

THIS ISSUE: Christmas crafts - Outdoor learning and SEN - Nature Friendly Schools



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Issue 3

SPROUT

The Wildlife Trusts' magazine for outdoor educators



**SPOTLIGHT ON
NATURE FRIENDLY
SCHOOLS**

Whatever the weather!

WELCOME!

“Sprout [noun]: new growth, the start of something”

Abi Paine, Communications and Engagement Officer at The Wildlife Trusts

Hats, gloves, scarves, coats, wellies – it’s that time of year to get trussed up against the cold wind and enjoy watching nature transition into its next phase. This is the season for trudging muddy footpaths, collecting conkers, and crunching leaves underfoot. You can find out which other wildlife wonders to look out for on page 13.

This is only my third issue of Sprout and I have to say a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed so far. I’m bowled over by the kindness of education staff and others sharing all manner of articles and activities for the magazine. It can’t happen without your knowledge and input, so it’s really appreciated. There’s some great insight in this issue, with a spotlight on the Nature Friendly Schools project, as well as a look at working

with groups who have additional needs, and adaptations that can be made to create wonderful wildlife experiences for all.

As we head towards the end of the year, we’ve also snuck in some tried and tested Christmas crafts to do at home - it’s amazing what you can do with a few twigs and some googly eyes!

I know many people have had a challenging year, with drastic changes and adaptations to working life. We will continue to keep you connected through Sprout, and I look forward to moving forward into the new year with lots of ideas and inspiration; sharing the amazing work taking place across The Wildlife Trusts, our partner schools and beyond.

Abi



@Helena Dolby for Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust



@Helena Dolby for Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust



@Adrian Clarke

Your contribution

We aim to provide inspiration, ideas and guidance that will help Watch Leaders, educators, parents, school groups and others to run safe and enjoyable activities that enable children and young people to engage with nature and environmental issues.

Do you have an activity that works brilliantly with your Watch Group? Or maybe your school has a fantastic wildlife area that you’d like to share? Get in touch!

Activity ideas

We’re always on the look out for new and innovative activity ideas, tried and tested with children. This magazine can only happen with your input, so why not share your ideas and experiences with us using the Watch email address?

You can find more activities on the Wildlife Watch website under ‘things to do’. Here, you’re able to download activity sheets and make species spotter sheets.

Getting in contact

The Wildlife Trusts’ central team are based in Newark and look after some shared aspects of Wildlife Watch, supporting local activity and staff across the UK.

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The Wildlife Trusts Registered
Charity No 207238

Wildlife Watch is the junior branch of The Wildlife Trusts. There are 46 Wildlife Trusts around the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. The Trusts work together with local communities to protect wildlife in all habitats. Collectively we have more than 850,000 members including 150,000 Wildlife Watch/family members. We are one of the UK’s leading providers of learning opportunities relating to the natural environment and sustainability issues. Every year thousands of schools visit our nature reserves and visitor centres. Trusts also deliver outreach programmes that engage tens of thousands of children each year. Each local Trust is committed to a diverse range of activities that engage individuals and communities in wildlife conservation and wider environmental agendas. We also promote engagement through our visitor centres and through access to the 2,300 nature reserves we manage, spanning more than 90,000 hectares of the UK’s finest wildlife areas.

NEWS

OUTDOOR LEARNING IN THE NEWS

As always, the Public Relations team at The Wildlife Trusts has been working extremely hard securing national media coverage, across digital platforms, radio and print. Their work ensures our campaign messages are heard, conservation successes are celebrated, and the communities that support us are kept up to date with our work.

October saw our education work take the spotlight, with a huge range of coverage. CBBC’s [Newsround](#) picked up on the Our Bright Future programme’s ask regarding outdoor learning in schools. It asked its junior readers their opinion on the key question: “Outdoor learning: Would you like to see your school doing more?” following Our Bright Future’s letter to the Education Select Committee to ask for an inquiry. Roberta Antonaci, Policy and Advocacy Manager on the programme was also interviewed for the [Independent](#), highlighting evidence which supports the ask.

There was also coverage in TES online, Nursery Management Today and Children and Young People Now, among others. The letter comes at a time when outdoor learning is in the spotlight, and plays a vital role in boosting children’s attainment, resilience, and wellbeing. We will keep you updated as this work develops.



@Helena Dolby for Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust

12 DAYS OF WILD CHRISTMAS

12 Days of Wild Christmas is The Wildlife Trusts’ mini nature challenge for the festive period. Starting on Christmas day, do one wild thing a day and reap the health and wellbeing benefits of nature throughout the holidays. Keep an eye on our social media channels for when you can sign up to receive exclusive #12DaysWild activities!



@Jon Hawkins

LEADING ON LEARNING



Fiona Groves, Education & Learning Policy Manager at The Wildlife Trusts

Reflecting on my last four months with The Wildlife Trusts, I am struck with how eventful it has been. There have been new campaigns and local Wildlife Trusts are starting to re-engage with people, young and old, adapting and innovating. For some, there has been a cautious return to activities as staff return from furlough. Leaders are working outside again in their ‘bubbles’, whilst also helping deliver new virtual programmes to support learning.

On International Youth Day, I attended an inspiring conference ‘Bridging The Gap’, hosted by the young people on the Tomorrow’s Natural Leaders programme, a lottery-funded Our Bright Future project run by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The conference included a mixture of presentations and break out discussions; speakers included the inspiring young environmentalists Mya-Rose Craig (a.k.a. Birdgirl) and Joshua Styles, as well as Stephanie Lynch from Groundwork UK. There was some thoughtful discussion about barriers facing young people wanting to have careers in the sector. This was the inspiration for forming a new network across The Wildlife Trusts; a Youth Revolution Forum.

At the end of September, we also received an update on the proposed new Natural History GCSE. OCR, who conducted the consultation, have put together a comprehensive report (<https://tinyurl.com/y4mmtqje>) and infographic that captures feedback on the responses, over 2000 of them! OCR are now working on a proposal for submission to the Department for Education, which we hope to be updated on soon. For those of you who haven’t seen it, you can read through my thoughts on the Natural History GCSE in this blog (<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-gcse>). As the development of this GCSE progresses, I am hopeful that approaches developed for these difficult times will add real value.

And as we continue to navigate new routes that respond to living with Coronavirus, our intrinsic need for nature in our lives, to support our mental health and wellbeing, has never felt more important. This is summarised so well by Dom Higgins, our Head of Health and Education, in his blog (<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/blog/dom-higgins/keep-nature-in-mind>) for World Mental Health Day.

SPOTLIGHT ON: NATURE FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

This innovative project will see pupils in some of the most disadvantaged areas of England undertake two hours of outdoor learning every week, benefitting their mental health and wellbeing.

Nature Friendly Schools is a ground-breaking project, led by The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, working in partnership with Resilience Through Nature Consortium members YoungMinds, Groundwork, Sensory Trust, Field Studies Council and six regional Wildlife Trusts.

Over three years, the project will work with over 350 schools in some of the most disadvantaged regions to develop teachers' confidence and ability to drive forward outdoor learning; benefitting pupils' learning, health and wellbeing, and care and concern for the environment.

“Recent figures show one in ten children do not regularly spend time outdoors.”

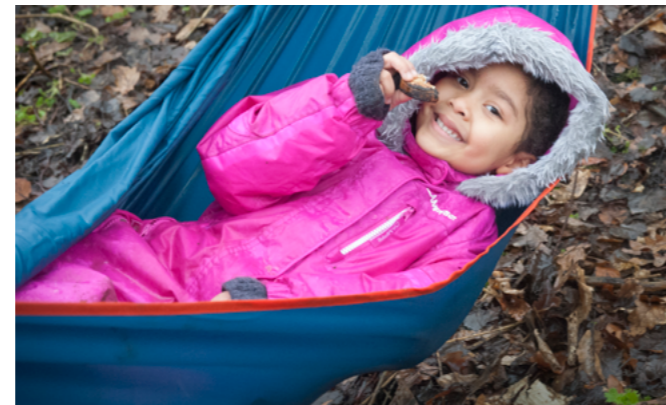
Using a unique 'Nature Friendly Team Around the School' approach, a trio of experts in outdoor learning, mental health and wellbeing, together with a 'share, learn, improve' coordinator will work with schools on their identified barriers and concerns, providing safe and natural spaces for pupils to build resilience, coping strategies and developing social skills.



©Field Studies Council

Project Manager, Jenny Teague, explains: “What sets us apart is our specialism in coaching and facilitation. Combining practical interventions with tailored teacher training will ensure schools are equipped to take their nature friendly journey forwards once we take a step back. With the help of our ten incredible partners, Nature Friendly Schools will support schools to embed two hours of nature-connectivity every week.”

“As we all navigate the ever-changing landscape of the 'new normal', it's more apparent than ever just how important the natural world is to our physical and mental wellbeing. We recognise that the last six months have been uniquely challenging and frightening for many children and young people, and nature has a big part to play in their recovery. In response, we are blending trauma-informed approaches with our provision of outdoor learning, to support and encourage pupils to safely process mental health and wellbeing barriers within the Nature Friendly Schools project.”



©Susan Freeman

Pupils will benefit from at least two hours spent learning outdoors every week, experiencing wildlife on their doorstep but also further afield. This can include long term changes such as greening school grounds or the opportunity for off-site visits to local nature reserves, parks, or residential visits.

“The project will leave a legacy of outdoor learning in schools that supports and promotes positive mental health and wellbeing across the whole school community, long after the project has concluded.”

The project is funded by the Department for Education with support from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Natural England as part of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan to encourage children to be close to nature to benefit their health and wellbeing. Find out more at www.naturefriendlyschools.co.uk.



OUR OUTDOOR LEARNING JOURNEY

Kate Sutton; Burlington Junior School

We have been on a journey here at Burlington Junior School to enhance outdoor learning. We have been supported by Anthony at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Living Seas Centre, who has come into school to talk about his job, and we've had visits through HEY Children's University to Flamborough - to 'Be a Marine Biologist for a Day' - which our pupils absolutely loved.

At our school we have been working to enhance our pond area - part funded by Tesco supermarket. We have a working garden (including fruit trees and a vegetable patch), a greenhouse made of plastic bottles and a large green area. However, the outdoor area has been lacking interest and there is a real desire to use this to its full potential. Our pastoral team have worked incredibly hard to identify pupils who will really benefit from being involved in the project in order to promote their mental and physical health and, in turn, their academic focus, learning and personal well-being.

Then Covid-19 struck! Throughout lockdown our school operated for children of key workers in bubbles of 10 pupils. At school and at home children were accessing COVID remote learning resources and, generally, there was more outdoor learning and enjoyment of nature taking place. Outdoor learning was pushed to the fore and upon return in June our pupils were able to access much more outdoor learning than usually was possible.

Mr Clark and his Year 6 class lead an assault on the pond area very successfully and the kids loved it. They worked to tidy it up and reoxygenate the pond (with support from the school's very helpful caretaker). Children took ownership and loved getting involved and improving the area. They really enjoyed observing the resident frogs!

“Developing an ethos of love and appreciation for nature and the outdoors in our young people is pivotal: ensuring the future leaders of our planet have a clear understanding of the importance of nature.”

Nature Friendly Schools

Alongside this, our school is taking part in the Nature Friendly Schools project. Our participation in this project will support all of our pupils but, in particular, we wanted to focus on the more vulnerable children, with a clear need to understand and develop good mental health. We have evolved a team of staff with various school responsibilities who have worked hard to promote and develop this opportunity. It is vital in supporting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our students, especially during Covid-19, which we could never have anticipated when we started the Nature Friendly Schools project.

Through the project, we have identified areas for development which will really benefit our pupils, including revamping our outdoor learning area and adding planters and a trellis, installing a weather station, and developing a collaborative garden space and a peace/friendship garden. Funding received will enable us to provide all weather resources and equipment so kids can get outside



©Kate Sutton/Burlington Junior School

whatever the season, catering to the pupils' needs. We are all excited about the coming year and enhancing the learning journey for our children.

Developing an ethos of love and appreciation for nature and the outdoors in our young people is pivotal: ensuring the future leaders of our planet have a clear understanding of the importance of nature, protection of our Earth and its natural resources. Getting outdoors can support positive mental health for our pupils and helps to develop a sense of self through contemplative activities. Building an 'I can do' attitude will ensure a better frame of mind for working academically.

The team at school have also made links with Katie Parsons, a PhD student from the University of Hull, who is working with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust on the Nature Friendly Schools project. The impact of outdoor learning on attainment will be the focus of a research project within the school, and Matt Clark will be part of the Teacher Research Group to develop an assessment system to monitor the impact of outdoor learning. The aim is to develop a means of measuring the impact on children's development and attainment, which is key to understanding the success of the project. This will involve establishing key knowledge, skills and wellbeing of pupils at the beginning of the programme and measuring outcomes at the end of the incentive. The school is also developing links with YoungMinds, one of the Nature Friendly Schools partners, to support the mental health and wellbeing of students at what is a very challenging time.

We are incredibly excited about the coming months and promoting outdoor learning at our school, which in turn will support good mental health and wellbeing for our pupils.

OUTDOOR LEARNING AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



WARWICKSHIRE'S SENSORY GUIDES

Vicky Dunne; Education Manager
at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

At Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the core of our education work consists of over 100 school trips and 250 parties a year. Many schools and families have children who need a little bit of extra help and guidance on a day out. When it comes to working with SEN children and young people, it all comes down to communication, some simple training and making sure there are no surprises.

Don't be afraid to ask. With our core work of school trips and parties, we always make a place on our booking forms for parents and teachers to tell us about any SEN needs. Similarly, when we are working with a specific group, we find out the level the work needs to be set at, if we need to make any specific changes, or if they have any special interests.

Training is also key. The education team at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust have attended autism training, Makaton training and courses relating to working with children with additional needs. Many courses are provided for free and well worth attending. They help you to adapt work for different audiences and make your teaching,



Education Officer Naomi Miller with the SEN guide for Brandon Marsh
©Paula Irish/Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

and the message you want to convey, much more accessible. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has created a children's guide for each of its visitor centres, for those who may need extra support to make their time with us as enjoyable as possible. They will enable pupils to find out more about what to expect on a school trip, to help reduce any anxiety they may be feeling about going somewhere new.

Using pictures and captions, the guides take children through the sights and sounds they will come across, ranging from the location of activities and where they will walk, to what the toilets look like and where they will leave bags for safe-keeping.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Education Officer, Katie Young, said: "Coming to Brandon Marsh and The Parkridge Centre for a school

trip can be exciting, stimulating and so different to a normal school day, and that's why children enjoy visiting us.

"But we also know that pupils with sensory conditions or additional needs can find certain parts of any different environment overwhelming at times. That's why we've put together a variety of special educational needs resources with lots of information for children about what they will be seeing and doing when they visit, including a timetable, details about all the activities and lots of pictures to ease any worries they may have."

Pupils from Nuneaton's Oak Wood Primary School for children with special educational needs, who visited Brandon Marsh weekly over the spring term before lockdown, helped the Trust to celebrate the launch of its new sensory guides after taking part in a forest school session.

Teacher Becky Northfield said: "The children do get anxious when going somewhere new so to have a guide for them with good



Oakwood pupils and teacher Becky Northfield with their guide
©Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

visuals is really useful. Usually we go on a website to show the children where they will be going but you don't necessarily always see the details. These guides show the children where they are going to walk and the places they will see, and we can download them to use alongside our own resources to meet their individual needs."

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust also has a Sensory Guide to Education Activities available to schools, which includes a description and sensory audit - sound, visual, touch and smell - for each centre, its classrooms and the different wildlife-themed sessions.

You can find the guides online at www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/ForChildren/schools-and-groups or for lots of home learning ideas, explore our website for family activities that help you keep in touch with nature.

MINIBEAST SAFARI SESSION

Christine Chambers; Special Schools Officer
for the Grassroots Challenge Programme at
Ulster Wildlife



Through my role as Special Schools Officer on the Grassroots Challenge programme, I work with secondary school children with special needs. I aim to help young people engage with the natural world and help them reap the benefits that come from doing this. I use both indoor (mainly greenhouses or classrooms) and outdoor spaces to lead nature based activities. Class sizes vary but generally I have around 10-15 children in a class with one or two assistants and a teacher. I mainly work with years 8, 9 or 10.

One of the most popular activities we do in the summer and autumn terms is a minibeast safari. It's great fun and can be hard to get everyone to stop searching; there's always one more plant pot that could be housing an undiscovered creature!



©Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

I start by using large, laminated (waterproof for outdoors) pictures of bugs, introducing each in turn, and we chat about them and talk over any fears or weird and wonderful facts the children may know about any of them. Then we play a game of 'Who am I?' using the bug pictures. I have string attached so each picture can be placed over a child's head and hangs down their back. They don't know what the picture is of and must ask their classmates questions to find out. The replies can only be yes or no. Eventually the child guesses what bug they are by accumulating lots of facts.

Next we start some artwork. We paint smooth stones to look like red or yellow ladybirds or green dock beetles - I use PVA glue and acrylic paints mixed. It's best to paint the whole stone first and then leave them to dry while you go on the safari. Then when you come back indoors you can paint on the details and stick on the eyes.

For the safari I use a couple of sweep nets, plenty of jars with magnifying lids (paper cups will do if you have some magnifying glasses), paint brushes and spoons to pick up the creatures, and a large flat tray. If you want to do tree beating you can use an upturned umbrella to catch the creatures when you shake the branch. You don't need extensive school grounds for a bug hunt. Under and around windowsills are great for spiders, and under planters are great for woodlice, millipedes, and beetles. A bush can be harbouring all sorts of weevils, aphids, spiders and even caterpillars! Long grass is great for using a sweep net but don't bother with one if the grass is damp as you'll end up with a soggy mass of sad little creatures all stuck together in the bottom of a wet net.



We spend around 20 minutes searching in small groups (with an adult keeping an eye on each group) and then bring everyone back together in a circle to see what they have found. I usually get each group in turn to empty their catch into a large flat specimen tray in the centre of the circle, so we can all see and they can tell us about what they found. If you get a lot of slimy snails and slugs keep them in a separate tray or things get sticky! You can hold a snail race for some extra fun. Start them in the centre and see which one get to the edge of the tray first. Make sure everything is put back where it was found as best you can and explain why. Then, I usually finish off with a game - something like Wool Caterpillars (see below).

Often, we show the children how to build a minibeast hotel or bug home. You need to have wooden pallets and lots of other materials gathered up beforehand for the hotel (you can find the activity sheet on the Wildlife Watch website - <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/make-bug-hotel>), but a bug home can be made simply by cutting the end off an old plastic bottle and filling it with hollow plant stems like old, dried out cow parsley.

Each activity is risk assessed and there's always a short health and safety talk at the start and plenty of hand washing.



GAME: Wool caterpillars

- Cut 10cm lengths of wool in a variety of colours and place them along a hedge or grassy patch. Have these in place at the start of the session. You will need enough of each colour so every child can find one.

- Give each of the children a twig and tell them you want them to pretend to be birds looking for food. They must look for the wool 'caterpillars' you hid earlier and tie them onto their twig starting at the top and working down as they find them.

- After a while call everyone back to you to see how they got on. Hopefully the bright red will be the first wool caterpillar they find and perhaps the black or green the last. Discuss camouflage and mimicry as a means of protection, and how bright colours act as a deterrent warning to predators.

- At the end of the session, collect any remaining wool that the children may have missed during the hunt.

ACTIVITIES

FROM WILDLIFE WATCH GROUPS

'BRENT GEESE MIGRATION' GAME

You will need

Signs ("Siberia" posted at the north of the space and "Farlington Marshes" posted at the south)

Coloured beads or pieces of wood (one colour to represent food, one for water and one for danger). These beads will be grouped on the ground to represent stopping stations for the birds. For a safe stopping station, provide at least one food and water bead per child. For a dangerous stopping station, provide less food and water, and more danger beads, so children won't have enough if they land on a dangerous spot such as a busy town

Hazard signs (a stick with fabric tied on) to put on hazardous spots such as holes, mud or brambles

We - Lucy, Andy, Esther and Mathilde - are four volunteers who run the Portsmouth and Southsea Wildlife Watch Group, which meets one Saturday each month. We are usually based in Portsmouth Natural History Museum, but we often go on trips to discover wild places around Portsmouth. Most children in the group live in the Southsea/Portsmouth area, are aged between 6 and 11 and come from urban neighbourhoods.

We use brent geese, but any migratory bird species can be used for this game!

You will need an open space for the children to run around. Pop a hazard sign in any areas to avoid. This game is suitable for any age and ability, as the instructions are straightforward. Although the children can compare how many beads they have collected at the end, it is nice to make it collaborative and encourage them to support each other and share food and water.



©Guy Edwards/2020VISION

What to do

1. Introduction. Start with information about the brent geese's migration journey. Why do birds migrate? What are the dangers they can find on the way? What makes a good stopping point for birds?

Set the scene with a story. The children are brent geese and need to travel from Siberia to Farlington, which is a 2500-mile journey! But first they need to learn how to travel together.

2. First game - V formation. Allow the group a few minutes to pretend to be a flock of birds, "flying" around however they like and interacting—or not. After a minute or two, join them and encourage them to follow your lead, honking like a goose. Then the children will take turns being a leader of the flock, at the front of the formation.

3. Second game - migration. When they have mastered their flocking skill, the children will need to go from "Siberia" to "Farlington". They will need to keep their formation, trying to find the suitable stopping stations on the way (e.g. finding and collecting food and water represented by the coloured beads). They must also try to avoid the dangerous stations (those with lots of "danger" beads). After each stop, a different child can lead the formation.

The game ends when the children have travelled through all the stations and arrived at Farlington. Did they manage to get enough food and water for everyone on their way?

4. Reflection. Based on your experience in this game, what makes a good stopping point for a migrating bird? Hopefully, they will answer that it is a place with lots of food and water and little danger. Would our town or city make a good stopover point for a migrating bird? Why or why not? Cities and towns offer some stopover sites that provide food, water and shelter, but pavement and buildings limit these resources. In addition, window collisions, traffic, power lines, predators, and pollution can all be dangerous to birds.



©Southsea Wildlife Watch

The children inspect their resources.

CONKER NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

Although not a native tree to the UK, the horse chestnut is familiar to many of us. In April and May, rows of horse chestnuts lining roads and in woodlands provide a spectacular display of 'candles' - large, upright flower spikes ranging in colour from white to deep pink. In autumn, it sheds its brown and orange leaves, along with its spiny-cased seeds, known as conkers.

This is a game for two players. Grab yourself 4 straight sticks or twigs and lay them on the ground to make the base of your noughts and crosses grid. Each player must then find four 'counters' of the same type from a horse chestnut tree - one person could be the seed and the other person could be the case.

Decide who goes first (perhaps with a round of rock, paper, scissors!) and take it in turns to lay your counters. The first person to make a complete line across the grid, wins!



BEESWAX WRAPS

By Grace, from the Alford Watch Group

These wraps are a great way to cover food, instead of using cling film (which is a single-use plastic). You can cover almost any food with them, except raw meat. They are hand washable with warm soapy water. Make sure they don't get too hot or the wax will melt and drip into the food - they work best in the fridge.

You will need

Food safe beeswax pellets
Cotton or linen cloth
Baking tray
Pinking scissors
Tongs
A paint brush

What to do

1. Preheat oven to 85°C. After you have washed and dried your material, cut out the shape you want using the pinking scissors (this will stop the edges from fraying).

2. Put the cloth on a baking tray and sprinkle the beeswax pellets evenly over (if the cloth has a pattern on it, put the pattern face down on the tray). Pop in the oven for about five minutes, but check throughout and don't leave unattended.

3. When all the wax looks melted, use the brush to spread it evenly over the cloth. Do this quickly as the wax will dry almost immediately.



4. Use tongs to lift the cloth from the pan and leave on a cooling rack to further set.

Your wraps are now ready to use! When moulding around a pot or bowl, use your hands to press down. The warmth from your palms will soften the wrap and it will set to your desired shape.

If you have put too much wax on all you need to do is warm it up slightly and scrape off the excess wax. If you didn't put enough wax on, simply sprinkle a few more pellets on and put it back in the oven to melt, following the same method. This method can also be used to 'refresh' your wraps after a few months.

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS

FOR FAMILIES TO DO AT HOME



DRIED LEAF GARLAND

Gather freshly fallen leaves, avoiding particularly mushy ones. Place the leaves flat between a few layers of newspaper or kitchen towel and press between some heavy books (use old books in case the moisture wrinkles the pages!). Pressing will help dry out the leaves and ensure they stay flat once displayed. A week or two of pressing should be enough - you could varnish them with PVA glue for a shiny finish if you wish. Tie the leaves along a length of string by their stems and hang up.

TWIG REINDEER

First, glue your twigs together. Pick two that make good reindeer antlers, and have these at the top of your 'V' shape. Add a straight twig across to form the top of the head. Glue on your googly eyes and the pompom as a nose. Tie some string to the top so you can hang it up once dry.

- For a twig reindeer, you will need:
- three twigs
 - googly eyes
 - a red pompom
 - glue
 - some string



You could also try twig stars - bound together with colourful string or wool.

PINECONE CREATURES

Bring your favourite winter characters to life! Collect only enough cones for your craft, leaving plenty in the woodland. This one can be a bit fiddly, cutting small detailed shapes, so one for the older children really.

For the penguin, you will need something small and round to create the head. A wooden bead will do the trick and means you can draw on the eyes and markings with a felt tip pen. You can use folded yellow card for the beak and feet, and black card for the wings. Glue everything in place and allow to dry.

For the elf, you will need some red pipe cleaners for the arms and legs - they can be twisted around the cone's open scales. You will need something round for the head, perhaps a bead, glued onto the top of the cone. Cut out the hat, gloves and boots from green felt. Glue everything into place and allow to dry.

For the owl, you will need felt in various shades of brown, black and white. The wings can be tear drop shaped - large enough to wrap around the front a little. You can paint a white belly onto the owl if you wish! Glue the layers of the face together, with large double circles for the eyes, and a small triangle for the beak. Add some feet and allow to dry.

What other creatures can you try? A hedgehog, a badger, a deer, or perhaps even Father Christmas!



SCRAP RIBBON TREE

All you need for this is a stick and some scrap pieces of ribbon. Tie the ribbons around the stick and trim to form a classic Christmas tree shape. Add a star on the top for extra festivity! These can be hanging decorations or propped up against a wall.

SALT DOUGH DECORATIONS

Salt dough is easy to make and, once baked, the decorations are sturdy enough to hang on a Christmas tree. You can find a link to the video and activity sheet [here](#) on the Wildlife Watch YouTube channel. You could adapt the activity with festive shapes like stars, holly leaves, candy canes or you could even use seed heads to make imprints in the dough. Bring them to life with paints and don't forget to make a hole for hanging them up *before* baking.



CELEBRATE NATIONAL TREE WEEK

Takes place
November 28th to
December 6th

National Tree Week is the UK's largest annual tree celebration, marking the start of the winter tree planting season (November to March each year). Around the country, volunteer Tree Wardens, community groups and schools hold tree planting events to celebrate National Tree Week. This year may be slightly different, but here are some ideas to try with your groups, alongside tree planting.

- For older children, there are some great ideas on the '[10 ways to measure a tree](#)' activity sheet from Learning Through Landscapes. The ideal way to combine maths and outdoor learning!
- Try a tree-based scavenger hunt. Create a list, attached to a clipboard (with pictures) of things to find within a set area that you know are already there. Set some guidance about treating the woodland with care and not to pick anything that is growing. Items to tick off could include an acorn, a leaf with a palmate shape, a twig shaped like antlers, a feather, a spider's web, a fungus, a pine cone, something prickly and even animal tracks.

- Gather around a tree and discuss the habitat that one tree provides. Ahead of time, create cut out pictures of fungi, aphids, an earthworm, a moth, an owl, a bat, a deer, a vole and a badger (or any other examples of living things dependent on trees). Discuss the different ways that each organism depends on the tree for survival, hanging the picture on the trunk as you go (without damaging it). You should end up with a trunk full of wildlife! What would happen if we chopped the tree down? Why are they so important? Remember to remove your pictures at the end of the session.

- Make leaf match-up cards. Gather different leaves and make leaf rubbings on small pieces of paper. Make sure there are two of each type of leaf and rub these with the same colour crayon to help with matching. Laminating the cards can help them to last longer. Put them all face down and take it in turns to turn over two, in order to make a leaf pair. You could also write the name of the tree the leaf belongs to on the card, and test their knowledge on your next woodland walk!

You will need:

- Pines cones
- Long twigs
- Garden wire
- Soft lard
- Mixing bowl
- Holly and other leaves
- Bird seed, breadcrumbs and grated cheese
- Dried fruits or unsalted nuts

1 Twist together bundles of long twigs and fasten with wire into a ring.

2 Squish lard into a soft paste in a bowl. Mix in bird seed, breadcrumbs or grated cheese.

3 Smear over pine cones and decorate with dried fruits and nuts.

Somewhere to hang your wreath

4 Attach the cones to the ring with twisted wire.

5 Decorate with festive greenery and hang up your wreath.

Make sure there's a clean supply of water nearby

Illustration: Corinne Welch © Copyright Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts 2015

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

HOW TO MAKE A TIPPY TAP

Mary Bendall, Wyre Forest Watch Group

Wyre Forest Watch are based in Worcestershire and meet every second Sunday of the month, except for in August. Their members range in age from 5 years to 15, with adults encouraged to stay and join in too. Wyre Forest Watch has been going for an astonishing 33 years with voluntary leaders, and has run a huge range of wildlife activities from bird ringing to bush craft. Over the years, the group has set up a conservation work party, won Watch Group of the Year, and has had at least two members go on to have careers in conservation.

The tippy tap is a great portable hand washing system, that has been used all over the world. Tippytap.org is a charity dedicated to spreading the word about this life saving practice. Not only does it save water, but it's very handy for conservation work parties and school groups when out and about.

You will need

- Container with handle - a 2L milk bottle works well
- String or rope
- A stick for the foot pedal
- Another stick to suspend the bottle from
- Means of support, such as fence posts, the corner of a gate and fence, or you could even make twin tripods from sturdy Y sticks

Tie a loop of string/rope to the handle of the container. Use this to suspend the container on your parallel stick - it should dangle underneath at a height suitable for handwashing.

Make a hole in the centre of the container, along the seam below the curve of the bottle. This is where the water will come out.

NOTE: Is the water not flowing in a steady arc? Shorten or lengthen the string/rope attached to the pedal, to adjust the flow depending on the terrain and height of the bottle.

Make a hole in the centre of the lid, thread string/rope through and tie a large knot.



Soap on a rope. You could make a tippy soap too with a smaller container.

Tie string/rope from the lid to the stick pedal. This will tip the container forward so the water comes out.

Tie the string/rope around the foot pedal - towards the back, so it sits slightly suspended.



Wildlife Highlights: November and December

Hedgehogs are in hibernation (check all bonfire piles for hiding hogs before lighting them)

Redwings and fieldfares arrive

Grey seals pupping

Acorns are in abundance

Estuaries fill up with wildfowl

Atlantic salmon are migrating back up stream

Tawny owls can be heard calling

Fungi is still around until the first frosts

Mistletoe can be seen in apple or lime trees

Goldfinches feed on teasel seed heads

Look out for birds nests visible in branches



wildlife watch

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Wildlife Watch is for kids passionate about wildlife! The Wildlife Watch and Sprout magazines are produced by The Wildlife Trusts' central team. For local queries regarding Watch groups, educational sessions and events, please contact your regional Watch organiser or Wildlife Trust.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE (JANUARY)

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Wildlife Watch Group of the Year Awards launch
New year wildlife bucket list