

Homes for bugs

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Ever wondered where all the insects go in the winter? They're still here, some as eggs, some as young stages such as caterpillars, some as pupae and many as adults.

Most insects in the UK become inactive during winter. They need somewhere safe to hide away from predators and the worst of the winter weather. Sadly, we tend to remove lots of their homes when we tidy up our green spaces

Bug hotels like the ones pictured provide homes for lots of different wildlife. They are packed full of different, natural materials which different insects use as their homes.

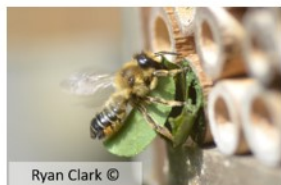


Butterflies and ladybirds are just some of the invertebrates that will use bug hotels to shelter during the winter



Richard Comont ©

They also have lots of places for insects such as bees and wasps to nest in – for example, hollow plant stems.



Ryan Clark ©



Ryan Clark ©

Wood-carving leafcutter bees (left) and Red Mason Bees (right) are just some of the many bees and wasps that will use bug hotels to nest in

While bug hotels give our wildlife a helping hand, we can provide many more natural homes for bugs with some simple actions, including:

- ❖ Leaving areas of long grass
- ❖ Not clearing up all the dead leaves, pine cones etc.,
- ❖ Providing piles of dead wood
- ❖ Not removing native evergreen plants like Ivy
- ❖ Leaving parts of hedgerows uncut



Have you seen holes like these in stumps and bits of dead wood around the site?

Wood feeding invertebrates create holes in wood, which we can replicate. These are then used by species of solitary bees and wasps that nest in holes and cavities in dead wood.

Keep an eye out for some stunning looking creatures coming in and out of some of these holes



Ryan Clark ©



Ryan Clark ©



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What are these wood piles for?

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You might be wondering why there are wood piles being left around the site? These are part of our work to improve green areas for wildlife.

Dead wood is really important for many different animals including birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, as well a huge diversity of invertebrates: it provides food, nest sites and overwintering sites as well as places to bask and/or hide in the day.



Nearly 2,000 species of invertebrates in Britain require dead wood in some way. Lots feed on it and are rarely seen as they are hidden away inside the wood. A large number of insects make their nests in dead wood, including many species of solitary wasps and bees. You can learn more here: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/get-involved/create-your-own-dead-wood-habitats/>



Tiny faces of Common Yellow-faced Bees (*Hylaeus communis*) peering out from nest holes in a fence post



Adults of the attractive Sulphur Tubic moth (*Esperia sulphurella*) can be found flying around piles of dead wood by day. Their larvae feed on decaying wood

Dead Wood is crucial for some species, including one of the UK's most amazing looking beetles, the Stag Beetle, *Lucanus cervus*.

The larvae of this impressive beetle take several years to develop. Many other wood feeding invertebrates also live for a long time hidden away which is why it is so important not to remove dead wood.



Look out for the Stag Beetle's smaller, more widespread and commoner relative, the Lesser Stag Beetle, *Dorcus parallelipipedus* (pictured left)



Male Stag Beetle. Females lack the 'antlers' but are still impressive, large beetles

Beautiful Ivy

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Ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a really important plant for wildlife in the UK.

It provides an invaluable nectar source late in the year when few other plants are flowering and can be smothered in pollinating insects



Look out for butterflies such as Red Admiral (left), hoverflies (centre, right), wasps, bees and many other insects on Ivy blossom in the autumn.



Being evergreen it provides valuable cover and screening all year round, including nesting sites for birds and small mammals, and places for insects to spend the winter away from their predators



Spotted-Flycatcher (top) and Song Thrush (bottom) nesting in Ivy



7-spot Ladybirds preparing for winter among Ivy berries.



Swallow-tailed Moth larvae feed on Ivy



Ivy is the main food of the summer generation of Holly Blue butterflies

Ivy berries are great food for birds and small mammals and the leaves and buds are eaten by a wide variety of insects.

Ivy has a bad reputation for killing trees and damaging buildings. In reality, the only trees likely to suffer are those already stressed by other factors. Some studies have shown Ivy can actually have benefits to buildings by improving insulation and reducing heating costs! Management is needed in some places, but managed appropriately, and leaving it to grow in suitable places Ivy can really help improve biodiversity

The Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederae*) is a recent colonist to the UK, but is spreading rapidly. It flies later in the year than most other species of solitary bee and, as its name suggests, is strongly associated with Ivy. While Ivy bees will visit other flower species, Ivy is the key forage plant, and is crucial in maintaining healthy populations of this beautiful bee. Look out for large numbers of this attractive bee visiting Ivy flowers from August until November



Bringing back our meadows

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You may have noticed big changes to some grassland areas on site recently. This is part of our work to improve green spaces for wildlife around your homes, by creating a diverse wildflower area.

Wildflower meadows were once a more common sight across the UK providing an array of colour and life. They are rich in plant and animal life, but have disappeared over time due to changes in how we use and manage land and we now have less than 10% left of what we had under a hundred years ago!



Look out for butterflies (left) , bees, hoverflies, grasshoppers (centre), beetles (right) and many more fantastic insects using the meadow.



A new meadow: we have sown a wildflower seed mix containing native plant and grass species. It contains short-lived annual species such as corncockle, corn marigold and corn chamomile, as well as longer-lived perennial plant species such as knapweeds, yarrow, and bird's-foot trefoil. These plants offer a wide variety of different nectar sources throughout the year, as well as different food plants for a wide range of invertebrates. These in turn, along with the seeds the plants produce later in the summer, attract other wildlife such as birds and small mammals.

CHANGING MEADOWS: wildflower meadows are constantly changing. Throughout the year there will be different plants and grasses flowering and producing seeds and fruits. In spring look out for dandelions and cowslips providing crucial nectar sources for bees, butterflies and other insects. As the year progresses more and more species will start to flourish, creating a variety of colour and attracting more and more wildlife.



Dandelions (left) are great for pollinating insects, especially early in the year when other plants such as knapweeds (centre) and scabiouses (right) are yet to flower.



Over time the structure of the meadow becomes more complex allowing more wildlife, such as spiders to use the meadow

The meadow will also change from year to year. Many of the annuals you have seen this year will disappear to be replaced by longer lived perennial plants. In the first few years some species such as Oxeye Daisy and Wild Carrot may dominate while other plants get a foothold. This succession is perfectly natural and seasonal hay cuts will help allow more different plants to establish.

Bringing back our meadows

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You may have noticed some big changes to some grassland areas around the site this year. This is part of our work to improve green spaces for wildlife around your homes, by creating a diverse wildflower area.

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Look out for butterflies (left), bees, hoverflies, grasshoppers (centre), beetles (right) and many more fantastic insects using the meadow.



A new meadow: we have sown a wildflower seed mix containing a variety of native plant and grass species. It contains species such as knapweeds, yarrow, and bird's-foot trefoil. These plants offer a wide variety of different nectar sources throughout the year, as well as different food plants for a wide range of invertebrates. These in turn, along with the seeds the plants produce later in the summer, attract other wildlife such as birds and small mammals.

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The meadow will also change from year to year. In the first few years some species such as Oxeye Daisy and Wild Carrot may dominate while other plants get a foothold, while other species may only start appear after two or more years. This succession is perfectly natural and seasonal hay cuts will help allow more different plants to establish.

Bringing back our meadows

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Beautiful wildflower meadows were once a more common sight across the UK providing an array of colour and life. They are rich in plant and animal life, but have been lost over time due to changes in how we use and manage land .

The good news is, its not too late for us to try and bring back these habitats and try and connect existing ones up. There are some simple things we can do to make a difference. You will see some examples around your homes as part of our work to improve our green spaces for wildlife.



Reduced mowing
By simply mowing less frequently and at the right time of year we can provide areas of longer grass and allow the native plants to flower which in turn provides food and homes for lots of different wildlife

Planting native wildflower plants
Planting species of plant that would be found in local wildflower meadows will enhance the grassland we already have.

This includes plants that provide important nectar for pollinating insects and seeds for birds as well as food plants for a wide range of invertebrates.



Some of the many different invertebrates that meadows support. These provide valuable services such as pollination and pest control as well as being food for other wildlife such as birds and small mammals

Keeping it varied: 'variety is the spice of life'. Keeping areas of longer grass supports a wider range of wildlife, but not all plants and animals like it this way. Some plants thrive in more disturbed areas, some wildlife prefers shorter grass or bare ground and the key is to have a bit of everything if possible. Bare ground and short grass areas are important for species that like it warm and are especially important for a wide range of solitary bee species that like to nest in the ground for example.