

**FREE!**

Red deer  
poster

**THE HEDGE  
OF GLORY**

Explore a hedgerow  
full of life



**LIGHTS, CAMERA,  
CONSERVATION ACTION!**

Hear from wildlife cameraman  
Hamza Yassin



**Issue 115 Autumn 2025**

# Wildlife Watch

**MAGAZINE**

# GO NUTS!

Stashing seeds, planting trees



The  
**Wildlife**  
Trusts





## Editor's corner

**TOM HIBBERT**

Editor, Wildlife Watch

**W**ow, that was a hot summer! I don't know about you, but I'm ready for things to cool down a little. We don't know what weather autumn will bring, but we do know it will bring lots of wonderful wildlife.

Fungi will be popping up all over the place and birds will be making dangerous journeys to reach the UK. One of them is the small but mighty goldcrest – learn more about this bird on page 22. What autumn wildlife are you most excited for? I hope you get to see it!

Tom

### WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THIS ISSUE?



When you've read your autumn 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/autumn-survey-25](http://wtru.st/autumn-survey-25)



### GET IN TOUCH

Email us at: [watch@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:watch@wildlifetrusts.org)

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# WILD THINGS

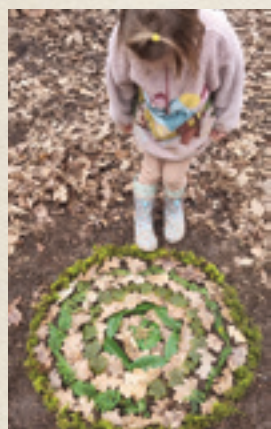
News from our Wildlife Watchers



## GOING THE DISTANCE

**I**sla (aged 9) from Devon trained really hard to do a sponsored 3 km run, raising £115 for Devon Wildlife Trust. Isla said, "I wanted to raise money because nature is such an outstanding thing and it's everywhere, we need to look after it." Well done, Isla!

## UNBE-LEAF-ABLE



**F**our-year-old Rosa from Leicestershire made this fantastic nature mandala from leaves and moss. That must have taken ages to arrange! She was inspired by 30 Days Wild.

## CETACEAN CELEBRATION



**I**n our summer issue, we forgot to tell you who drew the wonderful whale, dolphins and porpoise on page 19. They were by the super talented Katy Frost. Thanks Katy!

## FUTURE EDITOR



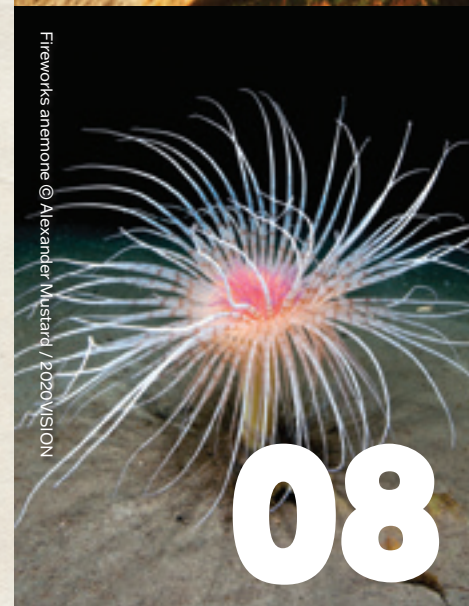
**P**oppy (aged 7) from Herefordshire draws any creature she finds and makes her own magazines with the drawings. She studies insects, adores everything nature and is a huge fan of Wildlife Watch. Keep it up, Poppy, one day you could be the editor of Wildlife Watch!

## CURIOUS CATERPILLARS

**F**ive-year-old Bjørn from Northamptonshire discovered lots of webs full of caterpillars. Staff at the Nene Wetlands Visitor Centre explained they were ermine moths. They also showed him a copy of Wildlife Watch and he was so excited he decided to become a member. Welcome to Wildlife Watch, Bjørn!



Oak tree © Guy Edwardes / 2020VISION



Fireworks anemone © Alexander Mustard / 2020VISION



Squirrel by Watch reader, Phoebe



Goldcrest © Janet Packham

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### WILDLIFE WATCH 115

Editor: Tom Hibbert

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

Design: Sean Coleman



Check out [wildlifewatch.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://wildlifewatch.org.uk/privacy-policy) to find out how we keep your information safe.



### 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](http://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!

### MYCOPHAGY

(my-kof-uh-jee)  
The word for animals eating fungi. An animal that eats fungi is mycophagous.

### SYNZOOCHORY

(sin-zoo-uh-kor-ee)  
The scientific word for animals spreading seeds by storing them as a source of food. For example, when squirrels bury nuts. Learn more on page 18!

### EXTANT

(ek-stant)  
You've probably heard the word extinct, which means something no longer exists. Extant is the opposite. It means still living.

## MOTH MAGIC

**T**his summer, there was an exciting discovery in Kent. A moth called the Treetop twist was found at a Kent Wildlife Trust nature reserve near Dover. It's the first time the moth has been seen in England since 1952! It used to be known as the Dover tortrix, because it was only found in that part of Kent. It seemed to disappear from Kent, but was later found on the Scottish island of Tiree, which is why it became known as the Tiree twist. Now it's been rediscovered in Kent, conservationists are working hard to help it thrive there.



© James Hunter

## FLOCK TOGETHER

**W**e all know gulls can be cheeky, sometimes snatching food. But scientists in Belgium have been investigating how brave they are. They found that young herring gulls are much braver when they're in a group! They tested this by placing plates of fish next to an object, like a blue bucket or yellow brush. Some of the objects were familiar to the gulls, whilst others were new. Gulls were more wary of approaching a new object. When they were on their own, lots of them were too nervous to approach the object and eat the fish. But when there were other gulls nearby, they were braver and more likely to eat the fish.



Herring gull © Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

# YOUR PHOTOS

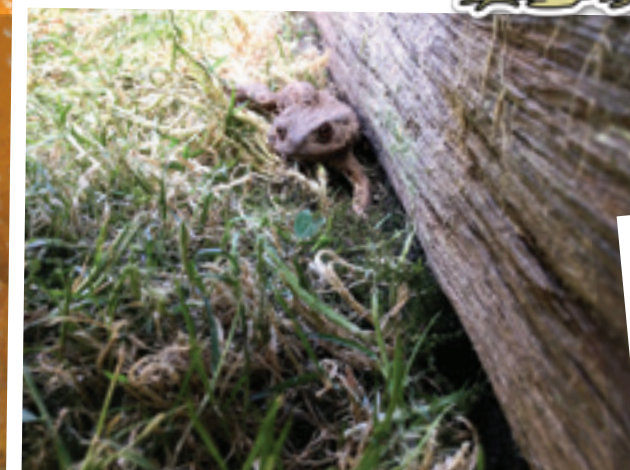
Keep sharing your amazing photos with us, we love to see them all!



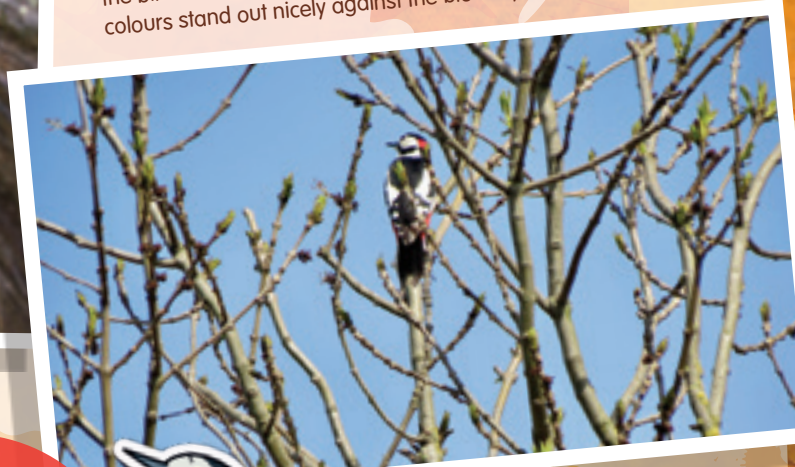
**BENJAMIN** (aged 13) from Berkshire was gifted his late uncle's camera and has fallen in love with wildlife photography. He took this fantastic photo of a puffin on a trip to the Farn Islands this summer. Keep it up, Benjamin!



**REUBEN** (aged 3) from Liverpool had three puss moth caterpillars living on a bush in his garden. Every day they would eat all the leaves from a stem, fattening up to build their cocoon and become a moth. He took a photo of one the size of his mum's finger.



**FRANKLIN** (aged 10) from Coventry was digging a hole in his garden when a toad crawled out! It really made him jump, but he took the opportunity to snap this photograph before it went back down into the hole.



**MOLLIE** (aged 10) from Yorkshire took this photo of a male great spotted woodpecker at the top of a tree. Mollie did really well to get the bird in focus through all of those branches. The woodpecker's colours stand out nicely against the blue sky.

Do you want to be featured in the magazine? Send your stories, ideas or photos to [watch@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:watch@wildlifetrusts.org)!





# LIVIN' ON THE HEDGE!

Hedges are incredibly important for wildlife. They provide food and shelter throughout the year, creating a home for lots of animals. In autumn, some creatures will be feeding on their berries, whilst others will already be tucking themselves in for winter.

Hedges can be home to **HARVEST MICE**. These animal acrobats climb up to reach autumn berries, using their tail as an extra limb.

If the hedge has ivy, look out for **IVY BEES**. They fly late in the year and visit ivy flowers for pollen and nectar. You might also see butterflies like the **RED ADMIRAL**.

Insects and other minibeasts, like **WOODLICE**, live in the fallen leaves at the bottom of a hedge. **ELEPHANT HAWK-MOTH** caterpillars might hide here to pupate, emerging as an adult in late spring.

Tiny mammals like the **BANK VOLE** often seek shelter beneath hedges. But it can be risky, as stoats and weasels like to hunt along hedges.

Some birds can't get enough of the berries that grow on many hedges in autumn and winter. **REDWINGS** migrate all the way to the UK to stuff themselves on berries!

**HEDGEHOGS** look for food along the edge of hedges and nest in the tangled branches at the bottom. This is also the perfect place to hide away whilst they hibernate through winter.



Dig into life on the sea floor

# MARVELLOUS MUD

Much of the seafloor is covered in mud. It's full of life, rich in nutrients and can store huge amounts of carbon. At a quick glance, mud might appear lifeless. But dig a little deeper and you'll discover a huge variety of creatures buried beneath the surface.

by Beth Churn

## BRITTLESTARS



These relatives of starfish have disc-shaped bodies and five spiny, snake-like arms that they use to crawl across the seabed. They can break off their arms to escape predators but don't worry, they grow back! Their mouth, which they use to both eat and poo, has five jaws. Millions of brittlestars cluster together on the deep, muddy seafloor making 'brittlestar beds' that can cover hundreds of metres.

## PHOSPHORESCENT SEA PEN



This creature looks like an old-fashioned quill. It is made up of a colony of anemone-like creatures called polyps. Each polyp plays a special role from feeding to warding off predators. It lives in deep water, anchored into the seabed using its peduncle – a stalk-like organ that burrows into the mud. When disturbed, it glows a bluey-green colour that pulses in waves along its body to startle potential predators.

## NORWAY LOBSTER



This little orange crustacean is known by many names including Norway lobster, scampi, Dublin Bay prawn and langoustine. Norway lobsters are found at depths of around 100 metres, hiding in burrows in the mud. They aggressively defend their burrows, only leaving to look for food or a mate. At night they will crawl along the muddy seabed scavenging and hunting for worms, molluscs and other crustaceans.

## FIREWORKS ANEMONE



These rare and beautiful anemones have bright tentacles that look like an exploding firework! Unlike the ones you find on the coast attached to rocks, these anemones bury their long tube-like bodies into the muddy seafloor. They prefer to live on deep, sheltered seabeds where they are less likely to get pulled up by currents.

## SOLE



This flat fish looks like a 'normal' fish when it first hatches, but it goes through a weird transformation as it becomes an adult. One eye moves around to the same side of the head as the other. This comes in handy as it can still watch for passing prey when buried into the muddy seafloor.

## LUGWORM



Have you ever seen wiggly piles of mud on the beach and wondered if they are poo? These are created by lugworms, which look a bit like fat, spiny earthworms and live in U-shaped tunnels in the mud. At one end of the tunnel the worm's head eats through mud, creating a crater on the surface. It digests anything edible and excretes the remaining mud out the other end, forming the piles you see at the surface.

## SEA MOUSE

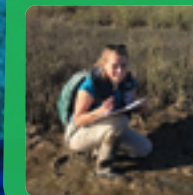


This strange, furry looking creature is not actually a mouse – it's a worm! Its body is covered in brown and iridescent bristles, reflecting light in a way that makes them shine blue, green and gold. It is thought this colourful display is to scare away predators on the dark seabed. Sea mice hunt for other worms and crabs on the muddy seafloor. They can be found at depths of up to 200 metres.

## PEPPERY FURROW SHELL



These bivalves (two-shelled molluscs) live buried in thick mud in intertidal estuaries. Although hidden beneath the surface, their presence is given away by star-shaped markings in the mud. These marks are created by the animal's siphon, a feeding tube that extends out to the surface to sweep the mud, sucking up food particles like a vacuum cleaner.



BETH works for Cumbria Wildlife Trust, where she loves to celebrate the wonderful mud in the Irish Sea!



# Hamza Yassin

**HAMZA** is a wildlife cameraman, documentary maker and author. He loves sharing the wonders of wildlife with as many people as possible. You might have seen him on *Wild Isles*, *Countryfile* or as Ranger Hamza on CBeebies.



© Fergus Collins

## Where does your love of nature come from?

My love of nature comes from being born in Africa, in Sudan. I just loved being outside. That love of nature was in me before I even realised it was there. It was only when I came to the UK at the age of eight that I realised having a job in nature was an option. You can be a wildlife cameraman, a conservationist, an educator. I'm lucky enough to say I've been all three of those things!

## How have you been helping nature recently?

Mother Nature doesn't have a voice, so we have to speak up for her. I tell nature's story to as many people as possible. In documentaries, books, audiobooks – any way I can! I do a lot of talks and guided walks to introduce people to nature, but my biggest impact comes through my documentaries and books. They help me inspire even more people to love and protect nature.

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

I've filmed wildlife for lots of documentaries, but my proudest moments have been hearing Sir David Attenborough narrate some of my footage. One example was for a series called *Wild Isles*, celebrating British wildlife. At one point, he even said my name! I was filming golden eagles and, as it showed me walking across the screen, Sir David's voice said: "450 miles to the north, cameraman Hamza Yassin...". I was over the moon.

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

There are so many things you can do right now to help the natural world, from picking up litter to learning more about nature. But the most important thing is to learn to love the natural world, to look after Mother Nature. And follow your dream – if you want a job working with nature, there are lots of opportunities to explore. In my book, *Hamza's Wild World*, I talk about all the different jobs that you can do to help nature.

I'm lucky enough to say that my hobby is protecting nature and so is my job. Maybe one day you can say the same thing!

Win a copy of *Hamza's Wild World*! Head to the competitions on page 24 to find out more.



Golden eagle © Steve Davis

# FAIRY FUNGI

This cute little mushroom is a fly agaric. It looks like it's grown straight from a fairytale, with its spotty red cap. It's toxic to humans, but some animals can eat it.



© Barrie Williams



IT'S NOT JUST HUMANS THAT LOVE TO MUNCH ON MUSHROOMS!

# FUNGI FEASTERS

**SOME PEOPLE LOVE MUSHROOMS** – in a pie, on a pizza or even as a burger. It's not surprising that many wild animals love to feast on fungi too! Some are picky eaters and only feed on one particular fungus. Others will scoff down almost any mushroom they meet.

by Tom Hibbert

Many mushrooms are **POISONOUS**, so unless you're a fungus gnat or an expert, it's best to stick to the shop-bought kind!

## SCARCE FUNGUS WEEVIL

**T**his weird-looking weevil is obsessed with one particular fungus – King Alfred's cakes, also known as cramp balls. It's a fungus that grows on dead and dying wood, often from ash trees. It grows into dark brown balls that eventually turn black. They look a bit like lumps of coal – or burnt cakes!

Scarce fungus weevils feed on King Alfred's cakes. The adults can sometimes be found resting on logs, but they're tricky to spot as they look like bird droppings. They lay their eggs inside the fungus. When the eggs hatch, the young beetles (called larvae) live inside of the fungus ball, feeding on the walls of their home. Eventually they tunnel into the wood beneath the fungus, where they turn into adults.



Scarce fungus weevil larva © Alex Hyde / naturepl.com

© Frank Porch



## FLIES

**S**ometimes, mushrooms want to be eaten. This includes stinkhorns, like the common stinkhorn and the dog stinkhorn. Unsurprisingly, stinkhorns pack a powerful pong! They smell like a rotting animal – disgusting to us, but irresistible to some flies.

When stinkhorns first grow, their cap is covered in a layer of sticky gloop called the 'gleba'. This is full of spores, which are a bit like seeds for fungi. Flies that are attracted by the smell land on the gleba and eat it. Some spores get eaten, whilst others stick to the flies' feet. When the flies fly away, they take the spores with them. They spread the spores to new areas, either on their feet or in their poo. The flies get a stinky meal, the fungus gets a taxi service to spread its spores.



Common stinkhorn © Chris Lawrence

Dog stinkhorn © Chris Matison / naturepl.com



## OAK PINHOLE BORER

**T**hese beetles don't just eat fungi, they farm them! They live in tunnels inside logs and stumps, feeding on ambrosia fungi that grow in a slimy layer on the wood. When adults leave their tunnel to find a new home, they take some fungi with them. They have special pits on their body for carrying the ambrosia fungi.

As the beetles burrow into a new log or stump, they spread fungi on the wood, where it can grow. Females lay eggs in the tunnel and when the larvae hatch, they eat the fungi too. Eventually, they'll turn into adults, leave the tunnel and start the cycle all over again.

They're sometimes known as ambrosia beetles, along with other similar beetles that farm these fungi.

© Tomasz Klejdzisz



## FUNGUS GNATS

**F**ungus gnats are a group of tiny flies. There are hundreds of species in the UK, but they're very difficult to tell apart. Despite their name, they don't always eat fungi. Many feed on bits of plants and other rotting things – as well as fungi that grow on the rot.

But some fungus gnats are much pickier. They have young (also called larvae) that only feed on one specific fungus. There are fungus gnats that specialise in eating hoof fungus, others that prefer the red-belted conk fungus, and some that only eat chicken of the woods.

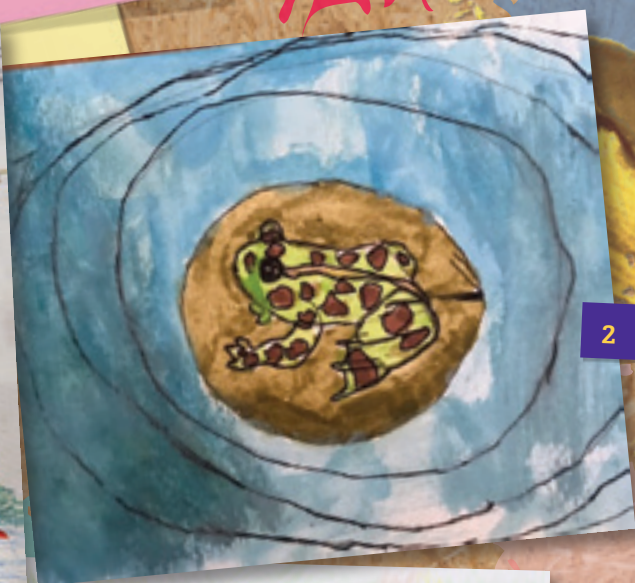


Fungus gnat larvae © Brian Eversham

© John Waters / naturepl.com









# WEIRD NATURE

by Alex Domett

What exactly are these odd-looking lumps and bumps? A gall is an abnormal growth on a plant that is caused by another organism, like a wasp or fungus.



## THIS ISSUE: GALLS

### ALDER TONGUE



© Vaughn Matthews

Has an alder tree ever poked its tongue out at you? If yes, then it's likely you've spotted an alder tongue gall! These are caused by a fungus called *Taphrina alni*, which infects the scales of female alder catkins, creating these mischievous looking tongue-like growths.

### OAK MARBLE GALL



© Brian Eversham

A tiny wasp called *Andricus kollari* produces brown, marble-shaped growths on oak twigs. Inside the gall, the wasp larvae feed on the tissues but cause little damage. They make a little hole and leave as an adult in autumn. In the past these galls have been used to make dyes and ink!

### NAIL GALL



© Simon Colmer / naturepl.com

These spooky looking spikes can be found in large numbers on the leaves of lime trees. Caused by a mite called *Eriophyes tiliae*, these sharp points are made up of tiny hairs where the mites feed. A mite escape hole can be found on the other side of the leaf!

### KNOPPER GALL



© Les Birns

A knobby looking growth that develops on acorns, caused by the wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*. Galled acorns fall from oak trees in late summer. The adult wasps normally come out the following spring, but some can stay in their galls for up to four years!

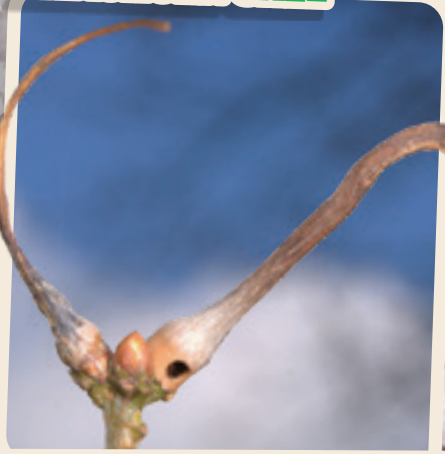
### ROBIN'S PIN-CUSHION



© Adam Cormack

A red, hairy growth that can be seen on wild roses throughout the year (though it turns brown in winter). It is caused by a tiny gall wasp that lays its eggs in a bud in the spring. The wasp larvae live inside and emerge as adults the following spring.

### RAMSHORN GALL



© Brian Eversham

Caused by the very well-named gall wasp *Andricus aries* (the star-sign Aries is represented by an image of a ram), this gall can be found on oak trees and often has two yellowish horns, which later turn brown. *Andricus aries* was first discovered in Britain in 1997!



## How to make an apple bird feeder

- You will need
- An apple
  - An apple corer or skewer
  - Sunflower seeds
  - String
  - A thin stick

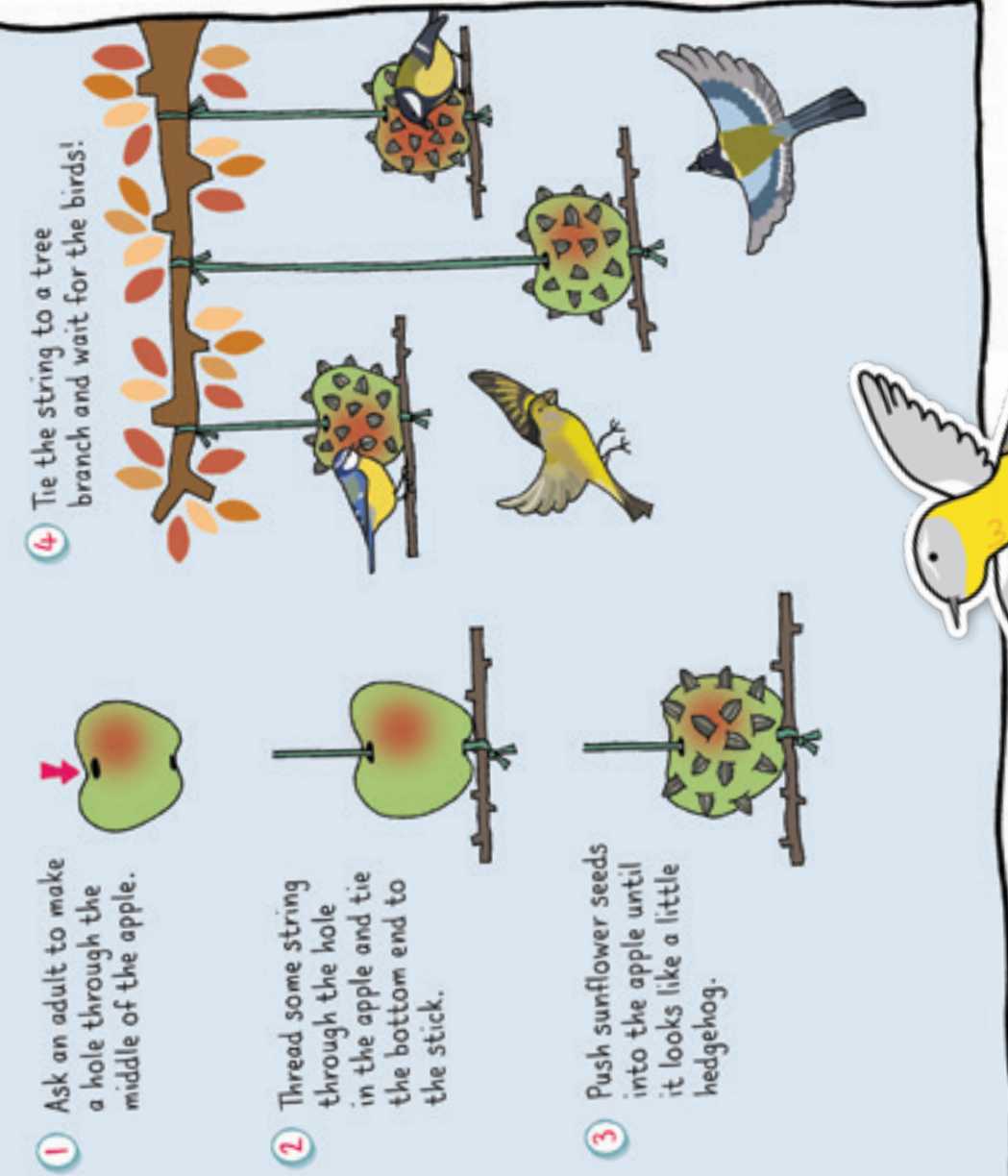


Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2019

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# TREE TROOPERS

by Pete Dommert

EVEN TREES NEED A LITTLE HELP FROM THEIR FRIENDS!

**GROWING UP ISN'T ALWAYS EASY!** Becoming a fully-formed tree takes energy, time and a little bit of luck. But along the way, other plants and some animals can lend a helping hand!



## Unplanned planters

In autumn, many animals collect seeds, nuts and other nutritious nibbles to eat during the winter when food is harder to find. They often stash these tasty treats in secret places so other creatures can't find them – this is called caching. Jays bury acorns and beech tree seeds and red squirrels bury hazelnuts and pine tree seeds in shallow holes in the ground, often over a wide area. This is known as scatter-hoarding. Both species are pretty good at remembering where they've hidden their goodies, but they'll always forget a few. So some lucky seeds stay planted in the soil and go on to grow into trees.

Dung beetles drag animal poo down into their underground burrows. Any seeds inside the dung get planted in the process... and come with their own fertiliser! Badger poo might contain seeds from yew trees, for example.



Red squirrel © Vad Galdarovsky

## Prickly protectors

Young trees are very vulnerable, especially in the first few years of their lives. Lots of different animals – including rabbits, deer and farm animals – love to chew their tender leaves, stems and bark. This could stop them growing properly. Fortunately, other plants can help keep the saplings safe from browsing beasts. Thick, thorny bushes and spiky shrubs – such as bramble, hawthorn, wild roses and gorse – sometimes make a protective barrier around the tree and prevent it from getting eaten! Plants growing near a sapling can also protect it from harsh sunlight (they stop it getting sunburnt!) and strong winds.



© Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

## Balancing browsers

But if trees are left totally untouched, everywhere would eventually turn into forest! That might sound like a good thing, but if this happened, a whole host of other habitats – such as heathland, wetland, moors and meadows – would disappear, along with the wide variety of plants and animals that live there. So when hungry herbivores browse (eat) the tops of trees, it stops them from growing too much and keeps wild areas open. In the past, this browsing was done by big animals like bison, elk and aurochs (an extinct kind of wild cattle). Nowadays, deer and large farm animals (like sheep, cows and horses) do a similar job. Over-browsing can be a problem in some places though, especially from deer – too much munching means no new trees at all and that's not good either! It's all about keeping nature in balance.

Bison went extinct in the UK about 10,000 years ago. They can still be found in other European countries, including Poland and Germany – and have been introduced to a woodland in Kent!



Roe deer © Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography



**PETE** is a wildlife writer. He used to love climbing trees when he was younger!



# ITSY BITSY HIDERS

Where do  
**SPIDERS** go  
in autumn  
and winter?

by Jenna Shaw

**H**ave you ever wondered what spiders do during the colder months? They're fascinating animals and by the time you've finished reading this, I bet you'll have a favourite of your own!

## SPIDER SEASON

Autumn is 'Spider Season'! As we say goodbye to our summer holiday and start wearing our jumpers, we start to see more spiders in our homes. Many of them have been here the whole time, hiding away, but now they're wandering around looking for a mate. Other spiders might have come in to avoid the chill outside, just like we do. Our cosy houses are the perfect place for them. But most spiders stay outside all year, finding ways to adapt to the cold. There is even an amazing spider that spends the winter underwater in a bubble! Autumn is a great time to get to know our friendly neighbourhood spiders.

## HOME SWEET HOME

**O**ur homes provide shelter for spiders all year. A few spiders would struggle to survive autumn and winter without the warmth our houses offer. Some people find spiders unsettling, even scary, but they are really useful housemates to have! They control flies and mosquitoes for us, which means we don't have to find other ways of catching them or keeping them outside. And our UK spiders are not dangerous. So let's welcome them inside!

We often find spiders in bathrooms because they're looking for moisture.



House spider

There are several spiders known as house spiders. Most like to hide in dark, quiet corners, behind furniture, or in attics during winter. They are small to medium-sized spiders with long legs and hairy, brown bodies.



Cellar spider

These spindly spiders are a common sight in many houses. They originally come from warmer countries so can only survive indoors in the UK, though climate change may be making it possible for them to live outdoors. They hunt other spiders, including larger house spiders.



Noble false widow spider

These spiders also arrived from warmer countries. They often hide in quiet, undisturbed places like garden sheds, attics or behind furniture. They come indoors for warmth. Males are thought to live for just one year, but females may live for three years.

## WILD WANDERERS

**M**ost spiders stay outside all year. They find interesting ways of surviving the colder months. Some might hide under bark or leaves. Others make silk nests to snuggle into. They don't like the cold and there isn't much food for them. By slowing down and resting, they save energy so that they can survive until spring, when it is warmer and their food is back.

Flying spiders! Some spiders use their silk to catch the wind and float through the air.



Diving bell spider

The diving bell spider hides in ponds during winter, where the temperature doesn't change as much. It spins its silk between pond plants to trap air in a little bubble. The spider uses the bubble to breathe underwater. They've even been found living under the ice in frozen ponds!



Nursery web spider

Most female nursery web spiders produce eggs in summer, but some have them in autumn, too. They carry them around and then guard their young for the first few days. The adults die and the young spiders spend the winter hiding low down in grass or leaf litter. They enter diapause, a form of deep rest, waiting for spring's arrival.



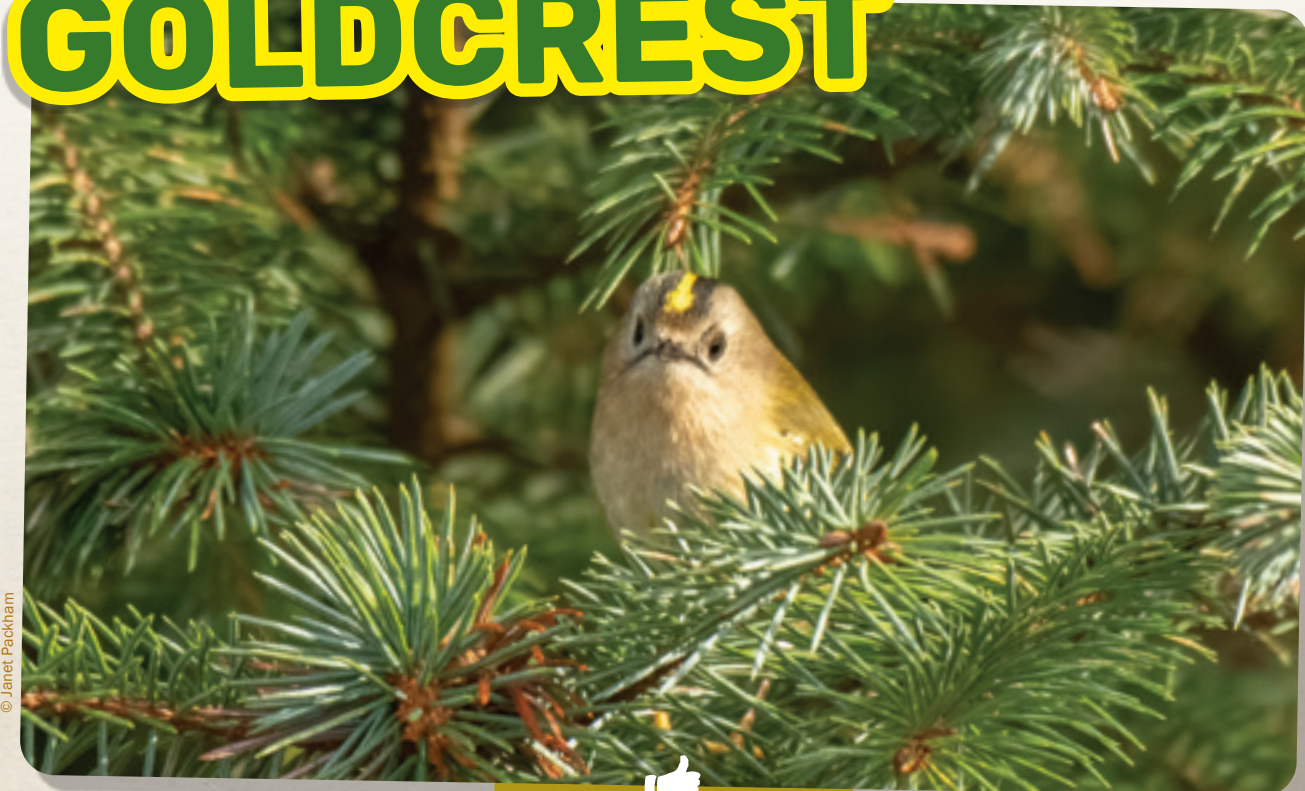
Zebra spider

Zebra spiders often live close to our homes. In winter, they tuck themselves away in sheltered spots, such as under stones or in cracks in walls. They stay still for months to save energy.

Some spiders are hunters and pounce on their prey. They don't all spin webs.



# GOLDCREST



## TINY TRAVELLERS

**G**oldcrests are Europe's smallest bird – though the similar firecrest is only slightly larger. Despite being so tiny, many goldcrests make incredible journeys each autumn. They travel to the UK from other countries in Europe, crossing the North Sea. This feat is so unbelievably impressive that people used to think they hitched a ride on the back of a larger woodcock. How else would such a tiny bird fly hundreds of miles over the sea? Now we know goldcrests are just that impressive!

## LITTLE KINGS

**O**ne look at a goldcrest and it's easy to see how they got their name. They have a beautiful golden stripe on top of their head. This little 'golden crown' also earned them their scientific name, *Regulus regulus* – so good they named it twice! *Regulus* means 'prince' or 'little king' in English. Male goldcrests even have a bit of fiery orange in their yellow stripe. This makes them look a bit like firecrests, but firecrests also have big white eyebrow stripes.



## ESSENTIAL FACTS

### Scientific name

*Regulus regulus*

### Size

Around 9 cm long and weighs 5-6 grams

### Amazing fact

On the 10th October 1959, more than 4,000 migrant goldcrests arrived at Spurn Point in Yorkshire!



## FLUTTERY FEEDERS

**G**oldcrests really like evergreen trees, like pines and yew trees. These are often planted in cemeteries, making them a good place to look for goldcrests. They are really active birds, constantly flitting around the tree as they hunt for insects and other minibeasts. Their thin beaks help them pluck tiny creatures from between the leaves, which other birds would struggle to snatch. They sometimes hover as they grab their prey.

## A WILD HEARING TEST

**O**ne of the best ways to find a goldcrest is to listen for them – they like to make noise! Their call is a soft, high-pitched 'zee zee'. Their song is just as high-pitched but more musical. Their voice is so high that some people can't hear them at all. As we age, it gets harder to hear these high-pitched sounds.

# WHAT HAPPENS TO FALLEN LEAVES?



## LEAF LITTER

The fallen leaves gather in piles at the bottom of trees, along with twigs and other plant bits. We call this leaf litter. It might look like nature's messy bedroom floor, but it's really important for wildlife. Lots of animals like to hide in this leaf litter, especially over winter. This includes caterpillars, spiders and toads. Hedgehogs will also gather leaf litter to make their winter nest cosier. A layer of fallen leaves can be surprisingly warm!

As they munch, they break the leaves up into smaller pieces that get buried in the soil. Fungi also get in on this feast, growing on the rotting leaves and bits of wood. But a lot of the work of breaking leaves down is done by living things that are too tiny for us to see, called microorganisms.

## ROTTEN RECYCLING

As the leaves are broken down, they release nutrients into the soil, making the soil healthier. This is good news for the plants that grow from the soil, as these nutrients are the perfect plant food. The tree that dropped the leaves in the first place might even get some of its nutrients back. It's nature's recycling!

## WHY DO LEAVES FALL?

Leaves help trees create food using water, carbon dioxide and sunlight to make sugar. Trees rely on this to survive. But in winter, there's less sunlight and the leaves can't make as much food. Instead, they become a problem. It takes lots of energy to keep your leaves green and healthy. As leaves aren't as useful in winter, it's easier to get rid of them. So, the trees drop their leaves to save energy. It also helps protect them from winter storms, as the wind can blow through the branches without catching the leaves and putting more strain on the tree.

Some trees keep their green leaves all year. They usually have narrow, needle-like leaves, which are better suited to winter weather.

## DELICIOUS DECAY

Leaf litter isn't just a home for wildlife, it's also food. Lots of little creatures like to eat the fallen leaves, including earthworms and woodlice.





# COMPETITIONS

WIN

## HAMZA'S WILD WORLD

**W**in a copy of Hamza's Wild World by Hamza Yassin, illustrated by Louise Forshaw, from Macmillan Children's Books. Hamza's Wild World brings you everything you will ever need to know about the animal kingdom in this fun, fascinating guide packed with hundreds of funny, smelly, awesome, scary, revolting, weird, cute, clever and AMAZING facts!

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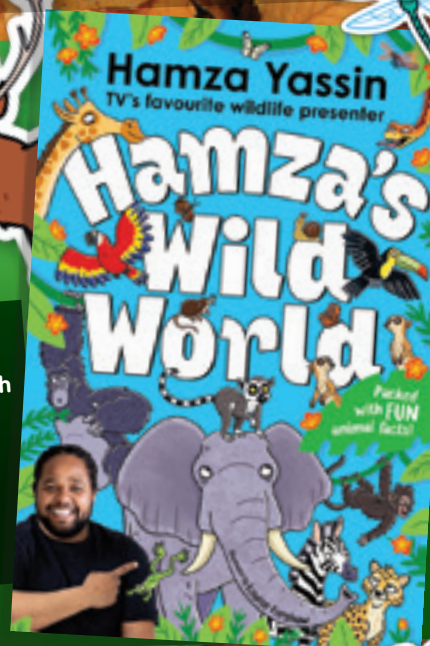
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**FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:**

Just answer this question.  
What was Hamza filming when Sir David Attenborough said his name?

- Golden eagles
- Tawny owls
- Otters

**Clue: the answer is in the magazine!**



WIN

## THE FOREST THAT GROWS AROUND ME

**T**his beautifully illustrated concertina book leads you deep into two forests. One is a tropical rainforest and the other a temperate forest. Explore beneath the forest floor, amongst the shrubs and up through the branches and leaves. Discover the plants and animals that live at every level of the forest, from the soil to the tops of trees. There are bugs and beetles, sloths and squirrels and so much more! *The Forest That Grows Around Me* is by Charlotte Guillain, illustrated by Vuon Illustration © Words and Pictures, 2025.

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Just tell us what your favourite insect is!

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](mailto: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 2025**

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