



Your guide to going wild

Alzheimer's Society
United Against Dementia

THE *wildlife* TRUSTS

#30DaysWild

wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild

Getting close to nature

Here at The Wildlife Trusts, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife in their daily lives. From hearing a burst of birdsong to glimpsing the golden glow of a buttercup, these wild moments work wonders for our wellbeing. By bringing nature into our daily lives, we can celebrate each dose and enjoy the benefits of being wilder.

This booklet is designed for those who want to help people with additional needs and vulnerabilities connect with nature. Alzheimer's Society has helped us adapt the activities in here for those living with dementia, but the activities within this booklet can be used by anyone. It's really important that people who are affected by dementia or are otherwise vulnerable know that ideas and activities like this are available to improve health and happiness.

We've filled this booklet with ideas to get started, but the beauty of nature is that anyone can go wild and create activities of their own! To see what others are getting up to, just search for **#30DaysWild** on social media. You can find even more activity ideas and downloadable resources at wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild

Cover: Man gardening @ upx/Shutterstock.com, woman sitting @ Penny Dixie

The healing power of nature

Have you ever noticed the little surge of happiness after spotting a butterfly fluttering by, or seeing a meadow ablaze with bright and beautiful wildflowers? We've always known that nature has healing powers, and we now have the data to prove it! Evidence shows that spending time in the natural environment improves our mental health and feelings of wellbeing. It can reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression while combatting loneliness and binding communities together. Connecting with nature also has its health benefits: helping to boost immune systems, encouraging physical activity and it can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as asthma. Whether you head out into nature or bring the outdoors in, we promise you'll feel better if you make each day a bit wild!



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Five Ways to Wellbeing

Connecting with nature can really help people feel happier and healthier. Recognised by the NHS and multiple health organisations, the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' can greatly enrich your life.



1. GIVE

Small acts that give nature a helping hand remind us what we are capable of. We have so much to give to nature — and to each other — through sharing our experiences.

4. CONNECT

Making time for nature is a great way to feel connected to the outdoors. Sharing with other people on the phone or online strengthens this connection.

2. BE ACTIVE

Even taking gentle exercises just outside the front door, or with the window open, can work wonders for physical and mental health.

5. LEARN

Education doesn't have an age limit! We can all challenge ourselves to learn new things everyday, even if our school days are far behind us!

3. TAKE NOTICE

Noticing the good things in everyday nature raises the spirits and reminds us that there's so much to be seen and experienced, no matter where we are.



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Activities

Inhale a wild scent

Whether it's a wildflower or the air after a storm, a scent can really stir the emotions. That's because the scent centre of our brain is close to our emotional and learning centres, so we associate a scent with what we were doing and how we felt the first time we smelt it. This can be done outside or by bringing scented items indoors.



© Ben Hall/2020VISION

Feed the birds

Local birds will appreciate a free meal at any time of year, so it's a good idea to set up some bird feeders, and when feathered friends arrive

they can provide great entertainment. If getting outside isn't possible, set up a feeder within view of a window, or buy one that sticks to the outside of your window if there's no garden available. Seeing which birds turn up is the best bit!



© Penny Dixie

Create a wild corner

Create a dedicated indoor wild space for any houseplants and outdoor treasures to provide a retreat within the home. If there's a garden, nature can be invited in by setting aside a mini wildlife refuge. Letting the grass grow a little longer and allowing bushes and flowers to spread will mean wildlife will start to move in in no time — tidiness is the enemy of nature!



© Matthew Roberts

Wild meditation

The simplest acts of wildness can also be the most effective. Taking a little time in nature can work wonders: closing your eyes and simply taking a moment by the window to listen to the birdsong and leaves rustling can really reduce feelings of stress. If getting outdoors is possible, add going barefoot and feeling the grass to this routine.



Breakfast and birdsong

An al fresco breakfast is the wild way to start the day. For a picnic feel, blankets can be laid down while the birds provide the background music. If there's no outdoor space available, breakfast can be enjoyed with a window open and the radio off — bliss!

Watch a wild webcam

It's not always possible to head outside but with wildlife webcams it's possible to tune into a wild soap opera from anywhere! Setting up a computer, tablet or smart phone to peek into an osprey nest, barn owl box or bat roost has never been easier, visit wildlifetrusts.org/webcams

Show off a nature table

A nature table showcases natural objects: new and interesting wild treasures that can come from a wild treasure hunt. For someone who isn't able to go outdoors, objects could be brought in to them — the different textures make for a great sensory experience. Categories can include things like 'twigs' 'rocks' and 'leaves'.

Unleash the inner artist

A view from a window can provide great inspiration for drawing, or a wild object (like a feather) that has come from outdoors for a go at still life. The exquisite detail and texture of nature is perfect for sketching. Creating from scratch can be overwhelming, so starting with some



simple shapes and one item at a time may be easier, or colouring in a pre-drawn outline of something wild like a wildflower or a frog.

Share wild stories

Sharing memories of times spent in nature, like visiting a special place or spotting a rare species, with friends or family over the phone can be a very therapeutic act. Alternatively, having a book about the natural world or a novel based in the wild read aloud over the phone can be relaxing and bring back these memories.



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Spot wildlife in the dark

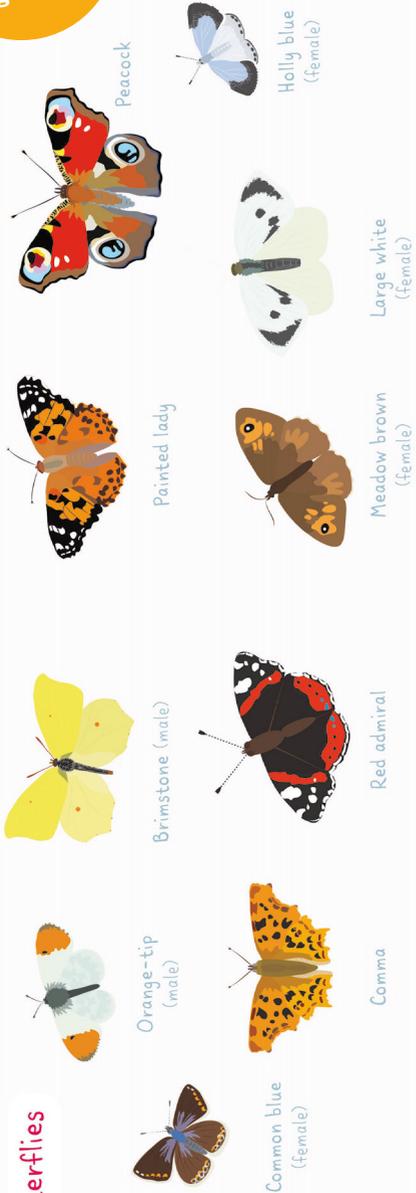
Some of the most spell-binding wild moments happen after the sun has set. Searching for constellations or looking for the flitting shadows of bats out the window is a good way of having a night-time dose of the outdoors for someone without a garden.



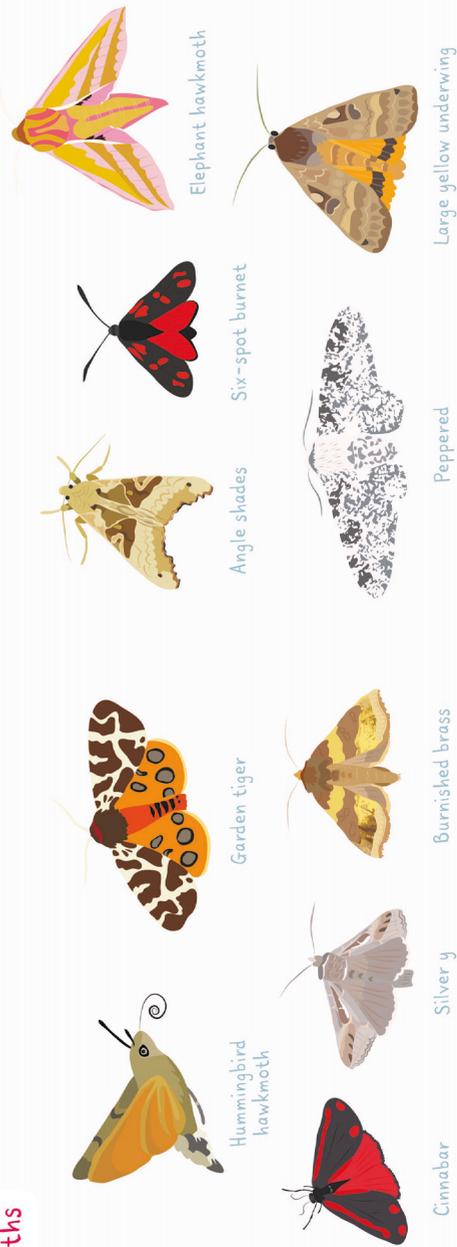
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Why not use our spotter's guide?

Butterflies



Moths



A few considerations

if you are recommending the activities in this pack to a vulnerable relative, friend or neighbour

Consider the potential limitations, personal interests and vulnerabilities of the person you are helping. Consider the risks associated with some activities before getting started. Give special attention to those with restricted mobility, or those living with dementia or other degenerative conditions.

We want everyone to enjoy wildlife, regardless of age or ability. We've provided a wide range of simple activities that will be suitable for almost everyone. However, some may need to be adapted depending on the individual. As well as nurturing wellbeing, appreciating nature often results in wildlife around you flourishing due to an increase in pro-nature behaviours. In turn, connecting to the wild becomes easier and health and wellbeing is boosted in the long run.

Why not get the person you're helping to record their wild adventures, and how it made them feel, in a journal? Have you noticed any positive changes in physical and mental wellbeing? We'd love to hear about any of the experiences you or someone you're helping has. You could share them on social media using **#30DaysWild** or, if you're not able to share, tell us about them and we'll share them for you. To do this, email us at

30dayswild@wildlifetrusts.org, or write to us at The Wildlife Trusts, The Kiln, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG24 1WT.



Tips for using this booklet from Alzheimer's Society

The three big benefits of connecting with nature for those living with dementia are relaxation, reminiscence, and sensory stimulation.



Some dementia-friendly tips for starting new activities

- Put out the things you need before starting an activity, for example, tools for planting seeds or preparing flowers to smell. The person with dementia might like to help you with this
- Reduce distractions such as background noise
- Give yourself time and take things at a slower pace if you need to and be reassuring if the person finds things difficult.

Explaining new activities to those who have not done them before

- If possible, use visual clues — write your message down if the person is able to read and use objects or pictures to help the person understand. For example, show the person photographs of the birds feeding and say that's the activity they are going to do
- Speak clearly and calmly
- Use short, simple sentences
- Speak at a slightly slower pace
- Listen carefully to what the person is saying and give them plenty of encouragement.



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More activity ideas

- Childhood reminiscence activities — for example making daisy chains or blowing a dandelion seed head, playing conkers or picking blackberries
- Sensory sessions: seek out plants that are soft to touch (like lamb's ears and bunny tails) or have strong, recognisable scents (roses, lavender, rosemary, mint). Plant these where people will brush past as they walk to stimulate the senses.

Stay wild with your Wildlife Trust



#30DaysWild

The Wildlife Trusts is a grassroots movement, made up of 46 individual Wildlife Trusts operating in every corner of the UK, Alderney and the Isle of Man. We care for 2,300 incredible wild places, from remote woods and wild rivers to inner city pockets of nature. We also look after the amazing wildlife that lives on our coasts and in our seas. By taking part in 30 Days Wild you're helping us achieve our mission of bringing people closer to nature, and land and seas rich in wildlife. Visit wildlifetrusts.org

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