

# NATURE DAYS

## Activity 1- Window Sights.

Time to take a closer look at what's outside your window! Find a comfy spot with a view outside and spend a few minutes looking around. How many of these things can you see?

- ☐ A flower
- ☐ Two kinds of tree
- ☐ Three kinds of bird
- ☐ Something very old
- ☐ A spider's web
- ☐ Something blue
- ☐ Something flying
- ☐ A piece of litter
- ☐ ? Something you don't know the name of
- ☐ ☁ A cloud shaped like an animal
- ☐ Something that makes a noise
- ☐ A pond, river, loch or the sea

## Activity 2- Window Sounds.

Tune into the sounds outside your window...

Things you will need:

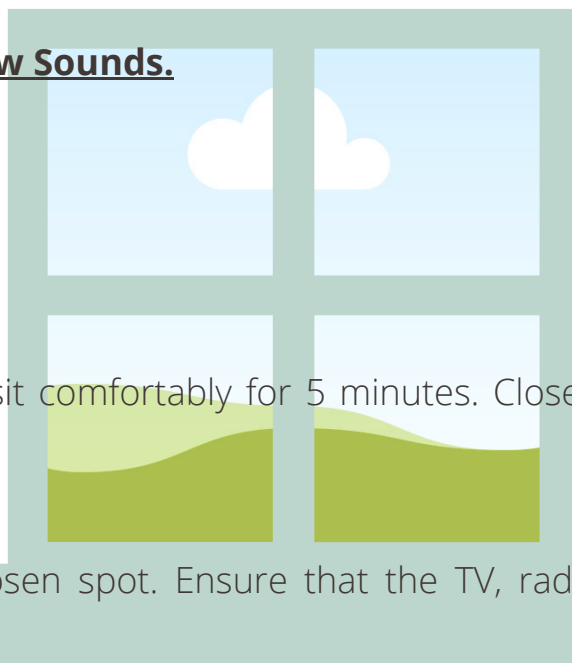
- ☐ A notepad (or scrap paper) and a pencil
- ☐ A watch/clock/the timer on your phone
- ☐ A spot away from distractions where you can sit comfortably for 5 minutes. Close to an open window is ideal, or even your garden.
- ☐ Your ears

Your task: Make yourself comfortable in your chosen spot. Ensure that the TV, radio and anything else potentially distracting is turned off.

Set your timer for 5 minutes and listen to the sounds you can hear. Write these down in the order you hear them

When your timer stops, look down at your list of sounds. How many did you hear? Can you separate them into a list of natural and man-made sounds?

Report back to us! We would love to find out what your ears managed to pick out. Were many of the sounds natural? Were there any you couldn't identify?



### Activity 3- Make a Rain Gauge.

☐☐ Today we will turn a plastic bottle into a rain gauge to help us keep track of our lovely Scottish weather!

Things you will need:

- ☐ An empty 2 litre plastic bottle
- ☐ A ruler
- ☐ A pair of scissors
- ☐ A kitchen knife (with parental supervision)
- ☐ A few candles you no longer want, or some shop bought candle wax
- ☐ A permanent marker

Remove the label from around your bottle.

1



Cut the top of your bottle off. Cut from around a third of the way down the bottle – where the sides of the bottle run straight down rather than curving in. I used a kitchen knife to start this off, then scissors.

2



3

Put the top of the bottle aside for now. This is where the candle wax comes in! As you will see, the bottom of the bottle is uneven. You will need a flat surface for the water to sit on. The melted candle wax will fill the grooves in the bottom and produce a flat surface. You could also use jelly for this

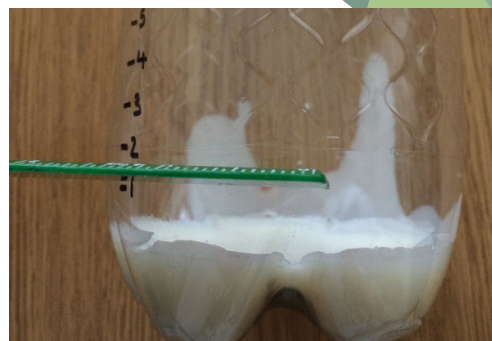
Melt your candle wax. I lit a large candle, allowed time for the wax to melt and then poured the wax into plastic Tupperware that I was happy to sacrifice. I then poured the liquid wax into my bottle so that it completely filled the grooves. Unfortunately I then ran out of wax! For your bottles I recommend you fill the bottom of the bottle, all the way up to where the grooves finish (Look at where my ruler is in the last photo to see what I mean).

4



Once the wax is completely dry and has formed a solid layer, take your ruler and line zero up with the top of the wax. Use your permanent marker to make a line every 1cm. If you want to be really accurate with your readings you can mark every 5mm.

5



Put the top of the bottle upside down into the rest of your bottle and ta-da, you have a DIY rain gauge! Put it outside, away from the shelter of buildings and trees. The weight of the wax should keep it steady, but if you think it may blow over you can bury it or pop it in a plant pot. Check your rain gauge at the same time every day, record how much water there is and remember to empty it after you've checked it each time! Keep us updated with how much rain you record...

6





#### Activity 4- Photo Fridays.

□ With spring ready to burst into action in the Highlands, we would love you to record the changes happening near you! □

Step 1: □ Every Friday we are going to ask you to take a picture of the same view so we can compare them in a few weeks. We are using the view across our beautiful loch. You don't need to share the photo here, just save it somewhere safe.

Step 2: □ Now we would like you to describe the view! Share 5 or 6 words in the comments below that describe what you can see. You might want to think about the colours, how leafy the trees are or whether you can see any wildlife!

choppy,  
contrast,  
bare



purple,  
cold,  
cloudy

We will do this again next week and see if anything has changed... Maybe we will have some leaves on the trees by then! □

#### Activity 5- Guess Who!

It's time for our 'Guess Who' animal quiz! □□□□

Every week, we will post a picture of part of an animal and it is your challenge to guess what that animal is. It will always be an animal found in the Scottish Highlands. Over the next few weeks, they may get harder too! □ Give it a go...can you guess what animal is in the picture? If you would like to, please let us know if you guess it ➡



The answer will be revealed at the end of this document!

## Activity 6- Indoor Vegetable Patch.

□ Kerri's attempt at small space fruit growing... □

Hi everyone, it's Kerri here. Since working from home I have decided to attempt growing some fruit. I live in a very small studio flat with no outside space, so this will be quite a challenge! I thought I'd share my progress with you all, if I can manage to successfully grow some food in my tiny flat then I'm hopeful most of you will be able to do the same!

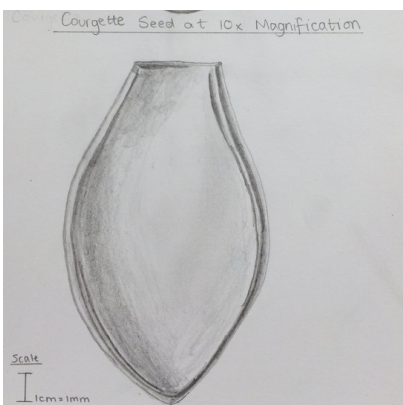
So, what am I growing? Before the shops closed, I managed to buy some bell pepper and courgette seeds from B & Q. I am also going to save the seeds from my shop bought plum tomatoes and plant those. Yes, that really works!

Today I sowed the seeds for my bell pepper and courgette plants. These came in a handy little kit containing the seeds, some compost and a growing tray. This kit isn't necessary though. In the past I have sown seeds in old mushroom trays. Now is the time to raid your recycling trays for alternative seed trays! I have rescued a grape punnet from our recycling box, I'm saving that for when I need to put these seedlings into bigger containers.

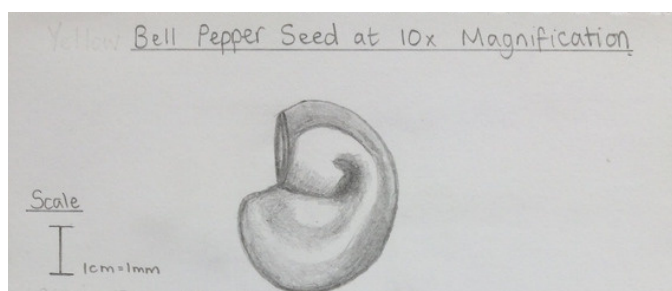


You can turn food growing into an ongoing family science project. Here are a couple of activities to make the whole process more scientific:

□ Before planting your seeds, make detailed drawings of them. You can see my attempts below! If you have different types of seeds this will enable you and your children to closely observe the difference in seed shape, size and colour. There is a surprising level of diversity in seeds once you start to look!



**My  
pictures  
of the  
seeds I  
planted!**



□ Start a daily recording sheet. The one I have made (photo number 5) records the amount of water I have used, the height if the growth and the structure of the growth (leaf + stem shape).



I'll keep you updated with how my seeds are coming along. In the meantime, I am very open to helpful tips. If you are attempting to grow your own food then we would love to hear how you're getting on.

### **Activity 7- Guess Who!**

It's time for another 'Guess Who' animal quiz! □□□□

Each week we are posting part of an animal from the Scottish Highlands to see if you can guess who it is. Over the next few weeks, they may get harder too! □



The whole picture and the animal's name will be at the end of this document!





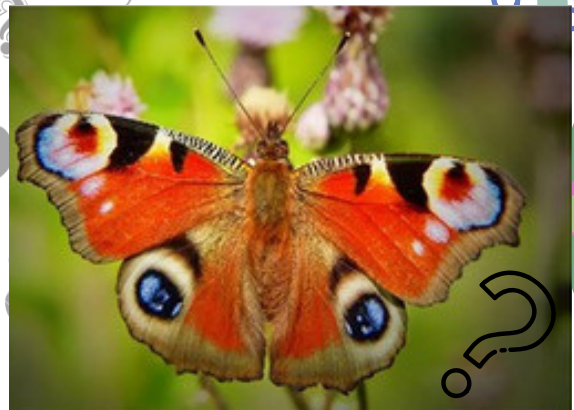
## Activity 8- Animal Trickery!

Just like we do on April Fool's Day, animals play tricks on each other! We'd like you to do some research on animal trickery, sometimes called mimicry, and report back with your findings.

Why do animals try to trick each other?

Now have a think about **how** animals trick each other. What techniques do you think different animals use?

Below are some pictures of British animals that use trickery. Find out which kind they use and why!



HOVERFLY

PEACOCK  
BUTTERFLY

ELEPHANT HAWK  
MOTH CATERPILLAR

CUCKOO


## Activity 9- Wildcat Enclosure Design!

The Scottish wildcat (*Felis silvestris silvestris*) Enclosure Design Activity 🐈📐


Aigas Field Centre are part of a nationwide conservation breeding programme, breeding healthy wildcats for future release. It is a busy job for Staff Naturalist Ben Jones, who had a particularly big task last year of managing the build of a new enclosure for our breeding pair, Brora and Fergus.

Ben had to get creative in order to make the enclosure as enriching and natural for the wildcats as possible. The final design (partly shown in the picture below) included ropes and wood to climb on, boxes to sit up high in, dens made of stone and wood, small trees, shrubs and a mini pond. So far Brora and Fergus are loving their new abode!







Why don't you have a go at designing an enclosure for wildcats 🐾 You can use the template below or go freestyle! Remember to make your enclosure similar to the preferred habitat of a wildcat and don't forget to draw in your wildcat(s) too! 🐈



### My Wildcat Enclosure




What your wildcat might need:

-  A Den
-  Water
-  Food
-  Toys
-  Vegetation
-  Climbing Pole

What else would make your wildcat really happy?

\*\*Don't forget to draw your wildcat in the enclosure too!





Linnhe, one of the Aigas Wildcats!



Brora and Fergus's enclosure



## Activity 10- Draw a Picture of a Bird!

We wanted to set a challenge... how well do you know your birds and how good are you at remembering detail?!

What you will need:

- Pencil / pen
- Paper
- An outline of a garden bird
- A way of timing 30 seconds

Trace the outline of the garden bird below (or you can find more online easily). If you can't do that then you can draw one freehand, or if you have a magazine with a bird in it, put this against a window with paper on top and trace the outline.

### ★Challenge★

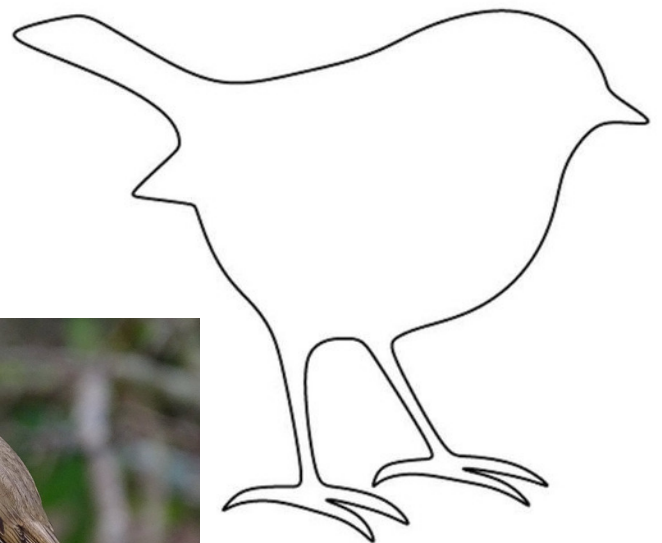
Below are pictures of two common garden birds, the robin and the great tit.

1. Have a look at one of these pictures closely for 30 seconds.
2. Cover up the picture
3. Try to colour in (or shade) the main colours of the bird onto your outline.
4. Once completed, check back with the picture
5. If you would like, let us know how you did!

You may be surprised how difficult it is to get it exactly right!

Have a go with the other picture and any of your favourite birds too.

□ Rachel Buckley



□ Emilie Shuttlewood



## Answers Sheet!

**'Activity 5'** was a mountain hare!

Did you know that the mountain hare is the native hare of Scotland, unlike the brown hare that was brought over by the Romans. In the spring, mountain hares will begin 'boxing matches'. This behaviour is actually the female and male squaring up to each other so the female can choose the strongest and fittest male to mate with.



□ Emilie Shuttlewood

**'Activity 7'** was goldfinch!

Adult goldfinches have a distinct red face, but juveniles look much plainer and can be difficult to identify. Luckily they all have a bright yellow wing patch as pictured earlier! They have quite a long beak which helps them get into tricky plants like thistles □□



□ Milo Mole

## Animal Trickery Notes:

**Camouflage** is a very common form of trickery. Camouflage allows animals to blend in with the environment around them, making it difficult for predators to find them. A good example of this is our mountain hares which turn white in winter to blend in with the snow on our mountains. Unfortunately, warmer winters means less snow, so mountain hares can really stand out against the heather and grass they are trying to hide in.

**Mimicry** is when a plant or animal has adapted to act or look like something else. For example, a poplar hawk-moth's wings make it look like a dead leaf, and no predator would want to eat a dead leaf!



## Animal Trickery Notes (continued):

**Eye spots.** Many butterflies, moths and their caterpillars have large circles on their bodies that look like eyes. These may startle a predator and scare it away. Elephant hawk moths use this tactic, they will make their eye spots bigger when threatened and thrash their front end about in a menacing fashion! In other cases, like peacock butterflies, eye spots are cleverly positioned on a part of the body that is less vulnerable. This means that if a predator attacks that part of the body, the animal will probably survive.

**Brood parasitism** is one of the most impressive forms of animal trickery! Brood parasites are birds that lay their eggs in the nests of another species and leave the other female to raise their chick.

We see this in the common cuckoo, a species which visits us every summer. Female cuckoos target the nests of smaller species, including meadow pipits and reed warblers. They wait for the female to leave the nest, quickly sneak in and lay one egg, within around 10 seconds! Cuckoos look a bit like sparrowhawks when flying, which is thought to scare away the female victim, allowing access to the nest.

When the cuckoo chick hatches, it swiftly get to work pushing the other eggs or chicks out of the nest so that it is the only one left. The foster parents are completely fooled and keep feeding the ridiculously big chick until it can fend for itself.



Can you see how this cuckoo looks a bit like a sparrowhawk?



Notice the eye spots on this peacock butterfly ☐

**We hope you enjoyed these activities!**

**We'd love to hear what you thought, or if you have any more suggestions via any of the methods below:**