



SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER

LEADING CELEBRITY CONSERVATIONIST TO BE OUR FIRST PATRON

We're immensely proud to announce that George McGavin has agreed to become the first Patron for Wildlife Friendly Otley. As you probably know he is one of the UK's foremost entomologists and a respected academic, author and television and radio presenter.

Having previously spoken at the launch of our Nature Recovery Plan in Otley, George already knows Otley and has good links with us and our aims. He will no doubt give our cause more gravitas when influencing others to adopt and act on our Nature Recovery Plan and all the other work we do. We are so happy to welcome George to Wildlife Friendly Otley and looking forward to his appearance at our Wildlife Arts Festival on **8 October 2023**.



Book your tickets [here](#).

YOUR NATURE RECOVERY PLAN

As you'll already know, Wildlife Friendly Otley was key in developing and presenting a Nature Recovery Plan for Otley which Otley Town Council unanimously supported and adopted as part of their declaration of a biodiversity crisis - we're now working with them so that our plans become actions.

For more information on the Nature Recovery Plan, click [here](#).

NATURE RECOVERY PLAN — COMMUNITY ORCHARDS

We were delighted to work with Leeds City Council Housing who agreed to allow our first two community orchards to be planted on their land in March. One is at Bennett’s Court and the other at Westbourne Park.

Many of you, enthusiastic members / volunteers joined our Trustees to plant various fruit trees, underplanted with a wildflower meadow. These two orchards have been made possible by generous donations from Cash Bash Trash and from the new owners of our local Otley Garden Centre. Westbourne Park was planted in partnership with the Friends of Westbourne Park.

Trustee, River Six said ‘These valuable sites will provide a much needed refuge for birds and insects, they will also look beautiful throughout the year and will provide the community with free fruit for years to come’.

‘We are still waiting for permission to plant more community orchards; our Nature Recovery Plan includes proposals for a number of Leeds City Council managed sites to be restored for wildlife, as well as a much needed reduction in the use of herbicides/pesticides throughout our town. We have been delighted with the enthusiastic level of public support we have received for the orchards and the rest of our proposals’.

We’d particularly like to thank all our volunteers who joined in a vital watering rota during our hot dry June.



Volunteers at Bennett’s Court



Volunteers at Westbourne Park



A BUSY SUMMER OF EVENTS

We've been very active all summer at events and festivals and thank you for your support.



OTLEY CARNIVAL

Typically after a very dry and hot spell the heavens opened just as the carnival parade got underway and if that wasn't enough a swarm of bees swept through the carnival site - like we'd organised our very own wildlife display!

The weather didn't put the crowds off and we had a great day talking to people about our work; running a poo quiz and adult quiz and selling native plants donated by our members.

Trustee, Helen Hey said 'We had so many, young, enthusiastic and knowledgeable children visit our stall - their level of interest and passion for wildlife was impressive and gives us energy to undertake even more work. We definitely know the future is in good hands with the children of Otley'.



YORKSHIRE REWILDING FESTIVAL

This year Wildlife Friendly Otley proudly partnered with Yorkshire Rewilding Network for their very first **Yorkshire Rewilders Day**. This was a day for rewilders of all sizes, to share knowledge and experience, inspire each other, and learn something new. Our own River Six represented our community projects on the rewilders panel discussion, whilst Jane Smith gave a presentation on our plans for nature corridors throughout Otley, informed by our Nature Recovery Plan. Ecologists Catherine Burton and Steve Heaton led expert walks throughout the day.



CHEVIN DISCOVERY DAY

As key members of the Otley Nature Network we were heavily involved in the third Chevin Discovery Day. As well as our stall, featuring the first outing of our soon-to-be legendary animal poo models (for a quiz), we led a variety of walks and workshops, at what was a very successful event.

Read the whole story [here](#).

OTLEY WALKING FESTIVAL

Trustees Neil Griffin and Steve Heaton hosted very popular walks as part of Otley Walking Festival. The walks were fully booked, despite some inclement weather and included the 'Where to Watch Wildlife in Otley walk,' 'Wildflower Walk' and 'Otley's Favourite Tree Walk'.

SCHOOLS REPORT

POOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

We held a very successful Wildlife Day at Pool School, including helping Year 1 children plant seeds and plants kindly donated by WFO members. Children from across the age groups learned about local wildlife, often through playing games, and were encouraged to feel they could do something about the biodiversity crisis. Prickly Pigs' Diane Cook also came along with a presentation about hedgehogs in morning assembly.

Read the full story [here](#).



Neil inspiring the next generation at Pool

ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The end of the summer season marked the end of a series of nature-engagement lessons at Ashfield Primary School led by our education officer Neil Griffin. These were based on the Science curriculum and funded by our friends at Wharfedale Naturalists' Society.



Neil leading a mini beast hunt at Ashfield

PRINCE HENRY'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

At Prince Henry's work has started on a wildlife pond as part of the ecological mitigation of the new plastic sports pitch. On Timanyane (citizenship) Day Year 10 students helped us reducing cleavers and bindweed and watering beds at Wharfemeadows. Students have also assisted us staffing stalls at events, supporting activities and balsam-bashing on the Chevin.

Our trustee Nic Ship also recently organised and supervised some practical hands on conservation in Wharfedmeadows Park



NEW APPEAL LAUNCHED AS PURCHASE OF LOCAL WOOD FOR COMMUNITY NEARS COMPLETION



The Friends of Weston Woods (of which Wildlife Friendly Otley are one) have announced a new appeal to raise funds for the wood now that the legal formalities for the purchase are almost complete and the exchange of contracts is expected soon.

A spokesperson for the group, which is a consortium of local wildlife and environmental groups as well as donors to the initial appeal, said: “Now that the legal proceedings to finalise the purchase are almost complete, we need to raise further funds to repay the generous loan of £65,000 which helped us to mount the successful bid earlier this year. We are appealing to everyone who appreciates wildlife and supports our aims of holding a wood for the local community to make a donation to the new crowdfunding campaign. Those keen to support the appeal can also help by sponsoring a 3x3m square for £25.”

Details of how to donate to the campaign or sponsor a square can be found [here](#).

Weston Woods, near Otley and Weston (also known as East Wood) is nearly 20 acres of mature mixed deciduous woodland, alive with wildlife including red kites, warblers, woodpeckers and owls. The wood is also loved also for its carpet of bluebells and wild garlic, in the spring.



Andrew McKeon, Francesca Bridgewater, Jenny Watson, Julia Davies (of [We Have The Power](#)) and River Six.

The spokesperson added: “We are very grateful to over 1500 people and organisations, including Otley Town Council, who have supported the acquisition by donating over £165,000 so far. From the comments left on the fundraising site it is clear that this area of woodland is beloved by a large number of people; some children have even donated their pocket money. It is valued for the memories of playing there as children, the peace people find there, and also as a place where nature thrives.”

Acquisition of this site was made possible by a philanthropic loan from [Julia Davies](#), through her [Funding Nature Project](#), [We have the Power](#).

The Friends group now needs to raise more money in order to repay this loan. Julia is an environmental campaigner, philanthropist and ‘green innovation’ investor who uses her personal funds to enable charitable projects (including land acquisitions for nature restoration) to progress.

Read the full story [here](#).



NEW DUCK BANNER

You might have noticed over time that the UV light and wind damaged our duck food banner in Wharfemeadows Park. After some discussion we decided that the benefits of ensuring the public are educated and reminded about what to feed the ducks outweighed the downside of losing a banner to the elements. Also the new banner is made from eco-mesh which will biodegrade in the environment over time.

VOLUNTEERING AND DONATIONS

We have already mentioned the help with the community orchards but we've had great support from our members / volunteers this summer - a huge thank you to you all!

Here are the activities you supported:

- Helped engage the public at events and on our stalls
- Got hands on with balsam bashing
- Supported the Nature Recovery Plan and planted community orchards
- Helped those orchards survive by coming out to water them
- Donated wildlife friendly plants for our plant sale
- Donated woodpecker sewing kits inspired by our logo to raise funds

We're always keen to encourage you all to become involved and support activities - in the autumn and winter we've got our Wildlife Arts Festival and will have a stall at the Science Fair. This autumn as well as seeking out new areas to plant wildflowers, we will hopefully (LCC permission pending) be planting two more community orchards! In early spring (March) we will be running our toad crossings again - let us know if you want to get a bit more involved.

We're particularly in need of volunteers to help us with **website** updating and maintenance, as well as someone to help us with **fundraising** ideas - so if you have some skills in either of these areas please let us know.

email : wildlifefriendlyotley@gmail.com



OTLEY WILDLIFE ARTS FESTIVAL

6 - 8 OCTOBER 2023

Our popular wildlife arts festival returns for a third year, showcasing talent local and national, and engaging people with the wonderful world of wildlife. Just as last year's festival was that bit bigger and better than 2021, this year's version will include new work, new people and new venues.



The core of the festival will again be the exhibition of art and photography at the Courthouse. This will be supplemented by ticketed events over three evenings. Boff Whalley (Chumbawamba) and Daniel Bye will perform a version of their “These Hills Are Ours” show on Friday 6th, inviting people to join them the next day for a local run. Saturday sees the return of naturalist and writer Amy-Jane Beer, author of more than 40 books on natural history, while Sunday features our first patron, celebrated entomologist and television presenter George McGavin.



Amy-Jane Beer

Book now at the Courthouse, or by clicking [here](#).

Our popular programme of free short talks features:

Ian Brand on “Learning to love Dandelions and Stinging Nettles - the fascinating biology of our everyday weeds, and their amazing stories”; Tim Gomersall on the birds in his paintings; Andy Golring on the work of the Permaculture Association; a new talk from the Yorkshire Rewilding Network; a presentation from the Friends of Weston Woods; and Andy Woodall on local fungi.

Local poets will perform poetry inspired by nature.

This year there will be a greater emphasis on participation. As well as the ever-popular children’s wildlife art workshop (this year at the library), there will be three free workshops for adults. Professional local artist Kim Coley will be running two wildlife art workshops; while leader of the Healing Arts Group Sandra Flitcroft will run a found poetry workshop using old nature books as a stimulus. Richard Sabey of the Woolpack Studios will be leading a workshop helping people to make nature-inspired music using samples of wildlife sounds.

The environmental activist Dr Mya-Rose Craig – famously “Birdgirl” on Twitter – will be doing an interactive presentation for Prince Henry’s students; and author Jeanne Willis will be working with primary school children.

Once again the festival is being sponsored by Otley Town Council and Sinclair’s.

MEET YOUR TRUSTEES



Andrew McKeon

The idea that Otley could be the UK's first 'Wildlife Friendly Town' provided the incentive to see if we could create something that would inspire others to be wildlife friendly and do something for nature at a local community level that would make a difference.



River Six

In the beginning, my drive to create Wildlife Friendly Otley was informed by my frustration with the national conservation charities continued growth whilst wildlife was still declining. I strongly believe the local approach to conservation Wildlife Friendly Otley represents is the most effective way we can make a difference.



Catherine Burton

I've worked as an ecologist for many years and was keen to put my skills to good use in the local area. I saw the action that Wildlife Friendly Otley was taking to directly address the biodiversity crisis and wanted to be a part of it. I can often be found making wildlife habitats and leading minibeast walks.



Claire Blindell

I started helping out with publicity and community engagement back in 2019. More recently I've been supporting WFO's work on community orchards and habitat restoration. These sorts of projects are so important for nature recovery on a local and national scale - it's great to be part of a small team making a big difference to wildlife and to people.



Helen Hey

I became a member during lockdown. I needed a positive distraction from working hard in the NHS and was drawn to working with wildlife. I specifically chose a small, local charity as in my opinion, this is where some of the most meaningful work happens. I particularly like working with people and you'll most likely see me on stalls, at events or supporting some activities in schools.



Jane Smith

I'm passionate about reversing the rapid decline of our biodiversity. We have lost more than half of our wildlife, and urgently need to restore and create as much habitat as possible. We are trying to change the way our green spaces in Otley are managed by planting community orchards, restoring habitat, reducing the use of herbicides, pesticides and helping our community to support its flora and fauna.



Neil Griffin

I joined WFO through the contrasting emotions of love for wildlife and fear of the biodiversity crisis. As a teacher I'm particularly keen to engage the younger generation with nature, just as I got that rewarding connection with wildlife as a seven year old. It's great to work as part of a team with a variety of talents, all working towards the same important goal.



Rob Tindall

I am a huge wildlife fan and I worked with WFO to help make the garden where I work more wildlife friendly. By becoming a trustee it means I can be that bit more involved in really making a difference in the town of Otley.



Sarah Shipp

I've always taken a keen interest in wildlife and the countryside and it's really good to be able to learn more by being part of WFO. I enjoy taking part in the events that we run as it's interesting to hear what concerns local people have about our wildlife and I also like helping out with practical projects such as the recent orchard planting.