



Sheffield &
Rotherham

Kingfisher

In this edition...

Help protect
our badgers

Wonderful wetlands

Homes for
winter wildlife

Issue 98 Autumn-Winter 2018-19

For nature, for everyone

How you
can help...

Donate to our Badger Appeal today at [wildsheffield.com/ badgers](http://wildsheffield.com/badgers)

Read more on pages 4-5

Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

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Find out more
wildsheffield.com

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Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust is registered as a charity no. 700638 and company no. 2287928. *Kingfisher* is edited by Nick Howard and Claire Hanley-Öpik, designed by Ink & Water and printed by Northend Creative Print Solutions on FSC® mixed credit paper.

If you have any comments or suggestions for future issues, you are welcome to write to the editors at the Trust's postal address or by emailing kingfisher@wildsheffield.com. If you do not wish to receive *Kingfisher* magazine in the future, please let us know by emailing mail@wildsheffield.com, calling 0114 263 4335, or writing to us at Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, 37 Stafford Road, Sheffield, S2 2SF.

Front cover image: badger by Andrew Parkinson/2020VISION

Back cover image: robin by Mark Hamblin/2020VISION



A big thank you to all
our partners and funders:



Sheffield Town Trust



Building communities. Transforming lives.



The Debs Foundation





It was great to see so many of you at our AGM this year. Demand was so high we had to move the event to a larger venue to accommodate you all! Unfortunately the weather was against us, with possibly one of the worst storms of the year

so far causing traffic problems and flooding in the city centre - another reminder of how our climate is changing and our reliance on nature, even in the heart of an urban area.

Patrick Barkham's (*Guardian* journalist and author of *Badgerlands*) talk about our relationship with badgers was both fascinating and inspiring, and his enthusiasm for this amazing species was clear. At a time when the Trust is working hard to prevent a badger cull in South Yorkshire, his discussion about alternatives that could solve the problem of bovine TB in cattle made the perfect launching pad for our Badger Appeal (see pages 4-5 for more).

At the formal proceedings of the AGM, we had two new Trustees join the Board - Niel Stewart and Daragh O'Reilly - both bringing valuable skills and experience to the Trust, with Mark Ridler stepping up to Vice Chair and Christopher Pennell remaining as Chair. Excitingly, we also welcomed our first ever Patron in naturalist, writer and broadcaster Mike Dilger, who has links to Sheffield on his father's side. I would also like to thank our three departing Trustees, David Bird, Alice Puritz and Claire Lea who have all made such important contributions to the Trust's work during their time on the Board.

As we go to print, we've had some fantastic news - our new Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership has just been awarded £2.6m by the Heritage Lottery Fund, as part of a £3.4m package of partnership projects conserving and celebrating the landscape of north-west Sheffield. Look out for more information in future editions of *Kingfisher*.

Thank you for your ongoing support and helping to make a real difference to the wildlife and people in Sheffield and Rotherham - please take a look through our 2017-18 Annual Review for a summary of what we have achieved together over the last year.

Liz Ballard
Chief Executive

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Top Badger Facts!

Badgers are a member of the *Mustelidae* family, related to stoats, pine martens and otters.

Badgers are omnivores, with a diet including fruit, small mammals and earthworms – of which they can eat several hundred in a single night!

Badgers are tremendously strong and can remove literally tons of soil over the course of digging out their setts.

Support our Badger Appeal

Sheffield and Rotherham's badgers are now at threat from the badger cull. Your donation could help us vaccinate our local badgers to deter culling and promote better biosecurity measures on farms.

Badgers are one of a handful of large native mammals left in the UK. They are protected by national and international law and are an important part of our biodiversity.

The UK has 25 per cent of the global population of the Eurasian badger *Meles meles*, so we have an international responsibility to conserve the UK population of this much-loved species.

Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium bovis*, which affects a range of mammal species. It is a particularly unpleasant disease and is very distressing for farmers who will see entire herds culled if bTB is present.

Cattle become infected by bTB from other cattle – a major issue as live herds are regularly transported around the world – and from other infected mammals, including badgers. It is not

known what proportion of bTB in cattle arises from badgers, with estimates from 20 per cent to 50 per cent.

Since 2010, the Government has been piloting a licensed shooting policy as a method of culling badgers in identified areas with the aim of delivering a reduction in confirmed new incidents of bTB in cattle herds. The culls were being deployed in 'high risk' areas, identified by their high incidence of confirmed bTB in cattle.

All 46 Wildlife Trusts including Sheffield & Rotherham are opposed to badger culling and we will not allow it on our land – a position also shared by both Sheffield City Council and Rotherham Council. We agree with the strong scientific evidence that culling badgers will make no meaningful contribution to the management of bTB and may even be counterproductive to its reduction.

Badger by Andrew Parkinson/2020VISION

The Randomised Badger Culling Trial (1998–2007) found that while culling badgers in control sites reduced bTB incidence within the cull zone, it actually increased in neighbouring areas. This is known as the 'perturbation effect', caused when infected badgers move out of the area following disturbance by the culling operation, infecting cattle and/or other badgers outside of the culling zone.

We are very conscious of the hardship that bTB causes the farming community, with an increasing number of cattle contracting this awful disease each year. We understand the need for action and from our knowledge of previous scientific cull trials have concluded that in the short-term, a nationally-coordinated, sustained programme of badger vaccination, improved biosecurity measures and improved testing and control of cattle movement would be the best means of tackling the disease.

“Following the Government’s decision to expand culling to Low Risk Areas, badgers could now be culled in Sheffield and Rotherham. We need your help to stop this happening. If we can take early action to protect our badger population, we’re hopeful we can stop culling from taking place. Please give what you can to our appeal and help us save our local badgers.”

Liz Ballard, Chief Executive,
Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

However following a consultation earlier this year, the Government announced it would extend culling to bTB hotspots in Low Risk Areas where badgers are – including Sheffield and Rotherham.

This is why we are now launching our Badger Appeal. We’re hoping to raise £50,000 to help us begin rolling out a badger vaccination programme at selected sites and/or work with local farmers and other landowners to improve biosecurity measures, preventing cattle and badgers from coming into contact with one another, reducing the chances of infection and hopefully preventing any requirement for culling in our area. Our appeal and work programme will continue until 2024.



Badger by Andrew Parkinson/2020VISION

How would a badger vaccination programme work?



Badger by Andrew Mason

If we secure enough funding from our appeal to proceed with a programme of vaccination, we will:

- identify and survey setts to be vaccinated
- train and certify a vaccinator
- obtain the necessary licenses
- acquire the vaccine
- trap, vaccinate and release badgers
- repeat this annually for five years to ensure long-term bTB immunity.

What will we do if we don't raise enough funds to go ahead with a vaccination programme?

Establishing a programme of badger vaccination will be complex, expensive and resource intensive, so if we don't receive enough funding we may not be able to deliver an effective programme. If we are unable to carry out badger vaccination, we would instead use the appeal funds to invest in resources enabling us to work directly with farmers and landowners to provide information, advice and support on improving biosecurity – implementing barriers to restrict herd movement and prevent cattle coming into contact with badgers or neighbouring herds, preventing badgers from accessing cattle feed, water and mineral sources, ensuring robust checks, testing and other preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of infection and breakout of bTB. Alternatively we will carry out land management work to improve badger habitats.

Between vaccination and the threat of badger culling coming to Sheffield and Rotherham, we think the choice is black and white.

Please support this vital work by making a donation to our Badger Appeal today at wildsheffield.com/badgers, or complete and return the donation form on the reverse of our letter or call us on 0114 263 4335.

Transforming our wetlands for wildlife



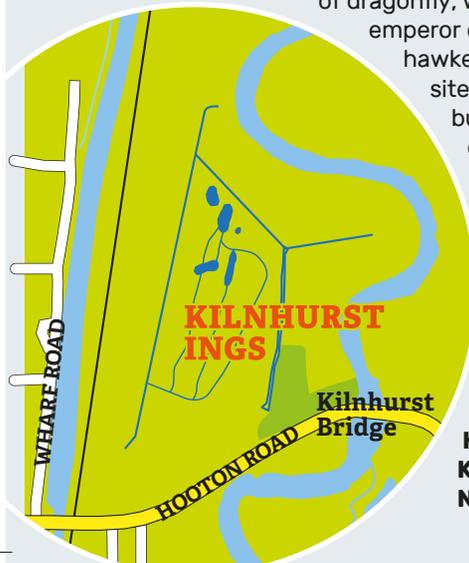
Kilnhurst Ings - Nothing to snipe about!

We've transformed this post-industrial washland on the River Don near Thrybergh into a fantastic new wet grassland habitat, making it the sixteenth nature reserve of ours to be enjoyed by both wildlife and people.

Kilnhurst Ings is one of a chain of washlands located by the River Don that hold water during times of flood, protecting the local community. It contains a mosaic of habitats including marshy grassland, ditches, mature trees and scrub.

In 2014 we started working with the Environment Agency and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council on this 15 hectare site to create a breeding habitat for snipe. Snipe nest in simple scrapes in the ground, so to encourage them we created a series of wide channels and shallow pools using a nifty piece of machinery called a rotary ditcher – a lot easier than digging them out by hand! The new features were connected to the existing ditch network by excavating a new channel. The grant helped us to put in a new sluice which lets us control the water levels and rate of flow, which means we can manage water levels in the wetland year-round. We also restored reedbed in the wet ditches and removed invasive scrub from the wet grassland.

Evidence we have successfully improved the site is easy to see; as grassland and wetland features are enhanced, meadow flowers and aquatic plants are becoming more established. This is attracting a good variety of insects, including 10 species of dragonfly, with black-tailed skimmer, emperor dragonfly and migrant hawkers being first records for the site, along with 11 species of butterfly, including the small copper. We've also recorded 53 species of birds, with brand new visitors including little egret, grey wagtail, teal and gadwall. Best of all, the snipe love it – overwintering numbers have quadrupled!



How to find Kilnhurst Ings: just off the B6090 Hooton Road, downstream of Kilnhurst Bridge, between the River Don to the east and the South Yorkshire Navigation Canal and railway line to the west.

Rotherham's Rivers - Transforming our wetlands for wildlife

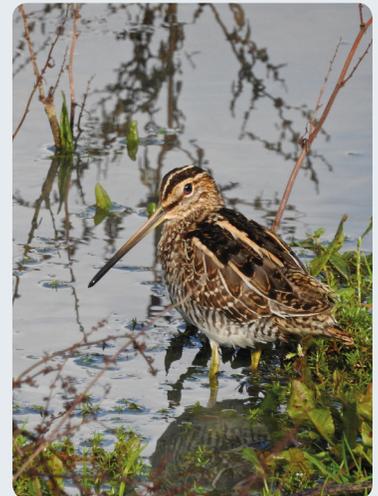
Thanks to a Yorkshire Water Biodiversity Enhancement Fund grant we've been able to improve the quality of wildlife habitat and its connectivity for key species on wetland sites along the Don and the Rother. It's all part of The Living Don, a 25-year strategic partnership programme managing the River Don catchment in South Yorkshire, creating a green network and reducing the risk of flooding in urban centres by encouraging wetland habitats.

Centenary Riverside nature reserve is a purpose-built wetland site close to the junction of the Don and the Rother near Rotherham town centre. It has an important role as a natural flood management system defending Rotherham, storing and slowing down potential flood water, protecting residential and industrial areas nearby. Here we've been doing similar reedbed restoration and scrub management work, with a big push on controlling invasive species – Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and crassula – which were threatening to overpower native plants. We've enhanced the dry grassland areas by planting wildflowers to improve food sources for the many insects using the site.

At **Woodhouse Washlands** nature reserve, between Woodhouse and Beighton, restoration work focused on improving the network of wetland areas across the reserve. Wet ditches were restored by clearing scrub, while scalloping banks created shallow water and muddy margins perfect for wildlife. Silted up ponds and marshes have been restored, and the livestock infrastructure on the site has been improved to facilitate long-term conservation grazing management.

Listen out

for the 'drumming' sound of a male snipe as it performs its aerial courtship display. It's not a call, but actually its tail feathers beating in the wind!



Fungi can be split into three categories, based on their lifestyle:

Parasitic fungi derive their food from other living organisms, such as plants, other fungi or animals. The scarlet caterpillar fungus *Cordyceps militaris* for example occurs on open grasslands, where it infects the underground pupae of moths and butterflies.

Saprophytic fungi break down dead organic material and play a vital role in the cycling of nutrients, such as the unmistakable stinkhorn *Phallus impudicus* which grows on rotten wood.

Mycorrhizal fungi live in a symbiotic association on the roots of plants: by enveloping the plant's roots they increase the root surface area and thus the ability of the plant to absorb water and nutrients. In exchange, the fungi take sugars from the plant's roots, so both species benefit. Many woodland fungi such as the fly agaric *Amanita muscaria* live symbiotically on tree roots, in this case on the roots of birch.

Glistening Inkcap by Nabil Abbas

'Shrooms and 'stools

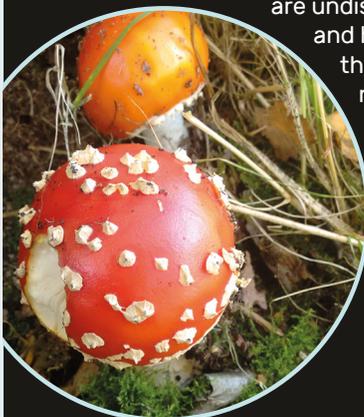
The fabulous world of fungi

To protect the fungi living on our nature reserves and ensure that all visitors can see and enjoy them, picking of fungi is not allowed on any of our reserves.



Fungi are everywhere and are critical to the healthy functioning of our ecosystems. Autumn is the best time to see them, as this is the time when the majority of the macrofungi (those visible to the naked eye) produce their fruiting bodies – mushrooms and toadstools.

Some 15,000 species of fungi have been recorded in the UK, and more than 3,000 are macrofungi. They can be found in all habitats, but especially in areas which are undisturbed and free of pollution and human inputs. For example, the pastures at Blacka Moor nature reserve have been managed under a low-input grazing regime for over 700 years, allowing a diverse community of grassland fungi to develop. We've identified 106 grassland fungi on just this single site!



Far left: fly agaric by Nabil Abbas
Left: common stinkhorn *Phallus impudicus* by Chris Lawrence
Below: velvet shank by Nabil Abbas

November

Thursday 15th

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am – 3pm

Friday 16th

Woodhouse Washlands Work Day
Furnace Lane entrance, S13 9XB
10am – 3pm

Sunday 18th

Wyming Brook & Fox Hagg Work Day 🐿️
Meeting point varies
10am – 3pm

Saturday 24th

Winter Trees Walk 🌸
Come and join us for a wintry morning walk looking at the wonderful trees of Wyming Brook. £4 members, £6 non-members. Redmires Road, S10 4QX
10am – 12pm

Wednesday 28th

Sunnybank Work Day
Broomhall Place entrance, S10 2DG
10am – 12pm

Thursday 29th

HS2 – How can we get the best deal for local wildlife and people? 🌸
As more details emerge, we will be sharing information about the Government's plans to help compensate for the impact of HS2 on wildlife sites in South Yorkshire. How can we achieve the best possible outcome for nature? This event is free for members with a suggested donation of £5 for non-members.
Aston Hall Cricket Club, Green Lane, Aston, Sheffield, S26 2BD
7 – 9pm



Reed bunting female by Rob Miller

December

Saturday 1st

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am – 3pm

Thursday 6th

Moss Valley Woodlands Work Day
Meet Hazlehurst Lane layby, S8 8BG
10am – 3pm

Friday 7th

Wildlife Gardening
37 Stafford Road, S2 2SF
10am – 12pm

Saturday 8th

Christmas Crafts at Greno Woods #ThanksToYou 🌸
Join us at this family event making seasonal decorations using traditional woodland materials. Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, the funding we receive from the Heritage Lottery Fund helps us carry out vital conservation work. To say thank you, we're offering free entry to this event to anyone with a National Lottery ticket or scratchcard. Woodhead Road, S35 8RS
10am – 12pm

Thursday 20th

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am – 3pm

Friday 21st

Woodhouse Washlands Work Day
Furnace Lane entrance, S13 9XB
10am – 3pm

January

Friday 4th

Wildlife Gardening
37 Stafford Road, S2 2SF
10am – 12pm

Saturday 5th

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am – 3pm

Thursday 10th

Moss Valley Woodlands Work Day
Meet Hazlehurst Lane layby, S8 8BG
10am – 3pm

Thursday 17th

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am – 3pm

Friday 18th

Woodhouse Washlands Work Day
Furnace Lane entrance, S13 9XB
10am – 3pm

Sunday 20th

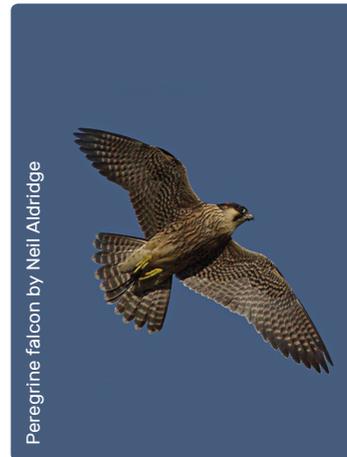
Wyming Brook & Fox Hagg Work Day 🐿️
Meeting point varies
10am – 3pm

Wednesday 23rd

Sunnybank Work Day
Broomhall Place, S10 2DG
10am – 12pm

Wednesday 23rd

Birds of Prey 🌸
Mike Price of the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group will be talking about this group's important work and the concerning decline of some of our best loved birds of prey. We will also be sharing information about the Wildlife Trust's plans to try to redress this. This event is free for members with a suggested donation of £5 for non-members.
37 Stafford Road, S2 2SF
7 – 9pm



Peregrine falcon by Neil Aldridge

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outdoor



15% discount at Cotswold Outdoor

Our supporters can claim 15 per cent off in-store and online. Just present your membership ID at the checkout, or use code **AF-WILDLIFE-M5** online.

February

Saturday 2nd

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am - 3pm

Thursday 7th

Moss Valley Woodlands Work Day
Meet Hazlehurst Lane layby,
S8 8BG
10am - 3pm

Friday 15th

Woodhouse Washlands Work Day
Furnace Lane entrance, S13 9XB
10am - 3pm

Thursday 21st

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am - 3pm

Wednesday 27th

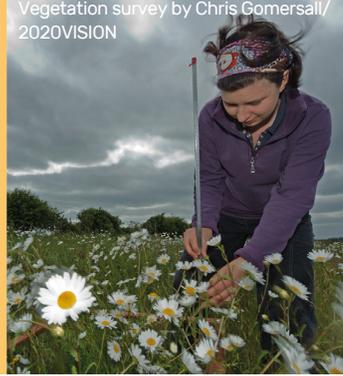
Sunnybank Work Day
Broomhall Place, S10 2DG
10am - 12pm

Tuesday 26th

Data for Nature 🌸

How do we know how wildlife is faring on our nature reserves? Come and learn more about how we gather and interpret key data to check on the health of the species and habitats under our care. This event is free for members with a suggested donation of £5 for non-members.
37 Stafford Road, S2 2SF
7 - 9pm

Vegetation survey by Chris Gomersall/
2020VISION



March

Saturday 2nd

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am - 3pm

Thursday 7th

Moss Valley Woodlands Work Day
Meet Hazlehurst Lane layby, S8 8BG
10am - 3pm

Friday 15th

Woodhouse Washlands Work Day
Furnace Lane entrance, S13 9XB
10am - 3pm

Sunday 17th

Wyming Brook & Fox Hagg Work Day 🍌
Meeting point varies
10am - 3pm

Thursday 21st

Blacka Moor Work Day
Stony Ridge car park, S11 7TW
10am - 3pm

Wednesday 27th

Sunnybank Work Day
Broomhall Place, S10 2DG
10am - 12pm

Volunteer Work Days Give us a hand!

Our Volunteer Work Days are a great opportunity to get some fresh air and get closer to the wildlife on our reserves - and our volunteers are a friendly, welcoming bunch! Community rangers Rachel and Hannah or Land Management Team officers Mikael and Marta will be on site to welcome you. For more information go to wildsheffield.com/volunteer



#StayWild

Share your sightings!



Event Key:

- 🍌 Venues or times vary or to be confirmed - check website & contact us
- 🌸 Online booking essential

Find out more...

For more information about all our events, including exact meeting points, please visit wildsheffield.com/whats-on or call **0114 263 4335**. You can also find out about events by subscribing to our newsletter, Kingfisher Online - just email mail@wildsheffield.com



Sheffield & Rotherham

Urban badger by Terry Whittaker/2020VISION



Working for Nature



Our new Working for Nature project targets people who might not otherwise get the opportunity to receive the training and experience necessary to work in conservation.

Conservation can be a difficult profession to get into – so many people want to be part of the movement but there are few opportunities for free or cost-effective training and even fewer opportunities for employment. We are hoping to address that.

The four-year Heritage Lottery-funded project runs in partnership with Sheffield & Rotherham, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trusts. Recruits study for their Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Environmental Conservation as well as receive internal training.

We'll also equip trainees with the skills employers want, such as using power tools, first aid and surveying. Once on the course trainees receive a bursary, a mentor to help with any difficulties, English and maths training, regular reviews and careers advice.

The programme will give underrepresented groups the opportunity to be trailblazers in the conservation world.

We have just taken on our first group of six new trainees as part of the project, and two of them are based at our headquarters on Stafford Road; a warm welcome to Liam Jackson and Moustafa Atta – we're confident they'll be a great asset to the Trust!



Dowey Lumb bluebells and red campion by Les Cornthwaite

Filling in the gaps

Our new Data for Nature project is a Heritage Lottery-funded initiative which will help us respond to one of the key recommendations of the *Sheffield State of Nature* report: to address gaps in the city's ecological data. The project team is working to improve the Trust's ecological monitoring and data collection capacity on our reserves over the next eighteen months, resulting in a more evidence-based approach to management.

We're looking for people to join a network of regular volunteers who will visit our reserves and carry out activities like bird surveys and habitat condition assessments. We're also looking for volunteers to help with data input and analysis. We will provide in-depth training in monitoring techniques, data management and analysis, to help you develop the ecological and surveying skills necessary for this voluntary role. If you think you could help and would like more information, please contact Julie Riley at j.riley@wildsheffield.com



Above, top: Data for Nature team: Pete Tomlin, Chris Senior, Patricia Malcolm and Julie Riley
Above, bottom: mammal surveying, by Terry Whittaker/2020VISION



Natural Neighbours at Eastwood Fun Fest, by Wayne Munro-Smith

Natural Neighbours

Our Natural Neighbours project is now in its second year with two new sites to work on and a new member of the team to help us get out into more communities to enable them to use, enjoy, improve and reclaim local greenspaces in Rotherham.

The project has focused mainly on Eldon Road Recreation Grounds in its first year. This site in the Eastwood area poses some significant challenges, but thanks to our fantastic partners, most notably Clifton Learning Partnership, we have had some great successes. The Young Rangers programme has been a highlight. This pilot engaged young people in environmental play and safe outside activities out on the park. As a result

of this successful pilot the partnership is seeking additional funds to extend the programme to an older cohort of teenagers to pilot a Young Ecologists programme in the second year.

We have also worked with the British Red Cross and other local partners to support refugees and asylum seekers through Closer to Nature Walks across sites in Rotherham and a trip out to Agden Bog nature reserve – a new reserve of ours in the Peak District. A film crew from the British Red Cross recently attended our celebration event at Centenary Riverside in Rotherham to find out from beneficiaries about what they thought of the project and the benefits it's had in their lives.

The two new sites, Boston Park and Winterhills, will see new programmes of activities take place, from our Closer to Nature Walks to environmental play sessions, habitat surveys and volunteering opportunities.

Residents are invited to get involved in the Natural Neighbours project to help Rotherham take back pride and ownership of these green spaces for the whole community. The Natural Neighbours project is supported by the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

Activities at Boston Park and Eldon Road will be taking place from October and from February at Winterhills. See wildsheffield.com/natural-neighbours for more details.

Hello...

...to Roy Hatfield Ltd, the latest Corporate Member to join Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust! The company was established in 1971 with the aim of removing and recycling troublesome waste streams previously destined for landfill, and it remains a family company, with Mark and Grant Hatfield, Roy's sons, taking on the Directors' roles and continuing the day-to-day running of the business at their site close to Centenary Riverside nature reserve.

If you'd like your company to be part of a greener future, get in touch with our Fundraising Officer Chris Grice at c.grice@wildsheffield.com



Roy, Mark & Grant Hatfield

4,000
people

signed our petition
to ban stink pits

Our Moors

Mountain hare by Mark Hamblin/2020VISION

Our iconic Sheffield moors are under threat even though they are internationally protected habitats which support important local wildlife.

The future of these incredibly special local places and the biodiversity they support is in jeopardy, due to increasingly intensive moorland management for grouse shooting. Intensive management practices threaten many of this landscape's most iconic creatures and their habitats. Birds of prey are being persecuted, in some confirmed cases illegally, through trapping, poisoning and shooting, while mountain hares, foxes and badgers are being trapped through the excessive use of snares, traps and stink pits.

The South Pennine and Peak District Moors are a globally important area for birds 'in danger' – one of only two sites identified as such in the UK – meaning the threat level to important upland species there is very high and in need of immediate action to prevent them from being lost.

Currently our moors are part of the South Pennine Moors SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and South Pennine Moors Phase 1 SPA (Special Protection Area) – European designations which legally protect these internationally important areas. Parts of our moors are already under increased pressure thanks to the degradation of peat bog through extensive burning and drainage; how will these areas be protected after Brexit?

Our uplands are wonderful 'wild' places, but they could be so much better for people and wildlife. Our moors shouldn't be a monoculture, but a fantastic mosaic of habitats supporting thriving populations of the full variety of wildlife which should live there. This includes majestic birds of prey such as the hen harrier and peregrine, as well as rare moorland species such as mountain hares.

To achieve this vision, we need landowners to move away from the intensive moorland management for grouse shooting that

is currently practised and put an end to excessive and illegal wildlife persecution. To start with, we're calling for a ban on stink pits – and over 4,000 of you signed our petition!

A more sustainable approach working with nature, must be the future of grouse 'farming'. Instead of clearing moorlands, land managers could be paid for public services which benefit people and wildlife, for example natural flood risk management measures, wildlife conservation, improving water quality and carbon storage.



Hen harrier by Mark Hamblin/2020VISION

What you can do to help

Tell us if you see snares and stink pits adjacent to – or even on – our nature reserves. Email mail@wildsheffield.com and include the date and a picture if you can.

Support our work by donating at wildsheffield.com/support-us/donate

Write to your MP – find their details on theyworkforyou.com

Low Spring Wood by Helena Dolby



Double celebration for Sheffield tree lovers

Sheffield tree lovers had a double celebration in September. Not only was it the city's first ever street tree festival, but internationally renowned writer and Cambridge University fellow Robert Macfarlane revealed his brand new poem.

'Heartwood', which Macfarlane describes as 'a spell-song, a charm against harm for all trees everywhere threatened with unjust felling', was composed especially for Sheffield trees. He was inspired to write it when he learned that Vernon Oak, a 150-year-old tree in Vernon Road, Dore, was fronting a crowdfunding campaign to raise enough money to give a copy of *The Lost Words*, a book that he and Jackie Morris created together, to every primary school in Sheffield. The first four crowdfunded copies were presented to representatives of Sheffield primary schools by our CEO Liz Ballard, just before the unveiling of 'Heartwood' at the festival.

The festival at the Merlin Theatre in Nether Edge was a thought-provoking celebration of the city's magnificent street trees, featuring writers, artists, tree experts, musicians and more. Local musicians Sally Goldsmith and Val Regan set 'Heartwood' to music and it was performed beautifully by a community choir brought together especially for the festival.

Macfarlane also unveiled two stunning pieces of artwork created to accompany the poem by the multi-award-winning illustrators, co-author Jackie Morris and Nick Hayes.

The day of celebrations was inspired by a New Year's Day tweet to Vernon Oak from Peter Fiennes, author of *Oak and Ash and Thorn*, who suggested that Sheffielders fighting to save their trees from the chainsaw should celebrate their importance with a festival.

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News in Brief

Hen Harrier Day

Many thanks to organisers Sheffield Environmental and everyone that attended Sheffield Hen Harrier Day 2018 at Devonshire Green. The event was attended by over 160 people and we had a long queue to sign our petition to ban stink pits, which we are sending to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. If you haven't done so yet, why not write to your MP and ask what they're doing to stop illegal persecution of our birds of prey?



Save our badgers!

Following a consultation earlier this year, the Government announced it would extend badger culling to even low bTB risk areas, which could include Sheffield and Rotherham. We're hoping our Badger Appeal will raise £50,000 to help us work with local landowners on badger vaccination and biosecurity, preventing any requirement for culling in our area. To find out more turn to page 4.

Brexit and nature

The fate of our wildlife depends on an Agriculture Bill which enables farmers to create and restore natural habitats. Thanks to all of you who took the time to #writeforthewild and take part in the consultation. Successful farms need thriving wildlife because crops depend on pollination, natural pest control and healthy soils. As the draft Bill progresses through Parliament, we'll keep fighting to make sure nature's voice is heard.



Helping wildlife through the winter



Turn your outdoor space into a natural sanctuary and reap the reward of seeing wildlife all through the winter months!

With a little planning your garden can be a haven for wildlife during the winter months, providing an important source of food and shelter for all kinds of species. *Kingfisher's* Claire Hanley-Öpik has been talking to Ben Keywood, an entomologist at Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, and they've come up with a seasonal guide to making the most of your patch for bugs, birds and beasts!

Jobs to do in late autumn

Try making a bug hotel – it's a great thing to do with the kids! First, gather plant stems together. They need to be pithy or hollow – elder, raspberry, thistle or bamboos are all good for this. Tie them together or put them in a box, and leave somewhere dry. It provides a great place for lacewings and ladybirds to spend the winter.

If you have a bit of space, you could make a woodpile habitat in a shady undisturbed corner for hedgehogs and toads to spend the winter in. Newts often hibernate communally under logs and wood piles too. An old wall can also provide a great habitat for toads and frogs who will spend all winter sleeping in cracks in walls.

Consider buying some winter flowering shrubs and plants to brighten up your garden and provide nectar for pollinators like moths. Plant some bulbs to provide colour and a food source for spring visitors.



Hedgehog in the garden by Jon Hawkins

Late autumn

The good news is you can do more by doing less! Don't clear away leaves or cut down plants. Leaf mulch is a good way to provide a boost of nutrients in your garden, and it also provides a great habitat for invertebrates and frogs. Ben is very keen on leaving log and leaf piles around. He explains, "Leaves offer shelter to amphibians, insects and hedgehogs. Let plant stems stand until the spring, as insects will use them for protection from the winter weather." Leave windfall apples or pears on the ground or put them on a bird table.

You'll see a lot of birds if your garden is a source of food and water. Plants with berries or seed heads will attract them, and autumn is a great time to plant trees and shrubs ready for next year. Native species are best; hawthorn, teasels, and dog roses are all good for wildlife. Ben says, "Ivy provides winter colour and its flowers are a valuable source of late nectar for insects. Some species spend the whole winter sheltering in ivy, like comma butterfly, disguised as a dead leaf."

Autumn is also the time to think about hedgehogs; numbers have declined by over 90 per cent in the last decade. Help by leaving out dog or cat food to help build up their fat reserves and making sure they have somewhere to hibernate. Stop feeding them as it gets closer to winter though otherwise they may not hibernate! Leaf piles and compost heaps are favourite spots for hedgehogs to get comfortable; just don't disturb them until spring. Always check bonfires before lighting – ideally try not to make the pile until the day of burning. Ben points out that you should never use slug pellets in your garden. If you encourage hedgehogs into your garden they will eat the slugs for you!

As Halloween rolls around, your mind might turn to bats – but don't worry, bats are harmless! Some species hibernate in cracks in walls, old buildings and lofts. "You can help bats by erecting a bat box in your garden," Ben says.

Our hedgehog homes, bird and bat boxes are all locally hand-crafted. Call 0114 263 4335 or email wildplay@wildsheffield.com to place your order!



Winter

Redpoll on feeder by Bob Coyle

With branches bare it's much easier to see birds and other animals. For those species that choose to stay and brave the winter, finding food can be difficult. When days are short and cold, birds spend most of their time trying to find enough food just to survive on. You can really make a difference to their chances by putting out food and water for them. Kitchen scraps, seeds, nuts and berries are all good. Fat balls are easy to make and can be hung out of the reach of predators like cats. Bird feeders and food are all available in your local garden centre. Use with different types of food to attract multiple species of birds.

If your garden offers a tempting snack or two you may find some unexpected animals visit your garden! Look for the tracks and signs of winter visitors after a snowfall. A lot of critters will be keeping a low profile though. Ben explains where they are hiding: "Many invertebrates like moth caterpillars spend their immature stages overwintering in the soil, or as eggs on bare branches, so don't dig flowerbeds if you can avoid it. You're also less likely to disturb ladybirds where they cluster on dead plant stems in sheltered areas. Known as the gardener's friends because they eat aphids and other pests, it makes sense to look after them in the winter."

One of the birds you are most likely to see is the robin, providing a flash of colour which makes them easy to spot as they strut around and start marking out their territories. If you want to encourage them to breed in your garden, you could put up an open-fronted nest box. January is a good time to start putting up other nest boxes, as birds are starting to look for potential nesting sites. Just remember to protect them from predators by hanging them well away from ground level or protecting them with chicken wire.



Jobs to do in winter



Blackbird in nest box by Amy Lewis

It's the best time of year to clean out bird boxes so they're ready for spring. Use hot water to clean them rather than detergent. It kills parasites just as well without leaving chemical residues. Do check them for signs of wrens first though, as they often use them communally in the winter, using the heat of their bodies together to conserve warmth.

Make sure that there is an unfrozen water supply for the creatures that haven't hibernated. A shallow dish or a bird bath is ideal. If you have a pond, try floating a tennis ball on the surface to prevent it freezing over. If it does freeze, don't try to break the ice as this will cause shock waves that could harm the wildlife. Sit a pan of hot water on the ice until it melts a hole instead.

Make fat balls for the birds. You need a large bowl with a mix of bird-friendly foods like peanuts, seeds, dried fruit, uncooked oats and grated cheese. Melt as much lard as you need (about one third lard to two thirds food), pour it onto the ingredients and mix well. Then pour into a shallow dish to set (an old margarine tub is ideal) and use string to hang it up in your garden.

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