

# Stay Home, Stay Wild

## Ravenswood Walk & Activity Pack



How to get there : Accessed from Island Road G67 1NR, there is parking in the surrounding streets and a path from the Town Centre.

Description : An easy walk over gravel and dirt paths then back over urban pavements. The route is mainly flat though there is one short climb up to Rabbit Hill and there can be occasional boggy areas.

The circular route is around 1.5km long (approx. 2250 steps)

What to see : A magical raised bog, packed with wildflowers and pollinators in warmer months. Look out for specialist bog plants, and signs of amphibians, birds and mammals.

Partners



Funders



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

# CONTENTS

- 1. Ravenswood walk**
- 2. Ravenswood treasure trail**
- 3. Ravenswood species spotter guide**
- 4. What a view – sketching activity**
- 5. Wild Ways Well grounding activity**
- 6. Spy on a snipe**
- 7. Spelling bee**
- 8. Sound map**
- 9. The story of the Ravenswood Mossy Man**
- 10. Scrub management at Ravenswood**
- 11. The new path at Ravenswood**
- 12. Information about Cumbernauld Living Landscape**



For this week's Wild Walk we are going to be visiting Ravenswood Local Nature Reserve (LNR). There are more than 70 LNRs in Scotland, covering areas of natural heritage that are considered to be locally important. Ravenswood is owned and managed by North Lanarkshire Council. Cumbernauld Living Landscape works with the Council and the community to make improvements to the site and to look after the wildlife that lives there for the benefit of people and wildlife alike.

Enter the reserve through the kissing gate and you'll find yourself in an open tarmaced area surrounded by short grass. The tarmac is used to allow access for maintenance vehicles, and our volunteers regularly have to remove encroaching grass here to keep the drains clear and prevent flooding. In the grass to the sides you'll see a notice board and a totem pole – one of many round Cumbernauld. On the opposite side there is a memorial to the artist Brian Miller – Cumbernauld's (and perhaps the world's) first town artist. His job was to bring colour and beauty to the concrete of the new town, and his abstract style often incorporated natural shapes and themes.

What do you think about this? Some of the greatest art people have ever created has been inspired by the natural world. Later in this pack you'll get a chance to try out an art activity – everyone has an artist inside them and this kind of creativity has been shown to have great benefits for wellbeing. What type of art inspires you? What could you create?

Follow the path into the reserve. On your right you'll see a new path which leads down to the adjacent football field and on to Our Ladies High School. This was installed by Cumbernauld Living Landscape at the request of the local community to make access to the reserve easier. We won't be following this path today however – though we'll come back to it in later packs!



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



As you walk onwards you'll see on your right an area of wild growth and a colourful wooden raised bed. Our Wild Ways Well group paints this bed every year to keep it looking bright and to honour Brian Miller's memory. We have a long term aim of making this a therapeutic teaching garden, but for the moment it is overgrown – showing how sites like this need constant maintenance.

On your left you'll see an area of gravel bounded by a semi-circular log wall. This is our outdoor classroom. The logs were brought here by the Scottish Wildlife Trust from another reserve in the town and were put into place by our volunteers and school groups. They form a bug hotel and small mammal habitat almost 100ft long, one of the longest in Britain. Our volunteers painted and decorated the logs to make sure the wildlife which lives here feels welcome!

The gravel was wheelbarrowed from the entrance by the Nature Ninjas volunteer group. We made a day of it with family activities and games while the adults did all the hard work. The tree in the middle is used for all sorts of art activities and provides great cover from both sun and rain. Behind the bug hotel we helped school groups plant a native holly hedgerow. As this grows it will give even more habitat for wildlife.

Behind the holly hedge our Wild Ways Well group planted and weaved willow rods to create a living willow fence. This is a traditional and sustainable way of making both a fence, and some art. The willow rods have rooted into the ground and each has become a mini tree of its own. As the fence grows it will maintain itself and provide even more habitat. Our volunteers will cut and shape it every year and will take new rods from it to create more willow structures in future.



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



Partners



Funders



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

Cumbernauld Living Landscape is led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, a Scottish registered charity (charity no. SC005792) and a company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland (registered no. SC040247).



The outdoor classroom is a great resource. Our Young People's Officer will bring school groups here to learn about nature and our other groups use it as a great base for their activities on the reserve – the bug hotel makes a surprisingly comfy seat when you've been out walking for an afternoon!

Keep walking and you will pass a colourful piece of farm equipment. This is here to remind us that this area was once farmland. Ravenswood and Pollockshole farms were both in this area – Ravenswood was a mediaeval retreat for the Bishop of Glasgow and other senior clergy, showing that people have known of the therapeutic benefit of this area for a long time.

As you walk you will see plants and trees all around you. You might spot some plants in amongst them that you recognise. There are many garden plants in this area. Some have been deliberately planted by well meaning people trying to 'brighten up' the reserve, others have escaped from gardens nearby. Planting surplus garden plants on the reserve might seem like a good idea at first but it can actually cause a lot of problems. Every patch of ground filled by a garden plant is one that can't be used by a native wild plant – and native plants tend to be much more useful for wildlife.

Garden plants can also bring disease and unwanted parasites. We have discovered that this whole entrance area is infested with New Zealand flatworm, an invasive non-native worm that probably first arrived here hidden in the roots of a garden plant. New Zealand flatworms are predators. They aggressively hunt and eat our native earthworms, which have no defence against them. Earthworms are vital for a healthy ecosystem. They create soil by processing dead vegetation, and their underground tunnels improve drainage which helps prevent flooding.



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



New Zealand flatworms do not bring any of these benefits. Very few creatures in Scotland are even able to eat them so they don't help the ecosystem at all.

It's great that people want to help the nature reserve. One of the best ways they can do so is by getting in touch with our volunteer group – there's more info on how to join later in the pack.

Keep walking and you'll come to a fork in the path. To the left is a short section of path that will take you through an area of long grass and shallow ponds directly to the top of Rabbit Hill. This is a great spot to come to in summertime as it is full of wildflowers and tall grasses, and can be covered in bees and butterflies. Feel free to explore it, but then the main route of our walk is going to take the right fork in the path and keep on going.

Soon you'll notice the view on your left opening out as you come on to the raised bog which makes this area such a special place. You're now walking on a sort of 'floating' path, a narrow strip of solid ground between the bog on your left and the network of shallow ponds and willow trees to your right.

Raised bogs are a special and rare habitat. They form when a low-lying area of ground becomes waterlogged. Over time – thousands of years - sphagnum moss and other plants build up and build up, preserved by the acidic water, and form gigantic domes of peat. Lots of animals and plants live in this sort of habitat, and many of them can't live anywhere else. In addition to this raised bogs are an incredible carbon store. They lock up carbon in the ground below the water level and prevent it being released into the atmosphere and contributing to global climate change. As if that wasn't enough they also hold vast quantities of water, preventing flooding – if the bog wasn't there a big part of the surrounding area would be under water!



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



Historically we haven't treated our raised bogs very well in Scotland, and only about 10% of them remain nationwide. In the past we deliberately drained them to try and turn them into 'productive' farmland, or we planted trees on them to create forestry. Usually at Cumbernauld Living Landscape we are all for planting trees, but in this case our volunteer groups actually go out regularly to cut down and pull up young trees which are growing on the bog. If these trees are left to grow their roots will suck up water and quite quickly dry the bog out. It might seem counterintuitive, but this is one area where no trees are allowed!

There are informal trails which lead out onto the bog. You can step off the path onto one if you like but do be careful. As well as potentially damaging the delicate plants and creatures which live here the ground is very wet and there can be deep, concealed holes.

Keep following the path as it curves around, keep an eye on the bog. You can get occasional glimpses of birds like jack snipe, woodcock and lapwing here, and wildflowers grow along the edge of the path. To your right the land is a network of shallow ponds, patches of bog, wet meadow, trees and shrubs. This is great habitat for dragonflies, and in summer you can often hear the beat of their wings as they whirr past, hunting for flies. We bring school and family groups here to pond dip and we know that the ponds are healthy and full of life.

As you walk you might notice one pond right next to the path. The tall green plants growing in it are the yellow flag iris, and they make an impressive sight when they flower. This pond is sometimes called a 'sacrificial' pond – because it is right next to the path and lots of dogs love to go for a swim in it! The hope is that if the dogs get to have their fun swimming in this pond they will not go for a dip in the others which are further away where they might damage the sensitive life which lives in them.





The path curves again around the bog and heads south. The bog is still to your left and on your right the ground opens out into a large area of wet meadow. Over the past couple of years our volunteers, school groups and Wild Ways Well participants have planted thousands of native wildflower plugs and seeds in this area, helping to establish it as part of a 'nectar network' of wildflower meadows which will help our struggling bee and butterfly populations. You might see trails through the grass here, criss-crossing the meadow and even heading out onto the bog. These are mostly made by roe deer and foxes which love this kind of patchwork habitat. One more advantage of the bog is that the wet ground tends to keep people out, which is all the better for our mammal community.

Stop for a moment here and imagine the ground around you as a riot of colour and the air full of the hum of insects. Take a mental image of how the area looks now – and then come back in summer and take notice of the difference.

Walk up the hill – notice the gorse bushes around you. They're the low shrubby trees which even in winter have green leaves and a smattering of yellow flowers. There is an old saying 'kissing will go out of fashion when the gorse is out of bloom' – luckily however gorse can bloom in every month of the year so our love lives are safe! In summer time gorse can even transport you to another place. When the hot summer sun hits the flowers they give off a strong smell of coconuts, which often reminds people of the smell of sun-tan lotion. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and you can imagine you're on a sunny foreign beach holiday!

Soon you'll reach the top of the hill – take a break here, you've earned it. Locally this is known as 'rabbit' hill though rabbits are a rare sight there nowadays. Myxomatosis, a human-made disease, has had a devastating effect on Cumbernauld's rabbit population. It comes in waves, and can kill more than 90% of rabbits in an area before it recedes.



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



This is a good spot for a picnic. The short grass here can be studded with tiny wildflowers, and in summer gorgeous butterfly orchids can be found. Crab apple trees grow here too. In January Wild Ways Well brings groups here to 'wassail' the apple trees. This ancient tradition involves singing songs, drinking apple juice and banging pots and pans to wake the apple trees from their winter sleep to make sure that Cumbernauld has a good apple harvest in autumn. Next time you eat an apple I hope you think of all the hard work our groups, and the apple trees, put into making it!

Stand at the viewpoint and take in the views of the surrounding areas. Look how many trees there are! Cumbernauld has one of the highest percentages of tree cover for any urban area in Scotland. We really are a green town and it's something to be proud of. This is a great spot to try some art and creative activities – look elsewhere in the pack for some inspiration.

Once you're finished head down the path to your right, towards the pond. This is Pollockshole Pond. It is surrounded by a fence as its steep sides can be dangerous for walkers, but there is a platform that you can stand on and get good views over the water. Coots, moorhens and even water rail can sometimes be seen on the water but, they are getting harder to see in among the vegetation. Every year the plant cover grows more dense, and one day all the water will be covered. Should we interrupt this process and try to clear the vegetation away or should we let nature take its course and lose the open water? What do you think?

Look again at the animal trails crossing the vegetation here. Some of them are deer and foxes – but others are made by otters! It is unlikely that an otter lives in the pond full time, it's too small for that, but there are regular visits. An otter can have a territory that covers several miles and they will walk over land between rivers, streams and ponds in their home range. They are incredibly secretive animals so it is highly unlikely you'll ever see one here, but you never know!



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



Walk on after you've had a good look, and head for the trees ahead. The path cuts through an area of young woodland. There is a mix of native and non-native trees here, which are now getting to an age when they will need to be thinned. It is common practice when planting a woodland to plant many more trees than the area can support, with the knowledge that many of the trees you plant will naturally die or be eaten by deer. To properly maintain a new area of woodland it is necessary to come back several years later and remove many of the trees that were planted. This process is called 'thinning', by removing the weaker trees and giving the remaining ones more space and light you ensure a stronger, healthier woodland.

Up ahead you'll see a line of more mature trees and the path will turn left as you enter them. This avenue of lime trees is well over one hundred years old and used to mark the entry way to Pollockshole Farm. It is fascinating to think that where we now walk used to be bustling with farm traffic – the width of our modern path decided by the needs of farm carts long ago. Just ahead you'll see a bench and a fallen log. This is another of our 'banter benches' designed by pupils from local schools who wanted somewhere to sit and talk. Take a seat and breathe in the history of this area, feel the depth of time around you. One day our descendants will walk through these woods – what will they think of the legacies we are leaving them?

This is a great spot to try out a grounding exercise – you'll find one later in this pack.

Our volunteer and school groups conduct litter picks here regularly and work to maintain the path and cut back encroaching vegetation every year – our Wild Ways Well group also spends a lot of time in this spot, simply soaking up the atmosphere and enjoying being among the trees.



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



Once you've had a rest you can walk on up the path. Keep an eye, and an ear, out for the woodland birds that live in this area. Soon however you will leave the woods and you might be surprised to find just how close we are to the surrounding houses here!

We're going to leave the nature reserve here but that doesn't mean we've left the wildlife behind. Roe deer often come out of the woods here and can be seen in among the houses. A huge variety of birds and insects will also happily make their homes in the human gardens.

Turn to your left and follow the path through the houses, heading for Skye Road. You can follow Skye Road all the way back up the hill to the reserve entrance where we began our walk.

Keep an eye on the common areas as you go. Many of them are well maintained by the council and the local people who take pride in the plants which grow there and the animals which rely on them. There is nothing wrong with most garden plants in their proper place, and with care people and wildlife, urban gardens, parks and nature reserves can all co-exist together in harmony.

Thank you for taking part in our Wild Walk through Ravenswood Local Nature Reserve. This site is a great example of how people and wildlife can live side by side and is an area that feels truly wild while still being a connected part of the town.

You've only walked about a mile but you've covered some of the rarest habitat in Scotland and you've passed through the territory of countless birds and mammals. Engaging with nature like this is vital for our mental and physical wellbeing.

Thank you for joining us and for helping to make Cumbernauld a better place for wildlife – and people.



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

# RAVENSWOOD TREASURE TRAIL



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

- The 'Welcome to Ravenswood' rock **1 point**
- The rainbow log wall **2 points**
- The football field **1 point**
- The plough sculpture **1 point**
- The amazing view from Rabbit Hill **10 points**
- A pond **2 points**
- A blackbird **5 points**
- A magpie **5 points**
- A tree with lichen growing on it **10 points**
- A brown leaf **3 points**
- A green leaf **5 points**
- A crawling insect **5 points**

Total \_\_\_\_\_



Rainbow log wall



Blackbird



Tree with lichen



Magpie



Amazing view



# SPECIES SPOTTER

Common sights to see now?



## Reed bunting



In vegetation!

Sparrow sized but have longer tails. Look for the deeply streaked feathers, black head (male) and moustache.



## Bullfinch



In the trees!

Bright pink-red breast and cheeks with a black cap and tail.

Their short thick bill is great for feeding on buds and seeds.



## Dunnock



On the ground!

Small bird with a grey head, brown wings and tail with a thin black beak.



This quiet little bird will usually be seen on their own creeping through vegetation.

## Buff-tailed bumblebee



On flowers!

Can be seen from February. Buff-tailed have two yellow/orange stripes and a white tail. Easily mistaken for a white-tailed bumblebee but has a thin yellowy margin at the top of their tails.



## Gorse



Gorse is an evergreen shrub with sharp spine-like leaves.

Gorse flowers can be seen all year round. Return on a warm summer day to be surrounded by their vanilla/coconut scent.



## Turkey tail



On deadwood!

Seen all year round, turkey tail is a bracket fungus that has striped contrasting colours like a turkey's tail. Its white underside is filled with little white pores



# SPECIES SPOTTER

Others to spot



**Snipe**



**Blackbird**



**Hawthorn**



What else do you see (make a note):

---

Who to look for at a later date

**Wildflowers**

Knapweed  
June - September



**Butterflies**

Peacock  
March - September



**Moths**

Six-spotted burnet  
June - August



**Caterpillars**

Elephant hawk-moth  
July - September



Funders



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

# WHAT A VIEW!



When you reach the viewpoint at the top of Rabbit Hill, why not stop for five minutes and take in the spectacular view of the town.



This is an excellent place to take a photograph.

Alternatively if you are feeling artistic, why not take a quiet moment and have a go at sketching what you see. Just remember to bring a notepad and pen or pencil on your walk. If you do, please do share it and tag us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram!



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

# WILD WAYS WELL GROUNDING ACTIVITY



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:

**Sight : Sound : Smell : Touch : Taste**

Sit or stand somewhere in a natural space where you feel comfortable and experience these senses through a simple grounding exercise. Grounding is a great way to take your focus away from everyday life with all its cares and worries and simply experience the moment that you are living in right now.

Just for a few seconds forget about everything except what you can feel at this very moment.

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.

Repeat this process. Focus on your breathing. If you find your attention starts to drift that's OK, acknowledge it, remind yourself that you can deal with whatever you are thinking about later. But for right now just concentrate on your breath and this single moment in time.

Repeat your breathing exercise 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**



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



Exercises like these can calm our minds, focus our thoughts and really help us to connect with the natural world around us.

They cannot solve our problems but they can help us to think clearly and gain new perspectives. Sometimes even a few moments away from our worries can make a real difference to how we think about life.

You actually have lots more senses than the five you have just explored – 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? We all stand on the same earth, drawing energy from the Sun. We all have roots which hold us firm, we all look up into the same sky, breathe the same air.

Take some time to put yourself in the shoes (or paws!) of a plant or animal that lives in these woods. How do they live their lives? What troubles do they have? You and they share the same planet, you share these woods, we are all part of the same natural community. No one part of this vast web of life can exist alone.

**Together we have the strength to face whatever the future might bring.**



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

# SPY ON A SNIPE

Snipe belong to a group of birds called waders. There are two species typical to the UK, common snipe and jack snipe. **60 % of the UK population of snipe can be found in Scotland.**

Their lack of bright colours makes these birds well camouflaged against their habitat. Their feathers are streaked with shades of white, black and brown that create a marble effect, especially on the young chicks.

**Snipe can feel with their bills!** Snipe have a flexible tip on the end of their bill that contains nerves allowing them to feel underground for insects!

One way to tell the two kinds of snipe apart is by the length of their bills. Common snipe have long bills (approx 6.5cm), with jack snipe having relatively short bills (approx 4cm).



**A loose flock of snipe is called a wisp**

During the snipe's courtship display males can be heard "drumming" in flight. This noise is made by short dives mid-flight that vibrate its tail feathers!

**Stick to the path.** Snipe are shy birds that will "flush" when spooked. Take a moment to stand quiet and look among the grasses for birds venturing out to forage on the wetland!

# SPELLING BEE



**Number of People:** Two or more

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

**Materials Needed:** None

## How to play:

- Challenge each other to spell words based on what you can see, such as "crow" or "butterfly" or "cloud" etc.



# SOUND MAP



This is another great activity to do on Rabbit Hill to help you relax and take notice of what is around you.

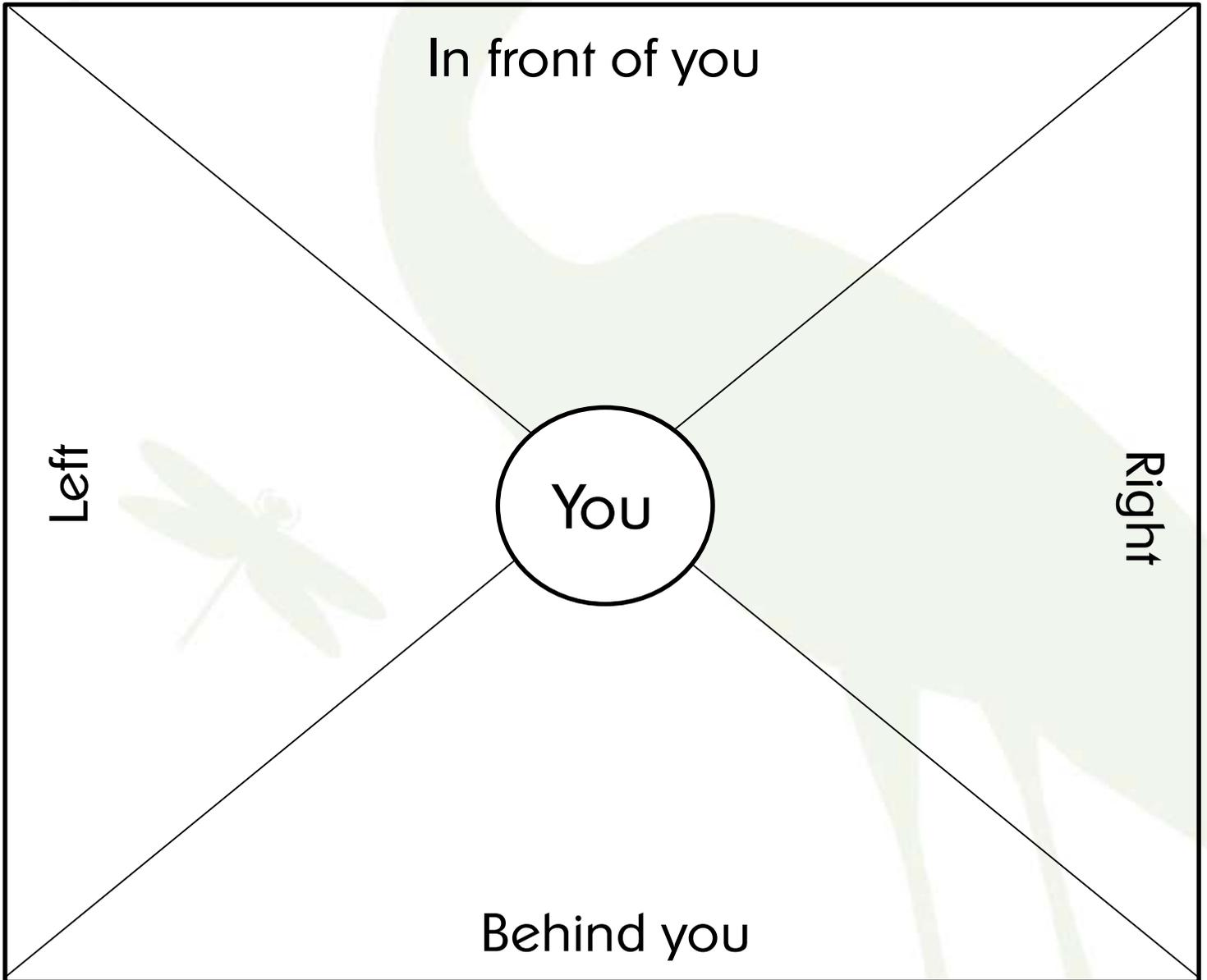
**Materials needed:** A blank piece of paper, a pencil, something to lean on like a book or a clipboard.

**How to play:** Over the page you'll see a circle, imagine this is you sitting outside and the circle is your head. Lines are drawn from the circle in the middle to each corner. These are for you to draw to what you hear in each direction.

Find a quiet place to sit, then draw or write on your sound map what you hear and where you hear it. Try sitting quiet and listening for at least two minutes. Did you and/or your family hear the same thing?



# SOUND MAP



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

# THE STORY OF THE RAVENSWOOD MOSSY MAN



Long, long ago the raised bog of Ravenswood was much larger than it is today. Few people lived there but it was home to all sorts of supernatural creatures – bogles, boggarts, brownies, will o' the wisps, walking trees, black dogs and even witches, who rode across the marsh on great water snakes.

These creatures made the marsh a very dangerous place to go after dark, but there was one wetland spirit that people could trust and who would look after travellers who came across him. He was known as the Mossy Man and he lived in the deep dark pools in the centre of the bog, coming out only at night or when the mists rose.

He was only three feet tall and covered head to toe with sphagnum moss. He had a great long white beard and walked with a birch branch as a cane. He always had an old Tam o'Shanter on his head with a long cockade and he wore a dark cloak woven out of marsh grass that allowed him to disappear into shadows if he wanted to hide from curious eyes. People saw him sometimes, a small shape with a dark back, a white chest and tall cockade walking round the marsh, but as soon as they tried to focus on him he would fade into the background and become just the faintest hint of movement in the shadows. And then the only way that people could follow him would be to listen for his cheerful laugh which sounded just like the call of a lapwing.

Mossy Man was a cheerful spirit and did his best to help the people who lived nearby. If an animal or a child went missing on the bog, or the waters overflowed and flooded the fields, the local people would call out "*Mossy Man, Mossy Man, 'mon oot and hear us, we'll aye abide your rule and law if you this favour gie us.*" They would pour a bowl of water into the bog and the next morning the lost animal or child would be returned safe and happy, or the flood waters would recede.

This state continued for many years until one day the local lords decided that the bog should be drained to become farmland. They brought in workers from all over the country and the local people were promised great benefits and riches from the new work. But the Ravenswood folk knew that no good would come of it because if the water pools were drained then what would happen to the Mossy Man?





Nevertheless the new workers laboured on the land every day, digging ditches and clearing away the moss, allowing the bog water to flow down into the Luggie and away to the sea. Gradually the bog got drier and drier. As it did more and more reports came of strange goings on in the surrounding areas. Bogles came into people's homes and stole clothes and smashed crockery. Boggarts scared the horses in the fields, causing them to sicken and die, and brownies stole the milk from cows.

The work went on however. The bog drained steadily and as it dwindled so did the people's beliefs and memories. One by one the people forgot about the Mossy Man, and as they forgot so too did the bogles and boggarts and will o the wisps fade into obscurity. The people were sickly, their homes often flooded, the crops withered in the fields and the animals died.

The people lived in misery but the local lords paid no heed and simply brought in more workers and told people that things would be better when the bog was finally drained.

Finally one morning the local people awoke to discover that their homes were surrounded by a thick mist. As they got up and began to go about their business they soon discovered to their horror that all the children in the area had disappeared. Some blamed the witches that were supposed to live on the bog and they marched out with flaming torches to confront them. Many poor old men and women, who had committed no crime but to be old, or to be lonely or to live apart were forced to flee by the mob, accused of riding water snakes and snatching away babies.

It made no difference, the next day, and the next, the mist was as thick as before and the children were still lost. There was one old woman left in the village who had not been accused of witchcraft and the local people determined she must be to blame so they resolved to capture her and burn her at the stake. As they approached the old woman's home she saw them coming and she ran out onto the bog to escape. The people gave chase and soon they were all as lost as each other out on the drained wildland that now stood where the bog had once been.





Eventually the old woman had ran so far that she had reached the centre of the old bog. Here she found there were still some pools of water left and as she splashed through them she heard the call of a lapwing and it made her stop dead in her tracks.

The people were about to seize her when they too heard the lapwing's call and felt the splash of water at their feet. It was as if a dam had burst as one by one they all remembered the bogles and boggarts, the brownies, the will o the wisps and the walking trees. As they remembered the shadows about them hardened and sinister laughter could be heard. Ghostly hands reached out through the mists and grabbed at them, bogles ran between their legs and tripped them, brownies threw stones and knocked them to the ground. The air grew stale and the light faded as walking trees surrounded them, shutting off the sky.

But the old woman now remembered the Mossy Man and just in time and she called out the old rhyme *"Mossy Man, Mossy Man, 'mon oot and hear us, we'll aye abide your rule and law if you this favour gie us."*

As she called a tear fell from her eye and landed in the moss. As soon it touched the ground the air was filled with the calls of a lapwing and the sound of it brought the memory of the Mossy Man back to everyone who heard it. Soon all the people were chanting together *"Mossy Man, Mossy Man, 'mon oot and hear us, we'll aye abide your rule and law if you this favour gie us."* And they all poured whatever water they had on them out onto the bog.

All around pools of dark bog water began to bubble up out of the earth, growing deeper and deeper. The bogles and brownies and sinister creatures all began to fade away again and the mist started to lift. The people looked round and everyone saw a shadow of what looked like a tiny man, with a dark cloak over his back, a long white beard over his chest and a tall cockade stuck into his Tam o'Shanter walking away through the marsh. They followed the shadow which always stayed just ahead of them, right on the edge of vision. Eventually the shadow led them back into the village and as they arrived the people were amazed and delighted to see that their children were back before them, peeping out of windows and doorways, looking for their lost parents.





Everyone now realised what had happened. the Mossy Man had not forgotten them, even though they had forgotten him.

From that day on they refused to allow the lord to drain anymore of the bog and they built dams across the remaining peat to slow the flow of water running away to the sea. And every year, on the anniversary of the children's return they all walked down to the bund at the edge of the bog, each with as much water as they could carry, and they poured it into the dark pools while saying the old words

*"Mossy Man, Mossy Man, glad we are ye heard us, we'll aye abide your rule and law and keep the moss around us."*

As they did so the Mossy Man would come and stand at the edge of the shadows and they would see his dark cloak, his white beard and the green cockade on his Tam o'Shanter - and they would hear his laughter, like the call of lapwings.

The people kept this up for a long, long time, but, as tends to happen, memories fade and eventually people stopped going to the bog and pouring water and they forgot the words to the old rhymes.

The Mossy Man isn't seen anymore but if you go out onto the bog when the conditions are just right, when the mist swirls about you and faint shadows fill the air, you might just see a shape with a dark back, a white chest and a tall green cockade atop its head, and perhaps you'll hear the call of a lapwing, telling you that the Mossy Man remembers.



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

# SCRUB MANAGEMENT AT RAVENSWOOD



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

# SCRUB MANAGEMENT AT RAVENSWOOD LNR



Ravenswood Local Nature Reserve is an amazing area for wildlife right in the heart of the community. This reserve is home to a raised bog – unique within Cumbernauld, and a precious environment within Scotland. On this site you will see wonders! At the height of summer there are dazzling dragonflies, magnificent moths, brilliant bees, splendid snakes, lovely lizards, and an amazing array of mosses. It is these sphagnum mosses that gives the bog character! The ability of this kind of moss to retain water and keep the bog – well – boggy, creates this haven for wetland-loving wildlife. Sphagnum mosses also act as a gigantic carbon sink- sucking in and retaining carbon, a crucial factor in the fight against global warming.

There are historic issues with keeping this raised bog wet: peat cutting, drainage for farming, and afforestation. These have had a massive impact on the bog. That is where our volunteers come in! We are actively removing “scrub” (tree saplings up to 2m in height) from the bog. Removing this scrub allows the bog to retain more water and preserve its health. We also remove invasive species from the bog: rhododendron, dogwood, and snowberry. We also plant specialised wetland wildflowers so that this can be another food source for invertebrates in the area.

Cutting scrub can be tough. Volunteers must be trained in tool safety, coppicing and risk assessing. However, learning these skills allows for invigorating collaborative work! The volunteers also get to be closer to the wildlife which is incredible in this gorgeous space. We now see the bog as a character in its own right; with a different personality depending on the time of year.

An important task that can be tackled alone is the pulling out of small saplings (no bigger than the height of your knee). if you see a small birch or willow sapling by the side of the path here – just give it a good pull! Then place it off the path. This will stop it growing and seeding later. This will help the bog retain water. we are always looking for new volunteers to get involved with scrub management. To join - contact me, David Walsh, at [d.walsh@tcv.org.uk](mailto:d.walsh@tcv.org.uk)



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

# THE NEW PATH AT RAVENSWOOD



**Managed by North Lanarkshire Council, Ravenswood is a popular place for people to visit, but it hasn't always been the easiest to access and explore.**

Feedback from local visitors was that the entrance to the site could be very boggy and muddy. This was also experienced by our own Cumbernauld Living Landscape team and volunteers. We worked with North Lanarkshire Council to design and install a path that connects the football pitch to the reserve, allowing access all the way from Our Lady's High School right through to the nature reserve without getting covered in mud.

Our Project Officer for Young People engages with a variety of schools in Cumbernauld, so this should help us to connect more young people to nature. It also makes accessing the outdoor classroom much easier. This work was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Campsies Centre (Cumbernauld) Ltd. Tell us what you think of the finished path @wildCumbernauld and <https://www.facebook.com/CumbernauldLivingLandscape/>



Before the path and drainage was installed



After the new path and drainage was installed



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

## 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.



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

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 links 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)



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