Ten point plan for easy win wildlife action

1. **Build a pond – big or small!**
   Even a small pond will support a wealth of wildlife.
   Guidance for how to create a good wildlife pond can be found online.
   If you have a big space and more time and are prepared to put in a bit of effort:
   https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-pond
   If you don't have a lot of space or time, here are some good tips for a small pond:
   https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife/wildlife-gardening/ponds
   (See YouTube guide to building a mini-pond).
   With any pond, make sure that there is a shallow part so that any small mammals (especially hedgehogs, which are actually great swimmers) deciding to go for a swim can climb out easily.

2. **No Mow May (and June and even July and August!)**
   This allows daisies and clover to flower, and encourages pollinators to your new mini-meadow. Pollinators are vital, as they allow plants to fertilise, develop seeds, and produce fruits,
   The bigger the area you can leave unmown, the better, but if you can't bring yourself to leave the whole lawn, leave a 1m strip along the edges or simply mow a pathway through the lawn.
   Amongst the more common plants such as daisies, clovers and dandelions, you may find some wonderful surprises such as orchids and beautiful grass flowers too. Leaving the patch unmown through May is great – leaving it all to grow through to August is even better!
   https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay/
   As a follow on from this, try not to be too tidy in autumn. Many invertebrates like to over-winter overwinter in hollow stems, under leaf litter and seeds provide a valuable food source.

3. **Hedgehog highways**
   One of the main reasons hedgehogs are struggling in Britain is because our fences and walls are becoming more and more secure, reducing the amount of land available to them. Hedgehogs travel around one mile every night through our parks and gardens in their quest to find enough food and a mate. We can make their life a little easier by removing the barriers within our control – for example, by making holes in or under our garden fences and walls for them to pass through.
   https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/

4. **Embrace the dark!**
   Bat populations have declined considerably in the UK over the last century. They are under threat from all sides, including from building and development works, loss of habitat, cat attacks – and potentially badly designed lighting if sited near roosts. In most cases, security lights do not need to be on all night and many are super powerful, more like floodlights on a football pitch than an aid to finding your keys in the dark! By using lower powered and motion/light sensitive controls, or a timer, we can not only save money on electricity, but help nocturnal wildlife too.
   https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/threats-to-bats/lighting

5. **Feed the birds**
   Winter can be a difficult time for wildlife. Temperatures drop and food becomes difficult to find. Some birds migrate, but many stay. Insect-eating birds need to turn to alternative, nutritious foods. By encouraging insects generally throughout the year, but especially through the spring and summer, we can also support the birds. Many species are finely adapted to breed at a certain time of year so that they know food will be available for their chicks (eg blue tits will collect thousands of tiny green caterpillars in spring, which are ideal soft, nutritious food for their

young, before they can move on to harder things that might be found on a bird table). Try growing (or allowing to grow) plants such as teasels for birds like goldfinches.
https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/helping-birds-and-wildlife
https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2018/02/feeding-winter-birds/
Making fat feeders is a great activity to do with children too:
https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/diy/how-to-make-fat-cakes-for-birds/
https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/crafts/how-to-make-fat-cakes-for-birds

6. **Create a log pile**
   Log piles are fantastic habitats for all sorts of invertebrates, but if you would like to make a home for something a but more unusual (and, sadly, endangered) you might need to adapt your design a bit. Stag beetle larvae like upright logs, rather than horizontal ones, so try to incorporate that into your log pile.

   https://stagbeetles.ptes.org/how-to-build-a-log-pile/
   https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/dead-wood-compost-heap-habitats

7. **Build a box – birds or bats**
   If you're feeling ambitious and like a woodwork challenge, make a nest/roost box. LANCE Trust (Long Ashton) has shown what a joint effort can achieve by building and installing around 34 swift boxes to provide nest sites for these amazing summer visitors. Swifts are picky though, so do take advice from the experts on box design and location.
   https://www.swift-conservation.org/

   If you would like to make or install a bat box, Bat Conservation provides plenty of guidance:
   https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes/wooden-bat-boxes
   Please remember that you should not handle bats without an appropriate licence!

8. **Planting for pollinators**
   Pollinators are animals that move pollen from one flower to another and in doing so enable plants to make seeds and reproduce. In the UK the majority of pollination is done via wind or by the 1500 species of pollinating insects. These insects include bees, butterflies, flies and beetles. Around 80% of British plants are pollinated by insects. This process produces the wide variety of plants we see, feeds our wildlife and provides much of the food that we eat.
   https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators

9. **Start a compost heap/bin**
   It may be that you get rid of your food waste through kerbside collections, and this is the right thing to do for certain items (eg meat, cooked food, dairy etc), but many other items, such as peelings, cores, etc can go on a compost heap or bin together with a lot of garden waste. As long as you are careful not to add pernicious weeds like bindweed and nettles (unless you are going to get really serious with a hot compost), most other green waste can go into a compost. Compost heaps/bins are also fantastic habitat for many invertebrates, not just worms!
   https://www.somersetwildlife.org/actions/how-compost-your-waste
   https://www.soilassociation.org/take-action/growing-at-home/allotments-and-home-growing/make-your-own-compost/

10. **Ditch the chemicals**

    No more bug sprays! Insect numbers are falling dramatically and this has a massive knock on effect on wildlife generally – many birds and all bats, as well as other insects, all rely on invertebrates for food.

    Weed out weed killers! ‘Weeds’ are often the best flowers for pollinators.