

Large Print Guide

A MUSEUM OF MODERN NATURE

Once finished please leave in the box
provided outside the exit

A copy of this guide is available for download from
wellcomecollection.org/makingnature

In spring 2017 Wellcome Collection asked the public to bring in objects that tell a story about their relationship with nature. Over three days we received everything from oxygen cylinders and tattoos to deer antlers and musical instruments. On display in this gallery are a selection of the most intriguing, surprising and inspiring objects, chosen by a small team of people who each work with nature in a different way. Together these objects provide a portrait of our relationship with the natural world in the 21st century.

The four themes in this exhibition – Change, Imagine, Sustain, Ritual – arose out of the stories that contributors shared with us. These stories describe their encounters with the natural world, including nature's power to heal and mend and its importance to family life. They also acknowledge tensions between humankind and animals and a desire to control nature.

In contrast to some natural history museums of the past, this museum of modern nature addresses our place in the natural world and records the ways in which we interact with our environment. It suggests that we can no longer consider ourselves distinct from nature and encourages us to contemplate the consequences of our daily actions on the earth.

A series of walking tours will accompany the exhibition:

Nature Wanders

Saturdays 1 and 29 July and Wednesdays 5 [BSL], 12 and 19 July, 15.00–16.30

Free | Book from 30 June

Nature is sometimes seen as rural and remote, but what beautiful, wild, surprising or mundane natural things might city dwellers find closer to home? Join us for a series of walks that will take a fresh look at what nature means today.

For more information, go to [**wellcomecollection.org/events**](https://wellcomecollection.org/events)

THE TEAM

The objects on display in this exhibition were chosen from the public's submissions by a small team of people who each work with nature in a different way.

These are the objects brought by each team member to represent their relationship with nature.

Binoculars

Nick Biddle, park manager, 56 years old

These binoculars are a new development in my relationship with nature. I have studied plants, horticulture and landscape management for decades and I am now devoting what time I can spare to learning more about birds. These binoculars are a window into a whole new world for me and embody the excitement that I feel in the discovery of that world. Thinking about this has led me to appreciate the condition of ignorance, for without it there can be no discovery!

A rising plate meter for measuring grass

Robert Craig, dairy farmer, 46 years old

Using this device, I walked our farm every week for around 15 years measuring the pasture (grass), seeing the seasons change as growth rates increased and declined throughout the year. Our whole dairy farming business revolves around growing and efficiently using grass as our main feed source. The natural environment is where we work, and maintaining the natural health of the land is fundamental to our prosperity and long-term sustainability. Therefore, we need to take better care of nature, as would a gardener managing their own prizewinning garden. As a society we have been gardening Planet Earth for food, medicines and sustenance, and the way in which we garden Planet Earth now and in the future will have a massive impact on humanity's health and wellbeing.

Playmobil gardener

**Alistair Griffiths, horticultural scientist,
41 years old**

I am a gardener and a plant scientist. As a society we are all gardeners of our planet, yet many of us have become disconnected from nature. I feel our society needs to reconnect with nature so that we are more mindful that we are nature and are large influencers of nature. Most importantly, we are totally dependent on nature for our very existence.

Therefore, we need to take better care of nature, as would a gardener managing their own prizewinning garden. As a society we have been gardening Planet Earth for food, medicines and sustenance, and the way in which we garden Planet Earth now and in the future will have a massive impact on humanity's health and wellbeing.

My baby/milk teeth

**Zoe Laughlin, maker and materials expert,
35 years old**

When thinking of something that I could consider as natural, I thought of my baby teeth. They were explicitly part of me, thus natural to me, but I like the fact that something so ancient, human and universal is also specific, local and modern. There will be mineral deposits in these teeth that reveal that they were grown by someone at the tail end of the 20th century, in a certain part of the country, who ate a modern diet, drank water with added fluoride and had access to modern health and dental care.

An asthma inhaler and a glass jar full of country air

Paul Leinster, sustainability practitioner

I've had asthma since I was six years old. This has made me aware of the air that I breathe – polluted air is one of the causes of me wheezing, as are various allergens. Inhalers like this one have allowed me to participate fully in active sports throughout my life.

This interest in air quality has also influenced my professional life. One strand of my work has involved assessing and reducing as required people's exposure to air pollution, both in the workplace and in the general environment.

This bottle of country air illustrates various things to me: that it's difficult visually to see the difference between country and city air, for instance, and that you can't usually see allergens or pollutants. It's also a reminder that it takes real and concerted effort to reduce pollution – if you remove the lid, the clean air soon disappears.

Hemp products

**Rebekah Shaman, plant medicine shaman,
45 years old**

Hemp and cacao are not often considered medicines, but these two plants are extremely beneficial to our health and wellbeing. I work closely with both in a healing/nutritious capacity. Hemp grows locally, and we grow it organically for its nutritious seed and oil. The seed contains a balance of omegas 3, 6 and 9 and all the amino acids and essential fatty acids to help our immune systems. Its stem can be turned into fibre and used for construction, housing, materials and cloth.

Cacao is highly beneficial for our wellbeing. It naturally releases serotonin and dopamine into the brain so that we feel blissed and happy. It is high in antioxidants and flavonoids and acts as a natural antidepressant. I offer cacao in ceremony to reconnect people to their deep inner guidance. Using shamanic journeying we meet the Cacao Spirit to release negative energetic blockages and find inner peace and clarity.

Two bottles, one full of water and one full of air

Rebecca Stephens, mountaineer, 55 years old

The elements of life – oxygen and water – are so easily taken for granted; but after a couple of months at extreme altitude, where the landscape is undoubtedly striking but stark, it is exquisite to step off the glacier and onto terra firma, to feel a tidal wave of thick air flood into one's lungs, to feel moisture on one's skin, to listen to the burbling of water running free, to smell vegetation and to be reunited with the colour green.

A bottle of water seemed to say it all: at extreme altitude it's locked as ice; where there's life it runs free. But then it struck me how even more fundamental the presence of oxygen is – above 8,000 metres there is insufficient oxygen to sustain life even for a day. So the empty bottle is not empty at all, but full of air.

CHANGE

1

Fakah (fan)

Khoirun Nessa, 73 years old

I made this for my granddaughter when she was three – 15 years ago. Before we had electric fans in the village that I come from in Bangladesh, we would use these fans to keep us cool. It can be really hot. Individuals would carry a fan like this with them to keep themselves cool, but you don't need them any more. At this time of year [April], it should be raining in Bangladesh but it's not, which is a problem.

2

Princes 100% Pure Apple Juice carton

Emilie Brotherhood, 25 years old

Without fail, one of these juice cartons (always the choice of either orange or apple) would be produced by my mum and dad during our many trips together around the UK to beaches, parks and various National Trust sites. Whenever I see this particular brand and carton, I'm always reminded of those journeys throughout my childhood.

Bringing this object in today throws the object somewhat out of context. It seems out of place here on the busy Euston Road, seeing something which I connect strongly with being in the countryside, even though the object is in fact more aligned to the city, I suppose – a quick, convenient snack.

3

Jar of feathers

Kitty Percy, 48 years old

(Audio transcript)

Oh, it's just one of those kind of magpie impulses, isn't it? It's just you see something lovely and can't help but pick it up. I walk the dog in the park every day, this is Greenwich Park, so it's a sort of... I guess it's a city park, it's slightly suburban but it's quite central and there are parakeets and, you know, you see them but they're quite elusive, and I just pick up... I've always picked up feathers just because, you know, they're lovely. And so it's not really scientific at all the jar of feathers, but there are other jars, so it's one of several.

I guess this year I've noticed there are more parakeet feathers than ever. So usually in previous years it's just been ducks and crows and pigeon feathers, but for some reason this year more parakeet, so, you know, you see the little yellowy-green feathers. I know they're invaders and they are probably... they're probably quite invasive, aren't they? But they're just so magical, seeing them flying around in our grey sky, so they're lovely really.

4

Hand-carved spoons

Bill Hudson, 45 years old

A silver birch had to be cut down, so I was asked to reuse the timber for a community project. So I taught myself how to carve spoons. The tree was cut down in south-east London.

The bay tree spoon came from a branch I needed to cut down in our garden as part of a garden project and I wanted to use the branch. So I made a few spoons in the hope that when using them, the flavour of the bay would transfer to what I was cooking.

5

Trench art paper knife made from brass shell casings

Alex Julyan, 55 years old

This object is symbolic of the human impetus to create art in times of unimaginable suffering. The Third Battle of Ypres was one of the largest of World War I, resulting in the loss of nearly half a million lives. This paper knife summons an image of great contradiction, a lone soldier-craftsman working intensively in a decimated landscape of mud, rain and blood. I have speculated about this beautiful shiny fish crafted from the very stuff of war, made in a place where plants and animals had all but disappeared. It is an object that is profoundly connected to the earth, death and life. Its material substance was extracted from rock and formed into a bullet whose intention was to send men back into the earth.

This object connects me in a powerful and poetic way to the mortality of all things and the renewal and hope that inevitably follows.

6

Shell and silver jewellery

Wendy M Anderson, 58 years old

(Audio transcript)

When I was a child I used to play with a jar full of shells that had been collected by my mother and my aunt, that my grandmother kept, and they would have collected those shells at a particular beach: it's called Barry's Beach on Phillip Island in Australia. And then my family took me there for summer holidays, and so I would collect the same shells, the same sort of little round, flat shells and add them to the collection.

Now, my family and I, with my children, we have actually built our home at the beach, which is now part of a nature park, which means that nothing can be removed from that beach. So my children and I would go down and collect the shells but we would have to put them back and leave them on the sand. So one Christmas not long after we'd moved to Barry's Beach, the children went hunting around various jewellery stores and found a collection of jewellery for me made from the same shells that we used to collect from that beach. For me they are a connection to family and place, they are part of my heritage, they are part of my love of the beach and my family all being surf-obsessed Australians.

7

Playing cards

Ruth Horry, 35 years old

These playing cards have been kicking around my house for years. They're promotional cards associated with a tea company advert showing chimpanzees dressed in human clothes. Years ago, I don't think I'd have thought twice about what was pictured, but now they make me feel uncomfortable about how we saw primates then – I now think it's not OK to do that. They're a bit challenging and show us how our attitudes have changed in the past 20 years.

8

Cat made of cat hair

Merle Nunneley, 17 years old

(Audio transcript)

My cat is a ginger cat and when you brush him lots of hair comes out. So I took the hair and felted it into a tiny, miniature cat. So you brush the hair out and then take the hair and you stab it with a needle, which has got lots of little barbs in it, which kind of makes it... all of the fibres stick together. And you can mould it with your hands to make it into a 3D shape. Some people think it's a bit strange, which I guess it is. But it's quite cute. A bit disgusting maybe. I guess you think of humans as one thing and nature as animals and plants; humans aren't really part of nature. You don't think about it, I don't think about it that way, but I guess everything is part of nature. There could be fleas in there.

9

Mousetrap

Emily Sargent, 41 years old

Everywhere I have lived in London I have shared my home, unwillingly, with mice. I try to comfort myself that it means I don't have rats. I've tried humane traps, asking them nicely to leave, trying to ignore them. In the end, the only way we've been able to stay sane, get some sleep and protect the kitchen has been to lay traps. I love nature, but some parts of nature more than others, and at the appropriate distance.

10

Tote bag

Jasmine Spavieri, 34 years old

(Audio transcript)

I'm a huge ocean lover, and I was running down the beach and I saw this sea turtle in the waves, and when I looked a little bit closer I could see that the sea turtle had actually choked on a plastic bag and it had asphyxiated on it. And that's when I decided there was something I had to do about stopping plastic pollution. When I saw that plastic bag I realised that it was something I had produced, or my species had produced, humans had made, and so felt partly responsible for it. So my object reminds me to be more responsible, to reuse things, and to recycle things rather than to just buy something new. And actually I think it looks a lot better than a plastic bag, actually much more stylish.

11

Black-and-white family photograph

Joan Scott, 91 years old

(Audio transcript)

I think I might have been about four and my sisters were looking after me. They look like guardians, don't they? But sometimes they couldn't be bothered with me at all. They wanted to lose me. [Laughs] Usually every weekend we went to the seaside somewhere or other, you know? Local, not far, you know? Margate, Ramsgate, Southend. Just for the day. I think we might have stayed once or twice. We didn't book up anywhere, just if you saw someone with a notice in the window, "Bed and Breakfast" or whatever it was, you just went there. Music and a fair, the happiness of the place, everybody was enjoying themselves, you know? It was lovely, just lovely. I think it's very funny because there's a boat, a little boat, toy boat, and I know I really wanted that boat so I must have kept on until I got the boat. [Laughs] Although we were poor, a poor family, we were very well looked after – rather spoilt really, I was.

12

Duke's Mayonnaise jar filled with cotton, pecans and pine cones from Alabama

Heather Ticheli, 47 years old

(Audio transcript)

My mother sent me the objects in the jar over a few years. She sent me the cotton, she sent me the pecans, she sent me the pine cones, and occasionally someone will send me a jar of Duke's Mayonnaise because it's my very favourite, so it seemed an appropriate place to put them. It lives in my kitchen, on the windowsill above the sink, and sometimes it's very comforting and sometimes it's very painful because I get homesick quite a lot, but at the same time I can't really ever go home again. I think the influence of the nature of home is maybe underestimated. When you move to a different country, a different climate, you are in a different habitat. The trees are different, the smells are different, the flowers are different, and I miss them. I miss the smells and the nature of home. So there's something about having a connection with almost the deepest part of me, the part when I was a child, when I could go outside, pick up pine cones, pick up pecans and crack them open and eat them with my grandmother, stop on the side of the road and go into a cotton field and pick some. It makes me feel a bit less lonely and a bit more like my true self.

13

Loomery scroll drawing

Christopher Wallbank, 37 years old

(Audio transcript)

This drawing is of a loomery, which is a name used for a guillemot breeding colony, and the loomery in this picture is called the Amos and can be found on Skomer Island. I wanted to capture them on this landscape scale, so the drawing had to be large, and I needed to find a way of working on a large scale on location on a windy cliff. So I came up with drawing the colony bird by bird and rolling the scroll as I went along. I drew this on and off for two weeks.

When I first got there I thought the colony would stay the same, but actually, of course, the colony is in constant flux, and this is something that you'd only notice from very long periods of observation – either as a scientist or as an artist. It was a fantastic experience because I was so involved in the life of this colony. Just the constant sort of drama unfolding of quite literally life and death, with eggs being taken and guillemots fighting and falling off cliffs. It's a constant drama that you can only really appreciate when you observe it for such a long period. And of course for me, by drawing something, I'd never get bored, I'd just get lost in all the details. So it's a really exciting one to make. It's a drawing of wildlife and that's my way of connecting to nature. The most exciting thing for me to do, or way to observe nature, is through drawing.

The Amos is a very important colony to science and conservation because it is the subject of a long-term monitoring project run continuously for over 40 years. The first thing that strikes you when you see a colony like this is just the enormous scale; they take over the entire landscape. The sound is overwhelming. They make a purring, kind of gurgling noise and quite often in unison. The smell absolutely hits you in the face. So it's a real sensory overload.

14

Photographs from the 1950–60s and 1980s

Elizabeth Shuck, 29 years old

(Audio transcript)

Two photographs. One is from the 1950s or early 60s; one is from the 80s – and I found them in my grandad's house. They were... he was a very keen photographer – he built his own dark room – and these are two images of the same view. One shows a farm, and there's actually some kids that have set alight to the farm, so there's a massive fire that you can see.

And the second view is the exact same view, so it was literally opposite his house, and it shows it from the 80s and it shows the motorway that actually replaced the farm, so it's completely built up. It's completely changed. But to me the motorway actually reminds me of the seasons, because as a child I would look out at the motorway when I was visiting my grandparents and in winter, when it gets dark about 5 or 6 o'clock, the lights of the motorway actually looked like Christmas tree lights. So it really reminded me of Christmas and the fact that winter was coming. And I used to kind of watch for the Christmas Coca-Cola van on the motorway. So yeah, that's why it reminds me of nature.

15

Elderflower and cordial

Loren Bianconi Leader, six years old

(Audio transcript)

Near my dad's flat there are lots of little bushes of elderflower – well, they're not that small. And I found some near my mum's house, but most of them had little insects in them. I did find some that didn't have any little insects though. We made elderflower cordial, 12 litres. Once I heard that somebody made elderflower jelly.

16

Plastic grass turf sample

Jenny Bettenson, 31 years old

(Audio transcript)

I work at a city farm and the space that we use it on originally used to be a grass field with cows on it. As it became urbanised it got covered in concrete and as we're starting to develop the space to encourage people to come and connect with nature, at our farm we've put this fake grass out, like a football pitch sort of size, rolled out, and it's been there for about a year or so now, and things have started to grow out of it.

And it wasn't just grass that was growing, it was... there were little bits of kale coming up and little nasturtium seeds and... [laughs] and it was really like creating this own garden within the turf, the plastic turf lining. It is noticed – certainly our volunteers have, they've been like, "Look at that! That's so funny, you've got, like, cress grass growing out the plastic." Nature kind of will always find a way to get back to what it's... its equilibrium, and I just think it's that... the little things, it's sometimes nice to take time and notice.

17

Barometer

Solomon Szekir-Papasavva, 31 years old

I've had this barometer since I was 16; I picked it out from a local second-hand shop. I look at it every day and I like how it gives me a little feeling of control, an advantage over everyone else who doesn't have a barometer. I know what's coming! Nature and emotion are inseparable. For me, nature is all about my mood; it affects how I feel, and occasionally this barometer knows how I'm feeling. Air pressure is represented as 'Stormy', 'Change', 'Fair', etc and I like how terms like these also relate to my feelings at the time. The morning after Donald Trump's election, for example, the barometer displayed 'Change'.

18

Sound piece, *Plastic Water*

Ania Tomaszewska-Nelson, 49 years old

Plastic Water is one of my recent pieces. It is a simulation of the sound made by sea waves, which I executed in Lego. I put Sea – a natural power and phenomenon – against Plastic – a powerful man-made pollutant, also phenomenal in its mass (8 million tonnes of it gets chucked into the sea every year). I looked for the common poetics of both Water and Plastic, turning a piece of eco-tragic news into a longing for the past. The past, when the seas were clear and full of fish. The perfect sea in my past was a ‘sea of time’ when I was a child at play. To me, the sound of breaking waves and the sound of crushing mountains of Lego bricks represent the same sentiment.

19

A bundle of walking sticks made from Jersey kale

John Newling, 64 years old

In my work *From a Garden of Walking Sticks* (2011–12) I germinated and grew 120 Jersey kale in our garden. This cabbage plant grows at a prodigious rate and requires regular trimming of its lower leaves in order to reach approximately three metres in a growing season. The plants are then dried and walking sticks are formed from the very strong and light wood. Tending the cabbages every day was good learning.

The final phase of this project saw 81 walking sticks cut, sanded and varnished ready for use. From the inception of this project I knew that, if I was successful in growing the Jersey kale, I would arrive at a moment when others could take ownership of the walking sticks. Not unlike seeds being subject to the wind, the walking sticks become materials of exchange, transformation and value dispersed through others. I enjoyed this fusion of ecologies.

IMAGINE

20

Beetle collection (model cars)

Stephen Hall, 47 years old

(Audio transcript)

I have never really been into cars – I've never really been somebody who was drawn to them or thought much about them. I grew up in Australia, and I started collecting beetles because there's lots of insects, and from that lots of natural things like fossils. And I've always had this very strong relationship with nature through my collecting.

Forward to about six years ago, and my son was about three years old, so I decided... I was out and I saw some model cars, and I thought I'd buy him some cars. And he liked those, so I bought some more and I bought some more. And then one day I saw a car that I quite liked, and I thought, "Okay, I'll have that."

And I bought a car for him, and a car for me. And then this sort of built up, and I would go out and I would buy him a car, but it was really becoming an excuse to buy a car for me, but not really knowing why. And I was suddenly confronted by this collection of beetles that I'd had when I was a very young boy and I realised that I was re-accessing that idea of

collecting and also classifying and putting things into groups, which I think as a graphic designer is something that I've continued in my job. So, you know, nature and design and collecting all sort of came together in this act of gathering these objects. And, you know, when I look at them, it's very much that tension of same but different – collecting an idea of what nature is and what it represents now but also inside me when I was a child.

21

Crab coffins

Merle and Bette Nunneley, 17 and 15 years old

(Audio transcript)

Me and my sister found the crabs when we were walking our dog in Medway Country Park in the Thames estuary when we were maybe 10 and 12. There were loads of them, hundreds of crabs on the beaches, strewn everywhere. They were like pebbles and they had been dried out by the sun, I think. Shell and bone and stuff. And so we picked them up and put them in dog-poo bags to bring them home and then we made coffins out of cardboard to put them into. I think we were reasonably serious.

We did take time to make the coffins and decorate them and place all the crabs inside. They didn't really need to be in the coffins. I think it was more we wanted to feel like we'd done something for the crabs, rather than the crabs actually needing something to be done for them, yeah? We didn't want to bury them. I guess we put quite a lot of work into making them, so to bury them in the ground would be kind of a waste.

22

Lino prints depicting what to do if you find a bumblebee or racing pigeon

Merle Nunneley, 17 years old

I wanted to make sure that people knew what to do should they find a stray racing pigeon or sad bumblebee, so I made some informative prints.

23

Synthetic yellow chick

David Cahill Roots, 36 years old

The object tells a story of a synthetic relationship with nature, and of a trip to a farm where my family and I compared real-life baby chicks to the fake fluffy thing on my desk – rather than the other way around. It made me realise my primary connection to nature (and my daughter's connection to nature) is more through fake and commercialised symbols than the real thing – the fake items become the standard by which we hold the real world to account.

24

**A blade of grass and golden
grass necklace**

Phoebe Walsh, 24 years old

The humble blade of grass represents, to me, the precious moment we have in the day to pause, take a break and reflect on nature. Sweet perennial grass has distinctive angular spikelets and grows along roadsides.

From the Weald in Hampshire to Hatton Garden: The story behind the grass is that it was hung to dry over winter, layered in wax before casting, and developed into the necklace. It celebrates the overlooked tufts of grass that grow all across our countryside and cityscapes. More importantly, it celebrates those precious moments we have wandering between places, to pause and engage with our surroundings. It's important to me because my grandmother and mother picked the sample (*Dactylis glomerata*) in the Weald in Hampshire, which I then made into a necklace in Hatton Garden. It's made from nature. The single blade of grass exists within the initial case. I use it to feel balanced.

25

Ladybird books and school biology exercise book

Michaela Strachan, 51 years old

(Audio transcript)

Some of you will remember these books. And these two are obviously particularly relevant for nature because one is *What to Look for in Spring* and then we have *British Wild Animals*. These are what inspired me as a child to get interested in British wildlife.

I'm going to read something because these are just classic: "Newts are really very queer creatures and if you look at them long enough, you'll be filled with wonder." Which is just so charming. I can't imagine anyone writing that in a nature book now. So, as I say, I think they are absolutely charming books.

And then we have this book. This is my biology book from when I was about 10 years old. There's one bit in particular that I thought was great – this is my golden eagle project. And I think I've done that quite nicely actually for a 10-year-old. Quite neat writing. But it's clear that I copied a lot of it out of a textbook, because listen to this: "Tremendous elevations are reached in their flight which are interrupted by successions of head-long dives with half-closed wings ending in an upward sweep at the end of the plunge." So there we go, that was my project on golden eagles.

Very sadly I gave biology up shortly after that because I didn't want to cut animals up, and that was part of the coursework, that you had to dissect a mouse, which I think is very sad because that was my emotional side ruling my head and really I should have done biology as an O level. There are lots of things that I might learn just reading this book from when I was 10 years old. [Laughs]

26

Amethyst flower crystal

Dyala Janselme, 10 years old

(Audio transcript)

My object is a crystal; I'm not sure how old it is but it's very beautiful. It was my birthday and I could pick a few, but that crystal, it looked amazing, and so I thought it would go well in my collection that I have. It's an amethyst flower crystal, named after its shape because it's got like little spikes coming out, and it's nice to think that like some, it might have been growing one day. I like to think of it that way.

27

Musical instruments (percussion)

Jacqueline van Zyl, 35 years old

(Audio transcript)

All of these objects are musical, and I love music and I also love nature, and these objects are kind of a connection between the two because they all are made from natural elements and they have a musical quality to them. When I travel I usually look for instruments like this because I love this as a memory of travels, and some of them are also a memory of my home where I'm from, my home country, South Africa. There are so many sounds in nature that have to do with rhythm, just the sound of rain, the sound of birds, even the sound of the wind, and we have that inside ourselves as well. We have our heartbeat, right? And so these elements, because they're percussion elements and they were used for rhythm, I feel like, you know, that kind of connects us.

28

A bottle of volcanic sand

Aishling Caomhanach, 34 years old

2015 was a bad year, so I decided to take my first solo trip to space – that’s exactly what visiting Iceland felt like. I spent the first five days in hostels and with tour groups, visiting the amazing landscape. On my second-to-last day, I met a man from New York called Kevin. Kevin was young and had, on a whim, decided to visit Iceland for the weekend. He was wearing a light jacket and dress shoes.

We went on a tour of the black sand beach at Vík, and we walked to a glacier and met friendly horses and visited fairy houses, guided by Ragnar, our cigarette-smoking tour guide. The morning I left, Kevin gave me a bottle of black sand.

29

Fallow deer antler

Chris Packham, 56 years old

(Audio transcript)

This is treasure! To me it's treasure. Because when I picked this up from the floor of the woods, wandering one morning with my dogs, I enjoyed the same thrill that I would have felt when I was eight years old. You can't go looking for cast antlers. The deer shed them randomly. So you're just wandering along and you look down and you see this remarkable object lying there. And it's yours. You found it. Finders keepers.

You see, for the rest of the year the deer are shy and distant, and with even the best binoculars in the world you can't see the detail on here that tells a story. All of these scratches that have been made. How were they made? Were they made in conflict, when this buck was jamming the tines of this antler into another buck during the rutting season? How did it lose this tine? Did it lose the fight? Did some young pretender stray into that glade and clash antlers with this and this snapped off and the old boy was driven out? And I like to sit down there in the woods, with this in my hands, feeling it, touching it, smelling it and imagine its story. A story that only lasted a year. They regrow these again in the late summer. This is connecting with something which is old, primal, purposeful, beautiful to touch, a wonderful piece of natural art. This is my treasure!

30

Suncatcher

Ikuko de Gruchy

(Audio transcript)

My object is a rainbow suncatcher. I collected the coloured glasses over years from charity shops and it hangs at my window, so when the sun comes in that makes a lovely rainbow everywhere in my front room. I'm living in a second-floor flat, I haven't got a garden, so the window is for me the lookout into the nature around me. I can see neighbouring trees and I can see birds and squirrels running around my back garden. And during the night sometimes I see the foxes. So for me the window is an interface to nature and the suncatcher is representing the window to connect me to the outside world, surrounding nature.

31

Weapons

Felix, Vito and Gulliver Wayman-Thwaites, seven, seven and two and three-quarters years old

(Audio transcript)

My object is an axe and a hammer put together. It's made of wood, string and concrete. I like being outside in nature and the wood came from just on the ground in Mayow Park, which is a park I live near to. We tied the concrete onto a stick with some string and it has a bug living in it but it's dead now.

32

A (rain)bow and arrows

Mia De Caro Hewson, seven years old

(Audio transcript)

It's a working bow and arrow. I made it in the woods with my dad and played with it in the house. Making things with sticks, it's fun. Nature's a playground to me.

33

Dawn chorus (continuous audio)

Christopher Fitch, 28 years old

The power of immersion in the natural world: I was in Kenya, sleeping in a safari park in a bed rolled out at night so – mosquito net aside – I was asleep beneath the stars. Through the night I would occasionally awake to the sound of howling hyenas or grunting hippos. Then, in the morning, I was blown away by the great explosion of sound, as the morning was broken by the dawn chorus: birds and other animals squawking, hooting, chirping, singing and generally creating an amazing natural orchestra. I grabbed a recorder so I could capture the amazing sound and transport myself back to that moment in the future.

SUSTAIN

34

Replica stone tool – Acheulean hand axe

Neil Webb, 41 years old

This is a replica stone tool that I made as part of an experimental archaeology exercise. I am deeply interested in human evolution – becoming human, being human if you like. It occurs to me that the argument surrounding the question ‘At what point does human activity stop being natural?’ is found in our evolution: the point at which we commenced technology, ie lithic technology (stone-tool making and using). This is uniquely human. This is the moment we changed for ever – our behaviour changed for ever and ultimately our relationship with nature for ever.

35

Clothes brush

Maria Normile, 90 years old

(Audio transcript)

So we were above a second-hand shop and I was going up with my baby in the pram. And when my little girl she took a fancy on a cat, took a fancy and she was brushing her hair. So the lady in the shop, she said, “Give me 50p and she can have it.” She loved it because she... it was the shape of the cat. She loves cats and she went for it. She would cuddle it every night, brush her hair, and she would sleep with it, because she took so much fond of it. I had a cat and a dog. The dog had puppies and the cat had kittens, and me with the baby. [Laughs] To me – and I was in bed with my child, a boy, just a month, so my daughter she was about seven – she said, “Oh, mummy, I’ll take him off;” and she brushed his little hair with the cat. And she was so fond of it, at the moment this cat has lots of memory. At the moment my oldest child she’s 70 [laughs] and my youngest is 57. It’s a good family, everybody together.

36

Wooden Japanese sake box

Kimela Shah, 27 years old

(Audio transcript)

It's a little Japanese sake box, which I bought from a village called Tsumago in Japan a few months ago. It's handmade by the local carpenters. The wood is sourced from Japanese cypress forests, which are sustainable forests, and there's only a certain number of trees that can be cut down every year.

The shop that I bought it from, it had a carpenter sitting in the back handmaking other items that they were selling in the shop, so it was a really nice place just to be and to watch them use these really traditional methods. I liked that the wood was from a forest where we were specifically told, "You need a licence from the emperor to cut down a certain number of trees every year," and that's why this wood that was sold in this shop was very special wood. The first thing I did when I bought the Japanese sake box was also bought a bottle of sake, went into the nearest bamboo forest – it was a wild forest – and perched up and had a little glass of sake. And it was beautiful.

37

Drawings

Pinja and Maisa Salmi, 36 years old and three years old

My relationship with nature is all about how my children see nature. My children are really important, so how they feel and worry affects me a lot. The drawings tell a story about how my three-year-old sees the world.

38

Shopping list on Post-it note

Emily, 24 years old

(Audio transcript)

So these Post-its are very old, they were given to me by my mother maybe 10 years ago. I keep everything. I really have a hard time throwing things away. And so now I use them as a shopping list. So I try to use every possible place/free space there is on the shopping list. So once I have bought the element I wanted to buy, I strike it out, and then I write my next shopping list next to the words I've written, so that no space is wasted. We don't relate to the products as being part of nature any more, but they are, and I feel like: Why waste? Why take too much and then throw things away when I don't need them? For example, when we are at home I try to use everything there is in the cupboard until there's nothing left, which sometimes drives my boyfriend crazy, but there you are. So it's the same thing for my list. I use it as much as I can until there's no place any more and then I recycle it.

39

Mammal trapping bag

Jack Ashby, 35 years old

(Audio transcript)

A couple of times a year I go out to Australia to do ecological surveys with wildlife charities and NGOs, and when we're out there we're kind of out in the absolute middle of nowhere, kind of hundreds of kilometres from the next human being. We've been helicoptered out to see what lives there and to see what impact things like fire and introduced herbivores have on these really, really wild environments. So always walking around with a kind of few of these bags in your pocket and bits of tape to flag where you've put traps and things like that.

But when I got home from one of the trips, I was out there for a few months, obviously you do the big wash, haven't washed your clothes for a very long time – I hadn't really washed anything for a very long time – and in my washing machine... it had obviously stayed in the pocket, and I've accidentally come home with it. I'm definitely happiest when I'm in nature. It's the... yes, like the air, the light, the kind of... just that time doesn't really matter. You know, you don't have meetings and you don't, you know, do any computer work and it's just beautiful. And it's kind of living wild, living in a tent, eating off of a fire, going to the toilet in the wild, which is maybe not the best part of it, but it's a very different life. I prefer it.

40

Trail trainers

Adam, 29 years old

(Audio transcript)

I'd been going through a really dark time in my life, so I went travelling for a year. Quite a lot of things happened when I was travelling. I was going through a break-up and then I needed to face my sexuality head on, and I'm a little bit anxious about what happened after the year off, like: What do I do with my life? What do I do with my job? And then I found nature. I was doing lots of trekking, hiking, going to all sorts of different places, and I found being out in the nature really helped me. I've been wearing the same pair of shoes every day and so it's kind of become the connection between me and the nature. What I found is, nature is something that can take my mind off things, and also give me a purpose to keep going. So every time when I look at the trainers it kind of reminds me like, you know, to keep going, to keep going forward, and then try to make things happen for yourself.

41

Oxygen cylinder

John Cockram, 56 years old

(Audio transcript)

I guess I wear three hats in my life. I'm an artist, a nurse and most importantly of all a father, and I'm making my first garden at 56. And it's a great place for me to relax and think and reflect. And I guess it teaches me quite a bit about life as well. When I'm in the garden, I suppose what intrigues me most of all is the coexistence of life and death. I guess it's a theatre for growth and decay. And taking that a little bit further, there are similarities between observing those things in the garden and also my experience of being an artist and an educator, actually. Creativity and learning is a dual process, I think, of creation and destruction, of life and death – I suppose nurturing, if you like, the new shoots of fresh ideas and reconfigured understandings. All this is a process of parallel exchange, I think. And then I guess there's my life as a nurse, and I deal with the coexistence of life and death on a daily basis, and there are similar processes I think at play. There's cleaning, there's organising, there's tending, there's caring, there's observing, watching, listening and treating. For me it seemed natural to bring an oxygen cylinder as my significant object. It's an object of symbolism I suppose, an object of hope and of sustenance. For me it links everything. While oxygen is life, for me creativity is oxygen.

42

Brain sculpture

Louisa Brooks

I love being out in nature – it clears my mind and makes me feel more grounded and peaceful. I experience a meditative state that allows my creativity and ideas to flow freely. Nature benefits our wellbeing, is a good antidote to mental health issues – such as depression and anxiety – and is good for our physical health, increasing attention and creativity. Through research, I have discovered that when we spend time out in nature there are differences in brain activation, which lets the prefrontal cortex recover, and that's when we experience bursts of creativity, sparks of ideas forming and a feeling of happiness.

43

Sculpture made from cast bronze and silver birch wood

Morwenna Lake, 58 years old

(Audio transcript)

So for me this is about how nature always manages to come back from being destroyed, if it's given the chance. This particular tree, which is the base of the sculpture, is silver birch, and that's called a pioneer species. And what it does, it colonises areas that have been damaged or polluted and it creates the right conditions by colonising for other species then to follow. So in this way it's sort of a pioneer.

It also reminds me of how long nature has been around. So we're talking millions and millions of years that nature's been evolving, and this piece of bronze that I've put on top of the sculpture is about how little time we as a species have been on this planet. So there's this comparison of millions of years of evolution for nature whereas we've only been here hundreds of thousands of years. So for me it really is about this awe and respect that I have for nature.

44

Hand plane

Rosa, 38 years old

(Audio transcript)

In September 2012, my younger brother, Felix, died. He very sadly took his own life. It was quite a long time waiting for the inquest, and to help me kind of pass the time I set myself the task of doing 32 wild swims in 32 days, one for each year of his life. So I'd go swimming in a different place each day. Everyone living in Cornwall talks about the sea having this pull. I really felt it very strongly as soon as he died, and it helped me realise the power of the sea and water and nature to heal. It really helped me that summer.

This is a hand plane, known by some as a cheese board because of its size. It's held in your hand when you're bodysurfing and it enables you to catch a wave with your body; it's brilliant fun. A friend who is a surfboard shaper, he made it for me, and I wrote with my sister our brother Felix's name on it. It was my way of kind of carrying his memory with me.

45

Sea rag picture, *I don't care what I see outside. My vision is within! Here is where the birds sing! Here is where the sky is blue!* E M Forster

Susie Tooby, 65 years old

Seamless countryside doesn't do it for me, compared to where man meets nature. Often I walk on the beach collecting old fabric (sea rags) from the tide line. At home, I wash and sort the material. Each picture is made by positioning the old cloth, which is then glued and stitched onto canvas. I moved to Devon in 2011. I felt in my marrow that walking by the sea would in part temper the effects of low mood and anxiety. It has proved to be just so...

46

Archival digital print, *Snowskin III*

Bethany Marett, 29 years old

I recently undertook a six-week art residency in Calgary, Canada, during January–February 2017. Being within a completely different environment and constantly changing landscape heightened my awareness of the earth as a porous, fragile yet hardy surface akin to our own skin. Walking to my studio every day, navigating the snow and ice, I saw crystallised ice as the squamous cells on my hand. Flying across Canada’s frozen landscape, I was blown away seeing this river carving through the land like a pulsating vein, with all its many tributaries coming off. I paired it with an image of a varicose vein from my mother’s foot. As a vegan, I am so conscious of our detrimental impact on the planet, and wanted to draw a parallel between our precious natural water supplies and the life-supporting veins running through our bodies.

RITUAL

47

Sieve, for sorting rice, lentils and vegetables

Sofia Aktar Chodwry

When I hold this, it reminds me of Bangladesh and home. It reminds me that this is what I brought from Bangladesh. I could buy one here in England if I wanted, but I use this because of the memories it holds. It's made from the earth, from materials we have available, but it also has a monetary value. We can make money from what is around us, so it serves life in many ways.

48

Slice of bread

Luke Rollason, 22 years old

When I was young, we lived near a nature reserve, which was less glamorous than it sounds because you couldn't go inside it – but next to it was a duck pond, which features pretty heavily in what I remember as my childhood: going to feed ducks stale bread... eating most of it myself... balling it up to throw it further... This obviously isn't the same piece of bread. But it's the clearest thing for me to talk about. I learned to interact with nature.

49

Thermos flask

Rosemary, 57 years old

(Audio transcript)

My life in London is very hard at the moment. I feel trapped in London. For family reasons I can't leave London. My dream is to live in the country with a garden of my own and ideally a dog. I've never had a dog, but I would love to have a dog. I live in a very small studio flat without even a balcony and I do find it very claustrophobic. So every opportunity I have I go out with my thermals and a good book and with my walking boots, and go out to either the local park or ideally Kew Gardens, which is my favourite place in London to go to.

For me what nature does, and having my thermos, enables me to have my own space in nature, where I can be myself, free from all the demands from people in my life who want something from me, the customers at work, and I can just be on my own, be with the beauty of nature, and have a hot drink as well, which keeps me warm.

50

Garden gnome

Julie Carr

Born in 1901, William Thomas Cooper ran away to sea aged 14. Fast forward to 1947, when he became my mum's stepdad. Mum says the gnomes were already there when they moved into his maisonette, a huge big bank of them carefully arranged in the yard.

Initially, when I picked this gnome, I did it somewhat ironically. But in reality it has contributed significantly to my love of nature as an adult. Many of my pastimes now involve the countryside, its birds and beasts, and my garden or my allotment. There are few greater pleasures than pootling around the garden on a warm summer's morning.

If those odd little fellows hadn't drawn me outside while the grown-ups talked inside, my life would certainly have been a poorer one. I would have missed watching Gramps garden and bearing witness to the pure and simple joy that nature can bring us.

51

A coffee tin painted with thunderbird image

Sophie Whitehead, 34 years old

(Audio transcript)

I'm doing a 40-day *sadhana*, which is where you introduce new rituals into your daily life, like meditation and yoga in the mornings, daily creative tasks and fitness, and sort of pampering as well. The aim is to find your true self and find your true purpose. And I came to paint the thunderbird because I have to do something creative every day. I quite like what the thunderbird symbolises, sort of abundance, creation, strength over adversity and also being connected to nature and feeling really strongly connected to it.

52

Running trainers

Julia Pena Avila, 32 years old

I love running. Years ago I joined my local gym – didn't last long. I hate the gym. Never felt comfortable around gym goers. Who lifts the heaviest weight? Who endures the longest run? Pushed by a financial decision, I decided to run outdoors. However, soon what was familiar began to feel small, so I ventured further away, thus discovering the immensity of Alexandra Park. Some time after, I read in a Buddhism book about the importance of being 'present', so I tried that. I unplugged. Taking my headphones off, I began listening to (and learning about) my own breathing, the sound of the wind through trees, birds, dogs barking. The sound of my steps against the loose gravel, grass and mud. Everything changed. I felt alive and connected. I never went back to running with music. I will always run in nature.

53

Set of primatological field data

Shenaz Khimji, 34 years old

(Audio transcript)

The data sheets represent my relationship with one family of night monkeys. They were the black-headed night monkey, and data sheets enable natural primate behaviour to be documented in numerical form, providing the basis for scientific analysis and discussion. I think I was drawn to the fact that they were nocturnal and I like walking around in the forest at night, and they hoot like owls on the full moon, so they are rather intriguing. I do like a challenge, so manoeuvring around the rainforest at night is really exciting.

I created a platform where I could observe them quite well, so I was the same height as them, so I could actually see their behaviours in their nest all day long. I chose to record the behaviour of each of the animals, so there are three animals in the family: the male, the female and the infant. So every minute from dawn till dusk, I collected the behaviours. The dataset that I collected represents 753 hours observing this family of wild owl monkeys.

I managed to publish this data in a research paper with my professor, Giuseppe Donati, and so we confirmed that the black-headed night monkey was a nocturnal animal. It's probably

one of the most incredible things I've done, having the opportunity to just live beside them. I felt incredibly privileged to be able to do that and I'd definitely do it again.

54

Tick box

John Lock

(Audio transcript)

These are the ticks, which over the years, have made the mistake of biting me [laughs], because as an ex-zoologist, I know about ticks, and I know how to deal with them. I'm a former zoologist and I've been looking at the deer in Richmond Park over several years. When I check my personage after a visit to the park and I find anything adhering to me, I remove it and set it aside. I do actually have a spreadsheet, which has them all listed chronologically by date, so that I can see which years were good years – for the ticks, not good years for me – and which years were bad ones.

And the reason for doing this is because in Richmond Park the ticks, which attack not just the deer but the other warm-blooded animals in the park as well, carry a disease, which is called Lyme disease, and while people think it's the big, fierce, grown-up ticks that do the damage, actually the real damage is done by the small baby ticks, because the small baby ticks are small and they can't really chew their way through a big, thick deer hide. They can deal with mice, they can deal with rabbits and they can deal with thin-skinned people like myself. And that they do whenever the opportunity arises.

I started out, I think, collecting these in 2009, and there's now about 80 ticks over the years. They have given me a good dose of Lyme disease on one or two occasions, which has necessitated hefty doses of antibiotics. Lyme disease has some nasty aspects. If you miss it in the early stages, you might find yourself 10 years later displaying interesting neurological symptoms all because 10 years earlier something the size of a pinhead bit you on the back of the knee and you didn't notice it. So if you are visiting Richmond Park, or indeed Bushy Park, it's well worth watching out for these things.

55

Tattoo

Kelli Powling, 36 years old

Tattoo artist Michael Sheerin

I wanted a permanent symbol of the daily gratitude I feel towards nature – the complexity of her systems, the balance and delicacy of her cycles, and the beauty of her diversity. It took me years to decide on phytoplankton, which I chose because they represent each of the elements above and hold an invisible importance of immense magnitude, as they make over 80 per cent of the oxygen in our atmosphere. For me, it is a daily reminder to honour, with each breath, the magic of the natural world. The tattoo is the artist's version of German biologist Ernst Haeckel's drawing of a species called *Triceratium digitale*, from plate 4 of *Kunstformen der Natur*, which is in the Wellcome Library collection. The placement, on my brainstem, also reflects the symmetry of nature.

56

Prayer mat

Sofina Razzaque, 43 years old

(Audio transcript)

The prayer mat is something that I use five times a day. The prayer mat actually takes me down to the earth, because I have to go completely down onto my forehead. It's called *sajdah* where I'm very close to the earth and very close to God.

We have five prayers, and the early morning one... because like, hmm, I woke up today at 4.30, just before 4.30 in the morning, and that's when everything is quiet, everything is so peaceful, you know, and I'm... it's just me and my prayer mat and actually dedicating myself to God.

During the daytime, you're like: I'm taking that five minutes away or ten minutes away from work. It's just performing the prayer, but the feeling that you get with... in the morning prayer is very different. While everybody's sleeping at home, you're just in that little corner doing it. Although, you know, I really admire plants, trees, you know, when the blossoming happens on the trees, I love that. But that only happens once a year. And flowers are only around seasonally, but the prayer mat and going down into the position of *sajdah* is all season around, throughout the whole year. It's very close to the earth.

Natural Habitat, 2017

Year 9 art students from Central Foundation Boys' School with artist Verity-Jane Keefe

Natural Habitat explores the complex subject of what nature is and might be in the future. It combines fragments from our daily surroundings in the city of London with dystopian landscapes from its edges.

Visitors are invited to step inside this fantasy world and become the specimens on display in a contemporary diorama – a three-dimensional recreation of the so-called natural world.

Photograph yourself inside the diorama and share your photos on social media using the hashtag **#NaturalHabitat17**

A Wellcome Collection youth co-production project created with art students Alex, Charlie, Emmanuel, Evan, George, Gurpreet, Irfan, Isa, Josiah, Leevon, Magnus, Malachi, Muntasar, Percival and Xavier

This work was produced following an intensive workshop period that spanned five months and included collaging, painting, making, mapping and field trips. The accompanying soundtrack features the art students exploring ideas about nature alongside ambient sounds recorded on their daily journeys in the city.

For more information, visit
wellcomecollection.org/naturalhabitat

