

FREE!

**HOBBY
POSTER**

**GIVE A
HOOT**

Get to know
tawny owls



**SUPER
SEAGRASS**

Discover underwater
meadows



Issue 98 **Summer 2021**

Wildlife watch



MAGAZINE



MAKING A SPLASH

Meet the squid-scoffing
Risso's dolphin

WANNABEES

The weird wildlife that pretends to be a bee!





Editor's corner

TOM HIBBERT
Editor, Wildlife Watch

Summer is here! The days are long and warm and full of wildlife, with plenty of exciting animals and amazing plants to discover.

In this issue, we explore two incredible wild places you can find in the UK. On page six, you can dive beneath the waves to discover seagrass meadows, the wonderful watery places where seahorses live. On page 12, you can find out all about our very own rainforests!

We've got plenty of animals to discover too, including tawny owls (page 20) and Risso's dolphins (page 22). Our 'Weird Nature' section (page 16) is all about animals that share their name with food, from strawberry anemones to marmalade hoverflies.

We love to hear about the wildlife you see on your adventures, so don't forget to send us your photos and stories!

Tom



GET IN TOUCH

Email us at: watch@wildlifetrusts.org

Ring us on: 01636 677711

Write to us at:
Wildlife Watch
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WildlifeWatchUK

WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers



SALT DOUGH SAFARI



It was great to see lots of Watch readers sharing photos of their salt dough creatures, using the 'Make your own...' guide in the winter issue of Wildlife Watch. Here are a few of the wonderful creations! Edward (aged 6) from Wiltshire made this amazing hedgehog (right), and Charles and Veronica (aged 6) from Oxfordshire created the whole safari worth of creatures you can see above!



NATURE RANGER

Adam (aged 12) from Yorkshire learnt all about hedgehogs as part of his Wildlife Watch Nature Ranger award. As well as discovering lots of fascinating facts, Adam came up with activities like baking hedgehog cakes. Here he is making a 'track trap' to see if any hedgehogs visit his garden.



MINIBEAST MANSION



Four-year-old Tom from Shropshire built this magnificent four-story bug hotel at the end of his garden. He used old pallets and garden waste, and even turned an old chimney pot into a hedgehog den. Amazing!



Temperate rainforest © Peter Cairns / 2020VISION

12



Red admiral butterfly by Watch reader Ava

16



Tawny owl © Margarita Holland

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WILDLIFE WATCH 98

Editor: Tom Hibbert

Editorial Team: Abi Paine, Joanna Richards, Leanne Smart, Mike Watson, Charlotte Varela



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What's Wildlife Watch?

Wildlife Watch is the junior branch of The Wildlife Trusts. Join Wildlife Watch and start your nature adventure. Prices range from £10-£24 per year for child-only membership and £30-£60 for family membership.

You'll receive a starter pack and four issues of Wildlife Watch magazine a year. This is

packed full of amazing pictures, posters and competitions. We also have a really wild website and e-newsletter full of wild ideas and nature-spotting tips. Plus you get access to local events and groups. Go to [wildlifewatch.org.uk](https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk) to find out more.

KEEP WATCHING!

Cover pic: Risso's dolphin © Chase Dekker-Mirnden / naturepi

The Science Section

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In every issue this year we'll be bringing you a fact-packed science section, sharing recent discoveries about weird and wonderful wildlife and explaining the meaning of some scientific words.

WILD WORDS

Impress your friends with new words from the world of wildlife science!

DNA

(pronounced dee-en-ay)

DNA is short for deoxyribonucleic acid. It is a molecule found in living things that works like an instruction manual, telling the body how to grow and function. Scientists can learn lots from a sample of DNA, including what species the sample came from.

ELYTRA

(pronounced el-eye-tra)

The wing cases of a beetle. When beetles aren't flying, the elytra cover the wings and protect them. When it's time to fly, they pop up and the hind wings come out. A single elytra is called an elytron.

CETACEAN

(pronounced se-tay-shun)

A member of the group of aquatic mammals commonly called whales, dolphins and porpoises. These animals are all grouped into the order Cetacea (se-tay-shuh).

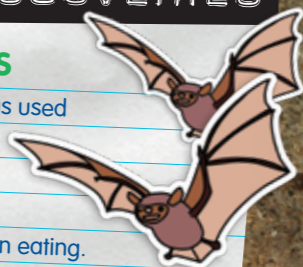
RECENT DISCOVERIES

MOTH MUNCHERS

A recent study has used the poo of barbastelle

bats to figure out what these rare bats have been eating.

The scientists identified the DNA of 120 different prey items in the bats' poo, and almost all of them were moths. By finding out what the bats like to eat, we can figure out the best way to protect them.



Barbastelle bats love to eat moths like this dun-bar

CLEVER GULLS

Have you ever seen gulls hanging out around your school? Scientists in Bristol

have discovered that gulls are more likely to visit school grounds during lunchtime and morning break, when pupils are having lunch or eating snacks. The gulls have learnt that this is the best time to find scraps to eat! As part of their study, the scientists put tiny backpacks with GPS trackers on 12 lesser black-backed gulls, to record their movements.



YOUR STORIES



Hansel the hedgehog

by Sophie (aged 8)

We fostered a hedgehog from a rescue centre. Hansel the hedgehog was found as a hoglet with his sister – they were both very cold. Unfortunately, his sister died on the first day at the rescue centre. After a little bit, Hansel came to stay with us.

Our first time weighing Hansel was very funny. After escaping from the pot where we were weighing him, he ran past me so close that his furry face and spikes brushed against my leg. Hedgehog faces are so soft, but they look wiry. Then he passed beneath the sofa but eventually daddy

"I saw a little dark shape galloping towards us..."

caught him. We started weighing him in a higher-walled box, but then Hansel weed in it so that box had to be replaced by another high-walled pot.



Eventually he reached the summer release weight – 500g. He was heavy enough to go back into the wild! We released him in our garden. We saw him eating

some insects and spitting on his spines, which has something to do with smelling. We sometimes saw him in our garden after his release and on the night

when we released our next hedgehog, Magnus, daddy saw Hansel and Magnus. One night when we were in the garden, I saw a little dark shape galloping towards us. It was Hansel looking for his mince!

The rats in our garden called Paws, Jaws and Claws all eat some of Hansel's mince, but they are terrified of Hansel. We have seen Tony, one of our winter-fostered hedgehogs, managing to get a cat away from him. Phoenix, our first foster hedgehog, was not especially pleased when she was weighed. We have seen Hansel in his new house in the garden which looks nice and cozy for hibernation. Ginger, one of our guinea pigs was fascinated by Hansel and squeaked to him on her way outside to the guinea pig run. We also saw Hansel when we camped in the garden.

THANK YOU to Sophie!

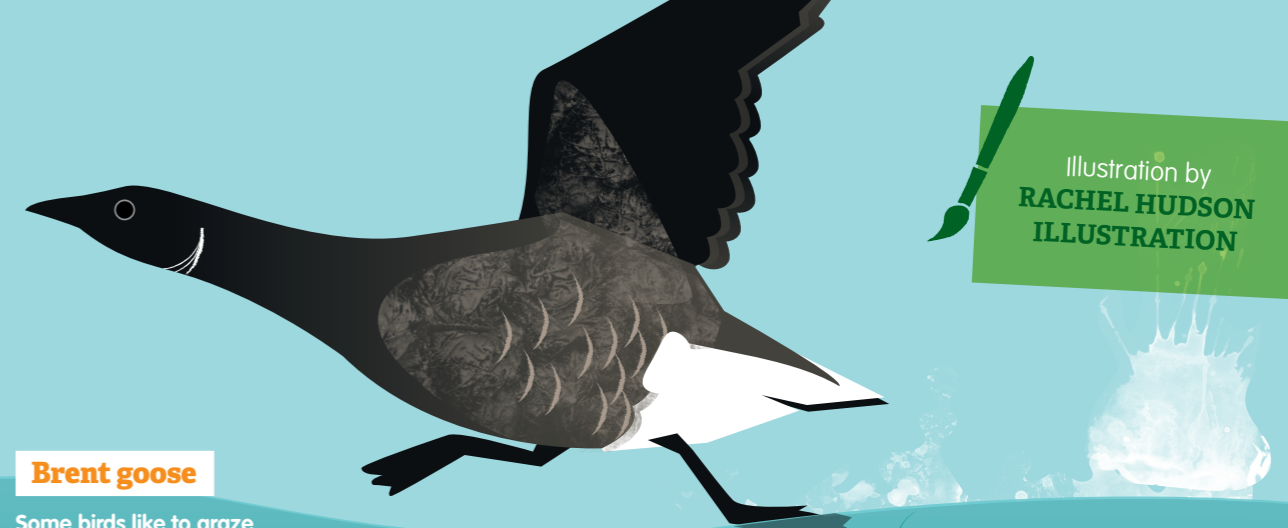
Do you want to write for the magazine? Send your stories and ideas to watch@wildlifetrusts.org!

SEAGRASS SECRETS

Seagrasses are the only flowering plants in the UK that can live in the sea and pollinate underwater. Because they need lots of sunlight, they're found in clear, shallow water around the coast. Just like grass on land, seagrasses can grow in big meadows that are home to lots of wildlife. They also help fight climate change by taking in carbon from the water.

Let's meet some of the creatures that hide in the seagrass!

Illustration by
RACHEL HUDSON
ILLUSTRATION



Brent goose

Some birds like to graze on seagrass at low tide. Brent geese come to the UK for winter and gather in large flocks around seagrass meadows.



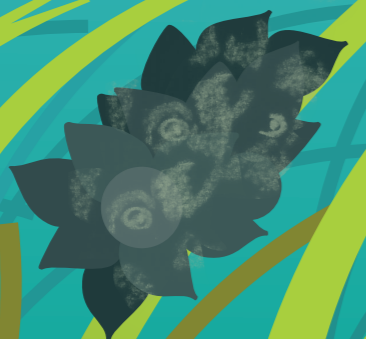
Nudibranch

Also known as sea slugs, these colourful creatures munch on algae and other things that live on the seagrass.



Snakelocks anemone

These anemones stick to the seagrass and catch passing prey with their stinging tentacles.



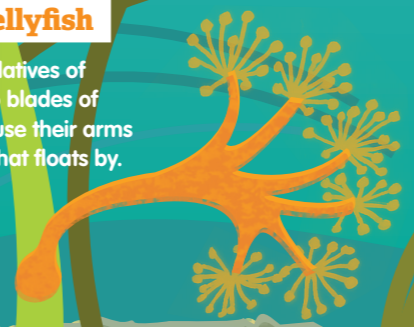
Corkwing wrasse

Some wonderfully colourful fish live in our seas, like this corkwing wrasse!



Long-snouted seahorse

Did you know we have two species of seahorse in the UK? There's the long-snouted (or spiny) seahorse and the short-snouted seahorse. They use their tail to cling to seagrass blades.



Stalked jellyfish

These weird relatives of jellyfish stick to blades of seagrass and use their arms to catch food that floats by.



Cuttlefish

Colour-changing cuttlefish lay their eggs in seagrass meadows. Females attach clumps of black eggs (known as sea grapes) to the leaves.



Plaice

Seagrass meadows are a safe space for young fish to grow up, including flatfish like this plaice.

WALKING IS WONDERFUL! Not only is it a great way to spot wildlife, it's also good exercise and helps to make us feel good. Many of us may have been walking the same routes for over a year now, being restricted to our local area. So, we've pulled together a few ideas to help make your walks even more of an adventure.

WILD WALKS

by
Abi Paine

PHOTO TRAIL

For this activity, you'll need a device that can take a photo. Ask a parent or carer to write a list of things to spot and photograph. They will need to be things you know can be found in your local area. Head out on your walk with your list and a pen, to tick them off as you go. If there are a few people on the walk, you could even make it a competition to see who can complete the list first!



My photo trail:

- An insect ✓
- A footprint ✓
- Someone hugging a tree ✓
- A blossom or flower ✓
- Something written using sticks ✓
- Two different tree leaves ✓

RAINBOW TREASURE HUNT

For this activity, you'll need an empty eggbox and some coloured paints. Paint each hole of the egg box a different colour that you can find in nature and allow the paint to dry. Head out on your walk and try to fill the treasure box with wild finds, matching each one to a colour in the box. Remember not to pick up insects and animals! Instead, look out for things that have already fallen on the ground. If you pick something like a dandelion for your treasure hunt, just take one, leaving plenty for pollinators.



AND THEN...

This activity turns the things you spot on your group walk into a story that everybody gets to tell! One person in your group starts the story by saying 'Once upon a time' and making up a sentence that ends with the words 'and then'. The next person in the group adds the next sentence, ending with 'and then...' until everyone in the group has added a sentence. Keep going round until you get to a natural ending and finish with 'the end'. So, for example, you could start off with 'Once upon a time, a family was walking along a woodland trail, with the wind rustling the trees and then...'. Use nature and your imagination to make it as wild as you like!

ONCE UPON A TIME...

AND THEN...

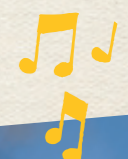


Find more activities, ideas and wildlife spotting sheets at wildlifewatch.org.uk

TEST YOUR SENSES

Sometimes we can miss the wonders of nature if we're out on a quick walk. Try this dedicated sensory walk and see what else you notice. For this activity, you don't need any equipment, but it helps if you have a 'leader' who keeps the time and leads the way, so you don't have to think too much about the route!

During your walk, take three minutes to focus on each of the senses, one at a time. Start off with sound – walking for three minutes listening out for every sound. Once the three minutes are up, the leader will give you the next sense to focus on. Go through touch, sight and smell, each time doing it without talking to each other. At the end of your walk, sit together and reflect on how it made your walk different to normal, and what you noticed each time.



Hear birdsong



Feel the textures of bark



Smell wildflowers

Willow warbler © Chris Donnersail / 2020VISION

Honeysuckle © Neil Barne / 2020VISION

You don't always have to travel far to see amazing wildlife. **EVERY ISSUE THIS YEAR** we're taking a look at some of the natural treasures that can be found close to home.

NATURE ON YOUR DOORSTEP

SUMMER SENSATIONS

Our summers are alive with wildlife, from bees and butterflies dancing around flowers, to birds finding food for their growing chicks. With so much going on, there's lots of wildlife to be seen. **HERE ARE SOME WILD WONDERS TO LOOK OUT FOR...**

White clover



This pretty little flower is often found in parks and gardens. Most white clovers have three leaves, but it's considered lucky to find one with four (or even five) leaves! Can you find a lucky clover? You might also spot bees visiting the flower, or a common blue butterfly laying eggs on the leaves.

Swift



Swifts are shaped a bit like feathered boomerangs, with their long wings curving backwards. They're masters of the sky and can hunt insects, drink and even sleep whilst flying. Each year they migrate from Africa to the UK to nest. Swifts like to nest under roof tiles and in other holes in buildings, so are often seen around towns and cities. Listen out for their screaming calls!

Common pipistrelle



Pipistrelles are the most common bats in the UK and can be found almost anywhere. There are two species you're likely to see, the common pipistrelle and the soprano pipistrelle, but you'll need a bat detector to tell them apart! But you don't need to identify the species to enjoy watching them swoop above gardens and parks, or over canals and ponds. Look for them just as it starts to get dark.

Elephant hawk-moth

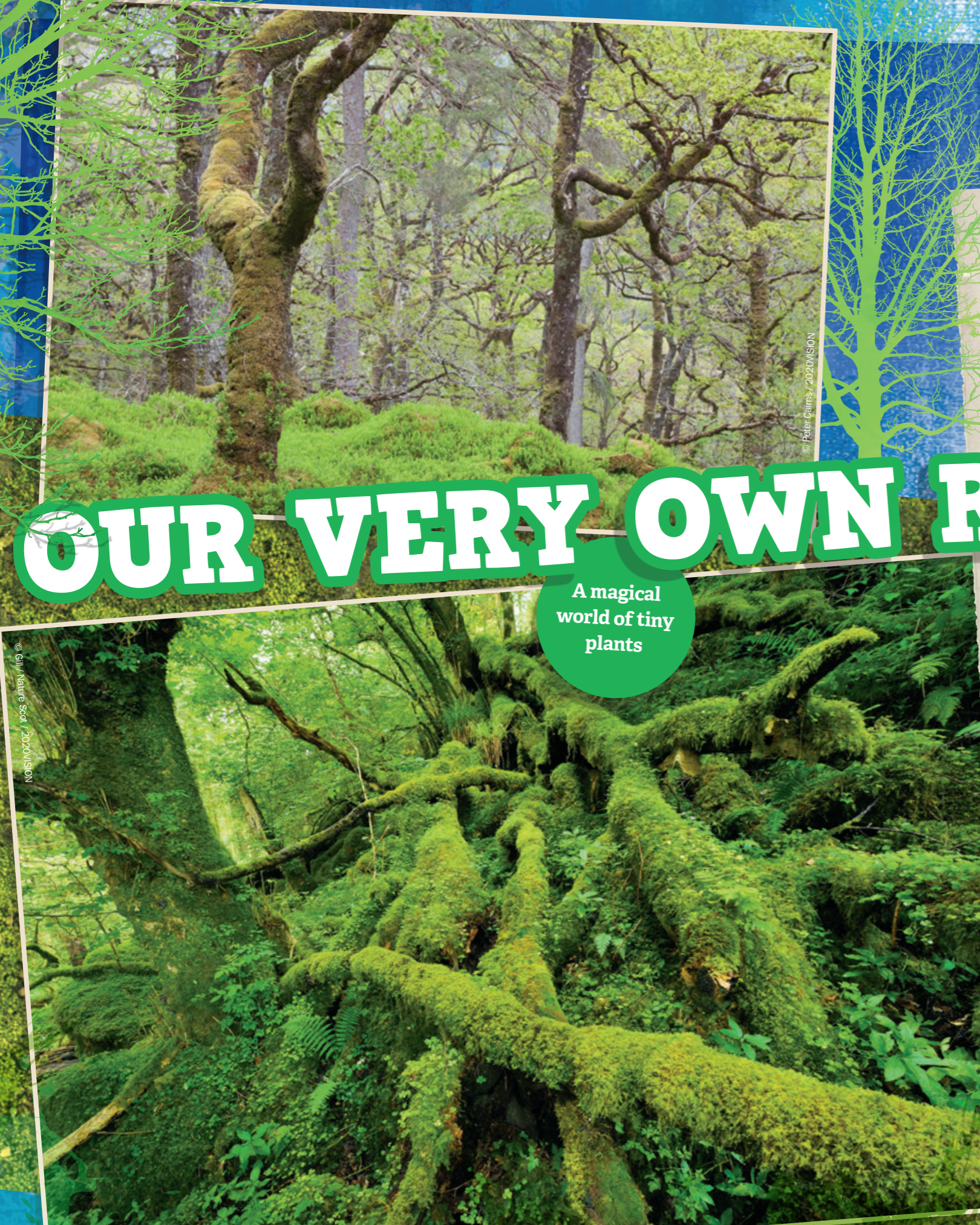


This flashy pink and green moth flies on summer nights, visiting honeysuckle and other tube-shaped flowers. Watch the flowers at dusk and you may see them feeding. In the daytime, you can sometimes find them resting on fuchsias and willowherbs, which their caterpillars (that look like an elephant's trunk) love to eat. The best way to see moths is with a moth trap, which uses a bright light to attract them.



Water voles spend a lot of time eating. They eat about 80% of their body weight every day. They love to munch on grasses and waterside plants and are known to eat at least 227 different plant species!

Very hungry voles



JULIE works for Plantlife, a charity that saves threatened wildflowers, plants and fungi. She helps protect temperate rainforests as part of a group called the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest.

WE HAVE A RAINFOREST?!

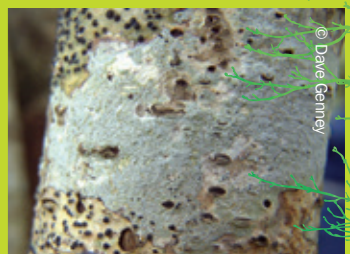
When people think of rainforest, they usually think of tropical rainforests in far off places like the Amazon or Borneo. But did you know that we have our very own rainforest right here in the UK? It's a different kind of rainforest (called temperate rainforest), but it's just as full of interesting and rare animals and plants.



© Peter Cairns / 2020VISION

RAINFOREST WILDLIFE

Our temperate rainforests are home to lots of amazing wildlife, including...



© Dave Ganney

White script lichen
The surface of white script lichen is etched with patterns that look like writing. It is found nowhere else in the world except for Scotland's rainforest!



© Tamasine Stratton

Pearl-bordered fritillary
Once common in our ancient rainforests, this is now one of our most threatened butterflies, suffering a 95% decline in just 40 years.



© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION

Pied flycatcher
This beautiful songbird migrates every spring from Africa to breed in our rainforests, where there are lots of insects to eat and plenty of tree holes to nest in.

OUR VERY OWN RAINFOREST!

A magical world of tiny plants

FINDING A FOREST

The kind of temperate rainforest you find in the UK is very rare, as only 1% of the planet has the right climate for these rainforests to form. They need high rainfall, mild winters and clean air to thrive. Other hotspots around the world include the Pacific Northwest of America, the Chilean coast, and New Zealand's South Island.

In Europe, it's also found in Iceland, France, Spain, and the fjordlands of southwest Norway – but the very best examples of European rainforest are right here, along the west coast of Britain! The best places to look are along Scotland's west coast, in Cumbria, north Wales and southwest England.



PRECIOUS PLANTS

The rainforest is a magical place to visit. But it isn't actually the trees that make our rainforest so special, it's the tiny plants you find within them – like mosses, liverworts and lichens. Huge numbers of these tiny plants, in all kinds of shapes and colours, grow on every surface you can see. There can be hundreds of different species, including some that are rare or even found nowhere else in the world! That's why our rainforests are internationally important, and we need to look after them.

RAINFORESTS UNDER THREAT

Unfortunately, our rainforests are facing many threats, including pollution and plant diseases. One big problem is a bush called rhododendron that has escaped from gardens and fills the rainforests, stopping other plants from growing. Add to that climate change, which could alter the mild and wet conditions needed for rainforest to thrive, and you can see we have a big job on our hands to save this magical and precious place!

SO WHAT NOW?

Fortunately, an increasing number of people are recognising how important our rainforest is. Charities like The Wildlife Trusts and Plantlife are working to protect our rainforest and introduce more people to its magic. There are lots of big plans to restore these wild places and make them even bigger! If we all work together, we can save our precious rainforest.

by **JULIE STONEMAN**

© Peter Cairns / 2020VISION



Gallery

Send in your photos, poems, artwork and letters for your chance to feature in the gallery. If your artwork is picked as the star entry you'll win your very own drawing kit! The perfect starter set for any budding wildlife artist.



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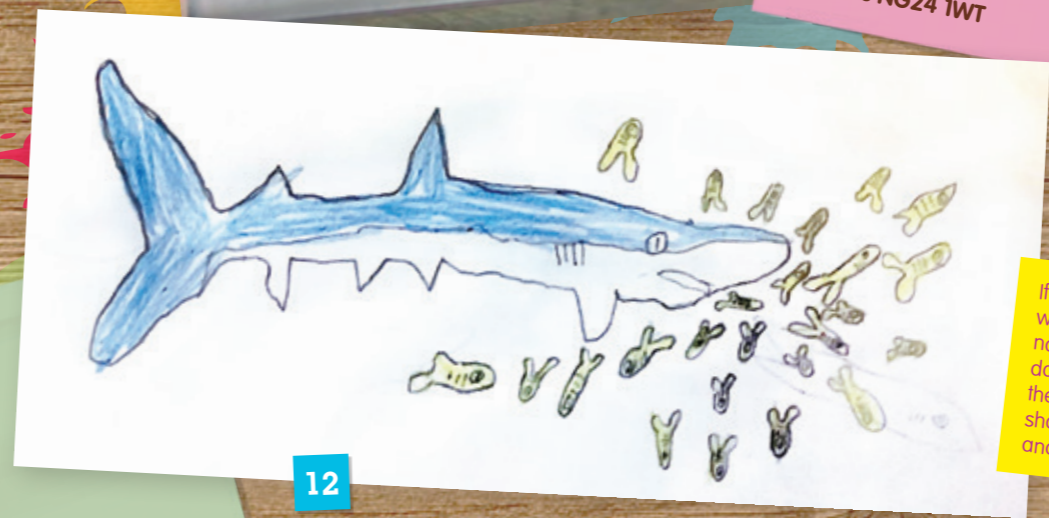


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HOW TO ENTER
 Email watch@wildlifetrusts.org with the subject line 'Gallery entry' or write to us at:
Wildlife Watch Gallery
The Wildlife Trusts
The Kiln, Mather Road
Newark
Notts NG24 1WT



6



12

If we feature your artwork we will include your first name and your age, so don't forget to include them. We might also share it on our website and social media.

1) Tawny owl by Eryn, aged 7
 Eryn has done a wonderful job of bringing this gorgeous tawny owl to life. We can almost hear it hooting!

2) Red admiral by Ava, aged 8
 This bright and bold butterfly perfectly captures the spirit of the red admiral. Have you seen one this year?

3) Nuthatch face paint by Brier-Rain, aged 12
 This is something you don't see often. Brier-Rain has painted a doll's face to look just like a nuthatch. Brilliant!

4) Red squirrel by Dawn, aged 9
 We love the textures in this drawing of a red squirrel, from the bushy tail to the spiky branches!

5) Hoopoe by Gwen, aged 8
 Just look at that crest! Hoopoes don't live in the UK, but sometimes take a wrong turn on migration and pass through in spring and autumn.

6) Hare by Lorna, aged 10
 We love the beautiful colours used on Lorna's hare, and those eyes are amazing!

7) Mute swan by Mia, aged 12
 This photo is incredible! The contrast of black and white is striking. Swans are a tricky bird to photograph, but Mia has done it perfectly.

8) Fox by Niala, aged 14
 Niala has really captured this furry fox. Just look at that rich, orange coat – gorgeous!

9) Red squirrel by Poppy, aged 11
 What a lovely mosaic pattern on this squirrel and its acorn. Great job, Poppy!

10) Long-tailed tit by Rosie, aged 7
 This long-tailed tit really stands out from the page. We love the little pink blush on the belly. So cute!

11) Bee by Ted, aged 9
 Ted's bee is very impressive, just look at the detail in those wings!

12) Shark by William, aged 7
 It's great to see a drawing of a shark after we featured them in the spring issue. Nice choice, William!

WEIRD NATURE

These weird and wonderful creatures all share their name with a food!



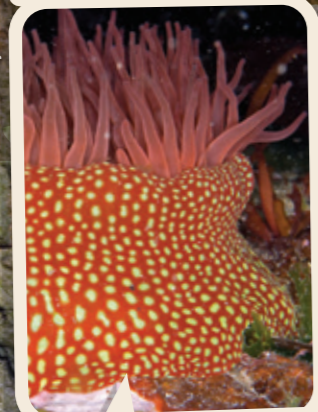
THIS ISSUE: ANIMALS WITH FOODY NAMES by Isla Geis King

CURRENT CLEARWING



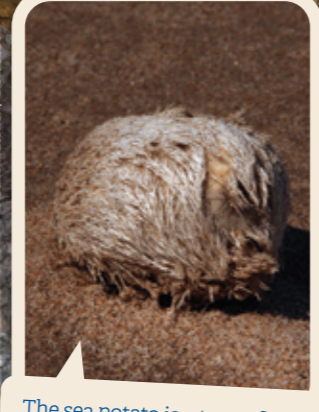
With its see-through wings you might not guess that this neat little insect is actually a kind of moth! It gets its name from the black and red currant bushes that its larvae (babies) like to feed on.

STRAWBERRY ANEMONE



This large anemone has a bright red body covered in small green spots, making it look like a strawberry (but with added tentacles)! These colourful sea creatures can be found living around the UK's shores, attached to rocks – maybe you'll spot one next time you go rockpooling?

SEA POTATO



The sea potato is a type of urchin which gets its name from its potato-y appearance, and because it lives burrowed under the sand. But it's actually an animal, not a vegetable! Covered in furry-looking spines, it collects food using its tiny tube-shaped feet – weird!

LEMON SLUG



With its bright yellow colour, it's easy to see where the lemon slug gets its name! These slimy fellows are quite rare. They live in ancient woodland, often hiding in the dead leaves on the ground. Mushrooms are their absolute favourite food – yum!

MARMALADE HOVERFLY



Marmalade hoverflies are really common, so you might already have seen some around flowers in your garden or local park. They often hover in mid-air, but can also dart around super fast when they want to! Their name comes from their orange colour, which looks a lot like marmalade.

CHOCOLATE MINING BEE



This fuzzy, dark brown bee is a chocolate mining bee. There are more than a thousand different species of mining bees – wow! Instead of living in a hive, mining bees nest in holes in the ground or in crumbly walls.

MINT BEETLE



This shiny little beetle is amazingly iridescent (its colour changes when looked at from different angles). The mint beetle has only been found in the UK fairly recently. It gets its name from its favourite food – mint leaves! It must have really fresh breath...

SANDWICH TERN



This handsome seabird is a Sandwich tern. It feeds on fish, not sandwiches – its name comes from Sandwich Bay, the place it was first discovered! Look out for the Sandwich tern on the coast, where you might spot it diving for fish.

Make a beetle bucket

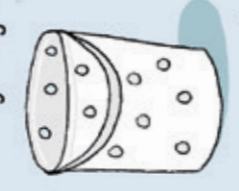


Perfect for smaller gardens!

Fill a bucket with rotting wood and leaves and make the perfect home for all sorts of beetles and other insects. Making your beetle habitat in an old plastic container means you can easily find it again to top up or examine the contents (make sure to replace everything straight away after examining).

You will need

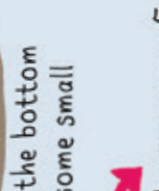
- A bucket, trug, or other durable, upcycled container
- A small craft knife
- Stones
- Bark chips and/or leaves
- Small logs (that will fit in your container when upright)
- A spade



1 Safely cut small circular holes (around 3cm wide) in the sides and bottom of the bucket for beetles to enter and exit.



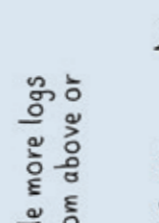
2 Dig a hole just larger than your bucket and sink it into the ground.



3 Place some large stones at the bottom of the bucket, then stand some small logs upright on top.



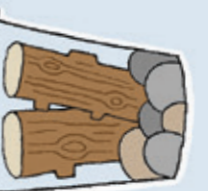
4 Fill the rest of the bucket with bark chips and/or garden leaves, leaving around 10cm at the top to fill with some soil dug from the ground.



5 Top the soil with a couple more logs to tempt in beetles – from above or below!



If you'd rather not use plastic, you can simply make your beetle 'bucket' in a hole in the soil.



These will rot and make lovely spots for female beetles to lay their eggs.

Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2021

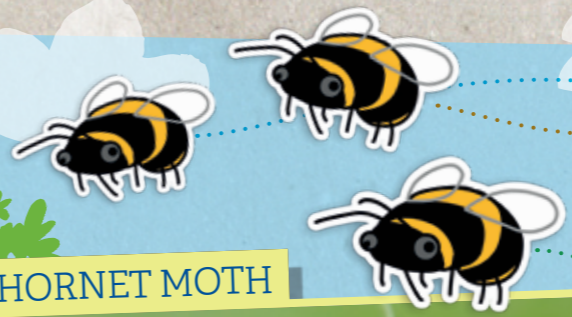
www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk

TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE? Some types of wildlife spend the summer pretending to be stinging insects. The question is... WHY?

WANNABEES!

by Pete Dommett

Bee-lieve it or not, these eight stripy species are not bees – they're bee mimics! They imitate bees, wasps and other insects that sting to protect themselves from predators, to sneak into nests without being noticed or for other reasons. These phoney fraudsters fake it to make it!



BEE BEETLE



When is a bee not a bee? When it's a bee-tle! A hairy body and bold colours confuse predators into thinking this harmless beetle is a sting-bearing bee...so they leave it be. But a beetle in a bee suit? That's just cute!

DARK-EDGED BEE-FLY



Is it a bee? Is it a fly? It's a bee-fly! Looking like a furry brown bee, a female bee-fly hovers over the nests of real bees (like mining bees). Then she suddenly flicks her eggs towards the nest entrance. After hatching out, the bee-fly maggots crawl into the underground burrow and feast on the bee larvae. Un-bee-lievable bee-haviour!

The scary-looking spike sticking out of a bee-fly's face isn't a stinger – it's a tongue!

See egg-flicking in action at wiru.st/bee-fly

LUNAR HORNET MOTH



Nothing's going to mess with something that looks like a hornet! And this brightly-coloured moth certainly does an impressive impression of the super-sized 'king of sting'! It even buzzes like a hornet while it's flying about during the day. It may look fierce, but it's quite gentle really.

VESTAL CUCKOO BUMBLEBEE



This bee-mimic actually is a bee, but it pretends to be a different type! The vestal cuckoo bumblebee has evolved to look a lot like the buff-tailed bumblebee. Why? So that it can lay its eggs in this other bee's nest and leave its young to be raised by different bee parents – just like the bird that it's named after. Is that cuckoo or clever?

BUMBLEBEE HOVERFLY



This hairy hoverfly comes in two varieties, disguising itself as either a red-tailed or a white-tailed bumblebee. It uses this clever camouflage to creep into the bumblebee's nest unnoticed and lay its eggs. The larvae that hatch out live in the nest, feeding on the bees' leftovers. Yum!

WASP BEETLE



Wasp that? This little beetle poses as a wasp to keep itself safe. The black and yellow markings warn birds and other animals to stay well away from it. It's not a perfect likeness, but close enough to make any enemies think twice – giving the beetle time to, er, buzz off!

HORNET-MIMIC HOVERFLY



Here's another hornet looky-likey! The UK's largest hoverfly wears a hornet's stripes to put off predators while it's busy feeding from flowers. These crafty copycats lay their eggs inside wasp nests where the grubs eat bits of nest rubbish. Well, at least the wasps' home gets a free clean!

How can you tell a bee-fly or hoverfly from a real bee? Tip: flies only have one pair of wings. Bees have two!

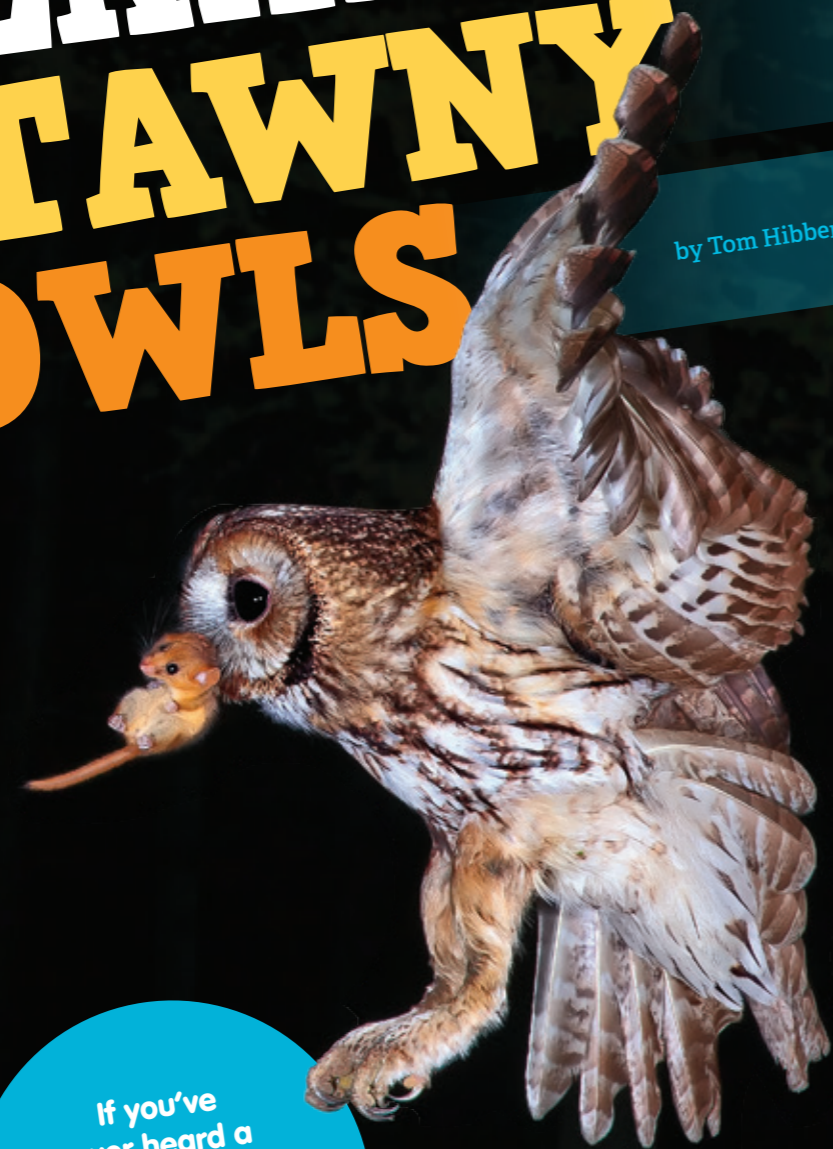
BEE ORCHID



A plant that pretends to be an insect? Bee-whizz! The flowers of this fabulous orchid look like female bees to trick romantic males. When the male bees try to mate with the flowers, they pollinate them in the process. It's a cunning plan, except the species of bee that the orchid imitates doesn't live in the UK. Doh!

TERRIFIC TAWNY OWLS

by Tom Hibbert



If you've ever heard a haunting call from the trees at night, you may have heard a tawny owl!



Tawny owls are the most common British owl, though they aren't found in Northern Ireland.

WOODLAND WONDERS

Tawny owls live in woodlands, parks and sometimes even large gardens with lots of trees. Although they're quite common, they're very hard to see because they hunt at night and spend the day hidden high up in trees. With their big black eyes closed, their streaky brown feathers blend in with the bark around them and make them look like part of the tree.



SILENT HUNTERS

Owls have special feathers on their wings that let them fly almost silently, so their prey can't hear the owl coming and run away. The feathers are extra soft to help absorb sound, but the shape of the feathers helps too. The front edges of their wing feathers have lots of little points like a very tiny comb. These edges break up the air and stop it making a 'whooshing' sound as it passes over the wing. At the back edges of the feathers, a soft fringe helps absorb even more sound. A tawny owl could fly right over you without you hearing it!

A BALANCED DIET

Tawny owls are skilled predators. They mostly eat small mammals like voles and mice, but can also hunt a wide range of animals. They've been known to catch squirrels, birds, frogs, large insects and even bats! On damp nights they sometimes hunt for earthworms that are wiggling through short grass.

They like to perch on tree branches, waiting for prey to pass beneath them. Their big black eyes help them spot suitable targets in low light. They also have incredibly good hearing to help find food when it gets really dark. When they spot a meal, they swoop down and grab it with their claws.

The hoot of an owl was once thought to be an omen of death!



OWLET EXPLORERS

Tawny owls like to nest in large holes inside trees, or in specially made nest boxes. They usually lay two or three roundish white eggs, which hatch into fluffy white chicks (called owlets) after around 30 days. Tawny owlets often leave the nest before they can fly, scrambling along branches as they explore their woodland home. This behaviour is known as 'branching'. They make a lot of noise so that their parents always know where to find them when it's time to get fed!



NOISY NEIGHBOURS

Tawny owls may be hard to see, but they're very easy to hear! Male tawny owls hoot through the night to warn rival owls to stay away from their territory. They make the classic owl sound that you often hear in movies, which sounds like "hooo... huh... huhuhuhooo". Females join in with a squeaky "kee-wik" call, which males sometimes use as well. Tawny owls hoot regularly from autumn through to spring, and in summer you might hear the owlets begging for food with loud, raspy squeaks.

FEATURE CREATURE

RISSEO'S DOLPHIN



© Eleanor Stone

DOLPHINS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Risso's dolphins are large stocky dolphins that look very different to all other dolphins. Their heads are blunt and rounded and they have a tall dorsal fin. They're born a brownish colour and as they get older they get whiter. This is because of scratches caused by other Risso's dolphins and sometimes by the tentacles of the creatures that they eat. They can look like they've been attacked by a paint brush! These scratches are unique just like your fingerprints, and so we can identify dolphins by the pattern on their dorsal fin.

WHERE DO WE SEE THEM?

Risso's dolphins live almost everywhere around the world, but they love to hang out in places where the sea suddenly gets deeper. These areas are known as continental shelves, and this is where there are plenty of squid. Squid, octopus and cuttlefish are a Risso's dolphin's favourite food.

ESSENTIAL FACTS

- Scientific name**
Grampus griseus
- Average lifespan**
Up to 40 years
- Amazing fact**
They don't have teeth on their upper jaw and swallow prey whole.

Although in some places in the UK they can be seen all year round, they're seen more in the late summer when the sea is at its warmest and there is more food around. They can be seen all along the west coast of the UK, but there are some hotspots where you have a better chance of seeing them. These are the Outer Hebrides, North West Wales, Isle of Man and South West England. Be sure to keep your binoculars handy if you're by the coast in one of these places!

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?

They are really sociable and sometimes even hang around with other types of dolphin. They're often seen leaping out of the water – this is known as breaching. They can be seen slapping their tails or their heads on the water and big splashes offshore are often a tell-tale sign that there are Risso's dolphins around.



© Eleanor Stone

WHY DO PLANTS FLOWER AT DIFFERENT TIMES?

by Uta Hamzaoui

Plants have flowers to produce fruits and seeds that will grow into new plants. But why do different plants flower at different times of the year?

WHAT CAUSES PLANTS TO FLOWER?

There are hundreds of thousands of plants in the world, all with a special strategy for producing new plants and ensuring the survival of their species. In the UK, it wouldn't make sense for most plants to flower in winter when flowers might freeze, there are few insects around for pollination, and sunshine is too weak for fruits to develop. Plants are able to recognise changes in weather, temperature and day length to make sure they flower at the right time of the year.

SUMMER FEAST

In summer, there are lots of bees, flies, beetles and butterflies looking for pollen and nectar. This is when most plants flower and attract pollinators with flowers of all colours and shapes. There are so many different types of flower that there is something for every insect!

BLOWN BY THE WIND

Have you ever seen a grass flower? They are not showy as they don't need to attract insects, instead they are pollinated by wind. They need to produce lots of pollen to make sure that at least some lands on another flower. You can see clouds of pollen rising when you walk through a meadow on a sunny summer day!

Dead-nettles can flower in mild winters and are great for bees waking from hibernation!

WOODLAND SPRING SPECTACLE

Our woodlands are spectacular in spring when carpets of flowers like wood anemones and bluebells emerge almost all at the same time. They flower early in spring to make the most of the sunlight that reaches the woodland floor before the trees develop their leaves. These plants race to store up energy in underground bulbs before the tree leaves grow and block their light.



Red dead-nettle © Amy Lewis

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES

Some plants like to be different. Ivy flowers in autumn. On warm autumn days it can be covered in bees, hoverflies and wasps that are attracted by its strong smell. Snowdrops flower in late winter and can even push through frozen ground! There are fewer pollinating insects around in winter, but also fewer flowers to compete with for their attention.

© Andy Bartlett

Cocklefoot grass © Ross Hodderott / 2020VISION

COMPETITIONS



WIN

100 ENDANGERED SPECIES

This book takes you on a journey of discovery to meet 100 endangered species from around the world. You'll find out where each species lives, amazing facts about their lives, and what's being done to save them. The book is beautifully illustrated by Rachel Hudson, who drew the super seagrass animals on page 6!

We've got **THREE** copies to give away.

Buy online at: wtru.st/100-species RRP: £12.99



FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:

Just answer this question!

What kind of rainforest do we have in the UK?

- a) Tropical rainforest
- b) Temperate rainforest
- c) No rainforest



WIN THE MAGIC OF SLEEP

Buy online at: wtru.st/magic-sleep
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Dive into the weird and wonderful world of sleep, from the science behind dreams to a peek into animal sleeping habits in this incredible book for children aged 7 to 9. *The Magic of Sleep* answers all your questions about what goes on in your head when you snooze, and reveals the sleeping habits of other animals, from bears hibernating to how bats sleep upside down.

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FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:

Tell us the name for a baby tawny owl!
Clue: the answer is in the magazine



WIN FUNNY BUMS, FREAKY BEAKS



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Draw a weird creature. It can be a real animal, or one you made up!



WELBECK

COMPETITION RULES

Send your competition entries to us: **By email** watchcomps@wildlifetrusts.org **By post** Wildlife Watch, The Kiln, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 1WT
Don't forget to include your name, age and a way of contacting you with your entry! **DEADLINE: 31 August 2021**

Competition entries may be used on our website and social media channels.