

# STAY HOME, STAY WILD LUGGIEBANK WOODS WALK AND ACTIVITY PACK



**How to get there:** Start your walk at Greenfauld's Station Park and Ride (on the south side of the railway line) G67 2RL. The wildlife reserve is to the south over Lenziemill Road (be very careful crossing the road).

**Description:** A generally flat route with only one or two short inclines. The path surface varies throughout from smooth surfaces to gravel or dirt tracks. The complete route is around 4km (approx 6000 steps) though it does involve walking back the same way you came.

**What to see:** A good mix of wildlife spotting opportunities: flowers, invertebrates and birds of prey in the open grassland area; woodland birds and mammals along the banks of the Luggie; and the possibility of river birds and mammals in the Luggie itself. The river itself is beautiful to watch as it winds through the trees.

Partners



Funders



Cumbernauld Living Landscape, 5-7 Napier Way, Wardpark North, Cumbernauld, G68 0EHF  
T 01236 617113 [cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk](http://cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk)

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For this week's Wild Walk we're going to visit the Luggie Water. It was immortalised in verse by the poet David Gray and his words will accompany us on our journey.

***"Rolled never golden sand into the sea,  
Made sweeter music than the Luggie, gloom'd  
By glens whose melody mingles with her own.  
The uttered name my inmost being thrills,  
A word beyond a charm..."***

You can't get a better invite than that!

If you've started at Greenfauld's Park and Ride then head down to the southernmost end of the car park (furthest away from town) and - carefully! - cross Lenziemill Road onto the mowed area of grass on the far side.

You'll spot a pond straight ahead protected by a fence. This pond (along with many others like it) is known as a SuDS – which stands for Sustainable Drainage System. SuDS are used by urban planners to manage rainfall, often near roads or houses. They are designed to transport water away from infrastructure which might be damaged by flooding and to slow down waterflows from manmade surfaces before they enter natural watercourses. If the fast moving water draining from a tarmac road were allowed to pour directly into a stream (such as the Luggie) it would cause huge damage to its banks. SuDS often slow this excess water by storing it in ponds and allowing it to slowly soak into the ground, or be taken up by surrounding vegetation. Well-designed SuDS can also use natural elements like stones and vegetation to filter pollutants from the water before they can reach natural watercourses.

Although primarily designed to control floodwater SuDS can be amazing resources for wildlife. There is little that is more important to life than water and wherever clean water can be found then life of all kinds will surround it.



Take a moment to look over the fence and see what signs you can see of local plants, birds, insects and mammals taking advantage of the water here. This can be a good spot for dragon and damselflies in summer.

Turn to your right once you're done and you should see a low gate leading to a path between two rows of trees. This path is lovely to walk along in spring as the light filters through the trees, and woodland birds flit in and out among the branches. Cumbernauld Living Landscape brings volunteer groups here every year to cut back the vegetation on either side of the path and to dig out the mud and grass from the path itself making it easier to walk down. You can read more about the work our volunteers do – and how you could join them – later in this pack.

This track follows the path of the access route to the Lenzie Corn Mill which stood here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and from which the local area of Lenziemill gets its name. The mill would have stood to your left as you walk down here and would have been an impressive industrial complex for its time.

Follow the path until it leaves the trees and begins to curve round to your left. Another industrial building stood here but now only a few mounds of earth remain. Wildflowers grow over it and provide a colourful display in spring and summer. Depending on the season you'll often find swathes of snowdrops or bluebells in here, but it's worth looking in among the showier plants for their smaller, humbler, brethren. My own favourite spring flower is the primrose, and you'll find them dotted around here, but look closer for signs of eyebright, speedwells, forget-me-nots and selfheal down among the grass. Spend a few minutes looking and take a tally of the different species you can find - it often surprises people just how many there are when you really look.





This whole area is part of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Luggiebank Wood Wildlife Reserve. The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a charity whose purpose is to champion the cause of wildlife, and one of the ways it does this is by managing habitat like Luggiebank. This is the smallest of the four wildlife reserves the Trust owns in Cumbernauld. It's a great example of how areas can still be managed for wildlife even surrounded by features like roads, railways and light industry. Check out the interpretation boards here for more information – and don't forget to look for wildflowers round them as well. Our Wild Ways Well and Nature Ninja groups have been planting in this section – look especially for yellow rattle in among the grass. In early summer this lovely little plant has yellow flowers which look a bit like parrots' beaks (some people have likened them to little turtles poking their heads out of the plant!) and in the late summer their brown seed pods make a distinctive rattling sound when disturbed. It's an important plant in wildflower meadows as it can parasitise grass roots, drawing nutrients from them and weakening the grass, helping to prevent it taking over.

To your right (southwest) you'll see the path stretch out over the grass toward some power lines. Walk this way first and take in the grassy area. This sort of rough meadow might not look that impressive at first glance but this is perfect habitat for a wide range of species. The differing grasses and flowers help all sorts of invertebrates like moths, butterflies, lacewings (pictured above) and bees thrive. Come in the morning and you'll also see the glitter of dew (or frost!) on the many spider webs which stretch between the grasses. Further down the rough ground is ideal for mice and voles which build tunnels among the vegetation and dig holes in the soft earth. These attract predators like stoats and weasels and birds of prey like kestrels, buzzards and owls which fly low and slow, quartering the fields.

Kestrels are one of our most impressive birds of prey. Their old name was 'windhover' and their ability to hover in mid-air, stiff wings flapping frantically, is unmatched by any other bird in the UK. You'll very occasionally see buzzards hovering but you can almost tell it doesn't come naturally to them, they labour away at it, looking very ungainly!



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The kestrel hovers as though it were the easiest thing in the world, constantly adjusting its wings, tail and body, but keeping the head perfectly still, its vision focussed on the ground below. Kestrels can actually see ultraviolet light - rodent urine fluoresces in ultraviolet, meaning kestrels can see the trails they leave around their burrows. Watch for long enough and you might be lucky enough to see the bird fold its wings and plummet like a stone to the ground – lucky for you, not so lucky for whatever was underneath it! If it has caught something the bird will probably ‘mantle’ over it, holding its wings in a distinctive way as though trying to hide the catch underneath them. It’ll then make a decision whether it feels safe enough to eat it on the spot or clutch it in its talons and fly off to eat elsewhere.

While their ability to hover is truly amazing kestrels aren’t above taking advantage of human infrastructure. Keep your eye on the power pylons as you walk, as you’ll often find a bird of prey on them, watching the ground for anything passing below, while giving its wings a bit of a rest!

Kestrel numbers have been in decline in recent years but their population is known to be closely related to vole numbers – the more voles there are, the more kestrels! Vole numbers naturally fluctuate over a four-year cycle. voles Will breed and breed until there is no longer enough food to support them – and then their numbers will crash. There can be ten times as many voles at the top of their cycle as at the bottom so it makes a big difference to the species which predate them. Unfortunately kestrels are also very vulnerable to habitat loss and pollution – as well as human persecution – and conservationists are worried about their future. Places like Luggiebank are key to their survival.

Follow the path as it curves until you come to a junction. Turn right and follow the path on down to the gate by the bridge where the reserve ends. It’s always worth a stroll down here to see what is happening – and also to get a glimpse of the site’s former history. As you walk take note of the line of trees to your right and then, just before you reach the pond at the bottom of the reserve you might be able to see a line of longer, lusher grass and wet earth coming down from them towards the path.



This is the last visible remnant of an artificial watercourse – called a lead or lade – which is shown here on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps. The lead was a flow of water which was siphoned off from the Luggie further upstream (we'll be passing the area later) and then diverted through the mill buildings to power their works.

The earliest maps show a flax mill also standing right on this spot with a sluice to control the water flow, but by the 1880s it seems that this was no longer operating - though the lead still existed to serve the corn mill. Once you've explored this area turn around and follow the path back to the junction.

This time take the path that leads south to the side of the river. For the next section we'll be walking along the banks of the Luggie Water itself.

David Gray, a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet from Kirkintilloch, describes the river in his poem (also called 'The Luggie')

***"Between its spotless clothed banks, in clear  
Pellucid luculence, the Luggie seems  
Charmed in its course, and with deceptive calm  
Flows mazily in unapparent lapse,  
A liquid silence."***

Slightly less charitably however the Gazetteer of Scotland in 1867 records

***"It is a dull, sluggish, ditch like stream."***

I guess beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

The origin of the name Luggie itself isn't clear. It might derive from the Welsh/British for 'bright shining water' or alternatively the Gaelic for 'low lying hollow place'. It could even have something to do with the Scots word for wooden bucket! It probably has nothing to do however with the story of Luggie Jean which is often brought up locally. Luggie Jean was a woman from Cumbernauld who was tragically murdered in 1880. She was supposedly named for her large ears (some say she had three ears!) and it has nothing to do with the stream – though her ghost is said to haunt the nearby woods seeking justice...

The Luggie rises in Fannyside Muir, as does the Red Burn. These two streams are destined never to meet however. Cumbernauld lies on Scotland's watershed and while the Red Burn runs east to the Forth and the North Sea the Luggie turns away to the west and eventually joins the Kelvin and on into the Atlantic.

As you walk alongside it here the flow is quite gentle and the banks are shaded with trees giving a real feeling of tranquillity. It is best to view the water from the path. The banks here are fragile and constantly eroding. Streams like this are prone to erosion as the river naturally twists and turns its way across the area. This is natural but it can be a problem when erosion starts to affect infrastructure like paths. The Scottish Wildlife Trust has been planting willow trees as a natural erosion prevention tool. Willows love to live on wet ground, often with their roots actually in the water. The roots will hold soil, stabilising the bank, and their strong, flexible structure means they can absorb the strength of flood waters, dissipating the force to prevent damage.

Take a look at the water. You can sometimes see trout here in the shallow, still pools and otters prowl the waters. Look for their footprints in the mud.

Use all your senses, take in the light shining through the trees, the sound of the water flowing over the stream bed.



***"Ah Luggie! Sure you murmur now  
Clearly and dearly o-er thy pumy stones  
And when amid a pause of thought they hear  
Thy babblement of music, never a shade  
Darkens their souls. Thy song is happiness  
A revelation of sweet sympathies  
By them interpreted; for never yet  
Was Nature sullen when the spirit shone."***

Keep following along the path and you'll pass another junction on your left which takes you back up to the entrance you came in. We're not going that way for now though. Head straight ahead and follow the path as it gently climbs. The old mill would have been on your left here and there are still signs of disturbed earth.

The path is lined with a mix of trees and tall flowers, including, in summer, the beautiful and uncommon melancholy thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*). You can recognise it by its drooping head topped with an incredible deep red-purple thistle. It has no spines on its stem and the leaves have downy white hairs on the undersides. Commonly you'll also find each flower covered with bumblebees, which cannot resist this plant. The nectar seems to have an intoxicating effect on the bees. They crawl slowly, as though drowsy on the flowers, waving their legs in the air, and they can hardly be persuaded to leave even if you get very close.

As the name suggests melancholy thistle was historically believed to be able to treat depression. For me just looking at it on a sunny day, with the drone of bees around me, can certainly lift my mood.



***“All the green  
Of sweet leaves playing with the subtle air  
In dainty murmuring; the obstinate drone  
Of limber bees that in the monkshood bells  
House diligent; the imperishable glow  
Of summer sunshine never more confessed  
The harmony of nature, the divine  
Diffusive spirit of the Beautiful.”***

The line of trees you can see on your left over the meadow is still marking the course of the mill lead. This is a feature that is likely to exist in this landscape for a long, long time.

The path will curve north. Follow it as it meanders through the trees until it starts to turn sharply east and the gradient starts to get a little steeper. The Luggie is bending back on itself here and this is the point where the Lenziemill's lead water was drawn from, through a sluice and down to the mill itself. There is a weir here which was also used to control the water flow. It looks quite impressive as you walk up to it with the water rushing over, this was designed to give the flow enough force to feed the lead.

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***“But as the Luggie with a plaintive song  
Twists thro, a glen of greenest gloom, and gropes  
For open sunshine...  
Fulfilled by sunrise; where slant arrow-showers  
Of golden beams make every twinkling drop  
A diamond, and every blade of grass  
A glory; - comes the earth-born wanderer  
Sweet Luggie singing. Over the Mill dam  
Sounding a cataract in miniature,  
White robed it dashes thro’ unceasing mist.”***

The river forms a sort of loop here as it doubles back on itself, a fact not missed by our ancestors. In 1947 aerial photographs revealed the signs of an earthwork, an 80m long ditch which had been cut across the base of the loop at some unknown time in the past. We don’t know what the ditch was for but it would have created a triangular area of land with the river on two sides and the ditch on the other, perhaps as a defensive measure or to enclose the area for some reason?

What do you think the purpose of the enclosure might have been? This would have been a large piece of infrastructure for its time, difficult and time consuming to create. Did the people who made it appreciate the beauty of this natural site like we do? Did they enjoy the singing of the Luggie? Or watch the sunrise through the trees?

Partners



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Walk along the riverbank as you contemplate this. Keep an eye on the water - kingfishers and dippers (pictured above) use the Luggie and you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse anywhere along its length. These are two very different birds (though once upon a time they were believed to be the males and females of the same species!) but they are linked by their dependence on the water. Dippers are chestnut brown with a prominent white chest. If you see one there is no mistaking where it gets its name, as it constantly 'dips' its whole body up and down as it stands. They fly low and fast over the water, usually downstream, before alighting on a rock in the middle of the water to begin their search for food. They eat invertebrates and small fish, actively hunting them through the water. They fully submerge themselves underwater and, holding their wings for balance, actually walk upstream along the river bed! They grab stones in their feet to hold themselves down and have special transparent eyelids which act like goggles, allowing them to see underwater.

Kingfishers eat the same sorts of food but have a very different strategy. They like to perch on branches or sticks above pools of slow moving, clear water. They will sit here patiently until they see a fish swimming below and then dive straight down, their dagger like beak open and their eyes firmly closed – like diving blindfolded! When they catch a fish they will bring it back to their perch and firmly smack it against the branch to kill it before consuming it. They have to eat their own bodyweight in fish each day which takes a lot of effort. They nest in holes in the bank which are vulnerable to flooding. The birds themselves are incredibly coloured, electric blue backs and wings with copper coloured breasts. They are unmistakeable when they fly, like a streak of electricity along the river.





Walk until you reach an interpretation board and a gate marking that you're leaving the wildlife reserve. Don't worry, you won't be gone long! You're at a crossroads with a new path. Walk directly over it and up a short stretch of hill. Before long you'll be back in the reserve. There's another stretch of woodland walk ahead but soon the trees on your left will open out into a clear space. Look again for the wildflowers growing here among the wet grass.

***"A bank of harebells, flowers unspeakable  
For half-transparent azure, nodding, gleamed  
As a faint zephyr, laden with perfume,  
Kissed them to motion, gently, with no will.***

....

***A gently rising hill with umbrage clad,  
Hazel and glossy birch and silver fir,  
Meet the keen sky.  
Oh in that wood, I know,  
The woodruff and the hyacinth are fair  
In their own season; with the bilberry  
Of dim and misty blue, to childhood dear."***

Like all streams the Luggie's path isn't fixed for all time. It meanders across this landscape, and the plants which live here are used to its nature – and have to be prepared for the occasional flood!

Partners



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Native plants like common butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) love these conditions and can be found growing along the bank in huge numbers. They die away almost to nothing in winter and first re-appear in March as purple flower heads which are soon followed by rhubarb-like leaves. The leaves are small while the plant is in flower but quickly grow – in fact they are the largest native leaves in the UK. The leaves give the plant many of its names – ‘butter’ comes from the historic use of the leaves to wrap butter in for storage and the scientific name for the species ‘Petasites’ originates from the Greek word for a floppy felt hat which the leaves do resemble! Butterbur is a dioecious plant – meaning it comes in separate male and female forms. There is a bit of a mystery around it as for some reason almost all the plants in the UK are male. We don’t really know why this is, but some theories have it that people used to move the male plants around to feed honey bees as they have such a high nectar content. It was also once a key ingredient in a rather gruesome love potion – when mixed with seaweed, ferns and human bones it could supposedly ensure fidelity.

Follow the path as it passes under the road (look out for the minions!). Unfortunately this area is a bit of a litter hotspot – rubbish is dropped along the road by car users and it collects here in the hollow by the bridge. No-one does this deliberately, it’s just one of these issues where small, unthinking actions by a large number of people combine to create a big problem. Flipping this issue on its head, we could all make a difference by taking the small action of thinking about what happens to our rubbish when it leaves our hands. Litter is a huge problem for wildlife and conservation in general. It kills plants and animals, chokes streams and waterways, and ultimately all ends up in our oceans, destroying the ecosystem that we all rely on. Our volunteer groups do their best to keep this area clear but it is really a societal problem that can only be solved if we all act together.

Keep walking and you’ll meet another path at a ‘t’ junction. If you go right here you can walk on to the bridge which carried the old Stirling Road and look down on the river from above. We are going to turn left though and walk along the new path for about 30m (100ft) and then turn right and follow another path down a few steps until we’re back at the waterside.





Walk past the houses here and you can almost feel the area becoming wilder. It always gives me a thrill to move among the trees, wondering what else is sharing this space.

***“There is a living glory in the air –  
A glory in the hush’d air, in the soul  
A palpitating wonder hush’d in awe.”***

Otters live on the stream along here (as they do in most major waterways in Scotland) and it’s always worth watching the water – though more in hope than expectation! Otters in urban areas are generally nocturnal, only coming out when people are not around. They have learned over centuries of persecution to be wary of humans. The best hope of seeing them is at dawn and dusk, but even then their superb senses are easily a match for most human watchers. The old Scots name for them was the ‘dratsie’ and the Gaels called them ‘dobhran’ or ‘water dogs’. They were thought to be ruled by an Otter King who would grant magical powers in exchange for his life if captured.

They have suffered much at human hands over the years - persecuted for their fur or because they compete with us for fish. In past times they were even a foodstuff. Some Christian clerics declared that as they lived in the water they must be fish and so could be eaten during Lent. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century their numbers fell to dangerously low levels mainly due to pollution in our rivers. The tightening of environmental laws in recent years however has meant that they have staged a remarkable comeback, and they can now be found even in many urban places.

You might find signs of their presence on the river. Look for flat patches of muddy grass where they come in and out of the water, particularly where it is fast moving, five-toed footprints in the mud, or spraints that look like smears of thick black tar on prominent rocks.

Partners



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There are badgers along here too. Their ancient setts are built into the hillside above any floodwater, and you can see their bulldozed trails leading to and from them into the woods.

Further on into these woods you might see signs of human activity. Piles of wood and thin branches at the side of the path were made by our Nature Ninja volunteers. They are 'dead hedges' made from the cuttings of invasive dogwood which grows along here in abundance. The volunteers work hard to remove it from the woods. It grows so vigorously that if left unchecked it would swamp everything else. Its not easy to remove the cuttings from here though so the Ninjas weave them together into these piles of dead material which will rot down over time providing fantastic habitat for fungi, insects and small mammals. They also do a good job of catching any litter floating through the woods, hopefully helping to keep it away from the water.

Take some time to stop here and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the woods: the green trees, the smell of damp earth, the sound of flowing water and the song of woodland birds.

***“To fainting heart and the despairing soul  
What is more soothing than the natural voice  
Of birds?...  
No violet as yet breathed perfume, from the darkling sward  
No snowdrop boldly peeped; and even the ash,  
Whence flowed the sound, unfolded not her buds  
To blacken while the embryo gathered green.  
And yet this hardy herald of the Spring  
Chaunted rich harmony, daintily carved out  
Her voice, and through her sleek throat sobb'd her soul.”***







Just beyond, on your left you'll find a grove of apples trees, the wild remnants of an ancient orchard. Our Wild Ways Well group visits this spot in January to take part in an ancient tradition, called wassailing. Our ancestors believed that very little in life happened by chance, everything had purpose – and everything was alive and vital in a way that we don't appreciate anymore. To them all life was interlinked and they understood how the actions of one thing could affect everything else.

Exact traditions differ all over the country but the purpose was the same, to wake the spirit of the apple trees and ensure a good harvest later in the year. People would arrive in a spot like this and make as much of a ruckus as they could, banging metal objects like pots and pans and blowing horns to wake the spirit within the tree after its winter sleep. They would sing to the trees to remind the spirit of its duties and they would throw offerings of food into the branches. Finally they would pour some cider into the roots, and drink some themselves... some cynics might suggest the cider drinking was the real purpose of the exercise!

Next time you eat an apple in Cumbernauld think of the sacrifice of our Volunteers who came here to wake the trees on your behalf (and all they got for it was some toast and apple juice!). We don't want your thanks, just your admiration! You can find out how to join our Wild Ways Well group later in this pack.

***“The shoreless air of heaven is purer here,  
Thy golden beams more keenly crystalline,  
The skies more deeply sapphire. For to me  
About these emerald fields and lawny hills,  
There lingers glories which you cannot see,  
And influences which you cannot feel.”***



This path continues on along the side of the Luggie for a long way, and other paths lead off from it to Palacerigg and beyond, but we'll have to follow them another day. My feet would always carry me on to see what's around 'just the next bend' but eventually we have to turn back and make our way home.

Take one last look at the path ahead and then turn and follow it back the way you came towards Cumbernauld. You can always return another day.

***"Reader, hasten ye and come,  
And see the Luggie wind her liquid stream  
Thro' copsy villages and spiry towns."***

If you've enjoyed this walk why not let us know on our Facebook page (Cumbernauld Living Landscape) or our twitter and Instagram pages (@WildCumbernauld). Don't forget you can also check our website [www.CumbernauldLivingLandscape](http://www.CumbernauldLivingLandscape) for more walks and activities or to join our volunteer, schools and wellbeing groups.

If you'd like your pictures or stories featured in our future packs you can also send them to us, we'd love to hear from you.

You can find the full text of David Gray's poem **'The Luggie'** digitised online in the book **'The Luggie and Other Poems'**.



# THE LUGGIE BANK TREASURE TRAIL



How many of the following things can you spot on your walk?

- |                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| • The Luggie River              | <b>1 point</b>   |
| • A bridge                      | <b>1 point</b>   |
| • A waterfall                   | <b>2 points</b>  |
| • A log dam                     | <b>2 points</b>  |
| • Snowdrops                     | <b>10 points</b> |
| • The minion paintings          | <b>1 point</b>   |
| • Three different kinds of leaf | <b>10 points</b> |
| • A stone bigger than your hand | <b>2 points</b>  |
| • A crow                        | <b>5 points</b>  |
| • A pile of logs                | <b>5 points</b>  |
| • A pine needle                 | <b>1 points</b>  |
| • A catkin on a branch          | <b>10 points</b> |

Total .....



A bridge



The minions



Catkins



Snowdrops



A crow



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# SPECIES SPOTTER

Common sights to see now?



## Otter tracks



January- December

You might not see the otter but you're almost guaranteed to see their tracks. Look for footprints in the mud and grooves in the vegetation leading down to the water.



## Mistle thrush



January- December

Large thrushes with messy speckles on their chests. They are very territorial and will fiercely guard their food source, especially holly trees.



## Pied wagtail



January- December

Long-tailed birds that quickly bob their tails when standing.

Despite living here all year round, wagtails don't like the cold and will nest in groups. The largest recorded roost held over 4,000 wagtails!



## Tree sparrow



January- December

Similar to house sparrows, tree sparrows differ in their slimmer build and chestnut brown cap instead of the house sparrows' grey cap (males only).



## Wood pigeon



January- December

Commonly seen in gardens, the wood pigeon is the largest pigeon in Scotland. Most likely you'll see one with another.



Listen! You've probably heard their song. "who-whoooo-who".

## Dandelion



January- December

This familiar yellow flower has ray florets (lots of tiny individual flowers grouped together) in place of petals. Dandelions are a great food source for insects coming out of hibernation.



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# SPECIES SPOTTER

Others to spot



## Blue tit

January- December



## Birch

January- December



## Coltsfoot

February - April



What else do you see (make a note):

---

What to look for at a later date

## Wildflowers

Foxglove  
June - September



## Butterflies

Orange tip  
April - September



## Hoverflies

Large tiger  
May - October



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# SPECIES OF THE WEEK

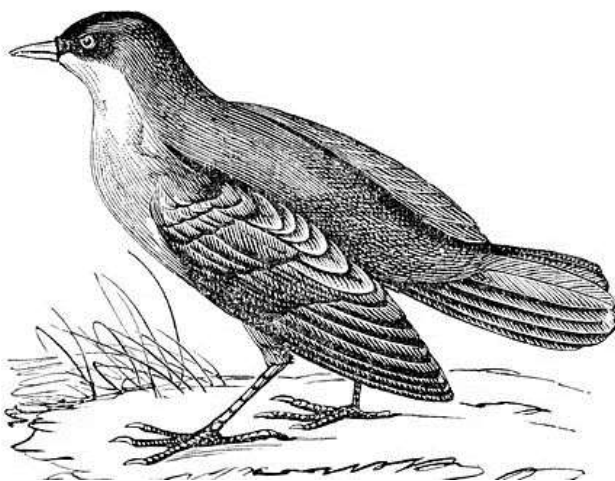
## Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*



Bobbing about, these little birds are expert hunters in water. They have short tails that often points skywards and can be seen making rhythmic nods with their heads. Look for their white throat, which stands out against their dark bodies.



For a bird that spends most of its time in, and even under, water you might be surprised to know that dippers don't have webbed feet like most aquatic birds. Despite this they are very good swimmers and will happily walk or dive into water. Dippers have several physical adaptations that help them explore their territory.



- They have special muscles in their wings used against the current that balance their weight.
- They can see underwater. They have transparent eyelids that work like swimming goggles.
- Blood that is capable of storing larger amounts of oxygen in their blood so they can stay underwater for over 30 seconds. That might not sound like much, but these little birds hold their breath for longer than most others, especially for their size.

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# SIGNS OF SPRING



## Bird song

Birds are warming up to attract a mate and defend their territory. Song thrushes, robins and blackbirds are some of the first to begin singing.

## Insect activity

Now that it is beginning to warm up, it's not surprising to see some insects venturing out from their winter hibernation. Queen bumblebees will begin appearing soon in search of food and territory.



## Wildflowers

Wildflowers are a sure sign that spring is on the way. You've probably already seen snowdrops, but keep eye out for others creeping out. Coltsfoot can be identified by its short dandelion appearance with a rounder middle and scaly stem.

## Tree buds

Blossoming buds! Dormant buds grown before winter are starting to blossom. Look closer at tree branches to see fresh green growth.

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# PHOTOGRAPHY CHALLENGE: RAINBOW RAMBLE



Try and photograph something in nature that matches each of these colours. Share your photographs on Facebook or tag us on Twitter or Instagram @Wildcumbernauld #wildlockdown



Red



Orange



Yellow



Green



Blue



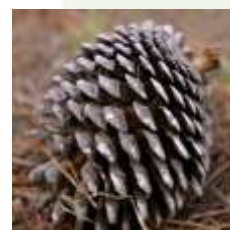
Purple



Black



White



Brown



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# PHOTO CHALLENGE

Can you snap a photo of a dipper?  
Or try sketching one.

Send us your image, drawing or photo by **Wednesday 3 March**,  
for a chance of being featured in our next booklet.



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# JUDGE NATURE SAYS



**Materials needed:** None

**Number of players:** This game works best with four players or more.

**Where to play:** A place where there are trees nearby is best.

**How to play:** Every player chooses the name of an animal they would like to represent. One player is chosen to become Judge Nature. Judge Nature calls out one of the following instructions:

- 'SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST' – Players run around a designated tree then run back and touch Judge Nature. The first player back remains alive - the others die.
- 'DROUGHT' - Players run to an area designated as the water hole then run back and touch Judge Nature. The first player back lives and the others die.
- 'HUNTER COMING' - Players have ten seconds to run and hide from the sight of Judge Nature. If they are seen, they are dead.
- 'WINTER' – All players must hit the ground and pretend to be hibernating. Last player to hit the ground dies.

Judge Nature is also free to add their own instructions such as 'all carnivores do ten star jumps' etc. If animals "die" during the game, they go to a designated area called "SOIL" where they must do a task by Judge Nature, such as 'hop on one leg for one minute' before they can join the game again.'

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# PASS THE STORY



**Number of people:** Two or more

**Where to play:** Play as you walk

**Materials needed:** One pine cone or stone.

## How to play:

- The person holding the pinecone starts the story eg 'Once upon a time there was an ancient woodland called the Luggiebank ...'
- When they have finished they toss it to the next person who continues the story and so on.
- You can add as much to the story as you like. It can be one sentence, it can be five, but this game is most fun when you leave the story on a cliff hanger before tossing the pinecone to the next person, for example: 'the fox ran under the bridge and there he met a ...'

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# WILD WAYS WELL - EATING AN APPLE



Today we are going to go time travelling. We're going to do it right here, right now, wherever you are. Time travelling is a tricky business so you'll need some special equipment – but not a De Lorean or a police call box, nothing so complex as that. You'll need a red(ish) apple, and a comfy place to stand or sit – preferably outdoors, where you can see trees and the sky.

Take your apple. Hold it in your hand, feel the textures of it, how smooth the skin is, how firm the flesh. Take in the colours, the subtle shading. Smell it, feel its weight. Experience it.

An apple is an amazing thing.

The first eating apples, as we know them today, were cultivated around 5000 years ago in the Tian Shan mountains on the Northern borders of what is now China. One farmer, perhaps a family, decided to put down roots, set up a home and grow apples. Maybe to eat themselves, maybe to trade, maybe just for the joy of growing. We can never know. They took a wild ancestor of the modern apple and domesticated it to make them easier to grow and harvest. Then slowly from that one farm the knowledge of apple growing spread, and through generations of farmers all over the world we were given all the different varieties we now enjoy.

But they all came from those first apples, and that first farmer. There is a direct unbroken link from the apple you are holding in you hand, through seed, tree, apple, seed, tree, apple, seed, tree, apple... all the way back to the apple they are holding in their hand. Generation upon generation of work, toil and love from your hand to theirs, standing there on the edge of the mountains, holding a seed and considering where to plant a tree.

Consider the feel of the apple in your hand. Roll it in your palm, grasp it so your fingers surround it and it nestles in your grip. Notice how well it fits there, how your hand and fingers work together to hold it. Your hand was made to hold that apple. That apple was made to be held by you. Natural processes, the blind drives of evolution, acting over millions of years gave you the perfect tool to grasp and pull this fruit from the tree. And the same processes, acting on behalf of the tree, made the apple the perfect shape for your hand to grasp. You want to eat the apple to survive and grow strong, the apple 'wants' to be eaten by you so its seeds – designed to be spread by you – can grow strong trees and more apples.



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Take a look at your apple. Notice the subtle variations in colour, the reds fading into greens, oranges and yellows. Examine it, drink in the colours and the shades. We are one of the very few organisms on this planet that can see and appreciate those colours. Human eyes can detect shades of red and yellow that few other animals can. Our eyes evolved that way so that we could tell when apples (and other fruits) are ripe and ready to eat. And as our eyes evolved to see the apple, so the apple evolved so that only we, and a few others, could see it.

Two organisms coming together for mutual benefit, a perfect symbiotic dance, whirling in partnership through aeons of time.

Now – finally – take a bite of your apple! Notice how perfectly your jaw and your teeth, working together, are able to pierce the apple's protective skin and take a crisp, clear bite. Your teeth are your toolbox, and evolution has provided you with exactly the right tools for working with this apple. It is just the right firmness, just the right consistency, so your teeth can cut right through. Sharp teeth for cutting the flesh, flat teeth to grind it and chew it and pull out the nutrients inside.

Chew your apple slowly. Feel the satisfying crunch. Savour the sweet juices that burst out of the apple's flesh, roll them around your tongue, delight in the sensations. Tiny little sensors on your tongue, your tastebuds, are detecting the sweetness of the apple and they are transmitting that information to your brain where all sorts of incredible reactions are taking place. Huge amounts of processing power, greater than any supercomputer, are analysing the taste of the apple, turning it into information – and telling you that this is good!

Think about that for a moment. Once again we are one of the very few organisms that exist, or that has ever existed, that can really taste that sugary sweet goodness. Your tongue is telling you that this apple is good to eat – because the apple has evolved to give you those signals. You and the apple are inextricably linked, neither would exist in this form without the other. You want to eat the apple and the apple 'wants' to be eaten by you.

This didn't happen overnight. This process of evolution, each species acting on and influencing the other – and acting on and influencing the millions of other organisms all around us - has been going on for millions, billions of years. An incredibly complex system of measures, countermeasures, weights, checks and balances that over untold generations of people and apples, working in harmony, ended with you, sitting here now, savouring this apple.

You are part of this world, this amazing dance through time. Think of the odds against you being sat here right now experiencing this apple. And yet here you are. And here is the apple.

Apples are made of the same stuff you are. An apple tree takes water and minerals from the ground, carbon dioxide from the air, sunlight from the sky, and makes apples. We don't really know how it does that. We know that photosynthesis turns light energy into chemical energy and that this energy can be stored by the plant in things like sugars. But we can't replicate it. No human made factory can churn apples out on production lines. No scientist in the world can make you an apple from sunlight.

Just sunlight. A flaming ball of hydrogen, millions of miles away in space. But now that you've eaten the apple, also part of you. The sugar from that apple will go to power your muscles and your cells, some of it will be stored for future use – so you will be using this apple long after it's gone to power your body, to maintain it, to rebuild it. To keep you being you. You and the apple are one, you can never again be split apart.

Finish your apple. Consider every mouthful. Enjoy it, savour it.

When you are ready you can get up and walk away and get on with your daily life, our time machine has returned to the present – but know when you do that within you are carrying concentrated sunlight, and thousands of years of history. All the lessons, lives and dreams of thousands of ancestors, made possible by your unbreakable relationship with the natural world around you.

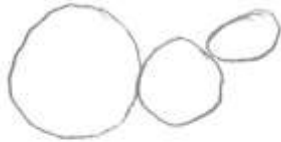
And perhaps, if you were able to look really deep inside you, you might be able to see the mountains and a figure sitting at rest, beneath an apple tree and contemplating the future.







## Draw an otter



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 otter. All you need to do to start is draw three circles with a pencil



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



Now draw some curved lines to join the circles together. Add the eyes, snout and tail.



You're almost done... Rub out the parts of the circles that you no longer need and go over the rest in pen or heavy pencil. Shade the body in with brown.



# WE LOVE LUGGI EBANK!



Luggiebank is a fine wildlife reserve owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. A gently slaloming stream bisects it, closely followed by an upgraded path. Next to the sloshing stream are amazing wildflowers and historic trees, including the rare melancholy thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*), a particular highlight as far south as this special wildflower reaches.

But there is an invasive plant here that puts these magical flowers at risk: dogwood. This shrub, native to England, has been brought north as a tough ornamental plant to add a splash of colour in autumn and winter. Dogwood devours land with its knotted branches spilling out in increasing circles. It can take over large tracts of land, blocking other plants and spilling out on to paths, crowding out walkers.

Removing the plant can be tough. Dogwood needs to be chopped with the cuttings left in deadwood piles raised off the ground. It has a nasty habit of regrowing from a single stem, a key pillar of its success. The exposed roots need to be injected with herbicide pellets to ensure that the remaining plant dies. Subsequent checks are then required over the next few years to cut back any potential regrowth.

Our volunteers love chopping down dogwood! We have created long dogwood habitat piles along Luggiebank's paths. Raised off the ground, they will eventually rot down while also providing a home for small invertebrates and mammals. Chopping and weaving the dogwood is an amazingly social activity. Working close together, we can chat about anything! Once we have completed the piles it is satisfying to take stock of the work completed along the track and with the thick dogwood gone now there are open patches for native wildflowers to grow.

To keep the paths open, we can all do our bit. If you spot any litter, why not grab a litter picker, and remove it to a bin? Also if you see any dead branches on the path that you can lift out of the way we recommend you do so. This makes the path safer for walkers and cyclists. If you would like to get involved with our Nature Ninjas volunteer group, why not contact us [d.walsh@tcv.org.uk](mailto:d.walsh@tcv.org.uk)



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# 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.

The lockdown is demonstrating just how important nature is to people's physical and mental health – but it is also making accessing greenspaces much more difficult. While our outdoor sessions are on hold we want to help people experience the benefits of nature on their own doorstep. This pack contains ideas, inspiration, information and activities that anyone can try to help them connect with the outdoors. Perhaps they'll help you to see Cumbernauld's greenspaces in a new light.

Remember to observe guidelines on social distancing and only access nature in your local area.



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

[www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk](http://www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk)

Facebook - **Cumbernauld Living Landscape** or

Twitter and Instagram - **@WildCumbernauld**



**Wild Ways Well** is our nature and wellbeing project which is free for anyone to join. Each session involves a short walk, a chance to relax and chat (if you want) over a hot drink and try some fun, creative activities. There's time to immerse yourself in nature while you learn more about wildlife and Cumbernauld. It's a great way to meet new people, explore nature, try new activities, relax and de-stress. Sessions take place regularly on weekdays and at evenings and weekends. You can come as an individual but we also offer bespoke sessions to groups. 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](mailto: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 and see the outdoors. No prior experience is necessary. 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](mailto: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 link to habitats projects and the wildlife in our town. **Natural Connections** encourages high school students aged 11-16 to connect with nature on a deeper level to aid employability skills. 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](mailto:tlambert@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk)

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