

# Wild and Free in LBBDD Calendar 2021

**Barking &  
Dagenham**

**COUNTRY  
PARKS**

**Gemma Bouchereau**  
Sunset moment

**Adult**  
(16 years+)

*"This photo was taken during a moment of solitude in my beautiful local park, Beam Parklands.*

*The sunset and the stillness of the glass-like pond were too beautiful not to capture in a photograph. The park was silent and still, just the sound of the remaining, softly-paddling ducks and geese.*

*My local park takes on a whole new essence at sunset, and I'm grateful to have experienced that."*

Barking & Dagenham Park Rangers Service ran a competition throughout Summer 2020 asking local residents to share their experiences of nature and wildlife within the borough. This calendar shows the shortlisted entries and highlights the diversity and beauty that we can find right on our doorstep.

#WildFreeLBBDD



BDParkRangers

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/local-parks-and-open-spaces> and  
<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/country-parks-and-nature-reserves>






**Leonora Hayes**  
Misty Summer's morning  
in Central Park

**Adult**  
(16 years+)

*"During lockdown my children and I went on a daily early morning walk around Central Park, Dagenham.*

*On a beautiful Summer's day we went out earlier than normal and were treated to a beautiful misty sunrise in the park, accompanied by birdsong. The mist swirled around the trees and hovered over the fields. As the sun rose, the smell of freshly mown hay hung in the air. It was very peaceful and tranquil."*



Birds sing for a variety of reasons, including claiming or defending a territory, attracting and courting mates, as well as practical reasons like to indicate a new food source or summon a partner back to the nest. While some bird species sing year-round, most songs are sung from late winter to early summer. Baby birds learn to sing by listening to the songs of their parents, so songs can vary slightly between geographic regions.

Find out more: <https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/>



December

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# January



February

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
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**Aaron Khan, Age 11**  
Green Woodpecker

Child  
(8 - 11  
Years)



*"A surprise early morning visit from a green woodpecker."*

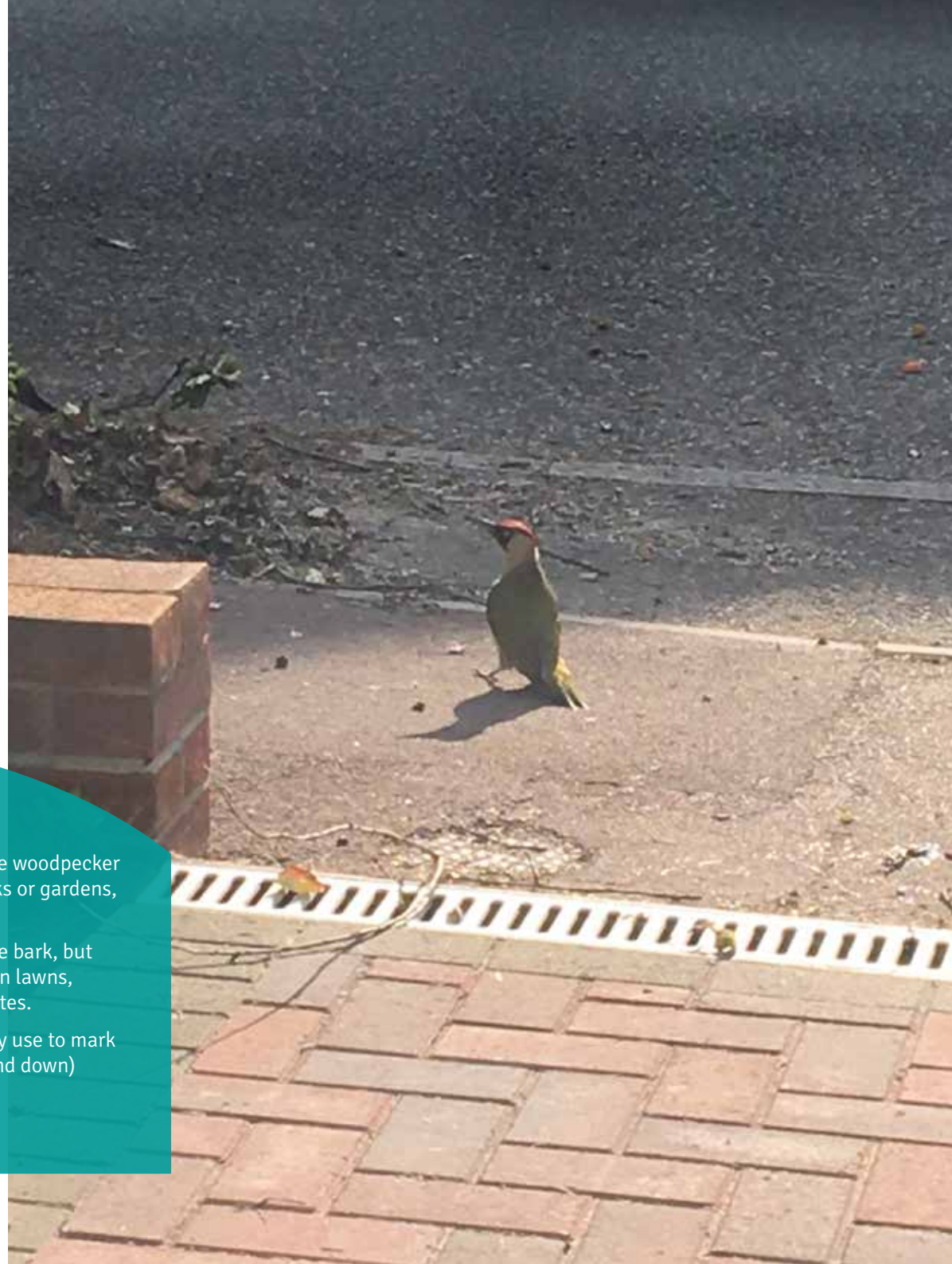


The green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) is the largest of the UK's three woodpecker species. You might find them nesting in woodlands, orchards, parks or gardens, in holes that they carve out of the trees.

Their barbed tongue helps them extract insects from crevices in the bark, but they spend a lot of time on the ground feeding in short grass and on lawns, where they use their beaks to dig up ants and find other invertebrates.

They are easily recognised by their laughing 'yaffle' call, which they use to mark their territory. When they fly it is with an undulating motion (up and down) rather than in a straight line.

Find out more about birds: <https://www.rspb.org.uk>



January

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# February



March

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## Deividas Kunigelis, Age 6 Tadpoles

Child  
(7 years  
and under)



*"It is amazing what you can find around you, if you just stop for a bit and look. A tiny tadpole can give a lot of joy. This many tadpoles bring enough joy to share and spread with others!*

*What will be your next adventure?"*



Frogs and toads are both types of amphibians and we have 2 native species of each in the UK. Frogs usually have smooth skin whereas toads' skin is usually more 'warty' in appearance.

Both frogs and toads spend most of their life on land, but in Spring return to ponds to lay their eggs (called spawn). Frog spawn is laid in clumps in shallow water while toad spawn is laid in strings in slightly deeper water. Tadpoles of both usually develop through Spring and leave the pond during Summer, but occasionally you might still see them in the pond through the Autumn and Winter. These 'overwintering' tadpoles will complete their development the following Spring.

Find out more - Amphibian and Reptile Conservation: <https://www.arc-trust.org/>



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# March



April

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**Matei Balasa-Angelescu,**  
**Age 1**  
Playing in the Grass

**Child**  
(7 years  
and under)

*"Matei is attending Chestnut Nursery in Barking Riverside, Class 1. He loves the nature and is very happy to go outside."*

*- Corina Balasa-Angelescu (Mum)*



Butterflies need flowers to provide nectar for food, but the caterpillars of several butterfly species also depend on grasses for their foodplants.

Different grasses will attract grass-breeding species of butterfly, such as the Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper and Ringlet, and wildflowers offer both a source of nectar and a potential breeding habitat for a wide range of butterflies and other species.

Find out more: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/gardening/wildlife-gardening-projects>





March

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28	29	30	31			



# April



May

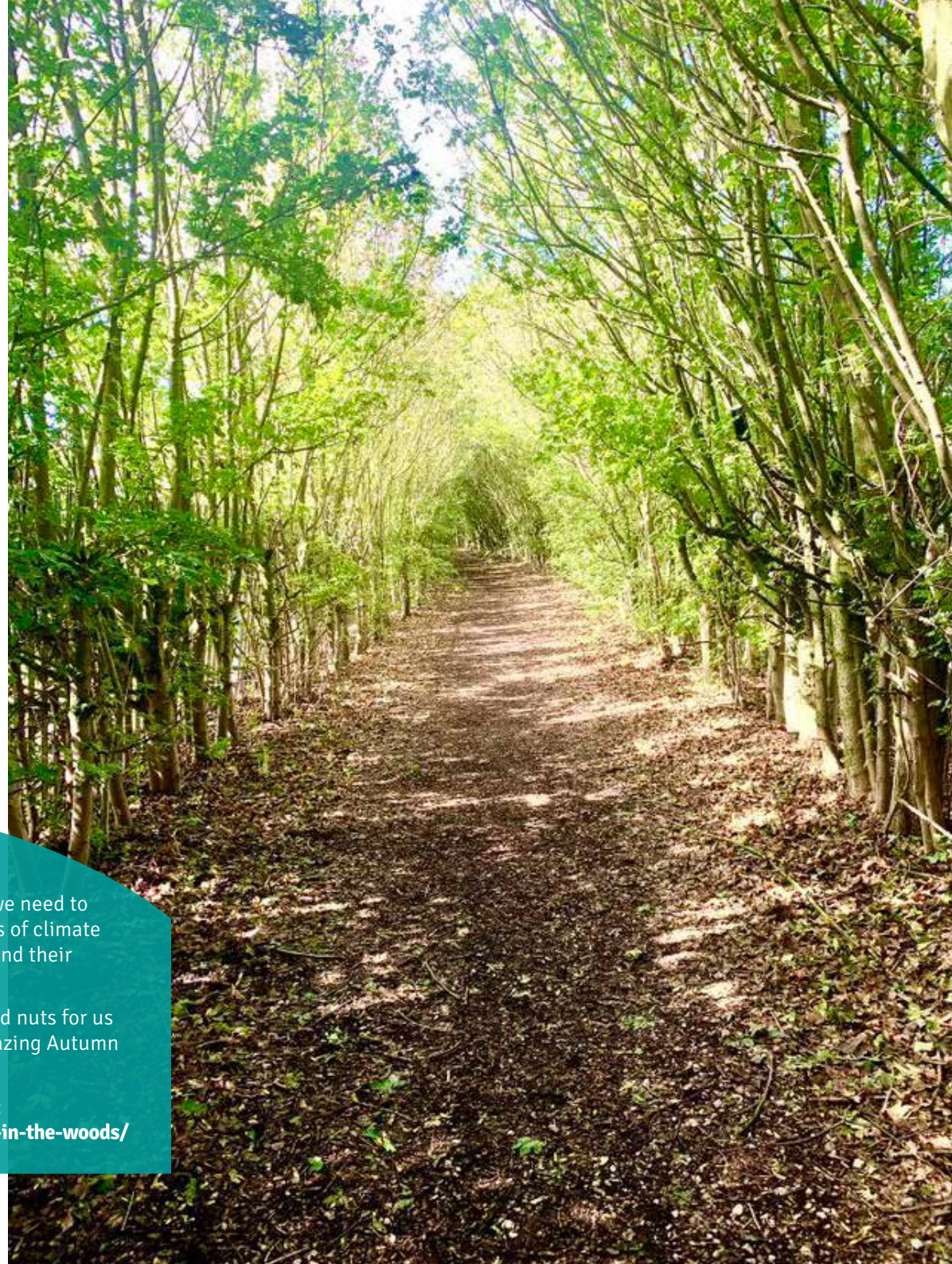
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**John Hughes**  
Avenue of trees

**Adult**  
(16 years +)

*"I take my dog for a walk regularly in The Chase or Eastbrookend Country Park and this avenue of trees are the link from a busy Rainham Road to the quietness of which could be the deep of the countryside. With the sun shining in Summer it's a really great start to my morning walk."*



Trees are fantastic! Not only do they provide us with the oxygen we need to breathe and remove CO2 from the air (helping reduce the impacts of climate change), they also regulate the water cycle, improve air quality, and their roots prevent the erosion of top soil.

Trees also provide essential habitat for wildlife and bear fruits and nuts for us all, not to mention the beautiful blossoms of Springtime and amazing Autumn colours that we can all enjoy.

'Walk in the Woods' takes place 1-31 May each year. Find out more:  
<https://treecouncil.org.uk/take-action/seasonal-campaigns/walk-in-the-woods/>



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# May



June

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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5



**Jules P**  
Emperor Dragonfly

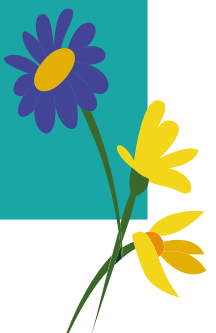
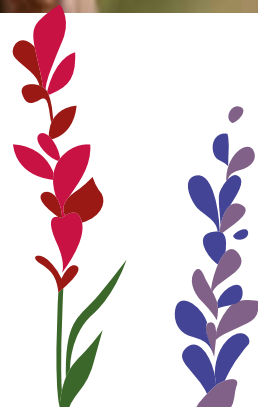
**Adult**  
(16 years+)

*“This photo was taken in Beam Valley Country Park on a hot summer’s morning in June. The abundance of nature such as birds, flowers and bees were terrific.*

*There were also many dragonflies around but this one stayed long enough for me to be able to capture it.”*

The bright blue and green Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) is Britain’s largest dragonfly reaching up to 7.8cm long. It is usually found close to water, where females lay eggs in floating pondweed. The larval nymph stage can live for up to 2 years underwater before emerging as an adult during the Summer months.

Find out more: <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk>



May

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# June



July

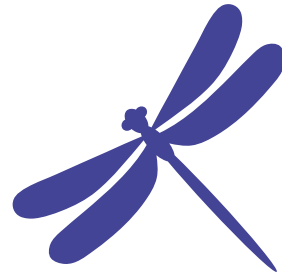
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## Sam Porter Toadlet

Adult  
(16 years +)

*"This toadlet was spotted in Fels Field near Barking & Dagenham College. It was crawling from the direction of the pond, across some Pineapple Weed I was picking. I imagine it had only just emerged."*



During the Summer you may see large numbers of tiny toads emerging from ponds after they have fully metamorphosed (changed from tadpoles into adults). Common Toads are very particular about where they breed and often migrate back to the same pond each year. They usually follow the same route, regardless of what gets in their way - which can mean they even have to cross roads!

For over 20 years, through its 'Toads on Roads' project, the charity *Froglife* has been helping toads safely navigate the traffic at these migratory crossings, by coordinating local Toad Patrols so the toads don't get squished by cars.

Find out more: <https://www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads/>



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# July



August

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## Tid Page Lockdown Sunflower

Adult  
(16 years +)

*"6ft Sunflower grown from seed! I started growing them this year as I had been reading about the decline in bees. I wanted to try and encourage them to my garden to do my part to help them reproduce and encourage pollination, as I hadn't realised how important it was for not only wildlife but for human survival also! I'd never grown sunflowers before except the mini ones you do in a windowsill as a child. This was definitely my biggest lockdown achievement.*

*My Dad and I had a competition, this sunflower is actually in a back garden in Salisbury Avenue, Barking.*

*I managed to grow over 18, some reaching 7ft, so I definitely won the competition we had!*



Pollinators, like bees, butterflies and other insects, are essential for the majority of plants we rely on for food, such as almonds, tomatoes and apples. Bees also pollinate around 80% of European wildflowers, so they help keep our countryside looking beautiful too, but sadly their numbers are declining.

You can help and enjoy gardening for wildlife, by growing pollinator-friendly plants like sunflowers to provide the pollen and nectar that these insects depend upon.

Find out more: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bees/growing-sunflowers-bees-birds-and-other-wildlife>





July

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# August



September

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5	6	7	8	9	10	11

**Susan Gibbs**

Leaves with raindrops  
(from her lockdown photo series)

Adult  
(16 years +)



*“Early on in lockdown, while I was working from home, I had not been able to see my beautiful grandsons for some time, and lock down rules stated we were only allowed to exercise once a day, so decided I need to focus on health and routine. I decided to do the couch-to-5k in nine weeks in my local park which is Castle Green. At the time there was a great deal of anxiety, negativity and fear on the news. So I started to take these photos after I had jogged, with a theme at the time “Beautiful things I see while doing my daily exercise”.*

*I added these photos daily to my Facebook page and my friends and family seemed to enjoy them. These photos prove that even though we live in Dagenham, there is beauty if we open our eyes.”*



Surrounding yourself with nature is good for mental health and wellbeing. Research shows that spending time in green spaces like parks, gardens, fields and forests reduces stress, improves mood and increases happiness.

Find out more:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/thriving-with-nature/>

August

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# September



October

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## Atari Azeke, Age 2 Feeding squirrels in Barking Park

Child  
(7 years  
and under)

*"My son loves everything animals. We LOVE going to the park to feed the squirrels, which are super friendly.*

*His favourites are the ones at Barking Park which he enjoys feeding on a regular basis. I'm always having to explain to him why he can't bring them home.*

*Today he said the squirrels are his best friends."  
- Shadene Palmer (Mummy)*



Grey Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) are most numerous in broad-leaved woodlands containing oak, beech, sweet chestnut and hazel trees, but you can find them in a wide range of habitats such as parks, gardens and urban areas with suitable trees. As well as using their sense of smell to locate buried nuts, it is thought squirrels might create a 'mental map', however many of their stashed nuts and seeds are never retrieved, which helps with dispersal and germination of new plants.

Find out more: <http://theseedsite.co.uk/dispersal.html>



September

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# October



November

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**Janette Powell**  
Urban Fox



**Adult**  
(16 years+)

*"At Reconnections B&D and Havering we support lonely older residents in the borough so when I saw this lonesome fox he caught my eye and I went to say hello.*

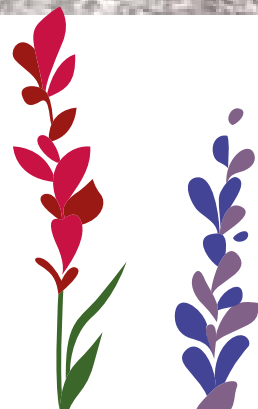
*He didn't move a muscle and I'm sure he posed for the shot. He seemed to be enjoying the quieter streets during lockdown"*

The Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is the only wild member of the dog family in the UK. Mainly nocturnal, these omnivores are known for their stealth and cunning.

You might sometimes hear the barking sound of the male dogs or the eery 'scream' of the female vixens.

They live in a burrow system called an 'earth' and scent-mark their territory with urine. They even have scent glands on their feet to mark well-used trails so they can follow them more easily at night.

Find out more: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org>



October

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# November



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**Steve Drake**  
Juvenile Kestrel



**Adult**  
(16 years+)

*"This photo was taken at Eastbrookend Country Park, in 'the Grove' woodland area, towards the end of July. I call it "You looking at me kid".*

The Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) is a common sight along woodland edges where they nest and hunt. You may notice their fan-shaped tail as they hover over rough, open grassland, using their razor-sharp vision to catch unsuspecting prey – usually voles and other small mammals – which they strike from above.

Since 1970 the number of kestrels in the UK has fallen by half, possibly due to a number of factors. More intense farming may have reduced field vole numbers, and secondary poisoning can occur when kestrels prey on voles and mice that have eaten rat-poison. The lack of old trees with suitable cavities for nesting sites might also be a cause in their decline.

Find out more: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>





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**JR, Age 11 and Bheatrice, Age 8  
Squirrel on fence**

**Adult**  
(16 years+)

*“Our family loves nature and animals. Though we don’t have pets like dogs or cats in our house, but we have connected our hearts with the wild squirrels in our backyard. They are now part of our family. Here to share our happiness whenever they are with us.” (Mum’s comments)*

*JR: “During summer 2020, some squirrels came into our garden (one of which we called Freeda, who’s in the image). Freeda regularly comes, instantly and naturally ate on the fence to enjoy her peanuts. We have developed a strong bond with the friendly squirrels.”*

*BHEATRICE: “Freeda is sitting on the fence in our backyard. What makes us like squirrels so much is their curiosity, fun behaviour and cuteness! We have made friends with them. Freeda is one of the squirrels and she comes for peanuts and eats them on her favourite place on the fence.”*

Wild Grey Squirrels mainly eat nuts, seeds and plant material like buds, shoots and flowers but will also eat insects and birds’ eggs.

If you offer them additional food, please make sure nuts are unsweetened and unsalted. They will also enjoy chopped apple, carrots, green beans, spinach, bean sprouts and celery.

**#WildFreeLBDD**

