



GET
INVOLVED
TODAY!

Creating Natural Connections Wild Ways Well Autumn



Autumn and wellbeing

If you ever find yourself dreading the end of Summer as the long hours of daylight begin to shorten and the nights draw in then you are by no means alone. Scientists have confirmed that there is a link between the changing of the seasons and a decline in people's moods. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is described by the NHS website as "a type of depression that comes and goes in a seasonal pattern". It is estimated that 1 in 3 people may suffer from SAD and will suffer from symptoms such as low mood, irritability, feelings of worthlessness, fatigue and cravings for comfort food. People often experience low energy levels, and find it difficult to concentrate and complete tasks.

It can be tempting in Autumn to 'hibernate' - hide yourself away indoors, close the curtains and shut out the outside world. This instinct however can be counterproductive, in fact one of the best things you can do for your mental health is get outdoors. SAD is linked to decreased exposure to sunlight so going outside and spending time in a natural place can be the perfect antidote. By being active you'll also find that you sleep better and have more energy and by being outdoors you'll have more opportunity for social contact and mental stimulation which is vital for keeping yourself healthy.

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Autumn Factoids

- Astronomically Autumn lasts from the autumnal equinox (September 22 or 23) to the Winter Solstice (21 or 22 December). Meteorologically it begins on 1st September and ends 30 November.
- Autumn is aurora season—geomagnetic storms are twice as frequent as average during Autumn.
- Squirrels get smarter—the memory centre of a squirrel's brain gets 15% larger in Autumn, perhaps to remember where they stored all those acorns!
- Heart attack rates decrease in Autumn, researchers think it is because the darker nights mean people get more sleep, reducing stress levels.
- It's moving. In the UK the average date on which oak leaves begin to fall is a week later than it was 30 years ago.

What is Wild Ways Well

Wild Ways Well is a free health and wellbeing project run by Cumbernauld Living Landscape. It demonstrates what most of us already know instinctively - Spending time outdoors, amongst nature, makes people feel better about themselves and their lives. It is especially helpful for issues such as depression, anxiety, low confidence and social isolation.

Wild Ways Well helps people suffering from, or at risk of, poor mental health get out into the greenspaces of Cumbernauld. Whilst out amongst the trees, parks and reserves participants get a chance to slow down, relax, enjoy being in the company of other like-minded people, and participate in a variety of environmental and conservation related activities designed to fit in with the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

Wild Ways Well is structured around the Five Ways to Wellbeing, a proven framework for promoting good mental health in use by organisations all over the world, including the NHS and the major UK mental health charities. The Five Ways to Wellbeing are a simple way of thinking about our mental health, they suggest five easy actions which we can all take to improve our happiness in our daily lives. Wild Ways Well takes the Five Ways and adapts them to an outdoor environment.

Example activities might include learning about trees, plants and wildlife; Forest skills like safe firemaking, shelter building and foraging; Conservation activities like wildflower planting or invasive species removal; Creative sessions focussed on photography, drawing, sculpting or storytelling; Citizen Science skills like wildlife recording and surveying and much more.

Wild Ways Well is not a replacement for more formal forms of therapy or medication but instead should be seen as a complement to a healthy lifestyle that could benefit anyone.



Autumn has always been a great inspiration to artists, poets and writers. As the days grow shorter and sink towards winter it is often linked to age, decay and the melancholy passing of time. But for others Autumn is just a foretaste of the Spring to come, nature glorying in colour once again before it takes a well deserved and much needed pause to rest and renew.

For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad.

Edwin Way Teale

Autumn is a second spring when every leaf's a flower.

Albert Camus

Every leaf speaks bliss to me, fluttering from the autumn tree.

Emily Bronte

**Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you
as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you,
and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves
of Autumn.**

John Muir

**Now Autumn's fire burns slowly along the woods and day by day the dead leaves
fall and melt.**

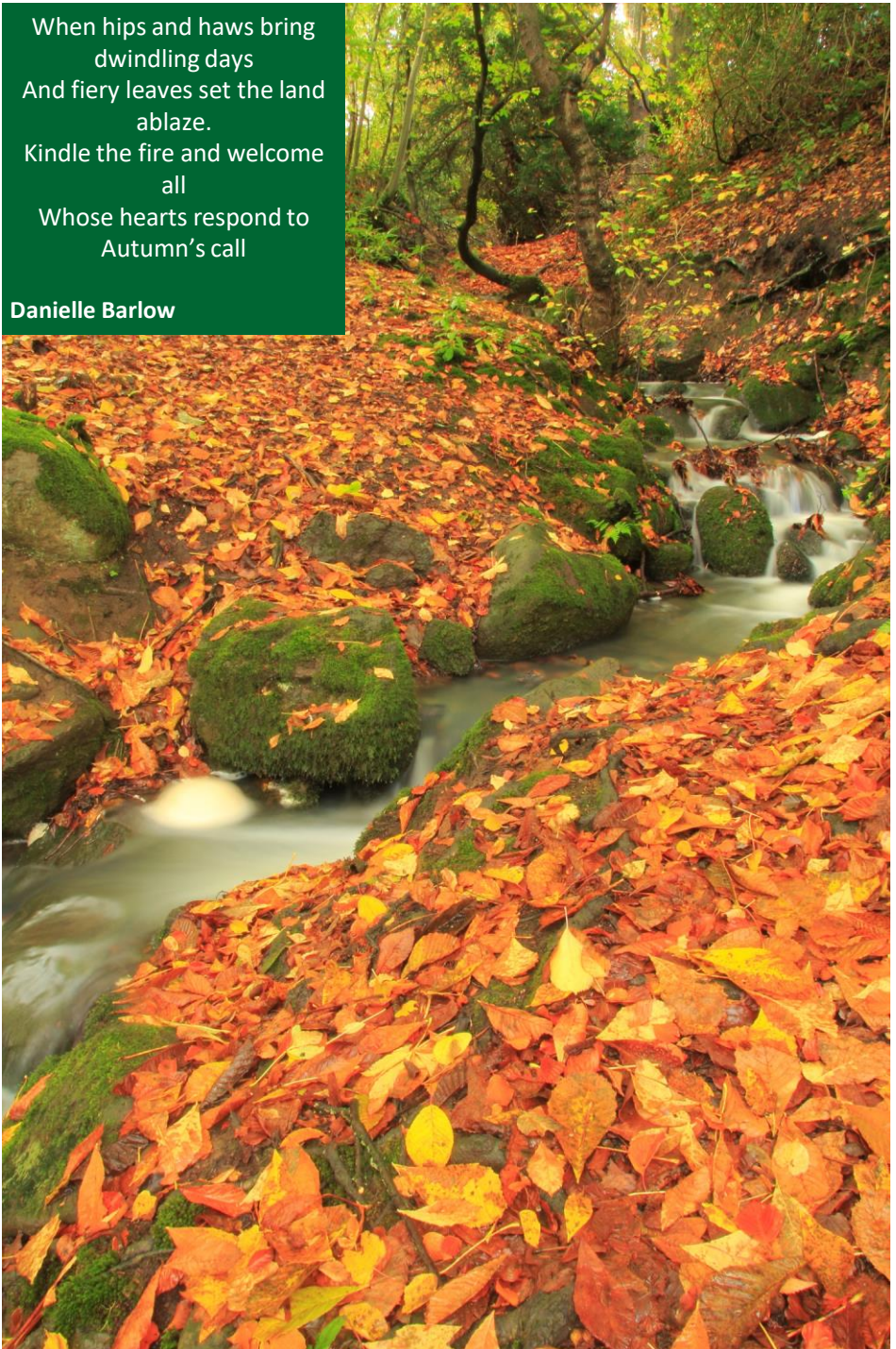
William Allingham

Wild is the music of autumnal winds in the faded woods

William Wordsworth

When hips and haws bring
dwindling days
And fiery leaves set the land
ablaze.
Kindle the fire and welcome
all
Whose hearts respond to
Autumn's call

Danielle Barlow



Leaf Fall

Tree species that drop their leaves in autumn are called deciduous. They do so in preparation for the harsh weather conditions of winter. As the days begin to get shorter trees are able to sense this change thanks to special chemicals which are sensitive to red and blue light. This forewarning of winter allows them to make the physical and chemical changes that result in leaf fall.

By the end of Summer many leaves will have been damaged by the weather, disease or insects so its worth renewing them. The lack of light means that each leaf will be much less efficient in producing energy through photosynthesis—and the thin fluids which pass through the leaf from the tree and transport nutrients will also likely freeze in the coming low temperatures anyway.

The trees stop producing the green chlorophyll which allows them to produce food from sunlight, and as this green fades from the leaves it reveals the yellow, orange and brown colours—which were always there, just hidden beneath the green. Some trees will produce red and purple chemicals called anthocyanins which may give some protection from the cold and allow their leaves to last a little longer, but even these will eventually fall.

This doesn't all happen at once, each tree will time things differently, depending on season, location and species. Oaks are often among the last to go but a warm autumn can delay things considerably. The best autumn displays are considered to occur in those years where the summers have been wet and the autumn clear and cool.

When it is time for its leaves to fall an array of cells positioned at the point where the leaf stem meets the twig—called the abscission layer—activates and chokes off the water supply to the leaf. Once the water is gone the leaf dries out and drops off.

Nature rarely wastes anything though. The fallen leaves decompose and their nutrients feed back into the soil, feeding future generations of all sorts of plant and animal life.

Some trees, evergreens like Scots Pine or Yew, have special adaptations, waxy cold resistant leaves and antifreeze chemicals that keep the water flowing so they don't have to drop their leaves and stay green all year round.



Traditions and Folklore

According to some Celtic traditions the festival of Samhain marked the end of Summer and the start of the long cold Winter. Some Celts believed that on the night of Samhain (31st October) the ghosts of the dead would revisit the mortal world.

To keep any evil spirits at bay every house would extinguish their hearth fire and contribute fuel, often a yew log, to large ceremonial bonfires which would burn in every village. Each family would then use a glowing ember of this sacred bonfire to relight the hearthfire in their own home to ensure they were warm and protected through the Winter.

After the arrival of Christianity this old tradition was converted into a Saints day—All Hallows Eve, which over the years morphed its name into the familiar Hallowe'en of today. Throughout it all however it remained a special time of year when many believed that magic was at its most potent and the spirit world could cross into our own.

Throughout the UK Hallowe'en has been celebrated by games like bobbing for apples, telling scary stories and making jack-o-lanterns (tattie-bogles in Scots). These lanterns were often carved from a turnip (pumpkins came later!), hollowed out and with a light placed inside to ward off evil spirits who may be on the prowl.

In Scotland the tradition of Guising where children would go from door to door in disguise seeking treats has ancient roots. The origin of it may have been to protect children, disguising them so as to confuse any evil spirits abroad. Traditionally they would have to perform a party trick, sing a song or read a poem before getting a gift of food or money.

It was also traditional in Scotland for newly engaged couples to 'burn nits'. Each would place a nut on an open fire, if the nuts roasted quietly they would have a happy life together—but if they sizzled, hissed and spat then it was a very bad omen.

Yew trees were also important at this time. Their hard wood, slow growing habits, long lives and ability to keep their green leaves all year round made them a symbol of everlasting life and renewal. Yew trees were important to early belief systems in Scotland and even now ancient specimens are often found near churches—in most cases the trees weren't planted next to the church, the church itself was likely built to be near the ancient sacred trees.



“Nature now, like an athlete, begins to strip herself in earnest for her contest with her great antagonist Winter. In the bare trees and twigs what a display of muscle. “

Henry David Thoreau

How the trees lost their leaves

A long time ago, when the world was new, all the plants and animals had to learn the best way to live their lives and how to fit into the environment. The Red Squirrel had a busy first day running through the woods, up and down the trees, foraging and playing.

As the day came to a close however, she realised that she hadn't yet found a place to live, so she began to make her nest in an Oak tree. As soon as she started the tree shook and swayed, and knocked her nest to pieces, casting it down to the ground.

"Go away" the Oak tree said, "I am the King of the Forest, I am too grand to have a squirrel nest in me."

And so the Red Squirrel went on to the Beech tree and tried again, but the same thing happened. Just as she was nearly finished building her nest, the tree shook and swayed and knocked it to the ground.

"Go away" the Beech tree said, "My branches are full of Beechnuts, I don't want a Red Squirrel living here and stealing them."

The Red Squirrel tried to build a nest in tree after tree, but each time it was knocked to the ground for one reason or another. Soon it was dark, and the squirrel grew disheartened, she sat on the cold ground, with her tail wrapped around her nose, and cried.



All day long the Winds had watched the Red Squirrel playing and running through the woods and had grown enchanted with her. They had watched as she went from tree to tree and grew increasingly angry as each tree refused her nest. The Winds called all the trees together and demanded that they help the Red Qquirrel, but the Oak was too proud, the Beech was afraid, the Rowan thought it was too delicate to hold a nest, the Ash claimed there was no room as it was full of bird nests.

Finally the Winds came to the last tree, the Scots Pine, and asked why it couldn't host the Red Squirrel.

"I will gladly take the Red Squirrel" the Scots Pine replied "I am not as beautiful as the Oak, my cones are not as tasty as Beechnuts, I am not as dainty as the Rowan or busy as the Ash, but if the squirrel will have me I will be proud to hold her nest."

The Winds were delighted but their anger had not abated and they determined to teach the trees a lesson. The Winter Wind came and blew with all its might and shook the trees to their very foundations. It raged through the forest and blew all the leaves right off the Oak and the Beech, the Rowan and the Ash.

"So be it" said the Winds "This is your punishment for not helping our friend the Red Squirrel. You can grow leaves all summer but every year the Winter Wind will return in all its cold fury and will blow every last leaf from your branches. Only the Pine will we spare, in thanks for its kindness."

And so it is to this day, the Red Squirrel makes her home in the towering Scots Pine which is one of the only trees in the forest allowed to keep its leaves all winter long.



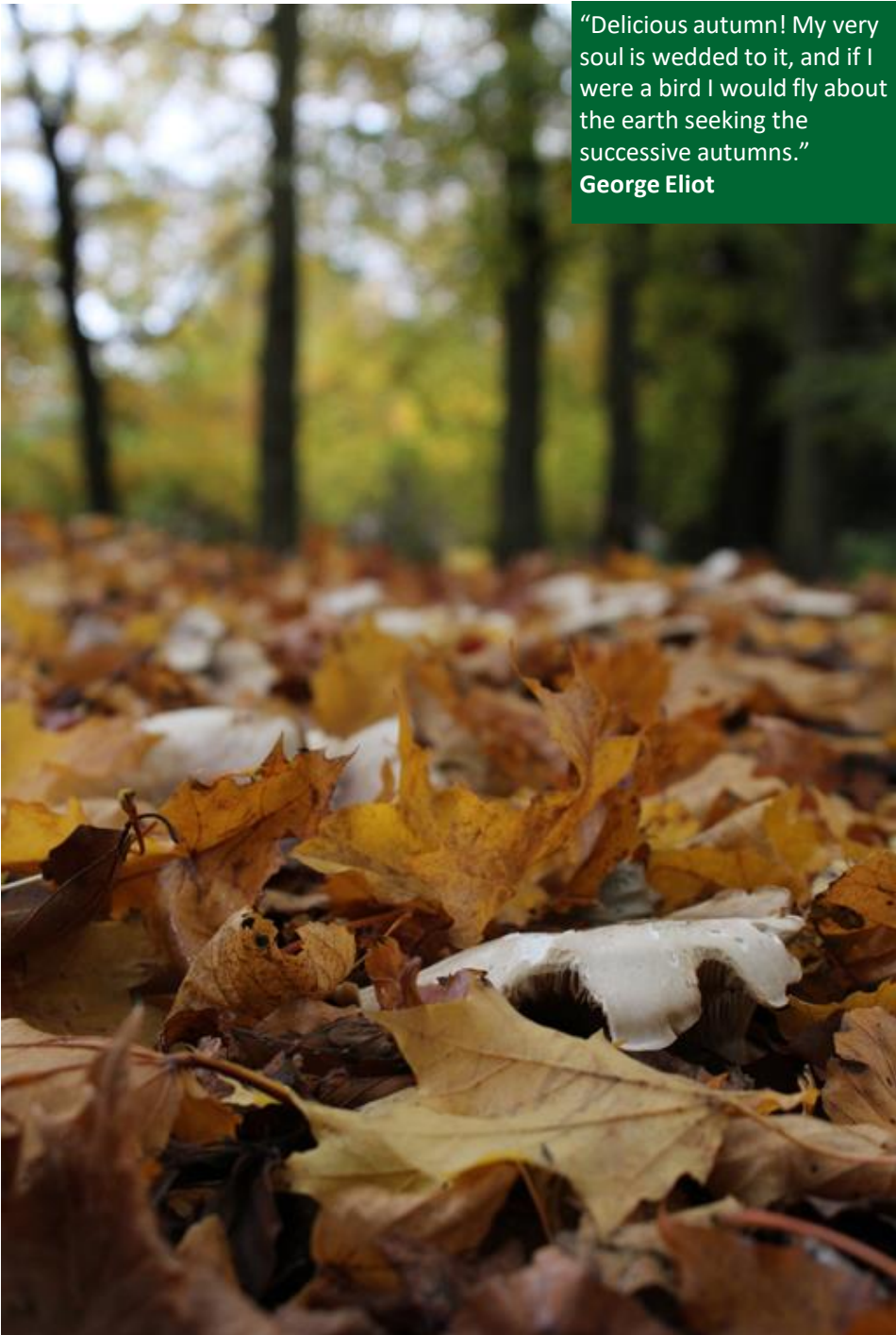
To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring him how to load and bless
fruit the vines that round the eves;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
until they think warm days will never cease,
summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
hair soft-lifted by the;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
'd with the fume of poppies, while thy
the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a drowsy keep
thy across a brook;
by a cyder-press, with patient look,
watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, are they?
not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
while barred clouds die a day,
touch the plains with a rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river, borne aloft
sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
red-breast whistles from a-croft;
gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats



"Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns."

George Eliot

Taking flight

For some creatures autumn is a time of incredible journeys. Many species of bird will migrate in autumn, often flying to areas where there will be milder winter weather. We know now some of the amazing feats of endurance and navigation that allow species like Arctic Terns to migrate 50,000 miles in a single year. But it wasn't always that obvious...

Aristotle, long regarded as one of the founders of science lived in Greece in the 4th century BCE. In his *History of Animals* He made some excellent observations on the nature of birds, the detail showing he had really studied their lives—but he struggled with one major question? Where did birds go in the winter?

Aristotle provided a couple of answers. Swallows, he theorised, hibernated in the clay beds at the bottom of rivers, and other birds transformed—Redstarts became Robins for example (which doesn't seem so odd when you realise that in Greece Redstarts leave for the winter just as Robins arrive).

Pliny the Elder (1st century CE) was another ancient scholar who wondered where the birds went. Pliny sucked in knowledge from all corners of the Ancient World, his appetite for information was voracious—but he perhaps wasn't all that great at telling when he was being fed a line. Many of the creatures in his *Natural History* simply don't exist (like the Swiss Alpine Rabbit headed bird), others were given bizarre habits. It is from Pliny that we get the idea of Ostriches avoiding danger by burying their heads in the sand. He had his own go at the theory of what birds did in the winter—and he got closer to the truth, writing his belief that every year the European Crane flew from Europe down to the furthest reaches of Africa – so far so good – where they did eternal battle with tribes of pygmies, riding rams and she-goats and armed with arrows. Oh well.

Mediaeval scholars explained Geese appearing from out over the sea each year by stating that they grew on the limbs of giant floating plants and were dropped like seeds. Every year the geese would lay barnacles on the rocks which would then wash out to sea and grow into these giant seaborne trees. This also provided a handy excuse for eating geese during Lent as it meant geese weren't meat, they were more a type of fruit.

The next big leap is to Charles Morton in the 17th century who looked again, with the light of modern science, on the subject of migration. By watching birds, taking notice of their lives, learning their habits and connecting with their lifestyles he made some real progress. He reasoned – by observation (and common sense) - that many of the previous beliefs weren't true.

Redstarts and Robins are different species. There's no air at the bottom of lakes, and it's too cold there for swallows to hibernate. Cranes aren't organised, or intelligent enough to wage war against humans. Geese are not a type of berry.

Morton believed that each year birds responded to "changes of the air" and, noticing the "alteration or abatement of their daily food" migrated to "obtain what is more suitable to them or to avoid what is offensive"

But where did they go? No one had ever seen where the birds went, or where they came from – but there was one clue... Sailors often reported that as they approached land, Woodcock would drop out of the sky, plummeting straight down, from high above, to find rest on their ships. They were exhausted having clearly flown a huge distance.

To Morton it was obvious. They were clearly migrating to and from the Moon. He estimated that the Moon was about 200,000 miles away and that it would take them 60 days to fly there at 125 mph. They would sleep on the wing—the lack of gravity and air resistance making flying easy—and live off their fat reserves. Once there they would find a thriving community of Moon life that was much like Earth.

We have to move on to Cambridge scholar Francis Willughby, the author of *Ornithologia* in the late 17th century, to get the final word. Francis took one step extra over most of the scientists before him – he actively travelled to make his observations.

Armed with his experiences he acknowledged the theories of those before him but he also came up with his own, almost throwaway line to address the issue of where birds went in the winter.

"To us it seems more credible that they fly away into hot countries, viz, Egypt, Ethiopia, etc."

So simple.

Autumn Activities

try 1 activity per week for the 12 weeks of Autumn.

Kick some leaves

Everyone did it as a kid, everyone should still do it as an adult! Walk through the woods kicking up the piles of autumn leaves—be careful for hedgehogs!

Make a leaf rainbow

Collect lots of fallen leaves of different colours and try to make a huge leaf rainbow collage in a clearing.

Go on a fungi foray

Autumn is the perfect time to go looking for colourful and amazing fungi species which thrive in the warm, damp weather.

Collect conkers

Look for Horse Chestnut trees and collect their fruits. Peel off the spiky shells to get the tough glossy chestnut inside. Put it on a piece of string and see who finds the toughest conker!

Look for the Hunter's Moon

The first full moon in October is called the Hunter's moon, it's often a more orange or red colour than normal.

Go on a bat walk

Autumn is the best time to spot bats flitting around your neighbourhood. Many bat species are mating at this time and also fattening up for winter so they're very active. Go on your own around dusk and watch the sky around trees and water or look for organised walks.

Build a hedgehog habitat

Look for instructions online to find out how to build one or just start by making a nice pile of leaves and dry sticks in a sheltered spot.

Volunteer

Find a local volunteer group, community group or environmental charity and see what volunteering opportunities there are. Check www.volunteerscotland.net, TCV Scotland, or Cumbernauld Living Landscape websites

Listen for Tawny Owls

Autumn is one of the best times to listen out for the distinctive hooting call of the Tawny as they re-establish territories over autumn and youngsters stake out their own patch. The birds are more likely to call on warm moonlit nights, listen for the 'hoot' of the male and answering 'keewick' of the female.

Create a Mythical Landscape

Let your imagination go wild as you walk through the woods and look for shapes and structures that could be turned into mythical beasts and creatures. A fallen tree that looks like a dragon, a knot in the wood that looks like an eye or a mouth.

Plant a tree

Autumn is a good time to plant a tree so it has time to acclimatise before the cold winter weather. Plant one in your garden or find a volunteer group to help plant one in a park or nature reserve.

Look for a starling murmuration

In autumn and winter Starlings gather in gigantic flocks and towards dusk they often perform a dazzling aerial display called a 'murmuration'. These pulsating displays can involve hundreds of thousands or even millions of birds swirling, twisting and turning in unison as they begin to settle down for the night. Look over winter fields, woodlands and reedbeds.

What's in a name?

Is it Autumn or Fall? Or maybe even Harvest? What do you call the time after summer but before winter? For a long time the answer was .. Nothing.

Farming communities would talk of Harvest (Hairst in Scots), the time to gather in the bounty of the fields, but for most people there were only two seasons worth naming, Summer and Winter.

Spring and Fall appeared as terms round about the 16th Century—referring probably to the Spring of new leaf, and the Fall of old leaf respectively. Autumn was borrowed from the French (and they borrowed it from the Romans) and gradually replaced Fall in British English. In American English however, Fall remained the favoured (or favored) term.

In his 1933 book “The King’s English” H.W Fowler rails against the Americanisation of British literature—but even he admits *“Fall is better on the merits than autumn, in every way: it is short, Saxon (like the other three season names), picturesque; it reveals its derivation to every one who uses it, not to the scholar only, like autumn; and we once had as good a right to it as the Americans; but we have chosen to let the right lapse, and to use the word now is no better than larceny. “*





There is rhythm in the woods, and in the fields,
Nature yields:
And the harvest voices crying,
Blend with Autumn zephyrs sighing;
Tone and colour, frost and fire,
Wings the nocturne Nature plays upon her lyre.
William Stanley Braithwaite

The Five Ways to Wellbeing



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

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.

Spending time with nature improves wellbeing

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

Wild Ways Well gets people suffering from, or at risk of, poor mental health out into the greenspaces of Cumbernauld.

Whilst out amongst the trees, parks and reserves participants get a chance to slow down, relax and enjoy being in the company of other people.

All sessions include a walk, a chance to safely socialise with other people over a hot drink (often round a fire) and opportunities to try a variety of environmental and conservation related activities designed to fit in with the internationally recognised Five Ways to Wellbeing mental health framework.

Wild Ways Well

Setting out to experience autumn in all its glory is a great way to work some wild ways into your week.

The Woodland Trust organises the Nature's Calendar every year, recording the places in the UK where you see the first signs of autumn. You can add your own records and build up a picture of how nature responds to autumn over time.

www.naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Find a woodland near you and **Be Active**—go for a walk and discover what is there to be found.

By exploring nature sensitively and respecting the sites you visit you're **Giving** something back and helping to preserve these beautiful delicate habitats. Why not take a camera out with you as well and take some photographs of the trees and the woodland? Share your photos with people you know or post them online for the world to enjoy. You can always share them with our Facebook or Twitter page.

Take some time to experience autumn with all your senses, Stop and breathe deeply, **Connect** with the woodland and with the life all around you. The woods are preparing for winter—you should too. You are part of this wider world and you hold the power to preserve and protect it in your hands. Spring will come again and you will be ready for it, but now it is time to rest and renew.

Take Notice of colours and signs around you, look at them closely. What signs of autumn can you see? How will even the most delicate of organisms survive the times ahead? What can you learn from them?

There is always more to **Learn** when studying nature. How do plants other than trees cope with change? What about the wildlife? Why do some species migrate and others stay behind? Some hibernate and some stay awake? What preparations is the natural world making?

Autumn is a reminder that we should embrace the natural rhythms of life and the cycle of the seasons. Change is inevitable and comes to all things, by making preparations and working with it we can make sure we are ready and able to cope with whatever comes our way.

Join Wild Ways Well

We're offering everyone in Cumbernauld a chance to test the Wild Ways Well out for yourself and learn how you can bring nature into your daily life. Our sessions are free of charge and we provide all the materials and equipment needed. There is no need to have any previous knowledge or experience of nature or the outdoors.

Each session involves a short walk, a chance to relax and chat (if you want) over a hot drink and time to immerse yourself in the outdoors, as well as a chance to get in touch with nature and find out how it can help you – and how you can help nature in return.

You can join a Wild Ways Well 'Open' group as an individual, or if there are a number of people from similar backgrounds, or who already know each other, or all coming from a single referring organisation then it is possible to form a 'Closed' group just for them.

Closed group programmes can be tailored to the interests, abilities and fitness levels of the participants involved. The project has successfully run groups of all ages and backgrounds. Past examples have included Families with young children; Teenagers; Senior Citizens; Disability groups; Refugee and Carers groups amongst others.

We recommend that people come on a number of sessions – a 12 week block is standard – but there is no requirement to attend every week and no maximum or minimum number of sessions you can attend. Attending for 12 weeks can allow you to earn a 'Discover' level John Muir Award.

Sessions are run weekly on weekdays and regularly at evenings and weekends. Everything is done at your pace and there will always be experienced, friendly guides and leaders, who understand mental health issues, there to help.

If you are an individual who would like to part, a group leader, or someone who would like to refer participants to the project you can find out more details on our website www.CumbernauldLivingLandscape.org.uk; our Facebook and Twitter pages (@WildCumbernauld); or by contacting **Paul Barclay** directly - p.barclay@TCV.org.uk or on 01236 617 113

Links

Cumbernauld Living Landscape

www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Wild Ways Well

www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/project/wild-ways-well

The Conservation Volunteers

www.tcv.org.uk/scotland

The Scottish Wildlife Trust

www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-ways-to-mental-wellbeing

SamH

www.samh.org.uk

Our Natural Health Service

www.nature.scot/professional-advice/contributing-healthier-scotland/our-natural-health-service

NHS Mental Health

www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/mental-health-and-wellbeing

The Samaritans

www.samaritans.org **call** 116 123 **email** jo@samaritans.org

Breathing Space

www.breathingspace.scot **call** 0800 83 85 87



Cumbernauld Living Landscape is a partnership between the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council, Sanctuary Scotland, the James Hutton Institute and TCV – The Conservation Volunteers.

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cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

5-7 Napier Way, Wardpark North,
Cumbernauld, G68 0EH

T 01236 617113

E cumbernauldll@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

f CumbernauldLivingLandscape

@WildCumbernauld

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Partners



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