



GET
INVOLVED
TODAY!

Creating Natural Connections Hallowe'en in Cumbernauld



According to ancient tradition Hallowe'en marks the end of Summer and the start of Winter. Some people believed that on this night the ghosts of the dead would revisit the mortal world and all sorts of supernatural and frightening things were possible.

It's always been traditional for people to tell stories at this time of year. Often the purpose of these stories was simply to entertain (or to frighten!) people but sometimes they had another purpose – a moral, a lesson, or a warning.

The stories in this book tell of other worldly events and happenings in Cumbernauld, but they have their own warnings hidden within. These messages – climate change, habitat loss, lack of respect for nature - may sound like modern concerns, but really their core has remained unchanged from those tales that were told around the fire across the centuries.

Tread lightly on the earth, respect nature and your community, consider how your actions might affect the future.

These stories are all set in real places in Cumbernauld, incredible green spaces full of life. Visit them, read these stories in the places they were set, and take note of how special, and fragile, they are. Their very existence is under real threat unless we all take action to preserve them. If we don't, then perhaps the stories future generations have to tell about their present will be the really frightening ones.

We've rated the stories on a scare factor (S1-S5 with S5 as scariest) so you can judge which to tell to younger kids. We've also included some brilliant Hallowe'en games and activities for you to try out in Cumbernauld's parks, woods and wildlife reserves.

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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.

There are lots of ways you can get involved in the project, as a volunteer, participant, or just supporter. You'll find more information about how at the end of this booklet.

The Abronhill Fairy Tree

One night a man decided to travel between Abronhill and the Village to meet his friends at the pub. His wife begged him not to go out on such a dark night but he was determined, so he put on his jacket and headed out the door.

It wasn't the best night, it was cold, there was a storm in the air, clouds covered the moon and the stars and in those days there was no good path to follow, but the man turned towards the Village and began to walk. He hadn't got very far however before the clouds grew thicker and the winds grew stronger, somehow the darkness of the night became even blacker. To make things worse it wasn't long before the man began to feel that he wasn't alone on his walk. He kept looking over his shoulder, sure he heard the noise of footsteps or of creaking laughter behind him.

He remembered his old granny's tale of Fairy Folks who would play tricks on travellers after dark *"Everything sounds louder at night"* he told himself *"It's just the trees"*.

He pressed on. The wind grew stronger, howling around him and the rain began to pelt down. Soon he was soaked through and he began to feel that it wasn't such a good idea to go to the pub after all. He decided to seek shelter, there was nothing nearby, but a brief gap in the cloud revealed a lone tree just off the path, its branches swaying in the wind. He made his way towards it, struggling through the undergrowth, but the clouds came and covered the moon again and he could no longer see. He pressed on, sure that the tree was so close that he couldn't miss it, but when, several minutes later, the moon reappeared he could see the tree was still a long way ahead of him,

he weather was getting worse, the temperature dropped and the winds blew harder. He had to find shelter. He pushed on towards the tree, but soon the moon disappeared again and he lost sight of it.


He struggled on through the thick mud. Suddenly he heard the creak of a tree in the wind, it sounded a bit like laughter, he stopped to listen and as he did the moon came out again and revealed the tree, off in the distance to his left. He turned toward it and hurried on.

This went on for a long time with the tree, when he could see it, always just out of reach, ahead or to his left. He was freezing now, the icy cold rain trickling down his neck, his boots soaked through, his fingers and toes numb with the cold. He walked through the dark with his arms outstretched, sure he must find the tree soon.

He must have walked for miles following glimpses of the tree and creaking laughter, he was getting more and more tired and wet, almost at the limit of what he could endure. He had almost given up hope when his groping hands finally met the gnarly trunk of the tree and he sank gratefully down to the ground. The trunk protected him from the wind, the branches kept him dry, he felt better, warmer and safer immediately as he huddled into its protection.

Then he heard a voice, speaking in the same creaky tones he had heard laughing through the night.

"I don't know about you" said the voice "but I'm getting soaked. I'm heading home to a warm fire and a soft bed." and with that the tree he was sheltering under uprooted itself and ran off into the night laughing, leaving the man stranded, freezing, lost and sinking, already up to his knees, in the deep clinging peat of Fannyside Bog.

A photograph of a forest in autumn. The ground is covered in fallen yellow and orange leaves. Several trees with thin trunks and sparse foliage stand in the background. A large, green, leaf-shaped speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "muhahah" and "ahaha".

muhahah
ahaha

Spooky Spider Race

Hallowe'en is sure to bring all the spooky spiders who live in the woods out to play. At this time of year they can capture all sorts of creatures in their giant webs. In this game you'll help some of the woodland creatures to escape being eaten!

Equipment

You'll need a ball of string, rope or twine, some stones and some paint or marker pens.

Instructions

First you'll need to use your stones and paint (or markers) to make some spooky pebble spiders and some pebble creatures to save. You can make these beforehand (or you could use some toys or even natural objects like stones, leaves or pine cones).

Next take your string/twine/rope and lay it out in a giant spiders web pattern on the ground. It needs to be big enough for you to walk over.

Now one person places the spiders and the other creatures on the web. You could place them deliberately or even throw them out so they land randomly. Make sure there is at least one more long line on the web than there are spiders.

The players job is to walk carefully along the strands of the web and collect all the creatures they have to save. They must keep their feet on the web at all times (no running or jumping to other strands!) and they cannot walk down a strand which has a spider on it. When they get to a creature they have to bend down and pick it up – without coming off the web!

Who can save their creatures the fastest?





Sparrow Bog Voices

A long time ago people felt differently about bogs and marshes. Today, to a lot of folk who don't know any better, they're an inconvenience, a place where you can't build a house or sow a crop, where no one goes, and no one cares.

But in the past things were different. A marsh or a bog was a sacred, otherworldly space where people made pilgrimages to commune with ancient gods, where creatures that today we think of as myths were known to live.

From archaeological digs we know that our ancestors made offerings to the water of the bog. Deep within the peat we have found swords and intricate jewellery, metal objects of great value. These things didn't fall into the peat by accident, they were placed into the marshy water, offerings to the gods that lived there. We still do this today – have you ever thrown a metal coin into a well or a fountain? Deeper in the peat, from even longer ago, bodies have been found. Humans and animals, with signs of ritual sacrifice, some who went unwillingly, with bound hands and slit throats, and those who chose to die, perhaps to appease the hungry spirits and prevent them taking other victims.

But that was in the past. In modern times no one believes in gods or spirits in the marsh. In fact Sparrow bog in Cumbernauld is disappearing. New housing developments have encroached on its space, choking and drying it out. No one honours the old gods anymore, but not everyone, or everything, has forgotten.

A few years ago the latest round of new housing development meant a new influx of people arriving to live on the edge of the bog. One of these was Fiona and being a nature lover she began to explore the area. The obvious place to walk was down by the bog, few people ever went there, but there were paths all the same, created by animals who criss-crossed the open marsh. Local people stayed away, there were rumours of sink holes, deep muddy pits that could open without warning under the paths, trapping unwary travellers. Some even muttered about voices and lights seen on the marsh after dark, in places no person could be.

Fiona didn't believe in lights or strange voices and she reckoned she could spot a sink hole before there was any trouble. She walked by the marsh every day, throwing a ball for the dog and enjoying the peace and solitude. Occasionally, usually while looking for wildlife, she would notice a group of old trees, twisted and stunted with age, growing on a rise in the middle of the marsh.

The long summer passed and moved into autumn, and as the days grew shorter Fiona found herself out walking closer and closer to dusk, but she enjoyed it all the more, the evening light, the moss alive with the burning colours of the season. She lingered longer and longer, until one night, a few weeks before Hallowe'en she found herself walking home in the near dark. That was the first night she saw the lights.

They were in pairs. Far out over the marsh, glowing yellow, silent and still. From then on she saw them every evening. Always in pairs, never moving, but never in the same place night to night. It was hard to pin locations down on the marsh, especially as the daylight faded. The lack of features meant there was nothing to give scale or distance but it seemed to Fiona as though, night by night, they were growing closer and closer to the path. Every day Fiona stopped and looked, mesmerised by them, until one night they seemed to drift in front of her, tantalisingly just out of reach. That was the first night she heard the voices.

There was more than one voice but they spoke almost in unison, a thin reedy sound, drifting across the bog. She thought at first it was trick of the wind, bringing the noise of children playing from the surrounding streets. But there was no wind, not even a breeze, the night was still and silent. Except for the voices.

'Kiiir', 'Aeewahchu', 'Ongi.'

It was faint but unmistakeable. Fiona's dog, Ford, faced the bog and growled, pulling at his leash. Fiona felt no fear, only curiosity. The lights, the voices, the bog. They spoke to her, pulling her towards them, she felt she almost belonged with them, out on the marsh. She took a step towards the lights but as she did Ford broke free and ran, racing along the path back to their home. The spell broken, Fiona followed. But she sat awake all that night thinking of the lights and the voices.

The next evening it was Hallowe'en and Fiona walked again down by the marsh. Ford followed behind reluctantly, occasionally whining, pulling at his leash. She stopped as had become her custom at the spot where she could see clear across the bog, and she saw, as had become usual, the lights, in pairs, glaring balefully.

For the first time she saw them move, the lights seemed to appear from amongst the branches of the trees, far out over the marsh and then move purposely towards her, drifting a few feet above the ground.

'Kiir', 'Eeeanchu', 'Ungi'.

The voices were clearer now. They repeated the same three words over and over, the sounds twisting in her ears, almost as though they were trying to create meaning. Like there was a language barrier that they were trying to cross.

'Kimiir', 'Eewanu', 'Unge'.

The voices grew louder, the lights brighter. It was full dark now, as though time had skipped, somehow the sun had gone without her realising. She shivered in the cold. Ford barked suddenly, he raised itself up on his hind legs straining at the leash. Fiona turned to look at him, and when she looked back was amazed to realise that the trees, which had once stood far over the marsh, now stood right in front of her on the path edge, their branches reaching towards her. She was fascinated, her face glowed in the golden lights which looked down on her from among the branches. She lifted her foot to step towards them.

'Komiiir', 'Eewanchu', 'Ungii'

The voices and the words filled her mind, she had to know their meaning, had to find their source. She took another step... And Ford tore himself from her grasp. Barking furiously he cut across in front of her and leaped into the trees, disappearing in amongst the dark of their trunks and the marsh. Fiona tried to follow but the trailing lead caught around her foot and she sprawled onto the ground, the wind rushing from her. By the time she could stand again Ford was gone, she thought she heard one more baleful howl from the direction of home and she turned to hurry that way, sure he would be home before her. As she turned she heard the voices speak once more in unison behind her and for the first time she felt fear.

Komiiir', 'Eewanchu', 'Ungii'

Her steps quickened until she was no longer walking but running headlong through the paths which seemed to twist and turn in a way they never had before. It should have been a straightforward walk back to her house, no more than a few hundred metres, but she had been running for several minutes now and still the marsh was all around her, still she heard the voices behind her.

Komiiir', 'Eewanchu', 'Ungii'

The voices sounded more and more urgent as they repeated, and this time the words twisted in her mind in just the right way and she felt terror take hold as she finally understood what they were trying to say.

One last time Fiona heard Ford barking, this time sounding as though he was between her and the voices behind her. He sounded furious, growling and snarling, and then there was one final flurry followed by an abrupt silence and with all her heart she pushed herself forward and finally broke out of the marsh, into the light of the streetlamps, her home in front of her.

Fiona sat in her kitchen that night, every light in the house lit, doors and windows securely locked. She drank pot after pot of coffee sitting at her kitchen table staring at the empty dog bed in the corner and thinking of the words which she had been hearing for days but which she only understood now. She was afraid to leave the kitchen and its circle of light, afraid to look out of the windows in case she saw from the direction of the bog the two glowing lights, and heard the thin reedy voices of the marsh repeating over and over the same words.

'Come here.' *'We want you.'* *'Hungry.'*

She was afraid if she heard them again she would walk out into the wet marsh to join them.

Perhaps we have forgotten the ancient legends and the beings who lived on the marsh, but the peat remembers. And perhaps, if not for the sacrifice of one brave dog we would be telling a different story.



Scary Woodland Walk

Our woodlands and green spaces are great to walk through at any time, but especially at Hallowe'en. At this time of year the woods come alive at night with all sorts of creatures –trolls, bogles, walking trees, giants, fairies, ghosts and monsters all spend their nights prowling the woods.

These creatures all hide during the day but did you know that if you walk through the woods and look very carefully you can still see them?

Open up your imagination and soon you'll see the signs they leave behind all around you

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 it a name and keep an eye on it. Do you dare go back after dark (with a torch and an adult) and see if it has changed?



The Castle

Most folk when they think of Cumbernauld, think of the new town, the 1960's monument to brutalist architecture and a post war dream of modern living.

People forget that Cumbernauld is older than that. Much older. In fact there have been people living here for a long, long time.

Down in Cumbernauld Glen, just by the House Park, high over the Red Burn there is grassy mound of earth that local people call the Castle.

No-one really knows what the Castle is, or was, except that it is not a natural object. It was built, made by deliberate hands, at some point it had a function, a purpose.

Once, everyone in local area would have known of the mound and would likely have known too of its purpose, but over the years that knowledge was lost, what was known became what was believed. Knowledge became myth and rumour.

Drowls are another thing mostly forgotten now but hung on to by fragments of myth and story. Our ancestors knew them well, when the first people came to Cumbernauld the drowls were there before them. They were little people, with dark hair, dark eyes and pale skin. They carried powerful bows with poisoned arrow tips. No one crossed them for they were a fierce race, but a quiet one too, they disliked conflict and would melt away into the woods when people were near. They lived underground, they loved the land and tended the flower meadows. They kept hives of wild bees and drank a dark mead, sweet with honey and blossom.

Above all else they loved music, they were fascinated by it, so much so that no one dared to play where they might hear for they would creep from their underground mounds to listen. While the music played all would be well – but when it stopped... then their razor sharp arrows dripping with poison would come out.

But over time even a memory like that of the drowls fades into obscurity.

It so happened that not so long ago Cumbernauld was in need of a piper – a piper was an important figure once upon a time, no wedding, funeral or civic event was complete without the skirl of the pipes. To fill the need a newcomer was brought to town, his name was David but everyone knew him as Davie Pipes and he never went anywhere without his great Highland bagpipes.

Davie was always busy with his piping, but like a lot of people he liked a drink and whatever he earned he soon spent down the pub. One night he was sat in the Theatre bar when the stories around him turned to the Castle and the rumours of treasure within. As the night grew longer the stories grew wilder and the buried treasure became ever greater. Soon it seemed like the crown jewels themselves must be buried there.

“Right” Said Davie “Ah’ve hud enough o’ this. If there’s treasure to be found in that mound ah’m huvin it.”

And with that he set off.

He walked down through the winding path to the Glen, through the old hazel and hawthorn trees, across the grass of the House Park and finally up the hill to the Castle mound itself. He was quite the worse for drink but he managed, in the gloom of the evening to find his way to the top of the mound and began to dig.

It didn’t take long before he hit something with his digging, between the roots of the trees, and from the hole he pulled out a wooden box, perfectly preserved, like it had been buried there only yesterday though it was clearly very old.

Davie held his breath as he opened the box but instead of the hoped for piles of gold and jewels inside he found a simple fiddle. He picked it up and examined it. There was nothing special about it, it looked to be made of cheap, rough wood, you could find a dozen like it in any flea market. He held it to his chin and ran the bow across the strings not expecting much but a discordant note, he wasn’t much of a fiddle player, but the sound that came from the fiddle was as sweet and pure as the birds in the trees. Davie looked at the fiddle in amazement, he had never heard a sound like that from a cheap fiddle!

He put the fiddle back on his shoulder and played all the way back up the path to the Theatre bar, practically dancing as he walked. He burst through the door into the bar with the fiddle in full flow and the whole pub stopped for a moment before the cheering started and the drink started flowing in his direction.

It was a night that would go down in legend, Davie sat in the corner of the bar and played and played. Everyone in the place was entranced, the singing and dancing was like nothing they had experienced before as Davie threw himself into tune after tune, every one more wonderful than the last.

Every few moments someone would drop off a pint or a glass on Davie's table, at first he would reach for them, but every time he seemed to think better off it and, rather than stop to drink, he played on, with even more energy. The drink piled up and eventually one of Davie's cronies, bringing over another pint raised his voice against the music.

"Davie man" He said "you'll wear yourself thin, 'mon put that fiddle doon a minute and hae a swallie, wet the old chords."

Davie looked over, a strained grin on his face.

"Ah cannae stop man, huv ye no noticed? Every time I rest the fiddle they come."

"Who comes?" his cronie looked round in puzzlement, "Ah think a'bodies here awready."

"Just you watch that windae o'oor there'" Davie said, and with that he stopped playing and picked up the first glass in front of him.

As soon as the music stopped the old barfly saw it, there, looking in the window were a pair of dark eyes, framed by thick dark hair. A hairy arm with a hand tipped with sharp claws reached up to the window and it began to open slowly, there was something about the movement that struck the old man as sinister and otherworldly.

"Every time Ah stop playing they try tae get in" Davie hissed, picking the fiddle up again and striking up a tune. *"An Ah dinna think we'd like it if they dae."*

"Ye cannae play furever though surely" said the old man, concern and fear in his voice.

"Ah cannae play much longer at a'" said Davie desperately, *"these strings are wearing through, ah dinnae ken which'll go first, the fiddle or ma airm."*

He'd no sooner said this than what he predicted came true, the bow, which had been old and rickety when he first picked it up and which had been playing non stop for hours now, snapped in his hand and the music came to a sudden halt. As though a spell had been broken several things happened at once, the lights went out and the bar was plunged into darkness, everyone stopped mid step in their dances, the words to old songs on their lips. There was total silence.

A silence broken only by the sound of the door creaking open.

A figure stood in the doorway. Pale skin was covered by dark hair which fell down its back like a cloak and long hair curled across its chest and legs. Behind it, in the mist, could barely be seen several others of its kind, and the same at every window, dark eyes staring in from the black of the night. The figure stood there in silence watching them. And then it raised a wicked looking bow, and the tip of an arrow, dripping with some thick substance gleamed in the moonlight.

But before it could fire, suddenly from the corner of the bar came the skirl of a pipe! Davie hadn't sat still, alone in the bar he'd had the presence of mind to do something, he'd grabbed for his great Highland Pipes and slung them over his shoulder. Filling the bag with air he threw himself into a wild Highland reel, the music pouring from the pipes like liquid gold.

Davie was a good piper, but the music he played at that moment was like nothing anyone had ever heard, he played like a man possessed as he marched forward, and stood before the figure at the door, the pipes bellowing their tune until the noise almost reached pain levels.

The figure stepped aside and, as though taking a cue, Davie marched outside playing all the time. Tune after tune poured forth from the pipes as he walked and the folk from the bar followed the sounds as they skirled into the night air. On and on Davie marched and around him, amongst the ancient hazels and hawthorns, could dimly be seen the shapes of small figures, following him, dancing as they went, their wicked bows and poisonous arrows forgotten.

Davie played as he marched down to the Glen, across the grass of the House Park and up to the Castle mound. Around and around the mound he walked, playing all the while, spiralling up the slope until he stood at the very top.

Everyone could see now that he was tiring, but he kept playing, tune after tune, reels and laments, one flowing into the other. And then finally he marched on again. In front of him a hole appeared in the ground, with golden light pouring from it. Without a backward glance Davie walked into the hole, disappearing down into a wide tunnel that sank deep into the mound. The small figures followed, and the mist that accompanied them flowed into the mound with them. The folk from the bar followed as close as they dared, but before they could get there the tunnel snapped closed in front of them. All that remained was a grassy slope as though no hole had ever existed. The people rushed forward, below their feet they could still hear the great pipes bellow, still playing a mournful lament, spiralling around the hill, growing fainter as though the tunnel was sinking ever deeper until finally and suddenly, with one discordant blast, the music stopped mid note... and was never heard again.

Magical Potions

For thousands of years people in Scotland have believed in natural magic – the power of nature to protect people and achieve change.

You can harness this power too, why not go out for a walk in nature and make your very own magical potion!

You'll need a water container (an old, clean, jam jar is ideal), a magical wand and some natural ingredients!

Walk through a park or woodland and look out for natural objects that you think might be good for your potion. Some examples might be leaves, berries, acorns, twigs or stones. Remember not to pull up any plants or hurt anything living.

As you walk keep an eye out for a good magical wand sized stick too!

Once you've collected your ingredients put them in the jar, add the water and then give it all a good stir together with your magic wand while you say some magical words.

Your potion is complete! Take it home with you, it is guaranteed to protect you and your home from all sorts of supernatural creatures. Ain't no ghosts busting through these defences!

In the morning you can pour your potion out onto some grass and make a wish while you do so – you never know what wishes nature can bring true



Am Fear Liath Seafar

Cumbernauld's Seafar woods are a great example of a wildlife corridor, a long thin strip of woodland that links other, larger, pieces of greenspace and lots of animals use these woods to move around the urban area, undetected and undisturbed. But what if it isn't only familiar species that use these corridors? What if they're discovered by something older, something stranger?

Grant Walker lived on the edge of Seafar woods and for some time he had been setting up camera traps there. These special devices automatically photographed any animal which walked in front of them, even in the dark of night, helping him understand the many different species which shared the area with him. Over the years he had perfected his technique – placing a camera trap isn't as simple as dropping it randomly in the woods and hoping something wanders in front of it. There is a complex art behind the placement and concealment of the devices to get the best shots, and of using exactly the right techniques and baits to lure your target to just where you want them to be.

One of the species Grant monitored was his local badger clan, and it had become a bit of a morning routine to head out, collect his cameras and see what they had been up to the night before. One morning however, during the long lockdown summer of 2020 was to prove anything but routine. On this morning Grant went round his camera traps one by one to find something very strange – against all precedent camera after camera had recorded absolutely nothing.

This was extremely unusual. The local wildlife was habituated to his cameras and his work. They knew to visit his bait sites every night for a free meal. To have nothing show up, on a warm, clear night... had never happened before. Cameras failed of course, but not four cameras in one night – and besides, a quick check showed them to be working fine, there just hadn't been any wildlife to photograph.

Grant came to the last camera, the fifth, and cracked the case open without much hope. This time however the readout inside showed one single picture had been taken the night before. He quickly transferred the file to his tablet and opened it up, in the centre of the frame, where the bait had been placed and the camera lights were focussed was just empty space, there was nothing in the circle of invisible infrared light.

Grant looked closer, shading the screen with his hand. There was something... in the corner of the frame... he zoomed the picture in closer. A shape partially silhouetted against the sky. Grant magnified and enhanced the image as much as he could and as he did it became unmistakeable. In the top of the frame, leaning out around a large tree was a face, staring right at the camera. It was no human face however, there were two red eyes and a wide mouth, partially open in what almost looked like a smile.

Grant immediately felt a chill, he raised his eyes and quickly found the very tree that the creature stood behind in the image. He stood and walked towards it, in the photo the creature had one hairy arm outstretched, casually touching a branch above its head, Grant's eyes stayed fixed on that branch as he walked until he stood almost underneath it. It was at least 10 feet off the ground at its lowest part. Grant tried to jump up and touch the branch and fell way short. Whatever had stood here was huge.

And it had stank! All around the tree was an all-pervading odour of stagnant water, mixed with rotting meat and animal musk. The air was thick with the stench, catching in his throat and making him want to vomit.

The thought crossed his mind that someone was playing tricks on him, he'd heard of this sort of thing before, people dressing up in ape suits to set off camera traps, intending to spook the owner, but no-one knew he had camera traps out in this part of the woods, and in any case none of his neighbours were the type to be interested in pranking him.

And besides, whatever he'd just taken a photo of stood at least eight feet tall, with arms stretching another two feet above that. He couldn't imagine anyone that could travel the woods in a massive bulky suit like that whilst simultaneously avoiding being caught on four other camera traps and without leaving any other sign of their passage.

But still, what else could it be? Grant collected his cameras and made the short journey back to his home. He had to leave the last trap on his back doorstep as the stench still clung to it, but the rest he took inside and then spent the rest of the day trying to come up with a rational explanation for what he'd seen. A brief google search showed no reports of any zoos or animal attractions missing a gorilla or a bear. It didn't take long searching the internet for apes in Scotland however to come across a website which seemed to hint at something familiar.

Bigfoot might be a legend of the American forests, but Scotland has its own legends of a mysterious ape like creature which haunts the valleys and mountains. Am Fear Liath, the Big Grey Man, is a story as old as time. A creature which lurks on the edge of civilisation, imagination and myth. It is said to inhabit the woods and glens of Scotland, but to be most often seen in the high places. Stories described a huge, manlike creature with shaggy grey fur all over its body, sharp canine teeth and a cunning intelligence. Most telling of all for Grant, as he delved deeper into legend, were the descriptions given by walkers in remote woodlands of a putrefying stench and a strange feeling of terror that accompanied the creature wherever it went, and of two glowing red eyes which campers described looking back at them from the treeline as they sat around their fires.

Most stories of the Grey Man came from the Highlands and the high peaks and hidden valleys of the Cairngorms. But there were records, fragmented and unsure, but stretching back over hundreds of years of sightings of the Grey Man in the Carron Valley, only a few miles away. It was said to live in caves beneath Meikel Bin and to lurk around the streams and reservoirs. In most stories it seemed keen to avoid people, but there were one or two where it had been reported around homes or camp sites. One story in particular described a night in a bothy where two frightened hikers swore they were awoken in the night to see a great grey arm reaching in through the window, silently groping about in the dark as though trying to reach and turn the bolt which secured the door.

It was late now, the day had disappeared and the house was in darkness. Feeling a little spooked by the stories Grant stood and went downstairs, turning on every light in the house as he passed. He reached the kitchen, flicked the kettle on and reached for the switch for the kitchen lights. As he did his eyes idly took in the darkness of the garden out of the back window, and he froze. There, right on the treeline, where the neat lines of his garden merged into the woods of Seafar, calmly looking back at him, were a pair of glowing red eyes, framed by the unkempt hair of a grey hairy face. As soon as he saw the creature its scent, drifting in the open window, hit him like a solid presence, rotten meat and dead, decaying matter. It stepped forward into his garden and he instinctively raised his phone and triggered the camera. The powerful flash reflected off the window blinded him, forcing him to close his eyes for a moment, when he opened them, the creature was gone.

The next morning Grant was out first thing, down at the bottom of the garden where the creature had stood the night before. There were clear signs that something big and heavy had been standing there for some time, the idea that it had all been some sort of dream was immediately dashed. A clear line of tracks stretched from the garden back into the woods and as Grant scanned it his breath

caught in his chest. In the middle of the track was his trail camera, the back broken, the front smashed.

The last time Grant had seen that camera was when he left it on his back doorstep, unwilling to bring it, and the terrible smell attached to it, into the house. Whoever, or whatever, he had seen down at the treeline last night hadn't just stood there in the woods, they, it, had been down to his house, stood on his very doorstep, perhaps peering in the darkened windows while he was unaware inside.

Now in the bright light of day Grant felt a confidence that hadn't been there the night before. He was 90% sure that whatever was going on was some sort of joke... but what if it wasn't? What if he really was having a series of encounters with a new, elusive, species of ape, a creature that had lived undetected in Scotland for thousands of years? It was just about possible. With all the new development around the Carron Valley, as trees were felled for houses and roads and people took more and more space, the areas where a large animal could live undisturbed were becoming smaller and smaller. There was still an uninterrupted corridor between the Valley and Cumbernauld however, small woodlands that were themselves under threat, but it was just possible that something could still move unseen through them. Could it be that all the human pressure had caused something to try and move to find new space?

Grant was excited now, if he could get some clear photos, or even better, video, this was a chance to make an incredible discovery.

Grant spent the rest of that day in preparation, a few hours work with a tarp, some netting and a lightweight frame let him build a kind of mobile hide. He set up his camera traps all around where the creature had stood the night before and as bait he placed a huge store of peanuts, fruit and vegetables. He had no idea what the animal ate, but if it was an ape, he guessed it would be vegetarian.

As night fell Grant positioned his hide. For some reason he couldn't explain he had been becoming increasingly nervous as the light fell – more than he felt could be explained by the thought of the creature. At the last minute his nerve failed him completely and he retreated back indoors. He locked all the doors and sat in a comfortable chair, his eyes fixed out into the darkness. Every time he felt himself drifting off he imagined those red eyes and the jolt of adrenaline jerked him awake. A few times he thought he heard the crack of a branch in the darkness and at one point he was sure he caught a whiff of the creature's scent but he saw nothing and when dawn came he was glad to stand and stretch.

He stepped out into the light and walked over to the bait, which still lay where he had left it the night before. Nothing had been disturbed – which was unsurprising as he'd been able to see it all night in the lights of the garden. He walked to the edge of the garden, and almost immediately was hit by the smell. Cautiously he headed for the first camera trap, he reached the tree he had fastened it to the night before... it was gone. The metal chain which held it in place lay neatly coiled on the ground, snapped in two. He quickly went round the other traps, only to find the same result. In each case the trap was gone, the sturdy metal locks broken on the ground.

Grant walked the tree line, contemplating what could have happened when he suddenly came across a large area of flattened vegetation. He quickly looked around. Everything – wildflowers, thistles, even a small tree - over an area covering several square feet had been flattened to the ground. It didn't take much knowledge of tracking to reconstruct that there had been something very big standing here for a long time overnight. He looked back to his house. Whatever had stood here had been able to see the house but was right on the edge of the circle of light from the surrounding houses and streets. It had been able to see him, but he hadn't been able to see it.

The creature seemed to be sensitive to light, he tracked its path and it had walked right round the edge of the lights cast by the street lamps, houses and gardens, but it had never once set foot in the open where these bright lights could touch it. It made sense. An animal that had managed to live hidden and undetected alongside people would have to avoid light. It was a behaviour that probably went back tens of thousands of years, the creature learning to stay hidden outside the circles of firelight created by the first bands of humans, perhaps it could even see the infra red light from his camera traps.

It was time for Plan B.

Grant spent the afternoon moving his small hide to a spot overlooking where the creature had been the night before. It was well concealed and safely within the range of the house lights which he felt sure the creature would not enter. Just in case however he rigged up a floodlight on the back wall with a remote trigger, if he felt threatened he would be able to illuminate the whole area very quickly.

He replaced his bait in the centre of the crushed area of vegetation. On a whim this time he added a chunk of raw beef in amongst the other choices – the creature hadn't taken anything the night before, perhaps meat was its weakness.

His preparations complete, Grant headed indoors to grab his camera which had been charging all afternoon. His plan was simple. Once the creature entered the clearing he would trigger the garden floodlights and then use his camera to get the photographic and hopefully video evidence he needed.

He scooped up the camera, checked it had a fresh memory card and slipped silently into his hide. There was still some time until dusk, Grant got himself into a comfortable position and raised the camera to his eye to focus on the bait... and received his first shock of the night. There was nothing in the clearing. In the few moments he had taken to fetch his camera and get into position, the bait was gone.

There was still a little light in the sky, Grant raced out from his hide, and holding the trigger for the garden floodlight like a talisman, approached the clearing. As he entered he realised most of the bait, the peanuts, fruits and vegetables, were still there but had been messily scattered around. Only the beef joint was missing completely. In the dim light he could clearly see where it had been – and he could make out the tracks of whatever had taken it, huge imprints of bare feet, heading deeper into the woods.

Grant was infuriated now, he was still unsure if this was an animal or a neighbour playing silly games, he decided to give chase. He plunged into the woods following the track, whoever it was wouldn't be able to get far. The trail led only a few dozen yards into the trees before it reached another clearing – and there, right in the middle of it was Grant's bait. He examined it from afar. It was definitely the food he had placed out earlier, picked up and left in this new site. The objects lying next to it gave him further pause. If he wasn't mistaken those were his missing camera traps, taken the night before.

There was no sign of anyone around however, it all looked completely abandoned. Perhaps whatever had taken it had been frightened by his pursuit. If this was an animal, it had waited very patiently to get that meat, and those traps. It wouldn't give up on them easily... it would surely be back. Grant looked around carefully, he knew where he was and he knew that nearby there was an elder tree with a hollow at its base which hid a badger sett. If he could squeeze himself in there he would be invisible to anything in the clearing but he would be able to see the bait, and whatever came for it. He still had his hand-held camera with its powerful flash unit... whoever, or whatever, came for the meat wouldn't be able to hide from it.

It was risky, it wasn't what he planned to do earlier, but the creature, whatever it was, had really shown no aggression towards him. It was obviously afraid of the lights back at the house, this was probably his best chance of getting some evidence. Apart from his own fear of the unknown why was he worried? And it would still probably turn out to be one of his neighbours in a gorilla suit. It was almost total dark now, he didn't have time to think, Grant made up his mind, he resolved to wait.

He squeezed into the space beneath the elder. The thick branches made the space seem like a cave, there was just enough space to lie down, but there was no room to move or turn around. Once he was in, he wouldn't be able to get back out quickly. For a moment he had second thoughts, the same deep-seated primal fear which had driven him indoors the night before was settling again in the pit of his stomach, but adrenaline pushed him forward.

And then it was too late for second thoughts. A loud crack came from the clearing, something was moving. Something big. Grant peered through the undergrowth. The noise changed, this time there was a dull thump, and a stir of vegetation. It was as though something were hitting the ground just in front of him. He squeezed further forward into the space, trying to see.

The noise came again, clearer now. A crack of something solid hitting wood, quickly followed by a thump on the ground. He watched the clearing closely and this time he saw it, in the low light a hefty rock arced through the air, over the clearing and hit a tree in front of him with a crack. It fell to the earth with a dull thump, bouncing off the ground, fixing his attention to the front. He felt uneasy again, he couldn't explain the deeper sense of dread that was passing through his body. The hair on his arms stood on end, his breathing quickened, a flood of adrenaline brought him out in a cold sweat. It was a pure fight or flight response, as though something, deep in his genetic past sensed danger.

He thought for a moment about the creature and its fear of light. It had been out in the daytime – it must have been to take his bait from under him like that. It wasn't light it was really afraid of then... could it be... could it be that it was only human made light it avoided? But if it was afraid of human light why had it stood on the edges of it watching him? If it wanted to avoid humans, it could do – lots of animals did – why would it approach humans at all if it was afraid of them?

Grant's attention, which had been fixed forward by the noises of the clearing in front, now focussed on the gentle breeze on the back of his neck which signalled the wind

had changed. And as he noticed the wind so he became aware of the smell, the heavy, fetid, stinking musk of the creature filling the air, coming not from the clearing in front of him, but from the silent woods behind and, smelling the animal in the darkness for the first time, Grant felt the purest fear he had ever experienced.

As he lay there trembling in fear, ears straining for noise behind him, he felt the branches at his feet slowly part, and heard a satisfied 'huff' of breath, bringing with it the roiling stink of part digested meat as Grant felt the first light pressure on his legs as something began slowly putting its weight on them.

Grant was frozen in terror, as though his body had gone into overload. He couldn't move, but his mind still raced, and now he felt he finally understood his mistake. While he had been searching for ways to get the creature in front of his camera lens, to lure it in, it hadn't occurred to him that it might also be setting its own plans to lure him out.

Grant considered a creature that is inexorably drawn to humans, like a wolf is drawn to a deer. Moving silently in the night, lurking in the shadows on the edges of our homes and communities. It would follow the light and smell of our fires, track us, stalk us, picking its time and place carefully. Perhaps it might learn over thousands of years of hunting to avoid the lit areas where groups of humans gathered, instead it would use its cunning to split a single individual out from the group, to lure someone away from the help of their community, away from the safety and light of their homes.

The pressure on his legs increased and Grant felt himself being pulled almost gently backwards through the elder tree. He tried to hold onto a branch but the force pulling at him was immense, nothing he could do could stop himself moving slowly, inexorably, backwards. He tensed and summoned up all his courage to twist and look behind. A broad shape filled the entrance to his hiding place, its outstretched arms holding his legs firmly, irresistibly pulling him closer. He triggered his camera, the bright flash filled the space but this time the light made no difference. The Grey Man knew there was nothing for it to be afraid of now, there was no help coming out here in the dark of the woods, far from the circle of lights around the town.

It was many weeks before the camera was found in its hidden spot, beneath an elder tree deep in Seafar woods. When the memory card was examined a single photograph was found. It shows a man like shape, partially silhouetted against the sky, and a face, staring right down the lens, two red eyes and a wide mouth open in what almost looks like a smile – but full of sharp wicked teeth, glittering in the flashlight.



Leaf Monsters

- Leaf monsters are a special kind of creature that you only find in the woods at Hallowe'en. Trees use them to scare off any ghosts or ghouls that might try to live in their branches.
- To see them yourself, first go out and collect some colourful autumn leaves, bring them home and then use felt tip pens, markers or paint to reveal the monsters!
- These hair raising leaf monsters are sure to frighten off any long leggedy beasties that are lurking about your woods.

Changing Times

One of the consequences of human impact on the earth is that it can radically change the behaviour of the other species that share it with us. Species which are forced to leave their homes due to human disruption are forced to adapt in order to survive.

The biggest change people are making to the earth is climate change and Tracy works for a wildlife charity, trying to monitor the impact changing temperatures and weather patterns are having on wildlife. Part of her job involves monitoring habitat that is on the edge of new developments. Very occasionally, if the building work threatens a particularly endangered species, she is able to make changes to the developers plans, but more often than not any potential losses or worrying signs which she highlights are simply chalked down to the price of progress.

Over the years Tracy has seen evidence of climate change and human disturbance all over Cumbernauld. Species which had previously been unknown in Scotland like tree bumblebees and nuthatches are now common. She had recorded all sorts of strange plants, birds, insects and mammals moving north escaping rising temperatures elsewhere in the world.

But for every opportunity created for an animal to move north, there was an equivalent danger for species which already live here. Some of the species most at risk are those that hibernate, warm wet winters could tempt them out of hibernation, only to find there wasn't enough food yet to make it through to summer. When this problem was compounded by a loss of habitat and a new influx of people – and their cats and dogs in what habitat remained – it could be a lethal combination.

Today Tracy was focussing her work on these hibernating species in Forest Wood Wildlife Reserve on the Northern edge of Cumbernauld. Once upon a time this wildlife monitoring would have been done with paper and pencil, but Tracy was a great believer in modern techniques and most of her work was done using a variety of digital apps such as the one on her smartphone she used to record bats. Connected to a special microphone it was able to pick up the extremely high pitched noises that bats made while echolocating and record when and where it had heard them. It could even automatically compare the calls it heard to a database and identify the species of bats it could hear.

She didn't normally have the app running during the day when no bats could be expected to be about, but on this day she had accidentally triggered it earlier, and now, opening her phone she was surprised to see the alert icon that showed it had recorded data. Opening the tab she analysed the data, expecting to see that it had recorded a bat flying through the woodlands as she had walked through. It would be unusual to record one flying in the daylight but not completely unknown, some individuals did strange things, especially when under pressure.

She stared at the information on her screen with a frown, the app displayed its recordings as a graph of frequencies, normally she would be able to match them with a bat species immediately, but nothing she was looking at made any sense. She clicked the button that would automatically identify the calls and found the app had the same problem. The message 'species not recognised' flashed up on her screen.

There were things other than bats that made ultrasonic noises, machinery, electronic equipment of all sorts. In fact that sort of artificial noise could often cause enough disturbance to drive bats out of an area. But that wasn't what she was seeing here. Artificial noises tended to come in specific patterns, they were easily recognisable as such. What she was seeing had all the hallmarks of a natural source, but it was nothing she – or the bat database – recognised.

She opened up the options on the app and ticked the box that expanded the species database to look for those that were found outside Scotland. Immediately there was a match. It was only partial, but the app suggested that the call was that of a species called Brandt's Bat, *Myotis brandtii*, a species that was known in England but that had never been recorded in Scotland before. Tracy's interest grew as she read the information, Brandt's bats were rare, on the international Red List of critically endangered species. If she had evidence of an undiscovered population of them in Forest Wood it would be big news, it might even be enough to stop any further development near the site.

She checked the GPS co-ordinates of the recording, it had been picked up in a section of the woods which was right next to the new development, where the contractors had just begun drilling and digging into the earth, building foundations for roads, reprofiling the water flow, laying the first underground services. It was a lot of disruption Tracy mused, the sort of things that led to species moving. Bats were poorly understood, there was very little known about the sort of places they like to roost, except that a lot of them liked to do so underground.

Tracy dug about in her backpack and located her handheld bat detector which would translate the ultrasonic bat calls into a frequency she could hear. As she walked Tracy pointed the detector up into the tree tops, hoping to pick up a call, but there was nothing to be heard. She dropped her pack to the ground, pulled her phone out and checked the app, and found she had a hit. A partial call again, similar to a Brandt's bat but not enough for a hundred percent ID. She needed more. Tracy walked back to the GPS co-ordinates where the call had been recorded. Her bat detector could still find nothing among the tree-tops, but as she walked back and forward she felt a strange sensation, as though she could hear something, right on the edge of her ability to detect. It wasn't unknown, perhaps one person in a thousand can just about pick up a tiny part of the ultrasonic ranges that bats called in, and Tracy was one of those people.

On a whim she pointed the bat detector at the ground by her feet and jumped when it immediately began broadcasting a rapid series of loud clicks. She moved the device around, judging where the sounds were clearest, after a few minutes narrowing it down she found herself standing in front of a dip in the ground, from which the detector was picking up a loud stream of ultrasonic noise. She looked at her phone again, the app was recording everything but it was no longer linking the sounds it heard to Brandt's bat. This time the message 'species not recognised' wouldn't go away.

Tracy stepped forward, into the deep vegetation filling the hollow, she was staring at the app as she walked, trying to make sense of the signal, when suddenly she took a step forward, the ground disappeared from under her, and Tracy vanished from the world.

Tracy didn't know how long she lay there at the bottom of the pit which had been hidden by all the vegetation filling the hollow she had been walking through. She could see a thin sliver of sky, enough to see that the light had faded from the day. She ran through a quick mental self-assessment, her head felt heavy and she had a sharp pain in her chest when she breathed too deeply but otherwise she was OK, no broken bones or deep cuts. A few moments search located her phone lying on the rocky ground beside her, she picked it up and examined it but the screen was smashed beyond repair and it didn't respond to her attempts to turn it on.

She still had her bat detector which had somehow survived the fall clutched in her hands, and a torch which was always clipped to her belt. It wasn't much of a survival kit but it would have to do.

She flicked the torch on and looked around, she thought she knew what might have happened and her suspicions were confirmed a few seconds later when her light picked up the even line of a wooden support embedded in the mud wall beside her. It was a pit prop, this whole area had once been a hive of mining activity, she must have fallen in an old air shaft and ended up in one of the abandoned tunnels. She knew the mines ran all over Cumbernauld, had even explored a part of them when she had been younger, until a group of kids playing in the tunnels had disappeared one day. People had searched for them but no trace was ever found, the common consensus was that a rockfall or collapse had sealed them in somewhere where they couldn't escape. After that no one went into the tunnels anymore.

Tracy wasn't worried yet, her employers knew where she had been working, when she didn't check in someone would come looking and would find her backpack where she had left it above. They would find her quickly enough and in the meantime she might as well have a look around.

She flicked on the bat detector and swung it around. Immediately it picked up a stream of sounds, translating them as loud clicks and hisses. She took a moment to work out where the sounds were loudest, checked her torch and set off into the darkness.

She hadn't walked far when she came to a fork in the path, again she let her bat detector show the way and followed the route where the sounds were loudest. It wasn't long before she was deep into the tunnel network and the faint glimmer of light from the shaft she had arrived through was far behind. The mine seemed to absorb light, her torch beam could penetrate only a few metres in any direction. As she walked her attention was focussed on the detector but she couldn't help a growing feeling of unease, every now and again she thought she heard something behind her. She found herself swinging around quicky and at random intervals, hoping to catch something in the torchlight. There was nothing conclusive but she was convinced that there was something there, something that ducked away every time the torch beam swept near, that occasionally knocked loose a stone and sent it skittering down the tunnel behind her.

It was during one of these 360 degree sweeps that her torch illuminated the wall of the tunnel ahead and she spotted an area where it had broken down, a ragged hole leading to a chamber beyond. Curious, she poked her head through and gasped as she took in the space.

It was a natural cave, so big that her torch could only just reach the far walls and ceiling. She played the light around, examining the space and suddenly the beam came across something unexpected. In amongst the natural shades of rubble and debris on the ground the light picked up a splash of bright colour. She walked closer until she reached what looked like a pile of mud, wet from the water which was running down the walls. She poked the pile with her foot and stepped back quickly as it collapsed and a stream of brightly coloured cloth slid to the ground. Tracy stood and contemplated them, hardly believing what she could see. It wasn't just any old cloth, it was clothes. Brightly coloured children's clothes.

Tracy's breath caught in her throat, she shone the torch around the cavern, there were more piles all around. She walked to the nearest and found some ragged denim and leather, disintegrating in the humidity. Her torch caught a gleam of metal and glass amongst it and she identified an old miner's lamp. Another sweep, another pile, this time it was brightly coloured strips of material. Cat and dog collars she realised. And beneath them the pale gleam of bones. She thought back to the reports from the surrounding area of missing pets, and then her thoughts turned to the party of kids that had disappeared in the tunnels when she had been a child, and the stories from even longer ago of mining accidents, tunnel collapses, gas pockets. Miners disappearing in the dark over years and years.

As she contemplated this her attention was caught by a noise from the adjacent tunnel, a 'click', like a stone dropping and then a cascade of loose rock and pebbles. Tracy pointed her torch in that direction and this time she was sure she caught sight of a shape, moving quickly, heading further into the maze of tunnels. As she shone her torch, her bat detector, which she had almost forgotten holding, was pointed in the same direction and it emitted a buzz of clicks and whistles, which were abruptly cut off as the shape moved and disappeared behind the tunnel wall.

Tracy raced over the uneven floor to the gap which led into the tunnel, she pointed her torch in the direction the shape had gone there was nothing to be seen. Still however the bat detector was sending out a steady stream of noise. She pointed the torch in the other direction, back the way she had come, again she could see nothing but the bat detector was alive with the sound of ultrasonic noises. The sounds definitely reminded her of bats, but it was like no bat call she had ever heard before, the range of noises was totally different. There were the usual clicks, like bats made to echolocate, but in amongst them were shrieks and hisses. There also seemed to be more going on than simple direction finding, as Tracy listened moving her bat detector from one side of the tunnel to the other, she was convinced that the noise sources were signalling each other. Almost like they were having a conversation.

She heard a scrabbling noise from her right, where the first shadow had disappeared and swung her torch that way, as the light swung around this time she caught sight of a large, pale... something ... retreating down the tunnel out of sight. She peered down after it, it had been roughly human sized, but crouched over, moving on all fours. As she looked she felt a prickling on the back of her neck, she concentrated, she felt that just on the edge of her hearing she was picking up faint clicks from her left, as though something was quietly, stealthily, picking its way through the dark towards her. She swung the torch back to the left and suddenly the bat detector picked up a cacophony of sound. Again her torch picked up a pale, human sized shape, racing on all fours back up the tunnel away from her.

Tracy threw herself back into the cavern. The creature had been only a few metres away, it must have stealthily moved along the tunnel towards her while her attention had been fixed by its partner in the other direction. Was it possible that had been deliberate? Could the 'conversation' she had heard have been them making a plan?

But they were afraid of her light, that seemed to be the one thing keeping them at bay. Tracy stood back as far as she could get, with her torch pointed at the opening. She had never heard of creatures like this. They were so big! She couldn't think of any animal anywhere in the world as big as these which walked on all fours and used echolocation to see in the dark.

She was fascinated, but also worried. They had her trapped in this cavern, there was no way out, and the ominous piles of clothing and bones vividly suggested to her imagination what they might do if they caught her. But these animals, whatever they were, weren't the only things that could plan. Tracy moved over to the wall, keeping the tunnel entrance on her left hand side. She reached down to the bat detector and flicked the switch on the side that powered on its own inbuilt torch and placed this on the ground behind one of the mounds of clothing, pointing at the far wall. She then turned her own torch off and hurried over to the opposite side of the cavern, pressing herself up against a rocky outcrop that partially shielded her from the entrance to her right.

The torch on the bat detector was small and weak, it barely illuminated the back edge of the cavern. Tracy was gambling that the light it cast would not be enough to put the creatures off from approaching. She would wait while they stealthily crept into the cavern and once they were past her she would race out through the entrance and back to the mineshaft she had fallen down earlier. With the torch to protect her and her back to a wall she was confident she could last there until morning arrived.

As Tracy thought this she sensed movement to her right along with the prickle on her neck that she now associated with hearing ultrasonic noises. Sure enough, when she concentrated, just on the edge of her hearing she picked up a faint clicking before the creature was suddenly right there in front of her, filling the cave entrance. Tracy looked on entranced. It was human sized but far from human. A pale body sloped up from the ground, short back legs were contrasted with arms that were almost like stilts, long and inflexible and attached to powerful shoulder muscles. In front of it all was a bulbous head, huge, pointed, mobile ears and a flattened muzzle partially open to reveal rows of needle teeth. It was as though a bat had somehow grown to enormous size and as it gained size had lost the power of flight and adapted to walking on all fours instead.

Where could such an animal have come from? How could it have existed unseen and unknown to science? Tracy's mind raced. She was here in the first place to study bats, hibernation and global warming. Bats were ancient creatures, they and their ancestors had existed on earth for millions of years. What if, untold aeons ago, one branch of the family had set on an evolutionary path that led to modern bats... and another branch had taken a different direction? Evolving to be the ultimate ground dwelling night predators. The creatures were hairless, perhaps they had evolved in a time, hundreds of thousands of years ago, when the earth was even warmer than today. And then as the earth had cooled they had been driven away from the frigid air above to the relative warmth underground. There would be little food down here to support such large animals but bats knew how to cope with that, they could hibernate when food was scarce and wake only when an opportunity to feed appeared. A mining party who broke into their hibernation chamber. A group of kids who wandered into their tunnels. Perhaps now as the global temperatures rose they were finding themselves able to survive longer periods above ground, enough to venture out and snatch pets wandering in the woods. If temperatures kept rising, maybe they would explore even further, into people's homes and communities.

These thoughts flashed through Tracy's head in just a few seconds as the first creature moved into the cavern with her and its mate followed. She could see both animals clearly now, they were moving slowly and cautiously. One turned its pale, eyeless head in her direction and she froze, the skin on her neck tingled again as she picked up the burst of ultrasonic clicks it sent in her direction. She held her breath as it seemed to focus on her, and then silently breathed a sigh of relief as it turned away, apparently satisfied that she was part of the rock wall.

Both creatures took another step forward. *Just a few more*, Tracy thought, willing them further into the cavern. They took another step, another... and then everything seemed to happen at once

As the creatures rounded the cloth pile protecting the bat detector it picked up their calls and spat out a long series of loud clicks. The animals reacted violently to the noise, leaping to one side, and Tracy burst out of her hiding place, activating her powerful torch as she raced for the exit. She gave it everything she had as she exploded into the tunnel and raced along the stone path until her lungs were bursting, throwing herself wildly around corners and leaping obstacles. Eventually she saw the entrance to the mineshaft area that she had originally fallen into ahead, and she risked, for a second, looking over her shoulder. There was nothing behind her.

Gasping for breath Tracy sank to her knees facing the tunnel which was filled with the bright light of her torch. Slowly her body returned to equilibrium, her breathing slowed, her heart eased its hammering. She peered down the tunnel, and thought she could detect a shadow moving, at the very limit of the light, but there was no way it could get closer to her without being exposed.

Tracy stood slowly and dared to relax slightly. With the dead end of the mineshaft behind her and the lit tunnel ahead she was sure she was safe until morning. As her breathing eased and her mind settled she was able to take stock of the last few moments. She replayed the mental image of the second creature as it had walked into the cavern on its stilt like legs and turned its eyeless face towards her. Eyeless. She thought about that for a moment. If the creatures had no eyes... then why were they afraid of her light? She felt a familiar prickle on the back of her neck and thought about her last sight of the creatures as she had burst from her hiding place. They had been leaping for cover themselves, but not because of the weak light from the bat detector... Because of the noise it was making. She saw again the animal's pale face with its huge mobile ears. They had never been sensitive to the light of her torch, she realised, they had always been hiding from the amplified sounds of the bat detector.

The prickling feeling on the back of her neck increased and as she concentrated she thought she could hear just on the edge of her hearing a faint 'click' of echolocation from behind. She slowly turned and brought her torch up to illuminate the bottom of the mineshaft behind her. There, barely two metres away, stood a huge bat like creature, as tall as she was. She noted now the vicious claws on the end of its pole like arms and the needle sharp teeth in its partly opened mouth.

'Click'. She heard the sound clearly as it raised its claws towards her.

Tracy backed away, opened her own mouth, and wondered how long she could keep screaming.

Hallowe'en is a great time to go exploring, why not head out into the woods and see how many of these spooky objects you can find....

- A stick that can be used as a magical wand
- A leaf the same colour as a pumpkin
 - A spider's web
 - A monster's eyeball (conker)
 - A goblins hat (acorn)
 - A witches' nose (pinecone)
 - A leaf shaped like a bats wing
- Some blood coloured berries (don't touch!)
- A leaf the colour of Frankenstein's monster (green)
 - A stick big enough to be a witches' broom
 - A bridge a troll could hide under
 - A hole that a bat could live in
 - A mushroom that a fairy might sit on

**Hallowe'en
scavenger hunt**

The Witch's Tower

Cumbernauld Glen is a special place, an ancient woodland whose trees have stood there for as long as people can remember – thousands of years at least. In any woodland like this you can expect to find all sorts of wildlife – foxes, badgers, rabbits, pine martens, deer, otters, bats – but in an ancient place like this you might find, if you know how to spot the signs, that there are creatures even older, and stranger, than those.

But the Glen is also a fragile place, it is very easily disturbed and if people don't look after it, and respect the life that lives within it, it would be very easy to destroy. To prevent this happening the Glen has guardians. You might have heard of the Scottish Wildlife Trust or Cumbernauld Living Landscape, these organisations do their best to protect the Glen, but when it comes right down to it the Glen's last line of defence comes from a more unexpected source...

Deep in the Glen, down in Crow wood, opposite the Red Burn, there is a stone tower called the Dovecote. Most people glance at it as they walk past, but not many people really look at it, if they did they would notice something strange. The tower is tall and imposing, it looks like a great place to live, but it has only one window right up at the top covered with iron bars. There are also two doorways but there's no way to use them, they've both been bricked up to stop anyone getting in – or out.

Nevertheless some people, walking through the Glen late at night on certain days of the year, when the moon is halfway full, have reported seeing lights from the tower window. Other people have dismissed this as nonsense, and it's true that if you go down there looking for the lights you won't see them – whoever lives there always knows when someone is snooping around and is good at hiding from prying eyes.

It so happened that one day down in the Glen there was a visitor from out of town. He fancied himself as an outdoorsman and he loved to walk through wild places, camp out, and live wild for a few days. There's nothing wrong with any of that, but he was a very peculiar kind of outdoorsman, he wasn't like you and me, he didn't respect the places he visited. He would start fires, and make noise, play music, shout and swear, not caring who he disturbed.

He thought nothing of cutting branches off healthy trees to start his fire, throwing rubbish into the streams and smashing his bottles of drink on the ground when he was finished with them. He didn't care about the disturbance this caused to people and wildlife and he would happily walk away from his camp every day leaving the place in a terrible mess for someone else to clean up.

He had a dog which he took everywhere with him and he never had it on a leash, he would let it run wild through the woods, killing young birds and scaring away sensitive animals like otters. Sometimes he would laugh when he heard his dog chasing a poor deer or found it digging into a badger sett.

The man set himself up in a beautiful spot down by the Red Burn. There was a family there enjoying the woods but he soon scared them off, cutting down a tree with his axe and setting it alight right next to them. As the family hurried away a Raven spotted them and flew down to the clearing to see what had happened. It looked on in horror as it saw what the man was doing, disturbing the peace and making an awful mess. It watched for a while and then took off, flying back through the trees towards the tower. It might surprise some people to see a Raven fly into the Dovecote through the gaps in the bars on the window, but it wouldn't surprise those who know the tower's other, older name... the Witch's Tower.

Not long after, the outdoorsman was sat around his blazing fire with a bottle of drink. It was starting to get dark and he was thinking about cutting down another tree to have more firewood. There was no need for a fire as it was a warm night but he didn't care about that, he liked the crackle and the smoke and he liked playing with his axe, breaking tree branches and cutting the bark of trunks. He threw the rubbish from his dinner into the bushes beside him and stood up and was surprised to see a woman standing right by his tent.

He looked at his dog angry at it for not warning him someone else was nearby. *"Hey, who're you?"* he said loudly, *"Get away from my fire, this is my spot, away and find somewhere else"*.

I know this sounds shocking – no real outdoorsman would ever turn a stranger who might be in need away from his fire – but this was the type of person we're dealing with.

"I live nearby" said the woman, "I've come to ask you to respect the woods. Please, don't cut down living trees, there's plenty of dead wood on the ground if you must have a fire. And don't throw your litter into the stream or smash bottles on the ground."

The man just looked at her and laughed.

"Or what? I have every right to be in these woods and I can do what I like. You can't stop me. Now get away with you before I set my dog on you."

The woman looked back at him calmly.

"Very well" She said "You're right, I can't make you leave, you have the right to be here. But just remember that with rights come responsibilities. And remember also that I came here and asked you nicely first."

And with that she turned and walked away, vanishing into the woods.

The man thought about her words for a minute. What did she mean by 'first' he thought? But soon after he turned his thoughts back to his fire. He'd lit it at the base of a tree and the fire was slowly eating into it, killing it. He threw his glass bottle away, enjoying the sound of it smashing, settled down with another and before long he'd forgotten all about the woman.

He was still sitting in front of the fire an hour later as the last light of day faded from the sky. He looked up at the sun and squinted as he saw what he thought was a huge cloud moving across it. It grew larger and larger and it only took a few moments for him to realise that it was no cloud, but an immense flock of birds! Crows, magpies, ravens, rooks and jays. Every one carried in its beak a bundle of wet leaves and as they flew over his fire they dropped them until they formed a huge soaking wet pile which smothered his fire, putting it out and filling the clearing with dense black smoke.

The man looked on in amazement. He had never heard of such a thing. He reached out with his lighter and picked up a piece of wood, but as soon as he did a crow swooped out of the forest and raked his head with its claws forcing him to drop it. This happened again and again, every time he reached towards the fire another bird flew over and scraped his head with its beak or knocked the twigs out of his hands. He tried ordering his dog to fetch some sticks, but the same thing happened, and it came running back to him, ducking its head as crows swooped at it.

He soon thought better off this and with blood running down his head, and scratches all over his arms he retreated inside his tent. The dog tried to follow him in, but he pushed it away and firmly zipped the tent closed. He lay there for some time in the darkness, listening but he heard nothing more and soon, the effects of his night's drinking making itself known, he found himself drifting off to sleep.

Later that night, with the only light in the clearing coming from the moon, he was woken with a start by the sounds of something creeping quietly outside his tent. It was faint, just the occasional rustle of a moving leaf, the faint crack of a twig, the soft noise of footsteps in the dark circling his clearing.

"Who's there!" He shouted. *"I'll set my dog on you."*

There was no reply. He lay as still as possible, straining to hear and soon the noises began again, faint soft sounds circling his tent, round and round.

He built up his courage and reached out a hand to slowly unzip the tent and peer out into the moonlit clearing. At first he could see nothing, but as his eyes adjusted he began to see a shadow moving, just over by where he had thrown his rubbish earlier that night. He reached into his tent and pulled out a powerful torch and flicked it on. There, caught in the torchlight, he was amazed to see two foxes, the biggest he had ever seen. They were stood, frozen in the light, looking back at him, their teeth bared in a snarl. He just had time to notice that each had a pile of his litter at its feet, almost as though they had been collecting it, when he heard a terrific screeching and hissing noise from the nearby trees. He looked up in time to see the broad white wings of a barn owl coming out of the night sky directly at him, its talons outstretched and aimed at his eyes. He ducked back into the tent and the shadow of the owl passed directly over, its claws hissing over the fabric of his tent, tearing the material where they touched.

He huddled back into his tent clutching at his knees and sobbing in terror. He didn't know how long he lay like that, but it must have been some time because when he heard the next sound the moon had almost gone from the sky, leaving the clearing darker than ever. This time the sounds he heard weren't the faint scuffings and stealthy footsteps of foxes. These were much louder, heavy and direct. There were snufflings, as though a large creature was breathing deeply, barks and snarls. There was clearly more than one animal out there now and it sounded like they were coming out of the woods straight for him.

No sooner had he had this thought than they were there. There was a crash as something large and heavy leapt on to the side of his tent. At the same time something began lifting the corner of it up into the air, there was a tearing sound and a great black snout burst through the material, violently shaking it from side to side. The man leapt backwards out of his tent, bursting through the doorflap and landing in a heap outside. He scrambled at the ground, his legs and arms windmilling as he tried to push himself away. He still had his torch and as he struggled it flicked on, the torchlight speared out and caught in its light the huge grey, white and black bodies of a clan of badgers furiously tearing at his tent. He had never seen badgers like these before, almost as large as bears, their powerful teeth and claws making short work of his flimsy tent as they tore it to pieces. He watched helplessly as each one took a piece in their mouths and then disappeared into the woods carrying it, leaving him helpless and alone.

He thought to run, the entrance to the Glen couldn't be far away, he swung his torch around looking for the path but as he did he caught a pair of glowing eyes, shining back at him from the silent woods. Terrified he jerked the torch away but when it settled again he saw the light reflected back at him from another pair of eyes staring at him from the trees. Again and again he swept the torch, trying to find a way out but everywhere he looked the sinister eyes looked back. He was trapped.

The man spent the rest of the night like that. His back to a tree, too afraid to move, too afraid even to make a noise in case the eyes from the woods came for him.

Finally a glimmer of light appeared in the sky. Dawn had come. In the gathering light he spotted his dog, cowering on the far side of the clearing. He called to it and, reluctantly, it slowly walked towards him. Soon it was standing next to him, tail down, ears flat to its head, as he shouted and scolded it for not protecting him the night before. Finally he raised a hand, intending to hit the poor animal, when he was stopped by another sound from the woods.

He looked up and there, on the edge of the clearing stood a beautiful deer in the middle of a wide path, leading back up towards Cumbernauld. The deer looked at him and then deliberately side stepped off the path. It looked at him again and then to the path. The message was clear, it was offering him a way out.

But the man wasn't the type to be cowed by a deer. He'd eaten venison many a time, had illegally snared them and trained his dog to chase them and bring the down. He sneered at the deer.

“Was that the best you could do? I’ll admit I was scared last night, but it’s daylight now, and there’s nothing a deer can do to me. You’re nothing more than breakfast.”

And with that he ordered his dog to attack the defenceless animal. The dog didn’t move at first, it cowered back, but the man turned and kicked it, shouting at it to do as it was told, Reluctantly, training overcoming its better senses, the dog ran across the clearing barking. The deer didn’t move, the dog stopped and looked back at its master who urged it on.

“Go on, get it. If you don’t it’ll be the worse for you.” And he bent and picked up a large rock as he spoke.

The dog turned and did as it was told. It leapt forward and bit at the hind legs of the deer, but as soon as the dogs teeth touched flesh it gave a shriek of pain, and without a backward glance raced off howling into the woods.

The deer never moved, just stood staring back at the man who was could hardly believe his eyes. It shook its head and then turned, and with blood running down its leg limped into the woods. As it did the wide path it had been walking on seemed to fade from sight, as though the trees themselves had moved to cover it.

The man was still standing almost in shock staring after the retreating howls of his dog when he caught movement again from the corner of his eye. He looked around and saw to his surprise the woman from the night before walking into the clearing. He saw she had a limp and a fresh bandage around her leg and in her arms she carried a sack which she emptied onto the ground in front of her. Out of it spilled the fabric of his ruined tent, all the litter he had thrown away, the smashed shards of glass from his broken bottles, in fact everything he had brought with him, intending to leave it behind when he left the woods.

“You can’t say you weren’t warned.” The woman spoke. *“You told me yesterday that you knew your rights, well I’m here to remind you of your responsibilities. And to tell you something that maybe you don’t know.”*

She paused and looked at the woods around her.

"These woods are ancient, they stood here before people like you ever walked the earth. They are full of life, and where there is life there is magic. Ancient magic. Your ancestors knew it well, but it seems you need reminding. We are all bound together, the woods, the animals, the people. We all work as one. Every action we take in this world has an effect, good or bad. And everything we touch becomes part of us. No real outdoorsman would ever treat living things like you do. Cutting down trees, hurting animals, leaving behind the rubbish and mess you were going to, because they know better. Those things you have damaged, everything you have ever carelessly thrown away, are part of you now. Your responsibility."

She looked down at the pile of rubbish at her feet, bottles, cans, paper, plastic.

"You have not shown respect for this place. Its time you learned some."

As she spoke animals appeared from the forest all around. Crows and ravens, hawks, pigeons and owls flew through the air. In the trees he saw squirrels and pine martens, on the ground came mice, voles, beetles, foxes, rabbits, deer – in fact every animal he'd ever heard of, and a few more beside. Each took in its mouth, paw or beak a piece of his rubbish and disappeared back from where it had come.

"You are part of these woods now. And you can never leave. Until you have collected every single piece of every thing you ever brought in here, until you have repaired every piece of damage you have ever caused, replaced every tree you ever killed, you will never find peace, and you will never find your way home. This is your punishment. And your lesson."

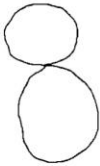
And with that the woman turned and walked back into the woods and disappeared.

The man ran after them but as soon as he stepped into the woods he was immediately lost. No matter which way he turned, no matter how far he walked, he could never find a path, could never find the edge of the woods. He walked for hours, far longer than it should have taken to walk right across the Glen, but he couldn't find a way out, or any sign of people at all. Finally he stood exhausted. The sun was sinking in the sky and as it did its light glinted off a tiny piece of glass right at his feet. He looked at it for a while. And then bent down to pick it up.

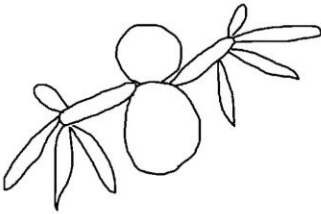
Sometime later the man's dog was found wandering around Cumbernauld Village, it was taken in by a charity and given a new home where it was well looked after, but no one could ever trace its former owner. The man never left the woods again. No one ever really looked for him, he wasn't much loved, but some people swear that they've seen him wandering the woods with a great bag full of all the rubbish he's found. Others say they've watched him on his hands and knees scouring the ground looking for pieces of glass from smashed bottles, sweeping away all the ash from fires, or carefully tending damaged trees. Always near by there will be a Raven watching and sometimes, on nights when the moon is just right, it flies back to the Witch's Tower, where there is a light on in the window and the woman listens, waiting to hear if the man has learned his lesson.



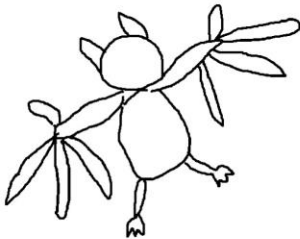
Draw a Bat



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 bat. All you need to do to start is draw two circles with a pencil



Add a few more ovals to make up the arms



Add some more details, ears and feet to start



Go over the pencil lines you want to keep in pen and rub out those you don't need any more. Add the wings and shade them in. Don't forget you'll need eyes, nose and mouth.



We all know that Hallowe'en is a spider's favourite time of the year. It can be great fun to go out looking for their webs – especially on a cold morning when you can sometimes see them covered in frost.

But it can also be a lot of fun to make your own!

First go out and collect some sticks from the woods – remember not to damage any trees, there are lots on the ground.

Lay your sticks down so they make a frame for your web.

Now tie them together where they cross, make it nice and secure.

Next you need to twist your string around each stick.

Start from the middle and work your way out, make sure to pull the string tight after each twist.

Take your stick home and hang it round your house to make a spooky Hallowe'en decoration!



Stick Spider Web

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@scottishwildlifetrust.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**

The Five Ways to Wellbeing



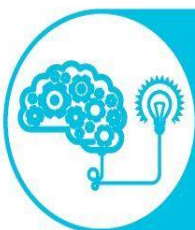
BE ACTIVE – Take part in health walks and practical outdoor activities. Explore your local paths, woods and greenspaces.

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.



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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Partners



Funders



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