



Wilder Wellbeing

A guide to connecting
with nature



Nature helps us feel happier and healthier

There are 5 ways to wellbeing

1. Be active

Go outside for a walk or explore your nearest nature reserve

2. Connect

With the people around you, share your wildlife experiences

3. Give

Do something to help your local place and the people that live there

4. Take notice

Of the everyday wildness on your doorstep

5. Learn

Try something new outside

This booklet is packed full of ideas to help you take these 5 steps!

Exercising with nature



Notice wildlife on a walk

One of the simplest ways to get moving is to go for a walk – it's good for your heart and even better for your mind!

You don't have to walk far, or visit a special place, to notice nature. Look for moss growing on garden walls, 'weeds' poking up through cracks, and urban butterflies and bees.



Yoga

Yoga has so many health and wellbeing benefits and is something that can be adapted for people of all abilities. Make it wild by trying a YouTube yoga lesson in your garden.

If you can't get out, challenge yourself to trying nature inspired poses in your living room such as the 'tree', the 'snail', the 'pigeon', 'mountain pose' and the 'frog'!



Yoga illustrations © Corinne Welch

Go for a wild run

Many wild places make great running spots. Grab your headphones, or let the birds provide your soundtrack, and head out.

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Getting outside into nature can be fantastic for your health, both mental and physical; feeling the wind on your face and getting your blood pumping has numerous benefits. To take it one step further you could use your outdoor exercise to help support the environment too.

I often go Plogging, combining my jog with picking up any plastic or waste I see around me (while, of course, keeping good hand hygiene!). Not only does this help the planet, it gives me a greater sense of satisfaction once I've finished!



”

Zanna van Dijk
Fitness blogger



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Connecting to nature with your colleagues



Working from home can sometimes feel a little lonely and isolating. Sharing a connection with nature can be a great conversation starter and help you to stay in touch with your colleagues, bringing you closer together as well as improving your mental health and wellbeing.

Taking it outside

You don't have to take your lunch or coffee break alone at home – ask your colleague if they want to video call for a virtual catch up! An outdoor lunch break, breathing in the fresh air and chatting with a colleague about their weekend, can be just what you need to get you poised for a productive afternoon.

Start a gardening club

A team of avid gardeners or group of novices keen to get started? Set up a gardening club and share your best tips for growing vegetables and herbs, making the most out of your space and planting for pollinators. You could do a video tour of your garden and send these to the group for lunchtime viewing. This is a really good way of staying in touch with colleagues that you may not speak to regularly for work purposes but would usually chat with in the canteen at work!

Eco-warrior club

If you're passionate about our planet and feel like your workplace could up their game, start an employee green team. Schedule your first meeting online to discuss how you could make your workplace more eco-friendly. Make a plan of action in priority order, thinking about things like plastic-use and recycling, Cycle to Work schemes, office clothes swaps and planting wildflowers if you have green space.

Wild meetings

If you have a small meeting tell your colleagues you're going to take it outside and encourage them to as well. You could be on the phone while on a walk or take your laptop into the garden. You'll find meetings much more enjoyable with the sun shining on your face and birds tweeting!



Group 'nature' chat

Create a group chat with your team on whatever online platform you're using to stay in touch. My team at The Wildlife Trusts' have a WhatsApp group that we use to share our #EverydayWildlife – whatever we can see, smell, hear, or touch in our gardens, on our balconies or on our lunchtime walks. Think videos of blackbirds singing and photos of daisies blooming!



It's often too easy to spend hours staring at the computer - especially when working in data! So I find it really important to take a moment catching up with a colleague over a cup of tea.



Mercè, Senior Data Scientist



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Wild workday from home



When you're working from home, it's often too easy to stay in front of a screen all day and never venture outdoors.

Setting up your workplace

Set up your workstation so you're close to a window – this way, you'll have a front row seat to any wildlife action. It's also a great idea to bring the outside in, so if you have any houseplants pop them on your desk so that you've always got a bit of green in sight. And if you can, work outside – even if just for a short time! Then you can enjoy the sights, smells and sounds of nature. Working from home doesn't sound so bad now, right?!

Starting the day wild

Take your breakfast into the garden or have a cup of tea while watching the world outside your window. Even if you live in an urban area, there will be little signs of wildlife – you might just need to work a little harder to see them. We promise it'll be worth the effort!



If you've got five minutes...

If you don't feel like you can step away from your screen but need a little breather, check out a Wildlife Trust webcam. You can watch peregrine falcons, badgers and puffins going about their daily business, or simply observe the calming landscape of a nature reserve. However, if you do want to take a moment outside, this is a good time to close your eyes and listen to the bees buzzing and birds singing.

If you've got half an hour

...it's most likely your lunch break! So, why not make it a picnic? Grab a blanket and head out – getting some fresh air in the middle of your work day is crucial to a productive afternoon. Take it a step further and try some outdoor exercise, such as a run, yoga or a quick bike ride, to get those endorphins flowing.



If you've got an hour

Take a walk at lunchtime or after work and notice the wildlife around you. You may live in a built-up neighbourhood, but if you're looking for it, you'll be surprised at how much you see. Challenge yourself by choosing a colour before you head out and seeing what you spot in nature of that colour. Is it a yellow day? You might spot dandelions, the stripe of a bee, the breast of a blue tit and if you're lucky, maybe a brimstone butterfly!

The most important part of staying connected to nature while you're working from home is **nurturing your own health and wellbeing**. Being outdoors and experiencing local wildlife can have a **calming effect** and instantly make you feel **refreshed**. Also, take the opportunity to connect with colleagues or customers by sharing your nature moments by email or social media.



Share what you get up to with us on social media!

Getting started with nature writing



Nature is inspiring. Whether it's the pink explosion of a blossoming tree, the lilting song of a robin or the flickering flight of a butterfly, there are so many wild moments that spark emotions and inspire creativity. We've pulled together some tips to help you channel your creativity into writing.

Write for yourself

Nature writing doesn't have to be fancy or poetic. It's not necessarily about writing something for others to read and enjoy (though that's an added bonus), it's about writing for yourself as a way of connecting with nature and remembering a special experience. Write for fun and if you're happy with the result, then you can think about sharing it with other wildlife lovers, like the 30 Days Wild Facebook Group.

Make a journal

A good way to get started is with a nature journal. Take it a day at a time, writing about something wild you experienced that day. It could be factual, just listing things you saw and what they were doing; descriptive, setting the scene and telling a story; or emotional, sharing your thoughts and feelings about nature. Or a combination of all of these! Get even more creative by adding drawings or sticking in wild finds like leaves and feathers.

Always carry a notebook

You never know when creativity will strike, so it's always a good idea to have somewhere to jot down ideas wherever you are, and especially when you're out in nature. Slip a small notebook and a pen into your bag or pocket, or in a pinch use your phone to note things down when inspiration seizes you.



Try a different style

Challenge yourself by experimenting with how you write, testing different styles. Pen poems about nature, create stories from an animal's perspective, write diary-style entries about your own wild experiences, or research for an essay on a particular species or behaviour.



Your own unique perspective is vital when it comes to writing about the natural world. Don't feel you have to fit a certain mould, or relate to nature in a particular way. What do you really think and feel?



Melissa Harrison,
nature writer



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Natural sounds map



Not only is this a great way of getting kids engaged in the natural world, it is also incredibly relaxing and meditative!

Time: 30 minutes

What you'll need

- Ideally, a space outdoors to sit down. A garden is perfect! You can try this next to an open window too; just choose a time of day when road traffic noise is minimal
- A piece of paper and a pen/pencil



What to do

1. Sit the children down in the garden with a piece of paper and a pen/pencil and tell them to make a mark in the middle of the paper (if they're next to a window, mark themselves on the edge of the paper instead). This mark represents where they're sat.
2. Tell the children to close their eyes, be quiet and listen to the natural sounds around them.
3. Every time they hear a sound, they should open their eyes and mark it on the paper with something that represents the sound and where it is in relation to them i.e. a bird at the top of their paper to represent a bird in the distance in front of them singing.
4. Once they think they've recorded all the sounds they can hear, they can put their pen/pencil down.
5. What did they hear? Where was it? Can they see what was making the noise? Maybe there's a tree where they heard a bird calling from - this can lead to a discussion about habitats.
6. If you're using this as a digital lesson for a class, ask the children afterwards to compare the sounds they heard. Were they different depending on where the children live?



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I'm a huge fan of outdoor learning. It develops children's independence and curiosity through exploration and investigation, encourages physical activity and promotes a love of nature. All of which have a positive impact on children's mental health.

”



Rob, Year 4 teacher & dad of two, Cheshire

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Nature photography



Taking photos of wildlife and wild places is lots of fun. You don't need a fancy camera with a big long lens to do it, either. Even a compact camera or phone camera can take some great photographs. Here some tips to get started.

The little things

Insects and plants make wonderful subjects for photographs. You can find them in almost any park or garden, so there is always plenty of choice.

Unlike most birds and mammals, if you are careful you can get right up to insects to take a photo without frightening them away.

Start off with beetles first, as they're less likely to fly away than butterflies!

Get low

For really cool photos, try showing the world from the wildlife's point of view!

Get down low so your camera is eye level with the creature you want to photograph.

You might have to crouch or even lie on the floor, so make sure there's nothing sharp or stinging in the way first.

For the best light, try to make sure the sun is behind you.

Do some research

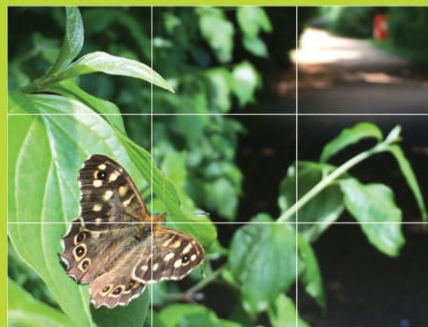
Learn as much as you can about an animal you want to photograph. What habitat does it like? What does it eat? The more you know, the better your chances of photographing it. By knowing what caterpillars, like this puss moth caterpillar, like to eat, you can search them out!



The rule of thirds

This one's a bit tricky, but can really help make your photos more exciting. Instead of always putting your subject in the middle, try putting it slightly to one side for a change. Imagine that your photo is split up into nine equal sections, separated by lines.

Put the most interesting part of your photo in a spot where two of the lines cross over each other. Check out this photo of a speckled wood butterfly for an example. For added impact, try to make sure your animal is facing towards the centre of your photograph.



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To be consistent as a wildlife photographer you need plenty of time, dedication and patience. Learning as much as you can about your subject: behaviours, light and weather conditions, can all help you capture that award-winning image.

”

Steve Race
Wildlife photographer



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Workout with nature

Rather than going to the gym for some exercise, volunteer for a couple of hours on a local nature reserve or within your community. It's sociable and fun, and you'll burn those calories off too!



Litter picking



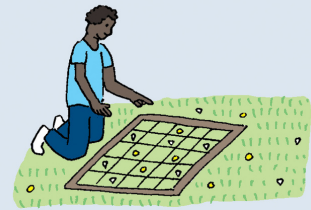
Cutting back Rhododendron



Helping others enjoy nature



Sow a wildflower meadow




Conduct a plant survey

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

Go on a beach clean

You will need:

- a group of friends (optional but useful!)

- thick gardening gloves 

- buckets 

- litter picking tool 

- suitable footwear (sturdy boots for rocky beaches) 

Note

There can be dangerous objects on the beach, please take care and do not pick up anything that could harm you.



Try not to overfill buckets as they may become too heavy.



You could try separating litter into different buckets for recycling.

cigarette butts

bits of plastic

empty cans

crisp packets or wrappers

empty bottles

fishing net

paper

carrier bags

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk