life is steadily increasing look closely and you will see it everywhere.

Bees moving between early flowers. Ladybirds warming on sunlit walls. Tadpoles gathering in shallow water. Trees shifting from bare branches to a soft green canopy. Spring is no longer arriving - it is here.

This is the perfect time to move from simply noticing nature... to recording it. The City Nature Challenge invites people across the world to observe, photograph and share the wildlife around them. Each observation contributes to a growing global picture of biodiversity. You don't need specialist knowledge. Just attention.

Understanding what lives where and when helps us track changes in biodiversity. The timing of flowering, the presence of pollinators, the return of birds and amphibians all tell us how ecosystems are responding to changing conditions. Just like phenology projects such as Nature's Calendar, these observations help build long-term knowledge.

In Birmingham, this connects directly to our Green City and Local Nature Recovery aims. Even a small urban park can support hundreds of different species from plants and fungi to insects, birds and small mammals. Much of this life goes unnoticed, but it plays a vital role in supporting healthy ecosystems:

- Pollinators move between flowers in verges and gardens
- Birds rely on insects emerging at the right time
- Trees and soils support complex networks beneath our feet

These systems depend on balance and on being understood. The City Nature Challenge invites us to take part in that understanding. To look more closely at the places we already know, notice what is there and to record it.

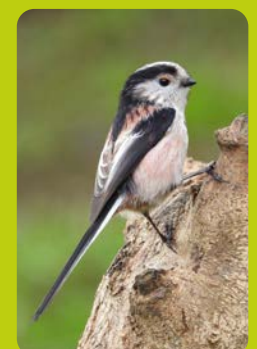
You might start with something simple:

- A bee visiting a flower
- A bird calling from a tree
- New leaves opening on a familiar branch
- Life moving in water at the edge of a pond

Each observation adds to a wider picture.

In a City of Nature, biodiversity is not something distant or hidden. It is present in our streets, parks, school grounds and gardens. By recording what we see, we become part of a shared effort — building knowledge, supporting nature, and strengthening our connection to place.

April is a time not just to notice nature, but to recognise how much life is already here — and how each small observation helps it to be seen and supported.



Things to Do in the Garden in April

April is one of the most active months in the garden. As temperatures rise and daylight increases, plants begin to grow more quickly, and there is plenty to do to support both your garden and local wildlife.



According to seasonal guidance from the Royal Horticultural Society, April is a key time for:

- Sowing seeds outdoors, including hardy vegetables and wildflowers
- Planting summer-flowering bulbs and early bedding plants
- Pruning shrubs that have finished flowering
- Manual weeding regularly while growth is still manageable
- Watering young plants if rainfall is low

It's also a great time to prepare soil by adding compost or organic matter, helping plants establish strong roots for the growing season ahead.



April gardens are not just for growing plants — they are important habitats. You can support biodiversity by:

- Planting nectar-rich flowers for pollinators
- Leaving a small area a little wilder for insects
- Providing shallow water for birds and wildlife
- Avoiding pesticides where possible

As you work in the garden, you may start to notice more wildlife.

This is a great opportunity to take part in citizen science using tools like:

- iNaturalist – to photograph and identify plants, insects and other wildlife
- Merlin Bird ID – to listen to and identify birdsong



These apps help turn everyday gardening into a way of contributing to a wider understanding of biodiversity.

April is a month of energy and change.

Seeds germinate. Leaves unfold. Wildlife becomes more active. What you do now helps shape how your garden grows through the rest of the year.



Young Green Champions - The Golden Hour



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



Spring is a wonderful time to tune into nature's sounds, especially the dawn chorus that magical time sometimes called the golden hour, when birds sing most actively at the start and end of the day. What if you could bring that moment into the classroom? You don't need to be outside at sunrise to experience it. Try playing a recording of birdsong during a quiet moment first thing in the morning, after lunch, or during a calm activity. Close your eyes and listen. What can you hear? Different calls, rhythms, and patterns begin to stand out. Some birds repeat simple notes, others create more complex songs. It's like a natural orchestra, with each bird playing its part.

Take It Outside

Once you've listened indoors, step outside and see what you can hear for real.

You could explore:

- The school grounds
- A nearby park
- Trees, hedges or green spaces close to your classroom

To help identify what you hear, you can use the Merlin Bird ID app. It listens to birdsong and suggests which birds are nearby — turning your listening into a live discovery.

What You Might Notice

Birds sing more in spring because they are:

- Defending territory
- Attracting mates
- Raising young

Different birds prefer different places:

- Robins and blackbirds often sing from lower branches
- Tits and finches move quickly through trees
- Woodpigeons and doves have slower, repeating calls

Why It Matters

By listening to birds, you are doing three important things:

- Developing your observation skills — noticing patterns, sounds and differences
- Connecting with nature in a new way — not just looking, but listening
- Contributing to understanding wildlife — apps like Merlin help record what is heard

A Moment to Pause

You could even keep a simple record:

- What birds did you hear?
- What time of day was it?
- How did it change over the week?

The dawn chorus reminds us that nature is always communicating — even when we don't notice it. This spring, why not pause, listen, and bring a little of that "golden hour" into your day?

Sometimes, the first step to discovering nature... is simply listening.

Spring, Renewal and the Symbols of Easter



April is a time when the signs of spring are all around us. Days are longer, the air is softer, and life is returning in small but noticeable ways. Leaves begin to open, birds are busy building nests, and flowers bring colour back into the landscape.

Across many cultures, this time of year has long been associated with renewal and new beginnings. Easter, in its modern form, has religious meaning for many, but it also carries older, nature-based traditions linked to the changing season. Long before calendars and clocks, people marked this point in the year by observing the land — the balance of light and dark, the return of growth, and the reappearance of life. Some traditions connect this time of year to Ēostre, an Anglo-Saxon goddess associated with spring, dawn and new life. While little is recorded, she is often linked with themes of renewal, fertility and the returning light — echoes that still sit within how we recognise the season today.

Some of the symbols we recognise today come from these seasonal roots.

Eggs, for example, have long represented new life and potential. Hidden, waiting, and then suddenly full of movement, they reflect the changes happening all around us in spring.

Rabbits, often seen at this time of year, are associated with fertility and growth. Their increased activity is a visible sign that the natural world is waking up again. These symbols remind us that life continues, even after quieter periods. That what seems still or empty can hold the beginnings of something new.

For families, this is a wonderful time to step outside and notice what is changing.

You might:

- Look for buds opening on trees and plants
- Listen for birdsong and watch for nesting activity
- Spot insects returning and early pollinators at work
- Notice how light and temperature shift across the day

These small observations help children understand the rhythms of nature — and their place within it.

Spring is also a time to think about how we care for living things.

Planting seeds, tending gardens, or simply taking care not to disturb nesting wildlife are all ways of showing that care.

These actions, however small, help children learn:

- Patience
- Responsibility
- Respect for the natural world

Whether celebrated through tradition, culture or simply through time spent outdoors, this season carries a shared message:

That growth follows rest.

That life returns.

That new beginnings are always possible.

Spring reminds us that even the smallest signs of life can hold the promise of something much bigger.

The Power of Us Conference 2026



Power of Us Conference 2026

When

Start: 23 April, 2026 at 8:30am

End: 23 April, 2026 at 4:30pm

Where

Birmingham City Football Club, St.
Andrews, Birmingham, B9 4RL

The Power of Us Conference 2026 marks the second year of BVSC Research bringing together community organisations, academics and anyone interested in the power of engagement in research.

[Book your place now!](#)

BVSC have worked with Birmingham and Solihull Research Engagement Network (REN) partners, and community researchers, to devise an agenda with:

Powerful key note speakers
Engaged community panels
Workshop sessions that will enable meaningful discussion including “From Participation to Trust: What Makes Nature-Based Research Work for Communities”

This year the conference the theme: In Partnership: Creating Spaces for Trust, Understanding, and Shared Impact.

REGISTRATION OPEN!

POWER OF US CONFERENCE

Thursday 23rd April 2026

Birmingham City Football Club, St Andrews, B9 4RL

Book your place now!

The Power of Us conference 2026 marks the second year of us bringing together community organisations, academics and anyone interested in the power of engagement in research.

We have worked with Birmingham and Solihull Research Engagement Network (REN) partners, and community researchers, to devise an agenda with:

- ★ Powerful key note speakers
- ★ Engaged community panels
- ★ Workshop sessions that will enable meaningful discussion

This year we gave the conference the theme: In Partnership: Creating Spaces for Trust, Understanding, and Shared Impact. We hope you will join us to learn and share on this theme.

Sharing the planet with the other 8.7 million species (approximately)

It's easy to think of the natural world in terms of what we can see easily like the trees in our streets, the birds in our parks, the flowers in our gardens.

But the scale of life on Earth is far greater than that.

Scientists estimate there are around 8.7 million species on the planet.

Of these, only a fraction have been formally identified.

Many live in places we will never visit — deep oceans, dense forests, microscopic worlds beneath our feet.

From the smallest bacteria and fungi, invisible to the naked eye, to the largest animals moving across land and sea, life exists at every scale.

Each species, no matter how small, plays a part in the systems that sustain the planet.



It can feel distant. But it isn't.

Let's bring that number closer - to the UK - to Birmingham - to your local park, garden, or street.

Within a single square metre of soil, there can be thousands of organisms — insects, worms, fungi, microbes — all interacting in ways we rarely notice. Above ground, plants support pollinators. Trees provide shelter. Birds, mammals and insects move through connected spaces, forming part of a wider network of life. Even the most familiar places are alive with complexity.

The challenge is not just to learn that there is so much diverse life on our planet. It is that much of it goes unseen. And what we don't see, we can easily overlook.

When we begin to notice — a bee moving between flowers, a bird collecting nesting material, the texture of moss on a wall — something changes. Attention leads to understanding. **Understanding leads to care.**

Caring for biodiversity doesn't only happen on designated days or through large-scale projects.

It happens in everyday actions:

- Planting for pollinators
- Leaving space for nature to grow
- Recording what we see
- Taking time to observe the living world around us

These small acts connect us to something much larger.

We are not separate from the other millions of species we share the planet with. We are part of the same system.

From the smallest organism beneath our feet to the largest life forms on Earth, every species plays a role. By noticing them and recognising their importance we take a step towards protecting the whole.

Start to explore today and then from April 24th-27th, you can join with Birmingham and the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall & Wolverhampton) who will be taking part in the 2026 City Nature Challenge - a fun, free, global challenge to see which city is wildest!

Will you help them show the world how wild we REALLY are?

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



Earth Stories – Memories, Hopes and Happenings

“March winds and April showers...”

Yes, the rain is still with us. Soft some days, insistent on others. But something feels different now. Not just a hint of spring but its presence, more fully felt at last. Light lingers longer. Mornings arrive earlier, almost quietly at first. I've found myself waking just as the sky begins to change, you know - that moment when colour starts to return, brushing gently across rooftops and trees. The birds start singing the with the first gentle glow of dawn noticing the light level increase long before we can. Not quite the full chorus of May yet, but building steadily every day. It's as if they are practising. Each morning a little more confident than the last preparing for their big performance.

This month brings the Pink Moon, the first full moon of spring. Despite its name, it won't glow pink in the sky, but it is named after the early spring flowers that bloom at this time as a reminder that even our language for the moon is rooted in the rhythms of the earth. And then, looking further out, far beyond our atmosphere, the Artemis II mission prepares to take humans back towards the Moon.

I find myself holding that with a mix of curiosity and care. Wishing them a safe journey. Wondering what it must feel like to see the Earth from that distance, and the Moon up close — something we have looked at, written about, and lived alongside for so long. It feels both extraordinary and quietly connected to everything here below. Should we explore beyond earth when there is so much to do down here?

Closer to home, April brings its own rituals. There is a sense of clearing. Windows opened. Spaces refreshed. A kind of spring cleaning that is not just of homes, but of mind — making space for what is coming next.

And in the kitchen, the season finds its way in too. Hot cross buns, warm from the oven. The scent of spice and sweetness. Perhaps a little chocolate, shared or quietly enjoyed. Small comforts that sit alongside the wider turning of the season outside where the details of the April landscape continues to unfold. Blossom now holds the trees. Greens deepen. Insects become more visible, moving between flowers. Birds are no longer tentative — they are claiming space, building, calling. And somewhere in all of this, life feels fuller.

This newsletter, again, has travelled across big themes — biodiversity, health, community, climate, participation. But beneath it all, as always, sits something simpler. A sense of continuation. April does not resolve uncertainty. The rain still falls. The future still asks questions of us. Our climate conversations remain as urgent as ever.

And yet...

Life on earth continues its steady work. Light expands. Birdsong builds. Blossom opens. People gather outside more as the days warm up. Plans are made for gardens, for picnics, for time outside once again. There is something deeply reassuring in all that not because everything is certain, but because the pattern continues.

The earth turns, the moon turns and here, on the ground, life keeps unfolding. Alongside all of this, it would be impossible not to notice the wider human world. There are tensions, uncertainties, and challenges playing out across countries and communities. Things that can feel heavy, complex, and often beyond our immediate influence. It is right that we recognise them. And yet, at the same time, there really is value in stepping outside and listening to birdsong at first light or the wind moving through trees or water finding its way down the river or a long the shore. Because these are not distractions, but reminders that we are part of something larger, older, and ongoing. Not everything rests on us alone. And in that, there is both perspective and a quiet kind of hope that gives us the strength to go on.

With warm regards

Deborah Needle

City of Nature Newsletter Editor and Green Champion for Involvement



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

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



Scroll down and select the **“Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero”** option.



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