



# 5 HABITATS IN 5 YEARS



Creating and managing habitats – the places where animals and plants live – is one of the most important things a park can do for the environment. When you think about it, few other businesses can give wildlife a home in the way a park can.

With this in mind, the David Bellamy Conservation Awards scheme is asking all participants to give extra attention to five specific habitats over five years. Starting in 2017, we focused on hedgerows. In 2018, we are looking at wildflower meadows and other wildflower areas. If you didn't take part last year, you can still get your **hedgerow habitat badge** this year, read on for details.

Over the next three years, we'll be asking you to focus on three more habitats, so by 2021 you'll be able to collect a complete set of five habitat badges – this handful of awards will show that you really are a friend to Britain's environment.

## WILDFLOWERS

Take part and receive your **wildflower habitat badge**.

**This year, we want you to do THREE things:**

1. take a look at the wildflower areas you've got on your park and work out how many square metres you have in all
2. think about how you can enhance your wildflower areas and add to them. Once you've decided what to do, set yourself some targets and plan the necessary work into your schedule for 2018 and beyond
3. get visitors involved by letting them know what you're up to and by encouraging them to plant wildflowers too. You could consider selling wildflower seed packs for visitors to take home.

**How to let us know:** If you have an assessment visit this year, let your assessor know what you've been up to, what your plans are and show them the area of wildflowers. If you are not due an assessment, send photos, measurements and details of what you're doing and your plans to Rufus Bellamy at [bellamycom1@aol.com](mailto:bellamycom1@aol.com). We'd like to hear from you at any time, so if you have any wildflower news you'd like to share, please email Rufus.

### Why wildflowers?

Native British wildflowers are incredibly important as food sources for pollinating insects, such as bees and butterflies, which are, in turn, vital for the health of the wider countryside. Wildflower meadows and the insects they attract also provide food and cover for many small mammals, birds and other animals. Many wildflowers are themselves rare and endangered. They are also incredibly beautiful and a vanishing part of the unique tapestry of the British Countryside.

Information you supply us about your wildflower habitat will be really useful to the scheme, demonstrating that the parks industry is part of the solution to the challenges facing the British countryside. Last year almost 300 parks provided information about their hedges. Between them they had an amazing 362 miles of wildlife-friendly hedging – further than the distance between London and Edinburgh as the crow flies. How many square miles of wildflowers will we find in 2018?



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## RIBBON OF POPPIES

Have you heard about the excellent Ribbon of Poppies project, which aims to create a carpet of crimson from Lands End to John O'Groats to remember all those killed or wounded in WW1?

Why not take part and plant poppies as part of your wildflower work? For further details about the RIBBON OF POPPIES project is available on this [link](#) or follow on Twitter @RibbonofPoppies and let Rufus Bellamy know your plans at [bellamycom1@aol.com](mailto:bellamycom1@aol.com).

### FAQs:

#### What should we measure?

We're looking for a record of any areas of wildflowers on your park – from a few square metres in a border up to larger meadow areas of over a hectare. Only take account of bits of ground that are predominantly growing wildflowers. Do not count ornamental borders where there are a few wildflowers growing in amongst non-native exotics and shrubs.

#### What if we don't have any wildflower areas?

Don't worry! It just means that you've spotted an opportunity to get planting. Why not find a bit of your boundary, or an area within your park, where you could establish a wildflower corner or meadow? Details of how to do this can be found on page 3.

#### How ambitious do our plans have to be?

We are looking for enthusiasm. If you plan is simply to maintain and add to the biodiversity of the wildflower areas you already have, and to look for opportunities to add to them in the future, that great! But it would be even better if you could commit to adding new wildflower areas, even if this is just a small bed outside reception.

#### What about our Honey Bee work?

If you have taken the DBCAS/BBKA Honey Bee Pledge (see page 8), then this initiative will dovetail nicely with the work you have been doing to plant the forage crops that bees need. Why not take it as an opportunity to do even more!

#### What's happening next year?

To give you a heads up, the focus for 2019 will be woodlands. This will encompass everything from single trees and small wooded areas up to full woodlands. So why not think about what you're doing in this area. If you haven't got any trees, why not plant some this year, so that you can be sure to win your **woodland habitat badge** next time round. Information on creating woodland habitats can be found on the David Bellamy Award Scheme [website](#) - have a look in the Park Resource pages.

#### If you missed the Hedgerow Badge last year

It's not too late to get your Hedgerow Habitat Badge. Simply record how many metres of wildlife-friendly hedge you have, and plan how you'll enhance the wildlife value of your hedges. When you get an assessment, let your assessor know your measurements and plans; or email Rufus Bellamy at [bellamycom1@aol.com](mailto:bellamycom1@aol.com). For full details on how to manage hedges for wildlife see [www.bellamyparks.co.uk](http://www.bellamyparks.co.uk).

#### Any questions?

If you have any questions, please contact Rufus Bellamy at [bellamycom1@aol.com](mailto:bellamycom1@aol.com)



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## TOP TEN TIPS FOR GROWING WILDFLOWERS

- 1. Where to plant:** Wildflower meadows make a beautiful alternative to lawns and borders; you can also turn small field corners or grass verges into beautiful wildflower areas. Wildflowers can also thrive in rockeries, pots or troughs. They can be planted around ponds, in the rough on golf courses, around trees and along hedges. Some, such as native bluebells, can be planted in woodlands.
- 2. What to plant:** A traditional perennial wildflower seed mix will give you a beautiful meadow which, when established, will bloom each summer. Such meadow plants prefer less fertile soils. Another option is a native cornfield annual mix. Such plants like more fertile conditions and will produce brightly coloured displays from June to September.
- 3. Which plants to choose:** Choose species and seed mixtures that are right for your geographical location and for the aspect and soil type of the area you'll be planting. Choose seeds and plants of British origin. See what is growing locally for inspiration. See page 4 for websites that will help you choose.
- 4. Where to source seeds:** It is cheapest to grow from seeds. The easiest choice is to get seeds from one of the increasing number of seed suppliers that specialises in native wildflowers, such as [Emorsgate Seeds](#). They will be able to supply you with a mix that will meet your requirements.
- 5. Timing:** You can sow wildflower seeds between March and April or in September, depending on conditions and the species you are planting. Ask for guidance from your seed supplier.
- 6. Plug plants and wildflower turf:** As an alternative to seeds, you can also buy wildflower plug plants and wildflower turf. Both can be used to kick start a meadow area. Plug plants can be used to add wildflowers to borders, lawns and other areas.
- 7. Ground Preparation:** You can establish a meadow on an infertile, weedy lawn, but it is often better to start from scratch. Remove grass and weeds. Then dig or rotovate the soil to make a seedbed.
- 8. Planting:** On all but the biggest areas, you can sow seeds by hand. Seeds generally come with sowing instructions - follow these. Rake the seeds in lightly, water well and protect with netting if birds are a problem.
- 9. Meadow management.** In the first year, regular cutting will probably be required to control weeds. Established meadows should be cut around August. You can leave the hay for a week to let the seeds drop into the soil. All cuttings should then be removed.
- 10. Get help from plants:** Wildflowers can be out competed by grasses. Semi-parasitic plants such as Yellow Rattle can be used to reduce the vigour of grasses and give the flowers a fighting chance.



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## Advice and information

The internet is full of information on wildflowers and wildflower meadows. Good resources can be found at:

**Plantlife** is a charity dedicated to protecting the UK's native plants and helping more people enjoy them. It also runs the Great British Wildflower Hunt. The group's Wildflower garden website has lots of information on growing wildflowers, including a section that helps you choose the best plants, more information is available [here](#).

**Flora locale** is a charity that promotes and advances the conservation and enhancement of native wild plant populations. Lots of information on wildflower meadows and other wildflower issues is available on their website [here](#).

**www.bellamyparks.co.uk** for lots of interesting advice on wildflowers visit the David Bellamy Award Scheme [website](#). Take a look at the Park Resource pages, where you'll be able to download a number of articles that specifically deal with wildflower planting on parks.



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## HEDGEROWS

### We want you to do three simple things:

1. take a look at the wildlife friendly hedges you've got on your park and work out how many metres you have in all. See '**What should we measure**' for more details.
2. think about how you can maximise the benefits that your hedgerows give to wildlife. You'll find some great tips and resources below. Once you've decided what to do, plan this work into your schedule for 2018 and beyond
3. send photos, hedge measurements and details of what you're doing to Rufus Bellamy at [bellamycom1@aol.com](mailto:bellamycom1@aol.com). If you have an assessment this year, let your assessor know what you've been up to, so that they can note it in their report.

#### It's a win-win

The information you supply us about your hedgerow habitat will not only win you your hedge habitat badge, it'll also be really useful to the scheme, demonstrating that with metres and metres of hedgerow, the parks industry is part of the solution to the challenges facing the British countryside.

### A bit more information ...

#### What should we measure?

We're looking for hedges that are predominantly made up of native species, such as hawthorn, blackthorn and bramble. According to Defra a hedge should be at least 20m long, but we are interested in any lengths of hedging that is of benefit to wildlife. When measuring please exclude any large gaps.

#### Why hedges?

Hedges make great boundaries and can break up a park, adding privacy and beauty. What's more, a thick hedge that's not over-pruned provides shelter, nest sites and food for many insects, bird and other animals. Hedges also provide vital corridors along which wildlife can move, linking up different sections of a park with each other and with the wider countryside.

#### What if we don't have any hedges?

Don't worry! It just means that you've spotted an opportunity to get planting. Why not find a bit of your boundary, or an area within your park, where you could put in a native hedge. A good time to plant is between November and March, so you can have the start of something wonderful in place for next year, when you'll be able to win you 'hedge habitat' badge.



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## TOP TEN TIPS FOR HEALTHY HEDGE HABITATS

1. **See what you have:** It is incredibly helpful to know as much about your hedges as possible, such as the diversity of species they contain, their layout and length (Defra publish an excellent survey handbook – see next page for details).
2. **Let it grow:** Where appropriate, allow hedges to grow tall and thick – let the hedge 'breathe'. The RSPB notes that thick dense cover at the base of a hedge helps protect nesting birds. Remember, a diversity of hedge types will help the widest range of species.
3. **Go native:** When planting new hedges choose native species such as blackthorn, hawthorn and hazel. See what's growing in your local hedges for inspiration.
4. **Go mixed:** In general, the greater the variety of plants in hedge, the greater the variety of wildlife it will support. For a mixed hedge, the Wildlife Trusts recommend including three plants of one species per metre along with one plant each of two other species. A large hedge can include some standard trees, such as oaks.
5. **Plant up gaps:** Use native species that are appropriate to your region to fill in gaps in any existing hedges.
6. **Link things up:** When planting a new hedge or adding to an old one, try and link your hedge to other habitats on your park such as woodlands or ponds. This will provide a safe passage for animals.
7. **Manage with a light touch:** Trim in January or February to avoid damaging nests and to allow all berries to be eaten. If possible, only trim one side of a hedge each year. Trim on a two- or three-year rotation to allow thick nesting cover to develop. If necessary, use laying or coppicing to restore and maintain your hedge.
8. **Add wildlife value:** Add climbers, such as Honeysuckle, Ivy and Old Man's Beard, to add extra thickness and wildlife value.
9. **Create a rich grass margin:** Leave a grass strip (at least 1m wide) along the base of hedges. Let leaf litter gather as this can provide habitat for insects and other animals. Encourage flowers and grasses along the bases of your hedges.
10. **Keep dead wood:** Many hedges contain dead wood. This can be a valuable habitat, so leave it in place if possible.



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## Advice and information

**The internet is full of information on all aspects of hedge management. Good resources can be found at:**

[www.hedgelaying.org.uk](http://www.hedgelaying.org.uk) - the National Hedgelaying Society provides training and information on traditional hedge management.

[www.hedgelink.org.uk](http://www.hedgelink.org.uk) - Hedgelink is a partnership for everyone interested in hedgerows; its website is a cornucopia of all things hedge-related.

[www.hedgerows.co.uk](http://www.hedgerows.co.uk) - the English Hedgerows Trust website has a great Good Practice Guide and species list, amongst other information.

[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) - The RSPB provides lots of information about hedge management (search hedges)

[www.swog.org.uk](http://www.swog.org.uk) - The Small Woodland Owners' Group works to conserve British woodland and is open to anyone interested in woodland management.

[www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk) - download the Wildlife Trusts' *Hedges for Wildlife* leaflet

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) - lots of information on hedge planting, community involvement, woodland activity ideas, funding etc.

**[www.bellamyparks.co.uk](http://www.bellamyparks.co.uk)**

For lots of interesting advice on hedge planting and management visit the David Bellamy Award Scheme website, take a look at the Park Resource pages, where you'll be able to download a number of articles that deal with hedge planting on parks

### **Hedge surveys**

Defra publish an excellent Hedgerow Survey Handbook available to download [here](#).

### **Funding for hedges**

Various grants are available for farmers and landowners for hedgerow planting and management. Advice and information can be obtained from [gov.uk](http://gov.uk), the [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Association](#), your local Wildlife Trust or local authority.

## The David Bellamy Conservation Award Scheme



## HONEY BEE FRIENDLY PARK PROJECT

Bees are a vital part of the British countryside. Not only are they beautiful and fascinating creatures, they are one of the most important pollinators of crops and other plants. That's why the recent dramatic decline in many of Britain's bee species is such bad news.

To help, the David Bellamy Conservation Award Scheme (DBCAS) has teamed up with the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) to run the Honey Bee Friendly Park Project.

**The project, which has been running since 2015, aims to get as many BH&HPA member parks as possible working to conserve Britain's bees.**

In 2017, over 500 member parks took the Honey Bee Pledge and did lots of important work for bee conservation.

### Get involved

All participating DBCAS parks receive the Honey Bee Pledge logo to display to show that they are committed to bee conservation. The benefits of being involved include:

- it offers an exciting way to do something really important for Britain's wildlife
- it will help you achieve your conservation and DBCAS goals
- it will help make your park an even more beautiful place for people to stay and will help you enhance the experience of your homeowners and visitors
- it's a great way to let everyone know what you're doing for wildlife and encourage others do their bit
- it will give you an interesting story to tell - this will help generate publicity, and content for your social media and website
- if you get a hive or hives you'll be able to make your own honey – and sell it!
- You could also discover a wonderful new hobby, as many park owners have done already.

If you have done enough for bee conservation you will receive a certificate to confirm that your park is a Honey Bee Friendly Park for 2018/19.

### What you need to do

Simply display the Honey Bee Pledge logo to show you are doing your bit.

If you've already been working on this project, do what you can in all three steps of the project (see next page for details). If you're just starting out being bee friendly, then focus on Step 1 - you can, of course do steps 2 and 3 too!

### How to report on what you've done

As you go bee friendly, take photographs and make notes about what you're doing. When your

DBCAS assessor visits, show them what's been done and let them know your plans. If your park is not due an assessment, then simply email photographs and details of progress to [beefriendlyparks@aol.com](mailto:beefriendlyparks@aol.com) (to be received no later than 31 August 2018). Of course, we'd love to hear your bee-friendly news at any time – use the same email to get in touch.

## Step 1: Plant food for bees

*"It's all about forage,"* says the BBKA, who explain that honey bees need to be able to find flowering plants (to get the nectar and pollen they require) from early spring through to early winter.

Providing this food resource for as long a period of time not only supports honey bees but also helps solitary bees, hoverflies and other pollinators.

### What to do ...

Over the course of a 2018/19 do what you can to provide the pollen and nectar producing forage plants that honey and other sorts of bees need to survive. Make sure that there is something for bees to feed on from February/March through to September/October. This will involve four main planting periods over the year:

- winter/spring: plant spring and summer flowering bulbs and pollen and nectar-rich wildflower seed mixtures
- spring/summer: plant flowering trees and shrubs
- summer/autumn: sow pollen and nectar-rich wildflower seed mixtures
- autumn/winter: create an herbaceous border filled with long flowering plants.

You will probably be doing much of this work as part of your normal park management. However, once you have taken the Honey Bee Pledge, look at everything with an eye to providing nectar and pollen for as long a period of time as possible.

If none of the above work is being done, plan it into your schedule. If it is being done, do a bit more than you would do normally!

A great list of plants to use and advice on bee-friendly horticulture is available [here](#):

## Step 2: spread the word about bees

Do what you can to get everyone interested in bee conservation by providing information, activities and interpretation.

This work is vital, as everyone can do their bit to help Britain's bees and spread the word to their own friends and relations. Many parks have found that their homeowners and visitors are very interested in bees and that some are beekeepers.

### What to do...

There are many ways to spread the word about bee conservation. You can:

- with your bee-friendly planting under way, let everyone know what you are doing and why
- incorporate bee conservation messages into your existing interpretation/wildlife activity work. For example, add a sign about bees to your existing nature trail
- put information about bees and what you are doing to help them in your newsletter, welcome

- pack etc. Talk about bees on your website and blog
- run bee friendly activities for kids and grown-ups. Local beekeeping associations may be able to help you with this. Go to [BBKA](#) website to find the nearest association
- select a bee conservation charity as your chosen wildlife charity and raise money for it in fun 'bee-related' ways
- point guests in the direction of bee-friendly gardening advice so that they can make their gardens as bee friendly as your park. Stock bee-friendly wildlife seed mixtures for them to buy.

All of these ideas show how caring for bees can be used to enhance the experience a park offers and how bee-friendly interpretation and activities can be used to show what your park is doing for wildlife.

### Step 3: give bees a home

Providing a home for bees is a great way to help conserve them. This can be done in many ways – by putting in a bee hotel, setting aside places for bees to nest, adopting and looking after a hive for a local beekeeping association or by becoming a beekeeper. Providing places for bees to live will give a real focus for your bee-related activities and interpretation.

#### What to do

- **open a bee hotel:** a bee hotel provides a place for the red mason bee to lay their eggs. Commercial versions are available online. You can also make your own out of a bundle of 10-20 cm long sections of old bamboo canes. Position the hotel in a sunny spot out of the rain. A bumblebee nest can even be made from an old flowerpot, see the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website [here](#) for details
- **create nesting areas:** many bee species nest in holes, so leave strips of undisturbed rough grassland adjacent to hedgerows and in field corners or banks
- **host a hive:** one easy way to get a hive or hives is to link up with a local beekeeping association and act as a host for a hive or hives. To find a local association, simply visit BBKA website [here](#) to find a full listing.
- **become a beekeeper:** beekeeping is a fantastic hobby, but it is important to understand what's involved. Help is at hand as the BBKA run beekeeping courses around the country. These will tell you just what you'll need to do to set up and look after a hive. The courses will also provide you with access to a local support network and with advice on sourcing bees.

#### Is it safe to have bees on a park?

For those concerned about safety – bees are generally docile animals and hives need to be placed in quiet areas away from people, so the danger of stings is minimal.

#### For more information:

For more advice and information about all aspects of beekeeping and bee conservation, contact the [British Beekeepers Association](#) or email: [bbka@bbka.org.uk](mailto:bbka@bbka.org.uk)

Another excellent place to find information about bees is the [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#)

## Take the RSPB's Wild Challenge

One of the great things about running a wildlife-friendly park is that you can offer your owners, visitors and residents a wide range of wildlife activities to get involved in.

One source of great ideas is the RSPB's Wild Challenge. This web-based scheme has already proved a hit for a number of David Bellamy parks and helped one win a special distinction award.

The Wild Challenge provides 30 fun activities – from building a hedgehog café to taking a wild flower foray. They're all designed to give kids, adults and families the chance to help and experience nature. So why not:

- take a look at the scheme's website (see below): you'll find loads of good ideas along with resources such as print-out activity sheets and spotter guides. You can use them to create a range of wildlife activities on your park
- then encourage your visitors to sign up to the scheme and report on what they've done? Depending on how many activities they complete whether on your park or back at home, they can win bronze, silver and gold Wild Challenge awards from the RSPB.

See how many families you can inspire to go for Gold!

Don't forget to tell us about it too – send photos and information to [bellamycom1@aol.com](mailto:bellamycom1@aol.com)

For full details visit RSPB website [here](#)