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Opening extract from

RSPB Nature Guide

Written by

Mike Unwin

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This book is for Florence.

Introduction

Have you ever watched a nature programme on TV and wondered why all the best wildlife seems to be in other parts of the world?

Well, good news: it isn't! Look closer and you'll find nature is pretty impressive here too. Did you know, for example, that a bumblebee beats its wings over 200 times per second as it buzzes from flower to flower? Or that basking sharks longer than minibuses cruise around our coast every summer?

Surprised? Don't be. Just get outside and see it all for yourself. This book is packed with ideas for getting stuck into nature all year round. And you don't need to live in the countryside or visit a special nature reserve. Turn the pages to find out just how much amazing stuff is happening right on your doorstep.

You will also learn some fun ways to give nature a helping hand, such as feeding birds or building a hedgehog box, and pick up some special skills, like attracting moths at night or camouflaging yourself in the forest.

And don't worry if the weather keeps you stuck indoors. There's something in this book for every occasion. Keep it with you: you never know when you might need it.



Mike Unwin has been fascinated by nature ever since he first grew front legs and hopped out of the pond. His books for children include *The RSPB Children's Guide to Birdwatching*, *Endangered Species* and *Climate Change*, and he writes regularly for *Bird Life*, the magazine of RSPB Wildlife Explorers. Mike lives in Brighton, where he keeps an eye out for dolphins from the beach.

SPRING March–May



See the first apple blossom.

Search for snowdrops.



Spot the first summer visitor.

Watch birds singing and showing off their colours.

See birds gathering nest material.



Look out for frogspawn.

Watch toads migrate to their breeding ponds.

Look out for adders emerging from hibernation.



Spot the first brimstone butterfly.

Watch bumblebees out and about.

SUMMER June–August



Watch flowers attract insects to their nectar.

Find wildflowers in a meadow.

Find juicy fruits and berries.



Look out for fledglings.

Watch swifts catch insects high overhead.



Scan the sea for whales and dolphins.

Look out for bats on warm evenings.

Spot badgers and foxes with their cubs.



Look out for caterpillars.

See moths visit lights and flowers after dark.

Discover rock-pool life at the seashore.

AUTUMN September–November



Find juicy fruits and berries.

See how plants disperse their seeds.

Spot fungi popping up all over.



Look out for jays collecting acorns.

Listen to tawny owls calling at night.



Listen to red deer at the rut.

Watch grey seals with their pups around the coast.



Find ladybirds gathering to hibernate.

Watch butterflies and wasps on rotten fruit.

See spiders spinning their webs all over.

WINTER December–February



See which trees keep their leaves.

Look for winter buds on trees.



Follow a feeding party through the woods.

Count the birds on your garden feeder.

Marvel at a starling roost.



Watch grey squirrels chase each other through the trees.

Spot a stoat in its white winter coat.



Look for hibernating butterflies in your shed.

Go beachcombing after winter storms.

Start a nature diary

You may notice that this book keeps telling you to write things down. But where should you write them? In your nature diary, of course.

What you need

A good strong notebook – preferably spiral-bound, and not too small. A sketchbook has thick paper, which is good for drawing and sticking things in.
You also need pens and pencils – and maybe paints, glue and sticky tape.

What to write

What you put in your wildlife diary is really up to you. You could keep a record of everything you see and find – or you could also write down your thoughts and feelings about nature. You could do it every day or just when you go on holiday.

Don't forget!

Your records should always include:

- Date
- Place
- Time of day
- Weather
- Habitat (the sort of environment: woods, meadow, pond and so on)

Make it fun

Make your diary look fantastic! Try some of these ideas:

Pictures
Use your diary to draw or paint things that you've seen. Or cut out pictures that you have made elsewhere and stick them in.

Photos
Cut out photos from magazines. Or, better still, print out your own snaps and stick them in.

Bits and bobs
Stick in interesting natural objects that you find, such as leaves or feathers – as long as they're flat enough!

Cool cover
Why not give your diary a personal touch by decorating the cover? An extra clear plastic cover will also protect it on nature trips.

TOP TIP

Why not use your camera phone to snap nature pics? You can download your best ones, print them out and stick them in.

Getting started

Here's a sample diary page to give you some ideas.

