



A FAMILY GUIDE TO WILDLIFE SPOTTING AND FUN OUTDOORS



LOTTERY FUNDED

Cover Art by Lauren Greenwood

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I remember...



Photo: Jules Howard



Photo: Laura Brady

"I nearly drowned catching newts with my sister. Granddad pulled us out and we had to walk home covered in green pond slime. Mum went mad."
Anon

"My father ate a live frog as a bet for 5 shillings during the war. It was only small. It was different in those days!"
Anon, Shetlands

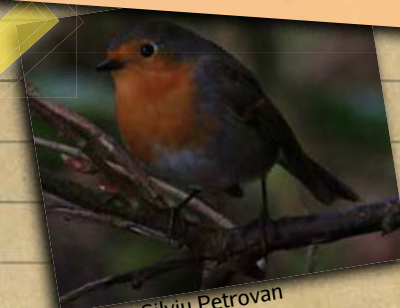


Photo: Silviu Petrovan



Photo: Laura Brady

"Hearing cuckoos on Harris (Highlands) in springtime. I still go back and still hear lots of cuckoos."
Diana, Glasgow

"Going out onto Holbeach Marsh with my father and jumping over the muddy marsh streams to ring the hundreds of Black Headed Gulls."
Lucy, Lincolnshire

I remember...

"My brother found a baby thrush that was sick and he raised it back to health until it flew away again."
Janet, Glasgow



"Sparrows in the roof.
Starlings in the roof.
Everyone seemed to enjoy
the sound of blackbird and
song thrush.
An abundance of
greenfinch and chaffinch.
Time to enjoy nature."
Ann, Kent, 68

"One of my earliest memories is of my older brother and I being sent out to collect mushrooms for breakfast. In those days (the 1940s) there was no traffic and it was perfectly safe for two young toddlers to cross the road and venture into the field opposite the house. I can still remember the excitement of being allowed to go on our own and going through the gate into the field. The thrill of being in what seemed to me to be a wild place, on our own has never left me.
However my brother then told me that there was a bear living in the bushes that bordered the brook that ran alongside the field. He told me it might eat me, whereupon my courage finally failed and I ran home as fast as I could."
Terry Jones



Photo: Laura Brady

"Stayed on a campsite on a farm. The farmer took us into woods next to the road, said bring torches, we stood still on a track, torches on, and a family of badgers walked across our feet. They were so used to the car head lights that they didn't care about the torches!"
Richard, Gloucester

"When I was 10 there was a brickyard near me. They had a large pond in which I saw adders, grass snakes and great crested newts and common newts, frogs, toads and from then on it was "wow!"
Paul, Nottingham, 58



Photo: Jules Howard

"As children we used to collect frogspawn from the mill dam and keep them in 2lb jam jars until they hatched and they ate each other. There aren't mill dams now and there aren't frogs. A different world."
Anon, Yorkshire

"Listening to the nightingale in 1936 - no longer heard there."
Anon, Bournemouth



Photo: Laura Brady

MY WILD LIFE

This book and its accompanying film were created to celebrate a two-year project delivered by Froglife to learn more about different generations' childhood experiences of nature.

Froglife is a national wildlife conservation charity which focusses on native reptiles and amphibians and their habitats. Froglife's vision is a world in which reptile and amphibian populations are flourishing as part of healthy ecosystems.

The *My Wild Life* project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, was created to bring different generations together to share their childhood experiences of wildlife and playing outdoors.

The project brought different community groups together in Peterborough, London and Glasgow and worked with over 2,500 people aged 1 to 101.

A reminiscence kit of wildlife-themed items was used to bring back memories. The kit contained a wide variety of items from books and toys, cameras and binoculars, to feathers and snakeskins.



Photo: Jodie Coomber

"When I was 7 my teacher took us on a nature walk through ancient meadows and ancient woodland. She named all the plants and insects for us. That inspired me and I am now an education officer for the RSPB"
Caroline, Essex, 54

Hundreds of memories were recorded on post-cards and bunting. Many others were captured on film. Some of these memories recall kindness to wildlife, others unfortunately recall cruelty. It is clear that attitudes to wildlife are changing constantly and what may have been acceptable in the past doesn't seem so now.

It is hoped that these real-life stories bring complex issues such as biodiversity loss and climate change to life, and are therefore able to inspire new generations to conserve wildlife.

These memories show how important nature is as part of a child's experiences. It is also apparent from these stories that habitats are disappearing fast, and many species with them. We can all take steps to help reduce biodiversity loss so that future generations can enjoy the wildlife we have today.

Why not try some of the ideas from the book, or create new habitats in your own garden?

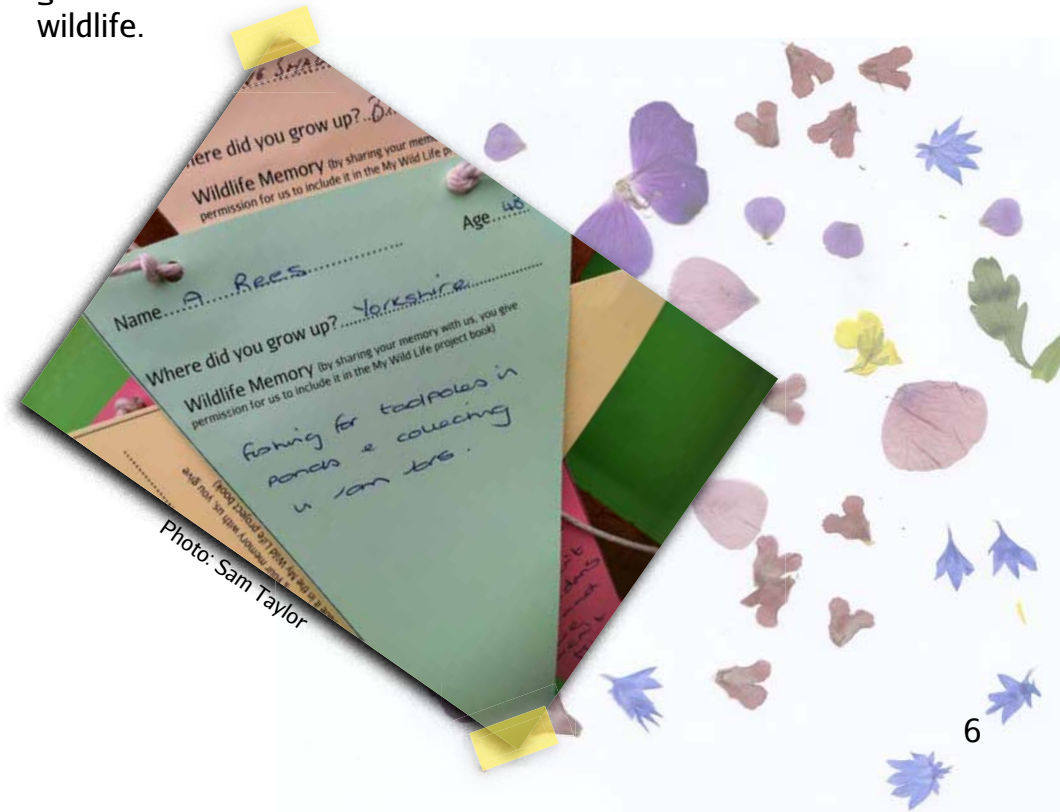


Photo: Sam Taylor

Most common
amphibians

Common frog



Photo: Ash Jarvis

Common toad



Photo: Rob Williams

An easy way to tell
frogs and toads apart
is by watching how
they move - frogs
jump but toads crawl!

Palmate newt



Photo: David Palmer

Great crested newt



Photos: Jules Howard

Smooth newt



AMPHIBIAN ADVENTURES

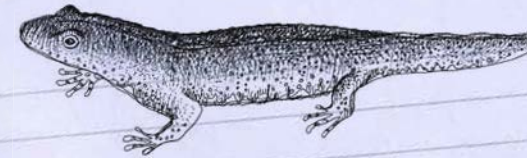
A jar full of frogspawn tied with string is an iconic image of childhood and was a common memory shared by older people during the project (13% of all the memories collected).

Worryingly, many of the younger people involved in sessions had never seen frogspawn, let alone handled or collected it.

Overall, memories featuring amphibians made up 33% of the memories collected by the project. They clearly show the joy that these charismatic creatures can bring to children and adults alike.

There are 7 species of amphibian native to the UK. Of these, the pool frog can only be found on one site, the natterjack toad is only found at a handful of coastal and heathland sites and the great crested newt population is declining.

"When I was a little boy we used to go and play with the newts at the side of the park, which has now been built on so no more newts."
John, Birmingham



"As a child I found a frog in my garden but we didn't have a pond so my friends and I went on an 'expedition' to the local burn (stream) to help the frog. It seemed like a big adventure at the time!"
Anon, Glasgow

I remember...

"When I was very young, I walked around a lake to meet my dad from work and a very large bullfrog leapt off a log and I thought it was going to eat me! I'm not fond of frogs since then, but am delighted to have them in my allotment!"
Janet, Glasgow

The North American bullfrog is a non-native species and a threat to native amphibians so sightings should be reported to Natural England.
www.naturalengland.org.uk

"I put a jar of frogspawn in the kitchen (where we had a Rayburn stove) and a jar in my bedroom where I only had a small heater - rarely used. Of course nothing happened to the frogspawn in my bedroom for weeks, but downstairs we soon had lots of tadpoles with legs. I made a point to my dad about how cold my room was."
Barbara, Scotland, 57



Photo: Laura Brady



Photo: Laura Brady

"When I was a child we would walk down to the canal and there were hundreds of tiny frogs on the path. We tried not to stand on them but the boys would pick them up and put them down our necks."
Jenny, Nottingham, 67

"Spending hours standing in a stream and catching 'tiddlers' and being really scared of frogs - now I love talking to frogs and watching the babies develop and grow."
Bobbie, Peterborough

Why not create a home for amphibians by digging a pond in your garden? Visit www.froglife.org for a step-by-step guide.

The common frog is an excellent help in the garden.

"One memory was catching frogs on the field behind our house. I was only 4 or 5 so there must have been loads if I could catch them at that age. The field was converted into playing fields in the late 60's."
David, Manchester

"Every summer we went to an aunt in Brierley Hill, at the bottom of her garden was a disused canal. We watched local lads shooting with air pistols, at frogs. My memory, terrifying as it was, was seeing lots of dead frogs floating amongst the other debris on the canal."
John, Birmingham



WHERE TO FIND AMPHIBIANS

Ponds

Frogs & toads don't actually spend all their time in ponds. They may only return to ponds to breed.

Half the UK's ponds were lost in the 20th century.

Photo: Jules Howard

Woodlands

Photo: Sivi Sivanesan

The best time of year to see amphibians is February to September

Long grass

Log piles

Gardens

Photos: Sam Taylor

Toads return to their ancestral breeding ponds each year and often have to cross roads to get there. 1000's are killed. Froglife's Toads on Roads project co-ordinates toad patrols to help save them.

"We used to go fishing for sticklebacks with my mum. One time we brought back lots of little frogs - too many for the pond. They got put in the bath and escaped all over the house."
Sue, Eltham, 52

"Growing up on a farm with access to a wealth of wildlife, but most enjoyable was 'adopting' toads found in a drain outside the back door!"
Janet, Somerset, 32

"Going into a friend's air-raid shelter to look for a reported 'monster' to find it was really a common toad."
Matt, Nottingham

HOW TO POND DIP



You need:

- A plastic tray
- A net
- Some little pots or jars
- A spoon can also come in handy for picking up animals!

1. Fill up your tray gently with some water from the pond
2. Bending down, move your net through the water in a figure of 8
3. Empty your net into the tray, watching out for pond creatures!
4. Take a look at what you find
5. Gently empty the water and the creatures back into the pond.



Pond snails

Water boatman

Newt eft

Photo: Natalie Pretsell

What you find might look gunky, or just like leaves and sticks. But if you wait & watch you could find all sorts of creatures in your dipping tray...



Damselfly nymph



"When I was young my Mother couldn't afford pocket money for me, so I used to catch newts and sell them to classmates. 1p for a plain one and 2p for a coloured one." Joy, Peterborough

You now need a license to handle or disturb Great Crested newts as their UK population is declining and they are protected by law.

"I remember at about 8 or 9 being absolutely blown away by finding and catching newts with my friends. They were just so alien". David, Irlam

"One particular place that I always liked visiting was a pond. I used to catch newts there. On one occasion I was able to catch a great crested newt and I was really struck by the size of these animals. Six inches long, really vivid bellies and great crests on their backs - beautiful animals. About 10 years ago I went to revisit this site and I found that the pond wasn't there any more." Jonathan, Bexley, 51

Most common
reptiles

Adder



Photo: Georgette Taylor

Grass snake

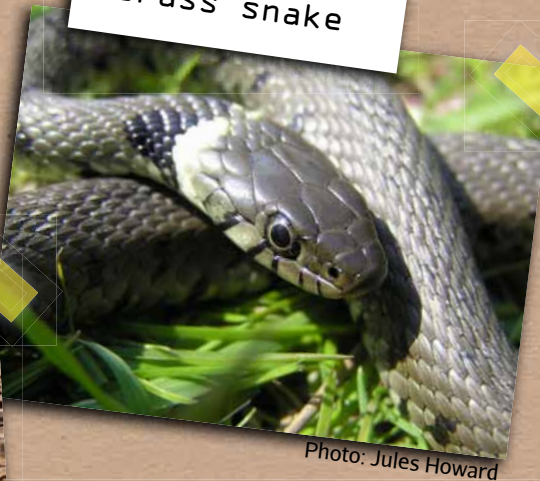


Photo: Jules Howard

Adders are only likely to bite if trodden on or caught. No one has died from an adder bite in the UK for over 20 years.

Slow-worm



Slow-worms look like snakes but are actually legless lizards.

Common lizard



Photo: Georgette Taylor

RUMMAGING FOR REPTILES

Memories of reptiles only made up 9% of the memories collected by the project. Perhaps this is because these creatures are much more wary of human contact, and perhaps it is because they often move too quickly to be spotted. This may also explain why very few of the younger people involved in the project had ever seen a reptile in the wild.

There are 3 species of snake, and 3 species of lizard native to the UK. Of these, sand lizards are under threat due to habitat deterioration and loss, and smooth snakes are the UK's rarest reptile, only found in certain heathlands. Both are protected by law.

"We have a compost heap at the end of our garden. One day I was trying to clear away some of it when a forked tongue poked out and a scaly head slid towards me. A snake hissed at me and, to my horror, out came a grass snake."
Anon, London

Grass snakes are very timid and feign death when disturbed - even sticking their tongues out!

I remember...

"We had grass snakes. They were big - monsters, and that's even without childhood exaggeration. We used to put them over people's fences. The grass snakes never seemed to worry too much. We just used to hide and wait for the screams."
Bob, Essex, 64



Photo: Laura Brady

Bob's father was a postman and often brought things home for Bob - here he is with a grass snake.



"We used to catch lizards and slow worms to keep as pets but regret it now as we realised we did more harm than good!"
Simon

"When I was a kid there used to be lizards. We used to go out and catch them. We had to look for them but when you found a little pocket of them there were loads. They moved really quickly. They built all over the area and they were gone."
Justin, Suffolk



Photo: Laura Brady

"I had an excellent book called Handy Homes for Creepy Crawlies. It inspired me to look for slow worms and catch them. I could always find them under corrugated iron sheets in the garden."
Rob, Hampshire

WHERE TO FIND REPTILES

Ponds, rivers, lakes

Grass snakes are brilliant swimmers and hunt for fish and amphibians in the water

Photo: Frank Clark

On bare ground...

...near long grass

Pathways through grass are great for reptiles to bask in the sun close to shelter

Photo: Sam Taylor

The best time of year to see reptiles is March to September

On warm rocks

Photo: Rob Williams

Heathland

Photo: Lucy Benyon

Compost heaps

Photo: Sam Taylor

"Picking up an adder on holiday and being told to drop it by the holiday park owner. Luckily it was sleepy and did not bite."
Ann, Glasgow

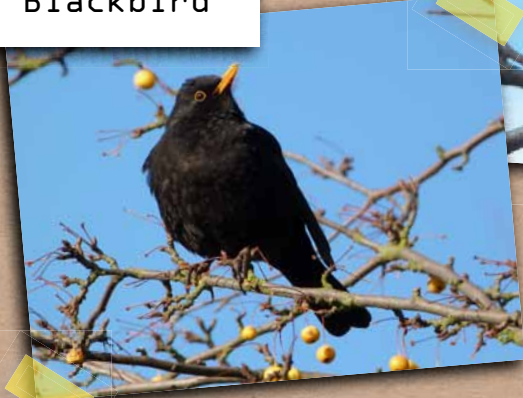
"My parents and I went for a picnic in Epping Forest when I was six. We had our picnic on a blanket and were enjoying our sandwiches when we heard a rustling in the tall grass next to us. Suddenly out of the grass an adder glided towards us. We all jumped up and the picnic went everywhere."
Lynn, Essex

Chaffinch



Photos: Ash Jarvis

Blackbird



Blue tit

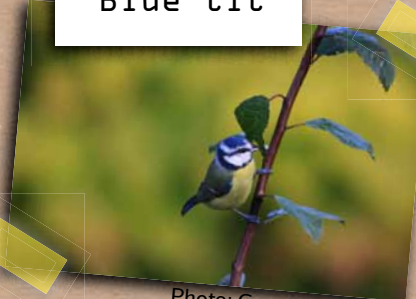


Photo: Georgette Taylor

Buzzard



Photo: Nick Peers



House sparrow

Photo: Silviu Petrovan

FLYING HIGH

Memories collected by the project featuring birds were very common, making up 21% of the memories collected. Perhaps this is because birds are present in both rural and urban areas, and are accessible for children. Participants had often had childhood encounters with birds that had resulted in a lifelong passion for bird-watching and a love of wider nature too.

There are an estimated 596 bird species in the UK. Currently 21% are on the Red List (of high concern) in the Birds of Conservation Concern report. (Source: www.rspb.org)

Lapwing



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

"I used to spend hours drawing birds then go out looking for the bird I'd drawn. Perhaps it was a good job I started with a lapwing!"
Roy, Birmingham, 50

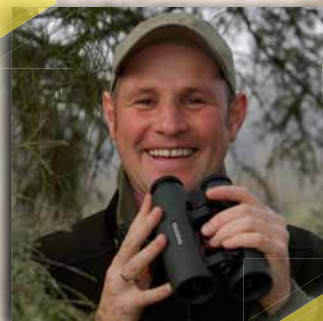


Photo: Laura Brady

"A cuckoo singing, sitting on our garden fence. Sadly, much rarer these days."
Mark Avery, Bristol, 54

I remember...

"I remember being woken up in the early hours and taken out to listen to the dawn chorus on our farm. For some time afterwards I used to try to sneak out to repeat the experience, and I have loved dawn skylarks ever since."
R. Cockerill, Northants, 57



"I have one incredibly strong memory as a kid which is lying in bed and listening to the birds singing outside. I remember thinking 'I want to know what those birds are', and 40 years later hey presto I do!"
Mike Dilger

"When I was 6 my parents took me to St James Park in London. I stood with my arms stretched out and they put seeds over my arms and head and I was completely covered in house sparrows and have never forgotten it since! Now you wouldn't see any."
Mark Cawardine



Photos: Laura Brady

Swift



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

"Seeing lapwings for the first time and getting a bird book to help identify them age 4."
Ros, Wales, 72

"Wonderful dawn chorus! Not now in comparison! Not tomorrow, too late!"
Badger, Derbyshire, 69



Photo: Jodie Coomber

Goldfinch



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

"My greatest memory of wildlife as a child was being taken to see nightjars displaying and wing clapping and catching moths."
Janet, Lancashire, 50

TIPS FOR SPOTTING BIRDS

Woodland walk



Photo: Jules Howard

Birds are at their most active between May and September. A walk through the woods in spring or early summer will be filled with birdsong!

1. Pick a spot. You can look for birds whilst walking along, or find somewhere quiet to sit.

2. Look around you. Use your binoculars or eyes to see what you can spot. If you keep still and quiet, birds should stay around longer, giving you more chance to identify them.

3. Keep your ears open too. If you can't see any birds, there's a good chance you can hear them. Sit and listen and see how many different calls you can hear.

Sitting in a bird hide



For information and advice on birds & bird-watching, visit www.rspb.org.uk

Bird hides are sheds placed to overlook areas that are good for birds

Dawn chorus



Photo: Francesca Barker

"Seeing my first buzzard while walking the dog with my father. The next day I got my first pair of binoculars"
Laura, Somerset

"Walking up the Royal Mile in Edinburgh at night when a barn owl glided across the parapets until it disappeared into the darkness."
Anon, Scotland

"Sitting by a caravan by Loch Ness and a golden eagle came down and swept up a rabbit."
Anon, Scotland

"As a young lad out with friends in Epping Forest I fired a stone (with a catapult) at a duck on a lake and killed it. I took it home and persuaded my mum to cook it. As far as I can remember, I quite enjoyed it."
Frank, London

"At around 4 an uncle had shot a crow and killed it and I thought it was wonderful and put it in a doll's pram until it got very smelly! Life was different then just after the war."
Anon, Nottingham, 65

Roe deer

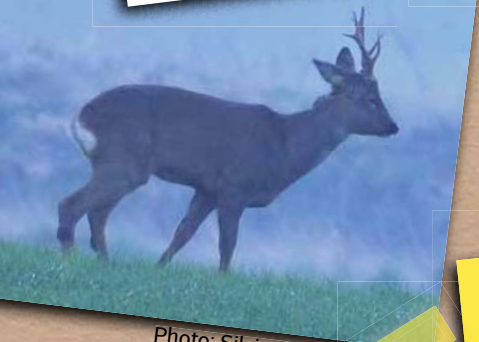


Photo: Silviu Petrovan

Hedgehog



Photo: Rob Williams

Hare



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

Otter

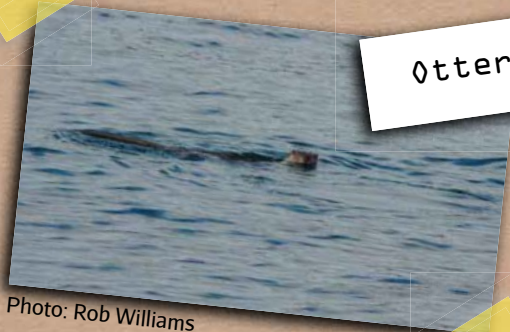


Photo: Rob Williams

Grey squirrel



Photo: Sam Taylor

Grey squirrels are very common, but are not originally from the UK. If you're lucky you might see a rare red squirrel

ALL CREATURES GREAT...

Memories featuring mammals were rarely recalled during the project, making up only 9% of the total. This is probably because mammals can be difficult to see being very shy and often nocturnal. A good way to start looking for mammals is keeping an eye out for footprints, tracks or droppings - clues that the animals have passed through an area.

There are 92 species of mammal in the UK and many face threats. For example, there are an estimated 285 million individual mammals in the UK, but red deer only number 360,000, making up 0.126%. (Source: www.mammal.org.uk)

A good place to find out more about native mammals is The Mammal Society at www.mammal.org.uk

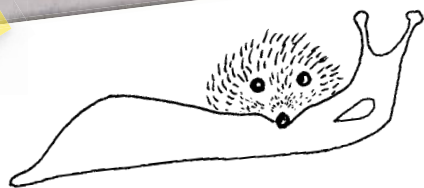
"Around 11 or 12 going into the woods near my house one night sitting in the den, me and my brother ...and waiting to see the badgers come out - so cool!"
Anon

"Waking up really early on a campsite and walking through the surrounding fields and spotting a fox and cubs playing with their surroundings and each other, sitting only about 10m away from them acting and exploring like that...just amazing!!"
Paul, Unknown

I remember...

"When I was about eight years old my father came home with a rather unusual addition to his bowler hat - a baby hedgehog that he'd found in the lane, alone and suffering from heatstroke. We called him Sammy, and he lived with us for about a year. I'll never forget his first sight of a slug - it was nearly as big as him, and he leapt around it squeaking enthusiastically and nibbling either end. When he was old enough to leave home he marched off into our orchard and we didn't see him for a couple of weeks. One night I called him, and there was a crashing and commotion about two gardens down, followed by the familiar hedgehog snuffling noise. There he was! What lovely creatures they are and how sad that they're in decline."

Sarah, Shalford



SAMMY'S FIRST SLUG
SS 2012

Hedgehogs can have up to 7 babies in a litter and they are called hoglets.

"Finding hedgehogs hibernating - all curled up - in the sandpit I played in after primary school. Freezing March day with dead leaves everywhere and a curved spiky back poking out of the sand."

Robert, Henley

The rabbit is actually a non-native species and was introduced to the UK during the 12th century.

"We moved to Suffolk when I was 9 and I discovered wildlife! I especially remember hand feeding the wild baby rabbits in our garden, not a very rare animal but it was magical to my young mind!"

Sue, Suffolk, 40



Photo: Laura Brady



"WHAT DREAMS
ARE MADE OF"
SS 2012

"A dead long-eared bat was found in our neighbour's back garden. Knowing of my fascination with all things wildlife, the neighbour brought it over for me as a present. I took it into school with me the next day and showed it to my biology teacher. She offered to preserve it for me in formaldehyde. In a couple of days I was able to bring my long-eared bat home, floating in a kilner jar, wings crossed upon its chest. I put the bat on my bedside table and at night would watch it floating. Unfortunately for me, my mother discovered this glassy sarcophagus and the bat was consigned to the garage. Little did my mother know that I used to creep down the stairs and sit with him for a couple of hours nearly every night. An only child finds friends in the most unexpected places!"

Sarah, Shalford

For information on bats visit the Bat Conservation Trust at www.bats.org.uk

TIPS FOR SPOTTING MAMMALS

Coast



Donna Nook in Lincolnshire and Blakeney Point in Norfolk are brilliant places to see seals

Fields



1. Pick a spot. Find somewhere quiet to sit where you think you might find mammals.

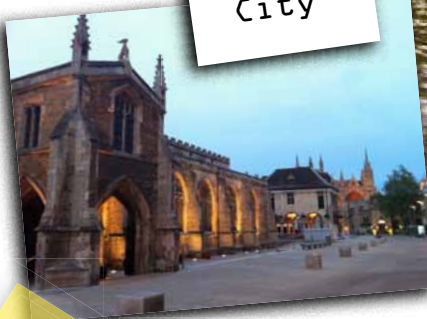
2. Keep your eyes open. Use binoculars if you have them to see what you can spot. If you keep still and quiet, you have more chance of seeing something.

3. Keep your ears open too. If you can't see any animals, you could still hear them. Listen out for calls and rustles from nearby creatures.

4. Even if you do not see any animals, you might see signs that mammals have been nearby, such as footprints, tracks, burrows, bones or poo.

Early morning and early evening are good times to spot some mammals like rabbits and foxes

City



Woods



A number of mammals hibernate over winter, so spring and summer is a good time to look for them

Useful equipment

- A guide to UK mammals
- Binoculars
- At night time you could take a bat detector out to hear the noises they make as they fly around

Rabbit burrow



Photo: Jules Howard

Deer skull & tracks



Photos: Sam Taylor



"My Grandad used to take me out at night when I was staying with them. There was a war on and we waited until Granny went to bed and then crept out! We went to the local woods and sat in silence and we were often lucky enough to see badgers and cubs. I was about 7 and still remember it today."

31 Janet

"Staying in Scotland and watching the otters playing right outside the window and then seeing them interact with dolphins."

Chris, Hampshire

"My father taking me and my brothers and sisters up on the moors to watch a fox and her cubs come out and play late one evening."

Julie, Cornwall



Green-veined white butterfly



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

Honey bee



Photo: Rebecca Turpin

Dragonfly



Photo: Ash Jarvis

Dragonfly nymph



Photo: Jules Howard

Dragonflies actually spend most of their lives underwater as larvae called nymphs

Damselfly



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

...AND SMALL

Memories of invertebrates collected by the project made up 16% of the total and were incredibly varied. This is probably due to the abundance and variety of invertebrate life.

Creepy crawlies are often a child's first encounter with nature, whether it's a snail in the garden or a butterfly in the park. They can also be the first creatures that children choose to either nurture or injure, which can teach important lessons early on.

There are over 40,000 species of invertebrate in the UK and it is estimated that 15% are under threat. One stark example of the problem is that 70% of butterflies are declining significantly. (Source: www.buglife.org)

"Age 5 walking through a wood with a friend. At the edge of the wood was a valley with a rainbow of wildflowers and as we walked into the field a cloud of butterflies flew up. Never to be experienced again."
Anon



I remember...

"Being fascinated by woodlice and trying to build many different types of homes to keep them in - eventually I realised that I could always find them in their natural homes - under rotting wood."
Dave



Photo: Ash Jarvis

"Pulling the back legs off grasshoppers in my garden and telling mum I'd found a new species that couldn't jump."
Dave, Birmingham, 44

"Watching a dragonfly emerge and seeing it come into the sunshine then fly."
Shirley, Kent, 62

"I remember in the war we each had butterfly nets to catch white butterflies to save the green cabbages etc. When we had a jar full we would get one old penny."
Joan, Peterborough



Photo: April Parker



"Going on family picnics in the hills behind Porthcawl and catching butterflies (common blues)."
Peter, Porthcawl, 62

"I remember seeing large blues. They've gone now."
Anon, Leicester

"My favourite wildlife memory was on holiday in Scotland and I became fascinated with some big hairy caterpillars and decided to pick them up! I ended up with a nasty rash on my hand! I learned my lesson."
Anon, Glasgow



Photo: Rebecca Turpin

"When I was six I went away to camp in Wales. After 2 weeks of rain when we returned home I remember racing snails along the wall in the sunshine"
Mavis, Essex, 61



"Having snail races. We would find snails under stones and line about four of them up and try to persuade them to slide to a finishing line and see which one was quickest."
Veronica, London

Wildflowers

BUG HUNTING IDEAS

Long grass

Flowerbeds

1. Gently sweep a net backwards and forwards over some long grass. Carefully turn the net inside out and see what you have caught.

2. Lift up a log and have a look at the creatures living underneath. Carefully put the log back down when you have finished so you don't squash the bugs!

3. Lay out some white paper or a sheet under a tree. Gently shake some of the tree branches and look at the creatures that fall.

Trees

Useful equipment

- Butterfly net
- Pots with lids
- Plastic spoons
- Magnifying glass

You can keep the bugs you find in a pot for a short amount of time to look at them. Make sure you set them free where you found them afterwards.

To find out more about the UK's invertebrates, why not visit www.buglife.org.uk

Dead trees support loads of invertebrates.

Photo: Daniel Piec

"Going down to the shoreline and trying to catch different crabs from under rocks."
Anon, Glasgow

"Collecting various examples of beetles and fungi during a school cross country run and arriving back at school to find the headmaster anxiously awaiting my return (2 hours late) and about to call the police."
Bryan, Derbyshire, 73

Photo: Rebecca Turpin

"Collecting bumblebees into an empty glass bottle and then emptying them into a barrel of water to see if they could swim! They all drowned - I was five at the time."
David Lindo, London

"Trespassing in the allotments next to the garden and finding all sorts of creepy crawlies, but chased away as they thought we were stealing raspberries."
Kate, London, 68



Bluebells

Photo: Lucy Benyon



Forget me nots

Photo: Silviu Petrovan



Cow parsley

Photo: Jules Howard



Sloe or blackthorn

Photo: Jules Howard



Chicken of the woods

Photo: Cacey Barks



Dog rose

Photo: Sam Taylor

BLOOMING MARVELLOUS!

Memories centred around plants of all kinds made up 17% of all the memories collected by the project. Plants are clearly important in a child's experience of nature as they feature in a wide range of activities from picking flowers to playing conkers and climbing trees.

There are a huge number of plant species in the UK. There are around 1,400 species of wild flowers, some of which are so rare that it is now illegal to pick their flowers. However, you are very unlikely to come across these amazingly rare plants, so picking common ones like daisies and dandelions is fine, just take care not to uproot the whole plant. The habitats that plants flourish in, such as woodland, hedges and meadows are in great need of protection.

An excellent place to find out more about wild plants & their habitats is at www.plantlife.org.uk

"My mother use to take me out into the countryside and told me the names of flowers. I was very lucky. We were out on the edge of London and you could just walk into the countryside."
Anon, London, 60

I remember...

"Collecting conkers along the country roads by throwing lumps of wood up into the chestnut trees (this was the most dangerous part of the operation - far more than playing conkers). We used to collect about 100, but only played with about 5 or 6."
Trevor, London



"Dozens of families picking raspas in a wood 2 miles from the town. Children were expected to pick and mothers were to be the quality controllers. Weans (children) will always be weans but we ate what we wanted and then ran off away from the wasps into the depths of the wood to play."
Anon, Glasgow

"Watching the coastline when the tide went out and the movement of seaweed floating and changing colour."
Christine, Jersey, 69

"My mother telling me the names of wildflowers when we were out in the countryside. She had been taught her wildflower names as part of her education and she loved to pass that knowledge on."
Hilary, Oxford, 59

"I will always remember learning to date hedges with an inspiring primary school teacher."
Barry, Norfolk



Photo: Laura Brady

"My mum, unlike me was taken on nature walks by her primary school. To compensate when I was small she gave me her father's small pocket guide to British flora and encouraged me to identify and draw wild plants I found. I soon built up a folder of drawings and never looked back!"
Lizzie, Bristol, 34

"Going to the fields and gathering wildflowers to take home and press."
Anon, Glasgow



Photo: Laura Brady

"As a child labelling wildflowers and putting them in jam jars - non PC!"
Gill, Yorkshire, 72

"Going across the fields and collecting a basket of flowers - half cowslips and half bluebells we then gave them out to people in the estate."
Sue, Glasgow

"Aged 10 with my best friend I was allowed to catch the bus to Wootton Sand Pits to collect things for the school nature table. I remember the smell of pine and fungi to this day!"
Stephen, Kings Lynn, 64

"Gathering with 6 cousins to take the tram to the ferry across the Mersey to visit the sand dunes and cockling beds in Moreton and finding wildflowers which we had to take home to dad to identify."
Dorothy, Liverpool, 71

PLANT & FLOWER FUN



Blackberries

Photo: Jules Howard



Daisy chains

The Woodland Trust has lots of information about trees, as well as some brilliant ideas for outdoor fun
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

"Collecting cob nuts in the woods in the autumn."
 Anon

"I would go primrosing on Good Friday to decorate the church for Easter, and blackberrying in the Autumn. We also used to go for long walks in the countryside."
 Betty

1. Collect and press flowers, petals and leaves. Decorate cards with them or start a plant book called a herbarium. If you spot rare plants, you could take photos to add to your book.

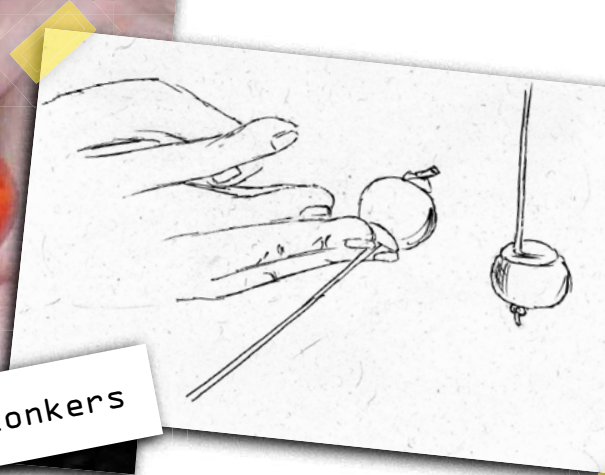
2. There are lots of things you can eat or cook from a hedgerow - have a look online for a guide & recipes.

3. Make some outdoor art using different coloured fallen leaves in autumn.



Photo: Rebecca Neal

Conkers



Wild garlic

Photos: Jules Howard



"Making mazes in a swampy bed of tall rose bay willow herb by the golf course. Now all the rough ground, trees and allotments have disappeared."
 Harry, Duffield, 61

"Aged about 4 years old, I was playing outside with friends. We decided to have a race, rolling down a small hill. Unfortunately at the bottom was a patch of nettles which I hadn't seen, and then rolled into. Luckily there was also some docken leaves close by to rub on all the stings."
 Mary, Glasgow

"I remember collecting brambles on the railway banks and my mum made bramble jam and jelly."
 Anon, Glasgow

Stickleback



Photo: Sivi Sivanesan

Minnow



Pike



Photos: Clyde River Foundation

You can find out more about fish and other creatures at www.clyderiverfoundation.org

Trout



GONE FISHING

Catching sticklebacks in jam jars with home-made nets or fishing lines is another iconic childhood activity which many people fondly remembered during the project. Only 10% of memories collected mentioned fish and only a few species were specifically recalled. An adult often featured in the stories as the 'expert' teaching important skills such as 'tickling' or 'guddling' trout.

There are 38 species of native fish found in freshwaters like ponds, lakes and rivers, and 12 species that have been introduced to these areas. Species range in size from miniscule minnows and sticklebacks to pikes. Our fish species are affected by water quality, pollution, climate change, disease and over-fishing. Some species, such as eels, are in serious decline, whilst others, such as minnows, are still very common.

"As a 16 year old I went fishing in the Staines reservoir. Having a fishing rod I caught a roach which I used as live bait to catch a large pike. At that time the (air raid) sirens went off so I cycled home to Hackney with the pike dangling from the handlebars. The lady upstairs gave me 2/6d for it and said they enjoyed it for dinner!"
Frank, London



I remember...

"Fishing for sticklebacks in the local park pond with my dad (and a net on a stick) and catching a weird black creature which turned out to be a leech! I visited the pond a few years ago and it appeared to be completely devoid of life!"
Billy, Edinburgh, 58



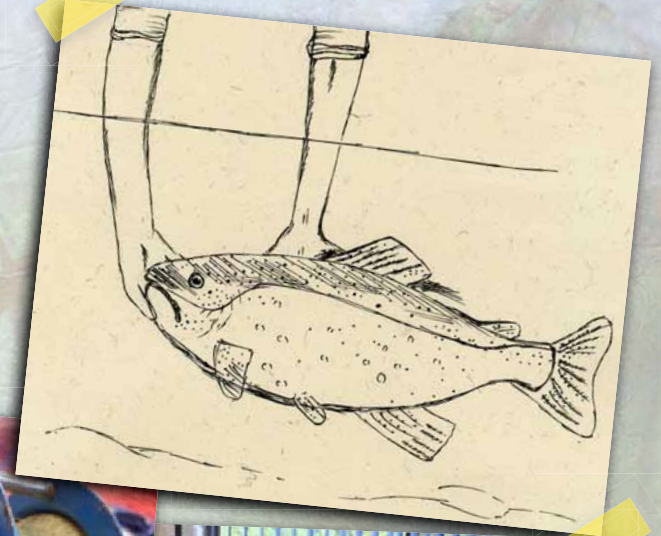
Photo: Georgette Taylor



Photo: Laura Brady

"Catching sticklebacks in 'the Dingles' - we lived just down the road from where Tolkein had lived in Westfield Road, so the Dingles beside the River Cole is really the Shire in Lord of the Rings."
Richard, Birmingham, 68

"Being about 6 and watching my father guddle (tickle) a trout from under a rock in the river. He put it in a pail, brought it home and released it into the bath of clean water my mother had saved because there was a severe water shortage on. She was not pleased!"
Ann, Glasgow



Photos: Laura Brady



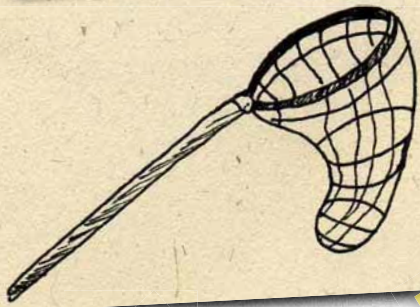
"I remember as a small child about 65 years ago guddling (tickling) trout in the burn (stream) behind my Gran's house (sadly these fields are all built on now!) I was taught to gently feel under the stones and tickle their underbelly."
Mavis, Glasgow

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Make your own fishing net

Materials

- Old tights or net curtains
- A coathanger or some wire
- A long pole or stick
- A needle
- Some thread
- A pair of scissors



"Making a fishing net: Cut the foot off of a stocking, find a strip of wire, bend wire to a circle.

Put the foot of the stocking over the wire and use Mum's needle and thread to attach. Find a stick and tie the wire onto it. If you moved it slowly it didn't fall to bits."

Bob, Peterborough

"Pond dipping with dad using a cane, wire, a glass jar and a pair of mum's tights.
Catching minnows with line and hook and fishing for my brother's glasses when they fell in - happy days."
Liz, Suffolk, 53

Fishing for tiddlers

1. Take your net and a jar or bucket to a stream or river.
2. Fill your jar or bucket with water from the stream.
3. Have a go at pond dipping, carefully weaving your net backwards and forwards in the water. Be careful not to fall in.
4. Gently pop any fish you catch into the jar for a closer look.
5. Set your catch free where you found them.

Rivers & streams



Photo: Lucy Benyon



Photo: Sam Taylor

Things to try

Making dens



Picnics



Photo: Jodie Coomber

Getting muddy



Photo: Duane Hamlett

Climbing trees



CHILD'S PLAY

Many of the memories collected by the project did not centre on an encounter with a specific creature. Instead they focus on activities, day trips or holidays.

This collection shows a wide variety of memories, from paddling to building dens, and from walking to making mud pies. It also shows how important wild places are for people as well as wildlife.

Many of the older people involved in the project believe they had much more freedom than the children of today have. Many of these memories capture that feeling of freedom.

"Paddling in the river near St Fagins in Cardiff and the clarity of the water after our local canal!"
Ann, Preston, 62



"I recall spending many hours climbing trees and building huts in the trees which gave us many hours of pleasure."
George, Glasgow

I remember...

"We were taken out every weekend for picnics or walks. My father would teach us all the names of the birds and flowers as we went. I feel privileged to have had such experiences."
Margaret, Glasgow

"Making mud pies and decorating them with daisies."
Anon

"I used to go picnicking every weekend with my mum and dad. We had our tea and it was lovely - our Sunday afternoon out."
Anon, Cotswolds, 68

"Building dens from dawn til dusk everyday through the summer holidays."
Leigh

"Freedom to roam and play in safety, making our own enjoyment with friends."
Anon, Peterborough



Photo: Sam Taylor



Photo: Jodie Coomber

"Going on Saturday morning walks in Suffolk country lanes with my teacher and other pupils."
Judy, Ipswich, 67

"Making a den in the park and building 'walls' from the mown long grass."
Jonathan, Henley

"Making little pots out of garden soil turned into mud and dried in the sun."
Anon, London



Photo: Laura Brady



Photos: Lucy Benyon



"When I was small I spent most of my time paddling in the sea and playing in the park and watching fighters and bombers in the sky having dog-fights, wandering all over the countryside."
Anon

OUTDOOR FUN



Photo: Sam Taylor

Useful equipment:

- String
- Scissors
- Blankets to sit on or drape to make a tent
- Clothes pegs to hold things in place
- A picnic to eat in your den!

Den building game

1. Think of an animal.
2. Imagine that you are that animal looking for a new home. Where would you build it? What do you need nearby to survive?
3. Pick a good place for your type of animal to live and build a den. You could use sticks, leaves, build it around a tree - whatever you can find.
4. Imagine you are an animal estate agent selling your den! Tell your friends or family all about the features of the den. What can you say about its location? Its size? The things that are nearby? Is it a good place to hibernate or make a nest?



Photo: Jodie Coomber

"Making a den in the bushes, at the top of the lane where my Nanna lived. I made it with my brother as a place to play in. It was a happy, hidden place. We would play there for hours, imagining."
Katya

Tree climbing tips

Keep an eye out for low branches and stumps to climb on.

Watch out for thin branches - they might not take your weight!

Find a place to perch so you can admire the view around you and listen out for birds or rustling leaves.



"We could go off into the fields all day by ourselves. We spent hours making little felt horses and having gymkhanas in the fields."
Judy, West Sussex, 59



Photo: Sam Taylor



Photo: Andy Mortimore

Visit www.50things.org.uk for inspiration on outdoor activities. It suggests 50 things to do before you're 11 and 3/4.

"I used to get the tramcar to Milngrove and then walk into the hills with my half bottle of lemonade. Up the top of the hill we would drink the lemonade and the white liquid at the base of the grass where we broke it off"
Bill, Glasgow

IDEAS FOR ADVENTURES AT HOME

There are lots of things you can do to create wild spaces in your garden....

Garden trees provide habitats for birds, squirrels and invertebrates. They're also excellent for climbing!

Plant a wildflower meadow to attract bees, butterflies and birds. It will also provide flowers for pressing.

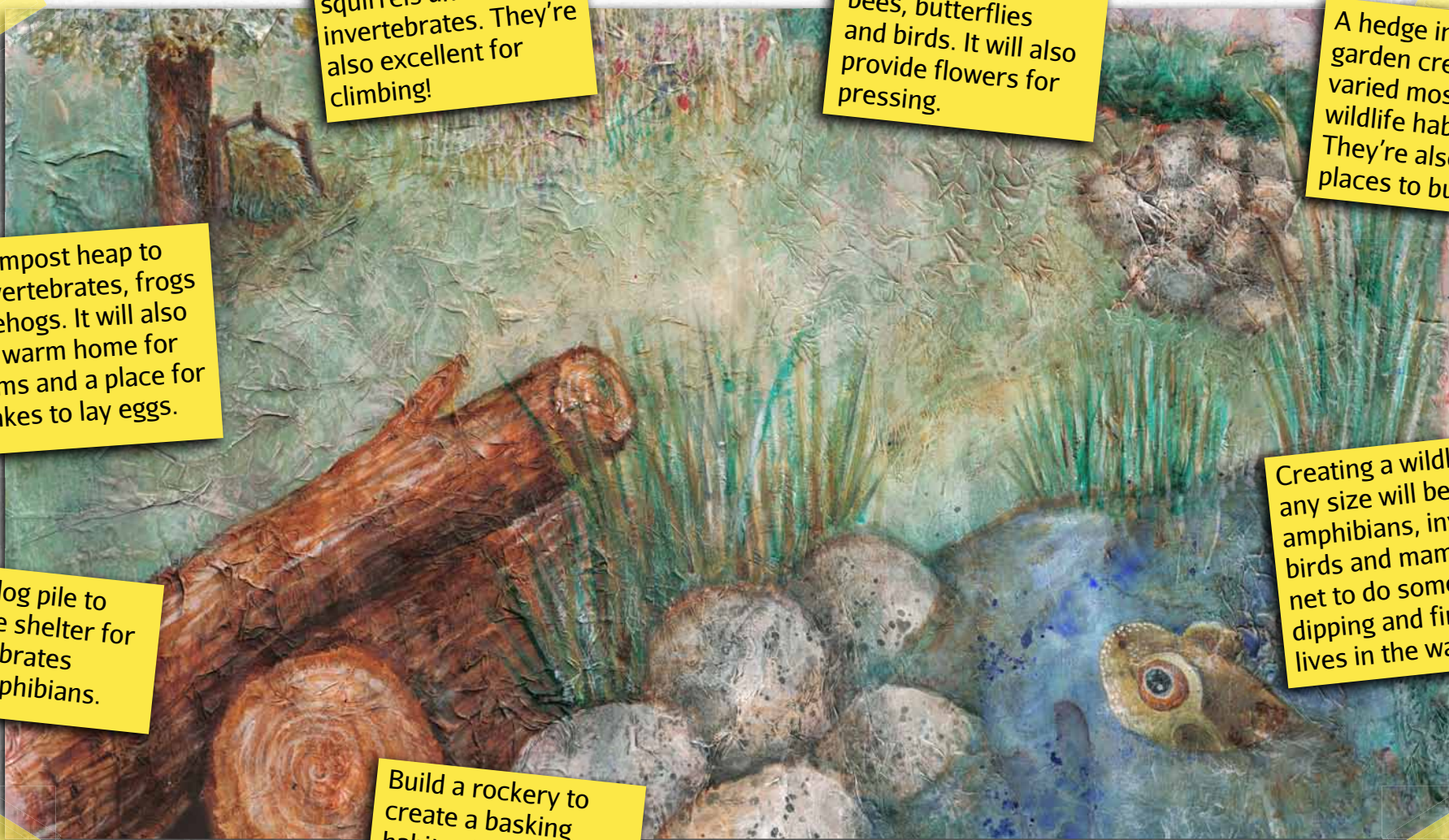
A hedge in your garden creates a varied mosaic of wildlife habitats. They're also great places to build dens.

Make a compost heap to attract invertebrates, frogs and hedgehogs. It will also provide a warm home for slow-worms and a place for grass snakes to lay eggs.

Add a log pile to provide shelter for invertebrates and amphibians.

Build a rockery to create a basking habitat for reptiles and a place of shelter for amphibians.

Creating a wildlife pond of any size will benefit amphibians, invertebrates, birds and mammals. Use a net to do some pond dipping and find out what lives in the water.



DISTANT MEMORIES

Some project participants grew up outside of the UK and had fascinating stories to share about all kinds of wildlife.

Although only 10 people shared memories of growing up overseas, stories about exotic species really captured the imagination of young people involved in the project, perhaps because this wildlife can only be seen in zoos in the UK.



Photo: Laura Brady

"My mum showed me a white-throated kingfisher. She lifted me into her arms and made me look out of the window. That made me a birder!"
Mohit, India, 45

"I saw frogs at the same time as I first saw rain - 6 years old! I lived in a very dry region in Africa and it rained and all these frogs emerged."
Kathy, South Africa

Almost half of amphibian species worldwide are in decline. A greater proportion of amphibian species are at imminent risk of extinction than any other animal class.

"I used to go out in the fields on my grandparents' farm and watch the fireflies. You don't see them anymore. We used to collect them in jars. You also used to be able to hear the crickets and bullfrogs - but not anymore."
Anon, Tennessee



Photo: Dr Joanna Smith

"I grew up watching lots of nature and wildlife documentaries, this made me interested in nature."
Azucena, Spain, 30

POST CARD

"Ideal Series."



THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN HERE.

"In 1972 at 5.30am in the Indian Ocean I felt I was being watched. I was - by an albatross. All I could see was a big beady eye."
Jim, Essex, 63

18 of the 22 species of albatross are heading towards extinction. An albatross is killed at sea about every 5 minutes (source: www.rspb.org)

"The boys at my school in the African Bush caught snakes such as puff adders, boomslangs, pythons, green mamba etc by pulling them out of hedges and trees."
Tim, Africa

There are approx 9000 known reptile species worldwide. 28% of those that have been assessed are considered threatened.

"I couldn't stand lizards - the little ones. I just couldn't stand them because they used to come up the door and look at you and they frightened the life out of me."
Lorna, Caribbean



Photo: Laura Brady

"When I was about 8 we lived in Kenya & often did short safaris near Nairobi. Once we stopped for a picnic and my mum opened the boot of the car and holding a bunch of little bananas, reached up to close the boot. A little hairy hand brushed hers, we all watched a little monkey running off with the bananas chased by a baboon! Mum had thought the hand belonged to one of us kids!!"
Celia, Kenya

POST CARD

"Ideal Series."



THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN HERE.

"I lived near a rainforest where many forms of wildlife exist. My first fond memory is when I visited the Wright Nature Centre nearby and I soon became a guide. Snakes were always my favourite because of how scary they were for everyone. Snakes rule!"
Jason, Trinidad, 33



Photo: Gillian Simpson

"We used to go out with my mum and dad in the jungle - I remember seeing the lovely display of glow worms that illuminated the car and outside."
Lynn, India, 45

I remember...

"In 1942 there was a tremendously heavy snow and my mother would take me out for walks and we'd go through the fields. The snow was about 2 ft deep and she would say 'that's a hare's track'...and we would spend hours going through the snow following these hares' trails - it was great."
Morag, Scottish Borders



Photo: David Palmar

"Finding a gannet's skull on Dunure beach in Ayrshire which triggered a lifelong interest in birds."
Rodie, Mansfield, 63

"I had just passed my driving test and was driving on a spring night. There was 100s of frogs crossing the road and I burnt the clutch out on my Mum and Dad's car, stopping constantly to get brother to move the frogs. Mum and Dad were not happy."
Anon, Glasgow

"My father was a great walker. In order to encourage us we would always have a new I-Spy book for each holiday. I particularly remember 'I Spy in the Country'. It was always a big competition between my brother and I to spot something first and score the points!"
Trevor, London

"Village life was so relaxed, able to play with friends by the river; very safe times."
Anon, Peterborough



Photo: Jodie Coomber

"Playing with Grandad and Grandma in the fields and woods."
Anon, Peterborough

"I remember one winter in 1970-72 when the Turkey Brook froze and a gang of us walked on the ice from Turkey Brook Station to Albany Park on the ice."
Chris, Freezy Water



Photo: Laura Brady

"Cycling into North Dagenham where the Harnault Forest appeared so wild compared with the large estate where I lived."
Dave, Dagenham, 67



Photo: Cacey Barks

"Collecting fossils on the beach at Robin Hoods Bay."
Anon, Peterborough

"As a youngster I recall collecting the Brooke Bond tea cards—they were our wildlife books!"
Steve, Essex, 55

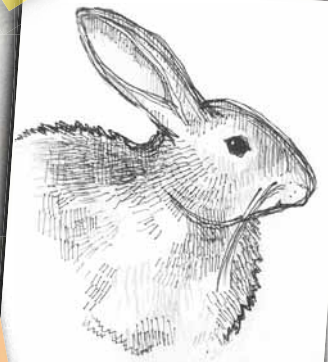
"When I was a child in Kent, we would be able to roam freely everywhere. Across fields and woods and be gone all day without worries. The birds and wildlife were all around and nobody bothered you."
Anon, Kent

"I lived in a tenement in Glasgow but enjoyed holidays with my parents in the countryside when we experienced more wildlife."
Isabel, Glasgow



Photo: Laura Brady

"Wind in the Willows I read as a little girl that started my love of wildlife dreaming of living in the country and one day having a pond."
Mrs Leppard, West Sussex



"We lived in Sheffield and my dad would drive 20 minutes onto the Derbyshire moors and let us out for the day amid the heather and burns (streams)."
Andy, Glasgow

"During WWII, when there were no street lamps, we would look up at the stars and identify the 'Great Bear', 'Orion's Belt' etc in the pitch black sky."
Jenny



Photo: Laura Brady



Photos: Laura Brady



"Memories of walking in the countryside and by the sea in the 1970s, watching the birds and looking at the flowers and learning to love and appreciate nature and the wildlife that is all around us every day."
Mark, Wolverhampton, 47

"I was born in 1951 in Devon. When I was wee our mum used to pack us off with a bottle of squash and a cheese buttty and we would be off to the woods, or down the stream or by the river making rafts to float, bows and arrows and lots more. Mum would come and look for us at about 8 in the evening. Good times!"
Anon, Devon



Photo: Cacey Barks

"We would go to the local waterfall and clear away the leaves to make it flow faster. While there we would look for birds, deer and wildflowers. These are my favourite childhood memories."
Anon, Glasgow

"I Spy bird book at around 7 or 8 got me into birds big time! The coloured photos in the middle were the best!"
Anon, Tottenham

"Walking with dad every Sunday, picking the grasses and chewing them as we walked along."
Anon, Manchester, 64

"Our school homework once a month was to collect ten wildflowers and identify what they were."
Anon, Weymouth, 60



Photo: Laura Brady

"I loved making mud pies at our cow sheds. You can imagine how dirty and smelly we were when we had finished."
Trish, Oakham, 62



Photo: Laura Brady

"Being about 7 years of age, following birds I had never seen before along a river. Eventually found out they were mallard ducks. Used to follow them for hours - just to see the beautiful colours of plumage."
 Jim, Glasgow

"I grew up in a village in Lincolnshire where everyone more or less knew each other. In the summer time we would pick blackberries in the fields and also go pea pulling after school to earn a few pennies."
 Anon, Lincolnshire

"When I was a child in the early seventies we used to play on the green between our houses. We'd lie in the long grass on our bellies watching all sorts of insect life including butterflies and ladybirds. Green t-shirts were part of our uniform!"
 Navahra, London



Photo: Laura Brady

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