

**FREE!**

Beetle  
poster

**MINI  
MUNCHERS**

Discover six weird  
caterpillars



**DIG IT**

Explore the  
underground world  
of burrowers



Issue 117 Spring 2026

# Wildlife Watch

MAGAZINE

## A TERN AROUND THE WORLD

Follow the epic journey of  
this special seabird



The  
**Wildlife**  
Trusts



## Editor's corner

**TOM HIBBERT**  
Editor, Wildlife Watch

Spring is here! What wildlife are you looking forward to spotting? Maybe you'll be lucky enough to see an Arctic tern, finishing its long flight from Antarctica – follow its incredible journey on page 12. If you're visiting a beach, you might find the rockpool photography tips on page 20 helpful. Whatever you do this spring, I hope you have a wonderfully wild time. Stay Wild!



### WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THIS ISSUE?

When you've read your spring magazine, tell us what you thought! What did you enjoy? What could be better? Scan the QR code or visit: [wtru.st/spring-survey-26](http://wtru.st/spring-survey-26)



### GET IN TOUCH

Email us at: [watch@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:watch@wildlifetrusts.org)  
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- Website: [WildlifeWatchUK](http://WildlifeWatchUK)

# WILD THINGS

News from our Wildlife Watchers



## FUNGI-FEST

Isabella (aged 14) from Northern Ireland loves taking pictures of mushrooms. She saw so many different varieties last year it was tough to choose a favourite photo, but these wonderful waxcaps really stood out!



## WOODLAND GUARDIAN



Fred (aged 2) from Lincolnshire has been busy helping his grandpa collect old tree guards from the trees that don't need them anymore.

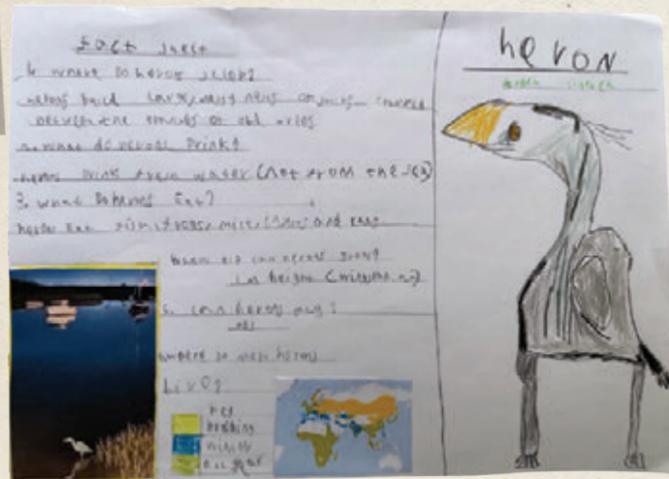
## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Nine-year-old Belle from Kent is in her school's Eco Council. They have meetings every term and do jobs like litter picking, turning off lights when no-one is in the room and watering plants. Belle says she loves it!



## FANTASTIC FACTS

Six-year-old Oscar from Devon spotted a heron and decided to create this wonderful fact sheet all about them. He's got facts about where they nest (in old trees), what they eat (fish, frogs, mice, insects and rats) and even a map of where herons can be found.



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### WILDLIFE WATCH 117

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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](http://wildlifewatch.org.uk) to find out more.

KEEP WATCHING!

# The <sup>21</sup> 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!

### EYRIE

(eer-ee)  
The large nest of a bird of prey, especially one built high up a tree or cliff. It's most commonly used for eagle nests.

### CARRION

(ka-ree-uhn)  
The decaying flesh of a dead animal. It's an important food for lots of wildlife including beetles, mammals and birds – like the familiar carrion crow!

### ALLOPREENING

(al-uh-pree-ning)  
The name for when one bird uses its beak to groom another bird, plucking parasites and dirt from its feathers and helping to keep them clean and healthy.



## SLEEPING JELLIES

Did you know you don't need a brain to sleep? Scientists have been studying sleep in jellyfish and sea anemones, neither of which have a brain. Surprisingly, they found that they sleep a lot like humans! The jellyfish they studied slept for around eight hours a day, mostly at nighttime – though they also had a midday nap. The anemones slept for a similar time, but mainly around dawn. Scientists think they need sleep to give their bodies time to rest and repair, just like we do.



Blue jellyfish © Linda Pritch / ZOOVISION

## RISKY DRESS SENSE

Male golden pheasants and Lady Amherst's pheasants risk their lives for the best looks! They have colourful crests and a cape of feathers that they use to impress females. Scientists have discovered that these fancy feathers actually block some of their vision, creating a larger blind spot behind their head. They found that males had a blind spot five times larger than females! This means they're more at risk from predators attacking from behind. These pheasants naturally live in Asia, but were introduced to the UK in the 19th and 20th centuries and occasionally still escape from collections.



Golden pheasant © Angela Pixabay

# YOUR STORIES

## THE DAY I FOUND A GIANT GOBY

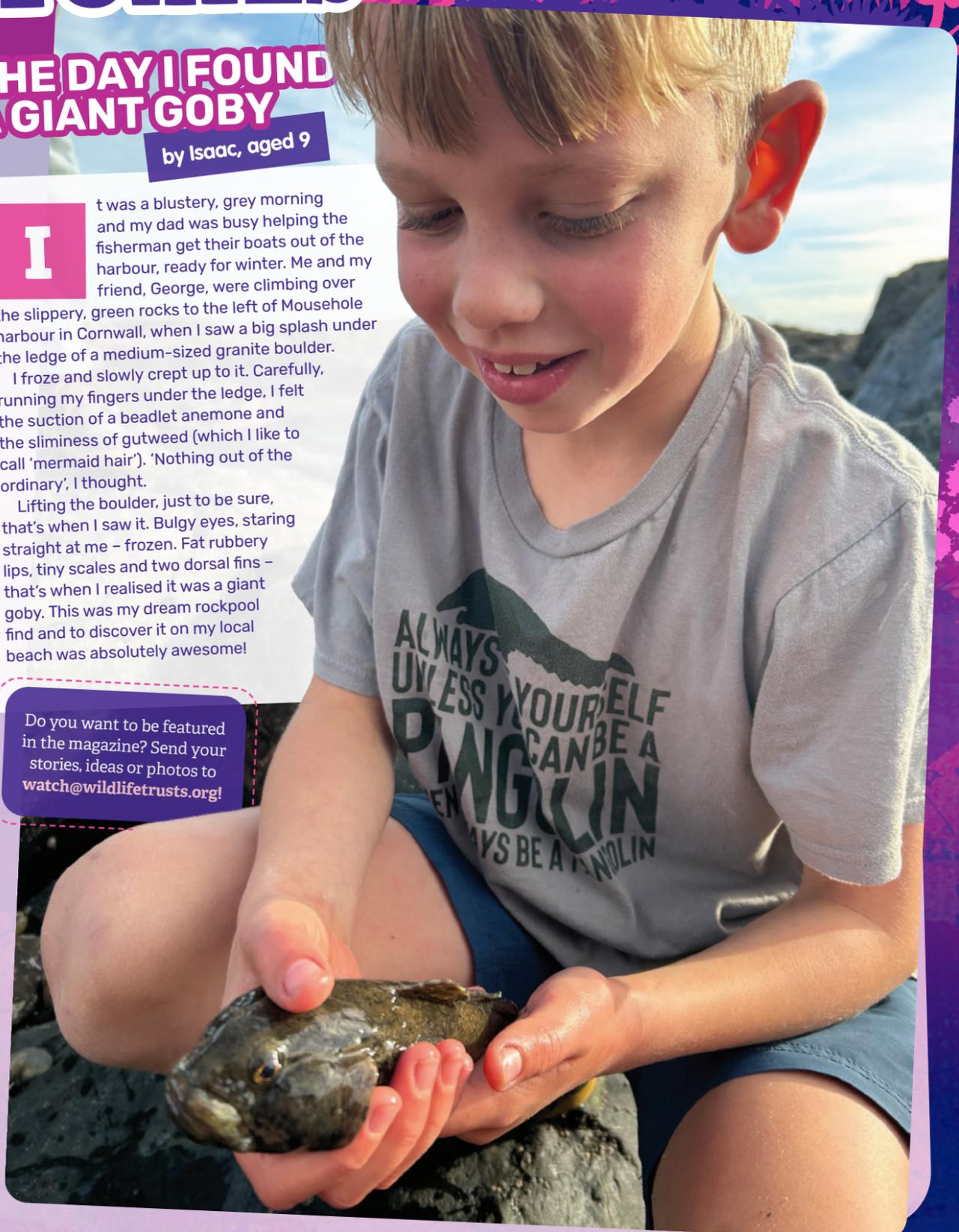
by Isaac, aged 9

It was a blustery, grey morning and my dad was busy helping the fisherman get their boats out of the harbour, ready for winter. Me and my friend, George, were climbing over the slippery, green rocks to the left of Mousehole harbour in Cornwall, when I saw a big splash under the ledge of a medium-sized granite boulder.

I froze and slowly crept up to it. Carefully, running my fingers under the ledge, I felt the suction of a beadlet anemone and the sliminess of gutweed (which I like to call 'mermaid hair'). 'Nothing out of the ordinary', I thought.

Lifting the boulder, just to be sure, that's when I saw it. Bulgy eyes, staring straight at me – frozen. Fat rubbery lips, tiny scales and two dorsal fins – that's when I realised it was a giant goby. This was my dream rockpool find and to discover it on my local beach was absolutely awesome!

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



HOW DO OUR LARGEST CROWS LOOK FOR LOVE?

# RAVEN ROMANCE

by Megan Adamou



© Andy Kerran

Ravens are the **LARGEST** bird in the crow family.

They have diamond-shaped tails and jet-black feathers that shimmer with greens and blues in the sun. You might see them circling high above on a warm afternoon or hear their cronking calls along cliffsides. In spring, ravens are very busy!

## LIFELONG LOVE

Ravens usually pair for life, sticking to the same partner and territory. The male bird often brings food to the female to prove that he is strong enough to help her raise their chicks together. Ravens also take part in something known as allopreening, where they'll cuddle up and pick muck and mites from each other's feathers. Romantic, right?

The oldest wild raven recorded in the UK was almost 18.



## CHATTER FLOCKS

Ravens have a huge range of calls. The most common is their iconic 'CRONK'. Their calls have meanings, too. Cronks are used to say, "I'm over here" or "this way". Purrs and churrs are used for comfort or casual chatter. When danger is near, you may hear croakier shouts that say, "stay away". Lots of birds, including ravens, can have an accent depending on where they live. This means a raven in Gloucestershire may sound different to one in Norfolk.

Ravens can mimic other sounds, from car alarms to human voices.

## DANCING IN THE SKY

Raven pairs also bond through dancing. They are excellent acrobats. They spiral and twist through the sky, almost touching and completely synchronised. A pair will fly high into the air, tuck in their wings and drop down... down... down, then fling their wings back open! You may also see them flip upside down and right way up again, like sideways roly-polys. They pair different dance moves with different calls, from cronks and churrs to whistles and purrs.



© Markus Varesvuo / naturepl.com

**MEGAN** fell in love with ravens around five years ago, after finding two local pairs. She watched them all season, building their trust and learning all about them.



© Andy Kerran

## NESTING NOOKS

Ravens often nest on edges, like the edge of a cliff or woodland. When nesting in trees, they prefer to be at the top of conifer trees like pines. Their nests are made from sticks, leaves, grass, mud and animal hair, like sheep's wool. As they may use their nests for several years in a row, they start around one metre wide and can end up more than twice as big! Their nests are fiercely defended – they lead danger away with distracting calls and wing-beats and dive at predators to drive them off.

Ravens can recognise faces and hold grudges, so make sure to smile when you see them!

## CHICK TOK

Ravens lay eggs between January and May. It takes just under a month for the chicks to hatch. They live in the nest, looked after by their parents, for another month and a half before fledging. Fledged ravens are noisy and clumsy, hopping and flapping between trees. They go on day trips as a family, flying farther each day, coming back to their nest site late in the afternoon. Ravens live as a family until autumn, when the young birds leave to start their new lives.

## YOUTH CLUBS

Young ravens gather in groups, travelling around to find food. In these groups, the young birds will find a partner – usually when they're 2-4 years old. The young couple leaves the group to find their own territory and the cycle begins again!

A group of ravens is called an unkindness... that's a little unfair, don't you think!

© MWSJM



BEAUTIFUL BLOOMS WITH A DARK AND DEADLY SECRET!

# PRETTY BUT POISONOUS

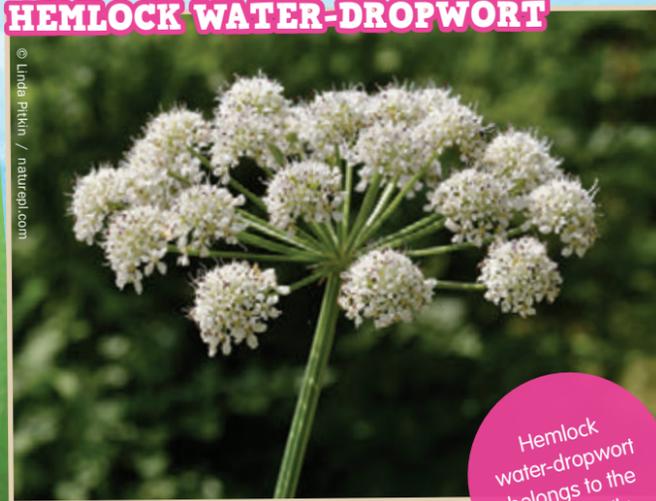
by Pete Dommett



**PETE** is a wildlife writer. He loves learning new things about plants!

The wildflowers that appear in spring and summer are a welcome sight for all kinds of animals, including us! These pretty plants play an important part in keeping ecosystems healthy, but some are seriously harmful to humans. So while it's wonderful to see them, it's best not to touch!

## HEMLOCK WATER-DROPWORT



Hemlock water-dropwort belongs to the carrot family.

Possibly the most poisonous plant in the UK! It always grows close to water, along streams, rivers and ponds. Accidentally eating this deadly dropwort would be a disaster, but several types of insects feed on its shiny, green leaves and small, white flowers, including beetles, caterpillars and flies.

## BUTTERCUPS



These friendly yellow flowers spread across lawns, parks, fields and woods in spring and summer. Their flat, open shape makes it easy for butterflies and short-tongued bees, such as mining bees, to feed from them. They're great for wildlife, but crushed buttercups also ooze a toxic oil that can cause an itchy rash.

## WOLF'S-BANE



A plant so poisonous it was once used to kill wolves? Well, that's how wolf's-bane got its name! Most animals avoid this lethal species, but bumblebees feed from its flowers in damp woods and ditches. Just touching these blue blooms can cause dizziness and headaches in humans, so stay well away from wolf's-bane! Recently, this plant has been known as monk's-hood. The name wolf's-bane is now used for one of its relatives, which is also toxic!

## BLUEBELLS



Almost half the world's wild bluebells grow in the UK.

A woodland covered in a carpet of bluebells is a spectacular sight. These fabulous flowers provide pollen and nectar to hungry insects at the beginning of spring. But all parts of the plant are poisonous to people. The sap can irritate skin and eating a bulb would give someone a serious stomach upset. Oof!

## LORDS-AND-LADIES



Lords-and-ladies produces orange berries in autumn that are poisonous to people, but gobbled up by birds!

Search shady woods in spring for this strange-looking plant. Its long spike (called a spadix) gives off a stinky scent that attracts flies. They get trapped at the bottom of the leafy bit (the spathe) and pollinate the flowers inside. Touching lords-and-ladies can trigger severe allergic reactions in people...so hands off!

## FOXGLOVES



Foxgloves are also known as dead men's bells.

In late spring and summer, look out for tall, purple foxgloves along hedges and in woodland. These easy-to-identify flowers are a great source of nectar for bees and moths. But this plant is highly hazardous to humans – it contains toxins that can harm someone's heart. Confusingly, they're also used in medicines to help people with heart problems!

## DEADLY NIGHTSHADE



A family reportedly once got sick from eating a rabbit that had been feeding on deadly nightshade.

Deadly by name, deadly by nature! The dark purple flowers seen on this woodland plant at the end of spring and in summer are super poisonous. The black berries that appear after are just as dangerous – swallowing a few of these would be enough to finish off a fully-grown man! But birds can eat the berries and some wild rabbits nibble nightshade without a worry!

## WILD DAFFODILS



Bumblebees, hoverflies and pollen beetles all feed from daffodil flowers.

These are smaller and paler than the colourful flowers that pop up in parks, gardens and supermarkets in spring. Wild daffodils are quite rare, but they can be found in ancient woods in England and Wales. All types contain bad-tasting chemicals that put animals off eating them. Dining on a daff would make a person pretty sick too!

# BE A CLIMATE CHAMPION!



Swallow © Chris Gomersall / 2020VISION

**T**he climate crisis can be scary. The world is getting hotter and it's having an impact on wildlife, wild places and people. But there are lots of people working hard to make things better and we can all help do our bit! In each issue this year, we'll be sharing seasonal tips for helping fight the climate crisis.

## SPRING TIPS

### SLOWING THE CHANGE

Lots of the things we do depend on burning fossil fuels like coal and oil. These release gases that increase climate change.

#### CYCLE OR WALK WHEN YOU CAN

If your school is close enough and it's safe to do so, you could try walking or cycling instead of going in a car. Even if it's just one day a week, cutting down on car journeys is one way to help.



#### SPRING CLEANING

At this time of year, we often tidy our houses and get rid of clutter. Have you got any old clothes or toys you don't need anymore? You could sell or donate them – then the new owner won't need to buy something new that might have been made using fossil fuels. Recycling isn't just for rubbish!



#### PLANT YOUR DINNER

Spring is a great time to start growing your own food. If you have a garden, you could sow some vegetable seeds now ready to harvest later in summer. If you don't have a garden, you could try growing herbs on a windowsill. Growing your own food is a great way to help the planet – just make sure you use peat-free compost.



### ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Climate change is already having an impact on us and nature, but we can help wildlife cope.

#### LET THE GRASS GROW

Can you let parts of your garden grow a little wilder? Long grass holds more water and helps keep your garden cooler, which makes it a much better home for wildlife. If your grass is cut with a lawnmower, mowing less often will use less electricity or fuel and be better for the planet, too.



#### WATER FOR WILDLIFE

Water is really important for wildlife. If you don't have a pond, you could set up a little container pond, filled by spring rains. You could also make a butterfly puddling station – a shallow saucer filled with soil, gravel and small stones. Add enough water to make sure the soil is damp, but the stones aren't all underwater. Find out more at [wtru.st/watch-water](http://wtru.st/watch-water)



#### BE A SCIENTIST

Climate change is causing some animals to move around to new areas. To help them adapt, we need to understand where to find them. You can help by recording the species you spot! There are even handy apps like iNaturalist or iRecord to submit your sightings – always get a photo if you can!

Check out The Wildlife Trusts' ID UK Insects app for help naming what you spot.



## NEWT KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The great crested newt is the UK's biggest newt. In spring, males do underwater dances to impress females. Their moves include rocking, leaning and tail-whipping. Young newts hatch from eggs and are sometimes called newt tadpoles. Once they've grown a bit, they are called eft. They spend spring and summer in the water, before leaving to spend the rest of the year on land.

## FOLLOW THE EPIC JOURNEY OF THE ARCTIC TERN

# POLE TO POLE

by Dr Joanne Morten

**D**espite only weighing as much as a small orange, Arctic terns hold the world-record for the longest recorded migration of any animal. Throughout their lives, they travel the same distance as flying to the moon and back three times! They see more daylight than any other animal, but they face many threats along the way.



### ARCTIC 1

Arctic terns generally breed very far north, in places like Iceland and Greenland. Like most seabirds, they only visit land to raise their chicks. Arctic terns lay 1-2 eggs directly onto the ground. This means that, at some colonies, rising sea levels caused by climate change could flood their nesting site.

Eggs and chicks are also at risk from predators, including mammals like Arctic foxes or even polar bears. At some colonies, accidentally released mammals like American mink can cause huge problems. To protect their eggs and chicks, adult Arctic terns make lots of noise and dive at predators. Humans can help by building predator fences, or being careful when visiting islands, to make sure no mink or rats hitch a ride.

### UK 2

There are some Arctic tern colonies in the UK, too. If you are lucky enough to visit one, avoid getting too close as they may mistake you for a predator and dive at your head! They eat very small fish, crustaceans and even insects. If there isn't enough food near the colony, they won't be able to raise their chicks. Overfishing by humans has caused whole colonies to be abandoned in the past. In 2024, the sandeel fishery was closed in Scotland and the North Sea around England. This will help lots of seabirds like Arctic terns by making sure there are more fish for the birds to eat. Campaigns supported by bird-lovers helped make this happen!



**JOANNE** is a marine science officer at the charity BirdLife International. She researches where seabirds travel using tracking devices, so that we understand where we need to protect them.



### ATLANTIC OCEAN 3

After nesting, Arctic terns from Europe and eastern North America head south through the Atlantic Ocean towards Antarctica. Some cover distances of over 60,000 km each year! They use two general routes – along the African or South American sides of the ocean.

It takes around 70-90 days to reach the Southern Ocean, but only around 30 days to fly north again. On the way back they stop less and the winds help!

Whilst migrating, they pause to feed in areas with lots of food, like in the central North Atlantic and the Benguela Current (west of South Africa and Namibia). These are areas predictably full of food, but climate change can cause the fish to move elsewhere. This makes a long journey even more difficult.

### INDIAN OCEAN 4

Instead of flying straight into the Southern Ocean from South Africa, some Arctic terns cross the southern Indian Ocean and head towards Australia! There are lots of fish and crustaceans that they can eat on the way. This is because the waters are very rich, where cold water from the Southern Ocean meets warm, tropical water from the Indian Ocean. This is called an ocean front.

### ANTARCTICA 5

They reach Antarctica by late September. The seasons are opposite to the UK, which means they arrive for another summer – though it is still very cold and windy. They feed close to the sea ice edge, as this is where they find the most krill. Krill are tiny crustaceans that are the most important food in the Southern Ocean. Even giant blue whales eat them!

Climate change is impacting the sea ice levels around Antarctica. It is challenging for scientists to predict what will happen, but a decrease is likely by the end of this century. Arctic terns can follow the sea ice and search for food

elsewhere, but it won't be easy. Other animals, like penguins, breed during these months, so are limited in how far they can travel to find food and will struggle.

We can all help lower the impacts of climate change on animals. Travelling by bike, bus or train when you can instead of car; planting trees; recycling, reusing and buying less; and spreading the word! At school, at home or in your community, you can make a positive difference to help Arctic terns and other wildlife!



# 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.



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- 1) Grass snake by Finn, aged 12** We love Finn's stylish take on a grass snake. There's so much energy in this picture!
- 2) Owl by Reuben, aged 9** Reuben has used bold black lines to make a really interesting owl with lots of personality.
- 3) Birds by the sea by Heath, aged 4** We can't get enough of this busy seaside scene. There's so much to see!
- 4) Fox by Mila, aged 12** This is a beautiful fox. A wonderful use of watercolours.
- 5) Mouse by Hazel, aged 7** Hazel has sculpted an adorable little mouse and framed it nicely for the photo.
- 6) Elephant hawk-moth by Obi, aged 7** We love the delicate markings on this marvellous moth.
- 7) Crow by Elliot, aged 5** Elliot has been making a book of paintings of the birds he sees. Keep up the great work!
- 8) Squirrel by Julie, aged 9** Julie has hand-sewn a squirrel drey for her modelling clay squirrel. She even collected nuts for it.
- 9) Frogs by Abigail, aged 14** These impressively crocheted frogs are named Regenal, Sebastian and Brian.
- 10) Badger by Neda, aged 11** There is a lovely sense of movement and character in Neda's badger.
- 11) Hare by Xanthe, aged 9** What's better than a hare? Four hares! Xanthe has done a great job on the different poses.
- 12) Brandon Marsh by Finley, aged 8** We love this drawing of a Wildlife Trust nature reserve. How many species can you identify?

## HOW TO ENTER

Email [watch@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto: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

From the extra hairy to ones a little bit scary – discover six caterpillars to spot in spring and summer.

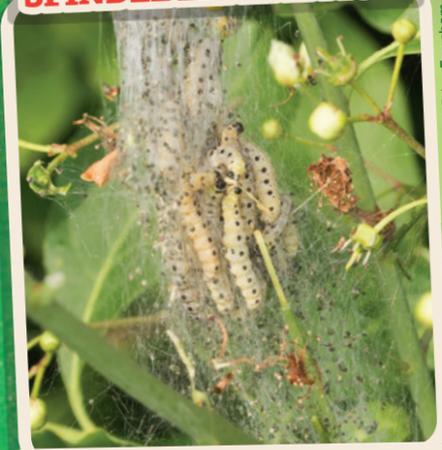
by Charlotte Wells



## THIS ISSUE: CATERPILLARS



### SPINDLE ERMINE MOTH



These small, greeny yellow caterpillars make May the spooky season! They live in big groups in trees and hedges – usually spindles – and completely cover them in a giant web. This helps to keep them safe from predators while they eat almost every leaf on the tree.

### LOBSTER MOTH



The lobster moth is named after its very strange caterpillar. Their tail is extra-large with two claspers and their front legs are longer than most. When scared they rear up, curl their tail round and stretch out their legs to look like lobster claws. They live in oak and beech woodlands and can be seen from June.

### FOX MOTH



This is a big caterpillar, growing up to 7 cm long. Covered in long black hairs with orange stripes down their back, they hibernate all winter underground as caterpillars. Spot them from April, when you can see them crawling across the floor to catch some sun after waking up.

### VAPOURER MOTH



This caterpillar has a black body with red spots all down it, each sprouting a bunch of hairs. Weirder still, it has a black horn of hairs on its tail and two more on its head. But the strangest decorations of all are four yellow brushes on its back. Look for it on hedges from May to September.

### PUSS MOTH



Living in willow and poplar trees in summer, this pink and green caterpillar looks like a friendly cartoon character, but it has a clever trick. It will lift its head and wave its two long tails when scared. If that doesn't work, it can spray acid at its attacker!

### INCHWORMS



A group of moths called Geometridae (pronounced jee-oh-met-ruh-day) have caterpillars called inchworms. They are hard to tell apart and have excellent camouflage that makes them look like tiny twigs. They are called inchworms as they move by scrunching up their bodies to 'inch' along. They are found on lots of different trees, if you can spot them!



## How to make a bird hide

What you need:

- old sheet or blanket (dark ones are best)
- one long and two short branches or poles
- string
- clothes pegs
- cushions
- warm clothes
- snacks
- bird feeders and food
- binoculars (optional)

1 Lash the three poles together to make a low frame

2 Cut a small viewing flap and peg it up out of the way

3 Cover with a blanket and peg in place

4 Stock your hide with comfy cushions, a drink and snacks



[www.wildlifewatch.org.uk](http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk)

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

Credits (clockwise from top left): House sparrow © Chris Lawrence, great tit © Jon Hawkins, Surrey Hills Photography, daffodil © Peter Cairns / 2020VISION, blue tit and robin © Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

# THE BURROWERS

**M**any mammals live in burrows or underground dens. They provide some safety and shelter, giving animals a cosy space to hide away from predators and bad weather. Burrows are fascinating because we rarely get to see what's happening inside them. Let's take a peek at what goes down below the ground!

Moles feel for vibrations in the soil using their sensitive nose. They follow them to find prey.

Stoats are small enough to enter rabbit burrows and eat any rabbits they catch. They may even nest in the stolen burrow.

Wood mice burrows are complex, with nest chambers and food stores. They're often under tree roots.

Foxes give birth in a den called an earth. They either dig their own earth or expand the burrow of a rabbit or other animal.

Water voles burrow into stream banks, with entrances above and below the water.

Moles make spherical nest chambers lined with plant material, where they sleep and have their babies. They also paralyse earthworms and store them in a larder.

Water vole burrows have specialised rooms. They have a chamber for storing food (called a larder), a chamber for pooing (a latrine) and a chamber for nesting. Females make nests in large balls of grass that they bring underground.

Rabbit mothers line their nest with fur they pull from their belly, to make it extra cosy for their young kits.

Badger cubs are usually born in late winter and spend around two months underground, before leaving the sett for the first time.

Badgers are social animals. They live in small groups in an underground home called a sett. Some setts can be used by generations of badgers for hundreds of years!



## TOP TIPS FOR ROCKPOOL PHOTOGRAPHY

**NAOMI** is a marine photographer, exploring the hidden magic of rockpools and our connection with coastal seas.



All photos © Naomi Ranft

# PICTURE PERFECT POOLS

by Naomi Ranft



Strawberry anemone

## CAPTURING THE MAGIC OF ROCKPOOLS

Along our shorelines lie rocky pools of seawater that are home to an abundance of life. These rockpools are tiny underwater worlds; look closely and you'll discover crabs, snails, seaweeds and fish waiting to be explored. With curiosity and care, you can capture stunning photographs of these colourful coastal creatures.

## STAYING SAFE ON THE SHORE

Safety comes first on rocky shores. Rocks can be slippery, especially when wet or covered in seaweed, so walk slowly and test your footing. Keep an eye on the tide to avoid being cut off by the sea, never lean too far over deep pools and explore with an adult nearby. Bright sunshine can be dazzling, so sunglasses are recommended and sunscreen is essential.

Wear wellies or walking shoes for dry feet and grip on slippery rocks.

## CAMERA CHOICE

There are many types of cameras to experiment with, each offering different benefits. Waterproof compact cameras are affordable and effective for photographing captivating subjects like anemones. Smartphones work well for above-water shots and can be placed in waterproof cases for photography below the surface. If budget allows, professional cameras can produce expert-level images, particularly for deeper water exploration, reaching beyond rockpools.

## CRYSTAL CONDITIONS

Still days are ideal for rockpool photography. Calm weather keeps the water smooth and clear, making creatures easier to see. Early mornings are especially magical, with soft light creating sparkles and shadows that bring even simple subjects to life.

## SUN, SHADE AND SHINY WATER

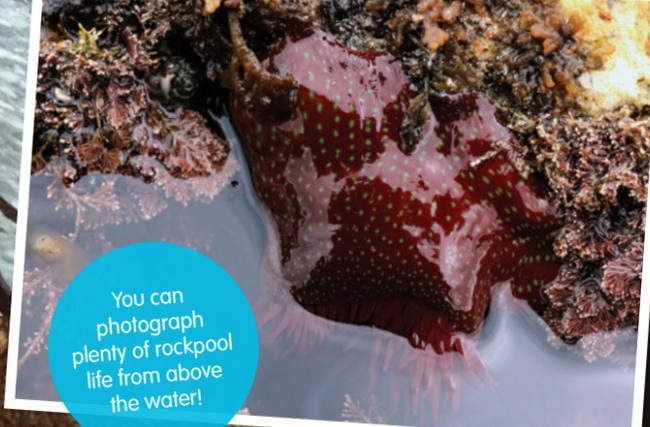
Sunlight can cause glare on the water's surface, making it hard to get a good photo from above the water. Position yourself so the sun is behind you, or use your body to cast a shadow over the pool to reduce reflections. Hats or jackets can also help block glare. When photographing underwater, however, make the most of sunlight to enhance colours and textures.

## LEADING LINES AND COMPOSING CRITTERS

Strong photos guide the viewer's eye. Use curving rocks, trails of seaweed or lines in the sand to lead attention towards your subject. Experiment with angles by getting low, moving closer or stepping back. Don't be afraid to get creative and try something unusual — have fun with it!

You can get really close to some rockpool creatures, like anemones.

Strawberry anemone



You can photograph plenty of rockpool life from above the water!

Shark and ray egg cases



Use rockpool critters or other beach finds to make your landscapes more exciting!

## TINY CREATURES, BIG SCENES

Slow-moving animals such as limpets, periwinkles and barnacles make excellent subjects and don't mind close attention. Including them in wider beach scenes adds depth and can make a landscape feel alive. Get nice and close to your slow-moving subject, so it stands out in the photo.

## RESPECTING ROCKPOOLS

Rockpools are fragile ecosystems and should be treated with care. If you move a stone, always replace it carefully. Animals can be viewed briefly in shallow containers of water but should be returned gently to where they were found. Every creature plays an important role in this delicate environment.

Create more interesting photos by including natural lines, like rocks or seaweed that your eye can follow through the scene.



Wireweed

# SAND LIZARD



© Vaughn Matthews

## SAND LOVERS

It's easy to figure out how sand lizards got their name. They're lizards that love sandy places! They are found in sand dunes and on sandy heathland. They like areas with some plants that can hide them from predators, as well as open sandy spots for sunbathing.

## GORGEOUS IN GREEN

Sand lizards are larger and chunkier than the common lizard, which you're much more likely to see. They are a sandy brown colour, but males have green speckling on their sides and turn bright green in spring. To help tell a sand lizard from a common lizard, look for rows of dark spots with a white centre, which look a little bit like eyes. These spots are called ocelli (pronounced o-seh-lie).



© Jack Horton



© Tony Phelps / naturepl.com

### ESSENTIAL FACTS

**Scientific name**

*Lacerta agilis*

**Size**

Up to 20 cm long

**Amazing fact**

It is the only native lizard in the UK that lays eggs.

## BURIED TREASURE

Sand lizards lay their eggs in burrows, where the hot sand helps keep them warm. A female will dig a tunnel around 5-7 cm deep in a sandy patch of ground. They are very picky and need the conditions to be perfect. They often dig several test burrows, until they find the right spot. When a female has finally dug the perfect burrow, she lays her eggs and buries them again. Sand lizards usually lay 6-12 eggs. They are laid in May or June and will hatch in late summer.

## RARE REPTILES

Sadly, sand lizards are one of our rarest reptiles. This is partly because we've lost lots of the sandy places they need to live. For a while, they could only be found in a few parts of southern England and on the Merseyside coast. Luckily, lots of people are working hard to help them! Sand lizards have now been reintroduced to other parts of England and Wales.

# HOW DO BIRDS SLEEP?

Dunlin © Naretha Franklin



**S**leep is really important. It's when our bodies rest and recover. But how do birds drift off?

## SNUGGLE DOWN

Some birds sleep perched on branches, others on the ground or even the water. If you've seen ducks sleeping, you might have noticed they sometimes do it standing on one leg. When birds sleep, they often tuck the other leg up against their body to keep it warm. The soft feathers there hold heat and make them nice and toasty. They also like to turn their head around and tuck their beak into their feathers for the same reason.

## NAP EXPERTS

Humans sleep for hours at a time, safe in their beds. But for birds, sleeping for such a long time could be dangerous.

When they're sleeping, they are at risk from predators. One trick birds often use to stay safe is taking lots of little naps, instead of one long snooze. They might sleep for a few minutes at a time, or sometimes even just a few seconds. They wake up between these naps to look around for danger.

Some birds take lots of these little naps in a day, to make sure they get enough rest. Scientists studied nesting chinstrap penguins in Antarctica, to find out how this worked. They found that the penguins napped for just four seconds at a time. But they did this 10,000 times in a day, adding up to more than 11 hours of sleep!

## HALF SLEEP

Power napping isn't the only trick birds use to stay safe whilst sleeping. Have you heard the saying 'sleep with one eye open'? For



Pochard © Tom Hibbert

people, it means being extra wary. But birds take this saying literally – they can actually sleep with one eye open! This is because birds can sleep with only half of their brain at a time. One half of the brain rests, whilst the other half stays awake so they can look out for danger.

Some birds even use this trick to sleep whilst they are flying. By resting half of their brain at a time, they can sleep without having to land. It's thought this is how common swifts sleep, since they rarely land outside of the nesting season.

In summer, male pectoral sandpipers spend less time sleeping so they can spend more time impressing females. The males that get the least sleep have the most chicks!



Pectoral sandpiper © Matthew Capper



Mallard © Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

# COMPETITIONS

WIN

## KINGFISHER MODEL KIT

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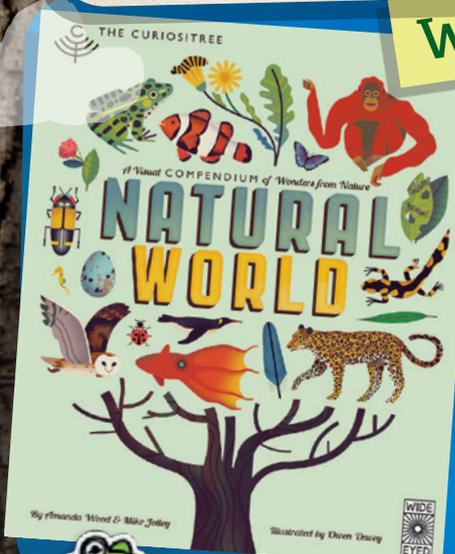
**FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:**

Tell us which type of vole lives in riverbanks, with underwater burrow entrances.  
**Clue: the answer is in the magazine!**



WIN

## CURIOSITREE: NATURAL WORLD



**T**his award-winning book explores the amazing ways that animals and plants have adapted to survive, as well as the incredible connections between them. Discover everything from the life cycle of an axolotl to wildebeest migration and life in the rainforest. Ever wondered why zebras have stripes? Or what makes a reptile a reptile? This book has the answers! *Curiosity Tree: Natural World* is by AJ Wood and Mike Jolley, illustrated by Owen Davey © Wide Eyed Editions, 2026.

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Answer this question:  
**What is a sand lizard?**  
a) An amphibian  
b) A mammal  
c) A reptile



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### 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: 31 May 2026**  
Competition entries may be used on our website and social media channels.

