

News from



January 2023

Your New Year - Naturally

WildCookham has so many things happening at the moment, with people involved across Cookham and beyond. This newsletter tells you about many of them but also shows how you can lend a hand. Some of our New Year Resolutions you can do yourself, some are about projects for our community. There's a mix of them here so you can see how you can join in – and make a difference. And you can simply contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Let's start Close to Home

A bunch of ideas for your home and garden. On your doorstep so no excuse! Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more about any of them

Make your garden a home for wildlife



Well over 100 Cookham gardens now have one of our prestigious Awards. Working with our Wild Maidenhead and other Wild group colleagues, we're extending the scheme across the Royal Borough this year as well as broadening it to include organisations with property locally. You can take your own simple steps to bring wildlife into your garden. Get tips from our website and you can also join the [Wild About Gardens scheme](#). Gardens make up 10% of all the land in our borough: if we all get involved we can make a difference. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Stop that! The easy option

One of the easiest ways to make a difference is to stop doing some things or simply to think twice about the possible impact of your actions. Nature is not tidy and we have to fight our natural instinct to have neat 'n tidy everywhere. Hold back on the hedge cutting, leave grass that little bit longer, leave dead wood for the insects, minimise the use of lights at night. Think this year about one area in your garden which you can leave well alone. And find ways to stop using pesticides – that includes things like lawn weed and feed, bug killers and fungicides. We need all the plant life and wildlife we can to help a biodiverse food chain. If you leave the bugs something will come along to eat them! Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



Build naturally

You're adding an extension or building a garage or ... Make helping nature part of the specification. Think about what you are removing and is it all necessary? Include nest boxes in the plans. Encourage new plans around and up the building that will support insects and provide food for other animals. New developments are required to ensure a minimum net biodiversity gain of 10%: are you achieving that? Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



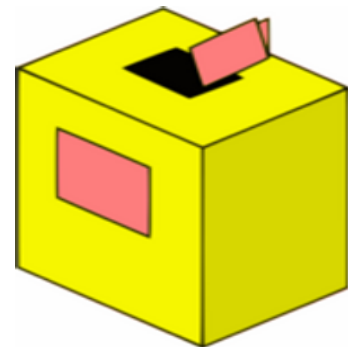
Make your own wildlife pond



There's perhaps no project that achieves so much, and gives as much enjoyment, as creating a pond in your garden. It supports life in so many ways and you can get so much fun, and learn so much, from watching the life mysteriously appear and make its home there. Be part of a Cookham pond network and you can share your experience with others starting. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Use your Vote!

The coming May we'll be voting in the local elections. Take time to study what the parties and the candidates have to say about protecting the environment and, where you can, match the words against the actions. It's a complex issue but it's the one big chance we have to influence future policy so please make your vote count for the future. Give some time in the new year to think about the issues that will determine how you will vote. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



What about saving our Special Species?

There are lots of ways that you can help with our projects focussed on specific species – ones we're either reintroducing to Cookham or are protecting from disappearing from our local world. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more about any of them.

Bringing back Ratty



As we work on bringing these wonderful creatures back to the home of Wind in the Willows WildCookham volunteers have released more than 200 water voles into our local waterways in the past 18 months. We had support from several sponsors providing the necessary funding – South East Water, Thames Water, RBWM, Shanley Foundation, Prince Philip Trust, Naturesave Trust and lots of volunteer hours. We now need help to keep an eye on them and also ensure that the local population of mink, who predate on the voles, is kept under control.

Ensuring that the habitat for the voles, and other animals, is the best possible is also key. So many ways you can help and we can provide training where it is needed so you're learning too. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

They make summer for us if we provide a home for them

Swifts, swallows and martins are among our best loved symbols of summer. Housing and other development has destroyed many of their nesting places. You can help us create new homes for them – and protect the ones that still remain. We installed 15 artificial House Martin nest boxes near the Odney Club in Cookham village last year – close to an existing sizeable colony of the birds. We have a local group installing Swift boxes and we plan to do more to support Swallows and Sand Martins. You may have a house or some land that's suitable for one or more of these species or you may just want to help to provide a better future for these harbingers of summer. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



Get to know our magical Glow worms

We are mapping the locations where we can find glow worms in Cookham – a fascinating species which has been badly impacted by changing habitats. WildCookham has been tracking the local Glow worms for several years with serious mapping starting two years ago. Join us to learn more about them and help us extend our mapping of their territories and then take action to protect them. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



Join our Toad Patrol and give Toads a chance



The Common Toad is not so common as it used to be – a drop from around 10,000 in the annual migration 20 years ago to fewer than 2000 today. The main population that we protect is around Strande and Lightlands Lanes. The migration starts around February and we need volunteers to help the Toads as they cross our dangerous roads. Spending just a few evening hours during the year can ensure that the dwindling population of toads has a better chance of surviving the dangers of these migrations. Cookham's Toad Patrol allows people of all ages to get involved, with a small effort making a big difference. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

You're helping us make Great Habitats for Wildlife

Protecting and enhancing nature is all about natural habitats. You can help us in really practical ways to ensure we don't lose any more and bring back to life the ones we've lost. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more about any of them

We are restoring our wildflower meadows, with your help

Last year saw further work creating a rich variety of wild flowers on some of the local Commons. So far WildCookham has been working on Cookham Moor, Odney Common, Hardings Green and some smaller areas in the Dean. You could join the team working with the National Trust and other local landowners to make our meadows a haven for insects. 97% of our meadows were lost to development and intensive agriculture from the 1930s, with insect populations falling by as much as 75%. Your involvement could involve the practical work clearing land and sowing seed as well as the organisation and planning with the landowners. And most of the work is done over short periods in the Spring and Autumn so you don't need to feel it's a major year-round commitment. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



Hedgerow Highways make a massive difference



Our hedgerows are home to countless species of mammal, insects, birds, fungi and plants and are a vital part of much of our local natural world. You can help with our projects surveying these, improving them where we can and creating new hedgerows. It involves a range of different contributions and skills and you'd be creating a healthy natural world for the future. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Needing arms, legs and a bit of brain!



Join a team of local people helping to protect and improve local habitats where WildCookham is involved. We have a number of sites now for which we are responsible and we'll welcome anyone who'd like to join our team – giving as much or as little of your time and energy as you can. There's the Harris Woodbridge Reserve off Dean Lane in Cookham Dean which we have been managing for the parish council for the past four years, creating a mini paradise for local wildlife and a great testing ground for other schemes. We're involved with the Borough in the management of Battlemead, the 110-acre site next to Widbrook Common which is home to a vast array of species of flora and fauna. We're helping to manage the pond on Marsh Meadow between Cookham Moor and the river. We're supporting the parish council in other smaller projects. They all benefit from the active help of our volunteers, either with hands on manual support or bringing skills or equipment. It's all needed! Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Planning for a better future

So much of our good work can be undone by not thought through planning decisions and policy which can so easily destroy or undermine habitats that have been home to wildlife for years, perhaps millennia. The ideal way to approach this is to work with developers and with individuals wanting do some building, as far as possible helping them to meet their objectives whilst ensuring that we are doing the best job for nature. Your experience and expertise in planning , dealing with planning authorities, or working with the local community can help ensure that new developments and policies work for nature and not against it. If you can help in any way with this, get in touch. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Showing us what we've got

Knowing what we have is the starting point. You can help, from getting out to survey local species and habitats to helping manage and use the information we gather. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more about any of them

Get to know our trees

WildCookham is mapping Cookham and adding Trust's national Ancient can add some protection much more accurate landscape and the wildlife team of surveyors and we skills or tree knowledge some training in the as well as the equipment great way to travel countryside, learning build an important database. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



all the significant trees in them to the Woodland Tree Inventory. That way we to them as well create a picture of the local in it. We now have a small need more. No previous are needed. You can get simple techniques needed, that will help. This is a really around our local more about it and helping

Much Ado About Mothing



There are some 2500 species of moth in the UK and around 450 of these have been recorded in Cookham. Many are exquisitely beautiful, and their presence, or absence, can tell us much about the state of our nature. You can create, or buy, a simple moth trap in your garden which can give you and your family a lot of fun and help us understand more about them – without harming the moths. We have experts on hand to help get you started as well as to assist with identification of the moths you find in your traps. And information about the species you find can be fed into the local database so you'll be involved in growing local knowledge and records: that's a key to developing policies and projects to protect our wildlife for the future. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Nature's class act



All of our local schools are doing their bit to encourage an interest in the natural world, with wildlife gardens, ponds and nest boxes. Could you lend a hand? Maybe you're a parent, a teacher or would just to help our young people to understand and love nature. We'd love to have you join our team of volunteers supporting our schools and helping to create a community of the future that understands how important it is to nurture nature. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Making it all run smoothly

Gathering information about our environment and our local habitats and species is crucial to our work. It helps us to prioritise and focus: and crucially we need data to ensure we protect important places and species from undesirable development. You can help in many ways – gathering data, organising data gathering/surveying activities, creating and managing databases, working with other groups and organisations to ensure that our data gets to the right places. If you'd like to help study our local world or if you have some administrative experience or some IT/data skills, we'd love to hear from you. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



We're putting the word out there: can you help?

Building a local community committed to protecting our natural world is essential and there are lots of ways we can use your creative, administrative and other skills. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more about any of them.

Help with our big 2023 Festival



Next June sees an exciting festival of art in Cookham, the biggest public event yet staged by WildCookham. The theme is in the name: [Our Changing Earth](#). It's about how we see the way we are impacting our planet and respond to the challenges this presents. There'll be art exhibits, workshops, outside activities – all at the Odney Club in Cookham village. See more about Changing the Earth here. If you are an artist, if you have creative ideas or if you'd like to help in some aspect of this weekend event on 9th/10th June, contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.



Let's communicate!

Awareness of our work and the opportunities to help is a basic building block for us. Telling our local community people about our projects and ambitions, explaining why it's so important and showing how we can all help is key to getting everyone involved and we always need help with this – keeping people informed about our projects, maintaining our website, helping with our events – as well as creating the strategies and plans behind it all. If you have special skills all the better, but a simple passion to make a difference is a good starting

point. Contact wildcookham@gmail.com to find out more.

Join Cookham's nature community

Here's one that requires no effort. With just short of 1000 members on WildCookham's Facebook page, we have an amazing community sharing their experiences, photos and questions. We reckon it's the world's friendliest Facebook group: join us and find out. It's a great way to learn, share and get involved. We have great locally-shot photos and videos, people their sharing wildlife discoveries in their gardens or on local walks and a regular selection of 'What's this?' question seeking help from our experts. And it's just a click away. And add your name to our Mailchimp email address list (a simple form at the bottom of our website home page – www.wildcookham.org.uk - and get news of our events by registering at www.meetup.com/WildCookham.



Coming soon

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28 - 10:00 AM. MEET AT GOLDEN BALL INN

What's About in January in Bisham Woods?

Join Brian Clews on Saturday January 28th for our first 'What's About' walk of 2023

MONDAY FEBRUARY 13 – 7PM. MOOR HALL.

It's All About House Martins with House Martin Conservation UK expert, Barbara Polonara

WEDNESDAY MARCH 15 – 7.30PM. Venue to be confirmed.

Looking at 2023: WildCookham's priorities and plans for the year, and how to get involved

WED, MARCH 22 – 7.30PM, ODNEY CLUB.

The Borough-wide launch of the 2023 Wild About Gardens Awards

Look out for booking details.

Reserve your places at www.meetup.com/wildcookham

WildCookham is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation no 1193867

