## OURPLACE News

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life! NOVEMBER 2023

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How to help garden wildlife hunker down for winter

Beds 6153 Directel 20 of the UK's best notels pubs and B&Bs - for under £150 a night

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UK over-50s on switching to part-time work

#### PLUS...

What's on • Health & Beauty • Money & Work • Leisure & Travel Food & Drink • Arts, Crafts & Hobbies • Home & Garden

#### OURPLACE

#### Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Our Place - The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

Every month, we bring you news and features on; Health & Beauty, Money & Work, Leisure & Travel, Food & Drink, Arts, Crafts & Hobbies, Home & Garden, plus... our Charity of the Month!

Our Place was founded with a mission to connect the mature online community to a world of news, features, offers and life changing products they may have missed out on. Bring them all into one place, Our Place.

What makes us special is that we are a vibrant team of all ages, from 21 to 65 who are all passionate about living life to the fullest irrespective of age. We have built strong relationships with some of the best UK age related businesses with the aim of brokering discounted rates for our Over-50s community.

Become a Friend of Our Place and receive our exclusive newsletters. They are a great way of keeping updated with the latest news and promotions. We aim to bring a smile to your face every time you open your inbox by selecting exclusive vouchers and discounts just for you.

We welcome you and hope you enjoy Our Place.

The Editor - Our Place

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

#### Welcome

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## OURPLACE



#### FIREWORK FEAR How to deal with your dog during Bonfire Night

Once again it is the time of year when many pets suffer from the effects of firework phobias. Phobias can be complex and it is important to tailor behaviour modification to each individual's circumstances, but there are some changes owners can make that will benefit most noise sensitive dogs.

The secret is to look round your home and watch how your dog is affected. See how you can use the principles to maximise the benefit for them. Here is the solution:

#### On the day of the fireworks:

- Take your dog out for a walk to empty before the fireworks start.
- Feed a stodgy meal of high carbohydrate, low protein, an hour before the fireworks (unless they suffer from stress related diarrhoea, when this is NOT a good idea).
- Put on some music with a heavy bass beat not too loud, but loud enough to mask the more distant bangs.
- Take your dog to their den and provide chews, stuffed Kongs and dog food. Water should always be available. Don't worry if the food goes untouched - some dogs are so stressed they are unable to eat.

#### When the fireworks start:

#### DON'T:

- Pet, praise or cuddle your dog if they are displaying anxiety they may see this as approval and continue with the anxious behaviour.
- Tell your dog off this will make them even more worried.

#### D0:

- Take your dog to their den.
- Ignore any anxious behaviour. They have to learn to cope on their own - dependence upon people will not help.
- Ignore the noise set a good example.
- Reward any relaxed behaviour with stroking, a massage, or food treats.
- Play games if your dog is able if there is another, more relaxed, dog, play games with them and hope that the stressed one joins in.

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### WINTER CAT WARNING

At this time of year please check under your car and wheel arches for cats trying to keep warm, before you set off on your journey!

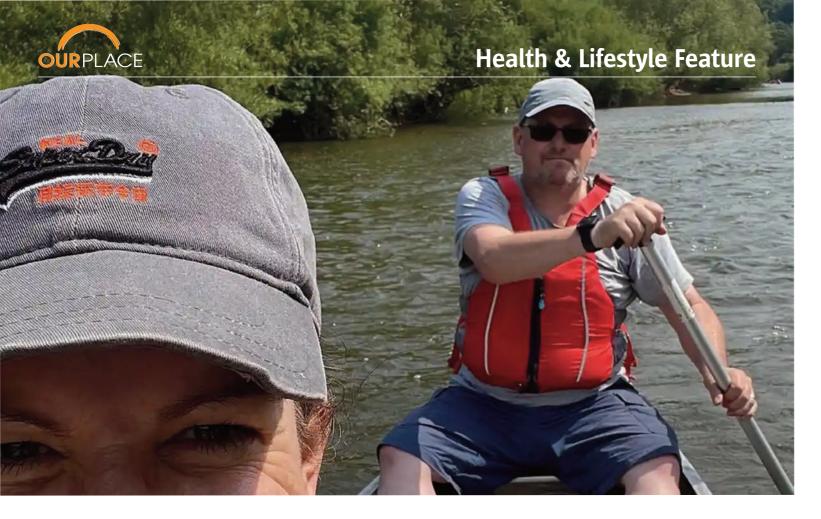
During the cold winter months cats will often seek out any warm space they can find. One particularly irresistible lure seems to be the cosy confines of a warm car engine. Unfortunately, cats that seek shelter under the bonnets of cars can then be injured or killed when that car is started. Help keep your own and your neighbourhood cats safe this winter by tapping the bonnet of your car before you start the engine.

## HEDGEHOG WARNING

At this time of year please check for these prickly creatures before lighting your bonfire.

Bonfires are perfect sleeping areas for hedgehogs and every year many get burnt alive. If you are having a bonfire, just make sure you check inside before lighting it. If you do find a hedgehog, move it to a safe place. This year second litters have been born later than usual. This means that there may still be young and underweight hedgehogs around. Remember if they are under 600gr they will not survive hibernation and need to be taken to a local animal rescue centre.





## **'We feel we've earned it': UK over-50s on switching to part-time work**

## As record numbers of people over 50 work part-time, three who have reduced their hours explain why.

Simon Woodall, 52, a self-employed carpenter and joiner from Plymouth, says he worked "70 hours a week, for 30 years", until he had a heart attack in June last year.

"The medical staff just said: 'You have stress-related heart disease, if you keep going, you're not gonna last very long, no matter what tablets you take or how much healthy food you eat.'

This triggered a wild change of lifestyle, and if I do 30 hours that's quite a busy week for me now."

Woodall is one of many dozens of Britons aged 50 and over who shared with the Guardian why they had recently decided to go part-time.

Health issues, a better lifestyle, caring responsibilities, a lack of flexible jobs and a general disillusionment with work were the reasons cited most frequently.

Record numbers of people in the UK in their 50s and older are in part-time work, according to data from the Office for National Statistics, with one-quarter of workers in their 50s working part-time.

The data reveals that 3.6 million older people are working parttime in the UK, a 12% increase since 2021. Analysis shows 42% of the UK's part-time workers are over 50.

Having cut his working week in half, Woodall, who is the sole earner in his household, has seen his income drop by 35-40%, to which his family has had to adjust.

"We have to cut the cloth. I've switched to a more basic TV package, we sold our caravan, think more about what we spend. My pension has performed so poorly I'll never be able to retire fully, but I'd rather work less and be alive for another 30 years than have an extra  $\pounds10k$  a year. I'll be of no use to anybody if I'm 6 feet under."



Woodall says many people in his social circle have come to the same conclusion since the pandemic. Louise Hirons, 51, a dental hygienist from Banbury, Oxfordshire, says she went part-time primarily for a better work-life balance, and hopes to retire fully by between 55 and 60.

"I could probably name 20 people like myself who, since Covid, just went 'I quite like being at home with my wife and children', and take it easy now, or have retired early - guys my age who used to do 50 to 60 hours minimum. I think a lot of people's attitudes have changed. "I felt after turning 50 I was getting close to retirement, then realised it was still more than 15 years away. I've worked since I was 16. It feels endless," she says.

I'm feeling better - pretty good, actually."

Sue, 57, from West Yorkshire, worked full-time in higher education administration for many years and decided in spring 2022 that she had had enough. "I chose to go down to three days because the commute was

"I chose to go down to three days because the commute was long - up to an hour and a half one way - and expensive, with public transport regularly failing," she says.

"Working from home during the pandemic proved that the commute was pointless, so I chose to reduce hours as working from home was being discouraged.

I don't agree with presenteeism and the organisation has brought in hotdesking, so the commute is worse now, having to schlep in with laptop, mug, etc.

"If I could work from home I would consider doing more hours but it's not worth it to me as the pay is pathetically low for my knowledge, experience and skill set, so I value my time more.

I also couldn't see any career progression, and I'm not giving my soul to any organisation when they'd get rid of you at the drop of a hat."

What also convinced her to reduce her hours, Sue says, was the crippling cost and scarce availability of childcare in her area - a factor referenced by others in their decision to switch to part-time working, alongside caring responsibilities for elderly family members. "This is the first time we can be selfish in 25 years," she says. "My husband, who is also 51, has a wholesale business and is now trying to hire a manager to do his job.

"I've got two young grandchildren under four and childcare is so expensive that my husband is looking after them one morning and I do another morning. My daughter couldn't afford paying for full-time childcare," Sue says. We have longer holidays and long weekends. We feel we have earned it and when we reach retirement age we may not be fit enough to get through the bucket list. Fifty is a good starting point to try and live more."

Although she says she wouldn't swap working part-time for a full-time job now, her family's long-term financial outlook is not good, Sue admits. Although working less suits the family well currently, Hirons has concerns about the financial repercussions of cutting back from full-time work.

"Neither of us have good pensions, because work hasn't paid well enough compared to housing and the general cost of living. My full-time pay for managing 20 people was £28k, which is

My full-time pay for managing 20 people was £28k, which is pathetic, a poverty wage. Going part-time means I'll have to work longer, but I couldn't have saved for an early retirement anyway.

"I worry about this country's future and for the next generations as work doesn't pay well enough and it feels like the social contract has long been broken."

#### **Health & Lifestyle Feature**

"But I also had a cancer diagnosis two years ago. I'm fine, and it's all been dealt with, but it was a bit of a wake-up call.

Hirons says her 50s felt like a good time to go part-time because her own and her husband's parents are still able to live independently without their help, which, she is acutely aware, could change further down the line.



"But ultimately, there's more to life than money. Don't work too hard, you're not here for long."

(Article source: The Guardian)



#### A moment that changed me: I had a heart attack at 37 - so I went to live in a cave

I wanted to heal and thought the Colorado wilderness was the best place to do it. So I began six months of hunting and foraging, with a pile of leaves for a bed.



**The Guardian** reports that two days before I had a heart attack in February 2017, I had just got back from Alaska, where I'd been leading an expedition. At home in Colorado, I thought the chest pains were to do with the change in altitude.

I was 37, and active. I'd been in the Marine Corps until 2011, then I became a wilderness and survival skills guide. I was training for a 245km ultramarathon through the Peruvian jungle. Even when I got to hospital, I struggled to believe I was having a heart attack, but I was rushed into an operating room and a stent was fitted.

When I came out of hospital three days later, I could barely walk and was put into cardiac rehab with a group of 85-year-olds. But I believed I needed something else to heal me.

As an outdoors guy who could make stone tools and live off the land, I knew that was where I needed to be. And so, after several rehab sessions, I thought, "I'm out of here!" and went to live in a cave, near where I could hunt animals and drink from streams.

I spent around six months alternating between a conventional life and living in the Colorado wilderness. My wife and I were separating, but I didn't want to be away from our two sons for too long, so I would come back often to connect with them. The longest stretch I was away in the wild was just under two months.

I had a series of caves and each had different amenities - some were next to springs, or near better fishing, hunting and foraging. The "main cave" had a bed in it - by which I mean a big pile of grass and leaves, which was comfortable.

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#### Health & Lifestyle News

It had a bit of a skylight, so the smoke from my fire could rise through it and I could see the stars. I would jam a stick between the cave walls and dry clothes on it, and would keep an old soup can there for boiling water in.

That was the cave that had the most resources, but I would move from cave to cave. I'd cache animal hides in one, and if I wanted to treat myself to something special, I'd put a jar of dried mangoes in another - I'd have a two-day walk to go and get it.

I didn't bring much from modern life. I always had a notebook with me with a photo of my sons, and something to write with. Depending on what I was doing or how I was feeling, I'd bring a steel bottle back out to the caves, which made it a bit easier to boil water.

Foraged food formed most of my diet - plants, berries, tubers, roots. I caught fish, squirrels and rabbits. You learn to really appreciate food: "Yes, I've got a fish and five berries! Today is awesome."

I missed my sons, but I also knew that this was my time to really heal and reflect, and there was always something to do. I would make stone tools, build traps, baskets and clay pots, tan hides - all very simple but they gave me so much value. And you're always collecting firewood.

One night in my main cave, the fire had gone out, and I was sleeping, when I started feeling a warm, wet sensation on my foot. When I woke up, I could see there was a juvenile black bear at my feet, licking my toes. I let out a scream, and the bear took off. I lit a big fire, and sat up the whole night waiting for him to return.

I was becoming part of the pattern of life that existed in the wild, understanding the sounds and the smells. You can choose to fight it, or to try to control it, but when you accept it, you reach a deeper understanding of who you are and what you're doing out there.

The day of my heart attack changed my life, because it was a reawakening. Knowing that eventually one day you will expire, you need to live the life that you want, find the value.

Now I live between the worlds. I rent a place, drive a truck, and have a TV. When I have my sons, we like to watch documentaries, but they're teenage boys so they also have their own interests.

For all the time I still spend in the wilderness, social media has actually become a big part of my life. Before my heart attack, I was never on it, but, afterwards, people encouraged me to start a YouTube channel sharing my skills. Now I've written books, done reality shows, and consulted for movies. I've embraced this element of modern life, and hope to fuel people's curiosity about the natural world.

Many of us accept life is just the way it is, but there are some outliers who want something different. I don't judge anybody for the choices they make, but I think some people get influenced to believe in things that don't matter.

My passion is doing less with more, in the simplest way possible. Ancient humans focused on family, community, and the natural world, and I think we can learn so much from that.



#### More than 165,000 over-50s have started work in the hospitality sector in the last three years

The Government has also taken steps to make work more attractive to over-50s.

**The Daily Mail** reports that the hospitality industry is often seen as the preserve of the young - but a report has revealed that the over-50s now make up a third of its workforce.

There are currently more than 165,000 employees over the age of 50 working in hotels, bars, cafes and restaurants, up 14 per cent since 2020.

Kathy Dyball, from Caterer.com, which sponsored the report, said that 'truly age-diverse policies and hiring approaches' have been a driving force of the change. 'Hospitality businesses are paving the way for other sectors,' she added. The Government has also taken steps to make work more attractive to over-50s.

Last year it launched a  $\pounds 22$  million initiative to help get those on benefits back into work and announced plans for financial health 'MOTs' to help participants find job opportunities.

However, there is still concern that older applicants for jobs face discrimination. A study in April by Rest Less showed the number of self-employed people aged over 50 has increased by 18 per cent in the last ten years.

(Story source: Daily Mail)

#### Shedding light on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): The winter blues explained

As the days grow shorter and the world outside becomes a sea of grey, many people find themselves struggling to muster the energy and enthusiasm that the warmer months effortlessly provide.

*Silver Surfers* reports that this annual phenomenon is known as Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, a condition that affects millions of people worldwide. In this feature, we'll explore the causes, symptoms, and treatment options for SAD, shedding light on this often-misunderstood disorder.

#### **Understanding the Cause**

SAD is a type of depression that typically occurs during the autumn and winter months when daylight hours are limited. Researchers believe that a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors contribute to its development. The primary cause is thought to be a disruption in the body's internal biological clock, or circadian rhythm, due to reduced exposure to natural light. This disruption can lead to an imbalance in neurotransmitters like serotonin and melatonin, which regulate mood and sleep.

#### Symptoms of SAD

SAD can manifest in a variety of ways and may differ in intensity from person to person. Common symptoms include:

- Mood Changes: People with SAD often experience persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and irritability.
- Sleep Disturbances: Oversleeping and difficulty waking up in the morning are typical symptoms of winter SAD. This is often accompanied by daytime fatigue.
- Changes in Appetite: An increased craving for carbohydrates and a resulting weight gain are common. These cravings are believed to be linked to serotonin levels.
- Social Withdrawal: Many individuals with SAD tend to withdraw from social activities and isolate themselves from loved ones.
- Difficulty Concentrating: People with SAD may have trouble focusing on tasks and making decisions.

#### **Treatment Options**

The good news is that SAD is a highly treatable condition, and a variety of therapeutic approaches are available to help individuals manage their symptoms. Here are some effective treatment options:

- Light Therapy: Light therapy, also known as phototherapy, is a widely used treatment for SAD. Patients sit in front of a specialised lightbox for a designated period each day, which mimics natural sunlight and helps regulate their circadian rhythms.
- Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT): CBT is a talk therapy that helps individuals identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviours. It can be highly effective in managing SAD symptoms.
- Medications: In some cases, doctors may prescribe antidepressant medications, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), to help manage the symptoms of SAD.
- Lifestyle Changes: Simple lifestyle adjustments, such as getting regular exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, and managing stress, can also help alleviate SAD symptoms.
- Vitamin D: Some individuals with SAD may benefit from vitamin D supplements, as a deficiency has been associated with the condition. However, it's important to consult a healthcare provider before taking any supplements.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a genuine and challenging condition that affects a significant portion of the population during the darker months of the year. Understanding its causes, recognising its symptoms, and exploring the available treatment options can make a significant difference in the lives of those affected by SAD.



## Beds on a budget: 20 of the UK's best hotels, pubs and B&Bs - for under £150 a night

In this extract from the new Good Hotel Guide, we choose places to stay with great cuisine, chic interiors and scenic walks from the front door.

#### **Best for food lovers**

#### Brockencote Hall, Chaddesley Corbett, Worcestershire (pictured above)

You might think you've rolled up at a luxury Loire valley chateau when you arrive at this Victorian manor in landscaped parkland. There's nothing too luxe about the price, though, with B&B from  $\pounds138$ .

Spend what you save on a nine-course tasting extravaganza in the restaurant, perhaps matching it with a flight of wine. A normal two- or three-course dinner might feature local produce such as Worcestershire duck breast with confit duck hash and artisanal cheeses. There's plenty to do during the day - fishing, tennis, or a stroll around the 29 hectares. The 21 bedrooms range from contemporary classics to feature suites.

#### Doubles from £138 B&B, nine-course dinner £85, brockencotehall.com

#### The White Hart Inn, Mersea, Essex

Derelict for almost a decade, this weatherboarded pub reopened last summer in the capable hands of Piers Baker, owner of Dedham's Sun Inn. It's worth crossing Mersea's causeway (check the tides first) for the seafood alone, although carnivores and vegetarians are equally well catered for in this gastropub, where nibbles are less salted peanuts and more asparagus fritter with pea aioli.



The long wine list offers plenty by the glass and reasonable prices. The bar forms part of an expansive dining room with colourful banquettes and parquet floor. Six colourful contemporary bedrooms have modern bathrooms and art (for sale) on the walls.

#### Doubles from £150 B&B, whitehartinnmersea.co.uk

#### Parador 44, Cardiff

Cádiz comes to Cardiff in this boutique bolthole, whose nine rooms were added last year above acclaimed Spanish restaurant Asador 44. Mains range from Pyrenean milk-fed lamb to grilled carabinero prawns.

The (soundproofed) bedrooms evoke Andalucía at every turn, with their tiles, shutters and headboards. They share a guest lounge whose honesty bar is stocked with Spanish wine and beer.

Breakfast is a delightful mix of Welsh and Spanish produce, with Spanish cheeses and tarta de Santiago (almond sponge) alongside Welshcakes on the buffet; cooked dishes include "flamenco eggs" or a "full parador".



#### Doubles from £131 B&B, grupo44.co.uk

#### The Crown and Anchor, Ham, Wiltshire

Run as a curry house before two local couples stepped in to renovate it, this village inn serves food several notches above the average chicken madras and pub grub. Unusual options might include torched salmon with hispi cabbage and tiger prawn spring roll, or celeriac schnitzel with truffle dressing.

Dining dogs are served snacks from the open kitchen, while owners can try the Ham 1840 beer, made for the pub, or sparkling Winding Wood from a nearby vineyard.

Interiors include a log burner and flagstone floor with interesting additions such as Martin Parr photos in the loos. The bedrooms don't disappoint, either, with antique furniture, oversized fabric headboards and botanical prints.

Doubles from £130 B&B, crownandanchorham.co.uk

#### Leisure & Travel Feature



#### Westmorland Hotel, Penrith, Cumbria

Those tired of motorway services sarnies can break the journey between Scotland and the south at Tebay Services, where the enterprising Dunning family created a unique roadside offering with a shop and hotel after the M6 carved through their hill farm.

Local specialities in the restaurant include lamb from the farm and Cumbrian beef, as well as home-made bread and ice-cream.

Stripped back Scandi-chic rooms have views of the fells, and despite the motorway there's no traffic noise.

In the morning, there are walks from the door, and supplies of cheese and more in the farm shop.



Doubles from £93 room only, westmorlandhotel.com

Continued on pages 12-13...



#### **Best for walkers**

#### The Barnsdale, Oakham, Rutland

The footpath circumnavigating Rutland Water is 23 miles long, taking in the picturesque waterside Normanton church. Or there's a seven-mile trail around the reservoir's central promontory. Five minutes' drive away is the newly opened Barnsdale, which makes a great place to rest weary legs and load up on calories in the excellent restaurant. The interesting menu might include a starter of lobster and squid with orange and fennel, followed by steak, or perhaps gnocchi with wild field mushroom and spinach. There's a good range of wines, plus complimentary ginger citrus liqueur in the colourful rooms, which surround a courtyard and have statement fabric headboards.



Doubles from £126 B&B, barnsdalerutland.com

#### Forss House, Thurso

In winter, when prices drop, guests at this Georgian mansion can live the life of a Scottish laird for less; booking 30 days in advance offers the best rates.



Wrapped in woodland and a curve of the River Forss near the north-east tip of the Scottish mainland, it makes a great base for exploring the hills and coast. Guided walks are organised by the Countryside Ranger service. There are other outdoor activities too, such as salmon fishing.

After a day in the countryside, the panelled lounge is a great place to relax before a dinner of local specialities such as scallops or Scottish beef fillet. There's the option of a whisky flight before snuggling down in one of the 14 elegant bedrooms.

Doubles from £125 B&B, forsshousehotel.co.uk



#### The Castle Hotel, Bishop's Castle, Shropshire (pictured left)

The Shropshire Way, a 200-mile walking route covering the Shropshire Hills and historic towns, runs past the front door of Kacey and Stephen George say their former croft house offers this market town inn, where dogs stay free of charge. Offa's Dyke "superior B&B". About half a mile from the North Coast 500 Path, along the Welsh borderlands, is just a few miles away. route, the cottage has two spacious ground-floor suites with The hotel is on the hilltop site of a medieval castle a mile from views to Stroma and the Orkneys. Artist Stephen's carvings and the Welsh border. Some of the contemporary and comfortable photography can be seen everywhere. Evening meals are served bedrooms have far-reaching views of the surrounding hills. room service-style by trolley, and might include smoked salmon After their rambles, guests can eat in the oak-panelled restaurant pasta, ribeye steak or teriyaki tofu. Dogs are welcome and can or in any of the three bars, where pub classics are accompanied bag a bacon treat for breakfast, also delivered to the rooms by by a superb selection of Shropshire real ales. trolley.

#### Doubles from £104 B&B, thecastlehotelbishopscastle.co.uk

#### Burleigh Court, Brimscombe, Gloucestershire

Cotswolds charm on the cheap is on offer at this beautiful Georgian building remodelled by Clough Williams-Ellis. There's a handful of circular walks straight from the door, some with pubs to visit en route, and other footpaths a short drive away. Back at the hotel, there's a food option to suit everyone, including afternoon tea, all-day grazing, wine tastings, and a more formal dinner in the panelled dining room. The 18 rooms are split between the manor house and coach house (where the dogfriendly rooms are); there's also a cottage with its own hot tub.



Doubles from £149 B&B, burleighcourtcotswolds.co.uk

#### Black Bull, Sedbergh, Cumbria

There are hikes in the Howgill Fells from the door of this markettown pub on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales national park. Walkers can climb all the way to the highest point, the Calf, at 676 metres (2,217 feet), or take a shorter walk to the lower hilltop of Winder, with its views of the Dales and the Lakes - Windermere is just over half an hour away. Back at base, uncluttered woodpanelled bedrooms are in a soothing palette, with Cumbrian wool blankets. Co-owner Nina Matsunaga draws on her Japanese/German heritage to create dishes such as Herdwick lamb and kimchi tartare. A shot of wasabi vodka will help with aching limbs.

Doubles from £134 room only, theblackbullsedbergh.co.uk

#### B&Bs

#### **Burnside Cottage, Canisbay, Caithness**



Doubles from £150 B&B, burnside-cottage.co.uk

#### Arthur's, Royal Hillsborough, County Down

In Royal Hillsborough's Georgian high street, this new B&B comes with its own coffee house, serving coffee and cakes daily until 3pm. The dozen rooms are plush affairs - owner Lynne McCabe studied interior design while renovating it with her husband Jonathan. (The couple also offer B&B at their family home, Lisnacurran, and at Ralph's guest house in Moira.) Rooms have centrepiece headboards in fabric by Mulberry, Osborne & Little and Sanderson, colourful walls from the Zoffany design house, antique fair finds and velvet curtains. A Lord Downshire's Ulster fry breakfast can be walked off with a stroll around the lake, fort and castle - the king's official Northern Irish residence.

Doubles from £140 B&B, arthurshillsborough.com



Continued on pages 14-15...

#### OURPLACE

#### eisure & Travel Feature



#### **Brooks Guesthouse, Bristol**

For sheer fun factor, the rooftop caravans atop this central Bristol B&B are pretty cool. What was a three-storey 1950s office block was converted by Carla and Andrew Brooks into a modern, frills-free guesthouse, with Airstream-style caravans in the rooftop garden. The largest can take a family with two small children. Bedrooms are more traditional, with tongue-and-groove panelling, pale-wood bedsteads and colourful throws. Bathrooms are compact and there are wall hooks rather than wardrobes. Breakfast includes dishes such as homemade fruit compote, eggs benedict and a full English.

#### Bedrooms from £99 B&B, caravans from £108, brooksguesthousebristol.com

#### Hollamoor Farm, Barnstaple, Devon

They don't stand on ceremony at this farmhouse B&B, even though it's run by Sir Bourchier (George) and Lady Caroline Wrey. The place has been in the family since 1740, when Sir Bourchier's ancestor married the Earl of Bath's only daughter. Now, they welcome families, dogs and horses to the property, where chickens and ducks potter around the garden. Human guests are invited to tea and cakes in the owners' sitting room. Rooms are cottage-chic; a hayloft suite has its own seating area. Breakfast is a homely affair around the table, with free-range eggs from the farm before guests head off to explore the estate on foot or horseback.

Doubles from £125 B&B, devonhorsebedbreakfast.co.uk

#### Newbegin House, Beverley, East Yorkshire

Walter and Nuala Sweeney's Georgian townhouse is minutes from Beverley town centre. They don't stint on extras in the three traditional-style rooms, which come with sherry, fresh milk and flowers. Nor is the breakfast your standard fare - offering omelettes, smoked salmon, pancakes and a full Yorkshire. The house is filled with original features, antiques, books and heirlooms, with shuttered windows, polished wood floors and marble fireplaces. There's a well upholstered feel throughout, with plump chairs and Victorian rugs; one bedroom has a rocking horse; another overlooks the pretty walled garden.



Doubles from £110 B&B, newbeginhousebbbeverley.co.uk



#### Pubs with rooms

#### The Meikleour Arms, Perth and Kinross (pictured left)

The Franco-Scottish union holds strong at this Georgian coaching inn on the Lansdowne estate, owned by Sam Mercer Nairne, a descendant of the Marquesses of Lansdowne, and his Bordeauxborn wife, Claire. Elements from both countries can be seen everywhere: bedrooms might have French antiques and a toiledraped canopy bed alongside Arran Aromatics toiletries. Estateto-plate menus feature local specialities with a French twist, such as Meikleour black pudding scotch egg with celeriac remoulade or estate venison with dauphinoise potatoes. During the day, guests can go salmon fishing on their own stretch of the River Tay, or play a round at Blairgowrie Golf Club.

#### Doubles from £90 B&B, meikleourarms.co.uk

#### The George in Rye, East Sussex



A fire raged through this 16th-century coaching inn in 2019, and restoration took until last summer. It's looking good, though, with a sense of drama given to its chic interiors by co-owner Katie Clarke, who used to work on film sets. A former church altar is the reception desk, there's an antique sailcloth on the restaurant walls and a ladies' loo that looks like a shell grotto. The bedrooms have fabric headboards, brightly patterned wallpaper, Frette linens and REN toiletries. The pub makes a great base to explore Rye, as well as Camber Sands and Romney Marsh.

#### Doubles from £95 B&B, thegeorgeinrye.com

#### The Rose and Crown, Romaldkirk, Durham

Standing beside a Saxon church in a pretty Teesdale village, this 18th-century inn is owned by the Robinson family, who also run Headlam Hall. They take pride in running a "proper Dales bar" with flagstone floors, wood beams, fires blazing and dogs lolling under tables. The 14 bedrooms are full of character, particularly in the main inn, where exposed stone and beamed ceilings rub shoulders with locally made furniture. Rooms in the courtyard are more contemporary, but all have fresh milk, homemade biscuits and Molton Brown toiletries. The pub is very dog friendly, with treats and a hose-down area for use after one of the walks from the door. Doubles from £100 B&B, rose-and-crown.co.uk

#### The Inn at Whitewell, Lancashire



The riverside location is key to this old manor house, with bedrooms overlooking the River Hodder, walks along its banks (and over its stepping stones) and guest fishing for trout and salmon along seven miles of water. Run by the Bowman family, it is deeply traditional, with oodles of atmosphere. Local ales are served in the flagstone bar, and diners can look forward to impressive meals under long-serving chef Jamie Cadman, whose Whitewell fish pie is legendary. There is also an onsite wine shop. Bedrooms overflow with charm and eccentricities, with antiques, deep sofas, books and art. All are dog friendly, many have working fires, while some have four-poster beds and Victorian cabinet baths.

#### Doubles from £145 B&B, innatwhitewell.com

#### The Three Daggers, Edington, Wiltshire



So much more than a pub with rooms, this 250-year-old village inn also has a farm shop, onsite brewery and spa barn with outdoor hot tub and sauna. Three beautiful bedrooms above the pub are in farmhouse chic style with a muted palette. The largest has a beamed ceiling and a bathroom with standalone tub and shower. They share an open-plan farmhouse-style kitchen and lounge with squishy sofas; guests who book all three rooms can have the top floor to themselves. Downstairs, farm-to-fork menus are served in the buzzy pub, filled with settles, beams and wood burners.

#### Doubles from £111 B&B, threedaggers.co.uk



## In a pickle: A beginner's guide to pickling your homegrown fruit and veg

Want to know how to make delicious pickles, chutneys and relishes by adding homegrown vegetables, fruits and herbs to the mix?

"A veggie patch is the fastest path to preserving homegrown produce," says keen gardener Jo Turner, who learned many of her skills from her mother and grandmother and has now put her knowledge into a new book, The Preserving Garden, an illustrated guide on how to preserve your produce throughout the year.

The book features recipes for chutneys, piccalilli and a plethora of pickled veg, and how to go about growing and preserving them.

Here, she offers tips for anyone wanting to have a go at pickling their homegrown produce.

#### **Pick fresh produce**

"You can pickle courgettes, cucumbers, onions, carrots, beetroot and capsicums," Turner enthuses, or use tomatoes in chutneys and courgettes in piccalilli.





Choose firm, young, blemish-free vegetables and start the To sterilise, wash the jars, lids and rings in hot soapy water and pickling process within 24 hours of picking them. Some, such as rinse in a sink of clean hot water. Leave the lids to air dry on a beetroot, will need preparation. Turner peels and roasts her clean tea towel. beetroot before pickling.

#### Watch your vinegar

"You need an acidic brine made from vinegar and spices," she advises. The vinegar used should have an acidity content of at least 5%, which should be on the label of the bottle. Alternatively, ready-made pickling vinegars are widely available from supermarkets.

White vinegar is often the base for pickling vinegars, but you could also use cider vinegar, wine vinegar or malt vinegar. For a richer flavour, balsamic vinegar can also be used. Don't add water to the mix as it will reduce the acidity, Turner says.



Mix your vinegar with sugar (some recipes require a lot of sugar). salt and spices and you will get a brine. You may have to taste it to assess sugar content, she suggests. Remember that darker vinegars will result in a darker brine and may not be ideal if you want your pickles displayed in a clear liquid, she adds. Use white sugar to keep the brine clear, not cloudy.

#### Herb choice

Use whole spices and washed fresh herbs to add to your vinegar, as that will give the best flavour. Ground spices will make the brine cloudy.

"Ideal additions include whole peppercorns and bay leaves, star anise and more robust spices," Turner suggests. She uses fennel leaves with carrots and finely sliced chillies to spice up other If you place an unopened jar of pickled veg in a dark, cool room pickled veg, while cucumbers (gherkins) go well with mustard it should last for six to 12 months, she predicts. seeds, coriander seeds, cumin, dill, chilli and bay leaves. Whole cloves, allspice and star anise make good companions for Once the jar is opened, it needs to be resealed and kept in the beetroot. fridge and should last a couple of weeks. Chutney may keep longer, although it will need to be placed in the fridge after opening, she adds.

#### Sterilise your jars

She advises avoiding metal lids to seal jars containing brined or pickled produce, unless they are sealed with a plastic-like coating on the underside. Sealing rings help long-lasting preservation and glass bottles can also be used.

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Place damp jars upside down on a baking tray lined with an old tea towel and place in a warm oven for 15-20 minutes, she advises. Turn the oven off and leave the jars to keep warm until needed.

#### Putting it together

Some veg, such as cucumbers, will need to be sprinkled with salt and left for a few hours before being rinsed off in a colander with boiling water and dried. Peppers will need to be grilled and their blistered skins removed before preserving.

You'll need to boil the brine in a pan so that the sugar and salt are dissolved.

"Place your spices and cut-up vegetables as you would want them into the jar and then cover it with boiling hot brine, ensuring that your jars are warm when you do it, or they may crack," Turner savs.

"Pouring hot brine on veg won't make them softer because it doesn't cook them through."

Remove air bubbles by gently running a small spatula or cocktail stick into and around the jar and leave a centimetre at the top, but the vegetables need to be completely covered with the brine, she adds.



#### How long will pickled veg keep?

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

#### Home & Garden Feature



## Happy hibernation: How to help garden wildlife hunker down for winter

## Gardeners can help birds, insects and frogs survive the cooler months with some simple steps, say experts.

It may have been a mild autumn, but as soon as temperatures drop, wildlife garden visitors will be looking for places to hunker down for hibernation.

Hedgehogs, birds, amphibians and insects all need a helping hand, and here are a few of the things you could be doing to give them the best chance of survival during the cooler months.

#### Give a boost to birds

"Whether you have a garden, balcony, or doorstep, the simplest way to help birds is to put out supplementary food.

Sunflower hearts, peanuts, nyjer seed and fatty nibbles will all go down a treat with a range of birds, but do make sure you keep feeding areas clean and hygienic," says Adrian Thomas, RSPB wildlife gardening expert.





"Try putting out some of your leftovers - mild grated cheese, dried fruit, and pastry with real fats will give them an extra energy boost." You may even leave out some straw for them to use, or place a hedgehog house (which you can buy) in an undisturbed patch.

Plant shrubs, trees, and climbing plants to boost their natural food sources, he adds. If you choose your plants well, in time they will provide berries, nuts and seeds through many of the coldest months of the year, and vital protein such as insects and their eggs. Keep birds hydrated by incorporating a birdbath into your open space, which will also keep their feathers in good condition.

Finally, there's shelter. If you've planted shrubs or trees, they will be an invaluable roosting space for many birds, while nest boxes can also help.

"You might even see multiple birds bunking up - wrens, for example, are normally pretty solitary, but in the winter they'll happily huddle together to stay warm," he says.

#### Create a hedgehog hideaway

Like birds, hedgehogs will be now foraging as much food as they can to see them through the cooler months, and are particularly partial to meaty cat or dog food and kitten biscuits, says Grace Johnson, hedgehog officer for campaigning group Hedgehog Street.



"As they enter the hibernation season they need to put on a lot of body fat to be able to last through winter," she says. "Put the food away from the house as they may be nervous about coming too close to lights or noise. It's a good idea to put the food into a feeding station such as an upturned storage box, cutting a small entrance for the hedgehog but keeping cats and foxes out.

"Hedgehogs are faring better in urban and suburban areas because our gardens can create a variety of habitats for them. If you make a little gap in your fence to give them access you may well see them," she adds.

Compost heaps and log piles provide good hibernation retreats, but hedgehogs will also be building hibernation nests, known as hibernacula, she points out, so leave a wild patch in your garden where they will make use of leaves and twigs. Planting low-growing dense shrubs also creates shelter for hedgehogs, as well as native plants such as bird's foot trefoil, vetches, hawthorn and hazel, she adds.

#### Don't forget frogs

"Being cold-blooded, [frogs] basically park up and close shop for the winter months," explains Sean McMenemy, founder and managing director of wildlife products specialist Ark Wildlife.

"Their metabolism slows down to a point where they won't be digesting. They just stop feeding. The male frogs will go to the bottom of a pond in winter, so even if you don't have fish it's a good idea to put a ball on the surface of a pond to stop it freezing over." Amphibians will also shelter in log piles, but you need to protect them from frost.

"I dig a small pit filled with stones with plenty of spaces," he says. "Either bricks which are offset or bricks with holes in, or rough edged stones give you lots of air gaps. Dig the hole about 8in and backfill it with rocks and cover it loosely with soil - it just gets them out of the frost zone."

#### Make a shelter for insects

"One of the most common things you find in gardens now are solitary bee (nesting) tubes with holes drilled into them," McMenemy explains. These are often hung on trees or mounted on south-facing walls or fences and hold the larvae, which will hatch out the following spring.

"If you have them and the bees have nested - you can tell if they've used them because they will either have a leafy cap on the top if they are leaf cutters or bits of soil stuck to the top - take them in and put them in a garage or shed over winter, to protect them from the worst of the cold and from predatory birds. Take them outside again in March."

The last of the queen bumblebees will now be evident in gardens, looking for hibernation quarters, he says. Hollows in tree trunks or holes in the ground provide ideal conditions. Leave lateflowering plants to do the last of their blooming, which will give bees the additional energy they need before winter.

Beetles need multiple habitats in one - a wet pile and a dry pile he suggests. Again, digging a hole with stones and offset bricks will protect many insects over the winter. Dig it in a south-facing spot, where the grubs will look for the morning sun come spring, he says.

If you want to go DIY, fill an empty cereal box with newspaper and hang it upside down or line an unused nest box with torn-up newspaper to make an overwintering site for insects. Or fill a clean jar with old newspaper and hang it upside down on a bamboo cane to give overwintering butterflies and moths shelter, he suggests.

# Please help us rescue and care for vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal

#### A shocking study has revealed that hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, with numbers <u>HALVED</u> in the last 20 years.

My et Matters



I am delighted to tell you that Britain's hedgehog has won favourite mammal in a UK poll.

The UK's only spiny mammal won with 35.9% of the 5,000 votes, more than double that of the Red Fox, who came in second place with 15.4%. The Red Squirrel came third with 11.4%, out of a shortlist of 10 charismatic UK mammals.

Unfortunately, hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside as numbers have <u>HALVED</u> in the last 20 years, a shocking study has revealed.

Henry Johnson, hedgehog officer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) said:

"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

Threats to hedgehogs come mostly from us. In rural areas, our farmland increasingly lacks the diversity of habitats hedgehogs need and the invertebrates they feed on. In towns and cities green spaces are lost to development, paved over or increasingly fragmented. Hedgehogs are also very prone to road traffic accidents.

This is why we have launched this special Annual Appeal to protect Britain's favourite mammal.

At Hedgehog Rescue Rehabilitation and Care Centre we respond immediately to rescue injured hedgehogs. A vet is called in straight away and the hedgehogs are monitored and cared for. Once fit and well they are released back into the wild.

Hedgehog Rescue is now conducting its Annual Appeal. Only by continuing our huge effort and long-life commitment can we give these wonderful animals a safe, happy and contented life. We care for many hedgehogs here at our rehabilitation centre. Hedgehogs just like these:

#### 'Julie'



**'Julie'** (pictured left) came in last Autumn, quite small, out in daylight and had ticks. She stayed a few weeks, put on enough weight, and made a full recovery. She was released back to her own territory by the finder.

#### **Baby Hedgehogs**

These 2 hedgehogs came in as very small babies and had stayed with us a few weeks, gaining weight and giving us a chance to sort out their health issues. They had several ticks and needed worming. When they were 100% ready, we released them close to where they were found.



These hedgehogs are some of the lucky ones. Others are less fortunate.

As a friend who knows what a wonder animals can be, I hope you will support our Annual Appeal. Your kind gift will help us rescue and care for many more vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal.

To donate to Hedgehog Rescue, go to: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hedgehogrescue or write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB



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