

Winner

Alex Bytheway

My Local Patch

2020

The image was taken on an overcast day at my local beach. I lay on the sand waiting for the sanderling to be forced closer to me by the incoming tide. After a couple of hours I snapped this shot and breathed a sigh of relief.

The image was taken on a Nikon d7500 with a Sigma 150-600mm contemporary lens.

Barn Owl

Scientific name: *Tyto alba*

Our most familiar owl, the barn owl will sometimes hunt in the daytime and can be seen 'quartering' and hovering over farmland and grassland looking for its next small-mammal meal. However, it is perfectly adapted to hunt with deadly precision in the dark of night: combined with their stealthy and silent flight, their heart-shaped faces direct high-frequency sounds, enabling them to find mice and voles in the vegetation.

The barn owl has a mottled silver-grey and buff back, and a pure white underside. It has a distinctive heart-shaped, white face, and black eyes.

Did you know?

Throughout history, barn owls have been known by many different nicknames, such as 'ghost owl', 'church owl', 'screech owl' and 'demon owl'.

Barn Owl

Scientific name: *Tyto alba*

The beautiful barn owl is, perhaps, our most-loved owl. With its distinctive heart-shaped face, pure white feathers, and ghostly silent flight, it's easy to identify. Look out for it flying low over fields and hedgerows at dawn and dusk.

Lincolnshire has one of the highest densities of barn owls of any county in the UK thanks to the works of local drainage authorities, farmers and landowners who put up nesting boxes and manage grassland edges, drains and field boundaries to benefit the field vole – the barn owl's favoured prey. You can see them throughout the wider landscape as they hunt alongside ditches, tracks and roads, particularly at first dusk.

Did you know?

Up to 13 pairs of barn owls breed at Vine House Farm in south Lincolnshire and in 2014, they produced an incredible 63 young! The farm holds open days and walks where lucky visitors may just catch a glimpse of these ghostly residents

Bee-wolf

Scientific name: *Philanthus triangulum*

One of our largest and most impressive solitary wasps, the bee-wolf digs a nest in sandy spots and hunts honey bees.

They are most often found on sandy areas of lowland heath and coastal dunes. They used to be extremely rare, with just a few scattered populations in southern England, but in the last few decades they have expanded their range dramatically northwards.

Male bee-wolves gather together and each defends a small territory, using pheromones to attract a female. After this, males play no further part in the nesting process. Female bee-wolves have to work a lot harder, digging a nesting burrow in a sandy bank or floor. These burrows can be a metre long, with up to 34 side burrows that end in brood chambers. Once excavation has begun on the burrow, the female goes hunting.

Female bee-wolves prey on honey bee workers, paralysing them with a sting and carrying them back to their burrow. Up to six paralysed honey bees are placed in each brood chamber, then a single egg is laid on one of the bees and the chamber is sealed with sand. After hatching, the larva feeds on the cache of honey bees before spinning a cocoon to hibernate through winter, ready to emerge in spring.

Did you know?

Once a female bee-wolf has taken a paralysed honey bee back to her nest, she covers it in a special chemical she secretes, which helps prevent dangerous bacteria and fungi from growing and killing the larva.

Black Headed Gull

Scientific name: *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Black headed gulls are a familiar site on Lincolnshire's farmland, regularly following tractors as the ploughing disturbs worms and other insects, meaning there is lots of food available.

They nest on saltmarshes and on islands in flooded gravel pits and reservoirs, and sometimes form very large, noisy colonies. There are about 140,000 breeding pairs in the UK and about 2.2 million wintering birds each year.

The black-headed gull is actually a chocolate-brown headed gull! And for much of the year, it's head even turns white with a black spot by the eye. It is silvery-grey above and white below, with red legs, a red bill and black wingtips.

Did you know?

Ridibundus, The species-specific part of the black-headed gull's Latin name means 'laughing' and comes from its 'ke-ke-ke' and 'kverarr' calls

Blue Tailed Damselfly

Scientific name: *Ischnura elegans*

The Blue-tailed damselfly does, indeed, have a blue tail. It is one of our most common species of damselfly and is particularly frequent around garden ponds, but can also be found near almost any water body.

When the larvae of damselflies are ready to turn into adults, they emerge from the water and moult their larval skin, leaving behind a cast known as an 'exuviae' – you can look for these on emergent vegetation, such as reed stems, around the edges of lakes and ponds.

You can easily encourage dragonflies and damselflies into your garden by having a wildlife-friendly pond.

Did you know?

Damselflies can be distinguished from dragonflies by their smaller, more delicate bodies and by the way they hold their wings when at rest - closed and folded back along the length of their body.

Dragonflies, in contrast, keep their stiff wings open and held out at right angles to their bodies.

Brown Hare

Scientific name: *Lepus europaeus*

The brown hare is known for its long, black-tipped ears and fast running - it can reach speeds of 45mph when evading predators. It prefers a mosaic of farmland and woodland habitats and can often be spotted in fields.

Brown hares do not dig burrows, but shelter in 'forms', which are shallow depressions in the ground or grass. Females can produce three to four litters of two to four young (known as leverets) a year.

If you spot brown hares 'boxing' in the fields, it is most likely that you are watching a female warding off the advances of an amorous male, not two males fighting. If a fight does happen, the two hares will stand on their hind legs and attack each other with their front paws, pulling out fur. This gives the impression of two boxers in a ring.

Did you know?

Thought to have been introduced into the UK in Roman times (or even earlier), the brown hare is now considered to be a natural part of our British flora and fauna.

Chicken

Scientific name: *Gallus gallus domesticus*

The chicken is a type of domesticated fowl. Its primary ancestor is the red junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*), a tropical bird originating from Asia. The chicken was domesticated from red junglefowl about 8,000 years ago, and they are now found around the world where they are kept by humans for their meat and eggs.

They are the most common and widespread domestic animal, and there are more chickens in the world than any other bird or domesticated fowl. In fact, demand for their meat is so high, there are more chickens in the world right now than humans!

Chickens are sociable, inquisitive and intelligent birds, making them popular to keep as pets.

Did you know?

Some folk tales say that the devil is believed to flee at the first crowing of a rooster.

Runner up

Corey Hunter-Mitchell

Bug Hunt

2020

The image was taken in my back garden whilst going on a "bug hunt" with my 4 year old son Riley. We have a dedicated area of the garden for wildlife and insects to blossom and do what they do. He's usually scared of bees and wasps however by taking macro shots of them and showing them up close I found that it helped him overcome his fear.

The image was taken on my Nikon d7500 using the Nikkor 85mm lens.

Dunlin

Scientific name: *Calidris alpina*

The Dunlin is a small species of wading bird and in Lincolnshire is very much associated with our fantastic coastal habitats where it feeds in large flocks that swirl in their thousands over the estuaries and saltmarshes.

Small with a fairly long down-curved bill, Dunlin are unmistakable in their summer plumage - brick-red above, with a black belly patch. However, in winter they lose this colour and turn grey above and white underneath. They feed on the estuarine mud which is full of worms and molluscs. In fact, each cubic metre of mud provides as much energy as 14 Mars Bars!

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust are working with fishermen, researchers, politicians and local people to create a 'Living Seas' vision, where coastal and marine wildlife thrives alongside the sustainable use of the ocean's resources.

Did you know?

Many of the Dunlin that spend the autumn and winter on the Lincolnshire coast will have flown to the UK from within the Arctic Circle. Many use our coast as a staging post on their

long migrations and it is therefore very important not to disturb them if you see a flock feeding or roosting on the beach.

Runner up

Ele Johnstone

Blue Tailed Damselfly

2020

A blue-tailed damselfly shelters amongst the foliage of Radipole Lake, Weymouth during a grey and windy summers day. I loved the effect that getting below the tiny insect achieved. I wanted to capture the joy I felt when I noticed pairs and pairs of incredible bright blue eyes peeking out from layers of plants the damselflies were safely tucked away within.

The image was taken at Radipole Lake in Weymouth, Dorset

I used a Canon EOS 7D with a Canon EF100mm f/2.8L macro lens

European Otter

Scientific name: *Lutra lutra*

The elusive otter is one of our top predators, feeding mainly on fish, water birds, amphibians and crustaceans. Otters have their cubs in underground burrows, known as 'holts'. Excellent and lithe swimmers, the young are in the water by 10 weeks of age.

Otters are well suited to a life on the water as they have webbed feet, dense fur to keep them warm, and can close their ears and nose when underwater. They require clean rivers, with an abundant source of food and plenty of vegetation to hide their secluded holts.

Seeing the signs of otters is far easier than seeing the animals themselves. Along riverbanks and waterways, look for five-toed footprints (about 6-7cm long) and droppings or 'spraints'. Otters leave spraints in prominent places, such as fallen trees, weirs and bridges, as 'scented messages', helping them to find mates and defend territories. They contain visible fish bones and have a distinctive, pleasant smell, reminiscent of jasmine tea!

Did you know?

Otters declined markedly in the UK between the 1950's and 1970's, largely due to habitat loss, pollution and the use of organochlorine pesticides. However, since then, numbers have gradually recovered and they are now found again in every English county, including Lincolnshire.

Great White Egret

Scientific name: *Ardea alba*

Compared to the now familiar little egret, the great white egret is enormous, almost as large as a grey heron. They can also be identified by their yellow bill and black legs and feet.

A few decades ago, records of great white egret were less than annual, but more and more are now occurring in the UK and a few pairs even nest here. Visiting birds can be found in all kinds of wetland habitats, even farmland ditches! They stand in shallow water, waiting for fish, insects and amphibians to approach, and then spear them with their dagger-like bill.

Did you know?

Like the little egret, great white egrets were once persecuted for the beautiful long-white plumes of their breeding plumage, which were often used in fashion. In the United States, they were almost wiped out completely during the late 1800s, sparking conservation movements like the RSPB and some of the first laws to protect birds.

Runner up

Isabelle Clark

This is my Best Side

2019

The image was taken at South Ormsby Estate in July 2019.

I took the photo on a canon 750D (DSLR)

Runner up

Joe Cooper

Solitary Stonechat

2019

The image was taken at Langton Lowfields reserve at Newark in October 2019.

The photograph was taken using an Olympus; Model No. SP565UZ (we don't know what this means, it was given to us second hand!).

Runner up

Jonathan Trotter

Bird's Eye View

2019

The image itself was taken via drone (DJI Mavic 2 Pro) in September 2019 at Binbrook in the Lincolnshire Wolds. The tractor isn't actually ploughing, a better term would be cultivating.

Winner

Katie Grant

King of His Jungle

2020

The photo was taken in June 2020. During lockdown, I spent some time getting to know the wildlife on my doorstep and was struck by how much I could actually find locally. This Jumping Spider was hunting Aphids on a rosebush in my garden.

It was taken using a Nikon D500 camera with a 70-300mm lens and a macro attachment.

Winner

Katy Read

Spot lit Robin

2020

Runner up

Ken Bunch

Fox on the Prowl

2020

The image of the fox was taken at the British Wildlife Centre and a few stray pieces of grass that were across its face were cloned out and its eyes were sharpened and lightened.

The image was taken using a Nikon D90 camera with a 70- 300 lens. The settings were 1/1250 second at f/5.3 ISO 400.

Runner up

Kevin Maxfield

Otter with Fish

2020

The image was taken from a hide run by Wildlife Photography Hides near Bourne Lincolnshire. Time taken 7.00pm

The camera used was a Canon 1DX MK II; Lens, Canon 500mm f/4 II; Shutter speed 1/160 second; Aperture F/8; ISO 1000; Multi flash set up 2 front & 2 rear.

Edited in Light room 6 & Photoshop 6

Kingfisher

Scientific name: *Alcedo atthis*

Blink and you may miss the fantastic kingfisher! This beautiful bird is easy to recognise thanks to its bright blue and metallic copper colours. It can be spotted sitting quietly on low-hanging branches over the water, suddenly diving in to catch a small fish.

Kingfishers live in burrow-like nests near lakes and other waterways. The sexes are almost identical but males have an entirely black bill whilst females have an orangey-red patch at the base.

As they rely entirely on a diet of fish, cold winters can be particularly hard for kingfishers, when harsh weather freezes lakes and ponds and make it hard for them to find food.

Did you know?

There are about 90 species of kingfisher around the world, most of which have brightly coloured plumage. The Australian kingfisher - the familiar, 'laughing' Kookaburra - is the heaviest of all the kingfisher species.

Runner up

Mike Cook

Eye to Eye

2020

The image was taken at sunrise just outside of Bardney, Lincoln. Two Barn owls peering through the stubble at each other

The camera used: Nikon D810; Lens: Sigma 150-600; ISO: 2500; Aperture: f6.3; Shutter speed: 1/2000

Mute Swan

Scientific name: *Cygnus olor*

One of our most iconic waterbirds, the mute swan is famed for its grace and beauty.

The mute swan is one of the most familiar birds in the UK, its long, curved neck and graceful glide a regular sight on our waterways and waterbodies.

Mute swans feed on plants, particularly waterweed. They usually mate for life, but some will have numerous partners.

Both males and females are involved in parenting; the cob will guard the nest while the pen leaves to feed, but will not incubate the eggs. Both parents are devoted to the cygnets, which, with their downy, brown fluff and short necks, do indeed look like the 'ugly duckling' of the rhyme! They soon grow into their adult plumage, however.

Did you know?

A female swan is known as a 'pen' and a male is a 'cob'.

Winner

Oliver Woodman

Great White Egret at Dawn

2020

The picture was taken on the Upper Witham,
15th April 2020 at 5.20am.

Camera Canon 5D MK IV with a Canon 100-
400mm lens shot at 400mm, ISO 1000, f 8.0,
1/1250 sec.

Red Fox

Scientific name: *Vulpes vulpes*

The red fox is our only wild member of the dog family. They come out mostly at night but can also be seen during the day if you're lucky!

They are not fussy eaters and will happily munch on small mammals, birds, frogs, worms as well as berries and fruit! Foxes that live in towns and cities may even scavenge in bins to look for scraps.

The red fox is orangey-red above, white below, with black tips to the ears, dark brown feet and a white tip to the bushy, orange tail (known as the 'brush'). A male fox, called a dog makes a barking noise whereas the females, called vixens make a spine-chilling scream sound. They live in a burrow system called an 'earth' and scent-mark their territorial borders with urine, creating a very strong, recognisable odour.

Did you know?

Foxes have scent glands on their feet to mark well-used trails so they can follow them easily at night.

Solitary Bee

Family_ *Megachilidae*

Most people are familiar with honey bees and bumblebees, but look closely and there are smaller furry bees moving from flower to flower. These are the solitary bees and as the name suggests, they do not live in colonies like bumblebees and honey bees, but nest alone.

The bee here is one of the solitary bees but without being able to see all of it in the photo, it is not possible to assign it to a species with any certainty. However, with its large mandibles it is likely to be one of the leaf-cutter or mason bees.

Mason bees are named for their habit of using mud or other "masonry" products in constructing their nests, which are made in naturally occurring gaps such as between cracks in stones. In contrast, leaf-cutter bees cut chunks out of leaves, gluing them together with saliva, in order to build their nests. The appearance of semi-circular holes in the leaves of your roses is a sure sign that a leaf-cutter bee has been at work!

Did you know

Of the 20,000 bee species worldwide, only 250 are bumblebee species and just 9 are honey bees. All of the others are solitary bees.

Sparrowhawk and Starling

Sparrowhawk Scientific name: *Accipiter nisus*

Starling Scientific name: *Sturnus vulgaris*

Sparrowhawk are excellent bird hunters, catching small species like finches, sparrows, and in this case, a starling. They will often visit gardens and are both fast and stealthy - sometimes ambushing their prey from a perch, while other times they may fly low, suddenly changing direction in order to fool it. Their rounded wings and relatively long, narrow tail allows them to manoeuvre through tight spaces, often chasing smaller birds through gaps that you wouldn't think possible.

The starling is a familiar bird to many and one of our more common garden birds. However, as with much of our wildlife, they have suffered long term declines nearly 70% since the 1970's. Research has shown that habitat loss, agricultural intensification and changes to our homes and gardens have driven these declines.

In winter, starlings gather into large flocks called murmurations which form in the evening before the birds go to a communal roost. These flocks help to provide safety in numbers from predators and the wheeling and diving also serve to confuse the hawks, further reducing the chances of being caught.

Did you know?

Some of the largest starling murmurations can number more than a million birds! In Lincolnshire, you can see winter murmurations at a number of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserves including Far Ings, Whisby Nature Park and Gibraltar Point.

Robin

Scientific name: *Erithacus rubecula*

The much-loved robin is a garden favourite and one of our most familiar birds, adorning Christmas cards every year. They're common in parks, scrub and woodland, making their presence known with a loud, territorial song.

They sing from prominent perches right through the winter, when both males and females hold territories; indeed, they are fiercely territorial, driving off intruders and even fighting.

During the breeding season, the female is allowed into the male's territory where she sets up a nest of dead leaves, moss and hair. Nests often crop up in the oddest of places, such as plant pots, old wellies and shelves, but ivy and other shrubs are their natural choice.

Did you know?

Robins have been associated with Christmas ever since Victorian times; Victorian postmen, who were known as 'Robin Red-breasts' because of their red waistcoats, are thought to be the inspiration for so many robins appearing on our Christmas cards. Whether it's the case or not, robins certainly make themselves known in winter with their loud, aggressive song!

Runner up
Steve Clayton

Success

2019

Taken at Kettlethorpe, Lincolnshire 4.25pm
on 29th March 2019.

Using a Canon 7d MK. 2, Canon 100 – 400
lens, at 400mm, ISO 1600, at 1/3200 of a
second.

Runner up

Steve Clayton

At Hover

2019

Taken over a fresh cut field of hay at Kettlethorpe Lincolnshire; 8pm on 4th of July 2019.

Using a Canon 7d MK. 2, Canon 100 - 400 lens, at 400mm, ISO 320, at 1/ 2000 of a second.

Stonechat

Scientific name: *Saxicola rubicola*

The stonechat sounds just how it is named - its call sounds just like two small stones being hit together! It can be seen on heathland and boggy habitats.

A small, dumpy chat, the stonechat is a little smaller than a robin. It has a big head and short tail. It can frequently be seen sitting on the top of gorse bushes, flicking its wings and making a call like two small stones being hit together. Stonechats inhabit heaths, bogs and conifer plantations. They eat invertebrates, seeds and fruit such as blackberries.

Male stonechats have a black head, brown back, black throat with a white half-collar, and an orange-red breast. Females and juveniles are paler. Darker than the similar whinchat, the stonechat does not have a pale eyestripe or pale patches at the base of the tail.

Stonechats are resident on heathland throughout the country but can also be found around the coast during the winter.

Did you know?

On heathland in the south of England, dartford warblers can often be seen following stonechats around, perhaps catching the small insects that the larger bird disturbs

Overall Winner

Tom Dalzell

Swan on Fire

2020

The image was taken in a local park in Belfast called Victoria Park around 6 30 in the morning in March 2020 just as the sun was coming up during lockdown.

Camera Nikon D500 lens 200mm 500mm, focal length 300mm, shutter speed 1/800, ISO 500, aperture f8.

Runner up

Tracy Marsden

When Breakfast Fights Back

2020

This was taken in my garden I heard a lot of noise went to look and then grabbed my camera. The sparrow hawk was unable to take off with the starling as it was fighting hard every time the sparrow hawk pecked down the starling pecked back; this went on for quite a while, amazing to witness. The sparrow hawk ultimately won and when the fight was ended it flew off with its prey.

Taken with a Canon EOS 70D and Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens

Settings: F/5.6 Exposure: 1/500sec ISO-6400 focal length-312mm

Winner

Tracy Marsden

What Big Ears You Have

2020

This was taken on one of the farm tracks, the hares use them to get from field to woods to hedges. This hare had walked towards me then sat and watched me; it always feels very special when they do this.

The hare was taken with a Canon EOS 70D and Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens

Settings: F/5.6 Exposure: 1/1600sec ISO-640 focal length-400mm

Runner up

Will Lawson

Bee-wolf

2020

When I took this photo, I had just discovered a Bee-wolf colony in a sandy bank and was captivated with how pretty the insects were but also how intriguing it was seeing them flying with a paralysed honey bee underneath them.

The photo was taken on the 16th of June 2020 and I took it using my Canon Eos 60D and Canon Ef 100mm f/2.8 USM.

Zebra Jumping Spider

Scientific name: *Salticus scenicus*

The Zebra spider is a common jumping spider that stalks and leaps on its prey - it can jump up to 10cm, over 14 times its own body length! Look for it on walls, rocks and tree trunks in the sun, particularly in gardens and sometimes in houses.

Males attract females through a complex courtship dance, moving around the females with their legs waving in the air. The females create a silk cocoon in which the eggs are protected, and guards the nest until the young hatch.

The Zebra spider is a small spider, with a relatively large body. It is so-named for its black-and-white stripy pattern on its back. There are several very similar species of jumping spider in the UK, which can be hard to tell apart; as a group, however, they are very distinctive.

Did you know?

With more than 5,000 species, the jumping spiders are the largest family of spiders in the world.

Bearded Tit

Scientific name: *Panurus biarmicus*

The bearded tit is an unmistakable cinnamon-coloured bird of reedbeds in the south, east and north-west of England. Males actually sport a black 'moustache', rather than a beard!

The bearded tit is a small bird with a long tail that is mainly found in large reedbeds where it feeds on insects and reed seeds. It builds its nest low down among the reeds, often on piles of dead reed stems. Bearded tits can be heard calling with a nasal 'ting' or 'ping' sound as they fly about the reeds.

The bearded tit is cinnamon-brown with a long, brown tail. It has a grey head with a black 'moustache' and a yellow bill and eyes. Females are less colourful than males, and do not have the moustache.

Did you know?

The bearded tit is also known as 'Bearded Reedling' or 'Bearded Parrotbill'. In fact, it is not actually a tit or parrotbill, but has now been assigned to its own family.

Seven spot Ladybird

Scientific name: *Coccinella septempunctata*

The 7-spot ladybird is 'the' ladybird that everyone is familiar with. A virtually ubiquitous inhabitant of gardens and parks, the 7-spot ladybird will turn up anywhere there are aphids for it to feed on.

It is our native ladybird and can be identified by its red wing cases, dotted with a pattern of seven black spots; it also has a familiar black-and-white-patterned thorax. Look out for the non-native harlequin ladybirds. These invasive species out-compete our native ladybird and are incredibly variable, some with up to 19 spots on red, black or orange wing cases.

Adult 7-spot ladybirds hibernate in hollow plant stems and cavities, sometimes clustering together in large numbers. Encourage them in your garden by putting up a bug box and they'll repay you in spring when they feed on aphids.

Did you know?

The bright colours of ladybirds warn predators that they are distasteful, although some birds may still have a go at eating them. As well as their warning colouration, ladybirds also have another defence mechanism: when handled, they release a pungent, yellow substance from their joints (a form of 'controlled bleeding') that can stain the hands.

Peregrine falcon

Scientific name: *Falco peregrinus*

Until recently, the peregrine falcon was only found in the north and west of the UK. Yet, over the last couple of decades, it has been spreading south finding some unusual nest sites including Lincoln Cathedral's central Bell Tower. They have been nesting there for over a decade, and in that time have raised at least 27 young.

The peregrine is our biggest falcon; it is dark slate-grey above and white below, with black bars across its chest and belly. It has a white throat and cheeks, and a strong, black moustache and mask.

Did you know?

Peregrines are among the fastest animals on the planet, reaching speeds of up to 200 miles per hour when 'stooping' - diving down on its prey from a great height. Prey is usually taken mid-air and consists mostly of birds like feral pigeons and collared doves.

Tawny Owl

Scientific name: *Strix aluco*

Tawny owls are the familiar brown owls of Britain's woodlands, parks and gardens. They are known for their 'too-wit, too-woo' song that can be heard at night-time.

Tawny owls are our biggest common owl, familiar in Britain's woodland, parks and gardens. The 'too-wit, too-woo' call, often referred to as being the song of the generic owl, is that of the tawny owl. It isn't the call of a single bird, but instead made by a male and female calling to each other. The female makes a 'too-wit' sound and the male answers with 'too-woo'!

These incredible creatures sit on their favourite perch on the lookout for small animals like voles and mice to eat. They nest during springtime in hollow trees, or sometimes choose to reuse an old crow's nest.

The tawny owl is mottled reddish-brown, with a paler underside. It has a big, round head, rounded wings, large, dark eyes, and a dark ring around its face.

Did you know?

Like other owls, tawny owl can famously turn their head through 270 degrees and are able to look behind them. Although owls have binocular vision, their forward-facing eyes cannot move in their sockets, so they must turn their heads instead.

Zebra Spider

Scientific name: *Salticus scenicus*

The zebra spider is a tiny species of jumping spiders, only 6-7mm long. Often labelled 'cute', zebra spiders have a large pair of front eyes capable of melting even an arachnophobe's heart. Their 4 pairs of eyes allow them to see almost 360 vision, swivelling up, down and side to side to lock on to their prey and accurately pounce to make their catch.

Unlike other spiders, jumping spiders don't make webs and rely on speed and stealth to jump on to their prey and catch it. Often jumping over 14 times its own body length, you'd expect it to have large leg muscles like a grasshopper or cricket, however this isn't the case. Instead, it uses a sudden change of blood pressure in the legs to propel itself into the air.

Did you know?

Before making a leap for it, jumping spiders will secure a line of silk beneath them, so if they miss their prey or land in a precarious place, they can quickly climb back to safety.

Fly Agaric

Scientific name: *Amanita muscaria*

The classic fairy tale toadstool, this red and white fungus is often found beneath birch trees in autumn.

Fly agaric is probably our most recognisable species of fungus, with the mushroom's distinctive red cap and white stalk featuring in countless stories, television shows and even video games! Fly agaric is found in woodlands, parks and heaths with scattered trees, typically growing beneath birch trees or pines and spruces. The colourful fruiting bodies can usually be seen between late summer and early winter.

Like most fungi, the parts we see are just the fruiting bodies, or mushrooms. These grow up from an unseen network of tiny filaments called hyphae, which together form a structure known as the mycelium. The fruiting bodies produce spores for reproduction, although fungi can also reproduce asexually by fragmentation. The mycelium of fly agaric often forms a symbiotic relationship with the trees around it, wrapping around the roots and supplying them with nutrients taken from the soil. In exchange, the fungus receives sugars produced by the trees.

Fly agarics are poisonous and should not be eaten. Reports of deaths are rare, but ingestion often causes stomach cramps and hallucinations. The distinctive mushrooms have a red cap, either flat or rounded, often with a scattering of white spots or warts, and a white stem. The gills, beneath the cap, are free of the stem.

Did you know?

Despite it being toxic to us, there are some animals that do eat fly agaric. These include red squirrels and slugs, as well as specialists such as fungus gnats - these flies lay eggs on the fungus, and when they hatch the larvae feed on the fruiting body.

Swallow

Scientific name: *Hirundo rustica*

Look out for the swallow performing great aerial feats as it catches its insect-prey on the wing. You may also see it perching on a wire, or roosting in a reedbed, as it makes its way back to Africa for the winter.

The swallow, or 'barn swallow', is a common summer visitor, arriving in April and leaving in October. It builds mud and straw nests on ledges, often in farm buildings and outhouses, or under the eaves of houses. Swallows are widespread and common birds of farmland and open pasture near water. They are agile fliers, feeding on flying insects while on the wing. Before they migrate back to their wintering grounds in Africa, they can be seen gathering to roost in wetlands, particularly reedbeds.

The swallow is a glossy, dark blue-black above and white below, with a dark red forehead and throat, and a black band across its chest. It has a very long, forked tail. Often spotted perching on wires in small numbers.

Did you know?

Until the 19th century, people thought that the swallow hibernated over winter. Of course, we now know that it migrates to South Africa from the UK, undertaking a perilous journey, during which it is vulnerable to starvation and stormy weather.

Roe deer

Scientific name: *Capreolus capreolus*

Our most common native deer, the roe deer tends to be solitary in summer, but forms small, loose groups in winter. The males (called bucks) have relatively short antlers, typically with three points. They begin to grow their antlers in November, shedding the velvet from them in the spring. By summer, they are ready for the rutting season. After mating with the females (called does), they shed their antlers in October and begin to grow a new set.

Roe deer live in areas of mixed countryside that includes woodland, farmland, grassland and heathland. They eat buds and leaves from trees and shrubs, as well as ferns, grasses and heathers.

A slender, medium-sized deer, the roe deer has short antlers and no tail. It is mostly brown in colour, turning reddish in the summer and darker grey in the winter. It has a pale buff patch around its rump.

Did you know?

Mating occurs in July and August, but females delay implantation of the fertilised egg until January of the following year, so that the young are not born during the harsh winter months. This is known as embryonic diapause. Two or three, white-spotted kids are born in May or June.

Lapwing

Scientific name: *Vanellus vanellus*

Familiar birds of farmlands and wetlands, Lapwings can often be seen wheeling through winter skies in large, black and white flocks. As spring approaches, these flocks get smaller; some birds head back to their continental breeding grounds and others disperse to breed in the UK.

Males put on dramatic aerial displays, tumbling through the air, accompanied by their piercing 'peewit' call, which gives them their other, common name: Peewit. Females can be spotted on their nests, which are simple scrapes in the mud or sand. By late spring, cute, fluffy lapwing chicks can be seen venturing out to forage. If the nest is threatened at all, the parents will attack or 'mob' the potential predators.

Lapwings can be recognised by their long crests and black and white patterns. Look a little closer and you'll see the back has an iridescent green and purple sheen. When in flight, their distinctive broad, rounded wings can be seen.

Did you know?

Lapwing eggs used to be a prized position for egg collectors in the Victorian times, but the introduction of the Lapwing Act in 1926 prohibited this in a bid to prevent further decline of this species.

Hoverfly

There are more than 270 species of hoverfly in the UK, ranging in size from a few millimetres to 2cm. They come in all shapes and disguises, and some are excellent bee mimics. This disguise is only skin-deep though, as hoverflies are harmless and cannot sting. By mimicking a bee, this puts off potential predators such as birds from eating them.

The main difference to note when identifying a hoverfly is, as the name suggests, they often hover in mid-air. Their eyes are also much bigger than a bees, often covering most of the head, slightly angular and sometimes meeting in the middle. Also, note the wings. Bees have two sets of wings, whereas hoverflies only have the one.

Hoverflies are essential for pollination and pest control in the UK. As well as pollinating crops, hoverfly larvae (which look like legless, semi-transparent maggots) feed on aphids, making them a gardener's friend. Plant things like knapweeds, marsh marigold or fennel to encourage them into your garden.

Did you know?

Hoverflies have the most flexible wings of any insect. They can twist up to 45 degrees and move over 300 times a second allowing them to hover.

Short-eared owl

Scientific name: *Asio flammeus*

The short-eared owl, or 'Shortie', is an unusual owl because it prefers to be out and about in the daytime. It is most easily spotted in winter, when resident birds are joined by migrants.

Short-eared owls mainly hunt during the daytime, flying low over moorland, grassland and saltmarshes where they feed on field voles and small birds. About the same size as the barn owl, but with long wings, the short-eared owl breeds in North England and Scotland, but can be seen more widely in winter. They nest on the ground in scraped-out hollows lined with grass and downy feathers.

The short-eared owl is mottled yellowy-brown above, paler underneath and has dark circles around its yellow eyes. Short 'ear tufts' provide its common name. The similar long-eared owl is darker with orange-red eyes and long ear tufts and is usually found near woodland.

Short-eared owls nest on uplands in the north of the UK. They spend the winter in the lowlands of central and southern England and Wales, particularly around the coast.

Did you know?

Some short-eared owls migrate here from Scandinavia, Russia and Iceland for the winter and can occasionally be seen flying in off the sea.

Red Fox additional

Scientific name: *Vulpes vulpes*

The Red Fox is an iconic species in the UK, immortalised in stories and legend for its cunning and stealth. This orangey-red dog, with its famously bushy tail, can be seen in town and country, day and night.

Foxes mate in winter, and the female (vixen) typically has a litter of 2-7 pups. She'll give birth in a special area in their den called a nesting chamber, and after being born mid-March the pups will emerge above ground in April.

The pups tend to be a grey/brown colour at birth, but by a month old their characteristic red coat starts to show through. Both parents share the duty of looking after the pups for about three months.

Red foxes are omnivorous, meaning they eat a variety of food including both plants and animals such as birds, rabbits, earthworms, as well as berries and fruit. City-dwelling or urban foxes may be seen opportunistically scavenging for food in bins.

Did you know?

Foxes have a short lifespan in the wild, with most having an average lifespan of 2-3 years. If you're lucky enough to stumble across a fox family in the countryside or have a den in your garden, listen for the playful pups 'Ack-ack-ack-ack' sound as they play fight.

Waxwing

Scientific name: *Bombycilla garrulus*

The waxwing is a colourful winter visitor. It can often be spotted in large flocks in berry-laden bushes in towns, car parks and gardens.

A starling-sized bird, the waxwing is one of the UK's most exotic-looking birds, with a large, orangey-pink crest. It does not breed in the UK, but is a winter visitor from Northern Europe and can be spotted in flocks on bushes full of berries - it isn't fussy where the bushes are and frequents towns, car parks and gardens.

Waxwings prefer rowan and hawthorn berries, but can be enticed with hung-up apples. Sudden invasions of large numbers of waxwings (called 'irruptions') occur when the berry crops fail in Northern Europe.

The waxwing has a pink crest and breast, a black mask and throat, a grey rump, a black tail that is tipped with bright yellow, and yellow-and-white markings on its wings.

Did you know?

Waxwings tend to prefer eating red berries to orange berries; but they will choose the latter over yellow and white ones. This pattern is seen in many other berry-eating birds. One downside of eating so many berries is that the birds sometimes become a bit intoxicated by fermenting fruit.

Red kite

Scientific name: *Milvus milvus*

Persecuted to near extinction in the UK, the red kite has made a tremendous comeback thanks to reintroduction programmes and legal protection. Sightings in Lincolnshire are becoming increasingly more common.

A large, graceful bird of prey, it soars over woods and open areas, its distinctive shape and 'mewing' calls making it easy to identify. Red kites were routinely persecuted as hunters of game and domestic animals, but they are in fact scavengers, eating carrion and scraps, and taking only small prey like rabbits.

Red kites can be identified by their angled, red wings that are tipped with black and have white patches underneath in the 'hand'. It's long reddish-brown, forked tail helps to distinguish it from other birds of prey.

Did you know?

Red kites were common in Shakespearean London, where they fed on scraps in the streets and collected rags or stole hung-out washing for nest-building materials. Shakespeare even referred to this habit in 'The Winter's Tale' when he wrote: 'When the kite builds, look to lesser linen'.

Frog

Scientific name: *Rana temporaria*

Our most well-known amphibian, the common frog is a regular visitor to garden ponds across the country, helping to clear out pesky slugs and snails. In winter, they hibernate in pond mud or under log piles.

Common frogs are amphibians, breeding in ponds during the spring and spending much of the rest of the year feeding in woodland, gardens, hedgerows and tussocky grassland. They are familiar inhabitants of garden ponds, where they lay their eggs in big 'rafts' of spawn. They feed on a variety of invertebrates and even smaller amphibians.

The common frog varies in colour enormously, from green to brown and even red or yellow. It has smooth skin, a dark 'mask' behind the eye and long back legs, covered in dark bands. It hops and jumps rather than walks, and lays spawn in large jelly-like clumps.

Did you know?

Male common frogs have 'nuptial pads' on their front feet to help them grip on to females during the breeding season. The male frog will wrap itself around the female and fertilise her eggs as they are produced; a female frog may lay up to 4,000 eggs in one spring! Frogs can spawn as early as December or as late as April depending on the weather. After hatching, tadpoles take about 14 weeks to metamorphose into froglets.

Roe deer

Scientific name: *Capreolus capreolus*

The attractive roe deer is one of only two native deers in the UK, the other being the red deer. They are widespread across woodland, farmland, grassland and heathland habitats. Look for its distinctive pale rump and short antlers on the males.

Roe deer vary in coat colour throughout the year, going from a dull grey in the winter to a more distinguishable rusty red in the summer.

They can be quite shy so you're most likely to spot their tracks and signs or see them from a distance depending on the wind direction. Look for footprints similar to a sheep with two oblong, pointed toe impressions that sit alongside each other, making the shape of an upside-down heart.

Did you know?

Deer 'ruminates', a process whereby they regurgitate and chew their food twice before digesting it. This allows them to gather a lot of food at once and then digest it later.

Blue Tit

Scientific name: *Cyanistes caeruleus*

A familiar garden bird, the blue tit can be seen around bird tables and feeders, as well as in woodlands and parks. Listen out for its trilling, 'tsee-tsee-tsee' song. It is smaller than the great tit.

Blue tits nest in holes in trees, but are just as happy to use nestboxes. They are active feeders, hunting out insects and spiders among the smaller branches and leaves of trees in woodlands. But they are also well-adapted to gardens and towns and will visit bird tables and peanut feeders; they are even famed for breaking the tops of milk bottles and taking the creamy top off the milk. In winter, they will form flocks with other tits, roaming the countryside and visiting gardens in groups.

The blue tit is a colourful little bird with a blue cap, white cheeks, black eyestripes, a greeny-blue back, yellow belly, and blue wings and tail.

Did you know?

Like most birds, blue tits can see ultra-violet (UV) light. Studies have shown that the blue crown on their heads glows brightly under UV light. The brightness of the feathers is thought to provide a variety of signals; for instance, male blue tits have been shown to choose females with brightly coloured crowns as they make fitter mothers.

Southern Hawker

Scientific name: *Aeshna cyanea*

A common dragonfly of ponds, lakes and canals near woodland, the southern hawker can be seen patrolling the water or 'hawking' through woodland rides. A fast-flying species, it will catch its prey mid-air.

The southern hawker is a large hawker dragonfly that is on the wing from the end of June through to October. A common dragonfly of ponds, lakes and canals in the lowlands, particularly near to woodland, it can be seen patrolling a regular patch of water when hunting, or often 'hawking' through woodland rides. Hawkers are the largest and fastest flying dragonflies; they catch their insect-prey mid-air and can hover or fly backwards.

The southern hawker is mostly black in colour. The male has lime green spots all along the body, pale blue bands on the last three segments of the abdomen, blue-green eyes, and large green patches on the thorax. The female is paler, with pale green spots and brownish eyes. The black-and-blue hawkers are a tricky group of dragonflies to identify. The southern hawker can be recognised by its lime green, rather than blue, spots and the large pale patches on its thorax.

Did you know?

The southern hawker is a very inquisitive dragonfly: males will often fly towards the observer, hovering nearby to have a closer look.

Zebra Spider

Scientific name: *Salticus scenicus*

As its name suggests, the zebra spider has the familiar black-and-white stripes of a zebra, making it very distinctive. It is a common jumping spider which does not build a web, but instead stalks and leaps on its prey. Look for it sunning itself on walls, rocks and tree trunks.

Its scientific name *Salticus* comes from the Latin for dancing, referring to their agility and the males complex courtship dance.

Jumping spiders like these have especially large eyes, eight of them in total, which are primarily responsible for excellent binocular vision, helping them to accurately judge the distance they need to jump to catch their prey. Prey includes smaller spiders although they've also been observed taking on moths 3 times their size.

Did you know?

Males can be identified from their huge, elongated chelicerae (the mouthparts that bear the fangs) which are used during tussles with other males.

Mandarin

Scientific name: *Aix galericulata*

A beautiful, unmistakable duck: male mandarins have elaborate plumage with orange plumes on their cheeks, orange 'sails' on their back, and pale orange sides. Females are dull in comparison, with grey heads, brown backs and a white eyestripe.

The mandarin duck is not native to the UK and was introduced from the Far East, where it can still be found in China, Japan, Korea and parts of Russia. It escaped, or was deliberately released, from captivity and is now established as a wild bird. Numbers have declined in South East Asia to the point where there are probably more birds in the UK than their native homeland.

Mandarin ducks are actually quite shy birds, often hiding beneath overhanging willows and usually only forming small flocks. They are found mainly in South East England but are becoming more common across the rest of the UK.

Did you know?

The mandarin duck nests in holes in trees, sometimes high up and a long way from the water. Shortly after the ducklings hatch, the female flies down and coaxes the young to jump from the nest. Once they have left the tree and made their way back to water, the father will return to the family and help to protect the ducklings.

Great Crested Grebe

Scientific name: *Podiceps cristatus*

The graceful great crested grebe is a familiar sight on our lakes and reservoirs, and is well-known for its elaborate courtship dance, during which it rises vertically out of the water and shakes its head.

Grebes are diving waterbirds, feeding on small fish and aquatic invertebrates. A little bit larger than a coot, great crested grebes nest on floating platforms made up of waterweed. They can be found on lakes and reservoirs everywhere.

The largest and most often seen grebe, the great crested grebe has an impressive plume on its head and orange ruff around its neck during the breeding season. It has white cheeks, a dark cap, a white neck and a dark body.

Did you know?

Never mind Strictly Come Dancing, to see some fancy footwork head down to your local lake or reservoir to watch the wild dance of great crested grebes. Their early spring courtship includes 'mewing' and calling, synchronised swimming, preening and fanning out their feathery ruffs.

Migrant Hawker

Scientific name: *Aeshna mixta*

The migrant hawker is not a particularly aggressive species, and may be seen feeding in large groups. It flies late into autumn and can be seen in gardens, grasslands and woodlands.

The migrant hawker is a medium-sized hawker dragonfly that is on the wing from the end of July through to October, or even November in warm years. It is a very common species and can be found hunting in gardens, grassland and woodland some distance from its breeding ponds. Hawkers are the largest and fastest flying dragonflies; they catch their insect-prey mid-air and can hover or fly backwards.

The migrant hawker is mostly dark brown and black in colour. The male has pale blue spots and yellow flecks all along the body, dark blue eyes, and pale yellow-and-blue patches on the thorax. The female has yellowish spots and brownish eyes. The black-and-blue hawkers are a tricky group of dragonflies to identify. The migrant hawker is smaller and has more brown on it than the other three large species (common, azure and southern hawkers) and is not on the wing at the same time as the hairy dragonfly.

Did you know?

During the late summer, large numbers of Migrant hawkers arrive from the continent boosting the resident population.

Mallard

Scientific name: *Anas platyrhynchos*

The much-loved mallard is our most familiar duck, found across town and country. Feeding ducks like the mallard is a popular pastime and, for many, a first introduction to the UK's wonderful wildlife.

The mallard is our commonest duck, found throughout the country on any body of water. The breeding plumage of the male mallard includes a shiny green head, maroon-brown chest, yellow bill and curly black feathers just above the tail. Female mallards are brown and mottled in comparison.

The female lays between 8-13 eggs in spring and will incubate them for about 28 days, leaving the nest only briefly for short breaks for food and to stretch her legs. The ducklings are capable of swimming as soon as they hatch, but will normally stay in the nest for a least 10 hours before the mother leads them to water. They will stay with the mum for about 50-60 days until they fledge and become fully independent. They are able to breed when they are a year old.

Instead of feeding ducks bread, which can be bad for their health and the water, try feeding them sweetcorn, peas, lettuce, oats and seeds instead. They'll gobble it up just as quickly!

Did you know?

Male and female mallards look so different that they were originally thought to be different species!

Osprey

Scientific name: *Pandion haliaetus*

The osprey is a large bird of prey with dark brown upperparts and contrasting white underparts that can appear mottled in females. Their heads are white with a dark brown 'mask' through their eyes. Their wings during flight show strong barring and distinctively dark brown, angled 'wrists'.

A migratory bird, the osprey is present in the UK in summer. Ospreys eat fish, catching them in spectacular fashion as they dive towards lakes and lochs, stretch out their talons and scoop them out of the water with ease.

Your best chance of seeing an osprey in Lincolnshire may be at Deeping Lakes, where a nesting platform has been erected with the hope that a pair will settle there in spring.

Did you know?

Ospreys migrate to West Africa during winter; satellite tracking has shown them flying up to 430km in just one day. It takes them about 20 flying days to complete the journey, but, in autumn, birds stop off to refuel at lakes and reservoirs.

