



# Home Sweet Home Challenge



## WHAT WE'D LIKE YOU TO DO

Put up artificial homes to help the animals on your park survive and thrive.

Do something **NEW** that will make a significant positive impact for wildlife.

The scope of the work should reflect the resources you have and the location and size of your park. For example, a large park might put up bat and bird boxes throughout its woodland; a small park might put in a couple of boxes and a feeding station. A residential park might encourage residents to put up boxes near their homes.

## WHY TAKE THE CHALLENGE?

Artificial wildlife homes and feeding stations such as bird and bat boxes, bee hotels, hedgehogs' homes, hibernacula and insect stacks/hotels can really help a wide range of creatures to thrive. They're also a great way to get people involved in your conservation work.

When you start and complete a challenge(s), you'll get a logo(s) to display to let everyone know what you are doing and what you have achieved.



## 1. DECIDE WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO

- You can build an artificial home or feeding station for a wide range of animals – birds, bats, bees, hedgehogs, otters, beetles and newts, to name just a few.
- Research the possibilities and take a look at your park and the wildlife that already makes its home there.
- You'll find there are many ready-made homes available commercially, or you can make your own.
- Get help and advice from a local wildlife group on what species need the most help – find them listed in your region's Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Aim to provide homes for at least two different types of animals that need a helping hand. Where appropriate, provide a variety of homes for each type of animal for example, homes for small, medium and large birds.
- Put up homes in as many appropriate parts of your park as possible.
- Be ambitious!
- Once you've decided to take up this challenge, let us know using the [online form](#). You'll get a logo to show that you've started the challenge.

## 2. MAKE A PLAN

- Once you've decided what you're going to do, put together a simple plan with actions and goals - time-tabled if possible. You can use the wildlife challenge plan template [here](#).
- Use the good ideas and resources below as a starting point. The internet is a mine of good advice to help with the practical details.
- Remember that cleaning and maintenance should be a vital part of any plan. As should monitoring progress to see if the plan is working.
- We would be delighted to receive a copy of your [plan](#), along with some of photos so we know what you're working on. Upload your plan and photos [here](#).
- Putting a [plan](#) together will help us know whether the scope of what you're going to do is 'enough' to win the challenge.



### 3. PUT YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION

- Put someone with the necessary skills in charge of the job and give them the time and resources they need to get on with it.
- Let everyone know what you're doing and keep them updated on progress.
- If you can, get everyone involved by helping you to make and set up your habitat boxes, etc.
- Use your challenge to educate everyone. Make the challenge part of what your park is 'all about'.

### 4. REPORT ON YOUR SUCCESS

- When you've reached your project goal or a first major milestone let us know – send us details of what you've achieved and upload your report and photos of the results [here](#).
- If you're due an advisory visit, show your advisor what you've achieved.

### 5. WINNING THE CHALLENGE

- Once we've received details of what you've done, we'll review the information.
- If you have done enough, you'll win the challenge and get a “*We've completed the Home Sweet Home Challenge*” logo to display.
- If not, we'll let you know what you still need to do.



# GOOD IDEAS FOR YOUR PLAN

- If possible, do a biodiversity survey so that you have a baseline from which to work. At a minimum, note the artificial homes you already have. Repeat the survey at regular intervals to monitor progress. Your local Wildlife Trust should be able to help.
- Ensure that all artificial homes are well sited, cleaned and maintained and that they provide a good variety of nesting opportunities.
- Provide enough variety to appeal to a wide range of species. For example, bird boxes with a variety of entrance holes e.g. 25mm and 32mm should be provided and should be placed in a variety of orientations. Larger boxes for birds of prey should also be provided where appropriate.
- Put up water and feeding stations for birds and other animals, make sure they are kept clean and well-stocked with appropriate food.
- Encourage people to feed birds and other animals, and to set up their own feeding/watering stations. Provide information so that they do this in the best possible way.
- Open a bee hotel: a bee hotel provides a place for species such as the red mason bee to lay their eggs. Commercial versions are available online. You can also make your own out of a bundle of 10-20 cm long sections of dried river reeds. Position the hotel in a sunny spot out of the rain.
- Create bee nesting areas: many bee species nest in holes, so leave strips of undisturbed rough grassland adjacent to hedgerows and in field corners or banks.
- Host a hive – a hive is a great wildlife home to have on a park. Link up with a local beekeeping association and act as a host for a hive/s or become a beekeeper yourself. NB: If you host a hive, make sure you have enough forage crops close by, so that your honey bees do not out compete other bee species.
- Create a Bug Hotel or Wildlife Stack - one great way to give a home to minibeasts, and other small animals is to build a bug hotel, a wildlife stack or to set up bug boxes. They're simple to do and are a great way to use recycled material.
- Create a hibernaculum for frogs, toads and reptiles to hibernate in over winter. This can be by making a covered or underground den, containing voids in which the animals can sleep. The web is full of advice: search for 'how to build a hibernaculum'.
- Make or buy a hedgehog home. This will provide a place for hedgehogs to hibernate and a nesting box for mothers. The web is full of instructions on how to build one and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society provides a leaflet – see Online Resources.
- Maintenance is vital. Once you've put up your new Wildlife homes, make sure you have a rota to ensure they are checked regularly and properly maintained.
- Put up signage to tell people what you've done and why.
- Use the project to get people involved. Run workshops to show how to make bird boxes and other artificial animals' homes. You can either put the finished articles up on your park, or let people take them away to use in their own gardens or pitches.



# ONLINE RESOURCES

**The Bat Conservation Trust** ([bats.org.uk](http://bats.org.uk)) offers loads of tips on how to look after bats and has many local groups who can help. The group's website includes everything you need to know about bat nest boxes.

**The British Beekeepers Association** ([bbka.org.uk](http://bbka.org.uk)) provides comprehensive advice and support on hives and beekeeping.

An excellent place for information about bees is the **Bumblebee Trust** ([bumblebeeconservation.org](http://bumblebeeconservation.org)) – loads of info. on bee nest boxes and bee hotels.

The **Buglife conservation charity** ([buglife.org.uk](http://buglife.org.uk)) has information on how to make a bug hotel/wildlife stack.

The **British Hedgehog Preservation Society** ([britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://britishhedgehogs.org.uk)) - everything you need to know about hedgehog conservation. The Society produces a leaflet on making a hedgehog house.

The **International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF)** ([otter.org](http://otter.org)) provides advice on otter conservation, including how to build an artificial otter holt.

**The RSPB** ([rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk)) - everything you need to know about helping our feathered friends, including the last word on nest boxes.