

URBAN TAILS

THE
ADVENTURES
OF

ALICE
& JACK



By

The British Carnivore Project



Urban Tails: The Adventures of Alice & Jack is based on the on-going work of the British Carnivore Project. To learn more, check out our webpage: <https://www.blakemorton.co.uk/case-studies/>

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Dedication

This free booklet is dedicated to all nature lovers – current, future, young, and ‘young at heart’ – who inspire us every day to help protect and cherish the natural world that we all share. We hope you enjoy these stories as much as we enjoyed creating them!



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Story 1:

A Great Urban Awakening

[Late July, the sun is high in the sky, the warm evening air is filled with the hustle and bustle of the city. Jack and Alice are walking down the street to their houses, school bags slung over their shoulders. A welcome relief after the final class of Year 9.]

Alice: [Raising her arms above her head] We're finally free! No more school, no more homework! The summer holidays are here at last!

Jack: [Grinning as he opens a pack of M&M's] Holiday? You say that like you're not already planning to spend the whole summer buried in your fox books.

Alice: [Laughs] Okay, you caught me. I've got some serious reading and fox-watching to do. I totally own the title of fox nerd – they're my favourite animal!

Jack: [Smirking] You and your fox obsession. You're nearly fifteen years old, and practically one step away from living in a fox den yourself!

Alice: [Genuinely excited] You laugh, but I've decided to study Natural History as part of my GCSEs. You know, the new course our school is offering. I'm taking it because one day I want to be an environmental scientist. I want to make a difference by helping nature thrive in a world that keeps trying to push it out.

Jack: [Offering Alice some of his M&M's] And I'll be there, your best friend and loyal sidekick, bringing you snacks while you lecture me about how humans are ruining the planet.

Alice: [Nudging him, taking the M&M's] Hey, you keep pretending to be uninterested, but one day you're gonna find yourself speaking fluent fox.

Jack: [Laughing] Not happening. But hey, speaking of foxes...

[Jack points ahead, where a quick flash of red fur zips between some bushes.]

Alice: [Squinting, whispering excitedly] That's a fox alright – good eye, Jack!

[Alice quickly finishes her M&M's and gets out a pencil and notebook from her bag and begins to write vigorously.]

Jack: What are you doing?

Alice: I've started to make notes and sketches of all my urban wildlife sightings. If I'm going to be an environmental scientist, I can't just study nature from books – otherwise I'll never recognise it when I see it!

[Alice glances up from her notebook to look at Jack.]

Alice: [Smiling] You know, ever since you moved into the house just down the lane, we've been practically inseparable.

Jack: [Watching the fox dart away] Which is lucky for me – when the fox apocalypse happens, I'll have the world's leading expert with me in the bunker! I swear I've been seeing more of them lately in the city. They seem to be everywhere.

Alice: [Laughs] Yep, foxes are definitely more noticeable in cities than they used to be. But they're not exactly taking over – they're just adapting to urban life, you know?

[Alice continues to scribble in her notebook, now sketching an image of the fox as it starts to cross the street.]

Jack: What do you mean?

Alice: [Looks up at Jack] Well, just look how bold they've become. I've read they're less shy than the ones you see in the countryside.

Jack: [Raising an eyebrow] Bold?

Alice: I mean they're not as scared of humans anymore. They've learned that the city's not as dangerous as the countryside. They can find food, they've got

places to hide, and they're pretty good at living around us. While that sounds good on the surface, it actually poses a problem for their future.

Jack: [Confused] But wait, foxes aren't exactly endangered, are they? I mean, they're everywhere these days.

Alice: [Pausing for a moment] You're right – foxes aren't in danger of going extinct. In fact, here in the UK, they're thriving in cities, which is pretty cool. But that doesn't mean everything's perfect. The real problem is that we're changing their behaviour.

Jack: [Frowning] Changing their behaviour? How?

Alice: [Passionately] Well, think about it – foxes are learning to live around us because of urbanisation.

Jack: “Urbanisation” – what's that?

Alice: Oh, that's just a fancy word for when towns and cities become larger as more people begin to live in them. It's happening all over the world. Most people live in a town or city these days, but the way cities are growing, they are taking some spaces away from nature.

Jack: Ah! I see what you mean now!

Alice: Exactly. Urbanisation is making foxes bolder in cities compared to foxes in the countryside. They're getting used to living alongside us and taking more risks because they're less afraid of people. Some of them have even figured out how to scavenge from bins and find food scraps in the street. But that's not natural behaviour for them.

Jack: But why is that important?

Alice: Well, it matters because foxes used to live in the wild, in forests and meadows, hunting for things like mice and birds. But now, they're adapting to an urban lifestyle – and that means they're changing the way they act.

Jack: [Thoughtful] So, they're not really acting like “wild” foxes anymore, are they?

Alice: Well, I suppose even city foxes are still technically wild, but conservation isn't just about saving a species from extinction. It's about protecting their *natural* behaviours. The things that make them who they are, the way they interact with their environment. It's kind of like how we might act a little bit different in school than at home, because our environment shapes how we might choose to behave. But if we're changing how foxes

naturally live and behave, that's a problem. Foxes in the city might be thriving in numbers, but we're potentially turning them into animals that are dependent on us, sort of like pigeons.

Jack: [Nodding slowly] Ah, I see. So, by reducing our impact, then maybe we can help them continue to use their natural behaviours?

Alice: Exactly, you got it!

Jack: [Laughing] So, I guess that means no more urban foxes with smartphones ordering takeaway then? What a shame.

Alice: [Teasing back] Not yet, but if they start, we might have a bigger problem on our hands!

Jack: [Chuckling] Unless foxes start paying rent for living in people's back gardens, huh? Nothing wrong with that!

[They both giggle at that prospect as they continue to walk down the street. Suddenly, they hear a rustle in the bushes. A second fox darts out from the bushes and looks directly at them. The fox pauses, seemingly unbothered by their presence, then trots across the pavement – a flash of red and white, with bushy tail flicking.]

Jack: [Pointing at the second fox] There goes another one!

Alice: [Elated by the double feature] Yep, just look at it crossing the street – it doesn't seem too bothered by our presence either, does it?

Jack: [Laughing] No, how cool is that? I guess I'll keep my eyes out for more city foxes this summer. Who knows, maybe I'll end up being their official ambassador to the human world.

Alice: [Teases] As long as you don't start holding press conferences for them.

Jack: [Grinning] No promises, Alice!

[Alice laughs, then finishes her sketch of the second fox before returning her notebook to her bag. They continue walking down the street together, the evening light casting long shadows as they talk about their summer plans. Meanwhile, the fox disappears into the bushes again, as if it has more important matters to attend to.]

July

6:30 pm





Story 2:

The Human–Fox Connection

[A warm, sunny August afternoon. Alice and Jack walk down a busy street in the city centre, eating ice cream cones as they make their way toward their local park. The air is filled with the sounds of the city, but the sweet smell of late-summer grass begins to mingle as they approach the quiet green space.]

Jack: [Licking his ice cream] You know, it feels like we just wrapped up school, and now we're already knee-deep in summer. Time flies, huh?

Alice: [Grinning] Right? No early mornings. Just summer freedom, ice cream, and a whole lot of walking around town – it goes by fast when you're having fun!

Jack: [Laughs] Not that you need much convincing to get me out for walks. You've dragged me all around this city looking for foxes, whether I want to or not!

[Jack pauses, noticing a flash of fur dart between the bushes ahead.]

Alice: [Eyes lighting up] A fox! I knew we'd see them here!

[They both stop to watch the fox slip through the bushes, its marmalade coat moving smoothly across the grass as it disappears behind a fence at the edge of the park.]

Jack: [Grinning] There goes that bold fox of yours, Alice! It's like it owns this place, huh?

Alice: [Chuckling] Yeah, it probably lives nearby. Funny how they used to seem so wild and mysterious, but now they're just part of the neighbourhood. Honestly, it's kind of cute.

Jack: [Frowning] Yeah, but sometimes they get a little...uh, too comfortable, right? Like that time one of them dug up your mum's garden. I hope it left her a "Thank you" note, at least?

Alice: [Laughing] Well, no "Thank you" note, unless you count the tiny puddle of pee they left behind as a calling card!

[Jack laughs]

Alice: But to be fair, I think it was just marking its territory while looking for a snack. I mean, they're just doing their thing. And honestly, it's kind of sweet in a "hey, this city is their city too" kind of way, you know? It's important to just let them be foxes.

Jack: [Raising an eyebrow] So, you're saying we should just *deal* with it? Foxes digging up gardens, waking us up during the night with their calls, and all the rest?

Alice: [Smiling] Not "deal" with it, more like *roll* with it. I mean, sure, it can be annoying sometimes. But foxes are like the city's unofficial mascots. Sneaking through backyards, slipping between fences. It's kind of cool. And in a big city like this, where green space is already so limited, they're one of the few wild things we still get to see, if we're lucky.

[Jack looks at Alice, still sceptical]

Alice: [Grinning] Think of it this way – they might dig up a few plants or create the occasional noise, but it's all part of the hustle and bustle of "life in the city". You wouldn't go full-on pest control on a pigeon just because it pooped on your car, would you?

Jack: [Laughing] I guess not. Okay, but still, what do we do about it? Just accept that foxes are here to stay and think our gardens are the new five-star restaurants?

Alice: [Chuckles] Not exactly. There's plenty to do and anyone can do it! Securing our bins, cleaning up food waste, protecting vulnerable areas of gardens with fencing – basically adapting to them just like they're having to adapt to us. That's what coexistence is all about – they can do their thing, we can do ours.

Jack: [Chuckling] Fair enough. I guess I can get behind that.

Alice: [Smiling] That's the spirit! And you know what? It's actually kind of nice having them around. A little piece of nature right here in the city with us.

Jack: [Grinning] True. I get excited every time I see a fox in the street – it's so special. You were right, I found my enthusiasm for them after all! And these city foxes, well, I guess they've just got a bit more swagger than their country cousins!

Alice: [Laughing] Exactly! They're like little adventurers, making the city feel a bit less...concrete. It's cool, you know? Just seeing them reminds you there's still some wildness left in cities. They might even offer a chance for people to connect with nature in the middle of all this urban chaos. And honestly, I think feeling more connected with nature is good for our wellbeing – like, for our bodies and mood. Think about all the fun times we've had outside together this summer – smelling the fresh air in your garden, feeling the cool shade along the tree-lined path of our street, watching squirrels put on acrobatic shows in the local park. Simple and peaceful, what's not to love?

[Alice pauses for a moment, thinking.]

Alice: [Adding] I mean, I understand that most people may not necessarily care as much as I do about nature. I know we all have our own priorities. But I think a lot of us can agree on protecting our health. And honestly, those two things – nature and health – they're connected. Like, when we take care of nature, we're kind of taking care of ourselves, too. It's like an investment in ourselves and our future.

Jack: [Jokes] An investment? Alice, you're not saying we should start putting money into foxes like they're some kind of piggy bank or something, are you?

Alice: [Laughs] Well, not that kind of investment, silly – although I wouldn't put it past some corporate CEO to come up with that sort of gimmick.

Jack: [Begins singing Joni Mitchell's *Big Yellow Taxi*] "They took all the trees...and charged the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em!"

[They both break into laughter.]

Alice: [Continues] My dad plays that song all the time. But seriously, just spending a bit of time outside, even like ten minutes in a park, can really help. Clears your head. Helps with stress and stuff. And you get to spot cool animals, like foxes! Total win-win.

Jack: [Smirks] Yeah, it's like the NHS – spending time in nature is free and keeps us healthy!

Alice: [Reflective] Actually, that's not a bad example when you think about it. Protecting nature and learning to reconnect with it, especially in the city, is one way we can take better care of ourselves without always relying on the NHS to do it for us.

Jack: [Smiling] Alright, alright, I get it. As for the foxes, maybe I'll start appreciating my new "wildlife neighbours" a little more. I can't speak for my parents' garden plants, though.

Alice: [Laughing] Fair enough. But hey, if the foxes can survive the city chaos, maybe we can handle a few more tiny inconveniences too. It's all part of living with nature. These little disruptions are actually a reminder that nature hasn't gone away – it's still here, adapting, thriving. And we can too.

Jack: [Nodding] That makes sense. Like how we've learned to tune out traffic, stag dos, and sirens – the typical "buzz" of the city. If we can get used to all of that, we can probably get used to things like the sound of a fox poking around the neighbourhood at night. And yeah...I can see now that it does make the city feel a bit more alive. Less concrete, more wild things.

Alice: [Smiling] Exactly! Making space for nature doesn't just help foxes and other wildlife, it helps us too. Even if we don't always notice it. We're not meant to live completely cut off from the natural world. We're part of it.

[They continue down the path within the park, their ice cream cones slowly melting in the warm summer afternoon. Noises from the surrounding traffic blending with birdsong and the wind within the trees. The occasional sight of a fox reminding them that nature is never too far away, even in the heart of the city.]

August

7:25 pm



Field observation:

Urban foxes are a "gateway" to nature and our own well-being. Nature and people aren't separate; we're meant to coexist.



Story 3:

The Mysterious Bin Phantom

[A crisp Halloween evening in the city. The streets are lined with trees that are nearly bare, their branches swaying in the breeze. A spooky mist lingers in the air as the glow from carved pumpkins flickers in bay windows, casting eerie shadows across the street. Children in costumes rush past, their laughter mixing with the rustling leaves. Alice and Jack stroll down the long row of decorated houses, on their way back from a friend's fancy dress party.]

Alice: [Sighs] It feels like we just started summer, but now we're back to school and it's Halloween! Time flies way too fast, but at least I'm really enjoying the new Natural History course this year.

Jack: [Nods] Tell me about it. I'm enjoying my new Geography course too, but summer break was like the blink of an eye. Feels like we were just complaining about the heat. Now I'm freezing in this skeleton costume!

Alice: [Laughs] Yeah, this frog costume isn't too warm either.

Jack: [Adds] Why are we going this way? I promised my parents I'd be back in time for curfew.

Alice: I know, but I just had to show it to you! This street goes all out for Halloween – they do it for the local kids.

Jack: [Ghostly voice] Oooo, very spooky, Alice!

Alice: [Eye roll] Quit messing around, Jack.

[Alice pauses, admiring all of the street decorations around her.]

Alice: [Continues] I just love it. Halloween has to be my most favourite time of the year!

Jack: Why? Because it's a good excuse to stuff ourselves with sweets?

Alice: [Brightening] Well, that goes without saying! But seriously, it's also because Halloween is all about the change in the seasons. Feel that spooky, eerie chill in the air? Everything seems to be transitioning – the air, the trees...

[Jack looks towards the sky, the silver moon beaming down as the wind sends a shiver through the leaves scattered along the street]

Alice: [Continues] Halloween is also a time when people connect with nature in ways that we often don't during other times of the year. Dressing up as spiders, bats, and wolves... it's like we're letting out our wild side a little!

Jack: [Turning from the moon, eyebrow raised] People connecting with wolves...here, in the UK?

Alice: [Laughing] Okay, not real wolves. I mean, you know, just the idea of them. Around Halloween, everything feels a bit more mysterious. The nights are darker, the leaves swirl around like little ghosts in the wind... It's as if nature's showing off its spooky side. And all the skeletons and pumpkins and stuff? It just makes it feel even more alive somehow.

[They continue walking past a row of houses: bat decorations dangling from trees, cobwebs covering doorways, the sound of distant voices and footsteps filling the air. Suddenly, they spot a flicker of movement close to an alleyway. A fox emerges, its eyes glowing in the beams of their torches, giving a haunted appearance.]

Alice: [Pointing] Oh, look! That must be one of the foxes that lives in the park we visited a couple of months ago!

[They both pause, watching the fox. Meanwhile the fox freezes, clearly confused about why a giant frog and a skeleton are staring at it. After a moment, it trots off down the street, weaving between a line of bins outside the houses.]

Jack: [Playfully] You know, seeing that fox makes me think they're a perfect fit for Halloween.

Alice: How so?

Jack: The way they sneak around the city at night, raiding bins and disappearing into the shadows like furry Halloween tricksters.

Alice: [Laughing] Foxes don't raid bins as much as people say or think they do. Have you ever seen a fox raiding a bin yourself?

Jack: [Defensive] Yeah, just the other week. I left a bin bag in front of the house overnight, and the contents were strewn all over the street by morning!

Alice: [Sympathetic] I totally get where you're coming from. But if you didn't see the fox actually do it, couldn't one of the neighbourhood cats have done it instead?

Jack: [Reflective] Well, I guess you're right, I hadn't thought of that.

Alice: [Continues] And even if it was a fox, it doesn't mean they're always causing trouble. Most of the time they eat natural food commonly found throughout cities, such as rabbits, squirrels, and pigeons. They even eat worms, beetles, and berries from parks and gardens. So, bins are just an easy snack when people leave the lids open or dump bags right out on the street.

Jack: [Re-adjusting the skeleton mask on his forehead] So, you're saying they're not all out there every night behaving like little garbage gremlins?

Alice: Exactly. Most foxes don't rely on human food at all. It's just that when people leave food waste out, it's too tempting – like a fast-food buffet would be for us, who could resist?

Jack: Huh, I always assumed they thrived on our leftovers...

Alice: [Giggles] Not really. Foxes raid bins, sure, but not nearly as much as people think they do. They're wild animals. They know how to find their own food, so they're not just waiting around to queue as we put our bins out at night.

Jack: [Laughs] Never thought of it that way. So then, what's the best way to avoid tempting the occasional fox from raiding a bin?

Alice: Simple – reduce their opportunities. Like keeping our bins locked up tight and helping the city keep the streets clean by not leaving litter and food waste everywhere.

Jack: [Smirking] Alright, alright. I'll start taking my litter home if the bin in the park is full. At least that way I know it'll be stored securely. Happy now?

Alice: [Winks] Yeah! That's one small step for bins, one giant leap for fox-kind...or should I say, one less reason for the "Mysterious Bin Phantom" to strike again.

[Alice laughs, shaking her head as they continue to walk. The fox they were watching returns to the alleyway, vanishing into the autumnal night, leaving the bins untouched.]

[Further up the street Alice and Jack walk past a hedge and pause, hearing a sudden rustling in a nearby bush.]

Jack: [Freezes, whispering] Alice. Did you hear that?

[Alice raises an eyebrow, her expression amused. They hear the rustling again.]

Alice: [Teasing] Uh-oh, Jack. What's in the bushes? A werewolf? A ghost? The Mysterious Bin Phantom coming to get you for saying all foxes raid bins?

Jack: [Eyes wide] No, seriously! Something's in there...

Alice: [Still teasing] Definitely the Bin Phantom.

[A dark shape suddenly emerges from the bushes, making Jack jump back in surprise. The shape darts into the light under a nearby streetlamp, revealing a cat.]

Alice: [Grinning] A black cat. How appropriate for Halloween.

Jack: [Groaning, laughing] I knew it. Just my luck. The Mysterious Bin Phantom probably isn't a fox after all...

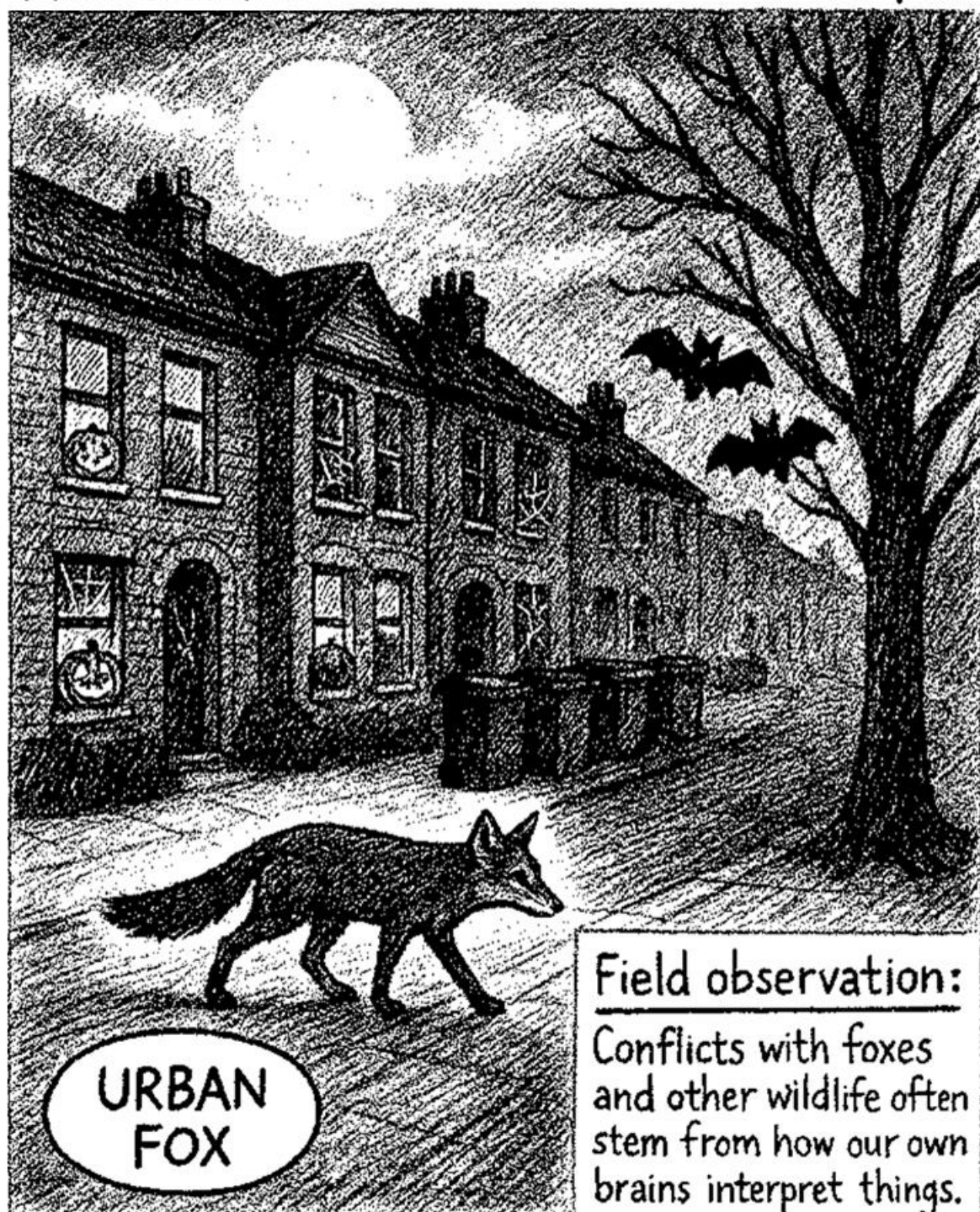
[They watch as a small group of trick-or-treaters passes them in the street]

Alice: [Turns to Jack, grinning] Exactly. So, I guess you might say the real "trick" is on us!

[Jack groans, half-laughing, half-exasperated, as they continue walking down the path. The distant sound of fox calls melts into the crisp Halloween air, a reminder of the mysterious, yet oddly charming, creatures that roam the city streets on this spooky night of all nights. Happy Halloween!]

Halloween

6:45 pm





Story 4:

The Christmas Fox

[A quiet snowy street on a crisp December evening. Christmas lights twinkle on terraced houses. Wreaths hang on doors, casting a colourful glow that reflects off the freshly fallen snow. Alice and Jack, bundled up in warm coats and scarves, walk home from ice skating, their breath visible in the cold air. The familiar sound of laughter can be heard in the distance as other kids return to their homes.]

Jack: [Grinning mischievously] Last one to my house is a rotten egg!

[He throws a snowball at Alice, who ducks and laughs, scooping up snow to return fire.]

Alice: [Giggling] You're on!

[They dart around a tree along the street, their boots leaving trails in the fresh snow. Alice launches a snowball, but Jack jumps out of the way, laughing triumphantly.]

Jack: You'll have to do better than that!

[Suddenly, Alice stops mid-laugh, her eyes drawn to a small porch a few houses down. She peers through the snowflakes and slows her pace.]

Alice: [Pointing toward a neighbour's house] Wait a minute...look.

[Jack follows her gaze, his playful expression fading as he notices the neighbour's front door creak open. A figure emerges, bundled in a thick winter coat, and walks toward the edge of their porch. The neighbour places a small bowl of food near their garden wall.]

Jack: [Tilting his head, confused] What's going on? Why are they leaving food outside?

Alice: [Watching the scene quietly, her expression softening] Let's wait and see.

[They stand still, watching as the neighbour turns, heading back inside and closing the door behind them. A moment of quiet lingers in the air, the snowflakes falling softly around them.]

Jack: What are we waiting for?

Alice: [Putting her finger to her mouth] You'll see.

[Out of the corner of their eyes, the bushes near the wall rustle, and a flash of russet fur appears. A fox steps cautiously into view, its nose twitching in the cold air as it trots toward the food bowl. It sniffs the contents carefully before settling down to eat.]

Jack: [His eyes lighting up with delight] Wow, look at that! Someone's feeding the foxes. That's gotta be the holiday spirit, right? A little Christmas feast for the animals.

Alice: [Shaking her head softly, still watching the fox] It might seem kind, Jack, but feeding foxes can actually do more harm than good.

Jack: [Furrowing his brow, confused] How? It's Christmas! Shouldn't everyone get a little extra food, even city animals?

Alice: [Teases] I know it may feel good, but we're not exactly characters in a Charles Dickens Christmas story, are we?

Jack: Haha, I guess you're right. Although I do think The Muppets' version of *A Christmas Carol* is by far the best one.

Alice: [Laughs] I'm with you there! But seriously, feeding wild animals isn't as helpful as we think. Remember a couple of months ago when we talked about how foxes are amazing at finding food on their own? Well, they don't actually need our food. When we feed them, it can make them rely on us, and that messes with their natural behaviours.

Jack: [Pauses, his face softening as he looks at the fox nibbling on the food] But it's freezing! What if they can't find anything under all this snow?

Alice: Foxes are amazing hunters. They can hear tiny creatures under the snow and track them down. They also eat winter plants, and there is plenty of

other natural food in urban spaces beyond that, like rats and birds. They're built to survive on their own. That's how they became the world's most globally widespread carnivore – all over the world, people and foxes exist together, from snowy forests to city streets.

Jack: [Frowning, still watching the fox] But it's only just one person giving them a little bit of food. What harm could that possibly do?

Alice: [Softly] That's the tricky part. It isn't just this one person. Over half of people living in the UK feed wildlife regularly, mostly birds, but also foxes and other animals. That's millions of people. When foxes start thinking humans are an easy source of food, they get more comfortable approaching people, hoping for a handout. It makes them lose their natural cautiousness, and that can lead to problems – especially for them.

Jack: [Surprised] I see! So, feeding them isn't really helping them at all.

Alice: [Nodding] Not really, no. But I get why people do it. For some people, feeding wildlife is a way to connect with something bigger, a source of comfort. I think it's important to recognise that.

Jack: [Pensive] You mean like a friend or neighbour?

Alice: [Looking back towards the neighbour's house] Yeah. That's Ms. Parker we just saw. She lives alone, and I think the foxes are her way of feeling less lonely. They've become her tiny furry companions, a connection to the world outside. She's been feeding them for months now.

Jack: [Hesitates, looking back at the fox] I get it now. It's not just about the animals. For some people, it's more about needing something to care for, a feeling of attachment.

Alice: Exactly. It's a tough situation. For some people, those animals are a source of comfort, a reason to smile. But at the same time, we need to respect nature and let the animals stay independent. The real challenge is finding a balance.

[The fox finishes the last of the food and disappears into the night. Alice and Jack continue to walk towards their homes, the snow falling more heavily in the cold, crisp evening air.]

Jack: [Earnestly] So then, if we really care about foxes, we should just... leave them alone? But then what'll happen to the people who get so much pleasure from feeding them, like Ms. Parker?

Alice: Well, perhaps feeding wildlife isn't the key, but we need to find alternative ways to help people like Ms. Parker connect with wildlife without disturbing them too much.

Jack: [Inquisitively] But how can we do that?

Alice: Setting up a trail camera in your garden is a good way to capture those wild moments. They offer a lens into their world without intruding. We don't need to feed them to do this.

Jack: [Confused] A trail camera? What's that?

Alice: It's a camera you can get pretty easily online. You set it up in your garden, and it takes pictures or videos of wildlife when they pass by. It lets you catch all sorts of cool moments, not just foxes – like deer, rabbits, even hedgehogs!

Jack: [Feeling more cheerful] A trail camera, huh? That sounds pretty cool. Watching and observing them without intervening.

Alice: [Smiling] Exactly. And by doing that, we are helping them too, in a way that works for everyone. It might be a small thing to do, but it is a big change and a step towards living together – that's what coexistence is all about.

Jack: [Turns to hug his best friend] Happy Christmas, Alice.

Alice: Happy Christmas, Jack.

[They walk on, their boots crunching in the snow, the glow of Christmas lights reflecting off the frost. Meanwhile, the fox from Ms. Parker's garden pauses at the edge of a drain, nose and ears twitching. Somewhere below, a rat scurries through the darkness, unaware of the sharp eyes watching from above. There's a stillness followed by a flicker of red fur and teeth. With a quiet bound, the fox disappears into the night, belly full – perfectly capable, as it has always been.]

Christmas

4:38 pm



URBAN
FOX

Field observation

Foxes are excellent hunters, capable of finding food on their own, even in winter. Feeding wildlife in our gardens, including foxes, isn't good for them.



Story 5:

Through Wild Lenses

[An early morning in May. The air is filled with the scent of fresh grass and blooming flowers. Birdsong can be heard echoing throughout the trees as Alice and Jack wander along the narrow footpath of a small woodland located on the edge of their local park. The rising sun is met by the sounds and smells of the surrounding city.]

Jack: [Breathless] Where are we going?

Alice: [Smiles, a sea of bluebells spreading out before them] Just a little bit further, I promise!

Jack: [Awe struck] Wow. Yeah, you weren't kidding. I'm so glad you talked me into coming along – these spring flowers are beautiful!

[They walked a little further, careful not to crush any of the stems. Suddenly, Alice spots something, stopping to place a hand on Jack's arm.]

Alice: [Whispers] Look over there.

[She points toward a small hollow near the base of an old oak tree. The entrance was a dark, shadowy hole in the earth, surrounded by disturbed soil.]

Jack: What is that?

Alice: It's a fox den.

Jack: [Wide-eyed] No way! That must be the home of the foxes we keep seeing in the neighbourhood. Do you think they're inside?

Alice: [Squeals gleefully] Probably. It's spring, so there might even be cubs!

Jack: [Steps forward] Amazing! Let's go check it out –

[Alice quickly catches his sleeve, shaking her head.]

Alice: No, we shouldn't go too close. If the mother fox is in there, she might get scared and move her cubs somewhere else. We don't want to disturb them.

Jack: [Confused] Okay, but how can we see them if we can't get close?

[Alice glances around and spots an old wooden park bench a little way off, partially hidden beneath the branches of a low-hanging beech tree.]

Alice: [Pointing at the tree] Why don't we sit over there? If we're patient and quiet, we might see something from a distance.

Jack: [Sceptical] But it's still morning. Isn't it a bit too early for foxes to be out and about?

Alice: Not always. Remember last summer when I told you about how urbanisation is making foxes behave more boldly? Well, that also means they're starting to become more active during the day as well.

[Jack follows Alice, sitting quietly down beside her on the worn wood. A respectful distance from the den. For a few minutes, they sit still, eyes peeled for any signs of movement around the den. Listening to the gentle rustle of the trees and the occasional birdsong.]

Jack: [Side-eyes Alice] Nothing's happening. Maybe nobody's home?

Alice: You're right, this feels like a long shot. They're probably asleep. But even if the foxes did eventually come out, staying here too long might make them avoid the area altogether. We should probably head out soon, so we don't disrupt their routine too much.

Jack: [Sighs] I wish there was a way we could watch without disturbing them.

Alice: [Grins] Like a trail camera! Remember we spoke about them at Christmas?

[Alice stands, brushing dirt from her jeans]

Alice: Let's go back to my house, and I'll show you some footage from the trail camera that's in my garden!

Jack: Can't we just set a camera up here?

Alice: We can't without permission from the city council because it's a public space and we can't risk invading people's privacy.

Jack: [Eyes bulge] Geez. You know everything, don't you...

Alice: [Cheekily grins] Takes practice. A serious environmental scientist is always prepared. Now, come on silly, let's go!

[They make their way back through the woodland, following the path until they reached the main street. Alice's house stands nestled among rows of quiet homes. Once inside, Alice and Jack look through a series of trail camera videos on her computer.]

Alice: [Pointing at a video] Check this one out.

[The screen flicks to life, showing a mother fox trotting into Alice's garden. The fox's sleek fur is illuminated by the camera's light. A moment later, three tiny cubs tumble after her, playfully nipping at each other's tails.]

Jack: [Jaw drops] No way! That's in your garden?

Alice: [Beaming] Pretty amazing, right? This was from just a few days ago.

Jack: Given how close your garden is to the den we saw in the park, I bet this is the same family of foxes we wanted to see!

[Jack leans closer, watching as the cubs pounce and roll in the grass, their tiny forms full of clumsy energy. As they begin to leave the garden, Jack notices one of the cubs run back and begin to drag something in its mouth.]

Jack: Wait...hold on. Is that my...*shoe* in its mouth?! I've been looking everywhere for it for three days! I left my shoes outside after football practice because they were smelly and then forgot about them overnight.

[He squints at the screen as the cub tugged at the shoelaces with great effort, dragging it as the cub ran after its family.]

Alice: [Laughing] I was wondering whose shoe that belonged to – mystery solved! That cub's becoming a bit of a collector. I found another shoe in our flower bed earlier this week – it probably belongs to one of our neighbours.

Jack: [Giggled] What cheek, the little thief! Why would foxes do that?

Alice: [Smirks] Maybe it's starting a fashion trend or just going for a run?

Jack: [Eye roll] Ha. Ha. Very funny, Alice.

Alice: [Smiling] Just kidding. Fox cubs are like toddlers – they explore the world with their mouths. Sometimes even their parents will bring random objects back to the den – like shoes, pet toys, and other things people leave in their gardens – to keep the cubs curious and stimulated. The smells and textures are interesting to chew on, and it helps them learn – sort of like a puppy or kitten might do when we give them toys to play with.

Jack: [Groans] Well, that's great for the foxes, but it doesn't bring my shoe back! What can we do to prevent them from taking things from our gardens?

Alice: [Shrugs whilst grinning] Easy – just remember to take your shoes and other things inside at night to avoid tempting the occasional by-passing fox.

Jack: [Smirks] Well, I guess you're right. Coexistence – that's the way forward, learning to adapt to them just like they're having to adapt to us.

[Jack turns back to look at the video on the screen]

Jack: [Gestures a military salute] Message received, little fox. May you enjoy playing with my shoe forever more!

Alice: [Laughing] Don't be so dramatic. I bet if you just ask around in the neighbourhood, you'll probably find your shoe's ended up in someone else's garden – probably a couple of houses down. That cub is too small to have dragged it very far.

[Alice and Jack continue watching the video. The cub on the screen proudly parades around with Jack's shoe as if it found buried treasure.]

Jack: Yeah, I suppose it's kind of adorable when you think about it. I can't believe you caught all of this on your trail camera.

Alice: [Smiling] Exactly! Keeping a trail camera in my garden has really helped open my eyes to the world of urban wildlife. I used to think of the garden as just my family's space, but now I see it's part of a whole hidden part of the city, full of amazing animals – foxes, hedgehogs, rabbits, even the occasional owl!

Alice: [Continues] But just so you know, it's not always like a David Attenborough documentary.

Jack: [Somewhat disappointed] Oh. So, not a fox leaping through the air to pounce on its prey while dramatic music plays in the background?

Alice: [Laughing] No, not quite. Don't get me wrong, I love David Attenborough documentaries. He's wonderful. But real life isn't always like what you see on television. A lot of the time, the animals are just...sitting. Or sniffing. Or walking by and not doing anything exciting at all.

Jack: [Frowning] That sounds...kind of boring.

Alice: [Chuckling] Maybe at first. But that's the thing, we have to learn to appreciate wildlife for what it really is, not for what we want it to be. Not everything has to be a big, dramatic Hollywood moment. When you slow down and really watch, even the small things, like a fox pausing to listen to the sound of a passing car...

Jack: ...or a fox stealing my shoe...

Alice: [Giggling] Yes, even a fox stealing your shoe, Jack – all of it can feel special because you're getting to experience their world, through their lens, without disturbing them – in the same space as you. And sure, documentaries are amazing, but most of us don't get to visit jungles or deserts or other far-off places we often see in them. What we forget is that there's a whole wild world right here, in our own gardens and parks, just waiting to be explored!

Jack: [Pensive] Huh. I like that. I definitely want a trail camera now!

Alice: [Smirks] I thought you might. And with a trail camera, you'll realise that you're no longer just watching a story – you're now part of it!

Jack: [Jumps up, excited] Actually, that's pretty cool when you think about it.

Alice: [Beams] I was hoping you'd say that. Once you've got your own camera set up, we can trade footage and see what our local foxes and all the other wildlife in the neighbourhood are getting up to! I've been wanting to compare notes with someone. And who better than with my best friend?

Jack: So cool. Our very own nature club!

Alice: Exactly! We'll have fun doing that together.

[They continue chattering excitedly about their plans for their new nature club, the sun filtering through the window of Alice's house, warm on their faces. Meanwhile, back in the quiet peacefulness of the local park, one of the foxes emerges from the den, slipping into the foliage. It pauses, sniffing the spot where Alice and Jack were sitting only a couple of hours earlier. It turns, leaving a tiny trail of paw prints hidden amongst a carpet of fragrant bluebells, ready to start its day.]

April

11:20 pm



Field observation: Trail cameras help us "connect" with foxes and other wildlife without disturbing their natural behaviour.



Story 6:

The Rhythm of Two Worlds

United

[Late September, a year and a half since Alice and Jack first began exploring the hidden wonders of urban foxes together. They sit side by side in a quiet area of their local park, not far from home. The sun hangs low in the sky, casting long golden shadows across a small grassy meadow, framed by the outline of the surrounding city. The cool evening air hints that it will soon be time to head home to start their homework. But for now, there's only the peaceful stillness of the meadow, and the soft sounds of birds calling to one another as they prepare for the autumn harvest.]

Jack: [Sighs] Three weeks into our final year of GCSEs, and I'm still enjoying my Geography course, but I feel like I've already forgotten half of what I learned before the summer holidays!

Alice: Tell me about it. I love what we're covering this year in my Natural History course, but after summer break, it's taking me a while to get back into a routine. How about you come back to my house, and we can do our homework together? We can help each other stay motivated and focused.

Jack: Great idea! Plus, I like studying with you because you keep me on track and make things less stressful.

Alice: [Blushes] Don't be silly. You're my best friend, of course I'll help you with anything. And besides, after the busy week we've had, we deserve a little time out here with the foxes – to help clear our heads.

Jack: [Smirks] Yeah, just think. Another summer gone by – I can't believe it's been over a year since you first introduced me to urban foxes!

Alice: [Exclaims] I know, it feels like it was only yesterday! But there's something beautiful about the transition from summer to autumn, don't you think? You can almost see it in the way this meadow feels, like the earth's ready to rest once again.

Jack: Yeah. It's so peaceful. Great idea to come out here to look for foxes. Maybe that'll help me find the motivation to start our homework!

[Alice giggles but they're both interrupted by the sight of a fox moving slowly across the meadow towards a line of trees.]

Jack: Look there, I see one!

Alice: [Pauses] I don't recognise this one. It seems so tired...not like the others we've seen this year, which were full of energy.

Jack: It's as if it knows something we don't. Like this is its last summer.

[They both sit quietly, watching the fox as it finally reaches the line of trees just beyond the meadow.]

Jack: [Quietly] I feel so sad for that older fox. We should do something, right?

Alice: We shouldn't. Foxes need to stay wild to survive. If we interfere, we take away their chance to live the way they were meant to.

Jack: [Concerned] But what if it dies?

Alice: [Softly] Foxes can't live forever, Jack. Nature's not like that. But every ending has a new beginning. It's part of the larger cycle. Remember that movie, the 'Lion King', when Mufasa explains to Simba the circle of life? Like that. Life doesn't just *stop*; it keeps going in new ways.

[The fox slowly moves through the trees, disappearing out of view into the shadows behind the fence on the edge of the park.]

Jack: [Sad] I guess it's gone.

Alice: [Puts her hand on Jack's shoulder to comfort him] It's never really gone. Nature keeps turning, even when we don't see it. A fox's life is part of something so much bigger – something we don't always understand.

[They sit quietly, watching the last light fade. The soft sounds of the meadow fill the air. The city traffic surrounding the park begins to become softer, signalling that it is time for them to go home.]

Jack: So, we just let nature be, even when it's hard?

Alice: Yeah. The best thing we can do is let it be. That older fox will always be part of this place, part of the flowers, the trees, and everything that makes this park so special. We don't have to save everything, especially when it's all part of the natural cycle of life.

[They stand and begin walking back towards Alice's house, the peaceful night settling around them.]

Jack: I think I get it now. It's not just about saving nature; it's about letting it do its own thing. We keep trying to shape nature, to control and manage it like an overprotective parent. But part of being a good parent is showing our "love" in other ways, like taking a step back – watching, enjoying, and letting things follow their own path.

Alice: Exactly. That's how life keeps going. Quietly, in ways we'll never fully see or even notice.

Jack: [Teases] Even with a trail camera?

Alice: [Smirks] Even with a trail camera.

[As they walk back, they spot the mother fox they saw back in spring emerge from the den on the far corner of the park. Her three cubs – now nearly grown – emerge after her, sniffing with cautious curiosity at the air and each other, their playfulness subdued as they prepare to leave to start their own adventures. The last bit of evening light stretches their long shadows across the grass.]

Alice: [Excited] Oh look, Jack! How lucky we get to see them in person finally! They're almost grown now. It won't be long before they go off on their own. I never get tired of watching them on the trail camera in my garden.

Jack: [Pensive] It's funny, isn't it? How the foxes have been part of our lives this whole time. It's nice seeing them on their own terms – without feeding or disturbing them, just fleeting glimpses, the way it should be.

Alice: Yeah, it makes these types of moments so much more special.

Alice: [Laughing] And to think. Eleven months ago, you were screaming on Halloween because you thought a phantom fox was rustling the bushes!

Jack: [Blushes, gives Alice a playful grimace] Okay, not my proudest moment. That Mysterious Bin Phantom thing is in the past, for good.

Alice: [Grinning] See? Look how far you've come. I'm proud of you, Jack!

Jack: [Rolling his eyes, smiling] Yeah, yeah...We've learned a lot about urban wildlife, haven't we? At first, it was all about the mystery for me – wondering why foxes were so wild and independent in the city. But now, I understand that it's because they have to be. Cities are changing them, making them adapt because of everything we do – the way we build, the way we live, and what we leave behind.

Alice: Exactly. But it's not about them fitting into our world – it's about us learning how to share it with them.

[Alice glances over her shoulder toward the spot where they last saw the older fox.]

Alice: [Softly] Like that older fox we saw earlier. I bet it's lived its whole life here, in this city, surviving as best it could. And now at the end, the fox is still out there, part of this place. They all are.

Jack: [Quietly] Yeah...and the least we can do is adapt alongside them – not pushing them out or making it harder for them to survive. We owe them that much, don't we?

Alice: [Nods] Respect their space, protect our parks, clean up our cities. Simple things, but they can make a big difference – for them and for us.

[A rustling in the bushes suddenly makes Jack jump. He grabs Alice's arm.]

Jack: [Whispers] Okay, but if that's the Mysterious Bin Phantom getting its revenge, you're dealing with it!

[The same black cat from Halloween darts out, pausing under a streetlamp. It flicks its tail, then trots off into the growing darkness.]

Jack: [Grimaces] Not a word from you, Alice.

[They share a laugh, the city humming softly around them, the foxes from the local park already manoeuvring throughout the streets – just as it always has. For a moment, everything feels whole, as if the wild and the city were never separate at all. The night deepens, and they both pause to look up at the stars, still visible beyond the streetlamps.]

Jack: Alice, I've been thinking about what I've seen over the past year, and you know what I've come to realise?

Alice: What's that?

Jack: That coexistence isn't a privilege, it's a necessity. Without coexistence, we don't just risk losing the wild – we risk losing ourselves, our health, our wellbeing.

Alice: I think you're right. Earth is crying out, and only by listening, by learning to live in harmony, can we all begin to heal. Because we are in this together.

Jack: [Pauses, then voice softening] Thanks, Alice. For showing me all of this. I think I still have so much to learn.

Alice: [Tender smile] We all do. But as long as we're paying attention, listening to the rhythm between city and nature – two worlds united – then I think we're on the right track.

Jack: [Glancing back up at the sky, voice quieter] Guess we better go do our homework, huh? I told my mum I'd be home before dinner.

Alice: [Smiling] Yeah. But not before you check out the new amazing badger trail camera footage with me first! We've got a few new visitors on the camera this week.

Jack: [Excited] Badgers in the city?! Amazing! Nature club still on, then?

Alice: Always.

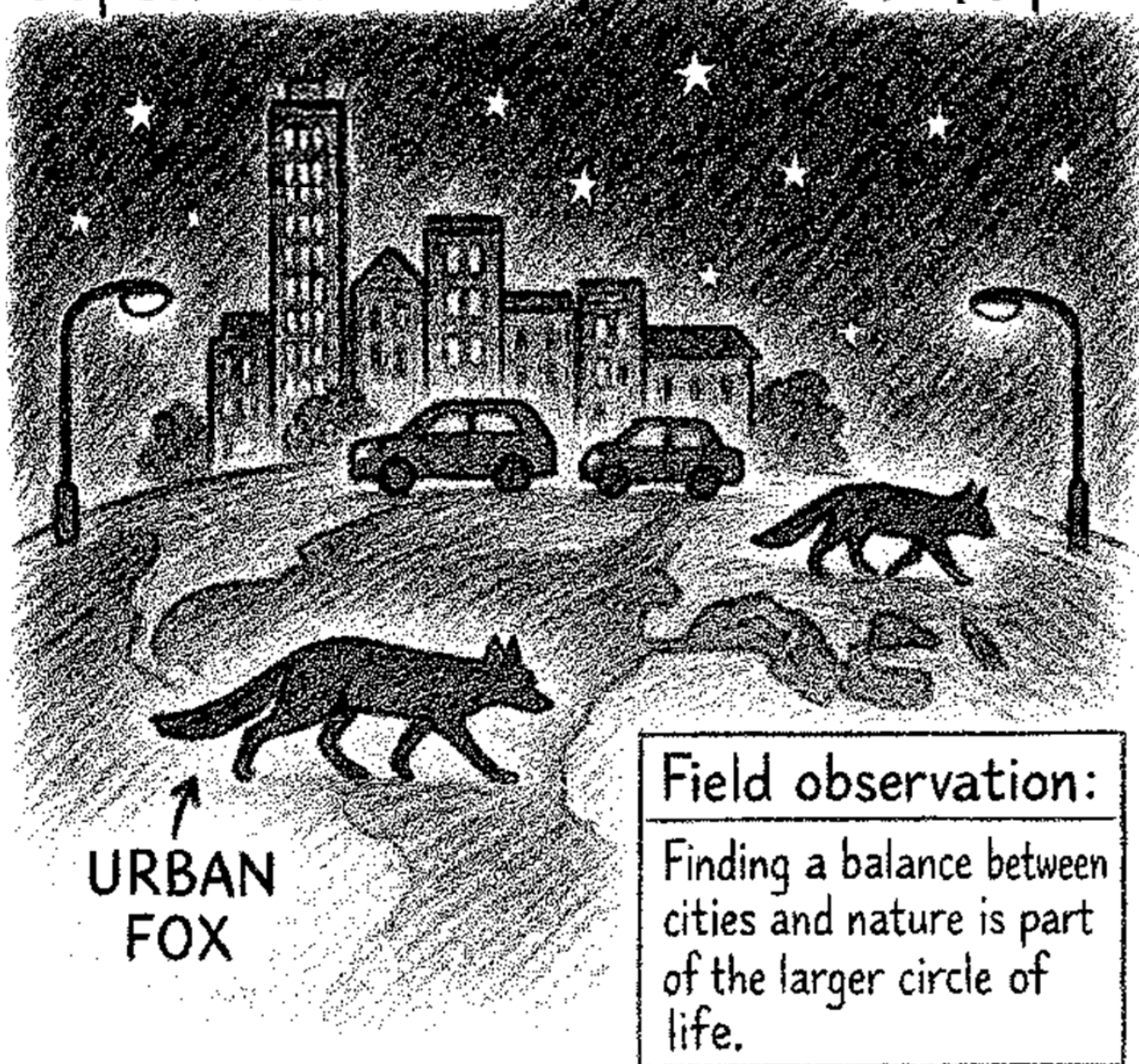
[They head home, their laughter blending into the distant hum of traffic and soft rustle of wind through trees, as if the city was rhythmically taking the quiet pulse of the land beneath it. Amongst flickering streetlights, a fox calls in the distance, its lone cry breaking the cool night air. In the stillness that follows, another fox answers – as if Earth itself was calling back.]

The End.

...But Also, The Beginning.

September

8:45pm





Key Environmental Messages

Story	Title	Environmental message
1	A Great Urban Awakening	Human-driven environmental changes, such as urbanisation, are impacting the behaviour of wildlife, including foxes.
2	The Human-Fox Connection	Foxes and other wildlife are a potential “gateway” to nature and our own wellbeing.
3	The Mysterious Bin Phantom	Human conflicts with foxes and other wildlife often stem from how our own brains interpret things.
4	The Christmas Fox	Feeding wildlife, including foxes, generally isn’t good for them or us.
5	Through Wild Lenses	Trail cameras can help us “connect” with foxes and other wildlife without disturbing their natural behaviour.
6	The Rhythm of Two Worlds United	Finding a balance between cities and nature is part of coexisting and appreciating the larger circle of life.

Urban Tails: The Adventures of Alice & Jack is based on the on-going work of the British Carnivore Project. To learn more, check out our webpage: <https://www.blakemorton.co.uk/case-studies/>



Fun Nature Challenges for Home or School

To continue to experience *Urban Tails: The Adventures of Alice & Jack*, check out the nature activities we recommend on the next few pages! There are seven challenges in total, each one is suitable for doing in your spare time, with friends or family, and at home or in the classroom.

Challenge 1:

Discussion Questions

In *Urban Tails*, Alice and Jack get to explore the exciting world of nature in the city through their experiences with urban foxes. Each story covers an important environmental message. Use the following discussion questions to help you learn and think more about those messages. You can find answers to each question on the next page, but there are many ways of answering them, so perhaps you can come up with something slightly different!

1. Why do you think urban foxes tend to behave more boldly than countryside foxes?
2. How might people's feelings towards urban foxes change because they are behaving more boldly?
3. What are some common misconceptions about urban foxes?
4. How might people benefit from having urban foxes living in cities?
5. Why might feeding foxes and other wildlife be bad for them?
6. What alternative ways can we enjoy seeing urban foxes without feeding them or disturbing their natural behaviour?
7. What can people do to get along with foxes and other urban wildlife so we can all enjoy the city together?

Answer to Question 1: Red foxes have adapted to urban environments where they are more accustomed to seeing humans compared to the countryside. As a result, they have become bolder, which means they are less fearful of people.

Answer to Question 2: Bolder behaviour in urban foxes means that people are more likely to see and hear them in cities compared to the countryside (where they are more afraid of people). This can have either a positive or negative impact on people's feelings towards them. Seeing a fox in a city can be a special and exciting occasion for many people in the UK, but for other people, it may be seen as a nuisance or threat, especially when foxes cause public disturbances, such as noise and garden damage. Urbanisation decreases people's opportunities to connect with nature because there are fewer places to experience it compared to the countryside. So, by finding ways to live alongside foxes, we can protect and enjoy this very special reminder that nature is still all around us, even in cities.

Answer to Question 3: Common misconceptions include thinking that urban foxes are dangerous to pets and children, are a major health risk, or create public disturbances. Such incidences are infrequent compared to the many times foxes are simply present without causing any problems, even in areas such as London where reports of "nuisance" fox behaviours tend to be more common. Typically, urban foxes do not pose a real threat, especially when they are respected and admired from a distance.

Answer to Question 4: Urban foxes are a reminder that nature can exist and thrive in cities. This is important because opportunities to experience nature are less common in cities compared to the countryside. Urban foxes allow city residents to experience wildlife, potentially helping them establish a deeper connection to the natural world. Having a stronger connection with nature can improve a person's general health, such as reducing stress by encouraging relaxation.

Answer to Question 5: Feeding foxes and other wildlife is generally bad for them, especially if they are given human food or fed large amounts on a regular basis. Wildlife are typically well-adapted to find natural food on their own, even in cities, and don't need our help. Feeding wildlife can encourage them to become habituated to people, making them more dependent on us for food. This dependency can encourage unnatural gatherings and close contact between animals, which raises the risk of disease spreading within their populations. Feeding wildlife also increases the chances of wildlife becoming a public 'nuisance' within neighbourhoods, such as bin-raiding and property damage, which can lower people's tolerance of them. Although feeding wildlife can help people connect more with nature, it can also disrupt the balance of nature by altering human-wildlife relationships as well as the health and behaviour of a species. To support healthy, thriving wildlife

populations, it is best to enjoy animals from a distance, let them find natural food on their own, and support local wildlife groups aiming to protect their natural habitats.

Answer to Question 6: There are many ways to enjoy wildlife, including urban foxes, without feeding them or getting too close, such as walks in local parks during times when they are more active (e.g., dusk or dawn), and by placing trail cameras in your garden so you can observe their behaviour without interference.

Answer to Question 7: Communities can create wildlife-friendly spaces and educate residents about the importance of reducing human-wildlife conflicts by securing outdoor bins, cleaning up litter in streets, and avoiding feeding wildlife. Helping people find ways to engage with nature without harming or disturbing them (e.g., trail cameras) is also important. Finally, planting native vegetation and leaving areas undisturbed within gardens and local parks (e.g., letting grass grow a little longer between mowings) can create natural food and shelter for wildlife, helping them thrive alongside us.

Challenge 2:

Start your own trail camera nature club

In *Urban Tails*, Alice and Jack start a nature club using trail cameras to observe wildlife without disturbing their natural behaviour. Starting your own nature club is fun, and a great way to get your friends and family involved! Here are some recommendations below to help you get started:

1. **Team up with friends or family.** Gather a small group of 2-5 people who are interested in learning more about local nature.
2. **Make a club plan.** Come up with a club name, club rules, meeting times, and a goal – like spotting certain animals throughout the year.
3. **Get a trail camera.** You or a family member can purchase trail cameras easily online. You'll also need batteries and a memory card that will fit into the camera. If your family is unable to purchase these items, ask your teacher if your school can purchase them for the entire class so that everyone can enjoy watching wildlife. You might also consider joining Nature Spy's Trail Cam Collective, which loans trail camera equipment to individuals and small groups (see [here](#)).
4. **Learn how to operate the camera.** Trail cameras can record photos or videos depending on what you want to record. If you or another member of your nature club has never used a trail camera before, a great idea for a first club meeting is to learn how they work. There are many online tutorials to get you started, but we recommend following the simple steps by Nature Spy ([click here](#)).
5. **Find a good spot.** Always make sure you have permission before placing a trail camera anywhere. The safest place is your own garden, or in the garden of a friend or family member. Don't put cameras on farms, parks, or in other public places unless a trusted adult has spoken to the landowner and has been given a clear "yes" to allow you to monitor wildlife activity on their property. It is also important to keep cameras away from footpaths or places where people are – trail cameras are for watching wildlife, not people. Always be respectful and think about where your camera is pointing. If you accidentally record people, always delete the video and consider moving your camera to a more private location.

6. Keep a nature notebook. A great way to explore and learn more about nature is to keep a record of your observations. You'll find an example of what you might write in your notebook on the next page of this booklet.

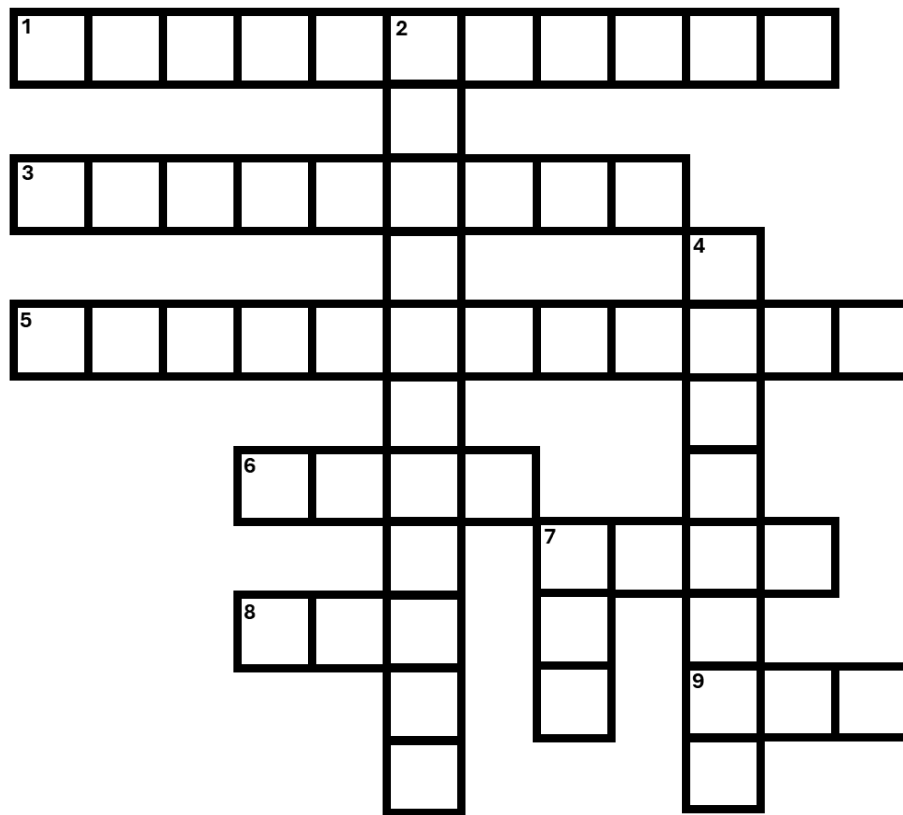
7. Share your findings. Sharing your findings with friends, family, or classmates is a great way to get more people interested in nature!

Here's an example of what observations to consider making in your notebook:

Video	Date	Time	Location	Species name	Behavioural observations
1	1 March, 2025	11:03 pm	Back garden	Hedgehog	Walking then pausing to listen/smell the air
2	12 March, 2025	8:00 am	Back garden	Robin	Eating worms
3	3 April, 2025	3:45 am	Front garden	Red fox	Walking through garden
4	8 April, 2025	12:23 pm	Back garden	Rat	Searching in flowerbed for food
5	20 May, 2025	9:14 am	Front garden	Blackbird	Searching for food under leaves on ground
6	1 June, 2025	4:53 am	Front garden	Badger	Digging in grass, looking for food
7	23 June, 2025	10:17 pm	Back garden	Rat	Smelling outdoor bin
8	12 July, 2025	2:08 pm	Front garden	Wood pigeon	Sitting on fence, flying away

Challenge 3: Urban Nature Crossword Puzzle

In *Urban Tails*, Alice is a self-proclaimed fox enthusiast with a passion for protecting nature, especially in cities. She discusses several key environmental messages with Jack about how we can do this, which are found in the crossword puzzle below. How many of these environmental messages do you remember from their adventures? Answers are provided on the next page.



Across

- 1 A device that records wildlife activity without disturbing them.
- 3 A term used to describe a person's physical and mental health; many people can improve it by connecting more with nature.
- 5 The process by which towns and cities are formed and become larger as more people begin to live there.
- 6 A large, densely populated human settlement.
- 7 Confident and unafraid; urban foxes are more likely to behave this way compared to rural foxes.
- 8 What a fox's home is called.

Challenge 4: “Spot the Difference”

In *Urban Tails*, Alice is studying Natural History as part of her GCSEs because she wants to become an environmental scientist. Being observant and noticing your surroundings is an important part of being a good environmental scientist. Below are two illustrations of the local park close to where Alice and Jack live. How many differences can you spot between the two images? Hint: There are at least 15 differences! Answers are provided on the next page.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ | 15. _____ |

Turn the page upside down to see 15 differences in the “Spot the Difference” activity. Perhaps you spotted even more, which means you’re really observant!

1. No rabbit in image 2.
2. Pond is larger in image 2.
3. Park bench is further to the left in image 2.
4. Fox slightly smaller in image 2.
5. The person on the left is slightly taller in image 2.
6. Car is more out of frame in image 2.
7. The skyline behind the people is different in image 2 (e.g., birds, and clouds are slightly different).
8. Large tree has different number of branches in image 2.
9. Squirrel is missing tail in image 2.
10. Goose is present in image 2.
11. Flower under the fox is missing in image 2.
12. Plants to the left of the people are different in image 2.
13. Dragonfly is present in image 2.
14. The person on the right has longer hair in image 2.
15. The person on the right has a pencil in image 2.

Challenge 5:

Experiencing nature through your senses

In *Urban Tails*, Alice and Jack experienced nature even in the heart of the city. To help you and your friends or family connect more with nature like they do, we recommend you try the following ten-minute activity. The goal of the activity is to immerse yourself in nature by experiencing it using four of your primary senses (sight, smell, touch, sound). There are seven steps in total. Ideal for gardens or local recreational parks, but you can also do many of them from the comfort of your own home by opening a window.

Step 1: Pick a spot. Find peaceful place where you feel safe and won't be disturbed. Sit down if able to do so. If in a park, sit under a shady tree, on a patch of grass, or on a quiet bench. If in a garden, find a place to sit near flowers, shrubs, or trees. If at home, open a window wide and sit with a clear view of the sky.

Step 2: Settle in. Take a deep breath, turn off your phone, and commit to ten minutes of stillness, silence, and open-mindedness. Prepare yourself to go through each of your senses one at a time for approximately 1-2 minutes each.

Step 3: Look. What do you see? Notice the tiniest details – sunlight on a leaf, an insect crawling, shifting clouds, or the way shadows move across the grass, shrubs, or trees. What colours, shapes, and patterns do you notice? Do you see any birds or other animals? What plants do you see?

Step 4: Listen. Close your eyes. Clear your mind of everything except for the sounds around you. What do you hear? Can you hear wind rustling in the surrounding bushes or trees? What about birds singing or insects buzzing? What is the farthest sound and the closest sound? Notice the rhythm of the sounds and compare them. Are they different, similar?

Step 5: Smell. With your eyes still closed, shift your attention to the smell of your surroundings. Take a deep breath. What do you smell? Does it smell sweet, sour, earthy, or wet? How many smells do you sense? Can you identify their sources from just your nose, without looking? How do they compare?

Step 6: Feel. With your eyes still closed, gently explore your surroundings. What do you feel? Focus on the texture as you touch the ground and the natural objects surrounding you. Are they smooth, rough, wet, or bumpy? How does each item compare to the others?

Step 7: Think. Open your eyes and quietly look around you again. Spend the remaining few minutes reflecting on what you just experienced with all four of your senses (sight, sound, smell, touch). What felt the most calming? Did you experience anything that was particularly interesting, unexpected, or beautiful to you? If you had a message for nature right now, what would it be? How would nature respond to your message?

Challenge 6:

Urban wildlife scavenger hunt

In *Urban Tails*, Alice keeps a book filled with notes and sketches to help her remember the exciting experiences she and Jack have with foxes and other urban wildlife. A list of Alice's most recent wildlife sightings is below, including a range of plants and animals found throughout her city. For this activity, visit your local park or set up a trail camera in your garden to see how many you can find in your own neighbourhood. Some can only be seen at certain times of year, so put a check mark in the blank spaces next to each name so you remember which ones you saw. Names listed in **bold** with an asterisk (*) next to them are part of the natural diet of urban foxes!

Birds

- Peregrine falcon
- **Wood pigeon***
- Grey heron
- **Pied wagtail***
- **European robin***
- **Magpie***
- Greylag goose

Checklist

Mammals

- Red fox
- **Hedgehog***
- Otter
- Badger
- Common pipistrelle bat
- **Brown rat***

Invertebrates

- Bumblebee
- **Earthworm***
- Ladybird
- Cinnabar moth
- Common pill bug

Trees and other plants

- **Blackberry bush ("brambles")***
- **Elderberry tree***
- **Crab apple tree***
- **Plumb Tree***
- Oak tree
- Dandelion

Challenge 7: Trail camera animal quiz

In *Urban Tails*, Alice and Jack are able to explore the wonders of nature in their own back gardens by using trail cameras. Many environmental scientists use trail cameras to learn about wildlife because it allows animals to be observed without disturbing them. Click on the link below to look at images from different trail cameras the *British Carnivore Project* has placed throughout the UK. How many different local animals you can identify?

To play the quiz, [click here!](#)



Further Exploration

Want to learn more about the work of the *British Carnivore Project*? Here are some articles that our team has written over the years, some of which inspired *Urban Tails*. They include a mix of popular science articles (written for a general audience) as well as scientific papers (written for anyone looking for more of a challenge!). You can click on the links below to read them for free in the electronic version of this booklet (available on Page 3). Our work has been inspired by the tireless efforts of many other environmental scientists, so be sure to check out the references within our papers to learn even more about these topics. For updates and further resources, contact Dr Blake Morton (BCP@hull.ac.uk) or check out the British Carnivore Project's webpage: <https://www.blakemorton.co.uk/case-studies/>

Article Titles	Link
<u>Popular Science Articles</u>	
1. Why not all urban foxes deserve their 'bin raiding' reputation	Click here
2. Even as urban foxes get bolder, people appreciate rather than persecute them, say psychologists	Click here
3. Media content analysis of wild red foxes in the UK	Click here
4. Inspiring the next generation of scientists	Click here
<u>Scientific Research Papers</u>	
1. Urban foxes are bolder but not more innovative than their rural conspecifics	Click here
2. Communicating information about the psychology of a wild carnivore, the red fox, influences perceived attitudinal changes but not overall tolerance in people	Click here



Glossary

Boldness – confident and unafraid; urban foxes are more likely to behave this way compared to rural foxes.

Carnivore – an animal that often eats meat, but some carnivores, including foxes, can also eat a wide variety of fruit, nuts, and other plant materials.

Conservation – taking care of nature so that animals, plants, and places stay healthy and safe for a long time. Human activities, such as urbanisation, can impact the health of nature, which is why we must learn to coexist.

Den – what a fox's home is called. It is usually a hole in the ground or a hidden spot under bushes, rocks, or under buildings. Foxes use dens to stay safe, warm, sleep, and care for their babies (called cubs, pups, or kits).

Environmental science – the study of how nature works and how people affect the planet.

Human-wildlife coexistence – harmonious state where the needs and interests of humans and wildlife living in proximity to each other are generally met.

Human-wildlife conflict – negative interactions between humans and wildlife, resulting in adverse impacts for one or both parties. However, perceived conflict (by people) doesn't always reflect actual wild animal's behaviour. There can be many reasons for this, such as stories we hear from other people which are exaggerated or not entirely true. That is why it is important to observe and learn about animal behaviour, instead of assuming animals are always doing something that they're not.

Human-nature connectedness – how much a person feels like they belong in nature, care about nature, and want to take care of it.

Nature – everything that is not made by people, such as wild animals, plants, rivers, oceans, mountains, and the sky. It's the "natural" world around

us, which can also be found within cities.

Trail camera – a device that records photos and videos of wildlife activity without disturbing them.

Urban area – a large, densely populated human settlement. Also called a “city”.

Urbanisation – the process by which towns and cities are formed and become larger as more people begin to live there.

Well-being – a term used to describe a person’s physical and mental health. Many people can improve it by connecting more with nature.

Wildlife – a word that refers to everything living in nature, such as plants, animals, mushrooms, and even bacteria.



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