

The member magazine for Kent Wildlife Trust

WilderKent

Winter 2023

PAGE 37

Sir David at Downe

Walking the same steps as Charles Darwin as he theorised about evolution, Sir David Attenborough opened the Planet Earth III series at our Downe Bank Nature Reserve.

PAGES 34 & 35

COP28: Less talk, more action

We share our expectations and asks for the upcoming international climate conference.

“

The future of life on Earth depends on our ability to take action

Sir David Attenborough

”

Speaking up for
nature

A special edition on how you can advocate for a Wilder Kent.



Kent
Wildlife Trust

65 years
wild
1958 - 2023

From decline to revival

In September, we unveiled the State of Nature report, which reveals the alarming decline in the UK's natural world. The report paints a grim picture, showing that the abundance of species studied has plummeted by an average of 19% since 1970. Shockingly, nearly one in six of the 10,000-plus species surveyed are at risk of disappearing from Great Britain.

Human activity has ravaged the UK's biodiversity, leaving less than half of it intact. Only one in seven of the habitats assessed for the report were found to be in good condition. The evidence presented in the State of Nature report points to intensive farming, unsustainable fishing, and the ongoing effects of climate change as the primary culprits behind this loss of nature.



However, we are not sitting idly by. With your support, we are tirelessly working towards nature's recovery.

1 in 6 species in the UK is now at risk of extinction

In Kent: 372 species are under threat of extinction and land under conservation management declined by 3.8% (14,075 hectares) between 2016 and 2020.

Taking action: Our ambitious species recovery programme aims to bring back missing species, such as the majestic red-billed chough. By focusing on keystone and flagship species, we will drive broader species recovery, enhance biodiversity and, most importantly, restore functioning ecosystems on a large scale to reverse these devastating declines.

30% of the UK population are unable to access green places near their home

In Kent: We have some of the highest rates of house building in the UK.

Taking action: We are actively collaborating with planners and developers to emphasise the crucial role and opportunities that arise from increasing nature access. Our dedicated team is embedded within local planning teams helping to develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and providing expert advice on policy. Moreover, we are pioneering green finance options, such as biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality, allowing our teams to help ensure that new developments incorporate and support wildlife benefits from the beginning.

Only 11% of UK land is within a protected area, and this is not always well-managed for nature

In Kent: 16% of land is covered by one or more designations and only 69% of SSSIs in Kent are in favourable condition.

Taking action: We are tackling this through protected area wardening and ongoing partnerships with farmers, landowners and land managers. The creation of Farmer Clusters provides support to drive sustainable, environmentally-friendly farming practices. We are increasing our own land management impact by using pioneering approaches to conservation, including using keystone species like bison and beavers. The development of our Wilder Grazing strategy uses a range of animals like cows, pigs, ponies, sheep and goats to manage habitats for nature across the county.



Join us in taking action

Find out more and how you can take action by going to kwtg.uk/electionasks or scanning the QR code.

Welcome

to the **winter edition** of Wilder Kent



It feels like a tough year for the environment so far. The shift away from petrol cars has been delayed, leaving us without a concrete plan. We are seeing attempts to remove nutrient neutrality, a safeguard against worsening river pollution beyond its already dire state, as a requirement for housebuilders.

Most recently, the much-anticipated enforcement of biodiversity net gain, the new mechanism to ensure all developments leave the environment in a better condition, has also been subject to a last-minute delay. Globally, we are witnessing the approval of more new oil and gas exploitation, contradicting the prioritisation of green growth.

All of this unfolds against a backdrop of devastating natural disasters - from Mediterranean fires to floods in Libya and New York, costing thousands of lives and billions of pounds - whilst we await the latest Climate Conference (COP28) in United Arab Emirates, presided over by the head of the state oil firm. It's clear that while many of us acknowledge climate change is real and caused by humans, many people cling to 'business as usual', and others feel overwhelmed with climate anxiety.

For me, the question becomes: what can we do locally to drive change from the ground up? At Kent Wildlife Trust, we are ambitious about improving opportunities for wildlife to adapt to climate change, restoring habitats for the benefit of us all, and using nature itself as a tool for climate resilience.

Kent Wildlife Trust excels at on-the-ground habitat protection and restoration, and we are continually improving our approach. We are always working with partners that share our level of ambition for nature, for example by integrating international learning on how to enable plants and animals to move across our fragmented landscapes (**page 14**) via the Local Nature Recovery Network planning process that we are currently working on (**page 8**). But what we all need to do now is to urge our electoral candidates to recognise that restoring and protecting nature matters and is something that we'll vote for (see page opposite, plus **pages 6 & 38**).

Advocacy is crucial; it's about telling decision-makers that nature is vital for the economy, our security in a changing climate and our wellbeing. Nature is part of who we are.

Advocacy involves reaching out to those who may not read Wilder Kent and helping them recognise that taking action for nature is in their own interest. Kent Wildlife Trust has been tirelessly working for wildlife for 65 years. While the pressures on nature are greater than ever, so are the opportunities. Your support is invaluable, and we urge you to encourage others to get involved too, for the sake of our wildlife and themselves. 🍀

Evan Bowen-Jones

Evan Bowen-Jones

Chief Executive of Kent Wildlife Trust | Follow me [🐦 @EcoLlogik](#)

Kent Wildlife Trust is the leading conservation charity for the county of Kent.

Wildlife is in crisis. The natural world isn't just something for us to enjoy; it sustains us. The decline of nature puts our very survival and prosperity under threat. It doesn't have to be like this.

Our vision is for a better, wilder future. We engage with politicians, business leaders, landowners, communities and people so that we can all work together to protect wildlife.

The Wilder Kent magazine team



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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



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Registered at the above address.

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Get into the festive spirit with our Christmas gift guide, alongside information on our winter events and clubs in the booklet included in your magazine pack.

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COP28: Less talk, more action

Read our expectations and asks for this global climate conference amidst record-breaking trends.





More from...

Kent Wildlife

Trust

Our campaigns

We hope you are inspired by this very special advocacy edition of Wilder Kent, exploring the many ways that we're speaking up and taking action for nature. With COP28 coming up and the threats to wildlife and wild spaces greater than ever, we must act now. If you'd like to join us, then head to the Campaigns page on our website to find out about our most recent activity to protect wildlife now and into the future, and sign up to our newsletter to receive regular updates on how you can get involved.

HEAD TO
[kwtg.uk/our-campaigns](https://www.kwtg.uk/our-campaigns)



JOIN OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

By signing up for our e-newsletter, you'll receive fortnightly updates on wildlife highlights, campaigns, ways to get involved, upcoming events and much more. As a member, keep an eye out for exclusive content, including early access to selected events, volunteering opportunities, and discount codes!

SIGN UP TODAY
[kwtg.uk/enews](https://www.kwtg.uk/enews)

Let's take a "Talk on the Wild Side"



Have you been listening to our podcast Talk on the Wild Side, introducing you to the people, businesses and community groups that are bringing nature back from the brink? From beaver reintroductions to uncovering how Wilder Carbon works, join former TV presenter Rob Smith for an audio feast. Episode 3 is out now. Rob takes a trip to the Natural History Museum in London where he visits Piotr Cuber's molecular biology lab, meets Ellen Wilson, Farmer Cluster Officer at Kent Wildlife Trust, and learns all about gardening for wildlife from Liz Watts at her garden in Bearsted.

LISTEN HERE
[kwtg.uk/podcast](https://www.kwtg.uk/podcast)



Join the wildlife watch on YouTube

Throughout the magazine, you'll find links to additional and exclusive footage relating to our exciting projects and campaigns. Delve into new bison footage from our camera traps, indulge in how-to guides for nature enthusiasts, and take a sneak peek into what to expect from our captivating events on our YouTube channel. 📺

SPEAK UP



FOR NATURE!

The natural world we all love is in trouble, and we need to act fast to protect it. The approaching General Election presents the perfect opportunity to ensure politicians prioritise nature.

Kent Wildlife Trust, in collaboration with other organisations, is actively working to raise awareness about the critical issues affecting wildlife and wild spaces. Through our Wilder Kent 2030 strategy, we want to make positive changes for both nature and people, and help local communities protect special places for wildlife.

The Wildlife Trusts are calling on all political parties to commit to policies that will help **species recover, address water pollution, fund wildlife-friendly farming, promote healthy communities,** and tackle **climate change.**

We want a future where nature is at the heart of everything we do, and we know you do too.



CONSERVATION STATUS:

The corn bunting has experienced a dramatic population decline in the UK, making it a Red List species.

Join our cause:

Engage with your local decision makers

Email your local representatives and communicate why nature matters to you. Ask them if they will make concrete commitments to tackling the climate and nature crises in their party manifesto. Explore our elections page to learn more about our expectations from Parliament: kwtdg.uk/electionasks

Show your support

Display your cut-out poster at the back of this magazine to show everyone your commitment to nature ahead of the General Election. Head to kwtdg.uk/posters to download additional posters!

Meet your elected representatives in person

You can make an appointment or attend an event where you know they'll be present. A face-to-face conversation can often be more powerful than a letter or email. ☺

KEEP UPDATED

Join our mailing list to stay up to date on how you can join our cause and speak up for nature: kwtdg.uk/campaignsnewsletter

Our marvellous members

Ever wonder how your generous membership fee helps achieve our Wilder Kent vision?

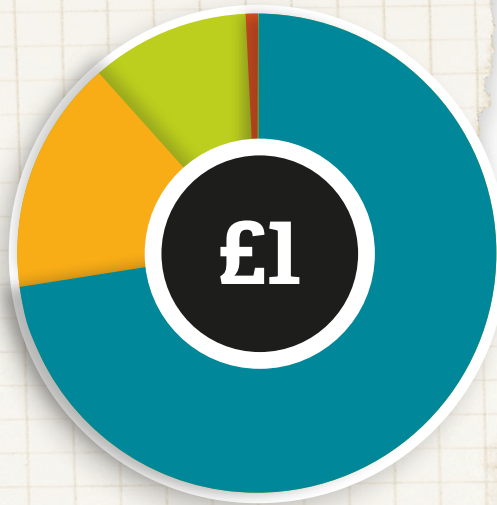
For each pound of your membership donation...

71p is spent on conservation work, from managing reserves to environmental education.

16p is invested in fundraising to help our organisation grow, raising the profile of wildlife and looking after our existing supporters.

12p is allocated to running our organisation, so we have the ability to carry out our work.

1p is spent on governance, to make sure we are complying with charity laws.



With your valued support, we have recently been able to reintroduce red-billed choughs to Dover, continue to manage our reserves for nature and put critical resources into challenging local development plans to protect existing wildlife and improve the connectivity of our county.



However, the fight is still not over and we need your continued support. If you would like to increase your membership donation, please contact the team: membership@kentwildlife.org.uk

UK taxpayer?

You can help us further!

Did you know that we can claim Gift Aid on your membership subscription if you are a UK taxpayer? Gift Aid is a tax relief allowing UK charities to reclaim an extra 25% in tax on every eligible monthly or yearly donation. We can currently claim back 25p for every £1 you donate.

If you are a UK taxpayer and not yet signed up to Gift Aid, email us at membership@kentwildlife.org.uk with your name and address and we will do the rest.



New address?

Is your membership up to date? You can email us at any time if you have moved house, have a new email address or need to change any personal details.

Get in touch

If you have any ideas, questions, or suggestions about how we could improve your membership, we would love to hear from you. Contact us on our details below. **Thank you again for all your continued support.**

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Your chance to win wilder:

For a chance to win a free Wilder Kent Safari voucher for two, simply answer the following question:

Q How many species in Kent are on the Red List?

A

21

B

34

C

43

Email your answer to membership@kentwildlife.org.uk, including your name and address. The competition closes on 1 December 2023. A winning entry will be picked at random and contacted after this date. Good luck! 🍀



Matthew Balfour



Wilder perspectives

As Chair of the Kent Nature Partnership, Matthew Balfour explores how the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent - Making Space for Nature project aims to tackle the staggering loss of nature in our county, and why it is crucial for everyone to get involved.



Last year's State of Nature in Kent report revealed fragmentation of habitats, a decline in water quality and concerning levels of air pollution as some of the key and worrying headlines.

But the report also highlighted many successes over the last decade, namely that when action is collaborative, the outcomes for nature have been dramatic.

In 2023, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enable a 'bigger, better, more joined up' approach to nature recovery across Kent and Medway, and not just on protected sites.

Kent County Council's (KCC) Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway project was launched at the beginning of October, and will develop an ambitious Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county.

This will be one of 48 strategies, entirely covering England, to deliver on the Government's commitment to ending the decline of nature and supporting its recovery.

With government funding, KCC has established a dedicated team to get started working with stakeholders over the next 20

months to establish shared priorities for the delivery of nature recovery.

The strategy will shape what our nature and landscape will look like in years to come, directing investment to where it's needed and delivering a network of wildlife-rich havens across the county for all to enjoy and benefit from. The project will need everyone's input, and I encourage everyone to get online to the project website and find out how they can get involved.

Along with Kent Wildlife Trust and other organisations, I will be on the project's Board and look forward to taking part in potentially the biggest nature initiative Kent and Medway have ever seen. 🐦

TAKE ACTION FOR NATURE



Find out how to get involved by visiting makiningspacefornaturekent.org.uk





Striving for climate resilience across our reserves

In a rapidly and dramatically changing world, resilience is a key principle we must champion if we are to confront and cope with the effects of climate change.



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 90+ reserves.



Conservation grazers
Holborough Marshes

Globally, average temperatures are increasing both on land and in our seas. **NASA announced the winter of 2023 as the hottest since global records began in 1880**, and data released from Copernicus revealed that this year is on track to be the world's hottest year on record. The challenges these changes bring, difficult as they are for us to

manage in our own lives, become perilous for wildlife.

Our wetlands are grappling with extended and more regular periods of drought, interspersed with high rainfall and flooding, putting strain on the wildlife struggling to adapt and survive. **Our woodlands are one of the most diverse habitats in the UK and are facing a worrying increase of pests and diseases**, with ash dieback and oak processionary moth just two examples threatening these habitats.

All our habitats in Kent are vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, it's important that as a conservation charity we recognise this threat and adapt the management of our reserves accordingly.

We need to use natural management techniques as much as possible to ensure our reserves are more connected across the landscape, diversify and expand the distribution of species, cultivate a mosaic

of habitats, and implement management strategies to mitigate the disruptive environmental fluctuations that climate change brings. Read more about what we are doing to make our reserves more climate-resilient on **pages 10 and 11**.

This is a collective endeavour across Kent, the UK, and beyond. Only through these united efforts can we ensure our wildlife, and their habitats, are as resilient as possible in this ever-changing world. 🌱

KEEP UPDATED

Sign up to our fortnightly e-newsletter to stay up to date with how we are fortifying the climate resilience of our reserves amidst the climate and nature crises.



Sign up here
[kwtg.uk/enews](https://www.kwtg.uk/enews)

Reserve updates



How are we making our reserves more resilient to climate change?

Our Estates Team works tirelessly to bolster the resilience of our reserves in the face of the climate and biodiversity crises. We are utilising innovative methods, like installing leaky dams to stabilise water levels and partnering with nature's engineers, like beavers, to revitalise habitats.

1 Re-wetting to revitalise

We're carrying out innovative methods to re-wet our reserves. Installing leaky dams stabilises water levels through wet and dry periods to boost habitat resilience and benefit wildlife, water quality and flood prevention downstream. Beavers do the same at Ham Fen, helping to restore Kent's largest remaining fen by creating a network of wetland channels and dams. At Oare Marshes, a new network of wet channels was designed to retain water longer into the spring to benefit breeding wetland species, such as lapwings.



2 Wilder Grazing

As part of our long-term grazing plans, we are incorporating more woodland, scrub and reed bed areas into our field designs. Light grazing of these habitats helps to maintain their ecology, but that's not all: we want to mitigate the increasing effects of heat stress during the summer months on our grazing animals. Providing a range of habitat types across our reserves provides food, shade and water for grazing animals as well as boosting biodiversity; it's a win win! Introducing natural management like this to our reserves allows us to move away from relying on machinery to carry out conservation works.

3 Diversity is our woodlands' armour

Woodlands thrive when they are diverse in both species and age, otherwise disease can creep in and put woodlands at risk of coming to the end of their natural life with no new growth to retain the canopy. Opening up areas of woodland through conservation grazing and volunteers carrying out tree felling means that light can reach the woodland floor and stimulate the germination of more tree species, bringing diversity and age structure.





Covert Wood
New land acquisition

4 Creating a landscape for resilience

Through our acquisition strategy, we are always looking for sites where we can buffer or extend our existing reserves. A standalone reserve is much more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, but when we create larger, better-connected areas, we boost their resilience.



5 From bonfires to carbon conservation

In the not-so-distant past, most volunteer tasks would have involved a bonfire to burn up excess brash or cut material. Today we have adopted techniques such as dead hedging to retain carbon in the material for longer, rather than burning it. This shift isn't confined to our volunteer work; more of the woodland management contractors we work with are now leaving waste top material on the ground, instead of the 'tidy up and burn' approach as it once would have been called.



6 Encouraging habitat mosaics

More of our long-term reserve plans are outlining how we will move towards creating a mosaic of habitats, rather than large areas of one habitat type. This variety gives more species a better chance to find the food, shelter and nesting sites they need as the climate continues to change.



For example, as man orchids move away from direct south facing and steep slopes in response to temperature increases and spring rainfall decreases, they are becoming more abundant in grass and scrubby areas on shallower slopes and eastern and western aspects.

A patchwork of habitats across a reserve allows for local population distributions to adjust naturally in this way. This approach is progressively informing more of our site management plans. 🍀

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

We are always looking for volunteers to join our outdoor tasks across the county.

You'll be working alongside our Area Wardens and other friendly volunteers, helping us to manage our reserves for wildlife using innovative techniques.



Find out more about becoming a volunteer here [kwtg.uk/volunteer](https://www.kwtg.uk/volunteer)



6 species

under threat

in Kent

KEELED SKIMMER ©STEPHEN WEEKS, SUNDEW ©H THOMAS, BEECH TREE ©DAN ATTWOOD, SEAGRASS ©PAUL NAYLOR

See these vulnerable species for yourself in Kent



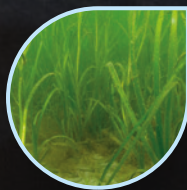
Keeled skimmer dragonfly

The skittish keeled skimmer dragonfly is restricted to areas with acid bogs and pools. Water levels in these sites are now often too low for successful breeding. To create suitable habitat, we remove trees and create wetlands to preserve water levels on site and mitigate drought impacts.



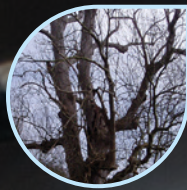
Silver-spotted skipper butterfly

The rare silver-spotted skipper butterfly can only be found on the best quality chalk downland. Scorching droughts have meant that females are struggling to find suitable leaves of fescue grass to lay their eggs. We are continuing work to restore high-quality chalk grassland across diverse terrains on our reserves to provide new opportunities for this butterfly.



Sea grass

Unprecedented ocean heatwaves also threaten important marine life, like seagrass. Seagrass is a vital nursery and shelter for many species, including young fish, cuttlefish and other molluscs and crustaceans. Brent geese also feed on seagrass during the winter at South Swale. Conserving and restoring seagrass meadows is key due to their ability to absorb and store carbon and so our Consultancy Team are involved in monitoring programmes across many Kent rivers.



Ash trees

Warmer, wetter UK weather fosters plant pathogens such as ash dieback, and a huge number of ash trees have been decimated by this fungal borne disease. This doesn't just affect ash trees; as one of the most common native broadleaf species, the ripple effects of ash dieback are felt by the wide range of species that rely on broadleaf woodland habitat. We are working with nature to provide a solution by allowing trees to naturally decay, leaving behind an abundance of deadwood to allow fungi and insects to thrive. We only remove infected trees in hazardous locations, such as by roads, houses or busy paths.



Beech trees

Beech trees are an iconic tree of Kent downlands, but they are shallow rooted and therefore vulnerable to drought and heat stress. These stresses can impact their growth rate and make them less competitive with other species, leaving them more vulnerable to pests and diseases. Ensuring woodlands boast diverse native species will strengthen their ability to adapt to climate change.



Sundew

The tiny round-leaved sundew is a bog loving plant, with glistening, sticky tipped hairs on its leaves which it uses to catch insects. In Kent, it only occurs in the same acid bogs that support the keeled skimmer dragonfly. Similarly, it faces threats from more frequent droughts. We are implementing proactive measures across our reserves to conserve acid bog habitat and safeguard this delicate plant.

In the wildlife havens of our reserves, climate change is quickly reshaping our local ecosystems and we're seeing the flora and fauna affected. From dragonflies grappling with dwindling water levels to iconic beech trees struggling to endure increased drought stress, these changes highlight the complex challenges that nature faces in an ever-changing world. Our Estates Team is continually developing innovative techniques to ensure our landscape's resilience against these environmental shifts.

Have you spotted any of these vulnerable species?

We love to see what you spot on your visits to our reserves.

Please tweet us your best photos! [@KentWildlife](#) 🐞

Bridging



Helen Pitman

Helen started her conservation career over 20 years ago conserving Australia's unique flora and fauna. She joined Kent Wildlife Trust in 2022, utilising her strategic and international expertise to develop the vision for the Wilder Blean Natural Park.



Slikken van de Heen
Netherlands discovery trip

Kraansvlak
Netherlands discovery trip



Over the past few decades, the construction of highways, waterways and railways in the Netherlands resulted in the fragmentation of natural areas.

Wildlife became increasingly trapped in unnaturally small habitats with no way to move across the landscape.

This has occurred across Kent, where landscapes such as the Blean suffer from fragmentation. While this region boasts the largest area of ancient woodland

in southern England, each individual woodland stands as an isolated island, meaning wildlife and people cannot move across the landscape freely.

The Dutch have been implementing landscape-scale wilding for the last three decades. Their approach to 'nature development', as they term it, has demonstrated significant economic and livelihood benefits for people. Now, **approximately 15% of the Netherlands' land area** is genuinely managed for

nature. Kent struggles to **claim even 3%**.

To address the issue of fragmentation caused by infrastructure, the Dutch central government commissioned the Dutch Multi-Year Program for Defragmentation (MJPO) in 2005. In collaboration with local authorities, academic institutions and NGOs, this program identified bottlenecks caused by existing infrastructure and devised defragmentation measures.

These efforts included the installation of wildlife crossings, ecoducts, ecoculverts, wildlife-friendly banks along existing transportation networks and infrastructure to allow wildlife to easily navigate across the landscape.

By 2018, **72% of the 176 bottlenecks had been removed, with over 500 wildlife crossings** established.



the gap



In September, representatives from the Department of Transport, National Highways, Natural England, South East Water, RSPB and the Lifescape Project joined Kent Wildlife Trust on a discovery trip to the Netherlands to glean insights on how the Dutch have tackled the challenge of providing space for nature in a crowded landscape.

Extensive monitoring has revealed that these measures are actively being used by wildlife, significantly contributing to the Netherlands Nature Network, the comprehensive network of wildlife conservation plans.

In contrast, the UK lacks a comparable initiative. Here, wildlife populations are fragmented by infrastructure, resulting in isolated, vulnerable sub-populations.

While the Nature Recovery Network aims to enhance connectivity, it falls short of addressing the fundamental issue of infrastructure.

Inspired by our experience and listening to Dutch practitioners and decision-makers, as well as one another, our coalition of willing stakeholders has already unearthed two additional requirements for successful UK nature recovery: mitigating fragmentation and reinstating natural processes.

Our vision is to create a nationally replicable model, the Local Nature Recovery Network, tailored for Kent, in collaboration with key stakeholders. This endeavour brings together all these crucial components, representing a transformative step for British wilding and closing the gap between development and nature conservation.



Exclusive bison footage!

Scan this QR code to watch exclusive footage of the bison herd going about their wilding business in West Blean and Thornden Woods, or visit kwtg.uk/bisonfootage



BISON ©DONOVAN WRIGHT

Bison Bridges

Become a Bison Benefactor.

To deliver the biggest benefits for nature, we must create nature recovery networks and build bigger, better, more joined up landscapes. We hope the Wilder Blean project will become an exemplar for improved government policy and better frameworks for Nature-based Solutions across the UK. We want nature to flourish, where large herbivores such as bison can shape their surroundings and enable wildlife to move across landscapes effortlessly.



The next phase of the project involves the addition of bison bridges into the landscape, allowing the bison herd and other wildlife to access 200 hectares of woodland. Visitors will enjoy amazing views walking across the bridges and may even catch a glimpse of these majestic animals.



Can you help us? We urgently need funding for this next phase of the project. If you or someone you know would like to be a Bison Benefactor from £3,000, please get in touch by emailing fundraising@kentwildlife.org.uk.



Chalk *and* chough

This summer, we returned the iconic red-billed chough to the skies of Dover. But without our work to restore Dover's chalk grasslands, this project would not be possible.

Chalk grasslands are relatively robust to climate change if other threats are mitigated. That is why our work to increase reserve size, connectivity and diversity, and improve grazing management, is so critical.

For decades, we have been protecting and restoring this priority habitat for the benefit of all chalk grassland biodiversity, allowing species such as the Adonis blue butterfly, wart-biter cricket, and early spider orchid to return and thrive.

How do we do it?

Thorny scrub invasion, as a result of land abandonment and loss of grazing, is one of the main threats to chalk grassland. Our volunteers have been controlling scrub at Lydden Temple Ewell National Nature Reserve (NNR), Old Park Hill, Nemo Down, and Dover Castle to create new areas of chalk downland.

This winter at Coombe Down, more of the dense, tall scrub that established after 40 years of abandonment will be cleared to allow the return of locally extinct species like frog orchids possible.

Healthy soils can also buffer climate impacts as they are more resistant to drought. This winter, as part of the Farming in Protected Landscapes project, we hosted a series of workshops to promote the importance of dung beetles (soil engineers and a climate resilience indicator species) in creating healthy soils. They are key to the biodiversity benefits of conservation grazing and, as a favourite food for chough, to the successful re-establishment of this iconic species.



 **Dung beetle workshop**
Lydden Temple Ewell

Why chough?

A flagship species is defined as a popular, charismatic species that captures the inspiration of the community, serving as a symbol to stimulate conservation awareness and action. With their striking red beak and feet and cultural relevance to Kent, choughs fill this role admirably. With the chough as our flagship species and together with Wildwood Trust, Kent Downs AONB, Paradise Park and other partners, we are bringing together local communities, landholders and funders to help protect and restore the chalk downlands around Dover and beyond.





 **Grazing area**
Lydden Temple Ewell

The released choughs are fitted with trackers that tell us their daily habits. They are currently foraging close to the release site on sheep-grazed pasture among flocks of jackdaws. In the coming months, as they become older and bolder, we expect to see them soaring over the White Cliffs in search of beetles, crane flies and other invertebrates. This is the first of a five-year release programme to re-establish choughs in Kent, and in winter 2024 we plan to release another group of fledglings to join this flock.



Spotted a chough?

 If you see choughs on the White Cliffs this winter, please let us know by emailing chough@kentwildlife.org.uk

Acknowledgements: The Farming in Protected Landscapes project 'Dover Downlands: advancing conservation grazing for the benefit of biodiversity and people' is supported by Kent Downs AONB with funding from Defra. Thank you to the dedicated volunteers and livestock checkers without whom this work would not be possible.

Want to find out more?



Chough reintroduction project: kwtg.uk/choughreintroduction



Dover Downlands project: kwtg.uk/doverdownlands

Exclusive content



To watch an exclusive interview with our Director of Conservation Paul Hadaway

on how we couldn't have choughs without chalk grassland, scan the QR code or go to kwtg.uk/choughvideo



Species spotlight

The 3-4 cm long wart-biter cricket is one of the rarest insects in the UK. We released nearly 500 nymphs and adults in the 1990s at Lydden Temple Ewell to re-establish the Kent population. Ongoing scrub clearance and grazing is helping to support the expansion of the population by providing a mosaic of microhabitats needed for the crickets' lifecycle: bare ground for egg-laying and long and short grasses for adults and nymphs. 🌱



 **Wart-biter cricket habitat**
Lydden Temple Ewell





Beavering away

Eurasian beavers have been present in Kent for two decades, initially through a licensed release at Ham Fen Nature Reserve. Coexistence is essential for these vital ecosystem engineers to thrive in the county, necessitating ongoing monitoring, engagement and collaboration with landowners and local people.

What makes the beaver an ecosystem engineer?

Beavers, as keystone species, transform freshwater habitats and foster biodiversity. They open woodland canopies, allowing more light to reach the forest floor to boost plant diversity and increase foraging for birds and bats. Beavers also enrich ecosystems by creating deadwood that provides shelter for invertebrates which serve as a vital food source for amphibians, birds and fish. Their dams not only protect beavers, but also mitigate

downstream flooding, local drought and even wildfire. Beavers' lodges and burrows offer safe havens where they can rest and breed and can be used by other animals, like otters, when beavers have moved on.

While beavers offer extensive ecological benefits, we recognise that their activities can sometimes be at odds with certain human interests. To address these issues, the East Kent Beaver Advisory Group was established to work collaboratively between conservation organisations and important stakeholders to promote coexistence.

**CONSERVATION STATUS:**

Beavers are protected in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

How do we advocate for beavers?**East Kent Beaver Advisory Group (EK BAG)**

Established in early 2019, the collaborative effort known as EK BAG comprises a partnership between Kent Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, Natural England, River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board, Wildwood Trust, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, Beaver Trust, National Farmers Union, Kent County Council, Network Rail and National Highways. Under the neutral banner of EK BAG, the group works to proactively investigate beaver activity, provide consistent and comprehensive advice and support to landowners and managers, and engage with broad audiences regarding beaver coexistence in Kent.

Integral to the work of the group is beaver mitigation advice and support, which plays a vital role in fostering coexistence. Landowners and managers can loan camera traps to facilitate beaver monitoring and collaborative problem-solving. These collective efforts contribute to the development of the Kent human-beaver coexistence strategy, designed to align with the forthcoming National Beaver Strategy.


Monitoring

A beaver monitoring data collection app was developed and is used by Kent Wildlife Trust staff, volunteers, and the Beaver Citizen Science Group. The app aligns with the Beaver Trust's own monitoring app to ensure a consistent monitoring method for recording beaver signs and sightings. This joint effort ensures the reliability and high quality of recorded beaver data by allowing access to trained individuals only.

Study Days

These events offer valuable training in beaver ecology survey techniques, aligning with Beaver Trust standards. This ensures national monitoring consistency, enabling vital species population management and conservation efforts. A collaboration between Kent Wildlife Trust and Beaver Trust, these sessions have already trained 89 participants.




 **Beaver Study Day participants**
Winter 2022 workshop

Get involved

Join the Kent Beaver Citizen Science Group! Over 50 members now contribute their records of beaver signs and sightings to the beaver monitoring app. You can also support annual Kent-wide beaver surveys, starting this winter.

This group aims to engage people in the local community with a native species, establish a sustainable yearly monitoring programme through community-based monitoring and empower citizen scientists to lead local and national level biodiversity monitoring in collaboration with wildlife charities.

Sign up to a beaver study day to receive training and join the expanding community dedicated to the conservation and monitoring of beavers in Kent. 



To learn more, visit:
kwttg.uk/beaver

Photography Competition 2023

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

Thank you to everyone who entered our 2023 Photography Competition. We received an amazing array of beautiful images celebrating wildlife and nature across our county, from breathtaking landscapes and magical minibeasts to precious plant life and majestic birds in flight.

This year, we introduced two new categories: People in nature and a Kids category. It was great to see your interpretations of the interactions between people and nature, and we love to celebrate the efforts of budding wildlife photographers of the next generation!

Congratulations to **Matt Smith**, whose stunning image, 'Snakes and Adders', featuring two adders intertwined at Queendown Warren Nature Reserve was crowned the overall winner of the 2023 Photography Competition. [👉](#)



You can follow Matt's work on Instagram at [@oakspringphotos](#) or visit [oakspringphotography.com](#)

Some of Matt's other works include:



Marbled knapweed butterfly, taken at Queendown Warren Nature Reserve.



Common blue butterfly, taken at Queendown Warren Nature Reserve.



Gatekeeper butterfly nectaring, taken in Matt's garden in Newington.



2023 Winners

Scan the QR code to see all of the winners from the 2023 Photography Competition, or head to [kwtg.uk/photocompetition23](#)

Discover your



Bugs Matter 2023

Citizen scientists across Kent and the UK have once again come together for this annual citizen science survey.

For insects, a branch can be a universe and a dewdrop can be an ocean. The Bugs Matter survey aims to paint a picture of insect numbers across the UK by asking people to record bug splats on their vehicle number plates as a measure of insect abundance.

Since the survey season ended in September, the Bugs Matter team have been busy analysing the data from **6,715 journeys** culminating in **203,254 miles**. Last year, the Bugs Matter survey found a worrying **74% decline** in bug splats between 2004 and 2022, and the statistics are expected to be equally, if not more, bleak this year.

The survey itself continues to evolve. For 2023, paper 'splatometers' were eliminated, and therefore the need for participants to wait for these to be posted to begin contributing. Now, a virtual 'splatometer' is built into the free Bugs Matter app, making it even easier for citizen scientists to start collecting essential data. Removing these paper 'splatometers' led to **participation by new users being twice**

as high in 2023 than in previous years.

Citizen science plays a critical role in understanding our changing environment. By integrating technology and user-friendly apps, meaningful science can be brought to the pockets of thousands.

Insects underpin all life, and without them, life on Earth would collapse. Citizen science projects like Bugs Matter play a pivotal role in advocating for more effective invertebrate conservation, policy and practice. By helping to collect such valuable data, you are amplifying the voices of insects and the protection of their ecosystems.



Find out more and download the Bugs Matter app ahead of the 2024 survey season here kwtg.uk/bugsmatter

inner scientist




Monitoring a Wilder Blean: The first year of discovery

In the spring of 2021, we kickstarted our ambitious Wilder Blean monitoring programme. The overarching goal is to continually evaluate the impact of restoring a naturalistic grazing regime on driving landscape-scale ecological processes and integrity. This programme is divided into four key themes: habitat structure and vegetation dynamics, biodiversity and bioabundance, natural processes and ecosystem services and natural capital.


Our data collection efforts are diverse, from measuring trees and sequencing soil eDNA to drone surveys and counting bugs and beetles. After a bustling summer of data collection, we are now launching into an even busier winter, meticulously analysing and reporting on that data. Our findings will give us an incredibly valuable baseline, against which we can measure any future change.

Having just completed the third field season, we're eager to decipher this year's data analysis as it will be the first year that we have had all our grazers on site: European bison, Exmoor ponies, longhorn cattle and Iron-age pigs. Although we would expect it to take some years for significant changes to translate to increased biodiversity and bioabundance, we have already witnessed some astonishing visual transformations in the bison treatment area. The landscape has opened up, allowing sunlight to reach the woodland floor and encouraging the growth of native species. More deadwood is providing habitat for invertebrates which in turn sustains the broader ecosystem by providing food for other species.

This extensive survey programme would not be possible without our valuable collaborations with academic partners and research institutes, such as the Natural History Museum. Equally crucial are our dedicated army of passionate volunteers who contribute significantly on several components of the project. 

Get involved

If you would like to get involved in creating a Wilder

 Kent, please check out our volunteering opportunities online: [kwtg.uk/volunteer](https://www.kwtg.org.uk/volunteer)



Help us save Oaken Wood

In the heart of Aylesford lies a hidden gem under threat – **Oaken Wood, a sprawling ancient woodland**. It is threatened by a quarry extension which has already destroyed 32 hectares of this rare habitat and plans to decimate a further 50 hectares.

The quarry expansion from this scheme could result in a greater loss of ancient woodland than that from HS2 and the Lower Thames Crossing combined. It is the biggest single development threat to ancient woodland in England for decades.

Kent County Council (KCC) is in the process of reviewing the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan and proposes to extend the planning period from 2030 to 2039. This extension has been driven by a need to plan for the supply of additional hard rock resources in Kent.

Between October and December 2022, KCC conducted a Call for Sites where operators, landowners, and relevant stakeholders nominated sites for hard rock quarrying in the Kent Mineral Sites Plan to meet mineral supply requirements. The resulting draft plan features a single site – the land south and west of Hermitage Quarry in Aylesford. The nominated site would involve the extension of Hermitage Quarry further, meaning Oaken Wood would suffer through the loss of over 50 hectares of irreplaceable ancient woodland.

The repercussions extend beyond just acreage; the expansion would also threaten the Oaken Wood Local Wildlife Site, an ecological sanctuary which contains valuable habitats and a mosaic of rare animal and plant life.

In 2013, we already saw an expansion of the quarry permitted which destroyed approximately 32 hectares of woodland. We cannot allow this to continue. Along with other conservation charities, we raised our concerns at a public consultation by KCC on the plans. Thank you to everyone who also shared their views. We will continue to give nature a voice and campaign to save this precious ancient woodland. 🍀



How can I help?

Join our mailing list to get involved in all of our latest campaigns and find out how you can speak up for nature [kwtg.uk/campaignsnewsletter](https://www.kwtg.uk/campaignsnewsletter)



Meet our Rangers

Introducing our new **Bison and Conservation Grazing Rangers**, guardians of the UK's first wild bison herd and stewards of the vital conservation grazers at West Blean and Thornden Woods. Our rangers advocate for natural management every day through talking to the public and high profile site visits from MPs, councillors and statutory bodies.



Eddie Murray

Previous role: Arboriculture for local government.

Specialties: Woodland management and tree biomechanics.

During my time as a member of an arboriculture team, I learnt how to carry out tree inspections and about wood decay fungi and tree pests and diseases, which I'm excited to apply to my new role to promote natural woodland management.



Heidi Aguirregoicoa

Previous role: Warden of Flat Holm Island nature reserve off the coast of Cardiff.

Fun fact: Took Matt Baker from Countryfile on a slow worm survey and Ellie Harrison on a lesser black-backed gull nest count.



Hannah Mackins

Previous role: Zookeeping and biology work across the UK, Peru and Morocco.

Favourite animal: African elephant.

Since I joined Kent Wildlife Trust in June, I have been instantly immersed in the Bison Ranger lifestyle. With African elephant's being the world's largest mammal and European bison the largest mammal in Europe, I feel like I'm working with the elephants of this continent!



Tom Gibbs

Previous role: Reserves officer specialising in ancient woodland and lowland habitats.

Fun fact: I like to upcycle things and make outdoor furniture with old pallets!

I have worked in the conservation sector for eight years. Aside from the European bison, my favourite animal is the peregrine falcon; these formidable hunters are becoming more common in our urban landscapes, showing how resilient and adaptable nature can be. 🐦

You'll be familiar with Tom Gibbs, one of the UK's first Bison Rangers that has been with the Trust since the bison herd took their first steps into the Blean last year...



Did you know?

You can meet the Bison Rangers themselves on brand-new experiences from this winter. Head to the events booklet included with your magazine to find out more.



Jessica Allam

Our Wilder Grazing Ranger Jess looks after the conservation grazers who contribute to the nature-positive management of our reserves.

Take the 65-day challenge to fundraise and take action for nature



To celebrate our 65th birthday year with us, ask your friends and family to sponsor your immense **65-day challenge** – how many of these actions for nature can you complete by **10 January 2024**? You might be surprised at how many you are already achieving!

1 Plant native wildflowers in your garden/encourage someone you know with a garden to plant

2 Take reusable bags with you on your food shop

3 Swap buying bottled water for a reusable water bottle

4 Volunteer with us

5 Visit one of our reserves

6 Switch to eco-friendly cleaning products

7 Choose to take the bus or cycle rather than driving to work or school

Use our letter template



8

Write to your local MP asking them to incorporate our asks in their election manifesto

9 Make a bee hotel

10 Build a bat box

11 Build a pond



Takes a few hours

12

Build a hedgehog home



Takes a few hours



13 Make a log shelter

14 Grow a wildlife-friendly vegetable garden

15 Make a hedgehog-friendly garden

16 Grow a wild patch or mini meadow

17

Attract butterflies to your garden



18 Create a container garden for wildlife

19 Attract bumblebees to your garden

20 Install a water butt



21 Plant a tree



Quick win for nature

22 Create a vertical garden

23 Feed birds in your garden

24 Feed hedgehogs and badgers in your garden

25 Grow the best plants for bees and pollinators

26 Grow wildlife-friendly herbs

27 Provide water for wildlife

28 Conserve water

29 Use less single-use plastic

30 Build a bird box

Takes a few hours



- 31 Go chemical-free in your garden
- 32 Compost your waste
- 33 Make a gravel garden for wildlife
- 34 Go peat free at home
- 35 Make a hedge for wildlife
- 36 Make a seed bomb
- 37 Make a woodland edge garden for wildlife
- 38 Make a bog garden



39 Attract moths and bats to your garden



40 Build a bug mansion



Takes a few hours

- 41 Make a shrub garden
- 42 Do companion planting
- 43 Take part in a litter pick
- 44 Play our wildlife lottery
- 45 Watch what you wash away

46 Take part in a beach clean



Quick win for nature

- 47 Have an eco-Christmas
- 48 Record a wildlife sighting
- 49 Clean nestboxes and bird feeders
- 50 Reduce your energy use
- 51 Recycle and reuse
- 52 Check your bonfire for hedgehogs
- 53 Cut out palm oil

54 Make a Christmas wreath for birds



- 55 Change what you eat
- 56 Help wildlife at school

Choose to buy your Christmas gifts from our online shop to support wildlife conservation, visit [kwtg.uk/shop](https://www.kwtg.uk/shop)



57

- 58 Become an eco-friendly pet owner
- 59 Make a coastal garden
- 60 Be smart with your souvenir shopping
- 61 Help wildlife at work
- 62 Join a local environmental group to advocate for wildlife-friendly spaces
- 63 Join a community garden
- 64 Support local farmers' markets
- 65 Encourage friends and family to join Kent Wildlife Trust

Any funds you raise can be donated:


PAY ONLINE

Visit [kwtg.uk/donation](https://www.kwtg.uk/donation)

PAY OVER THE PHONE

Call our friendly team on **01622 357800**

PAY BY CHEQUE

To Kent Wildlife Trust, Tyland Barn, Chatham Road, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3BD. 



Scan this QR code for how-to guides on all these activities, or go to [kwtg.uk/65days65ways](https://www.kwtg.uk/65days65ways)

The Wildler Kent Awards 2024 are open

Take action for wildlife and become a driving force for positive change.



By 2030, we want to see 30% of Kent's land and sea abundant with wildlife, but we can't do it without you. That is why we created the Wildler Kent Awards to recognise and reward the hard work of groups across Kent who are coming together to take positive action to create a Wildler Kent.

With **65 winners in 2023**, the awards keep growing and this year we're excited to announce a **brand-new business category!** This new category will help us to support more groups across Kent to start taking positive action for wildlife, and to celebrate those groups who are already doing so much for nature!

Reasons to enter

Celebrate

Join us for our awards ceremony next summer, where winners come together to celebrate their excellent work across the county.

Wellbeing

Improve both mental and physical wellbeing by spending time outdoors, gaining new experiences and learning new life skills.

Support

Join a growing network and gain access to resources and expert guidance from wildlife experts and previous winners.

Advocate

Share and discover new ways to make a meaningful difference in your communities.

Visibility

Receive a digital badge to use on your website, social media posts and promotional materials, and the chance to get involved in Kent Wildlife Trust's Talk on the Wild Side podcast, blog posts and magazine articles.

Validation

Know that you have done something positive for nature and wildlife in Kent.

Who can sign up?

- Schools
- Nurseries
- Colleges
- Universities
- Community groups
- Villages, towns and cities
- **BUSINESSES** **NEW FOR 2024**

How it works



Start your journey by scanning the QR code to download your Wildler Kent Awards brochure.

Remember, every action you take as part of the Wildler Kent Awards makes you an advocate and key to creating a more biodiverse, climate-resilient and wildler Kent. Sign up for free today! 🐝

Sponsor the awards



Want to sponsor our awards? Get in touch corporate@kentwildlife.org.uk

Wildler Kent AWARDS

Learn more by visiting:

kwtg.uk/WKA





Bridging gaps and building bonds

Improving diversity and inclusivity in our work



Conservation is the second least diverse industry in the UK. Kent Wildlife Trust's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Group is working to change that.

Chaired by Robbie Still, this dedicated team's mission is to inspire, empower and engage individuals from all backgrounds, cultures, identities and abilities in the collective endeavour to transform our natural world for the better. Acknowledging the issue is the first step, and it's a challenge that every organisation should rise to.



Robbie Still

As well as chair of the EDIB group, Robbie is the Head of Digital Development at Kent Wildlife Trust. With a background in conservation and experience in data management and programming, Robbie combines these skillsets to spatially plan for nature recovery, generate income through modelling projects, and improve organisational efficiency through digital systems.

The statistics:

3.1%

Only **3.1%** of environmental professionals are from a global ethnic majority background.

4.1%

The proportion of disabled people in management positions is **4.1% lower** than non-disabled people.

35%

35% of LGBTQIA+ staff hide this at work for fear of discrimination.

29%

29% of women reported that gender bias hindered their career advancement.

Our response:

1. We are constructing a supportive environment as **a catalyst for change** across Kent Wildlife Trust. Comprising passionate staff who volunteer for EDIB projects, we will foster an atmosphere of positivity.
2. **EDIB must be ingrained into every facet of the organisation**, as well as expanding to positively impact member and volunteer experiences. We are ensuring more accessible criteria in our job adverts to attract the best candidates.
3. Working closely with the Communications and Engagement teams, we will offer expertise, advocacy and capacity to ensure we continue to reach a more diverse audience.

FIND OUT MORE



To learn more about what the EDIB group is set up to achieve, read our blog by scanning the QR code or heading to kwtdg.uk/introducingedib

How can I help?



Increase your impact by joining us as a volunteer or employee! The biodiversity and climate crises will impact every single person on this planet, and to create a Wilder Kent, we need all the help we can get. Visit kwtdg.uk to get involved. 🐦

Farming for the future

Farming in England is under immense pressure, navigating a seismic shift in the way subsidies are provided and the unpredictable and volatile changes in climate.



Rory Harding
Rory is the Nature Recovery Manager at Kent Wildlife Trust, responsible for managing the Farmer Engagement and Wild About Gardens teams. Rory is passionate about the positive role farming can play in the restoration of species in Kent.



To counter this risk, we have been proactively collaborating with Farmer Clusters across Kent since 2019. Clusters enable farmers to come together to share concerns and experiences as new schemes are piloted and developed. Through projects such as the Marden and Tenterden Test and Trials and the Darent Valley Landscape Recovery Pilot, we have ensured that Kent's nature-friendly farmers have a resounding voice in critical discussions.

Within this pressure lies opportunity, sparked by a new subsidy regime brought about by our exit from the European Union. Much-needed conversations are now happening about how to best allocate public funds and the type of countryside that we envision and can support.

But there's a catch: if this new scheme is poorly implemented, farmers who are eager to contribute and support these initiatives may grow disillusioned with the concept of public money for public goods and may withdraw their engagement.

The Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) continues to evolve, most recently with the launch of the renewed Sustainable Farming Incentive. Our goal is to ensure this scheme is accessible and serves as a stepping stone to bigger, better and more ambitious actions for nature. We will continue to advocate for nature-friendly farmers and the support they need as pivotal players in nature's recovery across Kent. 🌱

🌱 Want to know more, or interested in joining or forming a farmer cluster? Head to kwtg.uk/farming



"Soil, air, water and nature recovery can and must go hand in hand with modern food production. Our experience is that these are mutually beneficial rather than mutually exclusive and are fundamentally reliant upon each other for rural economic development and the delivery of the myriad other benefits to our communities."

Peter Hall
Member of the Marden Farmer Cluster

Show us your

WILD SIDES



Volunteer spotlight

In May 1997, Bill Hickmott began his inspiring journey as a volunteer for Kent Wildlife Trust, dedicating his time at Tyland Barn in Maidstone, Sevenoaks and the picturesque Romney Marsh.



Bill Hickmott
Long-standing volunteer

His highlights include opening the iconic dipping platform and relining the pond at Tyland Barn, which serves as a valuable educational tool for visitors of the next generation. Bill's dedication meant that he assisted the contractors with clearing, ensuring the habitat was pristine for local wildlife.

Bill's interactions with wildlife have been a rewarding part of his journey. Whether it's observing the subtle nuances of animal behaviour or getting his hands dirty in the gardens, his connection to nature has been profound.

When asked about advice for aspiring volunteers, Bill didn't hesitate: **"Just do it!"** He emphasised the joy of meeting kind-hearted people and the overall mental and physical wellbeing that comes from volunteering.

Advocating for a Wilder Kent is at the heart of Bill's mission. As a volunteer for the Wild About Gardens team, Bill encourages people to leave parts of their gardens wild and create wildlife-friendly spaces. His garden expeditions have taken him to private gardens, a unique project at a crematorium, a care home and a balcony on the fifth floor of a block of flats that has been transformed into a wildlife haven.

In a world where the call to conserve our environment is now critical, individuals like Bill remind us of the impact one person can make. His journey as a volunteer with Kent Wildlife Trust serves as an inspiration for us all. Every action, no matter how big or small, counts in creating a Wilder Kent. 🐛

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



If you are inspired by Bill's work, why not start your own journey and join us as a volunteer?

Check out our current volunteering opportunities here kwtg.uk/volunteer



Corporate corner

From member to partner, make your support go further



Within Kent Wildlife Trust, every member is valued. Individually, you help us safeguard wildlife and your actions actively help us to achieve a Wilder Kent; collectively, your voices extend ours and amplify our mission.

But have you considered taking your support to the next level?

If you're part of a workforce, a business owner or are a visitor to local businesses in your community, you could make a substantial difference by helping us to expand our reach, increase our income and boost our impact.

Business owners

Choose Kent Wildlife Trust as your charity partner or sponsor one of our campaigns. In return, we offer benefits such as marketing collaboration, volunteer days for your team, exclusive discounts, early access to our coveted Study Days and more.

Employees

Nominate Kent Wildlife Trust for your company's Charity of the Year. Consult your sustainability lead to let them know of our work and explore ways that they could help your organisation do more for wildlife.

Customers

Engage with the teams of local businesses by proposing a donation tin on the counter (then email fundraising@kentwildlife.org.uk to get a tin sent to them). Ask if they have heard of Kent Wildlife Trust and if they could get involved as a member, partner or sponsor. Encourage them to take part in environmental initiatives to safeguard nature as part of the Wilder Kent Awards (**see page 28**).

As our biggest advocates, your voices hold the power to help us achieve a Wilder Kent. 🐦



Learn more

To find out more, scan the QR code or visit kwtg.uk/business



Daniel Wynn

Daniel heads up the Nature-based Solutions and Monitoring and Evidence Teams, working to achieve a blended finance model that supports our landscape-scale vision for Kent.

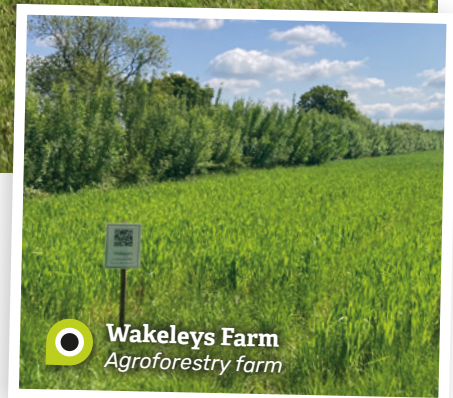
Driving nature recovery with natural capital

In the ever-evolving climate and biodiversity crises, the quest for sustainable solutions and collective responsibility has never been more critical. In September, I spoke at the 'Agroforestry Conference' in Wiltshire. Sitting on a panel alongside the CEO of the Farm Carbon Toolkit and the Head of Sustainability for the British Standards Institute, I showed how Wilder Carbon and the voluntary carbon market can be a powerful driver of income through nature restoration.

As the discussion unfolded, it became clear that the agricultural sector stands to gain as much from natural capital as the environment does. With growing interest in regenerative agriculture, the value of integrating nature with farming now becomes an important economic decision.

I showcased how using a wilding-led approach to nature restoration can generate sustainable carbon offsets. These offsets can be seamlessly integrated with farm businesses to drive a carbon-neutral sector, setting a trajectory to reach net zero.

One common challenge that surfaced on the day was the issue of 'greenwashing'. It was a stark reminder that businesses must take more substantive steps to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions instead of relying on offsetting methods. A compelling solution emerged - a supply chain offset mechanism that connects land managers to their buyers. Such a system would enhance trust in the carbon market for both buyers and sellers, enabling a scaling-up of carbon capture. This, in turn, could significantly mitigate climate change and address biodiversity loss at the landscape scale: a meaningful step forward.



We are now developing a farm-focused package for land managers, providing credible advice on achieving carbon neutrality and navigating the sale of carbon offsets through Wilder Carbon.

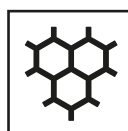
Are you a business owner or land manager?

Contact Head of Nature-based Solutions Daniel Wynn at **daniel.wynn@kentwildlife.org.uk** for more information. 🐛

Find out more about Wilder Carbon by scanning this QR code or heading to **wildercarbon.com**

Fight the crises, invest in nature

wildercarbon.com



Wilder Carbon
Native habitats. Natural solutions.

COP28: Less talk, more action

It's that time of year again when world leaders, ministers and negotiators gather to address how we can tackle the global climate crisis. This year, COP28 will be hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December 2023.

Every five years, a progress check is completed to evaluate the world's collective efforts. COP28, aptly named 'The First Global Stocktake', marks the halfway point between the implementation of the Paris Agreement and target year 2030.

Yet, the initial published stocktake report delivers an alarming message. Recent temperature rises, extreme weather events and natural disasters highlight a concerning reality: the world is still on track to warm beyond the target trajectories set out in the Paris Agreement. The UN has warned that we need to reduce global emissions by **at least 43% by 2030** to keep the planet from warming by more than 1.5C. The global stocktake reinforces the urgency of making rapid and drastic actions: phasing out fossil fuels, improving transport systems and bolstering more climate resilient food production and land use global systems.

The good news is that the report also states that there are many cost-effective opportunities to uphold the Paris Agreement. However, the clock is ticking, with unresolved political debates adding to the urgency.

The report also states that inaction actually carries a heavier price tag than investing in decarbonisation, sustainable food systems, and adaptation measures in the near and mid-term.

We want to see the governments of nations integrate climate change risks into all aspects of planning, decision-making and implementation. Corporations must disclose their emissions and set science-based plans to reduce them. Immediate and substantial emissions cuts across all sectors and regions are non-negotiable. The UN's Climate Ambition Summit in September asked nations to present credible and robust action plans, however many of the world's largest polluters including the United States and China were not invited to speak. Instead, the event focussed on championing the "movers and doers" taking accelerated action to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Even our Prime Minister remained in London to announce rollbacks on net-zero policies, a move that was met with widespread dismay at the summit.



Meaningful action in Kent

In Kent, we're dedicated to taking meaningful action and with the help of our members, volunteers and partners, are working hard to create a Wilder Kent. As part of our Wilder Kent 2030 strategy, we're doing our part by doubling our landholdings to expand our nature-positive influence. Together with landowners, local government, the private sector and individuals, we're working to improve ecological, social, and economic resilience to climate change through restoring natural processes to create local nature recovery networks across Kent's land and seascape, while also locking up carbon.



This is our contribution to making the UK's commitment to **30% of land and sea with thriving wildlife a reality by 2030**.

We recognise that the global pace of change can be frustratingly slow, which is why we champion local efforts. We know that local action can help make the global difference we need. Initiatives like the **MyWilderKent App** are in the pipeline to make positive action easier and more inclusive while showing how we, as a community, are making a substantial positive impact for nature and climate right here in Kent. Let's work together to make a difference! 🍷

Take action for nature

We hope that this year, global governments will finally prioritise the climate and nature crises and make the tough decisions needed for meaningful change. We want to see this happen sooner rather than later, safeguarding our planet now and for generations to come.

LOCAL NEWS



KENT UPDATE

Michael Gove called upon to end theme park threat to nature

We have joined other local wildlife charities calling for Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to step in and remove a controversial planning designation that threatens the future of a nationally important wildlife site in North Kent.

The Swanscombe Peninsula has been the subject of a Development Consent Order since 2014, but we want Mr Gove to use his powers to help secure its future by revoking the planning status.

The wildlife haven is **home to over 2,000 species of invertebrate** including the critically endangered distinguished jumping spider and 82 species of

breeding birds, making it one of the most important breeding bird sites in the South East of England.

However, the site has been under threat from a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) application for the London Resort Theme Park - a planning route normally earmarked for major projects like roads and power stations. This status is hindering attempts to protect Swanscombe. We are looking for support to carry out an alternative vision for the site, developed with the local community to bring nature to the doorsteps of many.



Follow the Save Swanscombe campaign here [kwtg.uk/swanscombe](https://www.kwtg.uk/swanscombe)

swanscombe



Save our Stour

Despite the government thankfully scrapping plans to weaken water pollution restrictions in September, the attempted amendments to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill highlighted the lack of government commitment to deliver on environmental promises and the need to do more to protect our precious waterways.

Our Save our Stour campaign encourages everyone to speak up for rivers in crisis. Last year's State of Nature in Kent report revealed that 79% of Kent's rivers are in poor condition.

Stodmarsh Nature Reserve and the Stour River are some of the worst affected sites, with eutrophication of lakes leading to fish kill events. As we lose more fish and invertebrates, less food will be available for birds to feed on and the value of this reserve for wildlife could be lost. We are urging everyone to write to their MPs to do more to tackle water pollution.



Download the template letter here: kwtg.uk/saveourstour

Bitesize news

1 Betteshanger Country Park

A revised application has been submitted for the construction of a 120-bed hotel within the Betteshanger Country Park, despite Dover Planning Committee refusing previous planning permission for another hotel application on the site. The development would have a detrimental impact on turtle dove populations and other priority species.



2 Winterbourne Fields

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Option for up to 2,150 residential dwellings has been submitted. The application site is integral to the wider Blean Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and would see the direct loss of habitats that currently support species such as dormice, great crested newts, and breeding skylarks. Kent Wildlife Trust are developing a strategy to oppose the scheme.

3 Lower Thames Crossing

This proposed road scheme connecting Kent with Essex would create miles of new roads including two tunnels beneath the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site. The scheme continues to threaten nature through the loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland, Local Wildlife Sites, and priority habitats causing wildlife displacement. We have been actively opposing the scheme throughout the examination process. 🙏

KENT UPDATE

Jet ski riders reported to the police

The colony of seals at Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve were rushed into the water after jet ski riders revved their engines and rode at speed near where the seals rest. The ongoing disturbance was reported to Kent Police's Rural Task Force under Operation Seabird, an initiative aimed at combatting the disturbance of marine wildlife.



Learn more about how to watch seals safely here: kwtg.uk/seals

KENT UPDATE

Sir David visits our oldest reserve

Downe Bank Nature Reserve is already renowned due to scientific studies carried out by Charles Darwin, but now it will be remembered in history for another reason. In August, Sir David Attenborough spent the day at the reserve filming for the opening of the award-winning TV-series Planet Earth III. Sir David was kind enough to write to the Trust following filming thanking us for all we do for nature.

UK UPDATE

Our election asks

River restoration should be high on the agenda, with pollution threatening wildlife like kingfishers



T

he coming year will bring with it a General Election, with the people of the UK given the opportunity to choose their representatives in government. One thing is clear: whichever party forms the UK Government, they must make it a priority to tackle the nature and climate crises.

The Wildlife Trusts have created a set of asks detailing what we want to see – and what nature needs – from the UK Government. Our asks are broken down into five key sections. The Wildlife Trusts are calling for whomever makes the next UK Government to:

1

Bring back our lost wildlife

Nature is declining at a speed never previously seen and shows no signs of slowing. We need the Government to reverse this trend and invoke a Nature Recovery Network to ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is genuinely managed and restored for nature through natural processes by 2030. They must also stop the damage to our seas through sewage discharges and river pollution, as well as safeguarding Marine Protected Areas from development and destructive fishing methods. Finally, we want to see wild beavers in every major river catchment in England, Scotland and Wales – restoring wetlands and making space for nature.

2

End river pollution

Many of the UK's rivers are polluted beyond legal limits, and less than half are in good condition ecologically – but the Government can take action. Firstly, they must ensure that environmental watchdogs have the powers and resources to enforce the law, with regular monitoring and commensurate penalties for parties who knowingly break it. They must halve nutrient pollution from sewage, wastewater and agriculture by 2030. Finally, we need stronger protection for chalk streams, one of the world's rarest habitats.

3

Fund wildlife-friendly farming

Farming is one of the main causes of wildlife declines, but it doesn't have to be. Government can support farmers to grow in harmony with nature and help bring wildlife back. They need to double the budget for wildlife-friendly farming, halve the use of pesticides and protect farming against climate change. The extreme heat and droughts in 2017 and 2022 provided a taste of the reality to come; farmers need more support to adapt to climate change.

4

Green our communities

Too many of us live in polluted, nature-deprived neighbourhoods. These poor quality living conditions are damaging people's health and cutting lives short. We need a Natural Health Fund to reduce the strain on the NHS and public services. We need a legally mandated right to a clean and healthy environment, protecting nature and the health and wellbeing of us all. And we need all children to be given the opportunity to learn outdoors.

5

Tackle the climate emergency

Climate change is driving nature's decline, whilst the loss of wildlife and wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change. It's a vicious cycle that demands immediate action. We need the UK Government to help nature and people adapt to climate change, protect the blue carbon in our marine environments, and make our homes more energy efficient.

UK UPDATE

In hot water


Summer saw global sea surface temperatures reach an all-time high, with worrying implications for the world's wildlife. In August, the Copernicus climate modelling service reported that the global average daily sea surface temperatures hit a record high of 20.96C.

The changes to sea temperature we are already seeing as the climate warms are particularly dangerous to unique and threatened ecosystems, such as warm water coral reefs. The UK's seas will not be immune to the changes we are seeing now. June saw an extreme marine heatwave develop off our coasts. Sustained high temperatures can lead to the death and changes in behaviour of fish and other marine wildlife, with significant impacts on food webs.

Alongside record sea surface and land surface temperatures, the last year has also seen unprecedented widespread

extreme weather, with many catastrophic heatwaves and flooding incidents around the world.

As the impacts of a warming planet become more obvious, we are urging this UK Government to accelerate action on climate change. It's vital that we reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, but also that we do more to adapt to the changes we are already seeing. The impacts of climate change will keep getting worse until action is taken. Global emissions are still increasing and haven't started to drop yet.

 Find out more about combatting the climate and nature emergency at kwtg.uk/ourwork



Sea Link

The National Grid's Sea Link project to update Britain's electricity network is proposing to build 100-foot pylons as part of the construction of a converter station at Minster Marshes. Although Kent Wildlife Trust is supportive of actions taken to tackle the climate emergency and understand how essential decarbonisation of the energy sector is, this should not be at the detriment of biodiversity.

We have been in conversation with the National Grid regarding the Sea Link project and have raised concerns, particularly around the need to not damage to precious salt marsh habitat which we saw from the 'Nemo Cable' project.

We want to see a complete Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) of the Sea Link project to evaluate the significance of the impacts to wildlife.

UK highlights

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 A model approach

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside is growing a sustainable alternative to goose-feather down. BioPuff® aims to replace feathers in padded jackets and is made from the fluffy seedheads of bulrushes. The Trust plans to re-wet agricultural peatland to grow the bulrushes, protecting the carbon in the peat and reducing emissions.

wtru.st/bulrush-clothing




2 The buffalo-down

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust has introduced a herd of water buffalo to improve rare fen habitat at Thorley Wash Nature Reserve. These hardy animals will graze the ditches and marshy areas that cows prefer to avoid, preventing the need for heavy machinery to clear scrub and improve the site for wildlife such as water voles.

wtru.st/herts-buffalo

3 Seeing reddish

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has rediscovered one of the UK's rarest moths. The reddish buff is only found on one site in the country, a Wildlife Trust nature reserve on the Isle of Wight, but had not been recorded since 2019. This year, the Trust's annual survey revealed two adult moths. 

wtru.st/seeing-reddish



Kent
Wildlife Trust



I'M VOTING FOR NATURE

Creating a **#WildierKent** is
my priority this election.



CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINE TO DETACH YOUR POSTER



**Kent
Wildlife Trust**

65 years
wild
1958 - 2023

Help us protect
wildlife this winter
and beyond...

Every donation, no matter the size, helps us continue protecting wildlife. Did you know we have over 30,000 members? That means if every member can spare as little as £2 we'd hit our target this winter!

©EVAN BOWEN-JONES

Dear

We are celebrating our 65th birthday this year and all the amazing wild spaces and species that you, our incredible members, have helped protect and restore over the last seven decades.

Please join us in celebrating, by supporting our 65 Years Wild appeal today.

What's more, this December also marks the 20th anniversary of our purchase of West Blean and Thornden Woods.

Between now and next May, we're aiming to raise £65,000 to support our vital education and engagement work so that we can connect more children and young people to the natural world.



kwtg.uk/65yearswild

Registered Charity No. 239992.
A company limited in England and Wales by guarantee 633098.



Action and innovation **for nature**

By donating today, you can help us to build

...with the next generation

Education and engagement have been at the heart of Kent Wildlife Trust's work from the very start.

Our amazing Education Team delivers unforgettable sessions at our sites and schools across the county, engaging thousands of young people in activities from pond-dipping to wild cooking, encouraging them to explore and discover.

In providing a wilder alternative to the traditional classroom, we aim to inspire a lifelong love for nature that will support us to build a better, wilder future. In the coming years our local wild spaces might look, sound and feel very different.



The power of Wilder Blean

Wilder Blean isn't just inspiring Hollywood royalty (**have we mentioned that Leonardo DiCaprio is a fan?**), most importantly it's capturing the imaginations of young people across Kent and beyond.

This flagship project is not only transforming one of the UK's most precious ancient woodlands, it's providing a national case study that shows just how much Nature-based Solutions can achieve for wildlife.

We know that children thrive when they are immersed in nature. But we also know that not everyone has the same opportunities to access the natural world. By supporting our 65 Years Wild appeal today, you'll be helping us to shape and inspire more wildlife champions of tomorrow.



We need you to help secure our future

£6.50

could pay for a child's lunch during a visit with our Bison Rangers

£65

could sponsor a child from a low-income family to attend a term of Nature Tots

£650

would enable a school class to attend an educational visit to the Blean

£6,500

would support our team to develop an exciting new education programme



To donate please read our donation form on the reverse of the next page.

ld bridges...

...with partners

Do you, or someone you know, want to be part of the trail-blazing Wilder Blean project?

If so, please consider becoming a Bison Benefactor today!

This unique opportunity is open to individuals, businesses, community groups and organisations across the UK and will place you at the heart of the Wilder Blean project.

Since the bison took their historic first steps into the woodland in July 2022, these fascinating ecosystem engineers – and the cattle, ponies, and pigs who joined them this spring – have had a significant positive impact on the woodlands, from eating their way through invasive species to creating basking spots for reptiles.

But these amazing achievements represent a fraction of what is possible.

With your support, we can take the next step in transforming West Blean and Thornden Woods into a thriving woodland that is teeming with life.

So far, the benefits brought by the bison have been **confined to 50-hectares of the woodland** because the areas they can roam are currently fragmented by public footpaths.

And that's where actual bridges come in...

We want to install the UK's first ever Bison Bridges.

These structures will act both as:



Tunnels

Giving the bison the freedom to roam through 200 hectares of the woodland (**that's around 7,600 tennis courts**) where they can work their natural restoration magic.

Bridges

Elevated crossings over the tunnels will ensure public footpaths remain open and create unique opportunities for visitors to witness the transformational impact that these animals are having.

.....
As a Bison Benefactor, you will be helping to make conservation history, ensuring that humans and wildlife can coexist and thrive in this landscape for the first time in more than 6,000 years.

If you or someone you know can help, please email fundraising@kentwildlife.org.uk and we will be in touch.

Sponsorship packages start at £3,000 and include a range of benefits



Scan the QR code or visit our website to find out more
kwtg.uk/bisonbenefactor



Donate to defend nature for the future



65 years
wild
1958 - 2023

How to DONATE

THREE EASY WAYS

£6.50

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£650

would enable a school class to attend an educational visit to the Blean

£6,500

would support our team to develop an exciting new education programme



1. PAY ONLINE

Visit kwtg.uk/65yearswild or scan the QR code to donate online and help us inspire the next generation of wildlife champions, defend nature and create havens for wildlife in Kent.



2. TALK TO US

Call our friendly team during office hours, Monday to Friday, on **01622 357800**. When calling please quote your membership number found below.



3. SEND YOUR CHEQUE

Please detach and return this form with your cheque in the prepaid envelope to **Kent Wildlife Trust, Tyland Barn, Chatham Road, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 3BD**.



YOUR DETAILS

Membership ID

Full name

Postcode

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YES, I want Kent Wildlife Trust to claim Gift Aid on donations I make now, in the future and for the past 4 years.

Gift Aid is reclaimed by Kent Wildlife Trust from the tax that I pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current tax payer. If I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference. The Wildlife Trusts will reclaim 25p in tax back for every £1 I donate.

Please notify Kent Wildlife Trust if you want to cancel this declaration; change your name or home address; or if you no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

*All donations made to the 65 Years Wild appeal will be used to support the Wilder Kent 2030 Strategy by helping wildlife, creating wild spaces and providing opportunities for children to explore nature in Kent. Please ask if you have any questions by emailing: membership@kentwildlife.org.uk



kwtg.uk/65yearswild

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