



Wild Ways Well and Summer

Today's Wild Ways Well task is to go for a walk in your local greenspace and look out for the signs of summer... Remember to follow the guidelines on Social Distancing, stay 2m apart from other people and only walk in your local area – and remember to wash your hands!

You'll **Be Active** by carefully walking outdoors (observing social distancing) keeping your mind busy and occupying your time looking for signs of the season. Some animals and plants are much easier to see in Summer but you'll still need to have your wits about you!

We can **Connect** with Summer by opening up our senses and empathising with the way other creatures live their lives. Lots of animals have to cram a lot of life into summer, how must it feel for them, having to collect all their food and raise their young, with the spectre of winter ahead. How tired do the parents look, how full of fun and potential are the young?

We can **Keep Learning**, Every time we take a walk in the outdoors there is more to learn, know one knows everything – there are plants, mammals, insects to be discovered in the Green spaces around you.

We rarely **Take Notice** and look very closely at the world around us. It's amazing how much we miss out in nature when we just walk through without paying attention to what is going on. Lose yourself in the moment and really take in everything your senses are telling you.

We can **Give** by giving ourselves a break from the drama of the current events and focusing on the little things around us that give us pleasure and by sharing these with others, in person or online. We can give back by looking after our greenspaces, taking our litter home and helping others to appreciate these places.





Wild Ways Well



BE ACTIVE – Take part in health walks and practical outdoor activities. Explore your local paths, woods and greenspaces.

Spending time outdoors, amongst nature, makes people feel better about their lives.

The Wild Ways Well project encourages people suffering from, or at risk of, poor mental health to get outside for some daily exercise and experience nature.

Remember to observe Social Distancing, stay 2m apart and only walk in your local area.

Whilst out amongst the trees, parks and reserves you have a chance to slow down, relax and take your attention away from current events.

This guide will help you to try out some environmental and conservation related activities designed to fit in with the internationally recognised Five Ways to Wellbeing mental health framework.

CONNECT – Meet new people. Connect with the people, the wildlife and the nature that's all around us.



GIVE – Your time to be in nature. Give something back by sharing experiences and undertaking conservation tasks.

TAKE NOTICE – Note the changing cycles of life. Use your senses. Listen to birds, smell the flowers, live in the moment.



LEARN – Identify plants and wildlife, try new crafts, learn new skills. Discover things about nature and about yourself.





Easy Living

Traditionally for many human societies Summertime has been a period when many of the hardships of life eased. For farming communities in particular there is a brief period of respite between the work of planting and harvesting – hence the prevalence of Summer get togethers like the Royal Highland Show where farmers could show off their best produce or finest animals.

In more urban communities too there was a chance for many to have a rare day off to celebrate the Fair or the Gala Day. Schools take a break and many families take holidays. We do have to be careful with our mental health at this time, the change in routine, our own expectations of summer fun, body image issues, or comparing ourselves negatively with others at this time can create unhealthy thinking habits. Getting outdoors at this time will help to overcome some of this and can be a great tool for improving your mental wellbeing.

But what about wildlife? Do badgers get to take a holiday? Are there Buzzards showing off at farm shows? Do deer get to have a go on the waltzers at Gala Day?

Summertime is generally a busy period for wildlife. They have to take advantage of the settled weather, warm conditions and abundant food to give birth, raise their families, and build up weight for the coming hardships of winter.

Some animals – like worker bees for example – have to live their whole life in the summer months. Others, like dragonflies and butterflies will undergo incredible transformations. Some will live for years in their larval stage before becoming flying creatures for only a few days or weeks (or hours in the case of some flies).

For plants too Summer is a time of activity, this is the best time for growing and flowering. A flower meadow or woodland might look peaceful but in reality it is a battleground as different species fight for light and space.





June

The last week in May and the first week in June are the peak time for **Roe Deer** births. Normally the females give birth to two spotty coated kids . They'll often leave them hidden during the day while they go off feeding – so this is also the peak time for people calling wildlife rescue services. If you do see a kid on its own that you are worried about it is best to back away and observe, mum will almost certainly come back – though it may be several hours.

Foxes gave birth underground back in March and in June it is time to finally abandon their dens for good. The families will stay together but they will now spend their time above ground.

As the days stretch out there often aren't enough hours of darkness for nocturnal animals like **Badgers** to find enough food so they will sometimes be seen in daylight. The cubs are curious and playful at this time and can be seen exploring the environment around setts.

Red Squirrels can have two litters of kittens over the Summer. By June the spring birth babies are weaned and almost ready to live independently so breeding season begins for the next litter.

Hedgehog mating season reaches its peak with the males performing a special courtship 'dance' where they circle round females.

Pine Martens gave birth back in April and now they begin to emerge from their dens to have their first look at the world. They need to be independent by the time they are 6 months old so they have a lot of learning to do!





July

In July the **Roe Deer** 'rut' begins. Normally solitary animals, the males and females will now actively seek each other out for mating purposes. Males will hold territory against other males, sometimes using their antlers to fight one another – occasionally to the death! Males and females will pursue each other around the woods leaving distinct 'roe ring' tracks.

Foxes are foraging around the woods in family groups. The dogs and vixens are working together to show the cubs around their territory, teaching them where and how to find food.

Badgers can struggle in the good weather of July, they rely on earthworms for the majority of their diet and when the weather is very dry the worms retreat deep underground where the badgers can't find them. The ground can also become very hard at this time making it hard for them to dig. Badgers will travel long distances at this time looking for food and some can even starve to death.

Red Squirrels are working hard, this is a time of scarcity for them, in Spring they eat shoots and flowers, and in Autumn gorge on nuts and cones, but in Summer food can be hard to find.

After mating in June **Hedgehogs** give birth in July after around 4 weeks gestation.

Pine Marten mating season peaks in July. The females practice delayed implantation so the foetus doesn't begin to develop until winter. The males make shrill, cat like yowls at this time.





August

The **Roe Deer** 'rut' continues into August. Males prioritise holding territory over feeding during this time so they gradually lose condition and grow steadily weaker – sometimes this will allow a younger, or weaker male who hasn't been able to hold territory to sneak in to another's territory to mate.

Fruits are beginning to appear in the woods and animals like **Foxes** are making the most of it. The young are still playfully exploring and learning the best things to eat from both their parents.

Badgers can still be struggling to find earthworms if the weather is dry – though they also have to cope with their setts being destroyed in flash floods. To supplement their diet they will be eating cereals and fruits, as well as more unusual things like young rabbits, squirrels and even hedgehogs if they can find them.

Red Squirrels kittens are being born in August. On average there will be 4 kits in a litter, born blind, deaf and hairless, they can weigh as little as 10grams.

Hedgehogs are now engaged in a race against time to put on weight before hibernating for the winter. They have to prioritise eating as much as they can. Some will attempt to breed again and have a second litter of young before Autumn but young born that late are unlikely to survive the winter.

Pine Marten mating season extends into August but they will spend increasing time looking for food to fatten up for the winter.





The Scottish Thistle

Often looking at their best in July, the thistle has been an emblem of Scotland for at least 500 years. This supposedly stems back to the 12th Century when the Scottish King, Alexander III, tried to take possession of the Western Isles and Kintyre from Norway (it is often forgotten that large parts of what is now Scotland once belonged to Norway). King Haakon IV of Norway set off with a fleet of ships but a storm blew them ashore at Largs where a Scottish army was waiting for them. Legend has it that when the Norse landed they tried to sneak up on the unsuspecting Scottish army but as they crept through a field in the dark the Norwegian soldiers stepped on some thistles and shouted out in pain, alerting the Scots, who thus warned were able to defeat them and save the day.

What is known for sure is that thistles featured on the coins of King James III in the 15th century and that King James V formed the 'Order of the Thistle' for himself and 12 companion Knights in the 16th Century. From this we get the familiar symbol of the thistle surrounded by the words of the Scottish motto '*Nemo Me Impune Lacessit*' ("No One Shall Touch Me With Impunity" – or "Who Daur Meddle Wi' Me in Scots!"). There are several species of thistle in Scotland, none of which match the one used in the national emblem. Usually these days the Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare* or the Cotton Thistle *Onopordum acanthium* is considered the 'true' Scottish thistle, but really there is no right answer. The beautiful, and rare, Melancholy Thistle can be found in Cumbernauld's reserves – its nectar is so potent its often covered in drunk bees!





The Fox and the Hedgehog

The fox and the hedgehog are old adversaries. There is a saying “the Fox knows many tricks – but the Hedgehog needs to know only one very good one.” Its spines and ability to roll into a ball are a perfect defence.

Throughout history the fox has tried to pierce the hedgehog’s defences, knowing that beneath those spines a hedgehog would make a very good meal, but no matter what, it always failed.

Well almost always...

One day the Sly Fox was walking through the woods when it came across the Hedgehog, already rolled into a ball. Fox had tried to penetrate Hedgehog’s armour before and had never managed – nowadays he didn’t even try and Hedgehog knew this “*Why are you rolled up so tight Hedgehog?*” Said the Fox “*You know I cannot defeat you.*”

“I am under attack.” Hedgehog said in reply *“Biting midges are swarming all over me and my spines are no defence, even rolled into a ball they can still feast on my blood, they have sucked their fill.”*

“I will help you.” said the Sly Fox and he stepped forward and, with a swish of his tail, swept all the midges away, their bellies full of Hedgehog’s blood.

“Thank you” said Hedgehog and began to unroll, but no sooner had he done so than a fresh swarm of midges appeared and landed on him and sucked their fill of blood.

Fox stepped forward again, and with swish of his tail drove the midges off – but again a fresh swarm appeared, landed on Hedgehog and drank their fill. This went on, over and over, for some time, every time the fox drove the full midges off a fresh swarm appeared.

In fact it went on for so long that eventually Hedgehog began to weaken. The midges had taken so much blood that hedgehog no longer had the strength to roll into a ball.

“So your one trick isn’t perfect after all.” said the Sly Fox *“if you had walked away, hidden in a stream or found some Bog Myrtle to repel the midges you would have been perfectly safe once the first swarm had eaten their fill. But every time you allowed me to drive them off while you stayed rolled in a ball a fresh swarm appeared and ate more, and now you are too weak to defend yourself...”* And with that the Sly Fox snapped his jaws shut and Hedgehog was no more.



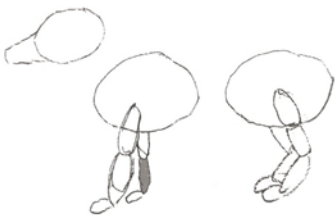


Draw A Red Fox

Art can be really therapeutic – and you don't have to be a brilliant artist to have a go at drawing! Why not try this simple Red Fox. All you need to do to start is draw three circles with a pencil



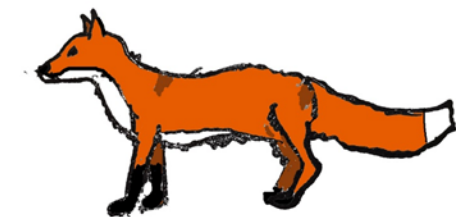
Add a few more ovals to make up the legs and feet



Now draw some curved lines to join the circles together. Add the eyes and nose – don't forget the big brushy tail!



You're almost done... Rub out the parts of the circles that you no longer need and go over the rest in pen or heavy pencil. Shade the body in with orange. Remember to leave its white chest and belly and shade in its black feet.





Wildflowers to Spot this Week



Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) The modern garden strawberry we find in our supermarkets is a hybrid of two American species. Our ancestors would have eaten its wild counterpart though, with its exceptionally sweet, vanilla like flavour. The name is a mystery, strawberries do not really grow amongst – or look like straw. The Romans ate strawberries to cure depression and in the UK it was the fruit of love.



Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*) – widespread and abundant, especially on low lying hills, but also on cliffs, walls, rocky places and even beaches, forming carpets of purple flowers. Wild Thyme is not the same as the modern herb used for cooking but still has an aromatic smell and was used to scent clothes and flavour teas. The name Thyme comes from the Greek for 'Courage' and it was always associated with bravery and warriors. In Scotland it was believed a tea of wild thyme prevented nightmares.



White Archangel (*Lamium album*) – Also known as white dead-nettle as its leaves resemble nettles but it has no sting. Another name 'Adam and Eve' refers to the idea that when turning the flowers upside down the black stamens look like two people lying side by side. The flowers grow in clusters and their and the bottom petal provides a landing pad for pollinating insects. It likes lightly shaded woodlands and hedgerows and flowers all summer. A small drop of sweet nectar can be sucked from the flowers and the flowers and young leaves are edible.



Spotting Sheet

Spotting Summer creatures is a great activity that anyone can try – and its almost as easy from your window or doorstep as it is on a walk! See how many of these things you can spot this week.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------|
| • A Red Fox |  | 2pts |
| • A Hedgehog |  | 5pts |
| • A Badger |  | 10pts |
| • A Pine Marten |  | 20pts |
| • A baby bird |  | 1pts |
| • A white butterfly |  | 1pts |
| • A dragonfly/damselfly |  | 2pts |
| • A Bumblebee |  | 1pts |
| • A Spear Thistle |  | 1pts |
| • Wild Strawberry |  | 2pts |
| • White Archangel |  | 5pts |
| • Wild Thyme |  | 10pts |

Total _____





Links

Go further with your Wild Ways Well activity by trying these links once you come home

Cumbernauld Living Landscape www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Wild Ways Well www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/project/wild-ways-well

Activities www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/get-involved/activities/

Facebook www.facebook.com/CumbernauldLivingLandscape

Twitter www.twitter.com/wildcumbernauld

The Conservation Volunteers www.tcv.org.uk/scotland

The Scottish Wildlife Trust www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

SamH www.samh.org.uk

NHS Five Ways Well www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing

MIND coronavirus and your wellbeing www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership www.elament.org.uk/media/2229/19-ways-to-stay-connected-2.pdf

British Deer Society www.bds.org.uk/index.php/advice-education/species

SNH Deer www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/mammals/land-mammals/deer

Mammal Society www.mammal.org.uk

Deer and the Wolf Folklore www.youtube.com/watch?v=mScY0e55gB8



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