

## FEATURES



The small blue butterfly was seen once in Victoria Park in 2017, and rarely elsewhere in the south of the city. PHOTO: Iain H Leach/Buglife

# We all need to look

**Why do we have so few of Britain's insects present in South Bristol? It's a real concern, says Voice wildlife expert Alex Morss**

**T**HE HUM of apple blossom in spring, a flutter of colour, fly-splattered windscreens, a wasp furiously orbiting your beer... are we missing some of the small wonders here in South Bristol?

Insect charity Buglife thinks so, and amid new fears about insect populations collapsing, it is on a mission to help turn things around with big new plans just launched across the city – and they would love your help.

The conservation charity's new Bristol Urban Buzz officer Hayley Herridge is appealing for community groups, schools and users of green spaces to team up with her and transform sites for bugs and beasties.

Buglife says this is the largest-scale urban project in the UK for bees, but it will also tackle other insect groups. It has raised more than £1 million in grants to pay for intensive seed sowing and

planting of vibrant flower-rich swards across 100 sites in Bristol and other cities over 18 months.

Buglife knows that urban areas like South Bristol have become a vital lifeline for many invertebrates, amid intensive farming and pesticides being blamed for decimating rural insect populations. Urban brownfield sites, such as old rubble areas, waste ground and derelict industrial corners, often throw up real hotspots of rare and exciting finds.

Buglife's spokesman Paul Hetherington said many of these interesting populations are concentrated in isolated pockets of such habitat, but they can be found in city parks too.

"There is more species diversity in urban areas than the rural environment now, though the urban populations suffer from isolation," he said. "In general, there are fewer and less toxic chemicals used in the urban environment. Honey yield from honeybees is higher in the urban than the rural setting."

But he added: "With the ever-increasing drive to concrete over gardens for parking, decking and so on, habitats are becoming disconnected."

Paul said it's very easy to encourage a diverse range of species by making a few simple changes, such as adding the right food plants, making ponds and