

Hundreds of churches have already signed up to a week-long 'nature count' occurring this summer, which will encourage people to visit churchyards and record what they see.

Churchyard with wildflowers.

Churches Count on Nature, to run between 5-13 June 2021, is a citizen-science event covering churchyards across the England and Wales.

The project will see communities and visitors making a note of the animals, birds, insects, or fungi in their local churchyard. Their data will then be collated on the National Biodiversity Network.

It is being jointly run by the conservation charities Caring for God's Acre, A Rocha UK, the Church of England, and the Church in Wales.

The week is open to anyone with a love of nature and churches are being encouraged to link with local schools, local wildlife groups, and those who may not have visited before to discover churchyards.

It is thought church land, often uniquely unploughed and undeveloped, could be a habitat for precious and endangered plants and other wildlife.

During Covid-19 restrictions, churchyards have offered a quiet space for communities particularly in urban areas.

The Bishop of Reading, Olivia Graham, who sits on the Church of England's Environmental Working Group, said: "Together, churchyards cover a huge area –estimated to be equivalent to a small national park.

"I would strongly encourage churches to sign up to Churches Count on Nature.

"It is simple to join in and there is plenty of guidance for churches, organisers, and participants online.

"We read in the Gospels that Jesus was deeply rooted in his natural surroundings, the rhythm of the agricultural seasons, the lilies of the field, the birds of the air.

"As Christians, we notice and celebrate the beauty and rich diversity of God's creation. And from our thankful hearts flows our deep desire to care for and protect it."

The Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, has also welcomed the project in a new video.

Visitors are being encouraged to take part – whether they are nature experts or not.

Various online guidance about getting to know fauna and flora are being shared with churches participating to make sure the event is as inclusive as possible.



The Church in Wales has also welcomed the initiative. The Bishop of St Davids, Dr Joanna Penberthy, said: “Churches Count on Nature is an important and imaginative project open to all denominations.

“Church communities with churchyards, open spaces, burial grounds or land are being encouraged to take notice of them and document the plants and wildlife within them. Look at the website: it is simple to log in and has plenty of advice to help you.

“At the end of Genesis chapter one we are told ‘God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good.’ Churches Count on Nature gives us a chance to see a little of what lives in our part of God’s acre and I do encourage you to get involved.”

Churches Count on Nature will also see a series of webinars from leading conservationists, scientists, and experts. Topics include tree management, ecology and biology record management guidance, and outdoor worship support.

A similar national event [Love Your Burial Ground Week](#) will be combined with this project.

Registration for the webinars has already begun on the [Church of England’s website](#) and churches can register interest in the [Churches Count on Nature online](#) as well.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/churches-launch-nature-count-assess-biodiversity-within-national-park>