



EMBRACING A WILD SUMMER

Inspired by her passion for nature and wildlife, **Katy Lassetter** suggests ways we can embrace the wonders of the natural world this summer

WORDS KATY LASSETTER

Summer is the season of abundance. It blesses us with long, warm days, reams of sunlight, and a cornucopia of natural resources. I'm here for the nature, are you? From a bounty of new birdlife finding their wings to blooms boasting kaleidoscopic colours and sensational scents... there are myriad wild wonders to embrace.

In this article, I'm going to share some easily achievable aspirations so you can make the most of summer abundance in a mindful and meditative way.

GET OUTSIDE FOR YOUR WELLBEING

Embracing nature benefits your mental health and physical wellbeing. Watch wildlife in a green space, potter around the

garden, or exercise outdoors. You can improve your mood, reduce stress and anxiety, and benefit from new connections (Mind, 2025). Spending two hours in nature per week is the sweet spot for achieving and maintaining your health (White et al, 2019).

According to The People and Nature Survey, led by Natural England, almost nine in 10 adults said that being in nature made them very happy. Also, four in 10 adults said they spent more time in nature than before the pandemic, with health and wellbeing one of their top reasons for getting outside (National Trust, 2024). This data contributes to the outcome indicator framework for the UK government's 25 Year Environment Plan, which pledges to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2023).

But nature is already accessible. As highlighted by Julia Bradbury in the WWF and the Mental Health Foundation collaboration *Thriving With Nature*: "If you work in a dense urban jungle, it's still worthwhile heading outside into the light; a single tree can inspire as much joy as a 'Big View'" (WWF UK and the Mental Health Foundation, 2020).

I started to embrace nature in 2020 and, while living a stone's throw from the South Downs National Park, London quickly became one of my favourite places to experience summer's abundant wildlife. At Bushy Park, the second largest Royal Park, I've seen grey

herons stalking in sunlit streams while kingfishers 'peeped' past, and I've watched red deer cooling off in ponds and vibrant green woodpeckers foraging for ants on the banks – mere metres away!

FLORA AND FAUNA FOCUS

Whether you have an urban window box or rolling hills on your doorstep, you'll find nature. Last year, I added a birdbath to my city-centre balcony and filled the feeders daily. Over 20 species visited with families of blackbirds, great tits, house sparrows, robins, and starlings throughout the summer – and when you've seen a baby blackbird sunning itself among your pansies, you're hooked!

But, as discussed in Michael Mosley's Radio 4 podcast *Just One Thing*, you don't have to see green to embrace the healing touch of nature:

"Each time you hear the soothing sounds of birdsong or of a babbling brook, brain scans have shown that your attention will naturally shift outward, you will become less engaged in your own thoughts – and this will help reduce levels of anxiety."

MY TOP SUMMER NATURE SENSATIONS:

- **Birds:** After the breeding season, garden birdsong quietens, but there are still sound shows to behold. Listen out for the joyous shrieks of swifts swooping through the sky from dawn to dusk. These summer screamers eat, mate, and sleep on the wing! If you venture to a heathland on an early July evening, you could hear the eerie churr and wonderful wing-slaps of displaying male nightjars.

Head to the coast, and you might see a soaring osprey. I recommend Birds of Poole Harbour cruises, where I've also spotted white-tailed eagles close to RSPB Arne. For some colour, you can see puffins on a few UK islands (like Skomer) where these brightly-billed characters feed up their pufflings before setting out to sea at the end of July.

- **Beasties:** Summer brings minibeasts in abundance, which, as pollinators and a food source for birds, are more than a bitey nuisance. Macro photography is one of the most mindful summer activities I enjoy. Focusing on the minutia of wildlife helps you immerse in nature, whether you watch bees emerge from bug hotels, study the filagree of a butterfly's wing, or spot beetles among oxeye daisies. But you don't need a camera; zoom in with your eyes – the more you look, the more you'll see!

- **Blooms:** There will still be some wonderful wildflowers around, from bee orchids to wild carrot, providing romantic views and havens for wildlife, but summer is when our aromatherapy essentials particularly shine. In July, the countryside is a sea of calm where lavender and chamomile flourish. Come August, sunflowers can be seen dancing and swaying among the welcome evening breeze.

- **Boardwalk:** If you visit a nature reserve this summer, pick one with a range of habitats and a boardwalk. I've had some fantastic wildlife



A kingfisher, photographed by Katy

“Summer holds much creative promise from painting sunny scenes to composing summery sounds”

encounters on boardwalks everywhere from Sussex and Surrey to Norfolk and Cornwall. Boardwalks are ideal places to spot basking common lizards and hovering dragonflies.

- **Back to Black:** While summer’s the light bringer, its dark skies are rewarding. There are Dark Sky Reserves worldwide, seven of which are in the UK (National Parks, 2025). In the South Downs National Park, I’ve had stunning views of the Perseids meteor shower, which peaks in mid-August (Royal Museums Greenwich, 2025). I’ve also mindfully marvelled at the Milky Way while glamping in Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons). Wherever you are, gaze for constellations and shooting stars, and don’t forget the wildlife; bats and owls love the dark but are most easily seen by moonlight.

ABUNDANCE ASPIRATIONS

When I edited *Over Catastrophising Daily*, it was clear that sunshine is key to how Sharon Brisley-Moore manages her obsessive compulsive disorder and high-functioning anxiety:

“Sun is my tonic. All my senses feel amplified when I’m in the sun, whether that’s lounging or strolling in it. I feel lighter in weight physically and emotionally. I plan better and think inspirationally. I find positivity and walk taller. I know I naturally smile more. How? The cheek aches!”

Sharon also shared a breathing technique in her book, which I’ve adapted in my abundance aspirations below:

- **Breathe:** Tap into summer blooms and childhood memories of blowing dandelion ‘fairy’ seeds to slow and focus your breathing. Inhale, while chanting in your head, ‘breathe in the flowers.’ Exhale, while chanting in your head, ‘blow out the fairies.’
- **Feel:** There’s something amazing or comforting to see, hear, smell, touch, or taste every single summer’s day. Why not aim to see or hear a new bird, smell a vine of tomatoes or a fresh strawberry, feel grass with your fingers or sand with your toes, and make water mint tea or lavender lemonade?
- **Move:** Walk among flora and fauna to soothe the soul. Wild swim to refresh the body and mind. Kayak to get on wildlife’s level. There are many ways to mindfully move in nature, no matter your ability or location. ME stops me from paddling my own kayak but, with my partner at the helm, I’ve seen swarming jelly fish, a swimming grass snake, nesting sand martins, and courting beautiful demoiselles.
- **Create:** There’s nothing like using creativity to free the mind. Summer, with its abundance of sensory inspiration, holds much creative promise, from painting sunny scenes to composing summery sounds. I journal, writing about my weekly wildlife sightings and sharing photography on Instagram (@kate.lassetter).
- **Share:** Gratitude journals are great to share with others; they can help you connect and spread the positivity of summer. You can also share summer’s abundance by gifting gluts of summer produce – flowers, jams, cakes, and veg – to friends and family.

- **Feed:** You need to feed your soul as much as your body, so let your fingers linger in the soil as you harvest salad or plant greens. Nurture nature, give back what you’ve harvested from its most abundant season. Think about what wildflowers you’ll sow to keep next year’s pollinators happy. **IT**

Katy Lassetter is a writer, editor, and nature nerd. She’s worked with aromatherapists to hypnotherapists and mental health advocates to the Story Massage Programme founders. Living with ME, fibromyalgia, and an autoimmune disease for over 16 years, Katy has gained valuable experience using complementary therapies to manage her health, which has granted her with the empathy needed to write about health and wellbeing. Email katy@chichestercopywriter.co.uk or visit chichestercopywriter.co.uk

Learn more about Sharon Brisley-Moore and her book *Over Catastrophising Daily* at s-m-b-m.com



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