



WILDLIFE GARDENING FORUM

E-newsletter: January 2016

www.wlgf.org

@WLGForum



Headlines

- **We are increasing our Newsletter to being quarterly.** Sent to members, it is subsequently made available on the Forum's website ([here](#)). Based on your feedback in the Survey Monkey, we're moving to more frequent newsletters (quarterly) with shorter items. Please help by sending relevant news stories, press releases, events and campaign information to news@wlgf.org.
- **Have you joined us on Facebook and Twitter yet?** Our [Facebook group](#) has 197 members and growing. Follow us on Twitter [here](#).
- [Plants for Bugs wins Garden Media Guild award.](#)
- **We're open for questions!** The Forum has access to experts in most aspects of wildlife gardening. If you have a question - or want to voice an opinion - why not do so through this newsletter? Email news@wlgf.org.
- **Showcase your garden.** Each issue, we would like to feature a garden – public or private – that is being managed with wildlife in mind so we can showcase different styles and approaches plus the challenges and successes. Email news@wlgf.org if you are interested in your garden being featured.
- **WLGf Conference Proceedings.** The proceedings for June's 'Soil' Conference and November's '10th Anniversary' Conference are now online [here](#) and [here](#). Highlights include Chris Baines' pitch-perfect talk in November and what is effectively a beginner's guide to soil creatures from Dr Matthew Shepherd in June.

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You are receiving this newsletter because you are a member of the Wildlife Gardening Forum. If you would like to be removed from our membership list and cease receiving this newsletter, please email members@wlgf.org.

Forum News

www.wlgf.org: Web Page of the Month



This issue's highlighted page in the new WLGf website is [Gardens as a Resource for Wildlife](#).

Did you know that the total area of gardens in the UK is estimated at about 433,000 hectares or 4,330 square kilometres, about a fifth the size of Wales? Or that only one in five new houses has a garden that matches the average size of existing gardens in the UK? This is the place to find all such information!

Give us your news

If you are part of an organisation, charity or research facility, please get your press team to add us to their press release distribution list for relevant topics. And, to every Forum member, if you see any wildlife gardening related news, do send it through. Email news@wlgf.org.

Results of Survey of Forum Members

Thank you to the 127 people who took part in our Survey Monkey questionnaire. The results were very instructive and are being used by the Trustees in planning the Forum's future. The full results are on the Forum's website, but here are some of the headlines:

- We had a encouraging geographical spread of replies from across England and Wales, but only three from Scotland and none from Northern Ireland
- 5% of respondents did not realise they were a member of the Forum, probably because Forum membership is free and relatively informal
- 67% of respondents identified as being home gardeners, 37% as working for a wildlife NGO, and 40% as amateur naturalists.
- The thing that would encourage more members to attend our conferences was if they were closer to them. The Trustees are looking at organising a conference outside of London next year
- There was a strong signal that, although the website isn't hard to use, it isn't the easiest either - we are working to improve that.
- The top priorities you identified for the Forum were:
 - reaching out to engage more of the general public
 - and focusing on being the umbrella organisation bringing together those with a passion for wildlife gardening.

Plants for Bugs wins award

Congratulations to RHS Senior Horticultural Advisor and WLGF Trustee, Helen Bostock, who won the 'Environmental Award' at the Garden Media Guild Awards held at The Savoy Hotel, London (November 2015).

Helen received the award for her article entitled '*Plants for Bugs: all in the mix*' which was featured in the September edition of The Garden magazine and discussed the findings of the 'Plants for Bugs' research that has been carried out by the RHS Science team, headed by Principal Entomologist, Andrew Salisbury.

In her article Helen translated the findings in a way which made them applicable to gardeners, offering clear guidance for those wanting to plant to encourage pollinators.

We are delighted for Helen and hope that her article has encouraged more gardeners to think about the importance of wildlife gardening.



Let us know the best gardens to visit



Which are the best gardens, open to the public, which are managed with wildlife in mind?

We'd like to compile a list for the WLGF website. They could be public gardens open throughout much of the year, or gardens open for NGS or other such schemes for limited periods only.

Send details of those you are aware of, including a brief description and details of why they are especially wildlife-friendly, to news@wlgf.org.

New trustee: welcome to Val Bourne

We are delighted to welcome Val as the newest Trustee of the Forum. Val describes herself as a 'natural gardener', has written several books, is a columnist for The Telegraph, and gardens in the glorious Cotswolds near Bourton-on-the-Water, Glos. The Forum's Trustees are all volunteers so we are delighted to have an extra and capable pair of hands.

Natural History Museum Garden - latest

Steve Head, WLGf Co-ordinator, has been liaising with the management team at the NHM to try and inspire them to think again about their current plans to bulldoze much of the existing wildlife garden in the grounds there.

We understand and agree with their rationale for wanting to bring in more visitors from the west side and to better use the greenspace around the Museum, but we do not want to see such a valuable, long-term scientific and educational project trashed in the process and believe there are ways to achieve their aims while not compromising the wildlife garden.

However, we are not currently making much progress. We continue to earnestly urge the NHM management to reconsider and not undo so many years of valuable work and research.

Forum's 10th Anniversary Conference, 20 November 2015

With Steve Berry, the Forum's founding father, and Chris Baines, wildlife gardening's perennial pioneer and champion, plus a host of other speakers on stage, our 10th Anniversary Conference at the Natural History Museum was a very enjoyable and productive occasion, with almost 80 delegates present.

Chris Baines was delighted on behalf of the Trustees to present Steve Head with an original painting by Richard Lewington to thank him for being at the Forum's helm for most of the last ten years.



Events and calendar

2016

- Sat 30 & Sun 31 January: RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch
- Sun 1 May: International Dawn Chorus Day
- Hedgehog Awareness Week (May, dates TBC)
- Mon 9 to Wed 11 June: Moth Night (theme: Hawk moths)
- Mon 20 to Sun 26 June: Pollinator Week and National Insect Week
- Saturday 2 July: National Meadows Day
- Friday 15 July to Sun 7 August: Big Butterfly Count
- October (*dates to be announced*): RHS/Wildlife Trusts Wild About Gardens Week

Would you like your event to be featured here? Email news@wlgf.org

Wildlife Gardening Research

Urban centres may help conserve solitary bees

A study in Northampton, reported in the *Journal for Insect Conservation* (19: 481-500) found 48 species of solitary bees (including those that are primitively eusocial) within 500m of the town centre. This is about 22% of the total species in the UK.

The results were compared with nearby meadows and nature reserves; surprisingly, the study found that solitary bees were more diverse and more abundant in the urban areas.

Of particular note were records of the nationally rare Red Data Book species Grooved Sharp-tail Bee *Coelioxys quadridentata* and its host the Four-banded Flower Bee *Anthophora quadrimaculata*.

Given the apparent reduction in bee populations in recent few decades and increasing urbanisation, this research demonstrates that urban settings can contribute significantly to the conservation of solitary and primitively eusocial bees in Britain

Nematodes used in biological pest control cause bumblebee deaths

In a [study](#) published in PeerJ, the Open Access publisher for the biomedical sciences, researchers at Liverpool John Moores University explored whether nematodes sold as biological pest control products could potentially have adverse effects on the Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*.

Two products were tested: a broad spectrum pest control agent containing the nematodes *Heterorhabditis* sp. and *Steinernema* sp., and a weevil control product containing only *Steinernema kraussei*.

Both nematode products caused $\geq 80\%$ mortality within the 96 hour test period when bees were exposed to soil containing entomopathogenic nematodes (those that cause disease in insects) at the recommended field concentration of 50 nematodes per square cm of soil.

Of particular concern is that nematodes from the broad spectrum product can proliferate in the carcasses of dead bees, and therefore potentially infect a whole bee colony.

Pesticides stop bumblebees from pollinating apple trees

In a [letter](#) published in *Nature* magazine, scientists from University of London, University of Reading, Reading and University of Guelph (Canada) report on a study in Berkshire that found that bumblebee colonies exposed to neonicotinoid pesticides spent longer foraging but visited fewer apple trees and collected less pollen. This reduced the levels of pollination.

Neonicotinoids have previously been shown to affect bees' memory and ability to learn. However, this is the first to show a negative impact on the pollination services that bees provide.



Combined stress drives bee declines - and points to how we can all help

A paper, published in [Science](#) (Vol. 347 no. 6229), examines the possible causes for the decline in species richness of wild bees and other pollinators over the past 50 years. It found that "habitat loss, which has reduced the abundance and diversity of floral resources and nesting opportunities, has undoubtedly been a major long-term driver through the 20th century and still continues today".

It also shows that the declines are attributable to factors including parasites and pathogens that have been accidentally moved around the world by human action, the intensification of agriculture, and the increasing reliance on pesticides. Climate change may further add to the problems in the future.

One of the study's conclusions was that gardeners can help reduce the dietary stress on bees and pollinators by growing appropriate bee-friendly flowers, improving the management of amenity grasslands, and providing nesting habitats.

The study comes hot on the heels of another published in *Science* (Vol. 346 no. 6215) which looked at the timings of the extinction of 23 species of bees and flower-visiting wasps that have disappeared from the UK. It found that the main period of extinction was just after the First World War and the introduction of nitrogen fertilisers and not after the Second World War as many might imagine. It also hints that we might be into a new wave of extinctions, although time will tell!

New analysis points to biodiversity loss - and its causes and effects

Researchers from the University of Reading and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology analysed records of 4,424 of the UK's wildlife species, collected between 1970 and 2009. They found that climate change and habitat loss are causing many species to decline, with pollinators and natural pest controllers most at risk.

Individual species that are particularly threat include the Common Red Ant, the Red-shanked Carder Bee and the Common Banded Hoverfly. Species associated with decomposition and carbon sequestration and those considered to be of cultural value are at less risk.

The research builds on the 2013 State of Nature report.

Wildlife Gardening and Citizen Science

Garden feeding brings in the Blackcaps

Using data from the 12-year Garden Birdwatch project, the BTO has found that the shift in the wintering distribution of Central European Blackcaps into the UK has been brought about, in part, by garden bird feeding.

The [findings](#), published in the journal *Global Change Biology*, are the first time that it has been shown



Male Blackcap nectaring on cherry blossom

that feeding birds can actually influence the distribution of a bird species across a whole country.

In the 1950s, some Blackcaps breeding in southern Germany and Austria are thought to have started to successfully migrate in a north-westerly direction to Britain for the winter, rather than heading south-westwards to wintering grounds in southern Spain.

Since then, this wintering population in Britain has rapidly increased, and research has revealed that this new migration strategy is passed on genetically.

Wildlife Gardening Policy

Land register for housing in England must exclude important brownfield sites

Interviewed in *The Planner*, Simon Marsh, Head of Sustainable Development at the RSPB, argues that George Osborne's plans for a new brownfield register of land for housing development in England must exclude those areas that have wildlife value.

The concern is that the Government's register would give automatic planning permission on all suitable brownfield sites to remove delays.

While there is a need for a significant number of new homes in England, they should be in the right place and not damage existing interest. The RSPB is currently spearheading a campaign against the development of an ex- MoD site at Lodge Hill in Kent, a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its Nightingales.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has produced [guidance](#) for planners and developers on brownfield land of high environmental value.

This comes on the back of the Westminster Government's pre-election pledge to build 200,000 new homes a year with starter homes that are "not rabbit hutches or shoeboxes, but decent, well-built, homes with gardens".

Voluntary policy approaches insufficient for the environment



An RSPB report shows that relying on the private sector to 'do the right thing' will not be enough on its own to protect nature.

Environmental regulations are the bedrock of conservation efforts, providing protection for our most threatened species and special wildlife habitats as well as the wider environment. Without these rules to protect against inappropriate development, persecution, over-exploitation and other threats, our wildlife would be in a far worse state.

However, as part of cost-cutting efforts, governments are increasingly promoting the use of voluntary approaches — such as industry self-regulation or voluntary codes of conduct — as a more 'flexible and low-cost' alternative to mandatory rules and regulations.

The report — [Using regulation as a last resort? Assessing the performance of voluntary approaches](#) — is based on a review of the effectiveness of more than 150 voluntary schemes.

The findings suggest that the impact of most voluntary schemes is limited, with over 80% of schemes performing poorly on at least one of three performance indicators. Nearly two-thirds of schemes failed to achieve the majority of their targets or industry compliance rates greater than 50%.

Examples from the UK include the failure of voluntary schemes to significantly reduce the sale of invasive non-native plant species by garden centres or to eliminate peat-based composts from the market.

The message is clear: relying on voluntary action alone will be insufficient if we're to tackle the most pressing threats that nature faces.

Norfolk cut the cutting

On 20 November 2015, Norfolk County Council agreed to stop the wholesale cutting of grass verges twice a year on the county's 6,000 miles of roads. Instead, there will be two 'intermittent' safety cuts, concentrating on bends and junctions to maintain visibility for road users.

Every other year, the second cut will be replaced with a full cut of all verges, to suppress weed and shrub growth.

While some councillors were happy with the benefits to biodiversity and the cash saving, one councillor went on record to say that: "Parishes will not want to see grass in verges up to two or three feet high".

New EU controls for high-risk invasive species

Eight popular garden plants including American Skunk-cabbage, Curly Waterweed and Water Hyacinth are some of the 37 non-native invasive plant species that now fall under new regulations (from 1 January 2016).

These species have been identified as being "of Union concern", meaning they have been assessed as posing such a high risk of invasion that a Europe-wide response is needed to limit their spread.

It will therefore become an offence in the UK to keep, cultivate, breed, transport, sell or exchange these species, or release them, intentionally or unintentionally, into the environment.

UK governments have 18 months to put measures in place to control the newly listed species and limit their spread, although two years is allowed to sell off existing trade stocks.

Garden wildlife

New mobile phone app for Grasshoppers



Meadow Grasshopper

A team from the Biological Records Centre at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology has created and released iRecord Grasshoppers, a mobile phone app for identifying and recording grasshoppers and related insects in Britain and Ireland.

Published in August 2015, it is available free for Android and Apple devices from the app stores. It comprises a field guide with species accounts, identification tips, photos, labelled illustrations and sound recordings, and allows submission of single- and multi-species sightings to the [iRecord system](#).

A photo can be attached to each record to aid verification.

The BRC website carried an interesting [summary](#) of sightings at with photos and league tables of species, recorders and counties.

At last, a field guide to bees - and it's brilliant!



With text by one of the leading field entomologists of our age, Steven Falk, and illustrated by the best in the business, Richard Lewington, the arrival of the Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland marks the end of a century-long wait - the previous one was published in 1896!

Aimed at every level of reader, and with something for everyone including beginners, it is a *tour de force* and should garner much more interest and kill in finding and identifying many of the 275 species of bees in our islands.

Some species will remain very much the domain of experts, as some species groups require collection and dissection. But this should at least ensure that many more people become aware of the main groups of species and where they are found. There is a long way to go to help people understand the array of 'home needs' of different bee species more than just Honeybees and bumblebees - here is the perfect start.

Review by Adrian Thomas

Wildlife Gardening campaigns

New report suggests a continuing decline in hedgehogs

A new report published on 21 November 2015 by People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and The British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) shows a continuing decline in hedgehog numbers, in both rural and urban landscapes.

The State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2015 follows the first comprehensive review of the status of hedgehogs nationally in 2011. Since this first report, several ongoing surveys, by PTES and others, have shown a continuing population decline. The State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2015, publicised at the special UK summit on hedgehogs, paints a stark picture: since 2000, records of the species have declined by half in rural areas and by a third in urban ones.

The loss of hedgerows and intensive farming in rural areas, along with tidy fenced-in gardens in urban and suburban locations, are just some of the threats contributing to the demise of hedgehogs.

PTES and BHPS used the Hedgehog Summit to launch a joint, [10-year conservation strategy](#) for the hedgehog in Britain are working to ensure the long-term survival of this iconic native animal and are also launching today. This report has been developed in consultation with leading experts, NGOs and statutory bodies and is designed help plan conservation action up to 2025. -

Save our Magnificent Meadows

The Save our Magnificent Meadows partnership project, led by Plantlife and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, aims to protect, conserve and restore wildflower meadows and other grasslands across the UK. It will focus on the Fermanagh grasslands of Northern Ireland, the pastures of west Wales, Scottish grasslands from Edinburgh to Aberdeenshire, the calaminarian and whin grasslands of Northumberland and traditional meadows and pastures in southern England. Watch out for National Meadows Day on Saturday 2 July 2016.



The newsletter is sent to all the members of the WLGf; you are welcome to forward it to friends or colleagues. Do encourage them to join the Forum (it's free!) by visiting www.wlgf.org and filling in the simple form.

The Wildlife Gardening Forum is a consortium of the UK's leading wildlife, conservation, gardening and horticultural organisations, from both the private and the public sectors. We now have over 620 members. Formed in 2005, our core aim is to help gardeners and decision-makers understand just how important our gardens are for wildlife.

Newsletter compiled by Adrian Thomas. All photos by Adrian unless stated.