

# The Irish Hare

## Have a summer full of wildlife

Our favourite things to see and do when the sun shines

### YOUR WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY HOUSE

Follow our ten simple steps to make nature feel at home

### BREAKTHROUGH FOR STRANGFORD LOUGH

How this precious wildlife haven is finally showing signs of recovery.



**Ulster  
Wildlife**

# Welcome



Welcome to the summer edition of your new-look *Irish Hare* magazine. Here's hoping for some better weather, so we can all get outside and enjoy the sights and sounds of a wild summer! New research by the University of Exeter suggests that a two-hour 'dose' of nature a week significantly boosts health and wellbeing, even if you simply sit and enjoy the peace. This makes a strong case for two hours in nature to join 'five a day of fruit and veg' and '150 minutes of exercise a week' as official health advice – something we'd wholeheartedly support. This edition offers lots of ideas and activities to help you enjoy nature, from snorkel safaris (p. 5) and spotting squirrels (pp. 6&7) to welcoming wildlife at home (pp. 12 &13).

Aside from the well-being benefits of spending time in nature, we also depend on the natural world for our very existence. That is why the UN's global assessment on the state of nature makes an alarming read. It reports that up to one million species face becoming extinct as result of human activity; and without urgent action, future generations are at risk from the collapse of life-support systems that provide clean air, water, and pollination. Read more about our plans for action locally and how we will be fighting for radical change for nature protection and recovery, thanks to your support (p. 8). One local success story is Strangford Lough, where wildlife is starting to recover following the implementation of proper protection (p. 10).

I looking forward to seeing many of you at our Members' Day in September.

*Jennifer Yulton*

Chief Executive Officer of Ulster Wildlife

## Ulster Wildlife *Get in touch*

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### Donate to our barn owl appeal

Barn owls are in trouble and need your help to survive. [ulsterwildlife.org/donate](http://ulsterwildlife.org/donate)

**Volunteer** Could you donate your skills and time to look after wildlife? Check our range of opportunities [ulsterwildlife.org/volunteer](http://ulsterwildlife.org/volunteer)

**Report sightings** From barn owls and red squirrels to shark egg cases, we want to hear about your wildlife sightings [ulsterwildlife.org/report-sightings](http://ulsterwildlife.org/report-sightings)



## SEE THIS

Look out for the migratory hummingbird hawk-moth, hovering just like a hummingbird over garden flowers with its long proboscis; its wings move so quickly that it actually hums!

## DO THIS

Take a summer trip to the seaside to explore a rock pool, go beachcombing, watch terns fishing, visit a seal colony, or look for fossils.

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

# Damselflies

Summer is an excellent time to get to know these beautiful insects and distinguish them from dragonflies.

### Out on patrol

Damselflies can be found in a wide range of habitats such as wetlands, bogs and even woodland clearings. They can also be found from sea level, sometimes frequenting brackish pools, to fast-flowing streams high in the uplands. The key requirement is that there is water nearby, so it's not that unusual to see a damselfly in an urban garden.

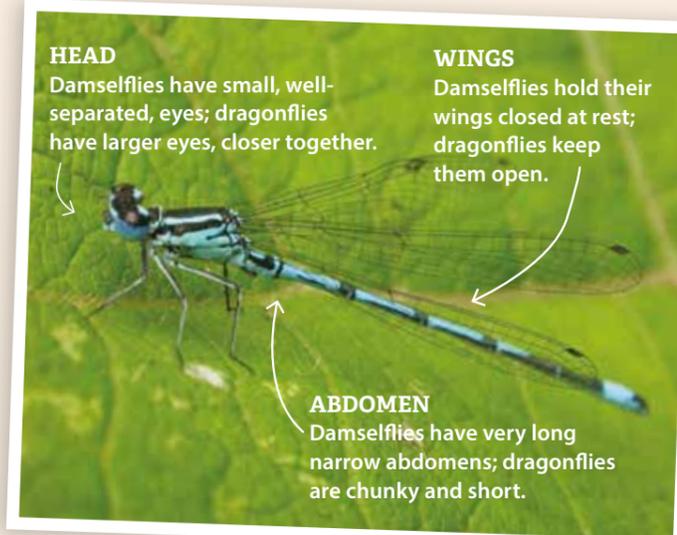
Damselflies may look delicate but they are in fact ruthless predators patrolling the sky to descend upon their prey with lightning speed - they feed on flies, midges, and even each other!

### What to look for

There are nine species of damselfly resident in Northern Ireland. Like most insects, damselflies are at their most active in warm sunny conditions, so pick your day wisely. Binoculars will come in handy, as most will fly off if you get too close. And of course, take care if near the water's edge.

### Know the difference

As a general rule, the damselfly is slimmer and rests with its wings folded along its body, while the stockier dragonfly keeps its wings spread outwards like an aeroplane. Most of the damselfly life-cycle is spent as an underwater larva called a nymph; they spend several years under water before emerging as an adult.



### HEAD

Damselflies have small, well-separated eyes; dragonflies have larger eyes, closer together.

### WINGS

Damselflies hold their wings closed at rest; dragonflies keep them open.

### ABDOMEN

Damselflies have very long narrow abdomens; dragonflies are chunky and short.

### LARVAE

Aquatic damselfly larvae have three paddle-shaped tail-like gills.

The earliest damselflies are on the wing by April while the latest might still be flying on a warm October day: the highest species diversity is found during July and August.

### Attracting damselflies

Simply add a pond to attract damselflies with a range of plants to provide hunting and emergence sites for nymphs, and perching and egg-laying positions for adults.

### SEE THEM THIS SUMMER

- **Ballynahone Bog** The bog habitat here is home to a wide range of damselflies.
- **Bog Meadows** Several common species of damselfly can be found here.
- **Milford Cutting** The grassland banks support several species of 'blues'.



To find out more please visit our website [ulsterwildlife.org/nature-reserves](http://ulsterwildlife.org/nature-reserves)

## Top tips 3 SPECIES TO SPOT

### Common blue damselfly

A regular visitor to gardens, the common blue is on the wing from April to September.



### Large red damselfly

Our only red damselfly species, found from April to August. It likes to rest at the edge of garden ponds.



### Blue-tailed damselfly

A distinctive species with a blue tip to the tail – found from May to September.



**HEAR THIS**

The melodic song of the skylark over grasslands is the quintessential sound of summer. The bird could be described as nondescript; its sound is anything but.

**FORAGE FOR THIS**

Red clover flowers in grassy places from May to September. Its little florets have nectar at the base. This makes them surprisingly sweet and delicious.



**NOT JUST FOR KIDS**

# Seven ways to enjoy nature this summer

Why should kids have all the fun? Reignite your love of nature with these really wild things to do.



**1 Dip into a rockpool**  
Armed with an eagle eye, a bucket and fishing net, explore a mini sea in search of crabs, fish, sea anemones and starfish; it's fun, free and totally fascinating – for big kids too. **Tip:** Time your visit at low tide.

© MATTHEW ROBERTS



**2 Shine a light on moths**  
Fancy seeing a tiger or elephant (moth) in your garden? Simply hang a white sheet over a washing line at night and shine a powerful torch on it. You'll be amazed at what you can attract. **Tip:** moths love jasmine and tobacco plants.



**3 Explore a nature reserve**  
Take a stroll at Slievenacloy to experience the magnificent mid-summer sounds of birds and insects, or why not enjoy our new path at Milford Cutting to take a peek, or even a sneaky sniff, at the stunning orchids, while they last?

**4 Hunt for signs of barn owls**  
Scan field edges, fence posts and hedgerows as night falls for a ghostly white bird and listen out for an eerie screech. The snoring sound of hungry chicks is unmistakable and may indicate that a nest is nearby. **Tip:** still dry evenings are best to spot them.



© DONALD SUTHERLAND

**5 Plant honeysuckle for wildlife**  
The sweet heady scent of honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) is a delightful summer experience. Strongest at night, in order to attract moths such as elephant hawk-moth, it's a welcome addition to any garden. Honeysuckle is a climbing plant that caters for a host of wildlife: it provides nectar for pollinators, prey for bats, nest sites for birds, and food for small mammals. **Tip:** use soap and water to wash off aphids.



© JOAN BURKMAR

**6 Leave out water for wildlife**  
During hot weather, remember to provide plenty of water for animals and birds to drink and bathe in. A pond or bird bath is great, but a shallow container or saucer will also suffice.

**7 Build your own insect hotel**  
An average garden could hold over 2,000 different species of insect! Very few of these creatures cause significant damage to our prized plants and there are many more insects that actually help us control pests. By providing the right habitats, we can greatly increase the number of beneficial insects in the garden.



- YOU WILL NEED**
- Wooden pallets
  - Bricks
  - Plastic bottles
  - Bamboo canes
  - Pebbles
  - Leaves
  - Twigs
  - Cardboard



ILLUSTRATION: © CORINNE WELCH

**MAKE YOUR BUG HOTEL**  
Place a wooden palette in your chosen location. Line bricks around the corners and across the middle. Place your next palette on top of this and repeat the process for all your palettes.

Cut off the top two thirds of your bottles. Fill half of them with bamboo canes and the other half with rolled-up cardboard.

Fill the remaining spaces with bricks, pebbles, leaves and twigs. Add any other materials you want to recycle, such as old pipes, toilet rolls, carpet, or plant pots.

# 10 summer events

Take your pick from this selection of some of the best seasonal events and activities close to you.

- 1 Take 5 Tuesdays**  
2, 16, 30 July, 13 & 27 August, 11am – 12.30pm  
Bog Meadows Nature Reserve  
Distance and pace-adjusted guided walks.
- 2 Woodland Wander**  
13 July, 11am - 12.30pm  
Straidkilly Nature Reserve  
Enjoy a guided nature walk through this beautiful hazel woodland.
- 3 Snorkel Safari**  
20 July, 1pm – 4pm  
Portballintrae  
Explore a hidden world beneath the waves.
- 4 Foraging Walk**  
20 July, 7pm - 9pm  
Bog Meadows Nature Reserve  
Learn about the wild edible and medicinal plants in this wildlife haven.
- 5 Rockpool Ramble**  
6 August, 10am – 12 noon  
Rossglass beach, Minerstown  
Explore the weird and wonderful creatures living in rockpools.
- 6 Trip down memory lane**  
6 August, 11am - 1pm  
Bog Meadows Nature Reserve  
Over 50's reminiscence walk.
- 7 Radical Rookpool Ramble**  
13 August, 10.30am - 1.30pm  
Portballintrae  
Explore rockpools by climbing and jumping off boulders.
- 8 Snorkel Safari**  
14 August, 3pm - 5pm  
Killough beach  
Explore a hidden world beneath the waves.
- 9 Storytelling & Campfire**  
16 August, 8pm – 10pm  
Bog Meadows Nature Reserve  
Come away with storyteller Eamonn Keenan to the world of Irish gods and heroes.
- 10 Bat walk**  
7 September, 8.30pm - 10.30pm  
Bog Meadows  
Find out more about the secret lives of bats.

**Discover more events** on our website [ulsterwildlife.org/](http://ulsterwildlife.org/) events. Booking is essential for most events.



Dip beneath the waves on one of our snorkel safaris this summer

# 8 places to see Red squirrels

Summer is great time to see red squirrels. You may hear the scratching of claws in branches before you see one – and they might chatter crossly or stamp their feet if you surprise them! Red squirrels are active in the daytime but, like us, don't really like being out in bad weather. They also enjoy an afternoon nap, especially when it's hot. These rare and beautiful animals can be found only in small pockets of Northern Ireland, but here are our top recommendations for where to see them this summer.

**Top tip:** Red squirrels don't like dogs, so keep your four-legged friends on a leash if you want any chance of seeing one!

PETER CAIRNS/2020VISION

With your support, we're leading a project to protect vital red squirrel strongholds in Northern Ireland  
[ulsterwildlife.org/red-squirrels](http://ulsterwildlife.org/red-squirrels)

Thank you



## See the spectacle *for yourself*

### 1 Straidkilly Nature Reserve

The woodland walk is your best chance seeing of a red squirrel, and there are stunning views of the Antrim Coast.

**Where:** Carnlough, Co. Antrim, BT44 0LQ

**More:** [ulsterwildlife.org/nature-reserves/straidkilly](http://ulsterwildlife.org/nature-reserves/straidkilly)

### 2 Glenarm Nature Reserve

Search for red squirrels in this beautiful wooded river valley, with regular sightings on feeders.

**Where:** Glenarm Estate, Munie Road, Glenarm, Co. Antrim, BT44 0BD

**More:** [ulsterwildlife.org/nature-reserves/glenarm](http://ulsterwildlife.org/nature-reserves/glenarm)

### 3 Mount Stewart

Visit the purpose-built viewing hide to see red squirrels, with numbers quadrupling after a successful red squirrel conservation programme.

**Where:** Mount Stewart Estate, Portaferry Road, Newtownards, Co. Down, BT22 2AD

**More:** [nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart)

### 4 Glenariff Forest Park

Keep an eye out for squirrels on the trails and on feeders at Laragh Lodge, complete with waterfalls and stunning views.

**Where:** 98 Glenariff Road, Co. Antrim, BT44 0QX

**More:** [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/glenariff-forest-park](http://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/glenariff-forest-park)

### 5 Muff Glen

Red squirrels can be spotted all year round in this small wooded river valley, thanks to conservation work by the North West Red Squirrel Group.

**Where:** Eglinton, Co. Derry~Londonderry, BT47 3GW

**More:** [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/muff-glen-forest](http://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/muff-glen-forest)

### 6 Montalto Estate

Feeders located in this privately-owned estate are regularly visited by red squirrels, thanks to a successful red squirrel conservation programme.

**Where:** Montalto Estate, Spa Road, Ballynahinch, BT24 8PT

**More:** [montaltoestate.com](http://montaltoestate.com)

### 7 Gortin Glen

Scan the conifer trees, nestled among the Sperrin Mountains, for red squirrels and enjoy magnificent views.

**Where:** Gortin Forest Park, Gortin Road, Omagh.

**More:** [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gortin-glen-forest-park](http://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gortin-glen-forest-park)

### 8 Castle Archdale Forest Park

Tom's Island Walk offers the best chance of seeing a red squirrel scampering in the trees.

**Where:** Castle Archdale Country Park, Lisnarick, BT94 1PP

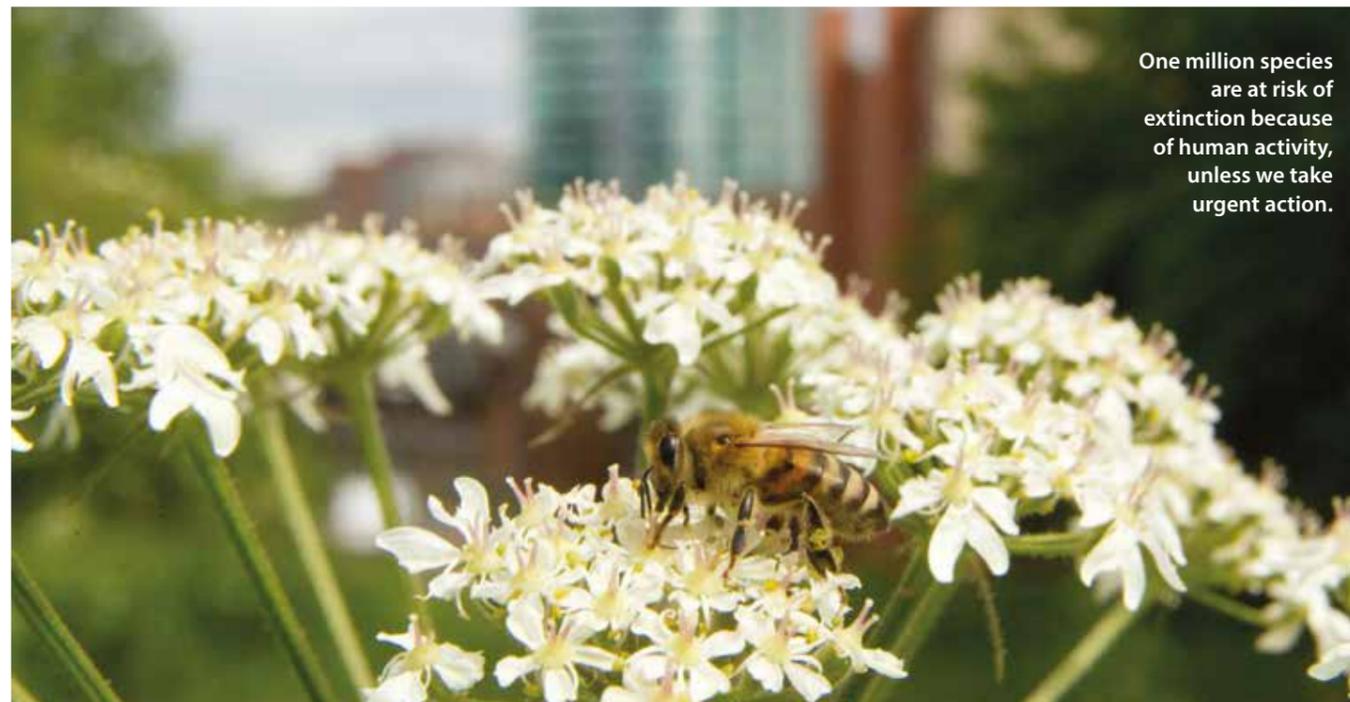
**More:** [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/castle-archdale-country-park-enniskillen](http://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/castle-archdale-country-park-enniskillen)

## Did you see?

If you're lucky enough to see a red squirrel, please remember to log your sighting to help with the 2019 All Ireland Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey – [ulsterwildlife.org/red-squirrels](http://ulsterwildlife.org/red-squirrels)

# WILD NEWS

All the latest local news from Ulster Wildlife



One million species are at risk of extinction because of human activity, unless we take urgent action.

© PAUL HOBSON

## Ambitious plan needed for a wilder future

A UN Report in May 2019 spelled out that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinction is accelerating with grave impacts on people around the world now likely. The facts about climate change are clear, and we are running out of time to avert dangerous climate breakdown.

It appears that our Government is finally treating these threats with the seriousness they deserve, and accepting that we need radical change if we are to avoid future catastrophe.

Locally, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is producing 'A Northern Ireland Strategy for a Better Environment' over the next year. This long-term plan will address climate action, waste, air and water pollution, and

nature recovery on land and at sea. The intention is for the plan to be endorsed by the whole NI Executive (once we have one back up and running) and will include commitments across all government departments.

Ulster Wildlife will be working with partner organisations across the environment sector to feed into this plan over the coming months, and will be challenging the Department to put forward a plan with ambitious targets.

We want to see clear commitments and measurable binding targets for safeguarding our natural life-support systems: a plan that reflects the true value of nature to our future well-being. We also think that NI needs an independent watchdog body to scrutinise government progress, and sufficient resources and

funding to implement the plan fully.

The United Nations report concludes: "Through 'transformative change', nature can still be conserved, restored, and used sustainably. By transformative change, we mean a fundamental, system-wide reorganisation across technological, economic, and social factors."

This transformative change will affect all of us and means we will have to change how we currently live our lives. But without this change, we are facing a very uncertain future and leaving a toxic legacy for our children and our children's children – the time to act is now.

We'll be fighting for the most ambitious strategy possible for Northern Ireland, and we'll let you know how you can show your support in this hugely important process in the coming months.



The four red squirrel kits born this spring at Montalto.

© WILSON JOHNSTON

## First baby red squirrels for Montalto Estate

Four red squirrel kits were sighted this March in Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, for the first time in over twenty years, much to the delight of red squirrel volunteers and visitors.

The baby boom is a result of the successful introduction of two red squirrels by Belfast Zoo, in September 2018, alongside dedicated conservation efforts by volunteers from the Heart of Down Red Squirrel Group who monitor and control invasive greys in the area, and supplementary-feed the resurging reds.

Over the last two years, we have been delighted to work closely with staff at Montalto Estate and the team of passionate volunteers to help red squirrels bounce back, through our Red Squirrels United project. We hope this success story will continue to expand in the months ahead and will encourage more volunteers to get involved and help with efforts to give these beautiful and treasured creatures a fighting chance of survival.

Find out more at [ulsterwildlife.org/red-squirrels](http://ulsterwildlife.org/red-squirrels)

## Sad loss of founding member

We were very sad to learn of the passing of Dr. Pamela Forsyth this March. Pamela and her husband Ian have been long-standing supporters of Ulster Wildlife right from the beginning of the charity.

We pass our deepest condolences on to her family and thank them for choosing to ask for donations to Ulster Wildlife in lieu of flowers for Pamela's funeral.



Together  
we're stronger

Here are some of the ways your membership has been helping

# 102

The number of under-threat species we care for on our nature reserves such as reed bunting and small heath butterfly, thanks to your support.

You helped  
barn owls



Your generous donations have helped raise over £9,000 this year to protect NI's endangered barn owls. Donate now at [ulsterwildlife.org/donate](http://ulsterwildlife.org/donate)

Thank  
you!

# 25km

The length of coastline across NI surveyed for wildlife last year.

You supported  
volunteers

Over 470 hours were given by volunteers to help wildlife this year, thanks to your support.



# Breakthrough for Strangford Lough

For over 20 years, we have been fighting to save the world-renowned wildlife of Strangford Lough, in particular its unique horse-mussel reefs. Finally, with proper protection, this special site is showing signs of recovery.

BY DAWN MISKELLY

Strangford Lough is one of only a handful of places in the world where horse mussels form living reefs which, if properly protected, can support hundreds of other species.

The seabed of Strangford Lough is home to a rare habitat of horse-mussel (*Modiolus modiolus*) reefs. These reefs are a key feature in the Lough's European designation as a Special Area of Conservation. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, the reefs were all but destroyed by bottom trawling and dredging in the lough.

Ulster Wildlife campaigned for many years for proper protection of the reefs, and when our government wouldn't take action, we made two formal complaints to the EU to highlight the damage. The EU upheld our complaints and threatened huge fines on the UK if corrective action wasn't taken by NI Government Departments to implement a series of restoration measures, including a trawling ban and fishing exclusion zone.

Since then, the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) has carried out a trial reef restoration project by bringing in young horse mussels from outside the lough, but this proved unsuccessful. Now, though, there is real cause for optimism following last year's seabed monitoring programme carried out by DAERA Marine Staff.

The severely damaged horse-mussel reefs in Strangford Lough are showing signs of recovery

throughout the lough. What we feared was potentially lost for ever is starting to come back with all of its associated sea life. This shows that with proper protection and management our seas and fragile marine wildlife can recover, so long as we act before it is too late.

Whilst we are cautiously optimistic, there is a long journey ahead before the horse-mussel reefs in Strangford Lough are fully restored and in a truly healthy state, and it is vital that the fishing exclusion zone is maintained to achieve this.

It is our view that without the threat of huge fines from the EU, it's unlikely that the necessary steps would have been taken by government departments here to secure the future of this hugely valuable marine sanctuary. We are therefore very concerned about the potential weakening of environmental protection when we leave the EU and believe we urgently need a new environmental watchdog to replace the oversight of the European Court of Justice. To be effective, this must be independent and have real power to hold our government to account and ensure the vital laws protecting places like Strangford Lough are fully enforced. We will continue to work closely with the relevant government departments to monitor the Lough's recovery over the coming years.



## Why horse mussels are important

Horse mussels form clumps on the bottom of the lough in muddy areas where there aren't normally hard surfaces for other sea life to attach to. These clumps or reefs act as a home, spawning grounds and nurseries for hundreds of other creatures, including queen scallops, king scallops, and scampi (Dublin Bay prawns).



## Signs of a healthier lough

Other signs that the lough's health is improving is the re-occurrence of large brittle starfish beds, which had disappeared along with the horse mussels. These suspension-feeding animals can have a positive effect on water quality, working to further improve conditions for wildlife in the lough.



## A haven for wildlife

Strangford Lough is one of our most important marine sanctuaries, particularly for seals and waterfowl. You are also likely to see dolphin and porpoise in the summer months around the narrows. There are indications that the mouth of the lough also acts as a nursery area for young sharks, such as tope.



Find out more about Strangford Lough's recovery at our AGM & Members' Day with a talk by Joe Breen from DAERA.



## Dawn Miskelly

oversees Ulster Wildlife's conservation work across NI, on land at sea.

# At home with nature

We put a lot of effort into making our gardens wilder, and rightly so. But what about our houses and flats themselves? In a world where the wild places are shrinking, every inch of space we can make for nature is vital.

Whether it's the joyful song of a robin drifting through an open window, or the colourful flash of a peacock butterfly just beyond the glass, it's always a delight to glimpse the wild world just beyond our walls.

But our wildlife is in trouble. Natural habitats are shrinking, becoming fragmented and isolated by roads and other developments. With every tree that is lost, there are fewer natural cavities in which bats and birds can roost and nest. Nature no longer has the space it needs to thrive.

Nature reserves are invaluable, but to keep these protected areas from becoming wild oases in an impoverished landscape, we need to use every single space to help wildlife. Our gardens, streets, road verges, and even houses can become part of a wild network, creating vital green corridors and stepping stones that connect larger wild spaces.

Every home, new or old, can play a part. With just a few mostly inexpensive adjustments, we can make our roofs, walls and even windows a little more wildlife-friendly.

From bee bricks and bat and bird boxes that provide safe roosting and nesting spots, to walls blooming with climbing plants, there are lots of great ways to turn the outside of your house into a wildlife sanctuary. The best results will come when they complement the surrounding landscape, so take a look at the habitats around your house and choose the best features for your location – bats are more likely to use a roost close to a hedgerow or line of trees, and birds need to be able to find enough food to feed their hungry chicks.

Together, our homes and gardens take up more space than all of Northern Ireland's nature reserves put together. So let's make every inch count! 🍀

📍 **Visit our website** for handy guides to helping wildlife, from building bat boxes to attracting bees [ulsterwildlife.org/help-wildlife](http://ulsterwildlife.org/help-wildlife)



**Window-mounted feeders**

Even with no garden you can still feed the birds. A window-mounted feeder gives them a helping hand and lets you enjoy their antics from your armchair.

**House martin nest cups**

Invite house martins to move in under your eaves with a specially made nest cup. They're especially useful when martins can't find enough mud to build their own.

**Hanging baskets and window boxes**

Wildflower-filled hanging baskets and window boxes make the perfect pit stop for passing pollinators.

**Hedgehog holes**

Hedgehogs can travel over a mile each night as they forage and look for mates. A 13cm x 13cm hole in your fence helps keep the hedgehog highway open.

**Bat boxes**

By fixing a bat box to your wall you can provide the perfect resting spot for your local bats. It's important to avoid directing any artificial lighting onto the box.

**Swift box**

Modern houses leave little space for swifts to nest, but swift boxes create a home for these summer visitors. Broadcasting a recording of their calls encourages them to move in.

**Green wall**

From a simple climbing plant to a trellis laden with different species, a green wall adds colour to a house, creates vital habitat, and helps regulate pollution and rainfall.

**Water butt**

Using less water helps keep our wetlands healthy, so set up a water butt to catch rainfall. You can use the water to clean your car and water your plants.

**Window stickers**

Placing stickers on your windows gives birds a better chance of spotting the glass, reducing the chance of a fatal collision. You can buy them or cut out your own.

**Bee box**

Bee boxes offer nesting space for some species of solitary bee. If you're having work done on your house, you can even fit a built-in bee brick!

ILLUSTRATION: SAM BREWSTER



**Dara McAnulty**

## Nature everywhere, for everyone



On a sunny day in 1970s London on the fourth floor of a block of flats, a young boy watched in amazement a jar holding three tadpoles. Collected from a nearby pond in one of London's city parks, it sat on a balcony alongside a pot of peas and some flowers; that's all there was room for. That boy was my dad and that experience in part led him to study and become a biologist. The only necessary component was an obliging parent and the natural curiosity of a young child. My dad moved to Co. Down soon after and his love of the natural world followed him, nurtured by small moments, and passed on to me.

I have never had a large garden, but there has always been sky, and so birds. A windowsill and so a pot of wildflowers. A patio, so runner beans and tomatoes – bees, butterflies, and hoverflies. We haven't travelled very far, but there has always been new and interesting wildlife to see and learn from, wherever we go: corncrakes and puffins on Rathlin Island; marsh fritillary butterflies in Co. Fermanagh; red kites in Co. Down; swifts swirling the streets of inner-city Belfast; lizards on Slievenacloy Nature Reserve, and seals in Carlingford Lough. The list is endless and there are still so many places to go to, so many things to see – we have such a rich and fascinating natural heritage.

When life gets overwhelming, I watch blackbirds and listen to their sonata on neighbouring chimney pots. Jackdaws squabbling humorously on rooftops. Swallows swooping overhead. You just need one



Dara exploring nature with his siblings.

bird feeder, a little patience, and soon a community of birds will provide a contemplative soap opera. Observation of bird behaviour not only stills the mind but is an opportunity to be a scientist, to record what you are looking at, see the next generation come in spring, and think about the intricacies of biodiversity. To realise the silence that comes in July when the breeding period is over. So much wonder. So much learning.

We let a patch grow wild in our garden and we stared in disbelief as orchids emerged. Self-heal. Clover. Dragonflies. Butterflies. Such a small space, buzzing and humming with a life so rich and yet so easily attained. It just needed an open mind and the desire to create a space for nature to thrive. I observed the multitude of species alighting on a single dandelion. In ten minutes, so much magic. Our garden came alive.

These encounters with nature and wildlife, these observations, it's all about connection and realising our place in the world. Our interconnectedness with, and dependence on, nature. It is all there: outside our window, in parks, forests, hills and mountains. It's everywhere, for everyone. It's magical!

**TAKE ACTION FOR WILDLIFE**  
Give nature a helping hand where you live, from creating a garden pond to cutting your use of plastic [ulsterwildlife.org/help-wildlife](http://ulsterwildlife.org/help-wildlife)

### A LITTLE BIT WILD

#### Let them grow

Nettles are an important food source for many moths and butterflies, and they make great fertiliser. Leave a patch to grow, if you can, then harvest it for compost just before it sets seed.

#### DARA MCANULTY

is a 15-year-old wildlife enthusiast from Co. Down and a member of Ulster Wildlife's Grassroots Challenge Youth Forum. His debut book, *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, is due for release in Spring 2020.



# PARTNERSHIPS FOR WILDLIFE

Want to get involved? Contact Vickie on 028 9046 3108



## Concentrix raises a hoot for barn owls

Staff at Concentrix Belfast have been making wildlife their business by raising £1,090 to help protect barn owls in Northern Ireland, as part of their Earth Month campaign this April.

Vickie Chambers, from Ulster Wildlife, said: "We are so grateful to the staff at Concentrix for their fantastic fundraising efforts. Raising more than one thousand pounds through aluminium can recycling and other in-house initiatives will make a massive difference to the future of these critically endangered birds."

As a thank-you, staff enjoyed a 'Barn Owl Discovery Day' where they had the

opportunity to meet a 'real' barn owl and find out more about this iconic bird from a passionate educator.

Stefan Cuning, Senior HR Business Partner at Concentrix, added: "In this time of environmental crisis, it is crucial that we all get involved to do our bit for our planet. Ulster Wildlife plays such an important role in protecting our beautiful natural heritage, and we are proud to have helped raise much-needed funds for their work."

**Find out how** your business can help barn owls [ulsterwildlife.org/corporate-support](http://ulsterwildlife.org/corporate-support)

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Danske Bank joins

We are delighted to welcome on board Danske Bank. Danske staff have taken part in corporate volunteering days on our Nature Reserves and are working to improve their sites for biodiversity.



### Translink staff become wildlife aware

Translink staff are now 'wildlife aware' having completed a series of training days with our conservation team, with a focus on wildlife they may encounter on a daily basis, how to identify it, and how it is protected.



### Alpha Housing audits sites

A warm welcome to our latest member, Alpha Housing. Alpha has also undertaken biodiversity audits on two of its sites, to achieve gains for both wildlife and residents.



## Corporate Members of Ulster Wildlife

**Platinum** AES UK & Ireland

**Gold** Bombardier Aerospace, Translink

**Silver** AllState Northern Ireland, Belfast International Airport Ltd, CES Quarry Products Ltd, Encirc Ltd, NIE Networks

**Bronze** Alpha Housing, Belfast Harbour, Henry Brothers Ltd, Lafarge Cement

**Standard** Chaka Travel, Danske Bank, Henderson Group Ltd, Finlay's Food, Peninsula Print & Design Ltd, Pritchitts – A Lakeland Dairies

# DO YOU GIVE A HOOT\*?



**\* actually it's more  
of a screech,  
but you know  
what we mean!**

**Visit [ulsterwildlife.org/donate](http://ulsterwildlife.org/donate)**



**Ulster  
Wildlife**

**There are fewer than 50 breeding pairs of barn owls left in Northern Ireland. Donate today to bring this precious species back from the brink.**