



Creating Natural Connections Cumbernauld Village to Seafar Activity Pack



LET'S GET STARTED

How to get there: Start your walk at the east end of Old Glasgow Road, G67 2RR. There is on-road parking here and in the surrounding streets. You can shorten your walk by parking outside the football pitch further along Old Glasgow Road.

Description: A moderate walk over urban pavements, gravel and dirt paths. The route through the Village is mostly flat but there is a climb up into the woods.

The circular route is around 3.5km long (approx. 5250 steps)

What to see : A great chance to spot some urban wildlife and contrast the ancient area of the Langriggs with the more modern Scottish Wildlife Trust Seafar Woods Wildlife Reserve.

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GET READY TO EXPLORE...

This week's Wild Walk will take us on a journey from Cumbernauld Village into Seafar Woods and back.

It'll involve some time travel on the way. We'll be walking from the ancient heart of Cumbernauld through the mediaeval Langriggs, the more modern buildings of the Village, the Jubilee Park and Seafar Woods, which were mostly planted in the mid 20th century.

If you're ready, let's charge our flux capacitors, get ourselves up to 88mph and go!

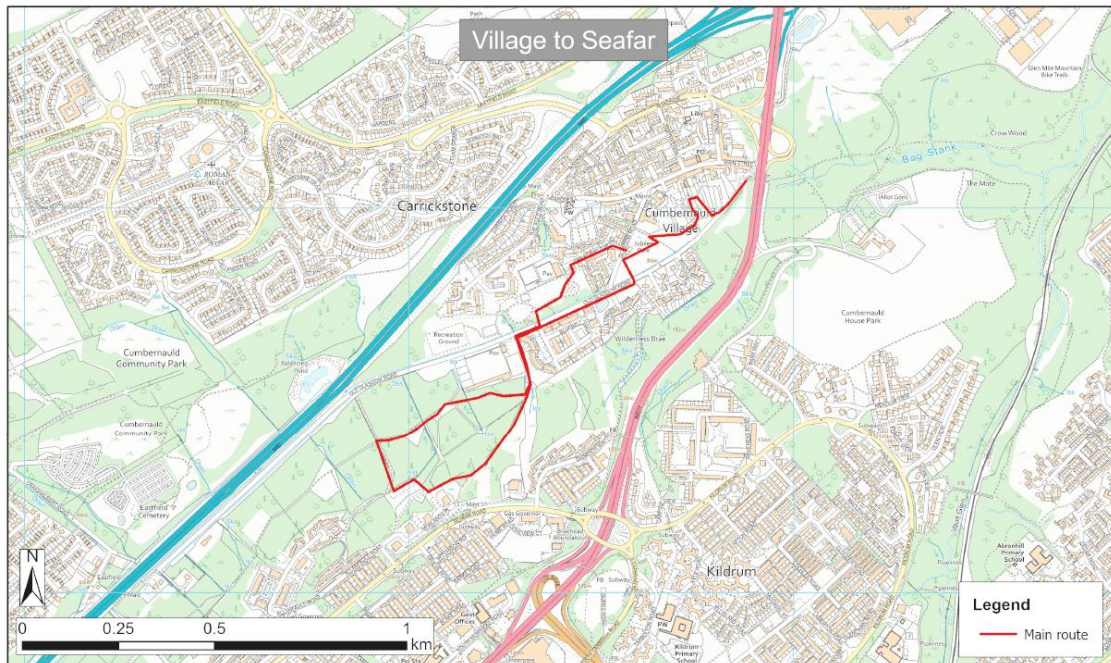
Begin your walk at the eastern end of Old Glasgow Road, near the Spur Hotel. The underpass leading to Cumbernauld Glen will be behind you – we'll be taking that route on another walk, but today we're going to walk west, along Old Glasgow Road towards Seafar.

Although Cumbernauld is classified as a 'new town' the Village itself has real claims to being an ancient place. The Roman Antonine Wall ran through this area and there was a garrison fort in nearby Westerswood. It is possible that, as with many Roman fortifications, a settlement of local people sprang up here to service the fort – or perhaps people already lived here when the strangers arrived with their tales of a far-flung Empire full of exotic wonders. Roman records show that the people of the 'Damnonii' (the deep ones) inhabited this land, and it was likely they were Roman allies, and lived in peace with the newcomers.

The shadow of Rome still lies all over, the very landscape echoing that far-off time and much of the physical infrastructure follows the routes they laid down here.

Look around you and imagine what this area may have looked like in Roman times. Much of what is familiar to us now would be absent then – the Legions changed this landscape, as well as building roads and walls they brought with them plants like fennel, celandine, ground elder and nettles. Sweet chestnut, apple and cherry trees, rabbits, hares and even the first domestic cats. The great wood of Caledon was already under threat before the Romans, but they likely stripped away even more of the woods for their fortifications.

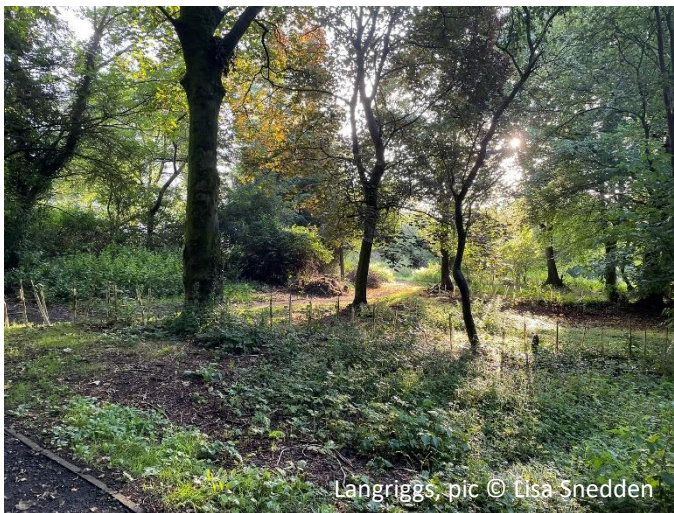
Here's a map of the route we will be taking today:



Scottish Wildlife Trust
Harbourside House
110 Commercial Street
Edinburgh, EH6 6NF

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Scale: 1:10,000





Langriggs, pic © Lisa Snedden

Much has changed, but much has also remained. Strip away the buildings and the roads and picture the curves of the earth, the bones of the landscape. We don't live separate from this landscape; we are part of it, and it is part of us.

Head off along Old Glasgow Road – before the M80 was built this was the main road to Glasgow - and admire the trees to your right. These are part of the Langriggs, a system of land management that dates back at least to mediaeval times in Scotland.

Once you reach the gate on your right head on in and explore. You can wander up and down the paths in here in any order but try to pay attention to the structure of the land. You should quickly notice that the area has been divided by lines of trees and hedges into long strips – these are the 'lang riggs' the area is named for. Every house would once have had its own long strip of land, which the inhabitants used to earn their living or ply their trade. Some might have been used to grow food or raise animals, others would have grown raw materials or housed buildings and workshops for tailors, weavers, blacksmiths – whatever the landowner needed.

Langriggs used to be common all over Scotland but very few survive now and these are some of the last still in existence. They are owned by North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) and in the not so distant past were under threat from housing developers. Happily, community action – in the form of Cumbernauld Village Action for the Community (CVAC) – was able to save them, bringing them back into repair and recreating a quality greenspace, saving a precious piece of social heritage for the future. Cumbernauld Living Landscape has been able to assist CVAC's volunteers in their work, providing training on orchard and meadow management, and in the future we hope to help them plant native hedges and trees to maintain the boundary lines of the riggs themselves. Working together we hope to be able to secure this greenspace for another few hundred years!



Nature is all around, like this beautiful butterfly. No matter what the season, be sure to keep your eyes and ears open.

Explore this place, imagine it when it was the heart of a bustling human community – and then imagine the natural community which lives here now. On our walks, surveys and events we have found that these trees are home to bats, like long eared brown and pipistrelles, tawny owls, sparrowhawks and woodpeckers. The sunny spots are perfect for butterflies like commas (shown above) and red admirals, and the ground can be carpeted with snowdrops, bluebells and orchids. All protected by ancient walls – and a proud human community.

The Langriggs are a great example of something which we don't often think about. If greenspaces such as this are not embraced by the local community, they will always be under threat. In order to protect these places, they must be part of the community, not apart from it. If people can't use greenspaces, they won't value them – and if they aren't valued, they can't be protected for the benefit of the natural community which has no voice of its own. How do you feel about this? Do you think natural spaces have to have a human use or should they just be kept for their own intrinsic value?

Once you've explored the Langriggs, come back out onto Old Glasgow Road and keep heading west, towards the houses and the distant green line of trees.

This is an urban landscape but there is still plenty of nature to be seen as we walk. Watch for the birds which flit all around – many of the bird species we love are well adapted to our urban environments. Blackbirds, blue tits, robins and wrens are all naturally woodland birds, but they have grown to love our parks and gardens. Some species – like crows, pigeons and gulls - are considered pests by some, but this is only because they are so successful at living with us in the environment we have created for them.



Many of our feathered friends – gulls in particular – are becoming increasingly threatened in their natural habitats, so our urban areas are a lifeline for them. Other species survive among us because they are intelligent and adaptable – crows and pigeons are great examples of this and are considered by scientists to be some of the cleverest species on the planet.

The green area on your right is the Jubilee Park. Walk through it and think about the species you share this space with. The closely cut grass of urban parks like this is designed for humans to spend time in and these areas are often not very good for wildlife, with little food and cover for animals. Keep an eye on your feet as you walk through here, however, and pay attention to the ground. The wet slope of the Jubilee Park is actually a great place to find all sorts of fungi, growing in among the grass. On a recent walk with the Wild Ways Well group, we spotted more than a dozen different species of fungi here, from tiny candlesnuff to colourful sulphur tufts and glossy waxcaps.

As you leave the park, keep heading west along the pavement. You should see a stream on your right flowing alongside you. This is the Bog Stank which rises in Eastfield and flows down through the Village and Cumbernauld Glen, where it meets the Red Burn and joins it for its long journey to the River Forth and on to the North Sea. This point where the Bog Stank and Red Burn meet offers one explanation for Cumbernauld's name '*comar nan allt*' – the meeting of the waters. We'll explore this meeting on another walk. For now, keep an eye on the water as you walk. There is always the chance of a dipper foraging in the water – or even (if you're incredibly lucky!) the chance of spotting signs of otters which use this waterway to move around the town. 'Bog' and 'Stank' are both old words from English and Scots respectively, which mean roughly the same thing, '*slow moving water*' – so the stream is really called the '*slow moving water, slow moving water*'!

This confluence of languages – Gaelic, Scots and English – all associated with the same natural feature again shows the depth of the human relationship with this land - I wonder what the Romans called it?



A litter pick we organised at Seafar Woods, which saw us hauling over 50 bags of rubbish and other items, such as a discarded shopping trolley, from the woodland area. We need to protect these spaces so nature, and we, can be happy.

Cross the road when it's safe to do so and head down the pavement on the other side, walking towards the curved block of flats. The Bog Stank keeps on flowing among the tree line, right under the motorway, through a specially made tunnel which also helps wildlife safely cross from one side of the motorway to the other.

Once past the flats you should see an opening on your left between the building and the football ground. This is the path that will take us up into the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Seafar Woods Wildlife Reserve. The path was re-laid, widened and improved by Cumbernauld Living Landscape at the request of local people to improve access into the woodlands – you can read more about it elsewhere in this pack.

Follow the path uphill – it's a bit of a cardio workout but you can take it nice and slow – in fact, the slower the better if you want to improve your chances of seeing wildlife! As you climb, you can also revel in the knowledge that this means your return walk is going to be all downhill!

Not far past the edge of the football ground you'll come to a fork in the path. This is a circular section of the walk so you can go either way, but this guided section will turn right here – mainly because I'm fed-up walking uphill!

Follow the path here through the woodlands – it's incredible to think these magnificent trees are just a few hundred metres from a motorway.

The land here is owned and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, who acquired it from the Cumbernauld Development Corporation (CDC), the 'quango' which was responsible for designing and building Cumbernauld New Town. The CDC planted these woods partly as an amenity for the community and partly to act as a kind of sound barrier between the noisy motorway and the community of Seafar.



As you walk take note of the structure of the woods – historically, this was open land, so the woodland is relatively young. In forest terms, it's still a baby. You'll probably notice that the mature trees are all roughly the same height and girth and are fairly uniformly separated. A woodland structure like this is a sure sign that it is human made. Unlike a natural wood which contains trees of all sizes and shapes, the trees here are all the same size because they were all planted at the same time.

This uniformity means the woods aren't as good for wildlife as they could be. Ideally a woodland should be full of trees of all ages and sizes as this provides the maximum amount of food and habitat for other species. Some animals or plants can only live among young trees, some need mature trees, some need ancient trees, and some even need dead trees! Some species need open ground, others need closed canopies, some species like tall trees, others like low growing shrubs and saplings. Some like one species of tree, others prefer another. A natural wood provides all of these niches, but humans find it very difficult to create this sort of habitat.

Fortunately, the experts at the Scottish Wildlife Trust are working hard to transform these woods from the uniformity they inherited to a more natural state – while still maintaining their character and level of access for people. It's a difficult and expensive balancing act and involves tricky decisions.

As you walk you might spot signs of felled trees, and other areas where young trees have been planted. This is part of the long-term plan to create a more 'natural' woodland. By felling trees, you create gaps in the tree canopy above, letting sunlight down on to the woodland floor. This encourages woodland flowers to grow and allows tree seeds to germinate. In time, these trees will grow and fill the gaps – and new gaps will be created elsewhere, either by felling or by the natural aging of the trees.

Humans have always created woodland clearings like this, right through our evolutionary history – in fact it might be regarded as our natural space in the ecosystem and lots of other species have evolved alongside us to use the spaces we create.



In the past, as humans moved into new areas, they tended to cut down trees to build homes and make room for crops and livestock. Countless numbers of species—particularly flowers, butterflies and birds—can only live in woodland clearings so benefit from those that humans make.

You'll notice also that in these woods the trees which have been cut down are often left on the ground to rot. Far from being untidy, or the 'cheap' option, this is actually the best way to manage a woodland for wildlife. Dead wood is a vital resource for all sorts of creatures from fungi (like the bracket fungus above) to pine martens.

Without dead and dying wood thousands of species cannot complete their life cycles – tidy woods are not good for wildlife! You'll also see lots of trees which have been 'topped', where the green parts of the tree have been cut off leaving only the trunk still standing to die in place. This standing dead wood is brilliant for all sorts of animals to live in and feed off.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) in association with Scottish Forestry and NatureScot have created a survey called '[Dead Good Dead Wood](#)' which highlights the value of this resource, and our Wild Ways Well groups and Nature Ninjas often use it in these woods.

Keep an eye out as you walk for these clearings and signs of management. Try to view the woods through the eyes of history. These woods will hopefully stand here for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. It is an important skill for the Trust's managers and foresters to view the woods not just as they are now, but how they will look in a hundred years' time.

Another reason for felling trees here is to remove non-native species like spruce, beech and sycamore and give more room to native species like oak, rowan, birch and Scots pine. These native species are much better for wildlife than non-natives. It is estimated that a native oak supports 500 other species of plant and animal and a Scots pine almost 200, while a non-native sitka spruce only supports about 20.



Look as you walk for signs of the life which lives in and on the trees. You should see all kinds of things, from huge bracket fungi (which look a bit like shelf supports) sticking out of the trunks to tiny colourful species like pixie cups and orange disco (fungi have the best names!) growing on stumps and fallen branches. Natural holes in the trees can be home to bats, owls, perhaps even pine martens.

You should also spot the neat circular holes made by woodpeckers as they carve out their nesting spaces in dead wood. High in the branches you'll see the nests of birds - messy piles of branches are often crows and magpies, slightly neater ones close to the trunk might be sparrowhawks, and right at the tree tops you might see buzzards or even goshawks. Large balls of twigs might be squirrel dreys where these little animals keep themselves cosy in the winter.

You'll soon come to a crossroads. To the right here the path heads back down to Old Glasgow Road, you can follow it if you fancy a short cut back. Ahead the path goes on through Seafar woods all the way to Ravenswood at the other end of the town. We'll be taking that path another week.

Today, however, we are going to turn left and walk uphill through the trees towards the town centre. This is another steep section so take your time and keep your eyes on the woods around you. This is a good spot to see roe deer. Try to walk as quietly and carefully as you can and scan the woods, looking for the horizontal shapes of the deer in among the vertical trees. Roe deer are superbly well camouflaged and have incredible senses of smell and hearing.

They are very good at hiding from people, and their ability to just fade into the background when humans are about is legendary. The deer in this area however are fairly used to people walking nearby and often allow themselves to be seen if they are confident enough that you are not a threat.



When you reach the top of the path you should find you are in a paved area which has been abandoned and allowed to slowly return to nature. This was once the site of a commercial building, and you can still see signs of it around. Nature is slowly reclaiming this space however and the plants which grow in and among the concrete are surprisingly good for wildlife.

In 2019 this space was alive with thousands upon thousands of painted lady butterflies feasting on the thistles, willowherbs and daisies which grow here. Painted ladies are a special butterfly which in some years migrate to Scotland in huge numbers all the way from North Africa. Our volunteers help to keep the paths clear here to make it easier to access the woods from the nearby houses.

Follow the old pavement to the left until you come to a place where the path forks. Take the turn to the left which goes into the trees. Before you go take one last look at the clearing, this is a brilliant spot to see bullfinches which flit around the trees. The male has an incredible red body with a black cap on his head. If you see him, keep looking. Bullfinches mate for life and his partner will likely be nearby. She is a much duller, more buff-brown colour and harder to spot – but just as beautiful.

This is the other end of the path which has been upgraded by Cumbernauld Living Landscape – the one you joined on Old Glasgow Road - and it is going to take us back down to the Village. The first section as we walk takes us between the new houses on Newlands Place and the woods. To your right is a grassy slope which is a great place to look for pollinator-friendly flowers in summer. It can be alive with bees and butterflies.

Don't neglect the view to your left though. You can look down into the woods here and this is a place where foxes are often seen – and heard! Female foxes call to their mate in spring and the distinctive noise has been likened to many things, including a woman's scream or a baby's cry. The police are often contacted at this time of the year by people reporting hearing a woman being attacked or a baby being abandoned in the woods, but the calls of foxes are the usual culprits!

Roe deer also bark in the woods at night, making a noise like a man shouting 'hoi!', and barn owls can hiss and screech like the monsters of the worst Hollywood film. Hearing noises like this in the dark, it's no wonder people have invented ghost stories over the years! You'll come to another fork in the path soon. Turn left and begin heading downhill to the Village.

As you walk downhill, take note of the paths around you. This is a good place to spot signs of the mammals living here. You should see narrow paths through the vegetation stretching into the woods on both sides, crossing the human path. Look at them carefully and consider who might have made them...

Heavily used ones might have been made by people or dogs, heading into the woods, but some go places where no humans could follow. A trail which leads under a low branch or forms a tunnel through a bush is likely to have been made by a fox, a deer or a badger (see a badger print, below). These paths can give us a glimpse into the secret lives of the mammals which live here. Look closely and you might be lucky enough to see a footprint.

You can find other signs as well. Badgers are very clean animals who change the bedding in their setts regularly, and they often drag piles of soft clean leaves, grass and moss long distances when bringing them home. They tuck their piles under their chin as they walk – and quite often drop most of it on the way! You might also find bones or sticks and stones, which young badgers and foxes will play with. Badger paths are traditional: they will follow the same ones for years and some are hundreds of years old, much older than the human settlements around them.

A trick worth trying is to occasionally turn round and look behind you – foxes love to quietly follow people along paths, keeping an eye on you and probably hoping that you're going to drop some food!





The woods around you are absolutely full of life. All sorts of creatures are busily living their lives, making their homes, finding food and raising their young. They have the same basic drives we do: a need for food, water, shelter, a community of their own and a safe place for their offspring to live. Think about this as you walk. Think about the great web of life that surrounds you and which you are a part of. The ancestors of the badgers, foxes and birds which live here have long shared this space with us.

They were here when the first humans came after the ice sheets retreated. They saw the Romans come, they saw the landscape change as the Village was built, they shared the Langriggs and the Bog Stank, now they share these woods with the people of the New Town and the Old. With care, it is possible that their descendants can continue to share this space with us on into the future. All we have to do is be a little considerate to their needs, to think of the community as a whole and not just ourselves when we make decisions.

Make your way back downhill to Old Glasgow Road. You can turn right and continue back along the road to where we started, or you can take a detour by going straight ahead and crossing the Bog Stank onto Auld Road. Walk up Auld Road alongside a small park and turn right when you come to a small enclosed five-a-side pitch. Keep walking until you reach Springfield Road which will join back onto Glasgow Road at the Jubilee Park.

YOU'VE DONE IT!

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 information about current projects.



CUMBERNAULD VILLAGE TREASURE TRAIL

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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| • The Langriggs | 2 points |
| • Jubilee Park | 1 points |
| • A singing bird | 2 points |
| • An animal with four legs | 5 points |
| • A spider's web | 2 points |
| • Something that fell from a tree | 1 point |
| • A flower your favourite colour | 5 points |
| • A toadstool | 5 points |
| • A bird's nest | 5 points |
| • A fern | 2 points |
| • A sign that spring is coming | 10 points |
| • A tree that looks like a monster | 10 points |

Total -----



The Langriggs



Spider's web



Male blackbird



Fern



Toadstool



Buds on branch
(a sign of spring)

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SPECIES SPOTTER

Short-eared owl



The easiest owl to see in winter is the short-eared owl, with migrant owls joining year-round residents to increase the population at this time.



Owls fly silently, so keep your eyes to the sky, particularly around dusk and dawn.

Although they mainly hunt at night, if you see an owl hunting during the day it's most likely to be this one.

Redwing



Redwings arrive in autumn from Scandinavia to spend the winter before leaving around April, bar a few pairs that stay to breed in Scotland.



Redwings look similar to song thrushes with their brown wing and cream speckled breast, distinguished by its red streak below its wing.

Starling



Although they may look black from a distance, closer inspection shows the purple and green sheen on their white speckled feathers. Commonly seen in flocks year-round.



Robin



Territorial little songbirds, our residents are also joined by migrants from other countries to spend the winter here.



Ash



Ash trees, identified by their unique opposite black buds ending in a with a larger bud at the tip of the branch.



Look out for their single winged seeds in winter, called keys, that hang in big bunches.

Brambles



Although you won't see their still-green berries till June, you can see their thorny arching stems growing along hedgerows.



SPECIES SPOTTER

Others to spot

Crow

☐

Gull

☐

Oak

☐

What else do you see (make a note):

What to look for at a later date

Wildflowers



Purple Clover

May-
September



Bats

March -
September



Berries

Wild raspberries
July -
September

HOW TO ATTRACT A MATE:

Valentine's Day special: typically, on this day we would be preparing to woo our significant other or perhaps be on the lookout for one. You may notice some similar behaviours across the animal kingdom.



Capercaillie displaying

Dancing or displays of strength

Stretching limbs and head bobs give some males a competitive edge. Or show everyone that you are the fittest by fighting, chasing or even jumping the longest.

Sing to them

You may start to notice changes in their song, becoming longer and more complex



Robin singing

Give a gift

Presenting your intended with gift of food and bedding material shows them that you can provide



Heron collecting nest material

Physical contact

Leaning close, preening or simply next to each other, strengthens the bond.



Pigeons grooming each other

Build a home

Planning ahead will show you're a good choice of companion. Add some decoration and it's bound to draw some eyes.

STORYTIME!

WRITING EXERCISE



If you saw last week's activity pack for Ravenswood you might have had the chance to read the story of 'The Mossy Man' who protects the marsh from witches and bogles. This week why not have a go of creating your own folklore tale?

During your walk: Find a quiet place to sit and take in your surroundings. Really reflect on what you can see, hear and smell. Write it down, being as descriptive as possible. Perhaps the wind in the trees sounds like a whispering voice or maybe there's a mossy log that looks like a sleeping troll. Perhaps the faint smell of foxes in the air is the sign of an ancient magic being present, one the animals use to keep their dens hidden from humans. Let your imagination run wild!

After your walk: When you return home, sit down, and reflect on what have written. Could it be turned into a short story? Your story can be about anything you like but over the page you'll find a fun prompt to get you started.

SNOW CRITTERS

Why not take advantage of this week's wintry weather and build yourself a snow buddy?

Tips

- Natural materials like sticks and stones are good to use for your snow buddies. How about sticks for whiskers or hedgehog quills? How about stones for the eyes and nose?
- If the snow is too powdery and not sticking together, adding a little water can help.



Snow hedgehog



Snow fox

SNOW CRITTERS

Make a snow owl

Carefully lie in the snow with your arms outstretched; try to land in a T position. Move your arms and legs like you're doing jumping jacks (arms above your head and back down to your sides, legs out and then back) .This will create the snow owl's wings and tail feathers. Gently press your head into the snow to make an indentation for the snow owl's head.



WHEN YOU HEAR



Number of people: Two or more.

Where to play: Play as you walk

Materials needed: None

How to play:

Pick a trigger sound, such as wind in the trees or a bird's song.

Line up in single file and start walking. When you hear the sound, the first person in the line has to run to the back. Continue until everyone's had a turn to lead.

WILD WAYS WELL: MEET A TREE

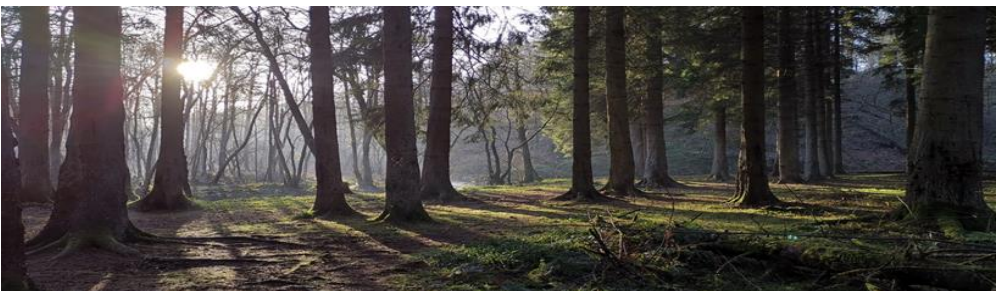
When was the last time you really thought about a tree?

Trees are some of the most important organisms on Earth. Without them our lives would just not be possible. As well as being practical they are beautiful, majestic, they can inspire wonder - but how often do we really spend time appreciating them?

Find a tree near your home – or on your walk – and really study it. Use all your senses.

Sight. Let your eyes travel from the tip of its topmost branches, all the way down to where the trunk meets the ground. Note the differences in form and structure. Count the different forms of life you can see. Are there birds in the branches? Can you see signs of insects on the trunk? Are there holes or hollows where a mammal might live? What colours can you see? Perhaps in your mind all trees are the brown and green of childhood drawings. But trees come in all sorts of colour, bark can be white, grey, silver, red, brown – even black and green in places. Buds can be purple, green, pink, red – the list goes on! What shape are its leaves? There may be some on the ground around you if it is autumn or winter. Is the tree standing alone? What is growing around it? Are there other trees – do they look the same? Are other plants growing by its base, or even through its structure?

Touch. Close your eyes, reach out and touch the tree. Examine the trunk with your fingertips, feel the different textures. Is the bark smooth or rough? Is it hard or soft? Does it crumble beneath your fingertips or resist the pressure? Find a leaf and turn it over in your hands, touch a bud, hold a stick and roll it between your fingers, feel its weight, find the knots and twists in its form. Feel its strength and its solidity.





Smell. Keep your eyes closed and your hands on the trunk and inhale deeply. Breathe. Bring the air in through your nose, hold it for a few seconds and then let it out through your mouth.

What can you smell? Can you detect the fresh, clean, fragrance of a pine? The sweetness of an apple, the musty, earthy scent of an oak? Can you smell flowers and plants growing on the woodland floor? The lichen and moss on the bark, the fungi growing within the wood. The smell of clean air, rich earth and growing things.

Sound. Still with your eyes closed, what can you hear? Listen really closely, try and filter out all the other sounds and just listen to the trees. Hear the rustle and whistle of the wind in the treetops, the creaks of the trunks as it settles and moves in its spot. Birds singing in the branches, animals moving, the pops and cracks as sunlight warms the bark. Scientists have recently discovered that tree roots make noises and even that trees may use this underground network to communicate with each other. Perhaps as you listen, the tree is listening back?

Imagination. Imagine the deep roots of the tree stretching down into the ground, holding it firm, drawing in water and nutrients. Think of the tree's life – how old do you think it is? Feel the weight of time and experience. What has it seen in its lifetime? Who else has stood here, right where you are, contemplating it? What creatures have sheltered under its branches? How does the tree experience winter, steeling itself to endure with its roots in the frozen ground and the winter storms lashing its body. What does it feel when spring arrives, the sun warms its bark, the ground thaws around it and water rushes from the earth to the very tips of its branches, as its leaves unfurl and flowers bloom.

Take a step back again, open your eyes and look at your new friend! Trees are not just some fuzzy brown and green background to the woods. They are vital, living organisms, each one trying to make the best of its place in the world. No two trees are the same, just like you this tree is unique, there is no other anywhere in the world that is just like it.

Celebrate that fact, and that you and it have defied all the odds to be here in this place, at this moment, to experience the world together.



Scots pine – *Pinus sylvestris* – Guibhas (Scots Gaelic)

Tree type - evergreen conifer

Bark – orange-brown scaly

Leaves – long thin waxy needle-like leaves that sprout in pairs, blue-green in colour

Flowers – Monoecious - male and female on same tree. Male flowers on the bottom of shoots, female flowers on top

Fruit – Pine cones

Life span – up to 700yrs

Facts

- Our only native pine.
- Can grow up to 40m tall and 6m in girth.
- Pine cones only open to shed seed in dry weather. They were used as candles and to brew pine beer.
- Often sheds lower limbs giving it a top heavy appearance.
- A very useful tree – its resin was used as ‘pitch’ to make barrels and boats watertight and is still used to make varnish. It was also used as an antiseptic by healers and veterinarians. Vikings chewed the bark as a cure for sore throats.
- It is quick growing and produces soft wood which is good for building –it is still used to make pit props, railways sleepers, telegraph poles and furniture.
- Arrived in Britain at the end of the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago – perhaps less than 20 generations of tree separate now from then.
- They have lost 99% of their former Scottish coverage.



There is little folklore associated with Scots pines – possibly because they were so useful practically. Branches were sometimes hung over doors to keep evil out and the resin was burned to purify areas. Boats sealed with pine pitch were said to have magical protection. The cones were a sign of fertility.

They were often planted to mark significant sites or areas – many a lost soul in the Highlands found his way to shelter by looking for the distant line of Scots pines which marked isolated settlements.

Some individual trees are noted as ‘cloutie’ trees which can grant wishes due to the spirits that live within them.

Common Oak – *Quercus robur* – Darach (Scots Gaelic)

Tree type – deciduous broadleaf

Bark – grey-brown

Leaves – lobed, dark green in colour, undulate margin (leaf edge)

Flowers – monoecious, male and female flowers on same tree

Fruit – acorns

Lifespan – 1000 years

Facts

- Second most common tree species in the UK.
- Oak forests support more life-forms than any other. Oaks are host to over 500 insect species. Birds and mammals eat the acorns and nest in the branches and trunk.
- Threatened by diseases like acute oak decline, sudden oak death and non-native pests such as the oak processionary moth.
- Most acorns never get a chance to germinate as they are such a popular food source for birds and small mammals.
- Oaks produce incredibly tough and useful wood, however it takes 150 years before oak wood is ready to be used.
- Tannin from the bark is used to tan leather. Acorns were used to make bread.
- Some of our most important texts, including the Magna Carta, Newton's Theory of Gravity and Mozart's symphonies were written using ink obtained from oak galls.
- Common, (or pedunculate) oak acorns are carried on short stalks called pedicles, while our other native oak (sessile) has acorns which grow directly on the twig.
- In 1511 it is said that every oak in Fife was cut down to build the Scottish warship the Great Michael whose oak hull was 3m thick.

Folklore

The oak was sacred to the Gods of Thunder (oaks are commonly hit by lightning). Known as the Kings of the Forest, oak trees were also associated with royalty - ancient kings and Roman emperors wore crowns of oak leaves. It is a symbol of longevity, so couples would marry under an oak to ensure a long marriage. An old saying is that an oak spends 300 years growing, 300 years living and 300 years dying – and is just as useful, for different purposes, at every stage of its life. The wizard Merlin lived in an oak grove, as did Herne, the god of the hunt and Robin Hood. Oaks were said to be healing for all sorts of foot problems. Foresters believed an oak would scream out loud when cut down if a dryad (woodland spirit) was within.



HISTORIC HEDGES!

The village is the oldest part of Cumbernauld. It is home to some of the most amazing habitats and historical fascinations in the town (if not Scotland)! The “Langriggs” are a set of ancient food growing gardens that are among the oldest in Europe, dating back hundreds of years. In days gone by, the community would have tended to these precious gardens lined with ancient hawthorn hedges to help sustain themselves on their produce. Over time the Langriggs have drifted away from this use and are now decorative.

Over the relatively recent past, the old hawthorns have been engulfed by recent plant visitors to Cumbernauld: snowberries and dogwood. These are invasive species to Scotland that have few natural predators to inhibit their growth. This means that they are free to spread as much as they can, blocking out the light to native hedgerow plants. This has a knock-on effect to the wildlife that uses these native hedgerows as a food source and habitat. Without these resources they are forced to look elsewhere.

This is where community action is necessary to get involved! Working with Cumbernauld Village Action for the Community (CVAC), we are trying to save these native hedgerows. We ran a scything training course for CVAC so they could get rid of unwanted scrub surrounding these hedges. Building up these skills means that the community group will be able to use these tools in the future. We have also brought our Nature Ninjas volunteers out to perform essential woodland management tasks – chopping back the dogwood, snowberry and beeches surrounding the hawthorn. We also intend to plant a new hawthorn hedge as lockdown restrictions ease.

The task of promoting native species is simple. It can start in your own back garden! If you have a space that is open why not plant some hedge plants? Plants such as blackthorn, hawthorn and juniper have been dramatically reduced in their distribution, so getting a few saplings in the ground between September and April is always a good thing!



THE NEW PATH FROM THE VILLAGE TO SEAFAR

This path connects the Village to Seafar, leading visitors through sites that are managed by both North Lanarkshire Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The path takes walkers and wheelers through a wildlife-rich wooded area allowing people to explore new areas of Cumbernauld and the nature it has to offer.

In December 2020, the Cumbernauld Living Landscape partnership resurfaced and widened this path in response to feedback that the surface was cracked and awkward to walk on in places. The route provides a nice leisurely walk from Seafar down towards the Village, and a fantastic cardio-workout on the way back up again (it can be quite steep in places).

This work was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Campsies Centre (Cumbernauld) Ltd. Tell us what you think of the finished path <https://www.facebook.com/CumbernauldLivingLandscape/>

Before the new path was laid at Seafar



After the new path was laid at Seafar



SEAFAR AND RAVENSWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Cumbernauld Living Landscape has links with the Seafar and Ravenswood Community Council and have worked together on developing initiatives.

Pauline Reed from the community council tells us a bit more about the group:

"Seafar and Ravenswood currently have a Community Council. We normally meet eight times a year to discuss local issues with local Councillors, local Police and interested members of the public. Issues arising mainly involve environmental issues like littering, noise nuisance (joy riders) and crime, as well as wider issues from the town. Before the pandemic lockdown, I found a volunteer to help tidy up a couple of neglected landscaped areas near her home and hope to expand this when lockdown restrictions end.

We proudly worked with a local independent Councillor who helped to have a ban imposed temporarily on the use of neonicotinoids (pesticides that are toxic to bees and other wildlife) in the town, and we await the results of a consultation. There is organised group litter picking as well as opportunistic tidying of the areas we enjoy in our woodland walks.

Our Facebook page is called simply [Seafar and Ravenswood Community](#). Residents are generally interested in our environment but getting them active is an uphill climb."



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

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