

STAY HOME, STAY WILD TOWN CENTRE TO SEAFAR WOODS WALK AND ACTIVITY PACK



How to get there: Start your walk at the Muirfield Centre in Cumbernauld Town Centre off Central Way, G67 1AX

Description: A moderate walk over urban pavements, gravel and dirt paths. The route through the Seafar Woods involves a couple of inclines.

The circular route is around 4km long (approx 6250 steps)

What to see : Urban wildlife, the trees and wildflowers of Seafar Woods, good chances to see woodpeckers, buzzards and roe deer as well as signs of other mammals.



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Travel has been difficult in recent times so on today's walk we're going to take you on a journey, not just to a different place, but to a different world. We're going to start off right in the town centre, overlooking the busy traffic of Central Way, the hustle and bustle of shops, the noise of engines and generators, the all pervading hum of electricity and the smell of sulphur. All around you, wherever you look your attention is drawn to concrete and harsh, jarring, artificial colours.

This human landscape is an assault on the senses. There is nowhere for your eyes to rest and your 'primitive' hind-brain – the one that stays ever-alert for danger in your environment – is constantly screaming alarm. Researchers all over the world are increasingly coming to the understanding that urban environments like this one are major drivers of human stress.

Scientists believe that being surrounded by natural elements, like trees, flowers, water – things that would have been vitally important to our evolutionary ancestors – reduces stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Research has also shown that spending time in natural spaces helps us to concentrate better, makes us feel more creative, increases energy levels and makes us less likely to feel tense or angry.

Spending time in and among nature just makes us feel better! But here, in the town centre, natural spaces can feel a long way away. There's something we can do about that though... Cumbernauld is an incredibly green town. 50% of the town's area is greenspace and around 23% is tree cover – that's about double the average for similar-sized Scottish towns. Cumbernauld was designed this way. It is possible to quickly reach natural spaces from almost anywhere in the town.

We're starting our walk outside the Muirfield Centre, facing south – looking towards the Police Station and Asda. You're standing on a hilltop here, on what would historically have been farmland. Turn to your right and follow the path which skirts alongside the area of open grass and playpark, heading towards the shopping centre. We're not going shopping though, we're journeying to a different world and we're about to take our first steps into it. Just as you pass the edge of the playpark you'll come to a line of trees on your right hand side with a path heading off into them. We're going to take this path.





Almost immediately, as you step under the trees the atmosphere changes. The wind dies as you are enclosed by the trees and you are surrounded by natural colours and sounds. It's amazing what a difference a few paces can make! There's a nice mix of trees in here, beech, lime, ash and rowan among others. Some of the trees are quite grand, which might seem surprising in among such modern buildings. But this tiny strip of woodland has actually been here a long time – it is shown on the very first Ordnance Survey maps in the 19th century. People will have walked in here among these trees for generations.

Keep walking down the path, heading roughly north. It's worth keeping your eye open along here. There's more to see than you might at first think. Fungi like jelly ears, polypores and turkey tail grow in the wood and leaf litter. Flowers grow here too. It's a reliable spot to find one of my favourite wildflowers, herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*). A type of wild geranium with small, deep pink flowers, herb robert is known by many other names – stinky bobs, stinking william, bloodwort and red robin. Some names are a bit of a mystery, 'Robert' might refer to St Robert who used this plant to staunch bleeding, or to Robert, Duke of Normandy, who supposedly used it to cure the plague! Its leaves turn red in autumn and this led people to believe it could be used to cure all sorts of diseases of the blood. Other names are more obvious – stinky bobs refers to the musky, foxy smell released when its leaves are crushed, and its use as an insect repellent. Herb robert was believed to be beloved of goblins and brownies and would bring good luck if it was well treated – and bad luck if it was not... the name of 'death come quickly' might refer to what happens to someone who picks this flower.

A final belief about herb robert was that it could predict the weather. If the flower head is drooping, a wet spell was said to be on the way! If you see some then carefully check the forecast before you head on.

When you reach the T junction, turn right. You'll find ivy climbing the trees along here and the sweet smell of honeysuckle hangs in the air on summer evenings. Keep walking until you reach Brown Road which cuts across your path. Carefully cross over and keep going straight ahead. We're heading for the underpass under Seafar Road.



There's a nice hawthorn hedge which grows along the path here, with holly growing in among it, and it's always worth checking for signs of birds and mammals.

You'll come to a narrow path with a building wall on one side and trees on the other. Head in here and follow the path as it curves to the left and heads for the underpass. The two trees ahead of you are horse chestnuts (conker) trees but they are slowly dying due to the honey fungus which has infected them. Conker trees are having a hard time in the UK. They're not native and they don't grow all that well here naturally. Most of the ones you see have been deliberately planted at some point in the past. They were once thought to be useful for curing wind in horses – though it is actually quite poisonous to them! The name might come from this, or from the horseshoe-shaped scar that is left on the twigs after the leaves fall. Look for the long, five lobed leaves and the tall white or pink flowers in May and June – which give it the name 'candle tree'. In winter the leaf buds are large, brown and covered in sticky resin. They've only been in the UK for around 400 years. They were often planted as an ornamental tree and considered to be very grand. In the past it was believed that carrying conkers in your pockets relived rheumatism – and in fact modern research has identified an anti-inflammatory chemical within them.

Continue on down the steps into the underpass. These steps can be slippery at times. Our volunteers come here to clear the leaves off the steps but it's an endless job. Once through the underpass keep walking straight ahead towards Allanfaulds Road/Newlands Place. Carefully cross the road here. For most of the year you'll find a pinky-purple flower growing beneath the trees here. It's another geranium (the same family of plants as herb robert). Wild geraniums are often known as 'cranesbills' which comes from the shape of their seed pods which are supposed to look like the beaks of cranes. Turn right and keep going a short distance until you come to some concrete bollards guarding a path to your left.





This path is really an old road, leading to the remains of a commercial building which stood in the hollow down here. You can still see other remnants of the building as you walk down the path, and it serves as a great reminder of how quickly nature can reclaim human spaces. Our Nature Ninja volunteers have worked here in the past to keep the path clear, and roe deer and bullfinches are common sights. You'll see a path to your right which was recently improved by Cumbernauld Living Landscape. We're not going to follow it today but you can find that walk in one of our other packs (Cumbernauld Village to Seafar).

The main path will curve back on itself over a concrete area. Follow it round. The treeline to your right includes a number of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) which grow well here. They are a wonderful plant for wildlife and support hundreds of species of insects and other plants. They can grow up to 40m tall and live for almost a thousand years. They are our only native pine and you can recognise them here by their long straight trunks with a sort of gingery tinge to the bark. They also look a bit top heavy as they have a tendency to drop their lower branches as they grow.

Look for an opening on your right with a dirt and gravel path going steeply downhill. This path brings you into the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Seafar Woods Wildlife Reserve. The Trust is a charity which manages these woods for the benefit of both wildlife and people. This is mostly an artificial woodland, planted here by the Cumbernauld Development Corporation in the 1960s – you can see hints of that in the tree structure. The trees are mostly the same age and size and there are only of a few different species. The Trust is working to restructure these woodlands, cutting some trees down and planting others to make a more natural structure which is better for wildlife.

Follow this path down. There are loads of fungi growing in the woods here. On one visit with a Wild Ways Well group we counted 14 separate species growing on one stump! Dead man's fingers, candlesnuff, orange disco, turkey tail, coral spot, pixie cups – fungi have the best names.

Partners



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Keep walking until you come to a crossroads. We're going to turn left here, but before you do check the standing dead trees which grow next to the path. These have been left here deliberately to rot and if you look carefully you should be able to see one of the reasons why – perfectly round holes about 5cm in diameter are made by woodpeckers, excavating a nest. The ones here were probably made by a young inexperienced bird as this isn't really in a great place for a nest – and in any case the bird has pecked so enthusiastically its gone right through the stump and come out the other side! Luckily woodpeckers (probably a great spotted in this case) have special structures in their necks and heads which prevent damage to their bodies as they work.

Once you've finished looking at the woodpecker's work follow the path along to the left. You'll spot some chainsawed stumps here, a good chance to go and practice some dendrochronology (counting tree rings to you and me!). Trees put on new layers of growth every year and this leaves distinctive ring-shaped marks behind in the cut stumps. Have a go at counting the rings on the stumps and see if you can work out how old the trees must have been (hint – remember when the woodland was planted!) If you look closely you can even work out the weather in any particular year. Wide rings mean warm wet summers while tighter ones suggest the weather was cold or dry, preventing the tree putting on much growth.

Cross a small stream (have a quick peek for frogs or toads as you go) and you'll come out into a wide area of wet meadow. You can see even from a distance that the meadow is wet by the patches of tall, dark rushes growing in among the grass. These plants love wet ground and thrive in the damp spots here. The stalks of rushes like these have soft spongy centres which were once used to make candle wicks. Trying to peel the fibrous outer coating off to leave a long unbroken section of potential wick can be a mindful way to spend a few minutes. It's difficult but possible with a bit of practice! Come here in summer and the grasses are alive with life, butterflies, moths and grasshoppers love it here.

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Follow the path through this area – you might see some metal structures dotting the grass. These are ‘living windows’ and the idea is that you look through the diamond-shaped holes and observe the view of the ground that they frame. The ground has been planted with wildflowers, so hopefully you get a colourful view if you give it a go later in the spring and summer! They’re also the perfect size for framing a photo with your smartphone... why not send us a snap at Cumbernauld Living Landscape?

We’ve truly stepped into a different world now. Take a moment to stop and monitor your senses, just like you did back at the town centre. You’re now surrounded by natural colours, greens, browns, the occasional vibrant splash of flowers. You can smell wet, rich earth, full of life and growth. You can hear running water, birds, the creak of trees moving in the wind. You might feel sunlight on your skin, the air is purer and cleaner and may be heavy with windborne pollen and scents. The trees mean shelter and protection. There is water nearby, the rich earth and the sounds of life all around means food to grow and eat. For millions of years evolution has taught our species that places like this are ‘right’, this is a good place to be, this is a safe space to spend time. It’s only been a few hundred years or so since our species made the move to living in dense urban areas. Much less – maybe a couple of hundred – since we began to spend the majority of our time indoors surrounded by artificial light, stale air, and constant noise.

It’s a blink of the eye in evolutionary terms, and science is increasingly showing that it’s a move that our brains haven’t caught up with yet – if they ever will. Spaces like this just naturally feed our senses and make us feel happier, safer, and less stressed – in fact research has shown that this effect even works on people who don’t consider themselves nature lovers! Someone in one of our groups, who struggled with anger management issues, once told me that they felt it was “impossible to feel angry here, the trees just swallow it all up.” Other people have remarked how the wide open spaces made it easier to talk or to think, or to just forget about their troubles for a few hours.

The Scottish naturalist John Muir said that ‘between every two pine trees is a doorway to a new life’ and it’s a quote I often think of as I step from the town centre into these woods.

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Keep on walking. You'll come back under the cover of the trees in a moment. From here on in be especially vigilant for signs of deer, foxes and badgers! They love the woods here with the open canopy of native broad-leaved trees. Look for the foxes low down in the undergrowth – they'll sense you coming but will often find a safe spot to crouch down and observe you as you pass. It's always worth checking behind you as you walk. Foxes love to let you pass and then slip on to the path and follow along behind, perhaps hoping you'll drop some food – or maybe even fall down dead. They are scavengers after all!

You'll soon come to another area of wet meadow. Local people used to call this area 'Wembley' as it was a popular spot to play football. It must have been drier back then as it's definitely too wet underfoot now. You can often see mammal trails crisscrossing the grass here. Paths left behind as the local residents go about their business. This is also a common spot to see buzzards soaring overhead, spiralling up into the air on draughts of warm air. In the Highlands they call buzzards 'tourist eagles' as they superficially resemble golden eagles – though they are much smaller as well as easier to see! These birds have had a massive resurgence in the last 40 years. They were rare until the latter part of the 20th century, but their numbers across the central belt have recovered somewhat. They are birds of prey, but here they are primarily scavengers. They will eat a lot of roadkill on the nearby M80. They will also eat small mammals like mice and voles and even invertebrates like beetles. You can sometimes see them 'worm charming' - tapping their feet on wet grassland to try and tempt earthworms to come to the surface.

As you pass 'Wembley' the path curves upwards – this is a steep section but it's short so take your time and you'll be at the top soon! Stop once you reach the top and catch your breath – you can admire the tree stump here as you do. It's noticeably bigger than the other trees around and is probably a survivor from woodland that existed here long before Seafar Woods were planted. Some of the Wild Ways Well groups have tried the 'hugging' technique (more on that later in the pack!) to age this tree and have come up with an age of about 150 years old.

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A new path stretches from here up to your left towards the houses on Allanfaulds Road, this was part of Cumbernauld Living Landscape's access works and should help to make it easier for people in the surrounding area to get in and out of the woods. You can head up here if you want a shortcut back, but once we've got our breath back our guided walk is going to keep on going further into the woods.

You can see the trees ahead are thicker and darker. There is a lot more Sitka spruce here than in the section of the woods you have just been through. Spruce is an evergreen tree which was often planted in the past because it is fast growing and likes Scotland's climate. It is not native though and it has very little 'wildlife value' – almost nothing in Scotland eats it or can even live in among it. Conservationists call Sitka plantations 'green deserts' for this reason, and it is better for wildlife to try and replace them with native trees which support lots of other insects, birds, mammals and flowers. Keep walking and the woods will soon open up again into an airier space. You can find wildflowers on the grassy verges here, and green woodpeckers (which are not common) have been reported in the trees.

Before too long you'll come to another new path stretching up to your left. This is another one of Cumbernauld Living Landscape's access works, this time leading up to Braeface Road. The path follows the wayleave – the cut section of woods which has to be kept open for the power lines above (don't forget to check the power lines for birds of prey perching on them and watching the woods below!). Again you can take this path and head up to the town centre if you like – but for me the woods are just starting to get interesting!

Our Project Officers run a variety of training courses in all sorts of conservation tasks, and this is one of the spots that we bring people to learn about mammal tracking and surveying. One of the first things we teach people is to begin their search for mammals around 'linear features' in the landscape. Linear features basically mean 'long lines' and right here we have a bunch of them all in one spot. First of all we have the long line of the wayleave and path coming down from Braeface Road, and then the path that we have been walking along cutting through the woods themselves. In addition you should notice just in front of you that we have a drainage ditch and a grassy bank running along the side of the path ahead.



Lines like this are a great place to start looking for mammals as they cut through the landscape, dividing up areas that the mammals themselves might like to visit. Humans rarely stop to think if their new path might be running between an animal's bedroom and its kitchen! If a fox, a deer or a badger sleeps on one side of the path but likes to forage for food on the other then it will have to cross it at some point – and when it does it will likely leave signs behind that we can see.

Sometimes this process can be really easy. For things like rivers or walls the animals will probably cross it at the same point we do. They'll use our bridges and gates, or they'll cross over the same, easy access points that we do. It's always worth checking around these spots to see if there are any signs like hair trapped in a gate where an animal has squeezed through. If there are muddy spots then you can look for footprints. If there is long grass you can look for the tunnels made by animals passing through them. One of the most reliable things to look for though are spraints - or poo to give them a more common name! Lots of our native mammals like foxes, otters, pine martens and badgers use spraints to mark territory. If they find a useful resource, like a hole in a wall or a handy bridge, they'll often mark it with a spraint, letting other animals know that they are around and claiming it for their own. These spraints are full of information to the animals which leave them but our poor senses can usually only get a few basic hints of information from them – but at least enough to know the animal was there!

As you walk through this section of the woods look for some of these signposts. Pay close attention to the ditch on your left and you should quickly spot some churned up areas of earth on the bank above it. Take a closer look and you'll probably spot the distinctive 'slots' of deer hooves in the mud, showing that the deer have been jumping over the water. Look further and you'll see you're actually on a mammal highway. There will be a distinct path leading from the mud back into the woods. Now turn around and look on the other side of the path... you'll probably find another trail leading into the woods there too! With a bit of practice you can soon learn to tell what species are using these paths, and even what they're for and where they lead to. You can build up a really vivid picture of the animals' lives as they go about their daily business.



Keep on walking through the woods and see how many mammal highways you can spot.

Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) are really common in this section. They like to live in trees near to more open, grassy areas. Roe are our smallest native deer. Their shoulders are not much more than waist high to the average person. In the 19th century they were considered fairly rare in Scotland but they are now very numerous – probably because humans have exterminated all of the animals – like wolves, bears and lynx – that would once have preyed on them. They have no natural predators now and the main check on their numbers is actually food supply. They eat leaves and berries for preference but will take fungi and young ferns as well. They can also eat tree buds and shoots – and can even eat very poisonous yew trees. Because there are so many of them this has caused problems in many areas of Scotland. The deer eat so many young trees that new forests cannot grow and existing woodlands can't naturally regenerate. In urban woodlands you'll often notice that there are few naturally growing young trees, and those that have been planted have to be protected by fences or plastic tree guards. Look at the trees around you and see if you can see signs of twigs with ragged, twisted ends. This is usually caused by deer, which have no upper teeth in their jaws so cannot cleanly bite the buds off.

Deer don't spraint. Instead they poo on the go, leaving piles of pellet like droppings behind. The old word for these is 'fewmets' and sometimes you find piles of them called 'crotties'. You can tell a lot from deer poo, including the sex and species of the dropper, but we'll maybe leave that for another time!

Partners



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Keep your eyes open as you walk. It is likely the deer will know you are there long before you spot them. They have incredible senses. They can smell us coming long before we see them, and their large mobile ears mean they can pinpoint sounds coming from any direction. Still, if you are lucky you might see them walking carefully and delicately through the woods. If they spot you they are likely to freeze in place, trusting in their camouflage to keep them safe. They will only move once they are sure that you have seen them, and then they'll often bound off, skipping through the woods in long jumps, sometimes barking in alarm. Keep watching them. After a while they'll generally stop and then look back at you to see what you're doing! They can move very stealthily in the woods. If they have to they will even crawl along on their knees with their bellies scraping the ground and they can move quickly like this if need be.

A good trick for spotting them is to scan the woods by slowly moving your head left and right and almost defocussing your eyes. You are looking to distinguish between the thin vertical shapes of the trees and the fatter horizontal shapes of a deer. Their colours change through the year from dark grey in winter to almost foxy red in summer, but always with a lighter coloured rump and pale flanks. The males have short antlers, usually with just three points on them – which can be very sharp. They can do great damage to each other when they compete in the annual rut. The rut is the name for their breeding season and it generally begins in August. They drop their antlers in November but are growing them again by December so you'll see them almost all year round. Outwith the rut they are generally solitary, or sometimes in family groups of only two or three. The young (usually twins) are born in May and will stay with the mother until independent.

While you're looking for deer you might also spot some drystone dykes through this area, hinting at the past use of the land. There were pig farms here once upon a time and the walls would have divided up the animal enclosures.

Soon the path will start heading downhill and before long you'll come to a low gate – this is the western edge of the Wildlife Reserve. Cross the gate, turn left and head uphill onto Downfield Road (be careful, although this road isn't busy it is still a road!).

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You'll see the school and the path leading to Ravenswood off to the west but we're not going that way today (check out our Ravenswood guided walk pack for that one!). Instead walk up the hill until you see an opening in the trees on your left and take this path, up towards the town centre.

This is an open, airy section of woods and the path is bounded by a stone wall which often has interesting plants and ferns growing in it. I always feel a sense of tamed wilderness here – in fact it always makes me think of The Shire in JRR Tolkien's novels! The sense that the trees and the people have been living here together for a very long time, and a sense of comfortable familiarity and co-operation has grown between them. But maybe that's just me!

Keep following the path up through the trees until you come to some houses on your left, then follow it as it goes under Seafar Road. We've passed out of the wild world of Seafar but this still feels like a gentle reintroduction to urban life as we walk through the trees and past St Mary's Primary School. There are some beautiful old trees along this section. There are limes and oaks among them, and in autumn the branches of the damson trees are dripping with fruit. If it's winter as you pass the back of the tax office then you can peek through the hawthorn hedge to get a glimpse of one of Cumbernauld's totem poles, another piece of town art.

The path heads straight now until it is running parallel to Ferguson Road. Once there look to your left for a long, steep path that leads uphill to the town centre itself. Take your time walking up here. There are lots of stone benches to rest on and the area is generally alive with birds of all sorts. I've seen bullfinches, long tailed tits, treecreepers and goldfinches along here. They're there pretty much all the time but you have to keep your eyes (and ears!) open for them!

Once at the top of the hill turn left and walk along the side of the shopping centre and its car parks. Keep heading straight along here and you'll soon find yourself back at the Muirfield Centre where we began.





Thank you for joining us on our Wild Walk through this incredible landscape. Please try out some of the other activities in this pack. It is now well known that walking among and engaging with nature in this way is incredibly good for our mental and physical wellbeing. It is vital that we continue to experience nature like this and learn to value the lessons that nature has to teach us.

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 for more walks and activities or to join our volunteer, schools and wellbeing groups.

Paul Barclay
Cumbernauld living Landscape Health & Wellbeing Project Officer



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THE SEAFAR WOODS TREASURE TRAIL



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

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| • The wildlife window | 2 points |
| • Birds on the powerlines | 2 points |
| • A woodpigeon | 5 points |
| • A bird of prey | 10 points |
| • A deer | 10 points |
| • A tree taller than your house | 5 points |
| • A tree wide enough to hug | 5 points |
| • Three different shaped stones | 2 points |
| • Fungi | 5 points |
| • A hedge | 1 point |
| • A tree stump | 1 point |
| • Something the colour of your eyes | 2 points |

Total



A woodpigeon



Roe deer



Buzzard (bird of prey)



Birds on powerlines



Fungi



SPECIES SPOTTER

Common sights to see now?



Sparrowhawk

January - December

Small raptors that are expert hunters in compact spaces. Females are twice the weight of males, which is one of the largest differences between sexes of our birds of prey.



Song thrush

January - December

Smaller than the mistle thrush with a darker plumage and speckles on its breast that are pointed at the top.

One of our few native species to eat snails. Although heard singing throughout the day you won't hear them early morning, unlike the robin.



Woodpecker

January - December

Spends most of its time clinging to trees, scooting away from anyone watching.

Take a minute to stand quiet and you may hear their loud drumming sound.



Wood sorrel

March - November

Five-petalled flowers with purplish veins sit among its 3 heart shaped leaflets. Wood sorrel likes dark, shady places surrounded by moss.



Scarlet elf cup



January - April

Magical little fungi that also like dark, damp, shady places and are sometimes found hiding under moss growing on decaying wood. As the name suggests the cup-shaped fungi are bright red, with a smooth inner surface.



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SPECIES SPOTTER

Others to spot:



Wood anemone

March - May



Ivy

January - December



What else do you see (make a note):

Who to look for at a later date:

Wildflowers

Bird's foot trefoil
May - September



Moths

Brimstone
April - October



Insects

Red soldier beetle
June- August



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SPECIES OF THE WEEK



Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Found in most places with leafy bushes and trees across Scotland. You may even have been lucky enough to have seen one in your own garden as they're very fond of suet alongside their diet of worms, fruit and snails!

They nest low in dense shrubs in bowl-shaped nests that are lined with mud mixed with saliva, where they lay 3-5 eggs sometimes four times a year! Eggs are incubated for 14 days and fledge approximately 14 days later.



The song of the song thrush

These musical birds stand proud with their complex songs made up numerous repeated phases. These birds are mimics so will copy other birds' calls. They tend to repeat around 4-5 times before pausing to start a new phrase.

If startled you may hear them shout their alert call which is a sharp “**sssit**” or a pitchy call of “**tic-ic-ic-ic**”.



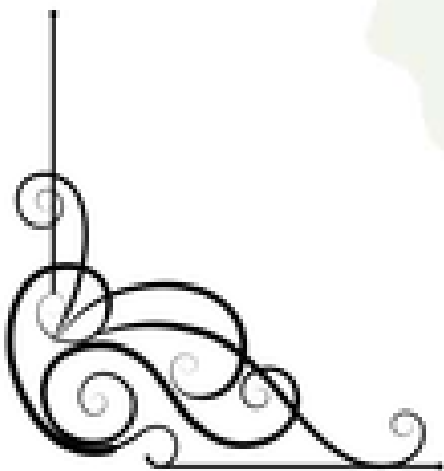
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PHOTO CHALLENGE

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



Send us your image, drawing or photo by **Wednesday 10 March**,
for a chance of being featured in our next booklet.



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PHOTO SAFARI



On your walk today challenge yourself to take a photograph of something that fits with each of the following words:

Feisty

Jaggy

Dark

Happy

Crooked

Warm

Magnificent

Partners



Snowdrops



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POETRY ON THE GO



Number of people: Two or more

Where to play: Play as you walk

Materials needed: None



How to play:

- Take turns creating a poem-on-the-go.
- Start off with a simple line like “one day I took a walk.”
- The next person adds their own rhyme such as “but then I lost my sock”... “I found it on a rock”... and so on.
- Be creative and have fun, the sillier the better.



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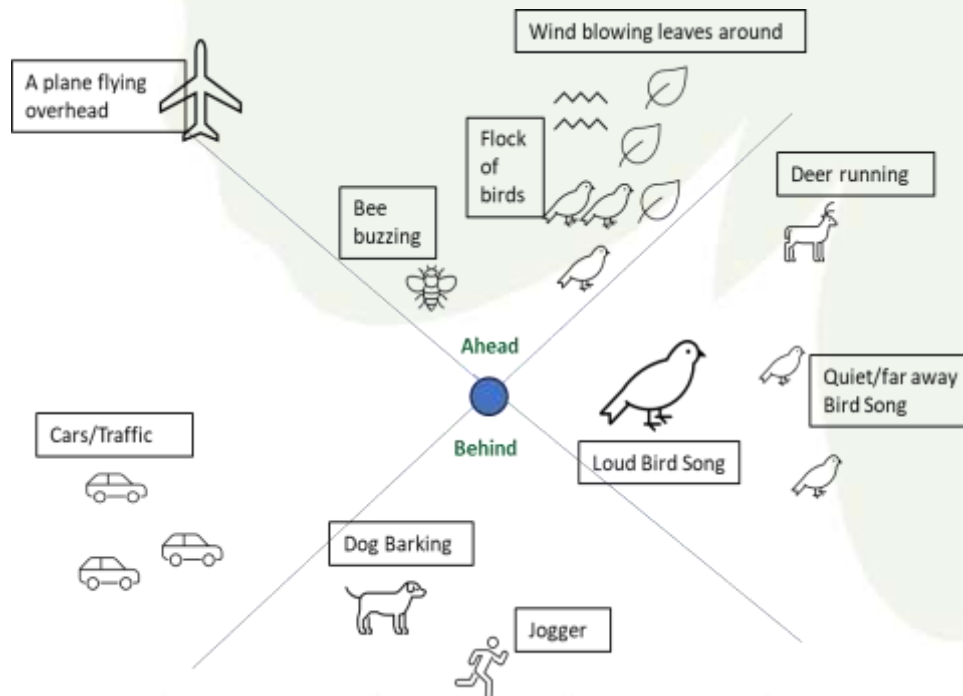
WILD WAYS WELL - DEER'S EARS



Have you ever looked at a deer's ears? Deer have brilliant hearing. They can turn their ears in all different directions so they can hear things sneaking up, no matter where they come from. Try it yourself. Find a quiet spot to sit for a few minutes, close your eyes, open your ears and listen like a deer!

Draw a small circle in the middle of a blank sheet of paper and imagine this is your head viewed from above. Split the sheet into four to represent ahead, behind and to your sides.

Now mark on the paper all the sounds you hear and the direction they come from, showing where they come from in relation to you and how far away they are. You could draw pictures, write words, whatever you like (there's an example below). Now try to use your deer senses... cup your hand behind your ears with the palm facing forward. How does this change what you can hear? Turn your hand around so it is in front of your ear with the palm facing backwards, how does this change things?



Partners



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WILD WAYS WELL - AGE A TREE WITH A HUG!



Did you know you can find out how old a tree is just by hugging it? First work out what kind of tree you have (check out www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/tree-id-app/ for a free app or <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/03/tree-id-kids/> for printable resources).

Next you have to measure the circumference of the tree's trunk (how big it is around) and you can do this by hugging it!

Measure the distance between your fingertips in centimetres with your arms stretched wide apart (the average adult should be about 130cm). This is your hugging distance.

Now hug your tree and count how many full length hugs it takes to go right around the trunk at shoulder height.

Multiply this number by your hugging distance and you have the circumference in cm.

Name of tree	Divide girth (CM) by this number
Oak	2
Hazel, Elm, Ash, Beech	2.5
Holly, Yew	1.25
Pine, Spruce	3.25
Sycamore	2.75

Now use the table above to work out the age... For example, an oak tree with a girth of 260cm (2 adult hugs) would be 130 years old! But a beech tree of the same girth would only be 104.

Some trees live a long time. An oak could live to be 900 years old, and we think yew trees might be able to live for thousands of years!

Other trees like birch, maple or rowan might only live for 100 years. A healthy woodland will have a good mix of trees of different ages and species.





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

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



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

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



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



SPENDING TIME WITH NATURE IMPROVES WELLBEING

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

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

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

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

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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).

OUR SEAFAR SANCTUARY



Seafar wildlife reserve is a special woodland owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Situated in the heart of the community it is an incredibly popular place to explore. Combining open meadows blossoming with wildflowers with cavernous plantation spruce, it offers a variety of habitats to investigate.

The reserve is a go-to area to highlight the beauty of Cumbernauld's woodlands to our groups. In a 5-metre stretch you can pass by buzzards perched on deadwood, mossy badger setts, bulbous inkcap mushrooms, spreading red campion, fluttering small tortoiseshell butterflies and more. It is also a forager's paradise with a larder of edible species – brambles, raspberries, sorrel and more.

A location of particular importance to our groups is the 'Wembley' meadow. It is here where many of our groups have first experienced what Cumbernauld Living Landscape offers. We have sipped tea, explored for insects, made works of art and learned safe fire lighting. It is here we share experiences.

A particularly prized memory of this space comes from the easing of last spring's lockdown. Our groups had ceased going out for months. We did not know when we could get them out again. After a period of risk-assessing and creating a secure work environment, we felt able to get our volunteers out again. We thought that Wembley would be a poignant place to meet our old friends - our volunteers! When the groups were there we were all socially distanced but, in that space, doing our nature walks really hit home for us how special the relationships between each other and nature were. It felt like we had never been away.

Go down to the reserve. Take away all distractions and just look at the amazing nature around you. Can you see any bugs crawling among the deadwood? Are there any birds melodically singing above you? Does the damp smell of the undergrowth pierce your nostrils? What does an old oak tree feel like; does it feel its age? All these experiences are free, and I guarantee can improve your wellbeing. If you would like to get involved with our Nature Ninjas volunteer group, why not contact me, David Walsh, 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.



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

www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Facebook - **Cumbernauld Living Landscape** or

Twitter and Instagram - **@WildCumbernauld**



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

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

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



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