

Caroline Lucas calls for Natural History GCSE ahead of People's Walk for Wildlife with Chris Packham



Green Party

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The Green Party's Caroline Lucas MP has called on the Government to introduce a GCSE in Natural History ahead of the [People's Walk for Wildlife](#) being organised by Chris Packham this Saturday.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove agreed earlier this year to meet Caroline to discuss nature deficit disorder – young people's increasing alienation from the natural world.

The MP for Brighton Pavilion will this weekend join Chris and people from across the country on the Walk from Hyde Park to Whitehall, which is designed to demonstrate the public's concern at the decline of nature and wildlife in the UK.

With a [Government-funded study](#) finding in 2016 that more than one in nine children in England had not visited a park, forest, beach or any other natural environment for at least 12 months, Caroline believes introducing natural history lessons to schools is vital to ensuring the next generation understands and cares about the natural world.

The idea was originally conceived by the producer and writer [Mary Colwell](#), who has proposed that as part of the GCSE, children would:

- Observe plants, birds, mammals, insects and amphibians in various habitats (gardens, parks, woodlands, seashore, moorland, etc).
- Record and observe nature coherently and scientifically in words and sketches at different times of the day and year.
- Name the major plants and animals in any one habitat.
- Understand the basics of ecology (the relationships between individual species and their environment) in different habitats.
- Be able to produce a scientifically useful set of notes that can be used to contribute to national databases.
- Be able to identify native from non-native species and record their distribution in an area.

- Study the history of how nature has been depicted in art, music and literature and study the influence of nature on TV, radio and other media.
- Learn about the history of natural history recording.

Saturday's People's Walk for Wildlife will bring together people from all ages and backgrounds who care about reversing the rapid decline of many common wildlife species. Because of climate change, industrial agriculture and the use of pesticides in farming, unnecessary mowing of roadside verges and many other harmful practices, there are:

Chris has today launched a [People's Manifesto for Wildlife](#), setting out 200 ideas for saving what's left of the UK's insects, birds, mammals and sealife.

For the day of the Walk, he has released a [recording of once familiar birdsong](#) – including sounds of blackbirds, chiff-chaffs, nightingales, robins and skylarks – and is urging all those attending to download it onto their phones and play it loudly on repeat to drown out the city with the voices of millions of missing birds.

Caroline Lucas MP said: “We are spending less time outdoors just as our wildlife and natural environment are being decimated by pesticides and industrial agriculture.

“Our children are growing up in a world with less life – but they aren't even being given a chance to know what they're missing.

“The People's Walk for Wildlife is a chance for everyone who cares about saving what's left of nature to take action.

“The Government needs to urgently put in place a strategy for far less intensification of agriculture and much more ambitious action to cut pesticide use. But unless we educate young people on the value of nature, the next generation won't be able to recognise the scale of the loss we're living through or do anything to reverse it.

“Creating a Natural History GCSE would get children back outside, instil them with a love of nature and give them tools they'll need to restore our land and replenish our seas.”

Chris Packham said: “If we wake up to the fact that we have somehow normalised living without wildlife, if we collectively realise that it's now or never, that our wildlife needs us, and needs us more than ever, then we can have our 'little bits of bread and cheese' back and a bright yellow bird will stir hearts from hedgerows again.

“So please, whoever you are, get off your arse and join us on Saturday in London and help us make the ground shake because we need to change the world now.”

Green Party co-leader Sian Berry, who will also be joining the Walk, said: “I was lucky to live on the edge of town and was taught about wildlife on our doorstep. For those of us joining the People's Walk for Wildlife, Britain's

badgers, birds, and birchwood forests bring a bit of wonder into our everyday lives – but too many children aren't having those formative experiences in nature.

“Introducing a Natural History GCSE would get our teenagers outside again and send an important signal that understanding the environment is just as important as understanding maths or history. Ministers should get to work on it now.”

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