

FREE!

**BADGER
POSTER**



**GET ON
TRACK**

Identify animal
footprints

**FIGHT FOR
THE FUTURE**

How you can help
combat climate change

Issue 99 **Autumn 2021**



Wildlife Watch

MAGAZINE



WONDERFUL WAXCAPS

Have you seen these
fabulous fungi?

A whole lotta limbs
The weird wildlife with extra arms and legs



WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers



Editor's corner

TOM HIBBERT
Editor, Wildlife Watch

What's your favourite thing about autumn? Maybe it's the gorgeous colours that fill our forests as leaves turn red and gold? Or finding conkers in their spiky shells?

Mine is watching birds preparing for their long journey south. They stuff their faces with juicy berries, or snaffle lots of insects, to give them energy for their tiring flight. But sometimes birds take a wrong turn and end up somewhere unusual. Every autumn, birdwatchers get excited as rare birds accidentally make their way to the UK. Find out more about these wanderers on page 20.

Last autumn we brought you some of the grossest and most gruesome fungi you can find, but this year we want to introduce some of the prettiest – the waxcaps! Head to page 12 to discover these fabulous fungi.

There's so much wildlife to enjoy in autumn, so get outside and have fun!

Tom



GET IN TOUCH

Email us at: watch@wildlifetrusts.org

Ring us on: 01636 677711

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WildlifeWatchUK

NIETY NEST



Sofie (aged 7) from Lothian had a lot of fun gathering twigs to make her very own nest. What a great job! She planned to put it in a tree and see if any birds wanted to move in and improve it.

POSTER PASSION



Seven-year-old Roya from Brighton is really passionate about helping the planet. She made this amazing poster with a powerful message about things we can do to help the natural world. Great work, Roya!



RONNIE AND THE ROBIN

Five-year-old Ronnie from Worcestershire took this fantastic photo of a robin in his garden. Ronnie sat very still with the camera, waiting for the robin to come and fetch some mealworms. It was worth the wait!



MAGAZINE ART



Monty (aged 7) and Nancy (aged 5) from Oxfordshire used old copies of Wildlife Watch to make these wonderful posters. They look great!



Black-browed albatross © Pete Richman

20



Honeybee by Watch reader, Sophie

08



16

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WILDLIFE WATCH 99

Editor: Tom Hibbert

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



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The Wildlife Trusts
Registered Charity No 207238



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 to find out more.

KEEP WATCHING!

The Science ³⁴ Section

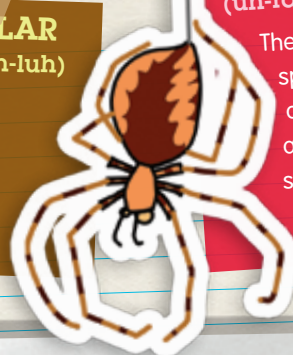
In every issue this year we'll be bringing you a fact-packed science section, sharing recent discoveries about weird and wonderful wildlife and explaining the meaning of some scientific words.

WILD WORDS

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

CREPUSCULAR (kreh-pusk-yuh-luh)

Used to describe animals that are most active in the twilight at dawn or dusk.



ARACHNID (uh-rak-nid)

The name given to any species from the group of usually eight-legged animals that includes spiders, harvestmen, scorpions, mites and ticks.

RECTRICES (rek-trih-seez)

The technical name for the stiff tail feathers of a bird, which help it to steer.



RECENT DISCOVERIES



© Margaret Holland

HURRAY FOR JAYS

A recent study has shown just how important jays are for helping forests grow and spread into new areas. Scientists recorded what happened in two fields next to a woodland after they were left alone for many years – one for almost 60 years! Over time, both fields grew into forests. More than half of the new trees that

grew were oaks, which were most likely planted by jays as they stashed acorns for winter. These clever corvids bury so many acorns that some are forgotten and left to grow into oak trees, helping forests spread naturally. Thrushes, like blackbirds, also helped shrubs spread to the fields by eating their berries and pooping out the seeds.

FALCON FACE PAINT

The stripe of dark feathers below a peregrine falcon's eyes could help them hunt by keeping bright sunlight out of their eyes, so they can see their prey more clearly. Dark colours don't reflect sunlight as well as light colours, so pale feathers would reflect more sunlight into their eyes. This idea has been around for a while, but a team

of scientists recently found the first proper evidence that this could be true. They studied photos of peregrines from around the world, finding that those from countries with more bright sunshine had larger dark patches. American football players often copy this effect by painting black lines under their eyes before a game.



© Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

YOUR STORIES



Every June, we challenge people to do 30 Days Wild! That's one wild thing a day, for the whole month. Here's new member, three-year-old JASPER, to tell you what he got up to during 30 Days Wild...



Photo from Day 6 of Jasper's 30 Days Wild



30 Days Wild by Jasper (aged 3)

I did 30 Days Wild in June and raised £55 for Somerset Wildlife Trust! I really enjoyed doing something wild every day with my mummy. We learnt a lot of new facts about animals, insects and flowers. We did something wild every day! Here are some of the things we did:

DAY 1 – we ate breakfast in the garden, listening to the birds sing.



DAY 4 – we picked and pressed flowers to make a window sun catcher.

DAY 6 – we walked up North Hill, part of the Exmoor National Park. We saw ponies, birds and wildflowers.



DAY 10 – we took wildlife photos using cut out frames of a heart and butterfly.

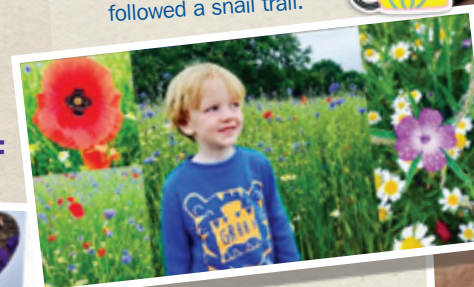
DAY 13 – we watched live webcams of owls, foxes and badgers.



DAY 14 – we signed up to Somerset Wildlife Trust and got to read Wildlife Watch magazine!

DAY 15 – we walked along the beach making footprints, foraging for sea glass and exploring what we could see.

DAY 17 – we made a hedgehog cone and followed a snail trail.



DAY 19 – we went to explore a wildflower meadow.

DAY 20 – we fed the birds in Nana's garden.

DAY 22 – we saved a mouse from our naughty cat Pablo, went to the park and saw a damselfly, butterflies and busy bumblebees.

THANK YOU to Jasper!



DAY 24 – we made up a garden poem and drew a flower drawing.

DAY 26 – we watered the sunflowers in our garden and read nature books.



DAY 30 – we made a rainbow picture using different coloured petals and leaves from the garden.

Even though 30 Days Wild has finished, I will still do something wild most days as I love exploring nature, making memories, helping the planet and will carry on supporting Somerset Wildlife Trust!

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

FABULOUS FOOTPRINTS

Tracking animals with the *Mammal Detective*

DARREN TANSLEY is known as the Mammal Detective. He loves tracking animals like otters and water voles, but his new favourites are the baby beaver kits born in Essex last year!



by Darren Tansley

Most animals like to stay hidden, with many mammals coming out at night when they won't be disturbed. Footprints can help us find out what animals live in our area. The best place to find prints is in soft soil or mud, perhaps along paths or bare patches in the garden, especially after rain. If it's been snowing, footprints can be seen almost anywhere!



FOX

Foxes are the wild cousins of dogs so their prints also have four toes, but their footprint is a neat diamond shape. They have a triangular foot pad with four toes around the sides and front, and two neat claws forming a point at the front. They live in a burrow called an earth, and there may be bones or feathers from previous meals scattered about outside.

The space between fox toes forms an X shape, so the fox is the only British mammal with an X in its name and its footprint!

© Mike Freedman



OTTER

Unlike the other animals here, otters spend much of their time in rivers. Their footprints can be found along muddy banks coming out of the water, or on sand and silt under bridges. They have five teardrop shaped toes around a large pad, but one toe is usually off to one side – like if you spread your hand out and look at your thumb. Otters will often leave crunchy-looking droppings, filled with fish scales and tiny fish bones.

© Darren Tansley



DEER

We have several species of deer, from the dog-sized muntjac to the horse-sized red deer. But all their tracks are roughly the same shape, just different sizes. Deer really walk on tip-toes, so you only usually see two long pointed toe prints side by side, with no claws or foot pads. Some species live in herds and create big muddy trails with dozens of footprints. Look for tracks crossing streams, footpaths and ditches, or heavily trodden tracks through woodlands.

© Darren Tansley



CATS AND DOGS

Dog prints © Darren Tansley

Lots of people have pets, so there are plenty of cat and dog footprints around. Search muddy patches in the garden, in flower beds or along verges and paths for footprints with four toes. Dog prints are generally larger than cats (3-5cm wide) with big claw marks in front of the toes. Because cats pull in their claws when walking, the 2-3cm wide cat prints have no claw marks at all.



BADGER

Badgers dig little pits called latrines where they go to the toilet.

Badgers leave deep bare soil trails wherever they search for food. Look for straight tracks across fields or coming out of woods, hedges or along fences. Badger feet are as big as a medium dog but have five toes not four. They face forwards and have long claws in front for digging their burrows.

© Philip Preedy



RAT

Rats have star shaped toe prints on the front and long back feet. Rats are the size of a guinea pig, so their footprints are only 1.5-2cm long. They can be found along ditches, streams, and river edges: almost anywhere there is food and somewhere to burrow. Rat poo stinks and can be harmful, so avoid touching it at all costs!

© Darren Tansley



RABBIT

© Darren Tansley

Brown hare tracks look almost identical to rabbits but are almost 50% bigger!

Rabbit footprints are an oval shape. You won't really notice separate paw marks, but the four feet are arranged in a triangle as they hop around. It is often easier to find rabbits by looking for the little round pellet droppings they leave on lawns and fields where they have been feeding.

Animals often leave droppings on prominent places, like mole hills



When wildlife is in trouble, sometimes we humans have to step in to save it...

SAVING STRUGGLING SPECIES

by
Pete Domett

Nature needs our help. More than half of UK species are in decline (that means their numbers are falling). We urgently need to make more space for wildlife and protect important habitats. But some species need extra attention. Hopefully, a helping hand from humans will stop these four animals from heading towards extinction...

© Elliot Smith

© Terry Whittaker / 2020VISION



STAG BEETLE

These seriously impressive insects are mostly found in wooded areas of south-east England, including parks and gardens in London. Female beetles lay their eggs in rotting wood which the larvae then feed on for up to six years! But if tree stumps and fallen branches are removed, this important deadwood habitat is destroyed. Stag beetles are declining across Europe and have even gone extinct in some countries. Turn your garden into a safe haven for these spectacular invertebrates – and other wildlife – by creating a log shelter. The results can be, er, staggering!

Male stag beetles use their 'antlers' (which are really overgrown jaws) to attract females and wrestle with rivals!

Wildcats can purr, but they don't miaow!

© Elliot Smith



WILDCAT

Don't be fooled – this is not your average moggy! Wildcats are bigger, furrer, stripier and wilder than any pet puss. Once they roamed all over the UK, but now they're only found in the wildest parts of Scotland. Wildcats are so scarce that it's hard for them to find each other during the breeding season, so they often mate with stray, farm or pet cats instead. This is causing pure wildcats to gradually disappear.

A project called Saving Wildcats aims to stop these rare mammals from going extinct in the UK by breeding them in captivity. It's hoping to release the first cats into the wild in 2023! Purr...fect!

The Scottish wildcat – also known as the 'Highland Tiger' – is rarer than a Bengal tiger!



TURTLE DOVE

You may know them from the famous 'Twelve Days of Christmas' lyrics, but turtle doves only visit the UK in summer. These plucky pigeons fly all the way from West Africa to nest in the south and east of England – a journey of over 5000km! But a lack of food in their breeding areas – plus thousands of birds being shot as they migrate over southern Europe – means the UK population has fallen by a massive 96% in the last 15 years! Conservationists are trying to stop this terrible decline by encouraging farmers and landowners to create weedy fields full of seeds – the birds' fave food. Lovely dovelly!

The turtle dove's name has nothing to do with reptiles! It comes from the male bird's summer song, which sounds like 'turr, turr'.



PINE MARTEN

This slinky, nocturnal carnivore is hard to spot among the trees of its forest home. Loss of woodland and hunting left pine martens on the edge of extinction in England and Wales.

The Pine Marten Recovery Project is helping these bushy-tailed animals to bounce back by taking them from places where they are more common to areas where they are scarce – this is called translocation. Over 50 pine martens have already been moved from Scotland to the wilds of Wales! And Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is reintroducing Scottish martens to the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley on the English/Welsh border. Welcome back!



© Russell Savory

© Terry Whittaker / 2020VISION

© Terry Whittaker / 2020VISION

Learn to make a minibeast mansion at wildlifetrusts.org/log-shelter

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

AUTUMN APPEARANCES

Autumn is a busy time for wildlife, with lots of birds leaving or arriving. Many mammals are storing food or fattening up for winter, and some insects are looking for places to hide away. **HERE ARE SOME WILD WONDERS TO LOOK OUT FOR...**

Cranefly



Also known as daddy longlegs, crane flies are gangly insects with dangly legs, thin grey-brown bodies, and slender wings. Their young live in the ground, feeding on plant roots before emerging as flying adults. They can be seen throughout the year, but are especially common in autumn. You may even find them flying through your windows! There are over 300 different species of crane fly in the UK, but many are tricky to tell apart.

Starling



If you have bird feeders with fat balls or suet blocks in your garden, you could have starlings paying you a visit. They look dark from a distance, but up close have beautiful glossy feathers. Autumn is when starlings start to put on their famous group displays, known as murmurations. You might see small flocks flying over your street as they head to their favourite roost site, where they meet up with other groups and fly in formation.

Redwing



Redwings are closely related to blackbirds. They're a little smaller, with a brown back, streaky whitish belly, pale eyebrow stripes and red armpits. They come to the UK for the winter and love to eat berries, so if you have berry bushes near your house they may well pay you a visit. Redwings migrate at night. If you stand outside your door on a cold autumn evening, you may be able to hear their soft "tseep" calls high overhead.

House spider



Several species of house spider love buildings because they're nice and warm and sheltered all year round. It's a relatively safe space for them to live, hidden away in corners and hunting the insects that find their way inside. You tend to see more house spiders in autumn because they start to get romantic. At this time of year, males go wandering in search of a mate. The poor males usually die soon after pairing up, and may even be eaten by the female!

A Whale of a Time

Did you know you can see whales around the UK? The species you're most likely to spot is the minke whale, which can grow to nine metres long!



WONDERFUL WAXCAPS!

MEET SOME FABULOUS FUNGI

Waxcaps are some of the most colourful (and smelliest) mushrooms around! They are also some of our most special as most of them are very picky about where they grow, choosing only grass that hasn't been fertilised or had chemicals added for over 40 years! Sheep fields, cemeteries and old lawns are the best places to try to spot them.

PARROT WAXCAP



© Ali McKernan

An absolute stunner! Its name comes from the fact it shares its wacky colour scheme with exotic tropical parrots - yellows, greens, oranges and even purples! Unlike our feathered friends though, these guys are slippery all over, sometimes even slimy.

PINK WAXCAP

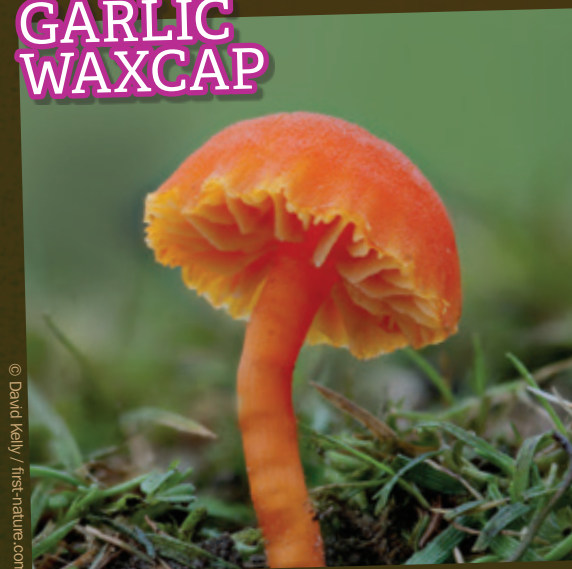


© Guy Edwards / 2020VISION

Waxcaps get their common name from the fact their caps feel all waxy when you touch them - like rubbing a candle!

Once thought of as extremely rare and still uncommon. To stumble upon this mushroom should put a smile on anyone's face. It's one of the most beautiful of all the waxcaps. The cap opens out to resemble a ballerina's tutu. Even the legs appear to be wearing white tights!

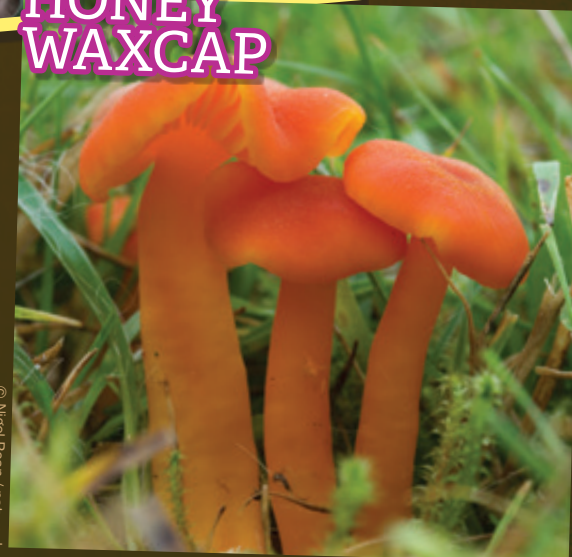
GARLIC WAXCAP



© David Kelly / first-nature.com

Quite a rare find on the hillsides of the UK, this diddy orange mushroom often grows in small groups. It only reveals its secret when you get your nose up close to the gills underneath - a strong whiff of garlic!

HONEY WAXCAP



© Nigel Bean / naturepl

You might think this mushroom gets its name from its yellowy-orange appearance, but no! This mushroom has a trick up its sleeve - give the base of the stem a squeeze and a warm scent of honey will be emitted! One of the only waxcaps that isn't waxy - it has a dry cap instead.

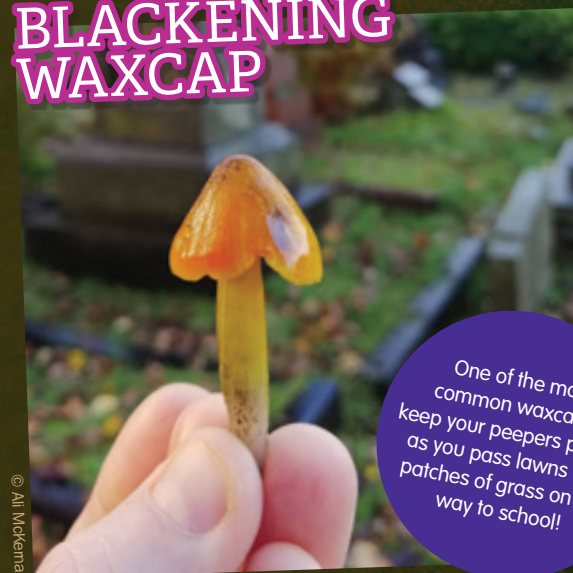
SCARLET WAXCAP



© Vaughn Matthews

A small, blood red waxcap that holds a special surprise. Look on the underside and you'll see the gills are orange and yellow, giving it the appearance of crazy fruit segments! The mossy lawns of churchyards and stately homes are a great host for these red devils.

BLACKENING WAXCAP

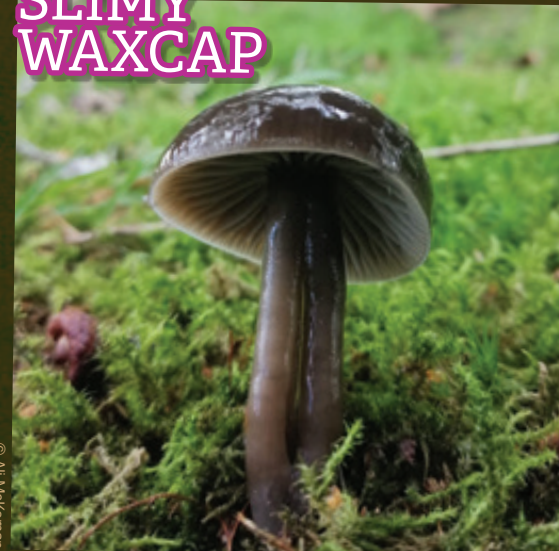


© Ali McKernan

One of the most common waxcaps, keep your peepers peeled as you pass lawns and patches of grass on the way to school!

This amazing mushroom starts out looking like all the colours of a sunset, before rapidly turning as black as night. These black conical shapes in the grass give them their other name - witch's hat! Which is perfect as they often hang out in graveyards too!

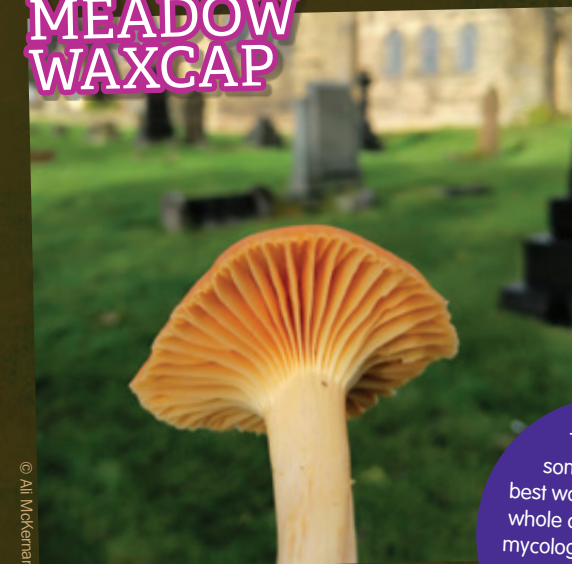
SLIMY WAXCAP



© Ali McKernan

It's not hard to see where this one gets its name. The cap of this mushroom is mega gloopy and a slight prod with a finger will leave you properly slimed! It's ghostly grey and often found in graveyards. It's uncommon but can be found all across Europe.

MEADOW WAXCAP



© Ali McKernan

These are one of the biggest waxcaps, one of the most common and (fortunately for us), also one of the toughest. They're less picky about their habitat, so check your garden, parks or even school field for these big beauties. Look for a peach-coloured cap, white stem and beautiful pale cream gills!

The UK has some of the very best waxcap sites in the whole of Europe - some mycologists (people who study fungi) even come on holiday here just to see them!

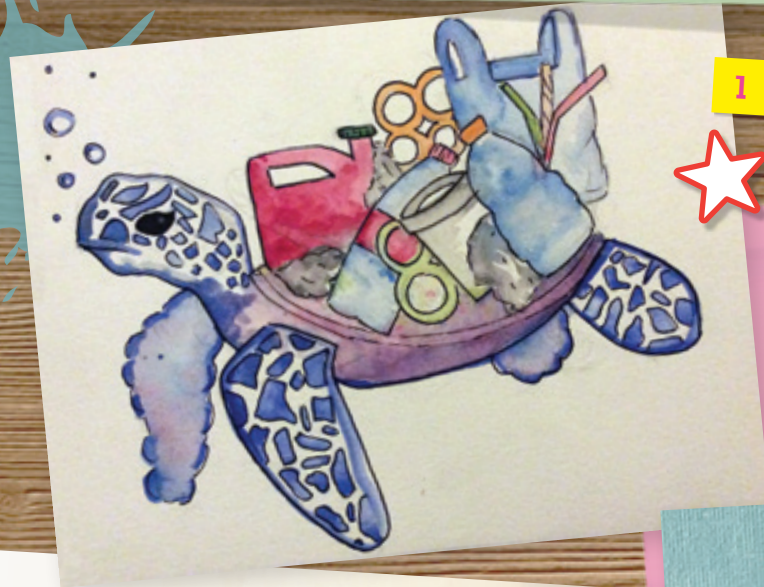
My name is **Ali McKernan** (The FUNgi Guy), and whether I'm shopping, at the zoo or walking to work, I'm always on the lookout for fungi!

the.fungi.guy



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.**



1



2



7



8



3



4



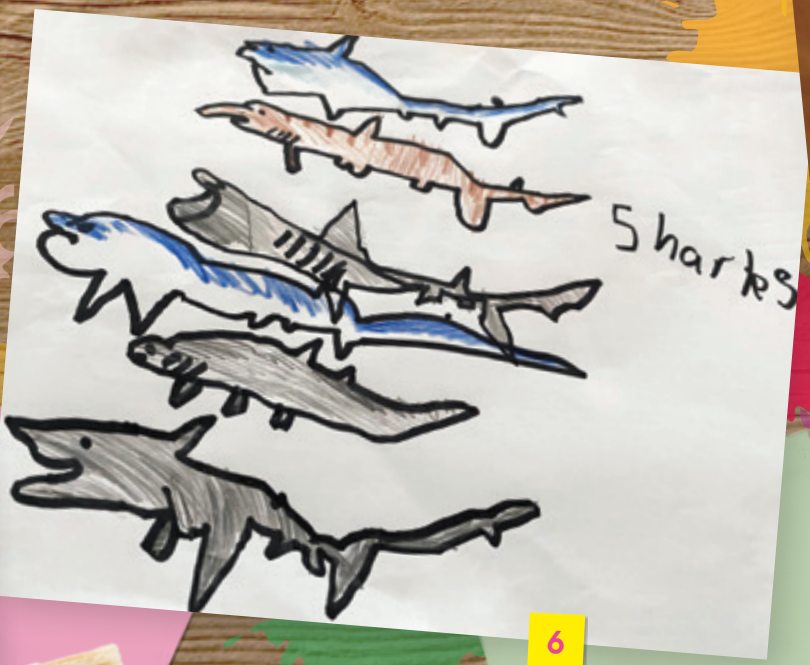
9



10



5



6



11



12

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

1) Turtle by Sophia, aged 13 ★
 This wonderful, heartbreaking artwork sends an important message about looking after our planet!

2) Butterflies by Rose, aged 5
 What a colourful kaleidoscope of butterflies!

3) Tufted duck by Jyoti, aged 12
 A great painting of a very dashing duck. The golden eye is gorgeous!

4) Blue tit by Alex, aged 12
 This colourful creation perfectly captures the bouncy energy of a blue tit.

5) Honey bee by Sophie, aged 8
 We can't bee-lieve how cute this artwork is!

6) Sharks by Jake, aged 6
 What's better than one shark drawing? Six shark drawings!

7) Puffin by Lily, aged 13
 The shadowing on this digital artwork is amazing! It's so lifelike.

8) Hedgehog by Eliza, aged 8
 Eliza has done a great job of making her hedgehog look super prickly!

9) Octopus by Lola, aged 11
 The texture on this octopus's skin is incredible. Well painted, Lola!

10) Bats by Katrina, aged 10
 There's so much character in this collection of bat sketches!

11) Blue tit by Ania, aged 10
 Another blue tit! We love how creative Ania got with her artwork.

12) Great crested grebes by Merel, aged 11
 Merel has created a wonderful scene, capturing courting grebes in action!



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

WEIRD NATURE

WEIRD-O-METER



THIS ISSUE: THINGS WITH LOTS OF LIMBS

by Eden Jackson

COMMON OCTOPUS



Octopuses are well known for having eight limbs. But less well known is the fact that each limb can act by itself. That means it can touch, taste and move around without a central brain telling it to do so. And, if that's not weird enough, their mouths are in their armpits!

MILLIPEDE



The name millipede means '1,000 legs'. But, while they do have a lot of legs, most millipedes don't actually have 1,000. The ones you might spot in a compost heap are more likely to have around 100 legs. To be fair, that's still a lot more legs than we have!

PUSS MOTH CATERPILLAR



These funky caterpillars have six legs... and, on top of that, a couple of fake ones! Their six 'real' legs are the ones they'll keep when they become a moth. In the meantime, the caterpillar grows a couple of extras. These extra legs help it move around before it becomes a moth.

SNAKELOCKS ANEMONE



Anemones look a bit like underwater plants but they are actually animals. Snakelocks anemones can sometimes be found in rockpools. They have lots of long wavy, snake-like tentacles. And the tentacles are very trendy - bright green with purple tips!

SPINY SPIDER CRAB



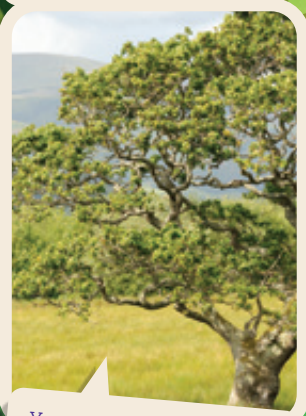
The spiny spider crab has 10 long, spindly legs that make it look like a spider, though the front legs are modified into their claws. Every autumn spider crabs migrate a long way to deeper waters. In total they can travel over 100 miles each year. All those legs must come in handy!

WOODLOUSE



Woodlice have 14 legs. So, if they wore trousers, they'd need seven pairs! Try having a look under some rocks outside. It's likely you'll spot a few woodlice. Maybe you can count their legs before they scurry away...

OAK TREE



Yes, trees have limbs too! A branch on a tree is often called a 'limb' or an 'arm'. Oak trees can grow to be very big with lots of long, thick arms. Some oaks live to be over 500 years old - so those ones have a lot of limbs!

COMMON SUN STAR



The common sun star is a type of starfish. However, they have more arms than your average starfish. They usually have around 10 but, occasionally, some grow 16! The common sun star's arms splay out from its body like sun rays, hence their name 'sun star'.

Make a mushroom spore print

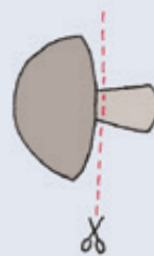


You will need:

- A mature (fully grown) mushroom
- Scissors
- White paper
- Glass bowl
- Hairspray

Avoid using mushrooms that are shriveled, bruised or appear old.

1 Cut the stem off the mushroom, so only the cap remains.



3 Leave your mushroom for approximately two hours to allow its spores to fall onto the paper.



2 Place the cap on a piece of paper, gill side down. Cover the mushroom with the glass bowl.



4 When you think it is ready, remove the bowl and view your print. Spray the print with several coats of hairspray to protect it.



Wild mushrooms can be poisonous - check with an expert before picking one.

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

Illustrations: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Truists 2015

Unleash your planet-helping superpowers and help nature at home, at school, and with your friends and neighbours!



RACHEL HALL works for The Wildlife Trusts, championing actions to help the planet and nature recover.

BECOME A CLIMATE ACTION CHAMPION!

by Rachel Hall

CLIMATE CHANGE can feel scary and overwhelming, for grown-ups and kids! But one of the planet's best superpowers to fight climate change is you. By taking small actions at home, at school, and with your neighbours you can help make a big difference to fight climate change and restore nature. It's time to unleash your superpowers and be a climate action champion!

AT HOME

Start at home, with lots of simple, small things that all add up to make a big difference. Why not get your family involved too?

1

FLICK THAT SWITCH – technology uses lots of energy even when we don't realise it. Switch off lights when you leave a room. Turn your game console or TV off at the plug. Put on an extra jumper rather than turning the heating on. This will all help reduce the pressure on our planet.

2

GROW WILD – fill your outside space with plants that wildlife loves and let some grassy areas grow long. Try growing your own fruit and veg. This can help our climate and wildlife too!

3

GO PEAT FREE – make sure adults only buy peat free compost for their gardening. Peat is a superhero in fighting climate change, but is in big trouble from being dug up. We can help by going peat free!

4

BE A REUSE AND RECYCLE SUPERSTAR – help your adults to reuse or recycle everything they can. This saves energy as we don't need to make more new stuff and it helps keep the planet clean.

5

PEOPLE POWER – walk, bike or scooter wherever you can instead of getting an adult to drive you in the car. This will save harmful gases getting into the atmosphere, and you can spot wildlife on the way!

6

BE A WATER WARRIOR – have shorter showers, turn the tap off when you brush your teeth, and ask your parents to install a water butt outside. Saving water will help to make sure people and wildlife have access to water when they need it.



AT SCHOOL

School is also a brilliant space to help the planet. Get your classmates and teachers involved to make an even bigger difference!

1

LOCAL LUNCHES – transporting food from other countries uses a lot of energy and isn't good for climate change. It's much better for the climate, where possible, to buy and eat food that is grown locally. Can you find out where your school gets its food?

2

MAKE YOUR SCHOOL WILDER – could you plant trees, a wildflower meadow, or grow vegetables or fruit in your school grounds? This helps to capture carbon and grow local food for your lunches.

3

SPREAD THE WORD – could you start a climate club, ask to present at an assembly, or get creative with a noticeboard to share simple actions like these here that your school could adopt?

Ask your teacher whether they've heard about The Wildlife Trusts' new *Nature's Climate Heroes*. It's a resource pack full of activities for schools, helping you to explore how you can fight climate change alongside nature. They can go onto the Wildlife Watch website to find out more!



IN YOUR COMMUNITY

1

CAMPAIGN – could you run a local campaign or event in your community to encourage neighbours, businesses, or your local council to also take action against climate change?

2

WILD LOCAL SPACES – can you join a local conservation group or get together with neighbours to plant some trees or hedges in your local green space or park?

3

SHARING IS CARING – can you start a scheme to exchange household items or clothes you no longer need with neighbours? You could share extra vegetables you've grown, or start a community-composting scheme so your food waste doesn't go to waste.



All of these little actions add up, helping protect our planet and its wonderful wildlife.



© Peter Collins / 2020VISION

© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION

FAR FROM HOME

by Tom Hibbert

Every year, birdwatchers get excited as unexpected species appear in the UK

Did you know that an amazing 626 species of wild bird have been recorded in the UK? More than half of these birds are rare visitors, individuals that have gotten lost on their migration and ended up far from their usual home. They come from all possible directions – America, Asia, the Arctic, North Africa and beyond. Some get lost in bad weather, others just take a wrong turn.

Many birdwatchers get very excited when these rare birds turn up, with some rushing across the country to see them. When a golden-winged warbler from North America appeared in a supermarket car park in 1989, over 3,000 people went to see it in just one day! But how do these birds get so lost?

In birdwatching terms, an incredibly rare bird is known as a 'Mega'!



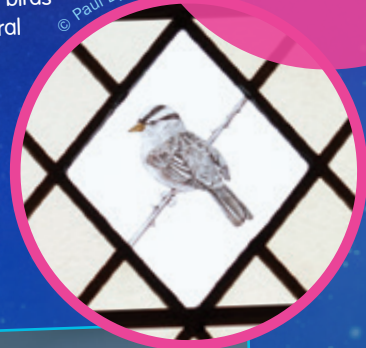
Red-eyed vireos breed in North America and winter in the Amazon. Storms sometimes bring them to the UK

© Gerrit Wyn / naturepl

From the west

Most rare visitors from North America are carried across the Atlantic by powerful autumn storms. They are usually migrant birds, which are leaving Canada or northern USA and heading south for the winter. These birds are aiming for the Caribbean, Central America, or even South America. Sometimes, as they fly along the coast, they get caught up in storms and drift farther out to sea. If the winds are strong enough, some are pushed all the way to Britain and Ireland.

© Paul Dykes



Birdwatchers visiting a rare white-crowned sparrow in Norfolk raised over £6,000 to help restore a church window. The new stained-glass window included an image of the bird as a reminder!



Lesser crested terns are usually found in warmer waters

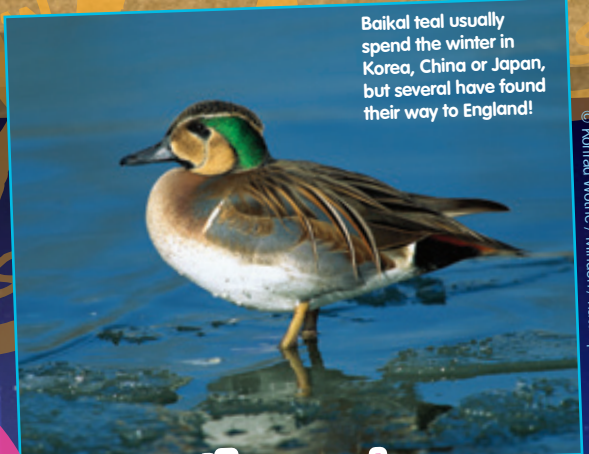
© Hanne & Jes Eriksen / naturepl

Familiar faces

Sometimes our rare visitors come back for several years in a row, with many even returning to the exact same place. One of the most famous returning rarities was a female lesser crested tern nicknamed Elsie. Lesser crested terns are usually found in tropical seas, but in 1984 Elsie appeared on the Farne Islands in Northumberland. She left after a week or so, but came back every summer until 1997 and even raised young with one of the local Sandwich terns! More recently, a black-browed albatross from the South Atlantic has visited Yorkshire's Bempton Cliffs for several summers in a row.



A red-footed booby found exhausted on a beach in Sussex was rescued, looked after and put on a plane back home to the Caribbean!



Baikal teal usually spend the winter in Korea, China or Japan, but several have found their way to England!

© Konrad Wöhrle / naturepl

From the east

A lot of the rare birds that reach the UK come from the east, with some of the rarest coming from the far side of Asia! We're still not quite sure what sends these birds so far off course, but unlike American birds the wind is probably not solely to blame. This is because they don't have to fly across a huge ocean to get here. If a storm pushed an Asian bird off course, it could land and wait for better weather. The most likely explanation is that the birds just make a mistake. Birds use all kinds of tricks to follow their migration route, but just like us they can go wrong and end up lost. Of course, if the wind is blowing in the right direction it increases the chances of them getting here!



An ancient murrelet in its usual home, off the west coast of Canada

© Glenn Bartley / Minden / naturepl

Out of the blue

Even though we get lots of unusual birds turning up in the UK, every now and then something appears that nobody would ever have expected. It could be a bird that doesn't usually fly far from its home, so is less likely to get lost on migration. Or it could be one that lives so far away we can only guess at how it got here! One famous example involved an ancient murrelet – a tiny seabird that's related to our puffins and guillemots. Ancient murrelets live in the Pacific Ocean, thousands of miles from here. So it was a huge surprise in 1990 when one was spotted from Lundy Island, off the coast of Devon!

FEATURE CREATURE

HERALD MOTH



© Vaughn Matthew

MASTER OF DISGUISE

Herald moths spend the daytime resting amongst fallen leaves in the parks, gardens and woods where they live, so they evolved to look like leaves themselves! Their wings are mainly a chocolate-brown colour with shiny orange splotches, and they have very thin white lines that look like the veins on leaves. Add in the wavy shape of the wings and herald moths blend in perfectly with their surroundings, meaning they're less likely to become dinner for hungry predators.

ESSENTIAL FACTS

Scientific name

Scoliopteryx libatrix

Average lifespan

Around six months as an adult moth

Amazing fact

Herald moths have special hearing organs, called tympanic organs, that help them to detect the ultrasonic calls of bats.

SUPER SNOOZER

Herald moths spend most of their adult lives asleep! They hatch out of their cocoons in July, then hibernate in sheltered places like caves from September until March, cosying up with bats, ladybirds and other sleepy moths. When they emerge from hibernation, they mate and lay eggs, which hatch into caterpillars in May.

Herald moths don't move much while they're snoozing, but they remain aware enough of their surroundings to be able to crawl away from things like rising flood waters. Herald moths also like hibernating in sheds, so if you have one, have a careful look around during winter and see what you can find tucked away.

SWEET TOOTH

It isn't just butterflies that drink nectar from flowers – herald moths have a particularly sweet tooth. As well as visiting ivy blossom and other plants to quench their thirst after dark, they feed from overripe fruits like blackberries whose sweet juices are beginning to ooze out. As caterpillars, their tastes are quite different – they feed on the leaves of willow, poplar and willow trees instead. When the caterpillars are ready to turn into adult moths, they pupate between two leaves in a white cocoon made of silk.

© Bob Coyle



© Amy Lewis

WHY ARE SOME ANIMALS NOCTURNAL?



Nightjar © Richard Steel / 2020 DIVISION

The word nocturnal just means happening at nighttime, so nocturnal animals are those that are most active at night. But why do some animals like to come out after dark?

ESCAPING PREDATORS

It's a dangerous world for wildlife – most animals are food for another species, so always need to be alert. Some animals have evolved to come out at night because there are fewer predators around, meaning there's less chance they will be eaten. Many caterpillars hide during the day and feed at night, when they're less likely to be found by a hungry bird. They've got good reason to be worried, as a single blue tit chick can eat 100 caterpillars a day!



MORE TO EAT

Some species become nocturnal to avoid being eaten, but others come out at night because it's easier for them to find food in the dark. This might be to avoid competition with all the animals that hunt during the day. For example, by hunting small mammals at night owls don't have to compete with the birds of prey that hunt the same animals in the day. Or it might be to take advantage of a food source that's only available at night, like the nightjars that have evolved to come out at dusk and hunt moths.

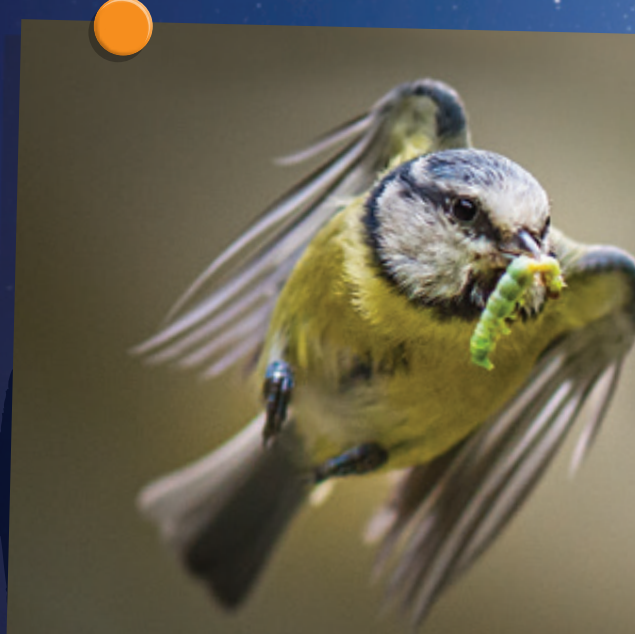


COOLING OFF

In really hot countries, some animals come out at night because it's cooler in the dark. This is especially common in desert areas, where if animals were active during the day they would get very hot and lose a lot of water. This isn't really an issue in the UK, where daytime temperatures don't get that high!

HOW DO ANIMALS HUNT IN THE DARK?

Many nocturnal animals have evolved to have really large eyes, which collect more light and help them see by moonlight and starlight. Some even have a reflective layer in the back of their eye, which helps direct more light into the retina – the part of the eye that detects light and sends signals to our brain, so it can form images. This reflective layer is the reason some animals, like cats, have eyes that glow when you shine a light on them. Nocturnal animals don't just rely on sight to hunt. Many have an incredible sense of smell or hearing, to help them find food when it's hard to see. Some have even more special tricks to track down snacks in the dark. Bats use echolocation to dodge obstacles and hunt moths at night. They make high-pitched sounds, which bounce off objects around them and come back to their sensitive ears. The bats can then work out what's around them. Incredible!



Blue tit with caterpillar © Gillian Lloyd



COMPETITIONS

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WIN

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Design your own bird!
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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 about your entry! **DEADLINE: 30 November 2021**
Competition entries may be used on our website and social media channels.