



IDEAS &
RESOURCES

SUMMER PACK

FAITH
ACTION
FOR NATURE

A time of abundance – a reflection on provision

Who eats what? - a quiz to get people talking

Children's activity: finding breakfast – explore the world through the eyes of a hungry animal!

Worship resource – look at the birds

Churchyard food map - what foods are growing? / plants for food

Your garden menu – a fun family activity to introduce wildlife gardening to children

Planting for wildlife – plants for birds and insects

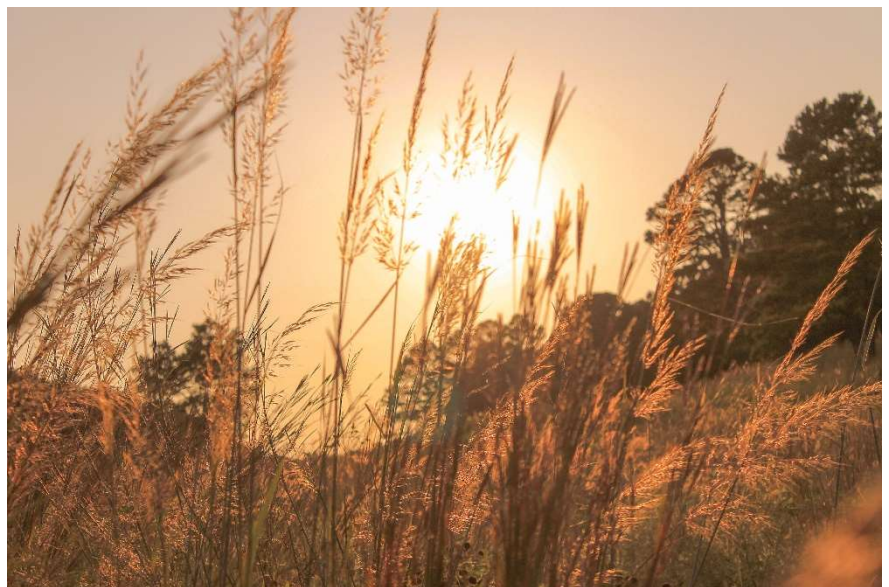
FORAGING

After the long wait through winter and the promise of spring, summer is the season when nature delivers. It's a time of warmth, colour, and abundant life. Most importantly for wildlife, it's usually a time when food is plentiful.

This summer resource pack, the second in our series, celebrates that abundance of food. We will look at what animals eat, investigate foraging, and celebrate the world of foods around us. We'll get practical too, with tips for planting for wildlife, both in gardens and churchyards.

These resources have all been produced to inspire Christians and churches to get outside into nature, to appreciate it, care for it, and find the Creator through it. Use and adapt whatever you like, and pass them along to others. Please let us know what you find most useful, and it will help to guide future resource packs – there is a short survey to fill in on www.faithactionfornature.org

Resources written by Jeremy Williams and Paul Williams at Earthbound Ventures, in consultation with A Rocha UK and RSPB Scotland. Distributed by Eco-Congregation Scotland.



A TIME OF ABUNDANCE

In the Northern Hemisphere, summer is where we see nature in all its glory. If all creation sings God's glory, then summer is when the choir reaches its crescendo.

This is when the trees are in full leaf, and the summer visiting birds put on their aerobatic displays. Wildflowers are out and speckling the fields in colour, and butterflies, dragonflies and beetles move among them. There is more to see in summer, more to enjoy - rich multisensory moments in the buzz of the long grass, or in the shade of the trees.

At this time of year it's easy to remember that God is good, that the earth is bountiful, that nature is generous. It's a time to enjoy, to marvel, to bask like a lizard on a rock.

Light and warmth are abundant in the summer, and creation prospers. Plants put out flowers and produce pollen. Insects flit from flower to flower and pollinate the plants. Where there are insects, birds appear, and life expands in diversity and complexity.

Where are you in this dance of life? Is your church a source of abundance for nature? Are your church grounds humming with life, or is nature relegated to the margins? In Genesis 1:11 we hear God's call to "let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit". And the earth responded, and God saw that it was good. What does God see in our churchyards, and in our back gardens? Is it good?

This season we will look at the abundance of food that summer brings, at who eats what, and where various animals forage. We'll ask what we can do to provide food for wildlife, what we can plant and nurture, so that wildlife can flourish in and around the church.

WHO EATS WHAT?

What do animals eat? Use this quiz to get people talking about what animals eat, and the many different foods the world provides.

Some obvious ones to get you started:

Anteater:	ants
Fruit-bats:	fruit
Egg-eating snake:	eggs
Pineapple fish:	plankton (trick question – it looks like a pineapple, it doesn't eat them)

Intermediate ones:

Horses:	grass, hay
Red squirrel:	nuts, seeds
Spiders:	insects
Blue whales:	krill
Fleas:	blood
Penguins:	fish
Butterflies:	nectar

Trickier ones for adults:

Giant pandas:	Bamboo
Koalas:	Eucalyptus leaves

You can use this quiz to get children or young people thinking about food, and where animals find it. If you're doing outdoor church, you can then follow it up with the 'laying the table' game. In a service context, it leads nicely into the worship activities below.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY: FINDING BREAKFAST

This is an outdoor activity for formal children's work, or to do as a family when out for a walk or while visiting a reserve. It aims to get children active in nature and help them to observe the wildlife around them. Use it alongside the worship resources in this pack to create an outdoor church session.

1. Start by asking the children what they had for breakfast. Where did their breakfast come from? Did they have to go and look for it outside? Or rummage around in a hedgerow?

People are unusual in the animal world. We eat a wide range of foods. We farm them, store them, and do all kinds of things to process them and cook them. Most other animals find the food that they need growing wild, and most of them eat it just the way it is.

Explain: We're going to imagine that we're hungry animals, and that we need to find our breakfast in this place.

2. Start off by pretending to be asleep – children can lie down or curl up on the ground if it's dry. Then when you say 'morning', they have to go and look for the food they need. (Establish some boundaries if you need to, so nobody wanders off!) What animal you choose to be will depend on your setting, but here are some ideas:

- Sparrow: seeds and grains
- Rabbits: weeds, clover, flowers
- Hedgehog: slugs, caterpillars, worms
- Red deer: grass, moss, tree bark, heather
- Fox: rabbits, birds, frogs, but also fruit and seeds, rubbish and dropped food
- Gull: will eat almost anything, including dead things washed up on the beach, crabs, snails. In the city they eat dropped food such as chips.

3. Get everyone back together after a few minutes. (You might want to blow a whistle or have another agreed sound) Get them all to go back to sleep, and then give them another animal to try. At the end, ask the children if they found what they needed. Which animal found their breakfast most easily? Did they look in the same places for each animal?

Bonus ideas:

- Contrast the kinds of foods we eat with the wild foods that animals eat by hiding packets of food for children to find. Do we need so much packaging and processing? Mini boxes of cereal are fun, small enough to hide, and children can eat them dry as a snack later.
- Leave breakfast for an animal or bird before you go – place a few seeds or little pieces of fruit on a stump or a stone as a surprise picnic for something that lives nearby. (You'll need permission if doing this on a reserve!)

WORSHIP RESOURCES:

LOOK AT THE BIRDS

The Sermon on the Mount is found in the early chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. It contains some of Jesus' best known teachings, including this famous passage on worry:

"Do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes? Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than the birds?"
Matthew 6:25-26

When Jesus says 'look at the birds', how should we take that? We could consider it to be a metaphor for how we should think about God's provision, a comparison to make a point. Or we could take it at face value. The Sermon on the Mount is called that because, as we learn in Matthew 5:1, it was delivered on the side of a mountain. It's an outdoor sermon, with an outdoor audience. When Jesus says 'look at the birds', there's a strong chance he was able to point to actual birds in the sky over his listener's heads.

In which case, what would we learn if we took those words literally? Rather than study this passage where Jesus talks about birds, we could do what he tells us to do and study the birds themselves. What we have here is an instruction from Jesus to go birdwatching.

If we look at the birds, Jesus says, we will see that they are cared for through the life-giving abundance of God's world. We will see that we do not live in a world of scarcity, where we all have to grab whatever we can. God provides. We can trust in that provision and live generously in response.

But let's not be satisfied with those words. Let's take up Jesus invitation: look at the birds, and let's see we learn.

Extra ideas:

- Use this reflection to invite people on walk or a reserve visit to look at birds.
- Notice what the birds are doing – are they feeding young? Getting ready to migrate? Trying to escape from something chasing it?
- After a walk and having observed the birds, pause to discuss what you have seen. Do Jesus' words about worry mean more to you? Or did you think of something other than worry?
- A 2017 study from Exeter University found that when people watched birds, they felt less stressed, anxious and depressed. So Jesus was onto something. How could you create space in your life to observe the wildlife around you? Could you create a healing bird-watching space for those in your community who are seeking solace?

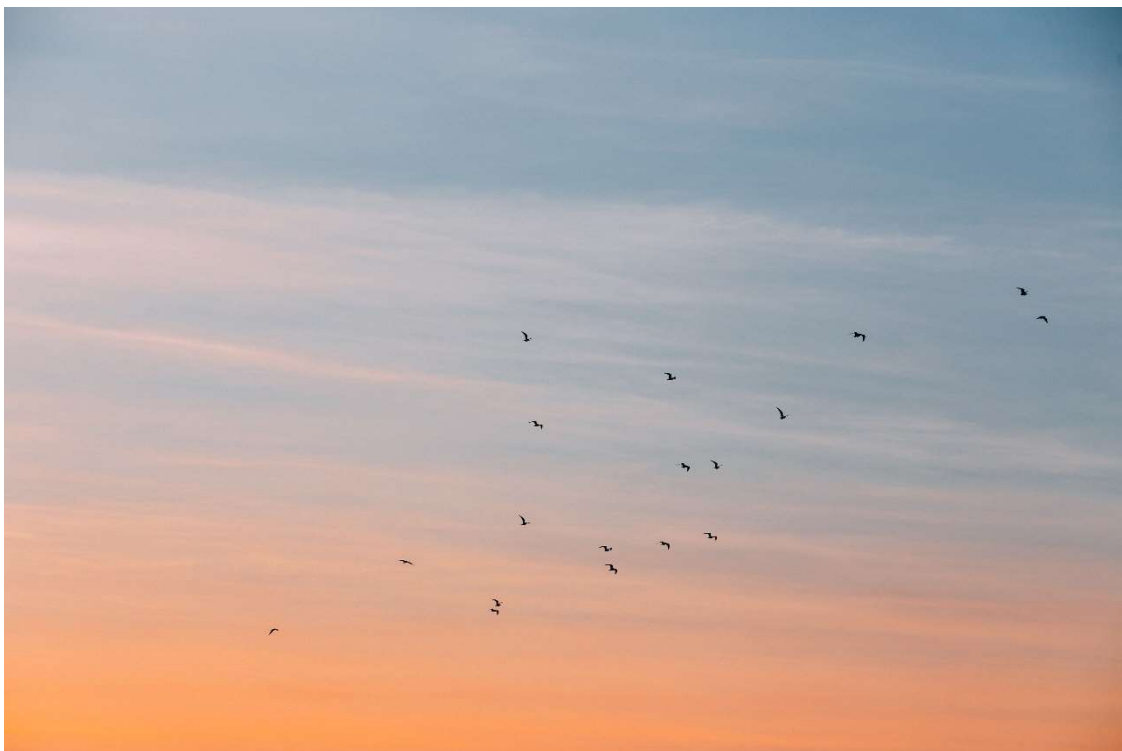
AN INVITATION

Jesus invites us to look at the birds, and he is not the only one. Here are two more invitations, one from the Bible, and one from Augustine. Use them before or during a walk, to start discussion, or as a prompt for reflection in your own garden.

“Ask the animals, and they will teach you.
Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you.
Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you.
Let the fish in the sea speak to you...

The life of every living thing is in [God’s] hand,
and the breath of every human being.
Job 10:7-8,10 (New Living Translation)

“Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, he set before your eyes the things that he had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?”
Augustine, 354-430 AD, in The City of God



A PRAYER FOR A MEAL

Use this prayer before a meal to draw attention to the diversity of tastes, textures and colours in the food we enjoy. Consider the words here a starting point – pray with your eyes open and improvise around the dishes on the table, being as specific as you like. This way we don't just thank God for the calories that sustain us, but for the whole multisensory experience of eating.

God our provider,

Thank you for the snap of celery,
The crunch of carrots and the squeak of beans.

Thank you for the zing of mustard,
The smack of salt and the tang of pickles.

Thank you for the red of tomatoes,
Yellow peppers, green peas.

The world is full of your flavours, textures and colours,
And we thank you for them as we eat together.

With watering mouths,
and thankful hearts,

Amen

CHURCHYARD FOOD MAP

In order to feel at home, all animals need four things: food, water, shelter, and a suitable place to breed. Those things look different for each creature, and we will investigate different aspects of those needs throughout the year. This season we are thinking about food.

The more sources of food there are within your church grounds, the more wildlife you can expect to find. Take some time to investigate what foods are available already, and which animals and birds benefit from what's growing. Then think about what you might be able to add, so that you can welcome more wildlife into your space in the years to come.

You can do this mapping exercise on your own, but it will be more rewarding with a team of mixed ages, experience, and knowledge of wildlife and plants. Invite your RSPB Scotland contact along to help if you like.

NOTE: If you did the Habitat Map as the final activity in the Spring Pack, you can add to this and go straight to step two.



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- 1** First, map your grounds. You may have a map or an aerial photo to work from already. If not, you can get a basic overhead view from Google Maps. It doesn't need to be precise! It's more important for it to be large. Use an A3 sheet of paper or a flipchart page. Mark the boundaries, buildings, paths and key features. (It might be helpful at this stage to map out different habitats as well. The Spring Pack has an activity to help you do this.)
 - 2** Now take a tour around the grounds. Look for out for food sources – seeds, nuts, fruit, flowers. There will be some obvious ones, but the more you look, the more you'll see. Even if your grounds are mainly paved, you'll find little spaces that you hadn't noticed before.
 - 3** Observe what is feeding on your grounds already, and make a note of what they are feeding on. If you've got someone on your team who can identify plants, that's helpful – but don't worry if not. There are of course animals you won't see because they are small or elusive! A bird expert will be able to identify bird song and tell you what birds are in the area – call your RSPB Scotland contact if you need help. You may be surprised by what you have but cannot see.

- 4 As you fill in the details on the map, talk about what different animals, insects or birds might eat those foods. It might be helpful to have wildlife books or reference guides to hand in case you wish to want to look something up.
- 5 Finally, look for gaps. Are there any corners where you could add some shrubs or a fruit tree? Perhaps you have a bare fence that you could grow some things up. Maybe you could add some planters or tubs. In a different colour pen, draw in what you imagine.

When you've had a think about the spaces you could use, think about the wildlife you want to attract. Are there any categories of wildlife that aren't catered for – pollinators or birds, for example? What could you add to feed them and welcome them?

We have made a few suggestions of plants for wildlife below, and there are more detailed lists available online or in wildlife gardening books.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: YOUR GARDEN MENU

We usually set up our gardens for our own enjoyment, whether we've chosen to put in a trampoline, a barbecue area or flowerbeds. Try this activity to get children thinking about how wildlife sees your garden, or a nearby a communal space or park, or even a balcony or a grassy verge.

- 1** Set up a blackboard, large piece of paper on an easel, or something similar to write on.

Explain: Imagine that this place is a restaurant, and different animals are coming here to eat. They're going to come flying over or crawling under the fence to see what's on offer, and we're going to write a menu to tell them. Give your restaurant a name.

- 2** Send the children out to identify things to eat. Then write them up on the 'specials board' or menu. Give them a little description if you like. Ask what animals, birds or insects might eat that food.

If they get a bit stuck, shout out different imaginary customers, and get them to think about what they might recommend – 'here comes a bee', or 'a hedgehog has just arrived'. (If you do this in a public space, welcome any curious children and adults!)

- 3** When you've written up a menu, ask if there's anything missing. Are there any animals that might visit your garden and not find their favourite food? Could you cater for them? Consult the list below and see if there's something you could plant together.

Extra ideas:

- You may have food scraps that you could leave in the garden for wildlife, which would save on food waste and add new things to the menu. Trim the fat off unsalted meat and leave it for the birds (somewhere that cats can't reach!) Crumble up dry bread – though only in small amounts, as bread isn't very nutritious for birds. Birds will also eat leftover baked potatoes or mash, and some will enjoy fruit such as apples or pears that are beginning to turn. Not all scraps are suitable for wildlife, so look up www.rspb.org.uk for details if you're unsure.
- Keep your blackboard up for a week, and children can add 'specials' to it as they put out scraps or when you plant something new. It will encourage them to observe what is happening in the garden, and how wildlife interacts with the space you have created as a family.
- If you've done some of these activities in communal or public spaces, it's probably best you don't go throwing your scraps out! Revisit the site during your week to talk about how you could make the place more welcoming. It might be that you can do something with your neighbours or church green group. Your local RSPB Scotland contact may be able to connect you with people to help you get a small community project off the ground.

PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE

You've identified some spaces for planting around your church grounds, at home or a local space. What do you want to plant? Here are some suggestions, with lots more information and ideas available from the Royal Horticultural Society (www.rhs.org.uk) or RSPB Scotland (www.rspb.org.uk)

Visit your local reserve to get ideas and learn more about the flora and fauna of your area. What can grow well will depend on where you are, but your RSPB Scotland contact will be able to advise you.

- In shady corners, plant Solomon's Seal, which feels right in a churchyard. So do epimediums, which are called 'Bishop's hat', and both will attract beneficial insects and birds.
- For butterflies, plant Violets, Red Valerian, Lilac and Sweet William. See Butterfly Conservation Scotland for a full list.
- Bees and butterflies benefit from many different herbs that we use too, so make space for a herb bed with Mint, Thyme and Marjoram.
- Provide winter berries for birds with Holly or Pyracantha. Don't plant them in the middle of summer though. Prepare the ground now, plant them in early autumn, and they'll provide winter food for years to come.
- Thistles and Teasels provide seed and insects into the winter.
- If you have a suitable space for a small tree, consider a Rowan or Crab apple. Again, clear the space now and plant later in the year to give them the best chance.
- Blackbirds and other ground feeders will visit your lawn, but avoid treating it with chemicals to improve the life in the soil. From a wildlife point of view, scruffy diversity is much better than a perfect lawn.
- Bats eat moths, and some moths love night-scented plants such as Evening Primrose, Honeysuckle and Sweet Rocket.



WILDLIFE GARDENS IN SUMMER

As you think about the nature that shares your home, you may want to bring some wildlife-friendly techniques to your gardening. Here are some ideas and tasks for the summer season.

- If you've got a suitable place to add a pond safely, it will add a rich diversity of wildlife to your grounds or garden. Summer is a good time to get some friends together to dig it out, line it and plant around it.
- With the longer hours of daylight, lawns will need mowing more often – but resist mowing all the way to the edges, or leave a strip to grow long in the middle. See what plants and wildflowers come up. Enjoy the insects that will follow – and compare the amount of life in long grass and short grass. You may well find the best possible excuse to mow even less next year.
- Scotland has 9 species of bats, and they breed in early summer. Look for warm and safe places where you could install some bat boxes, such as a high and sunny wall. In return, the bats will eat those annoying midges for you. See www.bats.org.uk for more information.

TAKING IT FURTHER

- If you enjoy getting out into nature as a family, why not join the RSPB Wild Challenge? Pick an activity that gets you out exploring, then log your activity and work your way towards the bronze, silver and gold badges. See www.rspb.org.uk/wildchallenge
- Explore wild foods by booking a foraging walk with a professional guide or an experienced friend. See what you can find along the coast, in the woods, or in your back garden.
- Summer is the perfect time to experiment with outdoor church. For ideas, try the book *Outdoor Worship: Engage with God in his creation*, by Sam and Sara Hargreaves, available from www.engageworship.org
- CreationTime begins on September 1st and runs to October 4th, so now is a good time to have a think about how your church will mark this annual season. See www.seasonofcreation.org
- There's always something happening at your local reserve, whether you want to get your hands dirty with some volunteering, or whether you prefer the safe distance of your binoculars. Visit www.rspb.org.uk or www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk to find places to visit and details of events, and see www.arocha.org.uk for church events and more resources.

Photos by Aaron Burden, Alex Woods, Leonard von Bibra/Unsplash, Lairich Rig/Geograph