

# *Callington Road Local Nature Reserve*

# *A wildlife oasis*

Photo: Ann Power



# Friends of Callington Road Nature Reserve

**The Friends Group consists of local residents and works closely with Bristol City Council.**

**They work hard to make it easy accessible for the local community.** Boundary fences and signs have been erected and paths have been created.

**They ensure that all wildlife feels welcome** by planting trees and wildflowers, like in The Field and Upper Slopes. A dew pond has also been created, which is visited by dragonflies and damselflies.



**If you would like to get involved** or find out more, take a look at their website - [www.tinyurl.com/focrnr](http://www.tinyurl.com/focrnr)

Mark Gundry, Bristol City Council      Pam Tanner

Mavis and Pete Stone      Ruth Gilliam



Denis Stuckey, chair of FOCRNR (here with his grand-children), says:

«The objective of our Friends group is to preserve and protect the extensive flora and fauna on Callington Road Local Nature Reserve for the benefit of present and future generations. It is our intention that the Reserve remains a peaceful haven in which wildlife flourishes and can be observed by caring members of the public.»

# History of the Reserve

**Callington Road Local Nature Reserve was made into a 'Local Nature Reserve' under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 on 1st October 2009 to make sure that the natural beauty and wildlife was protected for local people to enjoy.**

The Reserve is divided by an ancient public right of way. 'The Field' lies to the south of the lane and was formerly part of Imperial Sports field and now has Village Green status. To the north of the lane lie the "Upper Slopes"; former allotment land which is particularly rich in wildlife.

The area consisted of fields up to the 1920's when houses were built. As this development took place, the undeveloped part, which is now the Reserve, has remained an oasis for wildlife in a busy urban neighbourhood.

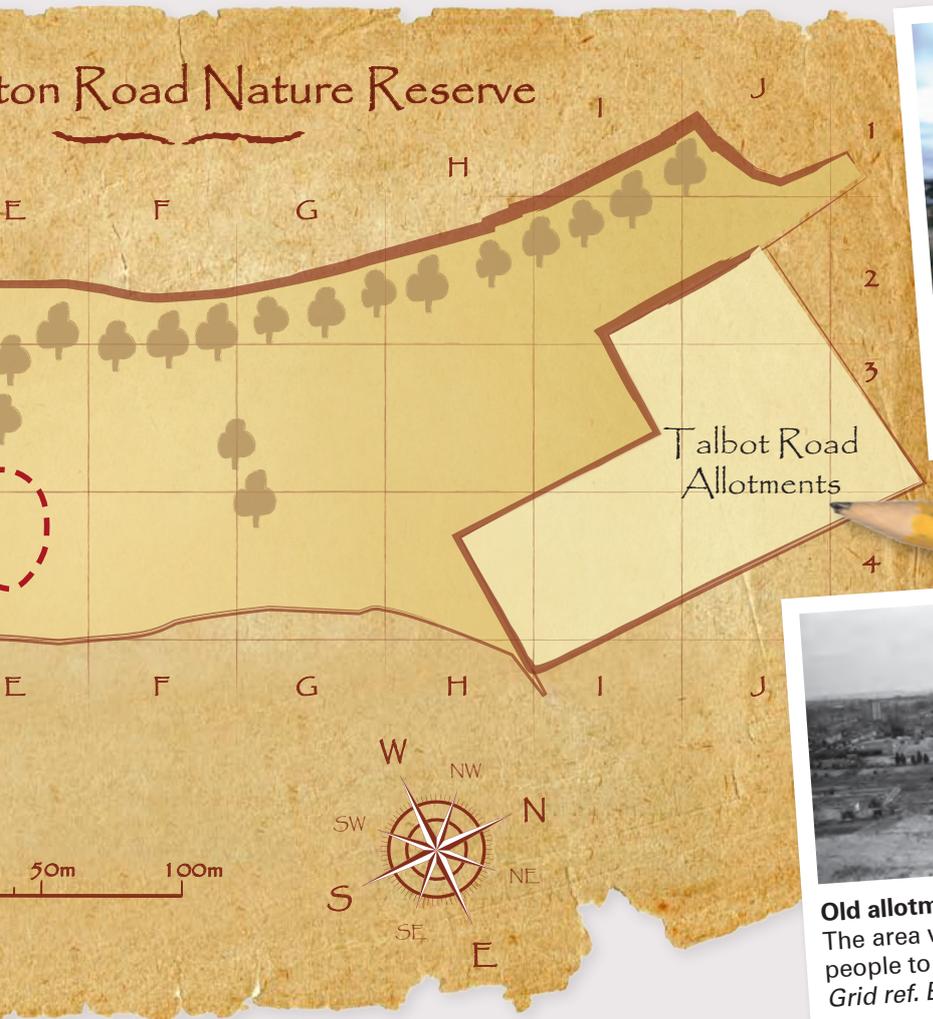
The site is now a designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest, and supports urban mammals such as foxes, deer and squirrels, together with a wide range of birds and some amazing insects, including several rare species. The results of two wildlife surveys can be seen on the FOCRNR website.

«Where Callington road is, that used to be all fields and farms. We used to have the little railway running through from Norton Radstock, which I could see from the house. My first son was 18 months old when we first came here and when I heard the whistle I used to run, pick him up and put him on the table so he could see it! You would see it coming down through at the back of Imperial lane.» Pam Tanner



← The allotment site in the 1980's and the same view today. Can you spot the line of conifers that appears on both photos?





**Row of cypress trees**  
 an Italian allotmentee once  
 planted these as a windbreak  
 around his allotment!  
*Grid ref. F4*



**Marker stone**  
 the original  
 boundary stone  
 for Bristol.  
*Grid ref. C4*

5



**Old allotment site**  
 The area was important for local  
 people to grow their food  
*Grid ref. E4*



**The old path**  
 An original right of  
 way. *Grid ref. C4*

*Your notes and sketches*



# Spring



**Explore** the reserve early in the morning to hear a wonderful dawn chorus. **Listen** for small birds such as wrens, goldfinches, and blue tits, particularly in the trees and bushes of the upper slopes. Find larger birds such as jays and green woodpeckers searching for ants in the field.

**Look for** Golden brimstone butterflies as they emerge from their cocoon in early March. **Find** their caterpillars feeding on the buckthorn plants on the upper slopes.

**Smell** the pungent wild garlic that fills the woodlands from April. Deciduous trees start to form their fresh green leaves, with plum and hawthorn blossom appearing in late spring.

**Listen** for hedgehogs in the early evening as they come snuffling out of hibernation whilst foxes prowl around, looking for a mate in April and May.



**Discover a tree.** What does it feel like?  
Can you describe it? Do a bark rubbing  
here:

## Fiction time

### Nest

The birds are singing loudly to attract a mate. They will need a good nest to lay their eggs in. Can you make one? What will you need?



Using moss to make a comfy nest

**Hawthorn,** also known as the **May tree** after the month that it flowers, was traditionally used to create garlands for **Mayday celebrations.**

Which is strange, as people thought hawthorn blossom smelled like the Great Plague in London. It was later discovered that a chemical present in hawthorn blossom is also a chemical formed in decaying animal tissue. Yuk!



Can you find these sensational springtime wild things? →



Tiny eggs under/on a leaf

Record your findings here

Something that jumps



Wild garlic



Great tit



Frog spawn



Hawthorn blossom

## Elder tree

The Elder was also known as the Fairy tree, apparently the best time to encounter faeries was under an elder bush on Midsummer's Eve, when the Faery King and Queen could be seen passing. There are many stories and magical references to elder. It was thought that if you burned elder wood you would see the devil but if you planted one by your house it would keep the devil away.

The berries and leaves are poisonous eaten raw however, Elder has a great deal of human

uses over history, mostly for food and drink. Elderflower cordial and 'champagne' is made from the flowers which can be dipped in batter and fried as

fritters. The flowers are also used to make a skin cleanser and eye lotion and the berries are used to make a rich wine.

The branches are filled with a soft pith which allows children to make elder beads and flutes or, more traditionally, as it is thought that the name elder comes the Anglo-saxon 'aeld' meaning fire, the hollow stems could have been used to blow air into the centre of a fire like bellows.



Derek W. D. Chapman



Wren



Elder tree



Blackbird



Brimstone butterfly



Something soft



Bluebells

## Cowslip

Primroses are the first of the flowers to appear at the sides of the green lane in January. They are followed later by cowslips in the field, and bluebells in the copse near the dewpond. The name cowslip is thought to have come from the Old English cūslýppe meaning "cow dung", probably because it is often found growing in cow fields. The leaves of cowslips are used as a salad and to flavour country wines and vinegars. Herbalists use it for the treatment of headaches, whooping cough and tremors amongst other things.



Cowslip



Birds nest

Record your findings here

Something yellow



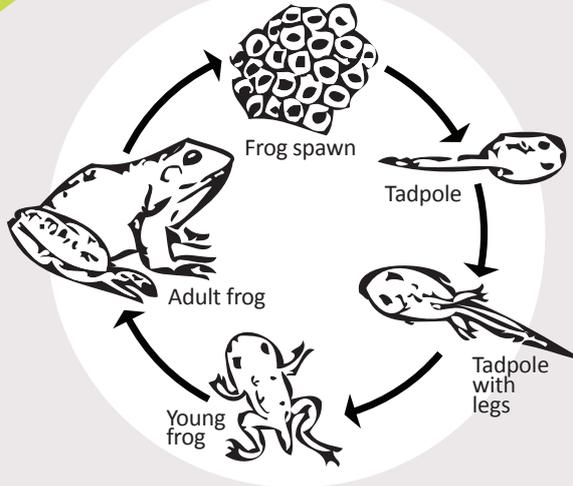
Orange tip butterfly



Snail

Did you know

## Frog Life Cycle



The **Spring Equinox** is the first day of **Spring**. Named **Ostara**, by the Anglo-Saxons in honor of **Eostre**, maiden Goddess of Spring fertility.

**Eostre** is the spirit of the dawning year, new growth, fresh beginnings, renewal, rebirth.

«I used to have a little covering on the allotment. There was a hedgehog there with about 6 young! We had loads of slow worms and still do now... and loads of foxes.»

Ian McCaulder

Did  
you  
know

## Slow worm

Slow worms emerge from hibernation in March and look superficially like snakes, but are actually legless lizards. One way to identify them is to see if they have eyelids: lizards do, snakes don't. Slow worms are a protected species, and spend much of the time hiding underneath objects. They are carnivorous and because they feed on slugs and worms, they can often be found in long grass and other damp environments. Slow worms



Ian Chambers

have the ability to shed their tails in order to escape predators. However, domestic cats are their main predator which they have no defence against.

**Find a beautiful spring flower.**  
Don't pick it but draw a picture to remember what it looks like:



Primroses

Record your  
findings here

Something round



Comma butterfly



Buttercup



Toad spawn

Your notes and sketches



**Enjoy** a quiet moment by the pond. On a warm sunny day, look out for dragonflies climbing up the plants, emerging from their skins as adults.

**Explore** the colourful wildflower meadow in the upper slopes, starring golden rod, purple loosestrife, delicate blue forget-me-nots and abundant oxeye daisies.

**Watch** the butterflies and day-time moths fluttering across the meadow. Spot the common blue, burnet moth and meadow brown.

**Keep really still** and if you are lucky, you may see a roe deer hiding in the trees with its young at the edge of the woodland.

**Take an evening walk** to look for bats flying at dusk over the tall trees lining the green lane.



Summer

**Find leaves from three different trees. Choose your favourite and draw it here. Make it as detailed as possible.**

*Fiction time*  
**What's happened to my leaf?**



Nibbled by a caterpillar



Damaged by fungi



Autumn colour



Thirsty plant



Damaged by gall wasp



Damaged by insect larvae

**Micro-moth**

*Did you know*

Look out for the rare micro moth - *Commophila aeneana* with a wingspan of 13-17 mm, a brightly coloured moth, with golden-yellow forewings with metallic blue markings. Being rather scarce in Britain, the moths fly from May to July, and the caterpillars live from September throughout the winter, feeding in the roots of the ragwort plant. *Thanks to Clive Sheppard for sharing his amazing photo (below).*

*Can you find these sensational summertime wild things?*



Vetch

**Record your findings here**

Something that flies



Shield bug



Flag iris



oak tree



Micro moth - *Commophila aeneana*

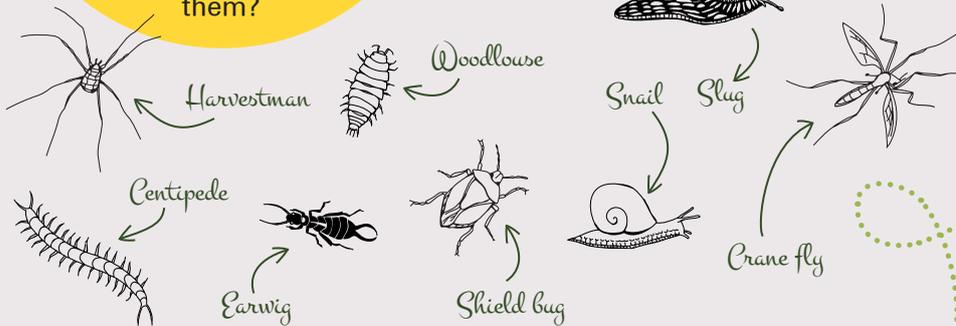
# Fiction time

## Search for a minibeast...

Find a quiet spot in the long grass and explore the tiny world of minibeasts.

Gently separate the grass and see how many different creatures you can see moving around.

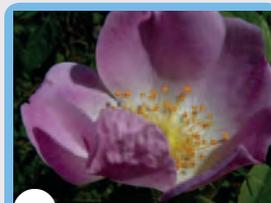
Can you identify them?



Harts tongue fern

Record your findings here

Something purple



Dog rose



Dragonfly

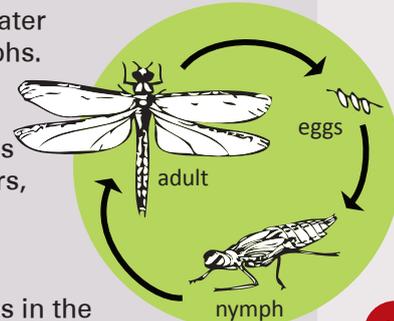


Meadow brown butterfly

## Dragonflies

Did you know

Dragonflies spend most of their life in the water as nymphs. where they are ferocious predators, eating a range of small creatures in the pond. Dragonflies are some of the fastest insects in the world and can reach speeds of 30 mph, change direction in mid-air, hover and even fly backwards.



For thousands of years humans have celebrated the **Summer Solstice on the 21<sup>st</sup> June**, the longest day of the year, to show their appreciation for the energy of the sun.

The Celts celebrated with bonfires that would add to the sun's energy, Christians placed the feast of St John the Baptist towards the end of June and it is also the festival of Li, the Chinese Goddess of light. In England thousands of people go to places of ancient religious sites like Stonehenge to see the sun rising on the first morning of summer.

«There's a huge variety of wildflowers. Michaelmas daisies had been planted on the allotments years ago - now they've gone wild, like antirrhinum and others.» Francis McCaulder



### Colour activity

Discover tiny specks of colour around the nature reserve to create a colourful, summer picture. Use a strip of double sided tape on card and use the smallest pieces of colour you can find, half a petal, the tip of a blade of grass, part of a leaf...

*Action time*

## Bats

Bats use echolocation to find their way around in the dark and to locate their food. They send out sound waves which they create by using their mouth or nose. When the sound hits an object an echo bounces back which allows the bat to identify the location, the size, the shape and even the texture of the object. The smallest bat in England, the pipistrelle bat, needs to eat around 3000 insects every night during the summer to ensure that it will survive hibernation later in the year.

*Did you know*



Bird's foot trefoil



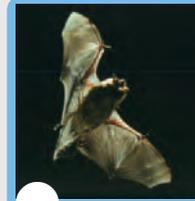
Burnet moth



Grasshopper



Goosegrass, or sticky weed



Bats

Record your findings here

Something that smells nice

Find a peaceful spot. Describe what you can hear? See? Smell? Feel?

## Black poplar

Black poplar wood is light but tough, absorbs shock and resists splintering so had many uses including being made into matches, wooden shields,



the bottom of carts and baskets. More recently it has been used for artificial limbs, shelving and toys. Black poplar is now rare but was once a very distinctive part of the countryside with its almost black bark. It is said that the bright red fallen catkins are called Devil's fingers and bring bad luck if picked up.

Did you know



Purple loosestrife

Record your findings here

Something with six legs



Common blue butterfly



Oxeye daisy



Elderflowers



Blue tit



**Pull on your wellies** and enjoy a crisp autumn adventure! **Notice** the leaves changing from green to yellow, red and orange. **Try and catch them** as they fall from the trees.

**See** the juicy fruits and berries that have ripened on the branches, that will provide valuable food for birds and mammals.

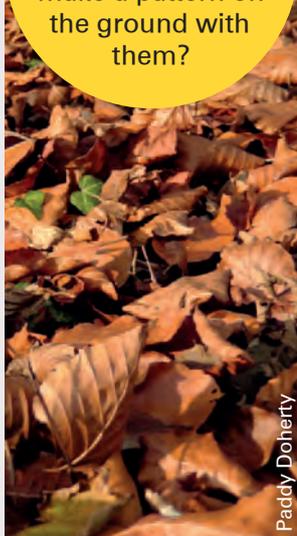
**Marvel** at the fungi as it starts to pop up all over the reserve, including the brilliantly named snowy wax cap, candle snuff fungus and shaggy ink cap.

# Autumn

The word 'Autumn' is written in a white, cursive font. It is surrounded by several brown, stylized maple leaves of various sizes and orientations, scattered across the top and middle of the page.

## Creation time

Collect lots of beautiful autumn leaves. Can you make a pattern on the ground with them?



Paddy Doherty

## Stag beetle

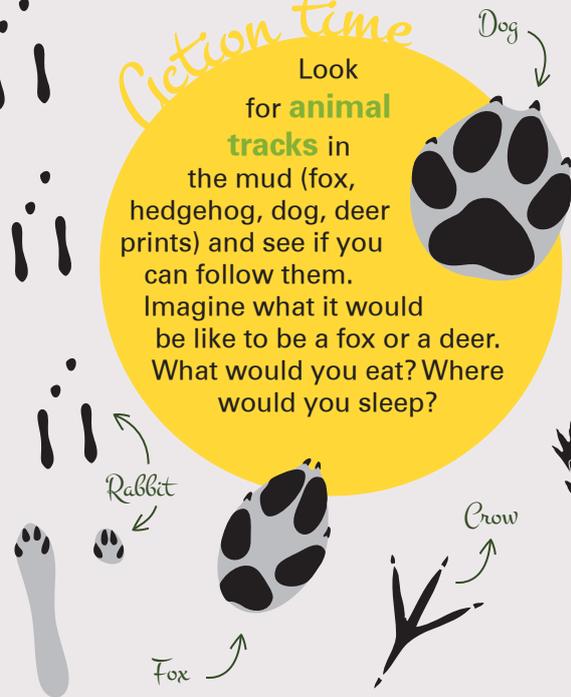
If you are lucky you may see a lesser stag beetle which is known to live on the reserve. As their name suggests the lesser stag beetle is smaller than the greater stag beetle and grey-black in colour. The males do not have large 'antlers' as the stag beetle does and they are never larger than 30mm. The C-shaped larvae tend to be found in decaying wood which is dryer and above the soil level.



Did you know

## Creation time

Look for **animal tracks** in the mud (fox, hedgehog, dog, deer prints) and see if you can follow them. Imagine what it would be like to be a fox or a deer. What would you eat? Where would you sleep?



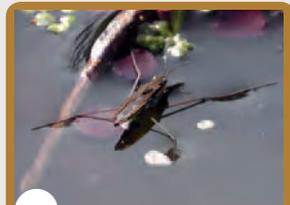
Can you find these sensational autumntime wild things?



Ragwort



Beechmasts



A pond skater



Acorns



Knapweed

«We went down on a fungi walk and it was really interesting. We found quite a few. We learnt about the different spores and how to identify if they were edible or not. We found some that were!» Peter and Mavis Stone

## Blackberry pancake

### Ingredients

a small bowl of fresh blackberries  
100g (4oz) plain flour  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 eggs  
150ml milk  
150 ml water  
1-2 tablespoons melted butter

*Put all the ingredients apart from the blackberries into a blender and whizz until smooth. Brush a non stick frying pan with butter and heat. When the pan is very hot remove from heat and pour in 2 tablespoons of batter, tipping the pan as you do. Return the pan to the heat and sprinkle a few blackberries over the top of the batter. Cook for around 30 seconds then flip and cook the other side until golden brown. Sprinkle with sugar to serve.*

## King Alfred's cakes

These black or dark brown smooth round fungi can be found on dead and decaying wood, usually Ash. Looking like burnt cakes they are named after the legend of King Alfred who burnt his cakes whilst cooking them on the fire. They are particularly good for making a fire as they can be lit easily from a spark and burn very slowly. Also known as cramp balls which originates from the tradition that carrying the fungus in your pocket would help prevent cramp.

Did you know



Blackberries



Something crispy



Field maple leaves



A ladybird



King Alfred's cakes

Find something to draw or write about here...

*Fiction time*

See how many different types of seed you can find from the trees. Take some home, plant them in soil and see if they grow! How do you think the seeds move about in the wild?



Acorn, oak seed



Field Maple seed



Ash seed



Conker, horse-chestnut seed



Hazelnut

*Fiction time*

Who's been eating the nuts? If you find a nibbled nut, try and work out who's eaten it



**Common**

**Dormice** leave a smooth edge to the hole and their toothmarks are at an angle to the hole on the nut surface.

**Squirrels** split the nuts neatly in half.



Candle snuff fungus



A squirrel

Record your findings here

Something that lives in a dark, cool place



Hazelnuts



Sloes



A nibbled nut

**Great spotted woodpeckers** break the nut into pieces or leave large irregular pieces.

**Wood mice** leave tooth marks on the nut surface and parallel toothmarks around the edge of the hole.

**Bank voles** create a round hole and leave tooth marks around the edge but not on the nut surface.

## Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs spend their days sleeping and come out at night, following regular routes in search of food. They are not territorial and live on their own - except when mothers are raising their young. They spend the winter in hibernation, saving energy because food is in short supply. They have poor eyesight but a fantastic sense of smell.



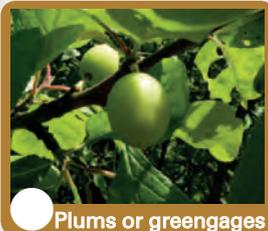
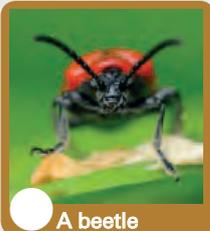
Did you know

## Harvest Festival

used to be celebrated at the beginning of the Harvest season on 1<sup>st</sup> August and was called Lammass, meaning 'loaf Mass'. Farmers made loaves of bread from the new wheat crop and gave them to their local church to show their thanks to God.

The festival is now celebrated on or near the Sunday of the Harvest Moon, which is the full Moon that occurs closest to the Autumn Equinox (about Sept. 23). It is a great time to enjoy local food and celebrate nature's bountiful offerings.

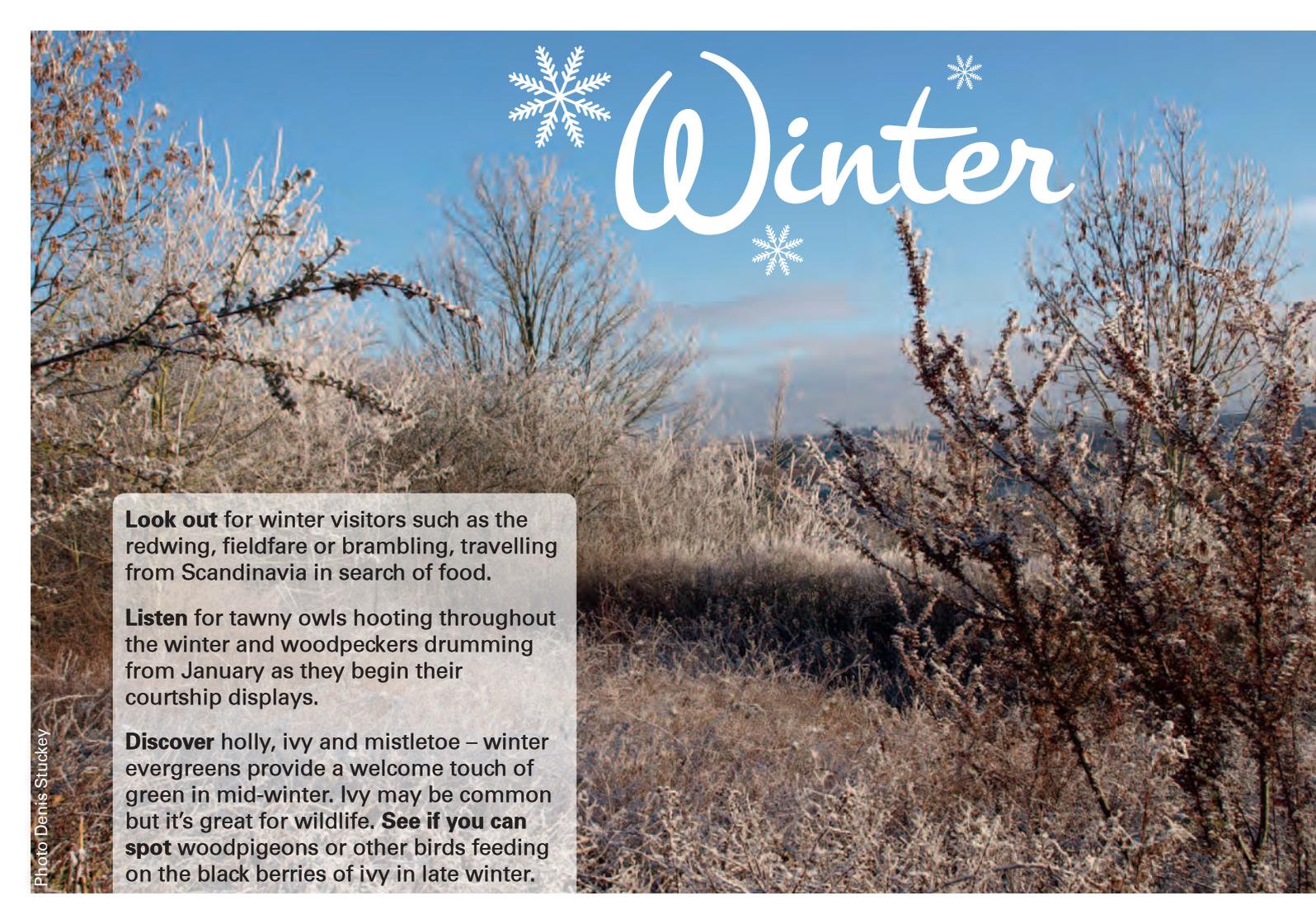
*See if you can find apples, plums, greengages and blackberries around the reserve!*



Record your findings here

Something wriggling

*Your notes and sketches*



# Winter

**Look out** for winter visitors such as the redwing, fieldfare or brambling, travelling from Scandinavia in search of food.

**Listen** for tawny owls hooting throughout the winter and woodpeckers drumming from January as they begin their courtship displays.

**Discover** holly, ivy and mistletoe – winter evergreens provide a welcome touch of green in mid-winter. Ivy may be common but it's great for wildlife. **See if you can spot** woodpigeons or other birds feeding on the black berries of ivy in late winter.

## Ash

In Scandinavia people believed that the Ash was the 'Tree of Life'. They thought a huge Ash tree reached up to Heaven and the roots went down to Hell and the Gods ruled the World. An eagle watched over Earth from the top branches and a squirrel ran up and down the tree reporting on what was happening.

Did you know

## Fiction time

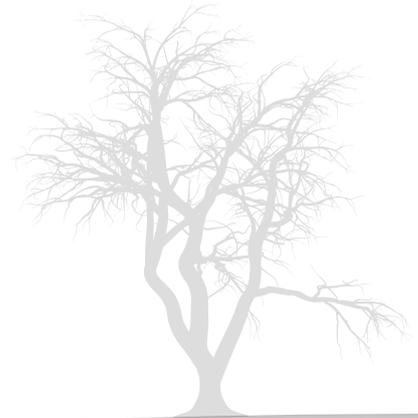
Get your wellies on and go for a wander, squelch in mud, splash through puddles and crunch through snow. Listen carefully and see **how many different wildlife sounds** you can hear.

## Fiction time

Wrap up warm and search for **frosty cobwebs** on a crisp, cold morning. They make wonderful photos!



**Find something wonderful - a tree, a leaf, a bug...** Write down a few words to describe what it looks like. Imagine what it would feel like to be this plant or animal, write this down too. Touch it - is it smooth, slimy, rough? Does it smell? How big is it? Use your findings to write a descriptive winter poem.



Ash tree



A frosty cobweb

Record your findings here

Something star shaped



Robin



Teasels



Some berries

## Winter's Feelings

The Winter wind whistles through  
The leafless trees  
The dark, empty, peaceful sky is stiller than ever  
I hear the leaves crumbling on the ground  
Animals hibernate in their homes  
Children wear woolly clothes  
Hats, scarves and gloves  
They play out in the snow making snowmen  
I wander down the lonely street looking at  
All the winter's feelings.

Gemma Limer (Year 6, Stretton Handley Church of England Primary School)

↩ Can you find these sensational wintertime wild things?



## Fox

The red fox is typically active at dusk or at night, but is often active in the day in more undisturbed areas. Its diet is extremely broad, and



includes small mammals, many invertebrates and birds, as well as fruit and items scavenged from dustbins, bird tables and compost heaps. Foxes generally do not live very long; although they have been recorded up to nine years old in the wild, most survive only one or two years.

Did you know



Julie Doherty

*«Here's  
to thee, old  
apple tree, That  
blooms well, bears  
well. Hats full, caps full,  
Three bushel bags full,  
An' all under one  
tree. Hurrah!  
Hurrah!»*

## Wassail

A traditional ceremony that involves singing and drinking the health of trees to awake the cider apple trees and to scare away evil spirits to ensure a good harvest of fruit in the Autumn. A wassail King and Queen lead a singing procession from one orchard to the next, the wassail Queen will place toast soaked in cider as a gift to the tree spirits (and to show the fruits created the previous year).

*Did  
you  
know*

## Fieldfares

The fieldfare is a member of the thrush family that lives in the woodlands of Northern Europe eating insects and earthworms for most of the year. During the Autumn large numbers fly over to England looking for food such as winter berries but sadly not all survive the flight. Great black-backed gulls will pounce on the weary birds, forcing them into the surf where they become easy prey.



Ivy

Record your  
findings here

Something hard



Holly berries



Beech tree buds



Woodlouse



Fieldfare

## Fiction time

### Winter sculptures -

collect beautiful natural objects on a winter walk. When you get home put them in a container, fill with water, add a length of string and freeze. Use them to create sculptures in your garden or hang them in trees.



«We used to always have sparrow hawks. One came and took a sparrow from our garden. A kingfisher came down to fish in the garden next door. One winter a heron even pitched on our garage!»

Ian McCaulder



Silver birch



Old mans beard



Roe deer



Magpie



Norway spruce  
(christmas tree)

**Make a bird cake** Birds are cold and hungry at this time of year. Why not help them out and make them a cake!

### Ingredients

- Lard (not cooking oil as it needs to solidify)
- Mixed bird seed
- Bread crumbs (fine until the chicks appear)

### Instructions

1. Melt the lard in a pan
2. When the lard has turned to liquid, add the other ingredients and stir
3. Pour the contents into a plastic container (an old marg tub will do)
4. Allow the mixture to go solid in the fridge
5. Push out of the container and put on your bird table.

You can also tie a long piece of string through the bottom of the container and then add the mixture - then hang it out on a tree with the bird cake still inside the tub.

# How to get there

Main access is from Callington Road (BS4 5XX), close to where it joins the A37 Wells Road, through kissing gates suitable for wheelchairs. Access is also available from Imperial Walk (BS4 9XX) via a steep set of steps.

A simple path system provides access into the field and to the dewpond. A further loop provides limited access into the more remote upper slopes.

Dog walking is permitted in the field area with dog bins provided at all entrances. Dogs must be kept on leads on the upper slopes which are designated a quiet refuge for breeding roe deer and other wildlife.

30



## Road Traffic Accident, 1840

«While Mr Burges was living in the house (Gotley Lodge), a tragic accident occurred. In 1840 Miss Jane Walter Packer of Montpelier, Bristol, a young lady aged 26, was being driven to Bath by her cousin. Between Arno's Court and "The Grove", the horse took fright at a drove of pigs and became unmanageable. The gig passed Gotley Lodge at a terrific pace. In those days Water Lane lived up to its name and a newspaper of the day says:

"The bottom of the lane forms at all seasons the bed of a rivulet which was so swollen by the heavy rain which had risen to six or eight feet above its usual level"

The horse plunged with great force into the water and soon was off its legs. The gig was lifted from the ground and Miss Packer and her cousin were thrown into the water. The horse was drowned and Miss Packer was swept away by the current which was running fast. She was taken from the water and carried into Gotley Lodge, and doctors tried to revive her, but it was too late.»

Story taken from *Bygone Brislington* produced by Jonathan Rowe and Diddie Williams, 1986



# Thank you

This journal has been produced by Avon Wildlife Trust on behalf of Bristol City Council's Wild City project which aims to provide opportunities for people to engage with nature in their neighbourhood. Wild City and Avon Wildlife Trust have created this journal as a resource for local schools and families to learn about the natural world in their area.

I would like to thank Denis Stuckey, Chair of the Friends of Callington Road nature reserve, for his invaluable help in compiling this journal and the rest of the group for their time sharing memories, photos and ideas. Also Claire Rosling and Ann Power for their many hours of voluntary work with Avon Wildlife Trust, helping to gather information by interviewing local residents, researching and taking photos for the journal.

Callington Road nature reserve is a wonderful, rich and diverse haven within the city of Bristol. A small group of people have worked hard to make sure this beautiful spot is managed and maintained for the enjoyment of the local community. Take time to enjoy it, visit regularly and help to ensure its future by respecting the landscape and wildlife.

*Julie Doherty*

Learning Development Officer

If you would like to find out more about learning opportunities with Avon Wildlife Trust, please contact Julie Doherty on 0117 91772701 or [juliedoherty@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:juliedoherty@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)

If you would like to find out more about the Wild City Project, please contact Paula Spiers, Wild City Project Officer, on 0117 922 4325, or [paula.spiers@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:paula.spiers@bristol.gov.uk)

Wild City is a three-year project funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces Programme, which is managed by Natural England under the Access to Nature scheme.



*«The wildlife has come back after all the building work round here. It's nice that it can regenerate again because you do wonder when they start building whether it's going to drive things out forever.*

*You do need this green space protected otherwise it's going to disappear all together. The children of the future won't see animals at all unless these places are kept.»*

Mavis Stone

