

# Get going

with Sustrans

## Enjoy the fruits of autumn

The leaves on the trees are starting to change colour and animals are doing all they can to get ready for winter. Look for the changes that make this season special and make the most of this bountiful time of year! So get a packed lunch and head out onto the National Cycle Network to see what you can find.

### What can you spot?

Go on an autumn nature hunt and see what you can spot! Tick each box when you find them.

### What you need

- A pen
- Binoculars (not essential, but useful)



#### Galls

Some insects like wasps can have an odd effect on trees. They make them grow really fast, resulting in odd shaped lumps called galls. They then use the gall as a shelter or nursery for their young.



#### Seal pups

If you're near the coast why not see if you can spot seals lying on exposed beaches with their pups? Grey seal pups stay out of the water until they grow a protective layer of fat to keep out the cold. Common seal pups can swim after a few hours and stay warm by being very active.



#### Colourful leaves

The leaves of lots of trees and bushes are starting to turn magnificent shades of yellow, orange and red.

#### Deer rutting!

This time of year male deer are trying to attract females and they do this by shouting and competing with other males. Some deer have really huge antlers that they use to wrestle, or rut. Deer can be aggressive at this time of year, especially if you have a dog, so don't get too close.



#### Fungus!

Now is the best time of year to find all sorts of mushrooms and toadstools. Don't pick mushrooms as some are poisonous.



#### Spiders

If you go out on a sunny day you might get to see baby spiders flying past on little parachutes or caught on bushes. These threads catch the wind and lift the tiny spiders into the air, helping them move about to new homes.



#### Autumn birds

In autumn many species of birds migrate south, such as swallows, and warblers.

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**Go nuts!**

**Lots of trees and bushes are producing fruit and nuts for animals to eat. Some can even be eaten by people.**



**Rose hips**  
The flowers are over but these bright red seed pods get fat and juicy at this time of year.



**Acorns**  
Oak trees produce thousands of acorns every year which jays and squirrels bury in the ground as a store for the winter. The oak tree hopes they forget a few so that new trees can grow in the spring.



**Conkers**  
Horse chestnut trees make great big nuts with a spiky outer layer that we use as conkers. These nuts are big and round so that they bounce and roll away from the tree.



**Sweet chestnuts**  
The roast chestnuts people eat at Christmas come from the sweet chestnut tree. These are a bit like conkers but look like a green hedgehog and have three or four smaller seeds inside.



**Blackberries**  
Bramble bushes are often covered in juicy blackberries this time of year and are a favourite of small birds like sparrows and blackbirds.



**Fruit trees**  
All sorts of fruit is ripening on trees along the Network, including apples, pears, plums and apricots. Some of these trees are from planted orchards and wildlife like badgers will eat fallen fruit to fatten up for the winter.



**Hazelnuts**  
These nuts grow in clusters at the end of tall branches and have a frilly sheath around the outside. They are a dormouse's favourite food and are great for filling up before winter hibernation.



**Sloes**  
Blackthorn bushes get covered in black sloes in the autumn. These taste bitter to us but birds will happily eat them and they can even be made into jams or sweet drinks.

For more information about the National Cycle Network visit [www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network)

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