

Help us to celebrate our local biodiversity

We want your help to produce a calendar for 2026 which will celebrate and inspire action for our local biodiversity. We are fortunate to live in an area where biodiversity has not suffered as much as elsewhere and we have a particular responsibility to conserve the biodiversity that survives here, to help to restore what we have lost and to build more resilience to future threats.

We also know there are some talented local photographers and we are looking for photos that can be used for each month of the calendar. The



Searching for elusive Dog violets. Take action for biodiversity, take photos for our calendar, join Signs of Spring walks



aim is to illustrate the targets of the St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir Biodiversity Action Plan, including photos of the wonderful local wildlife, natural beauty and people taking action for nature. The calendar will be on sale locally and we hope to be able to cover the costs of its production.

Please email parishgrasslands@gmail.com to submit any photos for inclusion in the calendar. Although we are asking for some photos to include people, we

might need the name and contact details of anyone who is identifiable so that we can obtain a privacy disclaimer. We will be able to accept photos until the end of October, so there's plenty of time to get snapping! But please submit any offerings as soon as they are ready.

The main themes of the biodiversity action plan and some suggested photo subjects are:

- Helping locally important wildlife species (two photos) e.g. barn owl, goshawk, grass snake, common lizard, horseshoe bats, moths, fungi
- Conserving important sites for nature (two photos) e.g. River Wye and Wye Valley woods
- Managing farmland and woodland sustainably and restoring wildlife habitats (two photos) e.g. hay-making/ livestock grazing/ hedgelaying/coppicing etc
- Improving community spaces, road verges and gardens for wildlife e.g. garden birds, hedgehogs, St Briavel's moat, community orchard, churchyards, villagescapes, common land
- Living with wild plants and animals e.g. deer, wild boar, foraging for wild plants and fungi
- Making gains for biodiversity from new developments e.g. ponds, native tree/hedge planting
 - Reducing impacts of pollution and invasive species e.g. light pollution/night sky or actions to control invasive species
- Awareness, engagement and access to nature e.g. people enjoying nature
- Observing nature and sharing information e.g. people watching/recording wildlife

The calendar will be produced by the Parish Grassland Project in support of the St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir Biodiversity Working Group. We are lucky to live surrounded by plenty of positive biodiversity stories. Go to work with your cameras, or more likely phones, and help us to tell those stories and inspire others.

ANDY STOTT



N E W S L E T T E R

www.parishgrasslandsproject.org.uk

COMMITTEE

Chair:
Mike Topp 01594 531496

Secretary, Treasurer and Membership:
Sally Secrett 01594 530539

Committee Members:
Gemma Bodé
Matt Dunwell
Jean Green
John Josephi
George Peterken
Phillip Powles
Andy Stott
Gwion Trefgarne
Ursula Williams

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Primrose



Peacock butterfly



A cold January afternoon at the Community Orchard... to find out what happened next, turn to center pages *Photo: Janice Lightly*

Wild boar evoke horror, delight and bemusement in equal measures among residents and visitors to the Forest of Dean. These contradictions will be explored by Chantal Lyons, guest speaker at our AGM at the Mackenzie Hall at 7.30pm on Thursday 27 March. Since her book *Groundbreakers: the Return of Britain's Wild Boar* was published 12 months ago it has been lauded with prestigious awards in the fields of ecology and conservation.

We are not accustomed to encountering large wild animals, and crossing paths with a wild boar can be an alarming experience. Amid worries over their impact on people and the environment, their presence in the wild in Britain is widely questioned. Little is heard of the species' habitat-regenerating actions that benefit a host of other wildlife. Unlike beavers, these ecosystem engineers are unloved by many and there is no clamour to reintroduce them. But is there an argument for replacing culling with a campaign to prevent their re-extinction?

That is one of the ideas that Chantal Lyons addresses in her book. She began her

Is it time we learned to co-exist with wild boar?

research by seeking out boar in the Forest of Dean, and found them to be a complex, intelligent and quirky species. She also spoke to people across Britain and beyond who celebrate their presence, and to those who want them gone. Her travels led her to understand what it might take for us to co-exist with the boar.

Come to hear a controversial and possibly challenging talk. Admission is free, to members and non-members alike. The meeting will begin with our AGM and also hear a short presentation on glow-worms, a species we are highlighting this year, and an update on the PGP's homes for wildlife plan, where we provided barn owl and swift boxes, pond-making materials and reptile mats. And as usual we will also serve hot drinks and cake.



The wassail band... from left Amy Hulme, Janice Lightly, Ellery Smith and Caroline Smith



A section of the gathering at the orchard

Photos: Janice and Alastair Lightly

A great day out at the wassail



It may have been a bitterly cold day, but once the music started so did the dancing!

Despite a bitterly cold day there was a great turnout of about 50 people at the St Briavels playing field on Saturday January 25 for the wassail we held at the community orchard, which was planted by the Parish Grasslands Project in 2018.

Children helped to decorate the trees with toast in preparation for the ceremony of blessing the trees, which featured the St Briavels wassail cup.

Other highlights included St Briavels folk singer Janice Lightly leading the assembled wassailers in the singing of the Brockweir wassail song, hot spiced apple juice and cake, and singers from the Bella Mamas, who closed the proceedings with a beautiful rendering of *First Light*, by Penny Stone.



Lovely harmonies... the Bella Mamas singing *First Light*