

FREE!

DARTFORD
WARBLER POSTER

**DANGEROUS
DEPTHS**

Life in the
deep sea

**PREHISTORIC
PERFECTION**

Uncovering an
ancient animal

Issue 102 Summer 2022

Wildlife Watch

MAGAZINE

SOARING SUPERSTARS

Take to the skies with swifts,
swallows and martins!

The
Wildlife
Trusts





Editor's corner

TOM HIBBERT
Editor, Wildlife Watch

Have you got any exciting plans for this summer? There's so much wildlife around, we're spoilt for choice! There are dragonflies and damselflies zipping over ponds, butterflies and bees bumbling from flower to flower, and baby birds begging their busy parents for food.

We've got plenty in this issue to get you excited for summer. You can meet the masters of the air on page 20 – the swifts, swallows and martins that swoop through our skies this season. These brilliant birds are only here for a few months, so get out and find them whilst you can!

If things are getting hot, cool off with a dip into the watery world of seahorses on page 12. Or you can dive even deeper on page 23 as we ask, 'How do creatures survive in the deep sea?'

Whatever your plans this summer, I hope you have a wonderful and wild time!

Tom



GET IN TOUCH

Email us at:
watch@wildlifetrusts.org

Ring us on:
01636 677711

Write to us at:
Wildlife Watch
The Kiln
Mather Road
Newark
Notts
NG24 1WT

[wildlifetrusts.org](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org)
[@wildlifetrusts](https://www.facebook.com/wildlifetrusts)
[thewildlifetrusts](https://www.instagram.com/wildlifetrusts)
[WildlifeWatchUK](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers

BUILDING FOR BIRDS



Daisy (aged 11) and Honey (aged 7) from Essex love feeding birds around their house. They decided to build a bird box to give them somewhere to nest, too. The box had its first visitor in less than an hour!



PURR-FECT POND!

Evelyn (aged 8) from Bedfordshire was determined to create a mini wildlife pond after reading about them in *Wildlife Watch*. Great job, Evelyn! Hazel the cat looks impressed, too.

HAPPY HOGS



Awesta (aged 12) from Oxford spotted hedgehogs in her garden, so put out some dry cat food for them. Now they're regular visitors. We've got tips for feeding garden wildlife at wtru.st/feed-hogs



22



14



06



10

IN THIS ISSUE



Regulars

- 02 Wild Things**
- 04 The Science Section**
Fact-packed discoveries
- 05 Your Photos**
- 10 Heroic Habitats**
Go wild for grasslands
- 11 Otter Poster**
- 14 Gallery**
- 16 Weird Nature**
Royal wildlife
- 17 How to...**
Make a blackberry crumble
- 22 Feature Creature**
Golden-ringed dragonfly
- 23 How do Creatures Survive in the Deep Sea?**
- 24 Competitions**

Features

- 06 A Sea Dragon Surprise**
- 08 Down to the Roots**
The stories behind wild names
- 12 Super Seahorses**
- 18 Nature's Neighbours**
Animals that share their homes
- 20 Masters of the Air**

WILDLIFE WATCH 102

Editor: **Tom Hibbert**

Editorial Team: **Ashleigh Carter, Charlotte Varella, Joanna Richards, Leanne Smart, Mike Watson**



Check out wildlifetrusts.org/privacy-policy to find out how we keep your information safe.

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!

Cover pic of house martin © Alan Williams / naturepl.com

The Science 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!

APOSEMATIC (ap-uh-si-matik)

Warning colours or markings that tell predators that a species isn't worth eating because it's toxic, dangerous or tastes bad. Wasps' black and yellow stripes are aposematic markings that warn birds they can sting.

PHOTOSYNTHESIS (fo-toe-sin-fe-sis)

The process where green plants use sunlight to turn carbon dioxide and water into nutrients they use to grow.

VENOM (ven-um)

A toxic fluid created by some animals to catch prey or defend themselves. It's usually injected into the target through a bite or sting.

RECENT DISCOVERIES



A RIOT OF COLOUR

Most birdwatchers will tell you that birds are more colourful in tropical places, but now scientists have finally proven this! They studied thousands of photos of more than 4,500 species of passerine birds – that's the family of perching birds like tits, sparrows and finches. They proved that birds that live near the equator are generally more colourful than those from farther away. Now they just need to work out why they're more colourful! There's still plenty of colour in UK birds though, just look at a blue tit!

SHARK SICKNESS

Scientists have discovered that a Greenland shark found on a Cornish beach died of meningitis. It is believed to be the first evidence that this species can suffer from the disease. The shark was found by a biologist who was out walking her dog. It was later collected so it could be studied. This was only the second ever stranding of a Greenland shark in the UK. This shark was a female that was 4-metres long and about 100 years old, so was not quite an adult yet. It might be a sad ending for the shark, but by studying its remains we can learn lots about this endangered species. This might even help us protect them better in the future!



YOUR PHOTOS

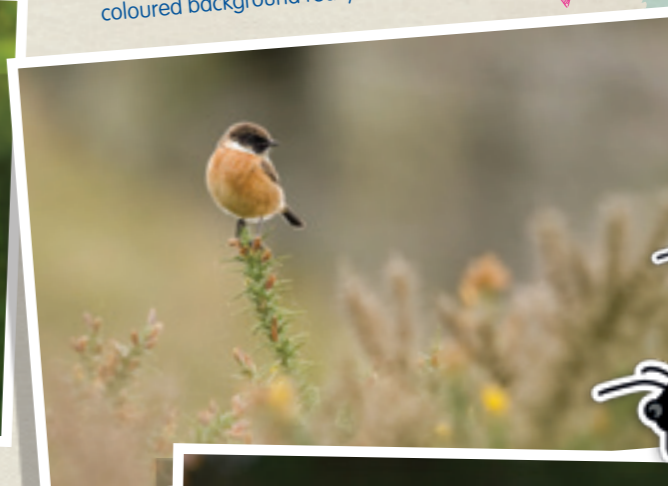


We were sent so many wonderful photos this issue, we just had to share them with you. So instead of Your Stories, here are Your Photos!

William (aged 12) snapped this snazzy stonechat! They love to perch high up on bushes to survey their surroundings. The focus on this bird is brilliant, with the fuzzy and even-coloured background really making it stand out.



Felicity (aged 13) took this pretty portrait of a pigeon. Feral pigeons like this one often get overlooked because they're so common in towns and cities, but they're beautiful birds – don't you agree? Just look at the shiny neck feathers.



Lila (aged 13) took this scenic snap of a spider on its web. The way the light hits the silk really makes it shine, showing off the spider's construction skills.



Lucy (aged 12) captured this cute little bee. She's mastered a really sharp focus on a very fuzzy subject. You can see all the individual hairs!

Matilda (aged 11) captured a photo of this magnificent marbled white butterfly. Matilda did a great job of showing both the upperwing and the underwing, so we can enjoy all of this butterfly's beautiful patterns.



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

A 'SEA DRAGON' SURPRISE

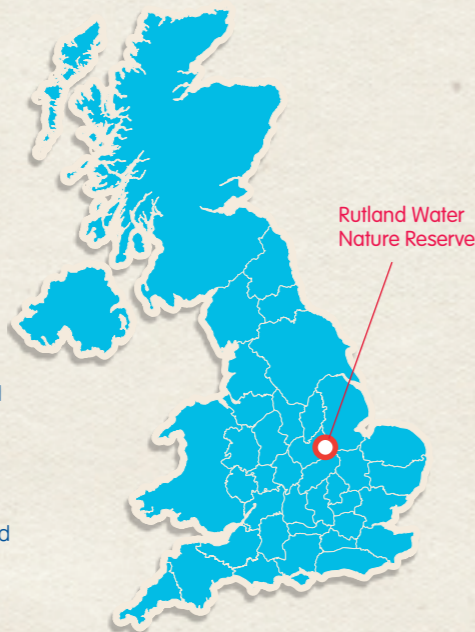
by Dr Dean Lomax

Last year, the fossil of an ichthyosaur was discovered at Rutland Water Nature Reserve. But what exactly is this ancient animal, and how did it get there?

WHAT IS AN ICHTHYOSAUR?

Often mistaken for 'swimming dinosaurs', ichthyosaurs (ick-thee-oh-saws) are a fascinating group of marine reptiles that swam in ancient tropical seas at the same time dinosaurs walked on land. The first ichthyosaurs appeared around 250 million years ago, but became extinct about 90 million years ago, in the Cretaceous Period.

Like dolphins and whales, they breathed air and gave birth to live young at sea, never coming ashore. They ranged in size from less than a metre to more than 25 metres long, reaching the size of blue whales! They were top predators that dined on a variety of animals, including squid, fish, other reptiles and even seabirds.



Rutland Water Nature Reserve

HOW DID THE FOSSIL FORM?

The Rutland ichthyosaur lived around 180 million years ago, during the Early Jurassic. At that time, the area that is now Rutland was covered by a vast tropical sea. It was filled with ancient marine reptiles and squid-like animals called ammonites and belemnites. After the ichthyosaur died, the body sank to the bottom of the seabed where its soft, fleshy parts were eaten by other animals, including sharks and other ichthyosaurs.

Over time, just the hard parts remained, the bones and the teeth. These became buried in the mud at the bottom. As the skeleton was buried deeper and deeper, the original structure of the bones was replaced by minerals from the surrounding mud, transforming the skeleton into a fossil.

Dr Dean Lomax is a palaeontologist, author, and TV presenter. He is a world expert on ichthyosaurs and has studied thousands of specimens, written many scientific studies, and named five new species of ichthyosaur!

HOW WAS THIS FOSSIL FOUND?

On 20 January, 2021, Joe Davis from Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust was draining one of the lagoons at the Rutland Water Nature Reserve. He revealed a strange structure sitting in the Jurassic clay. Joe thought he might have found a dinosaur, so snapped some photos. The very next day, I received an email about the find and immediately

recognised the bones as part of the spine of a large ichthyosaur!

In February, I led a mini, one-day dig to the site and revealed what appeared to be a complete skeleton! Unfortunately, the cold, damp weather meant we could not collect the skeleton. I returned to the site in the summer with a team of palaeontologists (scientists that study fossils) and volunteers, ready to unearth the giant ichthyosaur.

WHAT MAKES THIS DISCOVERY SO SPECIAL?

During our three-week dig, my team revealed an incredible discovery – a complete, 10-metre-long ichthyosaur. That's as long as a bus! At such a giant size, the Rutland ichthyosaur is the most complete skeleton of a large prehistoric reptile ever found in the UK. This is a once in a lifetime discovery and one of the greatest finds in British palaeontological history.

Ichthyosaur comes from the Greek words for 'fish lizard'

Joe Davis, who first found the fossil said, "I never thought in 180-million years this would happen to me. It's phenomenally exciting."



SEA DRAGON STATS

- NAME**
Temnodontosaurus, possibly a species called Temnodontosaurus trigonodon
- LENGTH**
10 metres
- LIVED**
Early Jurassic, around 180 million years ago
- CLOSEST LIVING RELATIVES**
Distantly related to lizards and turtles
- FOUND**
Rutland, East Midlands, UK
- DIET**
Ate squid, fish, and other ichthyosaurs

The UK is full of plants and animals with unusual names. Let's dig down to their roots and find out how they got them!

DOWN TO THE ROOTS

by Andrew Millham



ANDREW is a nature writer, forest school leader and Essex Wildlife Trust volunteer.
@AndrewMillham



FALSE WIDOW SPIDER



© Wendy Carter

BUMBLEBEE



© Tom Marshall

FORGET-ME-NOT



© Vaughn Matthews

STORM PETREL



© Chris Gomersall / 2020VISION

The name of this beautiful blue flower is full of mystery. One tale passed down from Greek myth says that the god Zeus was busy giving names to all the plants. Just when he thought he was finished, a small blue flower shouted, "Forget me not!". So that's what people called it!

A gloomier story tells of a brave knight picking flowers for his true love. He trips and falls into deep water, sinking in his heavy armour. Just before drowning, he throws the flowers to his maiden shouting, "Forget me not, my love."

The flower's scientific name, *Myosotis*, is a bit more straightforward. It comes from the Ancient Greek word for 'mouse ear', describing the shape of the plant's leaves.

The first part of this name is easy to work out. These little black and white birds spend lots of time out at sea, where they survive huge storms! Sailors used to believe you could judge the size of an approaching storm based on the number of storm petrels you saw before it arrived. Some even thought that storm petrels lived within hurricanes, directing storms towards unsuspecting ships.

The 'petrel' part of the name is a bit more mysterious. One theory is it comes from the Latin name for Peter. In the Bible, Saint Peter walks on water. Petrels often fly close to the sea, with their feet hanging down like they're walking on the surface. Storm petrels even paddle their feet on the sea as they feed!

Another name for storm petrels is Mother Carey's chickens. Mother Carey is a legendary witch-like figure who rides a broom and conjures wicked storms with her storm petrel minions, delivering sailors to watery graves.

We all know the name bumblebee, but our fuzzy black and yellow friends were once known by a different name. When Charles Darwin, the famous scientist, wrote about them he would have called them humblebees. This was because they make a humming sound as they fly. The name bumblebee still existed but was not used often. However, over time we decided these tubby balls of fluff seemed more suited to the name bumblebee. They bumble happily from bloom to bloom. Which name do you like best, humblebee or bumblebee?

This tiny spider was named the false widow because it is often mistaken for the more venomous black widow, which isn't found in the UK. A widow is a woman who has lost her partner. The black widow got its name when scientists saw a female eating the male after mating!

Back in the days of candlelight, it was believed that if a spider fell into a burning candle, it meant that a witch was close by. Spotting a spider weaving a web in the home is often seen as a sign of good fortune - they're certainly useful for catching flies and other insects. The belief that spiders brought good fortune inspired the name money spider.

OTHER NAMES EXPLAINED!



© Tom Hibbert

ELEPHANT HAWK-MOTH caterpillars look like an elephant's trunk.



© Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

HEDGEHOGS root through hedges for small creatures, like a pig or hog.



© Guy Edwardes / 2020VISION

SCARLET ELF CUPS are little, red cup-shaped fungi. In European folklore, wood elves are believed to drink morning dew from them.



© Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

ROBINS used to be called 'redbreasts' for their bright markings. In the 1400s, they were given the nickname 'robin redbreast'. Eventually it was shortened to robin.



GRASSLANDS

by Rachel Remnant



What are grasslands?

Grasslands are exactly what they sound like – a patch of land covered in grass! They are one of the world's most widespread habitats, covering around a third of the planet's land surface. You might think of a short garden lawn or sports pitch, but proper grasslands are wilder places like meadows. They have lots of other plants growing amongst the grass. They are kept in shape by animals grazing them, as well as by humans growing and cutting hay.

What wildlife lives there?

Grasslands are best appreciated up close! Get on your knees and see how many different leaf shapes and flower colours you can see. A good grassland will have more than 15 species of plant in every square metre. Some really special ones can have 40-45! With lots of flowers to feed on, grasslands are a haven for insects like moths, butterflies and bees. The tangles of grass provide shelter for voles and harvest mice, which are hunted by birds of prey like kestrels and barn owls.

The healthy soil is great for earthworms, which are eaten by badgers and moles. Grasslands are also great places to find fungi, like the colourful waxcaps that appear in early autumn.



Six-spot burnet moth © Guy Edwards / 2020VISION



Kestrel © Lujie Massey / 2020VISION

How do they fight the climate crisis?

Grasslands are important as a home for wildlife, but they also bring lots of other benefits. Healthy grasslands can soak up carbon and store it in the roots of plants and in the soil. Having less carbon in the air (in the form of carbon dioxide) will help prevent the climate crisis from getting worse. Sadly, when grasslands are ploughed or destroyed carbon gets released, making things worse. This means we must protect the grassland we have, as well as making space for more of it. Grasslands also play a big role in the water cycle and can help prevent flooding.



Common spotted orchid © Paul Lane

How can we help them?

We've lost 97% of our special meadows since the 1930s, and even more before then. The remaining patches are really important as we can gather seeds from them to make new grasslands. Sometimes people destroy meadows by planting trees on them because they want to help fight the climate crisis. We have to make sure that we don't plant trees in the wrong place.

At home we can make mini meadows in our gardens! Grow some local wildflowers in your lawn, like yellow rattle, red clover, meadow buttercup and ribwort plantain. Wildlife will love

it, and it will help animals move between larger meadows in your area. Even the food we buy can help. Look out for milk, meat and eggs from pasture-fed livestock.



Rachel looks after a meadow-filled nature reserve for Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. She was a Wildlife Watcher when she was younger!

Meadow © Ross Hoddinott / 2020VISION

Otter Spotter

Otter eyes are high on their head so they can peak above the water as they swim. They also have excellent hearing and a good sense of smell, and their long whiskers help them detect prey!

© Andy Rouse / 2020VISION



Enter the watery world of some of the ocean's cutest creatures!



SUPER SEAHORSES

You've probably seen seahorses on TV, but did you know we have them right here in the UK? These amazing animals are shy and secretive, but can be found close to shore on some of our coasts. Let's find out a little bit more about them!

© Andrew Peirson



Seahorses are related to pipefish and sea dragons

SEAHORSE SPOTTER

There are about 50 SPECIES of seahorses in the world, with TWO IN THE UK:

1. SPINY SEAHORSE

Also called the long-snouted seahorse. It has a long snout and a mane of fleshy spines on its head, neck and back. It's often found in seagrass.



2. SHORT-SNOUDED SEAHORSE

As the name suggests, this seahorse has a shorter snout. It also has no obvious 'mane'. It prefers rocky and sandy areas to seagrass beds.

FUNKY FISH

Seahorses are fish, though they look a bit different to most fish you see. They have a horse-like head with a long snout, and a curving body that makes them look a bit like the letter 'S'. They also have a prehensile tail – this means it can grip things, like a monkey's tail does. This strange shape makes them very slow swimmers.

POCKET-SIZED PREDATORS

Despite their slow speed, seahorses are hunters. They're ambush predators that feed on tiny shrimp and other miniature marine creatures. They use their gripping tail to cling to seaweed or seagrass, sneakily waiting for prey to pass by. When they spot something tasty, they suck it up with their long snout – like an underwater vacuum cleaner! They have no teeth so swallow everything whole.

SAFETY IN SEAGRASS

Because they're such slow swimmers, seahorses like to hide. They spend a lot of time in seagrass meadows, patches of seaweed and amongst rocks. These places give them shelter to avoid predators, but also something to grip onto. They grab hold with their tails to stop themselves being swept away. In the UK, seahorses are most common on the south coast of England. They spend the summer in shallow water, but can move into deeper water in winter.

Seahorses can change colour to help them blend in!

PRANCING PARTNERS

Seahorse couples show their commitment to each other by dancing! They meet up in the morning and spiral in circles, with their tails tangled together. Amazingly, it's the male seahorse that gets pregnant. The female places her eggs in a special pouch on the male's body, which then closes up to protect them. After a few weeks, the male gives birth to some tiny baby seahorses.

WATERY WORRIES

Seahorses around the world face lots of threats. Sometimes they're caught deliberately and sold as pets, dried out and sold as souvenirs, or used in traditional medicine. It's important not to buy seahorses, as they're much better off left in the sea! They're also in danger from disturbance and damage to the places they live. Luckily, seahorses are a protected species in the UK, but we still need to look after the seagrass meadows and other underwater areas that they call home.



© Paul Newby, marinephoto.co.uk

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

- 1) Owl by Mary, aged 9** This owl has so much character! We can almost feel it staring at us.
- 2) Whale by Carmen, aged 10** Carmen has created a wonderful watery landscape.
- 3) Blue tit by Felicity, aged 13** What a brilliant drawing of a beautiful bird!
- 4) Oak tree by Alfred, aged 8** Alfred has shown us an entire habitat, full of wildlife.
- 5) Honeybee by Dylan, aged 8** We love how bright and bold this is!
- 6) Owl by Nancy, aged 10** This is a great painting of an owl in action!
- 7) Bee orchid by Archie, aged 5** A lovely vibrant drawing of this weird and wonderful plant.
- 8) Crane by Edie, aged 9** It's great to see this majestic crane in its natural habitat.
- 9) Hedgehog by Ivy, aged 7** What a lovely prickly hedgehog!
- 10) House sparrow by Molly, aged 12** An amazing painting of a male house sparrow!
- 11) Eagle by Amie, aged 9** Amie has painted an eagle poised to take off!
- 12) Owl by Meghan, aged 7** We love the creativity Meghan has shown to make this owl from fallen leaves.

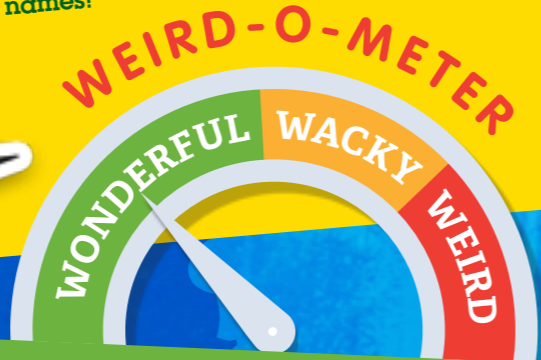


If we feature your artwork we will need your first name and your age, so don't forget to include them. We might also share it on our website and social media.

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

WEIRD NATURE

As this year is the Queen's platinum jubilee, we're taking a look at some wildlife with royal names!



THIS ISSUE: ROYAL WILDLIFE

KINGFISHER



This noble name speaks for itself! The kingfisher's realm is the riverbank, where they perch as they scan for fish. Their impressive hunting skills deserve the title of king of fishers!

THE CORONET



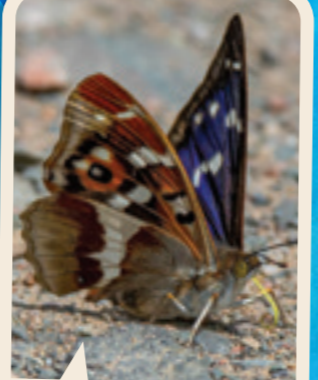
A coronet is a small or simple crown. This delicately patterned moth gets its name from the wavy patterns on its wings that look a bit like the paper crown from a Christmas cracker.

THE HERALD



In historic times, a herald was a person who made royal announcements or carried messages between different rulers. The herald moth may not carry messages, but its wavy-edged wings resemble the robes of the people who did.

PURPLE EMPEROR



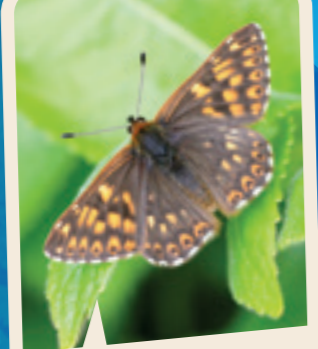
Kings and queens aren't the only rulers. This wonderful woodland butterfly is certainly impressive enough to be called an emperor, but its taste in food isn't so fancy. They can often be found feeding on dog poo!

QUEEN BEE



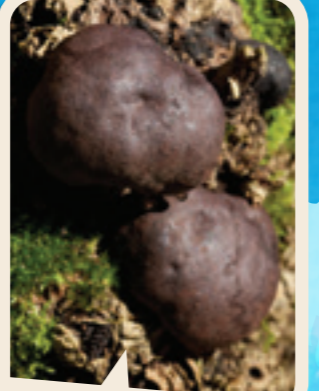
The classic wildlife royalty! The queen bee isn't a species, it's the name given to the female bumblebee or honeybee that rules the hive. Queens are much larger than the other bees.

DUKE OF BURGUNDY



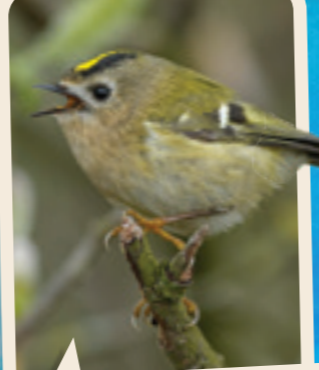
There are lots of moths and butterflies in Europe with royal names, but there's only one duke! The Duke of Burgundy is a beautiful little butterfly, but it's quite rare in the UK. Nobody really knows how it got such a fancy name!

KING ALFRED'S CAKES



These freaky fungi get their name from some royally bad baking! Legend says that after losing a battle, King Alfred hid in a poor woman's house. She asked him to watch her cakes, but he let them burn into blackened buns – just like the fungus!

GOLDCREST



Having 'gold' in your name is pretty regal, but the goldcrest has an even fancier scientific name: *Regulus regulus*. *Regulus* means king, so the goldcrest is secretly super royal. The American relatives of the goldcrest are called kinglets.

Make a wild blackberry crumble



- You will need:**
- 450g handpicked ripe blackberries
 - 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

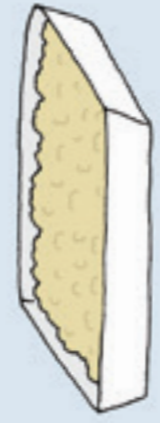
1 Between August and October, go out on an adventure picking blackberries.



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



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 to stand for five minutes. Tuck in and enjoy!



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

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

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

A good home is hard to find, so sometimes it's better to share!

NATURE'S NEIGHBOURS

by Tom Hibbert

Finding the right place to live is really important for an animal – their survival depends on it! They're often looking for somewhere sheltered, usually warm, and with lots of food nearby. But what happens if the perfect spot is already taken? Well, some creatures have learnt to share! Let's meet a few...

Badgers © Andrew Cooper / naturepl.com



wildlifewatch.org.uk



BURROWS

Lots of animals live in burrows, but they don't always dig their own. Sometimes one species will move into the burrow of another! Badger setts are particularly popular. They can include over 50 metres of tunnels, with multiple entrances, creating plenty of space for guests. Badgers have been recorded sharing their underground hideaways with wood mice, rats, rabbits and foxes. In Italy, they sometimes have porcupines as roommates! It happens in the sea, too. Shelled creatures called Norway lobsters (also known as scampi) live in burrows in the muddy seafloor. They sometimes share their burrows with other animals, including a small fish named Fries's goby.



Norway lobster © Paul Naylor / marinephoto.co.uk

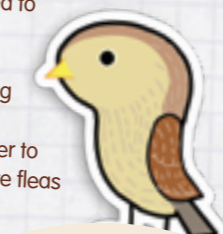


Fries's goby © Paul Naylor / marinephoto.co.uk

BIRD NESTS

Birds put a lot of effort into building the perfect nest, but they don't get to keep it all to themselves. It won't take long for new neighbours to move in. Lots of different insects and other miniature creatures love to live in bird nests, including beetles, moth caterpillars and even ants. They like nests because they're warm and sheltered, but mostly because there's lots of food on offer. There are bits of plants from the nest itself, plenty of poo and old feathers, or even dead animals brought back to feed to chicks – tasty!

These little lodgers can sometimes be useful, as they help clean the nest by eating all that poo and rotting material. But some nest guests are less welcome, as they prefer to feed on the birds and their chicks! There are fleas and biting mites that suck their blood. If a nest has too many of these, the chicks may not survive, or the adults might abandon it. Luckily, there are also predators like beetles and spiders that hunt these unwelcome invaders.



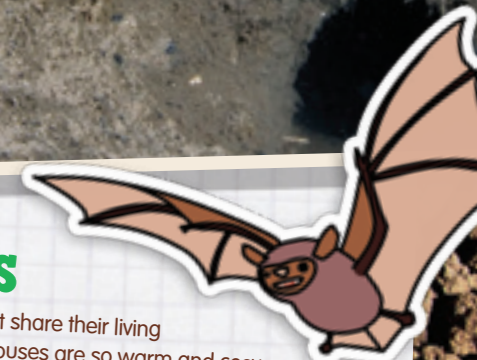
Blackbird nest © Amy Lewis



BUILDINGS

It's not just wild animals that share their living spaces – we do, too! Our houses are so warm and cosy that they provide a perfect home to lots of little creatures. Some houses may have larger lodgers, like bats in the attic or mice in the walls, but most guests are tiny insects and other invertebrates. They live out their lives without ever being noticed, quietly going about their business and not bothering us. There could be miniature booklice that feed on mould, teeny flies, and of course, spiders!

You've probably spotted a house spider or cellar spider in your home. Cellar spiders are those skinny ones with long legs that hang out in cobwebby corners close to the ceiling. House spiders are the chunkier brown ones that run across the floor. If you see one that looks like it has a little pair of boxing gloves in front of its face, it's a male. He could be looking for love! Other spiders that shelter in houses include a tiny, pink species of goblin spider, called the pink prowler, and the spitting spider. This slow-moving, spotty spider spits sticky fluid at its prey to make it easier to bite.



Spiders don't climb out of plug holes, they fall into sinks and baths and get stuck!



House spider © Philippe Clement / naturepl.com

LOOKUP!

The summer sky is filled with aerial acrobats!

MASTERS OF THE AIR

by Pete Dommert

Swooping and soaring in the air above you are four summer visitors with swept-back wings and forked tails. The swallow, house martin and sand martin are from the same family (hirundines), but the swift belongs to a completely different group. All of them are superbly adapted to their fast flyin' lifestyle!

SWALLOW



© Chris Gomersall / 2020VISION

Apparently it's bad luck to see a swallow fly under a cow, but we think that'd be pretty spectacular!

The classic sign of summer! Watching these acrobatic blue-winged birds twisting and turning over fields and parks as they feast on flies in flight is a seasonal treat. Wait for one to rest on a telephone wire and you'll soon spot its fancy tail streamers and red face. Swallows often nest inside barns, building a cosy cup of mud and straw on top of a beam or ledge. After their chicks have hatched, both parents fly to and from the nest with a non-stop supply of food. A brood of baby swallows needs about 6,000 insects a day to survive! Phew!

SAND MARTIN



© Hans Glader BA Minden / naturepl.com

The smallest member of the hirundine family doesn't get its name from its sandy-brown feathers, but because it breeds in the steep, sandy banks of rivers and lakes. Sand martins use their feet and beaks to dig tunnels in the soft soil. These can be up to one metre long and end in a special nest chamber lined with dry grass and feathers. A nesting colony can be home to hundreds of pairs of birds – all breeding and feeding together. Look for sand martins snatching up insects over open water. You might even see a thirsty bird swoop down to the surface to scoop up a drink!

HOUSE MARTIN



© Margaret Holland

Make a muddy puddle to help house martins and swallows build their nests!

Looking similar to a swallow (but with a white bum!), the house martin hunts for food a little higher in the sky. It snaps up flying beetles, aphids and other bugs in its broad beak. Once these birds would have nested on cliffs and in caves, but now they breed under the eaves (the edges of roofs) of houses. Their round nests – made from 1,000 or more pellets of mud collected from nearby puddles and ponds – take about 10 days to build! Why not fix a special nestbox to the side of your house and save this busy bird a whole lot of work?

SWIFT



© Stefan Johansson

A swift might fly more than 2 million kilometres in its lifetime!

Way above you, a black bow-and-arrow is screaming across the sky. That's a swift – the ultimate airborne bird! Swifts aren't related to swallows and martins – they're from the Apodidae family, which means 'no feet'. They do have feet, but never use them to perch on wires like hirundines do. In fact, swifts spend almost all their lives in flight – eating, drinking and even sleeping in the air – and only ever touch down to breed in old buildings. Adults Hoover up flying invertebrates and bring them back to their chicks in a mashed-up ball (called a 'bolus'). Just one bolus can contain 1,000 bugs!

All four species will soon be heading off to Africa on their autumn migration (if you're reading this in August, some swifts may have already left!). They'll cross the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert on their incredible journeys south, feeding as they fly! But don't worry – they'll be back next summer!



GOLDEN-RINGED DRAGONFLY

© Pete Richman



A DAZZLING DRAGON

The golden-ringed dragonfly is a beautiful insect, with big green eyes and a long body covered in black and yellow bands. It's one of our largest dragonflies – in fact, the female is the UK's longest dragonfly, thanks to the long egg-laying organ (called an ovipositor) at the end of her body.

HEATHLAND HUNTER

Golden-ringed dragonflies live on heathlands and moorlands, sometimes appearing far away from the nearest water. They hunt insects, including butterflies, bees and wasps. They'll even catch and eat other dragonflies! You can find them in Scotland, Wales and northern, southern and western England. They fly all summer, from May to September.



ESSENTIAL FACTS

Scientific name

Cordulegaster boltonii

Size

7.4 – 8.4cm

Amazing fact

It can take up to five years for a young golden-ringed dragonfly to develop into an adult

GO WITH THE FLOW

Golden-ringed dragonflies need flowing water to lay their eggs in. They really like narrow streams with lots of plants along the edge. The female hovers above the water with her body pointing down, then plunges lower and sinks her ovipositor into the stream bed again and again – a bit like a drill! Each time she sticks it in, she lays her eggs.

When the eggs hatch, the young dragonflies (called larvae) look nothing like the adult. They have shorter, fatter bodies and no wings. They live in the water for several years, hiding in the mud at the bottom of the stream and ambushing smaller watery creatures. They'll chomp down on young insects, tadpoles and even small fish! When they are finally ready to turn into an adult, they climb out onto a riverside plant and transform. They usually do this at night, so they're less likely to be spotted and gobbled up by a predator.

HOW DO CREATURES SURVIVE IN THE DEEP SEA?

by Erin McKeown



The deep sea is one of the coldest, darkest and loneliest places on planet earth. Living in this part of our oceans is very difficult. However, some species have evolved very strange adaptations to help them survive in these depths.

UNDER PRESSURE

If you go swimming under the sea, all the weight of the water above you is pressing down on you. The deeper you go the heavier the ocean gets. Deep sea fish have adapted to handle the weight of the water by having skeletons made from softer materials than our bones. This means they won't break under the intense pressure. Some even have a differently shaped skeleton than fish close to the surface. One deep sea snailfish from the Pacific Ocean has part of its skull missing! This adaptation stops the pressure from crushing the skull and injuring the brain.

If you dive five miles down into the ocean it feels like someone has stacked 50 airplanes on top of each other and then dropped them on your head!

DEEP AND DARK

Light from the sun doesn't reach the bottom of the ocean, making it very difficult for animals who live there to see anything. To help, some animals make their own light. This ability is called bioluminescence. Lots of animals around the world do this, including anglerfish. They light up a piece of their body that dangles in front of their face, attracting smaller animals to come close enough for them to eat. Other deep-sea creatures have eyes that are more sensitive to light, helping them see more in the dark.

The deepest part of UK seas is called the Rockall Trough, thought to be 3,500 metres below the surface of the sea. That's so deep you could fit Mount Fuji in it! The world's deepest known sea is an underwater valley called Challenger Deep, in the Pacific Ocean. It's over 10,000 metres deep!

DEEP SEA DIETS

Food is hard to find in the deep sea. As it is so dark, some fish rely more on smell than sight. Rattail fish have an extremely sensitive sense of smell. They sniff out food and then use a special organ on the bottom of their chin to sense their surroundings and move towards their prey. A rare species of shark, called the goblin shark, also has a very cool adaptation to help it find food in the deep sea. The goblin shark has a very long snout, covered in jelly pores that can sense the vibrations and movement of other species. In the pitch-black deep sea, this helps them find food as well as other goblin sharks to mate with.



COMPETITIONS

WIN WHAT A SHELL CAN TELL

Dive into the world of shells and the creatures that live in them! You'll discover what shells can tell us about wild places from around the globe, and meet lots of magnificent molluscs – like the clusterwink snail that glows in the dark! This beautiful book is written by Helen Scales and illustrated by Sonia Pulido.

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

Buy online at: phaidon.com RRP: £16.95



FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:

Draw your favourite shell or shelled creature and send us your drawing!

WIN BAT BOX KIT

Build your own bat box with this easy-to-assemble kit! It comes with all the pieces you need, you just have to find a hammer and a screwdriver. Put your bat box on a tree or building to offer a safe space to roost for common pipistrelle bats.

We've got **FOUR** kits to give away!

Buy online at: nestbox.co.uk RRP: £20.40



FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:

Tell us what fossilised ancient animal was found at Rutland Water last year? (Clue: The answer is in the magazine!)



WIN

MAKE THIS BOOK WILD



This book was made to have fun outside! Cut, colour and create as you connect with nature like never before. Fill the pages with mud, leaves, flowers, doodles and stories! There are more than 60 nature-themed activities to enjoy, from dressing a dragon to composing a poem for the planet.

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

Buy online at: wtru.st/book-wild
RRP: £10.99

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:

Just answer this question! Which one of these is a real bird found in the UK?
a) House martin
b) Garage martin
c) Shed martin

If you're sending multiple entries, please try to put them in one email to save energy!

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: 31 August 2022**

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

