



**RSPB**

# Together with Nature

**activity pack**

In partnership with Girlguiding North West England Region





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Welcome to the RSPB Together with nature activity pack which has been created in partnership with Girlguiding London and South East England Region (LaSER). We are delighted to share this pack with Girlguiding North West England.

Our aim is to encourage girls to go outside and directly experience nature through fun activities. We want to inspire you, their leaders, to gain confidence to run nature-related activities on a regular basis.



## How to use the pack



There are four sections of activities:

- 1 **Explorer** – creating a sense of awe and wonder
- 2 **Small worlds** – empathy for creatures and plants
- 3 **We need nature** – we are all connected
- 4 **Take it further** – caring for your environment

Sections five and six are to help you make the most of the activities:

- 5 **Icebreakers** – gives details of the icebreakers as suggested in sections one to three. These recommended activities, depicted by the blue ice-breaker icon (pictured right) are great to get girls focused, introduce them to nature or to recap ideas at the end.
- 6 **Knowhow for leaders** – a supporting resource for leaders giving ideas, tips, skills and confidence to get more out of the pack.



7 **What's it all about?** This is all about the RSPB and Girlguiding North West England partnership and why both organisations are passionate about creating experiences where girls make connections to nature.

The activities are a springboard for **GIRLS OF ALL AGES within Girlguiding** to begin their journey connecting to nature and to let girls explore, discover and enjoy!



# Which activities to choose

The activities are grouped into levels of complexity, suitability for size of unit, space available, preparation time, equipment and resources needed.

## Level one

These activities are simple 'quick wins'. You can do them with large or small units, in urban areas such as a car park or school playground. They can be done anywhere outdoors and require very little or no preparation or equipment.

## Level two

These are a little more challenging. They would be suitable for large groups but splitting into smaller groups may work better. They are suitable for larger spaces with more natural features such as a park or graveyard. They may require some preparation, equipment or resources.

## Level three

These are for those looking for a challenge. They are best done in smaller groups, in a natural green space such as a park, woodland, countryside or a nature reserve and may require specific equipment and time spent planning or collecting resources.

## Why don't you?

These are suggested ideas to take it further either by making the activity longer, or ideas for older girls.

## Remember!

All the activities can be done on your residential or at a local nature reserve.



# How to get a badge

We encourage you to build lots of nature activities into your programme. You can gain a badge if you complete a **minimum of any four activities, chosen from the first three sections.**

Each activity is designed to take a minimum of **30 minutes** for it to be a meaningful experience. The more activities you do and the longer you spend doing them the better the experience and enjoyment for the girls.

Tell us how you got on and what the girls thought of it.

Find the feedback and badge order form [here](#). Badges cost £1 each plus postage and packing.

## Why don't you?

Try Section 4 to 'Take it further'. These are optional ideas to 'Give Nature a Home' but they do not count towards the badge.



# Section 1

# Explorer

Nature allows for unstructured play, generating a sense of freedom, independence and inner strength which a young person can draw upon in the future. A young person's relationship with nature is a fundamental part of their development, allowing opportunities for self-discovery and experiencing the natural environment. There is evidence that free play in natural environments results in increased levels of social interactions promoting an aptitude for learning.

These activities are all about getting outside and allowing the girls to explore using their senses. The focus is on creating a sense of awe and wonder by looking, exploring and enjoying nature.



# Colour palette

Nature is full of a rainbow of colours, even a leaf has many different shades of green.

### Which level?

One.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors.

### Which season?

Any season.

### Equipment/resources

Lots of cut up paint colour test strips from your local DIY shop, card picture frames (you can make your own) about 5cm x 5cm in size. The larger the frame, the harder the activity.



Start by walking around your outdoor space, in pairs or small groups, with the frames. The girls need to find an interesting natural object then view the colours of the natural object through the frame. Challenge each pair or small group to choose test strips to match all of the colours in the frame to create a colour palette. At the end, go around the groups in turn looking at the 'natural picture gallery' to see each other's colour palettes.

### In the dark

This activity can also be done at dusk while the sun is setting. Watch the colours of the sky and clouds change as the light fades. Remember not to look directly at the sun.

### Why don't you?

Try looking at a whole scene with more natural elements, like a tree with some sky or try making different sized frames.



# Scavenger hunt



## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors.

## Which season?

Any season.

## Equipment/resources

Something to collect items in e.g paper bag or match box, download and print a scavenger hunt sheet or create your own, see: Section 6 – Knowhow for leaders.

Challenge the girls in pairs or small groups to find all the items on the sheet. If you have older girls, they could take photographs rather than collect items. Remember to only collect items from the ground and never to pick from living plants or trees. Bring everyone back together, talk through the items they have found or photos they have taken.

Here are some scavenger hunt sheets to get you started.

[Simple list](#)

[Egg box scavenger hunt](#)

## Why don't you?

Ask the girls to create a story either in a group or on their own using the items the girls have found, start by saying 'as I entered the woods' using the items as props.



# Watch the sunset



**Most life on earth needs the sun for energy to grow and survive, creating warmth and light. We circle the sun every day, watch this daily spectacle together!**

Go outside just before sunset. Find a space to sit and watch the sun go down until it is dark. Watch how the colours change, encourage the girls to see, think, feel and hear whilst sitting. Where is the sun? Does the moon come out? Who can spot it first? Are there any bird sounds? What are the birds doing? Look for silhouettes. Remember not to look directly at the sun.

## Which level?

One.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere but even better if you can see the horizon, best on a clear evening.

## Which season?

March to May or August to September.

## Equipment/resources

None.

## Why don't you?

Try capturing any dramatic or interesting sunsets the girls see by painting, drawing, using phones or a camera if available.

# BioBlitz



**How much wildlife do you think you have around your unit meeting space? You might be surprised what you find!**

## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors.

## Which season?

Any season.

## Equipment/resources

Download and print some 'Spot-it!' sheets including insects, plants, birds, and mammals, pencils or pen, timer/stopwatch.

[Minibeasts 1](#)

[Minibeasts 2](#)

A BioBlitz is an intense period of time spent recording ALL the living plants and creatures found in a designated outdoor area in a short time. Set the timer for 30 minutes, get into groups with Spot-it! sheets or simply list, draw or take photos of all the living plants and animals/insects that are found. For helpful tips, see: Section 6 – Knowhow for leaders.

## In the dark

This can be done when it is dark, arm the girls with torches. They may even encounter different animals.

## Why don't you?

Do a BioBlitz at different sites like a park, allotment or beach. Is there a difference between habitats? Can the girls come up with a fun way to display the findings?



# My tree friend



**Trees grow all over the world and provide us and animals with food and shelter. Studies show that trees calm us. Connecting with a tree and finding out about them can be fascinating.**

## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Somewhere where there are a few trees; these can be small trees.

## Which season?

Any season.

## Equipment/resources

Trees, a tree 'nature busy bag'; see 'Knowhow for leaders'.

Working in pairs, individually or small groups ask each to choose one tree and then sit or lay under it. Encourage girls to explore their tree by: spending five minutes in silence with the tree, one minute with eyes closed; looking at their tree from far away and up close; get them to get to know their tree using the tree 'nature busy bag' equipment and their senses. If the girls need help to get started ask questions such as, can they measure the tree? What does their tree look like? Feel like? Are there any creatures living on or around the tree? How old do they think the tree is?

After at least 30 minutes come back together, go round the group in turn to share what everyone discovered about their tree friend.

## Why don't you?

Keep a record of the tree in different seasons, keep a tree journal. Find out more about your chosen tree by looking at old maps or historic records to find out what the surrounding area would have been like when it was planted.

# Where

# am I?



### Which level?

Three.

### Where can you complete the activity?

The more natural the area the better.

### Which season?

Any season.

### Equipment/resources

Pencil, paper, bell, whistle or voice to make a duck/bird/animal sound.

See helpful tips in 'Knowhow for leaders' before you do this activity. Outside ask each girl to find an interesting spot. Explain to the girls they will need to sit quietly for the whole of the activity, after 10 minutes they will hear the bird call to start writing what they hear, smell, see, feel and think. Encourage the girls to write five of each. Bring everyone back together to find out what they experienced. For younger girls ask them to tell you what they experienced.

### In the dark

Take a torch – what can they see in their torch beam?



### Why don't you?

Encourage the girls to use directional language such as 'I can smell flowers to my left, I can see a small tree in front of me'. Swap papers over with someone else to try and guess the spot where they were sitting.



# Mud

# monsters



**Mud is dirt and dirt is not dirty! Mud, dirt or soil is made of crushed up rocks, clay, dead plants and even worm and other minibeast poo.**

### Which level?

Three.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors where it is OK to get messy with mud.

### Which season?

Spring, summer and autumn.

### Equipment/resources

Buckets (one for dry mud, one for water and a few mixing buckets), mud from a garden or mole hill (they create the perfect mud), water and sticks for stirring, place to wash hands, some old messy clothes.

Go on a hunt for natural objects like seeds, leaves and some sticks to use for stirring. Get the girls stirring the mud into a dough consistency by adding water, it needs to be like clay or playdough so not too wet. Ask each girl to take a handful to make their own monster and find a suitable place to stick it e.g. on the tree trunk or side of building or log. Use the natural objects to make features on the mud monsters. See 'Knowhow for leaders' for tips to encourage messy play.

### Why don't you?

If there are trees about, can they see any faces in the tree trunks? Add features like eyebrows on to the trees with mud, get imaginative!



## Section 2

# Small worlds

Young people spend less time outdoors experiencing nature now than ever before. Nature experiences have a positive influence on young people helping them develop positive values about nature.

Contact with nature is important for young people, it is inextricably linked to their wellbeing and also promotes healthy personal development.

These activities help to create empathy for creatures and love for nature through watching and by encouraging the girls to let their imaginations run free.



# Insect pets



**We don't ever want to keep any wild animal as a pet but watching a chosen insect or minibeast can help us to understand and care for creatures great and small.**

### Which level?

One.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors.

### Which season?

Spring, summer and autumn.

### Equipment/resources

None.

Ask the girls to find a small creature to follow for the session. Encourage the girls to spend some time following where their creature goes. Can they build it a tiny house it might like to live in or add obstacles for it to climb? Can they find its food? Does it have friends or family? Watch how it moves and behaves with other minibeasts. Come back together and ask the girls to take it in turns to share what they have discovered.

### Why don't you?

Ants follow their own scent trail between food and their nest. Find ants or an ant trail. Have a look what happens if a stick or grass is put in the way of their trail, or if a chalk line is drawn across their trail.





# Imagine you are



## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

The more natural the area the better.

## Which season?

Late summer or autumn.

## Equipment/resources

Some spare natural resources such as leaves, grass, moss, collect some seeds, acorns, conkers.

## Why don't you?

Go to a woodland or near trees such as horse chestnuts, hazel or oak and hunt for signs of nibbled nuts, look closely at the tooth marks.

[Nut hunting spotter sheet](#)



# Create this for...

## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors where there is leaf litter, sticks, grass or fallen natural materials.

## Which season?

Any time.

## Equipment/resources

Found natural materials.

Give the girls a challenge using natural materials, can they create something from their imaginations for a wild animal to use? Suggest some ideas such as a bed for a mouse, a boat for a mole, a minibeast café. Give the girls at least 30 minutes to create it and then go round and share what they have built and for who.

## Why don't you?

How good were the creations? Return another time to see if they are still there and whether there are any signs of them being used by mini beasts or other wildlife.

# Capture wildlife



Photographing nature helps us see moments we might otherwise miss, and capture the beauty of the natural world!

### Which level?

Three.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors focusing on natural features.

### Which season?

Any time.

### Equipment/resources

Any sort of camera, digital, film or disposable or phone which can zoom or take good clear photos.

To begin take a look at the [Wildlife Photographer of the Year award website](#) for some inspiration and read through photography tips in 'Knowhow for leaders' on how and when to take great nature photos.

Take the unit on a walk and see what they can discover to photograph. Try taking very close up images; this is called macro photography. The more unusual the better.

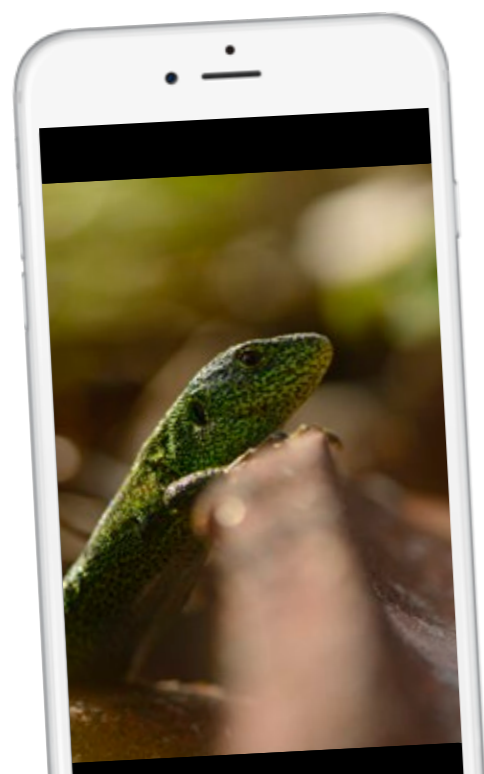
Get everyone to select their favourite image or images, then either print, make a PowerPoint or slideshow to exhibit the photos taken, and share with parents and relatives.

### In the dark

Try going out at dusk or in the dark, use a flash or a long exposure, or try taking pictures on a moonlit night.

### Why don't you?

Try taking some really close up photographs and challenge the girls to guess what each other snapped. They could even create a scavenger hunt from these.



# Moth catching



### Which level?

Three.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Outdoors where there are some bushes, trees or foliage. This is a great activity to do on your residential.

### Which season?

Evening during May to August.

### Equipment/resources

[Top moths ID sheet](#) or a [good moth guide](#), a bright light, white sheet, magnifiers.

Finding moths is pretty easy and all the girls really need to do is investigate who's been attracted to the outside light. However, to see more moths and take a closer look, have a go at setting up a white sheet and shine a bright light on to it or create a moth lure using the [RSPB how to guide](#).





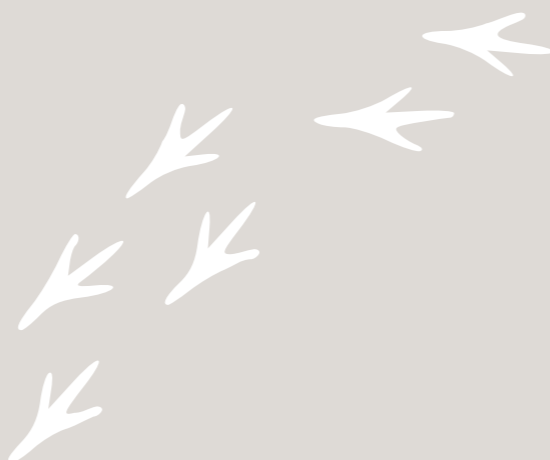
## Section 3

# We need nature

Spending more time with nature helps young people develop a stronger connection to nature.

Experience of the outdoors and nature has the potential to confer a wide range of benefits on young people, such as development of a positive self-image, confidence on one's abilities and equipping them with problem solving skills. These attributes are important to help young people face the wider world and to enhance their social skills.

These activities encourage an awareness of how dependent on nature we are for food, water, shelter and more.



# Hapa

# Zome



**Hapa Zome is the Japanese art of hammering or squashing leaves onto fabric to leave a print.**

### Which level?

Two.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere outdoors where there are some leaves.

### Which season?

Late spring and summer.

### Equipment/resources

Fresh green leaves, cotton cloth e.g. an old pillow case or sheet, cut to be approx. 20cm x 20cm, a hard surface, a hard object such as hammer, rock or log.

Go for a short walk around your space, ask the girls to look for leaves with interesting shapes. Find some green leaves; see 'Knowhow for leaders' for picking plants tips. Lay the material on the hard surface, fold the material in half, encourage the girls to think about a design then arrange the leaves in patterns they would like, fold the top piece of material over the leaves then tap the material where the leaf is. This bashes out the green dye in the leaf which will leave a print on the material, and will be permanent. Experiment with different shapes and sizes.

Follow [this link](#) for a video to show you how.



# Drip drop leaves



**Leaves have a waxy layer to direct water off them on to the ground towards their roots. This activity explores the different designs plants have evolved to do this.**

## Which level?

One.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Near low-hanging branches or easily accessible bushes or shrubs.

## Which season?

Late spring to late autumn, especially in the rain or hot weather.

## Equipment/resources

Small watering can with a sprinkler, or small containers e.g. a yoghurt pot with holes in the bottom, appropriate clothing.

Start by going for a walk. Look closely at leaves and encourage the girls to feel the leaves gently to explore their different textures. If it is raining, watch how the rain drops fall and move on the leaves.

In small groups, use the water sprinkler to pour water from above leaves. What happens as the water runs off the leaf? Which leaf shapes work best? Can the girls create a record to share with the group? Try standing under different trees when it is raining, which trees offer greatest cover from the rain? Bring the group back together at the end to talk about what they have discovered.

## Why don't you?

Create leaf boats, with a leaf as a base, then a stick and another leaf as a sail. Encourage the girls to experiment with different leaves. Try the boats out on some water somewhere safe. See 'Knowhow for leaders'.



# History tree



**Ancient trees in our community and countryside are really important for wildlife. Ancient trees are loved by their communities because of how they look and the stories and memories linked with them.**

## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Where there are old trees or a tree important to your unit or community.

## Which season?

Any time.

## Equipment/resources

Map or directions to the ancient tree, paper, pencil, camera, record of old tree, photos of old tree.

You will need to do a little investigating for this activity. Find out if members of the local community know about an ancient tree. Is there a record of the unit planting any trees? Have a look online on the [Ancient Tree Inventory](#) to find out if there are any ancient trees near you.

Once you have a location of an ancient tree, take the girls for a walk to find it. Encourage the girls to record their experience through drawings, photographs, a story or poem. Can they find out how old or tall it is? Bring their discoveries back to share it with leaders or others who knew the tree.

## Why don't you?

Older girls can do the research to find the ancient trees, is there anyone in the local community who could come and tell a story about the tree?

# Secret messages



**Dandelions grow in many places, often where the ground has been disturbed. People call them weeds because they can grow in so many places, often where they are not wanted such as lawns or flower borders. They have long roots and a very successful way of spreading their seeds! Some plants are OK to pick. Search 'Knowhow for leaders'.**

Start by going for a walk somewhere where you know there will be some dandelions. Using the **yellow flower spotter sheet**, in small groups how many types of yellow flowers can they spot? Can they identify the dandelions?

Ask the girls to pick one dandelion each, or one between two. Snap the stem, they will see some white sap coming out. This is the ink for the message. Holding the stem write a secret message on the paper with the ink, when the ink is wet the message is invisible. Leave the ink to dry and the message will appear! Handle the dandelions with care as the sap can occasionally cause skin irritation, always wash hands afterwards.

## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Anywhere where there are lots of dandelions.

## Which season?

Early spring to late autumn.

## Equipment/resources

Paper, dandelions (collect extra from your garden or green space if you have a large group).



# Pollinating



**In spring, bumblebees are busy filling-up on nectar after sleeping all winter. Some will be flying around low to the ground looking for places to nest and lay their eggs. Then they get busy collecting nectar to feed their young. They pollinate flowers, which helps the plants reproduce and grow fruit or seeds.**

Before you set off with the girls, talk through how to 'bee-have' around bees. See Section 6 – Knowhow for leaders.

Go for a walk to look for bumble bees. Use the bee spotter sheet to challenge the girls to spot as many different types of bees as possible.

Get the girls to sit calmly and quietly by flowers for visiting bees. Can they safely follow a bumblebee to find out where it goes and see it using its curled tongue to sip nectar or gathering clumps of pollen on its back legs?

## Which level?

Two.

## Where can you complete the activity?

Areas with flowers such as gardens along a residential road or wild flowers in parks, fields, school gardens.

## Which season?

May to September.

## Equipment/resources

**Bee spotter sheet**, pencils.

## Why don't you?

Create your own customised bee spotter, unique to your patch based on the bees the girls have seen over the summer term. Try making a bee nest (see section 4), or put out a teaspoon of sugary water to attract a bumblebee.



# Food for free

## Foraging



**Wild food is really exciting to find. It's free, healthy and it is fun to eat something fresh from the plant. See Section 6 – Knowhow for leaders.**

### Which level?

Three.

### Where can you complete the activity?

Blackberries: Hedgerows, along canal paths. Nettles: near hedges, edges of fields and woods, gardens, graveyards, places which have not been mown or sprayed with chemicals.

### Which season?

Late summer to early autumn for blackberries, late spring to September nettles.

### Equipment/resources

Bag or pot, gardening gloves, scissors to cut nettles, long sleeves and trousers, flask of hot water or boiled kettle, cups. [Spotter sheets](#)

### Why don't you?

Try making [nettle soup](#)!



Before going out, think of a safe place where nettles or blackberries can be gathered or ask the girls if they have seen any in their local area. Show the group images of blackberries or nettles to make sure everyone can identify them. Go for a walk with a spotter sheet, make time to stop and look at other things along the way.

For blackberries, find some which are within easy reach for all girls. Make sure girls only pick healthy blackberries, look for shiny and firm fruits. Wash thoroughly before they are eaten.

For nettles, the girls should take it in turns; wearing the gloves, snipping off the top green shoots of the nettles and putting them in a bag. Collect a small handful each. Wash well, then make nettle tea by adding them to the flask of hot water or into a teapot. Leave to brew for five minutes and serve. See 'Knowhow for leaders' to treat nettle stings.



# Dyeing

## natural paints



**Paints and the colours of our clothes all come originally from natural materials. Nowadays we often use chemicals to create paint colour and dye. First get the girls thinking about what natural materials could be used to make colours e.g. Charcoal makes black.**

Go out for a walk to find natural materials you think will make colourful paints. Encourage the girls to choose things which can be crushed and mixed with water to create a paint. Keep colours separate. Try dry mud, clay, chalk, grass, dandelions, blackberries and experiment with making new colours. Paint pictures of natural scenes or plants and animals.

### Why don't you?

Make natural paint brushes by finding different textured ends such as feathers, moss or seeds? Tie these onto a stick with string and experiment.



### Which level?

Three.

### Where can you complete the activity?

In a wild outdoor space.

### Which season?

Any time.

### Equipment/resources

Hard surface and heavy object for crushing (pestle and mortar), old plastic pots for mixing, paint brushes, water, sticks, string, paper or material.



## Section 4

# Take it further

## Caring for your environment

Young people are the future custodians of our natural places, and the urge to protect nature comes together with a love of nature.

Studies have shown that as well as enhancing young people's resilience to changes in their environment, outdoor learning also develops their environmental responsibility. Action by young people also leads to their becoming more engaged citizens.

These activities increase young people's knowledge and skills for solving environmental problems to help promote pro-environmental actions.

To discover more and 'Give Nature a Home' check out these great activities on the RSPB website.



[Bumblebee home](#)

[Hog house](#)

[Bug hotel](#)

[Make a log pile](#)

[Make a bee house](#)

[Make a butterfly garden](#)

[Bat nesting box](#)

[Make a mini pond](#)

[Make a rock pile](#)

[Plant a tree](#)

[Make a pinecone bird feeder](#)

[Make an apple bird feeder](#)

[Make bird kebabs](#)

[Bird water tray](#)

[Butterfly feeding bar](#)



# Section 5

## Icebreakers



### Sit spot

A sit spot is where we can go and sit on our own (near to others) to observe nature in some form, whether it is rushing water, rain dripping off a roof, birds, plants, trees or just sun, wind and clouds. There needs to be some nature around, but not much. When we are still, watching, listening and feeling calm, we often start to notice nature around us. A sit spot is a great activity to do many times, any time of the year. Locate a clear area outdoors giving boundaries to the girls. In pairs for younger girls and individually for older ones, find a space away from others. Stay within a few metres from each other without talking. Encourage them to calm their mind and just look. Younger girls start by doing sit spot for five minutes and older girls 10 minutes, then gradually increase the time they sit for as long as they or you choose. Calmly bring them back together, sit in a circle, what did they see? Why did they choose that spot? What did they hear, feel, and think?

### Minibeast hunt

See instructions in 'Knowhow for leaders'.

### Listening circle

Go outdoors, stand in a circle. Explain we are going to close our eyes for one minute and listen to all the sounds around us. Explain there will be a 'blanket of silence' which will be put over the group. As you put the blanket of silence over, ask the girls to close their eyes. If they are nervous all hold hands then let go once eyes are closed. Ask the girls to hold out their fists in front of them, each time they hear a sound they count it on their hands. Lift the blanket of silence, open their eyes and discuss what sounds they heard. Repeat and only count natural sounds.

### Recent nature experience

This is a good exercise to get the girls excited and thinking about nature. Get the group together in a circle, sitting either indoors or out. Ask the girls what was their most recent nature experience? It can be anything even watching a nature documentary or kicking leaves. Go round the circle in turn with each girl and leader sharing their nature experience.

### Wow nature experience

Get the girls in a circle before your activity. Start by talking about your most 'wow' nature experience, for example being in a big thunder storm or feeding horses in the New Forest. Go round the circle with the girls sharing their wow nature experiences, always include leaders too.

### Breathe inside, outside

Get ready to go outdoors and just before you go, explain you are going to do a breathing exercise inside then go outside. Stand the girls in a circle, ask them all to be silent. All breathe in and out slowly 20 times. Then calmly and quietly go outside. Reform your standing circle and ask the girls to breathe in and out 20 times. Ask them if they noticed a difference?

### Un-nature trail

This is great activity for improving and sharpening observational and looking skills. Set up a short trail for the group in advance along a bush by hanging items on the branches. Lay out a number of un-natural objects, which vary in being easy to spot or challenging, e.g. a ball, clothing, mirror, CD, plastic toy or bottles, small natural coloured objects such as string or pegs. When placing them around the area, make sure some are easy to see and others are more difficult. Ask the girls to walk the trail without pointing or speaking and see how many things they can spot. Ask them to whisper the number of things they've seen to a leader at the end. It's likely they missed objects, so challenge them to try again and look closer. When everyone has had a couple of goes, walk the trail with the group pointing out and picking up the objects. Discuss why some were hard and others easy.

### Meet a tree

Divide the group into pairs and have one of each pair wear a blindfold. The seeing player guides the blindfolded player by the shoulders to a special tree; one that has intriguing characteristics. The blindfolded player needs to feel the bark texture, hug the tree and explore the tree's branches and leaves. Their partner can silently guide the blindfolded player's hands to interesting places on and around the tree. The guide takes the player back to the starting position, removes the blindfold, and challenges them to work out which tree was theirs. Swap over so everyone gets a go.

### Webbing activity

This activity clearly shows that air, rocks, plants and animals work together in a balanced web of life which includes us, and if something happens to one part of the web, it affects the whole web. You will need a ball of wool or string and everyone standing in a circle with the leader in the middle holding the string. The leader asks the group if they can name a plant that grows nearby. Select an answer and throw the string to the girl, then ask 'is there an animal around here that would eat the plant?' again select an appropriate answer. Now ask the first girl to throw the ball of string to the second girl to make a connection. Continue asking similar questions to show their relationships to the rest of the group. Suggest elements such as soil, water and other animals. Continue until the whole group is linked together in your own ecosystem. To show how important the whole community is, take away an element e.g. a tree was chopped down, the tree person pulls on their string, all others who feel the tug, pull on their string and so on until all are affected by the tree being felled.

### Nature Kim's game

This can be done inside or out. Collect 10 natural objects. Place them on a tray and name each one. Lay a cloth over the items. Gather the girls around the tray. Lift the cloth for 20 seconds and ask the girls to look at all the items, then replace the cloth. Now ask the girls how many items they can remember? To make it simpler remove one item and ask them to guess which it was.

### Your natural name

Ask the girls to bring in a natural object which they have found on their way home from school or on their way to their unit meeting. The object needs to have the same first letter as their name. They need to bring this with them to the meeting. Display the items on a table. Take it in turns for the girls to show their item, say what it is and where they found it or what they like about it.

### As I entered the woods...

Fire their imaginations. You never know where the story will go. Sit in a circle either as a whole unit or in small groups. Explain to the group that they are going to create their own adventure story by all adding one or two sentences at a time, it can be as realistic or fantastical as they want. Start by saying: 'As I entered the woods I saw/felt/heard...'. Then the next person needs to finish the sentence. They only need to add a couple of sentences, then encourage the next girl to add another by finishing on a conjunctive, e.g. then, but, when. It is OK to not participate as listening is just as fun. Continue around the circle for approximately five minutes or until the story has come to a natural end.

### Rain storm

Sit in a circle, hands over knees and set the scene. There are dark clouds over us, the rain is starting to drip down in big blobs. Start by clapping on your knees slowly. Encourage the girls to join in. Then the rain slowly gets harder, faster until it is pouring; clap harder on knees. Then it turns to a light drizzle, use fingers to make a quieter tapping noise, continue to create a soundscape. Choose a girl to have a go at 'leading' the storm. They could add in other noises.





# Section 6

## Knowhow for leaders

Building confidence to run 'making connections' activities

**Our ABC Knowhow for leaders guide is to help you and your team make the most of the activities found in the pack. These top tips equip you with the knowledge and confidence to deliver the activities, which will inspire the most indoor-loving girl or leader.**

### A – First thoughts

#### What about setting boundaries and staying safe?

Plan where you are going to do the activity. Is it a public space? Where are the entrances and exits? Always do activities away from roads and traffic and where leaders can see all younger girls. If the girls feel safe they will be able to enjoy the activities better. Discuss boundaries, where the girls can go and what is and is not allowed at the beginning; for younger girls tell them they always need to be able to see a leader. For more help see the [Girlguiding pages](#).

#### What do I do if my meeting space has no outdoor space?

Level one activities are designed to work even in an urban area, such as a town centre where you have nothing more than a carpark, garden or nature they can see along a path. For a more valuable experience, plan a specific day in your term programme to go to a local greenspace so you can arrange more helpers or transport. If you are in a school or community building,

is there someone you can ask to give you access to their outside space one evening? Don't forget that 'residential' are a perfect opportunity to use this pack.

#### What resources do I need when outdoors?

Mostly keeping it simple works best and often you don't need anything at all. Using everyday items can help the girls spend more time, look more closely or give younger girls something to hold. Options include old food containers, plastic or paper bags for collecting, tea towels to catch minibeasts shaken from vegetation, paintbrushes or magnifying glasses. Why not put together some 'nature busy bags' which will always be ready when you decide to go on an adventure?

#### What is a 'nature busy bag'?

A 'nature busy bag' is a bag of lots of useful items for the girls to use to explore and investigate nature when outdoors on a walk or activity. It is a pre-packed bag which you can just pick up and go out with. You could include things like: pens and pencils, paper or a sketchbook, magnifiers, wildlife guidebook or laminated spotter sheets, binoculars, bug pots, teaspoons, a CD for a mirror or a torch. You could make themed ones such as one for trees including string, a tape measure and crayons.

#### How long will it take?

All the activities have been designed to take at least 30 minutes, once outside and including the icebreaker. We encourage you to allow up to an hour to give the girls the chance to explore within the activity. We recommend you do the activities over a couple or more meetings; they can also be activities you revisit many times.



#### Can we go out in the dark?

Definitely! Just make sure you are very familiar with the site and can arrive before it gets too dark to do a safety check. Make sure the area you are in has no public access or ensure that adults can supervise all of the entrances. Remember darkness can make moving around more challenging and hazards more difficult to spot. Let your eyes adjust to the light levels rather than use torches to navigate. Keep torches for close up viewing. Take a look at some of the ideas we have included in the activities.

#### I have a limited / zero knowledge on 'nature', do I need to be an expert?

No! Do not let this stop you from going outdoors and doing nature activities. The experience is more important than the knowledge. Anything you do not know can always be researched, so get some great books, spotters or charts to help you. Don't be afraid to say 'I don't know what it is, let's look it up together' or challenge them to go home and find out. Sometimes it doesn't matter, it is just interesting to find out what it does and watch it.

#### How do we take our first steps to connect with nature?

Do you remember jumping in puddles, smelling flowers, kicking leaves, hiding and sneaking-up, catching a raindrop or snowflake on your tongue, blowing a dandelion clock, testing wind direction with grass, or spotting faces in the clouds? All these activities and any more you may remember are what we need to encourage the girls to find a connection with nature no matter what age, so just give them time to do this.

#### How can we be safe in all weathers?

Always check the weather, do not let being wet, cold or too hot stop you from going outdoors. Advise the girls to come prepared for the weather, which means bringing extra clothes, hats, water or sun cream. Avoid wooded areas in high winds, heavy rain or lightning storms, as branches may fall. Weather can change quickly, so be aware of this and respond accordingly.

#### How do we deal with dangerous or stinging creatures and plants?

Most of nature is harmless, although look out for hairy caterpillars as these are often poisonous or can cause skin irritation, so avoid touching them. Some spiders bite, but none in the UK give fatal bites. If stung by a nettle, move away from the plants, be calm, and apply some cold water or a cold compress. If you can identify a dock leaf rub this on with some water. Brambles, holly, hawthorn and blackthorn have spikes, so look out for these and remind girls to do the same.

#### How can we be safe outdoors?

Check for dangerous rubbish such as glass, metal or sharp objects and look out for dog poo. Brief the leaders and group as to areas to avoid. Remind the girls of trip hazards in more natural places such as rabbit holes and roots. Dogs may be in public areas – advise the group if there may be dogs. You may need to speak to dog owners to ask them to keep their dogs on a lead around the girls. Advise the girls never to approach dogs or just stand still if one approaches them. **Don't forget your risk assessment!**



## B – How do I (and the leadership team)?

### How can I be a role model and enthuse the girls?

Do the activity with the girls, then challenge the girls to do more than you. Get involved, get down and look, get dirtier than they do, rather than just standing back and watching. Research shows that one of the four key influences on a young person's connection to nature is the attitude of adults they encounter. If adults are afraid of insects or look bored it will affect the reaction of the girls. If you can be the first to hold the spider or the worm, then carefully hand it around the group, many more girls will try it for themselves. Even if you are scared, don't let it show and keep reassuring them it's OK. Nature is amazing, not frightening.

### How do we encourage girls to look more closely?

If the leader is interested and shows enthusiasm in something, the girls will be inspired to look too. You can focus their attention to look more closely by simply stopping and pointing out things you notice or find interesting. You do not need to know what something is to point it out, it could be the colour, the way something moves or the shape. Give the girls some simple equipment to help focus their gaze e.g. frames, cardboard tube, CDs or mirrors, magnifiers, etc. On a walk, incorporate 'stopping time' to encourage the girls to look around, or to sit in silence for a few minutes.

### How can I encourage girls to discover, explore and enjoy?

The best experiences are often unstructured and child-led, where adults are facilitating rather than leading. Give the girls basic instructions to understand the activity and the equipment needed then stand back and let the girls be led by their own interests. If the activity is a bug hunt and they end up looking at animal poo or just running back and forth through long wet grass, let them! When you are out in nature allow time for the girls to just explore and play. Equally, be involved with the activity, do the activity with the girls, this sets a great example.

### How can I get them to sit still or be quiet outdoors?

Make sure you are in a safe place, remind them they are in a safe place. Fire their imagination by telling them what exciting wildlife you have seen when you have been still. Start by sitting still and quiet for one minute then increase by a couple of minutes each time. Encourage them to sit on their own or with a partner. Do an energetic exercise first to burn off any energy. Try introducing an activity by talking in a quieter calm voice which can often draw their attention. Ask them to take a few deep breaths or close their eyes. You can use any of these ideas again if they start to become distracted.



### How do I do a really great 'sit spot'? How do we get the most out of it?

Sit spot can be done anywhere. Start close to your unit meeting space, then try somewhere further away with more nature or different habitats. Girls need to feel safe to be able to fully enjoy and receive the benefits of sit spot. Make sure the space is safe and you are able to see the girls at all times. Walk around the girls when they are sitting to encourage them to be quiet and concentrate. Calmly ask them what they have seen so far as you walk around. Do it whenever you go on a trip to a greenspace. It may inspire a reaction of groans, but the more you do it the more it becomes second nature and a great way to calm the group quickly. Find your own sit spot near home or work where you can spend five minutes sitting, listening, looking and feeling.

### How do I encourage girls to get dirty?

First of all, it's mud. Not dirty. For girls who are nervous, source some smaller containers with some mud made up, or create a ball of mud which is not too wet and hand this around first. Make sure you give girls enough notice so that they can come in old clothes and suitable shoes and so they can be confident their parents won't be 'cross'. Make it a really positive experience, but don't force anyone to do anything they are not comfortable with. If leaders are getting dirty too, it makes it OK.

### How can I take the girls on an interesting nature walk?

Plan where you are going and make sure everyone is suitably dressed. Don't make it too far, so you have time to stop and look and explore along the way. Pick a good spot where you know you will see things. If you have walked it in advance you will be ready to share what you have seen. Take some activities with you or give the girls a challenge to do whilst they are walking. There are some great apps that give you simple and quick ideas, like [Persil's Wild Explorers](#).



## C – The activities – knowhow tips

### What is a sit spot and how do I do one with my group?

A sit spot is where we can go and sit on our own (near to others) to observe nature in some form. There needs to be some nature around but not much! When we are still, watching, listening, feeling and calm we start to notice nature around us more. A sit spot is a great activity to do many times, it is surprising what we see when we are still. The sit spot can become a special place which is personal to each girl. See icebreakers to find out more.

### How do I do a nature scavenger hunt?

A scavenger hunt is a list of anything natural to search for outdoors. It is a great way to get the girls discovering what exciting natural treasures they can find all around them. It encourages them to look closely at shapes, colours, textures, size and pattern. Make a list of approximately 10 to 20 different natural items. Encourage them to collect objects found on the ground rather than just make it a list ticking exercise. Use a mixture of coloured items, textured items, seeds, odd-shaped sticks. You could include signs of animals such as feathers and spider webs. Use your imagination to make it more challenging, such as something that can't be photographed. You don't need to include images and you can just give them verbal instructions like find something prickly, tickly, smooth and rough. Encourage the group to look high and low; they may need to get really close. Using a magnifying glass can help. Ask the girls to work in small groups to create their own scavenger hunt sheet thinking about what they might find at their site, then swap sheets between groups. For older girls, get them to use smartphones or tablets to photograph it rather than collect it. Perhaps geo-locate special trees or wildlife nests?

### How do you do a successful BioBlitz?

Use a stopwatch or timer. Keep the girls calm. Choose an outdoor space with a variety of habitats such as a grassy area with some bushes, concrete, stones, and plant pots, with soil or larger spaces with log piles, trees and leaf litter. Locate a space where the girls can be seen at all times, or suggest that they do not wander too far away. Encourage the girls to write down species they know but also draw or take photos of ones they don't know so they can identify them later. Doing this near or around your unit meeting space highlights to the girls how much nature is around. To encourage more wildlife try out some of the ideas from Section 4.

## What is a minibeast?

Minibeasts are small animals such as spiders, slugs, caterpillars, beetles, snails and worms. Officially minibeasts are invertebrates which are animals without a backbone. In Britain, there are more than 25,000 species of known invertebrates. The term 'minibeast' is misleading as it suggests they are all very small and dangerous, which is not the case! Some can be harmful but the vast majority are harmless and play a very important role in our gardens, on farms and in their habitats. Some, like insects and spiders, have a thin, strong outside covering called an exoskeleton. This means they have protection for their bodies. They mostly have legs, and often wings. An insect is a minibeast with three body parts: head, thorax, and abdomen. They also have antennae and six legs.

## Top tips for a successful minibeast hunt.

- Minibeasts can be found anywhere outdoors and even indoors sometimes! Look high, low and under; especially on or around trees, shrubs, rocks, plants, soil and leaf litter (old leaves).
- Get some collecting equipment. You don't need to spend lots of money, even a clean yoghurt pot, a teaspoon and paintbrushes will do.
- Explain the activity outside, then give out the equipment. Explain to the girls how to use kit correctly and ask them what they think they might find.
- Use sticks to carefully move grass, leaves and vegetation away to spot minibeasts, or move away leaves and soil to 'look with your fingers'.
- When you spot a minibeast, hold the pot near it and carefully scoop the delicate minibeast into the pot with your stick, brush or spoon. Only keep one minibeast in the pot at a time.
- Always return the minibeasts carefully where you found them, and roll any logs or stones back as they were.
- Do not put flying insects or slimy ones in the pots, just use magnifying glasses to look more closely.
- If they can't find any, demonstrate how it's done or look in a different place. They really are everywhere!
- Encourage everyone to look closely at ones they are scared of, even if it's from a distance at first.
- All have a go at holding a worm or woodlouse, always share what you have found at the end or take special finds round to show everyone.

Use RSPB 'Spot-it!' sheets [Minibeasts 1](#) and [Minibeasts 2](#).

## How can we take wildlife photographs?

You don't need a fancy camera. Disposable, phone, point and click, they all work. Before you go out, practise taking photos. Does everyone know how to use the camera that they have? While you are out, have your camera handy so you can capture the shot or action. Take different shots: if you like something, try taking a close up, or try different angles, zoom in or out, if you don't have a zoom use your legs! Try photographing moving creatures, this can be tricky but can have great results. Practise pressing the button gently just before you take the photo so the camera has time to focus. Think about framing your subject; where the main element is in the shot, usually the best wildlife photos are where there is space around the main animal to leave or enter the shot – i.e. they are just off centre. Experiment with putting the subject of your photo in different places to see what works best. Lean on a friend or firm surface to stabilize your phone or camera to stop any shake. Try photographing in different lights at different times of the day; the evening sun can cast dramatic shadows. Find things you like or things that make you laugh.

## How do I safely forage?

If you are not confident, stick to things you can clearly identify such as blackberries or nettles. Plan and locate where you will collect the blackberries or nettles from before you go out. Leave plenty behind for others and for wildlife. Wild food is vital for the survival of the UK's wildlife and it is important to forage sustainably to ensure there is enough left for birds and others, and to allow the plant or fungus itself to produce seeds and spores that grow into the next generation. Please also be aware that you may not be the only person foraging. Do not take more than you plan to eat and only collect flowers, leaves, fruits and seeds where they are in abundance.



You need to minimise damage to the nearby habitat and species, so take care not to trample in any areas. Don't just collect everything you see. Make sure everyone knows what they are looking for. Uprooting plants is harmful so pick leaves or berries with care and moderation and avoid damaging the plant's roots.

Please do not pick any mushrooms or fungi. All wild plants are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). It is illegal to dig up or remove a plant (including algae, lichens and fungi) from the land on which it is growing without permission from the landowner or occupier. Some species are specially protected against picking, uprooting, damage and sale. A list of these can be found on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

## Can I forage in the town or city?

Yes you can. Often blackberries and nettles grow along hedgerows in scrubland, allotments and graveyards (great places for wildlife). Make sure they are not overhanging roads or dangerous to access and it's usually better not to pick fruits from low down where they could have been contaminated by animal urine. Ask around for local knowledge; often people know about a great spot they have been going to for years, or a secret sweet chestnut tree in a park. Ask landowners for their permission to forage.

## We have already done this!

We often hear this, but it IS amazing how many girls love to do a minibeast hunt again and again. The benefit is they may find different minibeasts or they may find the same, this helps fix into their minds just how many creatures are all around us. Research shows that more regular contact with nature improves health and wellbeing, but also gives young people empathy to look after and care for the natural world. So if you want a bit of variety, try doing the activities in a different way. Go to a different site; at a different time of year; in the dark or from a different angle or view. As the seasons change, so do the sights, sounds, the animals and plants you can see. A sit spot can be done each time you visit a residential or campsite. The girls may find their own special spot they can connect with over the years. Encourage older girls to keep a nature journal or notebook to record what they have noticed each time they do a sit spot or minibeast hunt. This could be a lovely record to keep in your busy bag that many girls have contributed to over the years.



## Section 7

# What's it all about?

### RSPB and Girlguiding North West England partnership

The partnership was formed through a mutual passion to help connect more young people to nature. We aim to inspire thousands of girls about wildlife and the natural environment, by supporting Girlguiding North West England volunteers to develop their skills and confidence in connecting young people with nature through:

- Providing events for girls.
- Developing training and resources for leaders.

The partnership will:

- Support Girlguiding North West England volunteers to develop their skills and confidence in connecting young people with nature and show they have increased in confidence.
- Give Girlguiding North West England's young members an increased number of connections to nature experiences, and through that provide evidence of an increased emotional affinity.
- Grow the number of nature based sessions led by Girlguiding North West England leaders each year at unit meetings.



### What is a connection to nature?

A connection to nature can be a combination of positive feelings and attitudes that people can have towards nature. You could call it loving nature, a sense of awe and wonder, caring for the environment.

### Why is this important?

The recent RSPB State of Nature report shows that nature in the UK is disappearing. 60 per cent of species assessed have declined over recent decades. People's growing disconnection from nature is a significant strategic threat to nature conservation, and with fewer young people developing their connection to nature, this will translate into fewer champions of the natural world in the future.

We need to restore and strengthen that connection to nature, and provide opportunities to connect and empower young people to take action to save nature.

The RSPB's vision is that young people are a more powerful force for conservation, becoming the generation delivering a world richer in nature. The RSPB believes connecting with nature should be a part of every young person's life. Getting all young people connected with nature develops deeply-held feelings and attitudes towards wildlife and the world we all live in. The RSPB has developed a methodology to measure connections to nature in young people, by counting connection to nature experiences.

A 'connection to nature experience' is a young person having an active first-hand experience of nature (this is a physical interaction with the environment) of a minimum of 30 minutes, where they learn something and have fun.

By completing this pack and the evaluation form you are providing us with the numbers of nature connections Girlguiding North West England has delivered.





## What next?

### Wild Challenge

Nature is an adventure waiting to be had. Register for the **RSPB's FREE Wild Challenge** and work your way towards awards through a heap of wild activities. This award scheme is all about investigating wildlife and doing practical things to give nature a safe and welcoming home. Feeling inspired? Why not try some **RSPB nature activities**.

### Visit an RSPB reserve

RSPB reserves are wonderful places to get closer to the natural world.

[rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z](https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z)

