

FREE!

STOAT
POSTER

**CAPTURING
DRAGONS**

Insect photography
tips from a pro

**WHALE OF
A TIME**

Discover porpoises,
dolphins and whales



Issue 114 Summer 2025



Wildlife Watch

MAGAZINE

BABIES ON BOARD

The animals that take piggyback
rides to the next level!



The
Wildlife
Trusts



Editor's corner

TOM HIBBERT

Editor, Wildlife Watch

Summer is here and there are wild wonders wherever we look! This summer, I'm planning to try and track down the UK's tiger beetles. Have you got any wild plans of your own?

If you need some inspiration, we've got fantastic articles on photographing dragonflies (page 8) and watching whales (page 18) – summer is a great time for both!

Whatever you decide to do this summer, I hope you have fun. Stay wild!

Tom

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THIS ISSUE?



When you've read your summer magazine, we'd love to hear your thoughts! Take our short survey to tell us what you enjoyed and what you'd like to read about in the future. wtru.st/watch-summer-2025



GET IN TOUCH

Email us at: watch@wildlifetrusts.org

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WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers

FROG FRENZY

Six-year-old Isaac-Ali from Leicester found loads of frogspawn in a local pond. He kept an eye on it and was so excited to spot the first tadpoles! Have you seen any tadpoles this year? They might have turned into tiny froglets by now!



BUZZING GARDENER

Seven-year-old Reuben from Gwent has been using his pocket money to help make his garden wilder. He's bought a bird feeder, nestbox, insect house and flowers. He photographed this bee at a local garden centre whilst getting more bits for the garden. He was pleased to find it on a daffodil (the symbol of Wales) as it was St David's Day!



HOME IMPROVEMENTS

George (aged 6) from Hertfordshire went to a nature event and made his own birdbox. He was really excited to put it up in his auntie's garden.



POND PATROL



Harrison, Rosa Claude and Kit from Warwickshire used an old washing up bowl to make a wildlife pond in their small garden. This fat frog seems to approve!



Wolf spider © Alex Hyde / naturepl.com

06



Dormouse © Terry Whittaker / 2020VISION



Puffin by Watch reader, Bill

22

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Broad-bodied chaser © Ross Hoddinott

08

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WILDLIFE WATCH 114

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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

Ever 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!

ODONATA

(o-duh-nah-tuh)
The name for the group of insects that includes all dragonflies and damselflies.

FLUKE

(floo-k)
A lobe on the tail of a whale, dolphin or porpoise. Each has a left fluke and a right fluke, making up the familiar tail shape.

ALULA

(al-yuh-luh)
A group of short feathers at the front of a bird's wing that sometimes stick out in flight. It looks a bit like a bird's thumb.

DIVE DETECTIVES

Seals are expert divers. But how do they know when it's time to come up for air? Most mammals (like us) can sense how much carbon dioxide is in their blood. When we hold our breath, the carbon dioxide increases and we start to feel faint and panicky. But scientists have recently discovered seals do things differently. They seem to be able to tell how much oxygen is in their blood. When their oxygen levels get low, they know it's time to return to the surface. It's sort of like looking at the fuel gauge in a car!

INK STINK

Cuttlefish can spray clouds of ink to try to put off predators. Sharks have even been seen swimming away to avoid touching the ink. Scientists have been investigating why the ink might trigger this reaction. They found that the cuttlefish ink is very good at sticking to the shark's smell receptors – it's like the ink is clogging up the shark's nose! Sharks rely on their sense of smell to find food, so they don't want it clogged up with ink.

Common cuttlefish © Julie Hatcher



YOUR STORIES

We've received some fantastic poems from Watch readers that we want to share with you!

The blackbird song

by Abigail, aged 9

Up on a tree a blackbird stood.
He sang of a bush and wonderful wood,
He sang of fields of silver dew,
He sang of the bed where the daffodils grew.

He sings about lakes of sparkling light,
He sings of the glowing moon at night,
He sings of a sky full of twinkling stars,
He sings of a land without buildings or cars.

A land without buses, a land without trains,
A land without tractors or lorries or planes.
Where peace is made between all living things,
And this is the song that the blackbird sings.

Spring squill © Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION



Flower

by Charlie, aged 11

Foundation complete, I'm ready for the world,
Leaving my small bulb, I spring up, to be unfurled,
Open up my petals, no longer a bud,
With excitement in my stem, I see another spud,
Emerging from the ground are more plants like me,
Rising up proudly, beautiful and free.

THANK YOU
to Charlie
& Abigail



Blackbird © Zsuzsanna Bird

Do you want to be featured in the magazine? Send your stories, ideas or photos to watch@wildlifetrusts.org!

Meet **EIGHT** animal parents providing a personal taxi service!

BABIES on BOARD

by Pete Dommett

You probably get lots of lifts to school, sports clubs, parties and all kinds of other places. But have you ever wondered how animals move their offspring around?



GREAT CRESTED GREBE



This graceful waterbird ferries its stripy chicks around for the first few weeks of their lives to protect them from lake-dwelling predators like fish, including pike. The brood of baby birds rides on the back of one parent while the other fetches food for them, such as insects and tiny fish. The adults also feed feathers to the youngsters to help them digest their meals!

SHORT-SNOUDED SEAHORSE



Seahorses are the only animal species where the *male* becomes pregnant! The female seahorse lays eggs, but she puts them into a special pouch (a bit like a kangaroo's) on her partner's body. The eggs are safely carried by Dad for about three weeks, before he gives birth to as many as 100 miniature seahorses! Or should that be *seafoals*?

YELLOW-TAILED SCORPION



Newborn 'scorplings' (as they're sometimes called) look like tiny, pale-coloured versions of their parents. For their first few days, the whole bunch of babies gets a piggyback from Mum... until they're too big to fit on her body!

Scorpions have been living and breeding in the UK for over 150 years, after arriving on the south-east coast of England on board ships from Italy.

FALSE SCORPION



These microscopic arachnids (which are also called pseudoscorpions) are related to actual scorpions, but they don't have stinging tails. Just like their larger namesakes, they like to lug their babies about. Newly hatched nymphs are attached to their mother, who feeds them a special milk-like liquid produced in her body!

The book scorpion is the UK's smallest false scorpion – it's only 1.3mm long!

COMMON LIZARD



Instead of laying eggs like most reptiles, common lizards usually carry them within their bodies for approximately three months. Females bask in the sun to help the eggs develop. When they're ready, up to 10 little lizards hatch out *inside* their mum and are then born alive!

In some parts of Europe, common lizards do lay eggs.

PORBEAGLE



Like the common lizard, this stocky shark gives birth to live babies. Four or five pups emerge from eggs within the female fish. But before they're born, the developing sharks swim about *inside their mother's* body gobbling up all the unfertilized eggs!

Porbeagles belong to the same family of sharks as great whites!

WOLF SPIDER



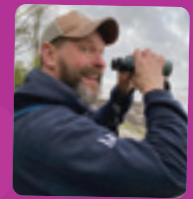
A female wolf spider wraps a round egg sac in silk and attaches it to her abdomen. After the eggs hatch, she carts the cluster of spiderlings around on her back for a few days. Eventually, the eight-legged offspring fall off their mother and float away on the wind!



STOAT



Female stoats give birth to a big litter of 6 - 12 babies. Mum moves her cargo of kits to a new nest site every now and then to avoid predators or to find a cleaner place to raise them. She carries each kit by the scruff of its neck. This might look a bit brutal, but the young stoat is completely chilled!



PETE is a wildlife writer. He carried all three of his children on his back when they were younger – but not at the same time!



Tips from professional photographer
ROSS HODDINOTT

Common blue damselfly



1/250 f8 -2--1--0--1--2+ 150 200

HOW TO FRAME YOUR DRAGON



Did you know that dragonflies have been patrolling our skies for 300 million years – long before dinosaurs roamed the earth?

They are colourful, intriguing and agile insects.

They are also hugely photogenic! You can capture great shots of dragonflies with almost any camera. Read on to find out how...

All photos © Ross Hoddinott



Emerald damselflies

TIMED TO PERFECTION

Dragonflies and damselflies spend most of their lives underwater as larvae (called nymphs). They emerge in spring and summer, hatching into adults on reeds and other plants close to the water's edge. Dragons and damsels love sunshine and are most active during the middle of the day. However, while this makes them easier to find, it also makes them harder to get close to and photograph! In the morning and evening, when the temperature is cooler, insects are more likely to stay still or roost. This is the perfect time to take photos. You can find dragons in almost any habitat, including your own back garden. However, it is normally best to visit a local pond or wetland nature reserve.

BE STEALTHY

Want to photograph dragons? Well, you are going to need to be stealthy. Dragonflies are highly sensitive to movement, so edge toward your subject slowly and avoid any sudden actions. To reduce the risk of disturbance, take photos from as far away as you can – if your camera has a zoom, use it.



CHARTERED TERRITORY

Some dragonflies, like chasers and darters, are quite territorial and will return to the same perch or resting place again and again. Spend time watching them. If you notice a branch or reed close to the water's edge where a dragonfly keeps landing, move closer with your camera, ready to take a photo when the insect next returns.

SHADOW AWARE

Phone cameras can focus really close, making them perfect for detailed dragonfly shots. But be careful not to cast your shadow over the subject as you get nearer, as this will alert the insect, and it will quickly fly away. Be aware of the sun's position and where your shadow falls.

After cool, still nights, roosting dragons and damsels will be covered with tiny dew drops, adding sparkle and interest to your photos.

When possible, try to capture behaviour. Photographs of dragons flying, hunting or egg laying will have extra impact.

BACKGROUND DISTRACTION

Try to avoid including lots of clutter or messy vegetation in your shots. Look for insects that are perched on a reed or branch where you can capture them against a clean background, like water or sky. This will help your subject stand out more in your photographs.

Don't just plonk your subject in the middle of the frame. Placing dragons off centre with some 'breathing space' around them will often produce a more interesting photo.

EYE WATCH

Dragonflies have brilliant alien-like faces and large eyes (which provide almost 360-degree vision). Eyes are important in photography – they need to be pin sharp for the perfect picture. Always focus carefully on your subject's eyes. And don't just take photographs of dragons from one side or above – dragonfly portraits taken head-on, eye-to-eye, will have lots of interest and impact.



ROSS is a multi-award-winning nature photographer, author and former Wildlife Watch member. He has been photographing dragonflies since the age of 10!



Four-spotted chasers



Four-spotted chasers



Southern hawker



Morgan Robson-Young

MORGAN works alongside the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust as part of their 'Owl Team'. This involves putting up nest boxes all over east Cleveland, where barn owls can make their homes.



Where does your love of nature come from?

Ever since I can remember, I have been utterly fascinated by birds. Even when I was young, I spent so much time in bird hides, collecting feathers and reading bird guides. I used to try and make my own field guides with my drawings! A standout moment was seeing my first owl: a tawny owl, sat on a signpost just five minutes from my house. Since then, I've been completely obsessed.

How have you been helping nature recently?

Last summer, the nest boxes we put up were home to more than 200 chicks! When the chicks are old enough, we visit them and fit them with unique metal rings on their legs, so other people that see them can find out where they came from and how old they are. This helps to build an idea of how barn owls are doing in our area.

What's been your proudest moment as a conservation champion?

One of the most rewarding things I've been a part of is showing the people who have a nest box on their property, or who sponsor a local box, that their nest box has owls! It shows them that they are contributing to something real and important. They're always so grateful to be a part of it.

It really helps people appreciate their local area and the wildlife in it and encourages them to protect it. Being able to show the results of our efforts – to prove that what we do is working and matters – is incredible. It absolutely makes our day!

What advice would you give young people to help them become conservation champions?

To become a conservation champion, I think the best thing to do is just get out there! Volunteering with your local Wildlife Trust, going on wildlife walks, joining any green after-school clubs – you never know who you'll meet and where it will lead! It can be a little bit intimidating, especially being young and finding a group where you can feel like you fit in, but taking that leap and sharing your passion for wildlife with like-minded people is the best way to make connections whilst making a difference to the environment. You'll learn a lot and probably teach others just as much, even without realising it!



Barn owl chicks



Barn owl box

SOLAR POWER

Common lizards spend a lot of time scuttling around in the undergrowth, but they love sunbathing! Look out for them in the morning, when they're warming up. They like open, sunny spots. They often bask on stones or logs.



Moths, moonlight and midnight snacks

NECTAR BY NIGHT

by Lauren Hibbert

It's no secret that most moths fly by night. Many seek out tasty nectar snacks from flowers, just like bees and butterflies do during the day. But what is it that makes moths wake up just as we're going to bed? And how do they find the flowers they need in the dark?



EVENING ADVENTURERS

Flying by night has some great advantages. In the dark, it's much harder for predators, like birds, to spot them. But it takes lots of energy for insects to fly in the cold of night. Many moths rely on sugary nectar to stay active. Luckily, there's also less competition for food at night. This is because the day-flying insects they share nectar-rich flowers with, like bees and butterflies, have gone to sleep. It's like having the whole buffet all to yourself!

Not all moths fly at night. There are more than 130 UK moths that are active while the sun is shining – that's more moths flying in the daytime than butterflies!

MIDNIGHT SNACKS

It's not just moths that wake up at night. Some flowers, like evening primrose, do too! They stay closed in the daytime and open at dusk. Many of these night-blooming flowers are white or very pale, helping moths find them in the dark. Other flowers smell more strongly at night. Plants such as honeysuckle flower all day and night, but their smell becomes more powerful in the dark. The strong smell acts as a signal to moths seeking a sugary snack, creating a scent trail for hungry insects to follow.

But why do these flowers wake up at night? Well, they do this specially to attract nighttime insects like moths, which they rely on for pollination. Moths will transfer pollen from one flower to another, helping fertilise plants and create seedlings.

STARLIGHT SUPERPOWERS

Lots of flowers rely on moths for pollination and thousands of moth species fly at night. But how do they find each other in the dark? Well, that's all down to moth superpowers! Moths have huge eyes that are very sensitive to light. They can use very tiny amounts of light, such as starlight, to spot where they're going. Pale flowers can appear as bright patches in the dark, so moths are drawn towards them and the nectar hidden within. Moths can also use their antennae like you use your nose! Their super sensitive antennae pick up tiny chemical scents given off by flowers. The stronger the scent, the easier it is for moths to find, so flowers that smell strongly at night get more attention.



Nighttime nectar



LAUREN loves all wildlife, especially things that fly! Her favourite moth is the peach blossom.

HONEYSUCKLE



This vine-like plant grows in woodlands and hedgerows. It has cartwheels of cream and pink tube-shaped flowers. Its strong, sweet scent gets more powerful at night. Honeysuckle flowers attract lots of creatures from June to September, including elephant hawk-moths.

EVENING PRIMROSE



Evening primrose has big yellow flowers on top of tall leafy stems. In the wild they grow on sand dunes, waste ground and roadsides, but are often planted in wildlife gardens. The flowers open in the evening between June and September, attracting lots of different moths.

TOBACCO PLANT



These plants don't grow naturally in the UK but are often planted in gardens. Their long, tube-like flowers open at night and smell like incense to attract insects. Some have tubes that are too long for most moths to reach the nectar inside. But they are popular with the rare convolvulus hawk-moth, which has an exceptionally long proboscis (a moth's tongue).

Discover more moth-attracting plants at wildlifewatch.org.uk/plant-for-moths

Moth spotter

ELEPHANT HAWK-MOTH



These large, colourful moths love to visit honeysuckle on summer nights. They are widespread across the UK and often visit gardens and parks. You might see one feeding on flowers at dusk or resting near foodplants during the day.

PRIVET HAWK-MOTH



Privet hawk-moths are one of our biggest moths! They have striking, pointed, black and brown wings and a pink-and-black striped body. They love sweetly scented flowers like jasmine and visit gardens, parks and woodlands between June and July.

TWENTY-PLUME MOTH



These small, pretty moths have wings that look like tiny fans of feathers. They are common and can be found year-round. You might spot one on honeysuckle or fluttering around a light.

ANGLE SHADES



Perfectly camouflaged to look like a dead leaf, these beautiful pink-brown moths like feeding on reed and grass flowers. They can be seen between May and October, often perched in the open.

SILVER Y



These fluttery, grey-brown moths get their name from the bright silver y-shaped marking on their wings. They fly during the day and at night, too, snacking on scented flowers like buddleia. They are most commonly seen in late summer.

CONVOLVULUS HAWK-MOTH



These rare migrant moths sometimes visit Britain in late summer or autumn and can turn up in gardens. They use their extra-long tongue to feed on tube-shaped flowers such as those of tobacco plants and petunias.



GALLERY

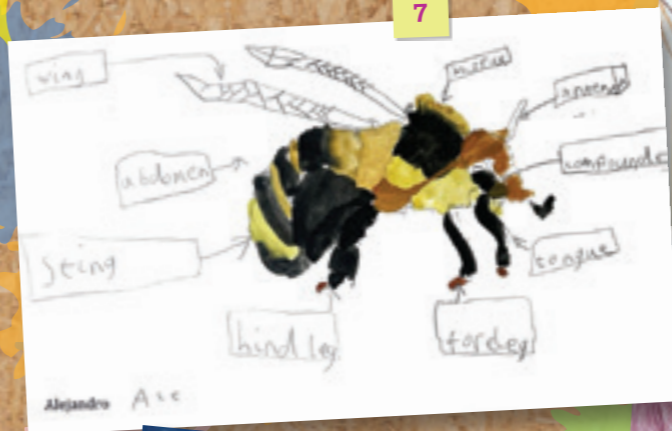
Send in your poems, photos and artwork of UK wildlife for your chance to feature in the gallery. If your artwork is picked as the star entry you'll win your very own drawing kit! **The perfect starter set for any budding wildlife artist.**



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11



12

1) Dragonfly by Zak, aged 10 ★
This wonderfully detailed study of a dazzling dragonfly really caught our eye.

2) Toadstool by Ella, aged 8
This needle felt toadstool is so adorable we want to live in it!

3) Bat by Holly, aged 9
This bat looks very happy in its cave home.

4) Puffin by Bill, aged 7
This puffin has so much character!

5) Ladybird by Anushka, aged 5
We were really impressed by this crafty Easter bonnet.

6) Bison by Jacob, aged 6
It's great to see Jacob celebrating these important grazing mammals.

7) Bumblebee by Alejandro, aged 6
We love the attention to detail in this study of bee anatomy.

8) Bittern by Felix, aged 7
This drawing of a bittern really booms!

9) Red admiral by Freya, aged 8
This pastel drawing of a butterfly brings a welcome splash of colour.

10) Pigeons by Kiera, aged 7
Kiera has done a great job capturing the behaviour of an often-overlooked species.

11) Barn owl by Isabel, aged 9
Who doesn't love a barn owl? Great job, Isabel!

12) Blossom by Odette, aged 9
This is a wonderful celebration of spring.

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

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

Many animals have false faces or fake eyes, usually to help them avoid getting eaten. Though scientists are still puzzling out how they work!



THIS ISSUE: FALSE FACES

PUSS MOTH



© Will Atkins

Puss moth caterpillars look like they have a giant head! Their actual head is surrounded by a big reddish circle, so it looks more like a face. It even has two black 'fake eyes' on top. They use this false face to look more intimidating and put off predators.

LITTLE OWL



© Elizabeth Barrett

From a distance, it can be hard to tell which way a little owl is looking. The markings on the back of their head resemble eyes! It's thought this might fool small birds into thinking they're being watched, so they don't harass the owl from behind.

SMALL ELEPHANT HAWK-MOTH CATERPILLAR



© Brian Eversham

The caterpillars of both elephant hawk-moth and small elephant hawk-moth have huge 'false eyes' (called eyespots) on their body. When they feel threatened, they tuck their real head in and puff up their body, so the big eyespots are more obvious. It makes them look like a cartoon snake!

PEACOCK



© Frank Porch

Peacock butterflies have bright eyespots on their wings. They're hidden when the butterfly is resting with its wings closed. But if the butterfly is disturbed, it opens its wings to flash the eyespots. Birds may suddenly think they're looking into the eyes of a larger predator and be scared off!

MEADOW BROWN



© Pete Richmond

These butterflies have small eyespots on the undersides of their wings. It's thought that these confuse birds, causing the bird to peck at the butterfly's wing instead of its head. The butterfly might lose a chunk of its wing, but it lives to fly another day.

JOHN DORY



© Linda Pitkin / 2020VISION

This funky fish has a huge eyespot on each side of its flattened body. It's thought these spots might confuse predators like sharks. Some people even think it might also confuse smaller fish, making them easier for the John Dory to gobble up with its extendable mouth!

Make a hoverfly lagoon

You will need

- A container (try to recycle or upcycle something)
- A tray that fits generously underneath your container

- A drill or piercing tool

- Dried leaves
- Sticks
- Other organic garden matter
- Water

A little water can go a long way in helping hoverflies! The larvae of several species live in leaf-filled pools.



1 Drill or pierce holes in the side of your container about an inch from the rim, to allow drainage.



2 Drill or pierce holes in your tray to allow for drainage, then place your container in the tray.

3 Fill your container up to the drainage holes with leaves and organic garden matter, compacting the contents as you go.

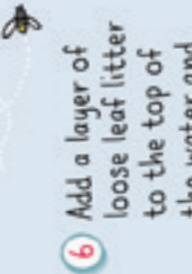


4 Add a few sticks pushed down so they touch the bottom of the container but still poke out above the top.



5 Add water to the container, filling it up to the drainage holes.

6 Add a layer of loose leaf litter to the top of the water and to any free space on the tray.



You'll need an adult to use the drill!

www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk

Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2025



FIN-TASTIC!

Tips for seeing **CETACEANS** this summer

by Ruth Williams

Dolphins might seem like tropical treats, but the UK is a fantastic place for seeing cetaceans – the name for whales, dolphins and porpoises. There have been 28 species of cetacean spotted in UK seas! Some are rare visitors, but others can be common and summer is a great time to spot them.

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SPOTTING TIPS!

1. Try to pick a calm day when the sea is still, making it easier to spot a fin in the water.
2. Scan the sea from a headland – they're easier to spot if you're high above the water. Places with lighthouses are often good watchpoints, but stay away from cliff edges.
3. Binoculars are helpful, but you can spot dolphins without them. Look out for diving birds, as dolphins are often nearby.
4. Be patient. Sometimes you can look for hours without seeing a fin, other times you might get several sightings.
5. Take warm clothes, sunscreen, snacks and plenty of water.
6. You can take special boat trips to look for cetaceans and get much closer views but always choose a Wildlife Safe accredited operator.



wildlifewatch.org.uk



RUTH is head of marine conservation for The Wildlife Trusts and a big fan of dolphins.

HARBOUR PORPOISE



Max size: 1.9 m

Look for: A quick glimpse of a short, stubby triangular fin. Not usually seen in more than ones or twos.

Where: Almost anywhere around the UK's coasts.

Fun fact: Called 'puffing pigs' in Cornwall because of the sound they make when they surface to breathe.

COMMON DOLPHIN



Max size: 2.7 m

Look for: Fast swimming groups of dolphins with a yellow pattern on their sides.

Where: Most common in south-west England and Wales, and off western Scotland.

Fun fact: Acrobatic animals that LOVE to swim beside boats.

WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN



Max size: 3.1 m

Look for: A white streak on the sides of their black back and a white patch behind the fin.

Where: The best chance is around northern Scotland.

Fun fact: Dolphins can keep swimming even while asleep.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN



Max size: 3.8 m

Look for: Small groups of chunky grey dolphins, often leaping from the water.

Where: Off most coasts, especially East Scotland, Wales and the south coast of England.

Fun fact: They talk in clicks and whistles and have distinctive 'signature' sounds which are special to each animal, like their name.

RISSE'S DOLPHIN



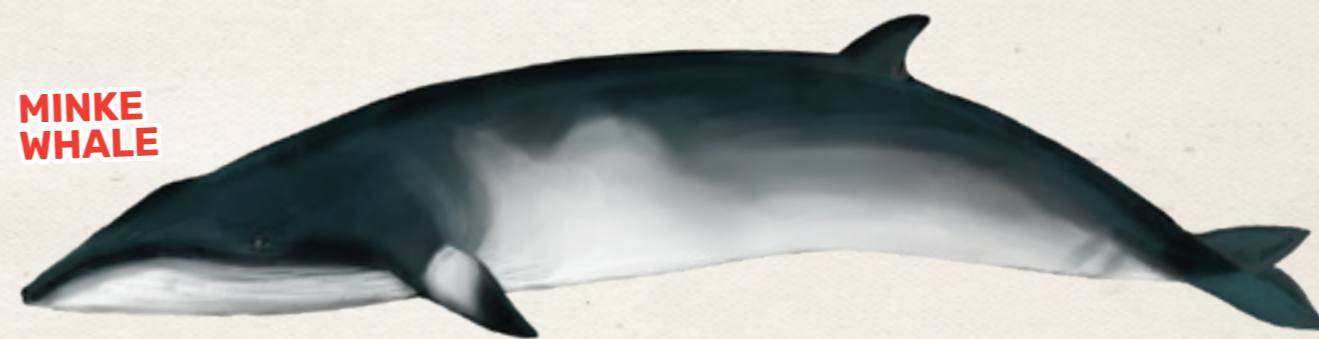
Max size: 4 m

Look for: Grey dolphins covered in white scars made by the squid they hunt and other dolphins.

Where: You're most likely to see them in western Scotland, Cornwall or off Wales.

Fun fact: Often confused with killer whales because of their tall, upright fins.

MINKE WHALE



Max size: 10.7 m

Look for: A long back with a small, curving fin two-thirds of the way along it.

Where: Often seen from western Scotland, Northern Ireland, East Yorkshire and Cornwall.

Fun fact: They can hold their breath for 20 minutes!

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Meet nature's **STRIPY** superheroes!



HEROIC HOVERFLIES

by Tom Hibbert

HOVERFLIES are fun to watch as they zig-zag between flowers. Many of them are bright yellow and black, others are shiny or look a lot like bumblebees. But whether they are shiny, stripy, hairy or huge, hoverflies play important roles in the natural world.



GROWERS

Many plants rely on insects for pollination. This is when pollen is passed from a male part of a flower to a female part, so it can create new plants. Bees are famously good pollinators, but they aren't the only insects getting in on the act. Hoverflies are great pollinators, too! As they flick from one flower to another, they carry pollen with them, spreading it between plants.

Hoverflies are known to visit more than half of the food crops that people around the world rely on. By carrying pollen between these plants, hoverflies are helping to put food on our plates. They also help many of the beautiful wildflowers we enjoy seeing in woodlands and meadows.

There are around 6,000 species of hoverfly in the world, with more than 280 in the UK!



Hoverfly on a flower © Jon Hawkins / Surrey Hills Photography

HUNTERS

When hoverflies are young (known as larvae) they look very different. They have no legs, wings or even an obvious head! But this doesn't stop some larvae from hunting. Many of them are predators, feeding on aphids and other insects. They feel around for prey by touch and by detecting chemical signals. When they find a target, they stab it with mouth hooks and suck out the insides.

By hunting aphids and other plant-munching insects, hoverflies help keep their numbers from growing too large. This helps to protect plants from being eaten, including many of the crops and food plants we rely on. Hoverflies are the gardener's friend!

Some hoverfly larvae live in the nests of bees and wasps, eating their young.



Marmalade hoverfly larva © Kim Taylor / naturepl.com

RECYCLERS

Not all hoverfly larvae hunt for their food. Most of them prefer to eat the waste formed when things die and rot. They suck up tiny particles from soggy or wet patches. They can be found inside rotting wood, under bark and even in water. Some water-dwelling larvae are called rat-tailed maggots. They breathe through a snorkel on their bum!

By eating rotting things, these hoverflies help with nature's recycling process. Without them and other recyclers, the world would soon fill up with waste.

Rat-tailed maggot © Stephen Dalton / naturepl.com

Larvae of the common snout prefer to live in cow poo.



Common snout © Frank Porch

3 COMMON HOVERFLIES TO SPOT

PIED PLUMEHORN



© Frank Porch

MARMALADE HOVERFLY



© Brian Evesham

COMMON TIGER HOVERFLY



© Frank Porch

Discover more about hoverflies and how we can help them at wildaboutgardens.org.uk



HAZEL DORMOUSE

by Laura Snell



LAURA is a conservation officer for Cornwall Wildlife Trust and is very lucky to monitor dormouse populations on nature reserves.



ARBOREAL ACROBATS

The adorable hazel dormouse is a rare and protected native rodent. They have golden brown fur, long whiskers and are the only small British mammal with a furry tail. They are shy creatures that only come out at night. Dormice are also arboreal, meaning they live above ground in trees, hedgerows and scrub. This means they are very acrobatic, using interconnected branches to climb and jump around.

NIBBLED NUTS

Dormice feed on flowers in the spring, insects in the summer and feast on fruit and nuts in the autumn. They especially love hazelnuts and blackberries, which help them to fatten up in preparation for hibernation over the winter. Keep a look out for hazelnuts with smooth circular holes, this will tell you that dormice have been nibbling!



ESSENTIAL FACTS

Scientific name

Muscardinus avellanarius

Size

6-9 cm with a tail of similar length

Amazing fact

Dormice can spend 5-6 months of the year hibernating and are even known to snore!

JELLYBEANS

Dormice weave grapefruit-sized nests in dense areas of woody vegetation. They give birth to a litter of four to five young each summer. The babies are born completely hairless and blind and look like little pink jellybeans! They soon start to grow a covering of grey fur and begin to explore and leave the nest at around 6-8 weeks. They develop their golden fur after about a year.

WAKE ME UP IN SPRING

In the winter, dormice come down to the ground and build a new nest for hibernation. This is so they can survive the winter and conserve energy when there's not much food. In the nest, they curl up into a ball with their tail around their face and enter a deep sleep. They then awaken in spring and head back up into the trees.



HOW DO FISH BREATHE UNDERWATER?

by Alex Smith



ALEX is a marine biologist and conservationist working at Essex Wildlife Trust. His favourite animals are sharks and he loves snorkelling!



HOW DO FISH GET OXYGEN UNDERWATER?

While we have lungs and breathe in air to get our oxygen, this doesn't work for fish. They have to find another way to extract oxygen from the water. This is especially difficult because water contains much less oxygen than air. Instead of lungs, fish have gills. They are a type of organ that has lots of feathery filaments that look a bit like toothbrush bristles! These filaments contain thousands of tiny blood vessels that help to pull the oxygen out of the water and into their bloodstream. Gills are much better at this than lungs – a whopping 75% of the oxygen that passes through gills is extracted!

JUST KEEP SWIMMING!

Fish have to open their mouths to breathe, and there has to be a flow of water over their gills for them to extract the oxygen. For some fish, this means that they need to be moving all the time to push water through their gills. This type of breathing is called ram ventilation. It's why lots of fish need to 'just keep swimming'! Some fish in the UK that use ram ventilation are tuna and basking sharks.

However, this isn't the case for all fish. Some are able to get all the oxygen they need just by moving their cheek muscles to pump water through their mouth and over the gills. This is called buccal pumping. It is mostly used by fish that swim slowly or rest on the seafloor, like rays and skates.

DO FISH NEED OXYGEN?

Yes! Just like us, fish need oxygen to breathe. In fact, almost all living things in the world need oxygen, apart from a few tiny bacteria and micro-organisms. But, because different animals live in different environments, they have different ways of getting oxygen.

Did you know that water contains less oxygen than air? Air contains around 21% oxygen, while water contains less than 1% oxygen.

Although most fish can't survive out of the water, there are a few that can. Mudskippers survive on land by trapping water in their gill chambers, like us taking a deep breath before diving! They aren't found in the UK though.

COMPETITIONS



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- b) Great crested grebe
- c) Goldcrest

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WIN

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- a) Puffling
- b) Cub
- c) Eft

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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 2025**

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

