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Sports for Nature

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Sports for Nature

Urban Playbook

Institutional partners

IUCN

International Olympic Committee

UN environment programme

Convention on Biological Diversity

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Sports for Nature

Introduction

From spectacular tournaments that transform skylines to grassroots games in muddy parks, sport is everywhere – woven into the fabric of urban life and deeply rooted in nature. Sport brings people together and creates unforgettable moments. Yet the infrastructure and resources it requires can place a heavy burden on natural ecosystems. In cities, where nature is often squeezed to the sidelines, these pressures can be especially pronounced. *But what if sport could change the rules of the game? Could sport help nature mount a comeback?*

Healthy urban nature isn't just good for the planet, it's good for sport. Cleaner air and water, cooler climates, and more resilient infrastructure are among the tangible benefits to sports professionals, athletes and fans. At the same time, sports organisations have the power to champion nature. By weaving it into their operations, restoring ecosystems, and rallying communities, they can help turn the tide on nature loss.

This guide offers practical steps and tools for clubs, teams, events and venues to integrate nature into the built environment. Based on the *Sports and Urban Biodiversity* guide, it serves as a playbook for creating greener, healthier and wilder cities, catering to a wide range of sports and urban environments worldwide.

Definitions

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, including plants, animals, and microorganisms, essential for healthy ecosystems.

Nature is the entire natural world, including living organisms and non-living elements like geology, water, and climate.

Ecosystem services are benefits from nature that support human well-being, such as food, medicine, clean air, water, and natural spaces for recreation.

Urban primarily refers to areas with high population density and developed infrastructure, typically cities and towns.

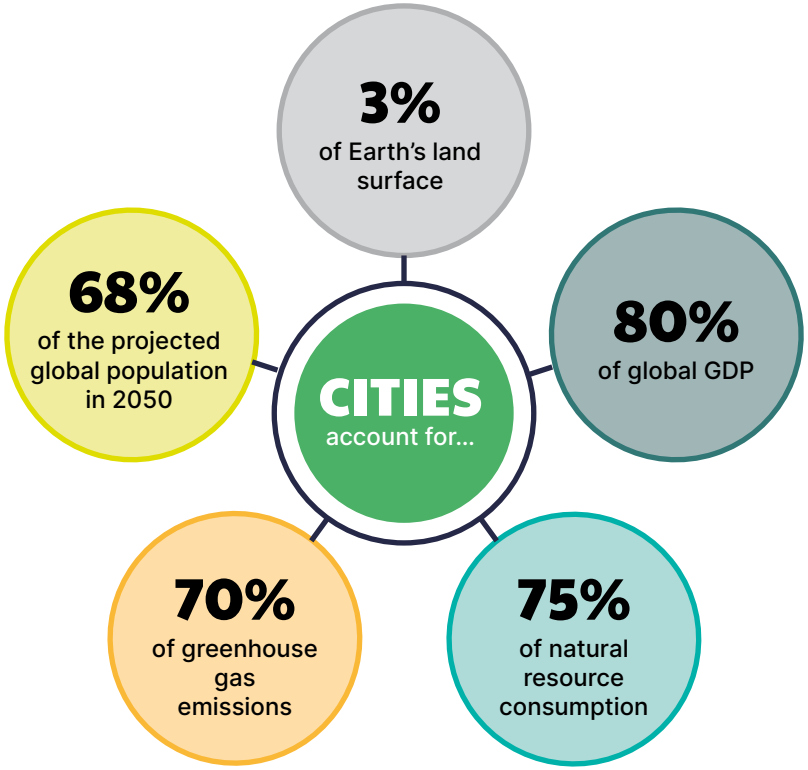
The built environment refers to human-made structures, spaces and facilities, where people live, work and play.

Arthur Tseng/Unsplash

1.1 Nature and the urban challenge

Biodiversity is integral to the ecosystems that sustain us, providing a comfortable climate, clean air and water, stable soils, nutritious food, and essential medicines. Yet, we are in the grip of an ecological emergency. Destructive human activities have degraded the natural world, pushing 1 million species to the brink of extinction, and jeopardising our very life support system.

Meanwhile, rapid urban expansion is reshaping our planet. By 2050, over two-thirds of humanity will live in cities. Vast areas of urban infrastructure are yet to be built. The next quarter-century is a chance to rewrite our urban story – to reimagine our relationship with nature. Conserving and restoring urban natural assets — including gardens, parks, wetlands, rivers, and forests — is now an imperative of the highest order. Sports organisations can lead the way!



Chuttersnap/Unsplash

1.2 Why urban nature matters for sport

By conserving and restoring urban nature, sports organisations can create tangible benefits and reap concrete rewards.

Tangible benefits for sport organisations

Cooling Athletes, Participants & Fans

Trees, green roofs, and shaded areas lower temperatures in and around sports venues by up to 8°C. Cooler environments prevent heat stress, improve endurance, and make venues more comfortable for fans with positive implications for attendance and engagement.

Keeping the Field of Play Playable

Green spaces, permeable surfaces, and rain gardens absorb excess water, reducing risks of flooding and waterlogging. Avoiding match cancellations, pitch damage, and drainage repairs helps clubs and event organisers maintain smooth operations and revenue streams.

Purifying Air & Water for Peak Performance

Natural infrastructure — including vegetation and soils — filters pollutants from the air and water, creating cleaner, healthier environments. Enhancing air quality boosts lung function and endurance, while enhancing water quality contributes to the health and safety of aquatic athletes.

Beautifying Venues for Better Experiences

Natural landscaping, flower gardens and tree-lined walkways make sports venues more inviting, relaxing, and visually striking. A well-designed, nature-rich venue may attract more visitors, elevate brand identity, and strengthen fan loyalty.

Quickening Recovery & Strengthening Mindsets

Exposure to nature aids recovery from injuries and improves mental resilience, helping athletes stay focused and bounce back faster. Natural environments reduce stress, enhance concentration, and improve rehabilitation outcomes, providing a competitive edge.

Bringing Communities Together

Gardening, tree-planting, and other nature-based activities can unite fans, athletes, and residents, fostering a stronger sense of belonging, deepening fan loyalty and opening doors to sponsorship and partnership opportunities.

Future-proofing Venues

Sustainable venue design, incorporating nature-based solutions, can help reduce energy and maintenance costs, mitigate climate-related risks, ensure compliance with environmental regulations, and increase the long-term value and resilience of facilities.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR SPORT ORGANISATIONS

1. Cooling Athletes, Participants & Fans
2. Keeping the Field of Play Playable
3. Purifying Air & Water for Peak Performance
4. Beautifying Venues for Better Experiences
5. Quickening Recovery & Strengthening Mindsets
6. Bringing Communities Together
7. Future-proofing Venues

1.3 Purpose and scope

Using case studies from around the world, this guide aims to inspire and empower sports organisations to conserve and restore nature across buildings, grounds and neighbourhoods. Broader sustainability topics such as energy, transport, waste management and supply chains, are not covered in great depth – for these we recommend referring to more technical publications dedicated specifically to these topics.

Who is this Guide for?

This guide is designed primarily for:

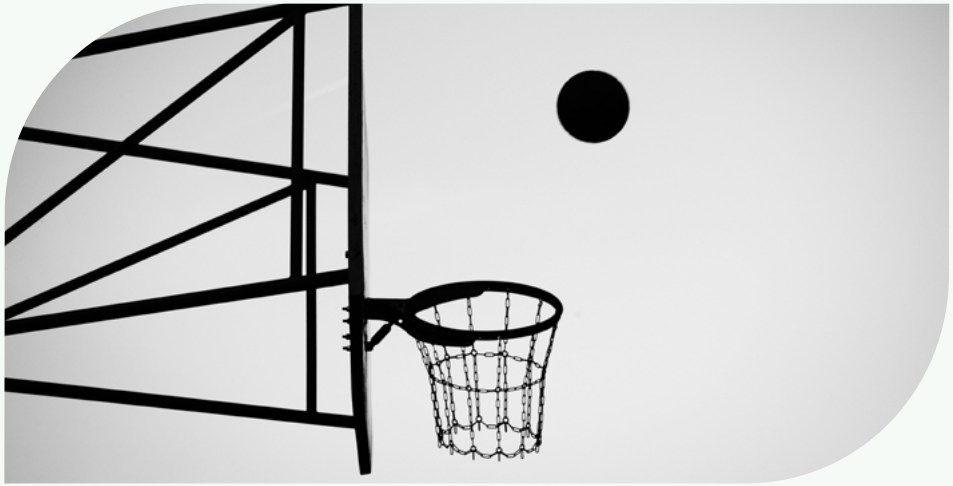
- **Sports clubs** with dedicated grounds, training facilities, and stadiums.
- **Venue owners and operators** responsible for sports complexes, stadiums and arenas, and community sports centres.[1]
- **Event organisers** managing competitions, tournaments, and multi-sport events in urban areas.[2]
- **Governing bodies** overseeing events, leagues, clubs or federations that can promote best practices, set sustainability standards, and support members.

How is this guide structured?

This guide comprises four parts:

- **Framework and elements:** Provides a foundation for understanding urban nature through the lens of sports.
- **Action planning:** Offers practical tools and examples to help users assess their area, build partnerships, and implement actions for nature.
- **Case studies:** Showcases real-world examples of sports organisations successfully integrating nature initiatives into their infrastructure and operations.
- **Toolkit:** Brings together all worksheets and checklists in one convenient place.

Sports for Nature
Urban Playbook - Toolkit



Jovan/Unsplash

1 For information about the biodiversity impact of the construction of new venues or reconstruction of existing ones, we suggest consulting the Mitigating biodiversity impacts of new sports venues guide.

2 For a more comprehensive approach to sustainability in event planning, we recommend referring to the Mitigating biodiversity impacts of sports events guide.

2

Framework
and elements

2.1 Introducing the Sports for Nature Framework

Sports for Nature (S4N) is a joint initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, International Olympic Committee, United Nations Environment Programme, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy. It aims to deliver transformative action for nature across sports, by 2030 and beyond, enabling sports to champion nature and contribute to its protection and restoration.

The S4N Framework, the main pillar of the Initiative, is grounded in four guiding principles that reflect the interplay between sports and nature:

- **Protect and conserve nature** and avoid damage to natural habitats and species.
- **Restore** and regenerate nature wherever possible.
- **Understand** and reduce risks to nature in your supply chains.
- **Educate** and inspire positive action for nature across and beyond sport.

These principles are as applicable in bustling cities as they are on remote mountains or open oceans. By signing the S4N Declaration, sports organisations commit to embracing these principles, taking measurable actions for nature, reporting annually on their progress, and sharing their efforts to inspire and guide others.

For sports organisations in cities, understanding the 'elements' of urban nature is essential for designing effective and measurable actions.

Philippa Rose/Unsplash

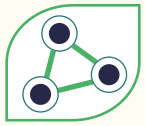
2.2 Elements of Urban Nature

The 'Elements of Urban Nature' are adapted from the Making Nature's City toolkit developed by the San Francisco Estuary Institute. This science-based framework offers practical guidance for designing and managing urban spaces to achieve mutual benefits for nature and sports in cities.

Making Space for Nature

Habitat patch size – *Winning ground*

Larger green spaces host a greater diversity of species. Sports venues can become 'biodiversity hubs' by creating, conserving and expanding habitat patches on their grounds.



Connectivity – *Connecting playmakers*

Connecting habitat patches via ecological corridors or stepping stones — small habitat patches that provide temporary shelter, food, or resources to wildlife — enable species to move and thrive.

Matrix quality – *Finding openings*

Improving the areas surrounding larger habitat patches enhances their ecological value. Sports organisations can achieve this by planting native vegetation, reducing paved surfaces, or introducing pollinator-friendly plants around playing surfaces.

Enhancing the Quality of Nature

Habitat diversity – *Building a balanced team*

Varied landscaping at sports venues — such as wildflower meadows, wetlands, and wooded areas — can foster ecological richness and resilience. Diverse habitats act as natural buffers, mitigating the impacts of flooding, heatwaves, and extreme weather while supporting rich species assemblages.

Native vegetation – *Seizing home advantage*

Native plants support local ecosystems by providing food and shelter for wildlife while requiring minimal maintenance. They can help stabilise soils, reduce water use, and resist invasive species, enhancing resilience to extreme weather and ensuring venues remain ecologically and operationally robust over time.

Managing Nature

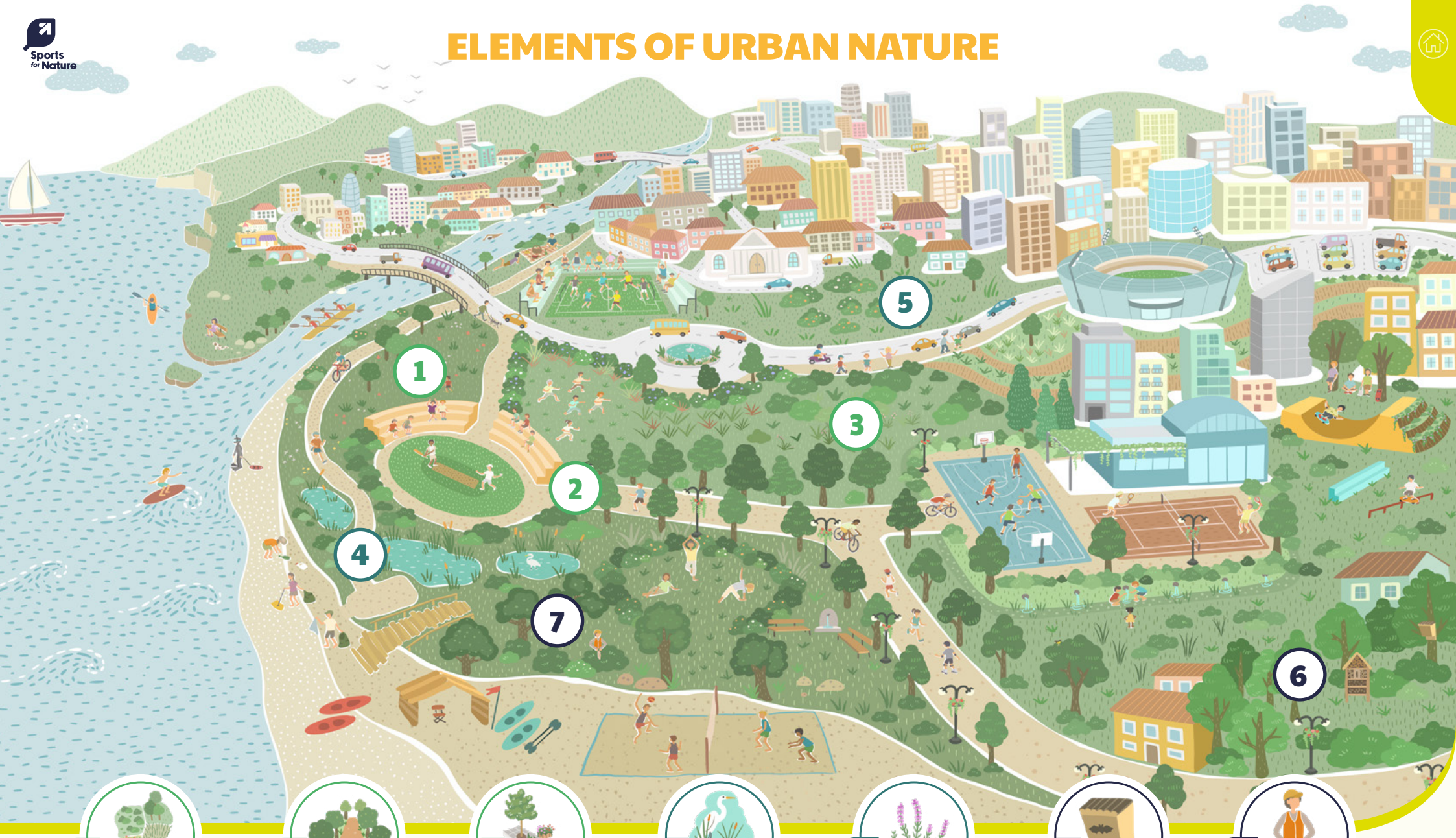
Special resources – *Landing the big hits*

Incorporating distinctive features — such as in front of nesting boxes or insect hotels — can create vital habitats for specialised species. Likewise, protecting natural assets like wetlands or veteran trees can offer outsized benefits to local biodiversity.

Wildlife-friendly management – *Masterminding the game plan*

Enhancing venue management is often one of the simplest and most effective ways to support local wildlife. Best practices include reducing mowing frequency, limiting the use of pesticides and fertilisers, and using sound barriers and low-impact lighting to protect sensitive species.

ELEMENTS OF URBAN NATURE



1 Habitat patch size
Winning ground

2 Connectivity
Connecting playmakers

3 Matrix quality
Finding openings

4 Habitat diversity
Building a balanced team

5 Native vegetation
Seizing home advantage

6 Special resources
Landing the big hits

7 Wildlife-friendly management
Masterminding the game plan

Making Space for Nature

Enhancing the Quality of Nature

Managing Nature

2.3 From principles to practice

Together, the S4N Principles and the Elements of Urban Nature offer essential guideposts for sports organisations aiming to drive nature positive action. When fully embraced, sports venues and the areas surrounding them can become thriving natural assets, and sporting events can become power conservation platforms – inspiring fans, energising athletes, and securing the future of sport itself.

The journey begins with understanding your starting point. The following section provides practical guidance on how to:

- **Assess your baseline,**
- **Forge effective partnerships, and**
- **Build a compelling case for action.**

With these first steps, your organisation can begin transforming initial objectives into meaningful impact.

Louise Pigeé/Unsplash

3 Building foundations

3.1 Understand your area

Before the action starts, every winning team puts in the groundwork. You wouldn't step onto the pitch without knowing the conditions, studying your competition, and shaping a solid game plan. In the same way, a baseline assessment is your pre-match analysis, providing a clear snapshot of your site's natural strengths, risks, and potential.

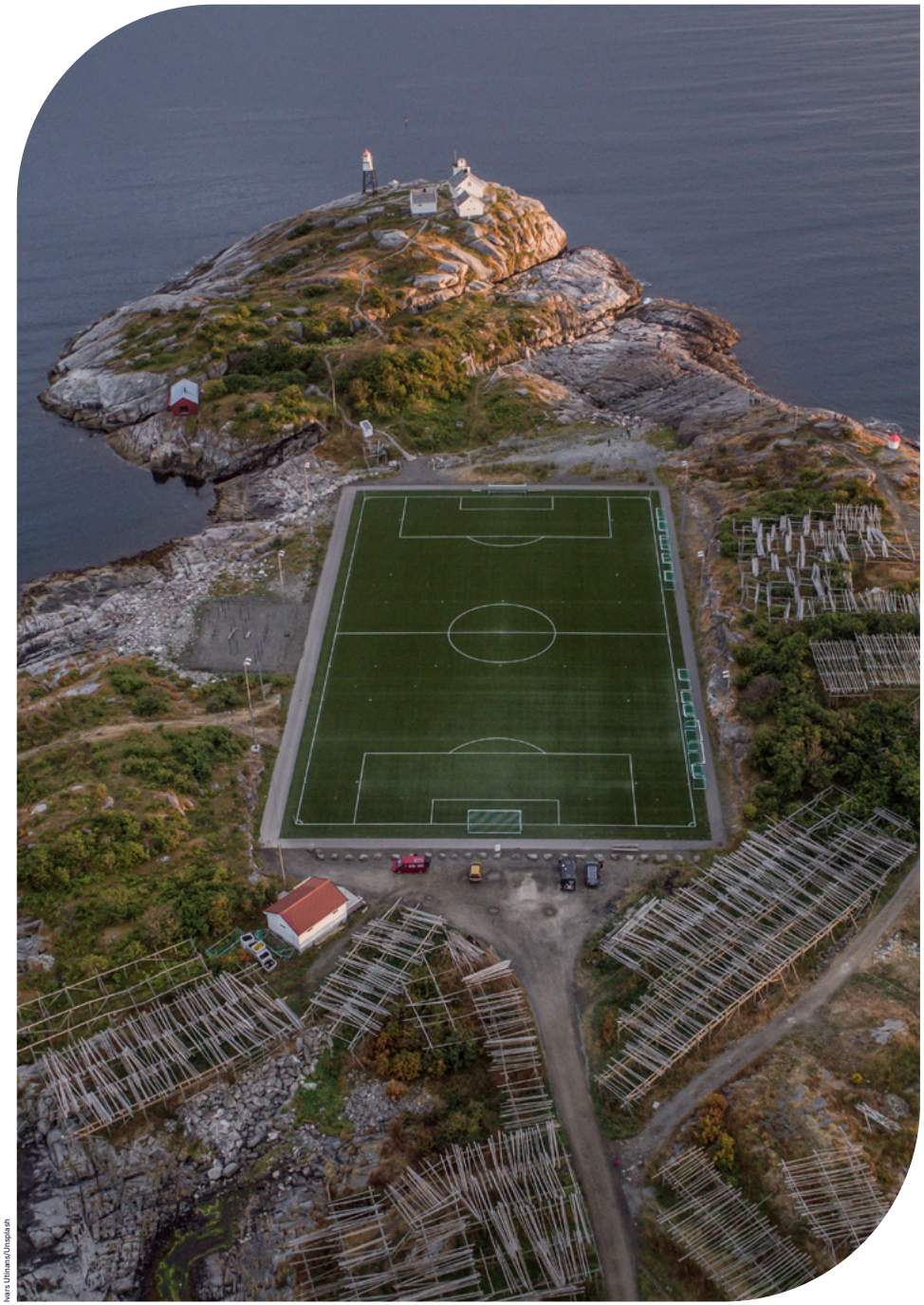
It can be divided into three main phases:

1. **Desk-based research**
2. **Initial on-site survey**
3. **Compilation of findings into a concise summary report**

The following example from Stourbridge FC, a medium-size football club in the West Midlands, UK, and Sports for Nature Framework signatory, shows how this can be done in practice. Based on their experience, we recommend allocating two days to complete the process. To facilitate the tasks, two tools are at your disposal in the Toolbox.

Baseline assessment worksheet

On-site survey checklist



Ivars Utināns/Unsplash

Phase 1: Desk-based Research

Thanks to the wealth of online tools and open-access data, it's now possible to learn a lot about your site remotely. The more thorough your desk-based research, the more valuable your on-site survey will be. Arriving well-prepared will enable you to focus your observations and more effectively visualise potential interventions. Have the Baseline assessment checklist at hand and don't forget to take notes.

1 Get a Bird's-eye-view on Google Maps

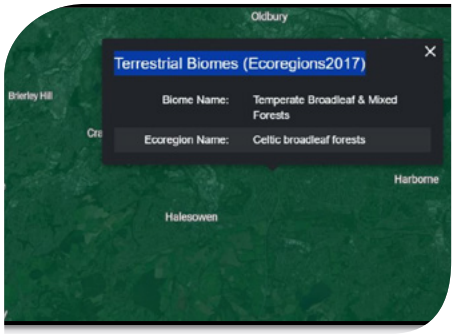
To quickly and easily understand where your sports venue sits within the wider urban or natural landscape, we recommend using Google Maps or any similar platform. The 3D view is especially useful for visualising tree cover, terrain, and surrounding land uses in remarkable detail. As you explore, look for opportunities to enhance ecological connectivity with nearby natural areas, and take note of neighbouring institutions — such as schools or other sports clubs — that may be open to collaboration.

Stourbridge FC is situated close to Corbett Meadow, allotments, a churchyard, a former industrial area being redeveloped, the River Stour and the Stourbridge Town Arm Canal. Neighbouring institutions of note include Stourbridge Cricket Club, Amblecote holy Trinity Church, and Amblecote Primary School.

2 Determine your Ecoregion

An Ecoregion is an area defined in terms of its natural features and environment. Understanding your Ecoregion provides insight into the general types of habitats and species your site is likely to support.

To identify your Ecoregion, visit the UN Biodiversity Lab Map and activate the 'Terrestrial Biomes (Ecoregions2017)' dataset. Once located, search the name of your Ecoregion online to learn more about its characteristics. Resources like Wikipedia provide accessible summaries of Ecoregions including information on geography, climate, flora, fauna and habitat status.



Stourbridge FC is in the Celtic Broadleaf Forests Ecoregion. Characterised by damp, oceanic climates and dominated by oak (Quercus spp.), ash (Fraxinus excelsior), and birch (Betula spp.) woodlands, these forests once supported rich biodiversity but have been heavily fragmented by agriculture and development, leaving just a small fraction of their original area intact.

Phase 1: Desk-based Research

3 Identify nearby Protected Areas

A Protected Area is a clearly defined space that is legally or effectively managed to ensure the long-term conservation of nature. These areas often support a wide range of habitats and species, serving as important sources of biodiversity for the wider region. Understanding nearby Protected Areas and their management goals can help you find alignment and synergy with local conservation priorities.

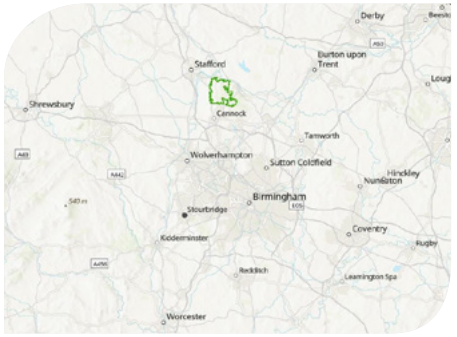
To identify protected areas near your site, remain on the UN Biodiversity Lab Map, and activate the WDPA (World Database on Protected Areas) dataset. Take note of their names, sizes, and key features.

There are several designated protected areas near Stourbridge FC. These include Stour Valley, Client Hills, Kinver Edge and Kingsford Country Park.

4 Identify nearby Key Biodiversity Areas

A Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) is a globally important site identified for its role in preserving biodiversity through scientific criteria like vulnerability and irreplaceability.

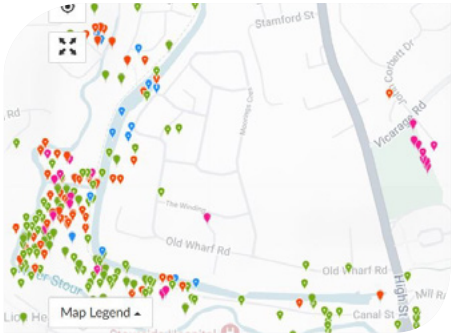
Use the KBA Database to find nearby KBAs and explore their detailed factsheets, which offer valuable insights into local threatened species and ecosystems. This information can help guide targeted interventions — such as planting native flora — to support priority species and enhance habitat quality.



The terrestrial KBA closest to Stourbridge FC is Cannock Chase which lies approximately 40km to the north.

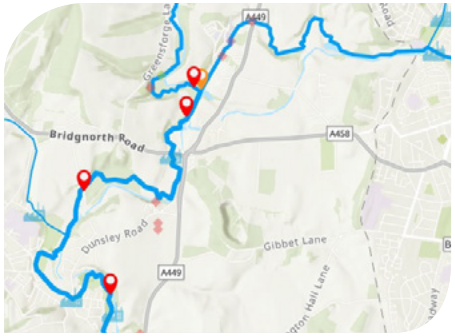
5 Explore Citizen Science platforms

Citizen science platforms provide another source of information on species present in the area. We recommend visiting iNaturalist to determine which species are present in the area. On the homepage, click 'Explore' to view a global map of observations. Zoom into your site to view the species occurrence records.



iNaturalist provides a rich source of species occurrence data. Near Stourbridge FC, there have been numerous sightings of Common Kingfishers (Alcedo atthis), Eurasian Jays (Garrulus glandarius) and also some invasive species such as Giant Hogweed (Heracleum mantegazzianum).

If there are water bodies near your site, it may be worth visiting Fresh-Water Watch – a global citizen science platform tracking the health of freshwater ecosystems. There, one can access valuable information on pollutant levels – specifically, phosphates, nitrates and turbidity. The platform also provides guidance on how to interpret the data.



Ecological data points on the River Stour. Green, orange and red pins represent good, moderate and poor ecological status.

Phase 1: Desk-based Research

6 Identify climate and disaster risks

Understanding how climate change and natural hazards may affect your site is essential for choosing the right nature-based solutions. Risks such as flooding, drought, and heatwaves can damage infrastructure, disrupt events, and affect the wellbeing of athletes and spectators.

Use tools like PREPdata, WWF Water Risk Filter, or your national climate portal to explore projected risks, and consult local adaptation plans or disaster risk maps for more detailed, site-specific insights.

These trends underscore the need to future-proof venues with nature-based solutions — such as shade-giving trees, wetlands to manage runoff, and climate-resilient green infrastructure. This includes measures like planting drought-tolerant species and designing for water retention during heavy rains.

Pro tip

Review local biodiversity reports, species inventories, or maps maintained by local governments, universities or NGOs. These resources often highlight conservation challenges and opportunities in the area.

In Stourbridge, for example, the Met Office's UK Climate Projections suggest hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters, and more intense extreme weather events. By 2070, summer temperatures could rise by up to 5.1°C, while heavier rainfall — especially in summer and autumn — will increase the risk of surface water flooding.

Xingyu Xian/Unsplash

Phase 2: Initial On-site Survey

While desktop research can unlock treasure troves of data, there's no substitute for getting onto the field – you may be surprised by what you find! An in-person on-site visit allows you to:

- Investigate opportunities to enhance nature on and around your site.
- Assess the condition and connectedness of habitats.
- Validate the presence of species and habitats identified in your desktop research.

Even without formal ecological training, you can still carry out a meaningful assessment. The On-site Survey Checklist offers a simple structure to help you gather useful data, set priorities, and start visualising strategic interventions. Remember to bring a notebook or tablet to record your observations, and don't forget to take photos and sketch out key features of the site.

When you visit matters. Early mornings are best for spotting birds and other wildlife, while spring and summer offer peak vegetation growth and pollinator activity. Visiting at different times of day and during different seasons will give you a more complete understanding of the site's ecological dynamics.

To deepen your insights, consider inviting a local conservation group, ecologist, or environmental planner to accompany you. Or better still, make it an open invitation to club staff, members, and fans. A bioblitz is a fantastic way to engage stakeholders, rapidly document biodiversity, and raise awareness of nature at your venue. (see next page for inspiration).

Stourbridge FC sits atop a sandstone plateau and shares its grounds with the town's cricket club. The site is bordered by valuable natural assets, including Corbett Meadow to the northeast — a designated Site of Interest for Nature Conservation — and Holy Trinity Churchyard, which hosts mature trees and seasonal wildflowers. A newly created green corridor runs along the western edge of the site, linking it to the Stourbridge Town Arm Canal and the revitalised River Stour, now recognised as a key ecological corridor through the Black Country.

The sports ground itself features mature poplars, birch, ivy-covered perimeters, and basic hardstanding infrastructure. Wildlife observed on-site included pied wagtails, magpies, and geese, suggesting some existing ecological value. Its location and surrounding habitats present a range of restoration opportunities – from enhancing native planting and improving pollinator habitats to creatively utilising the sandstone ridge for ecological features like nesting niches or rock gardens. These interventions could strengthen connectivity with nearby green spaces and better integrate the site into the broader ecological network.

Phase 2: Initial On-site Survey

Bioblitz by sport organisations

What is a bioblitz?

A bioblitz is an engaging, community-based event where scientists, naturalists, and volunteers team up to catalogue as many species as possible within a specified area and timeframe, usually 24 hours.

Carnoustie Golf Club Bioblitz

In 2024, Carnoustie Golf Links organised a 24-hour Bioblitz, bringing together over 50 participants including many club members, to identify 231 species of plants, animals, and fungi. The event was a hole-in-one for biodiversity, showcasing the course's natural splendour while sharpening participants' taxonomic skills.

More information

Desert Vipers Bioblitz

In 2025, Desert Vipers, a cricket franchise based in Dubai, undertook a one-hour BioBlitz at the team's base, JA The Resort. In total, 39 families, students, and community members, plus star players Wanindu Hasaranga, Nathan Sowter, and Michael Jones, identified 100 different species on the site and made 304 wildlife observations, fostering a greater understanding of local ecosystems.

More information

Phase 3: Compilation of results

By blending desk-based research with on-site observation, you can gain an intimate understanding of an area – its ecological strengths, limitations and opportunities. The Baseline assessment worksheet brings together both steps with guiding questions and suggestions to help you complete the process. Success in nature conservation, like sport, is a team effort – next, we'll explore how building partnerships can elevate your impact.

Pro tip

Repeat your baseline assessment regularly and it becomes a performance tracker – revealing what's working, what isn't, and where to adjust. We recommend regular monitoring – especially before, during, and after interventions or events. Done well, monitoring can become a competitive advantage, helping you to maximise environmental gains.

3.2 Building partnerships

In sports, teamwork is everything – every player, coach, and fan plays their part in securing victory. The same holds true for nature conservation. Building partnerships is like assembling a winning team, uniting skills, resources, and passions to achieve something greater than the sum of its parts.

Engaging stakeholders

Strong partnerships start with meaningful stakeholder engagement. Getting the right players involved early — be they local communities, fellow sports organisations, environmental groups, or business leaders — builds trust and paves the way for collaboration.

Key plays:

- **Scout your squad**: Identify all stakeholders who may be affected by or interested in your nature restoration efforts.
- **Keep the lines open**: Host meetings, workshops, or surveys to gather insights, align on goals, and surface any concerns before they become blockers.
- **Play for the win-win**: Highlight how thriving urban nature benefits everyone – from greener, more resilient venues to healthier communities and stronger fan engagement.
- **Build team spirit**: Foster trust with open, honest communication – sharing progress, challenges, and victories throughout the journey.

Building your All-Star Team strategically

With limited time and resources, it's essential to be strategic about who you approach, when, and how. Don't just stick to the usual line-up – think creatively and look beyond the obvious. There's no one-size-fits-all formula, but the stakeholder groups listed on the following page are well worth considering.

When approaching the various stakeholders, look for win-win opportunities and make the case by considering what the respective organisations may gain from partnering with you and how it may help them deliver on their own strategies.

Golf for Biodiversity (France)

The French Golf Federation, in partnership with the National Museum of Natural History, launched the 'Golf for Biodiversity' programme. Golf clubs collaborate with naturalists to conduct ecological assessments, implement conservation actions, and achieve certification. Over 200 clubs have joined, with gold-certified clubs like Terre Blanche becoming sanctuaries for wildlife.

More information

Stakeholder	What they bring	What they gain
Sport Organisations	• Access to venues, athletes, and fans • Operational resources (groundskeepers, marketing, etc) • Influence over public perceptions	• Enhanced sustainability reputation • Healthier and more resilient venues • Stronger fan loyalty and engagement
Local Governments	• Policy support and urban planning integration • Expertise in nature-based solutions • Potential funding for projects	• Collaboration to meet biodiversity goals • Improved public spaces • Visibility for government-led initiatives
Conservation Organisations	• Expertise in biodiversity conservation and restoration • Monitoring tools and global networks • Access to funding and best practices	• New platforms for public outreach • Volunteer and community engagement • Tangible biodiversity gains
Community Groups	• Local knowledge and understanding of community needs • Grassroots energy and volunteer support • Public engagement bridge	• Improved local green spaces • Shaped projects reflecting community values • Strengthened community cohesion
Academia & Research Institutions	• Scientific expertise in monitoring and analysis • Research tools and networks • Students and staff for project involvement	• Real-world case studies for research • Collaboration with sports organisations • Educational and practical experience
Private Sector	• Funding, sponsorship, and technical innovations • Sustainable materials and green technology • Marketing expertise	• Enhanced corporate reputation • Broader audience engagement • Business growth through sustainability alignment
Indigenous Communities	• Cultural and ecological knowledge • Expertise in sustainable land management • Heritage-preserving insights	• Respectful partnerships honouring traditions • Advocacy for natural and cultural heritage • Support for stewardship

Even with strong partnerships in place, you'll often need to persuade planners, decision-makers, venue owners, or club executives to support or invest in nature. Making a compelling case — one that speaks to their priorities — is essential for turning ideas into action. To this end, the **Making the case for nature cheat sheet** will provide you with basic guidance. You can find it in the Toolbox.

Making the case for nature

3.3 Now you are match-ready

With a clear baseline and willing partners, you're ready for action. Whether you develop a dedicated "nature plan" or simply embed nature considerations within broader operational and sustainability strategies, Chapter 4 outlines a range of practical measures to help you get started.

The Nature plan outline will help you approach your nature action strategically.

Nature plan outline

Watford FC's Biodiversity Policy (Watford, UK)

Watford Football Club, based in Hertfordshire, UK, has established a comprehensive Biodiversity Policy to minimise its environmental impact and contribute to local conservation. The policy integrates biodiversity into corporate decision-making and promotes eco-friendly procurement practices. Key actions include partnerships with conservation organisations, regular biodiversity education for staff and players, and leveraging communication channels to raise awareness.

More information

Daniel Lariionov/Unsplash

Taking action

Building on the baseline assessment, this chapter is your playbook for action, offering practical examples, ideas and inspiration to help transform your building, adjacent grounds and the neighbourhood into thriving spaces for nature. From enhancing facilities and expanding habitats to rallying support through education and advocacy, actions take many forms – ranging in scale, complexity, cost and impact.

Just remember, context is key. A winning design in one city could be a foul in another. Green walls work wonders but could fall out of favour if they attract dangerous snakes and creepy-crawlies.

Arun Clarke/Unsplash

Water features can be havens for wildlife but must be carefully designed to avoid mosquito infestations or exacerbating droughts. Even energy-efficient lighting must strike the right balance – reducing light pollution while keeping public spaces safe. That's why we encourage you to apply common sense, assessing and tailoring interventions to ensure their local feasibility, suitability, and acceptance.

To make the guide as user friendly and practical as possible and to provide you with further ideas and inspiration, two additional tools are at your disposal in the Toolbox:

Library of use cases

The Library offers over 20 additional examples demonstrating how sport organisations and venues have put the the below actions in practice around the world.

Urban nature actions playbook

The Playbook summarizes all the actions suggested in this chapter and links them to the 7 Elements of Urban Nature and the 7 Co-benefits for sports.

4.1 Buildings

Buildings need not be hostile to nature; in fact, they can be havens for it. With thoughtful design and sustainable management, buildings can support rich species collections, enhancing their visual appeal, boosting resilience, and inspiring stakeholders.[3]

Integrating green infrastructure

Green roofs and walls breathe life into urban structures, offering habitats for pollinators, insulating buildings, and reducing urban heat. They also look beautiful.

- **Green roofs:** Provide a sanctuary for native plants and pollinators while improving building insulation and reducing stormwater runoff.
- **Green walls:** Vertical gardens enhance building aesthetics, offer shelter for birds and insects, and contribute to air quality improvement.
- **Living lampposts:** Envelope lampposts with foliage, watered using solar-powered drip irrigation.

© Levi's Stadium

3 For more information about green buildings design in the urban context, we suggest referring to the IUCN-Holcim guide, Catalysing biodiversity on buildings.

Pro tip

Choose native, drought-tolerant plants for your green infrastructure to maximise survival rates and minimise upkeep.

Levi's Stadium (California, USA)

Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers, features a 27,000-square-foot green roof that includes Faithful Farm — a 4,000-square-foot rooftop vegetable and herb garden producing up to 150 pounds of fresh produce weekly for use in stadium events. This eco-friendly stadium also boasts solar panels and native Bay Area plants, making it a standout example of integrating food production and biodiversity into major sports infrastructure.

More information

Prince's Park (Dartford, UK)

Dartford Football Club's Princes Park stadium, with a capacity of 4,100, features an extensive sedum blanket that attracts pollinators and birdlife, improves air quality, and reduces heat loss. A smart irrigation system with rain sensors ensures the green roof remains healthy during dry periods.

More information

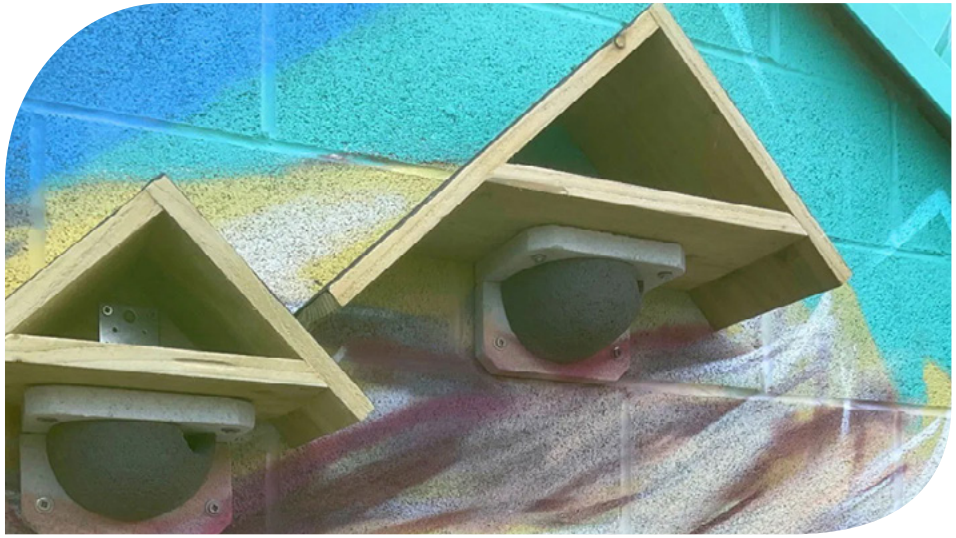
Managing lighting and noise

Minimising light and sound pollution ensures your venue avoids disturbing sensitive wildlife and local ecosystems while reducing costs by minimising wastage and inefficiencies.

- **Lighting**: Install shielded, warm-spectrum LED fixtures to reduce glare and skyglow. Use timers or motion sensors to limit unnecessary lighting. For best practice, consult resources from the International Dark-Sky Association.
- **Noise**: Use sound-absorbing materials and barriers to reduce noise from events. This protects species such as bats and owls, which are highly sensitive to acoustic disturbances.

Pro tip

Dim lights during migration seasons to protect birds navigating urban areas.



© Cliftonville FC

Designing for birds

Buildings can pose risks to birds, but small adjustments can turn them into allies.

- **Bird-safe windows**: Use patterned or coated glass to prevent bird collisions or retrofit existing windows with films as a cost-effective solution.
- **Nesting features**: Install swift bricks, bird boxes, or other structures to create safe nesting habitats for migratory and urban bird species.
- **Reflective surface management**: Avoid large reflective surfaces in landscaping and architecture (e.g., mirrored walls) that confuse birds and increase collision risks.

Pro tip

Position bird boxes and swift bricks in quiet, sheltered spots — away from high-traffic areas and direct sun — to boost occupancy rates and protect nesting birds from disturbance, temperature extremes, and strong winds.

Cliftonville Park (Belfast, UK)

Cliftonville FC in Belfast has turned a stadium wall into a vibrant living mural that provides a nesting site for endangered house martins (Delichon urbicum). Part of the 'Safari in the City' project, the artwork integrates nesting cups that mimic natural mud nests, supporting urban biodiversity while engaging the community through art and conservation.

More information

Managing organic waste

Managing organic waste responsibly reduces pollution and creates valuable resources for nature. Composting is a simple way for sports organisations to close the loop – supporting soil health, boosting biodiversity, and even growing fresh food to feed hungry athletes.

- **Composting**: Implement on-site composting systems to transform food scraps, grass clippings, and other organic waste into nutrient-rich soil. This compost can be used to enhance green spaces, gardens, and landscaping around the venue.
- **Community engagement**: Use composting programmes to educate visitors and staff on sustainable practices. Consider donating excess compost to local parks, schools, or community gardens.

Pro tip

Set up clear collection points for organic waste in catering and maintenance areas to ensure high-quality composting inputs.

Eden Park (Aukland, New Zealand)

Eden Park, New Zealand's largest stadium and famous fortress of the All Blacks rugby team, is committed to achieving zero landfill waste. It enforces a compostable-only policy for all food packaging, diverting nearly four tonnes of waste during major events. Partnering with GrowSpace, Eden Park runs the Morningside Urban Market Garden and Compost Kitchen, supporting migrant and refugee women while processing local organic waste.

More information

Claudio Schwarz/Unsplash

Achieving integrated water management

Integrated water management means designing systems that capture, reuse, and infiltrate water on-site, working with nature rather than against it. It can help to conserve resources, strengthen site resilience, reduce flood risk, and sustain ecosystems.

- **Rainwater harvesting**: Use cistern systems to capture and reuse rainwater for irrigation or other non-potable applications.
- **Greywater treatment**: Treat greywater for landscape irrigation to conserve water and reduce strain on local resources.
- **Permeable surfaces**: Replace impermeable surfaces like concrete with permeable paving or gravel that allows water to infiltrate the soil, reducing runoff and supporting groundwater recharge.

Pro tip

Pair irrigation systems with native, drought-tolerant plants to further conserve water.

Chinnaswamy Stadium (Bengaluru, India)

Chinnaswamy Stadium, home to Royal Challengers Bangalore, tackles Bangalore's water crisis by using a sewage treatment plant to recycle wastewater for pitch irrigation, saving 75,000 litres per match and reducing reliance on groundwater and municipal supplies.

More information

Kingsholm Stadium (Gloucester, UK)

Gloucester Rugby teamed up with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to install three rain gardens at Kingsholm Stadium. Built in raised planters, the gardens capture rainwater from the stadium roof, absorbing it like a giant sponge. This not only reduces flood risk but also helps filter out pollutants before the water reaches nearby rivers.

More information

© Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

4.2 Club grounds

With considerate management, your grounds can host thriving habitats, supporting biodiversity, conserving resources, and strengthening people's connection to nature. Here's how to transform your grounds into a biodiversity hub.

Creating diverse habitats

Introduce a variety of habitats to support diverse species and enhance ecological resilience.

- **Meadows and wetlands**: Establish wildflower meadows and wetland habitats near playing surfaces and buildings to attract pollinators, amphibians, and birds.
- **Woodland and hedgerows**: Create woodland edges and hedgerows to provide natural buffers and shelter for wildlife along site boundaries. Use native hedgerows instead of traditional fences to create wildlife corridors, support pollinators, and enhance aesthetic appeal.
- **Vegetation layering**: Use a mix of ground cover, shrubs, and trees to mimic natural ecosystems and increase structural diversity.
- **Mature trees conservation**: Protect mature trees as they provide essential habitats for birds, bats, and other wildlife, and help stabilise ecosystems.
- **Deadwood deposits**: Retain deadwood and fallen branches where safe to do so, as they provide critical habitats for insects, fungi, and small mammals.
- **Unique features**: Introduce elements such as log piles, rock shelters, or small brush piles to enhance habitat diversity and attract specialised species.

Pro tip

Regularly monitor and maintain habitats to ensure their health and functionality while minimizing disturbances to wildlife.

Hoiana Shores Golf Club (Quang Nam, Vietnam)

The Hoiana Golf Club creatively repurposed driftwood collected during beach clean-ups to enhance habitats in the rough. Local bird species soon began nesting on the driftwood, with many using them to rear their chicks.

More information

Buzzin Corner (Suzuka City, Japan)

In 2023, four-time F1 World Champion Sebastian Vettel introduced 'bee hotels' at Turn 2 of the Suzuka Circuit to promote awareness about the importance of insects and biodiversity. This project involved all F1 teams and drivers, who participated in customising and painting their own insect hotels.

More information

Using native plants

Native plants are well adapted to local conditions and support a far greater diversity of native wildlife than non-native species, which typically offer limited ecological value. Native plants can thrive with minimal upkeep and play a vital role in sustaining regional biodiversity.

- **Plant selection**: Select native species adapted to your site's soil, climate, and sunlight.
- **Pollinator resources**: Incorporate flowering plants that provide resources for pollinators throughout the year.
- **Procurement**: Partner with local horticultural nurseries for guidance on locally appropriate native species.

Pro tip

Choose a diverse mix of native plants that flower at different times of the year to ensure a continuous supply of food for pollinators and other wildlife.

One Goal, 100 Trees (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)

In Tanzania, the 'One Goal, 100 Trees – We Play, We Plant' campaign, led by Nourish Africa, promotes native tree planting and environmental stewardship among university and college students. For every goal scored in student football match, 100 indigenous trees are planted. To date initiative has planted thousands of native trees, engaged over 12,500 students, and built partnerships with football clubs, conservation groups, and community leaders.

More information

© Nourish Africa

Managing water resources

Effective water management reduces wastage, mitigates flooding, and provides habitats for aquatic species.

- **Rain gardens and bioswales**: Implement rain gardens and bioswales to manage stormwater runoff while creating habitats for insects and amphibians.
- **Water harvesting**: Install water-harvesting systems, such as rain barrels or cisterns, to reuse collected water for irrigation.
- **Efficient irrigation**: Use drip irrigation or smart irrigation technologies to minimise water waste while keeping landscapes lush. These systems deliver water directly to the root zone, reducing evaporation and runoff. This technology can be used on both buildings (e.g. green roofs) and glub grounds.
- **Pollution control**: Reduce the spread of microplastics from artificial turf by using high-quality infill materials, installing filtration barriers, and implementing regular maintenance to minimise runoff into surrounding ecosystems.

Pro tip

Combine nature-based solutions with smart technology to manage water wisely – reducing costs, supporting wildlife, and future-proofing your venue against drought and flooding.

Ypsilanti Township's CommUNITY Skatepark (Michigan, USA)

The Built to Play Skatepark Programme constructs environmentally sustainable skateparks that integrate stormwater management, native plant rain gardens, recycled materials, and other green initiatives. These skateparks, such as Ypsilanti Township's CommUNITY Skatepark, enhance urban biodiversity, reduce water pollution, and serve as vibrant community assets.

More information

© RW Built to Play

Managing turf

Natural turf, when sustainably managed, offers ecological benefits such as supporting soil health and reducing runoff. Sustainable turf management is a burgeoning area of research.

- **Mowing regimes**: Limit mowing in non-playing areas to allow wildflowers and grasses to flourish.
- **Chemical inputs**: Use integrated pest management to cut back on fertilisers and pesticides.
- **Climate-smart grasses**: Use drought-tolerant grass species to lower water demands on playing surfaces.

Pro tip

While natural turf has ecological benefits, consider the context. Artificial turf may be preferable in areas requiring greater durability or accessibility, and dirt fields remain essential in some arid regions. Also, consult professional associations like the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association (BIGGA) or the Grounds Management Association (GMA) for expert advice.

Integrated Management of Turfgrass Diseases and Pests (Europe)

The R&A funded research to find eco-friendly ways to keep golf course grass healthy without relying heavily on pesticides. Trials in Norway, the UK, and Germany tested different turf care methods — like rolling the greens regularly, using UV-C light, applying iron and citric acid, adding biostimulants, and using slow-release organic fertilisers. While no single method worked every time, combining several proved effective in reducing disease outbreaks and keeping the turf in good shape.

More information

Dongyeon Lee/Pixabay

4.3 The neighbourhood

Nature doesn't end at your venue's boundary and neither should your ambition. By connecting with the wider landscape — including nearby KBAs and Protected Areas — you can align with local conservation goals, strengthen ecological networks, boost resilience, and amplify your impact.

Expanding your playing field

Creating lasting change means thinking beyond boundaries. By collaborating with neighbouring landowners (including sport venue owners and operators), community groups, and local authorities, you can build ecological connections, pool resources, and realise synergies.

- **Coordinate efforts**: Work with nearby sports venues to align landscaping efforts and pool resources. Explore establishing green corridors to facilitate the movement of wildlife.
- **Encourage stewardship**: Partner with landowners to promote wildlife-friendly practices, such as planting native hedgerows or restoring wildflower meadows.

Irvine to Girvan Nectar Network (Ayrshire, Scotland)

Along Scotland's Ayrshire coast, the Irvine to Girvan Nectar Network links sports venues, nature reserves, and community spaces. Clubs, including Northfield Bowling Club, have joined forces with conservation groups to restore wildflower meadows resulting in a 50km-long ecological corridor. This corridor is supporting populations of pollinators including rare species such as the small blue butterfly (Cupido minimus).

More information

Connecting habitats with green corridors

Green corridors are essential for connecting fragmented habitats, enabling wildlife to move freely while facilitating active travel for people.

- **Multifunctional greenways**: Partner with local authorities, transport agencies, and other landowners to design multi-functional green corridors that benefit both wildlife and people, integrating these into cycling or walking networks.

Pro tip

Host joint workshops with neighbouring organisations to identify shared biodiversity opportunities and challenges.

Use interpretive signage to educate visitors about the importance of ecological connectivity.

Gepps Cross State Sports Park (Adelaide, Australia)

The Gepps Cross State Sports Park incorporates a unique urban arboretum known as the Foresters' Forest. This forest features 12 distinct woodland ecosystems planted by community groups, creating valuable ecological connections across the 100-hectare site. Signs provide orientation, trail and forest information and interpretation. The park also collaborates with Green Adelaide to promote revegetation and weed control, linking the park's natural features with surrounding green spaces.

More information

Managing invasive species

Invasive species can spread over large distances, disrupting ecosystems and outcompeting native flora and fauna. They may be introduced on club grounds — via landscaping materials, soil movement, equipment, or even the soles of shoes — and then spread beyond the venue, impacting the wider environment. Conversely, invasives introduced elsewhere can find their way onto club grounds, where they can take hold and cause substantial damage to playing surfaces.

- **Identification and knowledge**: Identify problematic invasive species using local resources or expert guidance.
- **Removal**: Organise removal initiatives with local conservation groups, providing training and tools for volunteers e.g. river cleanups and weeding.
- **Risk management**: Be aware of the risks and take preventative measures to stop the spread of invasive species — such as cleaning equipment, sourcing plants responsibly, and monitoring for early signs of invasion.

Pro tip

Replace invasive plants with fast-growing native species to prevent reinvasion and restore habitat quality quickly.

Protecting Trestles with Indigenous Leaders (California, USA)

The World Surf League (WSL) collaborated with Indigenous leaders and conservationists to protect the biodiversity of Trestles, a coastal area in Southern California. Key activities included removing invasive species like sea rocket to preserve native habitats. This initiative also restored Indigenous tule harvesting traditions and raised awareness about the ecological and cultural significance of the San Mateo Creek watershed.

More information

© World Surf League

Organising community cleanups

It's essential for sports organisations to take measures to prevent littering both within and beyond their sites. The IOC Plastic Game Plan for Sport provides detailed guidance on how to reduce plastic pollution. Regular cleanups can enhance the area while fostering community pride.

- **Local partnerships**: Partner with schools, community groups, and conservation organisations to recruit volunteers.
- **Gamification and rewards**: Offer incentives, such as refreshments or recognition, to encourage participation.
- **Plogging**: Before and after races, combine warm-ups and cool-downs with litter collection (i.e. plogging) to leave the environment cleaner than before.
- **Safety and hygiene**: Provide cleanup supplies and ensure safety and hygiene by equipping participants with gloves, litter-picking tools, and hand sanitiser.

Pro tip

Add a fun twist to cleanup events by incorporating friendly competitions, such as prizes for the most collected litter or the most unique item found.

Orlando Magic (Orlando, USA)

The Orlando Magic kicked off their sustainability efforts with a community cleanup in Orlando's Parramore neighbourhood, partnering with PureCycle Technologies. Volunteers from both organisations collected plastic waste to prevent it from entering local waterways. This initiative marked the start of a broader partnership to reduce plastic waste at the Amway Centre and educate the community about recycling and sustainability

More information

© NBA.com

Avoiding ecologically sensitive areas

Some natural areas are highly sensitive to human activity, such as bird nesting sites, rare plant habitats, and wetlands (which are also present in the urban context). Disturbance in these zones can lead to species decline and habitat degradation. Sports events and activities should avoid these areas or at least, measures should be taken to minimise their negative impacts on nature.

- **Locating sensitive zones**: Use expert advice from conservation organisations, ecologists, or local authorities.
- **Redirecting activity**: Use signage, fencing, or designated viewing points to steer spectators and participants away from fragile areas.
- **Monitoring movement**: Employ tools like mobile data tracking to assess crowd behaviour and refine your mitigation strategies.
- **Offering alternatives**: Create engaging spaces like fan zones with big screens to minimise pressure on natural areas.

Pro tip

Incorporate educational signage in non-sensitive areas to raise awareness about local wildlife and explain why some areas are off-limits.

2024 UCI Gravel World Championships (Flanders, Belgium)

The 2024 UCI Gravel World Championships in Flanders prioritised biodiversity protection, as the race passed through sensitive Natura 2000-protected forests. To minimise ecological damage, organisers redirected spectators away from fragile habitats by setting up fan zones with big screens, strategically placed so fans could see riders pass multiple times. A mobile data tracking system was used to measure crowd movement in the forests, comparing attendance before, during, and after the event to assess the impact. This innovative approach helped reduce trampling, noise, and disruption to wildlife, demonstrating coexistence with nature.

More information

4.4 Education, promotion and advocacy

Building on the principles of stakeholder engagement and partnership development outlined earlier, this section explores how education, promotion and advocacy can help you significantly extend the reach and impact of your conservation efforts.

Educating stakeholders on site

Your venue can become a dynamic hub for environmental education and community engagement – a living classroom that inspires awe for the natural world while flexing your club's sustainability credentials.

- **Signage:** Install informative signs about native species, green roofs, or habitat restoration efforts. Use engaging visuals and QR codes to link to deeper information or interactive activities.
- **Nature walks:** Organise guided tours led by conservation experts or local ecologists to showcase your club's natural assets and conservation efforts.
- **Exhibition garden:** Dedicate a small area to a garden featuring native plants, complete with labels and information about their ecological role.

Pro tip

Design hands-on activities like plant-your-own wildflower seed kits or birdhouse-building workshops to deepen engagement.

Mullingar Shamrocks Rewilding, (Mullingar, Ireland)

Mullingar Shamrocks Gaelic Athletic Association Club in Ireland has installed biodiversity signs along walking routes, educating visitors about local flora and fauna. The club also created native wildflower gardens to enrich habitats for pollinators. To engage younger audiences, they organised treasure hunts and nature walks, fostering awareness and appreciation of local biodiversity.

More information

Wimbledon, Tennis in an English Garden (London, UK)

The All England Lawn Tennis Club, home of The Championships, has and is delivering biodiversity enhancements across its estate, linking these to Wimbledon's unique history and English garden setting. The grounds feature a mix of ornamental and native planting, a mosaic of habitats, which include wildflowers, living walls, green and brown roofs, along with a Centre Court-themed bug hotel. These biodiversity features all deliver nature awareness and education opportunities.

More information

Rallying your supporters

By tapping into the loyalty and energy of your supporters through fun and accessible initiatives, you can foster a deeper connection with nature and inspire meaningful conservation action.

- **Mascots and crests**: Use native species as mascots or club/event crests to create a playful yet meaningful connection to local biodiversity. If you already have a plant or animal as your mascot, team up with a dedicated conservation organisation on their protection.
- **Campaigns**: Host biodiversity-themed match days with activities like pop-up exhibits, quizzes, or meet-the-expert sessions.
- **Restoration projects**: Involve fans in habitat restoration, such as tree planting or invasive species removal, creating memorable and impactful experiences.
- **Citizen science**: Promote and use tools like iNaturalist, encouraging fans to record species observations at your venue or in their neighbourhoods.

Pro tip

Run biodiversity challenges on social media, encouraging fans to share photos of local wildlife or sustainable actions.

Nature Based Blades (Sheffield, UK)

In 2024, the Sheffield United FC Community Foundation launched 'Nature Based Blades'. This 3-year community project provides sustainability education to secondary school students in Sheffield via workshops, accredited qualifications, and hands-on nature-based solutions like vegetable gardens and green spaces.

More information

Advocating for nature

Use your platform to advocate for broader urban greening initiatives.

- **Policy advocacy**: Collaborate with other organisations to advocate for policies that promote nature recovery in your local area.
- **Event advocacy**: Dedicate moments during sports events to raise awareness, such as halftime videos highlighting threatened species or habitat loss.
- **Campaign alignment**: Partner with national or global campaigns to scale your advocacy efforts.

© Mission Hills

Pro tip

Publish annual nature impact reports to demonstrate your organisation's leadership and inspire others to follow suit.

Mission Hills Ecological Sports Centre (Shenzhen, China)

Mission Hills blends sports with biodiversity advocacy by promoting environmental education and awareness. With botanical gardens, nature-focused attractions, and green art installations, the centre inspires eco-conscious behaviour among visitors. Mission Hills regularly publishes information about its conservation efforts.

More information

Case studies

5.1 Greening the Gaelic Games

Mullingar Shamrocks GAA is redefining what it means to be a community sports club in the 21st century. Through bold leadership and a clear commitment to sustainability, the club has transformed its grounds into a thriving ecological hub, enhancing biodiversity, strengthening community ties, and promoting environmental stewardship.

At the heart of this transformation are two carefully curated wildflower meadows, now home to native flora such as bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). These meadows provide vital habitat for pollinators including bees, butterflies, and hoverflies, contributing to broader efforts to halt insect declines. The club has also eliminated pesticide use, switching to natural, vinegar-based alternatives – a decision that supports healthier soils, safeguards local watercourses, and ensures safer play environments.

In parallel, the club developed a biodiversity walking route, complete with interpretive signage in Irish, English, and Latin. This immersive trail not only enriches the visitor experience but also serves as an informal outdoor classroom, reinforcing ecological literacy across age groups. Installations such as bat boxes, bug hotels, and a sensory garden, further enhance the site's ecological functionality and social value.

One of the club's most celebrated additions is its Olympic-ring-inspired sensory garden and barefoot path, designed to support mental well-being through multi-sensory interaction with nature. This feature has proven especially popular with local schools, disability advocacy groups, and retiree associations, who now regularly visit and engage with the site.

Youth engagement has also been a standout success. The club's mascot, 'Shambee', was co-designed through a children's art competition and now serves as a playful ambassador for biodiversity, helping to instil environmental values among younger generations.

By embracing nature-based solutions, Mullingar Shamrocks GAA has enhanced habitat diversity, boosted ecosystem services such as air and water purification, and helped future-proof club facilities against environmental risks – all while deepening community pride and participation.

Organisation
Mullingar Shamrocks GAA

Scale
Grounds, Neighbourhood, Education

Elements of Urban Nature

Habitat patch size
Connectivity
Habitat Diversity
Native Vegetation
Special Resources
Wildlife-Friendly Management

Co-benefits

Beautifying Venues
Bringing Communities Together
Purifying Air & Water
Future-Proofing Venues
More Info

© Joan Crawford

5.2 The Pursuit of Landscape and Biodiversity Greatness

Wimbledon is renowned for its world-class tennis and being the only grand slam played on grass, but also, for its dedication to environmental stewardship. The AELTC is working hard to embed biodiversity and environmental sustainability into its operations, protecting, creating and managing the integration of a mosaic of habitats across the estate, both on the historic venue at SW19, home of The Championships and on their other sites.

A key feature of the Wimbledon experience is "Tennis in an English Garden", a beautifully curated space where fragrant flowers create a stunning sensory experience for players and spectators. The floral displays are integral to what gives Wimbledon it's unique charm, but behind the ornamental English garden planting you will have seen shift in native and biodiversity focused planting and habitat creation.

Across its grounds, AELTC has introducing wildflower banks, green and brown roofs, and living walls to enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, aid cooling and help to mitigate the potential of flooding from the increased risk of high rain fall events. The recently delivered Technology Services and Broadcast Pavilion buildings now feature green and brown roofs, while the No.1 Court boasts a striking living wall buzzing with pollinators. These elements contribute so much to the overall Wimbledon experience, giving an environmental boost to the well-being of athletes and spectators alike.

Beyond the tournament site, the AELTC's impact extends into the local community. The Community Tennis Centre in nearby Raynes Park (before and after photos below) features a mosaic of habitats including swales and a pond (a mini-wetland), native hedgerows and wildflower meadows. On the adjacent Wimbledon Park, a former golf course, the club has harvested thousands of acorns from ancient and veteran oaks. Over 600 of these young trees have already been donated to the local Boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth, with the remainder being nurtured in nurseries for future replanting.

Bee hives, an annual programme of seasonal nature weekends, nature themes player interaction and the delivery of bug hotels, including a Centre Court-themed one further demonstrate Wimbledon's commitment to fostering urban biodiversity across its estate, improve awareness and inspiring wider action on a local, national and global stage.

Looking ahead, Wimbledon aims to achieve more than 10% biodiversity net gain by 2030, expanding green infrastructure, phasing out peat-based compost, and enhancing community engagement. By blending sport with ecological innovation, Wimbledon is setting a gold standard for sustainable sporting venues.

Organisation
The All-England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC)

Scale
Building, Grounds, Neighbourhood, Education

Elements of Urban Nature

- Habitat Patch Size
- Connectivity
- Matrix Quality
- Habitat Diversity
- Native Vegetation
- Special Resources
- Wildlife Friendly Management

Co-benefits

- Beautifying Venues
- Bringing Communities Together
- Purifying Air & Water
- Future-Proofing Venues
- More Info

© AELTC

5.3 A Sustainable Sport Oasis in Los Angeles

SoFi Stadium, home to the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Chargers, stands as a model for sustainable modern sports infrastructure. At the heart of SoFi Stadium's sustainability efforts is Lake Park, a six-acre artificial lake that captures and recycles stormwater, reducing runoff and pressure on the city's water system. The lake, complemented by natural wetlands and mechanical filtration systems, irrigates 25 acres of green space, conserving nearly 26 million gallons of potable water annually. Surrounding this oasis, native plant species restore lost habitats, encouraging the return of pollinators and native wildlife.

The stadium also incorporates three landscaped terraces, or 'canyons', reflecting California's diverse ecosystems. Each canyon — desert, montane, and chaparral — features flora suited to its microclimate, ensuring efficient water use while providing shaded, inviting spaces for fans and visitors. An open-air concourse eliminates the need for excessive air conditioning, reducing energy consumption while allowing natural ventilation to cool the venue.

The integration of nature at SoFi Stadium extends beyond aesthetics. The venue's landscape reduces urban heat, mitigates stormwater flooding, and sequesters carbon, with its 5,000+ native trees absorbing approximately 109 tonnes of CO_2 annually. The stadium's self-sufficient irrigation system lowers maintenance costs while ensuring year-round greenery, enhancing the game-day experience for fans.

SoFi Stadium redefines the modern sports venue. By working with, rather than against, the grain of nature, the stadium enhances its natural surroundings and future-proofs itself against climate challenges.

Organisation
SoFi Stadium

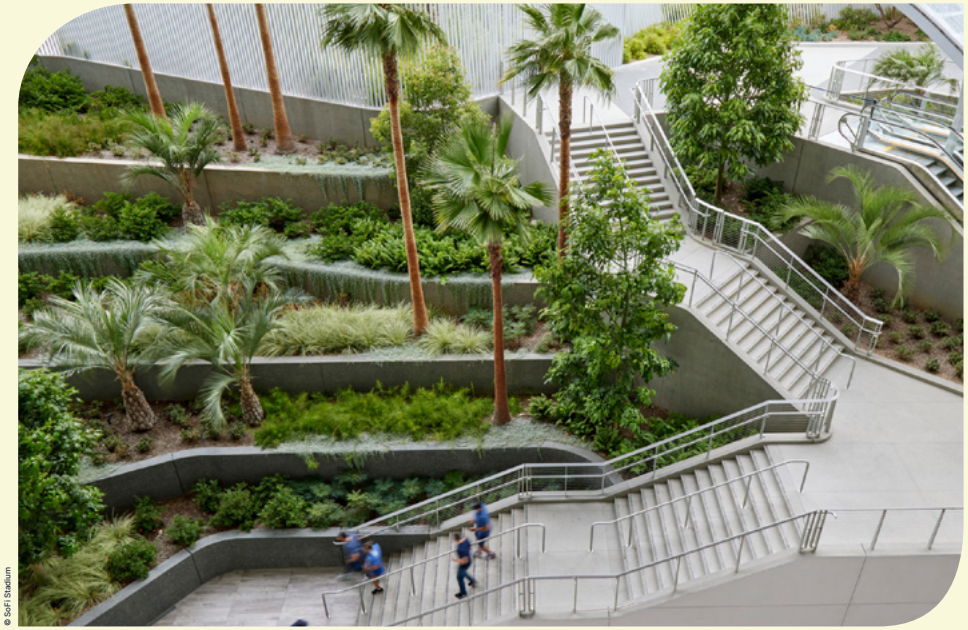
Scale
Grounds, Building, Neighbourhood

Elements of Urban Nature

- Habitat patch size
- Connectivity
- Matrix Quality
- Habitat Diversity
- Special Resources
- Wildlife-Friendly Management

Co-benefits

- Beautifying Venues
- Keeping the Field Playable
- Purifying Air & Water
- Future-Proofing Venues
- More Info



© SoFi Stadium

5.4 Where Wolves Roam, Nature Thrives

VfL Wolfsburg has established itself as a pioneer in integrating biodiversity into professional football. As the first Bundesliga club to conduct a biodiversity assessment, it has developed a comprehensive action plan that embeds nature into its stadium operations, training grounds, and surrounding community.

A flagship initiative is the VfL Forest, a long-term reforestation project that has planted over 2,000 native trees in Wolfsburg's urban forest. The project actively involves fans, players, and local authorities, strengthening community engagement in conservation efforts. Supporting this initiative, the local energy and utility provider, Landschaftsverband Wolfsburg (LSW), donates one euro per kilometre run by the team to fund future reforestation.

At the Volkswagen Arena, Wolfsburg has significantly reduced water consumption by irrigating pitches with 11 million litres of reclaimed greywater annually and installing water-saving fixtures throughout the venue. In an industry-leading move, the club has also introduced microplastic filtration technology to prevent synthetic particles from artificial pitches and training gear from polluting local waterways — directly benefiting water quality and aquatic ecosystems.

Beyond infrastructure, Wolfsburg embeds sustainability into its culture through education and advocacy. As one of the early signatories of the Sports for Nature Framework, the club champions environmental responsibility within the global sports industry.

Organisation
VfL Wolfsburg

Scale
Building, Grounds, Neighbourhood, Education

Elements of Urban Nature

- Habitat Patch Size
- Connectivity
- Matrix Quality
- Habitat Diversity
- Native Vegetation
- Wildlife-Friendly Management

Co-benefits

- Beautifying Venues
- Bringing Communities Together
- Purifying Air & Water
- Future-Proofing Venues
- More Info

© VfL Wolfsburg

6

Call to action

Sports organisations hold immense, often untapped potential to help create greener, healthier, and more biodiverse cities. From green stadium roofs to pollinator pathways and community gardens, their innovations can set high-profile examples that shift public norms and spark action across communities.

Supporting nature is a win-win: it enhances the health and appeal of venues, strengthens community ties, and builds climate resilience — while showcasing leadership on one of the most urgent challenges of our time.

The Sports for Nature: Urban Playbook is one of many practical tools to help unlock this potential. By adopting the S4N Framework, applying the Elements of Urban Nature, and learning from real-world examples case studies, sports organisations can turn urban nature into a source of pride – and a competitive edge both on and off the field.

Whether it's installing nest boxes, building rain gardens, or championing nature in schools and council chambers, every action contributes to tackling the ecological crisis. When aligned with a clear strategy and embraced across institutions, these actions become mutually reinforcing.

By placing conservation at the heart of your values and backing words with visible action, your organisation can lead a new kind of movement — one where athletes, fans, and entire communities come together not only to celebrate sport, but to champion nature.

Your call to action

- **Join the Sports for Nature Framework**: Make a formal commitment to championing nature through your infrastructure, operations and events.
- **Conduct a baseline assessment**: Evaluate your site through both desk-based research and on-site observation to understand its ecological potential.
- **Engage stakeholders**: Identify key partners — from local conservation groups to government agencies — and engage them in your action planning.
- **Make your moves**: Use the playbook to shape your "Nature Plan" or integrate measures into your existing sustainability and operational strategies. Define clear objectives, timelines, roles and responsibilities.
- **Mobilise support and expertise**: Leverage tools, case studies, and networks to set your conservation initiatives in motion.
- **Share your success stories**: Inspire others by showcasing your achievements and the lessons you've learned along the way.

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The examples featured in the Playbook are based on publicly available information and/or stakeholders' contribution referenced through corresponding hyperlinks.

About Sports for Nature
Sports for Nature is a joint initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Olympic Committee (IOC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy.

It aims to deliver transformative action for nature through sports, by 2030 and beyond, enabling sports to champion nature and contribute to its protection and restoration. It provides a game plan for sports – at all levels – to accelerate and inspire others to take action for nature.

Institutional partners

IUCN

International Olympic Committee

UN environment programme

Convention on Biological Diversity

Supported by

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Sports for Nature

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Sports for Nature

Join the Sports for Nature community

By committing to the Sports for Nature Framework, sport organisations join a community dedicated to leveraging sports towards the protection and restoration of nature. Contact the Sports for Nature team to learn more about the Framework and discuss how you can get involved.

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