



RSPB Brilliant Birds

Activity Pack



Working in partnership

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Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Introduction to the pack and badge

Welcome to the RSPB Brilliant Birds pack. This pack is part of the Girlguiding London and South East England and RSPB partnership. It has been created and updated by Girlguiding members, including those working towards their Queen's Guide award.

What is this all about?

This pack has been refreshed in response to findings from the Girlguiding 2024 'Girls' Attitudes Survey'¹ which showed that:

- 51% of girls aged 7 -10 are concerned about the loss of nature and animal habitats.
- Girls of all ages increasingly feel worried, anxious and overwhelmed by global warming. 37% of girls say this compared to 32% in 2020.
- Girls are increasingly questioning if anything can be done. Fewer girls say they feel hopeful that people are talking about it and trying to help (down from 38% in 2020 to 28%).

The activities in section one of this pack aim to help girls feel a deeper connection to nature, whilst also giving their wellbeing a boost and inspiring them to care for birds and nature. Section two activities enable girls to take action, to address eco-anxiety and empower girls to make a positive difference for birds and nature.

In section three, you'll find games which can be used to complement the activities, as warm up or starter activities, as time fillers, or to recap what has been learnt. These don't count towards the badge.



Charlotte Powell

How to earn a badge

It is up to you which activities you choose to do, but you must complete 'Spot that bird' as one of your activities (note that you can substitute this for 'Bird tunes' for girls with a visual impairment) and a specific number of activities from 'Section two: Action for birds'. The final number of activities can be from either section. The table below demonstrates how to get your badge.

Where there are two options within an activity, you can choose whether to do option A or B. Generally, option A is geared towards younger age groups and option B is geared towards older age groups.

	Spot that bird*	Section two: Action for birds	Your choice from Section one: Discovering birds and/or Section two: Action for birds	Total activities completed
Rainbows	Yes	1 activity	1 activity	3
Brownies	Yes	2 activities	2 activities	5
Guides and Rangers	Yes	3 activities	2 activities	6

*Substitute with 'Bird tunes' for girls with a visual impairment

Where to order your badges

Complete the badge order form, which is found on the RSPB partnership page on the Girlguiding London and South East England website: girlguidinglaser.org.uk/rspb-partnership. We'll also ask you to tell us how you got on and what the girls thought of the activities. Badges are posted by the RSPB and cost £1 plus postage and packaging.

¹Girlguiding 2024 'Girls' Attitudes Survey' girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/research-and-campaigns/girls-attitudes-survey-2024.pdf



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Section 1:

Discovering birds

(At least 30 minutes per activity)

These are outdoor activities which enable girls to have a physical interaction with the natural world. These activities aim to help girls build a deeper love of nature, to discover more about birds and to inspire them to care for birds and nature.

Where can we do the activities?

Activities from section one must be completed outdoors. Suggested locations include:

- Urban open spaces – such as a local park, school field/playground, allotment or churchyard.
- Local Nature Reserve.
- Woodland.
- Girlguiding campsites or activity centres – find a list here: girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/adventure/adventures-in-guiding/
- RSPB nature reserves – find your nearest reserve here: rspb.org.uk/days-out
Please contact the reserve in advance if you are visiting as a unit.
- Seaside.
- Riverside, or by the side of a canal, lake or pond.

One of the great things about birds is that they can be seen almost anywhere!



How can I get children and young people interested in birds?

- You don't need to know anything about birds to take your unit outside to explore! The experience of nature is more important than knowledge. You can use a spotter sheet, book or nature app to look up anything you don't know.
- Do the activity with the girls and then challenge the girls to do more than you. Get involved, rather than standing back and watching. Research shows that one of the four key influences on a young person's connection to nature is the attitude of adults they encounter.
- If the leader is interested and shows enthusiasm in something, the girls will be inspired to look too. You can focus their attention to look and listen more closely to birds by simply stopping and pointing out things you notice or find interesting. You don't need to know what something is to point it out; instead, notice the colour, movements and sounds.
- Give the girls basic instructions to understand the activity and any equipment needed then let the girls be led by their own interest. The best experiences are often unstructured, where the adults are facilitating, not leading.

- To prepare your unit for using their senses to discover birds, try an active game first to burn off any energy, then try one of the tuning-in games. See section three: Games.

How do we keep safe and look after nature when we're out and about?

- When running the activities, please follow the Girlguiding policies and procedures, including a risk assessment for activities away from the normal meeting place.
- Keep your distance from wild birds and animals so as not to disturb and stress them – especially those that are with young and in winter when food may be scarce.
- For activities like 'Art attack', ask the girls to only collect items which have fallen on the ground such as fallen leaves, twigs, seeds and fruits.
- Be mindful of where the group is walking to avoid trampling plants and flowers.

Activity 1:

Spot that bird

Which season?

Any time of year.

It is important to spot and count birds all year round; it can help us understand if birds (and other animals) are struggling to survive. The more we observe the more we understand and the more we can help. Spotting birds is a fun activity to learn.

Option A

Find a quiet spot, this could be a space with trees and hedges nearby. Sit down quietly in small groups, each with a spotter sheet. Look and listen for birds and use the spotter sheet to work out what the birds are. Tick off birds you see on the sheet. When you have finished share what you found with another group. Did you spot the same or different birds?

Option B

To start, look at the spotter sheet. Can you tell the difference between different birds? Go on a 30-minute walk to spot birds. Keep your eyes and ears open – use the spotter sheet to work out what the birds are and make a record of what you see. At the end of your walk, come together as a unit and compare the results of your survey. Were there any birds you hadn't seen before? Did you see anything that was not on the list? Can you challenge each other to see how many of the same birds you spot around your home?

Take it further: Spot migratory birds

At certain times of the year, many species of bird migrate – they fly from one place to another. They may migrate to find food, to breed or simply to survive. Some migrations are short, but many birds – like the Swift – make truly epic journeys, crossing continents, deserts and oceans.

Can you spot any migratory birds?

- In spring and summer, look out for House Martin, Swallow, Swift and Blackcap. For help with identification see: girlguidinglaser.org.uk/swift-identification-and-facts
- In autumn and winter, look out for Redwing, Fieldfare, Barnacle Goose, Bewick's Swan, Pink-footed Goose and Pochard. Find out more at: rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-migration



- ▲ Male Blackbirds are all black with a yellow bill and ring around the eyes. Females are all brown, with spots and streaks on the breast.



Top tips for leaders

- Download your spotter sheet from our partnership page on the Girlguiding London and South East England website. There are four different habitats to choose from.
- A great way to help you identify birds is to compare size, colour, beak and legs. Take out an RSPB bird guidebook or use the online RSPB bird identifier.
- Try taking binoculars out with you – see the barmy binoculars activity.
- Practise looking and listening skills to calm the group before you start looking for birds – see the games in section three.

Activity 2:

Barmy binoculars

Which season?

Any time of year.

Using binoculars can be great for helping us see things far away, but they can be tricky to use. Follow the instructions below to learn how to use these brilliant binoculars. Always use the safety strap and never walk whilst looking through binoculars.

Option A

Stand or sit everyone in a line an arm's length apart from anyone else. Ask one of the leaders to stand a couple of metres away from the group. Ask everyone to stare at the leader and then bring the binoculars up slowly to their eyes without looking away. Can everyone see the leader? Now use the binoculars to spot other interesting things in the distance, to look for birds in the surrounding trees, bushes or green spaces.

Option B

Spread the group out in a green space an arm's length apart and focus on an object nearby. Continue to stare at your object and slowly bring the binoculars up without looking away. You should still be able to see your object and follow it. Now, without looking through the binoculars, can you see any birds in the distance? Practise your binocular skills to see them up close enough to identify them. You can use the same spotter sheets as in the 'Spot that bird' activity. Download them from the RSPB partnership page on the Girlguiding London and South East England website.

Don't forget

- Binoculars are very fragile – be careful not to bang them about; the insides are more easily damaged than the outsides.
- Always carry them safely – many have straps that you can put around your wrist or neck so that you don't drop them.
- Keep them dry and clean – blow away any dust and sand from the lenses and then wipe them with a soft cloth.
- Always stand still when using binoculars – never walk along looking through binoculars.



▲ Both male and female Blue Tits are a colourful mix of blue, yellow, white and green.



Top tips for leaders

- Some Girlguiding campsites and activity centres, counties and divisions have binoculars available to borrow, contact ENGyouthpartnerships@RSPB.org.uk.
- A local nature or ornithology group may be able to help with binoculars. If you are visiting a nature reserve, ask if binoculars are available to hire on site. Be aware that there may be a hire fee.
- If practising with a leader, why not stick a life size picture on their front to see if the girls can spot what it is with their binoculars.
- Before getting the binoculars out, try using your hands as binoculars or a pair of cardboard tubes to practise focusing on objects.
- When you look through your binoculars you need to look through both eyes at once. Ask the girls how many circles they can see. They should only be able to see one; if they see two ask them to push the two eye pieces together until they see just one circle.
- If the image you see in your binoculars is blurry, gently turn the wheel in the centre of the binoculars until the image is sharp. You may need to refocus if following a flying bird.
- Some binoculars have adjustable eye cups. Eye cups should be pulled or twisted out for people who don't wear glasses and pushed right in for people wearing glasses.
- It's much easier to see a bird if you keep looking at the bird and bring the binoculars to your eyes, rather than trying to search whilst looking through them.

Activity 3:

Bird tunes

Which season?

Spring, autumn and winter.

Birds all have different songs and calls. They sing to defend their territory or to attract a mate. They also make shorter calls to let each other know where they are, or if there's a nearby threat. If you are quiet, you can pick out the different sounds they make. How many different birds can you hear? Sometimes it is easier to hear birds than to spot them.

Starter activity:

Before you head out, listen to birdsong. You can use the RSPB website to do this. Choose five common birds which the girls have all heard of. Practice mimicking the song using words which sound similar – see the list below to help you. Practice getting the rhythms right, you might also like to add actions to help you remember.

Blue Tit “tsee, tsee, tsee, chu, chu, chu”, very high pitched

Robin song is soft and sad in autumn, the rest of the year it sounds like this “tweedle-oo, tweedle-ee-dee, tweedle-oo tweedle”, its warning call is “pip, pip, pip”

Blackbird is beautiful and tuneful like a flute, its warning call is short and high pitched “chook, chook, chook”

House Sparrow “cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap”

Chiffchaff “chiff chaff, chiff chaff”

Great Tit “teacher, teacher”

Coal Tit “titchew, titchew” it sounds like it's sneezing

Collared Dove “I doooooon't know, I doooooon't know”

Woodpigeon “my TOE hurts mummy, my TOE hurts mummy”

Option A

Sit down quietly to listen to the different bird sounds. Can you imagine what the different birds look like based on their sound? Can you spot the bird making the sound – seeing and hearing the bird at the same time can help its song stick in your mind. Try getting everyone to work together listening to the bird and pointing to where the sound is coming from. Pick your favourite sound and listen carefully. Can you repeat the sound and add your own actions? Can you hear the songs or calls of any of the birds you practiced?

Take it further by making a sound map. With a pen and paper each, draw a small dot in the centre of the paper, that's you! Now close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you. Then draw what you hear around your dot, to include birdsong. If it's a loud sound draw it big, if it's small draw it small.

Option B

Sit quietly to listen out for different bird calls and songs. Start by trying to pick out the chirps, whistles and trills and focus on one bird at a time. Try tapping or clapping the rhythm or repetition of the bird song or call to help you identify it or seeing if their song sounds like words. Before you go out make a list of common birds in your area and what their songs or calls sound like and see how many you hear in your local space.



Top tips for leaders

- Spend some time outdoors in your space before the meeting to find out which birdsong can be heard the easiest, for example Robin or Blackbird, and choose these to practice with the girls.
- Before the activity try some listening games like '**Deer ears**' and '**Listening circle**' to help tune in to bird sounds; see section three.
- Practise the songs you have learnt by playing '**Find your flock**' from section three.
- Download an app, like Merlin, to help you identify birdsong.

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Activity 4:

Neat nests

Which season?

Any time of year.

Most birds lay their eggs in nests. It is a safe and warm place for them to incubate their eggs and look after their young. Discover what it is like for a bird to make a cosy nest.

Option A

What do you think birds make their nests out of? They need to make it safe and warm. They don't have bricks to build houses or blankets to keep warm. Pretend you're a bird and make your own nest. Look around you and find different natural materials, like grass, leaves and twigs to make a nest for a bird.

- ▼ Collect natural objects found on the ground, like twigs, fallen leaves and moss.

Option B

What do you think goes into building a nest? Think about the materials a bird might find to make their nests and go out to collect natural material. Using only two fingers, to copy a bird's beak, weave the materials together in the shape of a bird's nest. Once you have built your nest see if you can place it in a tree. You never know, you might make a family of birds very happy!

Take it further by finding what to do if you come across a baby bird or an injured bird. Look at the advice on the RSPB website to get you started: [rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/if-you-find-an-injured-bird](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/if-you-find-an-injured-bird)



Lisa Green



Top tips for leaders

- Make sure your unit only collects natural objects they find on the ground.
- Do not pick or pull anything living from trees and plants.
- Before you make your nests in the spring or summer, go for a walk to spot real nests in trees, hedges, on rivers or ponds. Observe these from a distance so as not to disturb nesting birds. Some bird species, like the Kingfisher, are legally protected from disturbance when nesting.
- In the autumn and winter, see if you can spot disused nests when foliage has gone from hedges and trees.
- Build smaller nests in pairs or work as a whole unit to build a large nest and use this to play '**Eagle eyes**' from section three.
- Be prepared for what to do if you find an injured or baby bird. Understand a range of situations and the best way to handle them. Explore your local support, are there any local rescues in your area that you could visit or fundraise for?

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Activity 5:

Art attack

Which season?

Any time of year.

Birds are all different sizes, shapes and colours. Become an artist and use the things around you to see if you can create a picture of a bird. This activity works well in pairs or small groups but can also be done individually.

Option A

Use natural materials which you find in situ, such as leaves and twigs, to create a picture of a bird. Or you could use stones, shells and seaweed if you're on the beach. It can be a bird you have seen or an imaginary one. Give your bird a name and make up a story about it. Where does it live? What does it eat? When you have finished, come back together as a unit and move around to look at the different artworks and share your stories. Leave your picture where it is and let other people be surprised by your art; you might even get a few animal admirers!



Top tips for leaders

- Before creating your natural artworks check the area for, and remove any, litter and hazards.
- Encourage the group to think about the different features and body parts of the birds.
- Why not take a picture and share it with us? Email info@girlguidinglaser.org.uk and put "Feedback for RSPB" in the subject line.

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Option B

Pick a bird on your spotter sheet and make it out of natural materials. Think about colours and textures to make it as accurate as possible. When you have finished, make an outdoor gallery and visit each other's pictures. Can you guess the type of birds that other girls have created?



Activity 6:

Sunset and sunrise

Which season?

Option A: This activity works well in autumn and winter, when darker evenings coincide with unit meeting times. These seasons are also the best time to see a murmuration of Starlings.

Option B: Spring and summer.

Did you know that it's not just owls that come out in the dark? Some of our most common birds – Robins, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes – can be heard singing as it gets dark, especially in urban areas with streetlights. Most of us only experience nature in the daylight but it can be exciting to explore in the dark or at dusk.

Option A

Go out for walk into a natural green space or urban open space as the sun is setting, or after dark. Which birds can you see or hear? If you live in a more rural area, you could increase your confidence in the dark by using torches for most of the walk. Regularly stop on your walk to listen in silence, if you are using torches switch them off at these mindful points and tune into any birdsong you can hear. Can you make out different tunes? Where are they coming from? See if you can spot any other nighttime wildlife, including moths, Foxes and bats.

Take it further by visiting a place where you can see a Starling murmuration, best seen at sunset between November and February. A murmuration is a flock of Starlings which can reach tens of thousands, a mass of flying birds forming enormous cloud-like shapes as Starlings swoop and dive in clever patterns. See the Starling murmuration roost map here: starlingsintheuk.co.uk/roost-map.html

Option B

Challenge yourself to spend a night under the stars so that you can immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of birds and nature after dark. This activity is designed for a residential – see the list of Girlguiding campsites and activity centres on page five. As it gets dark in the evening, sit outside or take a walk. Listen out for birdsong, including owl calls. A Tawny Owl call is the classic hooting we most associate with owls. The famous 'twit twoo' sound isn't made by one bird – it's made by two, a male and a female. Can you hear, or spot, any other nighttime wildlife?

You could also set your alarm and wake up early to listen to the dawn chorus. In the UK, the dawn chorus is at its peak just before and just after sunrise. Early May is the best time to experience the chorus, but it can be heard in some form into early summer. Practice 'Activity 3: Bird tunes' first, to help you identify different birdsong.

Activity 7:

Bird tracking detectives

Which season?

Any time of year, best after wet weather.

It's time to use your detective skills and track down some birds.

Option A

Explore the local area looking for signs birds leave behind. Look for feathers, bird poo, footprints, nests, broken egg shells, bones, holes in trees, and signs of feeding. Take out paper and pencils to draw and label what you have found.

Option B

Although birds can fly, they still have to walk sometimes, just like us! And just like us they sometimes leave tracks. Go for a walk in your green space. Look closely in muddy places or on wet sand for bird prints. Most birds have four toes, usually three facing forward and one facing backwards. See if you can follow the tracks and see where they went. Are birds the only animals that leave tracks? Can you find any other tracks? Who might they belong to?

You could also try collecting bird prints. Fill an old baking tray with damp sand and smooth the surface. Leave out overnight, or during a unit meeting, and check your tray for bird prints.



Bethany Spence



Top tips for leaders

- Visit [rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/tracks-and-signs](https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/tracks-and-signs) to download the RSPB animal tracks sheet, to help identify tracks and signs that you find. You'll also find instructions for making an animal tracker and a cast of bird prints.
- Take out some magnifying glasses to look more closely at footprints and objects you find.
- Birds can carry diseases; make sure girls wash their hands carefully with soap and water if they handle any bird objects they find.
- If you find a dead bird, do not touch it. You can report it here: [gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds)



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Section 2:

Action for birds

Birds need our help, as bird numbers are in serious decline. For example, the UK Song Thrush population has declined by 49% since 1967. Song Thrushes find food and make their nests in hedgerows and woodland, but many of these have been cut down to make way for bigger fields or for new roads or houses.

As with all wildlife, the key to the survival of birds is what we as humans do, and there are many positive actions that we can take to help the birds around us. What do you already do which helps birds? Is there anything you do which might have a negative impact? Try the activities in this section to help our feathered friends to thrive.

Activity 8:

Make a bird feeder

Option A

Make a pine cone bird feeder

You will need: pine or fir cones (dried out so they open), bird seed, raisins, chopped or ground peanuts*, grated cheese, suet or lard**, mixing bowl, scissors and string.

- 1 First make your bird mix. Allow the lard to warm up to room temperature, but don't melt it. Then cut it up into small pieces and put it in the mixing bowl.
- 2 Add the other ingredients to the bowl. Mix them together with your fingertips until the fat holds everything together.
- 3 Tie string at the top of your cones, then fill them with bird mix.
- 4 Put your cones in the fridge to set for an hour or so.
- 5 Now they're ready to hang up.

* Check for allergies. Leave the nuts out if anyone has a nut allergy. Even if everyone's ok with nuts, no one should eat peanuts that have been sold as bird food.

** Be aware of cultural or religious beliefs, some parents may not want their children to handle lard or suet. You can wear rubber gloves for this activity. Alternative bird feeder options can be found on the RSPB website: [rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/food-and-water-for-wildlife](https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/food-and-water-for-wildlife)

Option B

Make a bird kebab

You will need: bird kebab food such as apples, bread, hard cheese and raisins*; floral wire; string; a knife; and a chopping board.

- 1 Make up the things to put on your kebabs. Choose food that will be good for birds. Cut big chunks into marble-sized pieces.
- 2 Now carefully thread the pieces of food onto the floral wire, leaving about 8 cm at either end. Bend the ends into little hooks.
- 3 Bend the wire to form a circle, hooking the ends.
- 4 Tie a loop of string on the wire circle and hang your kebab up for the birds to eat.

For more advice on how and what to feed birds see: [rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/feeding-birds-near-you](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/feeding-birds-near-you)

*If girls have a dog at home, be aware that raisins can be toxic for dogs.

Charlotte Powell



Charlotte Powell



Activity 9:

Planting for birds

Option A

Plant sunflower seeds

This activity is best done in late March or April.

You will need: Sunflower seeds; biodegradable pots or you can reuse clean yoghurt pots or similar (around 7.5cm diameter); peat-free compost; stakes; and twine or wire.

- 1 Fill the pot with peat-free compost. Poke one seed per pot down into the compost. Cover with about 1cm of compost, and then water.
- 2 Place in a warm position, like a sunny windowsill, and watch the seed grow.
- 3 When they're around 30cm tall, plant them outside, in a sheltered position. Tie them to canes or to fence railings to stop them blowing over.
- 4 Water your flowers and protect them as best you can from slug and snail damage, for example, by using copper bands or broken eggshells. You might need to do an evening slug patrol.
- 5 When the sunflower head starts to turn brown, cut it off and hang it somewhere dry and airy. When the seeds are dry, rub them together to loosen them. Birds can eat your seeds if you leave them out. You could even put them in a bird feeder.

Option B

Grow flowers for minibeasts

Minibeasts, including insects and other invertebrates, are an important food source for birds, such as sparrows and Robins. Even birds like the Turtle Dove – which only eats seeds – need insects to pollinate plants.

You will need: biodegradable pots, peat-free compost and wildflower seeds (for recommended seeds see: [rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/create-a-wildflower-meadow](https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/create-a-wildflower-meadow))

- 1 Choose one big pot, a window box or perhaps a series of smaller pots. You could even upcycle colourful metal tins or an old sink.
- 2 Make sure your pot has drainage holes in the bottom. Pop a few pebbles or shards from an old broken pot into the bottom to aid drainage. Then fill your pot with peat-free compost, breaking up any clumps with your fingers. Gently smooth the surface without compacting the soil.
- 3 Spread seeds thinly on the surface of the soil, before adding a sprinkling of compost, then press down gently with your hands and water.
- 4 Keep watering your pots regularly, especially in dry weather when they can easily dry out.

Take it further: if you have access to outdoor space, create a wildflower patch or meadow: [rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/create-a-wildflower-meadow](https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/create-a-wildflower-meadow)



Top tips for leaders

- Ask your unit why they think it's important to use peat-free compost in this activity.
- Peatlands lock away carbon, keeping CO₂ out of the atmosphere, and are also important habitats, home to rare and unusual plants, birds and insects.
- It's vital that we maintain and restore our peatland, that's why we should use peat-free compost when gardening.

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Activity 10:

Make a nestbox

Sadly, some birds that used to be common, such as House Sparrows and Starlings, are struggling today. Your unit could make a real difference by providing a safe place for birds like these to raise a family. A nestbox attached to the wall of a house or building could be the perfect place for birds to set up home.

Birds come in all different shapes and sizes, so when it comes to nestboxes, one size doesn't fit all. Choose a bird species and follow the videos and instructions on the RSPB website to make a nestbox with your unit [rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/build-a-birdbox](https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/build-a-birdbox)

Before you build your nestbox, find somewhere, and someone, to install it. This could be a project for Guides or Rangers who could contact:

- Parents to see if they would be interested in having the nestbox on the side of their house.
- Your local authority park ranger service or an environmental charity based locally. Could they put the nestbox in a local green space?
- A local school – could they host a nestbox on one of their buildings?
- A local bird group, such as an RSPB or British Ornithological Society group, who may be able to advise you.



Top tips for leaders

- Once in situ, visit the nestbox with your unit to see who has moved in. Observe from a distance so that you don't disturb the birds.
- Make sure that your nestbox is cleaned and maintained regularly. For advice see: [rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/all-about-nest-boxes#maintaining-your-nestbox](https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/all-about-nest-boxes#maintaining-your-nestbox)
- If you're looking at buying a DIY nestbox, make sure that it's suitable for birds, for example, check whether it's been endorsed by an environmental charity.
- You could approach parents, or a local group – such as Men's Sheds Association – to help you build your nestboxes. For example, you could ask them to cut the wood and drill the holes in it for you. Some local groups also provide kits.

Activity 11:

Speak up for birds

Choose a message which you'd like to share about birds, the problems faced by birds and what can be done about it. For example, Swifts are classified as endangered but one way they can be helped is to install Swift bricks or Swift nestboxes in houses.

Option A

Make a poster or display

Create a poster or display to communicate your message. Tell people about birds in an eye-catching way and provide simple ideas to encourage people to help birds. Perhaps you could put this up in your unit meeting place for parents and families to see. Take it further by putting a display in your local library or other community space.

Option B

Speak to your local MP

Use your voice to influence your local MP or councillors by writing to them or by inviting a decision maker to your unit meeting. This can be done as an individual, in pairs or as a unit. Introduce yourself and what it is you care about. For example, a decline in a species of bird, or the destruction of bird habitats. Tell them what the problem is including facts and figures, suggest solutions to the problem, and ask them to do something. For example, do you want them to ask a question about your issue in the House of Commons, use their votes to support development of bird and nature friendly policies or raise the profile of, and sign, certain petitions?



Top tips for leaders

- Do this activity as part of 'MP, hear me! Influence stage 4'. For further support, for either writing a letter or inviting someone to your meeting, including links to each section's programme, see: girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/blog/how-to-organise-a-unit-meeting-with-a-decision-maker/

Activity 12:

Celebrate and share your actions for birds

Don't keep your good work a secret! You can maximise the impact of your actions for birds and inspire others to help birds by sharing what you've been up to.

Option A

Hold an event

Invite parents and family members to visit the unit meeting place to see and hear about what you've been doing to help birds. Plan for their visit by setting up a 'show and tell' area or making up a short play about how you've helped birds. Take it further by organising an event in your local community, or getting a stall at a local community event, such as a school or village fete.

- ▼ Put on a short play about how you've helped birds.

Option B

Share in the media

Tell people about what you've been doing to help birds and encourage them to take action too. Write and submit your news story to your local newspaper, magazine or local radio station or Girlguiding social media. Brownies could look at taking over local social media, such as units or their district. Guides and Rangers could look to take over division, county or even region social media. Can you educate, inspire and influence your audience? Remember to make sure that any sharing via social media is compliant with the platform's rules (for example age of user) and all contributors fully consent to using their content.



Charlotte Powell

Activity 13:

Fundraise for birds

Help birds by raising money for a nature conservation charity, to support their work in creating and protecting bird habitats.

- 1 First, come up with an idea as a unit for how you are going to fundraise for birds. For example, you could hold a bird themed bake sale, with Easter nest cakes, bird shaped biscuits, owl cupcakes and more! You could also make and sell bird feeders.
- 2 Next, make a plan. Consider when and where you are going to do your fundraising, what equipment you need and how you are going to spread the word about your fundraising activity. You might want to consider setting up a JustGiving Page.
- 3 Time to get busy with your activity. Remember, once you have completed it, let everyone know how it's gone and say thanks for their support.



Girlguiding London and South East England



Top tips for leaders

- This activity can count towards the Brownie Charities badge or as a Guide Gold Award challenge.
- If you're fundraising for the RSPB, please let us know in advance. This is to make sure everything looks okay to our team and follows UK Fundraising Regulations.
- For more information on fundraising for the RSPB see: rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/raise-money-for-nature
- Alternatively, you could use the money raised to adopt a bird with a Wildlife Trust: wildlifetrusts.org/adopt-animal/adopt-bird

Activity 14:

Big Garden Birdwatch

The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch is the largest citizen wildlife survey in the UK. It allows the RSPB to see how our birds are doing, and which birds are increasing or decreasing in number. The data collected by people can help conservationists understand how to better help protect certain bird species.

The Birdwatch takes place over a weekend in January every year and it's easy for you and your unit to get involved:

- 1 Sign up and access resources online here: rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch
- 2 Choose an hour during the weekend.
- 3 Count the birds you see outside your unit meeting place, in your local park or other greenspace. Or you could ask the girls to count the birds which they see from a balcony or garden at home and come back together to compare what everyone spotted.
- 4 Only count birds that land and record the highest number of each bird species you see at any one time.
- 5 Then tell the RSPB what you saw, online or by post.

Neva Brentnall



Top tips for leaders

- Practice the 'Spot that bird' and 'Barmy binoculars' activities to get ready for the Big Garden Birdwatch.
- Make bird feeders first and put them up to attract birds into your space ahead of the Big Garden Birdwatch.

▲ Use binoculars to see birds well enough to identify them.



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Section 3:

Games

The ideas in this section don't count towards gaining a badge. They can be used to complement activities in the main pack, as warm up or starter activities, as time fillers or to recap what you've learnt.

"Tuning-in" games

If your girls are new to outdoor activities or you want some activities to help them to calm down, focus and tune-in to nature before you start, try some of these games.

Deer ears

Cup your hands behind your ears, this makes it easier to hear; move your hands about to direct where you want to hear. If your group feels comfortable enough ask them to close their eyes and listen for two minutes; closing your eyes helps to "tune-in" to the sounds. Try this in different locations.

Listening circle

Stand everyone in a circle and ask them to make their hands into fists and close their eyes. Tell the group that they are covered with a blanket of silence so must make no noise. Ask them to listen and raise a finger each time they hear a new sound. Raise the blanket of silence and ask them what they heard. If you prefer you could just listen for different birdsong.

Silent walking

Ask everyone to wander around the area, looking and listening, without making any sound themselves. Then come back together in a circle so that everyone can share what they saw and heard.

Nature's colours

Stand everyone in a circle and ask them to look around the area. Name a colour and ask the group to individually count how many different examples of that colour they can find. After around 30 seconds let a few people share what they spotted before trying a new colour. Can you find the whole rainbow?

Texture walk

Split into two or more groups for a short walk around the natural area and ask the girls to search for different textures, such as rough tree bark, spongy moss and dry leaves. Encourage your group to touch and experience them, but make sure you only touch things that won't hurt you or get damaged by being touched. Come together and compare what textures each group found, which was your favourite?

Active games

Eagle eyes

This game is like hide and seek with an eagle (the spotter) and the prey (the hiders). The aim is to get as close to the eagle as you can without being spotted. The last one to be spotted is the winner.

- 1 The eagle has a small space which is marked out as a 'nest'.
- 2 Announce how long the eagle will count for. Around 40–60 seconds. The eagle covers their eyes and starts to count and the prey go and hide.
- 3 Announce you're opening your eyes by saying 'The eagle's eyes are open'. You then look to see if you can spot any prey. You can walk around your nest but cannot leave it. Any prey that is spotted must come and sit by the nest.
- 4 When you can no longer see any prey, close your eyes and start counting. This time count 5 or 10 seconds less. The girls need to find a new hiding spot at least five steps closer to you.
- 5 Repeat, counting less each time until there is only one prey left. They are the winner. Pick a new eagle, or start again.

Bird True or False

This is an easy game to find out what girls know about birds already and to help them learn.

- 1 Mark out one area as 'true' and an opposite area as 'false'.
- 2 Give a true or false statement about birds. You can use the statements in the appendix or come up with your own.
- 3 Girls decide whether the statement is true or false and run to the corresponding area.



Recapping games

Find your flock

Choose four to six of the birds from the bird tunes activity, whisper the name of one bird to each girl. Ask the group to think about (but not say) what sounds they learnt that their bird makes. When everyone is ready, ask them to make the bird song or call of their bird. Can they find everyone making the same song or call? Once everyone has found their flock – check if they are all the same bird. This game can be adapted for hearing impaired girls by using actions instead of sounds. For example, girls could make an action for a long necked Heron by putting their arm up in the air.

Owls and crows

This is a simple running game to reinforce what has been learnt. This game works best if the girls know the answers to the statements before they play the game. For example, it can work well if you play the game straight after you've been out looking at birds.

- 1 Put the girls in two lines facing each other. One line are crows and the other are owls.
- 2 Give a true or false statement. For example: Blackbirds have yellow beaks. You might want to have created a list of statements of things you have learnt that you want to recap.
- 3 If the statement is true the owls chase the crows; if the statement is false the crows chase the owls.
- 4 If the owls chase the crows and one gets tagged, she becomes an owl and vice versa. The game finishes when all the players end up on one side of the line.

The RSPB and Girlguiding London and South East England Partnership

The RSPB is the UK's largest nature conservation charity, our mission is to protect and restore habitats and to inspire others to do the same. Together with our partners, we protect threatened species and help to end the nature and climate emergency.

We are working in partnership with Girlguiding London and South East England to give more young girls and women the chance to discover and enjoy nature, and to empower them to take action to save it. We do this by supporting Girlguiding volunteers to develop their skills and confidence in running nature activities through:

- Downloadable resources to enable girls to connect with and act for birds and nature.
- Running large scale nature events, building the skills and confidence of girls through activities such as minibeast hunting and bird watching.
- Supporting the delivery of 'Running outdoors nature sessions' workshops for Girlguiding volunteers.
- Increasing the understanding and engagement with the nature and climate crises, and specifically the areas where young people can play a powerful role in creating genuine, positive change.

As a result of our partnership:

- Young Girlguiding members will feel an increased connection to, and a deeper love and knowledge of nature.
- Girlguiding leaders will deliver an increased number of outdoor activities for nature.
- Young Girlguiding members will make nature friendly choices and take positive action to help nature.
- Young Girlguiding members will be empowered to become champions for nature and drive change.



Bethany Spence

What next?

Feeling inspired, why not try some more nature activities?

Look at the RSPB 'Together with Nature' pack and the Girlguiding London and South East England 'Growing Up Wild' Paw Prints to discover loads of ideas for how to get your unit out and about in nature. You can find these on the RSPB partnership pages of the Girlguiding London and South East England website: girlguidinglaser.org.uk/rspb-partnership

RSPB Wild Challenge

Wild Challenge is a way to get young people out into nature, experiencing and helping wildlife. Register for free and work your way towards achieving certificates through a heap of wild activities.

By completing a set of activities, you can work with your girls and young women towards achieving certificates for your work with and in nature: rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/wild-challenge/wild-challenge-for-schools

Nature in the Girlguiding programme

There are many nature activities in the Girlguiding programme which you can try. Some of these are actions for nature, such as the Rangers 'Sow it grow it' unit meeting activity. Others can be developed as outdoor activities to encourage a connection to nature, such as the Rainbows 'bug hunt' unit meeting activity. See the RSPB partnership page: girlguidinglaser.org.uk/rspb-partnership

Appendix 1:

Bird true or false statements

For older girls:

- 1 The fastest animal on earth is a bird.

TRUE – the Peregrine Falcon can dive at over 200 mph when hunting.

- 2 Male and female Blackbirds look the same.

FALSE – male Blackbirds are black, but females are brown.

- 3 Robins are easy to identify by their red breast.

TRUE – they are the UK's favourite bird.

- 4 Some birds fly from Africa to the UK and back every year.

TRUE – these migratory birds include Swallows, Swifts and Cuckoos.

- 5 Seagulls are one species of bird.

FALSE – there are many different types of gulls found at the coast.

- 6 Magpies are noisy black and white birds.

TRUE – they are related to crows.

- 7 Crows have yellow beaks.

FALSE – crows have black beaks.

- 8 Starlings can form groups containing thousands of birds.

TRUE – a group of Starlings is called a murmuration.

- 9 Mallard ducks can't fly.

FALSE – wild Mallards can fly long distances and some migrate.

- 10 Birds call to let each other know where they are.

TRUE – birds also call to each other if there's a nearby threat.

For younger girls:

- 1 Both Mummy and Daddy pigeons sit on their eggs in the nest.

TRUE

- 2 If you go birdwatching in the summer, you will see the same kinds of birds that you can see in winter.

FALSE – some birds migrate to other countries so we can see different birds at different times of the year.

- 3 Birds need nestboxes to be painted in bright colours so they can find them.

FALSE – they should be natural looking to keep them hidden from predators.

- 4 Most birds have four toes.

TRUE

- 5 You will only see birds during the day time.

FALSE – some birds like owls can only be seen at night!

- 6 Most birds collect food using their beaks.

TRUE

- 7 All birds can fly.

FALSE – some birds, like Ostriches, can't fly.

- 8 You should put nestboxes close to the ground so the birds can jump in.

FALSE – they should be 2-5m above the ground, depending on which bird you are building the box for.

- 9 All Blackbirds are black.

FALSE – females are brown.

- 10 Sparrows like to eat insects.

TRUE



Working in partnership

rspb.org.uk | girlguidinglaser.org.uk

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