

The Yippittee!

for kids who are crazy about conservation!

Issue 1 September 2009

Autumn Days

Hello and welcome to Yippittee! - the brand new magazine for kids that want to make a difference! I'm Spike the Hedgehog and I'm very busy at the moment getting ready for the colder weather! For you its a brand new school year and as well as the new pencil case or shoes you may have, the days are getting shorter, the leaves are changing colour and the air has a fresh feeling about it that can mean only one thing - autumn is here! This is a great time of

year to see what's going on out there in the natural world, perhaps even in your back garden if you take a closer look, so read on to find out more about me, my friends (and my foes)! If you get out and about on these blustery days and see any autumnal activities going on where you are, do write to us - we'd love to hear from you (see the last page). Now I'm off to find a nice cosy place where I can hibernate...



What's Inside...

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Hibernation

is when creatures go to sleep over the winter because its too cold and there is not enough food about to give them energy to keep active. Like bees! They take the pollen and nectar from flowers in the spring and summer, but there're none around in the winter.

Nocturnal...

creatures that sleep during the day but are active at night time, like bats and moths. Slugs and snails are also more active at night so the sun can't dry their bodies out.



All About... Hedgehogs

Did you know that when hedgehogs are born they don't have any spines?! They have to wait two days to get them, and two weeks before they get their proper adult ones. An adult has between 3,000 and 5,000 spines! These are so that when faced with danger they can curl up in a ball. However, some crafty foxes have learnt how to open them up by dropping them and badgers can use their strong claws to turn them over and scoop them out!

There are many strange stories about hedgehogs. One is that they collect apples on their spines to eat later! Another is that they suck milk from cows udders! Actually they are insectivores so they mainly eat woodlice, snails, slugs and other creepy crawlies. Which is why its a bad idea to use slug pellets to poison slugs - because then the hedgehogs might get poisoned too! They also like to eat cat food! Many people think you should give hedgehogs milk



to drink but this can make them feel poorly so give them water instead.

You'll only see them at night because they are nocturnal which means that they sleep during the day. Their eye sight is not very good but they have much better senses of smell and hearing. In one night they may travel up to 4 km climbing over obstacles such as small fences.

In the autumn hedgehogs eat lots of food to get enough fat stores so that they can survive the winter when they hibernate between the months of November to March or April. If it is a long, cold winter, they may not survive. You may find one hibernating in a compost heap or in a pile of leaves under a hedge.

True or false?

1. True/false - hedgehogs can swim.
2. True/false - baby hedgehogs are called hoglets!
3. True/false - hedgehogs have fleas.

Answers are on page 6.

Another name for the hedgehog is hedgepig. This could be because they grunt as pigs do. The female is called a sow and the male is called a boar, just like farmyard pigs!

Did you know...?

Dormice hibernate for 6 months a year! In fact the "dorm" part of its name comes from a Latin word "dormire" which means "to sleep". In other languages like French and Spanish the word for sleep is "dormir". So it is in fact the "sleeping mouse"!



Frogs might hibernate under a pile of soggy autumn leaves or in the mud at the bottom of a pond. They can breathe through their skin.

Ladybirds and bees hibernate in small spaces. Fill a plant pot with twigs and lay it on its side - perhaps they will choose to hibernate there.



Fantastic Fungi!

Autumn is damp, the leaves are falling off the trees, plants are dying back and wood is rotting. It's the perfect time to see fungi! You might know these better as mushrooms and toadstools. However these are just what you can see - the cap. Most fungi is hidden in the soil or wood. Their job is to break down living and dead plants and animals, helping them to rot and turn back into soil.



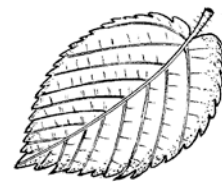
Some of them are edible like the mushrooms you buy from the shops, others are deadly such as Death Cap! But beware - some of them look very similar to each other so you should NEVER pick them in the wild unless you are with someone who is absolutely sure that they are safe to eat.

Some fungi is useful while others are harmful. Moulds are a kind of fungi that grow on food when it has gone off, yet yeast is another fungi which is used to make bread and beer.

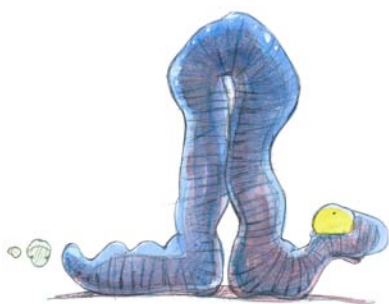
Fungi are not the same as green plants. They do not need light to grow and they don't have leaves. Fungi have spores instead of seeds. These are tiny cells that get carried by the wind or shot into the air by the parent fungi. If they land in the right place they grow into more fungi. Why don't you go to the woods and see if there are any fungi growing there?

Detritivores

This is the time of year when creepy crawlies or "detritivores" get really busy! There are so many fallen leaves, dead plants and bits of wood for them to eat so that the nutrients (the good stuff in food) doesn't get wasted!



Fill in the missing letters of these detritivores:



_ or _

s _ u _

_ n _ i _

wo _ d _ ou _ e

mi _ _ ip _ _ _

b _ et _ e

What am I?

Put on your detective hats and see if you can guess which creatures these clues are talking about...

I am covered in fleas
I live in a kind of nest called a drey
I use my tail as a blanket
I bury acorns in the autumn
I can be grey or red

My favourite food is worms
I live in a sett underground
An old name for me is "Brocc"
I am nocturnal
My face is black and white



Bonkers About Conkers!



The conker is another name for the horse chestnut which comes from the horse chestnut tree.

Horse chestnut trees were not grown in this country until the 19th century.

The horse part of the name might be because in Eastern countries conkers used to be fed to horses.

They are very different to Sweet Chestnuts which grow on different trees and humans can eat.

The first recorded game of conkers was held on the Isle of Wight back in 1848.

Before then the game used to be played using hazelnuts and even snails' shells!

The first World Conker Championships was held in 1965.

Other names for the game of conkers are "obblyonkers", "cheggies" and "cheesers"!

Did you know...?

The berries, fruit and nuts that trees make all have seeds inside of them. When birds eat the berries they also eat the seed. This goes right through their bodies and out the other end, by which time the birds have flown to somewhere new. This means that the seed of the tree lands in a different place, in a nice lump of poo, which is a fertilizer to help the seed to grow!

Squirrels collect nuts in the autumn such as acorns and conkers. They bury them in the ground or put them in holes in trees. They find them again using their sense of smell. The ones they forget sometimes grow into trees.

The alder tree likes to grow on river banks. When it drops its seeds the river carries them to new places. This spreading of seeds is called seed dispersal.



Can you link these trees to their seeds?

oak

a winged seed

brambles

cones

pine tree

haws

horse chestnut

acorn

hawthorn

conker

sycamore

blackberries



Migration

is a dangerous business for birds. You have to fly thousands of miles and risk getting lost, running out of energy, starving to death, getting eaten by predators or trapped by humans. So why on earth would you want to migrate? Well for birds they have a much better chance of survival when they fly south in the autumn and winter to hotter countries where there is a more plentiful supply of food. Then they will return in the springtime when the weather improves, when there is more food and conditions are good for breeding.

Migration - when creatures move from one place to another so they can survive more easily.

Birds can travel huge distances when they migrate. Some birds leave Britain to fly to countries in Africa, south of the Sahara desert. Others come from breeding grounds as far away as the Arctic. Perhaps the most well know of these is the Arctic Tern which breeds in the Arctic in the Northern Hemisphere and then migrates to the other side of the world to the Antarctic. The trip there and back is about 40,000 km!



A Willow Warbler

To complete these long journeys birds need to feed up and get stores of fat on their bodies, so that they have enough energy. Warblers can double their body weight before they migrate, feeding up on berries and insects and complete their journey in one long non-stop flight! They know when they've arrived at their destination when they have lost all of their weight - a bit like a car running out of petrol! But there are other birds travelling from the Arctic that actually stop in Britain for a rest and stock up on food supplies, especially wading birds which visit our estuaries and marshes. These are known as passage visitors.

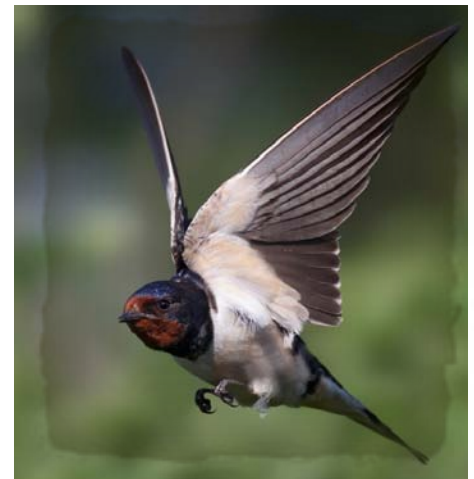
So how do they know where they are going? Well, some use the position of the sun in the sky to tell where they are while others fly at night and use the stars to navigate. Birds can also use the earth's natural magnetic field to know which direction to go in by using a kind of natural compass in their heads. Even young birds such as baby starlings seem to know which direction to fly in and how long for when they have never done the journey before!

Some birds take a direct route, crossing deserts and seas while others follow landmarks such as the coastline to stop themselves from getting lost. Once they have completed their first migration, birds get a kind of map in their minds so that if they go off course another time, they can correct themselves.

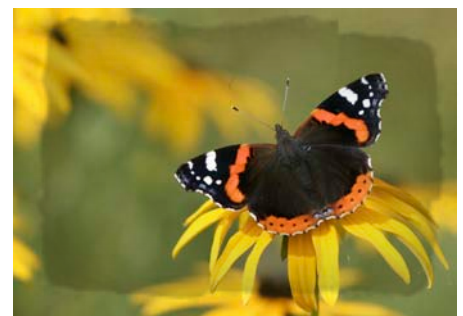
Not all birds leave Britain in the winter though, some arrive. Although starlings are found in Britain all year round, extra starlings come from places like Scandinavia, Finland and Poland to spend their winter here. Sometimes we also get surprise visitors when birds get blown off course during bad weather!



A Starling



Swallows (see above) and swifts were also thought to hibernate in caves when actually they can fly over 6,000 miles!



A Red Admiral

One of the first signs of spring is when you hear the cuckoo call. This is just one of about 50 species of birds which return in the spring - all together there must be about 16 million birds! However, its not just birds that migrate, butterflies do as well, such as the Painted Lady and the Red Admiral.

Crazy About Conservation!

This is your page so if you want to send us a poem, story or letter about the environment, send it to us at this address: info@ypte.org.uk or Crazy about Conservation!, YPTE, Suite 29, Yeovil Innovation Centre, Barracks Close, Copse Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8RN.

You're joking!

Why did the hedgehog cross the road?
To see his flat mate!

What do you get if you cross a parrot with a woodpecker?
A bird that talks in morse code!

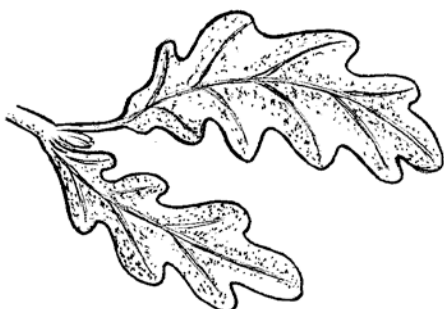
Why do worms taste like chewing gum?
Because they're wrigleys!

Why is the snail the strongest animal?
Because it carries its house on its back!



Top Tips To Help Wildlife:

- * Put food out for the birds - at this time of year fat, peanuts, bread, raisins are all good.
- * Leave out a shallow bowl of water where they can get a drink.
- * Leave a corner of your garden where the fallen leaves can gather - you never know what might crawl in there for shelter.
- * Make a wood pile - another place where creatures can hide.



Autumnal Activities:

Get green!

Plant bulbs! This is the time of year to plant bulbs so that when spring arrives there will be colourful flowers for you to admire and for the bees to get their nectar from - hyacinths, daffodils, snow drops and crocuses are some of the more well known ones.

Get crafty!

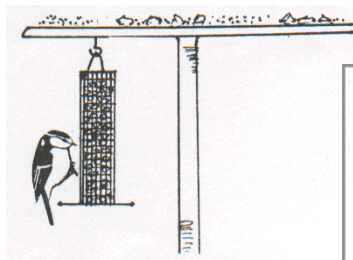
Make a collage using autumn leaves, berries, bits of lichen...

Do a tree rubbing - put a piece of paper against a trunk and then using a wax crayon rub over the paper to get the pattern of the wood.

Get muddy!

Go for a welly walk after it has been raining and splash in the puddles!

Go on a minibeast hunt and see what you can find.



What I am I?
- answers:
A squirrel
A badger

True or false? - answers

1. True - Hedgehogs can swim but sometimes they drown in swimming pools and ponds if they can't climb out.
2. True - Baby hedgehogs are called hoglets!
3. True - yes hedgehogs do have fleas!

Here are some useful websites to find out more:

BBC Autumn watch

www.bbc.co.uk/autumnwatch

Nature detectives

www.naturedetectives.org.uk

CBBC

www.bbc.co.uk/nature/reallywild

Young People's Trust for the Environment www.ypte.org.uk

RSPB

www.RSPB.org.uk/youth/learn