



**UNCOVER**  
wild worlds  
on your  
doorstep



**MASTER**  
art inspired  
by nature



**MEET**  
the female  
farmers saving  
nature

# Wingbeat

April 2022

Written by young people... for young people

**BE A  
LEADER OF  
CHANGE**

Make your mark  
and help save  
the planet



giving  
nature  
a home

RSPB Phoenix is the teenage membership of the RSPB

# Waste NOT

**1/4** of diet-related emissions come from 'optional' food – coffee, alcohol, cakes and sweets

Try **climatarianism**, a flexible approach to making your diet more carbon- and planet-friendly

**W**hat we eat has a huge impact on the planet. Eating a plant-based diet cuts about 20–30% of carbon emissions, but some vegan foods can still have a significant impact on the Earth (think avocados, cocoa and almonds).

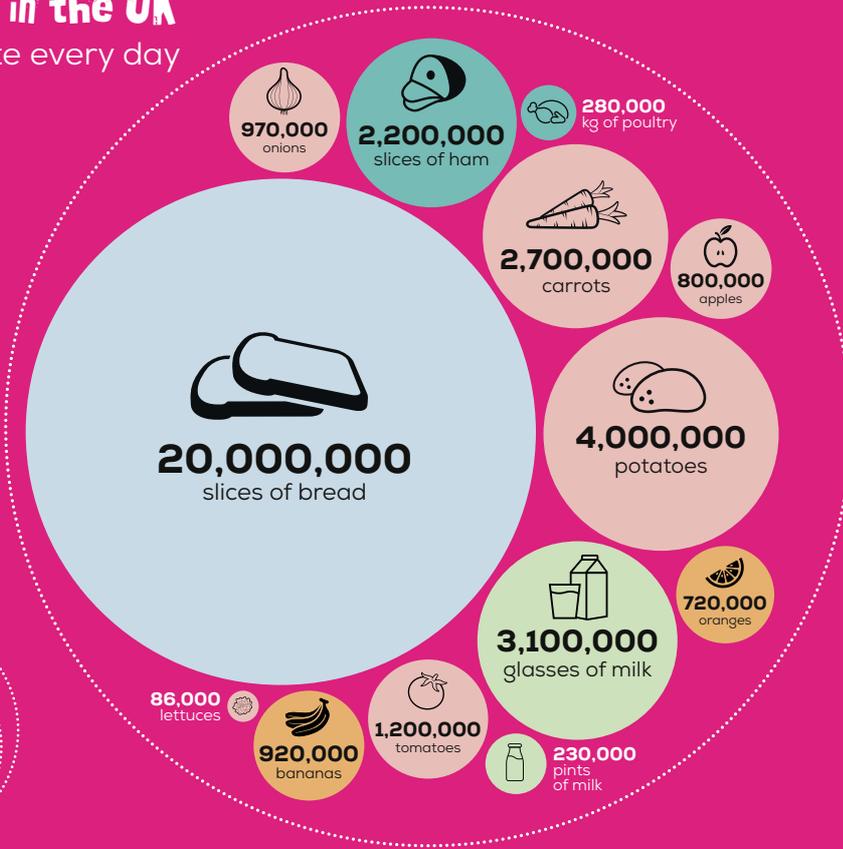
It's important to think about the air miles on your food. Opt for a low-meat diet, and choose local and seasonal foods where possible. Making any change you can to what you eat to help the planet is a brilliant step to take, and making sure you don't waste food is the most important change of all!

Food waste is a massive problem in the modern world, but the good news is, it is getting better. We can all do our bit to help the planet by choosing what we eat and not wasting food. Here is everything you need to know, plus some top tips to cut waste.

## Food waste in the UK

What we waste every day

- dairy
- fruit
- meat
- vegetables
- other



**8** FULL MEALS wasted and thrown out by every UK household per week

**400+** per year

**69KG** PER PERSON

**165KG** PER HOUSEHOLD

**244KG** PER FAMILY

**£14-£19** BILLION THROWN AWAY per year

## TIME FOR CHANGE

It's easy when you know how. We speak to youth activists for inspiration on starting your own eco-movement. Whatever you want to do – from setting up an eco group in school to a national organisation, you can make it happen. Check out page 8.



**Abby Ray** Wingbeat editor

### Get in touch

- [youth@rspb.org.uk](mailto:youth@rspb.org.uk)
- [RSPB Love Nature](#)
- Join us on TikTok @RSPB
- [rspb\\_love\\_nature](#)

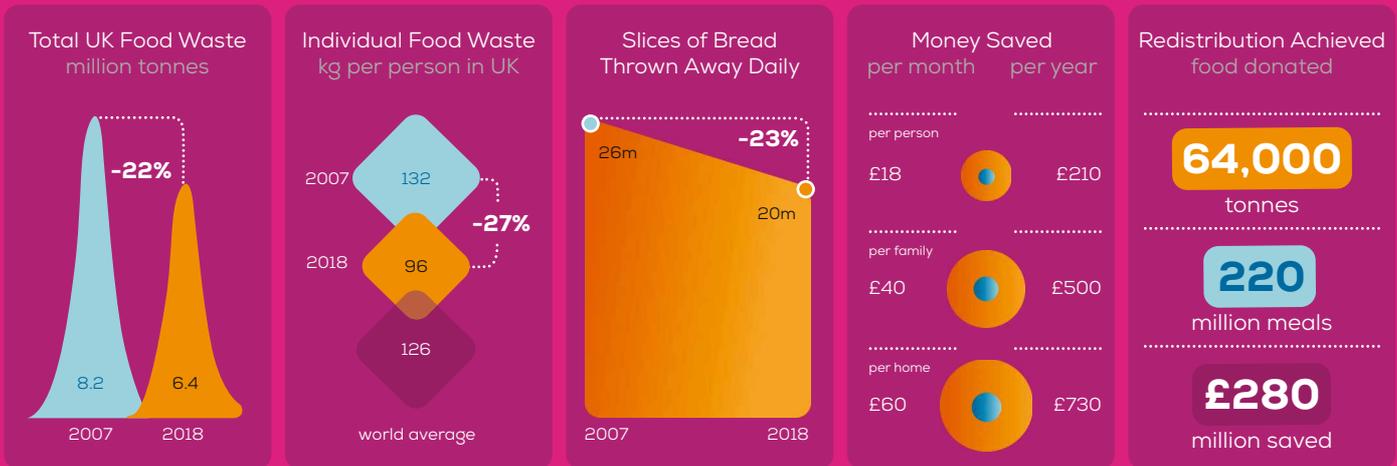
# HAVE YOUR SAY!

# If food waste was a country, it'd be the fourth biggest for emissions

greenhouse gas emissions per year



## The good news? We're already reducing waste in the UK



### What can you do?

#### 1. Make a meal plan

Draw up a weekly schedule with your family and only buy what you need.

#### 2. Measure your portions

Weigh out foods such as rice and pasta so you don't cook too much.

#### 3. Freeze for later

From bread that's about to go off to leftover fruit and veg, stick anything you don't eat in the freezer to use later.

#### 4. Clean out your fridge

One piece of rotting fruit can make everything else go manky, so clean out your fridge.

#### 5. Have a bin audit

Take a quick peek to see what you are throwing out. If your bin is bursting with salad buy less next time you shop.

#### 6. Get creative

From broccoli stalks to vegetable peelings, check out online recipes to use them for stocks.

Wingbeat magazine is all about the most important people saving the planet – YOU! We would love to hear your thoughts on what makes a great magazine. **Take our quick survey** to tell us what you love about *Wingbeat*, what issues you care about and what we could do better! Plus **you could win this amazing nature camera kit** to capture all the wildlife on your local patch. Enter now!

Take part at [rspb.org.uk/wingbeatsurvey](https://rspb.org.uk/wingbeatsurvey), closing date **1 May 2022**.



# FEATHERY FABLES AND WINGED TALES

**Why do we associate robins with Christmas? Why do we think owls are wise?**  
**Andrew Millham** casts an eagle eye over centuries of feathered folklore

## Robin redbreast

'Ruddock', 'robin redbreast', we humans have always loved these cheeky garden chaps, and when it became fashionable to give birds human names in the 15th century, we decided to call them Robert, Robin for short.

Before the 15th century, tales told of brave little robins fanning a fire to keep baby Jesus warm, or soothing a wren that stole fire from heaven, and scorching their breasts in the process. Robins have always been the good guys in our stories. Then, in the 19th century they started to appear on Christmas cards. The reason? Victorian postmen and their bright-red coats became a symbol of the season, and they were nicknamed 'robins'.

When I was younger, I was led to believe that robins were Father Christmas' helpers. I thought they delivered letters and, as they were singing all year round, they must be reporting back whether I was being naughty or nice! Robins only live for around 13 months, a surprisingly short lifespan. But, as my brother pointed out to me, at least they always get to enjoy one Christmas.



## Jenny wren

Once upon a time, all the birds in the world gathered together to decide which should be king, so the story goes. They decided that whoever could fly the highest could reign. Of course a strong eagle was the winner, but then a smaller bird flew above him, from where it had hidden on his back. It was a wren.

Angry at her cunning, the large birds said instead whoever could dive lowest would be king. The wren saw a mouse hole and dived inside, she had won again.

For days, the large birds took turns standing guard at the hole, waiting to kill the wren. One morning, the owl guarding the hole was momentarily blinded by the rising sun and the wren quickly escaped. The wren remains the king of the birds, but she still hides to stay safe. All the other birds visit her for advice, as she is so clever and cunning.

Noisy little wrens are common in the UK, but are usually heard more than seen. As they are most noisy when protecting their nests, wrens are usually thought of as female, hence Jenny. Some folklore tales even claim robins and wrens are husband and wife!

## Sweet nightingale

Nightingales have a powerful and complex song that's been blowing our socks off for thousands of years. From the Old English *galan*, meaning 'to sing', *galan* evolved to *nihtegale*, 'night songstress'. There is no middle ground when it comes to the folkloric portrayal of the nightingale; it's either a singing angel or a bringer of woe. Throughout literature, from Homer's *Odyssey* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the nightingale's song has been interpreted as a lament: the soundtrack of tragedy. Meanwhile Romantic-era poets (early- to mid-19th century) viewed the nightingale as an artist in its own right and associated this bird with creativity, virtue and nature's purity – the spokesperson for all wildlife.

Nightingales are a symbolic bird in Ukraine. A folk tale describes how the nightingale began its life in India, until one bird visited Ukraine. Upon hearing the local people's sadness, it sang to cheer them up. Since then, nightingales are said to visit the country every spring to sing with people and spread joy.



**Share your stories**  
What tall tales have you heard about our much-loved birds?  
Turn to p2



## Wise old owl

To ancient civilisations, a bird that only flew at night meant death, foreboding and darkness. Old superstitions said an owl flying past the window of a sick person meant imminent death, or the screech of an owl meant bad weather to come. However, not all associations with owls were negative. In Ancient Greece owls were the symbol of Athena, goddess of wisdom, and the idea of owls with their large, solemn eyes being wise continues to this day. The 1875 nursery rhyme 'A Wise Old Owl' was even used on a WWII poster created by the US military to encourage secrecy. The rhyme went as follows:

"A wise old owl lived in an oak, the more he saw the less he spoke, the less he spoke the more he heard, soldier be like that old bird."



### Meet the reporter

Andrew Millham is an environmental science graduate and Forest School leader with Essex Wildlife Trust. He hopes to become a wildlife writer.



### Swan song

People turning into swans and back again, from beautiful princesses to gods, is a story told again and again in Greek myths, Irish legends and everything in-between. Legend says this largely silent bird will sing the most beautiful song ever heard while it dies, also known as a swan song.



### Puffin forecast

These bizarre birds have baffled humans for generations. In the middle ages Muslim and Jewish scholars seemed unable to decide if puffins were humans or fish. What? Irish folklore says they're reincarnated monks, while Icelandic lore says puffins are expert at predicting weather!



### Special delivery

We all know where babies come from: that's right, storks. This story has lasted for hundreds of years across many cultures. In German folklore, storks drop babies down chimneys in return for sweets. It's thought this idea sprung from storks being good parents themselves.

## Find your perfect patch

**FIND IT** An overgrown footpath, a tiny park or a forgotten pond, your patch doesn't have to be a fancy nature reserve to hold some amazing nature surprises. Find somewhere nearby you can visit often.

**VISIT IT** Even the smallest place transforms through the seasons. Visit all year round, in all weathers. You'll soon get to know what's common and what's a five-star find.

**STUDY IT** Record what you see. Write or sketch in a notebook, or get more technical and keep track in an app with photos. Note exactly what you see, where, the time, date and weather. The more detail the better.

**HELP IT** Do regular litter picks and record your wildlife data with organisations such as Butterfly Conservation, the Mammal Society and the British Trust for Ornithology. Even small actions can help the planet we love.



## A coastal lookout

There is a huge variety of wildlife throughout the seasons on my patch. I'm particularly lucky that I can see dolphins and whales from the coast. Once, I watched a nuthatch defend its chicks from a woodpecker, which was incredible to see! **Kaite Monk, East Lothian**

## Share your finds!

From clifftop walks to inner city parks, we want to see what you've found! Turn to p2



## A hidden gem

I love my patch because it's the underdog. When you think of Welsh wildlife, you think of Anglesey or Snowdonia. But right on my doorstep I can get a whole host of creatures, especially if you know the right spots. Depending on your luck you might see a goldcrest. Once, I saw a dozen or so kingfishers dancing around in Llyn Coed y Dinas. Watching one dive into the water a few metres away from me in the hide was one of my favourite moments. I also enjoy visiting the Gigrin Kite Centre here, which helped prevent the local extinction of red kites. At this spot you can see hundreds of these birds in a matter of minutes!

**Anna Jones, Powys**

# Where the wild things are

**No matter where you live, look hard enough and there are amazing things to be found on your doorstep. Guaranteed**



## An urban oasis

It's summer in Ruislip Woods. The groves of dappled sunlight are packed with marbled white butterflies, while sparrowhawks search for prey. Purple emperors tumble from the treetops, soon the redstarts and spotted flycatchers will pass by on migration. Out on the lido, swallows and house martins skim for insects, returning to the same nests each year, and migratory hobbies swoop down from the trees to snatch the occasional dragonfly. Common terns search for fish, goldfinches perch in the trees and, a clamouring call, London's ring-necked parakeets announce their presence.

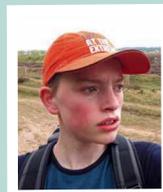
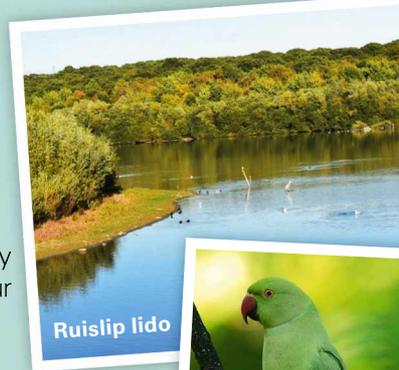
My patch is Ruislip Woods, a large area of woodland, wetland and grassland in north-west London. It is London's first National Nature Reserve, a Site of Specific Scientific Interest and the largest area of continuous woodland in the capital. Straddling urban and rural areas, this place holds many surprises throughout the year; in particular, a vast array of bird species.

Ruislip Woods actually consists of four woodlands: Park Wood, a huge ancient woodland; Copse Wood; Mad Bess Wood (named after a fierce landowner!); and Bayhurst Wood Country Park, separated from the rest of the reserve by a main road. The trees making these woodlands are hornbeam, beech, wild service and oak. The whole place actually originated as wildwood – woods that formed after the last ice age.

In recent years, my patch has had its fair share of local rarities: hawfinches, short-eared owls, a grasshopper warbler, Arctic terns and great white egrets.

Ruislip Woods and its habitats are a magical place, and I feel very lucky to have a place with such stunning birdlife on my doorstep. I'm excited to discover more surprises every season!

**Kabir Kaul, London**



## A resting place

My patch is a cemetery, so it hasn't been touched for years. It's full of old trees and, although it's small, it's packed with wildlife. The cemetery is also relatively unknown – most days I have the whole place to myself. Although my patch is beautiful, it doesn't boast many rare species. I have, however, seen green woodpeckers, fieldfares and a fox there before.

**Jannis Koulman, Norfolk**



## A harbour hideaway

My patch is an area between North Foreland and Ramsgate Harbour! In winter it's great because offshore I get auks, divers, scoters and loads of turnstones, purple sandpipers and curlews. In summer it's great because I have breeding fulmar!

**Jenny Allan, Kent**



Turnstone



Fulmar



# Be a changemaker

Want to change the world? Activist **Amy Bray** shares tips from the young eco leaders protecting our planet

Imagine if every single person in the world went outside and picked up five pieces of litter. Just think how clean it would suddenly be! It's not quite as easy, but if we could all live in a way that benefited people and planet, it would be incredible what we could achieve. Our individual choices can help pave the path of our future. And you are one of those people.

When I was 12 I became very worried about the threats our oceans face, so I emailed my MP about plastic-bag taxes, phoned Sainsbury's about their unsustainable tuna and took a cardboard SpongeBob to the summit of Helvellyn to highlight BP's destructive drilling practices. I also decided to bring change closer to home, and challenged my family to go plastic-free. I realised that individuals can truly change and influence our world.

After changing the way I was living, in 2019 I decided to go a step further and founded environmental charity Another Way. The aim of the charity is to inspire others to make changes to their way of life. Another Way has delivered talks to over 4,000 people about sustainable living, planted 12,000 trees with our community, established two successful zero-waste shops and created numerous online resources to help people reduce their carbon footprints and waste.

Setting up an organisation such as this might seem daunting, but if you're passionate about saving the planet you can do it, too! Start by organising a litter

pick or getting your friends together to write a letter to your MP about an issue you care about. You never know where it might lead! You don't have to do it all at once and you don't have to do it perfectly. Meet some of the young people who are out there changing the world:

## Teach the Future

**Karis McIntyre** was 14 when she joined the climate strikes. She helped launch the Teach the Future campaign to refocus education around the climate emergency, and drafted the first-ever student-written Education Bill. She explains: "We used petitions and grew a social

**"It doesn't matter whether you are the youngest, I don't think it means your opinion should be of any less value."**

media following. The SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability) helped us organise our time and meetings. Now we have staff roles who have responsibility, co-ordination support, and set times to work. Helping the Bill be written and working to make it legislation has been really incredible."

### Lucy Lapwing

**Lucy Hodson** uses Instagram to share her fascination with nature. "When I was 23, I was diagnosed with a cancer called Hodgkin's lymphoma. I had to take a break from work for treatment, so while I did, started learning about UK wildlife," she says. "Sharing your love for something passionately, and not being afraid to be silly or weird, helps others connect with you and share your interest. I've not deliberately tried to build my following, I just share my joy (and frustrations) honestly and with passion – enthusiasm is contagious! The more 'real' and honest you are, the better – it's not about numbers. I hope to be a tiny cog in a wheel connecting people with nature!"



### Bog Babes

**Amelia Hayward** started Bog Babes to educate people on the importance of peatlands for carbon storage, wildlife and water quality while she was an RSPB intern.



"It was tricky to know where to start. I found it helpful to sit down and make a plan with defined aims, goals and timelines for all the ideas we had. It can be quite overwhelming if you've got lots of ideas for future events, social media posts or campaigns, so having it all laid out before you start is very useful!"

### Beach Guardian

**Emily Stevenson** (our cover star) created an art installation out of plastics she found on the beach in Year 7. Now, 14 years later, her marine conservation social enterprise Beach Guardian, co-founded



with her dad, engages, educates and empowers against plastic pollution. Organising beach clean events, she has over 30,000 followers and a reach of 8 million people.

"The most difficult times are always followed by the most rewarding," she explains. "We have spent hours and hours trying to brush microplastics off a beach in the pouring rain. Those moments can sometimes feel hopeless, because, the next day a fresh tide will bring in even more waste. But then, after all those hours have passed, we can see the difference we have made and have bags filled with millions of microplastics no longer posing risks to wildlife. That's unbelievably rewarding."

### Youth Strikes 4 Climate

**Zoe Bonnett** was 14 when she set up Bristol Youth Strikes 4 Climate. She says: "Initially it was just me, with a bit of moral support from my dad. For the first strike, I decided on a location and set up an Instagram, Facebook page and Facebook event. I was so shocked as more people clicked 'interested' or 'coming' and realised what I'd taken on. I organised a makeshift sound system, chants, a short speech and timing plan. There was such a tangible buzz of hope and people power. It gave me a sense of belonging and purpose I had never had



## Ambassador for change



Anyone who is passionate about our environment can sign up to be an Another Way ambassador. You'll connect with other young people doing incredible things and get access to resources such as letter templates, event ideas, teacher statements, public speaking and media advice, and assembly plans.

We'd love to have you, simply sign up at [another-way.org.uk](https://another-way.org.uk)

before, with all of those other young people that cared just like me. It reminds me why getting people together like that means so much despite its challenges. I may have only been 14, but I wish that wouldn't have stopped me saying what I thought sometimes. It doesn't matter whether you are the youngest, I don't think it means your opinion should be of any less value."



### Meet the reporter

Amy Bray is the founder of Another Way



Share your stories on Instagram #RSPB4change

Photos: Amy Bray, Lucy Hodson, Amelia Hayward. Illustrations: Nadezhda Fedrunova (Getty Images)

# MEET THE Farm manager



A new generation of agri-women are calling the shots and driving the tractors. **Georgina Bray** shares how to get your foot in the field!

## What does your job involve?

I'm the farm manager on Hope Farm, an RSPB farm in Cambridgeshire with the aim to grow food in harmony with nature. I spend a lot of time discussing crops with the farm's contractor. When it comes to policy, farmers are referred to as 'land managers'. This is because we're not just farming food, we're looking after the countryside: making sure we have great hedgerows; protecting our soils and water courses to reduce flood risk; and managing the land in a good way for the environment. On Hope Farm, we try to do this through biodiversity – working with nature to farm. That's what I find so exciting; I'm managing an ecosystem to not only produce food, but also to create habitats for rare species such as yellowhammers and linnets.

At Hope Farm we're working on a project to make our carbon footprint

as small as possible and sharing what we learn with other farmers and policymakers. We also teach the general public about where their food comes from and monitor the farm areas linked with RSPB research.

## What do you do day-to-day?

Every day is different, it depends on the time of year. Sometimes I'm at a desk planning and sometimes I'm out on the farm checking how everything is doing. This can involve getting up very early to survey birds, although I mainly rely on other team members in the RSPB's research department to do this. With arable farming, everything needs to be done in the right season and the right weather, so the work varies a lot.

Because we're so reliant on the weather, we feel the effects of climate change. The last five years, the weather has been incredibly tricky. We need to be more resilient to changes in the climate.

## What made you want to become a farmer?

I grew up on an arable farm and studied zoology at university. Once I found out the RSPB had a wildlife-friendly farm I

## FACTFILE

### Skills to build

- Hands-on experience in nature, ecology and agriculture
- Project management
- Accounting
- Communication

### Subjects to choose

- Agriculture
- Zoology
- Conservation science

### Get involved

- Sign up to Open Farm Sunday to visit and volunteer at a working farm. Visit [farmsunday.org](https://farmsunday.org)

knew I had to work there. I love my job and if I ever need a reminder why I do what I do, I can just go for a walk on the farm. When you go out and see flocks of linnets and other birds in the hedgerows you know what you're working for.

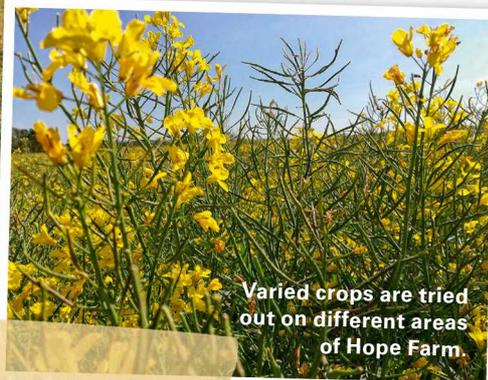
I love sharing what I do. Taking people out on the farm and giving talks is really enjoyable. I also like the fact I'm always learning. There are 70-year-old farmers who are still picking up new things, and working on a wildlife-friendly farm means there is only more to learn. There's always new research coming out about natural pest control, how nature can be used to keep our crops healthy and how to run a carbon-neutral farm.

## Is it challenging for women to work in farming?

Yes! There are not enough women in farming by far. I go to farmers' meetings and everyone is friendly but often my



Georgie at work on the RSPB's farm.



Varied crops are tried out on different areas of Hope Farm.

colleagues and I are the only women. Once or twice someone has not realised I am the farm manager, and that's probably because I'm a younger female. Farms are traditionally passed down from father to son and, however archaic that sounds, this is often still the case (it happened with my parents). The world is changing, and farming and conservation are working hard to ensure females are promoted, too.

### What do you like about working for the RSPB? Is it different from other farms?

The main difference is I feel constantly rewarded for what I am doing. It feels good to know I'm working for nature while growing food. The RSPB is a massive organisation; we talk to DEFRA and can consult with conservation scientists. The RSPB gives me opportunities to learn and I know that what I am doing will help inform change. It feels as if I'm a small but important cog in an amazing machine.

### What qualifications or skills do you need for your role?

When I came to work for Hope Farm I needed a degree in some kind of biology. When I became manager I had already been an assistant manager, which helped me gain knowledge about the farm and its systems. My degree was great for learning about the theory behind the work I do. However, practical skills are equally important, so take every opportunity you can to pick these up. I did bird ringing at university and that helped teach me to identify birds.

### Any advice for those wanting to work for the RSPB?

Look at what the RSPB does and see what interests you. Don't be afraid to email someone and ask, I did and I got a very friendly response. If you find something you like, try volunteering in it.

**"I'm managing an ecosystem to not only produce food, but also to create habitats for rare species."**



Crops are grown that benefit the farm itself, and that help nature on a wider scale.

### Has work on Hope Farm influenced any policies?

We have researched and implemented skylark plots on our farm – gaps in winter crops for nesting skylarks. Because of our work, farmers can now get paid to implement these. Since Brexit, everything has changed, and we are trying to ensure that the changes in agricultural policy will have a positive effect on nature as well as on people.

### If you could change one thing in farming, what would it be?

The largest carbon generator in arable farming is inorganic nitrogen. If we stopped being reliant on inorganic nitrogen, it would be a lot easier to become carbon-neutral. There are a couple of alternatives: organic farming, although it is less efficient; organic manures, although the animals that create the manure also create a lot of carbon; or planting plants such as clovers alongside crops. Another thing I would love to see is more hedgerows. This is because they are a crucial habitat for different plants, birds and insects, and they store carbon.



#### Meet the reporter

Jannis Koulman, is a member of the RSPB Youth Council, @jannis\_w\_k

### Female farmers to follow



**Listen:** *Farmerama* podcast

A female-run broadcast for farmers and growers rebuilding our food and ecosystems from the ground up.

[farmerama.co](http://farmerama.co)



**Join:** *Regenerative Women on the Land* on Facebook

A space for women, trans and non-binary land workers and ecologists. Championing regeneration and agroecology, restoration and food justice.

@Regenerative Women on the Land on Facebook

# EXPRESS YOURSELF

Young artist **Sophie Lee** shares her tips and tricks for harnessing the inspirational power of nature

I have always been in awe of the patterns, textures and vibrant colours that appear in the natural world. Working with new materials and techniques, nature is the perfect subject matter.

The most rewarding part has been connecting with and communicating the feeling of a place or animal through art. Everyone's interpretation of a certain subject matter is different – such as the colours, style and choice of materials. This beauty of being able to demonstrate your own one-of-a-kind view of the natural world through the decisions you make in the process is truly special.

## Make your mark

### \* Experiment with materials

Although I started with pencils, I now try not to limit myself with the

materials I use. For more detail-focused technical studies, I use finer media such as ink pens, biro and pencils, but have tried just about everything from black ink and nib to aluminium wires!

I enjoy using mixed media. I like to use this to compare the results of different materials when focusing on one subject matter. I make a grid and do each section of the picture in a different medium (see the butterfly picture below).

My current favourite medium is air-dry clay. I am working on a large piece inspired by sculptor Ellen Jewett using this material and have found that it has really challenged me. Working in 3D is a very new and rewarding opportunity. You can explore movement and angles in ways you can't with 2D materials, which gives me a fresh challenge and develops me artistically.

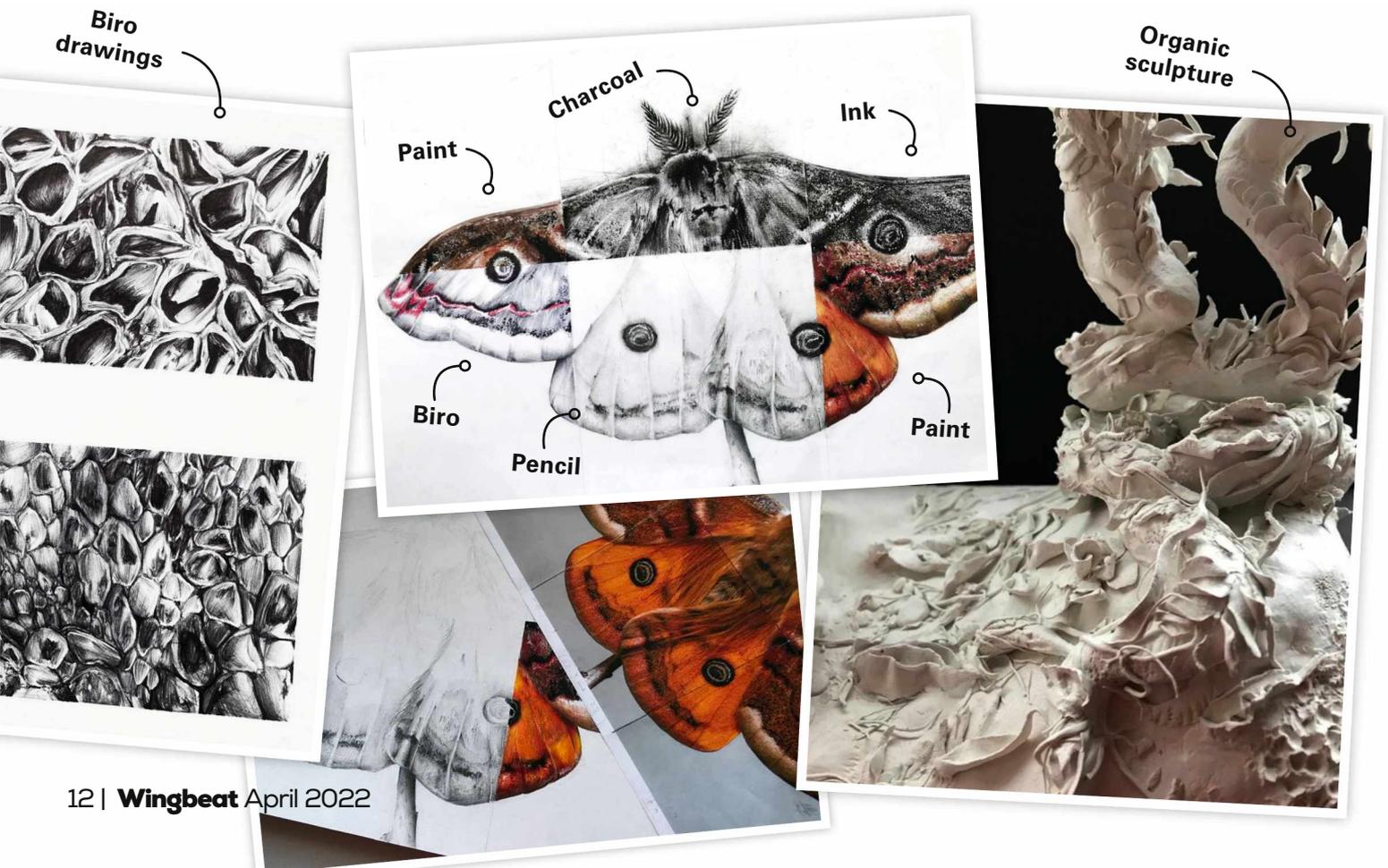
Experimenting with varied materials helps you find what you work best with and improves your skills, because different media require different techniques. Eventually, you will discover what you enjoy and develop your own unique style.

### \* Delve into the details

Learning about an animal's anatomy, behaviour, movement and interactions with its surroundings helps you to further understand it and more accurately convey the feeling of it.

When possible, just observing an animal for a while can give you a greater sense of how they move around and interact with their surroundings. The wildlife in your garden is perfect for this.

When drawing wildlife, I always work from reference photographs or materials. You can take your own



photos while you're out, or search for things you want to draw online. I use macro photographs rather than larger scenes as references because this allows me to focus on tiny details.

**\* Recreate things you like**

Creating your own versions of professionals' work, such as April Coppini's charcoal drawings, has allowed me to try new methods and

see how other wildlife enthusiasts express their ideas about the natural world. Studying their nature-themed artwork can be inspirational and can also introduce you to new ways of using media.

**\* Add personality and emotion**

Although the scientific accuracy of a drawing is sometimes important, it is definitely worth exploring the

'personality' or mood of what you are portraying, whether this is through the posture or stance of an animal, your use of brushstrokes, or your choice of colours to create atmosphere.



**Meet the reporter**

Sophie Lee, 14, is an artist who hopes one day to be a research biologist.

# UNLEASH YOUR IDEAS

sketch  
here



Share it on  
Instagram  
**#RSPBwildart**





Violet oil beetle

# Spring

# BUG SAFARI

Green tiger beetle



with columnist 'AntBoy' Xander Johnston



**T**he colder months of winter are over and nature is starting to re-emerge. Plants and flowers begin to bloom and trees start to grow back their leaves, birds return to our warmer climate, many animals and insects come out of hibernation, and new life begins.

## ANT UPRISING

At this time of year the ants are super busy! As the temperatures start to increase, they begin to swarm the tops of their nests to warm themselves and their queen. This is also the time to fix any damage that the harsh winter weather or other animals may have caused to the nest. They'll need to restock their food piles, too, and the new males and queens start building a colony of their own. This means all hands on deck to retake control of the forest floor.



Wood ants swarming and a winged queen

## BUSY BEES

Spring is a really important time for bees: the new queen is gathering food and resources to establish a fresh nest and grow her colony's population. Already established colonies re-emerge and begin the production of eggs and food. A worker bee can visit up to 2,000 flowers per day, with potentially thousands of bees in a well-established nest, that's a lot of pollination! Dandelions are an important early food for bees in spring, but unfortunately some people uproot these from their gardens as they see them as bothersome weeds.



Bee on a dandelion



Mound from an emerging ground nesting bee

## BEETLING ABOUT

You can also see plenty of beetles busy about their business this time of year. There are over 4,000 species of beetle in the UK including ladybirds, dung beetles, weevils and carrion beetles. Not only do beetles come in all different shapes, sizes and colours but they are also great pollinators and an important food source for many other animals such as lizards and slow worms, frogs, birds and even other insects! Beetles eat, break down and get rid of plant waste, animal poo, wood and even dead animals, essentially tidying up the forest floor!



Carrion beetle

## BUILD A BUG BANK

Encourage more beetles to your garden by making a beetle bank.

- 1 Mark out a good sunny area of your garden
- 2 Create a few layers of soil. Compact it until it looks like a good mound
- 3 Sprinkle some grass seeds on top, water when needed, and once the grass has grown, hopefully some beetles will come to check it out!

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Peat-free compost or soil dug from elsewhere in your garden
- Grass seed

Get more tips from Xander at [xanderjo.co.uk](http://xanderjo.co.uk)

## INSECTS, ASSEMBLE!

Some amazing insects you may see at this time of year are:

- Hibernating butterflies warming up their wings and beginning to take flight
- Newly hatched earwigs emerging from the ground
- Spiders spinning fresh webs to catch their prey

# Switch off + tune in

Columnist **Indy Kiemel Greene** on how to feel good on social media, and even use it to get more connected to nature

**S**ocial media. Love it or hate it, it's a part of life that's here to stay. Blamed for many of the tough issues we face today, it can be a double-edged sword. But used wisely it's a useful tool to share your love of nature.

I grew up next to Sherwood forest – the world's best playground. Young children have an innate connection to nature, and I was lucky to have Sherwood close by to nurture it. But while being out in nature is vital, a big part of learning more is connecting to other nature lovers, and that is done most easily through social media.

I use social media to share my experiences, connect with like-minded people and to find out about the issues I care about. This is all very useful but sometimes this has taken over my time outside, and I find myself checking it constantly for no reason. Sometimes it has even ruined my time in nature or stressed me out when I get home – reminding me of negative news.

It's important to strike a balance and set limits when using your phone. Give these tips a try:

## Switch it off

I try to go with the flow when using social media outside. I share things I see but I also allow time to be in the moment. It's important to go out with your eyes open and enjoy the experience. Put your phone on airplane mode when you're out.

On long summer evenings I'll be out all day. My phone has a 'focus mode' that disables certain apps for a while. In the evenings I put it upstairs to charge and leave it there. When I have a big adventure planned, I switch it off completely.

After I did *Winterwatch* my social media got really busy and it started to feel like a job, which made me feel stressed all the time. I was 15, in the middle of my exams – give me a minute! Social media has its place and is important, but you have to draw a line if it starts stressing you out.

## Team up

In 'Indy vs Lucy' I teamed up with @Lucy\_Lapwing during lockdown for a series of nature challenges, which

we posted on Insta as video stories, and got people to vote on them.

I've never looked for anyone on Instagram, but you just come across people – there's a big, visible nature community, like a massive family, full of knowledgeable and passionate people. *Springwatch* is a good place to find like-minded people online, and see who they follow.

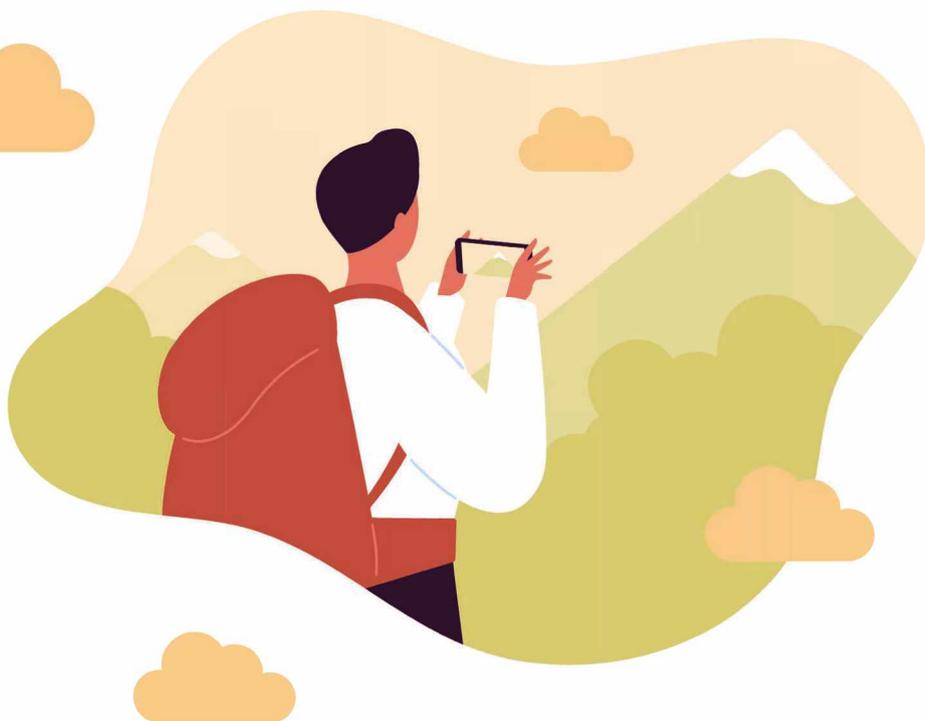
## Be you!

Just be yourself on social media. It's tempting to copy content if you see someone else being successful – but it never works if you're not being authentic. It's more enjoyable for you to talk about your own experiences. Don't just trot out Wikipedia trivia – talk about your patch and what you've noticed, that's always a winner.

## Step back

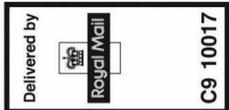
Social media isn't the be all and end all. Don't get too sucked into it because at the end of the day it's not a big deal. Don't worry about 'likes' or 'follows' or 'views', or what other people might think – just make sure you're enjoying what you're doing.

The first time I spot something, I get to know it. I look at the colours and the way it moves. I put my camera away for a minute. Yes I'll take a photo, but for my own memories rather than to share. Hanging out with the goshawks or watching a wasp drag a spider down a hole, that's what life is really about.



## Meet the reporter

Indy, aged 16, is a conservationist, naturalist and campaigner



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COMPETITION

# WildVerse

CLOSING  
DATE  
30 June  
2022

Win our wildlife poetry competition and you could have your words broadcast on the radio, plus grab some RSPB vouchers!



## WHAT TO DO

If you've got a way with words and a passion for nature, listen up! We're giving you the chance to share your lyrical talent on Fun Kids radio. Write and perform a poem inspired by the great outdoors. This year's topic is 'What would nature say?' It could be your favourite animal, insect, flower or special place. Let your creativity flow and write a poem as long or as short as you like. It can be in any style and it certainly doesn't have to rhyme. So, what are you waiting for? Get inspired by nature and share your words of wisdom with the world – good luck!

## THE PRIZES

If you are one of our lucky winners, your poem will be published in our magazines and will also be read on

Fun Kids radio between 25–29 July 2022. Each winner will also receive a fantastic RSPB gift card worth £50 that can be redeemed in our RSPB shop. There will be one winner selected in each age category (7 years and under, 8–12 years old, and 13–18 years old).

## HOW TO ENTER

If you would like to enter WildVerse 2022, record and upload your poem to [FunKidsLive.com](http://FunKidsLive.com) by **30 June 2022**. Make sure an adult provides a signed statement to say the work is all yours and include your name, address and age. For more details, plus terms and conditions, visit [rspb.org.uk/wildverse](http://rspb.org.uk/wildverse)

Photo: Mosquito (Getty Images)

Wingbeat is the quarterly magazine of RSPB Phoenix.

Members aged 13 to 18 are part of RSPB Phoenix and we pride ourselves in providing a platform for our younger voices to have their say on the issues that are important to them. Anyone aged 13 to 18 can contribute to Wingbeat.



The RSPB is the UK's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.



We are a member of BirdLife International, a partnership of conservation organisations working to give nature a home around the world.

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