



CEP introduces ARK Nature Recovery to the North York Moors, Coast and Cleveland

Small changes can make a big difference

Nature is under severe pressure in the North York Moors, Coast and Cleveland area, as well the rest of the UK. We are losing thousands of species. They are going extinct because of the way we manage our land and the effects of Climate Change.

The State of Nature Report 2023 shows the Government is failing to reverse nature's decline in the UK. At the same time, we are all starting to realise how important nature is and the role it can play in tackling climate change.

The Community Earth Project (CEP) would like your help to address this crisis at a grassroots level by bringing **ARK (Acts of Restorative Kindness – an international movement to support nature)** to the North York Moors, Coast and Cleveland.

We are calling on local communities to step in and urgently address the loss of nature before it is too late. Fixing nature will happen if every person does something to aid its recovery.

This could be planting a box on a windowsill, leaving a small part of garden to nature, an edge or corner of a field or more.

These spaces will create new habitats and as we add more and more, they will begin to link up into a huge patchwork of hope for nature.

When you create an **ARK** please let us know where it is. We will be charting the progress of ARK creations on our **CEP Nature Recovery Map** of the region.

CEP is planning a COMMUNITY ARK which members of the community are invited to help create, maintain and benefit from. Contact us by emailing cep.nature.recovery@gmail.com if you'd like to join the team.



What is the ARK?

- **'We are the ARK' (Acts of Restorative Kindness for nature)** is a grassroots movement begun in Ireland by Mary Reynolds, a former garden and landscape designer:
www.wearetheark.org
- The movement asks us to start sharing the earth again, patch by patch, for the benefit of nature. Each ARK could be as small as a window box or as large as many acres, or anything in between, including community land (with agreements).
- One way to do this is by reserving half our piece of land, whatever size it is, for growing food/gardening and giving half back to nature (or as much as we can manage). If nothing else, borders and boundaries can become healthy places for nature. So can a plant pot.
- Land, if left to itself, will re-wild by natural processes into a complex ecosystem. This takes time. To speed up the process, we will have to intervene to make our patch of land more friendly to nature by offering a variety of habitats.
- Our **ARKs** can encourage and sustain plant and animal life which will eventually spread to wider patches of land surrounding them. If enough ARKs are created, they will start to join up into **wildlife corridors** and larger areas where nature flourishes. By following the **CEP Nature Recovery Map** you can check where these corridors are developing.

Why do we need ARK?

- Biological diversity (or 'Biodiversity') is the variety and abundance of all living things (plants, animals and micro-organisms) which work together in ecosystems to maintain, balance and support all life on Earth. Biodiversity has been collapsing at a frightening rate in the last 50 years. Every day, 150–200 species become extinct worldwide.
- Read more about what is happening to nature and how we could help it recover in the State of Nature report (2023): <https://stateofnature.org.uk/> The report insists we need to create more, bigger and messier places for wildlife to thrive.

How to create an ARK

For a step-by-step guide to returning your outdoor space to nature:

- Visit www.wearetheark.org which has useful advice, links and resources.
- Read *We Are The ARK* by Mary Reynolds – an excellent practical manual.
- Search 'wearetheark' on www.youtube.com for helpful videos.

Be proud of what you are doing – display a sign **'This is an ARK'**. Add your ARK to the international website map at <https://wearetheark.org/map-of-arks/> and tell CEP about it. We are charting the progress of ARK creations on a CEP MAP of the region.

Key actions

- Choose which bit of land to leave for nature.
- Remove non-native, invasive plants and keep an eye to stop them coming back. See what native plants come through from the soil's own seed bank. Add seeds gathered from wild native plants growing within ten miles or so of your land.
- Create holes in any boundaries for wildlife to pass through.
- Darkness is best for wildlife. Re-assess any lighting you have. If you need lighting, make sure it has an orange or yellow-green tone and not blue, which can disrupt sleep patterns and impact negatively on the health of animals and humans. Consider motion sensor lights rather than permanent night-time illumination.
- Research and set up habitats suitable for native wildlife (hedgehogs, aquatic wildlife, birds, etc) e.g. insect hotels, log piles, hazel wattle, native hedges...
- Provide a water source – pond, birdbath or sunken bowl.
- Stop using any pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers.
- Contact your parish / regional council to tell them you are supporting nature recovery. Ask for a copy of their biodiversity policy.
- Talk to neighbours, share resources, arrange support meetings in your community.
- Look out for details of CEP support meetings.

A 'forest garden' ARK

An alternative method for creating a nature-rich ARK uses principles of permaculture. Botanist Anne Press explains:

Habitat preservation is always preferable to re-generation for biodiversity as it is very difficult to replicate a local natural habitat – a community of plants that grow successfully together and provide for other wildlife.

If you already have non-native flowering plants in your garden that provide food for bees, you might consider making a **forest garden ARK**. This approach integrates a whole garden into a mixture of wild and cultivated plants growing together to benefit wildlife all year round, grow food and provide a natural corridor to the wider countryside.

Planning a forest garden ARK takes in all aspects of the site – its plants, locality, etc – and involves sketching out a scheme that embraces diversity in all the garden's vegetative layers, from trees to ground cover, before planting.

A forest garden ARK can be made gradually. Experiment, learn and enjoy as the garden fills with birds and insects.

Just beware that some garden ground-cover plants can be invasive; they can be controlled and should not be allowed to spread into the surrounding countryside. Natural weeds are rarely a problem!

- For more information about forest gardens and permaculture, email cep.nature.recovery@gmail.com

Message from Sir John Lawton on Nature Recovery

Professor Sir John Lawton, who compiled the report to Government 'Making Space for Nature' (2010), writes:

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to learn of your interest in bringing forward ideas to help nature to recover in your Parishes. In my report on Making Space for Nature I argued that restoring nature required more, bigger, better managed and joined up habitats for wildlife. Nature Recovery Areas in as many Parishes as possible through the efforts and actions of communities and individuals will make a huge difference for England's threatened wildlife. And choosing what you can do in your Parish is empowering, when so much of news about the environment is depressing.

Every little helps, but I urge you to be as bold as possible. For example, don't think only about planting trees and putting up nesting boxes (important as they both

are). Aim to join up patches of natural habitats by creating corridors in the form of new hedges, nature-friendly roadside verges and so on, so that it is easier for species to disperse through the landscape. Or just add water; boggy and marshy bits, pools and ponds benefit a wide variety of plants and animals, not just frogs and newts. Above all, avoid being too tidy. Nature thrives in scrub, rough grasslands (mown once a year) and the 'messy edges' between habitats. Celebrate 'weeds' (aka wild flowers) and enjoy the butterflies and bees and the Cuckoos and caterpillars that will thank you for providing them.

The more you do, the more you will benefit by making space for nature in the places where you live and work.

Thank you.



Community Earth Project
Nature Recovery • Citizen Science • Community Building

Email: cep.nature.recovery@gmail.com

Facebook: [Community Earth Project](#)

www.eskvalleynews.co.uk/community-earth-project

Community Earth Project is a community group linking the Esk Valley of the North York Moors and East Cleveland, working on grassroots projects for nature recovery and building healthy, sustainable communities. It was formed as a legacy to the 2023 Community Earth Festival.

With support from Alpkit Foundation



We are the ARK (Acts of Restorative Kindness)

Nature is under pressure!

Take action by building an ARK – www.wearetheark.org

- Give some land back to nature. It could be a pot, a window box, a garden, a field or just a bit of boundary land.
- Set some aside to grow your own food. Let nature have the rest.
- Remove non-native, invasive plant species, expose bare earth and see what's in the seed bank.
- Provide a water source – from a stream, pond, sunken bowl or birdbath.
- Ditch the chemicals – no more fertiliser, pesticides or herbicides!
- Aim for a range of habitat types – mown grass path, meadow, shrubs, hedges, trees, wetland, rocky places and log piles...
- Create holes in boundaries to allow wildlife to pass through.
- Dark skies are important for wildlife. Avoid artificial lighting. If you need lighting choose orange-toned lights, not blue.
- Plant native berry trees.
- Be proud. Put up a sign:
This is an ARK.
- Add your ARK to the website www.wearetheark.org/map-of-arks
- Email CEP so we can add you to our map too and sign up to join our team to build a **Community ARK**.
- Look out for details of our CEP ARK support meetings.



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