

The member magazine for Kent Wildlife Trust

# WilderKent

Summer 2022

## NEW: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ZONE

How we are using data, technology and innovation to drive conservation efforts

## LOOK UP

The choughs will soon be back in our skies!

PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT

# Our journey to a Wilder Blean

The bison have arrived and we are answering your most pressing questions



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Protecting Wildlife for the Future





# Welcome

## to the summer edition of Wilder Kent

Pictured: a few members of our amazing Wilder Blean team

### Here we are, summer 2022! And what a summer it has been so far at Kent Wildlife Trust.

European bison have finally arrived at West Blean and Thornden Woods, thanks to herculean efforts from our fantastic cross-organisational team (find out more on [page 14](#)). This summer, come visit and try to catch a glimpse of these magnificent mega-herbivores who are tackling the climate and nature crises in our ground-breaking project - a first in UK conservation.

Alongside our pioneering Wilder Blean project, there is much more going on! Red-billed choughs will soon be flying over Kent for the first time in centuries, thanks to decades of chalk grassland restoration (find out more on [page 18](#)). Plus, Wilder Carbon is selling the UK's first genuine conservation grade carbon credits – a scheme that we hope will set the groundwork for ethical carbon trading around the world.

It is due to the growing diversity of skilled people at Kent Wildlife Trust that we are able to deliver such innovative projects. And, with your continued support, we can carry on leading the way, working with conservation organisations, companies and individuals to act now for wildlife, both locally and nationally.

We recognise that the urgency for climate action and wildlife's value to society has never been more clear. Therefore, at the halfway point of our current strategy, we are continuing to level up our ambitions. We will build on our current projects, learn

about the latest innovative ideas in the conservation and business sectors and lead pioneering projects that pave the way for the future of our planet.

Of course, continual improvement also means enhancing how we communicate with our supporters. That is why this edition of your Wilder Kent magazine is a little different.

After listening to your suggestions, from now on the magazine will contain more recurring sections, many of which were requested by you, our members. One of these is our new Science and Technology Zone ([pages 20 - 23](#)). As an ecologist, I was particularly pleased to see you asking for this. This edition includes several pages delving deeper into the scientific underpinning of the Blean initiative, our biggest ever ecological monitoring project. In future issues, we will showcase other aspects of digital transformation.

Kent Wildlife Trust has never been such a professional, dynamic organisation and I am proud to be leading it at such a crucial juncture. Please support us if you are able, volunteer with us if you have the time, promote us to others and engage physically by visiting our reserves or virtually via social media.

Together, we can create a Wilder Kent. 🍷



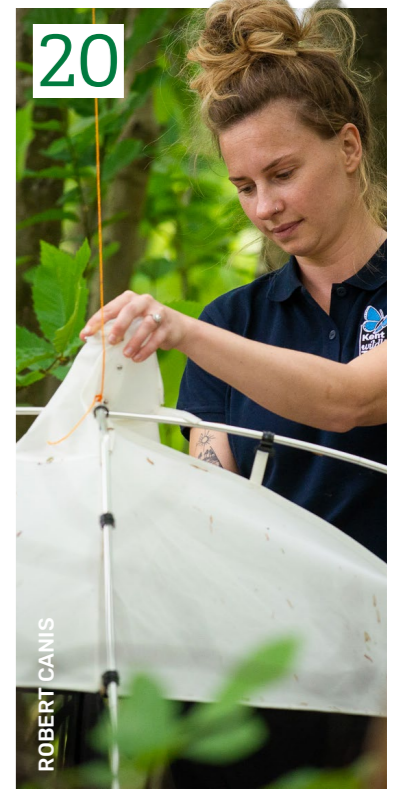
**Evan Bowen-Jones**  
Chief Executive of Kent Wildlife Trust  
Follow me [🐦 @EcoLlogik](#)



JIM HIGHAM



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### The Wilder Kent magazine team

			With special thanks to our incredible proofreaders: Tash Ruskin, Charlie Lewis, Hetti Riding, Sally Smith, Megan Hall and Terri Chalkley.
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**CONTACT US - WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU**

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### Let's be wilder together

Follow us on social media for updates and to share nature photos and your thoughts with us!

JUST SEARCH FOR Kent Wildlife Trust [🐦](#) [📷](#) [f](#) [in](#) [YouTube](#)

### DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

Keep informed of all our latest work, news and events. Email [comms@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:comms@kentwildlife.org.uk) with your member ID and up-to-date email address and we'll do the rest.

## TEAM UPDATES

# Comments from the Leadership Team


**Keeley Atkinson**

As Head of Wilder People and Places, Keeley engages and empowers people to take action to improve their lives and the lives of those around them.

Summer 2022 is an exciting time for Kent Wildlife Trust with bison arriving in the Blean, coughts returning to the White Cliffs, and research and feasibility studies starting soon for our next phase of species work, including turtle doves, beavers and pine martens. It is quite literally a summer of firsts for us in the Wilder People and Places Team.

Our Engagement team is planning lots of events to inform and engage people across Kent, and consulting communities about future projects and opportunities that are in the pipeline.

Our Nature Recovery team is working closely with Kent County Council, supporting them to deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and empowering communities and local councils to act for wildlife from a grassroots level.

Summer has also seen the expansion of the Farmer Cluster team, bringing farmers together to increase and protect biodiversity on their land and helping them navigate new government schemes.

Our Planning team continues to work with local organisations to safeguard the Swanscombe Peninsula Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and resist the development of a theme park on this site.

Our H2O team is busy demonstrating how nature-based solutions can reduce water management costs while improving freshwater quality, reducing pollution and benefiting wildlife and local communities.

The 5th Continent team is also working hard to bring their scheme to a successful conclusion.

None of this varied and impactful work would be possible without the dedication and passion within our team, nor the support we receive from colleagues across the organisation, our partners and you - our members. Thanks everyone! 🍷


**Simon Bateman-Brown**

As Head of Land Management with over 25 years of experience in conservation, Simon

works with Area Managers and Wardens to maintain 80+ reserves.

As the seasons turn, work on our nature reserves continues. The summer buzz brings a new range of tasks and projects for the Estates team who are out each and every day, ensuring that all sites are safe for wildlife and their two-legged visitors.

Also out in the field on a daily basis are our wardens and volunteer livestock checkers, making sure our animals are well, as well as many other groups of volunteers, carrying out a huge range of tasks to help manage our sites.

If you happen to see any wardens or volunteers while you're visiting, please do stop and say hello. They'll be more than happy to talk to you about what they are up to and the incredible reserves that Kent Wildlife Trust is entrusted to manage. 🍷


**Paul Hadaway**

As Director of Conservation, Paul develops and implements conservation and green space policies and drives nature-based solutions across Kent.

Five years ago, I attended a conference at the Royal Society and discussed a new approach to engaging and advising farmers and landowners: Farmer Clusters. This was the idea of approaching landscape-scale conservation and species connectivity through farmer-led approaches, working to identify the wildlife that they want to see on their farm and encouraging collaboration in a new way - often at the pub! As the national debate around food security and land-use planning goes on, we have an impressively skilled group of Farm Cluster advisors working across the county demonstrating that farming and conservation are entirely compatible if approached together.



Delivering projects like this, and achieving the breadth of ambition in our Wilder Kent vision, requires a remarkable group of people. Luckily, at Kent Wildlife Trust, we have some of the brightest and best in conservation working for us: from incredibly experienced and committed warden teams to wilding and species introduction experts; from evidence and monitoring teams to Farmer Cluster officers, community engagement teams and fundraisers.

Thanks to the continued support of our members, funders and corporate sponsors. There is lots to come, and we cannot wait to show you. Find out more about Farmer Clusters on [page 30](#). 🍷

## TEAM SPOTLIGHT

## The boots on the ground in our Wilder Blean project

Managing over 1,000 hectares of ancient woodland is all in a day's work for **Area Manager Matt Hayes** and **Wardens Will Douglas and Holly Savage**.

This incredible team creates and maintains habitats to enable a diverse range of species to thrive at West Blean and Thornden Woods.

Matt manages a team of wardens, liaising with farmers and partner organisations to protect wildlife. Will manages sites, working with contractors and volunteers to help this area flourish. Holly manages several other reserves, including land attached to West Blean.

This year, the team has spent a great deal of time preparing the woodlands for our very special new residents, European bison! This is part of our cutting-edge Wilder Blean project in which these mega-herbivores will restore the landscape in a natural way.

Will said: 'I enjoy the outdoor, hands-on aspects of my job as I am an active person. I work solely on the Blean complex and it is an incredibly exciting time to be part of a ground-breaking project in which a holistic approach is being taken to manage the woodland.' 🍷



From left to right: Will Douglas, Matt Hayes and Holly Savage

Thanks to our incredible team, from our wardens to our ecologists to our communications team, the Wilder Blean project is paving a new path for conservation in the UK and beyond. Find out more on [page 14](#).

## Your member area

Thank you for your feedback about our Wilder Kent magazine - we would love to hear more!

This magazine is for you. As a member of Kent Wildlife Trust, we want to keep you in the loop about all the amazing conservation projects that you are supporting.

Last month, we asked you to provide feedback about this magazine and over 250 of you responded - thank you so much! We have made lots of changes!

This issue is the first stage of a big update so please look out for more exciting changes later in the year.

Send your feedback about the Wilder Kent magazine to [comms@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:comms@kentwildlife.org.uk) 🍷



As part of our update, we will include a Member Q&A section in each issue. Send your questions to [comms@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:comms@kentwildlife.org.uk) for the chance to be featured in the next magazine and receive some Wilder Kent merch!

### Our edits to your summer issue

- 1 The events booklet is back**  
Discover our best events of the season.
- 2 We have reinstated our photo competition**  
Share the beauty of Kent's wildlife and your amazing photography skills ([page 28](#)).
- 3 There are more species features**  
Learn more about Kent's most fascinating species!
- 4 Tackling global crises**  
Find out how to tackle the climate and nature crises as an individual, community, business and nation.
- 5 Local reserves updates**  
Find out about some of our hidden gems ([page 12](#)).
- 6 Science and Technology Zone**  
Get technical and learn something new ([page 20](#)).
- 7 Kent-focused**  
Our articles are now even more Kent-focused.



**Dave Goulson**

@DaveGoulson @dave.goulson



## Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse

“ Since I was a child I have been obsessed with insects; I grew up in the countryside and spent my days roaming the lanes and meadows in search of caterpillars, butterflies, grasshoppers and beetles. I eventually came to learn that the world would not function without these tiny creatures. They pollinate; control pests; recycle all sorts of organic material from dung to corpses, tree trunks and leaves; keep the soil healthy; disperse seeds; and provide food for many larger creatures, such as birds, bats, lizards, amphibians and fish.

It should be of profound concern to all of us that insects appear to be undergoing massive declines. As a child, I vividly remember my parents having to stop the car on long summer journeys to scrub clear the windscreen, which quickly became crusted with splatted insects as we drove along. Today, our windscreens are disturbingly clean.

The causes of insect declines are many: habitat loss to intensive farming, housing and other developments; the ever-growing blizzard of pesticides used by farmers and gardeners; climate change; light pollution; impacts of invasive species and more. Our tidy, pesticide-infused world is largely hostile to insect life.

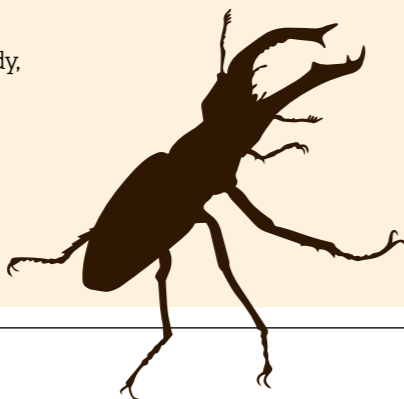
However, we can all get involved in reversing insect declines. If you are lucky enough to have a garden, you can take some simple steps to invite insects and other

wildlife in; it is astonishing how much life even a small garden can support.

If you have no garden, think about joining national and local campaigns to fill our urban greenspaces with wildflowers, or have your town or village declared pesticide-free. Imagine every garden, park, cemetery, roundabout and road verge filled with swathes of wildflowers. We could create a national network of wildlife-rich habitat from Land's End to John O'Groats.

You can reduce your own impact and support sustainable farming practices by buying and eating local, seasonal, organic produce, buying loose fruit and veg, and reducing your meat consumption. Better still, grow what food you can in your garden or in an allotment.

Love them or loathe them, we all need insects. We have to learn to live in harmony with nature, seeing ourselves as part of it, not trying to rule and control it. Our survival depends upon it, as does that of the glorious array of life with which we share our planet. 🍷



### BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST!

The Bugs Matter survey is a citizen science project which is improving our understanding of insect population trends.

By downloading the Bugs Matter app and counting the number of bugs squashed on your number plate after your car journeys this summer, you can contribute vital evidence that will inform important insect conservation, policy and practice.

Learn more: [kwtg.uk/bugsmatter](http://kwtg.uk/bugsmatter)

### SUPPORT OUR WILDLIFE

Find out more about how to support our wildlife here: [kwtg.uk/actionforwildlife](http://kwtg.uk/actionforwildlife)

**Dave Goulson** is a professor of biology at the University of Sussex, one of the UK's leading insect experts, and an ambassador for The Wildlife Trusts.



# YOUR WILD Summer

## Lesser spotted woodpecker

*Dryobates minor*

This regal bird is the smallest of the UK's woodpeckers, barely larger than a house sparrow. It is also the least common of the UK's three woodpecker species.

### HOW TO IDENTIFY

Lesser spotted woodpeckers can be identified by a distinctive white ladder marking down their black back. Males can be distinguished from females by a particularly striking feature: their red crown caps.

This species is most often found amongst the treetops where it creeps along branches in search of insects. Its characteristic 'drumming' - the sound made as it bashes its bill against trees to mark its territory - is much quieter and less vigorous than that of the greater spotted woodpecker.

### CONSERVATION STATUS

**Classified in the UK as Red** (the most threatened) under the Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the Red List for Birds (2021).

**Priority Species** under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.



### WHERE TO SEE

Listen out for the rhythmic drumming of these birds in woodlands, parks, orchards and gardens across the UK.

If you are visiting West Blean and Thornden Woods to see our exciting new residents - European bison, Longhorn cattle, Exmoor ponies and Iron-Age pigs - then make sure to also keep an eye (and ear!) out for these rare woodpeckers.

The lesser spotted woodpecker is one of the many species that will benefit from the presence of European bison in these ancient woodlands. Natural bison activity, such as eating bark, will cause some

trees to die, reinforcing the natural life cycle of the woodland and creating standing deadwood.

This provides an incredible habitat and food source for insects which, in turn, are eaten by woodpeckers. Lesser spotted woodpeckers also favour deadwood to create nesting holes in.

### DID YOU KNOW?

There are **less than 3,000** pairs of lesser spotted woodpeckers breeding annually in the UK, compared to **nearly 45,000** greater spotted woodpeckers.

These birds have a special shock-absorbent skull that protects the brain when drumming.

### STATISTICS

**Length:** 14-15cm  
**Wingspan:** 25-27cm  
**Weight:** 17-25g  
**Average lifespan:** 6 years

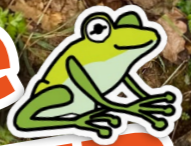
### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Being a member of Kent Wildlife Trust supports vital conservation work across our county, including the management of the precious habitats that lesser spotted woodpeckers rely on.

Find out more about how to support the Wilder Blean project on [pages 14 to 17](#).

BLEAN WOODLAND © DONOVAN WRIGHT, LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER © E. BOWEN-JONES

# 6 ways to enjoy nature this SUMMER as a family!



## 1 Come along to our Wilder Holiday Club

Suitable for ages 5-11, this drop-off club incorporates our Forest School ethos, allowing plenty of time for children to explore nature, learn about local wildlife, make new friends and let imaginations run wild.

Your children will take part in lots of fun nature-based activities, such as mini beast identification in our gardens and pond dipping on our brand-new platforms.

Find out more here: [kwtg.uk/holidayclub](http://kwtg.uk/holidayclub)

We have summer activities for younger children too. Nature Tots is a different type of playgroup, where pre-school children spend time outside immersed in nature, enjoying a variety of activities in stunning surroundings. Visit [kwtg.uk/naturetots](http://kwtg.uk/naturetots)

## 3 Plant a wildlife-friendly garden

Take action for wildlife this summer and work as a family to transform your garden into an oasis of biodiversity. The main challenge is: choosing which project to start! Do you want to make a bee hotel, create a hedgehog hole, grow a wildflower meadow or build a vertical garden?

Find instructions by visiting: [kwtg.uk/wildlife](http://kwtg.uk/wildlife)

For inspiration, you could visit one of our Open Gardens. Enjoy wandering around our volunteers' colourful gardens and quiz them about wildlife-friendly gardening (find out more in the events booklet).



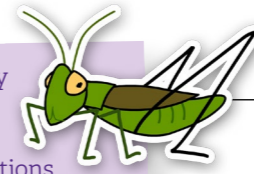
## 2 Join a family-friendly Wilder Kent Safari

Discover the stories of a Wilder Kent on these exciting wildlife watch experiences with our knowledgeable safari guides. Delve deeper into how bison are making a comeback to the Blean after thousands of years, find out more about the rare overwintering birds that visit Oare Marshes, or witness the impressive dams built by beavers introduced to Ham Fen over 20 years ago.

We are also introducing photography and sunset safaris, so keep an eye on our events page to secure your place! [kwtg.uk/events](http://kwtg.uk/events)

During your summer holiday excursions, why not take part in the Bugs Matter survey by counting bug splats on your number plate whenever you make a journey? Your contributions will help us monitor insect populations.

Become a citizen scientist today! Find out more here: [kwtg.uk/bugsmattersurvey](http://kwtg.uk/bugsmattersurvey)



## 4 Fun-draise!

Download our free Family Fundraising pack to find lots of fun ideas and activities, from creating bison masks to baking animal biscuits, there is so much to get involved in. Your achievements will contribute towards vital conservation work and a Wilder Kent.

Download your Fundraising pack here: [kwtg.uk/familyfundraising](http://kwtg.uk/familyfundraising)



## 5 Enter our really wild photography competition!

Back by popular demand, the Kent Wildlife Trust photography competition is now open for 2022! Get out onto our reserves and capture images of our wonderful wildlife for the chance to win a 50% off safari experience and be featured in our next magazine! Find out more on [page 27](#).

## 6 Experience the Blean's newest wild residents

Our popular West Blean and Thornden Woods nature reserve just got a lot more exciting. In addition to the Blean's existing population of wildlife – including adorable dormice, delicate butterflies and charismatic birds – we have just welcomed European bison, Exmoor ponies, Iron-Age pigs and Longhorn cattle as part of our ground-breaking Wilder Blean project.

This summer, come visit these incredible animals and learn about how their presence in Kent is going to help tackle the climate and nature crises.

### VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

We are looking for volunteers to support this innovative project.

Check out our current roles here: [kwtg.uk/volunteering](http://kwtg.uk/volunteering)





# 6 places to see butterflies in Kent

MARBLD WHITE © JOSHUA COPPING

### BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST!

Help us monitor insect populations by taking part in our Bugs Matter survey. By downloading the app and counting the number of bugs squashed on your number plate after your car journeys this summer, you can contribute vital evidence that will inform insect conservation, policy and practice.

Learn more: [kwtg.uk/bugsmatterproject](http://kwtg.uk/bugsmatterproject)

## See the spectacle for yourself in Kent

- 1 West Blean and Thornden Woods**  
Visit this stunning ancient woodland to experience both large animals (our newly arrived bison, cattle, ponies and pigs) and small, including one of the UK's rarest butterflies: the **heath fritillary**. Found in only a handful of areas in the UK, the rides and glades of the Blean are one of the best places to spot **heath fritillaries**. Our team is undertaking important monitoring work to inform conservation efforts to save this species across the UK (find out more on [page 20](#)).
- 2 Oare Marshes**  
Take a trip to this mystical marsh on the north Kent coast to see some of the migratory butterflies that make it to Kent's shores during the summer. Among the most common visitors is the **painter lady**, an attractive orange and black species. Less common, but still a regular visitor, is the **clouded yellow**, which often stops to feed on flowers such as thistles.
- 3 Pegwell Bay Country Park**  
A walk along the scrub and grassland at this beautiful coastal reserve will reveal some of our more common butterflies. The orange and brown **gatekeeper** butterfly can be seen flying along the edge of scrub and hedges. Its larger cousin, the **meadow brown**, is found in more open grassy areas alongside the brilliantly coloured **small copper** butterfly.
- 4 Lydden Hill Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR)**  
Road verges can be a fantastic habitat for butterflies. In fact, our Lydden Hill RNR is, without a doubt, one of our best. An incredible 30 species of butterfly were recorded here in 2021, including the striking **adonis blue** whose sole foodplant, horseshoe vetch, is found here.
- 5 Queendown Warren**  
The distinctive chequered appearance of the **marbled white** butterfly can be seen in good numbers at Queendown Warren during July. The caterpillars feed exclusively on fine grasses so the females must find patches of short dense turf to lay their eggs. In contrast, adult **marbled whites** are strongly attracted to large purple flowers, such as field scabious and black knapweed, to drink delicious nectar from.
- 6 Lydden Temple Ewell National Nature Reserve (NNR)**  
Holding a special place in our heart, the **adonis blue** butterfly is the logo of Kent Wildlife Trust and can be seen across Lydden Temple Ewell. Emerging at the end of May and again in September, the adults lay eggs on horseshoe vetches across the sunny exposed hillsides of this National Nature Reserve. The brilliant blue of the **adonis** provides a stark contrast to the powder blue colour of another butterfly species, the **chalkhill blue**, which appears from July to September and can reach numbers into the hundreds!

### Did you spot any butterflies?

We'd love to know how your search went. Please tweet us your best photos! [@KentWildlife](#)



# Updates from our reserves

## Due to its varied geology and historic management, Kent is home to a huge array of habitats.

From salt marsh and semi-natural ancient woodland to chalk grassland and heathland, we have some of the most incredible habitats for wildlife in Kent. We often talk about how special our larger sites - such as West Blean, Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve and Oare Marshes - are for wildlife. It is important to remember that we also have some amazing smaller sites that are equally remarkable.

**1** For example, have you visited **Brenchley Wood**? Hidden in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is this fantastic woodland reserve, with a small area of lowland heath and bog habitat. When it flowers in late summer, the heather is a beautiful sight and a valuable nectar source for bees and other insects. Whilst walking along the paths that run through the site, look out for lizards basking on rocks or green tiger beetles scuttling across the sandy tracks.



Multi-stemmed beech

**2** Do you know about **Cromers Wood** near Sittingbourne? This is an attractive, traditionally managed woodland where visitors can see the different stages of chestnut coppice. The rotational cutting of trees here provides timber for locally produced fencing and creates a varied age structure to the woods, supporting dormice and a range of breeding birds. Families can also enjoy the Cromers Wood QR code story trail which uses local features and wildlife as inspiration for six interactive stories.

**3** **Hosey Common** in Westerham is full of clues that point to its rich history. Often thought to be a coppice, this multi-stemmed beech (below) is actually part of an old hedge which marked out the land that was allotted to families of troops returning from the

Napoleonic Wars. This amazing structure is just one of many historical artefacts that you may find when you explore the site.


**4** It is a long walk to **Broadham Down** but it's certainly worth it! This downland reserve is tucked away in the hills behind Chilham near Canterbury and is home to man-orchids and pyramidal orchids. While visiting this site, be careful not to disturb the incredibly rare black-veined moth (above) in the long grass. There are also some interesting historic relics on this reserve, with impressive dene holes (chalk pits) and a 100m-deep well which now supports hibernating bats throughout the winter.

**5** We also have many Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) across Kent. In west Kent, you're likely to drive past our **Blue Bell Hill RNR** which, in the summer, is covered in thousands of common spotted orchids and pyramidal orchids.



Black-veined moth

### VISIT OUR RESERVES

 To find out more or visit our reserves please visit: [kwtg.uk/reserves](http://kwtg.uk/reserves)



Heath spotted orchid

**Where to find Hothfield Heathlands:**  
Cades Road, Maidstone Road (A20), Hothfield Ashford Kent TN26 1HD  
Open at all times.

"Hothfield Heathlands is one of the best spots for wildlife in the county. With your help, we can keep it that way."

Ian Rickards, Area Manager

### RESERVE UPDATE

## Sharing wild spaces with our dogs and wildlife

Unfortunately, the natural behaviours of our canine friends can damage our wild spaces, so we need to take action to protect our pets and our wildlife.

### In what ways do dogs harm our wildlife reserves?

- The presence of dogs puts a huge amount of pressure on ground nesting, coastal and wetland birds. Birds will perceive the presence of dogs playing nearby as a dangerous predator. They are then much less likely to breed and lay eggs, and frequent disturbances are causing low hatch rates. Sadly, chicks are also being eaten or trampled by dogs.
- Our grazing livestock animals are often attacked and chased by dogs. This frequently results in death for our grazers.
- Dog poo that is left behind can spread diseases which kill our livestock and wildlife. Worms in dog poo can also be spread to other dogs. Additionally, poo bags are a choking hazard, so please make sure you pick up after your dog. 🐾

### RESERVE FEATURE

## Hothfield Heathlands in bloom

### The lowdown

Since the designation of Hothfield Heathlands as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1951, over 90% of peat bogs in the UK have been lost. In fact, the bogs at Hothfield are sadly the last in Kent.

Peat bogs are incredible carbon sinks (they take in and store carbon) so protecting and restoring these habitats is a vital step in tackling the climate crisis. These bogs are also home to many rare plants and insects.

In the summer, Hothfield Heathlands is teeming with life: colonies of glistening sundew rosettes grow along the edge of the causeway and bog pimpernel covers areas with stary pink flowers; the white heads of cotton grass and the golden spears of bog asphodel stand tall above the sphagnum mosses; and

pink lousewort and yellow St John's wort are sprinkled about the landscape. Within the fen, there are spires of southern marsh orchid as well as some larger variations.

We have recently received funding from The Wildlife Trusts and an anonymous donor to restore bog and peat fen. Keep an eye on our website and social media to find out about our upcoming wilding work!

**You can help too:** only use peat-free compost to reduce the massive destruction that our valuable peatlands face. You can also leave patches of bare soil in your garden for burrowing insects, basking reptiles and sparrows needing dust baths.

### SHARING SPACES

#### How can we share these spaces without causing harm?

Consider taking your dog to a secure field or local park where they can race to their heart's content without disturbing wildlife or risking their own lives during an encounter with livestock.

If you decide to visit a reserve, remember to read all the signs that you pass - they will give you important information (e.g. sudden drops, farm sprays in use or livestock presence).

Many of our reserves require your dog to stay on a lead. On the right, you can see a few of the different signs to look out for.

**Please note that there are new restrictions at Sandwich and Pegwell Bay to protect breeding birds.**



PROJECT UPDATE

# Our journey to a Wilder Blean



## The bison have arrived!

When Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust embarked on the flagship Wilder Blean project with the aim to provide a sustainable solution to woodland management using European bison, one of the first questions that arose was... **where on Earth do you get bison from?**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



### 1. INVESTIGATION

Wildwood Trust researched where to source these important "ecosystem engineers" from by working with the European Endangered Species Recovery Programme (EEP) who advise on the structure and size of a herd, how to find suitable animals and how to ensure genetic diversity is as high as possible.

### 2. WHERE?

Eventually four animals were found: a matriarch from Scotland, a bull from Germany and two younger females from Ireland. Interestingly, these are lowland Caucasian bison, the rarer of the two subspecies of European bison.



### 3. HOW?

Wilder Blean is working with an experienced animal movement company that are experts in transporting bison safely and efficiently to their new homes, reducing any stress to the animals.

"Thankfully for us, this is not a unique situation. Bison have been reintroduced to other parts of Europe, which means animals have been successfully moved across the region in recent years."

**Tom Gibbs,**  
Bison Ranger



### 4. ARRIVAL

The four bison arrived in July and were placed into a corral. The team spent a few days checking their health before the bison were released into a section of the woods. They lived here for a few weeks, getting used to their new home and being monitored (at a distance) by the bison rangers.

From this initial section, the bison are due to move further into the Blean woodland and eventually they will have access to 200 hectares to roam around freely with ponies and pigs, who also play distinct and vital roles in the ecosystem.

The success of this project is thanks to funding from players of the People's Postcode Lottery.

The European bison of the Wilder Blean project are the closest living relatives to Steppe bison, the ancient species that once roamed the UK several thousands of years ago. Sadly, European bison went extinct in the wild in the 1920s. But thanks to an extensive breeding programme, there are now approximately 8000 individuals worldwide.

**"Wilder Blean is a locally, nationally and globally important project that will showcase how wilding and species like bison offer a sustainable approach where nature can take the lead and restore degraded ecosystems."**

*Donovan Wright, Bison Ranger*

To find out more about this project or to donate, please visit: [kwtg.uk/wilderblean](http://kwtg.uk/wilderblean)





# How will each species help create a Wilder Blean?

It's not just bison! Meet the other grazing animals in the Blean who will help create a biodiverse habitat and allow the woodland to be continuously regenerated and maintained by natural processes.



## European bison

Due to their power and size, the bison will push through the dark and dense vegetation at West Blean and Thornden Woods. This will cause some trees to fall, opening up the canopy, spilling light onto the forest floor and benefitting an array of plant life. In turn, this will enable many other species to thrive.

Bison fur will also trap seeds, transporting them around the reserve, and the fur will be used by birds to line their nests and insulate them. All of these different activities create varied habitats and benefit different species.

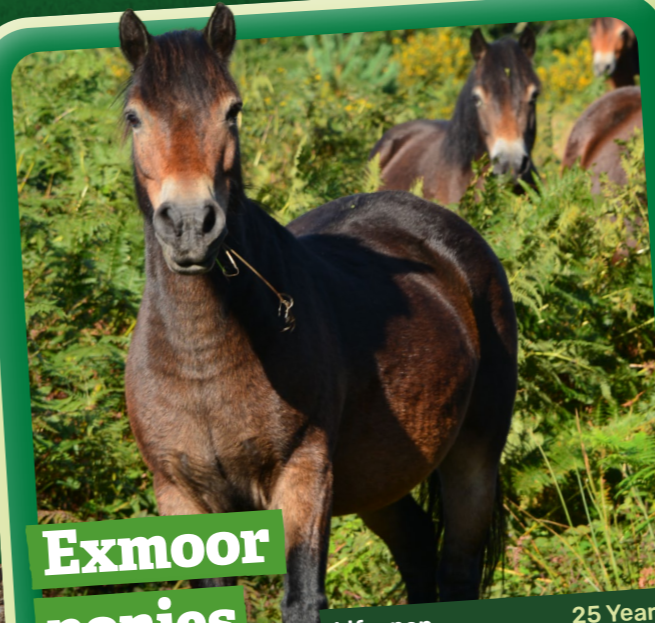
Lifespan	20 Years
Weight	900kg
Abilities	Can run up to 35 mph



## Longhorn cattle

The new herd of cattle in this woodland will graze on the woody twigs of trees and scrub, creating space in the woodland canopy for other vegetation to grow through. Cattle have similar impacts on the woodland as bison due to their size, but their activities differ in a few vital ways. For example, cattle graze higher up on plants than bison and they do not dust bathe. Exploring the difference between bison and longhorns is a key part of the Wilder Blean project.

Lifespan	20 Years
Weight	800kg
Abilities	Strong sense of smell



## Exmoor ponies

As the bison and cattle create corridors throughout the woodland, the ponies will follow them through, nibbling at the shorter vegetation. This will prevent the corridors from growing back over and continue to enable less competitive plant species to reach sunlight and flourish. The ponies will target softer, herby vegetation like grasses, creating space for different species to grow through in grassy and scrubby areas.

Lifespan	25 Years
Weight	350kg
Abilities	Well adapted to harsh weather

## Donate to start creating a Wilder Blean now

By donating to this ground-breaking project, you can help us increase the area the bison have to roam and restore large areas of our ancient woodland:

<b>£30</b>	<b>£60</b>	<b>£100</b>
could restore the size of a basketball court	could restore the size of a standard swimming pool	could restore the size of an Olympic swimming pool

To support this project, please visit: [kwtg.uk/donate](https://kwtg.uk/donate)



## Iron-Age pigs

Pigs "rootle" around in the soil with their snouts, looking for roots and bulbs. This activity disturbs the soil, causing even long-dormant seeds to grow, and prevents the spread of thick vegetation that can take over a landscape and block sunlight from reaching the forest floor.

Lifespan	15 Years
Weight	100kg
Abilities	High intelligence



The Wilder Blean project will answer the question of whether bison provide a conservation tool to kickstart natural processes in a way which domestic grazing animals (like cattle) cannot. Our plan is to compare an area with bison, horses and pigs with an area containing cattle, horses and pigs to understand the impact that bison have, plus a third control area with no animals.

EXMOOR PONY © KEVIN CASTER, IRON AGE PIG © ALISON RUYTER, HEATH FRITILLARY © JIM HIGHAM

# Look up:

## Red-billed choughs will soon be back in our skies!



Choughs have been absent in the wild in Kent for over 200 years due to habitat loss and historical persecution.

Yet, this charismatic species has retained a deep cultural link throughout Kent's history – these iconic birds can be spotted on pub signs across our county as well as on the Canterbury coat of arms itself.

This year, due to extensive conservation efforts by an incredible coalition of wildlife organisations, these charismatic birds are emerging from our history books and legends. They are about to return to our skies, thanks to a partnership between Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust.

For four decades, Kent Wildlife Trust has worked alongside others, including National Trust and White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, to restore chalk grassland habitat and reintroduce conservation grazing management across East Kent. Extensive feasibility studies

have shown that, thanks to this dedicated restoration work, there is now enough suitable habitat to support the return of wild red-billed choughs to Kent – and we couldn't be more delighted to welcome them back.

Post-release monitoring of the choughs and research into their diet and land-use in Kent will help drive future restoration work.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this reintroduction project so far, whether by visiting the chough aviary at Dover Castle, donating to our appeal or spreading the word about this project online and in your communities.

There is so much more to come on this journey so stay up to date by keeping an eye on our social media.

### SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

To support this project and ensure that the chough population can thrive in Kent, visit: [kwtg.uk/chough](https://kwtg.uk/chough)



### What is conservation grazing?

Large herbivores once roamed our landscapes. Their grazing behaviours maintained key habitats (such as grassland and heathland) by controlling the spread of certain plant species and allowing many others to thrive.

In order to mimic this ancient activity, we have introduced grazing animals, such as sheep, cattle, ponies and pigs, to many of our reserves. Their grazing behaviours help to naturally and effectively restore and maintain biodiversity. Grazing animals also provide another service: their dung is home to a variety of invertebrates, all of which are eaten by choughs.



### The return of choughs will:

- demonstrate the incredible potential of conservation work to return missing species, paving the way for further habitat restoration across our county
- encourage farmers and landowners to reduce the use of worming treatments etc. in livestock, thereby benefitting the whole ecosystem
- engage communities in conservation due to their cultural and historical significance to Kent

### Next steps:

The project partnership will be releasing small family-sized cohorts of between 6-12 birds each year for a minimum of five years in order to establish a breeding population of 50 birds.

We hope that this will become one of many restored populations of choughs across the south coast of England.

Find out more on one of our chough-focused Wilder Kent Safaris which launch in mid-August:

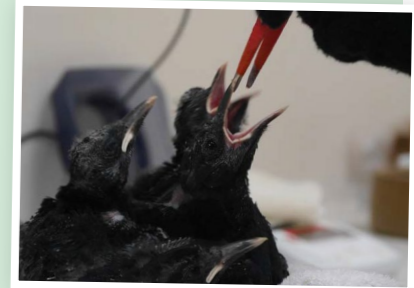
Join a Wilder Kent Safari at Lydden Temple Ewell, near Dover, to hear fascinating tales about choughs, the historical persecution that led to their decline and the habitat restoration in the area that has made their return possible. You may even see these distinctive black birds, with their red legs and bill, flying overhead. 🐦

### How to help:

- Keep your dogs on a lead around the White Cliffs
- Tell everyone about the choughs!
- Contact us if you have time to volunteer: [chough@wilderkent.org.uk](mailto:chough@wilderkent.org.uk)
- Get in touch if you spot any choughs in the wild by tagging us on social media or emailing: [comms@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:comms@kentwildlife.org.uk)
- And, if you manage to photograph one of these charming birds, why not enter the Birds category of our photography competition? Find out more on [page 27](#).

### Project timeline

**In May**, chough chicks hatched at Wildwood Trust in Kent and Paradise Park in Cornwall.



**In late July**, the chicks (now a little more grown up) moved to the "release aviary" in a top-secret location.



The team at Wildwood Trust conducted recall training with the birds prior to release.

Hollie from Wildwood explained: "Once the choughs are released into the wild, we will be able to use a whistle to call them to food. This will enable us to support the birds through regular visual health checks and veterinary intervention when needed."



**In late summer**, choughs are due to be released into the wild – a momentous day for Kent.

# Science and Technology Zone



**Robbie Still**

As Digital Transformation Officer, Robbie drives technological innovation at Kent Wildlife Trust Group which ranges from helping staff use new pieces of software to creating new digital nature-based solution products.

It is a very exciting time to be a Digital Transformation Officer at Kent Wildlife Trust, with so many ambitious projects going on.

Currently, I am working on our Digital Transformation Strategy, collaborating with every team across the Trust to ensure that all our current and future operating systems can talk to, and feed into, each other. This will help everyone at the Trust, from our reserves team to our finance department, use data to inform daily decision making.

**What kind of data?**

All data. From geological (e.g. bedrock) and habitat data to information about nature recovery networks, from project cost data to community engagement and customer relationship management systems.

Alongside this strategy, we are implementing the newest and most efficient ways of working across our projects, particularly for our Wilder Blean project - involving bison! Most of the challenges within this project are caused by the size and remote nature of West Blean and Thornden Woods nature reserve.

There is almost no mobile signal, certainly no 3, 4 or 5G, and the dense forest canopy renders radio communications ineffective.

Luckily, James Milsom-Mills, IT and Data Protection Officer at Kent Wildlife Trust, came up with an ingenious (and slightly out of the box) solution: 2G phones. They work an absolute treat at the Blean due to an old network that is still maintained.

Another challenge for Wilder Blean is putting GPS collars on the bison. We must do this for the safety of the bison and ourselves, and for ecological monitoring.

Traditionally, GPS collars transmit locations via a radio transmitter or a mobile data network, but this is not possible on this site. Instead, we took advantage of a relatively new branch of telecoms technology: LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network).

LoRa is a low power, long range signal, similar to WiFi, that allows for the transmission of tiny packets of data, such as GPS coordinates of bison.

We have been working with Netherlands-based Smart Parks to set up a LoRa network across the Blean, alongside specially made WisentEdge collars ("Wisent" is the Dutch word for bison). These collars have been tuned into the LoRa network and provide a live feed of bison locations. This keeps the bison safe and enables us to track our other grazing animals to ensure everyone's safety.

Kent Wildlife Trust does not allow unauthorised flying of drones on our nature reserves as they can easily cause disturbance and distress to wildlife.



**West Blean and Thornden Woods, southeast compartment**  
3D vegetation model created using drone imagery

Together with the other surveys we are conducting, this will be one of the most comprehensive monitoring programs of a wilding project ever undertaken.



**Lawrence Ball**

As Conservation GIS and Data Officer, Lawrence provides expertise in GIS, remote sensing, ecological monitoring and data analytics across a range of conservation projects.

Unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, offer fantastic opportunities for monitoring habitat characteristics. This is why we are striving to develop in-house expertise on drone usage.

The aim of the Wilder Blean project is to measure how the introduction of large herbivores (in this case, the bison) will affect vegetation structure and composition in an ancient woodland (in this case, the Blean). The scientific evidence strongly suggests that the activity of large herbivores can have huge benefits for

biodiversity as they help restore natural ecosystem processes. We need to closely monitor the Blean environment to track the benefits to biodiversity and contribute to the

global scientific understanding of wilding. We always ensure that our drone surveys have minimal impacts on wildlife.

There will be three different management zones in the Blean: areas with large herbivores including bison, areas with large herbivores excluding bison, and a control zone with no large herbivores. By surveying these zones with the drone, we will obtain a wealth of information about how these different management approaches influence the structure and composition of the woodland vegetation.

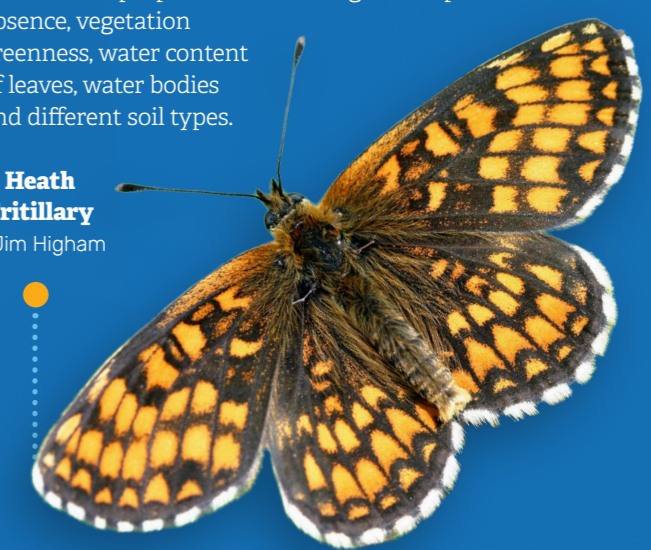
Using a drone and two specific sensors, we can measure a range of habitat attributes. One sensor stitches together hundreds of photographs to produce a three-dimensional model of the environment. By comparing models, we can examine how the vegetation and ground surface structure in open areas changes over time. One of the positive benefits of large herbivores in a woodland environment is their natural ability to reduce tree cover, allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor, thereby increasing the abundance and diversity of ground flora. By coupling our drone data with data from plant surveys, we can track this process in the Blean.

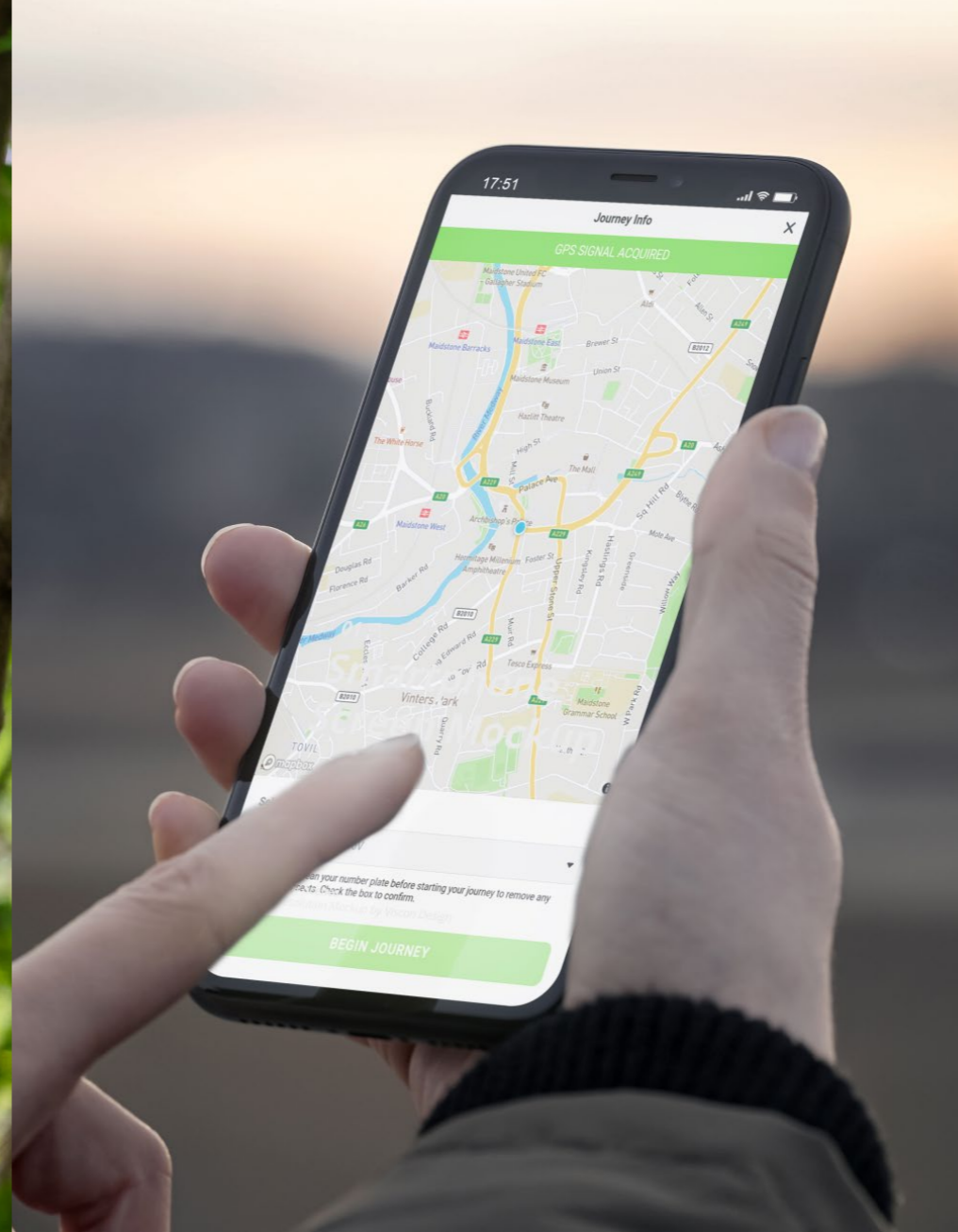
Our second sensor is a multispectral camera. It can detect visible red, green and blue wavelengths, but also red-edge and near-infrared wavelengths, which is very useful for monitoring vegetation. Chlorophyll in plant leaves absorbs visible red light but reflects red-edge and near-infrared light.

By applying simple maths to the pixel values in the photographs, we can calculate a range of indicators that detect land surface properties, such as vegetation presence or absence, vegetation greenness, water content of leaves, water bodies and different soil types.

**Heath Eritillary**

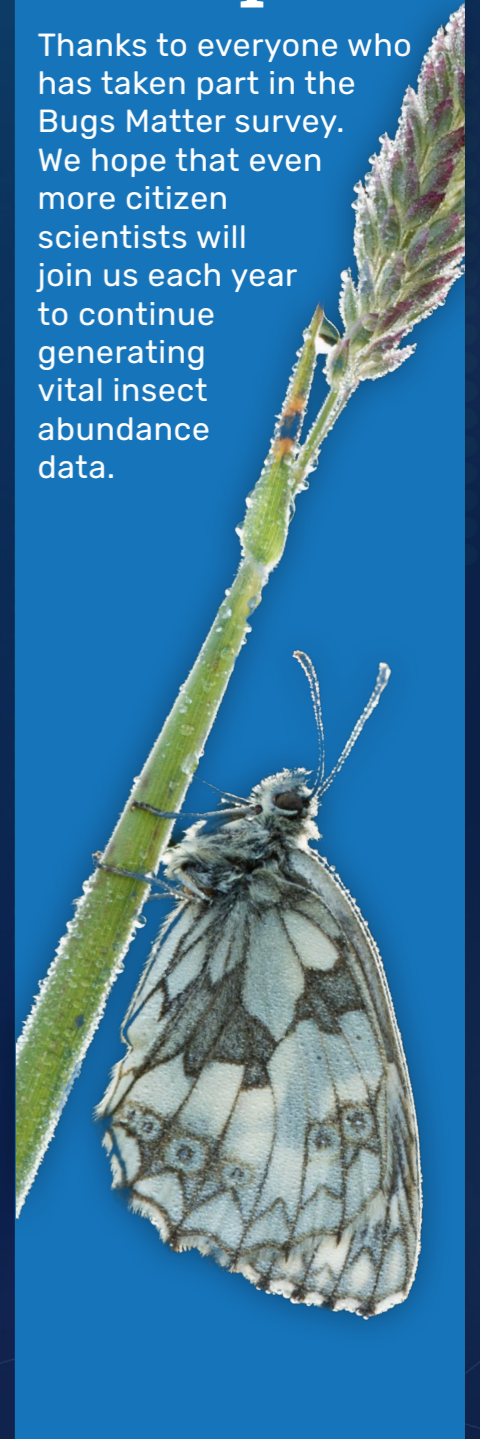
©Jim Higham





## Thank you

Thanks to everyone who has taken part in the Bugs Matter survey. We hope that even more citizen scientists will join us each year to continue generating vital insect abundance data.



## Ecological Monitoring

Digitally collecting data makes my work so much easier. I use a bespoke app in the field which contains projects set up by our amazing Geographic Information System (GIS) team and is tailored to my specific monitoring needs. The data from the app allows me to navigate to a monitoring point and I can log all the data I need right there in the field, removing the need to spend huge amounts of time in the office inputting data once the surveys are complete.

Most of my summer has been spent monitoring the vegetation of the Blean, recording a large amount of data, including species abundance, nectar sources, seedling numbers, tree height and deadwood volume within the app.

All of our surveys are repeated regularly. We already have an exciting Wilder Blean baseline (which captures what was there before the animals arrived). This will enable us to accurately measure change over time and provide evidence of how our ecosystem engineers and other grazers can provide a nature-based solution in our woodlands.

Digital data capture is also extremely helpful for all of my fantastic volunteers because it doesn't require specific technical knowledge. We have several exciting volunteer opportunities in the Blean and we would love for you to join us. Check out our current

 vacancies here: [kwtg.uk/volunteeringopportunities](https://www.kwtg.uk/volunteeringopportunities)



**Kora Kunzmann**

As Wilding Evidence Ecologist, Kora is leading on delivering the monitoring programme for the Wilder Blean project by developing scientifically robust survey methods and overseeing those on the ground. She works with contractors and a fantastic team of volunteers.

## Citizen science is crucial to understanding insect population trends across the UK

Bugs Matter, a citizen science survey led by Kent Wildlife Trust and Buglife, has found that flying insect abundance declined by a staggering 72% in Kent between 2004 and 2021. These results highlight a worrying trend and the urgent need for more insect-focused conservation efforts.

Citizen science is an incredibly valuable research method which relies on public participation and collaboration to increase scientific knowledge.


For Bugs Matter, participation by

citizen scientists in logging the number of bugs splatted on their car number plates means that we are building a better picture of how our insect populations are faring.

To understand how species respond to the climate crisis, long term datasets are crucial and paramount to informing effective conservation policy and practice. Citizen science is key to facilitating this. Such projects channel united efforts to enable valuable data collection that couldn't be achieved any other way. 🍷

### Take part

This year's survey is running until **31 August 2022**. For more information and to download the Bugs Matter app and become a citizen scientist,

 please visit [kwtg.uk/bugsmattersurveys](https://www.kwtg.uk/bugsmattersurveys)



SWANSCOMBE UPDATE

# Stay up to date with our campaign to #SaveSwanscombe

Following the fantastic news that the London Resort had withdrawn their application for a Development Consent Order (the technical name given to “planning permission” for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects), you would be forgiven for thinking that the precious wildlife of the Swanscombe Peninsula is safe!

Unfortunately, the fight to save one of our most biodiverse wildlife sites is not over yet - we are expecting the London Resort to resubmit their application later this year.

We are continuing to work with other wildlife organisations, including RSPB, Buglife and CPRE Kent, as well as the local Save Swanscombe Peninsula group to keep the #SaveSwanscombe Campaign live and ready to react to the new planning application.

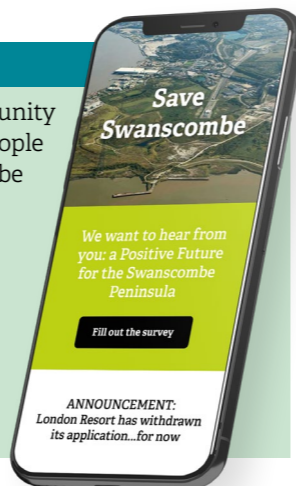
We are supporting the local community in developing an alternative vision for the Swanscombe Peninsula. This vision looks to a future that works with and for its special wildlife as opposed to a future of destruction, where one of the UK's most precious wildlife sites is demolished.

ADD YOUR VOICE



Be part of the community giving nature and people a voice at Swanscombe Peninsula. Fill out the online survey: [surveyheart.com/form/61f3c2f2263f8e2bfe124c1c](https://surveyheart.com/form/61f3c2f2263f8e2bfe124c1c)

Take a look at our website to find out more: [kwtg.uk/swanscombe](https://kwtg.uk/swanscombe)



CREATING A WILDER KENT

# Restoring the relationship between **people and nature**



**Aimee Howe**  
As Membership Admin Support, Aimee delivers inclusive, educational events across west Kent that connect every corner of the community to the Greensand Commons.

Wildlife photography, pottery painting and more! With a committed team of volunteers, the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project is reconnecting communities with nature through the power of people engagement.

This project aims to restore the landscape and the natural and social heritage of Greensand Commons, which boasts a mosaic of rare habitats and species.

The Commons have been historically shaped by human activity, which can be traced back as far as the Iron Age. Through proactive people engagement and the practical management of sites by local people, the Commons can thrive again.

SHARING SPACES

**For families**

Our activities so far have included crafting sessions with families to teach children about the ecology of the Commons while fostering their curiosity for art and nature. For example, children learned about the lifecycle of the oak tree during plant pot painting sessions. We are also leading employability workshops to help young people kickstart their careers in conservation.



The project also organised guided woodland walks and bioblitz picnics (where people identify as many species as possible during a short period of time) to attract visitors to the Commons.

**For seniors**

Weald Heights Care Home in Sevenoaks has enjoyed several engagement sessions, including an introduction to the birds of the Commons, which involved bird call bingo and bird feeder making. The project has also used Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve to run a wildlife photography course with Arts Without Boundaries, a charity which organises inclusive arts projects.

**For everyone**

People engagement and inclusivity is at the heart of Kent Wildlife Trust. Our mission to work with people to restore, save and enhance Kent's natural heritage is underpinned by the support of communities across the county. For each visitor that explores our reserves and for every volunteer that dedicates their time to our projects, we are creating a Wilder Kent. 🌿



Mary Broom and Vivienne Harrison, both residents of Weald Heights Care Home in Sevenoaks.

The project will continue to run a whole host of events in 2022. Visit our website to see upcoming events: [kwtg.uk/eventslist](https://kwtg.uk/eventslist)

CREATING A WILDER KENT

# Wilder Volunteering



ShoreSearch Viking Bay



Wraik Hill Cows

## The Best Volunteer View competition

Thank you to everyone who submitted their Best Volunteer View. The top entries since spring were:

1. ShoreSearch - Viking Bay, Broadstairs by Elaine Newman
2. Wraik Hill Cows by Richard Clark

The search for the Best Volunteer View continues.

## Volunteers' Week

Volunteers' Week (1 - 7 June) is an annual celebration of the contribution that millions of people make across the UK through volunteering. You can read how we celebrated and thanked our volunteers here: [kwtg.uk/volunteerthankyou](http://kwtg.uk/volunteerthankyou)

Our volunteers are a passionate group of people who help to deliver so much of what we do at Kent Wildlife Trust.

*"I retired five years ago and have never looked back. Volunteering has given me something to get out of bed for. Doing rewarding physical work in the open on a variety of projects keeps me healthy and gives me the opportunity to share some of my skills while working with lots of lovely, interesting people"*

*Bob Eves volunteers as a Tyland Barn garden volunteer, a practical volunteer at Queendown, a livestock checker and a volunteer with Forestry England.*

## Have you thought about volunteering with us?

### Do you love the outdoors?

We need livestock checker volunteers, particularly those who are local to Dover and Faversham.

### Do you enjoy practical tasks?

The Medway Wetlands Warden is seeking volunteers to help manage Holborough

Marshes, Peter's Pit and Wouldham Common.

### Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge with others?

We are looking for engagement volunteers to join the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project to help

establish relationships between the community and the Commons.

Full training is given. All volunteering opportunities can be found here: [kwtg.uk/volunteeringroles](http://kwtg.uk/volunteeringroles)



Rebecca Roberts

**Wild About Gardens Advisor (WAGA) volunteer**

**When did you start working for Kent Wildlife Trust?**  
2013/2014

**Describe your volunteer role in 3 words?**  
Wild about Gardens

**What has been your best encounter with nature?**

Seeing tiny baby frogs in my garden in 2013. That year, I won the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (KRAG) award for the garden that was best for reptiles and amphibians.

**What is the best thing about volunteering?**

Giving back to society in the name of wildlife.

**Tell us a joke?**

What do you call a man with a spade on his head?

Doug! 🍷

We are looking for Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers to take a turn in the hot seat. Email [volunteering@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@kentwildlife.org.uk) if you are interested in being interviewed!

## KENT WILDLIFE TRUST

# Photography Competition 2022

Following a two-year break, the Kent Wildlife Trust Photography Competition is back! This year we have **six categories to enter under:**

### 1. Plants

Branch out and enter our Plants category.

### 2. Insects

Get a buzz in our Insects category.

### 3. Animals

Big or small, capture them all in our Animals category.

### 4. Landscapes

Take a walk on the wild side for the Landscapes category.

### 5. Birds

Wing it in our Birds category.

### 6. Marine

Dip your toes into our Marine category.

We particularly welcome entries from women, people of colour, young people and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

## HOW WILL THE WINNERS BE CHOSEN?

A panel of judges will select images based upon technical skill, diversity, originality and creativity of composition. Judging will be made up of selected Kent Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers.

Full Terms and Conditions can be found on our website: [kwtg.uk/terms](http://kwtg.uk/terms)



2019 Category Winner  
Anthony Hurren

Each Category Winner will receive a **50% off voucher** to go on one of our incredible Wilder Kent Safaris.

In addition to this, the overall winner – Kent Wildlife Trust's Photographer of the Year 2022 - will be honoured in the winter issue of Wilder Kent with a **double page spread featuring their work.** 🍷

## HOW TO ENTER:

Find out more information about our refreshed photography competition here: [kwtg.uk/photographycomp](http://kwtg.uk/photographycomp)

Your entry must be submitted digitally via the process outlined on our webpage

Photographs must be a minimum 1MB – maximum 5MB file.



2019 Category Winner  
Hunter Herbert

# WIN

Winners in each category will receive **50% off a Wilder Kent Safari**, plus the overall winner will have their **photos featured in a double-page spread in the winter magazine.**

# Nextdoor Nature

## Working with people & nature in Dover

### Nextdoor Nature project

The Nextdoor Nature project is an upcoming project in Dover, Kent. The project will work with the LGBTQ+\* community, migrant community, Tower Hamlets community and schools community within Dover. By resource sharing, training, and making connections, this project will empower these communities to take action for nature.

This project will utilise a community organising approach – a new strategy for Kent Wildlife Trust.

### What is Community Organising?

Community organising works on the democratic value that everyone impacted by an issue should be able to speak, take action, and have their voice listened to about that issue.

#### A key difference between community engagement and organising:

- Under an engagement approach, Kent Wildlife Trust would deliver work in communities.
- Under an organising approach, we enable and empower communities to deliver that work within their community.

The Nextdoor Nature project will build on our previous work in Dover, but enable communities to take the lead in taking action for nature. This may include a range of activities, from an LGBTQ+ walking group exploring the White Cliffs to a community garden in Tower Hamlets. The key to the Nextdoor Nature project is that the communities themselves decide what the project looks like.

Furthermore, the communities we will be working with in this project have historically been excluded from natural/green spaces. It is important that we recognise and work to counter the exclusion of such communities. Everyone should be empowered to take ownership of their local green spaces and help fight the climate and nature crises.



### A Wilder Kent

Research demonstrates that when behaviour change is required (and with the climate and biodiversity crises, extensive behaviour change is critical), a community organising approach results in more sustained positive impacts. By enabling more people to take action for nature we can work to achieve a societal shift in behaviour so that we are all working for a Wilder Kent.

### The importance of community support: Red-billed choughs

Kent Wildlife Trust is currently reintroducing the red-billed chough to Dover. It is crucial for the success of this reintroduction that everyone in Dover works to protect these iconic birds by keeping dogs on a lead, protecting chalk grassland and helping our team track the released birds.

If you live or work in Dover and want to get involved in the project please let us know: [chough@wilderkent.org.uk](mailto:chough@wilderkent.org.uk)



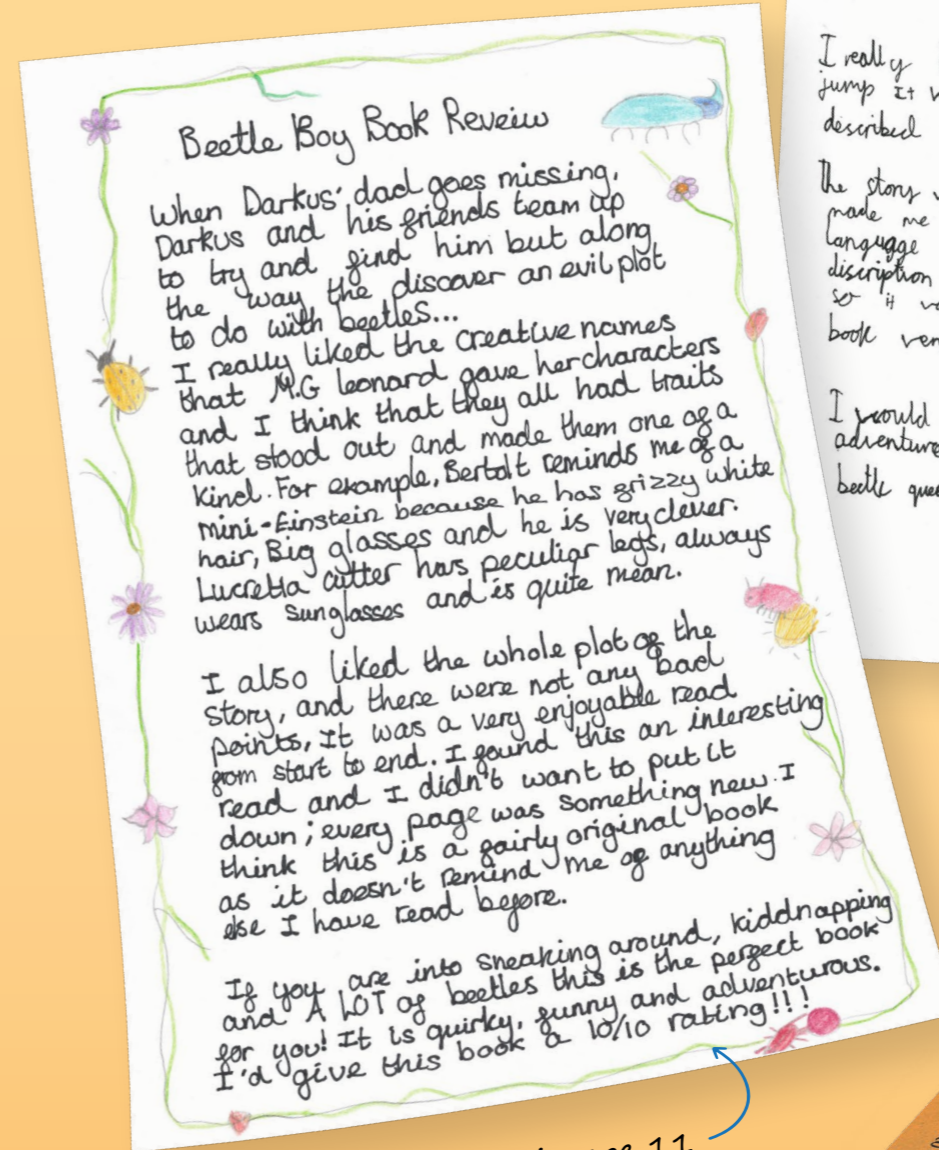
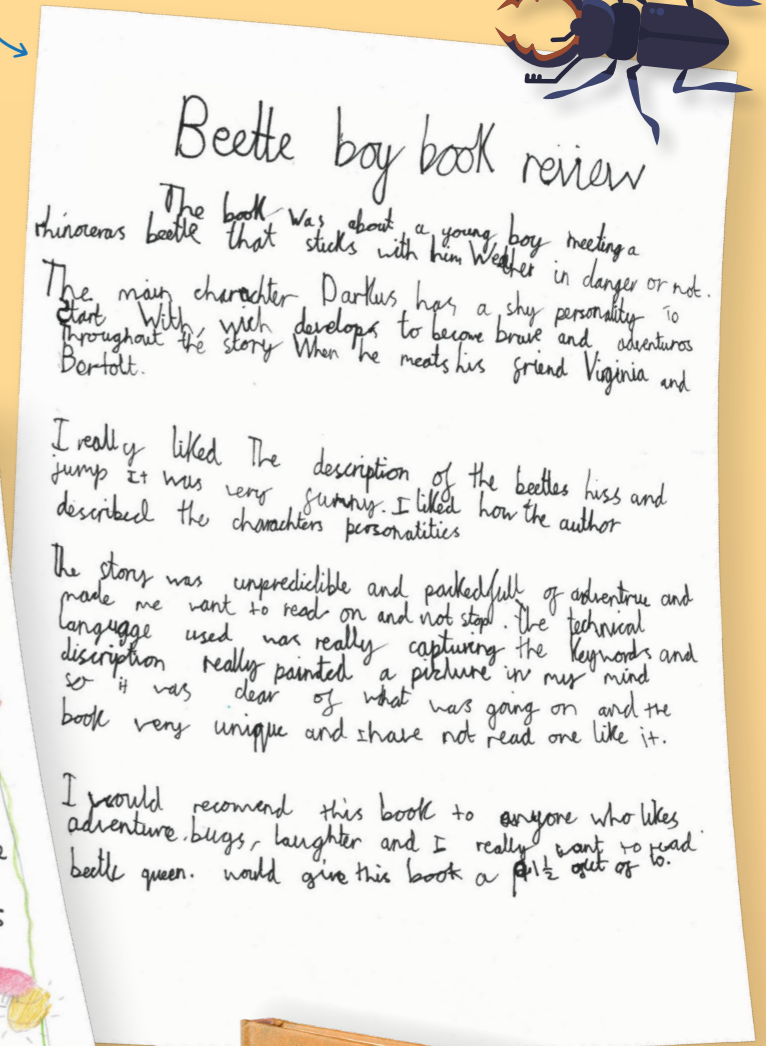
\*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning

### BOOK REVIEW

# Beetle Boy by M.G Leonard

This bug-tastic, award-winning series has been a hit with some of our younger members. Read a couple of their reviews below and, if you like the sound of this playful tale, buy a copy from our online shop!

Oliver Morris, age 8



Isabelle Morris, age 11



Beetle Boy is available to purchase from our online shop at: [kwtg.uk/shop](http://kwtg.uk/shop)

CREATING A WILDER KENT

# Farmer Clusters: Join our expanding farming team



Due to the impacts of the climate and nature crises, food security is an increasingly urgent issue. Therefore, our work with farmers is vital.

We must support farmers to produce quality food and support the restoration of wildlife habitats across the country - this will ensure our food systems are resilient and sustainable.



Evidence from studies at RSPB's Hope Farm, as well as Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)'s Allerton Project, shows that these aims are not mutually exclusive. However, farmers require the right support in order to produce food and protect wildlife at the same time.

Farmer Clusters are proving to be a great mechanism to offer this support.

Formed of local farmers and land managers, our Farmer Clusters work together to share skills, experience and information about more sustainable approaches to farming and land stewardship. For example, some farmers have hosted farm walks to explain to the rest of the cluster what they are doing on their farm for wildlife.

By being in these clusters, farmers are keeping pace with a rapidly changing sector, engaging with their local communities and showcasing wildlife-friendly farming to the public.

*"By working with Kent Wildlife Trust and our Farmer Cluster neighbours, with support from keen local naturalists who enjoy access to our wild areas, we're making gains for nature as well as helping to feed the nation."*

Lou Carpenter, Marden Farmer

Being part of a cluster also creates a one-stop-shop for organisations that want to contact farmers and enables farmers to have more control and opportunities to collaborate. 🍷

📍 To find your nearest Farmer Cluster and get involved, contact [marc.crouch@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:marc.crouch@kentwildlife.org.uk) or visit [kwtg.uk/farming](http://kwtg.uk/farming)

## MEET THE TEAM



**Marc Crouch**  
Senior Farmer Cluster Officer (Darent Valley)

Marc is leading our farmer team in the Darent Valley and supporting the development of new clusters across the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



**Suzanna Janes**  
Defra T&T Administrator

Suzanna comes from a farming family near Faversham and is supporting the delivery of the Defra Test & Trial. She joined the Trust after a successful career in horticulture and fresh produce supply chain compliance.



**Alexa Murray Mutjaba**  
Marden & Tenterden Farmer Cluster Officer

Alexa is running the Defra Test & Trial to understand blended finance for nature-based solutions. She is supporting farmers in both Marden and Tenterden to get involved.



**Ellen Wilson**  
Upper Beult Farmer Cluster Officer

Ellen has recently joined the team and brings fantastic experience having previously worked with the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) as a trials technician.



**Our new Corporate Partnerships Offer enables businesses to take real action for nature in Kent.**

Businesses can show their staff and customers they support nature and the work of Kent Wildlife Trust with exclusive use of our corporate logo alongside other benefits, including staff membership discount, fundraising and sponsorship ideas, volunteering days, talks, guided walks, networking opportunities and much more.

From corporate membership to bespoke partnerships, we can work together to create a Wilder Kent.

We are already proud to partner with great local businesses, including Premier Foods in Ashford, Gist in Faversham, The Kentish Soap Company, Michael O'Mara Books, Optivo and 2SB Management Systems.

📧 Email [corporate@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:corporate@kentwildlife.org.uk) if you think your organisation could be our next corporate partner!

Does your workplace support a Charity of the Year? If so, please nominate Kent Wildlife Trust for 2023.

## Nominate us as your Charity of the Year!

Does your workplace support a Charity of the Year?

If so, please nominate us for 2023. We can come and talk to your teams, curate a fundraising plan packed full of exciting activities, introduce you to team challenges and provide you with sponsorship forms and graphics for social media.

Shepherd Neame and New Look are currently fundraising on our behalf, having chosen to support us as their Charity of the Year for 2022. With their help, we are making improvements to our nature reserves and engaging a new, wider audience across the county.

You can also speak to your employer about payroll giving. This is a way of giving to charity without paying tax on your donation. The donation is made through PAYE and the amount of tax relief you receive depends on the rate of tax you pay. 🍷



To find out more about supporting us through your workplace, email [corporate@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:corporate@kentwildlife.org.uk)

**WE ARE A 1% FOR THE PLANET NONPROFIT PARTNER.**

Kent Wildlife Trust is delighted to announce that we have joined the 1% for the Planet network as a nonprofit partner.

This partnership is intended to advance our impact as well as include more businesses and individuals in the environmental movement.



If you own a business, consider joining 1% for the Planet and naming Kent Wildlife Trust as your beneficiary. Alternatively, you could donate 1% of your income as an individual.

**Everyone wins!**



# UK NEWS

## UK UPDATE

### Full marks for new school subject

This April, the UK Government announced the introduction of a new GCSE in Natural History. From 2025, secondary school students in England will have the opportunity to study the natural world, developing an in-depth knowledge of wildlife and wider ecosystems, as well as real-life experiences of nature. The GCSE will teach transferable skills in observation, identification, classification and data gathering and how to apply this knowledge to real world issues. The announcement follows years of campaigning to make nature part of the curriculum, led by naturalist and writer Mary Colwell.

Providing young people with the knowledge to protect the planet is

essential for the future of the natural world, as is inspiring a connection to nature. The new Natural History GCSE is a great first step, but this journey needs to start sooner and involve all pupils in the UK, regardless of the subjects they study.

We want to see children given opportunities to spend at least an hour a day learning outside and for nature and climate education to be embedded across all subjects and at all levels. This message has been championed by thousands of young people through the Our Bright Future programme, who want greater opportunities to learn in, and about, nature.

Read our full response to the new GCSE at [wtru.st/new-GCSE](http://wtru.st/new-GCSE)



### Sky-high ambitions

Wild About Gardens, an annual joint initiative between The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society, is setting its sights sky-high as we go wild about our high-flying birds. This year, the focus is on swifts, swallows and martins — summer visitors that have suffered some serious declines. Plummeting insect populations and loss of nesting sites

have contributed to swifts and house martins joining the UK's Red List, marking them as birds in dire need of help. The campaign is calling on the public to help by nurturing insect-friendly gardens and adding nest boxes to homes. 🍷

Find out more at [wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

## UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



### 1 Raptor real estate

A pair of peregrine falcons have nested for the first time on St Albans Cathedral, thanks to a nesting tray provided by the Wilder St Albans project — a collaboration between Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and St Albans City and District Council. The St Albans pair is one of only five pairs breeding in Hertfordshire.

[wtru.st/st-albans-nest](http://wtru.st/st-albans-nest)

### 2 Hope for hazel dormice

Surrey Wildlife Trust has trained more than 100 volunteers to help hedgerows flourish across Surrey's North Downs, giving hope to the iconic hazel dormouse. Even small gaps in a hedgerow can be a barrier to dormice, isolating populations. The new volunteer task force is surveying, laying and planting hedgerows to help dormice populations expand.

[wtru.st/dormice-hope](http://wtru.st/dormice-hope)



### 3 Scuttled cuttle

A rare pink cuttlefish was found on a Cornish beach, following late winter storms. This small species is more commonly seen in the Mediterranean, with only sporadic records from southern Britain. The discovery was made by Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteers and recorded in the Trust's Marine Strandings Network.

[wtru.st/pink-cuttlefish](http://wtru.st/pink-cuttlefish)

## CREATING A WILDER KENT

# The Environment Act 2021: is it enough?

In November 2021, the Environment Act was finally passed after years of delays in Parliament.

Coming shortly after the UK hosted COP26 (the UN climate change conference), the Act was heralded as the most ground-breaking piece of environmental legislation in years, although this is not a high bar to measure against...

So, what does the Environment Act mean for the UK and will it help to reverse species declines and habitat loss?

The Act is intended to maintain the environmental protections previously enforced through EU legislation and sets targets across various environmental improvements, including air and water quality, waste and biodiversity. All of these issues are underpinned by five principles which must be considered in policy:

#### Integration

Environmental protection should be integrated in all policy areas.

#### Prevention

Steps must be taken to anticipate, mitigate and avoid environmental damage before it happens.

#### Rectification at source

Environmental damage or pollution must be dealt with where it occurs.

#### Polluter pays

Those responsible for causing environmental damage should bear the costs and support solutions.

#### Precautionary

In situations of uncertain environmental risk, protective measures should be taken before the harm materialises.



The Act also includes: a commitment to reverse species abundance declines by 2030; the mandating of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain on development; and the creation of the Nature Recovery Network through Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

#### Let's drill down into the details of just one of the biodiversity aspirations of the Act:

The Government's target is **to increase 2030 levels of species abundance by 10% by 2042**. Based on the rate of current species' declines, this means that species abundance in 2042 would be below 2022's current, already depleted, levels. This is not good enough.

Consultations on the Act closed at the end of June. Kent Wildlife Trust, the wider Wildlife Trusts movement, RSPB and others have been lobbying the UK Government to ensure that the ambition of the Environment Act meets the overwhelming challenges presented by the climate and nature crises.

**Our Verdict: The targets do not go far enough - nature deserves better. 🍷**



Sign up to our newsletter to stay up-to-date with the latest news in conservation: [kwtg.uk/newsletter](http://kwtg.uk/newsletter)



**Paul Hadaway**  
As Director of Conservation at Kent Wildlife Trust, Paul develops and implements conservation and green space policies and drives nature-based solutions across Kent.

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE (BRANTA BERNICLA) © TERRY WHITTAKER

CREATING A WILDER KENT

# Check out our Visitor Centres this summer

Come and see us at our Sevenoaks and Romney Marsh reserves.

Discover more about Kent's wildlife and how you can get involved in creating a Wilder Kent. From volunteering in the centres, gardens and reserves to taking part in a family-friendly trail or workshop, there will be something for you.

🚩 Check our website before you visit to see if any events are taking place! [kwtg.uk/eventlist](http://kwtg.uk/eventlist)



Romney Marsh Visitor Centre

Sevenoaks TN13 3DH

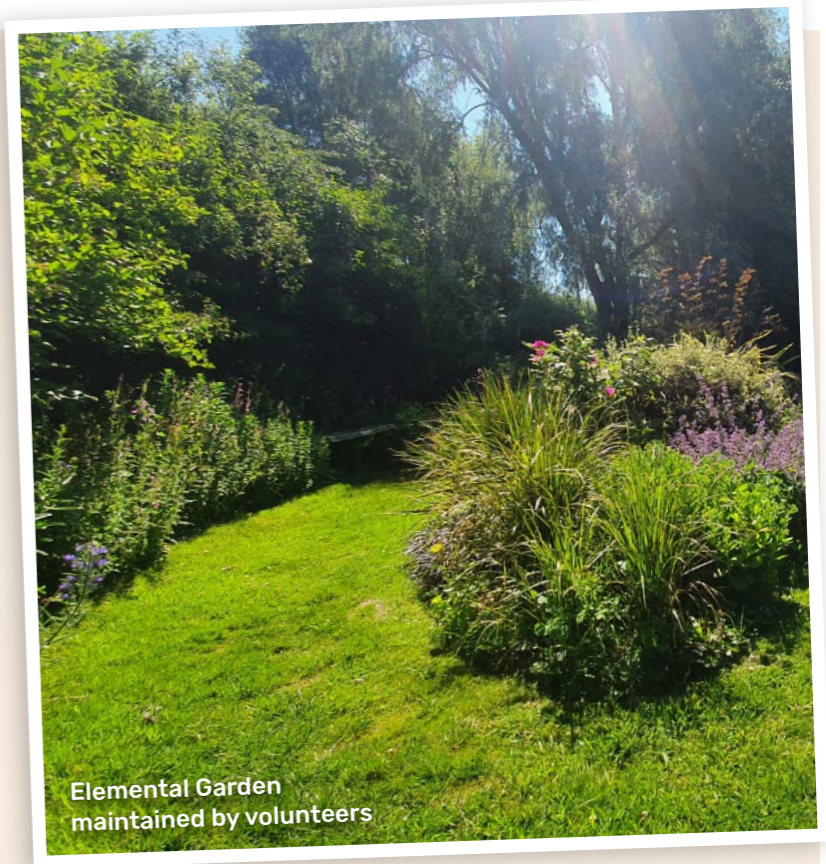
## Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve

This wildlife reserve lies immediately to the north of Sevenoaks. It was the first example of a gravel pit site being developed for the purpose of nature conservation. This restored former quarry is owned by Tarmac and leased to Kent Wildlife Trust under a long term agreement for the benefit of wildlife and enjoyment of all. At the Visitor Centre, make sure you visit the **elemental garden** which has been replanted with a selection of bright, wildlife friendly perennials.

**Know before you go:**

- Admission:** Free
- Parking:** Charges apply
- Dogs:** Guide dogs only please

Visitor Centre, toilets and café (with light refreshments) open 10am - 4pm



Elemental Garden maintained by volunteers

GREAT CRESTED NEWT © JOHN BRIDGES



Great crested newt

New Romney TN28 8AY

## Romney Marsh Visitor Centre

Set in an 11 hectare nature reserve and boasting an eco-build visitor centre, the Romney Marsh reserve invites visitors to learn about the natural and social history of the area. Ask our team about the rare and beautiful **Deptford pink flower** that grows on the reserve and where you can find it, and keep your eyes peeled for **great crested newts**, the UK's largest newt species, in the seasonal ponds.

**Know before you go:**

- Admission:** Free
- Parking:** Free
- Dogs:** Welcome on a lead

Visitor centre, toilets and café (with light refreshments) open 10am - 4pm

## Why not visit our online shop?

By choosing to shop with Kent Wildlife Trust, you are supporting wildlife from the comfort of your own home.

🚩 Find a selection of gifts (such as books and toys) for friends and family at [kwtg.uk/wildlifeshop](http://kwtg.uk/wildlifeshop)



**Mini Insect House**  
These mini insect houses offer shelter to a variety of insects.



**Wilder Kent Safari**  
With expert guides, safaris let you delve deeper into our ambitious projects.



**Adopt a Bison**  
Your adoption pack includes a certificate, bison photograph, facts sheet and a bison soft toy.  
£32 will help Kent Wildlife Trust sustain and build upon the ground-breaking Wilder Blean project.



**Beebombs**  
Your Beebombs contain 18 species of British wildflowers, confirmed by the Royal Horticultural Society as "Perfect for Pollinators".  
Your Beebombs will restore 21sqft of wildflower habitat.

# SHIFTING

# APART

# SEAS

**Bex Lynam** explores the effects of the climate crisis on our underwater wildlife.

This spring, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its sixth assessment report, and it makes for deeply uncomfortable reading. The report, authored by the world's leading climate change scientists, outlines the damage being done to the planet from our continued release of greenhouse gases, as well as the action needed to slow down the rate of change.

The impacts of a rapidly changing climate are not only felt on land (where we see droughts, wildfires and flooding after heavy rainfall) but in the ocean too, as our seas heat up, rise and become more acidic. Globally, across both land and sea, we're witnessing increases in the frequency and intensity of climate and weather extremes. Coral bleaching is widespread and glaciers are retreating, changing the waters around them.

Closer to home we know that UK seas are getting warmer. The biggest changes in sea surface temperature have been recorded in the North Sea and north of Scotland. Since 2000, eight of the 10 warmest years on record have occurred. At the same time, UK sea levels have risen by an average of 12-16cm since 1900. This may sound like a small increase, but even seemingly small rises cause erosion on the coast and increase the chances of flooding. The chemistry of our seas has also shifted; according to the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership, the North Atlantic Ocean contains more anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> than any other, causing it to become more acidic. So what does all this change mean for our marine wildlife?

SEAL IN KELP © ALEXANDER MUSTARD/2020VISION

**New neighbours**

Nature is constantly changing, so the effects of climate change can be difficult to discern. However, scientists are in agreement on some of the common effects seen across the world's seas. One of the most obvious trends is that wildlife is on the move. Long-term evidence shows shifts in the distribution of not only wildlife, but habitats too. As the seas around the UK warm, species that prefer cooler water are shifting northwards to seek a more suitable temperature. At the same time, some species from warmer waters to the south are moving into our seas, as conditions become more favourable for them.

Several kelp species (a type of brown seaweed) have declined because of warming sea temperatures. This has a knock-on effect on other wildlife, as so many animals rely on the kelp as a food source, hunting ground or shelter from predators. Many marine mammals, like the white-beaked dolphin, require cooler waters to live in. It's estimated around 80% of the European population of white-beaked dolphins is found in the UK, yet as our waters warm their range is getting smaller and they're being pushed

out of areas previously suitable for them. Meanwhile warm water fish species like northern hake, largely absent in UK waters for over 50 years, are increasing in number, and cold water species like cod will move north. This will have consequences for our seas, but also for UK fishers and the availability of cod in our local fish and chip shops!

**Seas out of sync**

Ocean warming also affects the timing of animal lifecycles. There's evidence that grey seals are giving birth earlier in the year and that climatic changes are part of the cause. In some cases, these timing shifts can lead to repercussions felt across the food web. One worrying example is the sandeel, a small, silvery fish that plays a big role in the UK's seas. It's an important prey item for many animals. Seabirds like Arctic terns, puffins and kittiwakes rely heavily on sandeels to feed themselves and their chicks. Warming seas have led to a mismatch between the timing of sandeels' spawning and the time when zooplankton, their favourite food, is available. As a result, sandeels have declined (exacerbated by overfishing),

which in turn has been linked to declines in UK seabird numbers.

Temperature isn't the only aspect of our seas that's shifting. Climate-driven changes in ocean chemistry have reduced the amount of carbonate available in sea water. This matters because carbonate is an important building block of the shells of many marine creatures, including crabs and lobsters. These shelled species are eaten by a variety of different animals, including us! Any impacts on their numbers could quickly affect the wildlife that relies on them, as well as many key fisheries across the UK.

The rise in sea levels will impact coastal habitats like saltmarshes and sand dunes, as deeper water and bigger waves can reach them, increasing erosion. As these places are damaged and potentially even lost, we also lose the valuable services they provide such as capturing and storing carbon and protecting coastal communities from flooding and erosion. Habitats like saltmarsh also have an important role to play for our wildlife, providing food for breeding and wintering wading birds and wildfowl, and acting as nursery sites for many fish and invertebrates.

**Ocean optimism**

Ultimately, we need to work hard to drastically reduce our carbon emissions. But whilst we do that, there are ways to help our seas cope in the meantime. The key step is to reduce the pressure from other human activities. This means ensuring we are fishing sustainably, making sure development is carried out in a sensitive way that minimises impacts on wildlife, significantly reducing marine pollution and noise in our oceans and managing invasive species.

At The Wildlife Trusts we have been campaigning for the establishment and protection of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for decades. Well managed MPAs are a tried and tested tool for making space for nature. By restricting damaging activities, they can allow wildlife populations to rebuild and flourish. These healthy populations are better prepared to face other threats, like those introduced by climate change. While the UK has established a network of MPAs in its waters, we believe more are needed and with greater levels of protection (in the form of Highly Protected Marine Areas) to ensure we safeguard wildlife for the future.

Alongside the designation and proper management of MPAs, we're championing the use of nature-based solutions to combat the climate crisis. This means protecting the habitats and wildlife that provide us with ecosystem services, like the saltmarshes and seagrass meadows that prevent flooding and take in carbon. The Wildlife Trusts lead many restoration projects around the UK, bringing these habitats back to areas of our coast where they have been lost. Using both of these tools together, we hope to tackle the dual climate and biodiversity crises we face, before it's too late.

We can turn the tide if we all take action now! 🌊



**Bex Lynam**

is the marine advocacy officer for the North Sea Wildlife Trusts and her role focuses on policy development and implementation, particularly around Marine Protected Areas and their management.

# Kent Species Spotlight

**Small spotted catsharks** are distributed all over the UK including Kent waters. They are one of our most abundant sharks, and they are named after their spotty skin and cat-like eyes. You may often find their egg cases on the beach, also referred to as "mermaid purses".

Research has shown that warming ocean temperatures may increase the pace of embryonic development of small spotted catsharks. This means that the sharks grow quicker and have a higher mortality rate, resulting in a decrease in reproduction rate.



White-beaked dolphins thrive in UK seas, but that could change as waters warm.



Some kelp species are in decline, threatening the wildlife that relies on them.

Find out more about how you can help protect our seas at

[wtru.st/marine-mailing](https://wtru.st/marine-mailing)

# Donate to start creating a Wilder Blean now

#WilderKent

Join Kent Wildlife Trust in fighting  
the climate crisis by supporting  
our flagship wilding project at  
West Blean & Thornden Woods

To find out more about this project  
or to donate, scan the QR code or visit:

[kwtg.uk/wilderblean](https://kwtg.uk/wilderblean)



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