

KENT'S PLAN BEE



December 2023 Summary Newsletter

2023... What a year for Plan Bee!

Looking back over 2023, we have pulled together some of our favourite achievements:

- We now have nearly 1800 followers on Facebook (an increase of 160 since the start of the year!) and our Newsletter is sent to 2200 people and organisations across Kent.
- We celebrated over 30 awareness days and weeks on Facebook, bringing you more fun pollinator facts and activities with all these available to you whenever you need (head to our [photo albums](#) to find all our resources in one place!)
- 131,510m² (approximately 503 tennis courts) of lawn was pledged for No Mow May and 272 responses were received to our No Mow May survey. We published the [full report](#) on our website.



A blooming brilliant verge of Knapweed near Horsmonden taken by Suzanne Marshall from the KCC Soft Landscape team

We've won!



Kent County Council's Pollinator Action Plan are delighted to have won the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Bees' Needs Champions Award 2023!

Winning our Bees' Needs Champion Award

Our newsletters in 2024

For 2024, our newsletter will be going from monthly to seasonal. At the beginning of each season, we will review all the pollinator news from the past few months, and let you know which pollinators to look out for in the current season. If you want to keep up to date with the most recent news and what you can do to help pollinators, our Kent's Plan Bee Facebook page is posting daily! Thank you for all your continued support for Kent's Plan Bee and our newsletter, and we look forward to seeing you in Spring!

2023... WHAT A YEAR FOR PLAN BEE!

- Nearly 1800 followers on Facebook (an increase of 160 since the start of the year!)
- Our Newsletter is sent to 2200 people and organisations across Kent
- Over 30 awareness days and weeks celebrated on Facebook
- 153 New Year's Resolutions for pollinators made in January
- 131,510m² (approximately 503 tennis courts) pledged for No Mow May
- 272 responses to the No Mow May survey
- Celebrated our 10th Anniversary
- Received a Bees' Needs Champion Award!

- More Kent County Council sites than ever before took part in No Mow May this year, including 6 country parks, more than 450km of road verges in rural and urban areas across Kent, 5 Household Waste Recycling Centres and 9 other KCC sites. Collectively, these sites provided about 300 hectares of wildflower-rich grassland.
- Spurred on by the amazing displays on our Rural Conservation verges, KCC's Highways Soft Landscapes team have taken up pollinator monitoring of some of their verges using the PoMS FIT survey. It is hoped that over the years, the evidence they collect on wildflower types, pollinator diversity and population sizes will show that the diversity and number of wildflowers and pollinators increases through the verges taking part in No Mow May and other conservation management practises.
- We celebrated our 10th Anniversary, hearing from many people involved in the action plan.
- AND Finally, our proudest achievement this year must be our Bee's Needs Champion Award, recognising our work in helping Kent's pollinators!

Thank you to everyone who has helped make this another bee-riliant year for Kent's Plan Bee! We're looking forward now to doing even more in 2024!

Your New Year's Resolutions for Pollinators...

What did you get up to in 2023?

In January, Kent's Plan Bee asked how Kent's residents were incorporating pollinators into their New Year's Resolution and supporting pollinators throughout 2023. Through our [Let's talk page](#), an ideas board was created with several ideas to get people thinking how they can help Kent's pollinators. An idea could be selected as a resolution through liking it.

An amazing 153 resolutions were set to help pollinators in 2023!

Throughout the year, we had a storyboard open to hear how you were getting on with these resolutions and we had several people add what they got up to this year.

From creating wildflower and orchid meadows to reducing the amount of chemicals used in your gardens, it looks like 2023 was a great year for helping pollinators:



"At Addington Recreation Ground... Planting wildflowers on car park verge, periphery of cricket pitch, amongst tree planted area and children's playground."

"I use no chemicals on my small patch."

"I don't use chemicals as my garden is wildlife and pet friendly. I have plenty of pollinator friendly plants."

"I have already designated a part of the garden behind my greenhouse to sow wildflowers and add to the nettles. Last year we planted early flowering perennials (Nepeta, Lavender, etc) in our front garden for the bees and bugs. It worked so well last year so we have increased the area to increase the food source until other plants come into flower."



"We have been developing a wild flower meadow for over 15 years and now we have over 100 pyramidal orchids."

This year, our Plan Bee Officer Hannah has been transforming her garden for pollinators as part of her New Year's Resolution for pollinators. And after a final tally, she counted 20 different pollinator species, including:

🐝 4 Bumblebee species and 3 Solitary bee species

🦋 5 Butterflies and 3 Moth species

🪰 And 5 different species of Hoverflies and flies

And that was just in the spring and summer on the flowers she planted for pollinators (with the sunflowers being a huge favourite!). Imagine how many more there were that she just didn't see!



As well as planting flowers for pollinators, Hannah has also been ensuring that they have suitable habitat and shelter in her garden, making sure that all their needs are catered for. Finally, when the weather was too cold and wet to be out in the garden, she pulled together a list of pollinator identification articles from across the internet. This helped her to learn how to identify which pollinators were turning up in her garden when the weather improved. This great list is still available in the [storyboard](#).

Thank you to everyone who took the time to submit their stories and activities. We hope you have been inspired by some of the stories above. The beginning of a new year is a great time to start planning how you want to help pollinators in 2024. If you are looking for more ideas on how to help pollinators or where to get started, why not check out our [idea board on our Let's Talk page](#), or our [photo album on our Facebook page](#).

We always love to hear what you are up to and how you are looking out for Kent's pollinators. You can let us know by dropping us an [email](#) or on our Facebook.

Pollinators to see in Winter

In general, January and February are quiet months for pollinators. Most pollinators will be in the middle of their overwintering period, but on warmer days you may see a few pollinators from the list below. Some winter moth specialists can be seen, including Winter & Satellite moth.

Bees: Buff-tailed Bumblebees

Moths: Herald, Winter moth, and Common Plume

Butterflies: Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, and Comma

Flies: Marmalade hoverfly, Common drone flies, and Greenbottles

Wildflowers have also mostly stopped blooming, but a few hardy species carry on over the winter. Those to spot over winter include Gorse, Common Chickweed, Groundsel, Red Dead-nettle, Shepherd's purse, and White Dead-nettle. The Gorse and Dead-nettle flowers are important nectar sources if pollinators do venture out on warmer days.

Spotted any of these or any other pollinators and wildflowers? Post them on our Facebook page or tag us in your photos @KentsPlanBee

POLLINATORS TO SEE IN WINTER

Others to See
Small Tortoiseshell - *Aglais urticae*
Winter Moth - *Operophtera brumata*
Common Plume - *Emmelina monodactyla*
Common Drone Fly - *Eristalis tenax*

Spotted any of these? Why not share them on our Facebook page @KentsPlanBee

Upcoming Events

Milton Creek Wildlife Group

To help add to the records and monitor the local wildlife of Milton Creek a new [ecology survey group](#) has been formed. The next survey walk will be at 10am on Sunday 21 January. Meeting in the country park car park, the walk will include surveying the wildlife and recording anything of interest.

Please [email the Milton Creek group](#) if you are interested in attending the wildlife surveys.



**MILTON CREEK
COUNTRY PARK**

Tree planting with Kent Plan Tree

Are you looking for an active day out in Kent? Why not help Kent Plan Tree plant 1000s of saplings across Kent this winter! Please contact plantree@kent.gov.uk to register your interest and for more details about each event.

- [Kent Gliding Club, Ashford](#) – 15 and 16 January, 10am-2pm
- [Great Cheveney Farm, Tonbridge](#) – 28, 29, 30, 31 January and 1 February, 10am-2pm
- Dunn Street Farm, Ashford – 29 and 30 January
- The Lodge Cornford Lane, Tunbridge Wells – 2, 6, 7, 9 February
- Marden Parish Council – 12, 13, 14 February
- Green Park Community Primary School – 4 and 15 February.



Keep up to date with the latest news via our [Kent's Plan Bee Facebook page](#)

If you received this email indirectly and would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please email us on the address below with the subject line "Sign Up". If you wish to unsubscribe from this mailing list, please email us on the address below with the subject line "Unsubscribe".

Do you have a Kent pollinator news story or event that you would like featured in our newsletter? Have you created a pollinator friendly community space? Got your neighbours together to create a row of pollinator friendly gardens? Or do you have an event about Kent's pollinators you would like advertised? Email it to the address below and we will be in contact about a potential space in the Newsletter.

planbee@kent.gov.uk

All the previous editions of the Newsletter have now been added to our webpage. You can download them as PDFs or share the website address on your social media. Find all the Newsletters on the [Pollinators section of Kent County Council's website](#).

Edited by Hannah Simmons, Biodiversity Officer, Kent County Council.

For a Pollinator Friendly Garden of England

