

# GREEN CHAMPIONS



## Health - Naturally

Why not try a guided healthy activity in the outdoors. You don't have to start a more healthy routine on your own.

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum helps groups to deliver Tai Chi & Qigong in some of Birmingham's parks. It involves gentle exercise that combines breathing and relaxation with slow movements, proven to have benefits for both physical and mental health. No previous experience is necessary and these sessions are free – so why not give it a go?

Find out where you can try this out:  
<https://bosf.org.uk/projects/tai-chi/>



## Noticing Nature

Never mind, March, we know  
 When you blow

You're not really mad, Or angry or bad,  
 You're only blowing the winter away

To get the world ready for April and May. - by Annette Wynne



## Learn more - Digital idents

### Recording species data - Using iNaturalist

iNaturalist helps you identify the plants and animals around you while generating data for science and conservation. Get connected with a community of millions of scientists and naturalists who can help you learn more about nature!

What's more, by recording and sharing your observations, you'll create research-quality data for scientists working to better understand and protect nature. So if you like recording your findings from the outdoors, or if you just like learning about life - you can find out more here



<https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/about>

# City of Nature Programme update

## Actions for Nature Recovery

Spring arrives on the 19th March this year and as things start to burst into life so do our actions for nature recovery. Everyone's actions can have both very local impacts for the nature on our doorstep, but can also help global nature recovery through the choices we make.

### Starting local

2021 - The requirement for **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** (LNRS) across the whole of England were set out in the Environment Act 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-leading-environment-act-becomes-law>

2023 - DEFRA published LNRS guidance - What a local nature recovery strategy should contain.

June 2023 - The West Midland Combined Authority (WMCA) was appointed as the responsible authority for delivering the LNRS for the West Midlands region.

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment/local-nature-recovery-strategy-for-the-west-midlands/>

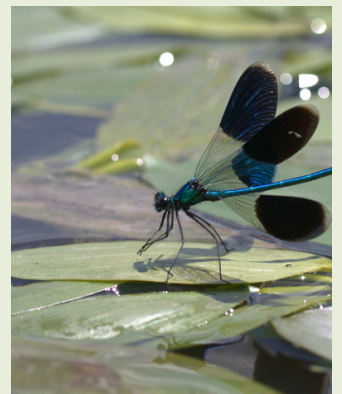
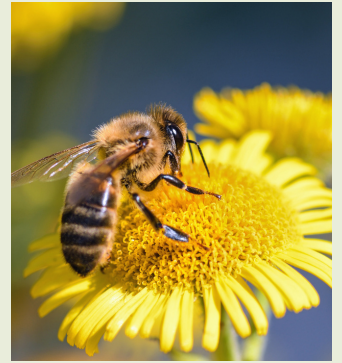
Birmingham City Council is now working with the WMCA to create the LNRS for the West Midlands which will in turn link up with the rest of England creating a network of action for nature that covers the whole country. The strategy will only be guidance for the local authorities, but some aspects are mandatory.

While this strategy is being written we still need to respond to the Environment Act 2021 which includes halting the decline of species by 2030 by: ensuring any new development has a net gain in biodiversity, changing the way we manage green spaces, cleaning up our air, protecting the health of our rivers and reforming the way in which we deal with waste.

### Globally

We need to try and tackle deforestation overseas by making good choices when we buy goods. For example refusing those that have a negative impact in forests across the world.

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230418175226/https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/>



Please contact us at [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk) if you would like to find out more about the City of Nature Programme.



## Connect with other Green Champions:



Please come and join us for our online lunchtime chat via Zoom on Friday 22nd March 2024 ( drop in between 1pm to 2pm)

If you receive this Newsletter by email you will already have been sent the link to join, don't forget to put a note in your diary : )

If not you can get the link by emailing us on [Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk) and we will email you the link.





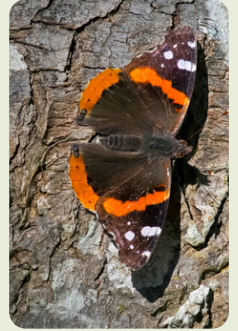
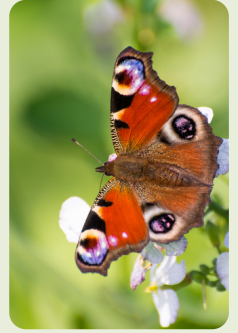
# Nature's Calendar - Butterflies appear

The Woodland Trust's Natures Calendar is partnering with British Science Week to get the UK looking out for seasonal events this spring.

Tune in to their webinar on 14th March at 6pm and hear from wildlife presenter Liz Bonnin and the Nature's Calendar team about how our seasons are changing over time, the importance of the "spring index" calculation and how you can take part in recording for Nature's Calendar. Click here to find out more:

<https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2024/british-science-week/> 

But in the meantime you can look out for the first sightings of butterflies on any sunny, not too windy days. Peacocks and Red admirals both have very obvious markings when they are basking in the spring sunshine. The markings of the peacock are unmistakable - big, blue 'eyes' just like a peacock's tail feathers. It can be seen feeding on flowers during warm spells, and overwinters as an adult. The Red Admiral is a fairly large black, white and red butterfly, an impressive visitor to our gardens. It will also frequent all kinds of other habitats, from seashores to mountains! Adults sometimes hibernate, and may be seen flying on warm days throughout the year, although they are most common in the summer and early autumn. The caterpillars feed on common nettles.



<https://butterfly-conservation.org/>



## World Wildlife Day - 3rd March

<https://wildlifeday.org/en/about> 

On 20 December 2013 at the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), March 3 was declared United Nations World Wildlife Day (WWD). This day holds significance as the day that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed in 1973. People everywhere rely on wildlife and biodiversity-based resources to meet our needs - from food, to fuel, medicines, housing, and clothing. For us to enjoy the benefits and the beauty that nature brings us and our planet, people have been working together to make sure ecosystems are able to thrive and plant and animal species are able to exist for future generations. So, let's celebrate wildlife and the important conservation work being done around the world!

For World Wildlife Day 2024, they are exploring digital innovation and highlighting how digital conservation technologies and services can drive wildlife conservation, sustainable and legal wildlife trade and human-wildlife coexistence, now and for future generations in an increasingly connected world. We are in the midst of a global digital revolution that is breaking down barriers to people-centered digital governance and to equal opportunities for all to unleash the power of digital transformation. The 'digital divide' is slowly narrowing, with better connectivity and Internet access reaching 66 per cent of our global population. However, we know not everyone has access to the internet not only across the world but also in the UK. In Birmingham we want to work with other organisations to try and make digital technologies more accessible.



# Plant a flower Day - 12th March

Plant a flower Day is another one of the “national” days that is hard to pin down to where this came from (probably USA) or how we should celebrate it. But - it seems like a really good idea so we’re going with it.

It’s a celebration of the beauty and the joy of gardening and encourages people to plant flowers, whether it’s in their own garden, community gardens, or even in pots indoors. The day serves as a reminder to embrace the wonders of nature and take part in the process of nurturing and growing plants. It’s an opportunity to create a more vibrant and colourful environment while experiencing the therapeutic benefits of gardening.

Planting flowers plays a crucial role in supporting biodiversity, attracting pollinators like bees, butterflies and helps contribute to the overall health of our planet. Flowers are essential in the reproduction of plants through pollination, leading to the fruits and seeds that feed countless species, including humans.

In a world where urbanization and technology can also distance us from nature, Plant a Flower Day serves as a gentle nudge to reconnect with the earth and experience the therapeutic benefits of gardening.



<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/about-us/our-impact/>



# International Day of Forests - 21st March

**International Day of Forests 2024 will be celebrated on the theme, ‘Forests and Innovation’.**

The theme for each International Day of Forests is chosen by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) organize the Day in collaboration with governments, CPF, and others.

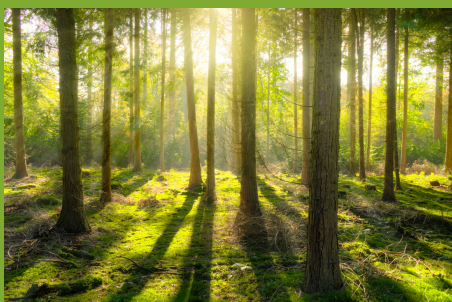
The UN General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed 21 March as the International Day of Forests in 2012. The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.

On each International Day of Forests, countries are encouraged to undertake local, national, and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns. In Birmingham we have many sites that have beautiful woodlands, wooded areas, gardens and trees. All together we call all these trees Birmingham’s Urban Forest. Birmingham Treepeople (BTP) <https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/> are a local charity and volunteer network, they help Birmingham celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of trees every day.

Find out more about Birmingham’s Urban Forest and the innovations that have been developed through the National Trusts Urban Forest Accelerator project by following BTP on social media.

Find out more about England's other urban forests here:

<https://forestrycommission.blog.gov.uk/2023/12/01/national-tree-week-2023/>





# Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

## Focusing on: Centre Park - Castle Vale

Castle Vale Centre Park - Kemble Drive, Birmingham B35 6QS.  
Square in shape it covers just under 6 acres of public open space – and is a nod to the aviation history of the area.

The land was previously an RAF airfield next to a factory which built Spitfire aircraft, the fighter plane which is renowned for its role in the Battle of Britain. The park opened in 2003 after being designed in consultation with the local community. It features a formal garden and seating area, along with ornamental and non-ornamental areas and dedicated conservation zones aimed at attracting wildlife.

There are play facilities for children of different ages, which include a multi-use games area for football, basketball and other games, as well as space for events and a daily mile walking route. And in a tribute to its heritage a Spitfire-themed gateway was incorporated into its design, providing an appropriate entrance to the park.



[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory\\_record/9093/castle\\_vale\\_centre\\_park](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9093/castle_vale_centre_park)



## Earth Hour - 23rd March 8:30pm to 9:30pm

Since the beginnings of Earth Hour in 2007, it has been known for the “lights off” moment, with individuals from around the globe switching off their lights to show symbolic support for the planet and to raise awareness of the environmental issues affecting it.

More than 15 years later, we are now at a tipping point with our climate and nature crises, putting at risk the fate of our one home and all our futures. We are on course to breach by 2030 the 1.5°C global temperature increase limit set by the Paris Climate Agreement, and nature - the source of our very livelihoods and one of our biggest allies against the climate crisis - is also under severe threat, facing alarming and unprecedented rates of loss globally.

The next 7 years are therefore crucial to all our futures - we have to stay under the 1.5°C climate threshold to avoid irreversible damage to our planet, and we need to reverse nature loss by 2030. With this 2030 goal in mind, Earth Hour decided they too must step things up. So in 2023, they breathed new life into Earth Hour - creating the Biggest Hour for Earth.

How can you get involved - switch off their lights, in fact switch anything off that you safely can and give an hour for Earth, spending 60 minutes doing something - anything - positive for our planet.

In the dimmed light, in the quiet, talk, look at the stars, snooze, relax, question, contemplate or consider. Feel connected to thousands of other people giving an hour back to the earth.



# Birmingham City of Nature - Green City Action I2

Over 100 Parks webpages detailing what our parks offer (I2).

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our\\_future\\_city\\_plan\\_ofcp/2518/our\\_future\\_nature\\_city\\_plan](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our_future_city_plan_ofcp/2518/our_future_nature_city_plan)



## Involved City and Involved Parks:

Involving citizens through the delivery of actions in this plan will mean that there is a greater understanding of the challenges the city faces and ensure local people have a voice in how their area is run. Maintaining digital access to information about parks and providing digital solutions to keeping in contact can help more people to connect and be involved. Not forgetting more traditional methods of communication and engagement.



## Your Space - Your Words - Your Views

From: Humera Sultan - Public Health Consultant

I've been reflecting on what it was like to live and work when the first Covid lockdown was announced in March 2020. I had just started working as our Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) Director in Birmingham. We had planned a whole host of face to face sessions with communities. And then we had to completely change our thinking. How would we speak to people if we weren't able to meet them in person? How would we deliver parks based sessions if we couldn't be outdoors in a park?

Covid brought massive challenges and hardships for families and communities. I still remember my mum touching my son, Esa's, hand through a glass window and the heartache that caused. But what started was this new way of meeting- we did daily video calls so she could still 'see Esa' and catch up with him.

Work meetings switched to online pretty much overnight. And community organisations started to support their service users with using digital tech like WhatsApp and Zoom.

I'll never forget seeing a video of a New York ranger giving a tour of one of her parks via Facebook livestream. I would never have been able to enjoy that without technology. Or the weekly digital session to meet an animal at the Nature Centre in Birmingham. The meercats are still my favourite!

Even though our lives have returned pretty much back to pre Covid times, I want to see more of the digital engagement that I think we have lost. It allowed so many more people to connect with nature and with each other. We started our mantra for FPA with parks need people and people need parks - digital absolutely has a place to help with that.





# Birmingham's Route to Zero - Climate Action

The Big Plastic Count - March 11th to 17th

Plastic is part of the climate change problem. Almost all plastics are made from fossil fuels - coal, oil, or gas. Therefore plastic emits greenhouse gases at every single stage of its lifecycle; if we produce less plastic, we can reduce emissions. The remove, reduce, reuse, refill, recycle economy is a vital step towards tackling climate change.

To help understand our use of plastic you can join in and count your plastic for one week – 11-17 March 2024. Thousands of schools, households, community groups and businesses will be coming together to count their plastic waste and The Big Plastic Count wants you to join them.

Almost a quarter of a million people took part in The Big Plastic Count in 2022. It revealed that almost two billion pieces of plastic packaging are being thrown away a week.

Find out more here: <https://thebigplasticcount.com/faq>

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero you can contact the team on:  
[routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk)



## Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with us for nature's recovery across Birmingham and the Black Country; protecting, restoring and creating wildlife-rich, accessible spaces that benefit people and wildlife. Get involved and find out more about their events in Birmingham and the Black Country.

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

## BOSF - Find you local Friends of Open Spaces Group

BOSF offers opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. They produce regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. They can also put you in touch with other groups who have experiences that might be useful to you.

<https://bosf.org.uk/members/>



Follow us on: @NaturallyBirmi1



Check our website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/>



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