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Opening extract from

Nature Adventures

Written by

Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom

Published by

Frances Lincoln Children's Books

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This book is dedicated to *The Wildlife Trusts*,
working hard to conserve the full range
of the UK's habitats and species – Mick and Brita

The authors and publisher would like to thank David North of The Wildlife Trusts
for checking the accuracy of the text and illustrations for this book.

JANETTA OTTER-BARRY BOOKS

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The illustrations in this book are in pencil and watercolour.
Mick has done most of the natural history drawings while Brita has drawn the people,
a selection of the plants, some seaside creatures and the hand lettering.
Find out more about Mick and Brita's books at: www.mickandbrita.com.

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NATURE ADVENTURES



Mick Manning & Brita Granström

FRANCES LINCOLN
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Town Wildlife

The wildlife in a town can be amazing when you look closely. It's a place to look again at things we sometimes take for granted: a singing starling, the amazing colour of sycamore buds, the egg-yolk-yellow of dandelions or a nettle patch heaving with hairy caterpillars. Try a simple plant and mini-beast survey, by pegging out a 1 metre by 1 metre (3 feet by 3 feet) square using sticks and string. The variety of animals and plants you find within your chosen area is known as 'species diversity'. Using your notebook, list what you see, then try your surveying skills in a larger 'enclosed' habitat such as a garden, churchyard or park.



Gently pour a bucket of water over your survey area to bring worms to the surface.

Woodlice are common in the garden.

Orb Spiders build beautiful webs to catch their prey.

Sycamore buds

Zebra Spiders stalk and jump on their prey.

'I know a bank where the wild thyme blows.' William Shakespeare

Many birds and animals eat worms, beetle grubs, slugs and snails.

Ivy provides good cover for nesting birds.

Cockchafer Beetle Grub

Blackbird

female

male

Dock leaf - dulls the pain of nettle stings

Earthworm

Hedgehogs hunt at night. Look out for black tarry droppings on lawns.

Slug

Snail

Centipede

Millipede

Earwig

Male 'pussy willow' catkins of the Goat Willow or Sallow

Four common garden insects:

Wasp

Bumblebee

Bluebottle

Hoverfly

Butterflies love park and garden flowers.

Cabbage White and caterpillar

Ladybird

Peacock

Red Admiral

Tortoiseshell

Look for caterpillars on plants like Nettle and Cabbage.

Buddleia

Peacock Caterpillars' dark skin soaks up the sun.

Hatching pupae

Rosebay Willow Herb loves waste ground and railway embankments.

White Dead-Nettles do not sting.

Nettles Ouch!

Dandelion

'clock' or seedhead

Daisy

FRESH WATER

'All along the backwater,
Through the rushes tall,'

'Ducks are a-dabbling,
Up tails all!'

Ratty sings that in
The Wind in the Willows.



male Pintail

The Dabchick dives for small fish and insects.

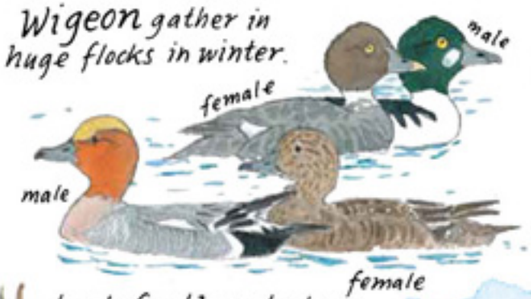




Great Crested Grebes also dive for fish.

Goldeneye are diving ducks and winter visitors.

Wigeon gather in huge flocks in winter.



Divers are rare birds with a haunting call. They nest in wild places like the Scottish highlands.





Look for the velvety sausage-shaped seed heads of the Bulrush.

Common Reeds grow in dense reed beds.

Dragonflies spend up to four years as fierce underwater nymphs...

Nymph

...after that they crawl out to become dragonflies.





Pond Skaters can walk on water.

Water Boatmen swim with hairy back legs.



Fresh Water

These habitats include lakes and rivers as well as 'man-made' reservoirs and canals. But don't forget rushing streams, drainage ditches, park lakes - even tiny garden ponds. All sorts of animals live in and around fresh water, and many others visit it to drink, bathe and hunt for food. What you might see depends on where you are; so although many animals on these pages, such as ducks, dragonflies and pike, are common in different habitats, you'll only see black or red-throated divers breeding in the far north - although they do turn up around the coast during the winter.



Flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings arrive to spend winter with us.



Autumn

Autumn is when many trees lose their leaves and drop nuts and seeds. Forage for conkers, beech mast and acorns once the autumn winds begin to blow. Autumn is also a good time to spot fungi, but don't touch because many can be poisonous. Look and listen for flocks of winter visitors such as gaggles of geese and 'chack-chacking' fieldfares, and on still nights go outdoors and listen for the thin 'seeep-seeep' call of redwings.



Fungi grow well in early autumn.



Fly Agaric is very poisonous.



The Stinkhorn's smell of rotten meat attracts flies that help disperse its spores.

Leaf litter is home and food for many mini-beasts.



Harvestman



Worms drag leaves underground for food.



Dormice begin to hibernate by late autumn.

Winter

Winter snow and ice can cover and freeze the drinking water birds and mammals rely on, so remember to put out fresh water as well as food. Look out for the acrobatic flight patterns of starling and wader flocks, designed to confuse birds of prey. By late winter the fat buds, bulging on many tree branches, are a sure sign that spring is just around the corner.



Winter visitors such as Waxwings can be seen feeding on berries even in the town.

Listen for their 'worried' twittering call.



Look for tracks in snow...



Fox Pet dog

In the winter, Starlings roost together in huge, noisy, acrobatic flocks. They like the warmth of towns and shopping centres.



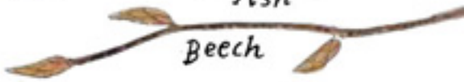
Winter Twigs



Horse Chestnut



Ash



Beech



Hazel

Silver Birch

Lime

Sycamore

Oak

Hawthorn

Rowan



The frosted web of an Orb Spider