

BBC
breathing
places



go for
a wild
walk

pocket guide



BBC Breathing Places is a major BBC Learning campaign to inspire and motivate you to create and care for nature-friendly green spaces where you live.

Getting out and enjoying nature can have great benefits for you and there are lots of exciting ways you can get involved.

Go wild with Breathing Places at bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

Top tips for a wild walk

Walking is the ultimate flexible activity and can fit around the busiest schedule. Better still, it can involve all the family. To make walks even more interesting, why not:

- Create your own wildlife bingo cards and see who can spot all their wild things first (see pages 8–9 for inspiration).
- Suggest budding amateur naturalists keep a notebook to jot down their sightings, draw pictures and note the times and dates they see things of interest.
- Encourage children to find: something beautiful, something green, something red, something from a tree, something long, something oddly shaped, something that's not from nature, something squashy, something tough and something that's been changed by the weather.

Also, to find thousands of events, walks and local nature reserves across the UK check out the Breathing Places Event Finder:

www.breathingplaces.org

Benefits for you

Getting outside and making contact with nature is great for lots of reasons:

- Walking improves your concentration and boosts your immune system – even a quick walk at lunchtime can help.
- A brisk 30-minute walk every day can burn off around 2,000 calories a week.
- Getting in touch with nature reduces stress, high blood pressure and muscle tension.
- The sights and sounds of nature can also reduce anxiety.
- Hospital patients benefit from having a view of greenery – recent research shows they recover more quickly and need fewer painkillers... definitely a great reason for greener hospital grounds!

If you can't get out and about easily, why not do one thing at home – like putting up a bird feeder? This way you and your local wildlife both benefit.

And the benefits for your kids

Getting in touch with nature really can inspire children on many levels:

- Children who engage with nature are much more likely to become the wildlife lovers of the future.
- Children love exploring wild areas. This not only helps their fitness and co-ordination, but also helps them do better at school.
- A wild walk can provide the inspiration for almost any school subject: try making art from driftwood or willow stems; for science, how about studying the impact of rivers on the landscape; or for story-telling, encourage them to make up a tale about the plants and animals they see on the walk.

...what's more, a wild walk allows you to pass on some of the activities you may have tried when you were young, like building dens, playing Pooh-sticks or climbing trees.

What to look for

This depends on the time of year, so here are a few ideas:

January – Look out for trees covered in tight buds, and bulbs, such as snowdrops, poking their way through the earth.

February – Listen for songbirds, like robins, tits and thrushes, which will have started singing to claim their territory ahead of the breeding season.

March – Watch hares performing their boxing-like courtship dance. They can also run at speeds of up to 40mph.

April – Go for a woodland walk, you might see acres of bluebells carpeting the ground.

May – In parklands, rhododendrons will be in full flower, giving one of the brightest and most colourful displays of the year.

June – Head for the coast to see huge colonies of sea birds raising their young along the cliffs. In farmland areas, birds like corn buntings and yellowhammers are at their noisiest.

July – Wildflowers like rampion, scabious and bellflowers are thriving on natural grasslands. In arable fields, poppies and white campion come into flower.

August – In upland sites, look out for the landscape turning purple as the heather comes into bloom.

September – Look to the sky for flocks of house martins, swallows and swifts beginning their migration to Africa, or large numbers of geese arriving from the Arctic.

October – Watch out for jays and squirrels feeding on ripe chestnuts and acorns. And listen for red deer barking loudly as they compete for mates in upland areas.

November – At the end of autumn, trees and woodlands put on their final display of colour with leaves ranging from brown to red, and yellow to gold.

December – Christmas sees bright red berries appear on holly. And look out for robins, one of the few birds still singing at this time of year.



**Wild
walk**

bingo



Why not see how many of these you can identify?



Fallow deer – Shy creatures, with summer coats of reddish brown and white spots, and winter coats of dark grey with no spots. Males have palm-shaped antlers.



Seen



Oak tree – Identified by its irregular-shaped leaves and fruit (acorns). Oaks are deciduous and shed their leaves each autumn. New leaves appear in spring.



Seen



Jay – The most colourful member of the crow family, jays have shrill, screech-like calls. In autumn they bury nuts in preparation for colder winter months.



Seen



Southern hawker dragonfly – One of the largest species in the UK, this insect lives near ponds and rivers but will fly some distance to hunt for prey.



Seen



Primrose – Found in woodland clearings and hedgerows from March–May, this delicate wildflower gets its name from being the ‘first rose’ of the year.



Seen



Oystercatcher – Seen along our coastline at any time of the year, these birds feed on shellfish, like mussels and cockles, and also fly inland to feed on worms.



Bingo!

Do One Thing

Looking for more inspiration? Try these other walk-related ideas:

Swap shop

Try something different next time you're planning a walk. If you usually opt for a rural route, why not try an urban alternative and discover city wildlife or what about a bit of beachcombing?

Discover the dark

Find out what really does go 'bump in the night' by going on a night walk. There are lots of different options on offer, from bat walks to glow worm hunts. Organisations like the Bat Conservation Trust and The Wildlife Trusts are good places to start.

Discover the dawn

Fancy something a bit earlier in the day? Try a dawn chorus walk, and find out how busy nature can be when most of us are still asleep. Check out the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) or Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) for more info.

Walk to work

Save money and keep fit by walking part, or all, of your journey to work. Use local maps to explore different routes and discover how much nature there is in urban parks and gardens, and along canal sides and river banks.

On your bike

Make a change by visiting the countryside on a bike. Many country parks and woodland sites have tracks suitable for off-road cycling and you don't need a special mountain bike if you stick to the easier routes.

Well seasoned

Revisit the same places over different seasons and record the changes and events you see there, like the first bluebell or conker. You can even record these through initiatives like the Woodland Trust Nature's Calendar survey.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces



**do
one
thing**

For more ideas of what you can
do for nature, why not check out
other Do One Thing activities at:

bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

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