



WINTER 2013



Update



Welcome to the final Wild City update...

Wild City, with the support of community groups and organisations across the city, has encouraged people from deprived communities and other priority groups to make contact with nature. As Wild City draws to a close we look back on 3 years of exciting projects on nature reserves throughout Bristol.



Mud, marshland and a rare moss

On the banks of the River Avon, just downstream of the historic Lamplighters Arms, you will find Lamplighters Marsh – soon to be known as Lamplighters Marsh Local Nature Reserve.

There are swathes of woodland, bramble and grassland on one side and open, watery, muddy reaches of the river on the other – both ideal habitats for wildlife. There is even a rare moss nestling down amongst the old railway sidings, which has brought specialists hotfoot from Kew and the Natural History Museum to identify it!

Read more about this on page four...



Wildflower Walk

Ride on the Wild Side

Our partnership with LifeCycle, the local cycling charity that enables people of all abilities to get out on bikes, has gone from strength to strength.

For the past 2 years we have run a spring Dawn Chorus Bike Ride, led by Ed Drewitt. Listening to the amazing chorus of birds along the lower parts of Leigh Woods, and seeing the wading birds in the early morning light along the river Avon has been the reward for an enthusiastic group of early risers.

We have also done autumnal Bat Safari Bike Rides each year along the Bristol & Bath Railway Path led by Miriam Woolnough. In 2012 we only found 1 bat as it was a very cold evening. But the 2013 evening seemed warmer and more promising... and we were lucky enough to detect quite a number of bats.

Other rides included a ride to Troopers Hill to look for fungi with Justin Smith, a Bushcraft Ride for young people with Steve England, and a ride to Arnos Vale Cemetery where we had a wonderful guided walk from Mary Wood. We also had a Bristol 99 Bike Ride to Eastwood Farm, which included a ferry ride across the Avon, surveying Eastwood Farm for wildlife with Rupert Higgins as our guide, and of course a delicious afternoon tea at Beese's Tea Gardens!

LifeCycle are hoping to continue some of these Wild Bike Rides after Wild City finishes.



www.bristol.gov.uk/wildcity



Shimmering Water



Children's comments included:

"The hawk moth was amazing and the shimmering water of the ANC"

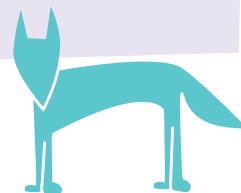
"I liked crossing the bridges and going to different parts of the ANC"

"I enjoyed looking at the river because of the tidal changes"

"It was a nice trip. I learnt more stuff about rivers. I got to see sea animals"

"There are often butterflies that go along the NC with large, small and green veined"

"I have enjoyed looking at the footprints in the mud along the sides"



St. Mary Redcliffe Primary School

Wild City has been working with FrANC to introduce the ANC to a wider public. A group of FrANC members have been training themselves up to lead guided walks along the river, and several local walking groups have taken up this opportunity.



We also worked with St. Mary Redcliffe Primary School, bringing children and parents down to explore the river, with help from heritage education specialist Ruth Coleman. Many of the children cross the river twice a day between home and school and they were excited to discover the wildlife that lay beneath their feet as they cross the bridges.

Why not take a walk along the river and see for yourselves.

Two new information boards, designed by Clare Challice, join the three refurbished boards at various points along the river – telling you something about the river, its history and its wildlife.

For further information visit:
www.franc.org.uk



Hillfields Walking for Health Group



Severn Project in action

Wild City and Severn Project

Undertaking practical nature conservation work on Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) is an on-going task. Currently, the Woodland and Wildlife Team undertake most of this work but with over 100 sites requiring periodic habitat management we are delighted that the Severn Project came on board with Wild City. Severn Project provide training and work experience for people with personal issues such as alcohol and drug dependency, mental health problems or long term unemployment. They have been hard at work on buddleia thinning and creating bays in bramble at Lamplighters Marsh, and widening the footpath routes and managing scrub at Glyn Vale and Hengrove Mounds.





New Local Nature Reserves



Wild City is pleased to announce that 4 of our sites are about to be designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). Avon New Cut, Lamplighters Marsh, Narrowways and The Northern Slopes are now at the final stage of the LNR designation process, the culmination of 3 years of sustained effort from the Wild City team and Friends Groups. Because LNR is a statutory designation it provides a very clear signal to each local community of the local authority's commitment to nature conservation on that site.



Narrowways, Church Field

Epic and Awesome at Eastwood Farm...



Wild Wednesday

Eastwood Farm Local Nature Reserve has the claim of being Bristol's last dairy farm (closing in 1971). Also a former landfill site, this tranquil nature reserve is tucked away in a quiet valley alongside the River Avon in Broom Hill, Brislington. In fact, it's so tucked away, that even people who have lived nearby for many years are unaware of this treasure, right on their doorstep!

With this in mind, Wild City worked with the Friends of Eastwood Farm to raise peoples' awareness of the site by providing more information in the form of a new site leaflet and a set of engaging interpretation panels that tell the story of the site's varied history and its watery wildlife, written and researched by Ruth Coleman and beautifully designed by Clare Challice.

Ruth also worked with three classes from Broomhill Junior School to build better links between the school,

local families and the nature reserve. Children learned to use nets to capture and identify pondlife, had lots of fun building temporary shelters in the woods and they took turns to measure the speed of flow in the River Avon using stopwatches and oranges!

Children's comments included:

- "I think Eastwood Farm is a wonderful place"
- "It was epic and awesome!"
- "It was amazing because you get to find fish"

Eastwood Farm is a popular location for dog walkers, and to engage them with the site, the Friends of Eastwood Farm and Beese's Tea Gardens teamed up with Wild City to run a fun dog show and wildlife activity day.

Throughout the summer, local people were invited to join in with a series of 'Wild Wednesdays' at Eastwood Farm. Thanks to a wonderful group of experts we learned all about detecting bats, foraging for wild foods, entered the mysterious world of moths and heard how to call for tawny owls in the woods.

The Friends of Eastwood Farm are planning another packed programme of Wild Wednesdays again in 2014, starting with an evening bird chorus on Wednesday 30th April, led by wildlife expert Ed Drewitt.

Check the website for more dates and download a leaflet at www.eastwoodfarm.org.uk





Flourishing Flora and Fauna at Callington Road Local Nature Reserve



Download one of our new reserve leaflets and explore this delightful former allotment site that sits on the border between Knowle and Brislington. Despite its small size, the reserve is a haven for a wide variety of birds, mammals and insects, including the tiny but spectacular micro-moth, *Commophila aeneana*, which has been recorded at this site but nowhere else in south-west England!

The Friends of Callington Road Local Nature Reserve have worked with Wild City to create a Nature Journal, the new leaflet and three new interpretation panels to help visitors to get the most from their visit. Together, we have also organised a variety of wildlife walks and surveys aimed at the local community to learn more about the birds, bats, trees and fungi that flourish here.

Last September kindly provided us with a beautiful sunny day to hold an autumn wildlife fair at Callington Road Hospital. Service users enjoyed close encounters with live owls, made bird boxes for the hospital gardens and created stunning artwork inspired by materials from the nature reserve next door. One service user commented: "Enjoyed everything – the owls were amazing. Kept my mind in a good place for a couple of hours." The hospital will continue its link with the reserve with support from environmental educator, Nicola Ramsden, who leads weekly visits to the site.

TCV volunteers built a fabulous dipping platform at the wildlife pond to enable groups from local schools and the hospital to enjoy discovering the creatures that live there. TCV also planted drifts of native bluebells and worked hard to remove scrub from the meadows to encourage wildflowers to bloom once again and provide food for birds and insects. You can help restore the Callington meadows at a special wildflower planting day planned for late spring (date to be confirmed) – check noticeboards or the Friends' website for details: <https://sites.google.com/site/focnr>

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Mud, marshland and a rare moss

Local people have worked with Wild City to make all these sights accessible to a wider public. Picnic benches, eye-catching information panels, noticeboards



Lamplighters Riverside Festival

and an attractive willow hedge have all been added to the 'Yellow Brick Road', an easy access path, flat and wide, which meanders through the site. SCAF (Shirehampton community action forum) and the local NP (neighbourhood partnership) have campaigned on litter and dogs mess, and locals, BCC and the Severn Project have got on with the many practical tasks that need doing to keep the reserve looking good.

Local schools have been involved, and an ambitious Arts Trail was staged at the Riverside Festival back in June 2013. The local Shire Stitchers created a series of stunning quilts reflecting the wildlife and history of the site, whilst Penpole Residents Association worked on a LinkAge Project to create cyanotype pictures of plants from the reserve. Talented local artists worked with local people to create an amazing variety of artworks, and 500 people came along to enjoy them – as well as music, and the wildlife of the site.

The artworks are no longer there, but everything else awaits your visit!. Access is easy from the Shirehampton end – a short walk from Shirehampton station, a stroll down from Shirehampton village, and plenty of car parking outside the closed pub. Access from the Avonmouth end is on foot from West Town Rd, with parking at the Portway Park & Ride.





Footpaths at Hengrove Mounds

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have built steps on the steeper slopes and Bristol City Council Landscapes team have installed an excellent tarmac path leading from Hengrove Play Area to the Mounds entrance. The footpath will be opened early in 2014. This is the culmination of lots of local consultation



and participation work, led by our Hengrove team - Ruth Worsley, Peter Margerum and Jim O'Shaughnessy. We found extra funding from the Local

Sustainable Transport Fund to help with the creation and improvement of pathways and future work is planned to create a wildlife trail and interpretation boards.

Community Payback hard at work



Bristol University Conservation Group and Avon Probation Trust Community Payback Team have also been undertaking valuable habitat work on the grassland and bramble areas.



Stunning Stoke Park...

Stoke Park Estate is the long, upward sweep of green topped by the bright yellow Dower House, seen on the left, as you travel north out of Bristol on the M32.

No visit to Stoke Park would be complete without a commentary from Steve England, local environmental educator and Stoke Park expert. Steve paints an exciting picture of life at Stoke Park in times past and has enthralled audiences on the many walks and bushcraft days he has led on behalf of Wild City. Steve has the knack of bringing even the driest sounding subjects to life and inspiring others, especially children and young people, to find adventure in the woods and meadows.



Stoke Park Primary School



All things Old and Wild Walk

Steve led outdoor sessions with nearby Orchard and Stoke Park Primary Schools and also provided invaluable support to Ruth Coleman, a Bristol-based heritage education specialist, who worked with Filton Avenue Junior School to create a series of fun wildlife trails for us, aimed at families. Ruth also researched and wrote a fabulous new site leaflet and worked with Walk for Health volunteers to prepare step-by-step instructions and new waymarkers for three self-guided walking routes, mapped out by Steve to make the most of the gorgeous views, varied wildlife and historic landmarks.

And as if all this wasn't enough, Ruth also found time to work with the local community and web-designer Dave Sandilands to create a lovely new website for Stoke Park Action Group. Visit www.stokeparkactiongroup.org.uk to download the leaflet, the walking routes or fun trails, or join in with a wide variety of exciting events and activities at this stunning estate.





Network Sites and Bristol 99!

During May and early June 2013 Wild City took part in the Bristol Natural History Consortium's Bristol 99 initiative, getting people out surveying their local wildlife on most of our Key and Network sites.

Teaming up with Lawrence Weston Community Farm, we took families out to Lawrence Weston Moor LNR to survey for water voles. Nobody saw an actual water vole... but, encouraged by Becky Coffin, Ecologist for BCC, we did manage to find definite signs of them. We also surveyed the pond, and discovered literally thousands of tadpoles! All of which inspired some wild artwork.

At Manor Woods LNR we helped organise two Bristol 99 events. The local primary school, Headley Park, came down to the LNR for the day, surveying the River Malago, the woodlands and the grassy areas along the river banks. With Ed Drewitt as our guide,

we found plenty of life both in and out of the water and both the teachers and the children were really inspired by their discoveries.

A few weeks later, with Ed again as our wildlife expert, LifeCycle brought a ride along the Malago Greenway to the wonderful summer meadow at Manor Woods. Local people from the Malago Valley Conservation Group also joined us and, along with enthusiastic help from the Bristol 99 team, we had a wonderful session using sweep nets to gently gather up and identify an amazing selection of invertebrates from amongst the long meadow grasses.



Bug Hunt at Hengrove Mounds

Step this way...

Walking has been a major theme throughout the Wild City project, with hundreds of people having walked their way through our city's fabulous nature reserves, learning more about the wildlife of hedgerow, meadow and river and hopefully improving their physical and mental health at the same time.

Walkers exploring the Northern Slopes as part of WildFest! 2013 said:

“Leafy loveliness... must come again!”

“A very interesting walk and talk, much enjoyed”

“Amazing stuff that can be found in a small area. Have learnt a lot today”



St. George Strollers at WildFest!

Research has shown how important contact with nature and green places is for the health of our bodies and minds. Wild City has worked with the Walk for Health Bristol team and an army of dedicated volunteer walk leaders to introduce people to the sights, sounds and smells of the special wild places close to where they live – many visiting for the very first time.

Wild City also joined forces with the mental health charity Rethink and the Walk for Health Bristol team to set up a weekly walking group for people recovering from mental health issues. The group, which celebrated its first birthday in 2013, attracts an enthusiastic group of walkers each week, led by dedicated peer-group volunteers. We are working with Rethink to help the group continue now that Wild City has finished.



Best Kept Secret, the Northern Slopes

Along with a wealth of blackberries, elderberries, rosehips and sloes, **WildFest!** has become an autumnal feature of the Northern Slopes.



Bee Scene

Piloted in October 2013, and established in 2014, Wild City worked alongside the local Northern Slopes Initiative (NSI) and Youth Moves, to create a week long festival for local people, celebrating the wildlife and wild food of the Slopes. This year 5 local schools were involved, taking part in a range of workshops such as Photography in the Wild and Nature Explorers. Out-of-school groups came each evening, including Knowle Sea Cadets doing an Owl Prowl and St. Martins 79th Guides doing a Night Walk. An evening for a local Woodcraft group included African drumming and dancing, green woodwork, outdoor cooking and moth magic.

This year we also invited local walking and cycling groups, and were able to offer refreshments at the Teasel Café each day, run by a fantastic team from Springfield Community Allotments, with guided

Comments from walkers included:

“A revelation! Discovered after 78 years a Bristolian”

“So interesting, what a wonderful place!”

“A perfect morning: so knowledgeable, great food, all by natural surroundings”

“Very enjoyable. Super walk. Great food”

“Walk great. Food and drink yummy. Feel so lucky”

walks around the Slopes taking in the allotments and Bramble Farm. Freshly baked treats were supplied each day by a group who cook at the nearby Health Park.

The grand finale was the community day on Saturday, open to everyone. Over 650 people took part, there were free hands-on workshops in such things as green woodworking, making bug hotels and clay creatures. There were introductions to bushcraft, wild food and survival skills from inspiring local experts, delicious food cooked up by Bramble Farm and Knowle West Health Association, and an amazing array of talented local musicians and performers. The local Pipe Band opened the proceedings beautifully, the Kuki Ukies carried us along, and the parkour group from The Park gave a fab demo of their skills, encouraging other youngsters to have a go.

Keep an eye on the NSI website for dates for next years Wildfest!



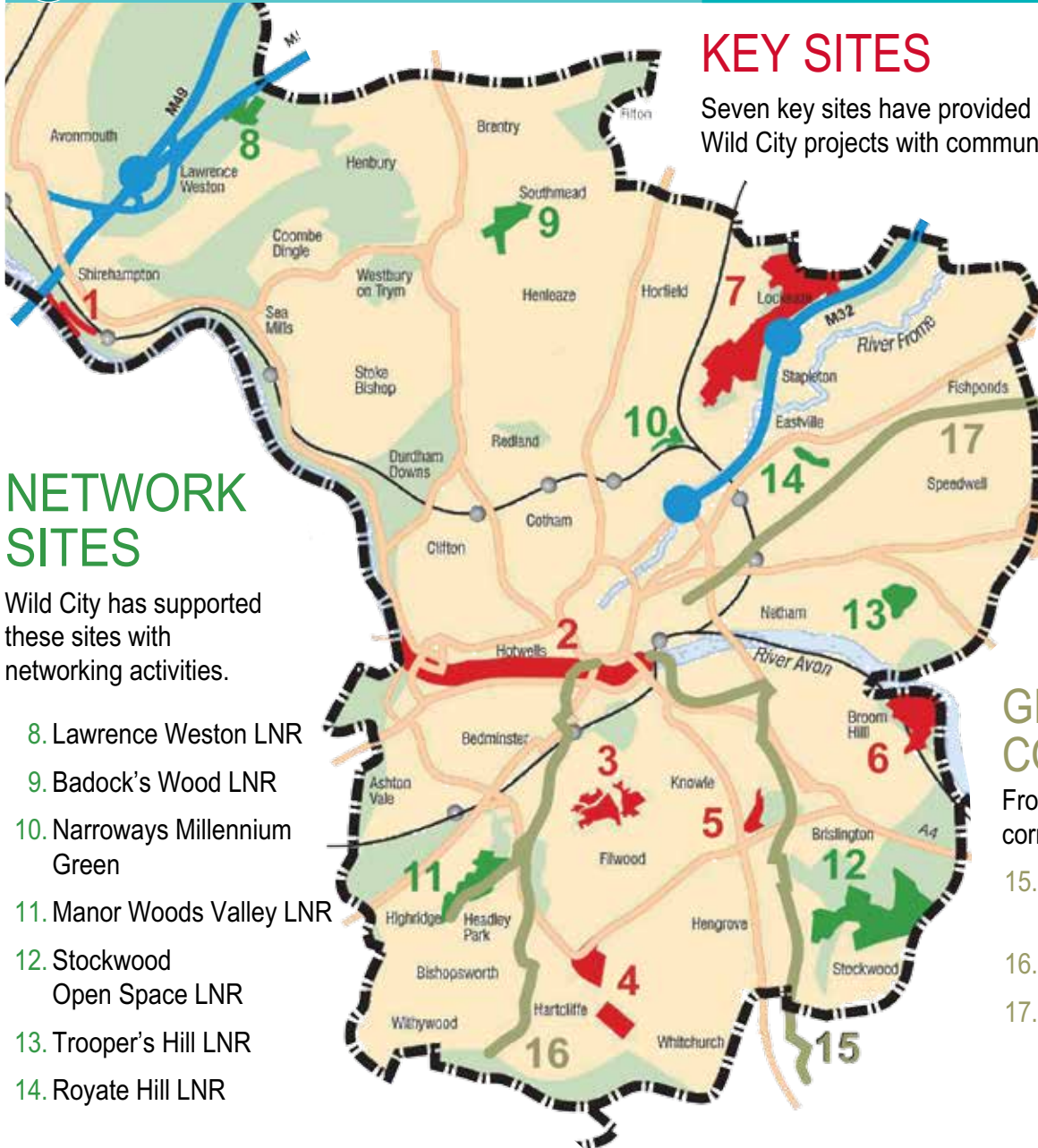
Wild Walk



Lamplighter's Marsh



Where is your nearest Wild City site?



NETWORK SITES

Wild City has supported these sites with networking activities.

8. Lawrence Weston LNR
9. Badock's Wood LNR
10. Narrowways Millennium Green
11. Manor Woods Valley LNR
12. Stockwood Open Space LNR
13. Trooper's Hill LNR
14. Royate Hill LNR

KEY SITES

Seven key sites have provided the major focus for Wild City projects with communities and priority groups.

1. Lamplighter's Marsh
2. Avon New Cut
3. The Northern Slopes
4. Hengrove Mounds and Hawkfield Meadows
5. Callington Road LNR
6. Eastwood Farm LNR
7. Stoke Park

GREEN CORRIDORS

Frome and Avon river corridors.

15. St Phillips Greenway/Whitchurch Railway Path
16. Malago Greenway
17. Bristol and Bath Railway Path

Wild City Project Officers:

Helen Adshead, Paula Spiers and Justin Smith

1st Floor, Brandon Wing, Brunel House,
St. George's Road, Bristol BS1 5UY

Tel: 0117 922 4325

Email: paula.spiers@bristol.gov.uk

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www.bristol.gov.uk/wildcity

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