



# WINTER RESOURCES

FOR YOUTH GROUPS



# WELCOME TO WINTER!

IT IS A WONDERFUL TIME TO WRAP UP WARM AGAINST THE ELEMENTS AND VENTURE INTO THE GREAT OUTDOORS. THE WINTER LIGHT IS TRULY MAGICAL WHEN THE SUN IS LOW IN THE SKY AND CASTS LONG SHADOWS THROUGH THE TREES.



Waking up to frost or even snow on the ground makes us really feel part of the season. Of course, there is nothing better than getting out and about in Winter and then coming home and snuggling up with a warm drink and a blanket afterwards!

## A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON NATURE

Although it can seem that there's not much happening in nature at this time of year, there is still plenty you can do to explore, learn more and take action to help. The deciduous trees may no longer have their leaves, but they continue to provide an important habitat, and the nests and dreys that they host, are much easier to spot at this time of year. We usually look at a tree's leaves to help us identify it, but there are lots of other tree features which we can examine and use as identifying features. Winter encourages us to view nature a little differently.

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Winter is actually a time of optimism. Once we pass the shortest day and longest night in December, we can look forward to the brightness of Spring. We keep an eye on the ground for the first snowdrops and watch the hazel tree branches with anticipation for the first catkins. Those first wafts of distinctive witch hazel blossom are a true indicator that the season is progressing.

## HELP OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

It may be a quieter time for wildlife spotting, but Winter is a great time for looking after our garden birds. As the food supplies in the environment dwindle, we can help by putting food out. Seeds, nuts and even apple cores will be devoured by hungry garden birds.

## NATURAL DECORATIONS

Over the years our ancestors have brightened the darkest Winter days around the solstice with celebrations including light, fire, food and fun. Using materials from the natural environment to decorate our homes in Winter has been a tradition for many years, and we still enjoy this today. Finding materials in nature and creating decorations from them can help us feel closer to nature.



## GET EXPLORING, GROWING, MAKING AND TAKE ACTION!

We have a great selection of activities for you to get stuck into this Winter, suitable for a range of ages and covering a variety of themes, from exploring and growing to making and taking action.

**If you want to get to know your local environment better,  
and want to enjoy the wonderful season of Winter, read on...**





# WINTER WELLY WALK



AGE 5+



30 MINUTES



EXPLORING

Winter days can seem cold and dark compared with the warmth and brightness of Summer, but there is still plenty to do in the great outdoors to appreciate the nature around us. It's just a case of dressing for the weather and heading out with a sense of adventure!

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Access to an outside space, such as your local park, green space or woodland
- Warm waterproof clothes
- Wellington boots
- Torches (optional)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Start the session by discussing the importance of spending time outside throughout the year and being prepared for the weather conditions. You're now ready to explore!



## DID YOU KNOW?

We put on extra clothes in winter to protect us from the cold and wet. Animals do things a bit differently. Some, put on weight in Autumn to help sustain them through the colder months. Others grow extra fur or downy feathers to help keep them warm. Whereas others (such as the mountain hare) actually become paler in colour, so they are more easily camouflaged against the snow!

2. Firstly, focus on your hearing. As you're walking along, do you hear leaves crunching, mud squelching, or is the snow muffling your footprints? Or perhaps you're aiming for every puddle and splashing along as you walk? See how many different sounds your group can create with your footsteps while walking along. Then quietly pause altogether and keep still for a minute. What natural sounds do you hear?

3. Next, it's time for careful observation of what you can see. The important thing here is to look in every direction. Start by looking all the way up – can you spot anything up in the sky, or at the top of any trees around you? What can the adults see at their eye height? What's different at the eye height of the young people? What about at ground level?

4. Then, it's on to finding different things to feel. Try feeling the bark of a tree, a feather, a stick, a stone, some moss or some seeds.

5. What does winter smell like? Sometimes what you notice most is the crisp temperature of the air, or perhaps you can smell a bonfire from a nearby garden?

**Top tip:** If it is dark when your group meets, you can take torches along to help you explore. Alternatively, you could arrange a special daytime meeting at a weekend if you would rather explore in daylight.

**Warning:** Remember to wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

HA-HA!

Why are winter days great?  
They're snow much fun!

# GROW YOUR OWN TREE



AGE 5+



60 MINUTES



GROWING

Trees make and disperse their seeds to enable new trees to grow. Take a look around for any small tree saplings that have started to grow. Why not see what types of saplings you can pot-up and grow on, ready for planting out in future years? This will help protect them from being trodden on and damaged, weeded out or pulled up for being in the wrong place. Trees are so important for people and wildlife: we need to help trees by planting more of them and in places where they will be protected. Imagine how many species of wildlife you will be helping by growing them at home or in your community space.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Sharp spade
- Damp reusable bag
- Recycled old pots (1- or 2-litre)
- A good loamy, peat-free compost (from the bottom of a compost heap is ideal)
- Watering can
- Labels



## DID YOU KNOW?

Squirrels spend the Autumn burying acorns in preparation for the Winter. As food becomes scarcer, they return to their hidden acorn stashes and dig them up to eat. Although the squirrels are good at finding the acorns, there are some that they don't find, which consequently remain buried (i.e. planted). These can grow into new oak trees, so squirrels are actually stealth gardeners!

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. With your group, find a place where you have permission to dig up saplings. Often community spaces, your local parks team, allotment holders, or people with very large gardens, will be very happy to let you.
2. Take your spade and a damp reusable bag with you.
3. Look around for saplings that are not too big to lift but are possibly in a tricky situation to grow much bigger.
4. Using your spade, dig down well to get underneath the roots, and then carefully lift into the damp bag. When you have a good number of saplings, take them back to somewhere practical for potting.
5. Fill the pots with compost and plant each sapling in the middle, lightly pressing down the surface of the soil to anchor the little tree.
6. Lightly water, label and date. Place somewhere light and sheltered.
7. Remember to keep looking after your trees and make plans for where they will be planted out when they are bigger.

**HA-HA!**

How did the tree get lost?  
It took the wrong root!



# WINTER TREE ID



AGE 7+



60 MINUTES



EXPLORING

Winter is a time of dormancy for deciduous trees. However, they are actually poised and ready for action as soon as the Spring arrives with its longer days and warmer weather. If you look closely at their branches, you will notice the buds, which are the starting point for those first fresh leaves of Spring. As well as the buds, there are several other features of deciduous trees that you can examine in Winter to help you identify them.

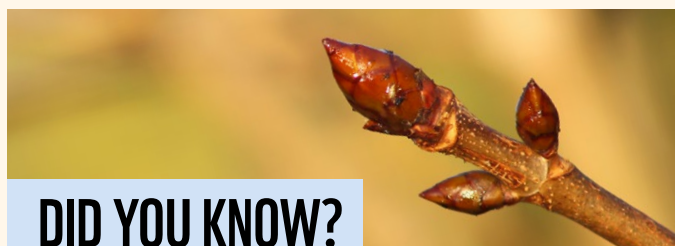
## WHAT YOU NEED

- Access to an outside space, such as your local park, green space or woodland
- Deciduous tree winter identification guide (you can borrow one from your local library, find one online or download an identification app such as the Seek app by iNaturalist [www.org.uk/discover-nature-seek-app](http://www.org.uk/discover-nature-seek-app))

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a tree in your outside space to explore as a group. (You may like to recce the space in advance, to select a tree which can easily be identified.)
2. Firstly, from a distance, look at shape of the entire tree. This will give you an idea of whether the main growth is in the same direction every year (e.g. ash) or whether the main growth direction changes every time a branch is formed, giving a zig-zag and “twiggy” appearance (e.g. oak).

3. Next, get up close to look at and feel the bark. There are different types of bark, which can broadly be described as: smooth (e.g. beech), peeling (e.g. silver birch), ridged (e.g. oak) and plated (e.g. horse chestnut).
4. Then it's time to examine the buds. These come in a variety of forms: terminal (at the end of the branches, e.g. horse chestnut), opposite (growing in pairs opposite each other on the branch, e.g. maple), alternate (alternating on each side of the branch along its length e.g. silver birch), alternate zig-zag (where the branch is zig-zagged rather than straight, e.g. small-leaved lime), clustered (e.g. oak) or furry (e.g. magnolia).
5. A few trees (e.g. hawthorn) have thorns, so do check as they are much easier to spot in winter when there are no leaves to obscure them.
6. Some trees may have old fruit or seeds that stay on the tree all winter (e.g. ash), so it is worth looking both on the branches and on the ground around your tree for clues.
7. Once you have identified one tree together, you can divide into smaller groups to see if you can find more of the same type of tree or find some new ones to identify.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Some of the UK's most common trees have very distinctive winter buds. In contrast to their pale grey bark, ash trees have small black buds that look almost like hooves. Small-leaved lime trees have small red buds, which look a bit like little boxing gloves, whereas horse chestnut (conker) trees have large brown buds that are rather sticky.

## HA-HA!

Why is the surface of a tree trunk called bark? Because it's rough.

# WARMED MULLED APPLE JUICE



AGE 7+



60 MINUTES



MAKING

After a lovely Winter walk in the crisp air, try making this delicious, mulled apple juice to share with your group. It is also the perfect drink to make for any celebrations in the holiday season. While cooking, this sachet will make your meeting place smell wonderful. The sachets work equally well dry and can be placed on a radiator to scent your room instead of synthetic sprays. Or you can make them as gifts and attach them to bottles of apple juice for a friend or family member to make and enjoy.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Muslin cloth, cut into small squares (about 15 cm)
- Star anise
- Cloves
- Cinnamon sticks
- Cardamom pods
- Dried orange slices (see Reuse, reduce, recycle activity)
- Pretty recycled ribbon
- Scissors
- 750 ml bottle of local apple juice
- Saucepan

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take a square of muslin cloth.
2. In each of the sachets you make, place 1 star anise, 4 cloves, a small piece of cinnamon stick and a cardamom pod.
3. Now thread a piece of dried orange on to a piece of recycled ribbon, gather all four corners of your fabric square up and tie together.
4. Add the apple juice and one sachet to a saucepan, and heat on low for 15 minutes.
5. Remove from the heat and allow to infuse for 20 minutes before enjoying.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Making mulled apple juice is a great way to use up any juice that may otherwise go undrunk. The average UK household wastes 13 % of their edible food and drink per year, costing £540. Another way to reduce waste is to organise what's in your cupboards and plan your shopping list so you only buy and cook what you need. Or be inventive with your leftovers and turn them into another dish.



HA-HA!

What can a whole apple do that half an apple can't? Look round!



# FEED THE BIRDS



AGE 7+



60 MINUTES



ACTION

Help care for our birds during Winter when their natural food sources are scarce. At this time of year, the Autumn berries have all been eaten and the ground can be too frozen for them to peck out worms or insects. They rely on scraps left on bird tables and bird feeders, to get enough energy to make it through the cold months.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Pinecones
- Garden twine
- Vegetable fat or lard
- Plate
- Good quality bird seed



## DID YOU KNOW?

The RSPB runs the Big Garden Birdwatch every January. It's a huge nationwide survey of UK birdlife and anyone can contribute. All you need to do is spend an hour watching the birds in your garden or local park and keep track of the different birds you see. Your results help build up a picture of which species are thriving, and which are in decline in the UK right now. [rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/](https://rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take a pinecone and tie a piece of garden twine around the middle firmly, leaving enough to make a loop to hang it up with.
2. Carefully press the vegetable fat into all the gaps, all round the pinecone.
3. Lay the bird seed on a plate and then roll the pinecone over the bird seed making sure it sticks to the fat. This will be messy!
4. Carefully place your bird feeder in the freezer overnight, this will help it all stick together.
5. The next day, take your bird feeder and hang it up for the birds. Ideally this will be somewhere:
  - quiet where they won't get disturbed
  - not too close to bushes where cats can hide, but close enough for the birds to perch in before reaching the food
  - sheltered from harsh winds
6. It might take a while for the birds to find this new food stash, but once they do, they will start visiting.

HA-HA!

Why do birds fly south in the winter?  
Because it's too far to walk!



# BUG HOTEL



AGE 7+



60 MINUTES



MAKING

Leaves, straw, bamboo, twigs and old pots... These are the things that bugs, bees and spiders absolutely love! Our gardens are filled with these amazing minibeasts who help us to control the unwanted pests in our garden so that our plants and vegetables can flourish. So why not help prepare a home for these amazing creatures by building them their very own bug hotel!

## WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 – 3 wooden pallets (small wooden boxes work well too)
- Any recycled materials such as: egg boxes, ceramic pots, plastic containers, plastic drainpipe, bricks, mesh or wood
- String / baling twine
- Garden waste that you can include: leaves, twigs, dead wood, pine cones, straw or old bamboo canes



## DID YOU KNOW?

Insects are a vital part of the food chain, playing a critical role in pest control (such as ladybirds which eat aphids) as well as being an essential food source for other animals. Creating habitats for insects supports our declining biodiversity. The UK has an average of only 53% of its biodiversity left compared to 1970, which puts us in the bottom 10% of the world's countries.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Insects like cool, damp conditions so place your pallet(s) by a nearby shady hedge or tree.
2. Fill your various recycled materials with leaves and twigs using the string to tie everything together to keep it in place.
3. You can use different materials to create a range of habitats, e.g. use straw for smaller invertebrates to burrow in, creating a safe environment to hibernate. You could also fill a length of drainpipe with bamboo canes to create a wonderful habitat for bees.
4. Continue to fill in the gaps of your wooden pallet or box using a combination of recycled materials and garden waste. Use loose leaves, bark and pinecones to fill in some of the smaller gaps.
5. Once your insect habitat is finished, you might want to plant some spring bulbs around it. They'll not only look beautiful when they flower in the Spring, but will provide food for bees, butterflies and other flying insects that will be attracted to your habitat.

# HA-HA!

What do you get if you throw butter?  
A butterfly!



# REDUCE, REUSE & RECYCLE!



AGE 7+



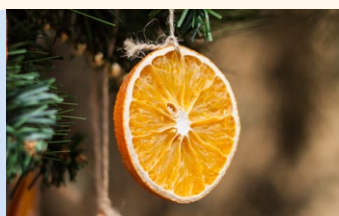
60 MINUTES



MAKING

We all love beautiful decorations to celebrate the holiday season so get creative and have a go at making your own this year. Natural and recycled decorations can be very beautiful, fun to make and a good way to avoid buying more plastics. [www.wwf.org.uk/creativeactivities](http://www.wwf.org.uk/creativeactivities)

## DRIED ORANGE SLICES



Slice oranges and place on a baking sheet on a low heat in the oven for several hours until no moisture is left. Next thread recycled ribbon or twine through your slices. They are now ready to hang on your tree.

## SCENTED ORANGES



Simply take a clementine and stud with cloves, tie with a coloured ribbon. These make beautiful simple decorations and smell wintry for weeks.

## PINECONES



Collect pinecones and decorate with white paint as if dusted with snow. When dry, place a loop of recycled ribbon on the top, fixing with a drawing pin. These can be hung in garlands, bunches or straight onto your tree.

## STARS



Cut out a simple square shape from recycled decorative paper or a magazine. Pleat the paper, folding back and forth until you make a fan. Next staple the middle of the fan. Pull one end of the fan to the other, staple again. Take a loop of ribbon and staple this in the two ends not attached to make a flower shape. They look very effective hanging in groups or dotted over a tree.

## MAKE YOUR OWN WRAPPING PAPER



Take sheets of plain brown parcel paper and stencil or print your own design onto the paper. Homemade wrapping can be personalised for the person you are giving to. You could look to nature for your inspiration – robins, trees, snowflakes, and holly can be fun to create with.

HA-HA!

Why did the orange stop halfway across the road? Because it ran out of juice!



# CRUNCHY KALE CHIPS



AGE 7+



60 MINUTES



MAKING

Kale can be harvested through the Winter. Often touted as a “superfood”, kale is packed with beneficial nutrients. Its vitamin C content is four times that of spinach. It’s also a good source of plant-based calcium and vitamin K to help support healthy bones. Try this recipe for a delicious kale snack.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 bunch of kale
- Scissors
- Roasting tin or tray
- 2 tbsp of vegetable oil
- Optional additions: a sprinkle of sea salt, 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar, a dusting of ginger and tablespoon of local honey, or if you like things spicy some dried chilli flakes

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 180 °C / Gas Mark 4. Wash the kale, shake dry and cut across the stems making small pieces about 3 cm long.
2. Lay the kale pieces in the roasting tin and drizzle with the oil and your choice of added flavouring.
3. Place the tray in the oven and bake for around 10 to 15 minutes. The kale should look lightly golden before serving.
4. Why not create some fun cones to serve your kale chips in by rolling up unused paper off-cuts or newspaper? The paper cones can then be composted and have created zero waste.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Eating more plants is one of WWF's Livewell principles: [www.org.uk/what-we-do/livewell](http://www.org.uk/what-we-do/livewell) Globally, 75% of our food comes from only 12 plant and 5 animal species - a restriction which is impacting our health and the health of the planet. Diversifying our diet to include more plants and less meat, as well as eating seasonally and eating locally will help to cut down the impact we have.

HA-HA!

What is a table you can eat?  
A vegetable!



# NEST VS DREY: WHOSE NEST IS WHOSE?



AGE 11+



60 MINUTES



EXPLORING

Compared with Summer, we may feel that Winter is a more difficult time to spot our UK wildlife. However, even though we might not always find the creatures themselves, we can still spot their homes if we know what to look for. Squirrels make their nests (known as dreys) in the trees, but how can you tell the difference between a bird's nest and a squirrel's drey?

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Access to an outside space, such as your local park, green space or woodland
- Binoculars (optional)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Your mission is to find a nest up in a tree and decide whether it was made by a bird or a squirrel.
2. Go to your outside space and find a nest. (You may like to do a recce visit in advance, so you know where the nests are.)



## DID YOU KNOW?

Both grey and red squirrels make dreys in the same way. However, there is a seasonal difference. The Summer drey is flatter, lighter and more open to the elements. However, in Autumn the drey might be adapted ready for Winter, or it might be abandoned in favour of a newly built drey which is more substantial, to provide greater protection against the Winter weather.

3. Firstly, take a good look at the location of the nest. Is it along a branch (more likely bird) or close to the trunk or at a fork in the branches (more likely squirrel)? Is it close to the top of the tree (bird) or about two-thirds of the way up the tree but still at least six metres from the ground (squirrel)?
4. What about the size? Is it small and compact (bird) or larger, perhaps even up to the size of a football (squirrel)?
5. Next, look at the structure and shape: is it neat, tidy and compact (bird), or is it untidy and messy (squirrel)?
6. Now it's time to look more closely at the nest, using your binoculars if you have them. What nesting material has the animal used? Plain twigs (bird) or leafy twigs (squirrel)?
7. If you think you have found a drey, the other signs to look for to show that squirrels are nearby are chewed pinecones on the ground that look like apple cores, and scratch marks on the tree bark.
8. The only way to be sure that it is a squirrel drey is to wait patiently and quietly to see if a squirrel appears (they are most active in the morning and late afternoon)!

**HA-HA!**

**Why was the squirrel covered in sand?**  
It lived in a beech tree.

# WATER AUDIT



AGE 14+



60 MINUTES



ACTION

Water is one of our most precious resources, and all life on Earth depends upon it. Climate change is likely to increase the seasonal variability of water, making water supply more erratic and uncertain. So, it is important that we all do our bit to use water wisely. A water audit is a great starting point for both conversation and action.

## WHAT YOU NEED

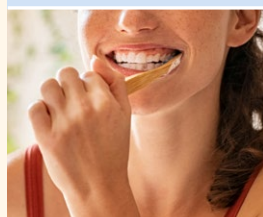
- Paper
- Pens

## INSTRUCTIONS

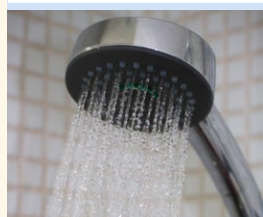
1. Start by doing a water audit of your meeting space.
2. Take a look at your water meter and record the reading every week for 4 weeks. Is the water use consistent each week or variable? Discuss the reasons for this.

## TAKE ACTION

Here are some easy things you can do to help save water:



Don't leave the tap running while you brush your teeth



Have a quick shower (for 4 minutes or less) rather than taking a bath



Keep some water for drinking in the fridge, rather than having to run the tap until it gets cold

3. Write a list of all the places in the building where water is used, e.g. toilets, kitchen etc.
4. Check each area for any leaks or drips (which will be wasting water). Request for these to be fixed.
5. Create and put-up posters in all areas with taps to remind users to turn them off after use.
6. Do you have any outside space that needs watering? Installing a water butt under the down pipes of your building will enable you to collect and store rainwater, which you can use for watering instead of tap water.
7. Spend some time discussing what you can do to reduce the water use in your meeting space and write an action plan. You might like to include things like:
  - Save washing-up water for outside watering rather than pouring it down the sink.
  - When taps or toilets need replacing, choose water-efficient options.
8. Once your action plan is in place, share it with the other users of your meeting space.
9. Continue to record your water meter readings and see if you notice a reduction of use.
10. You can also challenge your young people to assess their water use at home and make water-saving pledges which can be shared with the group.

HA-HA!

What runs but never walks?  
Water!





## GET MAKING, GROWING AND EXPLORING

These seasonal resources will get your group out and about, exploring and enjoying the nature on your doorstep. Whether you are based in a city or the countryside, these activities will help to guide your investigations, and provide a framework to understand how small actions really can make a difference.

The UK has many beautiful and diverse landscapes, each of which provides a unique habitat for a range of plants and animals. Our wildlife is adapted to these habitats and our seasonal variations in day length, temperature and weather.

However, climate change, urbanisation and habitat loss mean the UK's wildlife is under threat like never before. We invite you to celebrate what UK nature has to offer and to take action to protect and restore it for future generations.



The UK has lost 97% of its wildflower meadows since the 1930s.



The land required overseas to supply the UK's demand for timber has increased threefold since 2011 (from 28,000 km<sup>2</sup> to 84,000 km<sup>2</sup> – an area greater than the size of Scotland).



Parts of the UK may run out of water by 2040.



Over a third of assessed UK seabirds have declined by 20% or more since the 1990s largely due to climate change affecting food availability.

### BADGE IT UP

These activities can be used to support a range of interest badges across uniform groups:

#### Rainbows:

Nature, Recycling, Fruit and Veg and Healthy Mind badges

#### Brownies:

Grow your Own, Mindfulness and Zero Waste badges

#### Rangers:

Cooking badge

#### Beavers:

Explore and Gardener badges

#### Cubs, Scouts and Explorers:

Chef, Environmental Conservation and Naturalist badges

A Million Hands programme is one-way Scouts can take action and achieve their Community Impact Staged Activity Badge. WWF are supporting the Protecting Our Environment Theme [www.scouts.org.uk/about-us/help-others/community](http://www.scouts.org.uk/about-us/help-others/community)

### BE RESOURCEFUL!

These resources can be used as part of a wider programme of activities, such as awards schemes for community clubs or youth groups.

This pack is part of a series; you can find other resources available here: [www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/youth-groups/resources/seasonal-activities](http://www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/youth-groups/resources/seasonal-activities)





## HOW YOU CAN HELP UK WILDLIFE

There are lots of things you and your group can do to take action and help protect UK wildlife and create a sustainable future for us all:



### HOW BIG IS YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT?

Measure it here: <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>



### HOW SUSTAINABLE IS YOUR DIET?

Find out more here: [wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/livewell](http://wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/livewell)



### WANT TO TAKE SMALL STEPS TO HELP NATURE?

Find out how you can help UK wildlife with From Grey to Green here:

[wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/WWF\\_Green\\_Spaces\\_Resource\\_A\\_Million\\_Hands.pdf](http://wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/WWF_Green_Spaces_Resource_A_Million_Hands.pdf)



### INSPIRED TO TAKE MORE ACTION?

Have a look at 21 actions activity pack, developed by WWF's Youth Ambassadors here:

[wwf.org.uk/get-involved/youth-engagement](http://wwf.org.uk/get-involved/youth-engagement)



### REACHING OUT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Find out how WWF is inspiring the next generation with our young people's resources at

[wwf.org.uk/what-can-i-do/inspire-the-next-generation](http://wwf.org.uk/what-can-i-do/inspire-the-next-generation)



For a future where people and nature thrive | [wwf.org.uk](http://wwf.org.uk)

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