



Carymoor Volunteer Newsletter

SPRING 2026

I hope you enjoy looking back at all that has been achieved over the past 3 months.

Spring 2026 has been a very busy season for everyone at Carymoor. The unusually settled weather has really helped. In March we had the highest volunteer attendance of the year with 206 attendances!

In the three months that this newsletter covers you have given more than 1534 hours of your time to help support the Centre. We are so grateful for your time, energy and support and could not survive without your help.

THANK YOU!

Chrissie

GARDENING TEAM - March

Sadie started planting up the 88 tyres that make up our pollinator corridor. She has lots of seedlings and plug on the way in the polytunnel ready to add to this tyre avenue to encourage more pollinators.



Sue C planted snowdrops around the new pond in the Sensory Garden while Sue B continued to weed the surrounding beds.



Sarah and Sadie got lots of seeds underway in the polytunnel. Sarah is keen to develop the dye plants this year and has many germinating.



Judith and Anna weeded the veg garden. The garlands and onions are looking healthy, so too is the soft fruit bed. Once the phacelia (green manure) has flowered, this will be dug in and the bed turned over to courgettes and cucumbers.



Having spent all winter tidying the wildflower garden, Ros has been enjoying being able to plant up some of the tyres and watching the garden return to life.

GARDENING TEAM—March

In preparation for the growing season, Nick and Fred built a sturdy frame for the pumpkins and squashes to grow up later in the season. It looked rather bare in early March but should soon have foliage trailing up it, hopefully.



Nick and Jake added two new bays to the compost bins, giving the gardening team a brilliant space to recycle their garden waste and create a rich resource of compost from.



On March 9th Nate was able to make the first proper grass cut of the year. It was lovely to see the centre freshly cut and tidy.



GARDENING TEAM—April

Our two new volunteers, Anna and Katie got fully involved in the gardening.

Katie teamed up with Sarah to consider new and exciting ideas for the polytunnel. Anna has been helping with the weeding and tending.



Sue and Viv cleared parts of the Sensory Garden, removing the encroaching grass and planting new plants.



Sadie continued up the hill, tending the tyre avenue. She was fascinated and inspired to see just how many pollinators are using the flowers along this corridor.



GARDENING TEAM—May

In May we replaced the dead cherry sapling with a rowan (mountain ash) tree in an attempt to add more shade to the woodland section of the wildflower garden. The plants that grow here prefer the dappled light and shade and vary from those species that grow in the more exposed tyres. Hopefully, this little rowan will flourish in its new location.

Anna worked hard in this section of the wildflower garden, weeding out the aggressive couch grass and planting new woodland plants into the tyres.

Ros continued to tidy, maintain and develop the main tyre beds.



Judith and Sue focused on the veg garden, cutting down the phacelia which we had grown as a green manure. They were mindful to leave the cut flowers nearby for the bees to enjoy.



Sarah and Katie harvested produce from the polytunnel to share with volunteers.



Thankfully most of the plants in and around the polytunnel survived the heatwave at the end of May. We have been frantically watering everywhere!

GARDENING TEAM—Sunflower Room

The 'Castle Cary in Bloom' sunflower festival theme this year is sunflowers. Sadie was keen to get Cary-moor involved. She has created a wonderful sunflower room next to the Strawbale for visitors to immerse themselves in and enjoy being surrounded by these towering blooms.

In March, with help from the DofE girls, together we planted almost 100 sunflower seeds.



By the end of March Sadie was ready to mark up and dig out the bed.



In April the DofE boys got the mattocks out to enlarge the circle and added 2 wheelbarrow of compost. This they dug in, removing the weeds and stones and turning the compost in with the soil.



Sadie and Dean have since added manure and prepared the bed for the seedlings. Sadie is bringing on the sunflowers at home, ready to plant out in the next few weeks.

We are excited to watch this project develop...

Castle Cary in Bloom — Sunflowers

In April Fred and Nick cut out a number of supersized sunflowers ready for Kate to take into Castle Cary Primary School as part of the Castle Cary in Bloom project.



Kate has been collecting bottle tops to use to decorate these sunflowers.



It's the little jobs that help - MARCH

In early March we moved the mud kitchen from Lindon Copse down to the main centre. The boys DofE groups will be using this when they do their camp cooking as part of their 2 day expedition. Nick and Fred adjusted the heights and levelled the structure and made everything secure. It looks great!

Later a second washstand was installed on the edge of the wildflower garden for the girls DofE group to use as part of their expedition training.



Jake repaired the hinges on the vegetable garden gates as well as the gate leading into Dauncey. This will be a huge improvement. and help preserve both the gate and the ground underneath.

With the sun shining in early March it certainly felt that we were preparing for the season ahead. The Monday team pruned many of the apple trees in the heritage orchard using the long handled pruners. We focused on removing dead and diseased wood, any branches that were rubbing and aiming to open up the centre of the tree for air and light.



Neil took the strimmer to the dragon and translocated bank to cut the long grass. Both DofE groups then raked this up in time for the spring wildflowers to return.



It's the little jobs that help - MARCH

Fred repaired more of the pathways around the centre. By digging out the soil, laying cement then fixing a metal sheet over the top he has created a seamless junction and hopefully reduced the risk of tripping.



Towards the end of March Neil took the brushcutter to clear the brambles in preparation for the new workshop. Di helped to clear the area, removing the long brambles from the trees and raking up all the debris. The area looks transformed. We look forward to seeing this area develop over the next few weeks and months.



Neil worked hard to remove some of the tyres around the trees. These were planted in the tyres over 20 years ago. They have since grown! It took him ages to cut them free.



Armed with his camera, Adrian walked the site. He saw a number of early butterflies as well as queen bumblebees. He even watched a pregnant deer feeding on the hedgerows near the dragon..



It's the little jobs that help - April

Di, Barb and Harriet continued clearing and tidying the new workshop area. Rubbish was disposed of, dead branches were pruned and brambles were raked away. The area is looking refreshed.



Chloe employed her artistic flair to replace the edges of the Sensory Garden with new half rounds (previously cut and shaped by Nick and Jake).



Adrian spent two days completing the first proper mow of the year. The grass in the wildflower garden had shot up and he found it quite hard work!



It's the little jobs that help - April

Towards the end of April, Nate emailed to say that some mice had taken up residence in the Dauncey sandpits and could we do something to help them get out. Di was up for a creative challenge and made these wonderful mouse ladders to help the rodents escape.



Chloe and Di sorted more of the tyres, ready for them to be collected and recycled. Each one was graded, cleaned and piled ready for a company to come and assess them for us.

Barb and Jane tidied the edges around the veg garden and around the seating area in the wild flower garden. As the good weather continues these areas will be used more and more by our visitors so it is great to keep these looking tidy.

Neil, Fred and Nick headed to Nightingale Woods to saw up one of the felled ash trees. Nick is hoping to turn some of the ash into bowls similar to this one that he made previously from Carymoor ash.



It's the little jobs that help - May

A few volunteers came in on the first Bank Holiday Monday. Di and Harriet helped to tidy around the Centre whilst Adrian mowed the wild flower garden.



Work continued throughout May to keep the Centre looking tidy. The Monday team weeded, mowed and cleared around the buildings .

Whilst weeding, Di discovered a rouge gooseberry bush growing under the building. It was even bearing fruit! She managed to carefully extract it from the gravel and replant it in the veg garden.



Barb continued the clearance behind the tool store, cutting back the encroaching brambles.

Chloe and Jane tidied around the Boot Room and back door.



The Centre was closed for the second May Bank holiday.

Making ash planks — May

John returned in May! It was lovely to see him back.



One of the ash trees close to Nightingale Wood had unfortunately succumbed to ash dieback disease, which is caused by a fungus. Due to the tree's location and vulnerability to falling in the wind, it had to be deemed unsafe, therefore felled. Little has gone to waste. The branches have been used for dead hedging and sawn as firewood, to heat the centre within the cold, long winter months. The trunk? That's where the chainsaw mill comes in. The chainsaw mill is a high powered chainsaw with a mill attachment, ideal for cutting planks of various widths. The planks from this tree will be used to make indoor furniture. Neil, Nick Fred and John, were up for the task. With precision team work it took only a few minutes to cut a plank. Neil operator and guide, opposite Nick as guide, with John, tapping in wedges as the chainsaw progresses through, to prevent the chain from getting stuck.



The first ash tree planked well as it was smaller. They were worried about the size of the larger ash tree, in case the chain saw wasn't long enough. Thankfully all went to plan and they manage to produce some impressive ash planks.

The first tree made 4 good planks. John already has his eye on these to make some benches and seats from.

Nick sorted a storage area under the main building to help preserve the ash until it is needed.



HEDGELAYING—MARCH

In March the Tuesday team headed up on to the Green Lane on the cap to resume hedge laying. Some of this section had been started in February as part of the hedge laying course. Now it was the turn of the volunteers to finish the job.

First the hedge / bank was cleared to allow access to the trees on the top of the bank. These trees were then laid and staked to create a dense, wildlife-friendly boundary line. Finally dead branches were added to thicken the hedge further.



The hedge was finished on Tuesday 17th March. It does look great! Well done everyone !

LONG POND —MARCH

During March the education volunteers - Alison, Jane and Gillian - made about 30 netting bags. They reused the deer netting that we had removed from the site last year and sewed them together to create robust bags.

The DofE boys then filled the bags with barley straw.



At the end of March Neil lead a group to Long Pond. The tethered barley straw bags were thrown in and secured. Hopefully this will reduce the amount of blanket weed in the pond.



The team also scythed and raked the reeds which were just starting to emerge, hoping to keep them under control this year.

They planted more mint in the shallows.

At the same time an ash tree between Long Pond and Nightingale Woods was felled and the brush added to a dead hedge. This has re-established the pathway around the side of the pond.

POLINATOR PROJECT — APRIL

As the dry weather continued into early April. The clay soil on the Cap was already starting to dry and crack. The Tuesday team headed to the Bee Meadow to plant some wildflower plugs before the ground became too hard. These plugs had been sown and potted on by the A2A team over the winter.



Further along the Cap, Nigel and Duncan tackled the encroaching brambles on the Dragon, aiming to remove these aggressive invaders to allow more wildflowers to establish themselves on the chalk bank.

Previous efforts are starting to have a real impact as parts of the bank were awash with colour—cowslips!



WILDLIFE SURVEYS

The arrival of Spring has brought out the bees and butterflies. From March onwards Adrian, Sally, Julie and Harriet have walked the site recording each sighting.

Julie is compiling the data each week to help boost Carymoor wildlife records.



Jenny and Chris meet on Monday mornings to walk the bird transect, recording a wide range of resident species as well as documenting the departure of our winter visitors such as redwings and the arrival of some of the summer migrants.

Our bird data is supported with information from Roger and Mark who visit the site to ring and record birds across our site.

Claire has completed our reptile survey for a number of years. This year she is looking to share her vast knowledge with Sally and Julie and to help share the load.

Nigel and Julie are hoping to organise a bat watch evening to count to resident bats emerging from their roost in the Carymoor building.

Nigel is also working with Neil to survey some of the wildflower species that grow across the site.

Harriet and John will soon be searching the skies hoping to spot the emerging dragonflies at Long Pond, Ron's Pond and even at Cary Marsh.

Harriet and Di regularly put out the moth trap and record the species that live across the site.



WOODWORK

It was lovely to have Mark and Bill back in early March. With the sun shining and the birds singing they cut wood and continued to generate firewood for the year ahead.



This is the number of logs that Mark and Bill manage to cut on the average morning. These are pretty sizable! It is impressive work!



One of the students from Newberry Manor who attends regularly has also been helping to cut firewood to add to this pile when he visits each week.

BENCHES

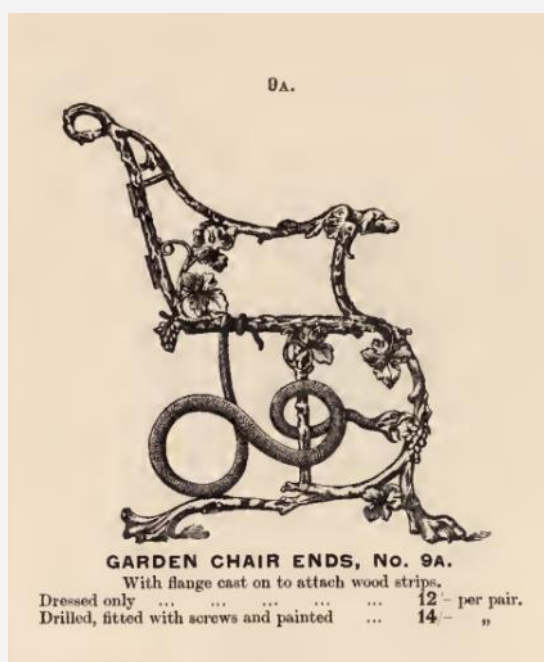
In March Nick uncovered 6 cast iron bench ends that had been stored in the working area for a few years. After some research he decided that they were worth restoring and bring back into use.

After a very generous donation of oak from Norman and Sue, and after spending many hours scraping off the old paint and re-spraying them the finished benches were brought back into the Centre.

They look amazing!



During his investigations, Nick discovered a similar looking cast iron bench end in the Coalbrookdale spring catalogue in 1888. Sadly, ours were more modern replicas , cast probably during the 1950's. However the snake and hound design makes them very distinctive and interesting



I am sure volunteers, visitors and students will enjoy resting on these delightful benches for many years to come. Thank you Nick.



EDUCATION VOLUNTEERS

In March the education volunteers helped us prepare for the upcoming markets. Jane planted some trailing nasturtiums and also brought in some shasta daisy and euphorbia plants.



Each Tuesday Alison, Jane and Gillian have been tasked with different prep jobs to support the education team, the 2 DofE groups as well as some of the volunteer projects across the site.

We asked the team to repurpose some of the deer netting into bags ready to fill with barley straw. These were put into all of the ponds to help tackle the blanket weed. The team were so efficient that we even have some bags left over for next year.



Other jobs this Spring have included rolling clay balls, making leafy bracelet strips, weaving willow tension plate templates, replacing orienteering controls, cutting out caterpillars, attaching kite components, sharpening marshmallow sticks, preparing bread dough etc.

We are all so grateful for the help that these wonderful ladies give us.

Thank you!

CARYMOOR EASTER EGG HUNT—Volunteer Social

At the end of March we held our first social event of the year, inviting the volunteers to join us for an Easter Egg hunt around the wildflower garden, the orchards and the tree trail.



The volunteers teamed up in 2's and 3's to follow the map in search of Easter eggs and to find out more about the various jobs that our Monday volunteer groups do each week. They completed a fun-fact quiz about Carymoor as they went



After we assembled in Craig Hall to run through the quiz answers and to enjoy tea and cake.

Thank you to Barb and Katie for baking the cakes.



A huge thank you to all our volunteers for everything you do to support Carymoor.

WILDLIFE AT CARYMOOR—March



Spring is one of Adrian's favourite times of year...

Nature has certainly made the most of the more favourable days, basking within the sun, feeding on the fresh blooms and new shoots. I have managed to see all the five species of butterflies that spend their winter within Britain. The brimstone, small tortoiseshell, peacock, comma and the red admiral. Monday March 23rd was a beautiful, spring day, a new hatching for another 2 species of butterfly emerged. The speckled wood and the small white. Photos: Peacock feeding on the blackthorn flowers. A camouflaged speckled wood, basking in the sun. A female roe deer feeding on the new shoots, from the bushes upon the Dragon's tail. She looked in good condition and rather pregnant too. She will possibly give birth sometime, around May. A common carder bumblebee, in flight and feeding on the flowing red cherry bush. Monday 23rd March was also a favourable day for the bumblebees. I have now managed to see 6 of the species from the big 8, Buff-tail, whitetail, red-tail, garden, early and the common carder. A bee-fly feeding from a cowslip. The snake head fritillary. Looking forward to more new sightings for the year and the start of the surveys.



Adrian.

WILDLIFE AT CARYMOOR—April

In early April, Adrain was lucky enough to capture this remarkable shot of a blue tit leaving the nest box.



Birds, starting their nest building duties, within their pairs, is a sure sign that spring has returned for 2026. Last spring a pair of blue tits successfully nested within the bird box, that is situated on the Carymoor Environmental Trust Centre's building. It is so great to see that they have returned this spring.

They both have been seen busily going in and out on a regular basis, strengthening and replacing the nest with a fresh lining, using moss, hair, feathers, leaves and spider webs. Blue tits usually lay their eggs around the end of April/beginning of May, to synchronise with the emergence of caterpillars. They eat; Caterpillars, Insects, spiders, fruit and seeds. Incubation of eggs; 15 days.

Fledging of chicks; around 3 weeks. Blue tits only lay 1 clutch of eggs a year however, she will lay between 7 - 14 eggs in a clutch, 16 being the most recorded.

That's allot of beaks to feed all at once, no wonder they give themselves the rest of the year off.

Looking forward to witnessing their progress through this spring and hoping for another successful year for them both

Adrian

WILDLIFE AT CARYMOOR—May

On the first bank holiday Monday in May, Adrian spotted these in the wildflower garden.



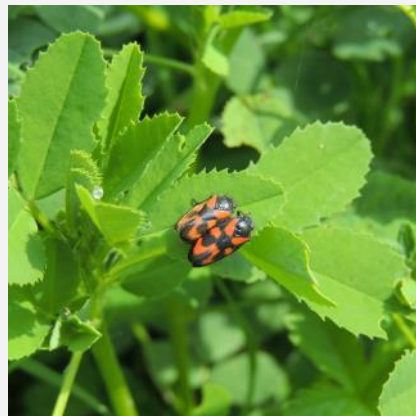
Some species of butterflies and moths, specialise in certain habitats and even a particular food plant, for their caterpillars food source, to survive and thrive. Here, the aptly named "Spindle ermine moth" caterpillars have made their web nests, upon the young spindle trees, within the wildflower garden, here at Carymoor.

A week later, Adrian took these wonderful pictures of some of the smaller residents living at Carymoor;

A garden bumblebee exiting her nest

A couple of red and black frog hopper bugs

A beautiful caterpillar of the lackey moth



WILDLIFE AT CARYMOOR—May

The butterfly survey season for 2026 has not long started, just over one month, however there is so much to report following 5 transects, with exciting, good news to share. The year 2025 for butterflies, was very much a recovery year for them, mainly with an average to below average number performance, following a very wet year in 2024, where numbers consequently suffered. Even so early within the year it appears that, at Carymoor, it is going to be a great year, a record year too for some, as long as the weather is not so unfavourable for the remainder of spring and this summer.

The holly blue; Only 1 recorded in 2025. Record year 2015, total recorded 32. I have already recorded 17 in 2026.

The orange tip; 34 recorded in 2025. Record year 2014, total recorded 66. I have already recorded 44 in 2026. The green-veined white; 14 recorded in 2025. Record year 2014, total recorded 141. I have already recorded 44 in 2026. I went out on transect 5/5/26 and saw the first painted lady at Carymoor this year. Sightings in the South of England have been recorded since 25/4/26 following their epic migratory journey, taking advantage of the northerly winds, to cross the channel from Europe.

The Painted Lady is a long-distance migrant. Each year, it spreads northwards from the desert fringes of North Africa, the Middle East, and central Asia, recolonising mainland Europe and reaching Britain and Ireland.

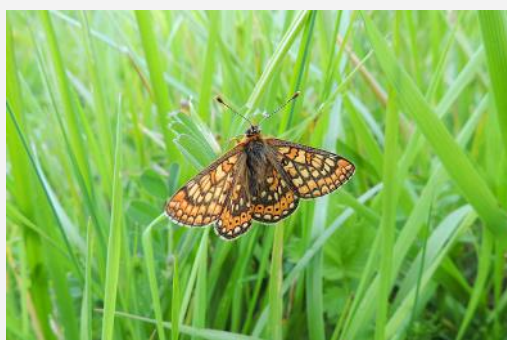
Recent new hatching on transect; small copper, dingy skipper and the grizzled skipper. Last year I only recorded 4 grizzled skippers, this year I have recorded them for the first time within my last transect walk on 5/5/26, recording a total of 9. Wow! that is over double in one transect compared with a whole year of transect recordings.

Volunteer Julie still joins me on transect and recently joined by new volunteer, Sally. They both are in training to take on another new transect of their own, as there are key areas of interest that are not covered by the present transects on site. Their help and support has been great, also with their enthusiasm for butterflies equalling mine, they will be most successful and their data gathered will be of much value to Carymoor and an aid to help butterflies thrive . *Adrian*



WILDLIFE AT CARYMOOR—May

Some more colourful butterfly photos. Taken on transect 12/05/26. Common blue. Brown argus. Small copper. Dingy skipper. Grizzled skipper. Marsh fritillary. **Adrian**



ASIAN HORNET ALERT

Lionel, our bee keeper, is very concerned about the possible sighting of an Asian hornet nearby in North Berrow. He is very worried that we might get them here too, especially as this is the time when queens are looking for nest sites. The trap is on the end of the strawbale veranda, so that it can be easily checked - If anyone sees a Hornet/ Asian Hornet in it, we need to give Lionel a call and he'll come and deal with it. It might attract other insects, but smaller things can fly back out.

There's a free 'Asian Hornet' app to help with identifying them.

There are some information leaflets in the Strawbale Room.

Have you seen this insect?

Yellow-legged hornet (aka Asian hornet) *Vespa velutina*

NNSS
Non-Native Species Society

What is it?

A highly aggressive predator of native insects that poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators. Originally from Asia, in 2004 this invasive non-native species was accidentally introduced to France where it has spread rapidly and into neighbouring countries. Since 2016 a number of sightings have been recorded in the UK.



Slightly smaller than the native European hornet. May be confused with other species, shown below in actual size for comparison.



Where might I see it?

May be seen on flowering plants, around beehives, around rotting / fermenting fruit and protein, and at street markets attracted by sweet fruit and fish stalls. Active February to November across England and Wales.

This insect stings,
do not disturb an
active nest.

Please report sightings immediately with a photo:

- with the iPhone and Android recording app: Asian Hornet Watch
- online at: nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Find out
more and
report a
sighting:



For more information on invasive non-native species visit: nonnativespecies.org



TICK AWARENESS

There was an interesting article in the Guardian this week, alerting people to the problems associated with ticks.

[Lyme disease cases in England rise by more than 20% in a year](#) | [Lyme disease](#) | [The Guardian](#)

There are ticks at Carymoor so we do encourage visitors to be vigilant and take precautions.

FIND A TICK—REMOVE IT QUICK



NEWS AND EVENTS

Our 30th Year continues to be celebrated through many different events, showcasing the variety of things that happen at Carymoor.

The education team delivered our 500th Schools Against Waste session which is an incredible achievement and means over 60,000 children have now received our environmental message.

We've had two brilliant Duke of Edinburgh groups here since the Autumn, working weekly towards their Bronze award with volunteering, skills, physical and an expedition. Chrissie has been working with the groups each week building their confidence and ensuring they were well prepared for the expedition. Both groups have blossomed and successfully completed their award.

We attended the Earth Day in Yeovil in April and it was lovely to see so many other organisations, all working towards the same goal of protecting our environments.

Rupert and Jon Pring, who has been involved in Carymoor since its beginnings have been filmed talking about the history of Carymoor and we hope to share this film with you all soon.

We are holding an Open Day on Saturday 8th August which we hope will be really well attended. Tickets will be £5 per person (with discounts for our regular volunteers!) and the ticket price will include a cuppa and a piece of cake. Donations of cakes and biscuits would be greatly appreciated, as would help with car parking, gate duty and having people on hand to talk to our visitors about volunteering, courses and our lovely site.

If you have young people in your family then they might be interested in our Go Wild holiday club which is running from the 10th to the 15th August with a different theme each day. Places can be booked via our website and there are discounts for early booking and booking a full week. More details below.

To mark World Bee Day, British Solar Renewables are hosting an after-work session at their HQ on Thurs 25th June which we have been invited to be part of. The event brings together businesses and environmental organizations to share real experience and explore how nature and biodiversity are being embedded into long-term business strategy and culture.

Our community learning and Experience courses are proving super popular and are fully booked for the rest of the Summer. We will let you know when the new courses are ready for booking, probably in mid September. Thank you for your support of our courses.

Thank you all, for everything you do for Carymoor, and for helping boost our Social Media presence by supplying content (Adrian!), or liking or sharing our posts.

It is all hugely appreciated.

Katie



30th Anniversary Open Day

Saturday 8th August 2026
10:00 AM - 15:00 PM

Join us on our unique nature reserve, based on a capped landfill site, to discover how we have transformed the site over the last 30 years.

TICKETS

£5 ADULT & £3 CHILD OR £15 FOR A FAMILY (2 ADULTS AND UP TO 3 CHILDREN)
THIS INCLUDES A COMPLIMENTARY HOT OR COLD DRINK AND A CAKE



Site walks



Wildlife Discovery



Family Activities



Rural Craft Demos

Underground Waste Tunnel

Wildflower Gardens

Tree Trail

Willow Weaving

BOOKING ESSENTIAL VIA
www.carymoor.org.uk/whatson

Carymoor Environmental Trust, Dimmer Lane,
Castle Cary, BA7 7NR



01963 350143



www.carymoor.org.uk

Go Wild

**AT CARYMOOR'S
SUMMER HOLIDAY
CLUB!**



**10th - 14th August
8:45am - 3:30pm**



**An action-packed, creative summer holiday club, based at
Carymoor Environmental Trust, Castle Cary, BA7 7NR.**



£40 per day!



***Early bird offer: Book before 30th June and save 10%!**

***Book a full week Mon-Fri and save 10%!**



Who can attend? Children aged 7-11

Younger children aged 5-6 are welcome as long as they attend with an older sibling who is booked into the same sessions.



**Carymoor
Environmental Trust**