

BUGLIFE IN THE CITY



None left: The carrot mining bee, above, might return to South Bristol if there was more wild carrot, right, in our hedgerows. PHOTOS: Above, Steven Falk/Buglife; right, Alex Morss

OUR WILD WINNERS WILL HELP!

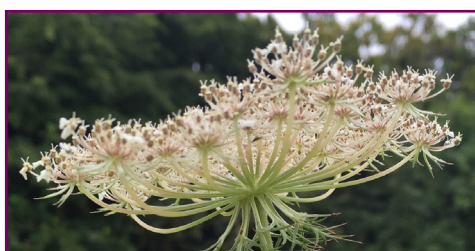
SINCE the spring, the Voice has been encouraging readers in Bedminster, especially in schools, to think about how wildlife habitats can be improved.

We received lots of marvellous photos of wildlife, from foxes to slow worms and even a newt.

The winners of the schools section of the competition want to look after smaller creatures.

Ashton Park primary school's After School Club, along with other pupils, worked hard to make a pond and other wildlife habitats in their grounds.

In January we'll be presenting them with their prize – the children have asked for something they can make into a home for insects. More next month.



after our creepy crawlies, even in the city

HOW MANY BUGS IN SOUTH BRISTOL?

Species	Total species recorded in the South Bristol Voice reader area	Total species in the UK	Our area's % of the UK total no. of species
Flies and hoverflies	66	7,000	0.9%
Beetles	50	4,072	1.2%
Moths and butterflies	233	2,559+	9.1%
Bugs	42	2,000	2.1%
Bees, ants & wasps	33	590	5.6%
Spiders, mites & harvestmen	63	700+	9%
Springtails	5	371	1.3%
Caddisflies	1	199	0.5%
Woodlice & millipedes	13	123	10.6%
Dragonflies	11	57	19.3%
Grasshoppers and crickets	11	27	40.7%
Earwigs	2	7	28.6%

building 'bee hotels'. "We would like to work with any groups who are interested in enhancing sites for pollinators," he said.

In South Bristol, Buglife also hopes to bring back the locally-extinct carrot mining bee and to reverse the decline of the small blue butterfly. "One of the last records for the carrot mining bee, *Andrena nitidiuscula*, in the Bristol area was recorded nearby at Hengrove," said Paul. "The area is soon to be developed. I am keen to target parks and nature reserves in the area to

ensure there is more suitable habitat for this species.

"The small blue butterfly has also been recorded in your area and again the loss of suitable habitat will impact this species." It's hoped planting pea-family wildflowers, such as bird's-foot-trefoil, will help encourage them back.

Buglife's new project arrives amid recent warnings that we are on a collision course for an insect armageddon unless we turn things around. Similar concerns were raised by Butterfly Conservation,

which announced huge crashes in butterfly numbers this year, including in Bristol.

Far wider population crashes in insect abundance – the actual volume of insects measured as biomass – were revealed last month from a 27-year European study by scientists, which prompted warnings the world is on the brink of an ecological collapse if we keep losing insects.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Buglife knows it is not always easy to work out which species are the winners or losers in an area – until the change becomes drastic – but its plan should support a wide range of little critters, from among the many that have suffered declines.

I searched public databases via the government's NBN Atlas for insect and other arthropod records for the South Bristol Voice area, shown in the table. The records cover roughly 14 x 1km map squares and reveal that we are home to at least 530 different types of invertebrate!

However, many of these records are rather old, and some of those creatures have since been lost locally or have suffered severe population declines. And look at how many species have not been recorded in our local patch in recent times, from the potential entire UK range, shown in the table. There are more than

17,700 different types of invertebrate from these groups across the UK, so we only support a very small fraction here at present.

And records do not always reliably tell us about abundance, so we can miss big changes in population size until it's too late, and a species disappears from an area. Most of this UK wildlife monitoring is done by volunteers, and this can lead to bias. For example, some species and locations are far more popular with wildlife recorders than others, as well as some tiny creatures being more tricky to find or identify.

Yet all these small wonders are vital for wildlife food webs. They prop up entire ecosystems, drive evolution and help pollinate around 90 per cent of the world's plant species, including around a third of our food plants.

The Buglife work follows on from a big drive by other conservation groups to create new habitat areas in Bristol, as reported in South Bristol Voice. These have included Butterfly Conservation, thousands of school children, park and community groups, the Berry Maze, Avon Wildlife Trust and Get Bristol Buzzing campaign.

• If you'd like to help create habitats with Buglife in South Bristol, contact Hayley: Hayley.Herridge@buglife.org.uk