



Bringing the Outdoors In!

Activity Resource Pack



Bringing the outdoors in

Introduction

Nature activities which can be done indoors, in your garden or local park.

There is a growing body of evidence that outlines the great health and well-being benefits from spending time outside and engaging with nature. For many, going outside is not an option due to physical or mental ill-health, especially in current times where we find ourselves practising self-isolation and social distancing.

This guide is intended to give nature connection activity options for a range of ages which can either be done indoors or, if you are able, in a garden, local park or greenspace (while keeping to a safe distance).

These activities are ideal for keeping engaged with the natural environment, focusing on the benefits of outdoor green health and adapting these for current circumstances. The activities are short and simple and not only connect people to their greenspaces, but offer you the chance to complete small tasks which can help our environment including natural art and citizen science tasks. Enjoy, and be sure to share your activities with us using the social media links!

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Helping hands for Hedgehogs

These activities can be done in your garden

CREATE A HEDGEHOG HIGHWAY

Help local hedgehogs by focusing on friendly garden improvements. Hedgehogs can travel up to one mile each night, create a 'Hedgehog Highway' by making a small hole (13cm x 13cm) in your fence. Get creative, remove a brick, make a gap in your gate. Information & ideas at hedgehogstreet.org.



MESSY GARDENS

Encourage hedgehogs by providing cat or dog food with a high meat content & shallow dish of water. Create a natural buffet - long grass, log & leaf piles attract favourites like beetles and worms, plus provide shelter. Let a corner of your garden grow wild for nature and watch who comes to visit!



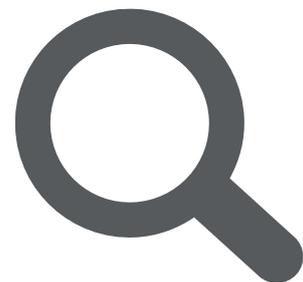
HEDGEHOG DETECTIVE

Help us understand hedgehog activity and report your sightings. Please email with a great hedgehog photo if you can, kirsty.crawford@tcv.org.uk or post to us on social media with the hashtag #HogSpotter. Please tell us:

1. Where (postcode, house number, or grid reference)
2. When (date and time)
3. Status (alive, injured, roadkill)

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Thanks to the Glasgow HogWatch project.

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Dead Good Deadwood Survey

These activities can be done in your garden and a local woodland

DEAD WOOD IS DEAD GOOD!

While it maybe looks unsightly to some, deadwood is essential for a whole range of wildlife. Why not take part in your Dead Good Deadwood survey and explore larger fallen pieces of wood to discover who lives inside and what that can mean for the health of your local woodland. Download at tcv.org.uk.



UNTIDY YOUR GARDEN

With a spare bit of time why not head outside and give 'untidying' a go in your garden. Allow shrubs to rot down naturally, create small log piles with some larger pieces of deadwood to create habitat for invertebrates. Leaf piles are great for hedgehogs and mice and rock piles provide a home for spiders, toads and frogs.



STICKS AND STONES

Get creative and use the smaller sticks in your garden to create some unique artwork. Use twigs and leaves to create patterns and designs, even your favourite animal. Why not paint your twigs different colours and tie together to form some natural wind-chimes in the garden!



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Thanks to the Scotland Counts project.



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Big Garden Bird Bonanza

These activities can be done both indoors and outdoors

CREATE A BIRD FEEDER

Encourage birds into your garden by creating some extra food. An old apple with sunflower seeds and some twigs for a perch. Core the apple and tie some string through the middle & hang on a tree. You can also use pine cones with some lard and roll in a mixture of seeds. Information at rspb.org.uk.



SPOT THE BIRDS

Spend 15 minutes watching from your window. Who has come to feed at the feeder? You can also do this in your local park or garden. Download the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch sheets to help, or take a notebook and pen. Why not draw a picture of your favourite? Can you learn the names of 5 common garden birds?



LISTEN TO BIRD SONG

Take the peace and relaxation of native birdsong into your home with the RSPB 'Radio Birdsong App'. Have a listen to the tracks, you could even try some breathing exercises at the same time to enhance relaxation.

The iBird App is a brilliant way to get to know your bird calls better, with all common UK species.



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Thanks to the RSPB and TCV Scotland Counts project.

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Beetles & woodlice & worms, oh my!

These activities can be done in your garden, or local greenspace

MINIBEAST SAFARI

Challenge yourself to a 15 minute bug hunt. Look under rocks, logs & benches for woodlice, slugs and centipedes who like dark places. Check flowering plants and long grass for bugs and bees. You'll be taking part in citizen science by using the free OPAL Bugs Count resources at opalexplorenature.org.



WORM CHARMER

Spend some time getting to know one of the most important creatures on the planet. Earthworms are fascinating, and respond to vibrations in the ground. Stamp around on the grass, do a funny dance and watch as they come to the surface. Take part in Earthworm Watch citizen science project and upload results at earthwormwatch.org



GRAND BUG HOTEL

If you have spare wooden pallets you can create a multi-storey bug hotel, full of hidden spaces for insects to live. Make a mini version by filling a plant pot with twigs, pine cones and bark. Drilling small holes in small logs can create a home for bees and wasps. Step by step pictures at wildlifetrusts.org. Get started and look around the house and garden for: **Plant pots, cardboard, tiles, bricks, yoghurt pots, twigs, sticks, logs, bark bamboo canes, straw, pine cones.**

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Thanks to the Scotland Counts project, The Wildlife Trusts, OPAL and EarthWatch.



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Power of the Pollinators



These activities can be done in your garden, or local greenspace

BUMBLEBEE WALK

Get to know more about your local bees. From March species like the Early Bumblebee with its red tail will be emerging. Download the Top 8 UK species guide at bumblebeeconservation.org. You can also take part in The Great British Bee Count in May & June, get free resources at friendsoftheearth.uk.



BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT

Don't miss out on one of the most popular UK-wide surveys, done from your window, garden or park. Live from July - August, download the colourful ID sheets from bigbutterflycount.org (also available as an app). Spend 15 minutes making a note of the species you see and upload your results online.



HOVERFLY LAGOON

Don't forget about hoverflies, they use mimicry to look just like wasps and bees - they are harmless and great pollinators. Create a perfect home using an old milk carton and some leaf litter. Full guide at thebuzzclub.uk.

1. Cut milk carton in half, pierce holes an inch below brim
2. Fill with leaf litter and grass, add two twigs & fill with water
3. Sit in tray with dry leaf litter and check once a month for signs of life!



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Thanks to the Scotland Counts project, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation and The Buzz Club.



Bringing the outdoors in *Big Garden BioBlitz*

City Nature Challenge
takes place across the
world from 24-27th April
2020, join in
citynaturechallenge.org

These activities can be done indoors and in your garden

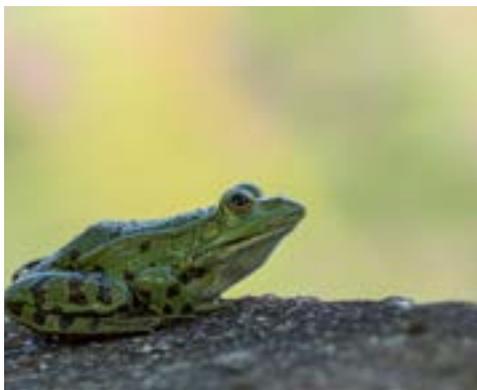
DISCOVER YOUR GARDEN

Your garden is the perfect place to carry out your first BioBlitz. Bio = life Blitz = to do something quickly and intensively. To take part simply make note of all the living things in your garden over 24 hours. Of course, you don't have to stay outside the whole time, spend 10 - 15 minutes at different points throughout the day.



WHAT YOU MIGHT SEE?

Make sure you have a notebook and pen, or a BioBlitz recording form from bnhc.org.uk. Make a note of everything you see from birds to butterfly, foxes to frogs, and remember to take lots of photos. You can get help with wildlife identification at ispotnature.org.



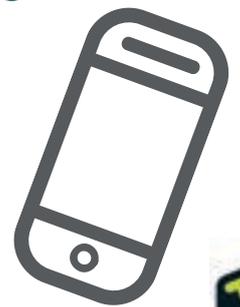
RECORDING YOUR RESULTS

Get in touch with your inner scientist by adding your results to the national network, helping scientists make decisions about our environment and wildlife. Download the iRecord app or head to brc.ac/irecord to complete the simple online form. Share your results with us using the hashtag #TCVScientist on our Twitter pages.



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Looking under the surface

These activities can be done indoors or in your garden

CREATE A MINI GARDEN POND

Grab something shallow and watertight (like an old washing up bowl) and add gravel, stones plus a few larger rocks to create a ramp for animals. Fill with rainwater & if you can add some native water plants. Watch how your pond develops over the weeks and see who comes to visit.



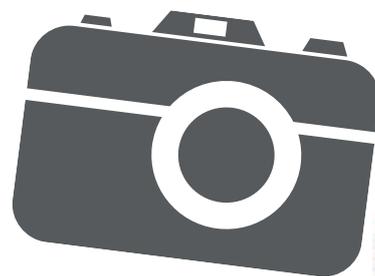
FIND OUT WHAT LIVES BENEATH

If you live close to a local pond why not try some pond-dipping. Make sure you stick to the safety advice and use the OPAL Water Health survey sheet and picture guide which you can download from opalexplorenature.org to find out how healthy your pond is, and to identify watery wildlife. You will need a small net, plastic container, notebook and a pencil.



SHARE YOUR SNAPSHOT

Bring out your inner photographer and share your mini garden pond and wildlife water photos with us on Twitter @TCVCitSci, we want to know what you found - do you have a family frogs, or diving water beetles? Be sure to keep an eye out on our main page @TCVScotland for our photography competitions with a different theme each month!



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Testing your senses

These activities can be done indoors or in your garden

NATURE STORIES IN A BAG

Collect items for inspiration in a bag. Head into the garden for things like twigs, flowers & cones. Then indoors for a good mixture - keys, jewellery, even a spoon! Take it in turns to pull something from the bag and begin to add a few sentences to the story. These can be as weird and wonderful as you like and could trigger some memories!



MATCHING THE SCENT

Collect some small plastic containers or bags and gather some interesting smelly items. These could be fresh herbs like lavender, mint, oregano, flowers, gorse petals, soil or tree bark. Put a small amount of the same thing in two containers, mix them up and have fun matching the scents!



NATURE TREASURE HUNT

Create your very own treasure hunt using double sided sticky tape and cardboard or simply an A4 sheet of paper. Create categories for different colours and textures by drawing a box with black marker and placing some sticky pads or tape inside (like the example below). Find something red, blue, yellow and brown - rough, smooth, fluffy and soft.



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Feeding time in the garden

These activities can be done in your garden

HEDGEHOGS

Hedgehogs are omnivores, eating mainly insects but will also eat things like mice, frogs, fruits and plants. In your garden the best thing is to leave a small dish of dog / cat food with a high meat content and a dish of water. Don't leave milk to drink or mealworms to eat for hedgehogs as it can upset their stomach.



GARDEN BIRDS

Set out some different types of bird food and you will have plenty of visitors to your garden. Various garden birds love seeds and nuts - best are sunflower hearts and unsalted peanuts in a feeder. Leaving out fruits and mealworms is also a favourite! You can play at creating fat balls with seeds, cooked rice, lard and chopped cheese.



BUTTERFLIES AND INSECTS

Plant brightly coloured flowers for insects and leave small pieces of over-ripe banana for butterflies. You can make butterfly windmill - a small amount of sugar diluted with water soaked in a cotton pad and pushed into an open bottle cap. Attach this to a cut-out cardboard flower (decorated however you choose), tape a small wooden stem to the back, stick in the soil and watch who comes to feed. Instructions at wildlifewatch.org.uk.



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Get Creative - Natural Arts and Crafts

These activities can be done in your garden

HAPPY HAPA ZOME

Collect brightly coloured berries, petals and textured leaves. Hapa Zome is a Japanese word meaning 'leaf dye'! Arrange a pattern underneath a sheet of fabric (even on old bed-sheet cut into squares) and use a rock or mallet to leaf bash! Once you start watch as the natural colours dye the fabric! You can even make bunting, punch a hole in the corner and thread string through.



SEED BOMBS

A messy craft for the garden which can help nature! You will need a small packet of native wildflower seeds, peat free compost and clay powder. Use a cheese grater on crayons for added colourful flakes. Mix all with water to create small balls to throw around the garden.



SMALL ANIMAL FOOTPRINT TUNNEL

Find out who is coming to visit your garden after dark with a footprint trap. Full details on naturehood.uk. You will need a sheet of corrugated plastic, A4 paper, wildlife friendly ink (using charcoal powder and vegetable oil), masking tape, a paintbrush, dry cat food and a small food dish. There is a handy free guide to identifying footprints searching animal tracks on the RSPB website. If you do have hedgehogs make sure to get in touch with our HogWatch project on social media!

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Useful Resources



If you are looking for some more activities there are a whole host of fantastic organisations who have brilliant resources available to download on their website. From crafts to baking, wildlife surveys to storytelling, below are just a few of the best.

- <https://www.tcv.org.uk>
- <https://treegrowing.tcv.org.uk/>
- <https://www.conservationhandbooks.com/>

- The Muddy Puddle Teacher is a great website and organisation focused around teaching resources. During this time they are giving one month full free membership to access their online resources, great ideas for outdoor activities -

- The Scouts have 100 free activities promoting #TheGreatIndoors, easy and fun nature activities inspired by nature and the outdoors which can be done inside your house - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/the-great-indoors/>

- The Woodland Trust's website has brilliant information about trees including identification, folklore and conservation - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

- The Wildlife Trusts download section for children 'Wildlife Watch' has hundreds of great activities and 'how to' guides - <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activity-sheets>

- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) can help with birds and other wildlife and have a lot of identification guides and surveys ready for download - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/>



Online resources to support and inspire for both indoor and outdoor activities!