



WOODLAND TRUST
NORTHERN IRELAND

MEDIA RELEASE

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VISIT BLUEBELL WOODS AND HELP SAFEGUARD THEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The enchanting and iconic bluebell wood is a breath-taking sight, but the popular spring outing could become increasingly rare, the Woodland Trust has warned.

The United Kingdom's largest woodland conservation charity cares for more than a thousand native woods, making it one of the most important organisations for native bluebell colonies. Bluebells bloom in April and May before the woodland canopy closes but are sensitive plants and take at least five years to establish and colonise.

Woodland Trust assistant conservation officer Sally Bavin said visitors to the charity's numerous sites are welcome as "everyone should have the chance to enjoy the spectacular spring-time sight of a bluebell-carpeted woodland."

But she said it is vital we do all we can to look after bluebells for future generations because trampling by people and dogs can cause serious damage in seconds.

"The UK's native bluebells are vital both ecologically and culturally," she added.

"They are often found in ancient woodlands because large colonies take so long to establish. The early blooms provide an important source of pollen and nectar for emerging insects.

"But many ancient woodlands where bluebells were found have been destroyed over the years, so the special places which remain are extremely precious. It is vital for us to safeguard these.

“We can all help with this by ensuring we do not damage the delicate flowers by keeping to the paths and keeping dogs from trampling through patches of bluebells.”

Woodland Trust estate manager Ian Froggatt said: “Ancient woods carpeted with bluebells are without doubt a sensory delight for people to visit and deserve to be looked after.

“It can be very tempting to stray from the path for that perfect photo or to get away from the crowds sometimes.

“But those footsteps soon turn into lines, which then turns into bare ground when lots of people are doing the same thing. I have seen it happen on multiple sites resulting in the loss of what can add up to be acres of blooms.”

Damaged bulbs cannot produce enough energy to flower and reproduce in subsequent years. Areas of high footfall can cause entire colonies of these rare and delicate flowers to die out.

The Woodland Trust is appealing for visitors to its bluebell woods to enjoy the natural splendour this spring, while being careful not to destroy any flowers by sticking to proper paths and keeping dogs on leads.

The guidelines are part of the Woodland Trust’s ***Love Your Woods*** campaign which is encouraging people to help protect woods and nature for the future. Visitors can play their part by following some simple advice, including staying on paths, taking dog mess and litter home, and protecting wildlife by keeping dogs close and staying fire free.

Bluebells hit their peak at different times across the UK and Ireland. Mid-April tends to be the best time to see them in the southern areas, while it can take until mid-May before woods in Northern Ireland are at their peak.

One of the finest bluebells woods the Woodland Trust in Northern Ireland has to offer is at Drumnaph Wood, Maghera in Mid-Ulster.

[Drumnaph Woods - Visiting Woods - Woodland Trust](#)

Bluebells - Did you know?

- *In the language of flowers, the bluebell is a symbol of humility, constancy, gratitude, and everlasting love*
- *Bluebells have had multiple uses throughout history, not just for ornamental purposes. Their sticky sap was once used to bind book pages and glue the feathers onto arrows, and during Elizabethan time, their bulbs were crushed to make starch for the ruffs of collars and sleeves*
- *Bluebells spend most of their time underground as bulbs, often emerging in droves, to flower from April*
- *Many insects reap the benefits of bluebells which flower earlier than many other plants. Woodland butterflies, bees, and hoverflies all feed on their nectar. Bees can 'steal' the nectar from bluebells by biting a hole in the bottom of the flower, reaching the nectar without the need to pollinate the flower*
- *Bluebells are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)*
- *Bluebell woods are believed to be intricately woven with fairy enchantments and dark fairy magic. It is said if you hear a bluebell ring, you will be visited by a bad fairy, and will die not long after – and if you pick a bluebell, you will be led astray by fairies, wandering lost forevermore*

Notes to Editors

For more information, please contact the Woodland Trust press office on 01476 602993 or email media@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Love Your Woods [Love your woods - Woodland Trust](#)

Woodland Trust sites are free to enter and open all year round so come prepared for nature in its natural state. This means no toilets, cafés, bins, or cleaning staff - just unmissable views, clean air, birdsong, and woodland paths for you to wander along to your heart's content. You can help protect woods and nature for the future by following these top tips for your visit:

- Stay on the paths
- Take dog mess and litter home with you

- Protect wildlife by keeping dogs close
- Stay fire free
- Leave sleepovers to the wildlife
- Be considerate with den building
- Park with consideration for others
- Swimming is for wildlife only
- Woods are not good for rock climbing which destroys precious habitats
- Check access rules before cycling

The Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the largest woodland conservation charity in the UK with more than 500,000 supporters. It wants to see a UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.

The Trust has three key aims:

- protect ancient woodland, which is rare, unique, and irreplaceable

restoration of damaged ancient woodland, bringing precious pieces of our natural history back to life

- establish native trees and woods with the aim of creating resilient landscapes for people and wildlife

Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 29,000 hectares. Access to its woods is free so everyone can benefit from woods and trees.