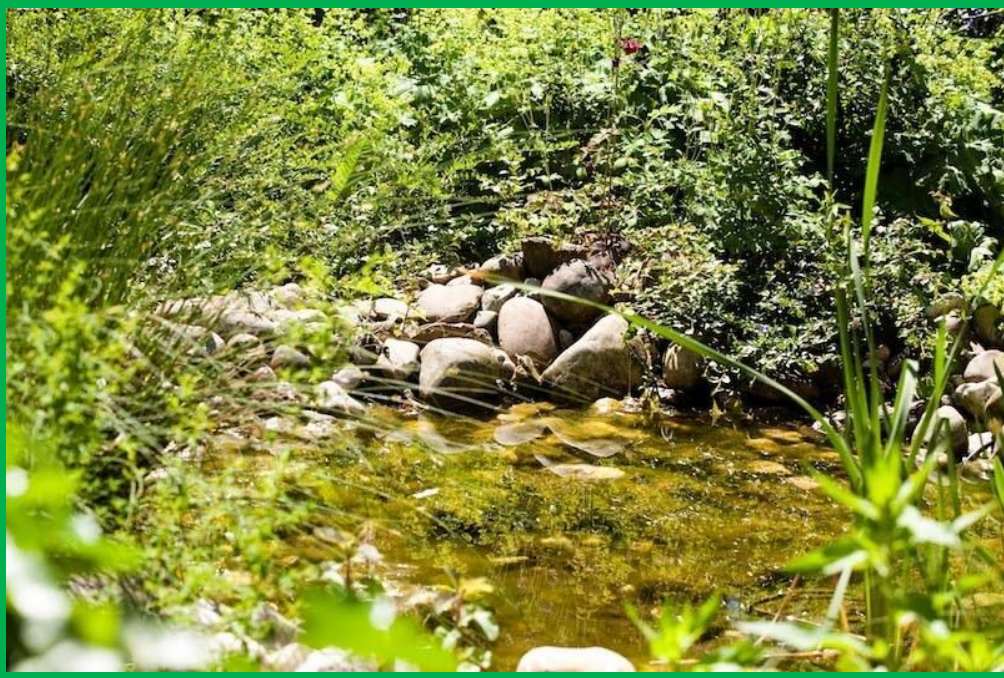




Part 1
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Regaining Paradise, Sustainability in the Early Years



Discovering

The outdoors has always been incredibly important to me, especially as a sporty child who spent countless hours in the garden. It was my personal stadium, a place where I could kick a football, practice my swings, or race around until I was out of breath, completely free and happy. Being outside gave me space to move, play, and test my limits without worrying about breaking anything indoors. It taught me teamwork when friends joined in, resilience when I practiced alone, and a love for fresh air and green spaces that has stayed with me. Those hours in the garden were important to my character building, it was where I built confidence, fitness, and lifelong memories. Now, as I'm getting older playing football and running around the garden isn't on my mind. It's now time for me to maintain the garden keeping it tidy and allowing it to be an open space for wildlife to thrive.



Discovering Areas with Potential

Whilst discovering areas with potential to be a wildlife haven I started by looking for quiet, undisturbed spots in my garden that offer a mix of light, shade and shelter. Even spaces with overgrown grass, fallen leaves, or old logs can be perfect starting points, as they already provide food and cover for insects and small animals. I also paid attention to places with natural features like hedges, trees, or water sources that can support diverse species. I thought about how I could enhance these areas by adding plants, nesting boxes and bug hotels. By observing what came to the garden and thinking what would support wildlife there, I spotted the hidden potential in overlooked spaces and tried to transform them into welcoming habitats where more wildlife could thrive.



Finding the Perfect Area

I recently discovered the perfect area in my garden that is full of potential for supporting wildlife. It's an area which is overlooked and for that reason provides a perfect spot. The area is tucked away in a quiet place, it gets the right mix of sunlight and shade from overhanging trees, and is slightly overgrown, making it a perfect attraction for wildlife like frogs, birds, squirrels and attracts pollinators like bees and butterflies.

What excites me most is how simple improvements I can make may turn this area into a sanctuary for wildlife. I'm planning to add a shelter for beetles and frogs, a bird bath for drinking and bathing, and a bug house to attract bees and other insects.



Enrichment of the Area



These simple structures provide safe, sheltered spaces for beneficial insects like ladybirds, bees, spiders, and beetles to rest, nest, and hibernate. Insects are vital to healthy ecosystems, they help pollinate plants, control pests, and break down organic matter. By offering a variety of places and materials like hollow bamboo, dry leaves, and old bricks with holes, a bug house will mimic natural hiding spots that are often lost in modern and well kept gardens. Encouraging more creatures into the garden not only helps sustain wildlife but also supports a balanced and thriving natural environment.



A bird bath provides essential fresh water for birds to drink and bathe, especially during hot or dry weather, encouraging birds to visit regularly. Meanwhile, a small log pile can create a valuable mini-habitat for insects, beetles, and even amphibians, offering shelter, breeding spaces, and food sources for other wildlife.



Ever since moving into this house I've always noticed the Blue Tits and Housemartins flying around. One of the first things I did was put up a snug little nest so they could lay their eggs safely and hide from predators.



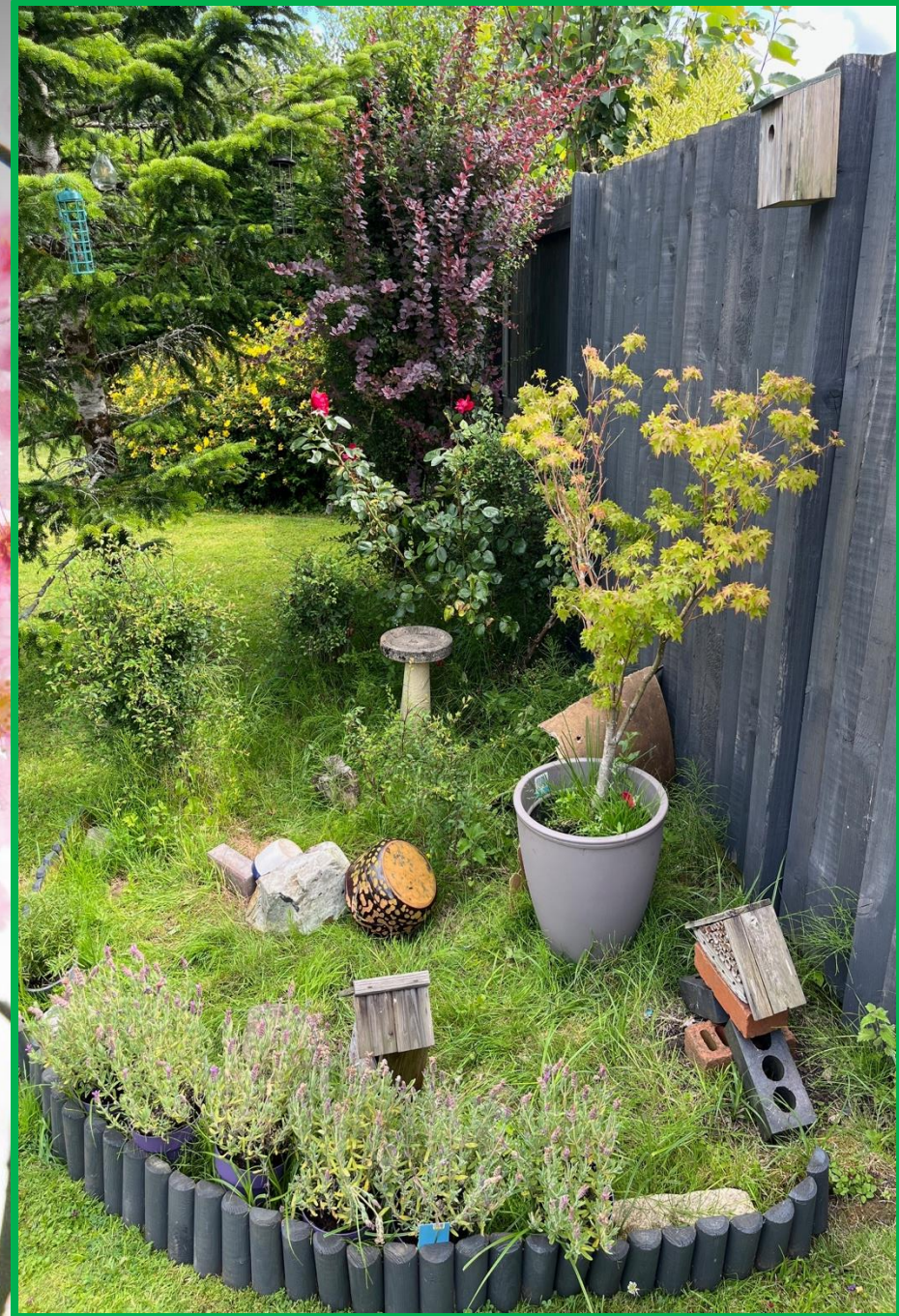
Plants improve air quality, support mental well-being, and create a calming, green space to enjoy. Looking after plants aids wellbeing. They also provide essential food and shelter for wildlife. Flowering plants like the Lavender plants attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators, while shrubs and trees offer nesting places for birds and cover for small animals. By introducing a mix of plants I'm support the garden's ecosystem, promoting biodiversity and creating a healthy environment that benefits wildlife.

I've added shelter for insects and small animals in my garden because it helps create a safe, welcoming environment for wildlife to thrive. By including features like pots, big rocks and overgrown grass, I'm giving insects, frogs and hedgehogs and other small creatures places to hide, rest, and breed away from predators and harsh weather. Shelter can help animals conserve energy and find food more easily, such as insects sheltering in logs or leaf litter where they can also feed. Overall, having access to suitable shelter is crucial for an animal's survival and wellbeing.

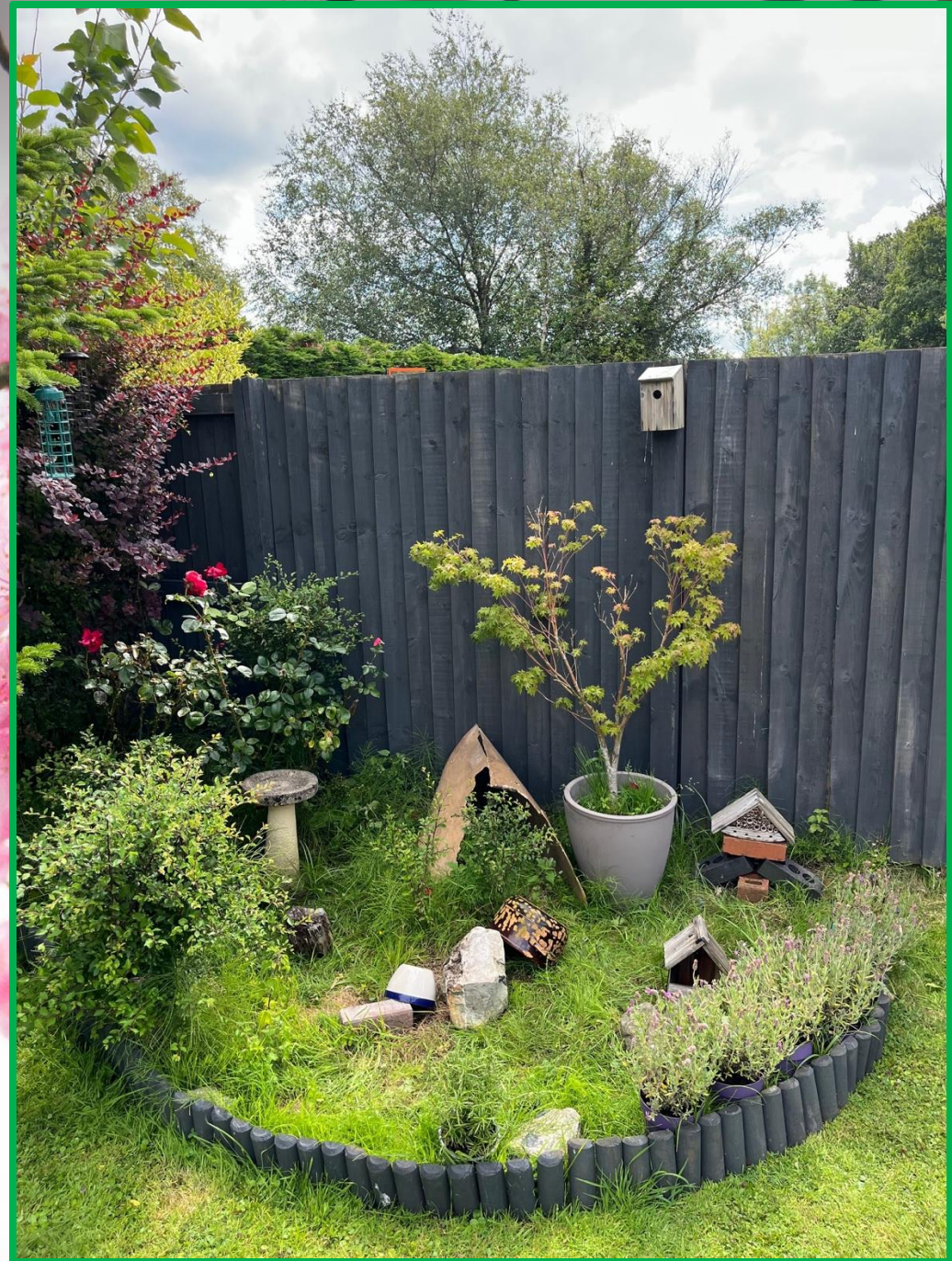


The Result

I wanted to create a safe haven for animals in my garden because I care about supporting wildlife and providing a place to thrive in an increasingly built-up world. Building habitats and adding shelters for birds, insects, and small mammals has made me feel like I'm giving something back to nature. It's also been beneficial for my mental health. Spending time outdoors, watching birds visit the feeder and seeing bees and butterflies among the flowers, gives me a sense of calm and purpose. Tending the garden and watching bumble bees and wasps and birds and frogs, and knowing I'm supporting wildlife has reduced my stress, lifted my mood and given me a peaceful retreat where I can unwind, with my family, and feel more connected to the natural world.



Side
by
Side



Wildlife Watch



Fun Fact

They drink through their skin. Frogs don't need to sip water like we do. Instead, they absorb it directly through a special patch of skin on their belly and thighs called the drinking patch.



Fun Fact

They're brilliant problem-solvers! Blue tits became famous in the UK in the early 20th century for learning how to peck through the foil tops of milk bottles left on doorsteps to get at the cream inside.



Fun Fact

They have around 5,000–7,000 spines. Each spine is actually a hollow, stiff hair that can last about a year before falling out and being replaced. When threatened, hedgehogs roll into a tight ball, using these spines as a super-effective natural defence to protect themselves from predators!



Fun Fact

Field mice are agile little creatures that can jump up to 18 inches (about 45 cm) in a single bound, many times their body length!

This impressive jumping ability helps them escape predators and navigate tall grass or dense vegetation quickly.



Fun Fact

They can release a smelly, yellow liquid from their leg joints when threatened!

This liquid, called reflex blood, has a foul taste and smell that deters predators. It's one of the clever ways these brightly coloured beetles defend themselves while warning would-be attackers that they're not a tasty snack!

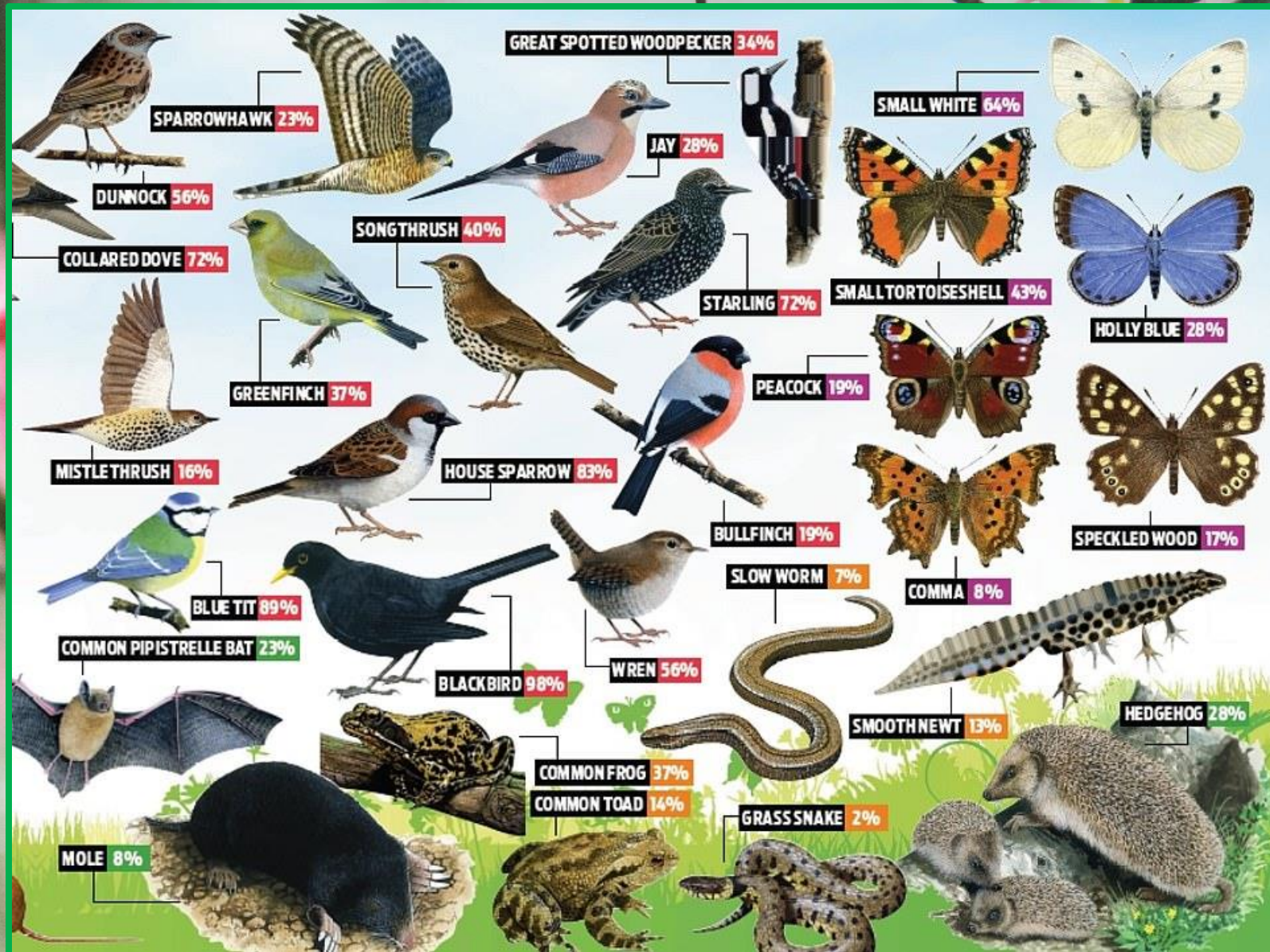


Fun Fact

They can vibrate flowers to release pollen.

This is called *buzz pollination* (or sonication). A bumble bee grabs onto a flower and rapidly vibrates its flight muscles without flapping its wings, shaking loose pollen that other insects can't easily access.

What will you find in your garden?



The Creation of Wildlife

Genesis 1:1 -31

God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Wildlife was created for a reason, to help sustain the planet, therefore we must do our best to support and conserve all wildlife.



A Short Story

In my little garden, there was once only grass and a few tired plants. But one day, I noticed a lonely bee buzzing around and birds in the sky, searching for flowers and food. I felt like I could help.

I planted many plants and set up a bird bath and left a small log pile for insects. Soon, the garden was alive with life, bumblebees tumbled through flowers, birds splashed in the water, hedgehog snuffled among the leaves at night looking for some food. Even Blue Tits made found their new home.

Watching these creatures taught me how important gardens are as tiny safe havens for wildlife. Each visitor played a part in keeping the garden healthy and balanced. Without insects to pollinate, flowers would fade and without birds and hedgehogs, pests would take over.

My garden wasn't just for me anymore, it was a shared space for many living things, and my family. I realised that even the smallest patch of land can help wildlife thrive, if we care for it. Now, every time I see a bee or a bird in my garden, I'm reminded that we all have the power to protect nature, starting right outside our own doors.



Reflection

I've discovered a passion for supporting wildlife, and it's been incredibly rewarding. Creating spaces in my garden for birds, insects, and small animals has opened my eyes to how much difference even small changes can make. It feels good to know I'm supporting local wildlife, and helping it thrive, while making my outdoor space more vibrant and interesting. This new focus has also given me a sense of purpose and calm, encouraging me to spend more time in nature, talk to my family about the nature in our garden and appreciate the small, natural wonders around me every day.

