

FREE!

WOODCOCK
POSTER



**FAIRYTALE
FUN**

Meet wildlife with
a fantasy theme

**TURNING
RED**

Learn all about
red squirrels



Issue 107 Autumn 2023

Wildlife Watch

MAGAZINE

**OOZE
INTO
AUTUMN**

Discover snots,
slimes and other
gooey delights!

The
Wildlife
Trusts





Editor's corner

TOM HIBBERT

Editor, Wildlife Watch

Are you ready for autumn? It's a wonderful season for exploring, as there's so much happening in the world of wildlife! Every day brings something different as animals prepare for the challenges of winter. You can look for the last of the summer visitors, getting ready to head south to find warmer weather. Or you can seek out the new arrivals, animals that have travelled to the UK from colder places. Birds are the most famous travellers, but they aren't the only animals that make mega migrations – find out more on page 12!

Autumn is also a great time for discovering some of nature's weirdest wonders. Fungi seem to appear from nowhere as they shoot up from the ground or tree trunks. They come in all kinds of strange shapes. We've asked *The FUNgi Guy* to share his tips for finding some common species – head to page six to learn more. And if fungi aren't strange enough, on page 16 we're exploring snot, slime and oozes!

I hope you enjoy the autumn issue.

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

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WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers

GO WITH THE FLOW



Sophie (aged 9) and Will (aged 6) from Bristol were walking along a river with their mum when Will spotted this dazzling damselfly – a beautiful demoiselle!



LOUNGING LIZARD

Felix (aged 6) and Wilbur (aged 3), also from Bristol, were lucky enough to find this slow worm in their allotment!

BEETLE BRILLIANCE

William (aged 9) from Buckinghamshire spotted this huge beetle enjoying the sun on the wall of a house. He proudly identified it as a cockchafer – great knowledge, William!



PUFFIN PAPARAZZI



Ten-year-old Iris from Buckinghamshire visited Skomer Island with her cousin Mina, where she photographed this handsome puffin. He must have been camera shy, as he disappeared into his burrow right after she snapped him!



Red squirrel © Peter Cairns / 2020VISION

Puffin by Watch reader Ruby

Fairy flax © Brian Eversham

Blue shark © Alex Mustard / naturepic.com



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12

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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 to find out more.

KEEP WATCHING!

The Science Section

Always wondered what that weird-sounding word meant or desperate to know what the latest wonderful wildlife discovery is? Well, here we bring you a fact-packed science section so you can impress your friends with your knowledge!

WILD WORDS

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

COLONY

(kol-uh-nee)
A group of individuals of the same species living close together.

INTERTIDAL

(in-ter-tie-dull)
The area of the sea shore that is covered by water at high tide, but exposed to the air at low tide.



MYCELIUM

(my-see-lee-um)
The main part of a fungus, usually hidden underground or in rotten wood. It looks like a bunch of threads, a bit like plant roots.

RECENT DISCOVERIES



Great tit © Chris Lawrence

SING STARS

You've probably heard a great tit singing. It's a simple, see-sawing "tee-ta, tee-ta" that sounds like they're calling for a teacher! But great tits don't always sound the same, they like to mix it up. Bird experts have been studying the songs of a population of great tits in a wood in Oxfordshire. They recorded more than 109,000 songs from around 454 birds. Most male great tits had three or four types of song, but some had up to 13! Their songs usually lasted around two seconds, but some sang for over 20 seconds without stopping.

ELECTRO TICKS

Ticks are little arachnids (relatives of spiders) that feed on blood. They climb onto a host animal, make a little cut and stick their feeding tube into it. Ticks can't jump, so they climb grasses and other plants and wait for animals to brush against them. However, scientists have recently discovered that ticks have a trick to help them. They're attracted to static electricity! As animals move, they naturally create static electricity. The scientists proved that this electricity can pull ticks towards the animal, launching them several millimetres or even centimetres through the air. This could help them find a host to feed on.



Tick © Tom Hibbert

YOUR PHOTOS

Keep sharing your amazing photos with us, we love to see them all!



MELISSA (aged 12) has shown us a foxglove from a new perspective with this fabulous photo. It's like a bee's-eye view as it visits the flower in search of nectar.



EMILY (aged 9) and her sister Izzy helped their grandad make a reptile refuge in their garden. They now see lots of lizards, which Emily enjoys photographing. She captured this one shedding its skin!



JACK (aged 10) took this lovely landscape shot in the Lake District. He was on a walk with his family when they discovered this tarn. We love the moody sky!



ISABELLA (aged 9) took this photo on a late night wildlife walk and identified it as a leopard slug. Doesn't it have a beautiful pattern! Like the markings on a leopard.



Send your stories, ideas, and photos to watch@wildlifetrusts.org

My name is **Ali McKernan**, and I love all things fungi! I'm known as **The FUNgi guy** on YouTube where I make fun videos to help identify fungi. @ the.fungi.guy

Take a look at some of our most popular fungi and learn how you might spot them this autumn!

FINDING FUNGI

by Ali McKernan

Fungi come in so many shapes, sizes and colours that once you start spotting them, it's hard to stop! Every step outside the house can turn into a treasure hunt – and who wouldn't want that?

TOP TIPS FOR FUNGI FINDERS

The big secret to finding fungi during the autumn is simple - keep your peepers peeled at all times! Fungi grow almost everywhere. Knowing their favourite habitats is helpful, though. Woodland is probably the number one place to find the largest variety, but you can find amazing mushrooms and other fungi in parks, your back garden or even on the walk to school. Some grow just with the grass, some are friends with living trees and some love dead things, so a log pile is like a hotel for fungi! A week or so after rain is when you're most likely to see them popping up.

Scarlet elf cups

TREE HUGGERS

Look for these fungi growing on trees.

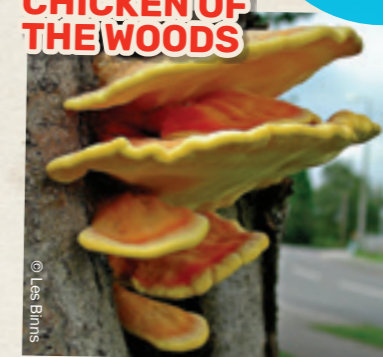
Brackets aren't the only fungi to grow on dead trees - some mushrooms, balls, slimes and jellies love them too!

BEEFSTEAK FUNGUS



This crazy fungus gives the appearance that the tree is sticking a massive tongue out at you! It grows mainly towards the base of old oak trees and gets its name from the fact that the insides look like a slice of raw meat - it even oozes red droplets like blood!

CHICKEN OF THE WOODS



One of the easiest fungi to spot – as long as you're looking up! This dazzling bracket is bright orange with a vibrant yellow underbelly. It grows in shelves with a wavy edge, and its favourite trees to grow on are oak, cherry and willow.

BIRCH POLYPORE



Resembling a small football, this 'bracket' fungus is only ever found on dead or dying birch trees. It flattens out as it gets bigger and older, and it has amazing healing properties - a thin slice off the surface can be used to make a self-sticking plaster!

TURKEY TAILS



These very common fungi often grow in large numbers. They stick out like sea shells on the sides of dead trees, especially big old tree stumps. You'll find them most often in the woods. They have 'rainbow' patterns of purples and browns. Can you guess where they get their name from?

The top four trees that fungi grow with are birch, beech, pine and oak.

ROOT RIDERS

These fungi like to grow under trees.

FLY/AGARIC



Probably the most famous mushroom in the world - and quite common! I often see these large mushrooms on grass at the side of the road, and know that its host tree mustn't be far away. They love pine and oak trees, but birch seems to be a favourite!

AMETHYST DECEIVER



These little mushrooms are a stunning bright purple colour and love damp woodland, especially on slopes with beech trees. They often grow in troops and once you find one, you can suddenly spot the rest of the family right beside it!

EARTHBALLS



These little balls can be scruffy, smooth or spotty. As they get older a little opening will appear at the top. If you give them a gentle prod with a stick they'll puff out a poof of spores (seeds), which catch in the wind and help them spread far and wide.

SCARLETINA BOLETE



Amagical mushroom that's friends with many different trees. They are very chunky, resembling a table lamp when they get to full size. Instead of gills underneath (flaps), they have holes that look like a sponge. Their magic trick is the ability to turn bright blue if you press the stem!

Graveyards can be home to some of our most colourful mushrooms - the waxcaps! Why not ask an adult to take you for a different kind of Halloween experience?

Are you a fan of fantasy films and books? Do you marvel at the fictional creatures that feature in them? Did you know that these make-believe beasts have given their names to some magical, real-life wildlife?

Let's meet **EIGHT** of these spellbinding species...

FANTASTIC WILDLIFE

(and where to find it!)

by
Pete
Dommett

**FIVE MORE
FANTASTICALLY-NAMED
SPECIES!**

Goblin spider

Ghost moth

Witches' whiskers lichen

Devil's coach horse beetle

Enchanter's nightshade

Can YOU find any other plants or animals to add to this fantasy wildlife list? Or you could even make up your own!



GOBLIN'S GOLD



As every Harry Potter fan knows, goblins love gold! So they'd be sure to like this glittering, golden-green, glow-in-the-dark moss. It grows in damp, dingy places (like caves) where there's not much sunlight. But special cells on the plant's surface capture what little light there is and use it to make energy. This means this luminous moss can survive in places where other plants can't. What a golden opportunity!

GREEN ELF CUP



Green fungi are few and far between! These tiny (only 1-5mm wide), turquoise mushrooms grow on the rotting wood of deciduous trees, especially oaks, and can be found during autumn and winter in woods, parks and gardens. In European folk-tales, wood elves drink morning dew from the little, cup-shaped caps. Or perhaps they prefer green tea?

You can also spot ruby elf cup fungi in autumn. They make a great snack for mice and slugs!

GHOST SLUG



What's white and comes out at night? The ghost slug! But this spooky slug actually spends most of its time underground (up to 1m deep) and doesn't often visit the surface, making it very hard to see. This carnivorous mollusc feeds on earthworms, sucking them up like spaghetti and chomping them into bits with its blade-like teeth!

FAIRY FLAX



This pretty plant can be seen blooming on grassy heaths and sand dunes in September - search for small white flowers on the end of long, wiry stems. It grows all over Europe - from Iceland to the Mediterranean - and throughout the UK. In English fairy tales, fairies use fairy flax to make their clothes!

SMALL PHOENIX



You may not see a phoenix - the fiery bird found in fantasy tales - flying about on a September night, but you might spot this nocturnal namesake! When this mini moth is resting, it curls up its bottom in a curious way - perhaps this reminded whoever named it of the phoenix's long, twirling tail feathers!

MINOTAUR BEETLE



In Greek mythology, the minotaur is a half-human/half-bull monster that lives in a labyrinth. These shiny, black dung beetles nest in maze-like tunnels deep underground, which the males defend with those bullish horns! Adults drag rabbit droppings and other dung down into their nests for their larva to feed on. Look for these beastly beetles on sandy grassland and heathland in autumn.

DRYAD'S SADDLE



Dryads are little woodland fantasy creatures that live in trees, so this big bracket fungus would make the perfect seat for them! It can grow to enormous sizes (up to 60cm across) and is often found on beech, elm and sycamore trees in summer and early autumn. It also smells a bit like watermelon - maybe that's another reason why dryads love this fruity fungus!

GREEN HYDRA



The legendary hydra - a venomous, multi-headed water-monster - lives in a garden pond near you! This pint-sized (less than 1cm long) predator captures and kills prey much bigger than itself - such as worms, water fleas and fish fry - using its toxic tentacles. And just like its mythical namesake, if a bit of green hydra gets snapped off, it grows into a new animal!

The green hydra is related to jellyfish, corals and sea anemones. It has no heart or brain!

HEDGEROWS



Robin © Chris Gomersall / 2020VISION

What are hedgerows?

As the name suggests, a hedgerow is basically just a row of bushes, but they can come in lots of shapes and sizes. There are often some taller trees mixed in with the shrubby bushes, with a strip of long grass and flowers at the base of the hedge. Hedgerows are man-made habitats, planted by people to mark the borders of their land. They can be seen all over the UK, along roadsides, paths and across farmland. Some are better for wildlife than others. A good hedgerow is thick and tangled, with lots of space for creatures to shelter.

What wildlife lives there?

Hedgerows can be wonderful for wildlife! They provide lots of food, from nectar-rich flowers in spring to juicy berries in autumn. These are enjoyed by insects, mammals, and birds – including redwings and fieldfares, which cross the North Sea every autumn to feast on our berries. In spring and summer, the tangle of leaves and branches is the perfect shelter for nesting birds like yellowhammers and whitethroats. Over winter, hedges offer shelter to many different animals, including hibernating dormice.



Can they help fight the climate crisis?

The trees and bushes in a hedgerow will capture and store some carbon, helping remove it from the atmosphere and fighting the climate crisis. But hedgerows also do lots of other really important things! They can stop soil from breaking down and blowing away, as well as stopping pesticides from running off of farm fields and into rivers. One other really important job that hedgerows do is join wild places together. Hedgerows can work like highways for animals, helping them move safely across the countryside. They also give cows and other farm animals a place to shelter from the wind.



How can we help them?

Lots of hedgerows have been lost from the countryside. If you have a garden, you could make a mini version of a hedgerow! It makes a great alternative to a garden fence, as wildlife like hedgehogs and frogs can move through it. Find out how at wildlifetrusts.org/help-hedge



Hedgerow © Jon Hawkins / Surrey Hills Photography



Hedgerow © Chris Gomersall / 2020VISION

JACK OF ALL TRADES

JACKDAWS enjoy a varied diet, including insects, nuts, fruit and carrion. You often find them in big flocks, mingling with other corvids.



Jackdaw © Fergus Gill / 2020VISION



Meet the animals that migrate MASSIVE distances every year!

INCREDIBLE JOURNEYS

by Tom Hibbert

Birds are famous for their mega migrations. They can fly hundreds or even thousands of miles each year. But they aren't the only animals that move phenomenal distances as the seasons change.

Let's meet a few more of our terrific travellers!



Blue shark © Alex Mustard / naturepl.com

FINTASTIC FISH

Lots of fish make migrations. Salmon and eels both migrate between rivers and the sea to breed, but they do it in opposite directions! Eels live in rivers but swim out to sea to spawn, travelling more than 3,000 miles to the Sargasso Sea. They die after spawning and their young swim all the way back to Europe and up a river, where they grow into adults. Salmon prefer to live in the sea, then swim up a river to spawn. The journey is tough and only the strongest salmon survive! The young salmon will eventually make their way back to the sea to grow up, before returning to the same river where they were born.

Sharks also make impressive journeys each year, with several species travelling to the UK for the summer. This includes the second largest fish in the world, the basking shark. One of the most impressive migrants is the blue shark. These sleek sharks can cover thousands of miles as they cross the Atlantic Ocean between America and Europe. They move in a big clockwise circle, passing from North America to Europe, down towards Africa, then back across to the Americas.



Salmon © Linda Pitkin / 2020VISION



Painted lady © Jon Hawkins / Strrey Hills Photography

UNBELIEVABLE INSECTS

Despite being tiny, insects can cross continents! Just like birds, they travel to the UK to make the most of the summer weather. Unlike birds, the insects that leave the UK in autumn aren't the same ones that arrived in spring. This is because insects don't tend to live that long. They make their mega migrations in stages, like a relay race. Adult insects fly part of the way, then stop to breed. Their young grow up and continue

Painted ladies use the wind to reach speeds of up to 30 miles per hour!

the migration. So one generation might fly to the UK in spring, and the next generation will fly south again in autumn. Our most famous insect traveller is the painted lady. This beautiful butterfly migrates between tropical Africa and the UK every year, even crossing the Sahara Desert! At the start of spring, the first butterflies fly from Africa to the Mediterranean. They stop there and lay eggs. When those eggs hatch and the caterpillars become butterflies, they continue the migration, with some reaching the UK. The next generation will fly south in autumn, with some making it all the way to Africa.



MIGHTY MAMMALS

Our migratory mammals include a small bat called Nathusius' pipistrelle. Some of these bats breed in the UK in summer, but others seem to travel here for the winter! They fly over from colder parts of northeastern Europe, then fly back again in spring. Scientists are still trying to understand exactly where they go. They put special numbered rings on the bats' forearms, which help them track their movements. Bats ringed in England have been found in Belgium, Poland and even Russia.

One Nathusius' pipistrelle flew 2,018 kilometres from London to Russia.



Nathusius' pipistrelle © Terry Whitaker / 2020VISION


Some of our largest mammals are also long-distance migrants. Humpback whales spend the summer feeding in the cool waters of the most northern parts of the Atlantic Ocean. In autumn they start to swim south to give birth in warmer, tropical waters. Some travel through the UK's seas on this journey. Northeast Scotland is becoming a hot spot for glimpsing humpbacks!



Humpback whale © Gillian Day

Leaping salmon © Rob Jordan / 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.

1



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12

1) Mackerel by Eleanor, aged 12 
Just look at this fantastic fish! We're speechless. Amazing work!

2) Snail by Ivan, aged 6
We love the way Ivan has put the snail in the garden. It brings the art to life!

3) Crow by Albie, aged 11
The use of black in the background makes this artwork extra dramatic – perfect for a crow.

4) Puffin by Ruby, aged 10
What a lovely puffin! All that careful stitching must have taken ages.

5) Kingfisher by Jessica, aged 11
The beautiful background takes this fantastic kingfisher painting to the next level.

6) Frog by Reanna, aged 12
Another piece of artwork in the wild! This fabulous frog looks ready to hop off.

7) Scarlet tiger by Gil, aged 10
Gil has done a great job of perfecting the delicate markings on this marvelous moth.

8) Pinecone craft by Evelyn, aged 6
Evelyn has been getting crafty to make this awesomely autumnal artwork.

9) Fox by Charlotte, aged 8
The posture and expression of this fox is delightful!

10) Puss moths by Elizabeth and Amelia
Elizabeth and Amelia did really well to find and photograph this lovely pair of puss moths.

11) Speckled wood by Kitty, aged 6
The intricate details on this butterfly's wings are incredible. We love the use of little hearts!

12) Bee by Lily, aged 4
This bright bee brings a wonderful splash of colour!



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



THIS ISSUE: SNOTS, SLIMES, OOZES AND JELLIES

HAGFISH



This freaky fish may be the slimiest thing in our seas! They have around 100 glands that can produce slime when they're stressed, covering their body and putting off predators that try to eat them. A single hagfish could fill a bucket with slime in minutes!

CADDISFLY EGGS



Caddisflies are insects that are often mistaken for moths. Some species lay their eggs on leaves above ponds and lakes. The eggs are laid in a blob of jelly that sticks to the leaf. Once the eggs hatch, the young caddisflies fall into the water below, where they will live until they become adults.

FULMAR



Last issue we featured the fulmar's ferocious vomiting, but they're also snot stars! They swallow a lot of salty seawater, but too much salt is unhealthy. Fulmars have a special salt gland that filters the unwanted salt out of their body. The extra salt gets pushed out of their nostril like a salty runny nose!

SLIME MOULDS



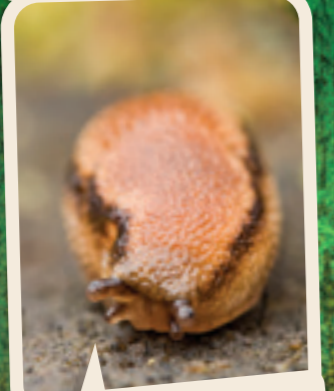
Slime moulds look a bit like fungi, but they can move around in search of food! There are lots of different species, from neat little globes to messy blobs. This one looks a bit like tiny squid eggs, or jelly icicles. Autumn is a great time to spot them.

LIMPETS



A limpet on a rock doesn't look that slimy, but limpets use mucus as a glue to stick to their rock! When they move around, they leave trails of mucus behind them. Some limpets follow their own trail to find their way back to their favourite resting spot.

SLUGS



Slugs use slime for almost everything! It can be slippery to help them slide over the floor, but can also be sticky to hold them in place. Scientists are trying to use slug mucus to make glue to use in medical operations!

CETACEANS



A surprise entry in the snot category! When whales and dolphins come to the surface, they blow plumes of spray out of their blowhole. This spray is a mix of air, seawater and mucus – sometimes known as whale snot! Scientists have used drones to collect the spray to learn about the animal's health.

MAGPIE INKCAP



This mushroom starts out with a beautiful black and white bonnet on top of its white stalk. As it ages, the cap turns into an inky black liquid and oozes to the floor.

Build a hibernaculum

Great for amphibians and reptiles!



You will need:

- Spade
- Logs and branches
- Rocks and bricks
- 2-3 drainpipe off-cuts or cement pipes
- If using plastic drainpipes, roughen the insides with sandpaper so that they are not too slippery for animals to climb
- Turf or meadow flower seeds (optional)

1 In a sunny spot, dig a hole about 50cm deep and 1.5 metres across.



Be careful not to build your hibernaculum on free-draining sites or where the soil gets waterlogged

2 Fill with logs, branches, bricks and rocks, leaving plenty of gaps in between.



3 Insert entrance tubes (drainpipes) at ground level into the pile.



4 Cover the pile with soil (to about 50cm high).



5 You can plant meadow seeds or turf over the mound.



www.wildlifewatch.org.uk



PELLET PATROL

by Tom Hibbert

You can learn a lot about a bird from the things it spits out!



Little owl coughing up pellet © Nicola S



WHAT IS A PELLET?

Everyone knows that birds poo – it's meant to be lucky when one hits you, though really it's just kind of gross. But that's not their only way of getting rid of waste! Lots of birds eat their prey whole. This includes beetles, small rodents and even other birds. This food is full of hard bits the bird can't digest, like bones, feathers and fur. Birds get rid of these bits by coughing them up in pellets.

If you've not managed to find a pellet, you can sometimes buy them online from owl sanctuaries.



Barn owl pellet © Jon Hawkins / Surrey Hills Photography



© Pete Heskell / Scottish Wildlife Trust

wildlifewatch.org.uk

HOO'S WHO?



© Mike Read / naturepl.com

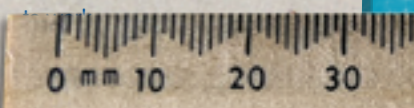
Any bird that eats hard to digest food will produce pellets. Robins cough up raisin-sized pellets full of insect parts, whilst great black-backed gulls can spit out 5cm long bundles of bones. Some of the most commonly found pellets come from owls, like barn owls and tawny owls. You often find them beneath nests or favourite roosting sites. Pellets are wet and soft at first, but quickly dry out and become hard.

Figuring out which species a pellet came from can be tricky. It helps to pay attention to where you find the pellet. A pellet in an old building is likely to belong to a barn owl, one at the base of a woodland tree probably came from a tawny owl, and one at the bottom of a telegraph pole could be from a buzzard. Be careful around nest boxes. It's a crime to disturb a nesting barn owl!

DIET DETECTIVE

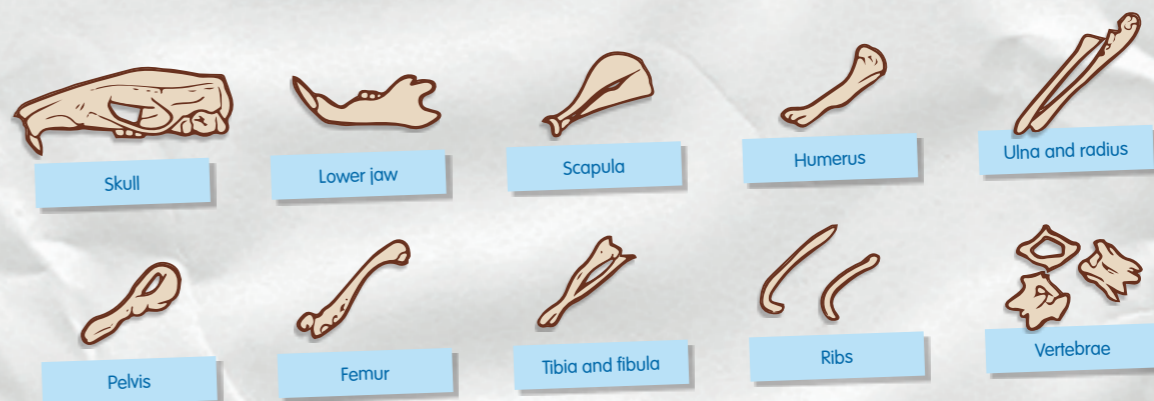
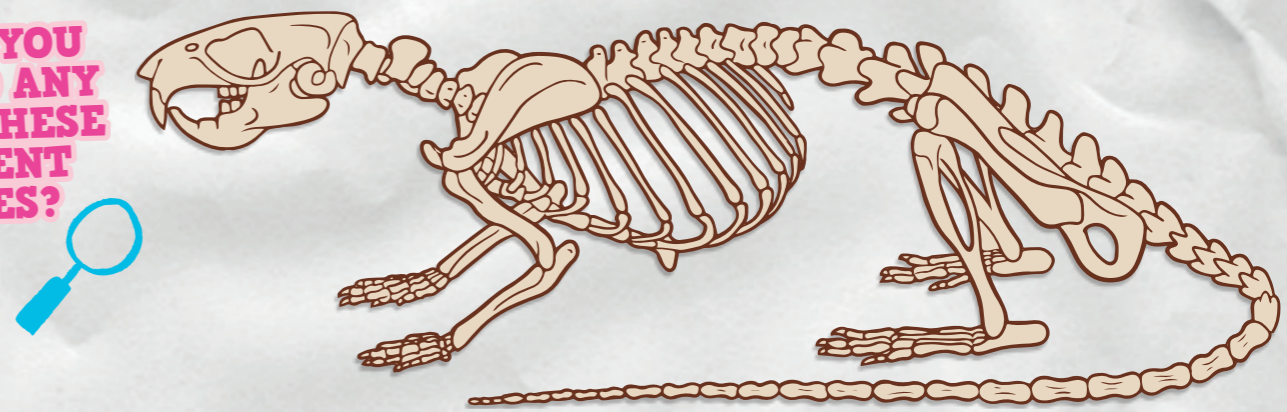
You can dissect a pellet out what exactly the bird was eating. For a quick and easy look, use a couple of sticks to gently pry apart the pellet. See if you can spot any bones or feathers. For a more detailed investigation, you can take the pellet home and completely break it apart. First, ask an adult to soak the pellet in a disinfectant solution. Then, wearing gloves, use some tweezers to pick it apart. Take out all the bones and see if you can identify any of them! When you're done, ask an adult to disinfect the tweezers and the surface where you did your dissection.

Watch a kestrel coughing up a pellet!
wtru.st/kes-pellet



Rodent skulls © Barn Owl Trust

CAN YOU FIND ANY OF THESE RODENT BONES?



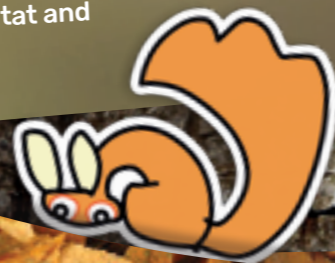
Take to the treetops with the rare red squirrel

CODE RED

by Dr Craig Shuttleworth



Red squirrels are brightly coloured, bouncy, acrobatic and active during the day. They were once common in our woodlands but have become very rare. This is because grey squirrels take over red squirrel habitat and carry a deadly virus.



© Peter Cairns / 2020VISION

© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION

TUFTS AND TAILS

Red squirrels have a bushy tail and are typically red, orange or brown in colour. Occasionally they are quite grey. They have long tufts of hair growing up from the tops of their ears. There are four fingers on their front feet, five on their hind feet. Their ankle is double jointed so they can scuttle down tree trunks. They are smaller than the grey squirrel. Grey squirrels have a silver edge to their tails, which red squirrels never have.

Red squirrels can be either left or right-handed!

SEEING RED

You can still find red squirrels in northern England, the Scottish Highlands and Scottish Borders, parts of Northern Ireland and on Anglesey in North Wales. In southern England they can be found on the Isle of Wight and Brownsea Island. There are exciting plans to reintroduce red squirrels to Cornwall!

© Luke Messey / 2020VISION

DREYS AND DENS

Red squirrels will sleep inside tree holes. These are known as a 'den'. They can also build nests themselves called a 'drey'. Dreys are constructed on branches from woven twigs. They are lined with soft grass and leaves and have a waterproof roof made of moss. A drey is about the size of a rugby ball. Baby squirrels are born in these nests. They are called 'kittens', which is pretty cute! There are between one and six kittens in a litter.

Red squirrels can swim across rivers and lakes.

RARE REDS

Red squirrels used to be more common. They have suffered from the destruction of their woodland homes and the arrival of grey squirrels, which are native to North America and were brought to Britain more than a century ago. Grey squirrels compete for food with red squirrels and carry the 'squirrelpox' virus. This infection does not harm grey squirrels, but it kills red squirrels quickly. They live in high numbers and are bigger than red squirrels. When they spread into woodlands, the red squirrels disappear over the next few years.

© Peter Cairns / 2020VISION



GOING NUTS

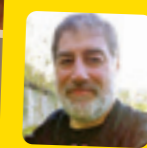
Red squirrels eat the flowers, buds, shoots and seeds of trees (including nuts). In the spring they will occasionally eat birds' eggs, whilst in autumn they nibble mushrooms. Sometimes insects are eaten too. Squirrels also take food from garden bird tables.

STOCKING UP

Autumn is a time when squirrels are super busy burying tree seeds. They dig these secret stores up later in the winter when food is harder to find. Red squirrels also nibble through mushroom stems so they can carry the fungi up into the trees. Here they wedge the mushroom between branches. The wind dries it out and preserves it. A hungry squirrel can come and eat it later.

A red squirrel was once seen eating frog spawn. Yummy!

© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION



Craig is totally fascinated by red squirrels. He has helped save populations in Wales from extinction.

© Peter Cairns / 2020VISION



DIPPER

by Lauren Booth

WHAT'S A DIPPER?

Dippers are plump, chocolate-brown birds with a striking splash of white across their chin, throat, and breast. They get their name from the way they constantly bob or "dip" up and down when standing still.

UNDERWATER WALKING

Dippers love to eat insects and tiny crustaceans living in streams and rivers. They will even eat small fish, like minnows. To feast on these underwater critters, dippers can do something that no other British songbird does – they go for a swim!

Dippers use their strong legs to help them scramble into - and under - fast-flowing water in search of prey. Their long toes and curved claws help them grip tightly onto stones and pebbles on riverbeds, keeping them from bobbing back up to the surface. Their short wings help them stay below the water, too. By stretching them out underwater, dippers can channel the water current to push them down so they can stay submerged for longer. Dippers can even use their short wings to "fly" underwater, just like a penguin.

AWESOME ADAPTATIONS

Dippers have a variety of superpowers that make them perfectly adapted to hunt underwater. Their blood stores more oxygen so they can stay under water for longer without having to come up to breathe. Dippers can stay underwater for up to 30 seconds at a time while searching for food.

They have special nasal flaps that cover each nostril when they dive to stop water rushing in. Dippers even have special muscles in their eyes that help adjust their vision to see better underwater, as well as a transparent eyelid that acts like a pair of goggles.



Dipper © Andy Rouse / 2020VISION

ESSENTIAL FACTS

Scientific name

Cinclus cinclus

Size

Length: 18cm

Amazing fact

Dippers are unique because they are our only aquatic songbird - dippers spend their whole lives living beside the water and feeding in it!

WHERE CAN I SEE ONE?

Dippers can mostly be found along shallow, rocky, fast-flowing streams and rivers. They live in upland areas in the north and west of the UK but can be found in southwest England, too. Look for telltale white splashes of poo on stones in river channels, or listen for their high-pitched 'tzik' calls.



Dipper © Andy Rouse / 2020VISION

DO ALL SHARKS HAVE TEETH?

by Reece Halstead

Did you know there are over 40 species of shark in the UK's seas – some live with us all year round, whilst others just pass through to feed. But do they all have teeth?

TOOLS OF THEIR TRADE

All sharks do in fact have teeth! But not all shark teeth look the same.. There are three main types of tooth that a shark could have, which depends on the kind of food that the shark will eat.

Flattened teeth: sharks that feed on turtles, crabs and other crustaceans need flattened teeth to crack open the hard shells of their prey. In the UK, this includes the rare angel shark.

Needle-like teeth: these are long and incredibly sharp. British sharks that have needle-like teeth include the blue shark. They use their teeth to grab onto fish with long and narrow bodies.

Cutting teeth: some sharks, like the famous great white, eat larger animals like seals, dolphins and even whales. This means that their teeth must be good at carving prey into smaller pieces.

Sharks have many rows of teeth, which can hold between 50 and 300 teeth at any one time!

GENTLE GIANTS

Did you know... basking sharks are the UK's largest shark and are the second biggest fish in the world! Despite this, they don't use their teeth at all, but instead eat by a process called filter-feeding. They open their mouths wide whilst they swim, sucking in plankton and tiny animals as they go. They can eat millions of these tiny creatures every day!



Basking shark © Alexander Mustard / 2020VISION

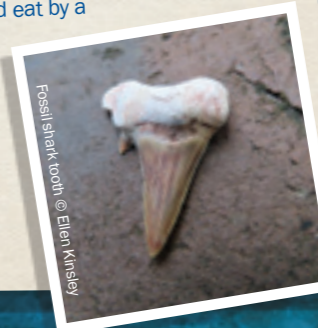
Baby sharks are born with complete sets of their own teeth, which they use to hunt as soon as they are born!

NEW GNASHERS

Sharks don't need to brush their teeth or visit the dentist like we do. Instead, they constantly replace their old teeth! Many sharks lose an old tooth when it gets stuck within its prey, but a new one can grow in its place very quickly – sometimes in as little as an hour! If a shark lives for 30 years, it could go through 20,000 teeth in its lifetime!

TIME TRAVELLING TEETH

Keep your eye out for shark teeth when you're next on the beach – you may stumble across a treasure in time! Shark teeth form fossils, so don't rot away. Because sharks have so many teeth, they are one of the most common fossils you can find. A nine-year-old in America once found a Megalodon tooth dating back 15 million years!



Fossil shark tooth © Eileen Kirsley



Reece works for North Wales Wildlife Trust who are helping sharks around Wales as part of Project SIARC.

Porbeagle shark © Doug Perrine / naturepl.com



COMPETITIONS

WIN

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WATER

Water is the world's most important resource, but it's easy to overlook. This vibrant book takes you on a kaleidoscopic journey across the planet to discover the wonders of water, from its effect on the weather to how tsunamis form. It's written by Sarah Garré and Marijke Huysmans, illustrated by Wendy Panders.



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- a) Woodpigeon
- b) Dipper
- c) Blackcap

WIN

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Draw the strangest animal you can imagine, then send us a picture of your weird creation!



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: 30 November 2023**

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