

Wildlife Watch

NORTHERN IRELAND 2021



Ulster Wildlife

Dear Wildlife Watcher

If there was ever a time to get closer to nature, it was 2021. We hope you've been getting outside as much as you can during lockdown and discovering amazing nature and wild places on your doorstep. Spending time in nature can make us feel healthier and happier, and more connected to everything around us, so ditch the screen and go explore more!

One of my favourite places is the beach, as it's completely free and there's always hidden treasures to find. And it seems I'm not the only one. In this issue, Wildlife Watchers Austen and Peter open our eyes to the weird and wonderful wildlife that is ready and waiting for you to discover.



Vickie

Join one of our clubs

- ✓ Have a go at exciting outdoor activities
- ✓ Learn how to make a difference to wildlife
- ✓ Make new friends

Lisburn Wildlife Watch

Meets 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6.30pm

Bloomfield Wildlife Watch

Meets 2nd Tuesday of every month at 6.00pm

Groups are currently meeting virtually. Visit our website to find out more ulsterwildlife.org/wildlife-watch

Seashore Detectives

Wildlife Watch members Austen (10) and Peter (7) love exploring the coast near their home in Co. Down and share some of their favorite finds from last summer's Big Rockpool Ramble.

Our favourite place to see wildlife is in rockpools because there is always lots of stuff hiding – a bit like a treasure hunt – and in the seaweed at the top the beach.

One of the most exciting things we found this year was a small spotted catshark eggcase with the baby shark still inside (see centre pages), which is pretty rare to see. We also discovered a tiny sea hare, a type of sea slug, baby crabs and big crabs under rocks, seas anemones with their big sucker tentacles – you can see how they got the name bloodsuckers if you give them a little poke – and starfish.

Even just finding stuff in the seaweed at the top of the beach or washed up after a big storm is fun. Recently we found five



thornback ray eggcases at Tyrella along with tonnes of catshark egg cases – amazing

to think these animals live in our seas. We also saw lots of barrel jellyfish washed up during the summer and got close to a compass jellyfish while we were swimming. Searching for different seashells is also cool too, like scallop, oyster and whelk.

On our list this year is fish, like a pipefish or shanny, or a sea urchin.

The Big Rockpool Ramble takes place from **25th July – 8th August**. Sign up at ulsterwildlife.org/bigrockpoolramble from June.

Do you want to write for the newsletter? Send your stories and ideas to watch@ulsterwildlife.org

Visit our website

Want more fun stuff? Head over to our website wildlifewatch.org.uk to watch awesome wildlife-activity videos, from how to make a bird feeder to identifying birds by their songs, take part in quizzes and read members' wildlife stories. You can also download heaps of activities, wildlife spotter sheets, masks and much more!

Be a Wildlife Champion!

Take part in the Wildlife Watch Awards and complete fun wildlife activities and challenges.

There are three different awards: Hedgehog, Kestrel and Nature Ranger. Once you've completed one, you'll receive a certificate and badge to display on your profile.



www.wildlifewatch.org.uk www.ulsterwildlife.org

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part of
The Wildlife Trust

wildlife watch

NORTHERN IRELAND 2021

Go wild all year round

KEY:

Do See

Did you know?

Visit wildlifewatch.org.uk to download spotter sheets & 'how to' activity guides. Check out ulsterwildlife.org for places to explore and to sign up to all our exciting campaigns.



January



Goldfinch, May 2018. © Gillian Day

- Winter is a great time to put up a bird feeder in your garden and help our hungry feathered friends. You could even have a go at making your own? Download activity.
- Find a quiet spot in your garden and watch the birds fly, chat, and eat their food. See how many you can tick off using our spotter sheet.
- Robins are one of the few birds to sing all year round to defend their territories.

February



Frog © Richard Burkmar

- Ponds are brilliant for wildlife. Why not try building a mini one in a container with your family for damselflies, beetles and frogs?
- February is usually when the first frogspawn starts to appear in ponds and ditches. Look for big, jelly-like clumps and listen out for purring croaks.
- Although frogs lay masses of frogspawn, only around one in 50 eggs will survive to adulthood!

March



- Encourage your parents to make their own compost to make your garden peat-free. A simple heap covered with old carpet is just as effective as a 'bin'.
- Visit a peatland or wetland to see some of the wildlife that lives in these wet and wonderful habitats, from insect-eating plants and squishy mosses to wading birds.
- Most shop-bought compost is made of peat. Sadly, peatlands and their wildlife are under-threat, so by going peat-free you'll help protect them.

April



Bee on dandelion © J. Havline

- Ask your parents to sign up to our 'Let Nature In' campaign, to help make space for nature in your garden - ulsterwildlife.org/let-nature-in
- Look out for the first queen bumblebees buzzing around your garden on sunny days, looking for food and a nest site after their long winter sleep.
- The humble dandelion is a bee's best friend. They are packed with pollen and nectar, and are one of the first flowers to bloom in spring.

May



Red admiral © Amy Lewis

- Why not plant flowers which bloom at different times of the year to help bees and butterflies? See ulsterwildlife.org/let-nature-in for info.
- We have 25 different species of butterfly in NI, from speckled wood to small tortoiseshell. Download a spotter sheet and see how many you can spot.
- Our gardens are the biggest source of food for pollinators. Not surprising given that gardens cover more land than nature reserves.

June



Bug hunting © Amy Lewis

- Can you do something WILD every day this June? Sign up for our 30 Days Wild challenge and get your free pack full of goodies - wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild
- See how much wildlife you can spot in just 30 minutes with our Big Wild Breakfast on 1 June to kick start 30 Days Wild. Sign up now!
- Spending just two hours in nature each week can make you feel healthier and happier, and more connected to nature too!

July



Rockpools © Matthew Roberts

- Take part in the Big Rockpool Ramble and help us record as much marine wildlife as possible this summer. Sign up from June at ulsterwildlife.org/bigrockpoolramble
- Rockpools are home to weird and wonderful wildlife, from sea anemones and starfish to sea slugs. Get your free Big Rockpool Ramble pack to help identify your finds.
- Starfish are fearsome predators, prizing open clam and mussel shells with their powerful tube feet.

August



Common Darter © Scott Petrek

- Make bees, beetles and other beneficial insects right at home on your patch by making an insect hotel - download activity.
- Look out for patrolling dragonflies hunting over nearby ponds, ducking and diving in pursuit of prey.
- Damselflies are thinner and rest with their wings by their side while the bigger dragonfly spreads its wings outwards.

September



Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin

- Be a red squirrel detective! Look for cracked hazelnut shells, nibbed pine cones that look like an apple core, and tiny, human-like hand prints in mud.
- Visit our website to discover the best stomping grounds for red squirrels in Northern Ireland. Early morning and mid-afternoon (after their nap) is when they are most active.
- Red squirrels help ensure the future of our woodlands by burying nuts and seeds which grow into new trees.

October



Hedgehogs © Jon Hawkins

- Watch Katy's hedgehog video on our website to get tips and advice to help our prickly garden friends.
- Look for sign of hedgehogs in your garden: tiny human-like hand prints in mud, dark droppings which look like a slug, and tunnels through bushes.
- Hedgehogs have very bad eyesight but their sense of smell and hearing is amazing.

November



Catshark egg case © K Muldoon

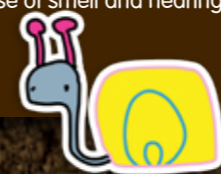
- Search the shore line for the empty egg cases of sharks and rays. Check out our ID guide and record your finds at seadeepni.org
- As well as egg cases, see what other hidden gems you can find from sea potatoes and scallop shells to goose barnacles. Download a spotter sheet.
- Shark egg cases are often called mermaid's purses as in the past, people believed that mermaids used them to store their treasures.

December



Barn owl © Donald Sutherland

- Help protect our precious local wildlife, from hedgehogs to barn owls, by adopting an animal for a loved one - ulsterwildlife.org/adopt-an-animal
- Head outside on a still moonlit evening for the best chance of seeing a barn owl silently hunting over field edges and roadside verges.
- Barn owls don't hoot; they make an ear-splitting screech, which has earned them the nickname 'screech owl'.





wildlife watch



How to go rockpooling

You will need:

• Buckets or clear Tupperware containers



• A field guide or ID sheet



• Sturdy footwear



• Camera and/or pens and paper



• An adult to help you keep an eye on the tide

Don't take living plants and animals home with you

1 Half fill your buckets or containers with sea water. Have more than one to keep bad tempered animals apart!

2 Use your hands to carefully lift crabs, starfish and other sea creatures into your containers. Watch out for spines and pincers! Nets can cause damage to rockpools and are best avoided.

3 Use a guide to identify your creatures. Take notes, sketch them or photograph them.

4 Return the animals to where you found them when you've finished looking and wash your hands before eating.

Be careful not to damage delicate animals

Don't prise limpets, anemones or seaweed from their rocky homes

Replace rocks to the same position once you've looked underneath



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

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk



Garden bird detective



wildlife watch



Chaffinch



Greenfinch



House sparrow



Blackbird



Blue tit



Goldfinch



Great tit



Collared dove



Starling



Wood pigeon

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

Pictures: Chaffinch, Blue tit, Goldfinch and Great tit (c) Amy Lewis / Greenfinch (c) Gillian Day / House sparrow (c) Stewart McDonald / Blackbird (c) Neil Aldridge / Collared dove (c) Ian Rose / Starling (c) Margaret Holland / Wood pigeon (c) Steve Waterhouse



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