



Chris Combe

# January

- Get out, whatever the weather. Feel the wind and rain on your face or the crunch of frost underfoot, walk through the haar, watch a winter sunset or taste a snowflake.
- Take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch: [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch).
- Watch crows play. Can you think like a crow? Where will you nest? What will you eat? What do you need?
- Look for unusual moss or lichen on city buildings.
- Follow the course of a burn or stream.
- Get to know your nearest green space. Why not plan to visit some new parks this year? See: [edinburghoutdoors.org.uk](https://www.edinburghoutdoors.org.uk).
- Step outside and be still for three minutes. Listen out for the sounds of nature.
- Clouds are often described as wispy (cirrus), heaped (cumulus) and layered (stratus). What clouds do you notice today? Watch them move across the sky.
- Put up a nestbox to provide a home for garden birds. You could even try making one. See here for ideas [rspb.org.uk/nestboxes](https://www.rspb.org.uk/nestboxes).
- Visit Cramond beach at low tide and stroll along the causeway to the island (check for safe times before you cross). Look out for wintering birds on the mudflats: [rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/sandpipers-snipes-phalaropes](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/sandpipers-snipes-phalaropes).



Mike Beales

# February

- Find your "sit spot" – a favourite place in nature to rest and just be. Visit it often and tune into the world around you. Get to know the local wildlife, plants and trees. Notice how it feels to connect with nature in your special place.
- Draw or paint a snowdrop.
- Join a Friends of Edinburgh Greenspace group near you: [edinburgh.gov.uk/friends-edinburgh-greenspace](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/friends-edinburgh-greenspace).
- Make a bird bath. Find out how at: [rspb.org.uk/birdbath](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdbath).
- Watch a dog play in a park.
- Look into the face of a daffodil. What do you see? How many varieties of daffodils can you find?
- Feel the bark of two different types of trees. What do you notice?
- Take a woodland walk and absorb the sights and smells of trees and undergrowth. You could visit Hermitage of Braid or Ravelston Woods. Listen out for the laughing call of a green woodpecker!
- Try "charming" a worm from the ground... it's all in the rhythm.
- Visit the Glasshouses at The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh: [rbge.org.uk](https://www.rbge.org.uk). Feel the different climates and take in all the shapes and colours of exotic plants from around the world.





# March

- Spot the first signs of spring. What do you appreciate most about springtime?
- Turn over some soil and plant wildflowers for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies.
- Follow your nose and forage for wild garlic. Try along the Water of Leith, up Blackford Hill or by the Union Canal.
- Spend time outdoors at the spring equinox and soak up the sun. If it's cloudy, imagine breathing in warm rays of sunshine through your whole body.
- Look out for queen bees emerging from hibernation.
- Open a bird café and see who arrives to have a meal: [rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/openabirdcafe](https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/openabirdcafe).
- Find the most unusual place that a weed grows. Is it just a plant growing in the wrong place?
- Take part in a springtime litterpick and help wildlife thrive: [leithersdontlitter.org/take-action](https://www.leithersdontlitter.org/take-action).
- Listen for birds such as blackbirds or house sparrows nesting in hedges.
- Get up at dawn and join Holyrood's annual toad patrol. Help toads safely make their migration journey from Arthur's Seat to Dunsapie Loch to spawn: [historicenvironment.scot/about-us/volunteer-with-us](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/volunteer-with-us).



# April

- Take a stroll under the cherry tree blossom in the Meadows.
- Smell the fragrance of yellow gorse blossom. You'll find it in abundance in Holyrood Park and on Corstorphine or Blackford Hills. What does gorse smell like?
- Volunteer at a community garden or allotment. Find a project near you at: [farmgarden.org.uk](https://www.farmgarden.org.uk).
- Appreciate a cloud. Maybe join the Cloud Appreciation Society: [cloudappreciationsociety.org](https://www.cloudappreciationsociety.org).
- Listen for songbirds singing from the top of tenement buildings at dawn.
- Go on a micro safari – choose one small space in nature and study it up close. Perhaps explore a patch of grass, the trunk of a tree, or the petal of a flower. What colours do you see? Are there any minibeasts around?
- Spot the first bluebells in bloom. Why not visit Dalkeith Country Park and spend time exploring the blankets of native bluebells?
- Look out for swallows, house martins and swifts returning after spending the winter in Africa: [rspb.org.uk/swallow](https://www.rspb.org.uk/swallow).
- Open your window and listen to the sound of rain.
- Get to know a city tree and watch it change throughout the year. Feel its bark, welcome bird visitors and notice how blossoms, leaves and fruits come and go.



# May

- Listen to the dawn chorus. How does your body respond as you listen?
- Plant a native tree: [woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice).
- Visit a beach and take in the sounds and smells of the sea. Breathe deeply and watch the ocean waves.
- Walk barefoot in the grass. What do you feel underfoot?
- Find wild orchids growing in the city. See: [woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/05/nine-wild-uk-orchids](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/05/nine-wild-uk-orchids).
- Take the high road in Holyrood Park and listen out for chaffinches. You can hear what they sound like at: [rspb.org.uk/chaffinch](http://rspb.org.uk/chaffinch). Watch out for fresh molehills!
- Look for kingfishers whizzing by on the Water of Leith.
- Go “roamin in the gloamin”. Head to your favourite hilltop and watch the sunset over the city. What sounds do you hear at twilight? Remember to take a torch if you’ll need one to find your way back!
- Volunteer to do some gardening for an elderly neighbour.
- Look out for hawthorn trees beginning to bloom. Can you find the ‘four witches of Tollcross’? See: [treesmeadows.blogspot.com/2015/10/hawthorns.html](http://treesmeadows.blogspot.com/2015/10/hawthorns.html).



# June

- Watch a heron feed. Can you stay as still as a heron for a few moments?
- Look for dandelions in unexpected places.
- Follow a bumblebee. Did you know that there are 11 different types of bumblebees in Edinburgh?
- Don’t mow the lawn. Watch wildlife move in.
- Try to spot an otter early in the morning. Try Figgate Park, the River Almond, the Water of Leith or Duddingston Loch. Shh...
- Celebrate midsummer! You could welcome the sunrise, have a picnic, make a herb garland, play, or just sit in the open air and enjoy the long, light evenings.
- Lie in the grass and watch clouds come and go.
- Visit a nearby park. Imagine you are a tourist visiting for the very first time taking in all the sights and sounds around you. What do you notice?
- Re-wild one of your senses – smell everything in nature!
- Listen out for flocks of screaming swifts skimming over rooftops. Become a “swift champion”: [rspb.org.uk/helpswifts](http://rspb.org.uk/helpswifts).





# July

- Find a patch of wildflowers and take in all the colours and scents. Imagine you are an insect exploring every flower.
- Visit “Edinburgh’s Seaside” at Portobello. Stroll along the promenade, feel the sand between your toes or paddle in the sea. Look out for Arctic terns dipping and diving to feed.
- Watch a fleet of ducklings darting along a riverbank, pond or loch.
- Listen out for a bird call and try to copy it. Can you “talk” to a bird?
- Explore the different trees in the city: [edinburghtreemap.org](http://edinburghtreemap.org). Notice the variety of shapes, leaves and bark. Which tree do you feel most drawn to?
- Look for kestrels hovering in the sky. Corstorphine Hill and Holyrood Park are good places to see them.
- Go for a picnic to a place you’ve never been before.
- Sit by a flowering shrub and see who comes to visit. Record any butterflies at the [bigbutterflycount.org](http://bigbutterflycount.org).
- Take a walk up Blackford Hill and listen to the early evening birdsong.
- Help look after the Water of Leith. Take part in a river clean up, plant flowers or tend to trees. You might even spot a roe deer, badger or an otter! Find out more at: [waterofleith.org.uk](http://waterofleith.org.uk).



# August

- What’s your favourite sound in nature? Go and listen to it! Notice how your body feels as you listen.
- Watch for bats skimming around in the early evening sky. Popular spots are Blackford Pond, Corstorphine Hill, Craigmillar Castle Park and sometimes even Princes Street Gardens! See: [bats.org.uk](http://bats.org.uk).
- Stop for a moment and listen out for gulls.
- Make a daisy chain.
- Go for a nature scent walk. What do you smell in the air? Hints of honeysuckle? Earthy moss? Urban foxes? Freshly cut grass?
- Go seabird spotting on the banks of the Firth of Forth. Look out for visiting dolphins!
- Forage for brambles. Eat one slowly and savour the taste.
- Take a trip to Edinburgh’s “back garden,” the Pentland Hills, and wander among the blooming purple heather: [pentlandhills.org](http://pentlandhills.org).
- Smell a rose. Take a long, deep breath as you smell. Perhaps visit the rose gardens at Saughton Park: [friendsofsaughtonpark.org](http://friendsofsaughtonpark.org).
- Visit RSPB Scotland Loch Leven and look out for resident red squirrels, or ospreys fishing in the loch: [rspb.org.uk/lochleven](http://rspb.org.uk/lochleven).



# September

- Find somewhere green to linger at lunchtime. How does it feel to take a break in nature?
- Look for a snail after rainfall and follow its journey. Notice the slow and steady movements and how it uses its tentacles to sense the world around, including you! Let yourself slow down.
- Watch young swans learning how to fly.
- Explore the Innocent Railway Path running under Holyrood Park and through Bawsinch Nature Reserve: [edinburghguide.com/news/transport/8064-innocentrailwaypath](https://edinburghguide.com/news/transport/8064-innocentrailwaypath).
- Go on a sound safari and listen out for curious sounds in nature.
- Notice how many types of wildflowers are still in bloom. Join #wildflowerhour and share what you've found: [twitter.com/wildflower\\_hour](https://twitter.com/wildflower_hour)
- Sit beneath a tree and imagine you are a leaf feeling the wind passing through.
- Visit a beach and beachcomb for shells and pebbles. Feel their shape and texture. Which natural treasures are you most drawn to?
- Build a bug hotel: [rspb.org.uk/bughotel](https://rspb.org.uk/bughotel).
- Spend time near flowing water. Perhaps sit by the Water of Leith, Braid or Burdiehouse Burn, explore the waterfalls of the River Almond or discover Jordan Burn, Morningside's "hidden" stream.



# October

- Take a weekly walk and notice the changing colours, light and scents of autumn.
- Listen to chattering starlings gathering on rooftops. Did you know that starlings are excellent mimics, often copying other bird calls, humans and sometimes even car alarms!
- Watch a spider make a web.
- Prepare homes for winter wildlife – tend to plants, clean bird baths, fill feeders and let piles of leaves grow: [rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/year-round-gardening/october](https://rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/year-round-gardening/october).
- Gaze at an autumn moonrise.
- Have breakfast in a local park. Breathe in the fresh air and take in the views. Watch birds foraging for their breakfast.
- Look out for urban foxes in the early morning or at dusk.
- Turn over a rock in a garden or park and see what's living underneath. Not sure what you've found? See: [buglife.org.uk/bugs](https://buglife.org.uk/bugs).
- Watch squirrels rummaging in the leaves.
- Find an open space such as a beach, hill or park. Write a message with nature (you could use rocks, sand, leaves or twigs). Leave it for the elements to take away.





Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

# November

- Note three good things in nature every day for five days. How does your body feel as you notice them?
- Visit the Water of Leith and watch a goosander float downstream: [rspb.org.uk/goosander](https://rspb.org.uk/goosander).
- Really look at a rainbow. Can you see all seven colours? Where does it begin and end? Remember: "no rain, no rainbows"!
- Hunt for fabulous fungi growing on city trees and patches of grass.
- Watch leaves dancing in the wind.
- Listen and look for v-shaped skeins of geese flying high above the city in the early morning.
- Play outdoors like a child: build a den or make a nature mask, go on a scavenger hunt or play conkers, skip in the leaves, get muddy...
- Plant some spring bulbs.
- Explore Edinburgh's "trees with a story": [edinburgh.gov.uk/directory/10202/edinburghs-trees-with-a-story](https://edinburgh.gov.uk/directory/10202/edinburghs-trees-with-a-story).
- Look for migrating birds feeding on the berries of rowan trees. Can you spot a fieldfare or redwing? Look for their red "armpits"!



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

# December

- Look for the first star appearing in the winter night sky.
- Get up close to a "naked" tree. What has been hiding behind the leaves? Abandoned nests? Unusual moss, knots or lichen? Secret hollows?
- Plan an outdoor adventure to mark the winter solstice.
- Watch some pigeon antics for five minutes.
- Find wildlife footprints in a fresh frost or morning snow.
- Get to know the residents of a local pond, river or loch. Who's here all year and who's paying a flying visit?
- Look up and notice plants growing out of chimney pots and gutters. How do you think they got there?
- Follow the journey of a leaf floating down a river or stream.
- Forage for fallen branches, ivy or berries and make a festive wreath.
- Reflect back on your year. What was your favourite nature moment? How does it feel now as you bring it to mind? What are you looking forward to noticing in nature next year?