







nature prescriptions | Orkney



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What is a nature prescription?

Nature is really important for our wellbeing. Connecting to nature has been shown to improve mood, reduce feelings of stress, improve physical health, improve sleep quality, reduce loneliness, and improve confidence and self-esteem.

An RSPB Nature Prescription is a free, non-medical approach to physical and mental wellbeing based on accessible connections to nature that you can do on your own or with others. Nature Prescriptions are for everyone regardless of circumstance. Whether you are new to nature or used to enjoying the great outdoors, a Nature Prescription will help you to engage with nature in a personal and meaningful way.

In this booklet you will find a calendar featuring ten nature-based suggestions per month designed to improve your wellbeing. These suggestions have been chosen knowing that what you do and notice in nature is far more important than how long or where you spend time in nature. Most of the suggestions can be done from your home, but one each month will suggest going further afield.

This is not a challenge but an invitation to connect to nature. You are encouraged to try as many of these as you can, as often as you can. You don't need to do them in the order or even the same month as suggested, and they can be repeated as many times as you like. You can choose what you do and when you want to do it. Even doing just a small number will start to benefit your wellbeing.

As with any trip outdoors, please dress for the weather and work to your ability. Remember to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which is available at **outdooraccess-scotland.scot**.

Throughout the calendar we suggest visiting a 'sit spot' which means finding a quiet outdoor spot close to home where you can go regularly to sit in nature. We also suggest keeping a nature diary, using the 'Your Nature Diary' pages in this calendar to write or draw your thoughts to help you to reflect on how nature makes you feel.



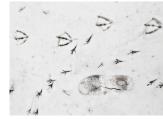
Goldfinch



Starling



Bladderwrack Seaweed



Bird tracks in the snow



Peedie Sea, Kirkwall

- Write some notes in your nature diary about how nature in winter makes you feel. What do you like about January?
- Start feeding garden birds. You can use garden feeders, window feeders or just scatter seeds on the ground and then take part in RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch event: rspb.org.uk/birdwatch.
- Get out whatever the weather to feel the rain on your face or hear the frost crunching under foot.
- Make a leaf ornament put a leaf in a lid with water and string, freeze outside overnight.
- ☐ Go for a walk around your neighbourhood and notice the plants and wildlife you see as you walk what takes you by surprise?

- Look for frost patterns outside. These may be on leaves, water, windows or car bonnets.
- Sit by the coast on a windy day and smell the sea and the seaweed.
- ☐ If it snows, go outside and look for paw prints and bird tracks and follow them.
- □ Visit somewhere you haven't been before. Why not try the Peedie Sea in Kirkwall or find other local places to visit from the suggestions at the back of this calendar.
- Look out for Starlings, Orkney's commonest garden bird. Notice how they are like the night sky dark and covered in 'stars'.

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Your Nature Diary January























Groatie Buckie shell



Holly



Snowdrops



lvy

- Look for shells on a shore. Maybe you will find a Groatie Buckie.
- Can you hear a Skylark singing? The RSPB can help you identify different bird calls. Go to: rspb.org.uk/birdsongs.
- This is a good time to spot Snowdrops flowering no matter the weather. Take a walk and find the most surprising place to see them.
- ☐ Find a tree to hug and look for new buds on the branches.
- Find your 'sit spot' a quiet place where you feel safe to just sit and watch and listen to nature. Keep it close to home so you can visit it often and get to know the wildlife that lives there.

- In your nature diary write a simple poem or a few words exploring how nature makes you feel.
- Meet a friend to talk about how they connect with nature.
- Open your window and listen to the rain. Think about it refreshing the ground and helping to bring on the spring flowers.
- Walk around your neighbourhood and notice how much is growing even in winter. You might spot evergreen plants such as Holly or Ivy.
- ☐ If you want to go further afield, look at the suggestions at the back of this calendar to find somewhere new to visit.

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Photos: Skylark – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Groatie Buckie shell – Adobe Stock Snowdrops – Michael Harvey rspb-images.com, Holly – Andy Hay rspb-images.com, ly – Andy Hay rspb-images.com

Your Nature Diary February























Oystercatcher



Mermaid's Purse



Brown Hare



House Sparrow

- ☐ Go for a walk on a windy day and feel the wind in your face.
- Be on the look-out for Brown Hares that are often called Mad March Hares because of the boxing mating behaviour displays.
- Go for a walk and find yellow coloured flowers. Look for early Buttercups and Daffodils.
- Look for Mermaid's Purses on beaches. These are hatched egg cases of Skate. Orkney Skate Trust are researching what species are here. Report any findings to: orkneyskatetrust.co.uk.
- Listen for Blackbirds or House Sparrows nesting in hedges and watch them carrying material to build their nests.
- Sow a seed and nurture it.
- ☐ Go to your 'sit spot' and look out from it as if for the first time. What do you notice?

- ☐ If you have access to the internet, look for links to local YouTube films of Orkney wildlife. Note in your nature diary what you might go and see as the weather changes:
 - > Spring https://youtu.be/ aD8pnRJ71U4?feature=shared
 - > Summer https://youtu.be/ L3udpywi6O4?feature=shared
 - > Autumn https://youtu.be/ XergpXbCUg8?si=pDdRaxnhvfvLtvOo
 - > Winter https://youtu.be/ vcQ8cfadHII?si=GZUXUIQ-8EsNhJBD.
- Mark the spring equinox (officially 20 March) by looking out for wading birds such Shalders (Oystercatchers). Listen to their calls: rspb.org. uk/birdsongs.
- On a warm day, choose a place to visit from the suggestions at the back of this calendar.

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Photos: Daffodils – Heather Stuckey rspb-images.com, Oystercatcher – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com Brown Hare – Chris Gomersall rspb-images.com, Mermaid's Purse – Orkney Skate Trust, House Sparrow – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com nature prescriptions | Orkney

Your Nature Diary March











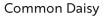














Eider Ducks



Beach clean



Long-tailed Ducks



Dandelions

- Take a shell or pebble in your hand. Focus on the texture and how it feels.
- Visit your 'sit spot'. Be still for three minutes and listen for natural sounds.
- Listen out for the mating calls of Eider Duck and Long-tailed Ducks at the shore: rspb.org. uk/birdsong.
- □ It's Bag the Bruck month join a local beach clean: greenerorkney.org.uk.
- Spend time in your garden or local green space and look for early insects, what do they visit, what are they doing?
- Look out for different plants/flowers along the edge of a path. You might see Dandelions, Daisies and Buttercups.

- ☐ Find a calm spot by a window or in a green space. Feel sunlight on your skin and concentrate on your breathing.
- Watch the surface of water (pond, loch, sea), what is floating on it bird/frog/leaf/driftwood? Spend time observing how things move in the water and watch their journeys. Follow the link to find out more about frogs and toads: arc-trust.org.
- Next month is the Orkney Nature Festival. Follow the link to see if there are any events you would like to go to: orkneycommunities. co.uk/orkneynaturefestival.
- Remember to check out the places to visit at the back of this calendar.

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Photos: Common Daisy – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Eider Ducks – Kevin Kelly, Long-tailed Ducks – Kevin Kelly, Beach clean – Sam Stringer, Dandelions – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com



Your Nature Diary April





















Scottish Primrose



Buff-tailed Bumblebee



Skylark



Curlew



- Ring of Brodgar
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- Photos: Scottish Primrose Shutterstock, Buff-tailed Bumblebee Sam Turley rspb-images.com Curlew – Andy Hay rspb-images.com, Skylark – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Ring of Brodgar – Sam Stringer

- □ 1 May is International Dawn Chorus day get up early and open your window or go outside and have a listen! What do you hear and how does it make you feel?
- Listen to the Whaup's (Curlew's) bubbling call and the Skylarks singing high in the sky. Ring of Brodgar is a good place if you can travel there: rspb.org.uk/birdsongs.
- ☐ Find out about No Mow May at plantlife.org. uk/campaigns/nomowmay. If you have a lawn, let the grass grow to allow flowers and insects to thrive. You could contact the Council to encourage them to take part in this campaign.
- Take a walk through a local greenspace and take time to smell the plants and flowers you pass. Why not make a Daisy chain?
- One of our special Orkney plants is the Scottish Primrose. Follow this link to find out why it's so special: plantlife.org.uk/saving-endangeredplantsin-scotland. Write some notes or draw a picture in your nature diary.

- ☐ If you have a local woodland, visit to see the different kinds of trees. For help with identification go to: woodlandtrust.org.uk/ about-us/where-we-work/scotland.
- Walk barefoot in the grass. What do you feel underfoot?
- It's the Orkney Nature Festival this month why not attend a session if you are able to: orkneycommunities.co.uk/orkneynaturefestival.
- 20 May is World Bee Day. Find out why bees are so important by going to: bumblebeeconservation.org.
- ☐ Ring of Brodgar is a great place for Curlews and Skylarks but there are other suggestions at the back of this calendar.

Your Nature Diary May























Arctic Tern



Gannets



Marwick Head



Little Tern

- Try growing some herbs in your garden or in a window box. They are simple to grow and taste nice too.
- Lie in the grass and watch the clouds come and go. Enjoy the feelings of peace and quiet as you lie still.
- ☐ Go to your 'sit spot', close your eyes and listen. What sounds are close to you and what sounds are further away?
- If you have taken part in No Mow May, why not keep going? Find an area of unmown lawn and notice different types of grasses that are growing and how different they look and feel. Can you find a four-leaf clover?
- 8 June is World Ocean Day. Find out more by visiting: worldoceanday.org.
- If you can, make a visit to Marwick Head and experience the sound, sights and smells of the seabirds such as Guillemots, Gannets and skuas.

- For the longest day of the year (20 June) stay up late and go to your 'sit spot' and watch the sun gradually set. How different does this feel in summer from winter?
- □ Can you see a tern before they leave Orkney on their migration? Two to spot are Arctic Tern and Little Tern and they nest on our beaches – careful where you tread!
- □ June is the month of The Wildlife Trusts' annual challenge 30 Days Wild encouraging us to do one wild thing throughout the month of June. Why not take part? For more information visit: wildlifetrusts.org/30-days-wild.
- ☐ June is a good month to see Puffins. Best places in Orkney are Westray and Brough of Birsay.

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Photos: Puffin – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Arctic Tern – Chantal Macleod-Nolan rspb-images.com Marwick Head – Andy Hay rspb-images.com, Cannets – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Little Tern – Kevin Simmonds rspb-images.com



Your Nature Diary June



















Oysterplant



Marsh Orchid



Brough of Birsay lighthouse



Red Admiral Butterfly



Bug hotel

- □ Take 15 minutes out of your usual routine to go outside in nature every day this month. Use different senses and write down how you feel in your nature diary.
- Explore somewhere outdoors that you've never been before. Imagine you've been given a mission to learn about this landscape and find all the best hiding spots.
- Paddle in the sea and feel the sand between your toes.
- While you are by the sea, look out for Oysterplant flowering this month. It is quite special as it grows on the beach.
- Help insects to flourish build a bug hotel from old logs or sticks. For more information visit: rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-onyour-doorstep.
- ☐ Sit by some wildflowers and look out for butterflies. Why not take part in the Big Butterfly Count follow this link: butterfly-conservation. org/butterflies/recording-and-monitoring.

- ☐ Go for a walk and photograph or draw something in nature you see every day but from a different perspective. What does it look like really up close?
- ☐ Find dandelion clocks and blow away the seeds. Imagine them carrying away your worries with them.
- Because of our Orkney geography, we have lots of lighthouses. Do you know where your nearest lighthouse is?
- □ Take a picnic to one of the places suggested at the back of this calendar. What nature is around you? Can you find a Marsh Orchid? plantlife.org. uk/where-and-when-to-see-wild-orchids-in-the-uk.

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Photos: Oysterplant – Andy Hay rspb-images.com, Marsh Orchid – Andy Hay rspb-images.com, Red Admiral Butterfly – Chris Gomersall rspb-images.com, Brough of Birsay lighthouse – Adobe Stock Bug hotel – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com



Your Nature Diary July



















Lesser Sandeel



Shore Crab



Rackwick Bay, Hoy



Redshank



Ringed Plover

- ☐ Go out on a sunny day sit on the grass and marvel at the different colours in the sky.
- Spend time near flowing water. What do you hear? Where does it go? What might be living under the surface that you can't see?
- Visit your 'sit spot' and close your eyes to focus on what you can hear. Is this different to the sounds you heard on your last visit?
- Have a look at your nature diary so far. What could you add in this month?
- Go to the shore to watch wading birds running in and out of the sea as they feed. Can you spot any Ringed Plover or Redshank?
- Turn over a rock and see what's there. Are there minibeasts in the soil? What other wildlife lives there? Try some bug identification with buglife: buglife.org.uk.

- ☐ Find somewhere green to linger at lunchtime. Sit against a tree, close your eyes and take a break in nature.
- Sit outside in the dark and take a few deep breaths. What can you see, hear, touch, smell and taste?
- What local food is grown near where you live and what could you cook with it?
- Visit a rocky beach at low tide and look for a rockpool to find crabs or fish. Use the suggestions at the back of this calendar to find a good place.

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Photos: Lesser Sandeel – Anne Bignall rspb-images.com, Shore Crab – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com Redshank – Jake Stephen rspb-images.com, Rackwick Bay – Iain Ashman rspb-images.com, Ringed Plover – Lestie Cater rspb-images.com



Your Nature Diary August























Pink-footed Geese



Sunflower



Common Pipistrelle Bat



Blackbird with worm

- Look overhead for triangles of geese flying over and listen to their call. If you hear 'honk honk' it's a Greylag Goose. If you hear 'wink wink' it's a Pink-footed Goose.
- ☐ If you have a garden, a window box or a small pot, plant some wildflowers to help bumblebees. Good plants for autumn growing are Sunflowers and Honeysuckle. Follow this link for lots of advice about gardening for bees: bumblebeeconservation.org/gardeningadvice.
- Make a home for hibernating insects use leaves and twigs to make piles in corners of your garden or under a bush.
- Find a high spot in your local area to look down and scan the horizon. Is there something you haven't noticed before?
- □ Join in with the Great British Beach Clean this month to keep our beaches clean and safe for people and wildlife. For more information visit: mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/join-a-beach-clean/great-british-beach-clean.

- ☐ Try some worm "charming" by tapping the ground like gulls do. Walk on the spot for 30 seconds then step back and watch for worms on the ground. Try it again until you see one. Watch the Blackbirds after a shower of rain they will show you what to do.
- ☐ This is a good month to start to spot fungi. Look on the grass and on logs and take a photo to draw in your nature diary. Remember not to eat them as some are poisonous!
- On a windy day, find a place indoors or outdoors to watch how the birds hover, swoop and glide.
- □ Did you know we have bats in Orkney? Dusk is the best time to spot a Common Pipistrelle Bat feeding on insects. Find out more about bats by going to: bats.org.uk.
- Pick a new further afield place to visit from the suggestions at the back of this calendar.

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Photos: Fly Agaric – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Pink-footed Geese – Shutterstock, Common Pipistrelle Bat – Hugh Clark, Sunflower – Sam Turtey rspb-images.com, Blackbird with worm – Adobe Stock



Your Nature Diary September



















Grey Seal and pup



Frosted autumn leaves and fern



Dead Man's Fingers



Spider's cobweb



Loch of Ayre bird hide

- Grey Seals are pupping on some of our beaches this month so keep an eye out for young seal pups on the shore. Take care not to disturb them by keeping off the beach, being quiet and taking photos from a long distance.
- Look down this month at the fallen autumnal leaves can you find five different coloured leaves?
- Write an autumn poem or some thoughts about what you most like about autumn in your nature diary.
- □ This month is a good time to plant some spring bulbs. For more information and help go to: rhs. org.uk/plants/types/bulbs/planting.
- Have another look for fungi this month such as Dead Man's Fingers.
- Kick through a pile of autumn leaves and enjoy the sound it makes

- On sunny days, watch how the light moves around your room and track shadows as they cross your walls. What changes through the month do you notice?
- In a garden, beach or park, collect natural materials and make a short sensory footpath on the ground. Twigs, leaves, feathers, shells or pebbles are great for this. If you are able why not take off your shoes and socks and enjoy the feeling on your feet!
- Look for fine wispy threads (gossamer) of money spiders' cobwebs on tall plants or in heather near your home.
- □ Visit a bird hide to stay warm and dry as you watch wildlife. Some of the RSPB reserves have hides, and there is a great hide at Loch of Ayre in St Mary's: facebook.com/AyreWalk. You can find ideas for places to try at the back of this calendar.

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Photos: Grey Seal and pup – RSPB rspb-images.com, Frosted autumn leaves and fern – Andy Hay rspb-images.com Spider's cobweb – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Dead Man's Fingers – Beth Aucott, Loch of Ayre bird hide – Sam Stringer



Your Nature Diary October



















November



Blackbird



Waxwing



Fallen Oak leaf



Frost on the tips of Hoy hills

- □ Go for an exhilarating walk in the wind and/or rain and think about how winter makes you feel.
- □ Collect three different leaves and try drawing them in your nature diary – focus on the fine lines and how different they all are in shape, colour and texture.
- Feed your garden birds with some cut up apple and look out for visiting Blackbirds, Thrushes or even a Waxwing.
- □ Touch or hug a tree and think about how it came to be there and how long it has been growing. How important do you think your tree might be to the wildlife around it?
- Look for examples of how strong nature is. Can you see any trees bending in the wind, plants flowering in the frost, birds flying in the rain, bees still buzzing in the cooler air?

- Brough of Birsay lighthouse
- Learn something new about nature. You can watch a wildlife film, get a library loan, find a book in your local charity shop or do some internet searching.
- ☐ Sit inside at the end of the day and watch the sun set. How long does it take to get completely dark? Do this a few times this month and see what changes take place.
- Have a look at your nature diary. What has been your favourite month for nature so far and why?
- The trees might be bare, but what can you see that you couldn't before?
- Do a bird count this month to see how many different birds you can hear or see in one hour. You can do this from your window, your 'sit spot' or from one of the suggested places at the back of this calendar.

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Photos: Brough of Birsay lighthouse – Adobe Stock, Blackbird – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Fallen Oak leaf –Picasa rspb-images.com, Waxwing – Andy Hay rspb-images.com, Frost on the tips of Hoy Hills – Adobe Stock

Your Nature Diary November























Robin



Visit your 'sit spot'



Northern Lights



Snowflake

- Take a short walk on the shortest day of the year (21 December). What has been your favourite walk this year?
- Feed the birds in your garden or your local park and count the number of different species you see. Take photos so you can identify them when you get home: rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife.
- Look for the first star appearing in the winter night sky. If you were to make a wish, what would you wish for?
- Really look at a rainbow. How many colours can you see? Where does it begin and end?
- □ Collect fallen branches, Holly and Ivy and make a festive wreath.
- ☐ If it snows, stand outside and catch falling snowflakes listen to the silence of the snow

- Look to the north on a cloudless night. Can you see the 'Merry Dancers' the Northern Lights?
- This can be a quiet month for bird sounds. Use the Merlin App to help identify anything you do hear: merlin.allaboutbirds.org.
- Read your nature diary and reflect back on your year in nature. What were your nature highlights? What season did you enjoy most? What are you looking forward to next spring? Would you like to do this calendar again next year?
- Return to your 'sit spot' and notice something new about the nature you see, or something new about yourself.

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Photos: Redwing – Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Robin –Ben Andrew rspb-images.com, Northern Lights – Adobe Stock, Visit your 'sit spot' – Adobe Stock, Snowflake – Shutterstock

Your Nature Diary December

















Local places to visit

Bay of Skaill (Sandwick)	6 0	₹
Berriedale (Hoy)	0	4 1
Brinkie's Brae (Stromness)	0	2.5
Brough of Birsay (West Mainland)	© O	₹
Dingieshowe (East Mainland)	e 0	₹
Earls Bu (Orphir)	© O	₩ • •
Heart of Rousay boardwalk (Rousay)	0	2.5
Hoxa Head (South Ronaldsay)	0	₹
Inganess (Kirkwall)	e	₹
Mull Head Nature Reserve (Deerness)	0	₹
Peedie Sea (Kirkwall)	0	₩
Rothiesholm (Stronsay)	© O	≋ ≋ !
Sands of Evie (Aikerness)	© O	₩
Sands O'Wright (South Ronaldsay)	O	
Scapa Beach (Kirkwall)	© O	₹
Tankerness House Gardens (Kirkwall)	0	4 1
Tresness (Sanday)	© O	
Binscarth Wood (Finstown)	0	4 1
Happy Valley (Stenness)	0	4 1
Loch Of Ayre (St Marys)	O 66	4 1
Marengo Garden (St Margaret's Hope)	0	4
Muddiesdale Wood (Kirkwall)	0	4 15
Wideford Hill (Kirkwall)	0	2.5
Olav's Wood (South Ronaldsay)	0	4 15

		1	•
The Ouse (Finstown)	O	ž į	≋ !
RSPB Birsay Moors (West Mainland)	•	66 y	
RSPB Brodgar (Stenness)	0	Y	2.5
RSPB Cottascarth & Rendall Moss (West Mainland)		66 y	2.5
RSPB Hoy (Hoy)	6	Y §	≋ ♣ ; ;
RSPB The Loons and Loch of Banks (West Mainland)		88 Y	
RSPB The Loons Listening Wall (West Mainland)	0	Y	
RSPB Marwick Head (West Mainland)	0	1	₩ 1
RSPB Mill Dam (Shapinsay)		66 y §	≋ ♣ • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
RSPB North Hill (Papa Westray)	0	Y	₩ 1
RSPB Noup Cliffs (Westray)		Y 8	₩ 19
RSPB Onziebust (Eglisay)	6	Y	≋ !
RSBP Trumland (Rousay)	0	Y	≋ ₽
St Magnus Way (Egilsay to Kirkwall)	6	*	

② beach **⑤** flowers **份** hide **→** reserve **○** shore **♠** trees **↓** walk

Follow the links below for more information

- orkney.com/things/nature
- woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/binscarth-woods
- woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/happy-valley
- facebook.com/AyreWalk
- facebook.com/marengo.garden
- theorkneynews.scot/2023/05/27/walking-orkney-muddiesdale-kirkwall
- olavswood.org.uk
- theorkneynews.scot/2023/04/30/walking-orkney-the-ouse-finstown
- rspb.org.uk/days-out/reserves
- stmagnusway.com/route



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Species on the Edge is a multi-partner species conservation programme dedicated to supporting vulnerable and threatened species found along Scotland's coast and islands. Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the partnership consists of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, NatureScot, Plantlife, and RSPB Scotland. Find out more at: speciesontheedge.co.uk.

With thanks to Megan Taylor from Wild Orkney Walks at: wildorkneywalks.co.uk.

As with any trip outdoors, please dress for the weather and be aware of your own safety. Take your healthcare worker's advice and work to your ability. Remember to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which is available at: outdooraccess-scotland.scot.

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Protecting habitats, saving species and helping to end the nature and climate emergency.

Nature is in crisis.

Together we can save it.



