



RSPB

Brilliant Birds

activity pack

In partnership with Girlguiding London and South East England Region

Funded by the Sussex Ornithological Society



giving
nature
a home





RSPB

Brilliant Birds

activity pack

Welcome to the RSPB bird pack! This badge pack was designed by members of The Senior Section working on their Queen's Guide Award as part of the Girlguiding London and South East England Region (LaSER) and RSPB partnership. The activities aim to encourage Rainbows and Brownies to spend more time in the great outdoors and connect to nature.

The aim

The aim of this pack is to help Leaders, give girls a first-hand experience of nature and learn how to record and study wild birds.

The activities

Each section has two activities. You only need to complete one from each section. Generally activity 1 is geared towards Rainbows and is slightly easier; activity 2 is geared towards Brownies. It is up to you which activities you choose to do but you MUST complete **Spot that bird** as one of your activities.

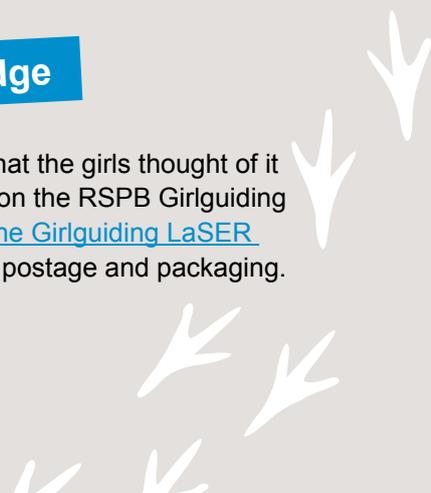
Rainbow units must complete three sections and Brownie units must complete five.

Each activity is designed to take 30 minutes.

Activities **MUST** be completed outdoors either at a reserve, Girlguiding campsite or an outdoor space near where your unit meets. Check each activity to see where the best place to do it is.

How to get the badge

Tell us how you got on and what the girls thought of it by completing the order form on the RSPB Girlguiding LaSER [partnership page on the Girlguiding LaSER website](#). Badges cost £1 plus postage and packaging.



Spot

that bird!



Where can you complete the activity?

RSPB reserve, Girlguiding campsite, natural green space or urban open space.

Which season?

Autumn, winter or spring.

It is important to spot and count birds all year round; it can help us understand if birds (and other animals) are struggling to survive. The more we observe the more we understand and the more we can help. Spotting birds is a fun activity to learn.

Activity 1

Find a quiet spot with trees and hedges nearby.

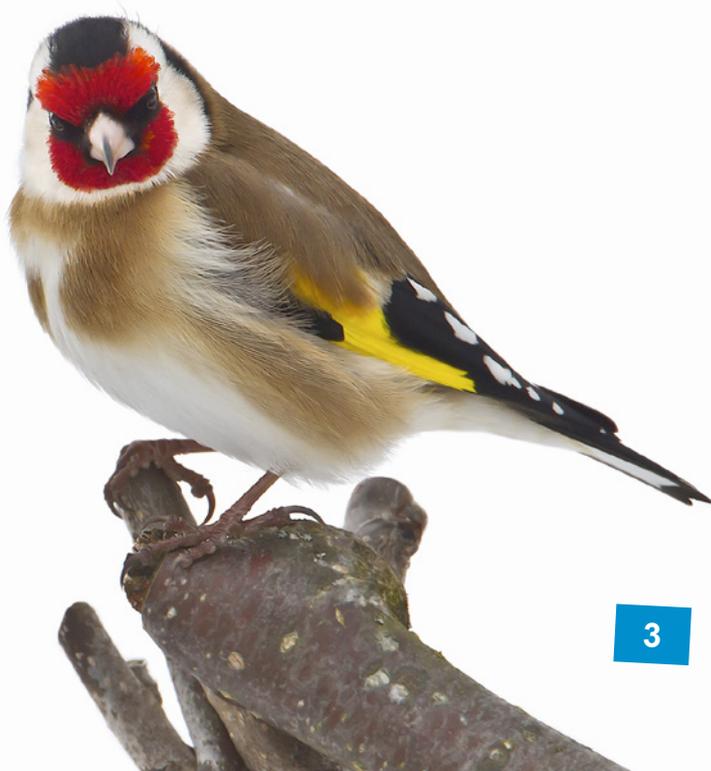
Sit the group down quietly. Look and listen for birds and use the spotter sheet to work out what the birds are. Tick off birds you see on the sheet.

Activity 2

To start take a look at the spotter sheet – can you tell the difference between different birds? Go on a 30 minute walk to spot birds. Keep your eyes and ears open, use the spotter sheet to work out what the birds are and make a record of what you see.

Top tips for Leaders

- Download your spotter sheet from our [partnership page on the Girlguiding LaSER website](#).
- A great way to help you identify birds is to compare size, colour, beak and legs. Take out an RSPB bird guide book or use the RSPB bird identifier.
- Why not try taking binoculars out with you – see the barmy binoculars activity.
- Practise looking and listening skills to calm the group before you start looking for birds, take a look at the games page.
- Why not visit an RSPB reserve to spot more unfamiliar birds. Don't forget to ask for the site-specific spotter sheet.



Barmy binoculars



Where can you complete the activity?

RSPB reserve, Girlguiding campsite, natural green space or urban open space.

Which season?

Any time of year.

Using binoculars can be great for helping us see things far away, but they can be tricky to use. Use this handy how-to guide to learn how to use these brilliant binoculars. Always use the safety strap and never walk whilst looking through binoculars.

Don't forget

- Binoculars are very fragile – be careful not to bang them about; the insides are more easily damaged than the outsides.
- Always carry them safely – many have straps that you can put around your wrist or neck so that you don't drop them.
- Keep them dry and clean – blow away any dust and sand from the lenses and then wipe them with a soft cloth.
- Always stand still when using binoculars, never walk along looking through binoculars.

Activity 1

Stand or sit everyone in a line arm's length apart from anyone else. Ask one of the Leaders to stand a couple of metres away from the group. Ask everyone to stare at the Leader and then bring the binoculars up slowly to their eyes without looking away. Can everyone see the Leader? Now use the binoculars to spot other interesting things in the distance, to look for birds in the surrounding trees, bushes or green spaces.

Activity 2

Spread the group out in a green space an arm's length apart and focus on an object nearby. Continue to stare at your object and slowly bring the binoculars up without looking away. You should still be able to see your object and follow it. Now without looking through the binoculars can you see any birds in the distance? Practise your binocular skills to see them up close enough to identify them.





Top tips for Leaders

- If practising with the Leader, why not stick a picture on their front to see if the girls can spot what it is.
- Before getting the binoculars out, try using your hands as binoculars or a pair of cardboard tubes to practise focusing on objects.
- When you look through your binoculars you need to look through both eyes at once. Ask the girls how many circles they can see. They should only be able to see one; if they see two ask them to push the two eye pieces together until they see just one circle.
- If the image you see in your binoculars is blurry, gently turn the wheel in the centre of the binoculars until the image is sharp. You may need to refocus if following a flying bird.
- Some binoculars have adjustable eye cups. Eye cups should be pulled or twisted out for people who don't wear glasses and pushed right in for people wearing glasses.



Neat nests

Where can you complete the activity?

Girlguiding campsite or natural green space.

Which season?

Any time of year.

Most birds lay their eggs in nests. It is a safe and warm place for them to lay their eggs and look after their young. Discover what it is like for a bird to make a cosy nest.

Top tips for Leaders

- Make sure your unit **ONLY** collects natural objects they find on the ground.
- Do not pick or pull anything living from trees and plants.
- Before you make your nests go for a walk to spot real nests in trees, hedges, on rivers or ponds.
- This activity is best done in pairs.
- Why not work as a unit to build a large nest and use this to play **Eagle eyes** from the games page.

Activity 1

What do you think birds make their nests out of? They need to make it safe and warm. They don't have bricks to build houses or blankets to keep warm. Pretend you're a bird and make your own nest. Look around you and find different materials, like grass, leaves and twigs to make a nest for a bird.

Activity 2

What do you think goes into building a nest? Think about the materials a bird might find to make their nests. Go out to collect natural material and weave the materials together in the shape of a bird's nest only using two fingers, copying a bird's beak! Once you have built your nest see if you can place it in a tree. You never know, you might make a family of birds very happy!





Art

attack

Where can you complete the activity?

Girlguiding campsite or natural green space.

Which season?

Autumn and winter.

Birds are all different sizes, shapes and colours. Become an artist and use the things around you to see if you can make a picture of a bird.

Top tips for Leaders

- Before creating your natural artworks check the area for, and remove, litter and hazards.
- Encourage the group to think about the different features and body parts of the birds.
- Why not take a picture and share it with us, email info@girlguidinglaser.org.uk and put "Feedback for RSPB" in subject line.

Activity 1

Use natural materials such as leaves and twigs to make a picture of a bird. It can be a bird you have seen or an imaginary one. Give your bird a name and make up a story about it. Where does it live? What does it eat? Leave your picture where it is and let other people be surprised by your art; you might even get a few animal admirers!

Activity 2

Pick a bird on your spot sheet and make it out of natural materials. Think about colours and textures to make it as accurate as possible. When you have finished, make an outdoor gallery and visit each other's pictures. Can you guess the type of birds other Rainbows or Brownies have made?



Land to air

Where can you complete the activity?

RSPB reserve, Girlguiding campsite, natural green space or urban open space.

Which season?

Any time of year.

Many of a bird's bones are hollow which makes their bodies very light, and they have strong chest muscles that move their wings. These are the things that help birds fly. Taking off uses a lot of energy; smaller birds can do this by jumping up while larger ones take a run up.

Get spotting or use binoculars to watch birds taking flight then try this activity!

Top tips for Leaders

- These two activities work well together.
- These activities require the girls to sit very still to see the birds in action; why not do an active game first followed by a tuning-in game from the games page.
- Bird flight patterns are related to saving energy, bouncing flight is short bursts of flapping and folding their wings in, soaring flight makes use of warm air currents.

Activity 1

How long does it take for a bird to get from land to the air? Using a stop watch, find out! Keep your eyes open for a bird taking off; as soon as they do hit the start button. Stop timing when the bird is in clear sky. How long did it take? Try timing different birds. Are some birds faster than others? Pair up with a friend. Each pick a bird that looks like it's going to take off and have a race. Which bird will win the race?

Activity 2

You can identify a bird by the way that it flies. Most birds fly in a straight line but some have distinctive flight patterns. For example finches fly in a bouncy rollercoaster way; a kestrel hovers in one place moving its wings quickly. Some birds like gulls and buzzards circle up high, gliding and soaring, moving their wings slowly, while others such as blackbirds fly fast, flapping their wings over short distances. Find a quiet place to sit and spot the different ways birds fly, then look closely to spot any differences in wing shape and how they hold them.



Bird

homes

Where can you complete the activity?

Girlguiding campsite, natural green space or urban open space.

Which season?

Spring.

Birds all live in different places and use different material as bedding. We can help birds by giving them nesting material and safe places to make nests such as bird boxes. Why don't you help out your local birds by making nesting balls and bird boxes?

Top tips for Leaders

- Activity 2 should be done in small groups such as Sixes with a suitable number of adults supervising; why not complete over several weeks so everyone gets to make one.
- See the RSPB website to work out where to site and how to clean your bird box.

Activity 1

Go on a walk to look for nests to see what they are made from. Look for and collect natural materials such as leaves, grass, moss and small twigs to make a nesting ball for a bird. Use a piece of netting such as a net from a bag of oranges or a piece of wire and fill with your bedding material. Tie a knot in the top and tie the bedding ball to a tree. Birds will then be able to take natural material and make a new nest. Over the next few weeks watch out to see who visits.

Activity 2

To encourage birds to nest in your green space make a nest box. This is a straightforward activity using one plank of wood which you measure and saw into pieces then nail together, following the RSPB nest box instructions. Once the box is built, choose a suitable place for it to go. You need to be able to reach it to check and clean it, away from cats and other predators and direct sunlight. Also make sure the birds have a clear flight path into it!



Bird

tunes



Where can you complete the activity?

RSPB reserve, Girlguiding campsite, natural green space or urban open space.

Which season?

Spring, autumn and winter.

Birds all make different sounds. If you are quiet, you can pick out the different sounds they make. How many different birds can you hear? Sometimes it is easier to hear birds than to spot them.

Top tips for Leaders

- Humans rely on their eyes rather than their ears, it is often easier to hear birds than see them. Before the activity try some listening games like Deer Ears and Listening Circle to help tune in to bird sounds; see the games page.
- Why not listen to bird calls from the RSPB website before you go out; choose five common birds the girls have all heard of.
- Practise the songs you have learnt by playing Find Your Flock from the games page.

Activity 1

Sit down quietly to listen to the different bird sounds. Can you imagine what the different birds look like based on their sound and can you spot the bird making the sound? Try getting everyone to work together listening to the bird and pointing to where the sound is coming from. Pick your favourite sound and listen carefully. Can you repeat the sound and add your own actions?

Activity 2

Sit quietly to listen out for different bird calls. Try to concentrate on one bird at a time. Working out the difference between bird calls can be tricky but some songs sound like words which can help you identify them. How many on the list can you hear in your green space?

Blue tit

“tsee, tsee, tsee, chu, chu, chu”, very high pitched

Robin

song is soft and sad in autumn, the rest of the year it sounds like this “tweedle-oo, tweedle-eedee, tweedle-oo tweedle”, its warning call is “pip, pip, pip”

Blackbird

is beautiful and tuneful like a flute, its warning call is short and high pitched “chook, chook, chook”

Sparrow

“cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap”

Chiffchaff

“chiff chaff, chiff chaff”

Great tit

”teacher, teacher”

Coal tit

“titchew, titchew” it sounds like it’s sneezing

Collar dove

“I doooon’t know, I doooon’t know”

Woodpigeon

“my TOE hurts mummy, my TOE hurts mummy”



Bird tracking detectives

Where can you complete the activity?

RSPB reserve, Girlguiding campsite or natural green space.

Which season?

Any time of year, best after wet weather.

It's time to use your detective skills and track down some birds.

Top tips for Leaders

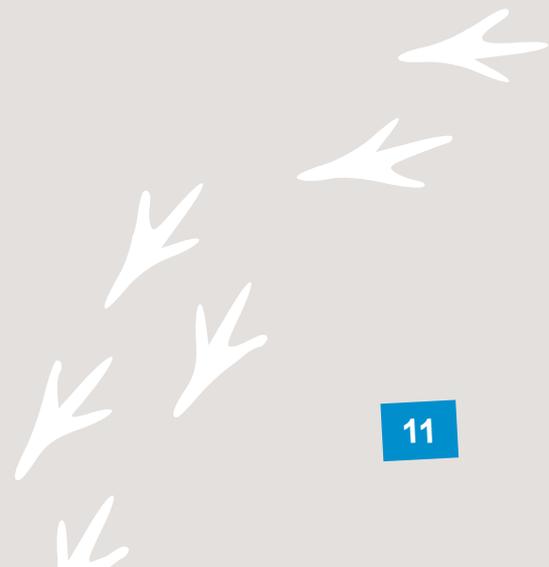
- Birds can carry diseases; make sure girls wash their hands if they handle any bird objects they find.
- Use the RSPB animal tracks sheet to help identify tracks and signs you have found.
- Take out some magnifying glasses to look more closely at footprints and objects you find.

Activity 1

Explore the local area looking for signs birds leave behind. Look for feathers, bird poo, footprints, nests, broken egg shells, bones, holes in trees, and signs of feeding. Take out paper and pencils to draw and label what you have found.

Activity 2

Although birds can fly they still have to walk sometimes, just like us! And just like us they sometimes leave tracks. Go for a walk in your green space. Look closely in muddy places for bird prints. Most birds have four toes, usually three facing forward and one facing backwards. See if you can follow the tracks and see where they went. Are birds the only animals that leave tracks? Can you find any other tracks? Who might they belong to?





Games

“Tuning-in” games

If your girls are new to outdoor activities or you want some activities to help them to calm down, focus and tune-in to nature before you start, try some of these activities.

Deer ears

Cup your hands behind your ears, this makes it easier to hear; move your hands about to direct where you want to hear. If your group feels comfortable enough ask them to close their eyes and listen for two minutes; closing your eyes helps to “tune-in” to the sounds. Try this in different locations.

Listening circle

Stand everyone in a circle and ask them to make their hands into fists and close their eyes. Tell the group that they are covered with a blanket of silence so must make no noise. Ask them to listen and raise a finger each time they hear a new sound. Raise the blanket of silence and ask them what they heard. If you prefer you could just listen for different birdsong.

Silent walking

Stand still in a space and close your eyes. What can the girls hear? Then get everyone to open their eyes and look around them, what can they see? Ask everyone to wander around the area, quietly and slowly, to see what they can spot. Then sit or stand in a circle and calmly talk about what everyone saw.

Active games

Eagle eyes

This game is like hide and seek with an eagle (the spotter) and the prey (the hiders). The aim is to get as close to the eagle as you can without being spotted. The last one to be spotted is the winner.

1. The eagle has a small space which is marked out as a “nest”.
2. Announce how long the eagle will count for. Around 40–60 seconds. The eagle covers their eyes and starts to count and the prey go and hide.
3. Announce you’re opening your eyes by saying “The eagle’s eyes are open.” You then look to see if you can spot any prey. You can walk around your nest but cannot leave it. Any prey that is spotted must come and sit by the nest.
4. When you can no longer see any prey, close your eyes and start counting. This time count 5 or 10 seconds less. The girls need to find a new hiding spot at least five steps closer to you.
5. Repeat, counting less each time until there is only one prey left. They are the winner. Pick a new eagle, or start again.

Find your flock

Choose 4–6 of the birds from the bird tunes activity, whisper the name of one bird to each girl. Ask the group to think about (but not say) what sounds they learnt that their bird makes. When everyone is ready, ask them to make their sound. Can they find everyone making their sound? Once everyone has found their flock – check if they are all the same bird.





Recapping games

Owls and crows

This is a simple running game to reinforce what has been learnt.

1. Put the girls in two lines facing each other. One line are crows and the other are owls.
2. Give a true or false statement for example: blackbirds have yellow beaks – you might want to have created a list of statements of things you have learnt that you want to recap.
3. If the statement is true the owls chase the crows if the statement is false the crows chase the owls.
4. If the owls chase the crows and one gets tagged she becomes an owl and vice versa. The game finishes when all the players end up on one side of the line.





What is this all about?

RSPB and Girlguiding LaSER partnership

The partnership was formed through a mutual passion to help connect more young people to nature. We aim to inspire thousands of girls about wildlife and the natural environment, by supporting Girlguiding LaSER volunteers to develop their skills and confidence in connecting young people with nature through:

- Programmes of events for girls.
- Developing and improving self-led resources and infrastructure at Girlguiding LaSER campsites.
- Developing relationships with local units and reserves through events, led and self-led activities.
- Developing training and resources for Leaders.

The partnership will:

- Support Girlguiding LaSER volunteers to develop their skills and confidence in connecting young people with nature and show that they have increased in that confidence.
- Give Girlguiding LaSER's young members an increased number of connections to nature experiences and through that provide evidence of an increased emotional affinity.
- Create a legacy of improved resources for connecting girls to nature, including enhancements to sites that Girlguiding LaSER own or manage.
- Increase the number of nature-based sessions led by Girlguiding LaSER Leaders each year at unit meetings.



Why is this important?

The recent RSPB State of Nature report shows that nature in the UK is disappearing – 60% of species assessed have declined over recent decades. People’s growing disconnection from nature is a significant strategic threat to nature conservation and with fewer children developing their connection to nature, this will translate into fewer champions of the natural world in the future.

We need to work to restore and strengthen that connection to nature, and provide opportunities to connect and empower young people to take action to save nature.

The RSPB’s vision is that young people are a more powerful force for conservation, becoming the generations that deliver a world richer in nature. The RSPB believes that connecting with nature should be a part of every child’s life. Getting all children connected with nature develops deeply-held feelings and attitudes towards wildlife and the world we all live in. We have developed a methodology to measure connection to nature in children by counting connection to nature experiences.

A “connection to nature experience” is one child having an active first-hand experience of nature (this is a physical interaction with the environment) of a minimum of 30 minutes, where they learn something and have fun.

Sussex Ornithological Society

The Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) has kindly donated the funds to produce this bird activity pack and a set of binoculars for Girlguiding LaSER members to borrow at Pulborough Brooks nature reserve whilst using the activity pack.

The Sussex Ornithological Society was formed in 1962 by a small group of young people, and the charity has grown to become one of the largest county bird clubs in Great Britain with current membership exceeding 2000. Members receive quarterly newsletters and a copy of the award-winning annual Sussex Bird Report.

The SOS exists to:

- Record and study wild birds in Sussex.
- Assist in the conservation of wild birds of Great Britain.
- Encourage by the use of meetings, books, outings and other ways for:
 - The study of birds in the field and ornithological science in general.
 - The education of its members and the general public in ornithological science and the need for the protection of wild birds and their habitats.

To find out more visit their website: sos.org.uk

Did you know

By completing this pack and the evaluation form you are providing us with connections **to help reach our target of creating two million connection to nature experiences for young people by 2021.**





What

next...

It's not just about the birds!

Wild challenge

Nature is an adventure waiting to be had. Register for free for our [RSPB Wild Challenge](#) and work your way towards awards through a heap of wild activities. This award scheme is all about investigating wildlife and doing practical things to give nature a safe and welcoming home.

Visit an RSPB reserve

[RSPB reserves](#) are wonderful places to get closer to the natural world.

Before you go

If you're planning to travel to a reserve to complete this badge, please contact the reserve to book your visit.

When you get there

Talk to the reserve staff and volunteers and tell them you are using the bird pack. They might have some great advice about where to do certain activities and will be able to answer any questions about nature or the wildlife you might see.

Whilst you are there

Please respect other people using the reserve at the same time. Never pick anything off living plants and do not touch any wildlife. Please stick to the paths and follow any signs that may be there. Remember plants are food or homes for wildlife so don't step on them.

When you leave

Leave the reserve as you found it and take any rubbish home with you.

Growing Up Wild with birds

Feeling inspired, why not try some more bird activities? Take a look at the [Girlguiding LaSER Growing Up Wild Paw Prints](#) and discover loads of ideas of how to get your unit out and about in nature.

How do I get my badge?

Thank you for taking part in this activity – we hope you enjoyed it. To order your badge please complete the evaluation on the [RSPB Girlguiding LaSER partnership webpage](#) to tell us what you thought about the badge and enter your bird survey results.