

Nature is messy. The role of pollinators, native plant species and other insects is suppressed by the human desire for the environment around them to look 'tidy'. This anthropocentric thinking often creates 'isolated, remnant patches of habitats', as described by one paper which concluded with the importance of 'increasing connectivity... to strengthen the ecosystem by making it more robust and less likely to collapse' (Wintle & Kujala, 2019).

According to DCC's Life on the Verge initiative, 97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been lost or modified since the 1930s. The BLUE Campaign is a nationwide project to create pollen rich, linked-up habitats around the country for the more than 1,400 species of insect that feed on the leaves, stems and roots of native wild grassland flower.

Amongst wider talk of a global mass extinction, a recent RSPB report found that the UK is amongst the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Nine in ten people underestimate the number of species in decline in the UK; the value is approximately 10% (RSPB State of Nature report, 2016). Goalposts shift. As generations pass, the understanding of what is 'normal' changes. Fortunately, the vast majority of people are in favour of efforts to reverse this trend, as found by a study in East Sussex, which found that 97% of visitors to a park favoured encouraging insects and wildflowers. (Garbuzov et al, 2014)

The BLUE Campaign in Yealmpton, replicated across Wembury and Newton and Noss, as well as rewilding verges in parts of Plymouth and Exeter, seeks to create bee-lines and wildlife corridors. The reduced – not neglected - mowing schedule has been designed in accordance with Life on the Verge guidelines. Hedgerows, in decline nationally, do have an important role to play but these do not provide the same habitat or land area. Some may consider that Yealmpton is already playing a role in increasing habitat and biological diversity by virtue of its location and surroundings. However, should environmental efforts be restricted only to those who live in 'urban areas'? Less than 7% of the UK is built on.

A UN-backed report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in May 2019 stated that 'it is not

too late to make a difference, but only if we start now at every level from local to global.'

I am sure we all agree that we are very fortunate to live in a beautiful part of the world, surrounded by green spaces, stunning coastline and a National Park on our doorstep. I am hopeful that everyone can enjoy the natural world that we find in our parish, taking every opportunity to celebrate nature in all its forms. For more information on the BLUE Campaign, please visit: bluecampaignhub.com

Thomas Guy-Fierens, on behalf of Yealmpton Environment Group

Sources:

Statistics on the land cover of the UK are taken from: Corine land cover raster, 2012.

RSPB State of Nature report, 2016

Global synthesis of conservation studies reveals the importance of small habitat patches for biodiversity, Kujala & Wintle, 2019

East Sussex park survey: Public approval plus more wildlife: twin benefits of reduced mowing of amenity grass in a suburban public park in Saltdean, UK. Garbuzov, Fensome & Ratnieks, 2014

Sources with links:

Statistics on the land cover of the UK are taken from: Corine land cover raster, 2012. <https://land.copernicus.eu/pan-european/corine-land-cover/clc-2012?tab=mapview>

RSPB State of Nature report 2016:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>

Kujala & Wintle 2019:

<https://www.pnas.org/content/116/3/909?fbclid=IwAR1DH7n8Xc808hcuylmg7oihIHKOIBzMI0tQYh-PG1cYLYyklm6NpAJdNrU>

East Sussex park survey:

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/icad.12085?fbclid=IwAR2okgWsw6C4sotP2UIEoGz3A0pULqHk3IAFv-zx05xVnTZ2w25WYwRH-pM&casa_token=VqpnKPUsnegAAAAA%3A9KIFotiDZ15M2k7qiB5XpNMf1w_R4tB6kMXEqY1okySZk2Mpy0mG2e48owN1q3hVxFx2wsGBwxpANHyB