



Wild About Barrow

April 2021

Spring is now in full swing and everything is full of fresh energy. It's wonderful to see the hawthorn greening up with its edible light green lobed leaves. Nature is in a race to grow, reproduce and rear young while there is plenty of food and for them to be fit enough to survive the winter.

You might have noticed 2 women working out recently in the Millennium Park with rakes – Alison Rushton and Annette Richardson. We're not as mad as you might think. In fact we were scarifying to create bare soil and sowing wildflower seeds. It was a real shame that due to lockdown restrictions we could not have a group of more than 2. We will be needing volunteers in the coming weeks with other projects and we look forward to welcoming you to our 'outdoor gym'!

Wild Celebration

Here is some wildlife seen around the village recently. What have you seen? Send your pictures to wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com for inclusion next month. There's no need to identify, we'll try to do that. Just tell us where you saw it so we can look first hand.



Red admiral butterfly
Vanessa atalanta



White tailed bumble bee
Bombus lucorum



Crab apple blossom
Malus sylvestris



Lesser celandine
Ficaria verna



Wood violet
Viola riviniana



Hairy rock cress
Arabis hirsute

Nature Notes in April

What to see

1. Bluebells are coming into flower and we are very fortunate in having the Outwoods nearby with the amazing blue carpet of bluebells to admire. These 110 acres of ancient woodland is so special that it has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to protect its wildlife and geology.

It is a garden favourite too but we must be careful not to plant the Spanish bluebell or the hybrid. These water down our British native bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) through interbreeding. The Spanish and the hybrid bluebell (which has characteristics of both), should be removed. Our beautiful native bluebell is also under threat from habitat destruction and illegal trade of plundering wild bulbs. They can take years to recover from this and from trampling which stops photosynthesis. Since 1981 the bluebell is protected by law. It is illegal to remove bluebells from the countryside, even by landowners wanting to sell the bulbs.



English bluebell

David Gould, NatureSpot



Hybrid bluebell

Graham Calow, NatureSpot



Spanish bluebell

There are a number of differences that distinguish the two bluebells, and of course the hybrid has characteristics of both.

The Spanish bluebell has:

- Leaves: wider and bigger leaves (often 30mm wide). (English bluebell leaves are around 7mm to 25mm wide).
- Flowers: bells are all around the stem, not just on one side which gives the English bluebell its drooping stature.
- Petals: bells open wider and flare at the ends rather than curl
- Stamen: blue on the Spanish version and yellow on the English one
- Colour: delicate pale blue (English bluebell is a deeper blue)
- Scent: almost no scent or an unpleasant oniony scent. (English bluebell has a sweet, fruity scent)
- Height: taller

Britain is home to half the world's population of the English bluebell so it's mainly our responsibility to look after them.

2. Violets can be seen all around the village like scattered jewels in grassy areas. Look out for the dog violet, sometimes called wood violet (somewhat hairy) and the sweet violet which has dark violet (not blue) petals and a wonderful scent.



Common dog violet (*Viola riviniana*)



Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*)

Both photos; David Nicholls, NatureSpot

What to do

1. **Make a pond.** The single best thing that can be done to improve biodiversity and species numbers is to make a pond, even if it's just an upturned dustbin lid. Remember to have margins or ramps to allow wildlife to get out safely. And of course, child safety is paramount. Before long you'll be seeing frogs, newts and dragonflies.
2. **Dedicate 20 per cent of your garden to wildlife.** The State of the Nature 2019 report showed that 41 per cent of species studied have declined since 1970. Gardens account for over half a million hectares in Britain. That's almost 30 per cent of urban areas! This means if we all give at least some of our garden space to nature it will make a significant difference to the natural world.

So, give nature a home by setting aside 20 per cent of your garden for nature. This could be simply left to grow or scarified by mowing closely then raking and sown with wildflower seeds. Look around the village; any little crack or crevasse will be home to a plant and that provides nectar and food for wildlife. It's there waiting to be given half a chance.

3. Send your **nomination for Tree of the Month** to Wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com, giving a little information on why you nominated it, where it is growing and your name.

Think global: Act local