

2023

Ash Wildlife Friendly Village

Pictures by Laura Whittaker at land by Jack Foat Fields 2022



The Ash Wildlife Friendly Village group was formed to take positive action to protect, enhance and improve biodiversity in the Parish of Ash.

Taking its inspiration from the national movement and local example in Staple, Ash Wildlife Friendly Village was formally constituted in April 2023.

Membership is free and open to anyone over the age of 16 years living in the Parish of Ash.

Our aims

The aims of the Ash Wildlife Friendly Village include:

- Identification of areas within the Parish that could be managed for wildlife both on public and private land.
- Management of areas for nature and wildlife recovery.
- To boost the biodiversity in the Parish of Ash.
- To encourage volunteers to help survey and help document wildlife activity in the Parish.
- Working with farmers to improve the biodiversity of the Parish.
- Raising awareness of ecological issues within Ash and encouraging residents to reconnect with their environment.
- Providing signage for the major wildlife areas managed in the parish.
- To increase the urban tree canopy within the village.
- Involving local businesses in protecting and enhancing village wildlife.



Key actions

Our activity to date has included

- Establishing social media accounts as a way of raising awareness and rallying supporters.
- Organisation of a bird survey with RSPB (see case study).
- Survey of local sites and identification of significant species, with view to establishing a Nature Trail.
- Organisation of Community Litter Picks.
- Participation in community events including the monthly Community Coffee Mornings and Cartwright & Kelsey Primary School Summer Fair.
- Maintenance of Hills Court Nature Trail.
- Purchase of a noticeboard for Hills Court to highlight the huge variety of wildlife.
- Engagement with local groups and individuals on land management for biodiversity.



Funding summary

Grant funding has been received from:

Ash Parish Council - £2,000

Perfectly Fresh - £500

Group fund raising including stall and cookie sale at the Ash Safari - £20.

Impact

Although it is early days for the Ash Wildlife Friendly Village, it is clear to see that there is huge interest in, and need for, the group.

The group has already attracted nearly 100 members to its Facebook group with a regular flow of people posting pictures of wildlife in and around the Parish as well as sharing information and inspiration to increase biodiversity.

Ash Wildlife Friendly Village believe it is important to seek positive dialogue with landowners and developers, to ensure that biodiversity and protection of habitats are at the heart of discussions on the future of the Parish.

There has been constructive dialogue on management of key sites of local interest and with local farmers and businesses.

Two Community Litter Pick events have been held which have brought new volunteers forward, including from young families and people who have newly moved to the Parish.

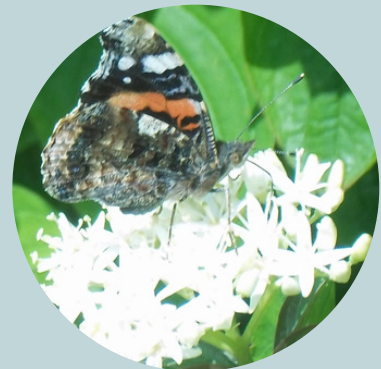
Volunteers have been engaged in the maintenance of Hills Court Nature Trail, including support from a local home education group.

Participation at local events have seen keen interest from residents of all ages.

One of the key pieces of work the Ash Wildlife Friendly Village has been responsible for is to instigate and carry out surveys of wildlife to establish a clear picture of the biodiversity which exists in the Parish.

This work has never been comprehensively carried out, and when done, will provide a benchmark for measuring the impact of activity.

We believe these early shoots of activity are the start of a meaningful movement which will ensure a future for the Parish of Ash as a vibrant place to live and work and a place which respects and values its wildlife and communities.



Case study: Breeding Bird Survey

A breeding bird survey was conducted in Moat Lane, Cherry Garden Lane, Mount Ephraim, areas of Sandwich Road and Hills Court Nature Path on 19th May with Nicole Khan, Kent Turtle Dove Conservation Advisor from the RSPB.

Among the results, were a red-listed (endangered species) Turtle Dove singing male observed in Moat Lane. It was assumed that this male was holding territory and breeding.

Other breeds of bird with singing males observed were the red-listed Song Thrush, the Wren, the Whitethroat, the Dunnock, the Stock Dove and the Wood Pigeon, all of which are of amber concern on UK listings.

More common birds surveyed were the Robin, Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Goldfinch, Blue Tit and Great Tit.

On the same day a similar survey was carried out at the western end of the village, along The Street, opposite St Faith's Prep, along Molland Lane and the footpath leading to the bypass (the site of a proposed 105 new homes).

Results showed that a singing Song Thrush was in the tree line that runs alongside the bypass, a red-listed species of high concern.

Other singing male species detected were the Wren, the Dunnock and the Wood pigeon, all of which are amber concern on UK listings.

More common singing birds surveyed were the Chiffchaff, the Chaffinch the Blue Tit, the Blackbird and the Robin.

As an immediate action, Ash Wildlife Friendly Village group has begun to identify suitable locations for the creation of Turtle Dove habitat to protect this red-listed, endangered species and work with local residents to manage these sites in collaboration with the RSPB.



Future activity

Community engagement is a key aim of the Ash Wildlife Friendly Village as vital first step in creating a vital network of support within the Parish and building a strong group volunteers to support the improvement and enhancement of biodiversity.

Over the next year, the Ash Wildlife Friendly Village is planning the following activity.

- There will be further survey of wildlife and biodiversity, firstly in priority locations, but reaching to cover the entire geographical area of the group in time.
- Bimonthly Community Litter Picks are now established and growing in popularity.
- At a wildlife conference to be held at the Village Hall in February, Ash Wildlife Friendly Village's professional ecologist will provide training for volunteers in surveying and accurately recording the wildlife in their back gardens, hedgerows, trees, land near them, etc helping in recognising significant flora and fauna, throughout the year. Invited speakers from key organisations including CPRE, RSPB will provide inspiration and information for volunteers.
- Engagement with landowners is key and Ash Wildlife Friendly Village aims to hold a Farm Forum – round table discussion with like-minded farmers to share best practice and support for increasing biodiversity.



- A wildlife calendar and greetings cards are planned not only as ways of raising funds for the group but also to celebrate the immense diversity of flora and fauna within the Parish.

Community Litterpick volunteers meet at the Chequer Inn, August 2023.

2024 Timelines

	Jan	Feb	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wildlife Conference	X	X									
Community Litterpicks	X		X		X		X		X		X
Wildlife Surveys											
Bird and Bat Box Campaign											
Schools Biodiversity Exhibition and Celebration											
Farm Forum								X	X	X	
Wildlife Calendar									X	X	X



Wild birds feeding at Molland Lane by Pearl Thorne

Future funding needs

Ash Wildlife Friendly Village aims to become a self-supporting group through a mixture of fundraising, sponsorship and grant applications.

Financial support would enable activity in areas including:

- Creation and hosting of a website for initial first year (with group fundraising to cover ongoing costs).
- Printing of environmentally friendly materials eg leaflets and to recruit volunteers in call to action for maintenance of specific sites.
- Waymarking signs for nature trails and noticeboards to highlight key species.
- Provision of materials for villagers to increase biodiversity in their gardens and communities eg bird and bat boxes, seeds and nature-friendly plants.
- Funding educational work and displays at events within the Parish.
- Securing expertise to further investigate and record biodiversity and wildlife within the Parish.
- Venue hire and refreshments for events including training nature survey volunteers, knowledge sharing at the Wildlife Conference and Farm Forum.

To discuss sponsorship opportunities and other ways in which to support the aims and objectives of the Ash Wildlife Friendly Village, contact the Chair, Leanne Stead at leannegstead@gmail.com or call the Secretary, Rebecca Smith, on 07443 605873.



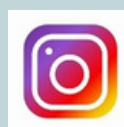


Thank you

As a small community group, we appreciate the time you have taken to read this document and hope to work with you in the future.



Ash Wildlife
Friendly
Village



@Ashwfv