



January

- Step outside – be still for three minutes and listen
- Really look at a lichen (a pair of upside-down binoculars make an excellent microscope!)
- Make a list of broch sites you'd like to visit and tick one off the list
- Count the birds in your garden. Maybe you could keep a "window list" of what you've seen?
- Take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch – visit [rspb.org/birdwatch](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch) for more information
- Get out "whatever the weather" and feel the exhilaration of wind and rain on your face
- Visit the Braer site
- Walk the core path at Lunga water - look out for mountain hares
- Go looking for seabean after westerly gales.



February

- Draw a snowdrop
- Buy a notebook and "write to yourself", sketch or jot down your thoughts and feelings, adding insights about nature as you go
- Follow the course of a burn
- Look for tracks and signs of animals
- Beachcomb for shells, do a mini-Redd-Up or both. Record your beach clean on the [2minutebeachclean](https://www.2minutebeachclean.org) app. or see [nurdlehunt.org.uk](https://www.nurdlehunt.org.uk)
- Make a bird bath (an upside-down bin lid will do)
- Watch a corbie (raven) – at this time of year you can see courtship displays, which often include dramatic tumbling and flipping in the air.
- Make your own windsock from a hoop and material – appreciate the speed of the wind
- Start bagging Shetland's 19 Marilyn's (they are slightly smaller than Munroes). See [shetland.org](https://www.shetland.org) for details
- Plant some bulbs.



March

- Welcome the oystercatchers and other waders home with an outdoor celebration of some kind
- Provide a nestbox and nesting materials for birds (avoid wool or plastic stuffing – dog hair is good, horsehair found on fences is even better!)
- Be inspired to experience some sights and sounds from Rhoda Bulter's poem "Fladdabister"
- Play like an eight year-old! Why not build a den or get together with friends and play the games you used to play outside?
- Join a club that goes outside. Search for Shetland clubs online
- Borrow a dog and take it for a walk
- Make pictures on a beach using natural materials like waar (seaweed), sand and rock – leave it for the elements to take away
- Stand looking over the Loch of Belmont in Unst and listen to the pre-migratory courtship of calloos (long-tailed ducks) before they move north to their tundra breeding grounds.



April

- Touch the sea
- Find a bud on a tree... feel the texture
- Turn over some soil and plant some flowering plants.
- Take a wader minute – step outside and hear the call of a whaup (curlew), lapwing or redshank
- Spot the first sten-shakkers (wheatears) returning to Shetland after wintering south of the Sahara
- Make a bug hotel (see [rspb.org.uk](https://www.rspb.org.uk) for ideas)
- Un-litter... a little and save a life. Take part in Da Voar Redd Up
- Take the coastal route to the Broch of Burrelland – watch for the "wheel" of a neesik (harbour porpoise) in Mousa Sound
- Visit the old haaf station at Fethaland, keeping an eye open for purple saxifrage on the way
- Clouds are often described as wispy (cirrus), heaped (cumulus) and layered (stratus). What clouds are in the sky today?



May

- Bury your face in the grass
- Make a daisy chain
- Tend to some plants
- Plant a tree
- Go to the Shetland Biological Records Centre website and choose a survey to take part in
- Listen for a horsegok (snipe) then try spot it in flight – as it drops it makes a “drumming” sound using its outer tail feathers
- Find a place outdoors where you feel safe to just “be” – try to be still in nature for three minutes and notice how you feel
- Make a sound map – take an A4 sheet and something to lean on outside, place an “x” in the centre to represent you, then illustrate or represent the sounds you hear around you using marks on the page
- Go and see the UK’s most northerly point – Out Stack (off Hermaness) – and check out all the breeding birds on your way
- Hunt for treasure. Go to [geocaching.com](https://www.geocaching.com) and [thingsites.com/geotour](https://www.thingsites.com/geotour)
- Turn o’er a rock and see what’s there



June

- Don’t mow the lawn – and watch the minibeasts move in
- Solitude in nature clarifies thought – carve out some time to yourself and go explore somewhere you’ve never been before
- Visit the Keen of Hamar National Nature Reserve in Unst and discover its rare and endemic plant species
- Eat the leaf of a wood sorrel in Kergord
- Sit cross-legged on the ground, close your eyes and listen to the birds
- What’s your favourite sound in nature? – go listen to it!
- Take your hood down
- Go for a “hock” in a rockpool. Leebiton in Sandwick or Sound beach in Lerwick are two brilliant spots. Plan for a low tide
- Visit RSPB Scotland Sumburgh Head nature reserve and breathe in the smells and sounds of a bustling seabird colony
- Visit RSPB Scotland Mousa nature reserve on a day or night trip. The thrill of a night trip is seeing storm petrels flying back to the broch at dusk
- Tirricks (Arctic terns) are said to see polar bears and penguins in the same year. Listen at a distance to these iconic breeding birds.



July

- Pick two different types of grass and really look at them
- Notice every bird you see
- Visit RSPB Scotland Sumburgh Head nature reserve in the evening to witness “the jump” (guillemot chicks taking the flightless plunge into the sea)
- Help with a peatland restoration project (contact the Shetland Amenity Trust for details)
- Make a meal using the flower of a dandelion
- Watch pollinators at work – hoverflies are major pollinators in Shetland
- Gather hentilegets (tufts of wool) and save a shalder (oystercatchers often get hampered by wool twisted round their legs)
- Go wild camping or stay in a Böd
- Walk to the top of the Noup of Noss NNR and enjoy the clamour of a solan (gannet) colony
- Follow a bumblebee.



August

- Follow the course of a burn
- Turn o’er a rock and see what you see
- Download “Fuelling the Future” from nafc.uhi.ac.uk and get to know your seaweeds. Why not create your own seaweed work of art?
- Make a seggie boat (fold the leaves of a yellow iris) – if you don’t know how, ask an amenable older Shetlander
- Watch a maalie (fulmar) for 10 full minutes
- Make a moth trap and identify your catch
- Take the pith out of floss (soft rush) without breaking the line – soaked in tallow they used to make nice (smokeless) wicks in oil lamps
- Explore some geology – do the ophiolite trail or the volcano trail. Did you know Shetland is recognised as a “GeoPark”?
- Listen and copy a bird sound – try “talking” to a bird
- Try “charming” a worm from the ground without digging or adding liquids... rhythm is the answer.



September

- Provide a full three-course meal for your family outdoors
- Watch the waves during the equinox gales
- Look for autumn migrants like warblers and waders
- Take part in the Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean
- Find the place or activity that makes you feel most at home in nature
- Climb a high peatland area (eg the East Kames) and name all the islands you can see
- Notice the *Sphagnum* moss under your feet – this powerful little plant has made most of the peat in Shetland and helps tackle climate change.



October

- Appreciate a cloud
- Help a neighbour with their tatties
- Write a worry onto a stone and throw it into the sea
- Keep a "window list" or list of birds seen. You can submit records to Nature in Shetland or BirdTrack (see birdtrack.net)
- Re-wild one of your senses – smell everything in nature
- Find 10 different species of fungus in Kergord – why not photograph them all?
- Find a grottie-buckie (cowrie shell, which used to be used as currency). The Laaward at Grutness can reward a keen eye
- Find a "Wullie Whyte's candle" (a curl of birch bark) on a beach and light a driftwood fire (challenge yourself to light it only with a flint steel)
- Look out for humpback whales on their autumn migration.



November

- Create a rock sculpture on a beach
- Find an immer gus (great northern diver) – shallow bays are good places to look, like Quendale Bay
- Count whooper swans vs mute swans on Spiggie Loch
- Talk to a pony
- Go to the top of Lindsey-Lea woods in Kergord. Listen and look for goldcrests (sometimes they'll approach you if you make a "pssshh" sound)
- Experience Da Grind O' Da Navir during a westerly gale – keep yourself safe!
- Go otter watching – low coastline a few hours either side of low tide is best and walk into the wind. Keep an eye open for spraint (poo) and avoid holts
- Explore Shetland's mighty sand dunes like at West Sandwick and Breckon in Yell
- Borrow a dog and play some games.

This calendar of ideas is a part of RSPB Scotland's Nature Prescriptions which is run in partnership with NHS Shetland. Share your suggestions for other activities at facebook.com/healthshetland or facebook.com/RSPBShetland. As with any trip outdoors, please dress for the weather and tell someone where you are going especially for longer trips. Take your doctor's advice and work to your ability. And follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. November image by Ben Andrew, December image by Helen Moncrieff. The RSPB is a registered charity in England and Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654. 730-1309-17-18.



December

- Feed the birds in your garden
- Spot a "white-winged" gull. Glaucous and Iceland gulls are sometimes found around Shetland Catch
- Use a tarp or sheet to harness the wind (hold the corners with a friend?)
- Visit Sumburgh Head lighthouse to look for linties (twite) outside the RSPB Scotland office (they're fed on canary seed)
- Watch for winter waders – the Virkie Pool mid-tide is a great place to see a variety of species
- Find the hairiest lichen within a mile radius
- Go and find a chambered cairn as near to the shortest day as possible
- Did you know that the "hegri" or grey heron is a winter visitor to Shetland?
- Look back on your year and recognise how far you have come.