

BBC
breathing
places



discover
the
dark
side



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

“The stillness of the night is an amazing time to listen out for wildlife, it literally is another world waiting to be explored and enjoyed!”

Chris Packham

BBC's Springwatch presenter

Night life

When most of us are ready for bed, there is wildlife in gardens, local parks, woods, trees and hedgerows waking up to start their day! These creatures are called 'nocturnal' (the name given to animals which are active at night).

You may not have thought of looking (or listening) for these animals but, if you do, you could discover a host of new faces and sounds – from bats, badgers and muntjac deer to moths, foxes and fallow deer.

Just remember, if you intend spending time outside at night, wear warm clothes, take a torch and always go with a responsible adult.

Once outside, let your eyes adjust to the dark (on a clear night with a full moon, you might not even need your torch) and listen to the sounds.



Creatures of the night

If you haven't looked for wildlife at night before, watching bats in flight is a great way to start.

All of the 17 different types of bats in the UK are natural pest controllers and catch their food as they fly. Favourite bat snacks include midges, mosquitoes, moths and small flies. As tiny mammals, bats need to eat huge numbers and can get through up to 3,000 insects every night.

Gardens with flowers and ponds attract lots of insects and are excellent hunting grounds for pipistrelle or brown long-eared bats which often make their homes in trees, house fronts and bat boxes. Look out for them emerging from these places as it begins to get dark.

If you don't have any luck bat-spotting at home, lots of organisations run bat walks with experts who know the bat hot spots.

Things that go 'grunt' in the night

Noisy night-time neighbours to look and listen out for:

Hedgehogs – This gardeners' friend eats pests like slugs, beetles and caterpillars. Hedgehogs can be quite noisy as they snuffle and rustle through the undergrowth looking for food. You may also hear loud, wheezy hissing as they mate.

Badgers – Their playful romping helps to strengthen social bonds. Badgers live in small groups or families, mainly in woodland or even large gardens. They make snuffling and grunting noises and you may hear them scratching and rustling through undergrowth.

Foxes – Live in towns and cities as well as the countryside. Their homes are called 'earths'. Foxes have excellent hearing and listen for their prey before pouncing on it. Their diet includes earthworms, insects, fruit and small mammals. They will also take food from gardens, bird tables and rubbish bins.

Moth-er love!

Moths are fascinating to watch at night, but, like other creatures, they need food, shelter and somewhere to breed.

Help out by making a 'wine rope'!

You'll need:

- a length of absorbent rope or a plait made from strips of clean cotton sheeting or clothing
- a bucket or large bowl
- a brew made from beer, sweet wine or cola, heated gently and then stirred up with black treacle and dark brown sugar
- a torch
- a piece of red cellophane



1. Soak the rope in the brew. Just before dusk on a warm, still night, hang it from a branch or washing line and wait.
2. Next, to avoid disturbing feeding moths, place the red cellophane over the lens of the torch before switching it on. Look for moths on plants too.
3. Instead of a 'wine rope' you could use a bright light and a sheet – what you are aiming for is a bright area where moths can land and you can watch them. Try hanging the sheet on a fence or wall with some of it spreading on the ground. Light the sheet with a powerful torch and see what comes along.
4. When you have finished, remove the light and the moths will fly or crawl away.

Why not use a book to try and identify the moths you see? You could also take notes and photographs. A tip for beginners: if you are confused by the number of brown moths, start with the colourful ones.

If you haven't got a garden, no worries – moths often come into houses after dark if you leave windows open and lights on!

Night

bingo



Why not get out in the dark and see how many of these you can spot or hear?



Badger – Their striking facial markings make badgers (also known as brocks) easily recognisable. Badgers live underground in burrows called 'setts'.



Barn owl – These large, white and gold birds have a long, eerie, screeching call. They also hiss, snore and yap and resemble ghostly apparitions at night.



Seen



Seen



Fox – Throughout winter, during mating season, the vixen's blood-curdling scream is unmistakable and far louder than the male's gentle 'yelpy' bark.



Seen



Muntjac deer – The UK's smallest and most secretive deer, muntjac are also known as 'barking' deer because of their loud and sharp yap or bark.



Seen



Pipistrelle bat – The smallest and most common bat in the UK, a single pipistrelle may eat up to 3,000 insects in one night and live to 16 years of age!



Seen



Tawny owl – The owl that makes the famous 'twit-twoo' call, which is actually a duet between the male and female who bond for life.



Bingo!

Do One Thing

If you fancy doing more for your local night wildlife, check out these other activities:

Be batty!

Get to know more about bats by going on a guided walk, attending a talk or making your own bat box. Contact the Bat Conservation Trust or your local Bat Group to find out more.

Provide pollen

Help insect-eating wildlife like bats and hedgehogs by encouraging insects into your garden. Try growing plants rich in pollen and nectar like honeysuckle, white jasmine or evening primrose.

Brilliant badgers

Contact your local Badger Watch Group or The Wildlife Trusts to see how you can help out the UK's badger populations. Volunteer activities include everything from badger watching to sett surveys.

Begin boxing

If you live in an area where there are owls, why not put up an owl box? Organisations like the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and The Barn Owl Trust are good places to start.

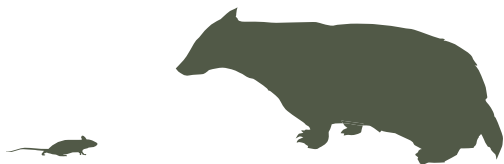
Navigate the night

Go on a nocturnal exploration to discover more about the UK's night-loving wildlife. Many local councils and organisations like the Forestry Commission run night-time activities.

Contain the cat

Cats like hunting most at sunset and sunrise, so help wildlife by keeping them in at night. These are also the times of day when your cat is most likely to get run over, so you'll be keeping them safe too.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: [bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](https://www.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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