For Chris, thank you for wondrous guidance and support.

For my Pikku friends, Elena and Joan.

For long-suffering Paul who, even after my fourth book, is still patiently teaching me the names of all the creatures.

And for my incredible illustrators, Lia and Beatriz.

R.L.

For Mum and Dad, thank you for gifting me a love of nature. And for Rachel who shares the wonder of nature with me now.

P.L.

For Carlos, the best bird rescuer, again.
And for my dogs, Greta and León, and the old lady Loba.

For my parents and the rest of my lovely family.

B.C.

For Marc 'Never stop exploring!'

L.V.

Pond Safety Guide

Young children love to explore the world around them. It is essential to be safe around water, so always supervise young or vulnerable children around ponds and never leave them unattended.

If possible, garden ponds should be fenced, raised or covered.

Always wash your hands thoroughly after coming into contact with pond water.

For more information about pond safety, seek advice from your local pond specialist.

Artwork Credits:

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Rachel Lawston: leaves 13 / seedball instructions 22 / leaves, leaf bunting 33 / clouds 35 / acorn, beech masts, hazelnuts, conkers, sweet chestnuts 45 / fox, badger, squirrel and hedgehog tracks and poo 47 / whole page 48 / sycamore, field maple and ash helicopters 49 / 56 / bird feeder materials, bird feeder 61 / whole page 62 / whole page 63 / natural decorations 66 / bark rubbing instructions 67 / 69 / bark and tree branches 71

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Rachel and Paul Lawston

Foreword by Megan McCubbin

My Nature Trail

Nature connection activities for every season

Illustrated by
Lia Visirin & Beatriz Castro

Pikku Publishing

Foreword

An adventure begins every time you step outside! Who you'll meet, what you'll hear and how you'll experience it will differ every time... and it's the mystery that makes exploring so exciting because you never know what, or who, you'll encounter. It could be a prickly hedgehog with a button nose, a dancing peacock butterfly or a soaring swift high up in the sky!

Inside this beautifully illustrated book, you'll be given lots of wonderfully wild ideas to connect with nature on your doorstep. There is space for you to record your favourite moments throughout the seasons as well as some top tips on what to look out for. From rockpooling, nocturnal wildlife safaris and fungi spotting to creating mini ponds, leaf bunting and bird feeders; there are so many activities to keep you busy throughout the year. Each page is filled with fun facts – it's your own personal nature guide and diary.

Spending time outside in nature makes us all feel happier and more content. Just spending an hour outdoors can improve our wellbeing for the rest of the week, and by having a go at these ideas we can give something back to nature, too. Wildlife needs us, just as we need it.

So go on... grab your shoes, pack this book in your bag... and let's go on an adventure!

Megan McCubbin

Zoologist, Wildlife TV Presenter, Conservationist, Photographer, Author

Mayfly

Make a plant pot pond

Dragonfly

A pond is a fantastic way to bring wildlife to your garden. All animals need water to be able to live so ponds get busy with all kinds of weird and wonderful creatures, no matter how small they are. Who knows, maybe you'll get your own frogs living in your pond?

Just like Daisy and Jack, you can use a plant pot to make a pond.

1. Choose a pot – something quite wide and shallow is best.

2. If your pot has a hole in it, you'll need to plug it up with special putty from a garden centre. You can also use a rubber liner to cover the inside of your pot.

You can buy special paints for the inside of the pot to help stop water leaking.

Always speak to an adult about how to be safe around ponds.

Water lilies

3. Dig a hole in the ground. It needs to be large enough to fit your plant pot in.

Put your plant pot into the hole.

4. Fill the pot with rain water.

5. You can add ramps to help animals get in and out, and also plants for creatures to live in.

Pond animals you might find:

POND SNAIL
They have a pointy shell and live underwater.

DIVING BEETLE
Some are tiny, but you might get a big one. They hunt for even tinier pond creatures.

POND SKATER
They skim around on the surface of water.

WATER BOATMAN
They row under the water with long hairy legs. They have hairy bottoms to help trap air to breathe.

HOGLOUSE
Like an underwater woodlouse, they're very important because they eat up all the other creatures' poo!

Common frog

FROG
Frogs are amphibians and need to live by water. They start life as tadpoles, so if you're really lucky you might get some frogs' eggs in your pond!

Smooth newt

Beach combing and cleaning

Summer is the perfect time to be by the sea! The sun shines, the days are long and there is loads to do – building sand castles, swimming, looking in rock pools. The beach is a great place to find interesting wildlife, so why not go on a beach safari?

Beach safaris

Take a bucket with you – and a spade can help with picking things up. You'll also want an adult to help you work out what things are. Make your way slowly along the beach and see what you can find. You can always put interesting things in your bucket, but be careful – don't touch anything sharp or dangerous. Some beaches may have signs telling you not to pick things up, so always obey these. Place anything really interesting in your bucket. You can take it home as treasure or return it to the sea.

Things on the beach to look out for:

- ◯ **CUTTLEBONE**
  This is the skeleton of the cuttlefish, a close relative of the squid.
- ◯ **SEA URCHIN TEST**
  This is the hard parts of a sea urchin.
- ◯ **SEA GLASS**
  Pieces of glass get polished by the sea as they get washed around.
- ◯ **CRAB SHELLS**
  These are often left over from when birds have eaten them.
- ◯ **SEAWEED**
  There are lots of types to find. Bladderwrack has little bubbles all over it, while sea lettuce looks like the lettuces we eat. In fact, lots of people eat seaweeds in countries like Japan and Wales – better to try this in a restaurant though.
- ◯ **SHELLS**
  Shells come in lots of different shapes. Long razor clam shells, slipper limpets, whelks, mussels and knobbly oyster shells are all ones to look out for.

Ephemeral art

Get creative! There are lots of beautiful natural materials around at this time of year, so why not use them to create some art? You can create wonderful pictures and patterns just using things that are lying on the ground in the woods. Let your imagination run wild – you can create pictures of people, animals, places or just beautiful patterns on the ground.

What are your favourite materials to work with? What are your favourite colours?

The best thing is, once you've finished, everything will return back to the forest without a trace. You can take a picture of your creation or just remember what it looked like.

Catch a falling leaf

When the leaves start to fall in autumn it's a sign that winter is on its way. People used to believe that if you catch a falling leaf at the start of autumn then you'll have good luck for the winter.

Why not see if you can catch a leaf?

How long do you have to wait under a tree, before a leaf falls off?

And can you catch one as it falls?

It's not as easy as you might think!

Jump in puddles

All the rain that comes in autumn leaves lots of puddles behind. After the rain it can be loads of fun to run and jump in the puddles. It's splashing time!

Helicopter racing

Some trees make seeds that look like little miniature helicopters.
You can race them with your friends to see whose reaches the ground first!

Hibernation homes for animals

In the autumn, a lot of animals get very sleepy and will look for a place to hibernate. Hibernation is like going into a very deep sleep – the breathing slows down, the heartbeat slows down and the animal stops moving until the spring comes. Being so fast asleep means that they need to hide away to stay safe from other animals that might eat them, so animals will usually hibernate in a special hiding place under or inside something.

Pipistrelle bat

Build a hibernation home for an animal!

There are lots of ways you can make hiding places for animals to hibernate in.

A lot of animals like to hibernate under compost heaps because they're really warm. Snakes and hedgehogs really like doing this, so if you make a compost heap you're helping animals and recycling your waste! You can make a wooden box to put your compost in, and leave a hole at the bottom for animals to be able to get in and out to sleep inside.

Frogs and newts like to hibernate quite close to water, so if you have a pond you can put bits of slate, logs and piles of sticks nearby for them to use in the winter.

Some animals like hedgehogs and frogs will also like hibernating in special hibernation houses. You can find out how to make simple ones online, or you can buy one if you want. For hedgehogs, they're best placed under a pile of leaves to keep the hedgehog safe and warm.

Bats also hibernate, so putting up a bat box on a tree or the side of your home will give them a great place to sleep.

zzzzzzzzzz

Garden snail

Common toad