

GREENING THE EARTH: 31 things you can do.

From Noel Debbage, Bowthorpe Church, Norwich

1. Walk in a bluebell wood in April/May (or a snowdrop wood, or a wild garlic wood,...)
2. Visit the bats at dusk: try feeding them mealie worms (throw them into the air for the bats to swoop and catch)
3. Join a local litter pick
4. Visit one of your local wildlife trust reserves. Try sitting very still in a hide and watch. No telling what you'll see. And there'll probably be someone there who can tell you what it is.
5. Join in one of the eco audit activities (BTO's GBW or similar with RSPB)
6. Find a caterpillar in your garden and watch what he eats. You could try keeping him till he turns into a chrysalis. What will he end up as?
7. Use your phone for something good: take some wildlife pictures. Can you identify the creatures in the photos? Or maybe you're good enough to try some sketching.
8. Collect all the different leaves in your local wood.
9. Get up really early and listen to the dawn chorus (spring time).
10. Go blackberrying (or chestnutting or collect conkers. I collect a few conkers every year just because they are such a lovely colour. Some people say they are good at getting rid of spiders).
11. Pick and press wild flowers (can you ID them?)
12. Build a den. (If it's not hard-wired in your genes, Google will tell you how). Yews and lime trees often have branches that sweep down to the ground: ready-made dens.
13. Find a wood in autumn and watch the colours change as the leaves fall. Our local car park is even better than the wood for leave changing colour.
14. Go to your local river and watch for fish and birds. If you get bored try skimming stones. How many bounces can you get? Or take a net and jam jar to catch tiddlers.
15. Take a bag on a walk and collect specimens. Mount them when you get home or arrange on a nature table.
16. Forget the organised run in the local park: try running through your local wood or along the river path. And when you stop to catch your breath remember to listen.
17. Take the dog for a walk in the park (common, by the river, etc). If you don't have one, borrow one (with permission). The dog will enjoy it as much as you do.
18. Get out into the countryside at dusk and watch dark noisy streams of rooks fly to their roost against the darkening sky. (winter)
19. Go out with the specific intention of seeing a particular animal, bird or plant. You'll almost certainly not see it but equally certainly will see something.
20. These are suggestions I found when I visited the Wyre Forest: We found things to do there on helpful signs along the trail. Set up a stone marker and see who can throw twigs closest to it. Collect twigs and leaves and make a ground nest with the twigs, cushioned with leaves. Carefully build a twig tower by laying them horizontally one pair on top of the next, finally putting a flag pole twig down the middle. Add a leaf to the top of twig pole as the flag.
21. Collect leaves from a walk, place them face downwards on the table under plain paper and wax crayon over them. A ghostly leaf skeleton appears. We had planned to cut them out and attach them to an upright branch making a tree of many varied leaves, but the children were

too distracted by all the other things that demand to be done in the countryside with cousins.

22. Maybe your local church has old brasses to rub. If not, try bark rubbings. Which tree has the most interesting bark?
23. Keep your eyes open. Where is the biggest tree where you live? Try hugging it. How many people do you need to get your arms right round it. The 60 foot wide yew in St Cynog's churchyard in Wales aged more than 5000 years is perhaps the oldest tree in Britain. How does your biggest tree compare?
24. Find the very middle of a wood and listen to the silence, play hide-and-seek or just kick leaves.
25. Get out to somewhere wild and be still and quiet. Look and listen carefully. This sometimes happens when you are playing hide'n'seek. Almost for sure you'll see or notice something unexpected. (Don't tell anyone: it spoils the secret!)
26. Go and gather branches: holly and ivy to decorate for Christmas, sticky buds in spring to keep in jam jars till the leaves open, blackthorn twigs just after Christmas, May twigs in May (odd that).
27. If you are really good at ID-ing things you might want to try the master classes: can you ID a tree in winter with no leaves (hint, look at the bark, look at the dropped leaves under the tree) or a bird by its song when you can't see it?
28. There are special bird songs that you have to make a special trip to hear: the nightjar (any commons near you?), a turtle dove (these days you have to live in the south), a nightingale. Some are more common but these days you probably have to make some effort: cuckoo, owl.
29. Warning: this might be addictive. Try making lists of things you have seen or heard.
30. Collect some seeds and try to grow them: acorns, birch.... If they grow you could try keeping them as bonsai trees unless you have a really big garden.
31. Help your parents dig a pond in your garden. If you don't have a garden then form an eco-club at school and get the school to make a pond. They say it's the most eco-friendly thing you can ever do. The next year collect some frogspawn. Dip a jam jar in and watch the tadpoles slowly change into frogs.