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Opening extract from

The Wild Weather Book

Written by

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For Connie, Dan, Edward, Hannah and Jake

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make a mud slide

Great fun if you don't mind getting plastered in mud!

If it's too muddy and slippery in the rain or snow to stay on your feet, just sit down and slide down a hill instead! Best to wear tough old clothes, and take along a heavy-duty plastic sack to give a little protection to your bottom and make the mud slide even faster.

Tip Only do this on slopes where you won't damage delicate grassland habitats.

make a rain catcher

A simple way to measure the rain.

- Carefully cut the top off a large clear plastic bottle, just below where the bottle starts to taper. Then put the top upside down into what remains of the bottle, so that it's like a funnel.
- Put an elastic band round the middle of the bottle. Poke a ruler down through the elastic band until it is flush with the bottle's base and use this to help you draw a scale on the bottle with a permanent marker, up to about 10cm/4in.
- Remove the ruler and replace it with a thin stick. Place the rain catcher in an open space, pushing the stick into the ground to ensure it doesn't blow away or fall over. If your rain catcher is on a hard surface, put pebbles in the bottom to make it stable.
- How clean is the rain? Place a small sieve lined with kitchen roll in the top of the rain catcher. Is any dirt left behind on the paper?



Measure how much rain falls each day. Can you collect enough to drink? Does your rainwater taste different from tap water?

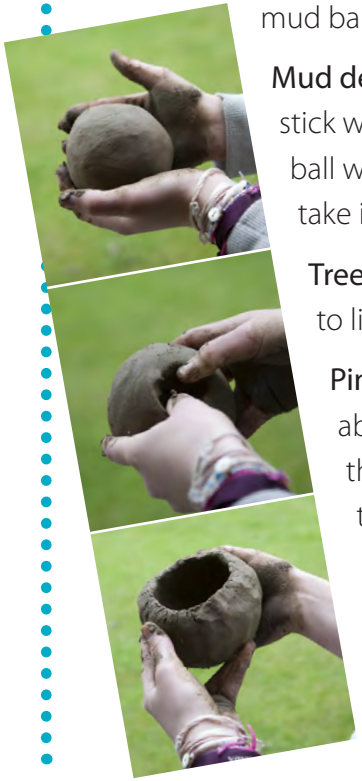
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mud sculptures

Wet sticky mud is perfect for moulding and sculpting.

Mud balls Roll mud into different-sized balls. Cover each ball in natural materials – perhaps moss, grass, sticks, leaves or petals – and then place the mud balls on top of each other. How high can you make your mud-ball tower? Alternatively, make covered mud balls round a stick or a branch.



Mud decorations Make a mud ball around a short stick with some string tied on to it. Decorate the ball with natural materials. Hang it from a tree or take it indoors to hang in a window.

Tree monsters Can you bring a twisted old tree to life with a scary or funny mud face?

Pinch pots Roll some clayey mud into a ball about the size of a tennis ball. Insert your thumb to make a well. Pinch up the walls of the pot while turning it slowly in your hands to ensure an even thickness all the way round. Pat the base on to a smooth surface to make it flat. Wet your hands and smooth the pot's surface before letting it dry.









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the great snail hunt

After a rainstorm go out with a torch just as it's getting dark. How many snails can you find slithering around your garden or at the park?

Make a snailery Find a large glass or clear plastic container – perhaps an old sweetie jar or even a fish tank. Put damp soil, leaves, bits of wood and stones in the bottom with a little water and some fresh green leaves. Collect some snails and put them in your snailery, and then keep an eye on what they eat and how they behave. Only keep the snails for a short while before returning them to where you found them.

The great snail swap Collect a few snails and paint a spot of nail varnish on their shells. Let them go somewhere in the garden, or swap snails with a friend who lives near by. A few days later, go outside after rain and see how many marked snails you can find.



A version of this was run as an official experiment to see how far snails wander; for further information, go to www.bbc.co.uk and search for the Great Snail Swap.





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go on an animal hunt

Some animals love warm wet conditions, so after a summer rainstorm go outside and have a good look around to see what wildlife you can spot. Take a magnifying glass and look for little creatures as well as bigger creatures.

- Birds know that after a rainstorm is the best time to look for worms, which wriggle up to the surface of the soil. It's also worth looking out for slugs, snails, slowworms (legless lizards), frogs, newts and hedgehogs.
- Set up a Worm Rescue Squad with your friends: your mission is to go and rescue worms stranded on pavements or patios after the rain. Gently put them in a bucket of mud and return them to a grassy area or a flower bed.

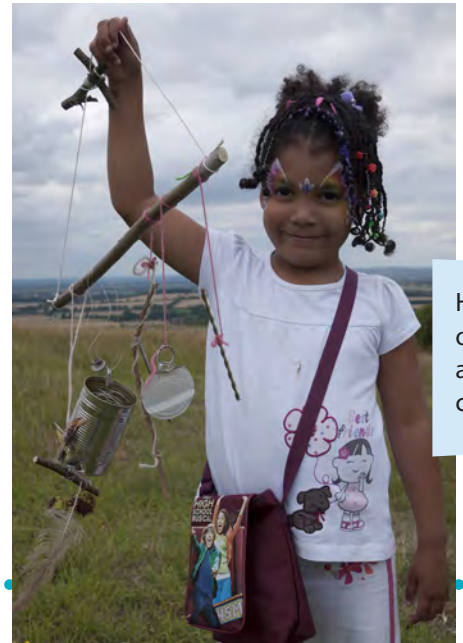
Safety tip Always wash hands after handling slugs and snails.

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wind music

Listen to the wind Try recording the wind's sounds on a mobile phone or iPod. Does the wind roar or rustle, hiss or howl? Perhaps you could play your recording back at night and let the wild wind music lull you to sleep while you lie snug in your bed.

Wind chimes Raid the kitchen for whisks, wooden spoons, skewers, pan lids and anything else you can find that might make a noise, or look for tin cans and lids in the recycling bin. Try banging them together to see what different sounds you can make, and then choose some to hang along a stick.



Hang your wind chime on a branch or outside a window to tinkle and clatter in the wind.





snow slushies

For a yummy treat, have a go at making these delicious snow slushies, which you could even eat out of an ice cup (see page 123).

- Gently defrost some frozen berries, such as raspberries or blackberries.
- Go outside and collect a bowl of freshly fallen clean snow. Gently mix the fresh snow with the berries, a little caster sugar and some pouring cream.
- If you would prefer a slushy drink, replace the cream with fresh fruit juice.

Add some decoration – perhaps white chocolate stars or coloured hundreds and thousands. Enjoy your tasty snow slushy before it melts!

