



Wild About Barrow

March/April 2022

Spring is in the air!

With everything to look forward to, this is surely a wonderful season, full of energy and life. March sees the arrival of swallows and chiffchaffs, soon to be followed by blackcaps and house martins. Whilst the blackbirds and wrens, amongst the loveliest song birds, sing out as they establish territories and attract mates. The purple and yellows of spring flowers are a cheerful welcome both for us and, more importantly, insects.

Wild About Barrow aims to install bird boxes around the village to help combat the decline in bird numbers and now is the time for them to be up and ready for use. The RSPB estimates that in the UK there are 83 million pairs of native breeding birds and, although this is 19 million fewer pairs than the late 1960s, numbers are stabilising. However, while some species such as goldfinches are doing well, some of our most loved birds are declining; blackbirds have declined by 15% and house martins by 53% in the period 1970 - 2018.

One of the most dramatic declines is in starling numbers: they have dropped by 83% during this period.

Following a survey with experts from *idverde* and RSPB, sites for bird boxes around the village have been identified. RSPB generously donated 6 starling boxes and 3 have already been installed in King George V Playing Field in a quiet corner near Humphrey Perkins and Thirlmere Road. Go Outdoors donated a whole box of used cycle inner tubes which we are using to protect trees from the wire securing boxes to trees.



Watch this space for news on more bird boxes as they are installed!

Wild Celebration March/April



Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)



Crab apple blossom (*Malus sylvestris*)



Primrose (*Primula veris*)



White violet (*Viola odorata*)



Red dead nettle
(*Lamium purpurea*)



Goat willow catkin
(*Salix caprea*)

Have you spotted any nature delights around the village? Send your photos to Wildaboutbarow@gmail.com or just let us know where you saw it and we'll take a snap.

Slugs and Snails are not Pests

Yes, it's official! The Royal Horticultural Society has announced that these little critters are no longer considered a pest. It is a long overdue change. These are the most complained about garden visitor but developing a better understanding of them will help us recognise the important part they play in the natural ecosystem. We need to garden in a planet-friendly way and develop a healthy ecosystem in our back gardens.

If we garden with nature, predators such as song thrushes, frogs, toads, slow worms and hedgehogs will happily Hoover up these invertebrates. Also, at this time of year it's a good idea to delay planting out seedlings and plants with young sappy growth which slugs love.

Planting from the RHS long list of beautiful plants which slugs and snails avoid eating is another way. And in any case, does it really matter if a few leaves are munched?

Fortunately, the government has banned all use outdoors of metaldehyde (the poison in slug pellets) from the end of March 2022 because of the harm it causes to birds and mammals. We should dispose of any we have through the local authority waste facilities and not at home.

Seeing the Light, or preferably, not

Our nocturnal visitors are finding light pollution an increasing problem here in the UK and throughout the world. Artificial light at night (ALAN) is increasingly being recognised as a threat to biodiversity and has been suggested as a driver of insect decline(1). Nocturnal animals depend on the cover of darkness to hunt, roost, breed, migrate and navigate.



Daubenton's bat, Rod Baker,
NatureSpot

Did you know bats can see? In low light (moonlight) they will switch off echolocation to conserve energy and disguise themselves from some prey that hear echolocation. However, if they suddenly encounter something glary or reflective they might not see the object in their path, potentially leading to impacts with obstacles. Consequently they will avoid lit areas. This limits their foraging and may lead to abandoning roosts if they cannot commute to feeding areas.

We can play a part in reducing light pollution.

Here are a few ideas, if you choose to light your garden:

1. Use light fixtures recommended for wildlife friendliness.
2. Design lighting with care. By selecting only the important parts of the garden to illuminate, we reduce the impact of artificial lighting.
3. Check that light sources point downwards. Light fittings with hoods and shields direct light where it is wanted. Falon Mihalic of [Falon Land Studio](#) advises that spotlights and uplights are some of the most harmful light sources around the home because they are often high-glare, intense and cast a very broad light.
4. Avoid using white and blue artificial lights, this includes white broad spectrum LED lights, instead use warm or neutral coloured lights.
5. Limit the times that lights are on to provide some dark periods.

What to see

1. Can you find at least 5 different types of catkins around the village: white poplar, silver birch, goat willow, alder and hazel?
2. Enjoy the colourful display of spring flowers in the churchyard of Holy Trinity.

What to do

1. Plan garden lighting to either have none (100% wildlife friendly) or follow suggestions above.
2. Love molluscs in your garden, or at least their predators, they have as much a right in nature as us.
3. Check out the list of plants the RHS recommend as being less likely to be eaten by slugs at: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/biodiversity/slugs> , it's SO much easier than fighting nature!

Alison Rushton

Think global: Act local