my wild winter

– A WINTER WILDLIFE AND ACTIVITY GUIDE –



#WILDWINTERDAYS

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wildlifetrusts.org/mywildwinter

Brrrr! The coldest and darkest months of the year are here, and it might be tempting to curl up indoors to wait for spring to arrive but DON'T! There are loads of things to do outdoors, and lots of wildlife to spot at this time of year.

This booklet is packed full with ideas from The Wildlife Trusts to help you explore nature and wild places, either at home or on days out. We're on a mission to help keep families wild and connected with nature, whatever the weather. So grab your gloves and pull on your wellies, it's time to begin your wild winter.



Wildlife to look out for in winter

- Ducks, geese and swans all visit the UK in winter. Look out for large flocks of migratory geese, especially at the coast.
- Winter is the best time to spot footprints in mud and snow, great for practising your wildlife tracking skills.
- Listen for woodpeckers drumming on trees in January and February.
- Grey seals breed during November and December around the coasts of Britain.
- Tawny owls call more in winter than at other times of year. Listen for the familiar twit-twoo.
- Look out for starling 'murmurations' where hundreds of birds swoop through the sky together before settling down to roost for the night.
- Snowdrops flower in late winter – one of the first signs that spring is on its way.
- Redwings and fieldfares look a bit like thrushes and they visit the UK in winter. They love eating juicy red berries on rowan and hawthorn trees.
- And finally, keep your eyes on the sky for those flying reindeer.





Starling murmuration



Red deer

Great Wildlife Trust places to visit in winter

Our nature reserves are great places to visit all year round, with loads to see and do even in winter. Try a frozen wetland for a chance to see secretive bitterns. Be amazed by flocks of winter waders at the coast. Explore a woodland under snow and look for fox and badger footprints. And don't forget to stop at one of our cafés to warm up afterwards!





Warm up with a hot chocolate and a piece of cake at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Potteric Carr



Beautiful whooper swans are just some of the winter visitors to stop at Scottish Wildlife Trust's Montrose Basin



Sussex Wildlife Trust's Rye Harbour is the perfect birdwatching spot at any time of year

Find a Wildlife Trust reserve near you at **wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/reserves**

my playground

– ACTIVITIES –

How to make your own bird feeder

wildlife watch

What you need:

- dry ingredients
  - bird seed
  - cooked rice
  - grated cheese
  - dried fruit
  - breadcrumbs
  - chopped nuts
- hard cooking fat (lard or dripping)
- a fir cone, coconut shell or yoghurt pot



- string



1. Mix all the dry ingredients together in a bowl



2. Add the fat and give it a good mix around

If you need to melt the fat, ask an adult to help

3. Choose your feeder



plaster all over a fir cone



put it round the inside of a coconut shell



press into a yoghurt pot

You can hang this upside down like a bell or turn it out like a cake

4. Hang your feeders with string (you may need to make holes and tie the string in before adding the mix)



Hang your feeder where you can watch birds without disturbing them



©conrune watch 09

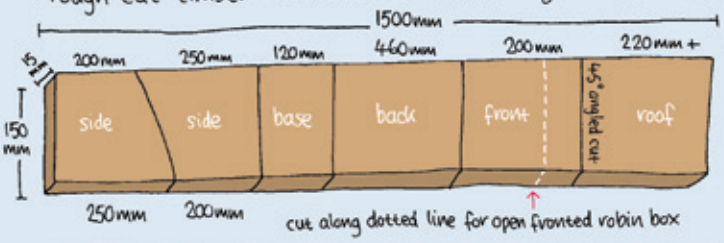
www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

How to make a nest box

wildlife watch

What you need:

- rough cut timber
- some old rubber or a hinge
- 20mm nails
- tools:





- saw
- hammer
- hand brace or drill
- pencil, ruler and scissors

always get an adult to help with tools!



1 Mark out and saw panels

Use diagram above, and write the name of each panel onto the marked out wood.

2 Choose your box type



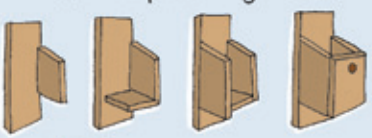
hole fronted box:
blue tits (25mm)
great tits (28mm)
sparrows (38mm)
starlings (45mm)



open fronted box for robins

3 Assemble the box

Nail the panels together:





Fix on the roof panel with a hinge or strip of old rubber.

Where to put it:

2-5 metres above the ground, somewhere sheltered.



2-5m above ground

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Discover animal tracks and signs

wildlife watch



Look for animal footprints in mud, sand or snow.



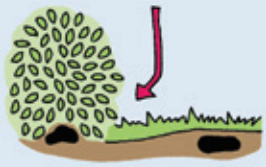
Owls spit out bits (pellets) of their prey they can't digest.



Look for pine cones that have been stripped by hungry squirrels.



Molehills are signs that moles are nearby



Look under hedges and in banks for rabbit holes.



Birds shed their feathers when they are damaged.



If the trail is continuous, it's a slug. If broken, it's a snail.



Mammals can leave flattened grass in their tracks.



Animal fur can get caught on barbed wire and fences.



Look for hedgehog poo with bits of beetles in it.



Nests are a surefire sign that birds are breeding. Hooray!



Song thrushes leave behind broken snail shells after meals.

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How to go plaster casting

wildlife watch

What you need:

- plaster of paris (from a pharmacy)



- an old 500g margarine tub for mixing it in



- a stick or spoon for stirring



- water



- strips of card, 10cm wide and long enough to fit around the footprint



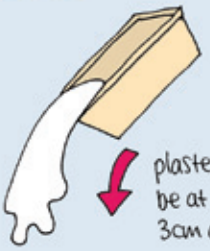
- paperclips



1. Find a footprint and clear away any twigs and leaves from the area around it



2. Make a circle with the strip of card, join the ends with the paperclip, and push it into the ground around the footprint



plaster should be at least 3cm deep

3. Mix 5 tablespoons of dry plaster with water until it is like smooth cream



4. Pour the plaster into the card collar. Wait 5-10 mins for it to set then dig it out



5. Take home, wash, identify and label

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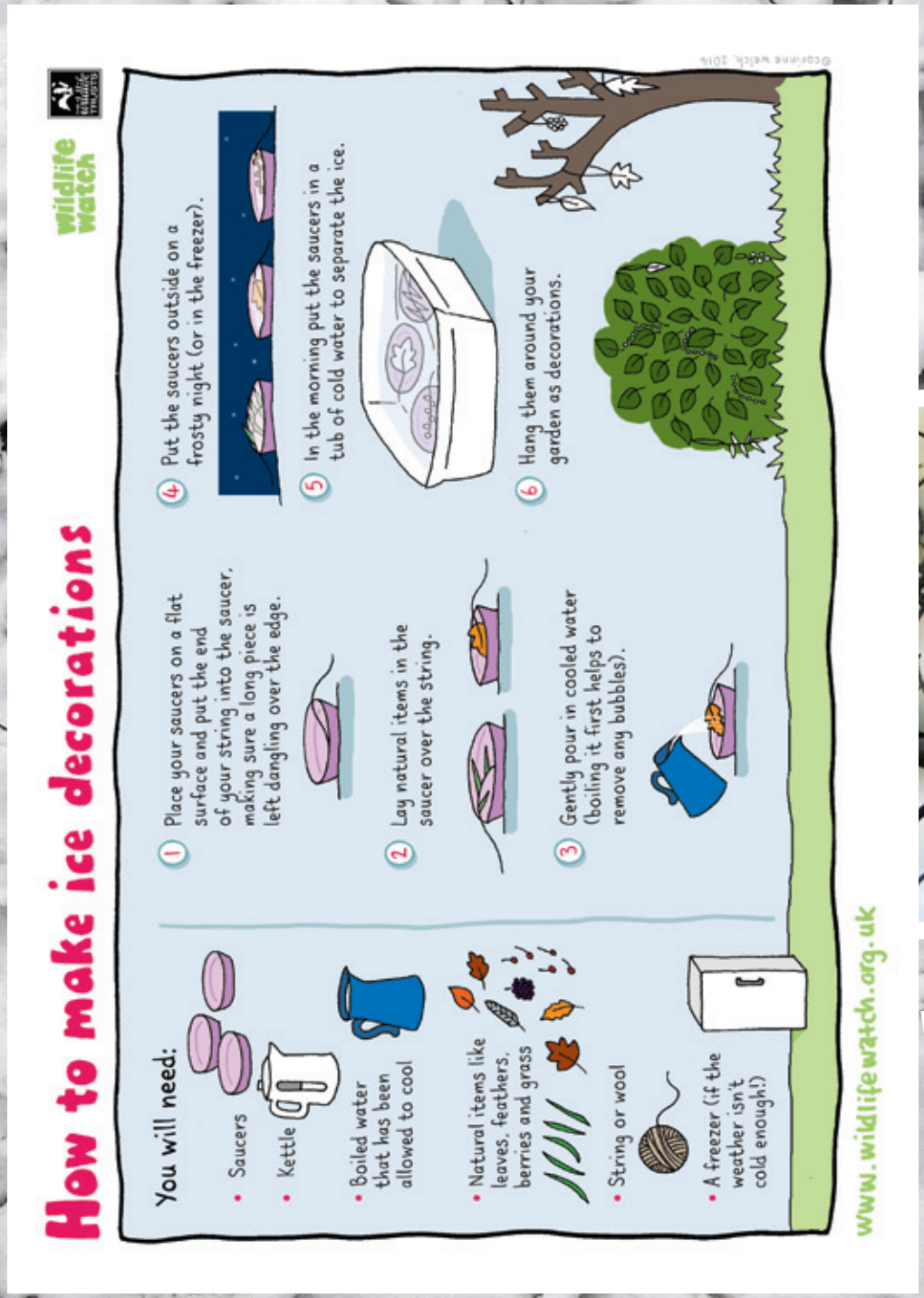


Snow, ice and the dark

SNOW ANIMALS

Have you ever built a snowman? Well this year we're challenging you to try something different! Why not see if you can build a wild animal from snow instead. You could have a go at building any sort of creature but if you're stuck for ideas, we've come up with a few suggestions of animals to try:



Difficulty rating
Easy: Hedgehog (use sticks for the spines), caterpillar, snail
Medium: Owl, rabbit (if the ears are bit tricky, use sticks instead of snow for these), dolphin
Tricky: Squirrel, octopus, swan

NIGHT WALK

During the winter the nights are long and dark but that doesn't mean you have to stay indoors. It can be exciting to explore outside at night time.

Things to do:

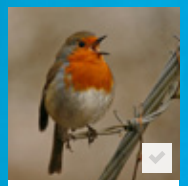
- Try switching off your torch to see how dark it is: what is the darkest place you can find?
- Take binoculars and look in detail at the craters on the moon, or learn to identify some star constellations – Orion's Belt and The Plough are both good ones to start with. It is believed that some birds use the stars to help them navigate during migration. Do you think you could use the stars to find your way around?
- Listen out for nocturnal wildlife like owls and foxes.
- Play 'sardines'. One person goes outside and hides somewhere in the garden (they can take a torch to help find their hiding place, but then they will need to switch it off once they are hidden). Everyone else must count to 20 before going outside to try to find them (no torches!). You must sneak round quietly on your own, and if you find the hidden person you hide with them. Eventually everyone will be squeezed into one hiding place.

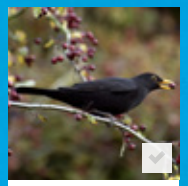
TOP TIPS FOR NIGHT TIME ADVENTURES:

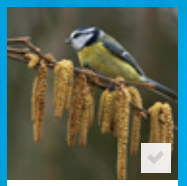
- Wrap up warm
- Take a torch
- Wear bright, light clothing near roads so that cars can see you.

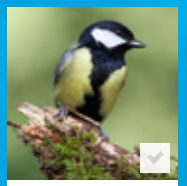
Spotting winter wildlife

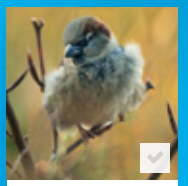
Tick off the wildlife you see this winter

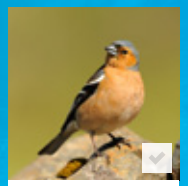

Robin

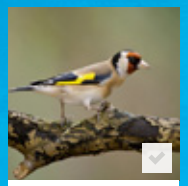

Blackbird

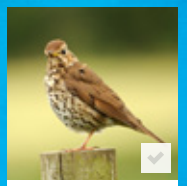

Blue tit

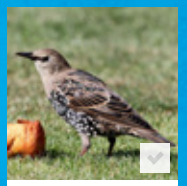

Great tit

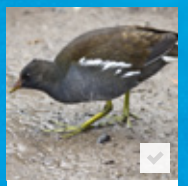

House sparrow

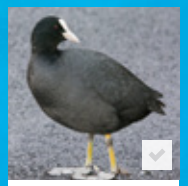

Chaffinch

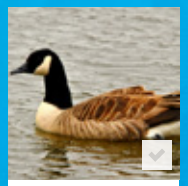

Goldfinch

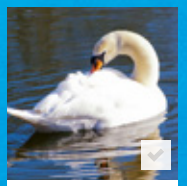

Song thrush

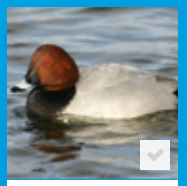

Starling

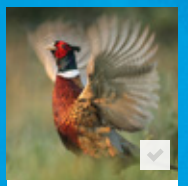

Moorhen

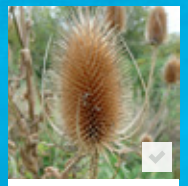

Coot

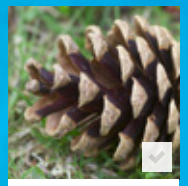

Canada goose

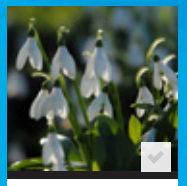

Mute swan


Pochard

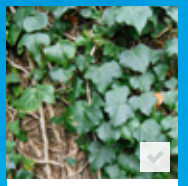

Pheasant

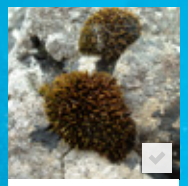

Teasel

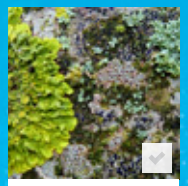

Pine cone

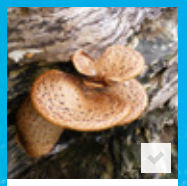

Snowdrop

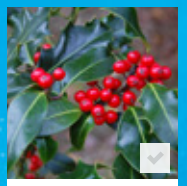

Mistletoe

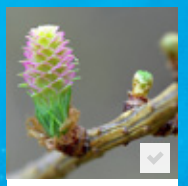

Ivy


Moss


Lichen


Bracket fungi


Holly


Larch

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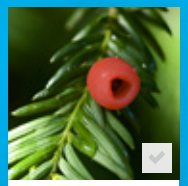
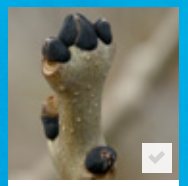
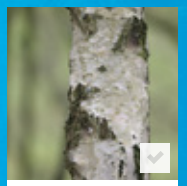
wildlifetrusts.org/winterspotting

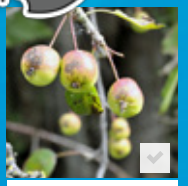


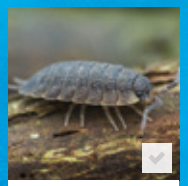

Yew

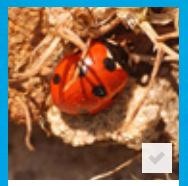

Ash tree


Silver birch

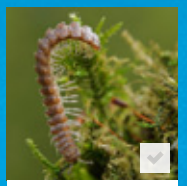

Rowan tree

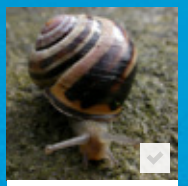

Crab apple

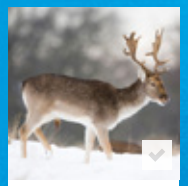

Woodlouse

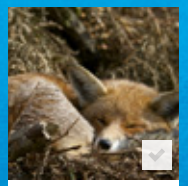

Hibernating ladybirds

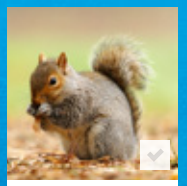

Earthworm

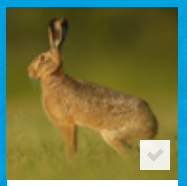

Millipede


Snail


Fallow deer


Fox


Grey squirrel


Brown hare

Grey seal

Icicle

Tree covered in frost

Frozen pond

Cobweb

Snow

Moon

Empty bird's nest

Rabbit hole

Animal tracks

Mole hill

Jokes



WHAT DO YOU CALL A DEER WEARING EAR MUFFS?

Anything you like - he can't hear you

WHAT DOES AN OCTOPUS WEAR WHEN IT GETS COLD?

A coat of arms

HOW DO YOU CATCH A SQUIRREL?

Climb up a tree and act like a nut!

IN WINTER, WHAT FALLS BUT DOESN'T HIT THE GROUND?

The temperature

WHERE DOES IVY GO TO BECOME FAMOUS?

Holly-wood

WHY DO BIRDS FLY SOUTH IN THE WINTER?

Because it's too far to walk

WHY DOES SANTA HAVE A GARDEN?

So he can hoe hoe hoe

WHAT FISH ONLY SWIMS AT NIGHT?

A starfish



WHERE DO FROGS LEAVE THEIR HATS AND COATS?

In the croakroom



PUZZLE

Can you help the jay find the way to the hidden acorns?





COLOURING IN

Get creative and colour in some winter wildlife. Can you unscramble their names too?



GHOST HURNS



ODOURSME

ROMTHERAW



About The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts are the UK's largest people-powered organisation caring for all nature – rivers, bogs, meadows, forests, seas and much more. There are 47 Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK with a shared mission to restore nature everywhere we can and to inspire people to value and take action for nature.

We work to connect children with nature through our inspiring education programmes and protect wild places where they can spend long days of discovery. We want children to go home with leaves in their hair, mud on their hands and a little bit of nature in their heart.

Make more of Your Wild Winter with The Wildlife Trusts

1) Visit one of our 2,000+ nature reserves. Find them at wildlifetrusts.org/reserves-wildlife or download our free app at wildlifetrusts.org/app
2) Take part in a Wildlife Trust event. Everything from pond dipping to walks at wildlifetrusts.org/whats-on
3) Find a kids' nature club near you. Try our interactive map at wildlifetrusts.org/natureclubs
4) Earn a Wildlife Watch award. Start the Hedgehog award at wildlifewatch.org.uk/awards-information-page
5) Become a Wildlife Watch or family member. Join today at wildlifetrusts.org/join



Love wildlife, wild places and making new friends? Then Wildlife Watch is the club for you!

wildlife watch

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Registered Charity Number 207238
Join us: wildlifetrusts.org/join

Winter wildlife colouring (p15) answers: song thrush, dormouse and earthworm

THE wildlife TRUSTS