

CDA
FESTIVAL OF
ARCHAEOLOGY
2026



Archaeology and Nature



Belfry
the Bat

Family Activities

- Nature in Church Designs
- Selection of Spotter Sheets and Activities from The British Wildlife Trust
- Church Climate Detectives



EXPLORE
THE
NATURAL
WORLD

with Belfry the Bat

Learning at
the Churches
Conservation
Trust

Archaeology and Nature

Family Activities

Overview:

Humans and nature have always been connected. By exploring archaeology and nature together we can reveal how humans have lived with, shaped, and been shaped by the environment around them. Through these activities, compiled for the Council for British Archaeology's 2026 Festival of Archaeology, visitors will learn how nature has inspired the design of historic churches and impacted the fabric of the buildings.

Activity 1: Nature in Church Design (Low Cost/ Low Effort)

Overview: Visitors look for evidence of how the surrounding natural world inspired the materials and artwork inside the building.

Age range: 4+ (Be aware of tripping hazards as people move around the space looking at a sheet of paper).

Materials:

- Nature in Church Design Exploration Sheet
- Pencils
- Clipboards

Activity 2: Wildlife Trust: spotter sheets and activities (Low Cost/Mixed Effort)

Overview: Many of our churches are surrounded by undisturbed wildlife that can provide great educational experiences. The British Wildlife Trust has an expansive array of activities to get people engaged with their local wildlife which we are allowed to use and distribute in our buildings! A variety are included in this pack, but we encourage you to explore their website and find more: <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activities> With great thanks to The British Wildlife Trust.

Age range: 4+ (Be aware that young children can choke on small objects and so should be closely supervised).

Materials:

For spotter sheets, you only need the sheet, clipboard and a pencil. However, for specific activities such as 'How to Make Your Own Bird Feeder' or 'Make a Seed Bomb' refer to the activity sheet for what materials are required.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FAMILY ACTIVITY ORGANISER'S MANUAL.

Activity 3: Climate Detectives (Low Cost/ Low Effort)

Overview: Visitors investigate the building and predict how it would be affected by extreme weather events. This is a great activity to promote discussions about the work of Churches Conservation Trust and encourage donations.

Age range: 8+

Materials:

- Climate Detectives Sheet- PRINT DOUBLE SIDED
- Pencils
- Clipboards
- Binoculars (optional)
- Magnifying Glass (optional)

Hazards to add to your risk assessment:

Hazards Identified	Risk (How people may be harmed)	Precautions / Control measures	Residual Risk	Further precautions necessary
Pens/ Pencils/ Colouring Pens and Pencils	Poking to eyes, ears, nose, mouth etc.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be respectful and sensible with the resources. Broken pencils replaced immediately.	L	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Small Objects	Choking hazard.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be respectful and sensible with the resources.	M	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Food or plant materials that can be smelled or ingested.	Allergic reactions from smell or accidental ingestion.	Organiser to ask if visitors have any allergies. Young children to be accompanied so they do not have the chance to eat food or plant materials.	M	Do not leave children unattended signage.

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Bee/ Wasp	Sting from Bee or Wasp/ allergic reaction.	Areas with higher levels of bees/wasps should be cordoned off. Visitors made aware of the possibility of bees or wasps, especially in wildlife conservation areas.	M	
Sheep or other animals on site.	Poo in mouth or eyes. Attack by animal.	Children will be cautioned that they are in an area where animals are present, and they should wash their hands regularly.	L	Organiser will provide hand washing equipment.

PLEASE CONSULT THE LEARNING EVENT ORGANISER'S MANUAL FOR FULL LIST OF POSSIBLE HAZARDS. DON'T FORGET TO ADD HAZARDS SPECIFIC TO YOUR BUILDING AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES.

Mascots:

The Churches Conservation Trust has six learning mascots each with their own colour and area of interest! These activities include 'Explore The Natural World with Belfry the Bat'

EXPLORE THE NATURAL WORLD
with Belfry the Bat

Belfry the Bat is interested in anything to do with animals and nature. He lives with his friends in a bat box and loves to watch the wildflowers. Belfry encourages visitors to explore and protect the natural world.

CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

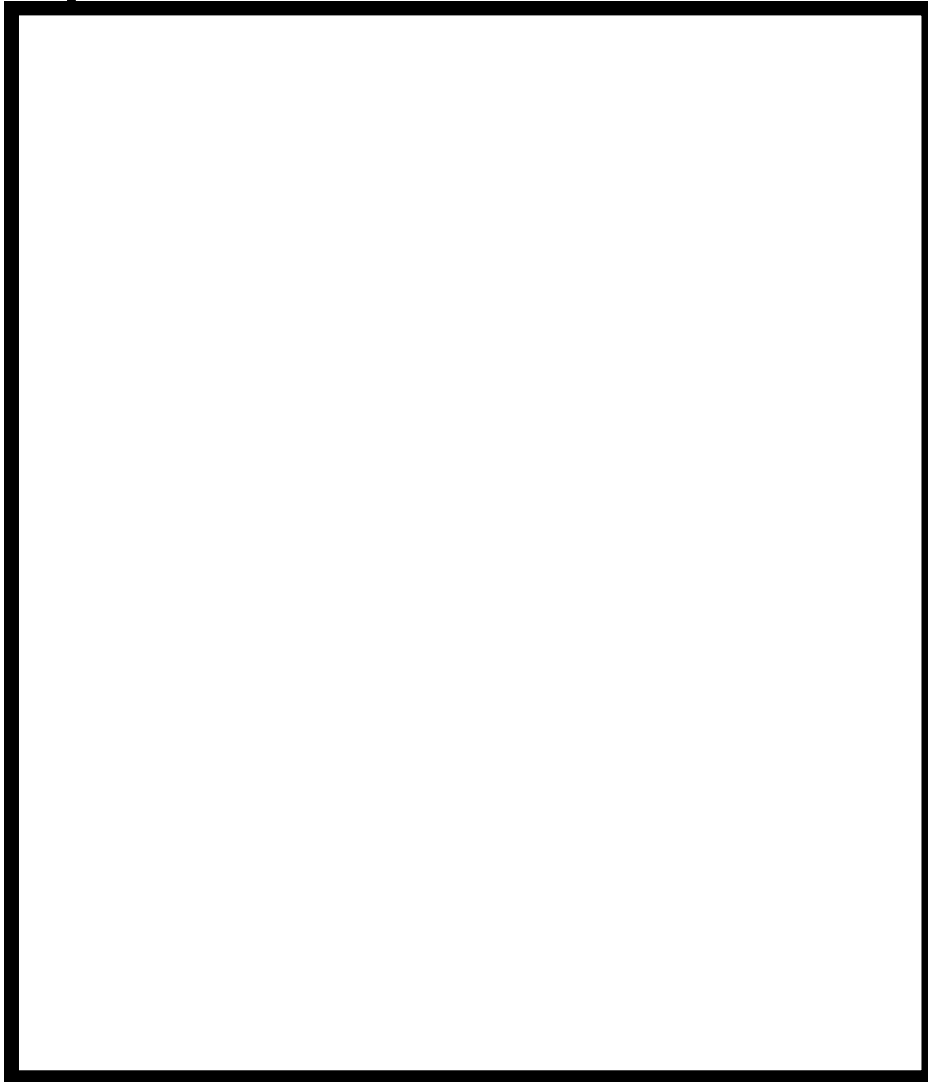
Nature in Church Design

Artists often take inspiration from the natural world and our churches are full of items made from or inspired by nature.

Can you find the following items around the church and draw them in the boxes?

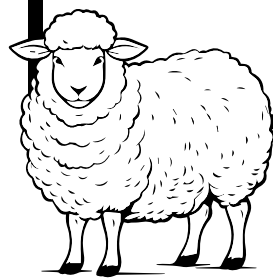
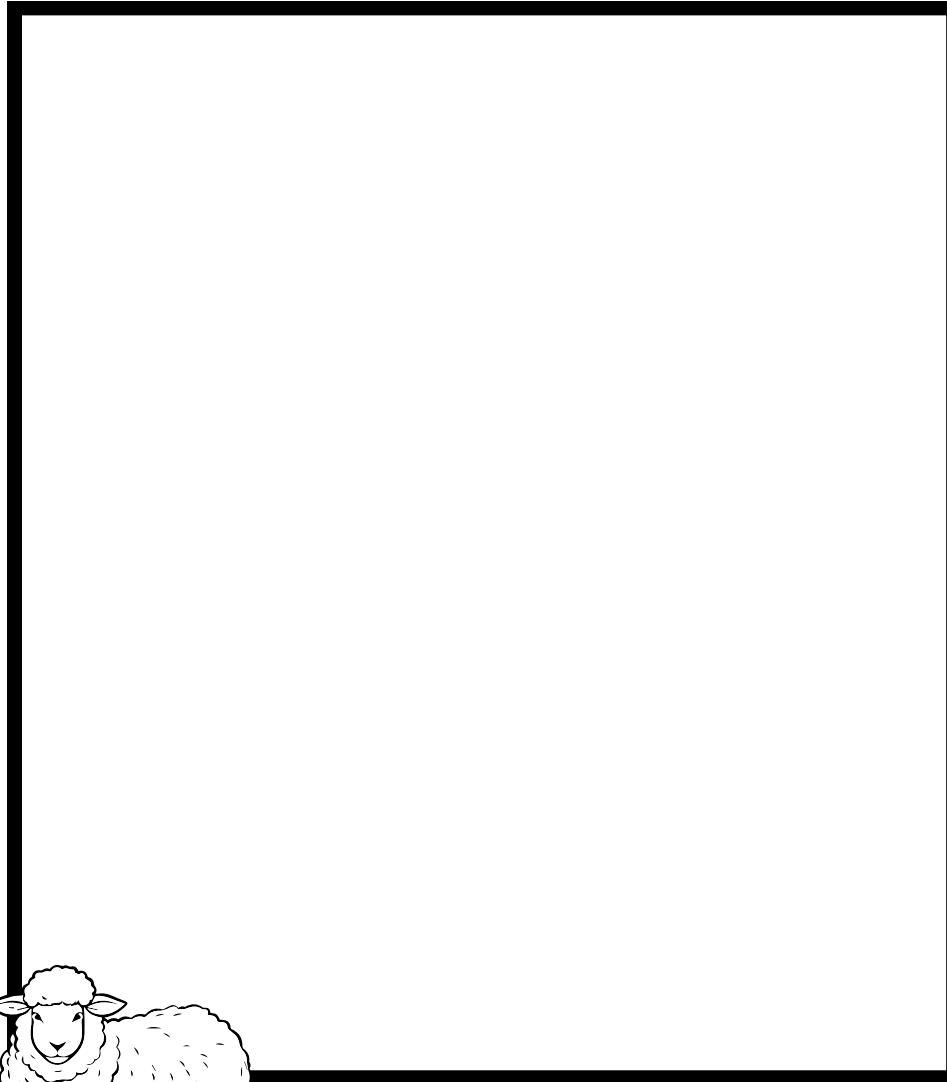


Designs inspired by plants:



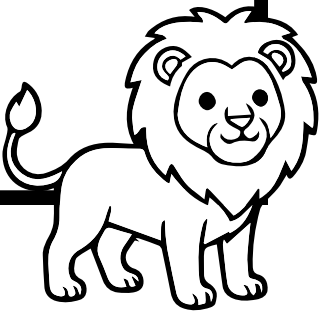
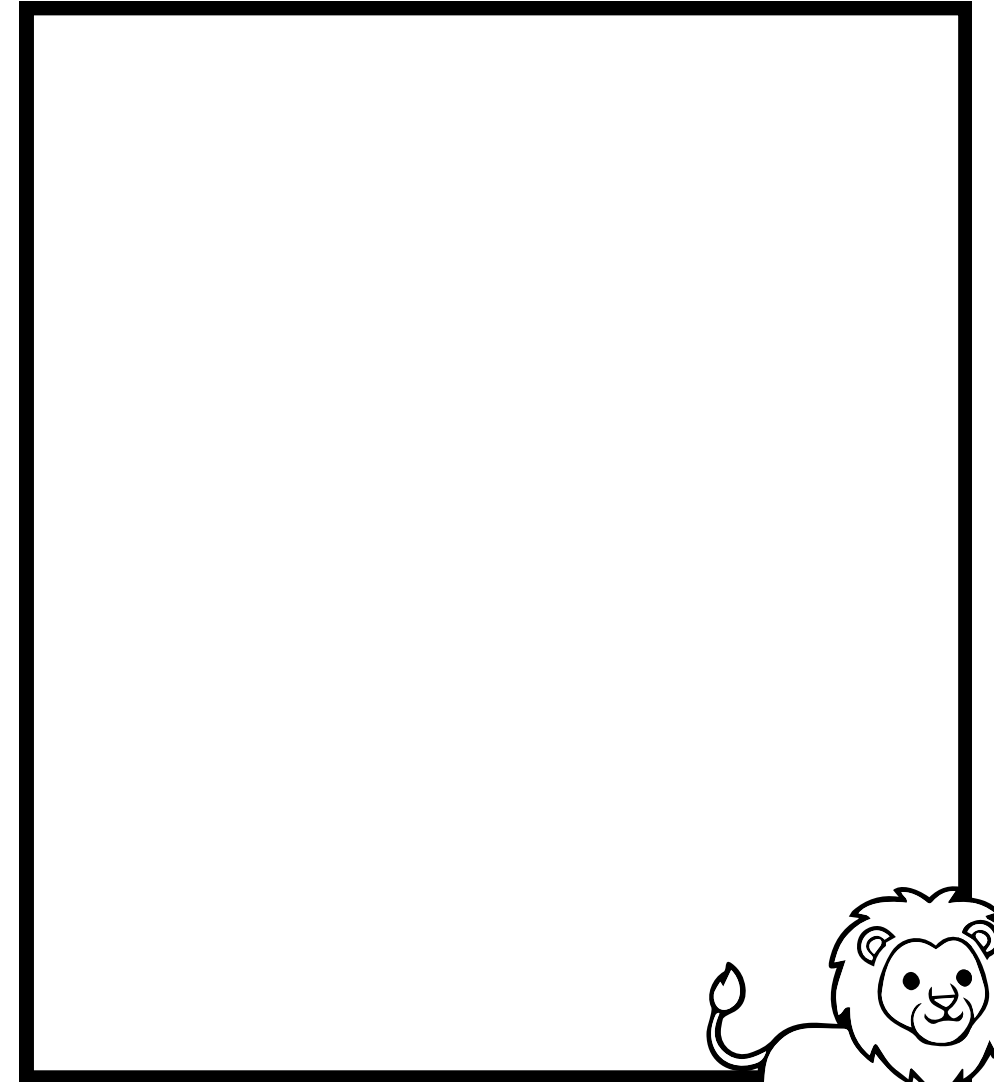
Hint: Look for patterns that include flowers, leaves or berries.

Designs with animals found in England:



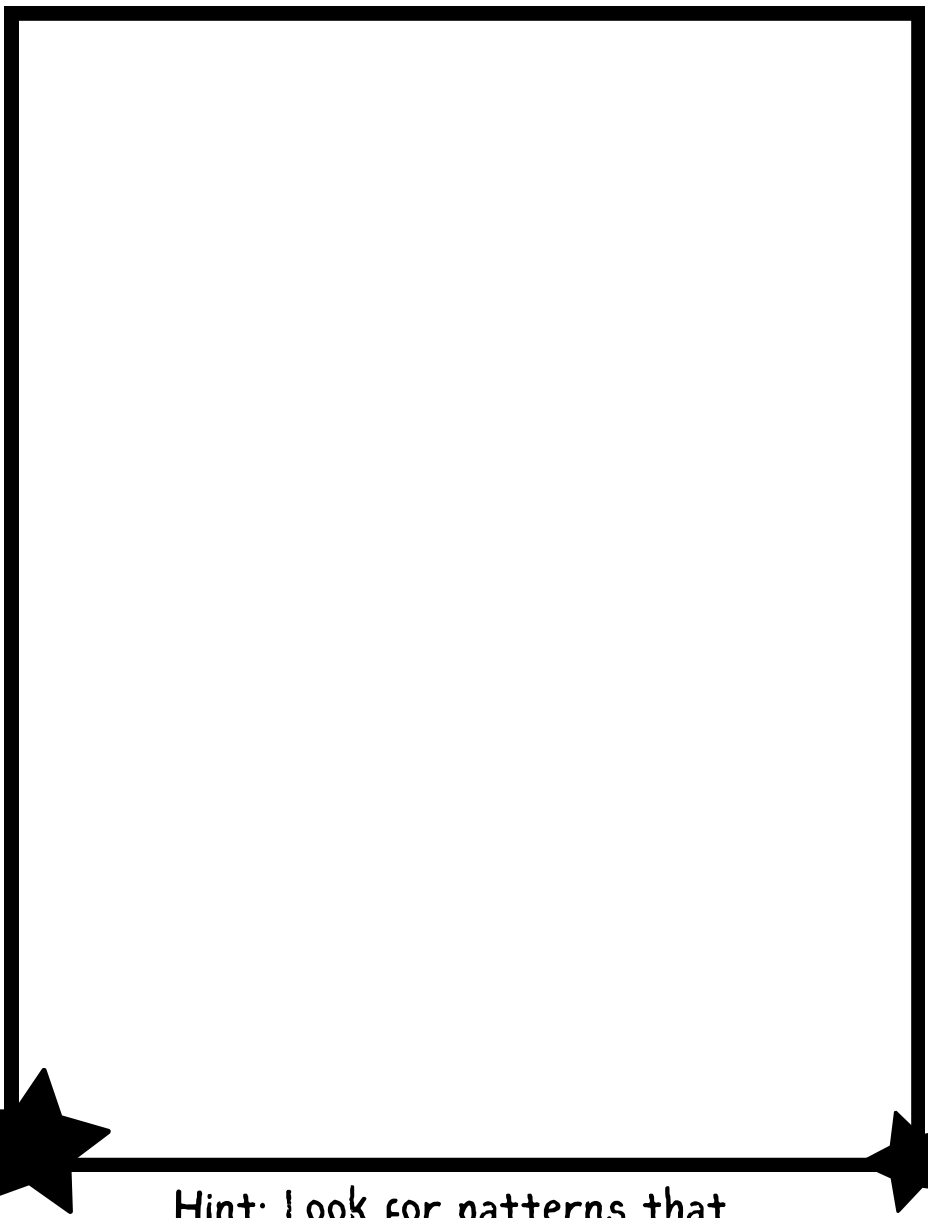
Hint: Sheep are quite common in church imagery.

Designs with animals not found in England:



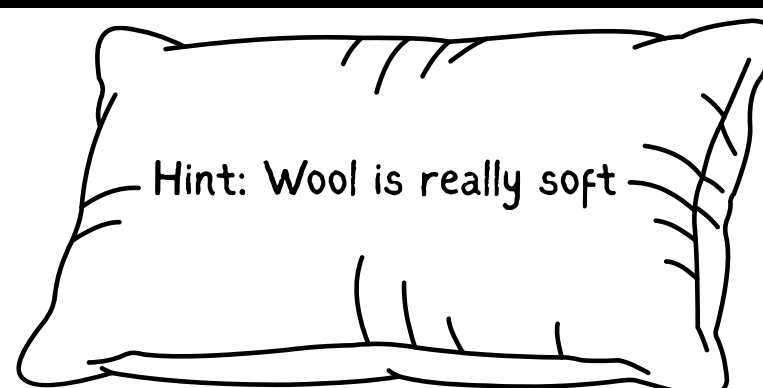
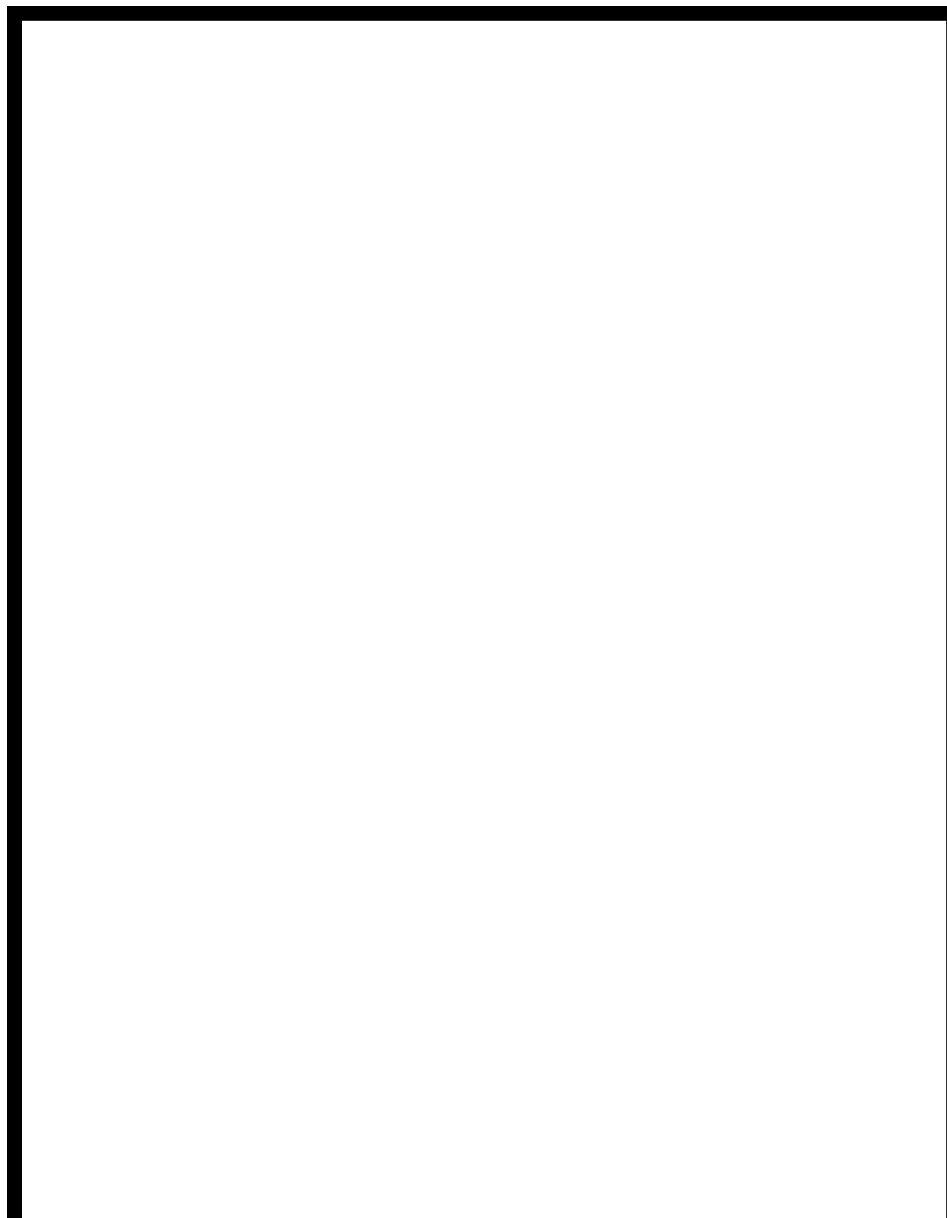
Hint: Look for shields with powerful animals

Designs inspired by the sky:



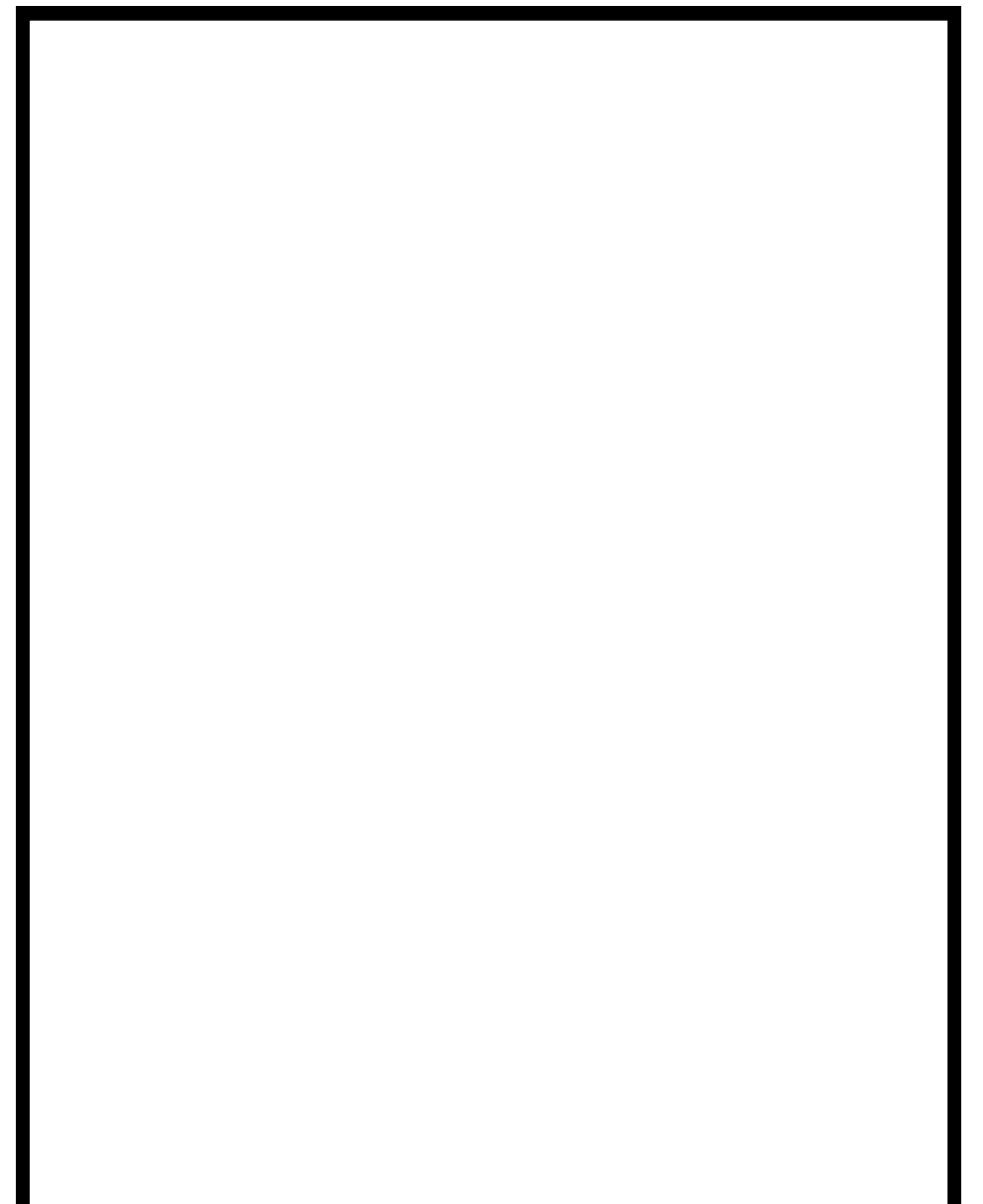
Hint: Look for patterns that include stars, the sun or moon.

An object made from wool:

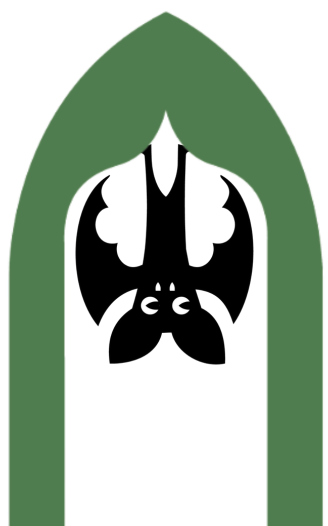
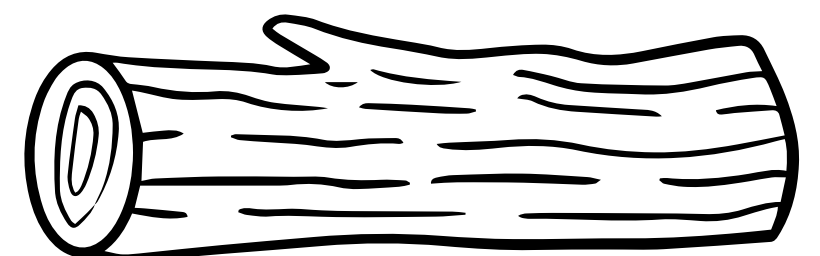


Hint: Wool is really soft

An object made from wood:



Hint: Where do people sit in church?



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Find out more about
the Churches

Conservation Trust: visitchurches.org.uk

Share your
experience on
social media:



@ChurchesConservationTrust



@thechurchesconservationtrust



Climate Detectives

Churches Conservation Trust are committed to protecting our buildings from damage by humans, animals and the weather. As the climate changes, we are consistently identifying weaknesses in our buildings and looking for ways to make them stronger.

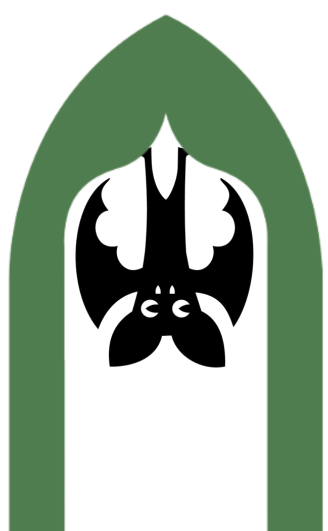
Can you investigate the building and ask questions to fill out the sheet?

Heavy Rainfall and Flooding	Which parts of the church would be the last to flood?	What features on the outside of the church help to direct the flow of rainwater?
Which parts of the church are most at risk from flooding?		

Hotwaves and High Temperatures	Which parts of the church are most at risk from fire?	Does this church have any features that make use of the sunshine (eg solar panels or sundials)?
What happens to old stone in hot weather?		

Storms and High Winds	Which parts of the church are most at risk from high winds?	What affect could a lightning strike have on the church?
Does this church have a way of telling which direction the wind is blowing?		

Now turn over to design creative solutions to protect the church!



EXPLORE THE NATURAL WORLD

with Belfry the Bat

Find out more about the Churches

Conservation Trust: visitchurches.org.uk

Share your experience on social media:



@ChurchesConservationTrust



@thechurchesconservationtrust



Climate Detectives

Use this space to brainstorm ideas of how to save the church from extreme weather!

Will you put the church in a huge, glass dome? Or put it on stilts? Will you add windmills and solar panels to create energy? Will you carry the church away and move it somewhere else?

It's totally up to you!

You can find out more about how we are protecting our churches from climate change and donate to support our churches at visitchurches.org.uk



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Share your ideas
on social media:



@ChurchesConservationTrust



@thechurchesconservationtrust



How to make your own bird feeder



What you need:

- dry ingredients
 - bird seed
 - cooked rice
 - grated cheese
 - dried fruit
 - breadcrumbs
 - chopped nuts
- hard cooking fat (lard or suet)
- a pine cone, coconut shell or yoghurt pot
 - string



Use an old yoghurt pot for this, and always recycle after it's been used



1 Mix all the dry ingredients together in a bowl



2 Add the fat and give it a good mix around

3 Choose your feeder



plaster all over a pine cone



put it round the inside of a coconut shell



press into a yoghurt pot

4 Hang your feeders with string (you may need to make holes and tie the string in before adding the mix)



If you need to melt the fat, ask an adult to help

Hang your feeder where you can watch birds without disturbing them

Build a bird's nest

You will need

- Newspaper
- Bags or baskets to collect nesting material
- Access to: sticks, grass, leaves, various other natural materials like pine needles, feathers, moss and mud



Take care, they can prick!

- 1 Lay some newspaper on the ground or a table where you want to make your nest – things are going to get messy!



- 2 Head outdoors and collect all your natural materials and bring it back to your working area. Empty it all out onto the newspaper.



- 3 Weave your twigs, grass and moss and your natural materials together, and use some mud to keep it all in place.



Try weaving your nest with two fingers, like a bird's beak!

- 4 When you've finished, show your nests to each other. Would eggs be snug and cosy? How strong is your nest? How many chocolate eggs you can fit inside?



- 5 Consider dismantling your nests and leave the materials for real birds to pick up and reuse – try wedging them into shrubs!



How to make seed bombs

You will need:

- Meadow flower seeds or seeds collected from the garden



- Peat-free compost



- Water



- Powdered clay (from craft shops - use clay soil if you can't find any)



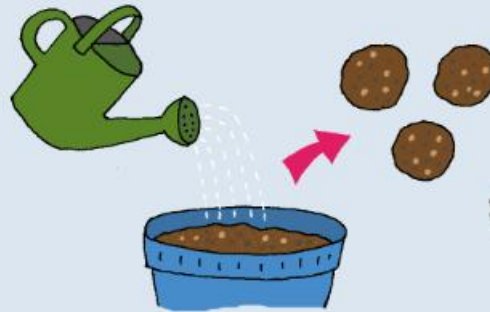
- Mixing bowl



- 1 In a bowl, mix together 1 cup of seeds with 5 cups of compost and 2-3 cups of clay powder.



- 2 Slowly mix in water with your hands until everything sticks together, then roll mixture into firm balls.



- 3
-

- 4 Now for the fun bit - plant by throwing your seed bombs at bare parts of the garden!



Garden bird detective

				
Chaffinch <input type="checkbox"/>	Greenfinch <input type="checkbox"/>	House sparrow <input type="checkbox"/>	Blackbird <input type="checkbox"/>	Blue tit <input type="checkbox"/>
				
Goldfinch <input type="checkbox"/>	Great tit <input type="checkbox"/>	Collared dove <input type="checkbox"/>	Starling <input type="checkbox"/>	Wood pigeon <input type="checkbox"/>

Spring flower spotter



Snowdrop



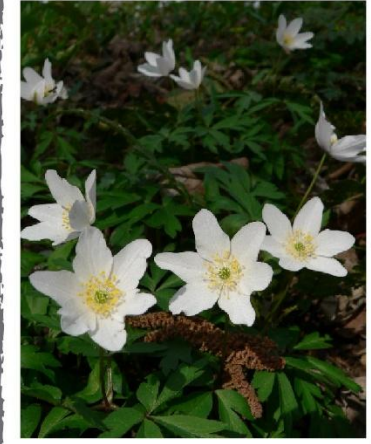
Daffodil



Wood-sorrel



Winter aconite



Wood anemone



Bluebell



Primrose



Wild garlic (ramsons)



Cowslip



Lesser celandine



Minibeast detective



Cricket



Harvestman



Woodlouse



Lacewing



Moth



Nettle Weevil



Millipede



Bluebottle fly



Slug



Bumblebee

Crows and other black birds



Carrion crow



Hooded crow



Jackdaw



Magpie



Jay



Raven



Chough



Rook



Blackbird



Starling



Credits: Chris Maguire, Margaret Holland, Neil Aldridge, Jon Hawkins – Surrey Hills Photography, Vaughn Matthews, Andy Karran, Mark Hamblin/2020VISION

Hedgerow wildlife detective



Hedgehog



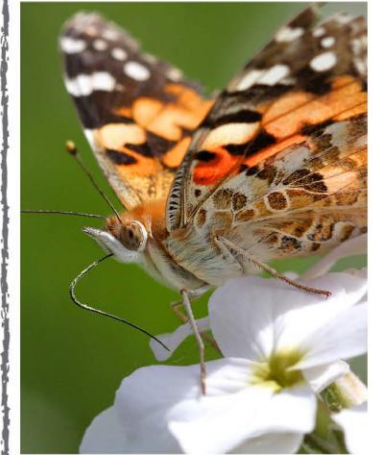
Hawthorn blossom



Bullfinch



Harvest mouse



Painted lady



Hawthorn shieldbug



Great tit



Common toad



Red campion



Yellowhammer



Summer flower spotter



Meadow buttercup



Foxglove



Poppy



Tufted vetch



Cow parsley



Teasel



Yellow iris



Toadflax



Herb robert



Red campion

