

# NATURE'S CALENDAR

## Spring analysis 2025

Judith Garforth

### Summary

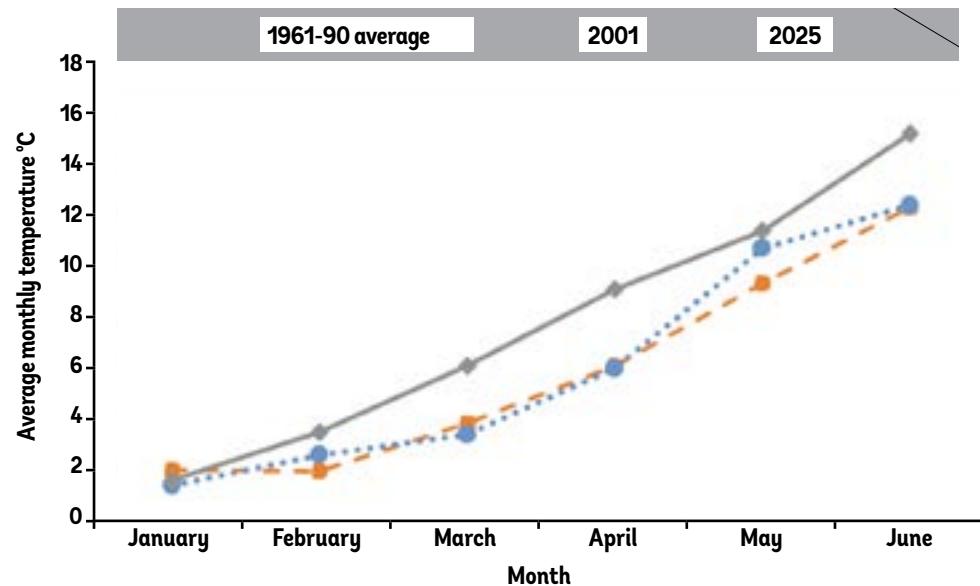
Following a warm and wet spring in 2024, spring 2025 was, overall, warm but dry. This weather resulted in hosepipe bans later in the year for some areas of the UK, as well as hundreds of wildfires. It was an early spring for wildlife,

with the UK average date for all seasonal events recorded in spring 2025 coming in early compared to the baseline year, with the exception of the first recorded red-tailed bumblebee.



WOODLAND  
TRUST

## Temperature



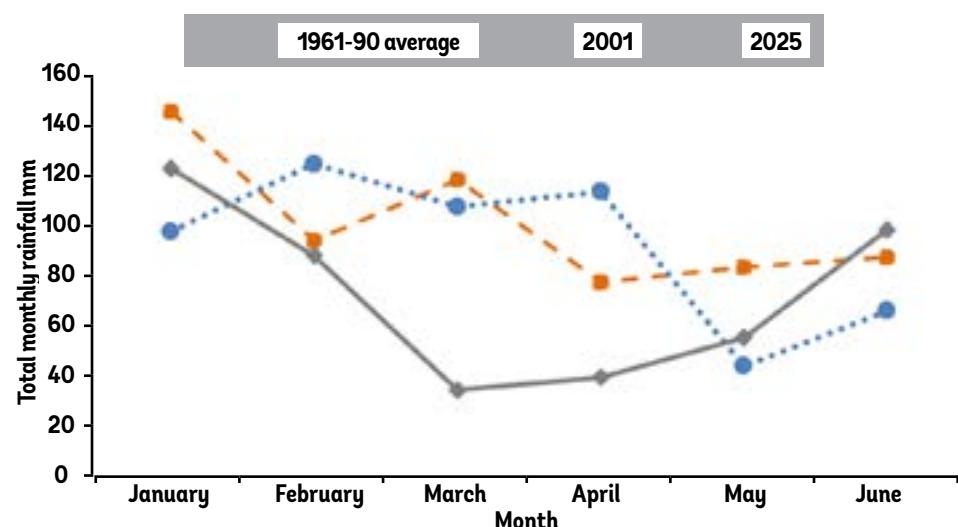
**Figure 1:** Average monthly temperatures 2025 (Central England Temperature<sup>\*1</sup>) compared with 30-year average (1961-90) and 2001 benchmark<sup>\*\*</sup> year.

- Following a mild December in 2024, warm weather continued during spring 2025.
- Average monthly temperatures for February to June 2025 were between 1.5°C and 3.0°C greater than the corresponding 30-year average for those months.
- April and June were particularly warm compared to the 30-year averages. April 2025 was the third warmest April (10.9°C), and June 2025 was the sixth warmest June (17°C) in the CET dataset (dating back to 1659).

\* The Central England Temperature (CET) dataset is a record from a roughly triangular area of the UK, enclosed by Bristol, Lancashire and London.

\*\* 2001 is used as a benchmark year because the mean monthly temperatures in spring were similar to the 30-year average (1961-90) temperatures.

## Rainfall



**Figure 2:** Monthly rainfall totals 2025 (HadUK-Grid<sup>2</sup>) compared with 30-year average (1961-90) and 2001 benchmark year.

- Monthly rainfall totals in January to May were below the 30-year average.
- Rainfall in March (37 mm) was 55.7mm below the 30-year average and was the 15th driest March in the series dating back to 1836.

## Nature's Calendar records

During 2025, Nature's Calendar volunteers from all over the UK recorded an impressive 16,466 observations, monitoring 94 different spring seasonal events.

The first spring sighting of frogspawn was the most popular event to record, with 695 records received, followed by 'snowdrop first flowering' (464 records) and the first spring sighting of a peacock

butterfly (438 records). Hawthorn was the most frequently recorded tree species. For each species and event, all the records are combined and a UK average date is calculated. These average dates are compared to the average dates in the benchmark year of 2001. Below, we take a look at some of the findings from the species and events recorded in 2025.

## Migrant birds

There are 13 migrant birds that can be recorded for the Nature's Calendar project in spring. Volunteers record the date that they first notice a bird's arrival back in the UK after the winter months.

### Chiffchaff

- Chiffchaff was the most popular migrant bird species recorded, with 314 records submitted in spring 2025. This species can be found in most parts of the UK (expect in upland areas), in various habitats including woodland, scrub, parks and gardens.
- The UK average date of arrival in 2025 was 18 March. This was the earliest UK average date in the Nature's Calendar record (2000-2025) and was 20 days earlier than during the benchmark year. The first chiffchaff was observed on 24 January and the last on 5 May.
- Chiffchaffs are increasingly overwintering in the UK rather than migrating to warmer locations. 20 volunteers observed them throughout winter 2024-2025.

### Other migrant birds

- The spring arrival of blackcap, cuckoo, house martin, swallow and swift was also early compared to the benchmark year (by 18, eight, seven, nine and six days respectively).
- However, the number of observations for some of the migrant birds was too low to calculate a UK average in 2025. Turtle dove, spotted flycatcher and nightingale are listed in the Birds of Conservation



Cuckoo

JOHN BRIDGES/WTML

Concern report<sup>3</sup> (also known as the UK Red List), while willow warbler, wheatear and whitethroat are on the Amber List. The decreasing population numbers of these species mean they are harder for our volunteers to spot.

Despite not being a bird of conservation concern, we received only 44 records of sand martin in spring 2025. This species is less common in more urban areas where many of the Nature's Calendar volunteers are monitoring their local wildlife on a regular basis.

## Breeding birds

- Blackbird, blue tit and rook nesting was early in spring 2025. The UK average date that Nature's Calendar volunteers first spotted these birds gathering nesting materials in their beaks was 13, 12 and 13 days earlier than during the benchmark year, respectively.

### Insects

- There are 14 insects that can be recorded for Nature's Calendar in spring. The most popular in 2025 was the first sighting of a peacock butterfly (438 records) for which the UK average date was 31 March – a particularly dry month.
- All butterflies were observed earlier than during the benchmark year (3-27 days earlier).

- The UK average date of the first spring sighting of an orange tip butterfly (12 April) was the earliest in the Nature's Calendar record, 27 days earlier than during the benchmark year. This species overwinters as a pupa and generally only has one brood a year. The caterpillar foodplants include cuckooflower and garlic mustard – both of which flowered early in spring 2025.

- The first spring sighting of a red-tailed bumblebee was the only seasonal event to be later in 2025 than during the benchmark year, at six days later. This might be related to the plummeting population numbers reported by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust in 2024<sup>4</sup>.

- The UK average date for 'blue tit first feeding young' – defined as the date that a volunteer first notices adult birds with their beaks full of insects – was 3 May, the earliest in the Nature's Calendar record and 12 days earlier than during the benchmark year.



Red-tailed bumblebee

JEAN-NOEL COPIE / WTML

- The warm, dry weather in March to April provided ideal conditions for insect flight and pollination, alongside wind pollination. We're seeing the results of this successful tree and shrub pollination with bumper crops of fruits so far in autumn 2025.

## Amphibians

- We received 695 frogspawn records! The UK average date was 5 March, seven days earlier than during the benchmark year. As usual, the first records were submitted in the southwest of the UK, while frogspawn was spotted further north and east across the UK as spring progressed.
- Fewer observations of tadpoles were submitted (only 144). The UK average date was 29 March, 12 days earlier than during the benchmark year.



Frog spawn

CHRISTINE MARTIN / WTM

## Flowers

- Flowering of all species was recorded earlier in 2025 than during the benchmark year. This ranged from 12 days earlier for wood anemone to 35 days earlier for hazel.
- Flowering of horse chestnut and oxeye daisy was the earliest in the Nature's Calendar record.



Horse chestnut

JOHN BRIDGES / WTM

## Trees

- Both budburst and first leaf were earlier than during the benchmark year for all species.
- First leaf for pedunculate oak had a UK average date of 12 April. This was the earliest in the Nature's Calendar record and 24 days earlier than during the benchmark year. This may be linked to

the early blue tit breeding mentioned above. Blue tits feed their young on the caterpillars that feed on oak leaves in the well-studied woodland food chain<sup>5</sup>. Blue tits time their breeding so that their chicks benefit from a peak in caterpillar abundance, which is related to the timing of oak leafing.

## Lawn first cut

- Volunteers cut their lawns 13 days earlier than during the benchmark year. The average UK date for 'lawn first cut' in spring 2025 was 18 March.

## Project news

### State of the UK Climate in 2024

The State of the UK Climate in 2024<sup>6</sup> report was published in July 2025 in the International Journal of Climatology. We were invited to write the phenology section of the report again this year, using the records submitted to Nature's Calendar. The report demonstrated that 12 out of the 14 spring events analysed were early in 2024. It was the earliest in the series (1999-2024) for frogspawn and blackbird nesting. Leaf-on season (the period between first leaf and bare tree) was seven days longer due to early leafing in spring. Hazel flowering revealed an advance over the 1999-2024 period.

### Is 2025 a mast year?

Have you noticed an abundance of acorns, conkers and other fruit this autumn? Records of the amount of fruit submitted so far in 2025 suggest that bumper crops are being noticed across the UK. It's probably at least partly due to the successful pollination in spring because of the warm and dry weather. You may have heard us talking about it on the Today Programme, ITV Weather and ITV News! We look forward to collating all the records at the end of the season to get a better understanding of fruiting in autumn 2025 and how it will affect wildlife.

## Thank you

Thank you so much for your continued support. We hugely appreciate all the time and effort you put into recording. We're always on the lookout for more volunteers to take part in the project. Anyone can sign up and find out more at: [naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

## References

- 1 Parker, D.E., Legg, T.P. and Folland, C.K. (1992). A new daily Central England Temperature Series, 1772-1991. International Journal of Climatology, 12, 317-342.
- 2 Hollis, D., McCarthy, M., Kendon, M., Legg, T. and Simpson, I. (2018). HadUK-Grid gridded and regional average climate observations for the UK. Centre for Environmental Data Analysis.
- 3 Stanbury, A.J., Eaton, M.A., Aebischer, N.J., Balmer, D., Brown, A.F., Douse, A.I., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D.G. and Win, I. (2021). Birds of Conservation Concern 5. British Birds, 114.
- 4 Bumblebee Conservation. British bumblebee numbers plummet in 2024. Available at: <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/news/british-bumblebee-numbers-plummet-in-2024/>
- 5 Nature's Calendar. Tritrophic phenological mismatch in space and time. Available at: <https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/analysis/research-reports/published-research/tritrophic-phenological-match-mismatch-in-space-and-time/>
- 6 Kendon et al. (2025). State of the UK Climate in 2025. International Journal of Climatology, 45(S1).

Thank you so much for your continued support.  
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you put into recording.

Anyone can sign up and find out more at  
**naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk.**



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