

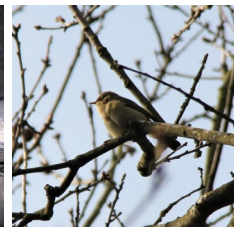
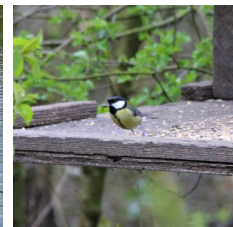
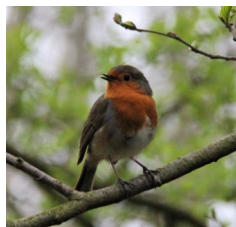
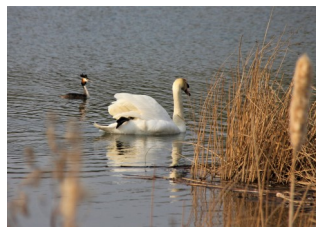
Bringing people, wildlife and wellbeing together

Nature Thoughts...

This year has certainly been a challenge so far! Covid-19 has thrown us all into a world of uncertainty, worry and change. The 'new normal' has been a phrase that we have heard so many times over the last few months but it is not an especially welcoming phrase – most of us just want to get back to our old 'normal'.

As a Senior Manager at WWT, this has been one of the most difficult situations the Trust has had to tackle in my 14 years working for the organisation. We have faced new challenges that we have never experienced before and situations that we have just never encountered - shutting down two visitor centres, putting a stop to all our activities and volunteering sessions was a first! Then working out how to restart everything has probably been even more difficult! Ever changing government guidance has been frustrating and complex to work through but finally we are starting to make progress and we are able to look forward.

However, it has been exhausting emotionally and mentally and I, for one, am fully aware that my health and wellbeing has suffered. Not being able to see friends and family has been tough and being restricted on when and where we can go out has been hard. Last week though, I was out for a run and a charm of goldfinches flew above me and into the hedgerow. At that point I felt a smile appear, despite the puffing and panting of trying to get to the end of my run! It's remarkable how nature can immediately make you feel just that little bit better. Despite Covid, nature continues to go about its business and that is one thing I have found comfort in – noticing the small changes which might normally have gone unnoticed. Visiting my local green space day in day out from early Spring to mid-summer has really made me take notice of the small daily changes which lead to the big seasonal changes. From being able to sneak in amongst the trees when they had no leaves and there was no undergrowth to now when those little paths are no longer accessible but the trees are covered in varying shades of green leaves, and from watching the swans starting to build their nest to watching them bring up their one remaining cygnet, nature continues to amaze me and bring a sense of calm and tranquillity to what continues to be a tricky world out there. The small wonders of nature can have such a huge impact on our wellbeing and Covid has really entrenched that for me both personally and professionally and I am really looking forward to the time we can get back to running our TEaM sessions so that more people can feel that benefit too.



TEaM does



Unscramble the letters to find some trees spotted in parks across Coventry...

Issue 19 answers...

wos wab-bow saw
cafft krien-craft knife
Thiltwing-whittling
Cacrholia-charcoal
bertim thich-timber hitch
chunv dote-dutch oven



A mindfulness moment...

Has anyone found a sit spot? Here's a meditation you could try when you're next there, or maybe on a walk. Spend a few moments grounding yourself, taking time to take some deep breaths and notice how your body feels, release any tension as you scan. Now think about the air you're breathing. Every breath we draw in contains the oxygen given out by the trees around us. As we exhale, that breath will in turn be inhaled, giving life else where. Each time your mind wonders, return to those breaths. Notice the other ways life is connected. Perhaps the sun shining on the puddle that will eventually find it's way back to rain. Where will that rain fall? For how many hundreds of millions of years have those water droplets been recycled? How many changes of state have they seen? Snow, ice, vapour, another puddle. How many oxygen giving trees have they watered? How many animals have drunk them? Notice how things are connected. How are they connected to you?
"Remember that nature is not an abstract place outside of you—you are part of nature." Micah Mortali

WILD-WORDSEARCH!

Australian Outback

Black swan

Camel

Cassowary

Crocodile

Echidna

Emu

Galah

Koala

Platypus

Redback spider

Sand goanna

Thorny devil

Wombat

Zebra finch

Image: Wonderlust.co.uk

T	Y	Z	W	O	S	U	P	Y	T	A	L	P	F	R
A	S	P	H	U	M	T	Y	P	U	A	D	Y	E	C
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L	T	I	N	H	E	S	O	Y	C	O	I	E	D	A
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I	N	L	A	N	W	P	A	O	L	N	W	L	G	W
D	N	H	R	Y	I	E	C	G	Y	A	F	W	A	S
O	I	O	B	D	R	G	E	R	U	S	O	B	F	K
C	H	R	E	E	O	H	O	M	P	M	M	K	I	C
O	C	R	Z	V	C	C	A	L	B	O	E	I	N	A
R	E	P	K	I	S	L	O	A	W	B	A	H	C	L
C	A	M	E	L	C	U	T	R	D	S	L	O	E	B

Challenge... Find the two hidden words that hint at next week's theme!

"Deep roots are not reached by the frost." J. R. R. Tolkien

Name It!

Can you identify the wildlife in the photos...



M Adams



Erin Green

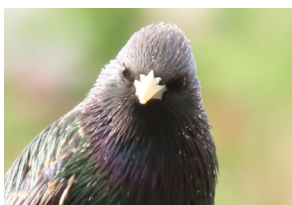
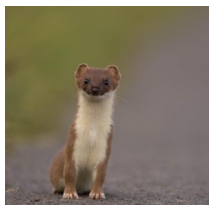


D Lovard

Issue 19 answers...

Name It!

1. Stoat 2. Starling 3. eryngium 'sea holly'



Missing Links...

Fog-Bill (**horn**)
Sky-Dance (**line**)
Spider-Page (**web**)
Chest-Cracker (**nut**)
Bull-Hopper (**frog**)

Missing Links...

Your task is to find the missing word that follows the first clue and precedes the second. For example, the answer to Rain-String could be 'Bow' giving Rainbow and Bowstring.

Bird'-Ball

Monkey-Hatch

King-Man

Wood-Room

Cow-\$hod

Answers next week!

You can also follow TEaM on social media for a Daily Dose of Nature...



The Environment and Me



theenvironmentandme



TheEnviroandMe

CLOSE-UP WITH BIRDS OF PREY

This week we meet two owls: 'Juliet' the Barn Owl and 'Dotty' the African Spotted Eagle Owl. Although they are similar species they are very different in terms of size, hunting technique and native country.

JULIET THE BARN OWL

At some time in our lives many of us will have caught a ghost-like glimpse of a Barn Owl hunting in the twilight. Typically, they hunt at dusk or at night by 'quartering' a rough grassland field listening for small mammals such as shrews, voles, mice and even rats moving about under the thick grasses. Barn Owls hunt primarily by sound and are equipped with the most extraordinarily sensitive hearing (despite their ears being hidden). In addition, their 'facial discs' collect all available light and sound and relay that to the owl's eyes and ears. Typically, they may catch 3-4 small mammals per night which they swallow whole. Unable to digest fur or bone, they then regurgitate (cast) the waste in the form of a pellet. Examination of these pellets, which may contain intact skulls, reveal the owl's recent diet. The two sexes are very difficult to tell apart but the clearest way is to look for darker plumage and small speckles on the breast of the female (the male's breast being white).

Another adaptation of the Barn Owl is its plumage and mode of flight which combine to make the bird almost completely silent on the wing. In addition, they have long legs which they extend forwards at the last moment in order to punch down through the long grass, pouncing on any small mammal which is moving beneath. Their razor-sharp talons are ideal for grasping and killing prey with one of their talons adapted with a comb-like structure for preening their facial-discs.



Ally closely inspecting 'Juliet's' beautiful plumage

Barn Owls are comparatively short-lived (only around 3-4 years) and do not 'hoot' but rather screech or hiss. They have broad wings up to 85cms in width and weigh in at around 350g with the males slightly smaller than the females. If a Barn Owl's weight drops to around 290g then it would be classed as emaciated whilst if it got as low as 250g the bird would be in danger of dying. Once more this underlines the connection between a healthy habitat and a healthy bird.

Finally, at the 'Bird on the Hand Falconry Centre' Juliet is trained to carry out an unusual task. She is trained to fly silently down the aisle of a church and deliver the wedding rings to the bride and groom! Lucky for them Juliet is not a Magpie!

'DOTTY' THE AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL

The African Eagle Owl is much bigger than the Barn Owl but is still one of the smaller Eagle Owls with a wing span of 100-140cms and a weight of 450-850g. It can be found in Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa to Kenya) and also in the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia and Yemen), where it hunts small mammals, birds, bats, reptiles and insects found in dry forests, savannah, grasslands and rocky hills. The African Eagle Owl also hunts in a unique way, especially when in wooded areas, flying silently at dusk or at night, they tuck their wings back close to their bodies when swooping through networks of branches to pounce with long, extended legs and broad talons to catch their prey.



Dotty on the pounce!



'Dotty' showing-off her long legs and razor-sharp talons

African Eagle Owls mate for life and can live 10-20 years, much of which they spend as solitary birds. They mate in February, making a nest on the ground in which the female lays and incubates 2-4 eggs which hatch after 32 days. The male hunts whilst the female continues to guard the nest and will bring back prey for the family even if he is close to starvation (what a guy!). After 4-6 weeks the young start exploring outside the nest and they are ready fly after 5 weeks. They become truly independent of their parents after a further 5 weeks.

During our day with the birds of prey 'Dotty' flew along a line of us so close that her wings touched our heads as she silently passed and also demonstrated her hunting techniques by swooping between our legs to pounce with outstretched talons onto a meat lure.

We had a wonderful experience with Juliet and Dotty: two truly remarkable owls.

Next week we meet 'Dolly' the Harris Hawk

Your nature...

A few weeks back we featured a really special article from our friend and colleague about the gardening project her daughter, who struggles with anxiety, had embarked upon. Towards the end she said “I don’t know whether we will end up with an abundance of beans, peas, carrots and potatoes—a few will be good enough. I do know that each achievement (no matter how small it seems) matters a great deal”.

She recently shared these photos with us...

Those that tend the TEaM plot know this is no small achievement and it does matter a great deal: from bare ground to jars crammed with pickled beetroot. We hope she’s allowing herself to feel super proud; she’s a very inspirational young woman.



From one inspiring young woman to another, allotment member Becky sent us this beautiful photograph of the sun setting over Allesley park recently. The colours are stunning. She also shared these snaps of some of the nature she spotted on a walk near Baginton...

Stay
connected and
send us your
nature spots
and gardening
achievements!



Feature Species!!

Swallow (Hirundo rustica)

Swallows are truly incredible little creatures. They are migratory birds and each year they make the most phenomenal journey. Twice.

At the end of the summer, British swallows (many of which are only a few weeks old) set off for South Africa. They travel south through France, The Pyrenees and eastern Spain until they come to the Mediterranean Sea. They continue their journey with some birds taking the most direct route: straight across the Sahara. Others take the less direct route and travel down the west coast of Africa avoiding the perils of the desert. This longer route comes with its own difficulties—it’s much further to fly for tired little wings and they risk meeting storms blowing in from the Atlantic. Whichever route is taken, swallows are at risk of dying from exhaustion or

Key Facts...

Length: 17-19cm

Weight: 16-25g

Wingspan: 32-25cm

Maximum flight speed: 35mph

Food: insects

Habitat: urban/suburban, upland, farmland, wetland, grassland

UK breeding: 860,000 territories

UK Conservation status: **green**

starvation if they are unable to find enough food to keep energy levels up, after all, they have an ~8000 mile journey to complete, clocking up around 200 miles each day. They spend the winter in South Africa, forming flocks of hundreds of birds. Next spring, they will make that same journey in reverse all the way back to the same spot to breed.

It is no surprise that swallows have become such a symbol of hope and loyalty. In Ancient Greece, the swallow was associated with Aphrodite, the Goddess of love. Historically, swallows are important symbols for seafarers. In the early days of sailing and exploration, long journeys at sea were treacherous. As swallows always return home, outward bound sailors were tattooed with a single swallow, believing they would guide them home to loved ones. If they died at sea, the swallow would carry their soul to heaven. They were also a mark of distance travelled—one swallow for 5000 nautical miles.



Rosie Charter



**Stay
safe**

