my wild winter

A WINTER WILDLIFE AND ACTIVITY GUIDE

#WILDWINTERDAYS
Brrrr! The coldest and darkest months of the year are here, and it might be tempting to curl up indoors to wait for spring to arrive but DON’T! There are loads of things to do outdoors, and lots of wildlife to spot at this time of year.

This booklet is packed full with ideas from The Wildlife Trusts to help you explore nature and wild places, either at home or on days out. We’re on a mission to help keep families wild and connected with nature, whatever the weather. So grab your gloves and pull on your wellies, it’s time to begin your wild winter.

Wildlife to look out for in winter

- Ducks, geese and swans all visit the UK in winter. Look out for large flocks of migratory geese, especially at the coast.
- Winter is the best time to spot footprints in mud and snow, great for practising your wildlife tracking skills.
- Listen for woodpeckers drumming on trees in January and February.
- Grey seals breed during November and December around the coasts of Britain.
- Tawny owls call more in winter than at other times of year. Listen for the familiar twit-twoo.
- Look out for starling ‘murmurations’ where hundreds of birds swoop through the sky together before settling down to roost for the night.
- Snowdrops flower in late winter – one of the first signs that spring is on its way.
- Redwings and fieldfares look a bit like thrushes and they visit the UK in winter. They love eating juicy red berries on rowan and hawthorn trees.
- And finally, keep your eyes on the sky for those flying reindeer.

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Great Wildlife Trust places to visit in winter

Our nature reserves are great places to visit all year round, with loads to see and do even in winter. Try a frozen wetland for a chance to see secretive bitterns. Be amazed by flocks of winter waders at the coast. Explore a woodland under snow and look for fox and badger footprints. And don’t forget to stop at one of our cafés to warm up afterwards!

Find a Wildlife Trust reserve near you at wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/reserves

my playground – activities –

Montrose Basin

Potteric Carr

Rye Harbour

Beautiful whooper swans are just some of the winter visitors to stop at Scottish Wildlife Trust’s Montrose Basin.

Sussex Wildlife Trust’s Rye Harbour is the perfect birdwatching spot at any time of year.

Warm up with a hot chocolate and a piece of cake at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust’s Potteric Carr.
How to make your own bird feeder

1. Mix all the dry ingredients together in a bowl.
2. Add the fat and give it a good mix around.
3. Choose your feeder and put it upside down.ene.
4. Hang your feeder with string (you may need to make sure the string is strong enough to hold the feeder).
Discover animal tracks and signs

How to go plaster casting

What you need:
- Plaster of paris (from a pharmacy)
- An old 500g margarine tub for mixing it in
- A small or spare tin for stirring
- Strips of card, long enough to fit around the footprint
- Paper clips

1. Find a footprint and clear away any grass from the area around it.
2. Make a circle with the plaster in thecentre. Then push it into the ground.
3. Mix 5 tablespoons of dry plaster with water until it is like smooth cream.
4. Pour the plaster into the card collar. Wait 5-10 mins for it to set. Then dig it out.
5. Take home, wash, identify and label.
During the winter the nights are long and dark but that doesn't mean you have to stay indoors. It can be exciting to explore outside at night time.

**Things to do:**
- Try switching off your torch to see how dark it is: what is the darkest place you can find?
- Take binoculars and look in detail at the craters on the moon, or learn to identify some star constellations – Orion's Belt and The Plough are both good ones to start with. It is believed that some birds use the stars to help them navigate during migration. Do you think you could use the stars to find your way around?
- Listen out for nocturnal wildlife like owls and foxes.
- Play 'sardines'. One person goes outside and hides somewhere in the garden (they can take a torch to help find their hiding place, but then they will need to switch it off once they are hidden). Everyone else must count to 20 before going outside to try to find them (no torches!). You must sneak round quietly on your own, and if you find the hidden person you hide with them. Eventually everyone will be squeezed into one hiding place.

**TOP TIPS FOR NIGHT TIME ADVENTURES:**
- Wrap up warm
- Take a torch
- Wear bright, light clothing near roads so that cars can see you.

**SNOW ANIMALS**
Have you ever built a snowman? Well this year we're challenging you to try something different! Why not see if you can build a wild animal from snow instead. You could have a go at building any sort of creature but if you're stuck for ideas, we've come up with a few suggestions of animals to try:

- **Easy:** Hedgehog (use sticks for the spines), caterpillar, snail
- **Medium:** Owl, rabbit (if the ears are bit tricky, use sticks instead of snow for these!), dolphin
- **Tricky:** Squirrel, octopus, swan

**SNOW, ICE AND THE DARK**
Spotting winter wildlife
Tick off the wildlife you see this winter

Yew
Ash tree
Silver birch
Rowan tree
Crab apple

Yew
Ash tree
Silver birch
Rowan tree
Crab apple

Chaffinch
Goldfinch
Song thrush
Starling
Moorhen

Chaffinch
Goldfinch
Song thrush
Starling
Moorhen

Coot
Canada goose
Mute swan
Pochard
Pheasant

Coot
Canada goose
Mute swan
Pochard
Pheasant

Teasel
Pine cone
Snowdrop
Mistletoe
Ivy

Teasel
Pine cone
Snowdrop
Mistletoe
Ivy

Moss
Lichen
Bracket fungi
Holly
Larch

Moss
Lichen
Bracket fungi
Holly
Larch

Download a poster of this page at wildlifetrusts.org/winterspotting
Jokes

What do you call a deer wearing ear muffs?

Anything you like - he can’t hear you.

How do you catch a squirrel?

Climb up a tree and act like a nut!

In winter, what falls but doesn’t hit the ground?

The temperature.

Why do birds fly south in the winter?

Because it’s too far to walk.

What fish only swims at night?

A starfish.

Where do frogs leave their hats and coats?

In the croakroom.

What does an octopus wear when it gets cold?

A coat of arms.

Where does ivy go to become famous?

Holly-wood.

Where does Santa have a garden?

So he can hoe hoe hoe.

What does an octopus wear when it gets cold?

A coat of arms.

Why does Santa have a garden?

So he can hoe hoe hoe.

COLOURING IN

Get creative and colour in some winter wildlife. Can you unscramble their names too?

Can you help the jay find the way to the hidden acorns?

Puzzle
About The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts are the UK’s largest people-powered organisation caring for all nature – rivers, bogs, meadows, forests, seas and much more. There are 47 Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK with a shared mission to restore nature everywhere we can and to inspire people to value and take action for nature.

We work to connect children with nature through our inspiring education programmes and protect wild places where they can spend long days of discovery. We want children to go home with leaves in their hair, mud on their hands and a little bit of nature in their heart.

Make more of Your Wild Winter with The Wildlife Trusts

1) Visit one of our 2,000+ nature reserves. Find them at wildlifetrusts.org/reserves-wildlife or download our free app at wildlifetrusts.org/app

2) Take part in a Wildlife Trust event. Everything from pond dipping to walks at wildlifetrusts.org/whats-on

3) Find a kids’ nature club near you. Try our interactive map at wildlifetrusts.org/natureclubs

4) Earn a Wildlife Watch award. Start the Hedgehog award at wildlifewatch.org.uk/awards-information-page

5) Become a Wildlife Watch or family member. Join today at wildlifetrusts.org/join

Love wildlife, wild places and making new friends? Then Wildlife Watch is the club for you!

With thanks for the generous support of our photographers:

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