



GET
INVOLVED
TODAY!

Creating Natural Connections Family Connections



Why Spend Time in Nature as a Family?

Because it's educational, the woodlands are nature's classroom; Because it's a great way to socialise and meet up with friends; Because it's a brilliant way to get some exercise in the wide open spaces; Because spending time outdoors as a family strengthen bonds and creates lasting, lifelong memories.

But most of all, because it's fun!

A recent study in the UK found that three quarters of children spend less time outdoors in an average week than inmates in maximum security prisons. One fifth of children did not play outdoors at all.

Research is increasingly showing how dangerous this situation is. It is becoming more and more clear that spending time outdoors amongst nature is vital for everyone's health—particularly their mental wellbeing.

This booklet is packed full of easy, fun, activities that families can try out in their local area. You don't need special equipment, kit or training, it doesn't cost anything, you can just step outside into a green space and have fun!

Remember while you're out that lots of animals, birds, insects, plants and trees share these spaces with you. They are helping us to have fun, so we must look after them in return. Never hurt or damage any living thing while playing outside, take all your litter or rubbish home with you and practice trying to leave no trace that you were ever there at all.

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CUMBERNAULD LIVING LANDSCAPE

Cumbernauld Living Landscape is improving Cumbernauld's greenspaces for both people and wildlife, while helping everyone in the community connect with the nature on their doorstep.

Cumbernauld is incredibly green and we believe that everyone should benefit from this. However, these green areas are often disconnected from one another and many are not as good for people – or wildlife – as they should be.

Without good quality, healthy places people and wildlife cannot flourish. Working closely with the local community, we need to ensure that healthy places are at the heart of the town's future. We will achieve this through a range of projects across the town, divided into four major workstreams.

Improving Habitats and Access – We're improving habitats for wildlife and making it easier for people to find and access these sites. We will also enable people to volunteer and take practical steps to conserve and improve these places.

Connecting Young People to Nature – We're providing opportunities for children to get involved in practical environmental projects and helping schools use the outdoors as part of their lessons.

Promoting Green Health and Wellbeing – It is now well established that access to the outdoors is vital for people's health. The Wild Ways Well project helps people, care practitioners and groups to use nature to manage their mental health.

Unlocking Community Capacity – We are unlocking and developing the skills of the community. By building relationships with groups and individuals and helping them to take action for nature we will ensure a legacy that will last beyond this project.

This booklet contains ideas, inspiration, information and activities that anyone can try to help them connect with the outdoors. Perhaps they'll help you to see Cumbernauld's greenspaces in a new light.

COLOUR MATCHING

Practice taking a bit more notice of the world around us. Look for different colours in the woodlands there might be some you will be surprised to find!

Equipment

Coloured squares. You can use the ones overleaf, pick up paint sample cards from your local DIY store, use pieces of cloth or even just hand out some colourful crayons.

Instructions

Give every person, pair or group a different colour. You can do this as a walking activity on your way somewhere or in a fixed location. If in a fixed location make sure to define your site boundaries so people don't get too far away or lost. Also remember to warn everyone about picking up anything 'nasty' on the ground. We don't want anything sharp, or anything man made. It might be appropriate to wear gloves if you're picking things up off the ground.

Ask everyone with a colour to go out and find it in the 'green' space. They must find exactly the right shade!

Once they've found it, they can photograph it in place or if they can safely take it without damaging or hurting anything, they can collect it and bring it back to the group.

Once everyone has brought their colours or photographs back you could try to make a rainbow or a picture from all the things you've found.



BAT AND MOTH

Did you know that bats love to live in Scotland's woodlands? One of their favourite things to eat is a tasty moth – but bats and moths only come out at night, so how does a bat find its dinner?

Equipment

For this game you'll need a blindfold (a scarf would do fine) or someone you can trust to keep their eyes closed!

Instructions

Find a nice wide-open space, somewhere you can move around without bumping into trees or tripping over too many stones, roots or holes.

Choose one person to be the Bat and one person to be the Moth. Everyone else will be a tree!

Ask the trees to form themselves into a large circle, ideally with their outstretched fingertips (branches) touching but you can leave gaps if you don't have a big enough group. This circle will represent a forest clearing and will be the boundary of your game area. (If you don't have any people to be trees then an adult who can see can still play the game with the child blindfolded. It's up to adult to keep the child safe!)

The Bat and The Moth both start in the middle of the clearing. The Bat wears the blindfold, the Moth can see.

The aim of the game is for the bat to find the moth, and for the moth to escape being eaten!

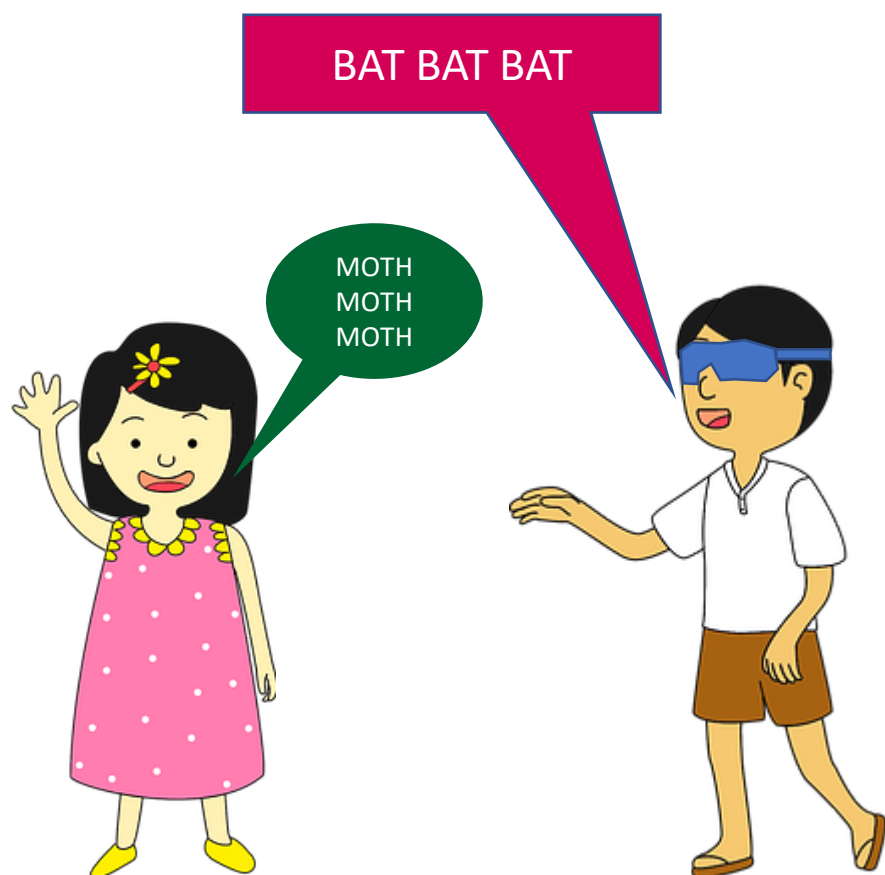
The Bat cannot see so must use its echolocation to find its way around. Every few seconds the Bat shouts out 'BAT!'. Every time it does the Moth must immediately shout out 'MOTH!'. The Bat uses these sounds to find its way to its prey.

If the Bat gets too close to a tree then the tree closest will shout out 'TREE' to warn it away. If the Moth gets too close to a tree the tree can grab it and hold it for a couple of seconds.

As the game progresses the trees can move closer together making the circle smaller and making it even harder for the moth to escape!

How long can the moth escape the bat?

If it's safe to do so you can also play a variation where both bat and moth are blindfolded for extra hilarity! Remember though that even if both are blindfolded only the Bat can shout its name first – and the moth must answer straight away!



MEET A TREE

At first when you walk through the woods you might be fooled into thinking that every tree looks just like the others. But if you spend some time getting to know one you soon realise that every tree is unique – just like you!

Equipment

For this game you'll need a blindfold (a scarf would do fine) or someone you can trust to keep their eyes closed!

Instructions

Find a spot where you can stand in a clearing with some trees nearby – make sure there aren't too many trip hazards or difficult to cross areas between you and the trees.

This game is played in pairs, one person wears the blindfold, the other person is in charge of guiding them and keeping them safe.

Once the blindfold is in place the sighted person has to carefully lead their 'blind' partner to a nearby tree – don't walk directly there though, we want to make this difficult! Spin your partner around, lead them on a long, twisty route – but remember they can't see, and it might be quite scary for them, it's the guide's job to reassure them and make sure they are safe!

When you reach your chosen tree the blindfolded person gets 30 seconds to 'meet' it. This is their chance to really get to know that tree – they should use all their senses; what does it feel like? Is the bark rough or smooth? Are there any holes or roots sticking up? What kind of plants grow round the base? How thick is it? Can you smell anything unusual? Can you touch any branches or feel any leaves? Can you feel the sun or sense the direction the light is coming from?

After 30 seconds the sighted person should guide their partner away, and walk (remember to go a twisty, turny route!) back to the start position.

Now for the tricky bit... Take the blindfold off, can the 'blind' person find their tree again without any help?



MYTHS AND MONSTERS

Our woodlands and green spaces are great to walk through at any time, and they are full of all sorts of life – trees, flowers, insects, birds and mammals.

But did you know that when no people are around some woodlands are also home to all sorts of mythical and magical creatures? These creatures hide from people but sometimes when you go a walk you can spot signs of their presence...

Equipment

Your imagination!

Instructions

Go for a walk and open up your imagination, look carefully at the landscape around you – what signs are there that mythical creatures might be about?

A rock embedded in the ground might actually be a troll's head, a magical tree might use its long branches as arms to capture things that walk below, or a hole in the trunk might be its eyes or mouth...

Is that a patch of long grass or an underground giant's green hair? Are those small mounds a sleeping dragon's back?

Can you find mysterious footprints in a patch of mud? Does a hole in the ground lead to an underground monster's lair?

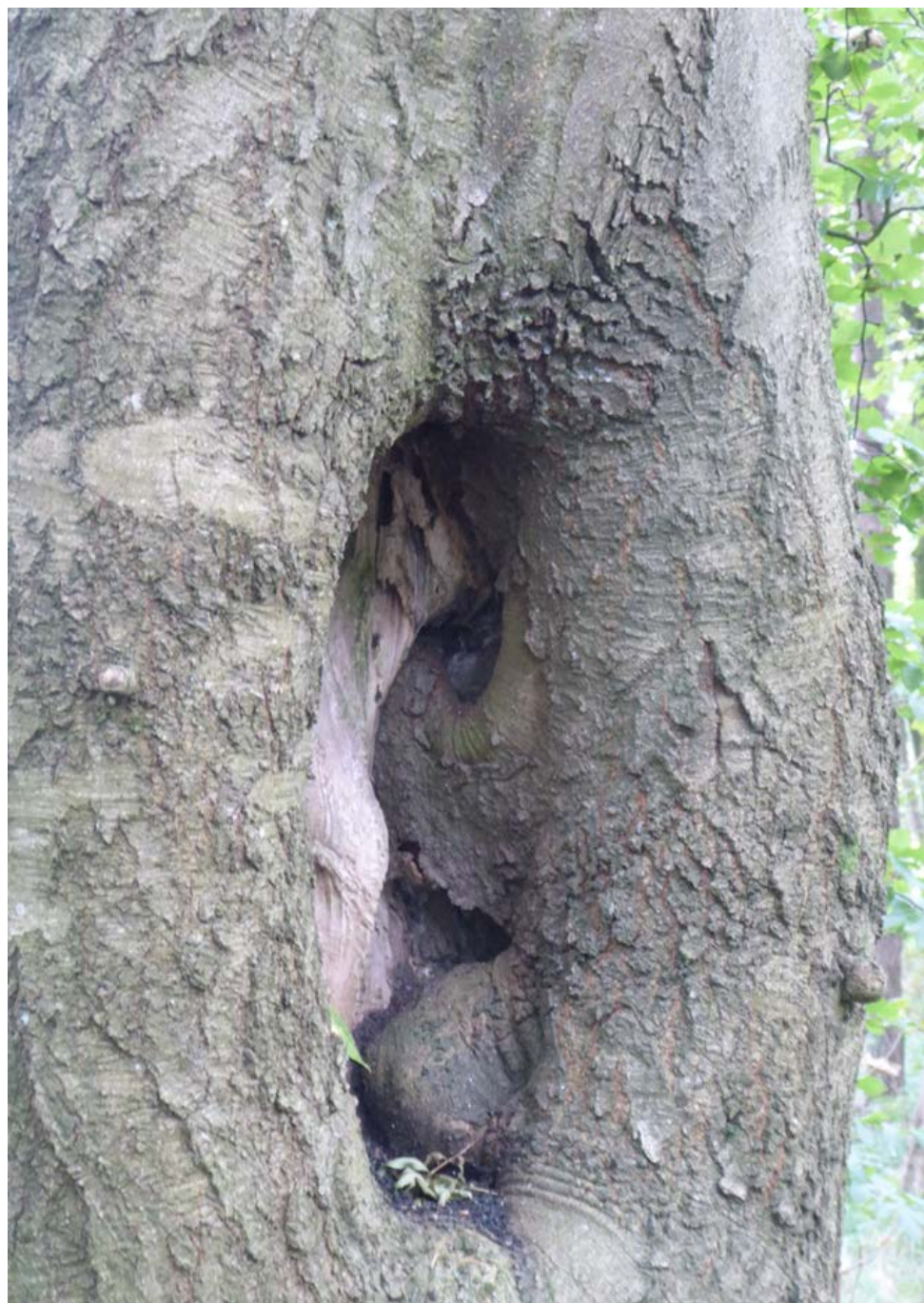
Once you've found your creature, give him or her a name and then imagine what it might get up to when people aren't around. Can it move? What does it eat? What sounds does it make? How does it defend itself?



The hole in this mossy tree might really be a yawning mouth surrounded by a green beard

Does this fallen tree branch actually become a giant snake after dark?





CATCH THE SQUIRREL

Pine Martens are a very special and rare animal that live in Cumbernauld's woods, they love to chase squirrels through the trees. This game lets you imagine being part of the chase!

Equipment

A piece of cloth or a scarf to be a tail

Instructions

The children all form a conga line with the Pine marten at the front of the line and the squirrel at the end. The scarf is tucked into the waist of the squirrel and it's the pine marten's job to chase the squirrel and capture the tail – but they must not break the conga line. This is a great game to all play together as a family – adults too!



Pine
marten

Squirrel

GOTCHA!



CREATE A CROWN

Lots of people call Oak trees the Kings of the Forest, and Birch trees the Queens. Every King or Queen needs a crown, can you make yourself one?

Equipment

For this activity you need to find a load of leaves and pine needles, long pine needles are best!

Instructions

Collect loads of clean leaves in a range of different colours, large leaves are better, and ones which are still a bit springy in the hand are best as it will make it easier to bend and twist the leaves into shape

Give your leaves a good shake to remove any caterpillars!

Arrange the leaves into the shape of a crown that will fit perfectly on your head and use the pine needles to stitch them together

leave the needles in the crown (careful they don't jab your head!), you can stitch in twigs and moss for colour too.



THE BRING ME GAME

This game is like a scavenger hunt, you can award points for items found and for the fastest person to bring back items! Make sure the item is clean before picking it up and wash your hands after the game, don't eat anything until hands are clean as a squid!

Please do not collect live animals or damage any living plants or trees.

Bring me....	Points for item out of 5	Points for speed out of 5	Total points
Pine cone			
Round pebble or stone			
A leaf with toothed edge			
Heart shaped leaf			
Pine needle			
Feather			
3 leafed Clover			
4 leafed clover			
3 different types of grass			
Conker (autumn only)			
A daisy (spring or summer)			
Frosted leaf (winter)			

MAMA BEAR MAY I?

One player is Mama bear and the others are her cubs
Mama bear take 20-30 huge steps away from her cubs. Imagine a start line now for the cubs and an end line at Mama bear.

To start the game Mama bear gives each cub an instruction to move in a certain way. The cubs must ask “**Mama bear may I?**” to be allowed to move forward. If a cub forgets to ask they must return to the start line. You can use a row of twigs or branches to mark out a start line.

The goal of the mama bear is to bring everyone to the finish line as equally as possible. Here are some examples to get mama bear started:

Mama bear examples	Create some of your own
Take 4 steps forwards like a deer	
Hop forward like a frog 3 times	
Bounce backwards 2 leaps like a rabbit	
Take 8 baby steps forwards like a caterpillar	
Take 2 side steps to the right	
Take 3 steps to the left	
Walk diagonally 2 steps	
Fly with your arms out like a dragonfly for 6 steps	
Buzz like a bee for 2 steps back and 3 steps forward	
Buzz around in a circle like a fly	

WEE WAYS WILD

Wrap up well, go out in the rain and splash in some puddles.

Take your lunch outside and find somewhere natural to enjoy it

Explore and find the biggest tree in your neighbourhood and then photograph or draw it

Imagine you are a giant – use stones, twigs, leaves, moss and natural materials to make a mini nature reserve.

Count your steps: how many to get from your house to your favourite greenspace? How long does it take you to walk 200 steps?

Draw a map of your local greenspace— Mark your favourite trees, show where you think all the animals live and the best spots to find food and water

Try and tell the difference between flowers just by smelling them

Encourage a friend to come on a walk with you

Tiptoe as quietly as you can through the woods. What do you see differently? Try and sneak up on an animal or bird

Listen to the birds sing, can you tell the difference between different birds? Which is the loudest?

Look up: find somewhere safe to lie on your back and stare up at the sky or into the tree tops. Can you see shapes in the clouds?

Take a photo or draw a picture of the same place every week for a month. How does it change?

Challenge yourself – can you and your group spend two hours outdoors without looking at a phone or electronic device?

WEE WAYS WILD

Go to the same place in the sunshine and in the rain. Can you see a difference in what wildlife is around? How do plants deal with the water?

Look really carefully at the tree closest to your house. Draw its leaves. Now walk into the woods and look at other trees – are all tree leaves the same? Can you find one the same as the one you have drawn?

Sit really quietly and watch the birds. Which bird do you see most often? What colour is it? What does it eat? Where do you think it lives at night?

Go out at night (tell an adult where you are going) and look up at the stars. Which is the brightest?

Walk into your local greenspace and imagine you are an animal. Where will you live? Where will you find food, water and shelter?

Go online and find out about birds that migrate to Cumbernauld. Find a map showing how far they travel. Can you imagine their journey? (Hint. Try a Cuckoo, a Chiff Chaff or a Taiga Bean Goose.)

Look for animal footprints in a muddy spot – can you follow them? Where do you think the animals are going?

Touch a tree. Feel the shape and texture of its bark (the outer woody layer of the trunk). Why do you think different trees have different kinds of bark?

Make your own 'visitors guide' to your local park or woodland and describe all your favourite places and the wildlife that lives there. Take your friends and family on a guided tour.

Take all your litter home with you and recycle it. What do you think happens to litter left in the woods? How do you think it affects wildlife?

WEE WAYS WILD

Without damaging anything living or breaking any trees make a small pile of wood and dead leaves for insects to live in

Draw a picture of a natural spot and show it to family and friends

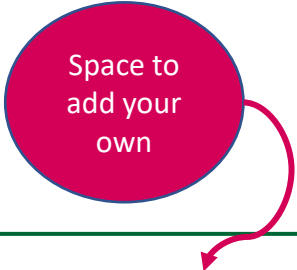
Collect together some natural objects like leaves, sticks and small stones. Use them to make a huge natural picture of a tree or animal on the ground.



If you spot a snail, slug, caterpillar or worm stranded on a man made path carefully lift it and put it somewhere safer

Write a story about your local greenspace and share it

Space to
add your
own





A WEE BIT OF ART

The simplest of pleasures is bound to creating artwork, and in nature there is no need for expensive paints or brushes, nature provides a bounty of items from twigs to leaves of many colours.

- Can you unlock your artistic side using only what you can find around you? Try using longer branches as a frame to display your artwork
- Don't forget to share with us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, details for those are on the next page

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 Squirrel, 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.



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

All sorts of scientific studies have shown that spending time outdoors, amongst nature, helps people live happier lives.

Spending time in nature has been shown to increase energy levels, help people concentrate and think more clearly, improve sleep patterns and lessen symptoms of depression and anxiety

The Five Ways Well are a mental health framework used all over the world – including by the NHS.

Studies have shown that building these five easy actions into people's everyday schedule helps them to live healthier, happier lives.

Wild Ways Well is our natural health project in Cumbernauld which combines these effects to help people feel better and more connected to nature.

Wild Ways Well is our nature and wellbeing project in Cumbernauld it is free for anyone to join and take part in, all you need is a really basic level of fitness, suitable for walking on rough forest paths.

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 feel better. It's a great way to meet new people, explore nature, relax and de-stress.

Sessions take place regularly on weekdays – as well as evenings and weekends. 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 by contacting:

Paul Barclay at p.barclay@tcv.org.uk

The Nature Ninjas Are our practical conservation volunteer group.

This aim of this group is to improve habitats across Cumbernauld for nature. Our groups are great places to make friends, keep fit, learn more about nature and see the outdoors. No prior experience is necessary. Sessions take place regularly on Tuesdays and Wednesday.

Examples of activities coming up include tree planting, scything, hedge laying, pond cleaning and much more!

We also provide training for upskilling or just for enjoyment and building knowledge of nature and conservation.

If you would like to get involved, then please contact:

David Walsh at d.walsh@tcv.org.uk

Early Connections and Natural Connections are our education/outdoor learning projects for Connecting Young People to Nature.

Early Connections workshops for ages 8-11 years links to habitats projects and the wildlife in our town. These workshops can be delivered to primary schools and community groups within Cumbernauld.

Natural Connections encourages high school students aged 11-16 to connect with nature on a deeper level to aid employability skills.

Outdoor learning is also fun, remember have a look out for all of our events on our Facebook page and website

We also offer Continual Professional Development **training** to enable teachers and leaders to confidently deliver outdoor learning for their young people.

For more information contact:

Tracy Lambert at tlambert@scottishwilldifetrust.org.uk

You can find out more about all our projects by visiting our website

www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Facebook - [Cumbernauld Living Landscape](#) or

Twitter and Instagram - [@WildCumbernauld](#)



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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Funders



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