



GET
INVOLVED
TODAY!

Creating Natural Connections Wild Ways Well Winter



Winter and Wellbeing

For many people the winter months can be a struggle, the “winter blues “ is something that most of us will have had some experience of. In severe cases this is also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and there is a sound scientific basis for its existence. Most scientists believe that the problem is related to the way the human body responds to the lack of daylight in winter. It is estimated that 2 million people in the UK suffer from SAD, experiencing feelings of low mood, irritability, lethargy, lack of motivation and sleep disturbance.

Another issue which makes winter a difficult time in the UK is that it contains two important time marking events in Christmas and New Year. It is not unusual for people to experience low moods around these time markers. Christmas in particular can be a very stressful time with money, family and relationship worries being brought to the fore.

One of the best things anyone can do to combat the winter blues is get outdoors. Research shows that outdoor exercise in natural light can be as effective as antidepressants in treating SAD.

Creative activities like painting or photography can also be therapeutic, helping you switch off from day to day pressures, turn negative thoughts into something positive and giving opportunities to both spend time outside and socialise.

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Winter Factoids

- The beginning of winter can be defined in two ways. Astronomically it begins on the equinox (1st or 22nd December; Meteorologically it begins on the 1st December.
- The Earth is actually at the closest point in its orbit to the Sun in January—3.1 million miles closer than it is in July.
- The coldest temperature recorded in the UK was –27.2 centigrade in Braemar. The coldest inhabited place on Earth is Oymyakon in Russia which averages –50 centigrade in winter.
- Snowflakes always have six sides and in 1988 scientists studying snow in America found two identical snowflakes that fell in the same storm in Wisconsin.
- In 1992, after a particularly hard winter, the city of Syracuse in New York State passed a law making snow before Christmas illegal.

What is Wild Ways Well

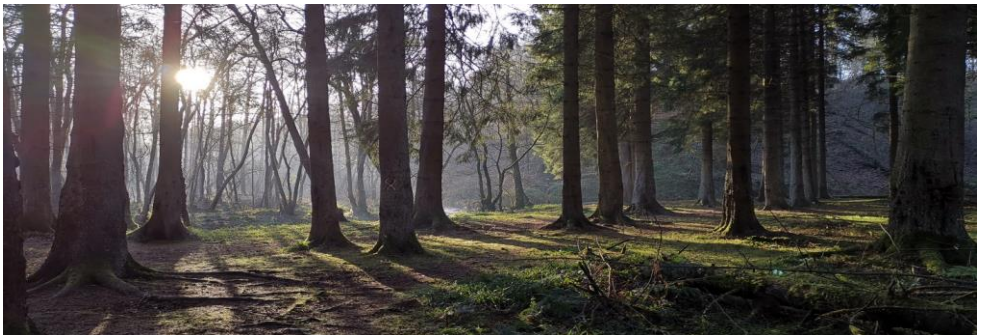
Wild Ways Well is a free health and wellbeing project run by Cumbernauld Living Landscape. It demonstrates what most of us already know instinctively- Spending time outdoors, amongst nature, makes people feel better about themselves and their lives. It is especially helpful for issues such as depression,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

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

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

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

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



Wild Ways Well and Winter

No matter how low the temperature getting outdoors in winter is always rewarding. There is a natural tendency to stay indoors in the warm but this is perhaps the most important time of year to make the effort to get outside and experience natural spectacles that just don't exist at other times of the year.

Find a greenspace near you and **Be Active**—go for a walk and discover what is there to be found. By walking you'll soon warm up your body and get access to sunshine and vitamin D, a scarce but vital resource at this time of year.

Take some time to experience winter with all your senses, **Connect** with the life all around you, share in its trials. You and the natural world are one, both engaged in the same battle against the cold.

Take Notice of everything around you. What signs of winter can you see? How will even the most delicate of organisms survive the times ahead? What can you learn from them? Look for the signs of life around you, tracks in the snow, nests revealed in the leafless trees. Many creatures are more visible at this time of year, more concerned with survival than camouflage.

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

There are lots of ways to **Give** in winter. You could help wildlife by leaving food out or providing water for animals like birds and small mammals. You could raise the profile of your greenspace by taking a camera out with you and sharing your photos with people you know or post them online for the world to enjoy. You could do the same by writing poetry or sketching. You can always share them with our Facebook or Twitter page too.

Winter is the time to recover and recuperate. To absorb the lessons you have learned over the past year and gather your strength for the year ahead. Nature must rest – and so must you. You are part of the immense web of life that has evolved on this Earth over millions of years and your body is tuned to the turning of the year. Don't fight the rhythm of the seasons, understand them and work with them – no matter how dark the Winter, Spring will come.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing



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

Spending time with nature improves wellbeing

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

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



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



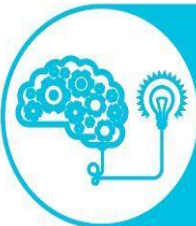
GIVE – Your time to be in nature. Give something back by sharing experiences and undertaking conservation tasks.

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

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



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



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

Winter has been the source of inspiration for some of the greatest writers and poets.

To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake it is necessary to stand out in the cold

Aristotle

Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire

Edith Sitwell

*What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it
sweetness.*

John Steinbeck

It is the life of the crystal, the architect of the flake, the fire of the frost, the soul of the sunbeam. This crisp winter air is full of it.

John Burroughs

*My old grandmother always used to say, Summer friends will melt away like
summer snows, but Winter friends are friends forever.*

George R.R. Martin

*In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible
summer.*

Albert Camus

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

*The colour of springtime is in the flowers; the colour of winter is in the
imagination.*

Terri Guillemets

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.

William Blake



"I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape — the loneliness of it; the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show."

Andrew Wyeth

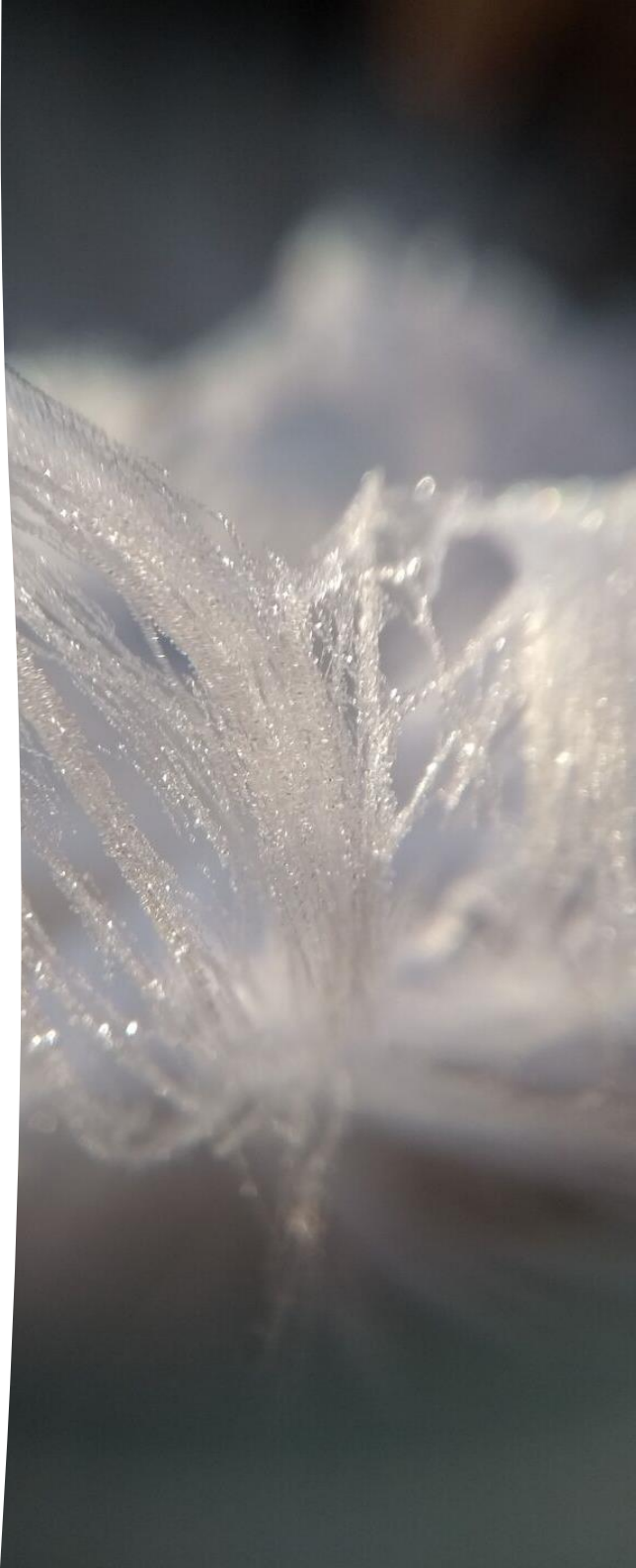
*The winter day,
One with sorrow
Carries a flower in the hand*

Lida Dakotsu

Frost flowers are a rare phenomenon where ice forms on dead wood or plants and 'grows' into silky, hair like strands.

Frost flowers need the presence of a tiny fungus which creates microscopic pores in dead wood through which the ice is forced by particular combinations of temperature and pressure.

Cumbernauld Glen is a great place to see these amazing formations, look for them growing on dead wood in sheltered spots on icy cold days. They melt quickly in the sun – or even from your body heat – so early morning is the best time.



"It was in winter that the islanders gathered round the hearth fire to listen to stories. Harvest was gathered in. The ears that had listened only to necessary farming and fishing words all the year of toil and ripening were ready for more ancient images and rhythms.

A tongue here and there was touched to enchantment by starlight and peat flame."

George Mackay Brown



Traditions and Folklore

In the traditional belief systems of some parts of Scotland winter was ruled by the Cailleach Bheur—also known as the Carlin, or Beira, Queen of Winter.

Beira was usually depicted as an old woman, she appeared every year in late autumn as the earth was dying, carrying a staff which froze everything it touched and bringing winter storms in her wake. Her breath was the chill winds of the North, she would search the land and cull anything whose time it was to die but would also find and protect the seeds of life buried under the ground, guarding them until spring.

The Cailleach is born as an old woman every year at Samhain (Hallowe'en) but grows steadily younger over the winter until she is a young maiden by Spring—at which point she turns into a grey boulder and rests beneath a holly tree to wait again for winter. This is why no wildflowers will grow beneath a holly.

She was also known as a creator goddess, using her staff and a magical hammer to create lochs, glens and mountain ranges all over Scotland—interestingly this corresponds with the actual action of ice and glaciers creating the landscape during the Ice Age.

Beira was the protector of wild animals, especially the wolf and the deer, giving them the abilities required to endure the harsh winter weather. She also protected fish and plants and was responsible for keeping the water flowing in streams and preventing wells freezing over. She is one with the land, her blanket is the snow which covers the ground and she always carries brushwood coated in frost.

The Cailleach is fierce and unforgiving but she isn't evil. Nothing she does is out of malice, she only takes what she must, what is essential to ensure the survival of all. She has the wisdom to let go of what is no longer needed and the seeds she guards give hope and confidence for the future. She facilitates change, the darkness of winter used as a symbol for new beginnings and new life.

To honour the Cailleach Bheur we should respect all life in winter and empathise with its struggle. We should walk through the woods, treading lightly, disturbing nothing and using our senses to see, hear, and smell the signs of life, death and renewal. We should let go of our past troubles and look for and guard the signs of spring to come.



"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, 'Go to sleep, darlings, until the summer comes again.'"

Lewis Carroll

Woods in Winter

When winter winds are piercing chill,
And through the hawthorn blows the gale,
With solemn feet I tread the hill,
That overbrows the lonely vale.

O'er the bare upland, and away
Through the long reach of desert woods,
The embracing sunbeams chastely play,
And gladden these deep solitudes.

Where, twisted round the barren oak,
The summer vine in beauty clung,
And summer winds the stillness broke,
The crystal icicle is hung.

Where, from their frozen urns, mute springs
Pour out the river's gradual tide,
Shrilly the skater's iron rings,
And voices fill the woodland side.

Alas! how changed from the fair scene,

When birds sang out their mellow lay,
And winds were soft, and woods were green,
And the song ceased not with the day!

But still wild music is abroad,
Pale, desert woods! within your crowd;
And gathering winds, in hoarse accord,
Amid the vocal reeds pipe loud.

Chill airs and wintry winds! my ear
Has grown familiar with your song;
I hear it in the opening year,
I listen, and it cheers me long.

Henry Longfellow

How do you feel about Winter? Write a story, a diary, a song or a poem.
Or just record your thoughts.

Coping with the Cold

There are many strategies used by species in Scotland to survive the winter.

One of the most extreme is **hibernation**. Hibernation is the process where animals conserve energy by slowing their metabolic functions such as heart rate, breathing rate and temperature through the winter months. In Scotland the only mammals which hibernate are bats and hedgehogs along with some insect species like butterflies and mason bees.

For some social insect species like bumblebees and wasps it is only the Queens who hibernate and survive the winter, workers and males live only for the warmer months. The Queen will hibernate after mating and will already be carrying the next generation ready to be born in the Spring.

The great danger of this strategy is that an unseasonal warm spell can cause animals to wake early from hibernation putting them in severe danger when temperatures fall again.

Other species, like squirrels, badgers, frogs and toads enter a hibernation-lite state called **torpor** where their energy levels greatly lower over winter though they are still active. They use less energy and eat less food but will still be out and about, especially on the warmer days.



Many species, like deer and foxes, will change the structure of their fur, growing thicker warmer coats for the cold months. Some species go further and even change colour— mountain hares and stoats can turn white in winter.

Reindeer have many adaptations for both the cold and lack of light in winter. A small area of tissue behind the retina called the tapetum lucidum changes colour from a gold colour in summer months to blue in winter. This allows the reindeer's eyes to detect ultraviolet light to help them see in low light. In addition a tendon in their ankle makes an audible clicking noise as they walk allowing reindeer to move as a herd even when they can't see each other.

Caching food is a strategy used by many species. Famously squirrels bury nuts in the autumn when food is plentiful so that they can recover it in winter. The brains of grey squirrels actually get bigger in winter to help them remember where they stored their food—it has been shown that red squirrels have a poorer memory than greys which may be another factor in their struggle to survive.

Some birds also cache food but they also follow other strategies. They will flock together during the day to maximise chances of finding food or spotting predators and huddle together at night to share warmth. Some species will even migrate, travelling huge distances to move to warmer parts of the earth. Arctic Terns migrate from one Pole to the other, covering up to 44,000 miles (71,000KM) every year.



Robin Red Breast

The humble Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) is firmly ensconced in the hearts of the British public, in 2015 it was named as Britain's national bird in a public poll.

From nature reserves, to parks, gardens and even urban streets, we're rarely far away from a Robin with its distinctive bright red breast and tuneful song. Unlike most birds Robins sing all year round, often from a hidden perch in a tree near a street light around dawn and dusk.

This tendency to sing all year reveals a bit about the hidden side of Robin lives. Although they appear very friendly and cheerful to us they are actually highly territorial and very aggressive birds –they will sometimes actually fight to the death over territory. They will not tolerate another Robin in their territory and in springtime they will sometimes attack anything orange/red coloured.

They build their cup shaped nests from dead leaves, small twigs, moss and hair usually well hidden on or near the ground – they are famous for nesting in all sorts of strange places like wellie boots, teapots, postboxes and sheds. Despite this they are actually nervous nesters and can easily abandon their nest and eggs if they are disturbed, so it is best to keep your distance. Only the female builds but the male will sometimes help gather materials and supply food. They can lay up to 6 eggs in a clutch which will take two weeks to incubate and another 10 days to fledge. Once fledged the male usually takes care of feeding the chicks for up to three weeks while the female gets ready to lay another brood – 3 or even 4 broods a season are normal.

There are probably more than 10 million Robins in Britain, they are omnivores, eating fruit and insects but are especially partial to things like spiders and mealworms. Robins are famed for their 'friendliness' to humans, often following gardeners around hoping to grab worms and insects disturbed by digging, and they can even be tamed enough to feed from the hand. This only seems to happen regularly in Britain however, in Europe they tend to be shy, secretive and rarely seen.

They began to be associated with Christmas in the UK in the Victorian era – postmen in those times wore bright red jackets and were nicknamed 'Robins' as they did their rounds delivering Christmas cards.

They are usually depicted as brown and red in pictures and on cards but next time you see one take a closer look... their bodies are really a greenish grey colour and their bibs are more orange than red!

How to Build a Nest

All the birds agree that the Robin makes the best nest, it is soft, cup shaped and hidden away in a secret spot, and her chicks always grow up strong and healthy. So one day they all got together and asked Robin to give them a lesson on nest building.

"First you need to find the best place for your nest. It should be cosy, flat and safe" said Robin, and that was enough for the Owls and the Woodpeckers, as they thought this perfectly described a hole in a tree. The Ducks hadn't been paying attention so they thought the lesson was over when the Owls left and they also flew off with only the vague idea that they ought to scrape a flat space on the ground.

Robin tutted as they flew off, *"if only they would listen"*, she thought. *"Next you need to collect some sticks..."* on hearing this the proud Eagles, who felt they shouldn't really be listening to a Robin anyway, felt they had learned enough and they flew off and built their nests from untidy platforms of pointy sticks and branches in high places. The Magpies, who also thought they were too clever to listen to a Robin, left too and to this day they make a messy pile of sticks in a tree.

Robin sighed. *"Just sticks will be very uncomfortable, you also need to add a lining of mud and soft moss or grass."* The little song birds were getting impatient, they had to get back to their singing, so they thanked Robin and flew off, sure they had learned enough.

The Sparrowhawk watched them go. *"If I wait just a little longer and then build my nest near theirs"* he thought *"then there will be lots of new fledged songbirds for my children to eat"*.

The Robin watched the Sparrowhawk follow the songbirds *"and finally you have to make sure your nest is well hidden and that no one sees you come and go."* she said - but there was no one left in the class to listen.



Fire

Fire is sometimes called humankind's oldest friend, some people even think that gaining the ability to make and control fire is what first set an unremarkable species of primate down the route to becoming the dominant species on the planet.

Humans are believed to have first started to use fire around half a million years ago perhaps by taking advantage of wildfires begun by natural processes. Animal carcasses caught in these flames provided a source of meat that was easier to eat and to preserve. A wildfire is a dangerous thing however and people would have to have found ways to control it.

As humans spread out of Africa they carried fire with them, in the form of burning embers. These embers stayed hot for long periods and could quickly be brought back to life.

Sites with charred earth and animal bones show that people made cooking fires and probably also used the flame to shape and harden wooden and stone tools. Some people think this transition to cooking and tool making represents the first clear difference between humans and other animals.

Once fire became a regular part of people's lives their survival chances hugely improved. The fire pit, or hearth, became an integral part of the home. Campfires provided food, warmth and comfort. They banished the cold, brought light to the darkness, drove away predators and became a source of comfort and fellowship where everyone could relax and share food and stories.

Fire was of great importance to many religions often as a symbol of life itself. Fire has two sides, it can symbolise love and celebration, but also danger, destruction and loss.

Even today we light fires at times of celebration and to mark the turning of the year, we light candles in remembrance and use burning torches to protest. The Olympic flame is perhaps the most famous example of the symbolic use of fire to represent peace, hope, renewal and purity.

A hot drink made over the fire is an important part of every Wild Ways Well session, providing a comforting ritual and a great opportunity to relax and safely socialise outdoors. We show you how to safely light, sustain and extinguish a small fire using traditional methods. After years of testing, with hundreds of opinions sought, we can confidently say that tea and coffee made over a fire and drunk outdoors really does taste better!



Winter Activities

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

Watch a sunrise

The great thing about winter is that you can watch sunrises without having to get up quite so early! Do it from a window or wrap up warm and get outside.

Look for frost patterns

Winter frost can make amazing patterns, often creating intricate designs on leaves and stones. Look for frosty cobwebs catching the light.

Track animals through the snow

Going out after a fresh snowfall or on an icy morning is the perfect time to see what creatures are around. Look for the tracks of animals like badgers, deer, foxes and squirrels.

Build a snowcreature

Building snowcreatures is an activity you don't get a chance to try very often! Instead of a snowman perhaps you could try creating a snow hedgehog with sticks for spines – let your imagination run wild!

Go stargazing

The Geminid meteor showers are in December and Venus is incredibly bright. Our ancestors knew the night sky intimately, have a look online for some constellations and then go look for them.

Watch birds

The bare trees reveal the secrets of bird nests which are normally hidden from us. Winter is also a great time to see unusual birds as they visit our gardens.

Try something arty

Head outside and have a go at some nature art. You could try leaving some leaves in water to make frost imprints, making snow angels, twig art or even stone balancing

Volunteer

Find a local volunteer group, community group or environmental charity and see what volunteering opportunities there are. Check www.volunteerscotland.net or join one of our Nature Ninja or Wild Ways Well groups.

Write a story

Winter is the traditional time for storytelling as communities gathered round the fire on cold dark nights to share tales. Try writing your own short 'folk tale' story.

Make a birdfeeder

You can make a simple birdfeeder with an apple, a twig and some string. You can find instructions online. Winter is an important time to feed birds as they can struggle with the lack of natural food sources. Don't forget to provide some water too.

Take a hot drink outdoors

There's something special about sitting outside in a quiet natural spot and enjoying a cup of tea or hot chocolate from a flask.

Go for a winter wander

Wrap up warm and go for a walk, explore a familiar woodland and see it in a new way in this new season. How are animals and plants surviving? Can you see any signs of the spring to come?

Make an Apple Bird Feeder

A great way to give something back to birds is to feed them! For this project you'll need an apple, a stick, some string and some seeds (we've used black sunflower seeds).



The first step is to carefully push your stick through the apple (you can remove the core if this makes it easier). This will create a perch for the birds to sit on while they eat.



Next add your seeds by poking them into the apple skin. This adds interest, birds who don't like to eat apple might still eat the seeds. You can put them in randomly or make a design like a face or even write a message!



Use the string to hang your apple up in a garden or green space where birds will find it. Hang it high enough to be out of the reach of cats or other predators. You can tie the string to the stick, or if you removed the core earlier, put the string through the apple. Now all you have to do is watch the birds enjoy your gift!



Windows on Wildlife

If you can't get outdoors to see wildlife then why not bring the outdoors in to you! All over the world there are thousands of internet connected cameras (webcams) which have been set up to watch wildlife. Many of these are easily accessible online and watching them and the animals they monitor can be great fun.

Some of the cameras will also have an attached forum or chatroom where people can discuss what they are watching so it can be a great social activity too.

At some times of the year the action can become quite intense and the drama can rival any soap opera.

You can witness the tension as we wait on an Osprey to come back to her nest and then the drama as she rekindles her bond with her mate and settles down to raise a family—with all the twists and turns of a Hollywood film along the way!

Or perhaps you'd prefer watching the daily affairs of a family of mice living in a tree stump or a badger clan playing around their sett. You might be able to watch a bait station in the Highlands of Scotland and see what animals come to visit for a meal - or watch a scratching post in the Highlands of Canada where bears come to scratch an itch!

There are other cameras to be found all over the world watching behaviours like orcas scratching their backs on sandbanks, hippos guarding their patch of river or chimpanzees living in social groups.

Interacting with nature in this way is good for our minds, we have an instinctive fascination for the lives of other natural living things and connecting with nature, even through a video screen, has been shown to really benefit our mental health.

A quick Google search will reveal hundreds of cameras but some good places to start looking are

- explore.org/livecams
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams
- www.visitscotland.com/see-do/wildlife/webcams
- www.africam.com/wildlife/index.php

Citizen Science

Another great way to help conservation from your own home is to get involved in Citizen Science. This is a term for when ordinary members of the public help scientists by collecting or processing the huge amounts of data that studies often require. It doesn't have to be difficult some of the best schemes are the simplest – if you've ever taken part in the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch you're already a citizen scientist!

Zooniverse

www.zooniverse.org

Zooniverse is a really easy to use website which was set up to help scientists advertise their research projects and attract volunteers to help them.

There are loads of different projects to choose from and they change all the time! For example, you could try out the '**Wild Watch Kenya**' project which has camera traps placed in a Northern Kenya to study giraffes. They are simply asking volunteers to help them look at some of the thousands of camera trap photos they have taken and identify which ones contain giraffes and other wildlife.

Other projects currently on the website include exploring chimpanzee behaviours, identifying wildflowers, listening to manatee calls, looking for plant references in old books, counting iguanas in drone footage and much more!

You don't need any previous knowledge or special skills, all instructions are given and are aimed at complete beginners. Why not try your hand at one of these projects and give something back to nature, science and conservation while you're indoors.

There are dozens of citizen science projects you get involved in in your spare time – here are a few more. There are lots more online, most are free to take part in and many offer training courses or chances to go out with experienced surveyors.

Dead Good Dead Wood www.tcv.org.uk/scotland/dead-good-deadwood-survey

Garden Bird Watch www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw

Bee Walk www.bumblebeeconservation.org/surveys

National Plant Monitoring Scheme www.npms.org.uk

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey www.butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/recording-and-monitoring/wider-countryside-butterfly-survey

Living with Mammals www.ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/garden/living-with-mammals

Mapping Roadkill hotspots www.projectsplatter.co.uk

Photo/Drawing Challenge

Try this sensory photo challenge or pick a few winter photo subjects and challenge someone to a friendly competition.

Item	Sense
Something Heavy	Weight
Something Soft	Touch
Something Cold	Heat
Something Camouflaged	Sight
Something Loud	Sound
Something Smelly	Smell
Something an animal might eat	Taste/Hunger
Something upside down	Orientation
Something moving	Motion

Quickfire photo challenges. Set yourself a time limit (5 minutes – 1 week) and challenge yourself, a colleague or a friend to photograph, draw, or even sculpt some of these things outdoors amongst nature. There's space to add your own.

Cold	A Flower	A Reflection
Warmth	A Leaf Bud	Lights
New Beginnings	A Wildlife Track	Human Hibernation
Frost	The Moon	An Extreme Close Up
Survival	Sunrise	Home
Something Missing	Something Heart Shaped	The Cailleach Bheur

Experience Your Senses

One of the best things you can do while you're outdoors is tune into your senses. We're all used to experiencing the world through the things we can see – but what about all the other ways we can interact with what's going on around us?

Lots of people say we have five senses - What are they?

Sight : Sound : Smell : Touch : Taste

Head out into a natural space, sit or stand somewhere quietly, and close your eyes. Concentrate on your breathing.

Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of 4 seconds.

Hold your breath for 4 seconds (or however long feels comfortable)

Exhale slowly through your mouth for 5 seconds

Do this five times and then open your eyes and say out loud:

Five things you can See
Four things you can Hear
Three things you can Feel
Two things you can Smell
One thing you can Taste

You actually have lots more senses than these five – can you think of any?

Heat – you can tell the difference between hot and cold.

Orientation – you can tell if you're standing up, lying down, or even upside down.

Movement – you can tell the difference between moving and standing still.

Balance – you know when you're going to fall over.

Proprioception – the sense of where your body is in relation to itself (close your eyes and touch your nose – how do you do that without looking?).

Hunger – you know when you need to refuel.

Can you think of any more?

Take these senses one by one and find a way to experience or examine them while in a greenspace.

How do you think the animals that live in these woods experience their senses? Do they have the same senses as you? What about the trees? What can they feel?



*The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blow;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snow:
While, tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.*

Robert Burns

Wee Ways Wild

Go out in the evening and listen for Tawny Owls – they call all winter long

Look for a starling murmuration – this is when hundreds, thousands or even millions of starlings gather together and fly in flocks in the evening

Take a walk through a park or nature reserve and look for spring bulbs beginning to poke up through the ground

Make some Swan and Duck food – don't give them bread, it's very bad for them! A mix of things like peas, grains, chopped up lettuce, cabbage and veg peelings (carrot and potato) will make a tasty treat

Make a footprint cast – you can find instructions to make plaster track casts online

Climb a hill! You can get some amazing views on a crisp, clear winter day

Go looking for 5 different types of tree by examining their buds

Make a nestbox – you can find instructions on the Scottish Wildlife Trust website www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/resource/build-a-nest-box-for-birds

Try stone balancing - www.stonebalancing.com

Go out into the woods at dusk (make sure someone knows where you are – or go with a friend) and experience the woods growing dark around you

Go out after snowfall and be the first person to walk across a pristine snow field.

If you have somewhere you walk regularly then make an effort to notice what's new. What has changed since your last visit? How is it responding to winter?

Make a wildlife record – write down what you saw, when you saw it and where you saw it, then submit it to www.brc.ac.uk/irecord

Wee Ways Wild

Go for a walk in the woods. Get as far away from roads and houses as you can and take a deep breath of fresh air

Wrap up well and go outside. Experience the cold, feel the wind and the frost on your skin – then go get yourself warm!

Catch a snowflake on your tongue!

Take your lunch and a hot drink outside and find somewhere natural to enjoy it

Write a letter to your local newspaper or post online in favour of conservation. Encourage a friend to care about nature

Find a new conservation blog or social media channel and follow it. Say hello to its writer, start a conversation

Listen to a Robin sing under a streetlight at dawn or dusk

Imagine you are animal which has to survive in the woods. How will you get through winter? Write your thoughts down

Move as quietly as you can through the woods. What do you see differently? Can you move as silently as a deer?

Look for winter colour – can you find colourful fungi, different coloured woods or even flowers?

Plan a trip for next Spring or Summer to a wildlife reserve or natural place. Where will you go? How will you get there? What would you like to see?

Put some water out for wildlife – even a small saucer, dish or plant tray will help

Volunteer! A great way to get outside is to join a volunteer group, check out www.CumbernauldLivingLandscape.org.uk

Join Wild Ways Well

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

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

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

Closed group programmes can be tailored to the interests, abilities and fitness levels of the participants involved. The project has successfully run groups of all ages and backgrounds. Past examples have included families with young children; teenagers; senior citizens; disability groups; refugee and carers groups amongst others.

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

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

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

Links

Cumbernauld Living Landscape

www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Wild Ways Well

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

The Conservation Volunteers

www.tcv.org.uk/scotland

The Scottish Wildlife Trust

www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

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

SamH

www.samh.org.uk

Our Natural Health Service

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

NHS Mental Health

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

The Samaritans

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

Breathing Space

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



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

cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

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

T 01236 617113

E cumbernauldll@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

f CumbernauldLivingLandscape

@WildCumbernauld

Partners



Funders



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