

A photograph of a snowy winter landscape. In the upper right, a screech owl is perched on a dark branch, looking towards the left. The background is a soft, hazy sky. The foreground is filled with snow-covered branches and trees, creating a textured, white scene.

Wilder Wellbeing

- A GUIDE TO CONNECTING WITH NATURE -

The 5 ways to wellbeing

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Good for nature, good for you

Nature helps us to feel happier and healthier. Whether it's going outside to stretch your legs and get some fresh air, listening to the birds in your garden, or appreciating a winter landscape.

This booklet is packed full of ideas from the Wildlife Trusts to help you connect with nature, either at home or outdoors.

It's more important than ever that we look after ourselves and each other. As your local Wildlife Trust, we want to make sure that all our communities stay connected, stay happy and stay healthy, as well as protecting the natural world we all cherish so much.



The '5 ways to wellbeing' are a set of actions to help improve our personal wellbeing. Daily contact with nature is linked to better health, reduced stress levels and improved concentration

Be Active

Let mindfulness become wildness. A short local walk or some outdoor exercises can leave you with a clearer head and a sense of achievement.

Connect

Connecting with nature doesn't have to take place outside. We can add meaning and build an emotional connection to nature through art, cooking, writing - anything creative!

Give

Give back to nature and show compassion by doing something to help your local area, the wildlife and the people that live there.

Take Notice

Close your eyes and listen to the birds, notice the ducks in the local park. Using your senses to connect to nature can help manage stress and re-energise your busy mind.

Learn

The natural world is fascinating and offers so many opportunities to learn. Experience the 'wow' factor of discovering something new!

Be Active

ACTIVITIES



Exercising with nature

Exercising at this time of year always feels a bit easier. The days are longer, and the sun is strong, encouraging us to move away from the sofa and into something a bit more physical! Here's a few easy ways you can combine exercise with the outdoors.



Notice wildlife on a walk

One of the simplest ways to get moving is to go for a walk – it's good for your heart and even better for your mind!

You don't have to walk far, or visit a special place, to notice nature. Look for moss growing on garden walls, 'weeds' poking up through cracks, and urban butterflies and bees.



Yoga

Yoga has so many health and wellbeing benefits and is something that can be adapted for people of all abilities. Make it wild by trying a Youtube yoga lesson in your garden.

You can do this indoors too. Challenge yourself to trying nature inspired poses in your living room such as the 'tree', the 'snail', the 'pigeon', 'mountain pose' and the 'frog'!

Turn the page to find out more.



Go for a wild run

Many Wildlife Trusts nature reserves make great running spots. Grab your headphones or let the birds provide your soundtrack and head out

Always make sure that you follow Government guidance on social distancing, and only visit reserves close by. If you don't have a nature reserve near you, head to a local green space and explore.

“

Getting outside into nature can be fantastic for your health, both mental and physical; feeling the wind on your face and getting your blood pumping has numerous benefits. To take it one step further you could use your outdoor exercise to help support the environment too.

I often go Plogging, combining my jog with picking up any plastic or waste I see around me (while, of course, keeping good hand hygiene!). Not only does this help the planet, it gives me a greater sense of satisfaction once I've finished!



”
Zanna van Dijk
Fitness blogger

How to do wildlife yoga



wildlife
watch

You will need

- Some indoor or outdoor space
- A yoga mat (ideally)

What to do

You can make your yoga session a bit more 'wild' by trying out some of our wildlife poses!

Make sure to warm up and stretch properly when starting yoga, and always be careful to give yourself plenty of space.

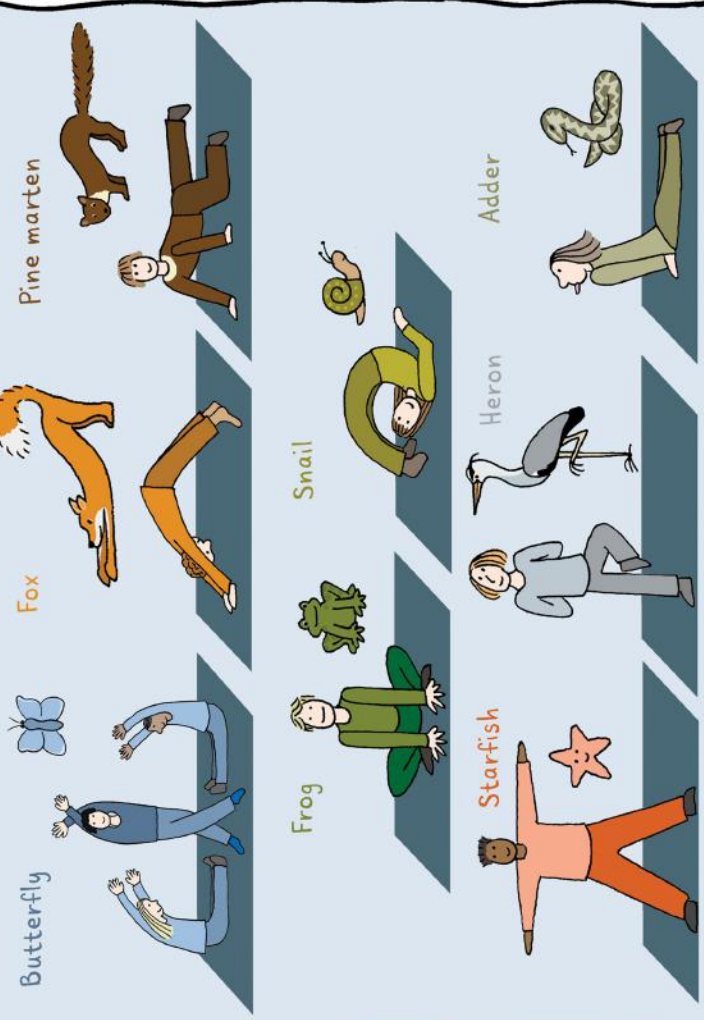


Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2020

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Workout with nature



wildlife
watch

Rather than going to the gym for some exercise, volunteer for a couple of hours on a local nature reserve or within your community. It's sociable and fun, and you'll burn those calories off too!



Helping others enjoy nature



Litter picking



Cutting back Rhododendron



Sow a wildflower meadow



Conduct a plant survey

Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2015

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Connect

ACTIVITIES



Wild workday from home



When you're working from home, it's often too easy to stay in front of a screen all day and never venture outdoors. To help you connect with nature, we've come up with some ways to achieve your daily dose! Whether you've got five minutes or an hour, there's plenty of ways you can make your day a little wilder!

Setting up your workplace

Set up your workstation so you're close to a window - this way, you'll have a front row seat to any wildlife action. It's also a great idea to bring the outside in, so if you have any houseplants pop them on your desk so that you've always got a bit of green in sight. And if you can, work outside - even if just for a short time! Then you can enjoy the sights, smells and sounds of nature. Working from home can be tough, so let's make the most of nature's little joys.

Starting the day wild

Take your breakfast into the garden or have a cup of tea while watching the world outside your window. Even if you live in an urban area, there will be little signs of wildlife - you might just need to work a little harder to see them. We promise it'll be worth the effort!



If you've got five minutes

If you don't feel like you can step away from your screen but need a little breather, check out a Wildlife Trust webcam. You can watch peregrine falcons, badgers and puffins going about their daily business, or simply observe the calming landscape of a nature reserve. However, if you do want to take a moment outside, this is a good time to close your eyes and listen to the bees buzzing and birds singing.

If you've got half an hour

It's most likely your lunch break! So, why not make it a picnic? Grab a blanket and head to your favourite outside space - getting some fresh air in the middle of the workday can really help a productive afternoon. Take it a step further and try some outdoor exercise, such as a run, a walk, or a quick bike ride and get those endorphins flowing.



If you've got an hour

Explore a bit further at lunchtime or after work and notice the wildlife around you. You may live in a built-up neighbourhood, but if you're looking for it, you'll be surprised at how much you see. Challenge yourself by choosing a colour before you head out and seeing what you can spot in nature of that colour. Is it a yellow day? You might see flowers, or the stripe of a bee, the breast of a blue tit and if you're lucky, a butterfly!

The most important part of staying connected to nature while you're working from home is **nurturing your own health and wellbeing**. Being outdoors and experiencing local wildlife can have a **calming effect** and instantly make you feel **refreshed**. Also, take the opportunity to connect with colleagues or customers by sharing your nature moments by email or social media.



Get crafting



Indoor and outdoor crafts are great ways to express yourself and bring out your wild side. They can also benefit wildlife, providing them with a meal or a home to live. We've got some ideas for you to try,

Build a toad abode



Despite their ancient associations with witches and warty appearance, these lovely amphibians are a gardener's best friend, feeding on slugs and snails. This is an activity for the whole family requiring adult supervision, and creations can range from practical, no-fuss toad houses to havens fit for fairies!

What to do

1. The first thing you need to do is create an entryway to your toad home! Here's 3 ways to do this:
 - a. Lay your pot horizontally so that it's half dug into the ground, half out, creating a cave.
 - b. Carve a doorway in an upturned pot - this is much easier with a plastic pot! If you are using clay pot, it may be easier to 'smash' a section of the rim creating an entryway. Be careful!
 - c. Upturn your pot on to a circle of rocks and make the doorway by removing one or two of the rocks.

2. Once you've got your entryway sorted, you can start decorating. This is the really fun bit, so get creative!

3. Pick a shady spot close to a water source in your garden for your toad abode.

4. If your pot is big enough, dig it slightly into the ground to prevent it falling over. If not, then place your heavy rock or brick on top.

5. Wait for your residents to move in!



You will need

1. An old plant-pot (any material will work, but clay pots are cooler in summer)
2. A heavy rock or brick
3. Materials for decorating, this can be whatever you have laying around! Here's some ideas:
 - o Paint or markers
 - o Glue gun
 - o Moss
 - o Shells
 - o Lollipop sticks for a makeshift picket-fence or for constructing a 'welcome' sign



“ Sometimes it's nice to just switch off and get crafty... I love combining my love of nature with being creative, and it's even better when you can help wildlife in the process! ”



Jo, crafter

Getting started with nature writing



Nature is inspiring. Whether it's the pink explosion of a blossoming tree, the lilting song of a robin or the flickering flight of a butterfly, there are so many wild moments that spark emotions and inspire creativity. We've pulled together some tips to help you channel your creativity into writing.

Write for yourself

Nature writing doesn't have to be fancy or poetic. It's not necessarily about writing something for others to read and enjoy (though that's an added bonus), it's about writing for yourself as a way of connecting with nature and remembering a special experience. Write for fun and if you're happy with the result, then you can think about sharing it with other wildlife lovers, like the 30 Days Wild Facebook Group.

Make a journal

A good way to get started is with a nature journal. Take it a day at a time, writing about something wild you experienced that day. It could be factual, just listing things you saw and what they were doing; descriptive, setting the scene and telling a story; or emotional, sharing your thoughts and feelings about nature. Or a combination of all of these! Get even more creative by adding drawings or sticking in wild finds like leaves and feathers.

Record your notes

You never know when creativity will strike, so it's always a good idea to have somewhere to jot down ideas wherever you are, and especially when you're out in nature. Slip a small notebook and a pen into your bag or pocket, or in a pinch use your phone to note things down when inspiration seizes you.



Try a different style

Challenge yourself by experimenting with how you write, testing different styles. Pen poems about nature, create stories from an animal's perspective, write diary-style entries about your own wild experiences, or research for an essay on a particular species or behaviour.



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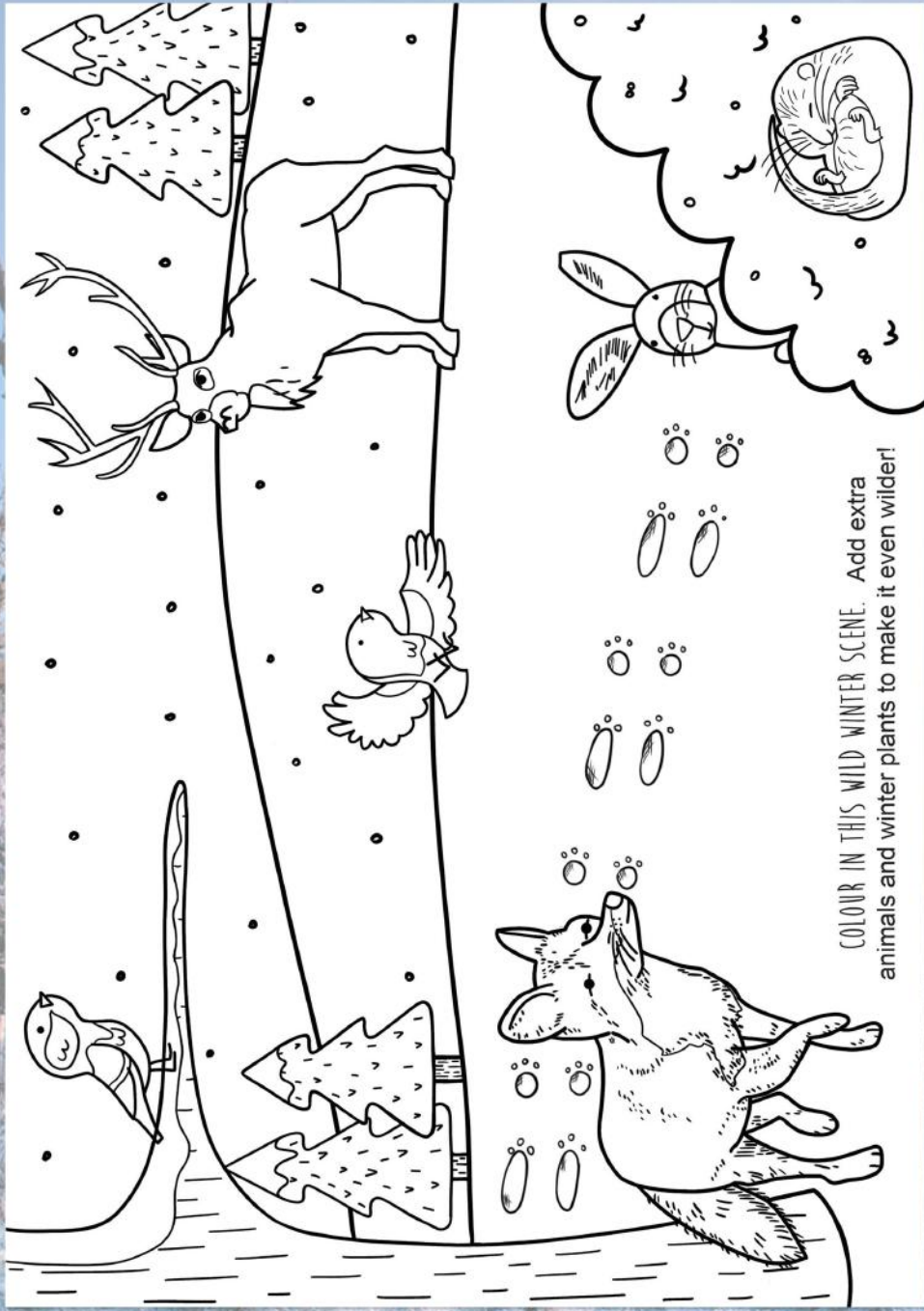
Your own unique perspective is vital when it comes to writing about the natural world. Don't feel you have to fit a certain mould, or relate to nature in a particular way. What do you really think and feel?

”



Melissa Harrison, nature writer





COLOUR IN THIS WILD WINTER SCENE. Add extra animals and winter plants to make it even wilder!

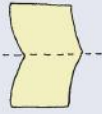
Make a butterfly painting



You will need

- Water-based paints
- Brushes
- Pastel coloured sugar paper
- Marker pen
- Plenty of newspaper (to cover tables!)

1 Fold a piece of sugar paper in half, side to side, and open it out.



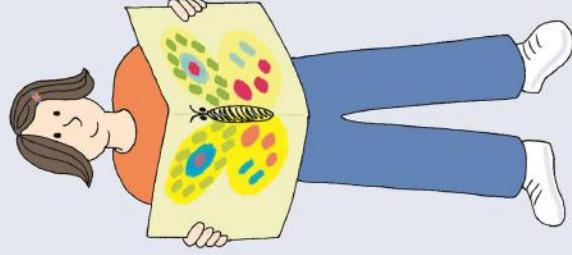
2 Paint the shape of butterfly wings on one half. Fold the paper over again and press it down.



3 Open out the paper and add more colours to one side. Refold and press.



4 When the butterfly wings are dry, add a body and antennae with a marker pen.



© Corinne Welch, 2015

Make a wild berry crumble

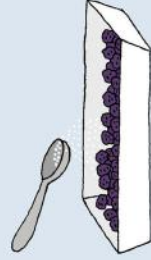
You will need:

- 450g handpicked ripe berries.
- 2 tablespoons caster sugar
- 225g plain flour
- 150g soft brown sugar
- 75g butter (soft)
- 1 level teaspoon baking powder
- Mixing bowl
- Ovenproof dish
- Oven gloves

1 go out on an adventure picking berries.

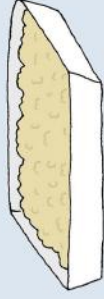


2 Wash the berries and arrange in a shallow ovenproof dish. Sprinkle with the caster sugar.



Remember to get help from an adult when doing this activity.

3 Mix the remaining ingredients together between your fingers until it goes all crumbly. Sprinkle the crumble mixture on top of the fruit.



4 Bake in the oven at 180C / 350F / Gas 4 for 30–40 minutes



5 Leave the crumble somewhere safe to stand and cool down. Ask an adult to check before tucking in. Enjoy!



Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2015

How to make ice decorations

You will need:

- Saucers
- Kettle
- Boiled water that has been allowed to cool
- Natural items like leaves, feathers, berries and grass
- String or wool
- A freezer (if the weather isn't cold enough!)

1 Place your saucers on a flat surface and put the end of your string into the saucer, making sure a long piece is left dangling over the edge.



2 Lay natural items in the saucer over the string.



3 Gently pour in cooled water (boiling it first helps to remove any bubbles).



4 Put the saucers outside on a frosty night (or in the freezer).



5 In the morning put the saucers in a tub of cold water to separate the ice.



6 Hang them around your garden as decorations.



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Give ACTIVITIES



Make a deluxe hedgehog house



You will need

- 20mm FSC plywood boards cut to the sizes shown
- Hammer and nails
- 2 metal hinges
- Soil
- Dry leaves
- Straw or dry grass
- Newspapers
- Polythene sheeting

Birch is ideal

1 Construct the hedgehog house from the following diagram and dimensions.

2 Put the newspaper and straw or dry grass inside, cover the house with polythene sheeting, then pack soil and dead leaves around the outside.

The roof is hinged so you can clean the box in future

Make sure the entrance tunnel faces south, and is kept clear at all times

raised up on feet

Do not creosote or treat the wood

©Corinne Welch, 2015



How to make your own bird feeder



What you need:

- dry ingredients
 - bird seed
 - dried fruit
 - cooked rice
 - bread crumbs
 - grated cheese
 - chopped nuts

- hard cooking fat (lard or suet)

- a pine cone, coconut shell or yoghurt pot



Use an old yoghurt pot for this, and always recycle after it's been used

- string



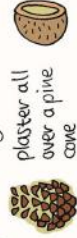
- 1 Mix all the dry ingredients together in a bowl



- 2 Add the fat and give it a good mix around

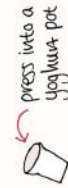
If you need to melt the fat, ask an adult to help

- 3 Choose your feeder



plaster all over a pine cone

put it round the inside of a coconut shell



press into a yoghurt pot like a bell or turn it out like a cake

- 4 Hang your feeders with string (you may need to make holes and tie the string in before adding the mix)



Hang your feeder where you can watch birds without disturbing them



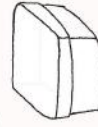
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How to build a mini wildlife pond



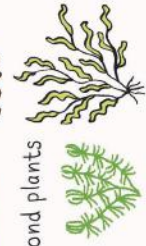
You will need:



- a watertight container*



- old bricks, rocks and pebbles



- pond plants

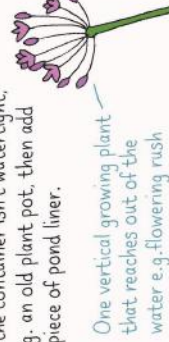


- spade

* Is there anything that you can upcycle? It could be an old washing-up bowl, sink or even a plant pot. Aim for 20-30cm deep.

- 1 Choose a spot. Your pond will need light, but not full sunlight all day. You can dig a hole and sink your container, or just have it sitting on top.

- 2 If the container isn't watertight, e.g. an old plant pot, then add a piece of pond liner.



- 3 Add a layer of gravel and rocks.
- 4 Fill your pond with rainwater (tap water contains chemicals).
- 5 Start planting... you only need two or three plants.
- 6 Now watch and wait! Wildlife will come to your pond of its own accord.



Use logs or stones to create a range of depths and a slope for creatures to climb in and out

One submerged plant e.g. hornwort or spiked water milfoil

Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2019 and Royal Horticultural Society 2019

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Don't introduce frogs, fish or even water from another pond as this can spread disease.



How to make an insect hotel



the express way!

What you need:

- hollow plant stems, like bamboo canes
- twigs and sticks
- string

- 1 Collect handfuls of stems, twigs and sticks.
- 2 Tie the bundles quite tightly in two places.

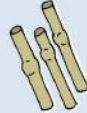
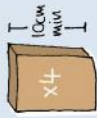
- 3 Post into a hedge / bush or hang in a sheltered place.



the deluxe way!

What you need:

- Small logs or untreated timber
 - hollow plant stems, like bamboo canes
 - twigs and sticks
- An adult to help with tools:
- wood saw
 - nails and hammer or screwdriver and wood screws
 - drill and 5mm wood bit



- 1 Make a wooden frame, fixing the wood with screws or nails.
- 2 Fill the frame with stems, twigs and sticks.
- 3 Fix a wire loop to the back of the frame and hang somewhere sheltered.



Illustration: Cornne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Truists 2015

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Go on a litter pick or beach clean



You will need:

- an adult helper
- a group of friends (optional but useful!)
- thick gardening gloves
- strong bin bags
- brightly coloured clothes (for visibility near roads)
- suitable footwear (sturdy boots for rocky beaches)



Ask an adult to take you on a litter pick or beach clean.

Ask an adult if you're not sure whether to pick something up.

Things to avoid

- broken glass
- sharp objects
- dog poo bags
- anything dirty or dangerous
- large or heavy rubbish
- bottles of liquid



carrier bags



empty bottles



cigarette butts



empty cans



fishing net

Try not to overfill bags to avoid splitting.

You could try separating litter into different bags for recycling.



bits of plastic



crisp packets or wrappers



paper

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Take notice

ACTIVITIES



Nature photography



Taking photos of wildlife and wild places is lots of fun. You don't need a fancy camera with a big long lens to do it, either. Even a compact camera or phone camera can take some great photographs. Here some tips to get started.

The little things

Insects and plants make wonderful subjects for photographs. You can find them in almost any outdoor space, so there is always plenty of choice

Unlike most birds and mammals, if you are careful you can get right up to insects to take a photo without frightening them away.

Start off with beetles first, as they're less likely to fly away than butterflies!

Get low

For really cool photos, try showing the world from the wildlife's point of view!

Get down low so your camera is eye level with the creature you want to photograph.

Look at the bark of a tree or any nooks and crannies you can see within nature. Insects like cold, damp, protected spaces.

For the best light, try to make sure the sun is behind you.

Do some research

Learn as much as you can about an animal you want to photograph. What habitat does it like? What does it eat? The more you know, the better your chances of photographing it. By knowing what caterpillars, like this puss moth caterpillar, like to eat, you can search them out!



The rule of thirds

This one's a bit tricky, but can really help make your photos more exciting. Instead of always putting your subject in the middle, try putting it slightly to one side for a change. Imagine that your photo is split up into nine equal sections, separated by lines.

Put the most interesting part of your photo in a spot where two of the lines cross over each other. Check out this photo of a speckled wood butterfly for an example. For added impact, try to make sure your animal is facing towards the centre of your photograph.



“

To be consistent as a wildlife photographer you need plenty of time, dedication and patience. Learning as much as you can about your subject: behaviours, light and weather conditions, can all help you capture that award-winning image.

”

Steve Race
Wildlife photographer








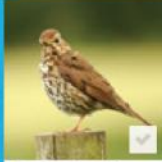






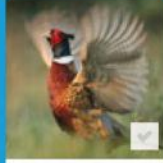









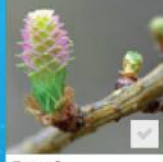



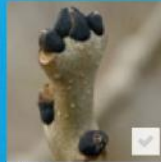


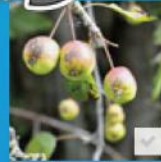



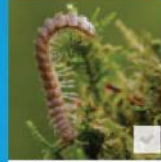









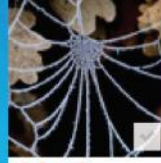






Spotting winter wildlife

Tick off the wildlife you see this winter

Download a poster of this page at wildlifetrusts.org/winterspotting



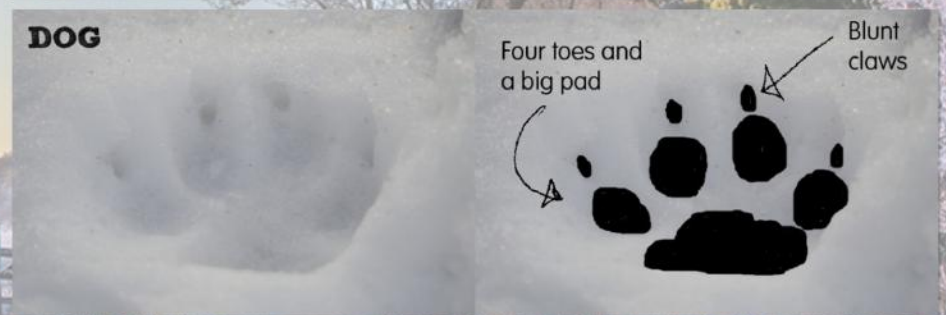
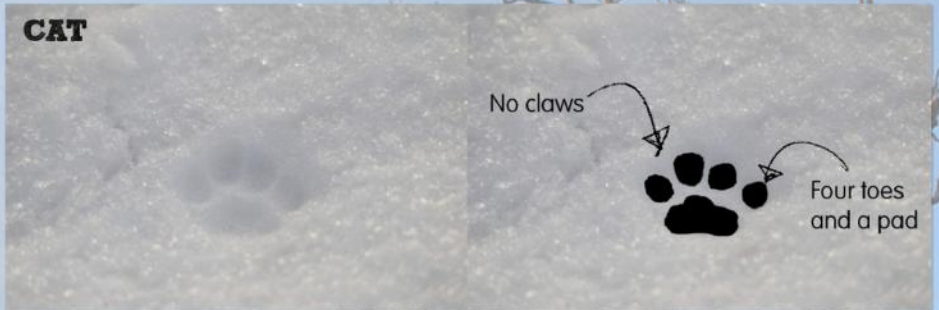
 Robin	 Blackbird	 Blue tit	 Great tit	 House sparrow
 Chaffinch	 Goldfinch	 Song thrush	 Starling	 Moorhen
 Coot	 Canada goose	 Mute swan	 Pochard	 Pheasant
 Teasel	 Pine cone	 Snowdrop	 Mistletoe	 Ivy
 Moss	 Lichen	 Bracket fungi	 Holly	 Larch

 Yew	 Ash tree	 Silver birch	 Rowan tree	 Crab apple
 Woodlouse	 Hibernating ladybirds	 Earthworm	 Millipede	 Snail
 Fallow deer	 Fox	 Grey squirrel	 Brown hare	 Badger
 Icicle	 Tree covered in frost	 Frozen pond	 Cobweb	 Snow
 Moon	 Empty bird's nest	 Rabbit hole	 Animal tracks	 Mole hill



Learn ACTIVITIES

IDENTIFY ANIMAL PRINTS IN THE SNOW (OR MUD!)



Winter nuts and berries



Yew berries



Acorns



Ivy berries



Conkers



Rose hips



Beech nuts



Holly berries



Crab apples



Rowan berries



Hawthorn berries

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Yew (c) Les Binns / Acorn, Ivy, Horse chestnut, Beech nuts and Rowan (d) northeastwildlife.co.uk / Holly, Rose hips, Crab apples and Hawthorn (c) Philip Precey

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Top tips to reduce your plastic use

In the bathroom



Swap your plastic toothbrush for a bamboo one.

Get rid of your exfoliating shower puffs and bottled shower gel. Use unpackaged bars of soap instead. You can also get solid shampoo and conditioner.



Check your cleaning products don't contain microbeads – avoid things containing polyethylene and polypropylene.

In the kitchen



Say no to cling film and use reusable Tupperware or beeswax wraps instead.

Kitchen sponges are made of plastic. Switch to a biodegradable option.

Make your own! Biscuits and other snacks usually come in throwaway plastic packaging.



Did you know clothes release microfibres when washed that go down the drain? Use shorter wash cycles or purpose-made microfibre-catching laundry bags.

Many teabags use plastics to seal the bags. Go for brands that are plastic-free or try loose-leaf!



Out and about



Do a little forward planning. Carry your own coffee cup, shopping bags and refillable water bottle. Go a step further by carrying your own cutlery, straws and food.



Food shopping? Choose loose produce over packaged and only buy what you need. Local greengrocers, community allotments or farmers' markets are often plastic free.



Having a take-away? When you're ordering over the phone ask to skip the cutlery or sauce sachets.

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