



Young Nature Writer 2023

Winning and runners up entries

Overall winner

Title: Scarlett

Author: Kayleigh Cannon

Age: 8 (7 at time of competition)

My favourite place to visit to enjoy nature is Scarlett. Every time I go there I have a new adventure and find cool things. I like looking at all the different rocks and looking for clues of the old volcano. When I climb the rocks I feel proud and like an explorer. There's a big combination of different rocks. The views from the top of them are very nice. Sometimes I see cormorants sunbathing and I can stick my arms out and pretend to be one on the rocks. Sometimes I see them diving into the sea.

Herons are my favourite bird to see there. I like their big beaks and wings, and they are an unusual shape compared to other birds I see. They remind me of a grumpy old man looking at the sea and wanting to go fishing.

I like all the pretty wild flowers at Scarlett too like the Sea Thrifts which add lots of pink to the grass and rocks. The lily pads also have pretty pink flowers.

There is a little pond at Scarlett that I play at with my brother, we call the bug spa because there is always so many bugs around it having fun there and some play in the water. There is a bench there made from a rock and there is loads of sea thrifts around it. Once when I was sitting by it watching them all a grasshopper jumped onto me.

In the long grass I can crawl around and pretend I am searching for swamp monsters. Sometimes I can see dragon flies here and they are very beautiful. I can also pretend they are real dragons and have to duck down and hide if one flies close.

In the rock pools near the Lime Kilns, I like to look see all the variation of sea creatures left in them when the tide goes out. I have seen crabs, fish, pond skaters and anemones. We can catch them in buckets to look at them closer.

These are some of the reasons I like Scarlett, it is a very beautiful place where I can have lots of fun and see loads of exciting things.

Best bird entry

Title: Come to the Calf!

Author: Delta Baptist

Age: 10

The Calf of Man (Yn Cholloo in Manx) is a 2.5 square kilometre island, off the southwest coast of the Isle of Man. To get there, you board a small chuggy boat in either Port Erin or Port St Mary. If you're lucky, you may even get to take the wheel for a while, like I did on a boat called 'Shona.'

When you land, there's no cars or shops! If you are staying over, the warden will come and collect your bags on a little quad they call the 'Polaris.' The observatory isn't too far away, a short walk across the peaceful meadows will take you there. Time to explore!

Take a stroll (or a hike if you prefer), to see abandoned lighthouses that are now home to Chough and Raven with noisy nests and protective parents. Past the mist-nets designed to safely catch the birds for observation and ringing. If you're lucky you'll get to watch or even help the wardens release the birds. Their soft, tiny bodies are warm to the touch and it's a privilege to get this close to nature.

Find yourself a picnic spot along the rocky shore and watch the Oystercatchers gliding on the wind and sunbathing seals lolloping lazily at the cold water's edge.

Perhaps pick a field filled with bouncy bunny rabbits (can you spot the black one?) and rest weary legs.

Listen carefully for the songs of the Goldfinch, Linnet, Meadow Pipit and Spotted Fly Catcher to name just a few. The birds seem amplified by the quiet.

We learnt so much on our trip to the Calf of Man, and it made us realise how we all need to look after the wildlife around us. Did you know:

1. Puffins nest in burrows which they dig out near the tops of cliffs? They've placed plastic puffins on the Calf, to try and attract the real ones!
2. Gannets dive head-first at speeds of up to 60mph into the sea to catch fish. They form huge colonies of up to 20,000 birds, and the Isle of Man is an important feeding area for them.
3. There's no such thing as a seagull! We mostly have Herring Gulls on the Island, although we do have Common Gulls as well. You can tell the difference by the sound that they make and the shape and colour of their beaks.

We've just joined the Manx Birdlife Young Birders group, and look forward to working with others to protect our planet. It's such fun and very relaxing - I'd encourage everyone to get out in nature and do the same!

Runner up

Title: You don't have to go out looking for nature... IT'S EVERYWHERE!

Author: Liam Cannon

Age: 11

When I go out for walks with my family my favourite way to enjoy nature is to stop and enjoy all the things around me. Even when it looks like there's not much wildlife about, it is amazing what you can find if you look closer.

A couple days ago when we were at Colby Glen I was looking at a tree and then I realised there were harvestmen all over it, once I seen one I seen them all. They were huddled up in big groups because they do that to keep warm and protected, it is also thought that this is to share heat and humidity. I find

harvestmen very interesting, they are not spiders but they are still part the arachnids' family. The difference between them is that harvestmen don't produce webs and their body and head is fused.

That same day at Colby Glen we found a chopped down tree which, as bad as it seems, I looked closely at it and seen that it was covered all over with bugs and worms as if nature had re-claimed it. It was interesting seeing the variety of creatures on it and watching them all in a little mini world together and seeing how they behaved with each other.

You don't even have to go far on the Isle of Man to find nature when you're looking for the little things. Earlier this year I was out in my back garden and seen what looked like a big hyper bumble bee flying around my garden, but it happened to be a humming bird hawk moth. I can remember it going up to the flower pots and just hovering around them and I could see its proboscis poking into the flowers. I have never seen one before and found it fascinating to see and it stayed there for a while allowing me to watch it.

A similar thing happened the other week, me and my mum were out in the front garden, and we spotted a may bug on the fence. We held it and could feel its sticky legs on our skin as it crawled up our arms. The other day I came out of the gate outside of my garden and I saw an injured butterfly so we took it in and gave it its own enclosure and fed it sugar water and looked after it.

So really to sum it up, you don't have to look hard for nature... because it is everywhere. I can assure you, if you go to any path, park or glen and just look at the smaller details you will most likely see whole communities of little creepy crawlies going about their day.

Runner up

Title: The Jungle

Author: Poppy Christian

Age: 8

My favourite place is called 'The Jungle'. The jungle is a place out the back of our garden that's full of trees and nature with a little passageway that goes by Ballaugh river down to my friend's house.

The best thing about it is that there are little fish in the river and also that there are lots of little flies and birds. There is also a bird's nest by the little bridge. I know there are birds there because I have seen a little blue tit.

There's also a bees nest that is really close to the bridge but on a different tree. I once stepped on a bee and got stung but these bees don't sting so no one gets hurt. They just help to pollinate our flowers.

I've seen dead birds in the Jungle and I think they were killed by a few things, like dogs. My dad says they are caught by a Hen Harrier. We can see the feathers on the ground.

The jungle in spring is full of buds and some flowers and in summer loads of flowers come through and the buds turn into leaves. In autumn all the leaves fall off and our next door neighbour and my dad clear up some of the leaves and use them to fill in a hole on the river bank to stop it getting bigger.

I worry about the trees being old and not being looked after. Someone chopped them down to install a drain and it looked better when it was natural.

Once in summer the river totally dried up and we found a blue crow's egg on the river bed. In winter it gets so full sometimes the water splashes everywhere.

We have seen a lot of snails, there's a field called the Coffee Spout and that has pheasants, lambs, sheep and sometimes rabbits. In our garden we have seen pheasants, crows, grouse and hedgehogs. They mostly leave through the gate and escape to the jungle.

I like the Jungle because it changes all year round. Me and my family use the Jungle to get in and out of our house during TT but mostly I like playing down there with my friends. I am lucky to have so much nature by my house.

Runner up

Title: Cronk ny Arrey Laa

Author: River Kelly-Brown

Age: 12

We have climbed Cronk-ny-Arrey-Laa several times and it's always different. Once the path was covered with ice. Another time it was so windy I thought my hat was going to blow off. Then there was the time it was swelteringly hot. And recently we picked blaeberrries all the way along the path. This is about a walk that we did yesterday up Cronk-ny-Arrey-Laa.

When we got to the top of the hill I stopped to look around, and this is what I saw.

The rocks in front of me were dotted with lichen in a variety of different colours: red, yellow, green and white. There was not much moss to speak of, but I suppose that's because the rocks were so continually windswept.

Just beyond the rocks there was a border of green-brown scraggly grass, which after about half a metre intermingled with the heather. The heather continued unbroken but for a few stray rocks and a few more patches of green-brown grass. Darting over the grass were swallows doing some beautiful aerobatics – though to be honest it must be quite normal for the swallows – and some meadow-pipits flitting merrily over the heather.

Further away I could see one or two plantations and some fields. It was a very sunny day and the few clouds in the beautiful blue sky were very thin and wispy, like feathers, except for one small grey cloud over one of the distant hills.

Surprisingly though, the only bit of sea that I could see was a bay on my left-hand side, sparkling in the sunlight. That was because the rest of the sea beneath us was covered with cloud. At first glance the cloud reminded me of a huge feather duvet that had been dropped on the sea by a giant.

It was white as far as the eye could see, but there were a few variations of colour because of all the humps in the cloud. There were humps everywhere which rather gave the effect of the cloud being quilted closer to the shore. Towards the horizon it became smoother, with cloud castles popping up here and there.

The interesting thing was how tendrils of it kept on creeping on to the land, trying to steal things from view. A particularly interesting case of cloud-snatching was when a misty tendril that was vaguely attached to the sea of fog tried to take a car and for some reason it kept fizzling out before it got there.

In the immediate neighbourhood I could hear bees buzzing and the wind blowing (because at the top of the hill the wind is ALWAYS blowing harder than everywhere else). It really was very restful up there.

In conclusion, every time you take a walk on this island there's always something new to see, so I definitely recommend it.

Bird category runner up

Title: Chip thief!

Author: Austin Rogerson

Age: 10

Pictures? No

On a warm, sunny day on Port Erin beach, I sat down on the wall to enjoy my chips. As I picked up a hot, salty chip a stealthy, sneaky gull flew down, out of nowhere, and snatched it out of my hand! I watched in surprise as the brazen thief flew away with it to his nest on the cliff. Annoyed by the crook, I climbed the hill to the steep, jagged cliff to ask him why he stole my chip!

As I got closer to the cliff-top, being careful not to scare him, I saw him land gracefully in his nest where he shared **my** chip between two fat, fluffy chicks. They didn't have their adult colours yet, they were grey and speckled with black. They camouflaged really well into the rock of the cliff so I nearly didn't see them.

The gull suddenly spotted me. He stared at me with his little beady black eyes and said "what are you doing up here?"

"You stole my chip" I said in an angry voice.

"I'm sorry", said the gull "We were hungry! We'd much rather eat fish but we couldn't find any! We usually like a tasty mackerel or a juicy herring but people have been overfishing so we have no food."

I felt sad for them. They just wanted some food so they wouldn't starve. It made me feel sad for them that humans were taking away their food without thinking about nature and other animals.

If we're all going to live on this big planet together we need to think of how our actions affect each other and not overfish so that all other animals can survive as well.

So next time a cheeky gull steals **your** chips, think twice about it and don't hate him for trying to survive.
