

## **PRISTON BIODIVERSITY WORKSHOP 4 NOVEMBER 2023**

Vet and science teacher Stephen Blakeway gave an informative introduction to our two-hour workshop (25 people attended). He explained the seven main causes of biodiversity loss:

### **5 direct drivers of biodiversity loss:**

- land use change (e.g. from 'wild' to farm or 'recreational' spaces with people and dogs going wherever they like)
- direct exploitation of species (e.g. sheep and cattle)
- climate change
- all the pollutants – including veterinary pharmaceuticals, plastics, light, etc.
- invasive alien species (e.g. pheasants)

### **2 indirect drivers of biodiversity loss:**

- human detachment from nature (i.e. general forgetfulness and thoughtlessness)
- and our undervaluing of nature (global free-market economy encouraging destruction of forests and other habitats)

Stephen then encouraged us to list ideas of how to work mitigate these very strong forces, both as individuals and as a community. These are the many and varied ideas contributed by people at the workshop:

## **LAND USE CHANGE**

### **Individual actions**

- Mow and strim less
- Build a pond (big or small) in garden
- Planting for pollinators, e.g. beech not photinia
- Install and clean bird boxes, esp. for swifts, house martins and swallows
- Provide clean water for birds
- Consider garden wildlife, e.g. stop use of slug pellets, herbicides or insecticides
- Build and install a bee hotel

### **Community actions**

- Oppose planning creep: horse fields, dog training
- Create hedgehog corridors – make sure they can get through fences
- Create a network of ponds
- Tree and hedge planting

## **POLLUTANTS**

### **Individual actions**

- Use less/no plastic sprays or microfibre cloths to reduce microplastics in water
- Don't use weedkillers, slug bait, rat poison
- Dead hedge and compost instead of having a bonfire

- Stop prophylactic use of parasiticides on pets which are washed into streams and kill river life

#### Community actions

- Encourage dimming of external lighting
- Preserve dark skies – education about wildlife at night
- Items in The Link about external lights
- Village team to try to educate others about light pollution

### INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

#### Individual actions

- Remove plants like Himalayan balsam when spotted

#### Community actions

- Work in a group to ensure fewer pheasants released - taking food from other birds (lobby campaign)

### CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Individual action

- Put on more layers and reduce heating
- Cycle more
- Use less petrol/drive electric cars
- Use less paper
- Planting for drought
- Plant a native tree and/or hedge

#### Community actions

- Group lifts
- Buy local
- Grow more plants for wildlife
- Bug hotel
- Tree and hedge planting

### DIRECT EXPLOITATION OF SPECIES

#### Individual actions

- Remember our native species – encourage grass snakes, hedgehogs, slow worms, etc.
- Pick up dog mess
- Eat the pheasants rather than waste them

#### Community actions

- Campaign to reduce pheasant numbers which are affecting birdlife, adders
- Build networks for hedgehogs
- Spread publicity about refuges for slow worms, etc.

## UNDERVALUING OF NATURE

### Individual actions

- Publicise Priston nature sightings
- Set up a wildlife camera
- Use apps for identification, e.g. Merlin identifies bird species
- Enjoy the countryside
- Love wildlife, think about fireworks and how they affect wildlife

### Community actions

- As a community create havens for wildlife in local area
- Engage each other in observing nature locally
- Take part in informal Priston wildlife watch – Priston website has photo gallery; or post on Priston facebook pages
- Add to lists of Priston flora and fauna at [priston.org.uk](http://priston.org.uk), go to PAGE section

## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS RESULTING FROM THE WORKSHOP

### POND BUILDING

Individual people are planning to build ponds in their gardens, recognising their value as wildlife havens. Guy Davies will be creating one during the next month or so. He will send out a date for people to come and join him to see what's involved. Email Guy at [guy@guydaviesarchitects.com](mailto:guy@guydaviesarchitects.com) if you are interested in joining in. Date will depend on the weather!

### DEADHEDGING

A dead hedge is a good way to create a refuge for wildlife and a means of avoiding the need for bonfires. Peter Brookes will demonstrate how to start a dead hedge. Email Peter at [peterybrookes@gmail.com](mailto:peterybrookes@gmail.com) if you would like him to help you with a dead hedge on your land.

### DARK SKIES

Priston villagers have always valued the dark skies. Watch out for items in *The Link* and on facebook showing the effects of light pollution and how to adjust your outside lights so they still help you but don't cause floodlighting that prevents nocturnal animals and birds from getting along.