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Wilder Derbyshire



Derbyshire
Wildlife Trust

Wilder by nature

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On the cover

Pine marten © Mark Hamblin

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Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

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Patricia Rice
Chair

Welcome

It is a great privilege to write my first editorial as Chair of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

At the AGM last September, I had the honour of taking on this role at an exciting moment for the Trust. Across Derbyshire, we are seeing growing momentum for nature's recovery. From the rewilding of the former golf course land at Allestree Park to ambitious landscape-scale work in the Peak District and the Trent Valley, the Trust is helping to shape a future where nature, climate and people thrive together.

What inspires me most is the scale of the ambition. Through the Wilder Derbyshire 2030 strategy, the Trust is not simply protecting the fragments of nature that remain. Instead, it is working with farmers, landowners, communities, businesses, and local authorities to restore wildlife across whole landscapes and neighbourhoods.

This is about more than conservation. Nature underpins our health, our economy and our sense of belonging. When we restore rivers, wetlands, grasslands and woodlands we also create places where people can connect with nature, learn new skills and feel part of something hopeful and practical.

Of course, none of this happens without people. Our members, volunteers, supporters and partners are the driving force behind this work. Your commitment makes it possible to be bold and to think long term about the future of Derbyshire's landscapes and wildlife.

As Chair, I am proud to support the team, trustees and partners who are leading this work. Together we are building something that future generations will thank us for: a county that is richer in wildlife, fairer for people and more resilient in the face of climate change.

Thank you for being part of that journey.

Patricia Rice

Chair



10



16



20



24



28

Features

- 4 News
- 10 Making Space for Nature: A New Chapter for Derbyshire's Wildlife
- 14 Reintroductions for Landscape Resilience
- 18 Plant a Butterfly Box
- 20 Wilder Chesterfield: Communities Taking Action for Nature
- 22 Wild Peak: Restoring Nature Together
- 24 Willington Wetlands: The People Behind Our Beaver Monitoring
- 26 Wildlife Wonders
- 28 A Wilder Future for Everyone: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- 30 Volunteering for Nature Your Way
- 32 My Wildlife Story
- 34 Members Update

Derbyshire News

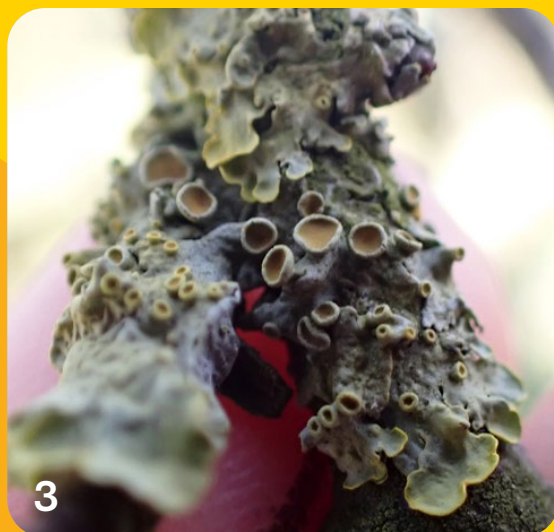
SPOTTED

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1. Lesser Celandine – Whaley Bridge
February 2026 © Jon Mortin
2. Hair Ice Crust – Grin Low Woods
February 2026 © Marc Whitlock
3. Common Orange lichen
Xanthoria parietina – Whaley bridge
February 2026 © Jon Mortin
4. Dock Hyper Weevil
Hypera rumicis cocoon – Buxton
June 2025 © Jon Mortin



Moor, moor, moor for nature and people!

Middleton Moor: secured by our community

Thousands of you came together to help raise £182,000 towards securing 135 acres at Middleton Moor, alongside vital funding from Biffa Award, demonstrating just how much people care about protecting nature close to home.

This exciting space will be restored and rewilded to create wildlife-rich habitats, including wildflower meadows buzzing with pollinators, healthy

grasslands for birds such as skylarks and curlews, and scrub and woodland providing homes for species like bullfinches and tawny owls.

As we move forward, early work will focus on surveying and planning, guided by natural processes to allow nature to lead the way, while also improving opportunities for people to connect with this beautiful landscape.

Looking ahead

Securing Middleton Moor marks an important step in our pioneering vision to secure landscape-scale sites across Derbyshire, designed to create a connected network of nature-rich spaces close to where people live. This landscape will provide lasting space for wildlife and help shape a wilder Derbyshire for generations to come.

Why not plan a visit and explore?

Address: Land off Water Lane Middleton by Wirksworth

OS Map Reference: SK26878 55635

What3Words: ///victor.hobbyists.flesh

Latest News

Special delivery: white storks make historic return

As part of our long-term strategy to restore lost species, we are excited to announce an ambitious new project to reintroduce white storks and establish a healthy breeding population in the Midlands, more than 600 years after they vanished from the region.



White stork



Willington Wetlands

Supported by more than £300,000 from Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund, the project is centred at Willington Wetlands, where we plan to create a purpose-built white stork enclosure in consultation with Celtic Rewilding, specialists running a captive breeding facility just over the border in Staffordshire.

The enclosure will be located within a low-disturbance conservation area and is designed to be predator-proof and adaptable for future species recovery projects. It will support breeding, chick development, and carefully managed soft releases into the wider landscape. A pair of flightless storks will also be introduced to help attract wild birds moving through the Trent Valley and encourage settlement and breeding.

This will be a community-led project, with volunteers engaged in habitat restoration across the reintroduction site. We are also developing a digital experience to engage visitors and those who cannot access the site, creating a platform for volunteers to share sightings, photos, and videos.

As a key indicator of healthy wetland ecosystems, white storks play an important role in enhancing biodiversity, regulating small animal populations, building and abandoning nests that support other

birds, and connecting different sites as they fly between them. The endearing species, often depicted delivering babies in beloved stories, also inspire a connection between people and nature.

The iconic native species would have been present across the county until the 14th century, when loss of habitat and hunting led to their disappearance. More recently, sightings have increased, including birds recorded flying over Willington Wetlands in 2024 and nearby in 2025, but none have yet stayed to breed.

Willington Wetlands has been identified as a critical stepping stone for stork recovery. The 113-acre reserve sits beside the River Trent, a key ecological corridor, and hosts dynamic wetland habitat shaped by natural rewilding processes, including the activity of beavers. These processes are creating wet grassland, open pools and reedbeds that provide ideal foraging and nesting conditions for storks.

We could not be more excited about bringing white storks back to the Midlands. This project isn't just about returning an iconic bird; it's about reigniting wonder for nature.

The white storks are expected on site this summer. Follow our social channels to find out more.



If you don't count it, it doesn't count!

Did you know that Derbyshire Wildlife Trust hosts the **Derbyshire Biological Records Centre**? We collate and combine data on all species across Derbyshire. We work closely with County Recorders, local natural history groups, charities and individuals to collect new records on an annual basis. It's so important that we know what is out there – even the common species we need to know about. So get sharing today!

Share what you're seeing in your local area:
derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/record-sighting

SCAN ME



Goldfinch © Amy Lewis



Making Space for Nature

A New Chapter for Derbyshire's Wildlife



Matt Buckler
Executive Director of Strategy and Innovation

We are nature. From the Peak District's moorlands and rivers to Derby's streets and gardens, we're all part of the same living system. Nature provides clean air, water, climate stability, food, and meaning. Yet the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries globally, with many of us feeling increasingly disconnected from the natural world around us.

Our Making Space for Nature programme aims to expand nature, rather than just protect what little remains. It's based on proven principles: more spaces, bigger spaces, better connected, and better managed – in our case, shaped by natural processes.



Peak District National Park



From Protecting Fragments to Creating Abundance

For over a century, nature conservation focused on protecting special places – the best remaining examples of particular habitats, sites where rare species still survived. That approach worked for a long time; it saved fragments of Derbyshire's natural heritage that would otherwise have disappeared.

But those sites became some of the only places where nature could flourish. Across the wider landscape, common wildlife - the butterflies, birdsong, wildflowers that once surrounded previous generations – quietly vanished.

If we want nature to recover, and return at scale, we need to make more space for it.

Reinvesting in Nature's Recovery

Making Space for Nature finds new ways to care for land across Derbyshire. Using approaches like Biodiversity Net Gain, nutrient neutrality and carbon capture, we work with the land ecologically, letting natural processes help nature recover.

This opens real opportunities. Land of lower ecological significance gives us the freedom to try something different. Rather than constant intervention, we create more untamed space, where nature shapes its own future. Natural processes do the work. Seeds arrive, vegetation establishes, wildlife moves in. And, over time, ecological value increases.

We're strategic about where we buy land too. Sites next to existing reserves help expand and strengthen those spaces. Bigger spaces – 20, 50, even 200 hectares – let natural processes happen properly. By focusing on creating connected areas rather than scattered pockets, we support wildlife's recovery at landscape-scale, which is proven to work better for nature. But we're still passionate about ecologically rich sites, which remain vital and irreplaceable. Many are already looked after by us, other organisations and local communities.

Making Space for Nature is about actually increasing the land and water available for wildlife across Derbyshire, helping to deliver our vision to rewild at scale. Thanks to the generosity of local people, funders, and landowners who have donated funds or gifted land for nature, we've already secured significant new spaces where recovery can begin immediately. These are early but powerful examples of what's possible when we work together.



River Derwent

Nature for Wildlife – and for People

Here's what makes Making Space for Nature different: these sites aren't just for wildlife – they're for people too.

Traditional reserves limited access to protect scarce fragments. But when we're creating new space, that can change. We're creating good functional habitat where nature can thrive and people can connect with it. Because these are new spaces, we can welcome people without compromising wildlife recovery. This matters because being in nature benefits our mental health, physical wellbeing and sense of belonging. Making Space for Nature creates opportunities for Derbyshire people to access those benefits as participants in nature's recovery, happening where they live.

More accessible space means more people connecting with nature, experiencing it, enjoying it, benefiting from it. That connection builds understanding and long-term support, enabling further expansion. A virtuous cycle, replacing decades of decline.

A Wilder Derbyshire

Imagine Derbyshire in twenty years. Not just isolated pockets of important nature in an ecologically disconnected landscape but expanding connected areas where wildlife is recovering. Wetlands where wading birds return. Woodlands spreading. Wildflower meadows buzzing with insects. Places where you can step into thriving nature from your door, where your children experience abundance that's been missing for generations.

That's what Making Space for Nature is designed to deliver: bigger spaces, more spaces, better connected, shaped by natural processes. An approach that helps us rewild land and water across Derbyshire, at the scale nature needs.

This is conservation reimagined – not protecting but enabling restoration. Not excluding people but reconnecting them with the living world they're part of. Not holding back decline, but unleashing nature's recovery.

Derbyshire's nature has been depleted for too long. Making Space for Nature is how we bring it back – for wildlife, for people, for a thriving county we all want to be part of.

Reintroductions for Landscape Resilience



Ruth Pilbeam
Derwent Living Forest Programme Manager

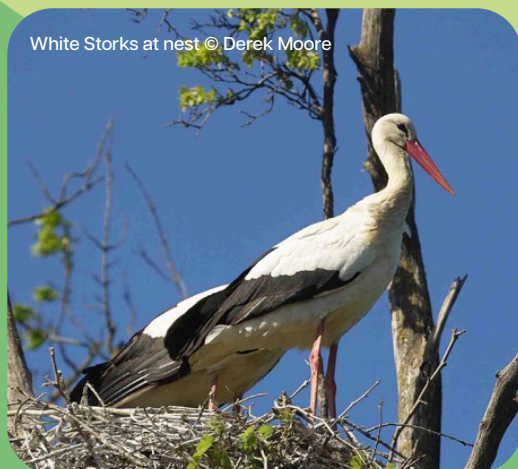
When we launched our **Wilder 2030 strategy** last summer, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust made an ambitious promise: to reintroduce key species to our landscapes as part of our vision for a **Wilder Derbyshire**. These reintroductions are complex projects, often requiring years – or even decades – of careful planning. They are designed to reverse the factors that caused these species to disappear in the first place.

The benefits, however, are clear. Evidence from surviving populations elsewhere shows that these reintroductions can succeed. As an evidence-led organisation, we are committed to rigorous feasibility studies to ensure that every species we reintroduce thrives in the long term. This work is also fully supported by partners across the county and forms a central part of **Derbyshire’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy**.

Building Momentum

Over the past year, members will have seen early plans for several species, including **white stork, black grouse, pine marten, and Eurasian elk**. These are flagship projects, though not the only ones: we are also exploring the potential reintroduction of **Minotaur dung beetles, dingy skippers, willow tits, and water voles**, among others.

The flagship species are particularly significant because their original extinctions were caused by complex and interlinked factors. Restoring them requires careful planning and large-scale habitat restoration, but the outcomes promise benefits that extend far beyond these individual species.



White Storks at nest © Derek Moore

Why Reintroduce?

White Stork

Lost from Derbyshire over 600 years ago due to persecution and habitat loss, white stork are a species that captures the imagination. Returning to the same nest over a lifespan of 30–40 years, they create strong connections between people, wetlands, and wildlife. White stork are an **umbrella species**: reintroducing them means creating the space, habitat, and public support that will benefit a wide range of wetland species.



Willow tit © Harry Hogg

Black Grouse

Black grouse disappeared from the Peak District in the late 1990s, victims of agricultural intensification and restrictive land management. They rely on the transitional woodland and moorland edge habitat, or **Ffridd**, which has declined dramatically. Sensitive to disturbance, black grouse require careful habitat and visitor management, making them another umbrella species: restoring them helps protect fragile habitats while fostering collaboration across landowners and conservation organisations.

“We are also exploring the potential reintroduction of **Minotaur dung beetles, dingy skippers, willow tits, and water voles**, among others.”



Black grouse © Mark Hamblin



Pine marten © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision

Laying the Groundwork

We are currently developing a **framework for species reintroductions**, guided by internationally recognised best practices. Feasibility studies are underway to assess available habitats for pine martens and Eurasian elk, while partnerships are being formed to explore habitat management for white stork and black grouse.

Crucially, we are also prioritising **community engagement**. Public education and consultation campaigns will ensure that people across Derbyshire understand our plans and can contribute their ideas.

Eurasian Elk

Extinct in Derbyshire for over 2,000 years due to hunting, Eurasian elk are **keystone species**. Their underwater browsing maintains unique wetland and woodland habitats, shaping ecosystems in ways humans cannot. Reintroducing them will help restore biodiversity, strengthen ecosystem resilience, and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events.

Pine Marten

Once lost from Derbyshire in the early 2000s, pine martens now exist in Shropshire and North Yorkshire, occasionally wandering into Derbyshire but never breeding here. They require **large wooded territories**, which have been lost over centuries to agriculture and development. Reintroducing pine martens will drive large-scale woodland creation, benefiting countless species and enhancing **climate resilience** across the landscape.



Eurasian elk

Looking Ahead

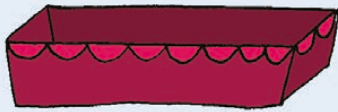
We are only at the beginning of this journey. This year, as we lay the groundwork for these long-term reintroductions, we are already thinking **landscape-scale**. Our goal is to develop county-wide support – from landowners, community groups, and residents – through financial models, information resources, and practical habitat toolkits.

We are starting small, but the potential impact is huge. As these species return, they will restore habitats, enrich biodiversity, and help everyone in Derbyshire experience the benefits of a wilder, more resilient landscape.

Plant a Butterfly Box

You will need

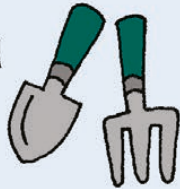
- A windowsill plant box



- Peat-free compost



- A hand trowel or fork



Pale-yellow
scabious



Aubrieta

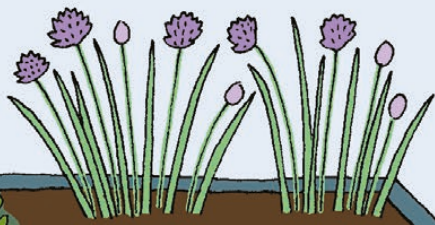


Nectar-rich plants for butterflies

- Viper's bugloss • Thyme • Sage • Forget-me-not • Fennel • Mint



Chives



Cuckoo
flower



Cabbage

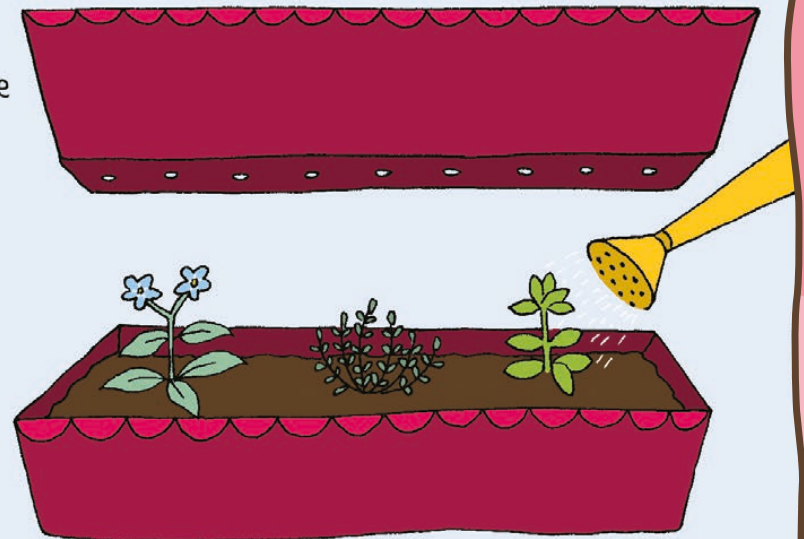
Nasturtium



Plants as food for caterpillars

- Common sorrel • Bird's-foot-trefoil

- 1 Choose a plant box appropriate to the size of your windowsill or outside space – make sure it has drainage holes.
- 2 Fill your box halfway with peat-free compost.
- 3 Pick three plants and place them in the box. Top up the container with peat-free compost and water well. If scattering seeds, follow the instructions on the packet.



Remember it can sometimes take a little while for pollinators to find your plants.

While a chance to glimpse a butterfly may be appealing, without caterpillars (larvae) there'd be no butterflies, so we need to make food for both. Try to plant one box of each! Plant one variety for larvae, but mixed varieties for butterflies.

Wilder Chesterfield

Communities Taking Action for Nature



Mark with staff and pupils at Duckmanton School



Mark Newton
Wilder Connections Officer

Now at the halfway point of its two-year pilot, Wilder Chesterfield is already helping communities reconnect with nature. Launched in March 2025 and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project is encouraging the return of hedgehogs, swifts, bats and pollinators to Chesterfield's streets, parks and gardens – while also supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Working across five neighbourhoods – Holme Hall, Barrow Hill, Duckmanton, Mastin Moor and Poolsbrook – and supported by Chesterfield Borough Council, the project contributes to local regeneration by bringing residents together to take practical action for wildlife where they live. In doing so, it is strengthening both habitats and community connections.

The project brings together ecological expertise and community engagement. Emily Howes, Urban Rewilding Programme Officer, works with developers, landowners and wildlife groups to support species recovery, while I focus on education and engagement with schools, community organisations and wellbeing teams. Together, we ensure wildlife and people benefit side by side.



Pond dipping at The Avenue, Chesterfield

Inspiring Young People

So far, we have worked with seven primary schools, delivering sessions on urban wildlife and simple actions to help nature thrive. A highlight has been our Hedgehog Heroes workshops, encouraging families to create 'hedgehog highways' – small fence openings that allow hedgehogs to move safely between gardens. Without joined-up community action, this much-loved species will continue to struggle. We've been heartened by pupils' knowledge and their enthusiasm to make changes at home.

During National Tree Planting Week in November 2025, 78 children from four schools planted more than 60 native trees. These will create richer habitats for wildlife and greener spaces for future pupils. As Emily reflected, "It was inspiring to see so many children keen to get stuck in supporting wildlife. They were interested not only in the trees, but also the soil, worms and other invertebrates we found."

Growing Greener Spaces

Community gardens are also flourishing. After attending Transition Chesterfield's Potato Day, we began working with Holme Hall Community Garden to improve green spaces around the estate. Plans include growing food, planting wildflowers for pollinators and encouraging more residents to volunteer.

At Mastin Moor Community Garden, we are supporting its role as a therapeutic space. Patients from the nearby Acer Clinic already enjoy visiting, and new plans will involve them in gardening and social activities – improving wellbeing while promoting wildlife-friendly gardening.

Understanding Urban Wildlife

In partnership with Derbyshire Bat Group and Derbyshire Swift Conservation, we're creating opportunities for residents to learn more about the wildlife living alongside them. Guided walks and survey training will help people identify bats and swifts and contribute valuable records. With much of Chesterfield under-recorded, this information will guide the installation of bat and swift boxes later this year, ensuring they are placed where they're needed most.

Looking ahead, Wilder Chesterfield aims to nurture a strong network of local nature champions who will continue caring for wildlife beyond the pilot – helping create healthier, greener neighbourhoods and a more resilient, wildlife-rich Derbyshire for the future.



Wilder Chesterfield painting – Mark Newton

Wild Peak

Restoring Nature Together



Dave Savage
Head of Landscape Recovery

Since it began in 2020, Wild Peak has grown into one of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's most hopeful and ambitious programmes. Working across the Dark and White Peak, it is laying the foundations for nature's recovery in and beyond England's first National Park.

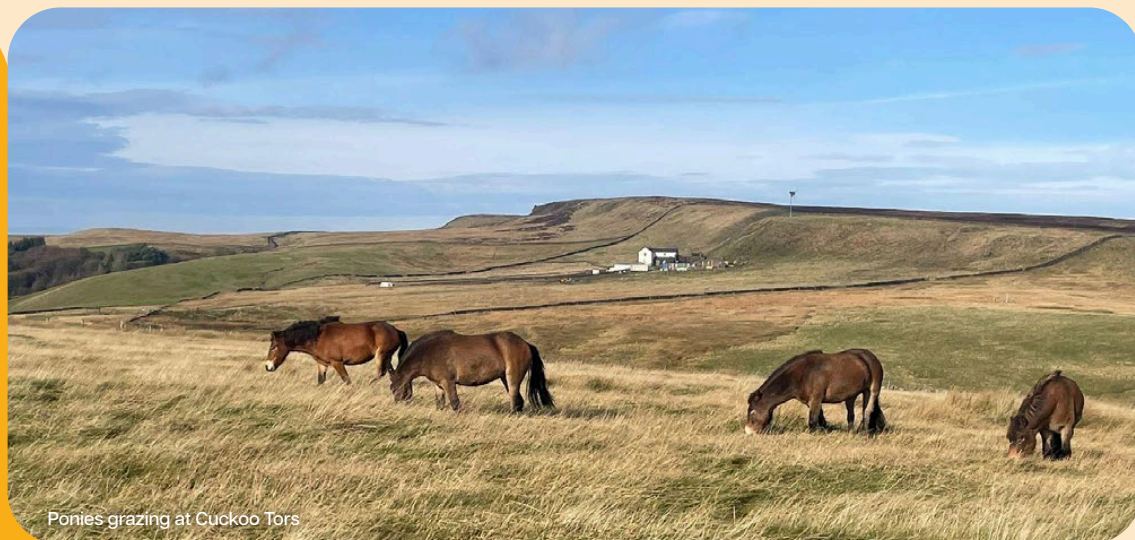


At first glance, the White Peak appears a rural idyll – rolling hills, drystone walls dominated by grazing animals. Look closer and the lack of wildlife is striking. There are few trees to shelter birds and insects, hedgerows no longer link habitats, and wildflower-rich meadows have become rare. Wildlife here needs space, connection and care.

Wild Peak aims to restore ecosystem function in the landscape, creating bigger, better and more joined-up habitats, whilst supporting processes like nutrient cycling and water filtration. Over the

past two years, thanks to funding from the Species Survival Fund, our team has worked alongside landowners and communities to begin turning this vision into reality.

Together, we have secured long-term management of the landscape for wildlife across 20 privately owned sites. In total, 1,555 hectares of woodland, meadow and moorland have been surveyed, focusing on indicator species, including plants, pollinators and breeding birds. Each site has received tailored advice to guide future management.



Ponies grazing at Cuckoo Tors



Volunteer work party

Practical habitat restoration work was then delivered on 506 hectares of this land and included removing invasive species like rhododendron and laurel, woodland restoration and creation, pond creation and moorland re-wetting. This approach to habitat improvement delivers the joined up network needed for landscape recovery.

Community support has been central to this work. Generously funded by Severn Trent Water, the Wild Peak Community Fund awarded 26 grants totalling £60,000, enabling an inspiring range of local projects. From swift and house martin recovery to a stork breeding initiative and new school wildlife

areas, people across the Peaks have embraced the opportunity to help nature flourish. Hundreds of volunteers have given their time, with some training as volunteer leaders, establishing regular work parties that now continue independently. Along the way, we have strengthened relationships with local communities and supported training opportunities to build conservation skills for the future.

Looking ahead, Wild Peak's ambitions remain bold. We hope to build on what we have learned to support landscape-scale recovery in areas like the Wye Valley and the Dark Peak – and, in time, to see species like black grouse, osprey and pine marten return.

At the heart of this vision is the growing Wild Peak Network – now 76 landowners covering more than 2,600 hectares, all committed to taking action for wildlife. Together, we are shaping a more hopeful future for the Peak District.

If you would like to join our Wild Peak network and be part of an amazing movement of people, contact Alex at afisher@derbyshirewt.co.uk

This project is funded by the Government's Species Survival Fund. The fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. It's being delivered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.



Overdale planted trees



Willington Wetlands:

The People Behind Our Beaver Monitoring



Katie Last
Trent Valley Living
Landscape Officer



Alice on paddle monitoring

When four beavers arrived at Willington Wetlands in 2021, there was a sense of anticipation – and curiosity. How would they settle in? How would they shape their new home? From the very beginning, a dedicated team of volunteer beaver monitors has helped answer those questions, playing a vital role in safeguarding the beavers' welfare and documenting, in real time, the changes unfolding across the reserve.

Helen and Andrew from ACE Nature, alongside volunteer Alice and others, have provided careful and consistent monitoring, offering a fascinating window into the daily lives of these remarkable ecosystem engineers. From monthly drone flights and camera trapping to developing new ways of analysing and storing data, their work helps build a long-term picture of how beavers transform landscapes – and how people and wildlife can thrive together.

Alice first became involved while studying at university, completing her undergraduate research project at Willington Wetlands. Using camera traps to study beaver activity, she quickly developed a passion for the project and chose to continue volunteering after finishing her degree.

“This is such an exciting opportunity to be able to be a part of something like the beaver project which is still quite a unique project in the UK,” she explains. **“I’ve learned that beavers are a keystone species.**

Beavers engineering their environment has seen wildlife flourish and flooding significantly reduces. The noticeable environmental change I have seen at the reserve since the beavers were introduced has been remarkable and gives a sense of a brighter future for nature.”

Helen and Andrew’s journey began even earlier, after attending a dawn chorus walk at the reserve in 2019. Inspired by the Trust’s work, they began volunteering – and when plans for the beaver reintroduction were announced, they offered their technical skills to support monitoring.

Recognising the value of aerial surveys, they invested in a drone and gained the necessary qualifications. They also set up camera traps and began building a database to manage the growing volume of footage



Andrew at Willington

and observations. Over time, they developed tools such as a timelapse photography app, allowing them to capture subtle but powerful visual evidence of how the beavers are reshaping wetlands, creating new habitats and improving biodiversity.

“The noticeable environmental change I have seen at the reserve since the beavers were introduced has been remarkable and gives a sense of a brighter future for nature.”

For me, the volunteers’ contribution goes far beyond data collection. The dedication and countless hours our beaver monitors spend observing activity on site allows us to think boldly about Derbyshire’s future. They help tell a story of resilience, showing that beavers are just the beginning of building an ecosystem where people and wildlife don’t simply coexist, but flourish together for generations to come.

Thanks to the care, curiosity and commitment of our volunteers, the story of Willington’s beavers continues to unfold – offering hope, insight and inspiration with every new dam, channel and pool they create.



Evidence of a busy beaver

Wildlife Wonders

Over the past year, our records centre has been buzzing with reports of incredible wildlife. From shy mammals to striking birds, here are just a few of the fascinating species members like you have spotted – and shared with us.



Toothwort

Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*

Spotted – Buxton

When – April 2025

Who – Amy Bennett

This strange-looking plant is a ghostly parasite, lacking in chlorophyll, which is why it isn't green. It lives off the roots of hazel, ash and elm in particular. Its rather ghoulish appearance resembling a set of human teeth suggested that it could be used to cure toothache. Its pale appearance also gives it another name: 'Corpse Flower'.



Ruby-tailed wasp

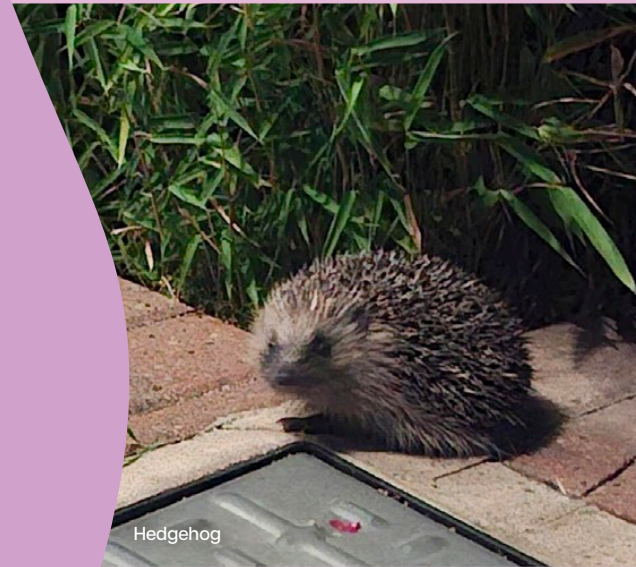
Ruby-tailed wasp *Chrysis ignita*

Spotted – Belper

When – May 2025

Who – Dave Evans

This is the ruby-tailed wasp, which may not resemble a typical wasp. It comes in stunning metallic colours, including red, blue, green, and bronze, with about 35 species found in the UK. These wasps are also known as cuckoo wasps, laying their eggs in solitary bees' nests. Notably, they can curl into a ball for protection, using their hard, jewel-coloured shells as armour against bee stings.



Hedgehog

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

Spotted – Hollingwood

When – August 2025

Who – Wendy Hall

Hedgehogs are best known for their spiny coats. These spines, derived from modified hairs, serve as a defence mechanism against predators. When threatened, they can roll into a tight ball, showcasing their spines and making it difficult for predators to attack. Hedgehogs have a good memory and can navigate their territories in the dark, often travelling several kilometres in search of food.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Spotted – Coal Aston

When – April 2025

Who – Richard Agar

The lapwing is recognised for its unique and loud call, which sounds like "pee-wit," leading to its nickname "Peewit." They are known for exhibiting protective behaviour, the dramatic "broken wing display," where a parent will mimic injury to lure potential predators away from their nests.



Lapwing



Share what you're seeing in your local area:
derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/record-sighting

SCAN ME



A Wilder Future for Everyone:

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



Marianne West
Equity & Emerging
Talent Lead

At Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, restoring nature is about more than landscapes and wildlife. It's about people. Our 2025 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report drawing on staff demographic data from 2025, carries a clear message: nature's recovery depends on the diversity of the people working to make it happen. This year's report reflects both the progress we've made and the responsibility we carry to go further.

Progress Rooted in Data

The numbers tell an encouraging story. In our latest staff survey, 88% of employees said DWT is an inclusive place to work. Our early talent programmes are delivering real outcomes: in 2024–25, 83% of trainees moved into employment or education within six months of completing their placement. Around a quarter of our staff identify as having a disability and their experiences have shaped our approach to inclusion from the beginning; and roughly a third are carers, supported by flexible working and our commitment to the Living Wage.



Going Beyond the Badge

One of the clearest markers of our progress is our Disability Confident journey. We started in 2019 with no formal recruitment systems and no proactive approach to reasonable adjustments. Our first EDI survey in 2020 was the turning point, revealing that many staff already identified as disabled but had no support framework around them. We committed to a simple north star. Everyone should feel valued and we rebuilt from there. By 2021 we had a new applicant tracking system, accessible job adverts, proactive adjustments, 18 mental health first-aiders, and personal work adjustment plans. We have since become a Level 2 Disability Confident Employer embedding disability inclusion into how we recruit, retain and develop our people.



DWT Staff Day Peak District © Alex Rogers

Honest About What Still Needs to Change

The report is equally candid about where more work is needed. Racial and ethnic diversity remains very low. 95% of our staff identify as white, mirroring deeply rooted patterns across the environmental sector. Our workforce is concentrated in the 20–39 age range. 92% hold a degree, a figure that points to real access barriers we must address, and practical challenges around physical accessibility and neurodiversity continue to surface in staff feedback.

Our Plan for 2026 - 2029

Our next three-year strategy places equity at its core – not as a standalone workstream but embedded across everything we do. Our plans focus on three priorities.

First, we will work to create an inclusive culture by creating tools that guide understanding and action by making nature accessible and inclusive in practice. We'll remove physical, financial and cultural barriers at one of our flagship sites.

Second, we will build a green economy that is inclusive, equitable and shaped by the needs and voices of all communities. We want to build partnerships that bring together organisations to drive collective action and co-create frameworks with communities at the heart of decision-making.

Third, we will use our experience and evidence to drive wider adoption of fair, inclusive practices across the sector and to influence and drive change across the movement.

A Shared Future

By embedding equity, diversity and inclusion into everything we do, we are helping to build a future where nature is not only protected, but shared, accessible and shaped by everyone. Because a truly wilder Derbyshire is one where everyone belongs.



Trainees © Flavia Ojok

Volunteering for Nature Your Way



Tom Flynn
Fundraising and
Volunteering Trainee

Since joining Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in September 2025, my traineeship has given me the opportunity to support our volunteers and witness firsthand their passion for wildlife, as well as their willingness to contribute in any way they can. Volunteering is becoming more accessible than ever, with a growing range of flexible and home-based opportunities available. For me, this is particularly encouraging, as it enables more people to get involved in meaningful action while fitting around their everyday lives.

From hands-on conservation work to camera trap monitoring roles, there are now more ways to get involved, whether that's outdoors on a nature reserve, in the office or from home. This shift is helping to remove traditional barriers to volunteering, making it easier for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take part.

As a result, the Trust is seeing a growing and increasingly diverse volunteer community, with nearly 400 active members contributing their time since April 2025. There has been particularly strong growth among younger people, alongside continued enthusiasm from long-standing volunteers, creating a vibrant, multi-generational network united by a shared passion for nature.

Olivia, our digital marketing volunteer, supports the team with content creation and communications, helping to deliver high-quality campaigns that inspire others to take action for nature. We asked Olivia to tell us how she is finding the experience, and she told us: "I wanted to volunteer for a cause I believe in so I could give something back while



Olivia Merrick

"I really enjoy coming into the office because it's such a friendly and supportive environment."

also gaining valuable skills for the future. I really enjoy coming into the office because it's such a friendly and supportive environment, and I love being part of a team."

Her experience highlights how flexible volunteering can not only support the Trust's work, but also provide meaningful opportunities for people to learn, connect and grow.

Building on experiences like Olivia's, the Trust is continuing to expand opportunities to include ways of volunteering that can be done entirely from home, helping to remove barriers for those unable to travel or commit to set times. One upcoming example is the chance to support ecological monitoring by reviewing camera trap footage. This flexible role will allow volunteers to contribute to citizen science in their own time, helping to identify species and build a clearer picture of local wildlife.

Some volunteers are also becoming leaders within their own communities, helping to inspire others to take action for nature. Rachel, who leads the Junior Rangers at Allestree Park, is a great example of this. "I have been volunteering over the past two years and it has been a great experience. I have now been trained to lead teenage volunteers in 'Junior Rangers'. I thoroughly enjoy the Junior Rangers Sessions. It's great for teenagers to be engaging with nature and making the park a better place for nature and for people."

Her experience shows how investing in volunteers not only supports wildlife, but also empowers local people to lead meaningful projects and create positive change within their own communities.



Rachel Horton

"It's great for teenagers to be engaging with nature."

For those who feel most at home outdoors, there are still plenty of opportunities to get stuck in and connect directly with nature, whether that's planting wildflowers, hedgerows and trees, supporting the management of nature reserves, becoming a livestock warden, or taking part in wildlife surveys such as butterfly and bumblebee transects. These roles offer a chance to see the direct impact of your efforts on the landscape and the species that depend on it.



Gustav Clark

"There's a whole world under the surface that volunteers are privileged to engage with."

One of our dedicated practical volunteers, Gustav Clark, tells us: "Most people walk through the countryside taking in the view, but as a volunteer you have a very different experience. When you put in a fence post you really understand the texture of the ground under you, rocks, gravel, or just sand. You understand how fussy cows can be and just why every bit of fence matters. There's a whole world under the surface that volunteers are privileged to engage with. Also you are there for the chance happening, a pair of sparrowhawks flying high, and with others who'll point them out – plus you get cake."



Gill Foxcroft

"I love the opportunity to meet new people, to learn new skills."

Gill, another practical volunteer added: "I love the opportunity to meet new people, to learn new skills, such as scything and drystone walling, and to spend time working outdoors. There's satisfaction in seeing the tiny trees we planted 5 years ago become hedgerow and coppice."

Together, these stories reflect a wider shift in volunteering, one that is not only growing, but evolving. By making opportunities more inclusive and adaptable, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is enabling more people than ever to play their part in protecting and restoring nature.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, learn more:
www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/support/volunteer



My Wildlife Story



Michelle
Wellbeing and Nature
Buddy Volunteer



Nature, Wellbeing and the Power of Inclusion

One of our incredible Wellbeing and Nature Buddy volunteers, Michelle, shares how spending time in nature has helped her rebuild confidence, wellbeing and connection while living with long-term health conditions. Drawing on her own lived experience, Michelle now supports others to find ways of accessing nature that work for them, whatever their starting point.

I'm a Wellbeing Nature Buddy volunteer with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, a role that draws deeply on my own experiences living with long-term health conditions. I live with Hyperadrenergic POTS and Reactive Hypoglycaemia, which means many days involve dizziness, nausea, exhaustion and pain. Often I have to wait for low blood sugar to stabilise before I can even sit up safely. I retired on ill-health grounds at age 45 and spent a long period rebuilding my life, both physically and emotionally.

How has spending time in nature shaped your own wellbeing over time?

After months of being indoors, I longed for the outdoors. Nature didn't magically make my symptoms disappear, but it gave me space to pause. Watching birds, feeling the wind or noticing sunlight on the leaves helps me steady myself and push through nausea and pain. Gradually, being outdoors has helped me rebuild confidence and trust in my body.

One moment stands out: during a low blood sugar episode by a river, shaky and dizzy, I watched a kingfisher dive. That brief distraction helped me manage it safely and reminded me I could cope beyond the walls of my home.

My limitations vary from day to day. Some days I can walk miles; other days I use mobility aids, to be outdoors safely. There are places I can't get to because of terrain or distance, and group walk paces aren't always possible. I've learned that being in nature doesn't have to look the same for everyone. It's about being present in a way that works for you.



What is the Wellbeing Nature Buddy programme and what does your role as a Wellbeing Nature Buddy mean to you?

The Wellbeing Nature Buddy programme is designed to adapt to individual needs, ensuring people with unpredictable health or mobility challenges can still enjoy being outdoors. It's about being in nature together and embracing it in whatever way works.

My role is to walk alongside others on both good days and bad, showing that getting outside is possible even when your body doesn't cooperate. I'm supported by Kirsty from the Trust's wellbeing team, which makes a real difference. Seeing someone take their first steps outdoors again or smile at wildlife reminds me why this matters.

Being outdoors has taught me how to build emotional resilience, find companionship and reclaim a life that illness once disrupted. Even if your health is unpredictable, being in nature can give you moments of calm and control you can't get anywhere else.

What would you like to see happen next in terms of nature, wellbeing and health support?

I hope that in future, organisations like the NHS and local councils will partner with charities like Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to offer standard, supported outdoor wellbeing activities, not just short-term indoor programmes.

Spending safe, supported time outside isn't simply exercise; it builds confidence, connection, purpose and community for thousands of people living with unpredictable health. If more people can discover nature in ways that work for them, I truly believe it can help them rebuild, reconnect and reclaim themselves. Just as it has done for me.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, learn more:
www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/support/volunteer



A Wilder Derbyshire

Thanks to You



Helen Watkinson
Individual Giving
Manager



Middleton Moor © Jo Smith



Willington Beaver Release © Kayleigh A Wright

As a member of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, you are part of something lasting – helping to restore and rewild the county’s wildlife. Your support has brought beavers and water voles back to our rivers, helped secure special places like Middleton Moor and Common Farm, and inspired communities to take action for nature close to home.

These achievements are more than milestones – they are a shared commitment to rebuilding Derbyshire’s landscapes for today and for generations to come.

This spring, we’d love to hear from you. Our 2026 Spring Survey will explore the areas of our work that matter most to you. We’re especially keen to hear your story: what first led you to become a member, what keeps you involved, and why supporting nature matters to you.

Look out for the survey in April. By taking part, you’ll be adding your voice to a legacy of restoration and rewilding, helping to ensure that future generations inherit a Derbyshire full of thriving wildlife, vibrant landscapes, and the joy of discovering nature close to home.

Notification of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust’s

64th Annual General Meeting

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Saturday 19th September 2026

Derby City

Venue to be confirmed

We’re pleased to invite you to our Annual General Meeting in Derby City. The day will be packed with fun activities for all ages from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, with the AGM starting at 1:00 pm.

Below is a brief agenda of what can be expected

- Find out about our ambitious plans to do more for Derbyshire’s wildlife!
- Approval of 2025 AGM minutes
- Trustees’ Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2026
- Appointment of the Trust’s auditors
- Election of committee
- Any other business / Question and Answer session

Full venue details and the Annual Report will be emailed to all members in August 2026. Members are entitled to appoint a Proxy in accordance with section 324 of the Companies Act 2006 and Article 16 of our Articles of Association.

If you require information in another accessible format or via post, please email: membership@derbyshirewt.co.uk or call 01773 881188 so we can ensure the communications reach you.

Leave a gift for a
**Wilder
future**



**Every choice we make
today shapes the
landscapes of tomorrow**

By including Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in your will, you can help rewild landscapes, bring back lost species, and ensure nature thrives for generations to come.

Leaving a gift in your will, no matter the size, helps us restore habitats, support wildlife recovery, and create a more resilient natural environment for the future.

Writing a will also gives you peace of mind, knowing your wishes are respected. That's why we've partnered with Octopus Legacy to offer all our supporters a complimentary will-writing service.

Our free will-writing service makes the process simple and stress-free. There's no cost, no pressure, and no obligation to leave a gift, but if you do, you'll be helping us restore wild spaces and build a wilder Derbyshire for future generations.

To get started, scan the QR code or if you have any questions, feel free to email us at giftsinwills@derbyshirewt.co.uk

Together,
we can make
**Derbyshire
wilder**

www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/legacy-giving

