

GREEN CHAMPIONS



Noticing Nature

April Blossoms float
for a moment suspended
Then dance to the ground

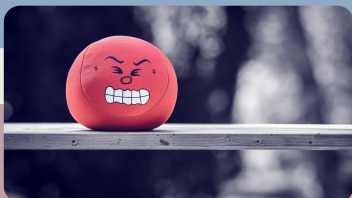


Health - Naturally

April is stress awareness month.

Stress is usually a reaction to mental or emotional pressure. It's often related to feeling like you're losing control over something, but sometimes there's no obvious cause. When you're feeling anxious or scared, this might cause physical symptoms such as a faster heartbeat. If you're stressed all the time it can become a problem. Taking time to connect with nature can help to provide moments of calm that have been shown to help our mental health even in some of the most difficult times we have recently faced. Have a look at this Healthy Brum video from 3 years ago when access to nature helped us to cope through lockdown:

https://youtu.be/x6_Bb4VYbUc?si=fptZswZJmGnlcIGW



Learn more - About bumblebees

Try Spotting bumblebees in your garden, or on walks.

The Bumblebee Trust wants you to develop your knowledge and understanding of bumblebees and the challenges and threats they face. They also want to help empower the next generation to become guardians of bumblebees and secure their future. Their activity sheets for children 11+ will introduce bumblebee science and the UK's 24 different species, the interaction between people and bumblebees, including food security and the devastating impacts of habitat loss and climate change.



<https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/learning-zone/>



City of Nature Programme update

The Future Parks Standard - Accelerating Environmental Justice

We want all Birmingham Parks to be fair, healthy, green, valued and we want you to be involved with their design, care and use.

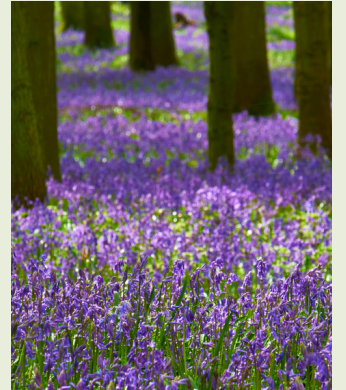
Anyone and everyone can get involved in caring for Birmingham's parks and green spaces. Whether you think there should be more benches, more bins, more flowers, more activities, or perhaps you want them to be less litter and see parks used better. Or perhaps your park is very good already but you want to help keep it that way or improve it even more.

We use a scoring and management system for parks called the **Birmingham Future Park Standard**. It is based on the Green Flag standard for parks and you can find out more about the process here:

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/birminghams-future-parks-standard/>

How do you think your park would score?

- Fair – is it welcoming, accessible, clean, and safe?
- Green – are there different trees and plants, are there habitats for wildlife, is it managed sustainably?
- Healthy – are there walking routes, quiet areas, activities, is the park used for social prescriptions; and play value?
- Involved – can you find out what's happening in your park, can you influence what is happening?
- Valued – do we know the worth of what the park provides, is that shared, are there ways to raise extra funds?



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



Come and Connect with other Green Champions:



Please come and join us for our online lunchtime chat via Zoom on Friday 26th April 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 and we will email you the link.



Nature's Calendar - Cuckoos and House Martins


The Woodland Trust's Natures Calendar

You can help The Woodland Trust track the effects of weather and climate change on wildlife near you. What effect has recent weather had on wildlife? Does climate change affect timings in nature? Join Nature's Calendar and help scientists discover answers to these questions. From leaf buds bursting to blackberries ripening, let us know what's happening near you. You'll be contributing to a long biological record that dates back as far as 1736.

In order to make sure their records are comparable and consistent you can only record events that occur in specific species. For April this includes the arrival of the cuckoo and House martins.

The list of species was selected using the following criteria:

- Recorded extensively in the past
- Responds strongly to changes in seasonal temperatures
- Common across the UK
- Widely-recognised and well-loved
- Found in both rural and urban situations

Take a look at the full list of [species and events that you can record](#). 



Earth Day - 22nd April



The Earth Day Organisation

"Planet vs. Plastics unites students, parents, businesses, governments, churches, unions, individuals, and NGOs in an unwavering commitment to call for the end of plastics for the sake of human and planetary health, demanding a 60% reduction in the production of plastics by 2040 and an ultimate goal of building a plastic-free future for generations to come."

To achieve a 60% reduction by 2040, EARTHDAY.ORG's goals are: (1) promoting widespread public awareness of the damage done by plastic to human, animal, and all biodiversity's health and demanding more research be conducted on its health implications, including the release of any and all information regarding its effects to the public; (2) rapidly phasing out all single use plastics by 2030 and achieving this phase out commitment in the United Nations Treaty on Plastic Pollution in 2024; (3) demanding policies ending the scourge of fast fashion and the vast amount of plastic it produces and uses; and (4) investing in innovative technologies and materials to build a plastic-free world.

<https://www.earthday.org/planet-vs-plastics/> 

Can you help to: Remove, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse or Recycle or at least carefully dispose of plastics?



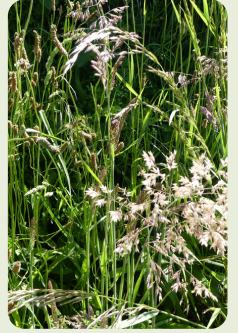
Creating A to Bee roads - helping biodiversity

A new initiative to increase biodiversity, reduce the council's carbon footprint and help mitigate elements of climate change is set to be implemented during the 2024 grass growing season. The pilot programme, entitled A to Bee Roads, will change the frequency of mowing on around 100km of central reservations and will act as a long-term, more strategic approach following the trial of No Mow May.

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/1433/a_to_bee_roads_%E2%80%93_reducing_mowing_and_helping_the_city_s_ecology

Although No Mow May has grown in popularity, the ecological value of ceasing mowing for four weeks alone is negligible. Ceasing all mowing of all previously mown grass is also not desirable as some flora communities only survive as the repeated cutting replicates grazing by herbivores. So, we have to be strategic which is why we have designed the A to Bee Roads pilot for this year, which will cover 51 wards, compared to just four wards covered by our No Mow May experiment. And those wards not covered already have a number of sites that are of value for urban wildlife including pollinators, have areas of high ecological value or will see trials in open green space as part of an emerging 'Birmingham's Buzzing Parks' project.

Signage showing places where the scheme will be implemented will be placed on the central reservations. To ensure the safety of all road users and pedestrians, edge cuts and visibility – giving road users a clear view of oncoming traffic - will be retained.



April - Rabbits, chicks, primroses and eggs

Before January and February were added to the year by King Numa Pompilius in around 700 BCE, April was the second month of the Roman calendar year (March was the first). Then around 450 BCE, April was rearranged into the fourth slot, and was assigned 29 days. With the introduction of the Gregorian calendar by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, an extra day was added, and we've been able to say "30 days hath April" ever since. There are a few theories behind April's name. One is rooted in the Latin Aprilis, which is derived from the Latin aperire meaning "to open" which could be a reference to the opening or blossoming of flowers and trees. Another theory is as months are often named after gods and goddesses, it could come from the Greek Aphrodite. But no one is certain. So what about the egg bringing Easter Bunny? It is believed to be connected to Pagan tradition, and is thought to have become common in the 19th Century. Rabbits usually give birth to a big litter of babies (called kittens), which are seen as a symbol of new life. In Germany in the 1700s children would build nests, and leave carrots out for the "Osterhase" or "Oschter Haws" - the Easter bunny. Legend has it that the Easter Bunny lays, decorates and hides eggs for good children, as they are also a symbol of new life. This is why some children might enjoy Easter egg hunts as part of the festival. The Easter bunny doesn't do all the work alone though! In Switzerland, Easter eggs are thought to be delivered by a cuckoo who suddenly appears at this time of year and in parts of Germany by a fox.



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Focusing on: Calthorpe Park

Calthorpe Park - Entrances on Edward Road, Cheddar Road and Speedwell Road. Car parking at the Cheddar Road entrance. Buses 45 and 47 stop in front of the park. Nearest stations New Street and Five Ways.

The park is divided into two sections north-west and south-east of the River Rea. The south-east side is known as the Calthorpe Extension. The extensive green space was created in 1857 and named after the Calthorpe family of Edgbaston Hall - Frederick Gough, 4th Baron Calthorpe, provided the land. At the formal opening by Prince George, Duke of Cambridge, the ceremony featured a triumphal arch and was followed by a ball and free meal for 700 soldiers and pensioners. The park contains a plinth for an 1855 memorial to Sir Robert Peel founder of the modern police force. The associated statue was re-located and is now outside the Tally Ho West Midlands Police Learning and Development Centre on Pershore Road, Edgbaston. In the north-west section the mostly flat pathways are inter-connecting, with the surrounding areas on Speedwell Road and Edward Road used by walkers who enjoy the tree-lined pathways. A Lodge House stands in the north-west corner of the park.



https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/354352/calthorpe_park



Tree Tales - Please share your stories with Birmingham Treepeople

Tree Tales: Memories of Nature



Everyone has a Tree Tale: growing up visiting the local park with Mom, meeting friends to climb the weirdest tree together, playing football on the playing fields with Dad, picking flowers to make daisy chains, barbequing in a community greenspace with all the family.

There are over 600 greenspaces in our city, with 1.1 million people from hundreds of different nationalities, and we want to learn about your unique experiences that make life special, without even realising, because nature is always there. We can come together through our shared experience of our surroundings, creating diverse and community-driven encounters that will bring people together. Birmingham TreePeople have spent 2023 working with many different partners and organisations, for various projects, all in the name of raising awareness of tree benefits and getting more trees in the ground. Underneath the overarching canopy of tree-related events, boiling down to the individual, we all have a relationship with nature. We want to hear your tree tale and how you connected with nature. We wrote many new tales this year to add to our collection, but we want to know what YOUR favourite recollection of nature is, because our urban parks and greenspaces are pockets of wellbeing just waiting to be dipped into. Tell us your nature memory, send us your favourite images, and highlight what you hope to see more of in the future, so we can capture the essence of how residents truly feel about their environment.

You can submit your Tree Tale in any way you like; you can write a poem, a short story, a single sentence. Feel free to include more than one photo if it helps you tell your story, or you could even submit a video for those who aren't camera-shy. <https://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/trees-in-birmingham/tree-tales/>

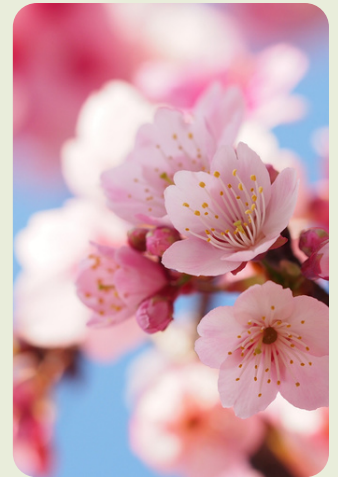


So - Tell us your Tree Tales! email stories and picture to: engagement@birminghamtreepeople.org.uk

National Trust - Helping Communities Blossom

The National Trust are working with partners to give communities more access to nature by creating green spaces and planting blossom trees in towns and cities across the UK. These natural places will give people a space to reflect and celebrate the beauty of spring, year after year.

The first blossom spaces were created in east London, an area that saw some of the worst impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. Since then, many other blossom-inspired spaces have followed in London's footsteps. Blossom spaces were created in Birmingham, Leeds and Swindon planted over 2022 and 2023, while further blossom trees are due to be planted in Belfast, Durham and Cardiff over 2024. Also, a blossom garden is opening in April 2024 in Coventry as a City of Culture legacy. Birmingham was once described as a town ringed by blossom, as it was surrounded by gardens with blossoming trees. The National Trust worked with residents, schools and community groups to create a new, symbolic ring of blossom and bring more blossom to Birmingham. Thanks to support from the players of People's Postcode Lottery, more than 500 blossoming trees were planted around the city's iconic Number 11 circular bus route.



<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/our-cause/communities/helping-communities-blossom>

Birmingham's Nature Recovery - Habitat Surveys

On a national scale an area bigger than the size of Hertfordshire is to be dedicated to fast tracking nature recovery as six new landscape-scale nature recovery projects are launched by Natural England and the government. The multi-partnership collaborative projects covering 176,000 hectares of land across England – from the Tees Estuary to the South Downs – will create improved and better-connected habitats for wildlife and improve public access to nature. The projects will strengthen the national Nature Recovery Network and showcase delivering nature recovery at scale. The projects, announced last year, will help to manage flooding and wildfire risks, improve carbon stores and build diverse habitats for wildlife such as the endangered wart biter cricket and the elusive twite.

In Birmingham we are working with the West Midlands Combined Authority, Natural England and The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust to understand the state of Birmingham's urban habitats some of which are already recognised for their importance to nature like Sutton Park which is a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9164/sutton_park

But all green spaces in the city offer or could offer homes to wildlife if we managed them for that reason. We will be surveying, recording and suggesting actions for all of Birmingham's parks and green spaces over the next 10 years.

https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Nature_Recovery_Network_Handbook_LO_SINGLES.pdf




Birmingham City of Nature - Involved City Action

New and more flexible ways for citizens to participate and to get involved in volunteering in green spaces; and becoming Green Champions (I5)

As a resident you can:

- Visit your local park.
- Explore the park with friends or other families.
- Look out for information about activities taking place in your local park.
- Sign up to become a Green Champion to help promote your park and learn new skills.
- Look out for children's activities through Little and Young Green Champions.
- Take time to notice nature and share what you find.
- Volunteer with a Park Friends Group or help to set one up.

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50273/our_future_city_plan_ofcp/2518/our_future_nature_city_plan/2 



Your Space - Your Words - Your Views

We would really like to hear from you.

We know that sharing ideas, asking questions, telling others about your work, volunteering experiences, things happening in schools, even the problems you face trying to improve things really help us all to keep up the great work that is happening across the city. My role in the project means I get to hear people's stories as we talk about people, green spaces and nature. These stories, hopes, anecdotes and memories become information that helps to shape how Birmingham's green spaces are designed, cared for and used.

There are formal ways to be involved in what happens in Birmingham, but it is often the ideas brewed over a cup of tea, or memories shared when making a daisy chain or concerns raised when we are just walking around a park listening for bird song that include the real gems. These might be called casual conversations but they are just as important when creating a City of Nature.

You can share your ideas, views or stories by emailing us on:
Cityofnature@Birmingham.gov.uk

Or you can join events run by all the different City of Nature Alliance Organisations: Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF), Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS), Legacy WM, Birmingham Treepeople, Patchwork Meadow, Learning Journey, The Parakeet, Ecobirmingham, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Canals and River Trust and Community Environmental Trust (CET)

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/birmingham-city-of-nature-alliance/>



Birmingham's Route to Zero - Climate Action

The West Midlands Combined Authority and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games are offering Carbon Literacy training to anyone across the West Midlands, as part of the Games' sustainability ambition to create a carbon neutral legacy for the region.

The Carbon Literacy training has been developed to empower you to make a positive impact on climate change and help to influence others around you to drive action.

You'll learn about the science behind climate change, how it's affecting both the world and our region, how you can influence others to take action and what you can do personally. On completion of the course and having successfully committed to carbon-reducing actions – you'll receive accreditation as formally Carbon Literate.

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment/carbon-literacy-training/>

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero you can contact the team on:
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/>



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

