

# Eco Champions

## The Great Outdoors

JUNE/ JULY 2023

### A new look for Eco Champions

Welcome to the June/ July 2023 issue of the Eco Champions newsletter. We look a little different but we promise to continue to bring you all the great eco news stories and events. This issue is all about The Great Outdoors and we hope you enjoy!

For more information about becoming an Eco Champion email [wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Local Action: Milton Keynes Green Gym

From colourful tulips to stunning rose bushes, the volunteers from Milton Keynes Green Gym have beautifully restored the raised beds in New Bradwell for the community to enjoy all year round. Dave Barratt of Milton Keynes Green Gym shares how the volunteers took the opportunity in their stride;



“On arrival we found the world’s best collection of thistles! These were removed and over various sessions, we laid down a membrane to reduce weed growth and covered the membrane with wood mulch. The next stage of development was to plant around 60 rose bushes along the beds. Weather permitting, the bushes keep their blooms until November, after which they are pruned back to prepare for new growth the next year. Springtime produces a riot of colour from a display of tulips. The beds are now attractive all year round”

Volunteers meet Thursday mornings 9.30am-12.30pm. To find out more and get involved contact Dave Barratt: [mkgreengym@gmail.com](mailto:mkgreengym@gmail.com) / [07919365790](tel:07919365790) / [miltonkeynesgreengym.co.uk](http://miltonkeynesgreengym.co.uk)

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## World Green Roof Day Tuesday 6 June: An interview with Hannah Meara from the Green Roof Project

### 1. What does being an eco champion mean to you?

To me, being an eco champion means that you are willing to open up conversations, listen to and encourage people by doing and demonstrating. Also, policies that have the planet in mind are essential and until we include the value of nature, big changes will be hard to make.

### 2. How did you get involved with eco champions?

I became involved with eco champions at the BLMK Climate Conference. I was invited as part of the Green Roof Project to do interactive demonstrations to show people how they can practically make a green roof on small buildings and talk about their benefits. There's a lot of talk about rewilding and green infrastructure but sometimes people just want to see it in real life.

### 3. How does sustainability influence your everyday life?

Sustainability influences my every day life because I am a green roofer and I help coordinate a project that wants every roof that can be to be green. Together, the team have created several green roofs in Milton Keynes to demonstrate the benefits such as, water attenuation, insulation, sound proofing, air cooling, carbon capture, creating natural habitats and contributing to good health and wellbeing.



### 4. What is the best thing about being an eco champion?

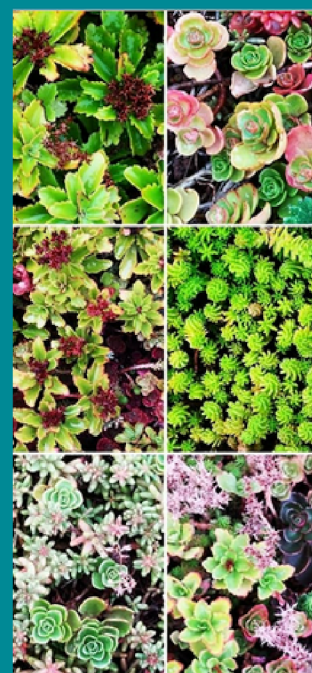
The best thing about being an eco champion is opening up other peoples experience to nature and the value of caring for it. I also like to let people know that it's okay not to know everything. We need to find common ground to listen to each other more and be practical, thoughtful and caring so we can enjoy what nature has to offer and Eco Champions is a great place to start.

### 5. What is your top piece of advice you would like to share for other eco champions?

Keep things real, practical and possible. Lead by example and be honest when things don't work. Keep reflecting on ways to care for our planet and respect and enjoy nature.

"It is important to bring people together and have honest conversations about what we can do."

Hannah Meara







## Eco Warriors in Milton Keynes schools

Eco Warriors across Milton Keynes schools are paving the way for a more sustainable future. MK College have installed a bee post and bat boxes at their Woughton campus, Ousedale Academy are reusing previously discarded items such as tyres and toilets for planting and various schools are dedicating spaces to wildflower growing.

Schools are hives for learning and biodiversity and through these activities, students are gaining skills, knowledge and a love for the great outdoors.

Every school has an eco story and we would love to hear about yours! If you work in education and would like to shout about the good things you are doing to educate our young people about sustainability, email [wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk). For more information about educational resources or Eco Warriors, visit: [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/environment-and-waste-education](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/environment-and-waste-education).

## Reap the wellbeing benefits of being outdoors

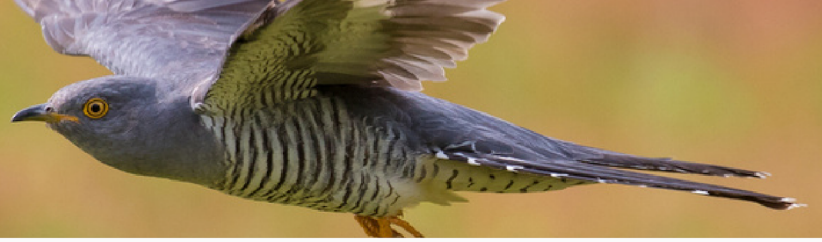
It is widely known that being outside is not only good for physical health but also mental and emotional health. Benefits include a reduction in stress and anxiety, an increase in self-esteem and it even has the potential to combat loneliness.

Nurturing a connection with nature has such profound positive impacts it is now being used as a formal course of therapy known as ‘ecotherapy’, where practitioners encourage individuals to immerse themselves in green environments. You don’t have to join an ecotherapy group to reap the benefits though, growing your own vegetables, joining a community garden or even going for a walk with a friend can contribute to your wellbeing.



Search for ‘ecotherapy’ on [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) for more information.





## Small Wins: Sending out a Bat Signal

One of MKCC's very own Park Rangers, Steve and his wife Davina recently completed the Virtual London Marathon around Emberton Country Park.

### 1. What inspired you to complete the marathon?

I am already a member of the Bat Conservation Trust and this presented the chance of a great challenge for an excellent cause.



### 2. Why did you choose the Bat Conservation Trust?

We raised money to assist in their work towards a world rich in wildlife where bats and people thrive together. Also, to be able to complete the marathon around Emberton Country Park and promote and support the bat populations that we have here was a great bonus as it is quite a special place.

### 3. What was the most memorable moment from the day?

The first pint in my local was a treat but prior to this was the sense of achievement and rush of euphoria as we crossed the finish line at the park's gatehouse!

***Steve and Davina raised a total of £501 for The Bat Conservation Trust.***

## Celebrating the dawn chorus at Emberton Country Park

The park recently held a dawn chorus walk starting at 5.00am and were treated to a symphony of melodies from the birds in the park including Song Thrush, Treecreeper, Cuckoo, Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Chiff Chaff, and many more.

The group was also excited to spot the first emergent damsel and dragonflies of the season. <https://tinyurl.com/MKECP>

## Get involved: Explore your Great Outdoors



- **Take a guided Walk:** Discover British pollinators with the Parks Trust 'walk and talk: Introduction to pollinators guided walk' <https://www.theparkstrust.com/whats-on-in-your-parks>
- **Volunteer at a community garden:** The planting up volunteer garden work party includes a picnic style 'bring and share' lunch. It takes place on the 2nd and 4th Saturday each month. For information and booking contact [info@plantingup.co.uk](mailto:info@plantingup.co.uk)
- **Wildlife friendly gardening:** Grow flowers for pollinators, build wildlife shelters, create water habitats or container gardens. No matter the space you have available, there are many ways to help wildlife at home <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions>
- **Explore your green spaces:** Visit one of the 46 parks across Milton Keynes. Take a walk or bike ride through woodland, lakes or nature reserves. <https://www.theparkstrust.com/your-parks/>



## Coming up in the next issue... Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- New wheelie bins in Milton Keynes
- What happens to your waste
- The circular economy
- Repair cafes

and more...



We always love to hear how Eco Champions are celebrating our environment.

Send us an email at [wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk) to be featured in the next issue.



If you're not already subscribed and you have enjoyed this newsletter, sign up to become an Eco Champion and keep updated with all the latest eco news!

[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/eco-champions](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/eco-champions)