



**Melissa  
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## The home patch



When you look back at the spring and summer of 2020, what will you remember? The challenge of home-schooling? The frustrations of domestic confinement? Fear of illness, or perhaps illness itself?

Our shared period of lockdown was a long, strange time, yet for many of us it came with an unexpected silver lining: the opportunity to rediscover (or discover for the first time) the overlooked green spaces around our homes.

Especially in the early weeks, when restrictions were at their strictest, all many of us saw of the outside world was during a brief walk each day. As one of the sunniest springs on record unfolded, we sought out parks, nature reserves and urban green spaces, hungry for contact with the natural world. For some time now we've been reading about the benefits of contact with nature to our mental and physical health, but this year it was really brought home to us, as our deepest instincts drove us to listen out for birdsong, plant windowboxes, cherish humble pavement weeds and take daily note of spring's progress, drawing deep comfort, amid frightening changes, from one of the eternal verities.

So what happens now that many of us are back at work each day, and car trips for leisure are once again allowed? Do we consign the local discoveries we made to the dustbin of memory, filing our wonder-filled walks under 'strange things we did in lockdown'? Or can we take something crucial from the weeks we spent close to home, using what we learned to transform the post-Covid world?

I've written before, in these pages and elsewhere, of the importance of having a 'home patch' that we care for and connect to, physically, mentally and emotionally. Knowing where the swifts nest on your street, which oak in the park is always the last into leaf, why the mason bees nest on one side of a nearby building and not the other – these things root us in place and time, in ways that often prove deeply beneficial both to the world around us, and to ourselves.

If, during lockdown, you found yourself seeing your local area with new eyes, don't turn away from it now. Consider becoming a Friend of your nearest park, or supporting The Wildlife Trusts; look online for Forest Schools who want help connecting kids in your area to nature, or other charities that have been doing unsung work to protect and preserve green spaces where you are.

At the very least, please don't stop visiting the places you discovered in lockdown, no matter how tempting it is to forget them in favour of somewhere further afield. We need them, just as wildlife needs them: not just grand National Parks, but nearby nature, too.

There could still be a new local gem to discover. Find out if there's a Wildlife Trust reserve near you:



[wildlifetrusts.org/nature-reserves](https://wildlifetrusts.org/nature-reserves)

### A LITTLE BIT WILD

It may have seemed as though the birds were singing more loudly during lockdown, but in fact, it's likely they were able to lower their volume as they had far less noise pollution to compete with. This will have saved them precious energy, and may also have boosted their chances of reproductive success.



### Melissa

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