Knighton Wild Annual Report 2025-2026

Although the financial year runs to 31st March, it has been our custom to report on the year up to the AGM, and this report continues that approach. After COVID our AGM was delayed to later in the year, and we are in the process of gradually moving the AGM forward each year until it is back in May as it used to be.

Meetings

We have organised three talks during the year. At our AGM in August last year Paul Killip, the Programme Manager for the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy, talked about the Strategy, how it has been developed, the extensive consultations that have been carried out with local organisations, and the production of the strategy document itself. He showed us some of the online mapping that allows people to look at areas that the strategy will focus on.

In September Alan Cann talked to us about harvestmen, an often overlooked group of creatures within the arachnids. He talked about how to distinguish harvestmen from spiders, some of the common harvestmen and how their populations are changing. As we have done before with Alan's talks on other taxa, we followed this up on the Saturday after the talk with a walk round Knighton Park looking for harvestmen. We found three species: Paroligolophus agrestis, Opilio canestrinii and Oligolophus hanseni, as well as ladybirds, bugs and spiders.

In April 2026 Richard Garnett, the chair of Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society (LROS), gave us a talk about House Sparrows. Richard introduced us to the lives and habits of House Sparrows and explained the survey that LROS carried out last year to identify where House Sparrows are breeding in our counties. He showed us maps and talked about some of the colonies that are local to Knighton and surrounding suburbs.

Projects

It's been another busy year on Knighton Green and in St Mary Magdalen Churchyard. Working sessions have been held during the year to cut the grass in the churchyard in the autumn and to sow seeds in the areas of the Green set aside for wild flowers and pollinator-friendly species. We also reprofiled some of the hedge that we laid ten years ago in the churchyard and cleared the coppice area near the Balmoral Close footpath. We have continued to work closely with the group of volunteers who maintain the triangle at the junction of Knighton Church Road and Carisbrooke Road.

We were pleased to see the results of our work at Overdale School on the wildlife pond, which is now much more open and accessible for wildlife and children! We are having a stall at Overdale's summer fair in late June. At the other end of the academic cycle, we have contacted the Wildlife Society at Leicester University, and hope that some students may join our practical work, attend some of our meetings and maybe do final year projects on the areas we look after.

All these pieces of work contribute to our submission to the Royal Horticultural Society's It's Your Neighbourhood scheme. Last year we achieved Outstanding for the seventh year running. We entered again this year for the tenth year running, and our assessment will be in mid-July.

We have taken more of an interest in the quality of water in the brook and surveyed it as part of the Great UK WaterBlitz again. This involved sampling the water in the brook and testing for Phosphates and Nitrates. The results showed that the water quality in the Washbrook was good above the sewage works in Oadby and poor on Knighton Green (downstream of the sewage works), similar results to those from the testing we did last year. We are also getting involved in the local Clean River Action group.

We organised a walk round Knighton Park on 2nd May looking for wildlife, especially the Local Nature Recovery Strategy 100 Indicator Species. We have another walk planned for 4th July. Three of us attended a meeting organised by Shockat Adam MP about parks and green spaces for local voluntary groups.

Publicity

We have continued to use the website to publicise and report on our activities. Nicky and Simon spoke to the local ward Labour Party about our work in November 2025, and Simon and Alan talked about NatureSpot and Knighton Wild to St Guthlac's Tea and Talk group in June 2026.

Simon Bennett, for the Committee 24th June 2026