

FREE!

Fieldfare
poster

**FROSTY
FUNGI**

Don't miss these
winter mushrooms!



**STAR-STUDDED
SKIES**

Discover the
secrets of space

Issue 116 Winter 2025

Wildlife Watch



DUCK!

Go quackers for
winter wildfowl

The
Wildlife
Trusts





Editor's corner

TOM HIBBERT
Editor, Wildlife Watch

Brrr! Winter can be chilly, but it's a great time for looking up at the night sky. Head to page eight for stargazing tips. Winter can also seem a bit grey, but there are some plants that bring a splash of colour to the coldest season - learn more about evergreens on page 20. Whether we get snow or just a lot of mud, winter is also the perfect time to practise your animal tracking - find out more on page 18. Stay Wild!

Tom

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THIS ISSUE?

When you've read your winter magazine, tell us what you thought! What did you enjoy? What could be better? Scan the QR code or visit: wtru.st/winter-survey-25



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
Social media links for wildlife trusts.

WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers

BERRY GOOD

Willow (aged 2) from South Lanarkshire went to a forest playgroup, where she created a masterpiece using squashed blackberries for ink and a feather for a quill!



PRICKLED WITH PRIDE

Freya (aged 3) from the West Midlands wanted to share this wonderful hedgehog that she crafted. We're as excited to see it as she was to make it!

HOG HERO

Belle (aged 9) from Kent completed our Hedgehog Walk this spring. She raised £260 for wildlife! Belle has a hedgehog house in her garden. A few years ago, it was home to a hedgehog called Hedgely von Prickleson. If you want to take part in the Hedgehog Walk in 2026, head to page six to find out how!



HOVERFLY HELPER



Seven-year-old Thomas from Devon enjoyed learning about hoverflies in his summer issue of Wildlife Watch. He even used the activity sheet to make his own hoverfly lagoon! Great job, Thomas, the hoverflies will love it.

BUSY AS A BEE



Nine-year-old Oliver from Leicestershire was worried about bees struggling in the colder months, so he made this bee café in his garden!



Hedgehog © Nick Upton

06



Night sky © Phil Savore / naturepl.com

08



Goldfinch by Wildlife reader, Arthur

14



Dark-bellied brent geese © David Trilling / 2020VISION

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WILDLIFE WATCH 116

Editor: Tom Hibbert
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Design: Sean Coleman



Check out 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 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!

ENTOMOLOGY

(en-tuh-mol-uh-ji)
The study of insects. People who study insects are entomologists.



SCLERA

(sklear-uh)
The white part of the eyeball.



PUPA

(pyew-puh)

A stage in the lifecycle of some insects, where the young insect is protected by a case as it transforms into an adult. Moth cocoons are a type of pupa.



SEABIRDS IN HOT WATER

Leach's storm petrels are little seabirds. They spend the winter out at sea then nest on land in summer. They can be found in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, including on Scottish islands. The birds in the Atlantic have been struggling, with their numbers declining in the last few decades. Scientists have discovered this could be due to rising sea temperatures. They found that when the sea temperature is higher, the adult petrels find it harder to survive. This is just another reason to do all we can to fight the climate crisis!

Leach's storm petrel © Richard Steel / Minden / naturepl.com



BACK IN THE BOX

Birds often use nest boxes as a sheltered place to sleep in the winter. Scientists in Slovakia discovered that great tits may get attached to their favourite nest box. They'll often keep using the same box throughout the winter. Some even come back to their box winter after winter! The scientists found that older great tits were more likely to return to their favourite box each year.



YOUR PHOTOS

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



EDEN (age 9) from Hampshire took this fabulous photo of a painted lady butterfly. Eden has her own camera, but snapped this shot on her mum's phone.



LONDON (aged 4) from Leicestershire was watching this garden spider on a web outside his house for several weeks. He decided to call the spider Bevin.



NIRVAAN (aged 6) from Surrey took this photo of a robin that visits his garden. There are two of them that come to the same spot every day. He had a phone, a tablet and his camera ready to use, just in case!

SOFIA (aged 11) from central Wales took this wonderful photo of a golden-ringed dragonfly. Did you know the female golden-ringed dragonfly is the longest dragonfly in the UK?



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

HELP WILDLIFE ONE
STEP AT A TIME



WALK LIKE A HEDGEHOG!

© Nick Upton



CAN YOU WALK AS FAR AS A HEDGEHOG?

This spring, join The Wildlife Trusts and Timmy Time for a wild adventure that helps protect nature! From 30th March to 30th April, take on The Hedgehog Walk, our fun and family-friendly fundraising challenge. All you have to do is walk 3km and raise money to help wildlife.

WHY IS IT CALLED THE HEDGEHOG WALK?

Hedgehogs come out at night in spring, summer and early autumn. They snuffle around in the dark, looking for tasty caterpillars, beetles and other minibeasts to eat. They often walk up to 3km in a single night on their search for food. On The Hedgehog Walk, we challenge you to walk as far as a hedgehog! You don't have to do all of your steps in one day though, you can spread them out over the month if you like.



© Nick Upton



HOW DOES THE HEDGEHOG WALK HELP WILDLIFE?

Nature is struggling. Lots of plants and animals are getting rarer, including hedgehogs and many birds, butterflies, beetles, moths and more. We need to make more space for nature to thrive. This means more meadows, marshes, woodlands, heathlands and hedgerows. But it also means more green and wild spots in our towns and cities. The Wildlife Trusts are working to make more space for wildlife by protecting 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. By taking part in The Hedgehog Walk, you are helping us get closer to this goal!

From planting trees to
protecting seas, you're
helping us help wildlife!



HOW DO I TAKE PART?

Taking part in The Hedgehog Walk is simple! Just head online to sign up and receive everything you need to fundraise for the wildlife you love.

Then you just need to find some people to sponsor you for your walk. Try asking friends and family or people at your school. Once you've found your sponsors, it's time to start walking! When you sign up, you'll also get access to lots of fun activities and tips to make your walk super fun.

Did you know you
can also take part in
The Hedgehog Walk
as a school class? Why
not suggest it to
your teacher!

© SolStock



TAKE PART WITH TIMMY TIME!



To make The Hedgehog Walk extra special, we've teamed up with our friends at Aardman and Timmy Time to bring you fun activities for your walk. Join Timmy, Apricot the hedgehog, Stripey the badger and more of their friends to have fun whilst you fundraise for nature!



To take part in The Hedgehog Walk
visit wildlifewatch.org.uk/timmy-time-zone

Ben Potter

EXPLORE THE NIGHT SKY THIS WINTER

SEEING STARS

by Revd Charles Thody

© Joshua Earle

© CProcyon

Do you ever go outside and look up? There is so much to see, even at night. The sky is full of BILLIONS of stars!

WHERE TO GO

Start in your garden or a bit of open space close to home – make sure an adult goes with you! You'll see more in places without much light, so avoid streetlights.

TOP TIP

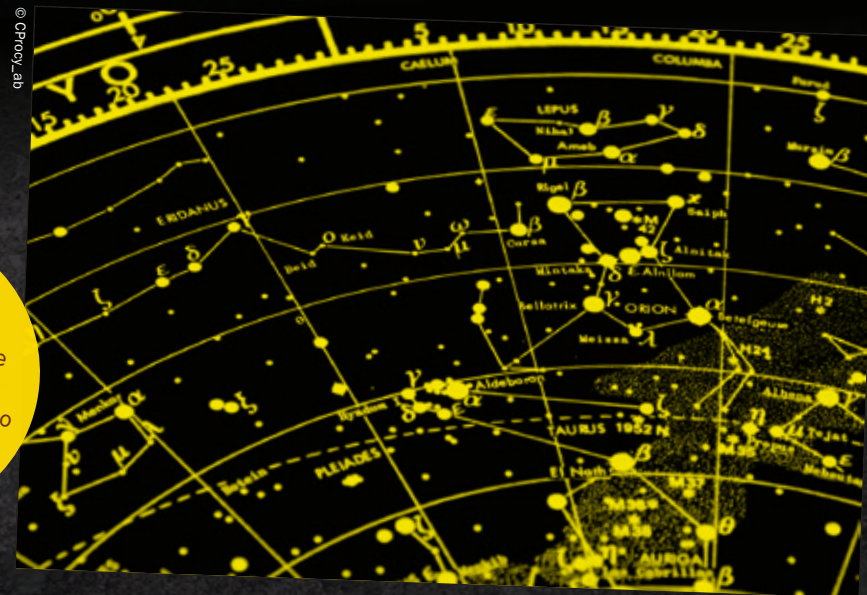
Autumn and winter are great times for seeing stars. It gets dark earlier, so you don't have to stay up as late to see them!

WHAT TO TAKE

Wear nice warm clothes. It can help to take something to put on the ground to lie on, so you can see the whole sky. Take a redlight torch so you can see where you're going – normal torches stop your eyes from adjusting to the dark. Binoculars are good for looking at the sky and a telescope is even better. But don't worry if you don't have them, it's amazing what we can see up there just with our eyes!

TOP TIP

Keep away from any bright light. It takes about 20 minutes for our eyes to really get used to the dark – then we can see the stars really well!



STAR MAPS

The stars make patterns in the sky, called constellations. Before satellite navigation, ships and aeroplanes used the stars like a map. The constellations move about the sky and clever people (who do maths) worked out where they would be at any time of day or night. So, knowing where the stars would be at any time, people could work out where they were going. Really clever stuff! You can learn the constellations with a smart phone or tablet, using free Apps like *Starwalk* or *SkySafari*.

START SPOTTING!



CHARLES loves flight and anything to do with space. He would love to be an astronaut!

THE PLOUGH



The most important constellation is called the Plough. It is in the north and is shaped like a saucepan. The stars in The Plough point to the North Star. When you've found the Plough, you can find other constellations.

CASSIOPEIA

Our galaxy is called the Milky Way. Andromeda is our nearest neighbouring galaxy.



Winter is a great time to spot this constellation. It is opposite the Plough and looks like a crown (or an "M" depending which way up it is). In winter, the galaxy Andromeda is not far from this group of stars.

ORION



Look south in winter for my favourite constellation, best seen in January and February. In the middle it has three stars known as "Orion's Belt" (Orion was a hunter in Greek legend). Find the middle star in his belt and then look down from it, there's a line of stars straight down (Orion's Sword) and they lead to the Orion Nebula. You will be able to see this with binoculars. It is beautiful!

New stars are created in the Orion Nebula.



THE MOON



And of course there is the Moon! You don't need binoculars, but if you do use them, you can see craters and mountains! Don't look at the moon until after you have looked at the stars – it is so bright your eyes will not see the stars for a while after looking at it.

Once you get used to looking at the night sky you will see other things – maybe a meteor (a very fast flash of light in a straight line). You might see satellites (a small dot of light travelling in a straight line across the sky). Or you might see the International Space Station (a very bright light travelling quite fast across the sky).

There is lots to see up there, make sure you look up and enjoy exploring!

© Charles Thody Photography

Each issue, we're introducing a different person working hard to save **WILDLIFE** in the UK!

Dara McAnulty

DARA is a multi-award-winning author, naturalist and conservationist from Northern Ireland. He is studying his MSc at Cambridge University, investigating the extinction of wolves and rewilding in Ireland. Dara was a member of Wildlife Watch when he was younger.

Where did your love of nature come from?

It's thought that all children are born with a love of nature, but my parents were amazing in nurturing mine. They encouraged me to explore, experiment and learn. My love really exploded when a conservation group visited my primary school. They were educating our class on the re-introduction of red kites in Northern Ireland and how they were caring for and protecting these wonderful raptors. I knew someday, somehow, I would make a difference to this work!

How have you been helping nature recently?

Last year I went on a field trip to the Danum Valley in Borneo. I was studying the impacts of logging on tree populations long after the operations have stopped. It was definitely a feat of endurance and strength; the long days recording data and monitoring were very tiring, but also extremely rewarding. The data we collected was important for the local wardens and staff protecting this beautiful wildlife-filled sanctuary.

What is your proudest moment as a conservation champion?

I have had many moments of success during my career as an author, but nothing matches getting involved with the 'Hawk Eyes' project alongside Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group. When I was 13 years old, I raised over £6,000 by walking for two days in the depths of winter, to buy much needed satellite tags for red kites. I was so excited to then tag and continue to monitor the red kites as I grew older.

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

The best place to start is with wonder and curiosity. When you are out in nature, take notice of the things you see and then monitor how they change, just like a scientist. Also, get involved in community groups, nature rangers, scouts or your local Wildlife Watch group! Then choose what you are really passionate about and champion that species, or campaign about that issue with gusto. Start with your friends, then your community... then the world! Good luck!

Dara's new book, *A Wild Child's Guide to Nature at Night*, illustrated by Barry Falls is out now! Join Dara on a nighttime adventure to meet hedgehogs, foxes, bats, owls and much more wonderful wildlife. Buy online at:

wtru.st/dara-nature-night



Red kite © Andy Rouse / 2020VISION

FLUFFY FLIER!

The December moth is one of our fluffiest moths, helping keep it warm enough to fly on cold winter nights.



© Iain H Leach

Meet **EIGHT** wild winter visitors!

DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE

by Tom Hibbert

Each winter, ducks and geese flock to the UK from their nesting areas in colder places, like Iceland, northern Europe and Russia. Head to a wetland near you and see who you can spot!



WIGEON

A plump duck with a whistling call that makes it sound excited. Thousands of wigeons visit the UK in winter, joining the few that spend the summer here. You can often see big flocks on lakes, but also on the coast and sometimes in fields. They like to graze on grass, more like a goose than a duck. Females are a rich brown colour, whilst males have a grey back and a yellow splotch on their forehead.



TEAL

Our smallest duck. A few teals nest in the UK, but most only visit us for the winter. They come from northern Europe, Iceland and Russia. They like lakes and marshy areas, where flocks often swim close to shore or spend time snoozing on the bank. Males have a reddish-brown head with a bright green stripe. Females look like a mini mallard.



PINTAIL

A pretty, elegant duck with a long tail, that's extra long in males! They are a little rarer than wigeons and teals. They also prefer coastal areas like marshes and estuaries, but sometimes visit inland wetlands. Males are grey with a white breast and a chocolate-coloured head. Females look a lot like a female mallard. A few nest here, but thousands more arrive in winter.



SHOVELER

This dashing duck is unmistakable, thanks to its long, shovel-like bill. The perfect tool for sieving tiny invertebrates and bits of plants from the water. Sometimes shovelers feed in pairs or even larger groups, swimming around in a circle together. Look out for them on lakes and marshes. Like the other ducks, a few shovelers nest here but many more visit for winter.



PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

These noisy geese know how to make an entrance. Listen out for large flocks flying through the sky, shouting 'wink wink' as they call to each other. Most of them have travelled over the sea from Iceland or even Greenland. Their favourite British destinations are the estuaries of Scotland, northern England and Norfolk. They have pink legs as well as a pink band on their beak.



BARNACLE GOOSE

These beautiful black and white geese mostly visit the coasts of Northern Ireland, Scotland and northern England. Some travel from Greenland, stopping for a rest in Iceland on the way. Others come from Svalbard, a group of islands in the Arctic. The geese you see in winter might have seen a polar bear!



BRENT GOOSE

These dainty geese are a similar size to a mallard. They have a black head and a white patch on the side of their black neck. There are pale-bellied brent geese, which travel from Canada and Svalbard to Northern Ireland and Northumberland. There are also dark-bellied brent geese, which come from Russia to visit south and east England. Brent geese like the coast, where they graze fields and mudflats.



WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

These greyish-brown geese have a white patch around their bill and black marks on their belly. They are rarer than the other geese and can be tricky to find. They like to feed in fields and sometimes join flocks of other geese, like pink-footed geese.

GALLERY



Send in your 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.**



1



2



7



8

1) Wildlife by Bo, aged 10 ★
Bo has drawn some of the wildlife spotted near her house, including a red kite, a waxwing and a pine marten! We're impressed by how carefully she has studied each species.

2) Beaver by Willow, aged 11
We love to see our readers celebrating beavers! These wetland engineers bring benefits for lots of wildlife.

3) Great crested grebe by Zoe, aged 14
This felted grebe is incredible! It looks ready to swim away.

4) Bee by Ruby, aged 3
The bold black and yellow stripes really help Ruby's bee stand out!

5) Dolphin by Tamaki, aged 9
We love the fantastic use of colour as this dolphin leaps from the sea.

6) Blue tit by Zoe, aged 9
Blue tits are happily common but that means it can be easy to overlook how beautiful they are. Thanks for the reminder, Zoe!

7) Fox by Isabel, aged 12
Isabel's painting of an urban fox is amazing. We love the reflection in the puddle.

8) Hedgehog by Annabel, aged 11
What a wonderful wintry hedgehog, all snuggled up for hibernation.

9) Goldfinch by Arthur, aged 6
Arthur's goldfinch has a lot of character. He's also done a great job on the feet, which can be tricky.

10) Goldcrest by Kitty, aged 9
The pop of colour really makes the goldcrest stand out in Kitty's nighttime scene.

11) Wasp by Yusuf, aged 13
We're buzzing about Yusuf's incredible photo.

12) Creatures by Simiy, aged 7
Simiy drew all the creatures found in a local park – including a pseudoscorpion!

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.



3



4



9



10



5



6



11



12

WEIRD NATURE

by Ellen Kinsley

ELLEN works for The Wildlife Trusts and loves finding fungi!



THIS ISSUE: WINTER FUNGI

DEAD MAN'S FINGERS



If you go down to the woods today, you might find a spooky surprise. Sticking up through the ground like blackened, decaying fingers, these fantastic fungi feed on dead wood, especially beech trees. The 'fingers' start out grey with a pale 'fingernail' at the end and blacken over time. Creepy!

OYSTER



These pale grey mushrooms grow in groups on dead trees or stumps. They may not look dangerous but, to a tiny nematode worm, they're deadly predators! The fungi use a powerful nerve gas to paralyse and kill the worms, then grow into their bodies and suck out their insides!

HOOF FUNGUS



These hard, brown or black lumps look like a horse's hoof stuck to a tree trunk. The 'hooves' can stay there for many years, growing a new bottom layer each year. Their fibres have been used for thousands of years as tinder to start fires and even to make clothes.

YELLOW BRAIN



This bright yellow fungus feels like a blob of wet jelly and looks a bit like a brain. It's often found on fallen branches, but dead wood is not on the menu for this fungus - it's a parasite that feeds on other fungi!

CANDLESNUFF FUNGUS



These little black sticks with white tips look like the antlers of tiny stags. They're often found on a moss-covered stump or piece of dead wood. This special fungus is bioluminescent, meaning it gives off its own light! But sadly, you're unlikely to see its faint glow without special equipment.

JELLY EAR



Listen up! These pinky-brown ears can often be found on elder trees. They really do look and feel like human ears! Unlike many mushrooms, jelly ear can survive being frozen and will carry on growing after it has thawed out.



How to make ice decorations

You will need:

- Saucers
- Kettle
- Boiled water that has been allowed to cool
- Natural items like leaves, feathers, berries and grass
- String or wool
- A freezer (if the weather isn't cold enough!)

1 Place your saucers on a flat surface and put the end of your string into the saucer, making sure a long piece is left dangling over the edge.



2 Lay natural items in the saucer over the string.



3 Gently pour in cooled water (boiling it first helps to remove any bubbles).



4 Put the saucers outside on a frosty night (or in the freezer).



5 In the morning put the saucers in a tub of cold water to separate the ice.



6 Hang them around your garden as decorations.



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

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

HOW TO BE A WILDLIFE DETECTIVE

TRACKS and TRAILS

by Stuart Edmunds

Winter is a great time to become a mammal detective and test your tracking skills. Mammals are often hard to spot, but their tracks and trails in winter's mud and snow allow us to follow where they have been.

Mountain hare tracks



© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION

wildlifewatch.org.uk

Badger trail



CREATURES OF HABIT

Some mammals use the same trails over and over again, until the trails become so well worn that they look like wildlife highways through the woods. Badger prints can often be found along their wide trails. Foxes, deer and other mammals often also use badger trails, so they can be a great place to start your search for footprints.

MUD MARKINGS

Snowy days are perfect for tracking as prints are easy to spot in snow. But we don't get much snow in the UK, so muddy patches are the next best thing. After rain, check your local woods for open areas of mud. You'll probably spot a few squirrel tracks, with their long thin toes and clearly visible claws. Riverbanks are perfect for otters to leave their tracks. It's fun to carefully look for exposed mud along brooks and streams for their big prints, which have five toes with some webbing between them.

Otter prints



Track ID



DOG

Dogs come in all shapes and sizes and so do their footprints! Look for rounded prints with four nails showing.



FOX

Similar to a dog print, but longer and narrower. To tell a fox from a dog print, do the cross test: if you can draw an X through the centre without the lines touching the toe and heel pads, you have a fox.



BADGER

Look for the kidney-shaped palm pad behind five forward facing toes. Badger prints are usually about 5-6cm across.



RABBIT

These prints have longer, narrow toes and claws. Rabbits and hares have hairy soles, so sometimes you can spot hair between the toe pads too.



The biggest wild mammal tracks you will find in the UK are made by red deer. They can be as long as 10cm!



Badger and fox tracks



KNOW YOUR PRINTS

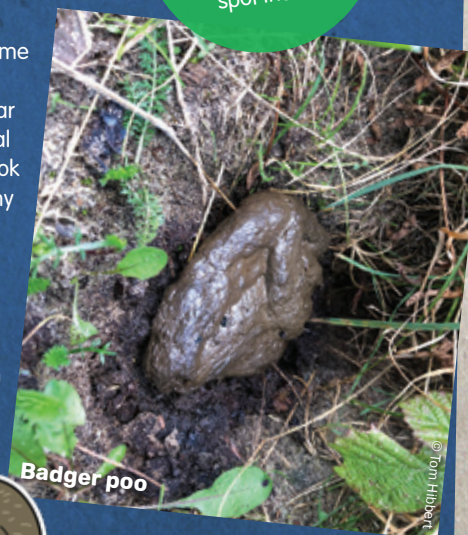
Finding prints is just the first step. Then you have to figure out which animal made them! Count the number of toes showing and see if there are claws, too. The size of a print is a good indicator of the animal you are tracking, so it's helpful to carry something to measure them. You could also take a photo of the print to identify later: put a coin next to it for scale so you can see how big it was. You might be able to find a local wildlife expert to help identify it.

The smallest mammal tracks are so tiny that you would struggle to spot them.

POO POWER

Maybe you'll find some footprints one day that just aren't clear enough to identify the animal that made them. You can look for other signs nearby; many mammals often poo along their trails and badgers dig their own dung pits on their routes! Sometimes they might leave bits of fur snagged on a branch or fence.

Badger poo



Water vole feet make star-shaped prints in muddy riverbanks.



STUART has been tracking mammals around the world for 15 years and runs training courses for the Mammal Society.





PETE is a wildlife writer. He has a huge holly tree in his garden!

FOREVER GREEN

by Pete Dommett

Meet the trees that don't lose their leaves!

Evergreen trees are exactly as their name suggests – they're always green! Unlike other trees which lose their leaves in winter, evergreens keep theirs all year long. Staying green makes them very special indeed!



Frost on Scots pine © Paul Hobson

EVER TOUGH

Evergreen trees are well adapted for winter. Yew, Scots pine and juniper trees have long, thin leaves or 'needles'. These are less easily damaged by harsh wintry weather, such as snow, ice and wind. Their narrow shape also stops them losing water and drying out in the cold air.

Holly and box have wider, thicker leaves which store more water. They are covered in a waxy coating that prevents the water from evaporating or freezing up when temperatures hit zero.

As well as being able to save precious water, evergreens are good at holding on to important nutrients from the soil, such as nitrogen. All this enables them to live in colder climates where other plants struggle to survive!

Some evergreen trees produce an anti-freeze chemical which helps them survive super-cold winters. How cool is that?

The Fortingall Yew tree in Scotland is between 2,000 and 9,000 years old!

EVER GOOD (FOR WILDLIFE)

When other trees are bare, evergreens offer protection from the winter weather for all kinds of creatures. Invertebrates, birds, bats and other small mammals shelter among the thick foliage. Hedgehogs might even hibernate at the bottom of a thick, evergreen bush!

Evergreen trees also provide wildlife with much-needed food, at a time when it can be very hard to find. Tiny goldcrests and other small birds search for insects hiding among the needles of conifer trees. Holly and yew berries are gobbled up by lots of birds, especially thrushes, and some smaller mammals, such as dormice and wood mice. Black grouse peck the fruits off juniper bushes and red squirrels scavenge seeds from cones that have fallen from Scots pine trees. For wildlife, being green is very good indeed!

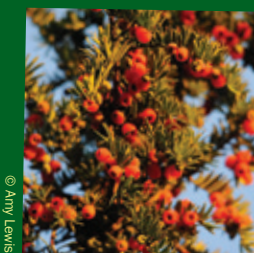


Redwing eating holly berries © Will Atkins

Ivy is an evergreen plant that supports at least 50 different species of wildlife. Wood pigeons love to eat its black berries in winter!

EVER WILD

There are **ONLY FIVE NATIVE*** SPECIES of evergreen tree in the UK – yew, Scots pine, juniper, holly and common box. All five trees can be seen growing in the wild, but a few can also be found closer to home!



© Amy Lewis

YEW

Grows wild in woodland. Old trees are very common in churchyards.



© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION

SCOTS PINE

Lots of tall trees in Caledonian pine forests in Scotland. Also planted in other places for timber.



© Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION

JUNIPER

A spiny bush or small tree found in different habitats. Quite rare.



© Scott Petrek

HOLLY

Spiky-leaved shrub found in woods and hedgerows. Also common in gardens and used in Christmas decorations!



© Becas Smith

BOX

Grows on hillsides in the wild. Also seen in parks and gardens, clipped into neat hedges and fancy shapes!

Each type of tree can live for hundreds of years!
*native = originally from a particular place

LOSING LEAVES

Actually, it's not true to say that evergreen trees don't lose their leaves – they do! But instead of shedding them all at once like deciduous trees, they drop them gradually throughout the year. And they grow new leaves to replace the old ones before they fall off. This means evergreen trees look the same (green!) all the time!



Scots pine © Peter Cairns / 2020VISION



WINTER MOTH



© Iain H Leach

TINY TRAVELLERS

Most insects tuck themselves away and hide through winter, waiting to become active in warmer weather. Not the winter moth! As you might have guessed from the name, this moth flies around on cold winter nights. You can usually see them from October through to January or February.

WINGLESS WONDERS

Coming out in winter is weird enough, but there's something else strange about winter moths – only the males can fly! Females have stubby little wings and barely even look like moths. Instead of flying, they climb up tree trunks and release pheromones. These are chemicals that male moths can smell using their feathery antennae. The males fly around sniffing for females.



© Iain H Leach

ESSENTIAL FACTS

Scientific name

Operophtera brumata

Size

Wingspan: around 28 mm

Amazing fact

Climate change is allowing winter moths to move north through Europe, into the Arctic.



Female winter moth

A MOTH IN THE HEADLIGHTS

Winter moths can be found in most places with trees, from woodlands to gardens. Like many moths, they are attracted to lights. You might see them peeking in windows at night, when the light is on inside. If you are in a car driving on a winter night, you can often see them flying in the light of the car headlights.

CATERPILLAR CATCHERS

Winter moth caterpillars hatch from their eggs in spring. They are pale green and feed on the young leaves of trees. They have to emerge at the perfect time. If they appear before the leaves, they might starve. If they hatch too late, the leaves are older and not as nutritious, so the caterpillars don't grow as much. They eat lots of different trees, including oak, birch and willow. You can sometimes see them hanging from the tree on a long silk thread, like a bungee jumper! Winter moth caterpillars are an important snack for birds. Great tits and blue tits often feed them to their chicks.

DO DUCKS GET COLD FEET?



Mallard © Guy Edwardes / 2020VISION

It's chilly enough going outside in winter, so how do ducks manage to paddle about in icy water?

WARM(ISH) WINTERS

Compared to places like northern Russia our winters are pretty mild. That's why lots of ducks, geese and swans travel to the UK for the winter. But even though our winters are mild, you wouldn't want to jump in a lake in January! Ponds and lakes can be as cold as 0 degrees Celsius, when they start to freeze at the surface. Water this cold can make a human go into shock. But you'll often find ducks happily paddling around in gaps in the ice. So, what is their secret?



Gardwall © Guy Edwardes / 2020VISION

BRILLIANT BLOOD

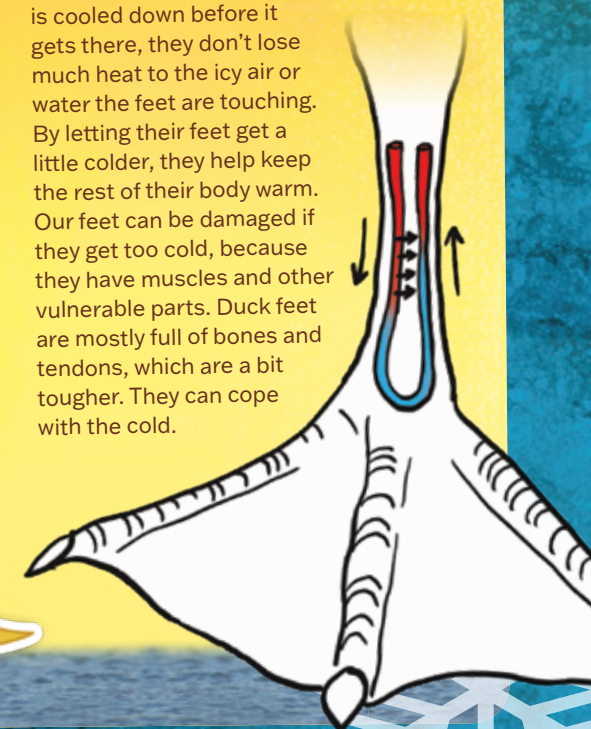
Like us, ducks have arteries and veins. Arteries carry blood from the heart to different parts of the body. Veins take the blood back to the heart. Blood is warm in the middle of the body, but as it gets closer to the skin and the cold air or water beyond, it loses some of its warmth. This is a problem as it makes the body colder.

This means ducks standing on ice or swimming in cold water risk losing lots of heat through their feet. But fortunately they've evolved a brilliant way of saving heat. It's called a counter-current heat exchange system. This sounds complicated, but it's a simple idea. The veins coming out of the legs are wrapped around the arteries going into them. As the warm blood flows down the arteries to the legs, some of its heat passes into the cold blood flowing out of the legs in veins. This means that the blood flowing into the feet gets colder, but the blood flowing back into the body gets warmer.

Birds will often stand on one leg, tucking the other into their feathers to keep it warmer.

SO, DO DUCKS GET COLD FEET?

Yes, ducks' feet do get cold – but the ducks do it on purpose! Because the blood flowing into their feet is cooled down before it gets there, they don't lose much heat to the icy air or water the feet are touching. By letting their feet get a little colder, they help keep the rest of their body warm. Our feet can be damaged if they get too cold, because they have muscles and other vulnerable parts. Duck feet are mostly full of bones and tendons, which are a bit tougher. They can cope with the cold.



COMPETITIONS

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a) 4 b) 5 c) 6

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WIN

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COMPETITION RULES

Send your competition entries to us: **By email** watchcomps@wildlifetrusts.org **By post** Wildlife Watch, The Kiln, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 1WT
Don't forget to include your name, age and a way of contacting you about your entry! **DEADLINE: 28 February 2026**

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