

# Green Health

## Spring



Sometimes it feels like Spring will never begin. But look for the signs and the soothingly assured constancy of nature never fails.

# March

**Green Health**  
South Ayrshire

## 1. Ayrshire Attraction



Fields of Colourful Spring Crocuses at Corsehill Gardens



## Corsehill Gardens

Originally a small 16 acre estate for Corsehill House (from 1818-1961), Ayr's Corsehill Gardens offers serenity every season within its stately parkland and walled garden.



DOGS WELCOME



ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS



TRANSPORT LINKS

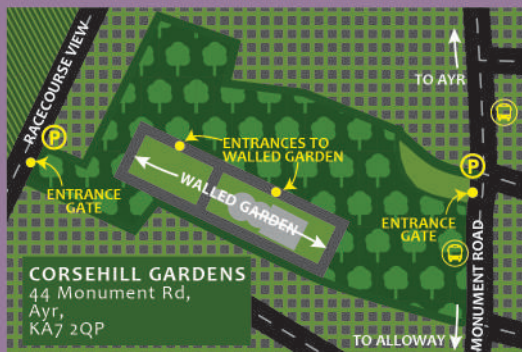


PARKING ON-SITE

Hidden behind iron gates is a mini oasis of wooded calm and garden tranquillity. March is the perfect month to view a sea of purple and white crocus flowers bloom under the towering beech trees before the canopy shades the parkland.

After admiring the crocuses, meander through the Walled Garden, home to plants and trees from around the world. Corsehill House stood just east of the Walled Garden and was removed in 1961 leaving the green space for us to enjoy.

Enter through black metal gates on either side of the site and follow the track through the trees. You'll find two entrance gates into the Walled Garden where gravel paths guide you around.



Short Walk: 600m / 0.4mi

## 2.



Follow the Flights of Fancy

## Eco Kids

Flight of the Homeless Bumblebee

## 3.



©UnderSky 2023

# 2. Doorstep Nature

This month nature starts to yawn, stretch and wake up.

The buds haven't quite burst on the trees yet but as you gaze upwards look out for birds.

There is a lot to prepare before laying eggs: most importantly searching for food and building nests.

This results in lots of sky-bound activity.

Follow the flight of birds as they pass purposefully overhead

Draw in the air the routes they take across the sky.

? What shape is their flight path - straight, bouncing, meandering, looped?  
How often do they flap their wings?  
Which direction are they going in?  
Is there a pattern to be found?

Word of the Month **Coddiwomple**  
(v) English / cod-di-wom-ple  
To travel in a purposeful manner towards a vague destination

## Have you felt the heat from the sunshine yet?

Bumblebees may be well adapted to life in chilly weather with their furry bodies, but only the queen bumblebees survive the winter by hibernating.

They dig a hole into earthy bank sides and snuggle asleep in there for up to nine months - that's nearly three quarters of their life spent sleeping! Their alarm clock isn't a bell though, it's the warmth from the sun.

In March, look out for large bumblebees flying low to the ground. After the queens wake up, they need to drink some nectar and then they go on a search for the best nest location: dry holes underground such as old mouse holes or under sheds.



3.

## Eco Kids

Can you pretend to be a Queen Bumblebee?

Buzz those wings and zig zag around. Look out for the best nest site. Ask your grown up to makes a 'V' with their legs for you to fly through!

Bzzzzzzzooooooooom!



# April

**+ Green Health**  
South Ayrshire

© Mary & Angus Hogg  
<http://www.geograph.org.uk>

## 1. Ayrshire Attraction

Contemplate Landscape Changes Over Time at Ballantrae

# Ballantrae

The past and present combine along this walk: the sense of spring renewal contrasting with ancient stones and towering trees.



## Doorstep Nature

Look for Light Glistening and Reflections

This month why not enjoy a tranquil wander along South Ayrshire's verdant Ballantrae River Stinchar Walk.



## 2.



Spot signs of the woodland awakening with wild cherry in blossom, daffodils bobbing their heads, the vanilla scent of yellow broom flowers and tree leaves bursting open. Starting at the car park, walk along the Vennel, turn right at Main Street and follow the road to the junction before the bridge over the River Stinchar.



## Eco Kids

Puddle Play with Floating Boats

## 3.



Turn left here with the ruins of Ardstinchar Castle overlooking the valley and continue along Mains Road (B7044) for 180m until a wooden way-marker points down some steps to the riverside. Follow the grassy river bank path until a steep slope, with handy rope to help, leads you back up onto the road to the village.

### Did you know?

Built in the mid-15th century Ardstinchar Castle once welcomed Mary Queen of Scots but by 1770 it was abandoned and the stone used to build the three arch bridge over the river. Along the riverside look out for ancient sycamore trees just starting their lives as the castle declined.

Can you predict the spring weather? Referring to tree bud burst, use this old saying to determine the rainfall over the coming months:

*“Oak before Ash, we’re in for a splash.  
Ash before Oak, we’re in for a soak.”*

# Doorstep Nature 2.

As the days lengthen, the light strengthens and April showers come and go, it can seem like the world is glistening.

When the brightening sunlight hits a clear surface, such as water, it slows down: some is reflected back and some is refracted or bent within the water. The reflected sun's rays are called the albedo effect and more light is reflected the lower the sun is in the sky. Countries in high latitudes are cooler due to this higher albedo compared with the equator where more of the sun's light (and heat) is absorbed rather than reflected.

After an April shower, check out the light reflections. Use the surface reflections of puddles to view new angles and perspectives of the world around you. How does the puddle image change as you move to new angles? Notice the changes in shapes when ripples form.

April showers bring new puddle play opportunities!

3.

In urban puddles, move and swish a stick through the water. Watch where the water marks the tarmac when you glide the stick over the surface and along the ground.

*How far can you draw your line?  
What other marks can you make with leaves or pinecones?*

In a park or woodland search for natural items that sink or float. Test your skills and sail a leaf boat.

*Find the biggest puddle – how far will your boat travel?  
Can you add any passengers without it sinking?  
Try tiny stones, stick pieces or bark and wave as they embark on a journey to the other side.*

# Eco Kids

## Word of the Month



## Phenology

Recording the dates of significant natural events, such as tree bud burst, bird migration and first blooms, as they unfurl, fly and flower into life.

# May

**+ Green Health**  
South Ayrshire

## 1. Ayrshire Attraction



Explore the Ancient Woodlands of Dundonald

# Dundonald

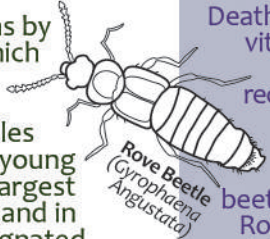
This northern section of the Smugglers' Trail passes through ancient woodland at Dundonald, home to bluebells, birds and a nationally rare beetle species!

## 2. Doorstep Nature

Give Your Brain a Break With Birdsong



Choose from various paths by following your senses: which way are the birds singing; search out the glow of bluebells; catch sun sparkles as they filter through the young leaves. This is one of the largest areas of deciduous woodland in South Ayrshire being designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Rove Beetle  
(*Gyrophana angustata*)

Death and decay are vital for a healthy woodland, recycling nutrients allowing new and sustained growth. Some beetles such as this Rove Beetle use a special gut enzyme to breakdown tough plant materials, ensuring the nutrients locked inside become available for other plants. The debris on this woodland floor provides necessary food and future life.

 TRANSPORT LINKS  
 TOILETS AT VISITOR CENTRE  
 DOGS WELCOME  
 PARKING

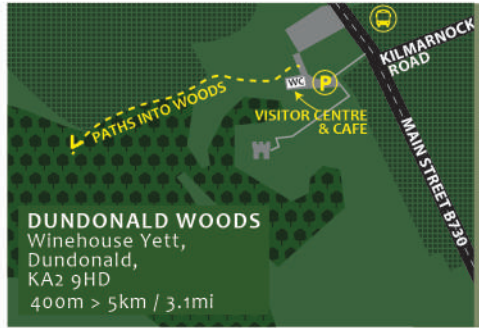
As you wander, consider the variety of people who have used this path, most notably smugglers travelling through dark nights carrying contraband from Troon to hide in the hills of Dundonald.

## 3. Eco Kids

Can You Mimic the Sounds of the Birds?



©UnderSky 2023



Follow the path behind the Friends of Dundonald Castle Visitor Centre, past the playground and into the woods. A network of stony paths guide you through this ancient woodland with some muddy and steep sections. Way-markers lead you on the Smugglers' Trail which passes through the woods to the coast at Troon.

# Doorstep Nature

## Word of the Month

## Catacoustics

(n) The study of sounds as they bounce. Reverberating, amplifying, softening, echoing. Used by birds to help extend their vocalisations.

### 2. Birds have much to sing about at this time of year!

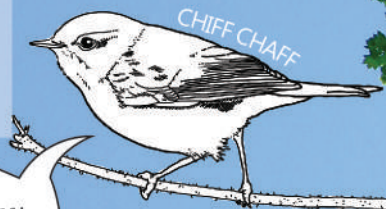
To ensure every bird within singing range understands who lives where and how spectacular they are, male birds each sing a song specific to their species.

(They are basically showing off!)

To our listening ears the melody of songbirds helps us overcome stress and tiredness by giving our brains a break from the hubbub of human life. Listen out for bird song and help your mind settle.

#### What other sounds can you hear?

Can your ears pick up something: muffled, shrill, faint, hissing, cooing, whirring, bellowing, jangly, babbling, warbling, rustling, rattling, pinging, clattering or chirpy?



CHIFF CHAFF!  
CHIFF CHAFF!

BLUE TIT

PEEKACHOOO!  
PEEKACHOOO!

GREAT TIT

TEACHER!  
TEACHER!

MY TOE HURTS,  
BETTY!  
MY TOE HURTS,  
BETTY!

I KNOW IT!  
I KNOW IT!  
I KNOW IT!

WOOD PIGEON

SONG THRUSH

### 3. Eco Kids

When out and about, try and pinpoint a singing bird. **Stand still and listen.**

(Movement can spook birds and they stop singing).

Can you mimic the sound?

Or choose some words that sound like their song? Perhaps you could give them a new name, based upon the sounds they make?

#### Did you know?

It is theorised that birdsong imitation led to human language development, influencing the expressive way we communicate.

# What is Green Health?

Green Health is about supporting a healthy lifestyle by integrating nature into your day. Simple activities connecting you with nature on your doorstep can benefit your mental and physical wellbeing.

Inside this booklet you'll find seasonal suggestions to refresh tiring spirits, brighten grey days and help you build nature connections into your life. Every month, there's something for the young and the young-at-heart - a location to visit in South Ayrshire, a home based activity and a fresh way for families to play outdoors.

Even as the days grow warmer, remember to be prepared for changeable weather.

Pack a waterproof jacket to keep you warm & dry, and wear comfortable boots with good tread to keep your feet stable on uneven paths. Don't forget sun protection to keep the rays off your skin and the glare out of your eyes.

*Feel healthier for free.  
Add nature into your day.*

South Ayrshire  
COMMUNITY  
PLANNING  
Partnership



Under  
Sky®