



Welcome to the inaugural Bryanston Nature Annual report for 2024, a year full of nature highlights, with many sightings all around the biodiverse school campus, including over 100 registered wildlife spots, ranging from the common, to the extremely rare.



Star Nature Sightings

☀ White Tailed Eagles

Seen on six occasions over the year, UK's largest bird of prey

☀ Polecat

First report at Bryanston of the small mammal

☀ Mandarin Duck

The rare duck was seen near the boathouse with a chick

☀ Merlin

Seen from Salisbury house, UK's smallest bird of prey

☀ Otter

Seen near the Boathouse, on a few occasions



Alan Wicks



Some of the Birds Seen on Site

blackcap tawny-owl bullfinch grey-wagtail
eagle buzzard great-tit merlin wren
treecreeper raven pigeon chaffinch
longtailed-tit blue-tit siskin mistle-thrush
barn-owl nuthatch blackbird coal-tit mallard
yellowhammer robin heron red-kite
kestrel white-tailed dunnock
swan house-sparrow pied-wagtail
pheasant sparrow-hawk song-thrush

What Bird Am I

I am very small

Weigh 5 - 7g

9cm Long



Roughly 2000 Breeding pairs in the UK

Special Relationship with a Goshawk

First Correct answer wins a prize

Email nature@bryanston.co.uk



2024 Nature Stats

44
Birds
in 2023

61
Birds
Species
2024

14
Mammals
in 2023

16
Mammals
Species
2024



11
Butterflies
Species
2024

4
Reptile
Species

Adder, Slow Worm
Grass Snake, Common Lizard

7
Butterflies
in 2023

47
Pupils &
Staff
Contributing

3
Reptile
in 2023

Personal Highlights - Dan Stokes

Full School Assembly

In May 2024, I was lucky enough to speak to the whole school, highlighting the bio-diversity around the school campus, and discussing one of my passions.

Launch an E.C.A

Launching the E.C.A in September 2024, was a real personal highlight for me, and to start to get some pupils involved, looking at conservation and discussing all things nature, has been fantastic.

Goldcrest

One morning in November, I had a box turn up to the catering office, inside the box was a tiny little bird, (smallest in the UK) the Goldcrest, he had been found in the Art department and was clearly not in a good way, likely to have flown into a window, being so small and fragile, there did not seem much hope, Following some TLC, and some luck, the goldcrest got his strength back, and I released him on to the grounds.

White Tailed Eagle

Seeing the WTE over Bryanston was fantastic, at one point we had two circling over the main building, one autumn afternoon.



Bryanston Nature E.C.A

In 2024, we started the Bryanston Nature ECA, Walking around the Campus, and working together towards Conservation objectives

Ava (AI)

The Bryanston Nature ECA raises awareness for the amazing grounds surrounding students, it allows for a break from the usual day to day life, enabling us to explore not only the wildlife but also to integrate ourselves within the nature we have access to. While we spend a lot of our time on walks simply enjoying the nature and animal spotting we also try to use our ECA to improve the wildlife through ideas such as nature reserves. However, it is also an opportunity to spread the message about the opportunities us students have. From seeing deer families on a Sunday walk to planning new nature reserves, the Bryanston nature ECA is a serene and chilled, yet extremely fun ECA.

Tonio (Po)

Brynature ECA is an amazing opportunity to encounter the wonderful wildlife that surrounds us. Bryanston's biodiversity is truly phenomenal, and I am always happy to enjoy a few minutes outside looking at all the birds and wild animals, especially during a stressful school day. Dan Stokes' knowledge of nature is only matched by his kindness and open mindedness. It is always a great pleasure to attend his ECA.



The Plural for Fish is Fish



When Referring to more than one species you can use Fishes as plural



Jonny Waters



Dan Stokes

Email nature@bryanston.co.uk Any Sightings



Bryanston Prep - Dawn Ball (Forest School)

A Year of Wildlife and Adventure with Forest School at Bryanston Prep
Over the past 12 months, Forest School at Bryanston Prep has been buzzing with exciting activities, fostering both creativity and practical skills. Our students have had hands-on experiences through a variety of projects, connecting deeply with the environment and making a positive impact on local wildlife.

A major project last spring was building bird boxes and bug houses to enhance our Forest School environment. It was rewarding to see our efforts come to life over the summer, with great tits happily using the nesting boxes we created. These projects not only taught valuable crafting skills but also contributed to making a real difference to the local ecosystem.

Our summer camp out with Year 5 was another unforgettable event with activities including venturing out to Bere Marsh to spot barn owls on their evening hunt, laying in the church yard at dusk, watching the colony of Horseshoe bats take flight from their roost in the Old School Kitchen, a dawn walk to watch the local foxes returning to their lair; all experiences bringing the magic of nature to life.

In the autumn, our Forest School adventurers took a trip to RSPB Arne, where they had the chance to observe a wide range of birds and animals including the roaming pigs whilst exploring this beautiful nature reserve. Closer to home, was an unforgettable experience whilst sitting atop the hill behind the school, we watched the local buzzards soar gracefully below us – a stunning display of wildlife in action.

This winter, Forest School also took an active role in recurring and then rehoming them from the Hedgehog Rescue. This initiative was a great opportunity for our students to learn about hedgehog care and the importance of protecting these creatures.

Throughout the colder months we have been getting creative, recycling large tin cans into nesting boxes for robins and blue tits and making willow fat ball feeders, offering sustenance for our feathered friends. This initiative was not only fun but also a great way to promote sustainability and care for our natural world.

Birdwatching has become a daily joy at the Forest School, with students spotting Goldcrests, Coal Tits, Great Tits, Woodpeckers, and Fieldfares. The excitement of identifying different bird species added an extra layer of connection to the environment especially when our resident Robin pops into the shelter to wait for leftover crumbs.

This year has been a perfect blend of creativity, environmental awareness, and thrilling wildlife encounters. We look forward to another year of exploration and discovery at Bryanston Prep Forest School!



By Dawn Ball



Email nature@bryanston.co.uk Any Sightings



Origins of the Logo

In September 2024, The Logo was illustrated by Amy Lewis (Catering Team). I was keen to include some of the key elements of Bryanston Nature
Badgers (Bryanston Trucker Cap)
London Plane Tree
Bryanston Bats
White Tailed Eagle
Kingfisher

Top 10



Most Reported Sightings

1. Deer (23 Sightings)
2. Fox (15 Sightings)
3. Hare (11 Sightings)
4. Swallow (9 Sightings)
5. Buzzard (8 Sightings)
6. GS Woodpecker (6 Sightings)
7. Badger (5 Sightings)
8. White Tailed Eagle (5 Sightings)
9. Sparrowhawk (4 Sightings)
10. Jay (4 Sightings)

Around the GROUNDS

BY ROB FROUD

The Woods

Over the last 3- 4 years the Woods department has had the difficult task of dealing and managing the fast-spreading Ash dieback, which is an airborne disease that effects Ash trees throughout the country.

The trees show up to 4 different stages of the disease and as a department we have had to recognise these stages and figure out our best form of management. Working closely with Dorset County council and the Forestry Commission we are managing this by monitoring all Ash trees with stage 1 and 2 sign of the disease anything with stage 3 and 4 we will cut down and remove. Part of communication with the council and the Forestry Commission is to re-plant the worst hit areas of the woodland with native trees such as (Beech, Oak, Rowan and Birch). Over the last 2-3 years we have planted over 300 saplings within the woods and are planning to plant a further 200-250 trees this year.

All the wood that we cut down is split and logged to help with the fires within the school buildings and is sold to staff. We would also use any chips from the wood in all the borders of the school.

Other works undertaken within the woods is the removal of laurel in all areas of the woodland, this is done to try and get as much light through the canopy of the woodland to help encourage new growth in these areas.

The Gardens

It's been a busy winter in the gardens, the team have cleared many large borders and are getting set to re-plant over 200 lavender plants around the main terrace steps leading on to the tennis courts. We have also planted and grown over 1000 plants within the greenhouses this winter ready to be planted in many borders for our summer bedding.

Our main project over the coming weeks is sowing nearly 2kg of wildflower seeds around the site, to try and help many pollinators flourish within the school grounds.

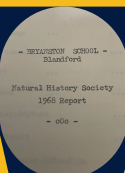
River Report 2024

By Mr Bridges



The Stour has fished well this year, with the best fishing just before Christmas. Dace, unusually, has been the most plentiful fish caught alongside roach and perch. Although the river suffers with pollution, particularly agricultural run off and sewage discharge, there is some evidence that some coarse species may benefit from the additional growth that run off provides which may indicate why coarse numbers continue to be strong. Before the rains washed out the swims and made fishing difficult, the largest pike to date this season was caught by George B (Pt): the pike was caught after it ate a caught roach off the hook – this has happened a few times before! The river continues to be home to a family of otters and Kingfishers.

To tie in with the school Motto, " The Old and the New" below is a report from the 1968 Natural History Society Along side the report of the same Mammals in 2024 via Bryanston Nature



ROE DEER

There were as many records in and beyond the Hangings as ever, particularly during the winter months. A roe deer was seen with young in February, and a fawn was seen by itself later in the year. Roe deer were also seen around Walnut Avenue and near Down House.

SIKA DEER

One possible but doubtful record, near Old Park, Bryanston.

OTTER

Otters have been reported several times during the past year. They have been seen near Blandford, around the boathouse and up to and beyond Middle Lodge.

RABBIT

Although there have not been many actual records this year, they are increasing in numbers in the grounds, particularly in the Hangings and along the Drive. No myxomatosis has been reported.

HEDGEHOG

Four were reported near Middle Lodge. One was found dead in the Hangings.

WEASEL

A few records. Two reports of a weasel seen on main drive, and one near the Coade Hall.

STOAT

Only two were reported this year.

HARE

Most of the records are from the fields behind the Sanatorium, near the reservoir, but they are not as numerous as in previous years.

GREY SQUIRREL

These are plentiful throughout the school grounds, and they abound in large numbers in the beech wood.

Roe Deer

Found in abundance on the school drive, often seen in the early morning

Sika Deer

Regularly seen also on the drive and around the school site

Otter

Seen at certain points of the river, sometimes near boathouse,

Rabbit

Fairly rare around the school site, although seen through the woods, at dawn and dusk

Hedgehog

Couple of sightings around the school, the prep have seen them at the Forest school

Weasel

Rare sightings of this elusive mammal, one seen near prep school

Stoat

Occasional sightings, on the drive, and around the security department

Hare

Common visitor through the year, seen around Coade hall car park, and Hunter house, increasingly tame

Grey Squirrel

Lots around the school site, all over the drive, and even seen eating a chocolate muffin in the quad



The passage below comes from the 1968 Natural History Society Report When a Snowy Owl was seen on site at Bryanston



Near the end of the Spring Term and in the holidays following, a Snowy Owl was seen at various times. Several people, including JS-S, AJL, D.J. Butler and Mr. D.C. Stevens, saw it but never for more than a minute. They are all convinced that it was a Snowy Owl and the record has been passed on to the Rarities Committee.

What is next for Bry Nature ?

As we move into the spring of 2025, we within the ECA group, have been discussing ideas on the possibility of creating a nature reserve within the school grounds (near the Boathouse). Following an interview on Bry. Radio, we discussed how a sustainable development within the grounds, including 2 x hides and a boardwalk, could be a sensational addition to the school facility, the focus location is full of a myriad of nature, and incorporates a mosaic of habitats for some sensational wildlife, all within close proximity of the river. Further detail to follow, personally I feel we have the scope at Bryanston to have the best nature setup of any school in the country.

THANK YOU to all who have contributed to the year, with sightings, pictures and videos. I would like to say a big thank you too Rob Froud, Dawn Ball, Mr Bridges, Alice Roberts and Lyn Fox for their help in completing this newsletter. Also to Amy Lewis for her fantastic artwork for the Nature Logo.

Finally would like to thank the Bry Nature ECA Group, with special mentions going to Tonio, Ava, Oz and Amr for their outstanding attitudes and innovative views on nature projects.

Dan Stokes

Bryanston Nature



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