

72

Seasons



**Look Closer;
How connecting with nature can improve health and wellbeing.**



The author of this report would like to thank the following people:

Thank you to the creators of the original ancient Japanese Calendar of *72 Seasons*

Thank you to Mika, a Japanese lady who mentioned the original concept in passing in 2018 on Facebook

Thank you to Kerry Morrison, an artist working with the Pendle Hill team who gave me the confidence to link the two ideas of *72 Seasons* and research into health and wellbeing during a lovely conversation in Barley, Pendle in March 2019

Thank you to the whole Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership team, especially Cathy Hopley who gave me the freedom to really run with this idea

Thank you to Cath Ford, for patiently drawing each season, and inspiring our Seekers with her beautiful artwork

Finally, a huge thank you to all our Seekers. We literally could not have done this without you!

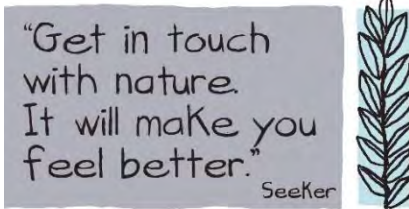
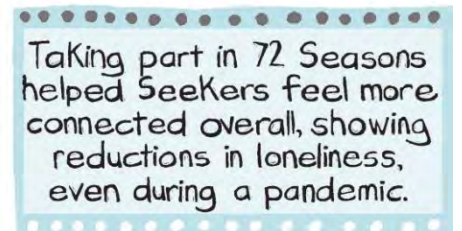
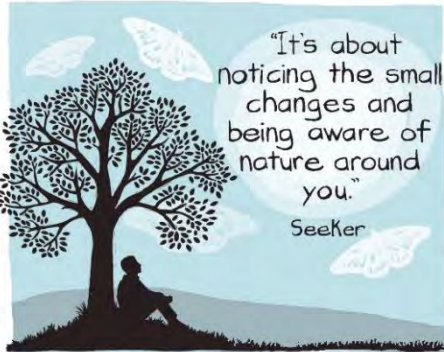


The
Evaluator
We'll figure it out for you

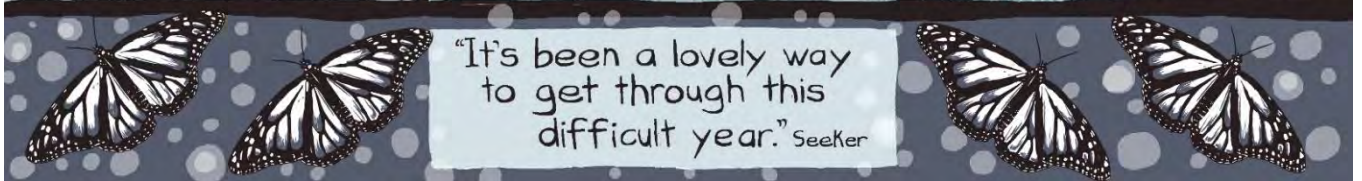
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	7
Background to PHLP and What's a Hill Worth	9
Outline methodology	10
Summary of engagement	12
Look closer at our Seekers:	17
Looking closer at health in general	26
Look closer at physical health and exercise	27
Look closer at use of health services	31
Look closer at sleep	32
Look closer at anger	35
Looking Closer at Seeker wellbeing	36
Looking closer at Seeker connection and loneliness.....	39
Look Closer at how engaged people were:.....	41
Look closer at how people felt when they joined	41
Look closer at Seeker's work status	43
Look closer at Seeker ages	44
Look closer at Seekers with disabilities	45
Conclusions	47
About The Evaluator.....	50
Appendix: Bibliography and Sources:	51
Appendix: Measurement Tools Research	54
Appendix: Sample Email.....	55
Appendix: Winter Blog.....	59
Appendix: Spring Blog	71
Appendix: Summer Blog.....	110
Appendix: Autumn Blog	136
Appendix: Scores segmented by how engaged people are.....	163





72 Seasons





"Connecting with nature definitely helps boost mood and wellbeing." Seeker



Seekers felt more connected to nature with average scores increasing by almost 10%



72 Seasons



Seekers noticed increases in their wellbeing, despite this project happening during a pandemic!



"Having the project has been brilliant and to have something that has continued, hasn't changed... has been 'better'." Seeker



Seekers saved 579 GP visits in 2020, saving £17,370 from the NHS on this measure.





72 Seasons

"It's great to be able to walk in nature, it's very uplifting when spirits are sometimes low."
Seeker



94% of Seekers agreed with the statement 'being connected to nature brings me joy', after taking part in the project.

Seekers read 2,730 emails about nature and completed 1,154 surveys about their health and wellbeing and what they had noticed.



Seekers noticed increased physical health, exercised more and felt less angry after taking part.



"It's provided a welcome break from Covid and a great opportunity to engage with the natural world."
Seeker

It started, as all projects start, with an idea that fitted the question surprisingly well. The question was, 'what's a hill worth?' Expanded this meant 'what does nature do for our well-being'. This was something we used to know instinctively. However, as the layers of modern life grow ever more complex, it's something we have forgotten. The answer, we think, was *72 Seasons*.

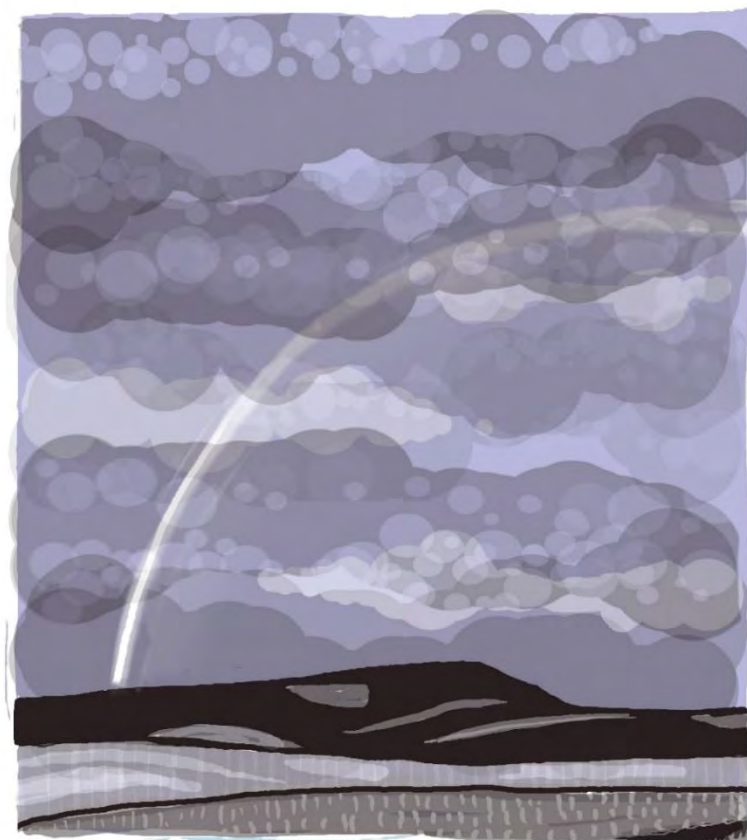
During 2020, millions of people enjoyed engaging with nature on a deeper level during lockdown, and hundreds of people around Pendle Hill took part in a dedicated adventure to note the seasons, and see if they could improve their health and wellbeing by doing so. This report is about that adventure and the ways we measured the impact of the project.

72 Seasons is originally an ancient natural calendar in Japan. It's possibly not on the radar of many people. We thought this could be the perfect fun tool to engage people with.

As this was a research project – we wanted to explore 'what's missing?' from our collective knowledge of health and green space. Lots of studies show that wellbeing *does* increase with time spent in nature - but hardly any have focussed on *why* or *how* – that is the connection we wanted to explore.

Research projects often require incentives to get people to take part: prize draws, payments, points towards qualifications, and so forth. We knew this wasn't the way we wanted to go; we wanted to give people a different reason to join in – fun. Doing something creative, and for people to enjoy themselves as we tried to inspire them to get closer to nature, was a consciously included part of the whole project.

We transcribed the seasons we thought could be spotted, and spent the best part of a year looking for these seasons alone. Then we launched a list of *72 Seasons*, or seasons around Pendle Hill, to our dedicated group of volunteers. We did not reveal the seasons all at once. We revealed them three at a time, through regular emails designed to encourage participants to experience the seasons we had spotted and to work towards a final, verified list of *72 Seasons*. This report tells the story of our year of adventure together and how that made people feel.



The Rainbow Hides Unseen

"Now that I am into it and know what to look for it is quite straight forward."

Seeker, End January 2020

"A lesson in observation"

Seeker, December 2020

All the ways we encouraged people to connect to the seasons were consistent with the five ways to wellbeing. This was a theme running throughout the project. One of these five ways to wellbeing is connection. We have thought about connection as looking closer; at paying more attention, and slowing down to notice details and subtle changes; to listen as well as look; to think about how the weather feels; to think about the wind on your skin or to feel the softness of snow or the voice of thunder; to look again at the sky and find the rainbows hiding.

In the five ways to well-being (connect, take notice, give back, keep learning and be active are the five ways to wellbeing originally identified by the New Economics Foundation in 2008¹) connection can often mean **connection** with other people - i.e., not loneliness. However, 2020 challenged that for everyone and really put our project to the test. We wanted to explore if a connection to the natural world can enhance well-being, and how can it help to replace the 'people connection' that everyone has suddenly lost.



Some emails encouraged people to use all their senses - almost all included facts to encourage **learning**; the whole project is around **noticing more**; and by being a research project, people are **giving back**. We hoped people would be **more active** and go out and about to seek the seasons, and this has mostly happened. It was hard to encourage too much activity during a pandemic, so we steered away from saying too much about walking and exploring. People connected with nature and with each other through our Facebook group and **new friendships** were formed.

"Indeed, two of the Wellcome Trust's 'active ingredients' for mental health are 'better access to green spaces' and 'more bodily movement'"² Coupled with the focus on connection built into the project, we felt confident that the simple and gentle reveals would over time impact on wellbeing and encourage a closer-to-nature relationship for those taking part.

"I have always been interested in nature but I think it has given me more time to stop and appreciate it more"

Seeker, May 2020



¹ <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing>

² A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020

This report is one of two pieces of research commissioned by the 'What's a Hill Worth?' project, funded by the Forest of Bowland AONB, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund as a part of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership (PHLP).

<https://www.pendlehillproject.com/>

The PHLP is a four-year funded programme of activity which seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape and heritage of the Pendle Hill area, whilst also seeking to re-connect people with the hill.

Pendle Hill is not quite a mountain, it stands at 557m, but it is an impressive hill that dominates the skyline of the Ribble Valley, Pendle, and Burnley in the eastern corner of Lancashire. It is a much-loved backdrop to the lives of many urban residents and it is a well-visited countryside destination - both now and in the past - for people seeking exercise, renewal, and inspiration.

The 'What's a Hill Worth?' project aims to identify the value this landscape offers in terms of the 'public goods' it supplies. These goods are the naturally occurring services provided by the land that supply us with things like clean air and water, carbon storage, biodiversity, and the various 'cultural' services provided that affect our health and wellbeing. The *72 Seasons* project focusses on these latter services and looks at how connecting to nature and the natural world around us might trigger improvements in our physical and mental wellbeing. Ultimately the 'value' of these services could be calculated from the savings that are made to health service costs and the wider economy (GP visits, mental health referrals, medication, and loss of production through employee sickness) by people connecting with nature.

As stated elsewhere in this report, *72 Seasons* was intended to run throughout 2020 and it was planned to include face-to-face work with groups of people involved in wellbeing projects that focussed on nature. The plan was to record participants' wellbeing and nature connected-ness scores - before and after a series of supported outdoor nature sessions - in order to see what the impacts were. Our online group were also recruited to record the impact of small-scale connections on their wellbeing scores. Due to the massive and unexpected impact of the Coronavirus in 2020, the research did not go as planned but continued very effectively online with both existing and new recruits, or Seekers.

Cathy Hopley

Programme Manager

Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Scheme

Forest of Bowland AONB

OUTLINE METHODOLOGY

This project began in March 2019, starting with a research and development project to look at the value of nature to health and wellbeing.

Cathy Hopley, project manager for PHLP explained, "Many people, particularly those under 40 maybe, and certainly more town and city-dwellers, have grown up without those connections to nature that some of us take for granted. In the past we were much more connected and felt the impact and benefits more keenly." The two 'what's a hill worth?' projects were designed to address that knowledge gap.

The project methodology in full included:

- Research and review of a wide range of existing literature including meta-analysis reports and large-scoped research reports. At first the onus was to find what already existed and what was missing.
- Interviews with people working in the field: Daveen Wallis and Rhoda Wilkinson from Lancashire Wildlife Trust about The Myplace programme; Sharon Robson from the NHS about procurement and a strategic overview of NHS priorities; Clive Escreet from the Up and Active Project in Lancashire; Clare Olver from Merseyforest learning about their Natural Health Service projects; Nick Robinson from Community Restart; Dr Santhosh David, a local GP about his views on health and wellbeing and nature; and Kerry Morrison, an artist working on a peat project on Pendle Hill about environmental art, international art, and how the shepherd's hut could be used.
- Further research into connection as the main gap in research.
- Adapting the Japanese seasons into those that could be spotted in the UK and which were easy to spot from a range of locations, for people with disabilities, for people with busy working lives.
- Designing and creating measurement tools to measure both connection and health and wellbeing changes.
- Sharing the idea with a range of interested parties.
- Working with artist Cath Ford to plan a way to visually share the seasons and aid both connection and 'spotting'.
- People were encouraged to join the project at four different times during the year. Once they joined, we started to refer to them as Seekers. The project was marketed with the call to action 'come on an adventure in nature'.
- Recruiting participants: Seekers were recruited through a mix of marketing methods including attending events locally; standing on street corners; call-outs in regional and local print media; conversations live on Radio Lancashire; Facebook adverts over Christmas 2019; sharing information via email; and to marketing databases from the project itself and many partners. Once the first season has happened, seekers were encouraged to tell a friend and share the message, although we only worked with people who lived, worked or played in the locale of Pendle Hill itself.
- Running the project itself; this included sending emails sharing the seasons on a regular basis, creating seven questionnaires for each umbrella-season, reading feedback and adapting communications



1 Kirsty Rose Parker, project creator, talking to potential Seekers, Clitheroe, September 2019



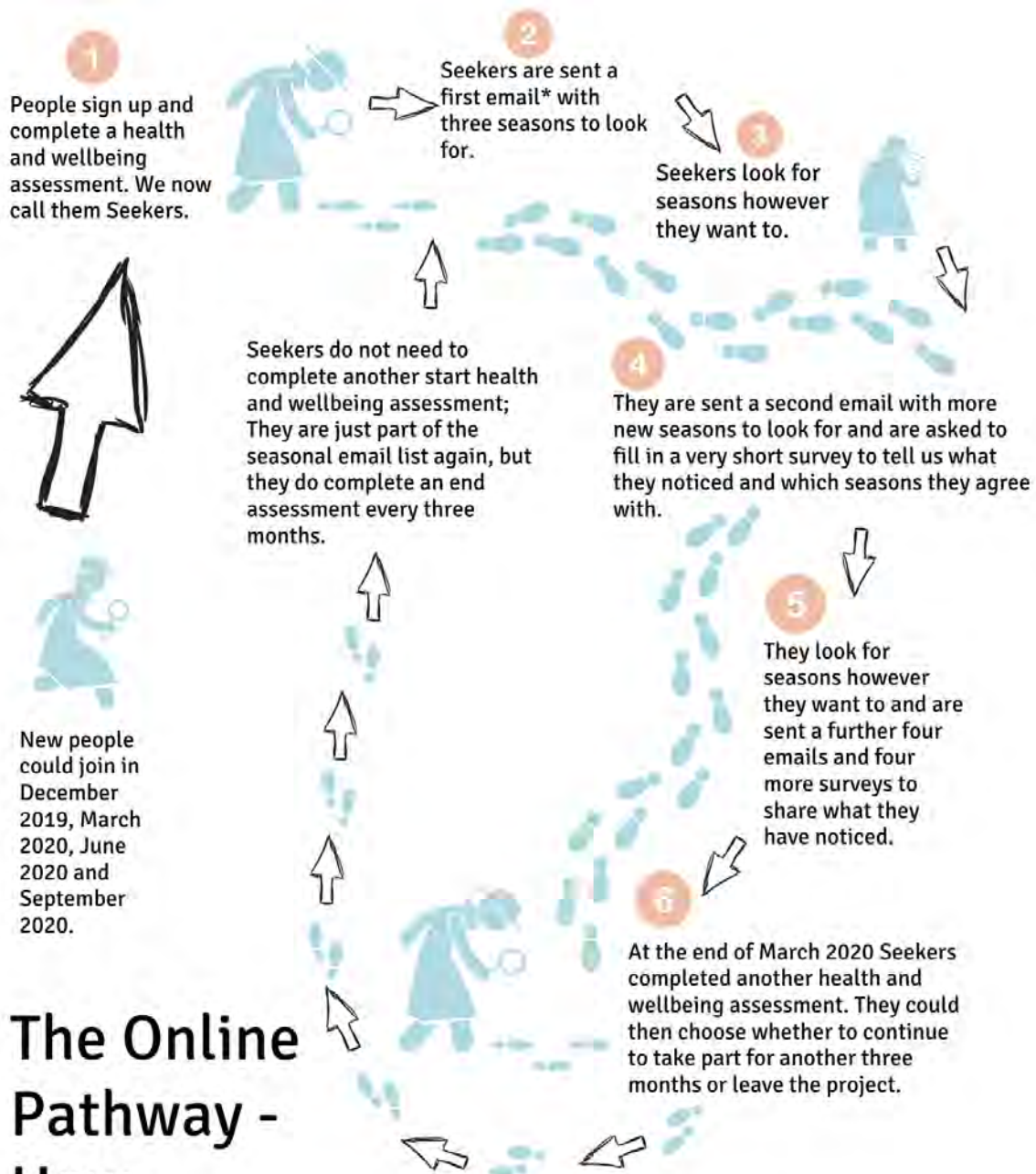
2 Conversations around the project encouraged people to say what they had noticed recently, and these were pinned to 'Corky' - the mobile shepherd's hut designed to raise awareness of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership project



3 Newspaper article about the project from December 2019

where needed, administrating a Facebook group where people could meet other seekers, and blogging about the seasons.

- Redesigning the project to be Covid-secure.
- Working with filmmakers Huckleberry Films to create a film of the projects' impact.
- Analysing all the results in detail to understand the impact.
- Writing this report to bring the whole project together and understand the wider conclusions we can draw from the work and experiences of those involved.



The Online Pathway - How Seekers took part online.

*Emails included different ways to connect with nature; some discussed feelings, movement, senses (including touch, smell and see), others contained knowledge, festivals, poems, colour charts, things to listen out for, or helped to raise awareness of particular flowers and birds, animal behaviour, others referred to the weather. All were suggestions and ideas and Seekers were encouraged to find their own way to connect.

When designing the ways we would encourage connection, we were particularly inspired by the work of Dr Miles Richardson, at the University of Derby, who has pioneered ways to improve connection to nature. Dr Richardson has identified five pathways to nature connection³:

- Beauty: finding beauty in the natural world, or connecting with nature through poetry, music, or art.
- Meaning: honouring and celebrating the cycles and signs of nature, such as 'busy as a bee' or 'heart of oak'.
- Compassion: looking after nature as you would look after yourself, taking actions that are good for nature.
- Senses: actively engaging with nature through the senses, for example listening to birdsong or smelling flowers.
- Emotion: tuning into an emotional bond with nature, or reflecting on the positive feeling's nature can inspire.

The emails we sent included: encouraging people to give snowdrops a sniff; stamping on frosty puddles; listening to birds; matching the colours of the earth and trees around you to a colour chart; watching the birds change behaviour as they build nests; telling the stories of older festivals like Hocktide; rhymes about oak and ash trees, and the ice saints of May; times when different flowers bloom; when the days are long; when the roses smell; when winds blow; when morning sunshine lights the grass; when it's harvest time; when berries dance in the wind; when it's time for the leaves to change colour; when the skies are dark; and when snow falls.

In total, Seekers read 2,730 emails about nature in total during the project.

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT



In total 310 different individuals took part in the project. Some stayed for the whole year, some just one season. Although we had initially planned some online only work, and some face to face, the impact of the pandemic was that in the end the project ran 100% remotely.

The project had initial targets of 120 people to complete a start questionnaire and 80 people to complete an end questionnaire. In the end both of these targets were exceeded, with 214 people completing start assessments of health and wellbeing and 251 Seekers completed end assessments (these

are not all different people, some are Seekers who stayed all year - who completed one start assessment and four end assessments - while some completed only an end assessment, but not a start one) against an original target of 80. In total 310 different people took part in the project, and not everyone completed a start and end assessment as we had hoped. All the assessments were anonymous, although we used a tracking code, which meant we could analyse who had taken part more than average, and who less than average. In addition to the health and wellbeing measurements, Seekers filled out short questionnaires to tell us what they noticed 24 times during the year. In total, Seekers read 2,730 emails about nature and 1,154 surveys were received and

This project ran 100% remotely during 2020, and was a fully Covid-safe project for people to take part in.



³ <http://ncxrg.wp.derby.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2021/04/NatureMe-Booklet-2021.pdf>

analysed. A further 127 Seekers joined a Facebook group and shared their experience of *72 Seasons* with each other.

We know that people were very engaged and spent a lot of time being Seekers. In December we asked them to estimate the amount of time they normally spent in an average week being a Seeker and the answer was an average of 51 minutes. We had expected the average to be perhaps 5 or 10 minutes, and were surprised how much people had taken this to heart and made it a part of their lives.

We understand that 78 people were highly engaged in the project, and assumed only these people will spend 51 minutes a week, and if we cautiously estimate that the rest will have participated for just 30 minutes (the time it takes to complete one health and wellbeing questionnaire, read 2 emails, and participate in just two seasons-seeking questionnaires), this means our Seekers spent 213, 816 minutes taking part in the project in 2020. That's 3,564 hours volunteered! Volunteers donated over 3,500 hours of their time in 2020. National Lottery Heritage Fund recommends a volunteer value of £50 per day. That's an in-kind contribution of £25,000 to the project.


We must also acknowledge right from the start that we ran a year-long research project all about health and wellbeing during one of the most turbulent years in recent history, which was also a period of time where our health and wellbeing were under huge pressure; where our lives were disrupted in a dramatic way. Our worlds became smaller, doors were closed, family separated, and many of the 'fun' parts of our lives were removed with no safety net to catch us.

"There are three different layers to the crisis all playing out simultaneously: a public health emergency; an economic disaster; and a social and cultural crisis. All of these layers have had huge mental health impacts, with some parts of the population – young people, ethnic minorities, women, people living in poverty, the elderly – disproportionately exposed." A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

"I am enjoying it, I am noticing things and I think, when I notice them, spending a little more time just noticing and watching."


Seeker, End January 2020

"I think the project has been done very well. The questions were framed simply."

Seeker, January 2021 


There is no way of unravelling our results from the impact of Covid-19 and indeed we would not try to, as that would be denying our Seekers' truth and experience in 2020. The project itself was forced to adapt. Originally planned to run online and attract those with busy lives, and to compare that to those who were taking part in nature-based activities in person, the project became an entirely online project. The Facebook group where Seekers were able to share their own photographs, and to be a place to connect with others in a gentle and light-touch way, became a strong component to the project.

"It's a form of creativity I have been able to fit in to my busy life that I have really enjoyed sharing with others, in a new form of being sociable - I haven't really used Facebook before"


Seeker, May 2020 

"It has given me a new adventure into the world of Facebook, a fresh way to explore the local nature that I love and am blessed to be surrounded by and this wonderful, liberating way of being able to share, learn and appreciate it further. It has served as a distraction from coronavirus, a pleasure to enjoy away from the necessary focus on living through it, and it's given me something else to talk about with people.

Thank you"

Seeker, Mid August 2020  

The best measure is, of course, people taking part and continuing to take part. People certainly do vote with their feet, and leave if not given a reason to stay. In this regard, ^{72 Seasons} did certainly deliver, surpassing all targets despite running during a global pandemic.

"Definitely makes you think more about nature & look out for things. And makes you realise how important the natural world is to health & well being generally." Seeker, May 2020 

FILM OF PARTICIPANTS TELLING THE STORY OF 72 SEASONS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojTv4-lg61k>

Filmed during November 2020, with appropriate Covid-safe measures in place.

A NOTE ABOUT COVID

How much claim can ^{72 Seasons} take, especially during 2020? **"Nature and green space – one survey suggested that 63% of people felt more connected to nature during lockdown"**⁴

Where possible, we have compared results to a control group. Originally, we had planned to compare and contrast our online Seekers with groups who were being supported face-to-face through a range of nature-based projects, including volunteers on the People Enjoying Nature Group, attendees at Community Restart, and other projects including those running with Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Ribble Rivers Trust, and even with local rambling groups. Sadly, due to the pandemic, none of these groups have managed to sustain regular contact in 2020 and the decision was taken to move to a wholly online programme.

Therefore, our control group is based upon some independent research carried out by The Evaluator, with a self-selected group of people from the Pendle community in April and May 2020, and again in January 2021. Not intended to be a control group at the time, the research was carried out as a way of looking at how we were doing as a local community and helping people to benchmark their results, particularly in January 2021 when the research was changed to enable people to get instant feedback on their scores. It is usable as control group data as we asked many of the same questions, and can be used to provide a useful steer where those taking part in ^{72 Seasons} differ from the rest of the local population during the pandemic.

Covid Note: Pendle was one of the worst-hit areas during 2020 and has been in lockdown or maximum restrictions for all but a few weeks between 23 March 2020 and 31 December 2020. At one point Pendle had the worst Coronavirus rates in the whole of the United Kingdom (possibly the world!). This was dramatically reported across media channels.⁵

⁴ A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

⁵ For example, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/12344969/coronavirus-cases-hotspot-pendle-lancashire-preston/>



The Butterbur Flowers

Figure 1 The Butterbur Flowers; season from 11-15 March. Illustration used in the project, by artist Cath Ford.

LOOK CLOSER AT OUR SEEKERS:

Our Seekers were recruited from a range of sources and we hoped to reach a wide range of people which is a key aim of the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

84% of those taking part were female, and only 16% male.

The project overwhelmingly reached White British Seekers, who made up 96% of ethnicities. We had planned in-person activities would try to reach more Asian participants, particularly in Pendle where around 20% of residents are from an Asian - Pakistani background.

Unfortunately, this part of the project was lost with the move to online only. Exploring how people who did not grow up in the British countryside take to the seasons is something we remain committed to, and we shall continue to look for options to explore that work further in the future.

The MENE survey found that **“engagement is unequal; low income, ethnic minority, and old age groups are less likely to visit”** ... this is a survey of access to green space, from Natural England. And that **“Adults and children from black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to spend time in the natural environment than those from white backgrounds.”**⁶

England as a whole has 17.6% of people having an activity-limiting health problem or disability, with 8.3% of people limited a lot and 9.3% limited a little⁷. We have over-reached disabled individuals, although

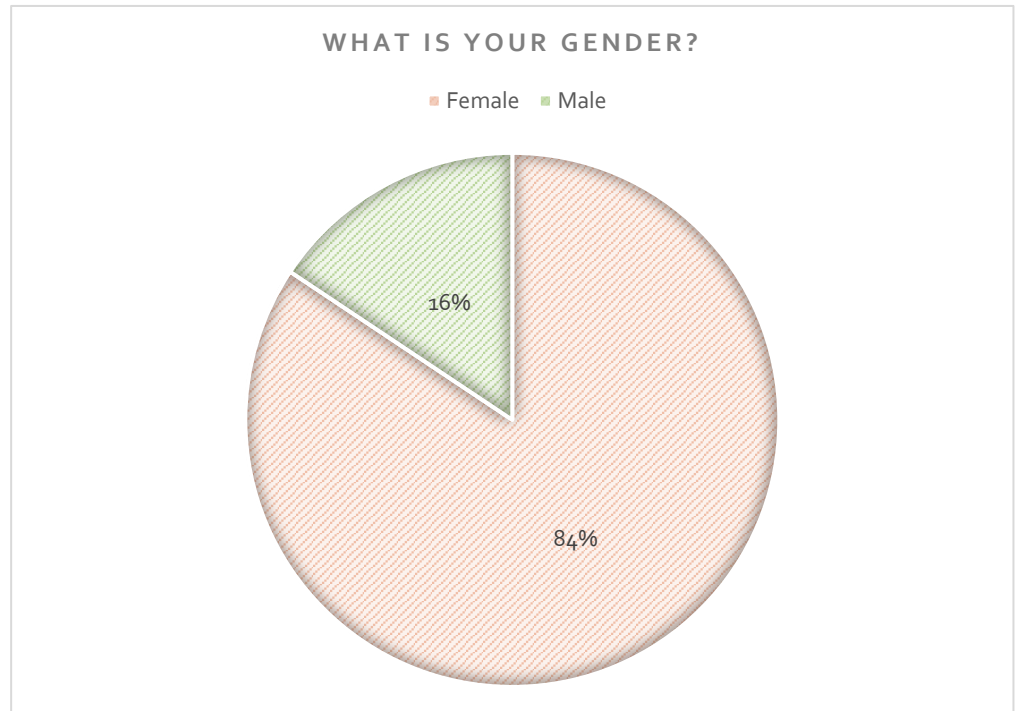


Figure 2 Seeker gender

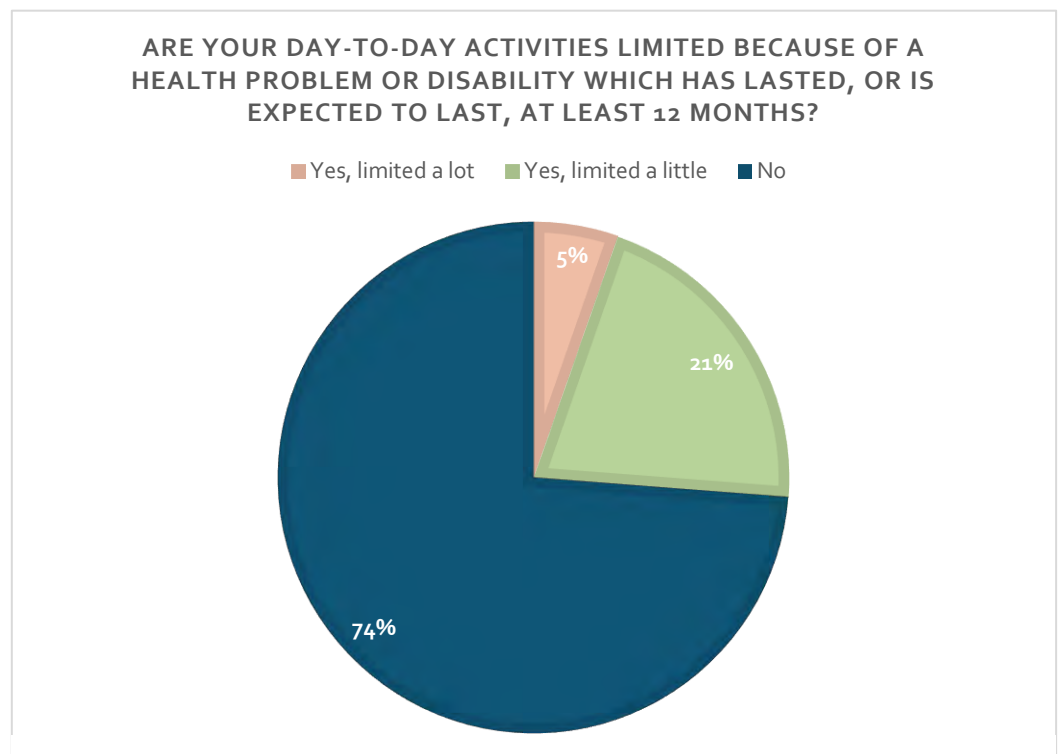


Figure 3 Seeker disability

⁶ MENE Survey from Natural England.

⁷ ONS 2011

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilityinenglandandwales/2013-01-30>

we haven't reached as many people whose health limited their activities a lot. Poor health and disability are often seen as barriers to engaging with nature.⁸

The ages of people taking part ranged from 27 years old to 87 years old. Two thirds of Seekers were aged between 40 and 65 while taking part in the project. Those taking part who lived in the Ribble Valley were more likely to be older; 52% of all Ribble Valley residents taking part were over 60 years old.

The working status of Seekers was mostly split between working part time, working full time, and retired. Pleasingly, as the project was designed to include people who worked full time, 37% of our Seekers were in full time work. A further 22% were working part time and 25% were retired.

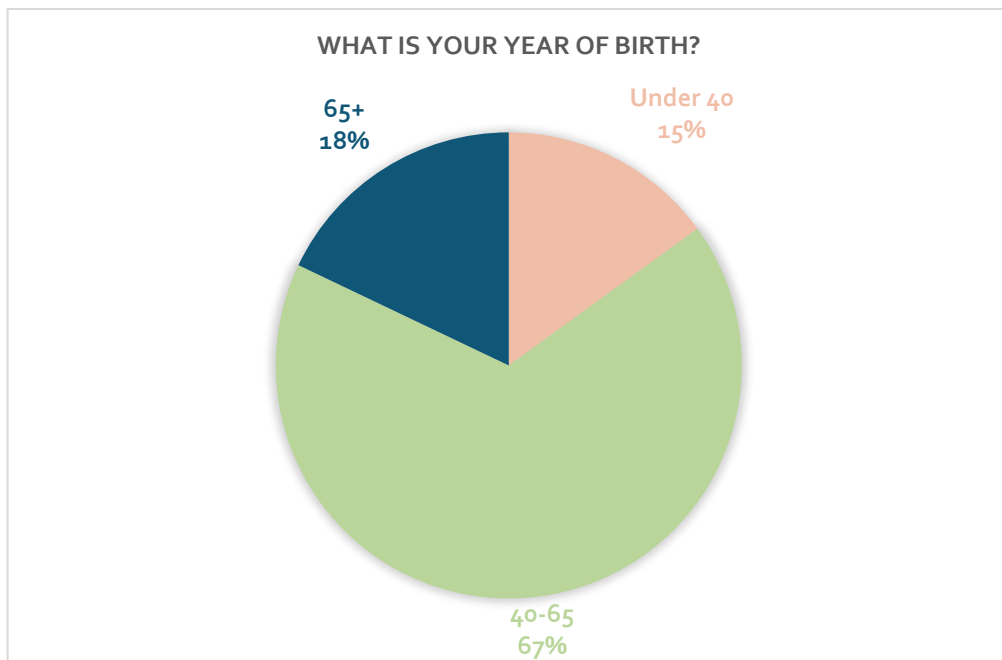


Figure 4 Seeker ages

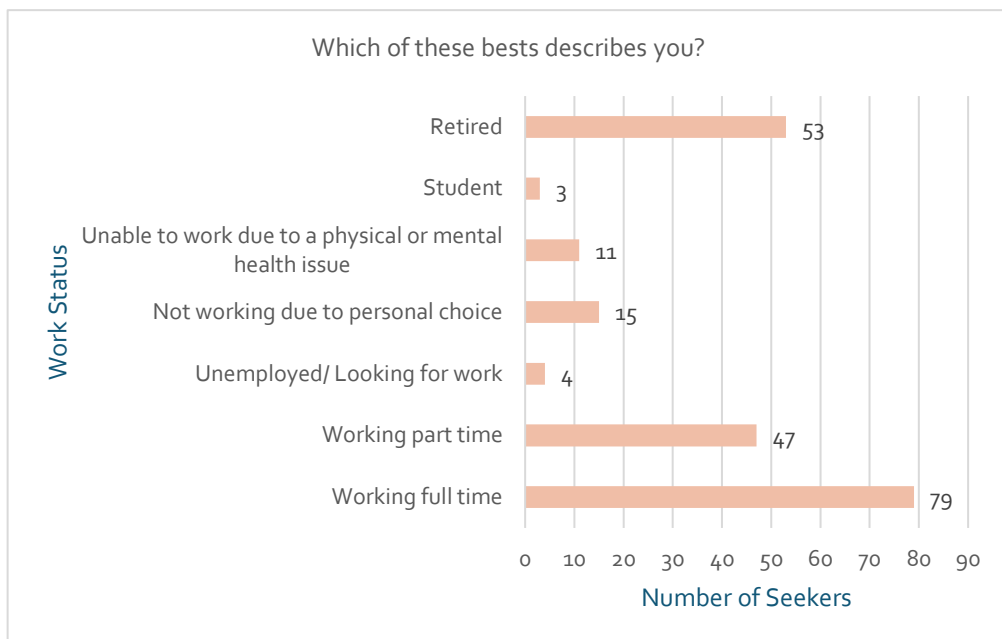


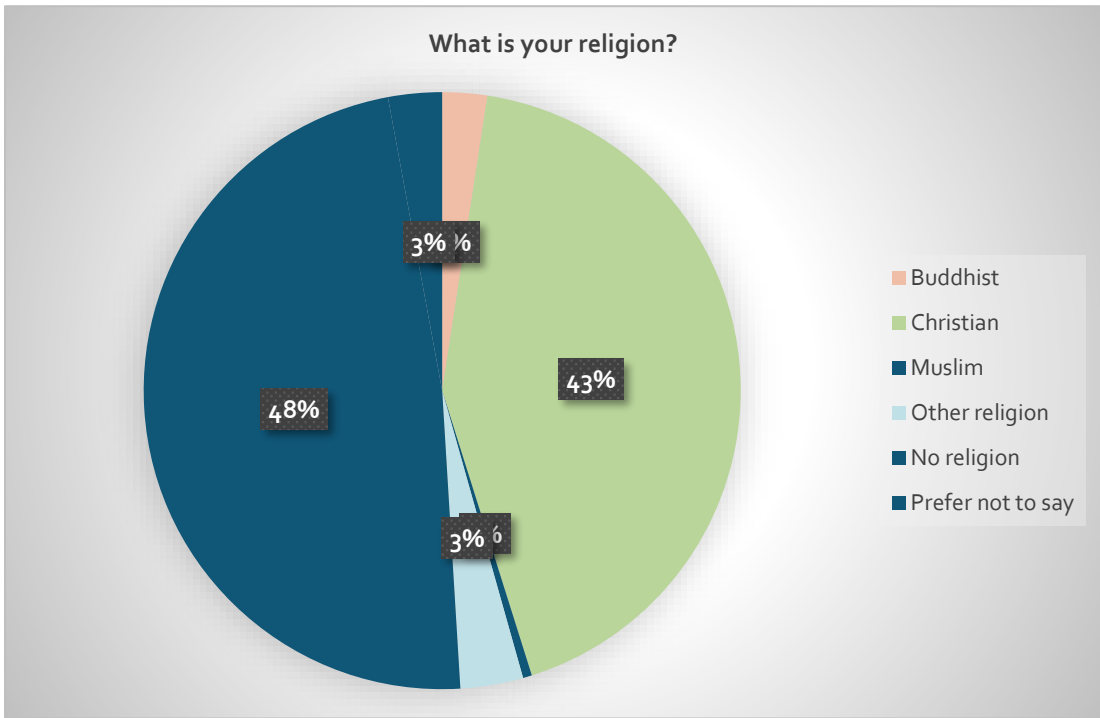
Figure 5 Seeker work status

⁸ Source Natural England MENE Survey



The Days Are Long

Figure 6 The Days are Long; Season from 21-26 June. Illustration used in the project by Cath Ford.



We also asked Seekers about religion; 43% are Christian, but the majority (48%) have no religion. 6% selected other religions and 3% preferred not to say.

The project aimed to reach people from all sides of the hill, and postcodes show the geographical spread was fairly even with small groupings in Clitheroe and Nelson.

Figure 7 Seeker religion

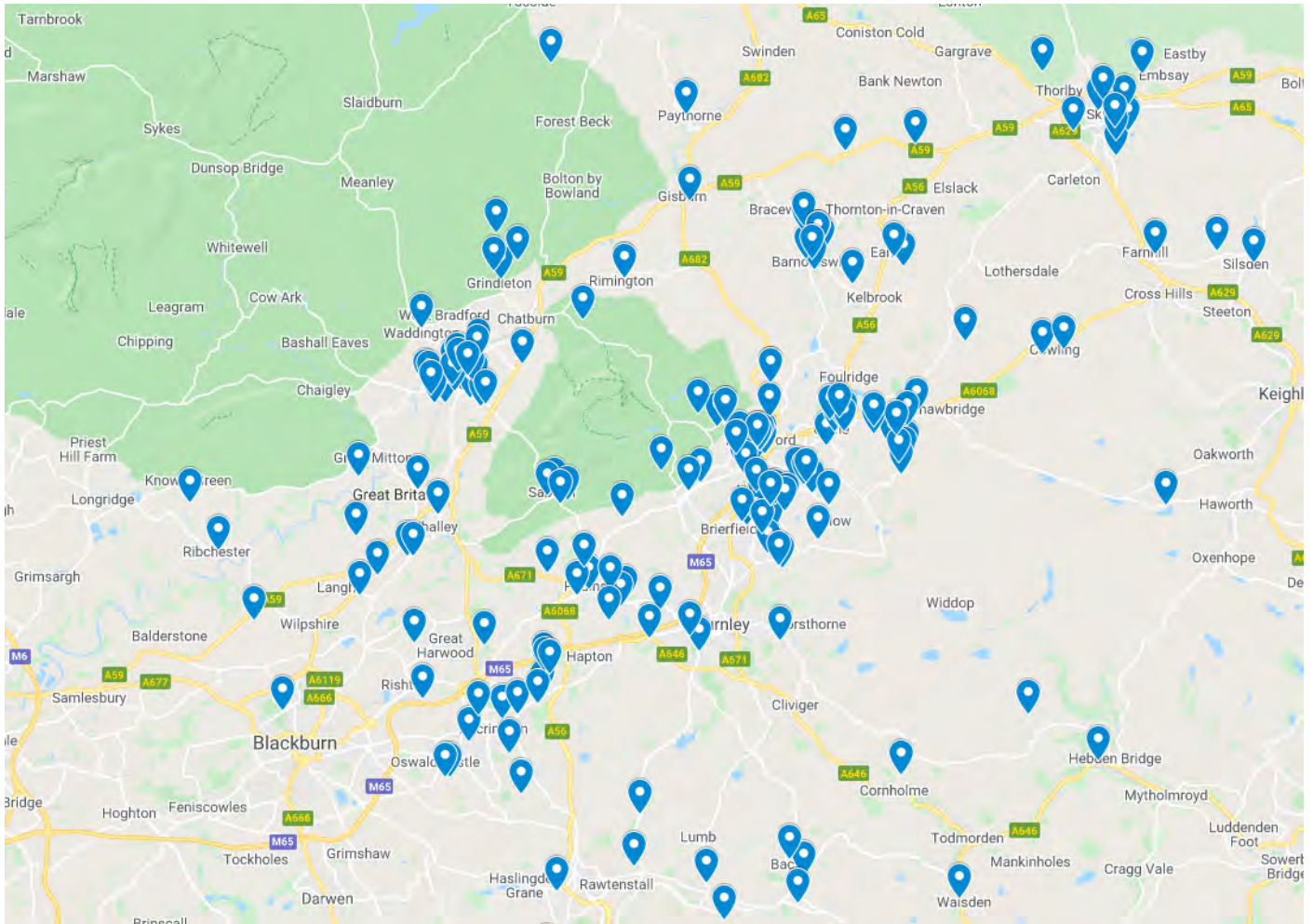


Figure 8 Map of Seeker home postcodes

IMD1	IMD2	IMD3	IMD4	IMD5
17	17	22	16	16
IMD6	IMD7	IMD8	IMD9	IMD10
34	12	37	26	9

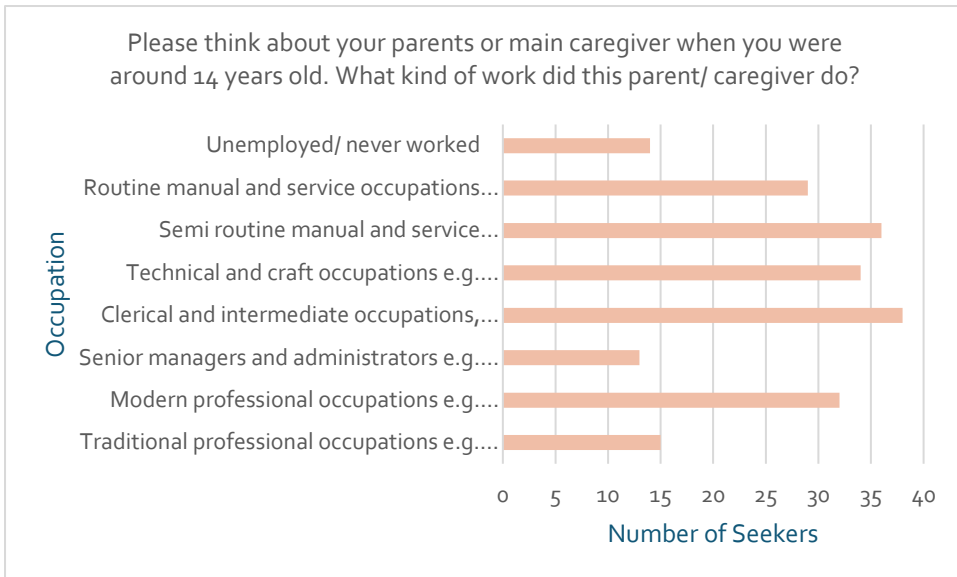
Figure 9 Indices of multiple deprivation analysis

We compared the postcodes of our Seekers with the indices of multiple deprivation. A perfect spread would be around 20 (10% of our sample) people in each section, as they are designed to rank the population. The indices of multiple deprivation are essentially a measure of poverty and the IMD decile is calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas of England in order, and divide them into 10 equal groups. Those in group 1 are therefore in the 10% most deprived areas in the UK. Those in group 10 are in the 10% least deprived areas in the UK.

This means a total of 40% of our Seekers live in the five most deprived areas, and 60% are from the five least deprived. 9% of people taking part were from the most deprived area, which was almost all Pendle Seekers, with a couple of Seekers from similarly deprived areas in Hyndburn.

Reaching 40% of people from the most deprived areas is a real achievement. **“Our data shows people from the most deprived areas are least likely to visit nature frequently. Analyses of green space quantity and quality across England show that the most affluent 20 per cent of wards in England have five times more parks and general greenspaces than the most deprived ten per cent of wards”**⁹

⁹ MENE Survey from Natural England.



In addition, we asked about socio-economic backgrounds of people by asking what kind of work their parents did when the Seekers were 14. On average 26% of our Seekers fell into the top socio-economic background – professional and senior managers, 37% were from a clerical and technical background and 31% were from a routine background. 6% of those taking part had parents who were unemployed or had never worked.

Figure 10 Seeker Socio-economic background

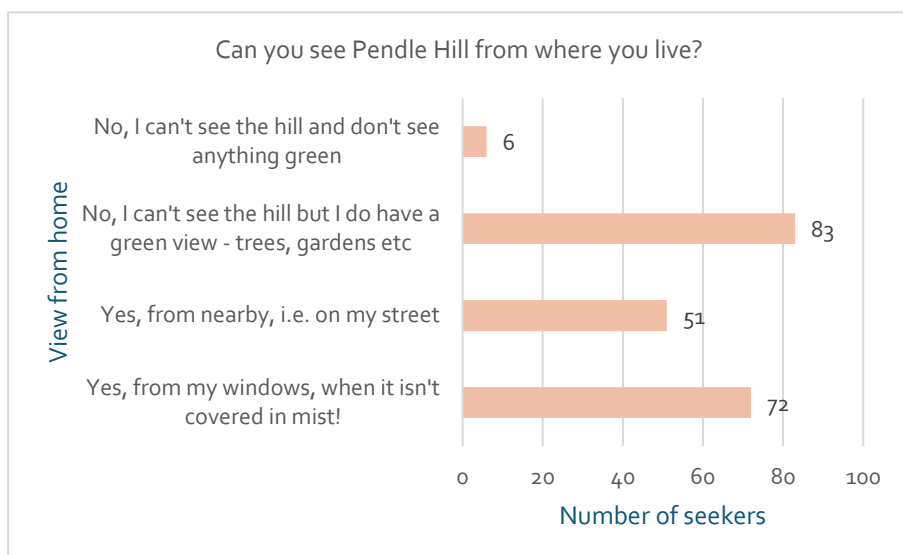


Figure 11 Seeker green views

The people we reached through this project – were not your ‘usual suspects’ when it comes to landscape or ecological volunteering. Only 12% were volunteering somewhere else when they joined - 80% were not taking part in any project like this. The 16 other responses included people who had allotments and took part in the RSPB big bird garden watch, or people who volunteered at a Parkrun, for example. Someone volunteered with Mountain Rescue and one other had their own small farm. Most people did have a green view and just over half would see Pendle Hill from their windows or on their street. This means we did successfully reach our core geographic audience.

We asked people how often they took part in the following activities:

Activity	Average at Start	End March 2020	End June 2020	End September 2020	End December 2020
Gardening	3.0	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.2
Go for a walk in the park, by the canal or river, or in any green space	3.6	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.2
Cycle in the park, by the canal or river, or in any green space	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.7
Walk somewhere a bit more remote/ in the great outdoors	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.5
Cycle somewhere a bit more remote/ in the great outdoors	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.6
Walk around Pendle Hill	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.6
Climb Pendle Hill	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.2

Figure 12 Seeker activities; average scores over time

A higher number shows people doing this more often. We can see people more likely to go for walks as the year and the project progresses, particularly in the two lockdown periods. Climbing Pendle Hill does see a fall, but for most of the year people were encouraged to walk locally and at one point Barley Village Car Park (the main access point to the hill) was closed to discourage visitors to the hill.

Every time we look at our results, we need to look through a Covid-lens. The start is the most ‘normal’ data we have as it was mostly completed by people before the pandemic. We have aggregated the start data, but almost 90% of people joining the project did so in December and January 2020. At the end of Winter, people had been taking part in the project for 12 weeks, although lockdown began just one week before we ended Winter. These results therefore relate to a large proportion of normality – 11 of the 12 weeks, but also to the first shocking impact of being locked-down as a nation. By the end of June 2020, we were coming towards the end of lockdown, in fact hairdressers opened again two days after we ended the ‘Spring’ section

of our project and as people were completing the Spring health and wellbeing survey that these results refer to. At the end of September, however, lockdown was a distant memory and eat out to help out had happened - but another lockdown was rumoured to be coming. At the end of December, we were heading into lockdown number three, which means results from the end of the whole project included two lockdowns and may have been more negative than expected because of that.

We wanted to know if our Seekers preferred a particular season, but these were actually quite well spread out. 5.5% of people did not have a favourite, 12% were drawn to Winter, 21% to Summer, 28% to Autumn, and 34% were drawn to Spring.

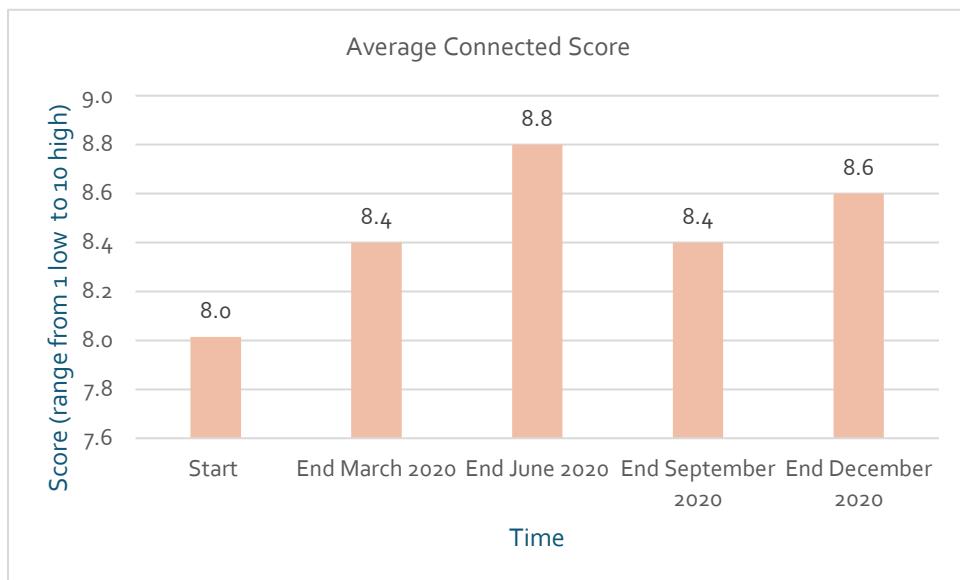



Figure 13 Seeker connected to nature score; average over time

We asked people how much they agreed with the statement 'I feel connected to nature', where the answer was a scale of 1-10, where 10 was most connected and 1 was least connected.


The average at the start was 8, with a full range of answers from 1-10 indicating a wide range of people taking part - at least some of whom felt very disconnected from nature.

Over time the range ended up between 3 and 10, indicating that connection levels were raised for every single person at the end of the project.

"Really interesting, and the idea of 72 seasons is great. The short seasons keep you focused and interested, and it made me think about nature even more as you look for little signs of mini seasons. Some of the seasons suggested were about change or events I had noticed, but hadn't attached significance to, I liked this as it made me think about what I saw rather than just 'seeing' it."

Seeker, May 2020 

"It really has been a highlight for me, a treat and something to look forward to catching up on. Really enjoyed all the seasons, information, challenges, surprises, contributions, the learning, the fun and joy of the findings"

Seeker, December 2020 

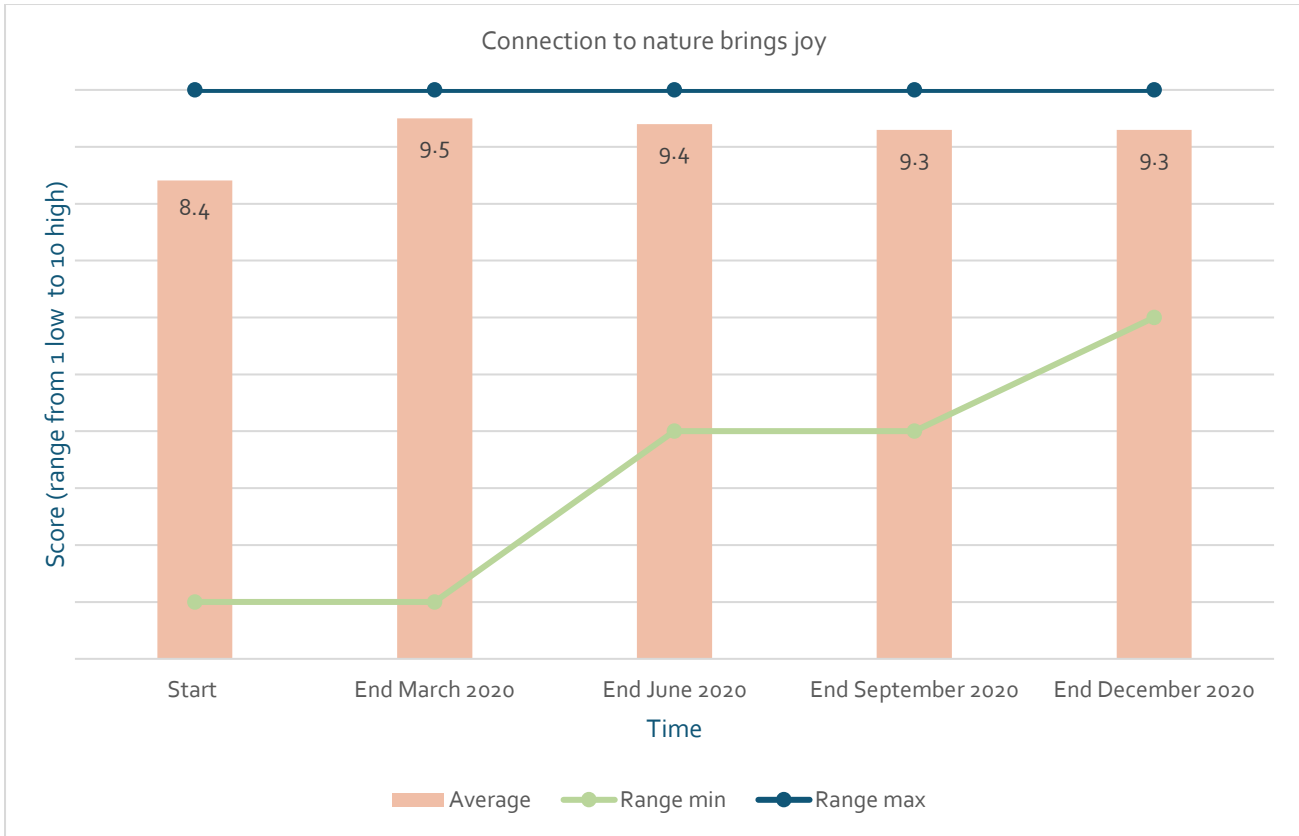
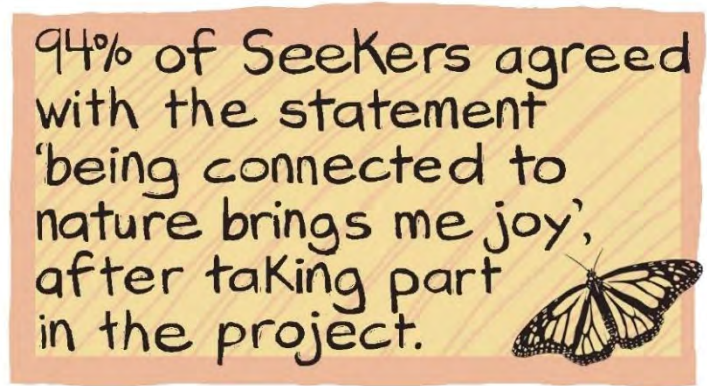


Figure 14 Seeker connected to nature brings me joy score; average over time

We also asked people how much they agreed with the statement: 'Being connected to nature brings me joy', which was answered using a scale of 1-10, where 10 was most connected and 1 was least connected. The average at the start was 8.4, with a full range of answers from 1-10, indicating a wide range of people taking part - at least some of whom felt very disconnected from the joy that nature can bring.

Over time the range ended up at between 4 and 10, indicating that no one felt as disconnected at the end of the project as they had at first. It did take time to build this connection, although average scores improved in just 12 weeks - the range took 6 months to see an improvement for all, and 12 months to see large improvements.

People taking part in *72 Seasons* felt more connected to nature, but they found more changes in the joy that that connection brought them.

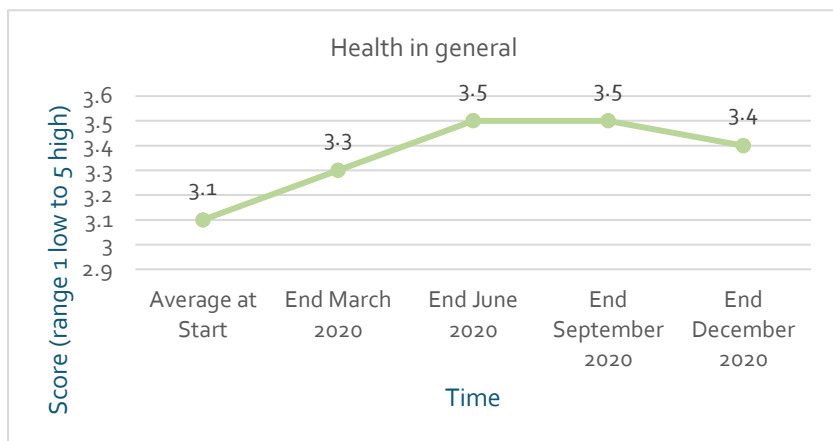


One Seeker explained in May 2020 how they had been engaging with 72 Seasons, "Nature has always been a big part of my life, part of my being. I appreciate it especially when walking, or out on our tandem, but because we were researching walks for our village community, I decided to be guided by 72 Seasons observation targets which led on to recording many many plants, flowers, bushes, trees and insects more keenly and as spring progressed. I took images from March 13th onwards when we self-isolated, and the colour, delicacy and beauty of watching spring unfold have been a real delight and a very, very soothing and calming experience. The observation and picture taking have really slowed us down, but the pace has been a relief from the speed of normal life, and I have enjoyed that, but maybe it has been a frustration for my husband from time to time.... he has wanted to make faster progress with our village walks project!!"

"Connecting with nature definitely helps boost mood and wellbeing." Seeker

At the end of September, we asked if there is anything we could do better and one Seeker answered "Nothing. All is well."

LOOKING CLOSER AT HEALTH IN GENERAL



We asked Seekers how they rated their own health and monitored this over the whole year. Seekers could choose: poor (1), fair (2), good (3), very good (4), and excellent (5). Scores increased on average across the year from 3.1 to 3.4 with a peak in June and September. This represents an improvement in self-reported own health in general. This means across the project most people saw improvements in their health. The average score here, a 3 relates to 'good' health

Figure 15 Seeker health in general score; average over time

"It makes me stop look and listen more. I look up and down not just in front 😊"

Seeker, May 2020 ❄️❄️❄️

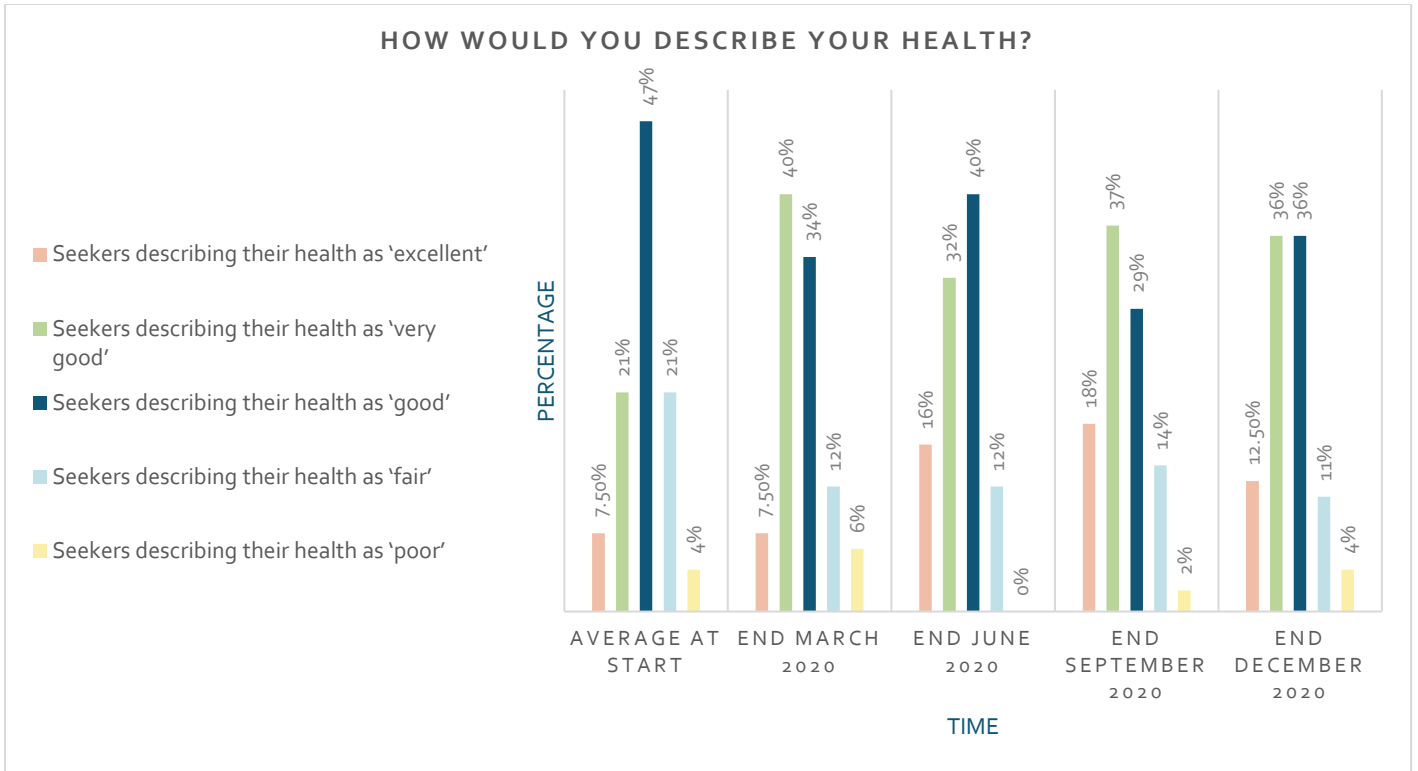


Figure 16 Seeker overall health changes

In total just 7.5% of people described their health as 'excellent' at the start of the project, but that rose to 12.5% by the end of the project and had a large increase to 18% rating their health as 'excellent' at the end of September. 20% of people described their health as 'very good' at the start of the programme and this increased to 40% just 12 weeks later. Although people with poor health remained a fairly constant 4% during the year, we saw significant falls in people describing their health as 'fair' from 21% at the start of the year to just 11% at the end.

At the start of the project, the most popular answer was to say they had 'good health' and only 28.5% of people thought their health was better than that. By the end of the year, 'good health' tied for popularity with 'very good health' and 48.5% of people thought their health was better than 'good'.

LOOK CLOSER AT PHYSICAL HEALTH AND EXERCISE

Throughout the year we observed large changes in the amount of exercise people took. The average number of days people took some exercise increased by more than one whole day a week during the year, and peaked in the summer with an increase of 23% more exercise each week, on average.

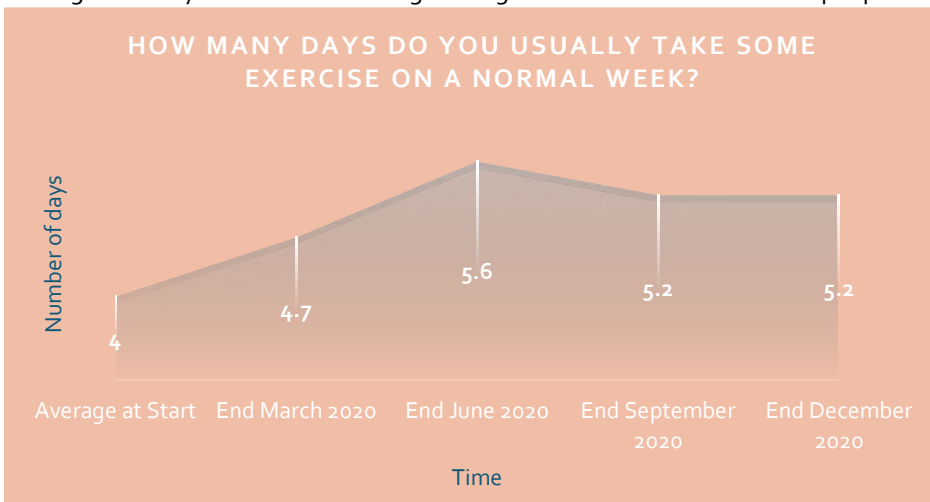


Figure 17 Seeker number of days exercising; average over time

The average number of days people took some exercise increased by more than one whole day a week during the year, and peaked in the summer with an increase of 23% more exercise each week, on average.

Again, the large increases could well be due to the pandemic, as once a day exercise outside the house was allowed and may have become more desirable due to its scarcity, alongside the knowledge that exercise was important for health and that Covid-19 was worse for people whose health was worse.

Looking at exercise in a bit more detail, we can see that there were large increases in the number of people exercising every day, and huge and significant falls in the number of people not exercising. When we started this project, the most popular answer was to never exercise, by the end of the project the most popular answer was to exercise 7 days a week. That is a massive change.

Health Questions	Average at Start	End March 2020	End June 2020	End September 2020	End December 2020
How many days do you usually take some exercise on a normal week?	4.0	4.7	5.6	5.2	5.2
People exercising 0 days	21%	6%	0	0	0
People exercising 7 days	6%	39%	52%	42%	38%

Figure 18 Seekers exercising 0 and 7 days; number over time

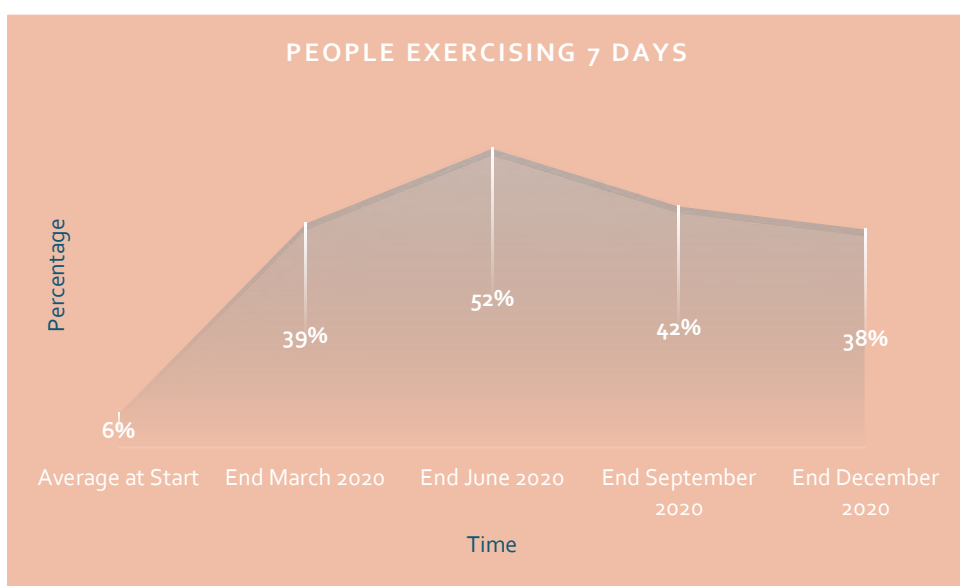


Figure 19 Seekers exercising every day; number over time

There was a corresponding change in the numbers of people never exercising. At the start, exercising 0 days a week was 21%, this fell to 6% at the end of March (just one week into lockdown) and then fell to 0 and remained there throughout the rest of the year!

We see huge increases in people taking daily exercise, from just 6% of Seekers at the start of the project to over 50% at the end of June. From the average scores we know that at the start people were taking an average of 208 sessions of exercise, per person, per year. After taking part in *72 Seasons* this rises to 270 sessions of exercise per person, per year. That's equivalent to each person taking an extra 62 sessions of exercise a year.

"The project was a good idea and particularly appropriate under lockdown. Thank you!"

SeeKer, December 2020 

We must be wary of assuming this is due to taking part in *72 Seasons*; lockdown and only being allowed to do daily exercise, plus the furlough scheme and the very real threat to health must have been a major factor in this change.

"It's a way of noticing the small changes that you wouldn't otherwise see."

SeeKer, Mid September 2020 

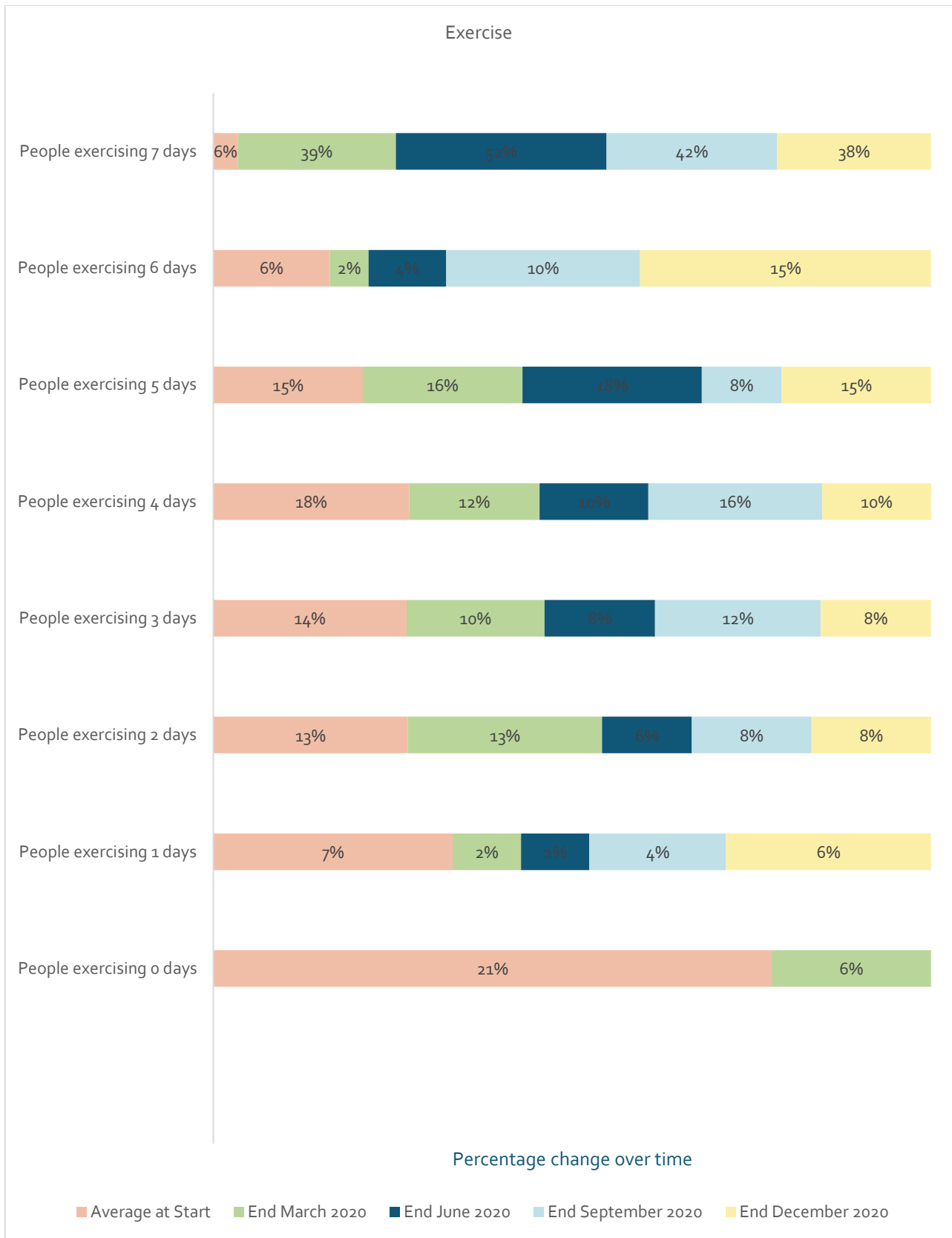


Figure 20 Seeker's exercise in full

The chart above, figure 20, shows how average exercise patterns changed over time in more detail. People who chose to exercise 0 days disappears after March 2020 and higher levels of exercise increase over time.

Health Questions	Average at Start	End March 2020	End June 2020	End September 2020	End December 2020
Can you do everything you want too physically? (higher is better, maximum of 5)	2.6	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.1
Seekers answering 'yes, all of the time'	22%	29%	40%	29%	38%
Seekers answering 'yes, most of the time'	50%	42%	38%	43%	47%
Seekers answering 'yes, some of the time'	14%	15%	12%	12%	3%
Seekers answering 'no, my health stops me from doing everything I want to do'	15%	14%	10%	16%	13%

Figure 21 Seeker's physicality results in full

The average score increases over the year, but we actually see really large improvements in physical wellbeing.

Seekers saw improvements in their physical mobility. Seekers were asked if they could do everything they wanted to physically, with answer options including:

- No, my health stops me from doing everything I want to do (change from 15% at start to 13% at end)
- Yes, some of the time (change from 14% at start to 3% at end)
- Yes, most of the time (change from 50% at start to 47% at end)
- Yes, all of the time (change from 22% at start, to 38% at end)

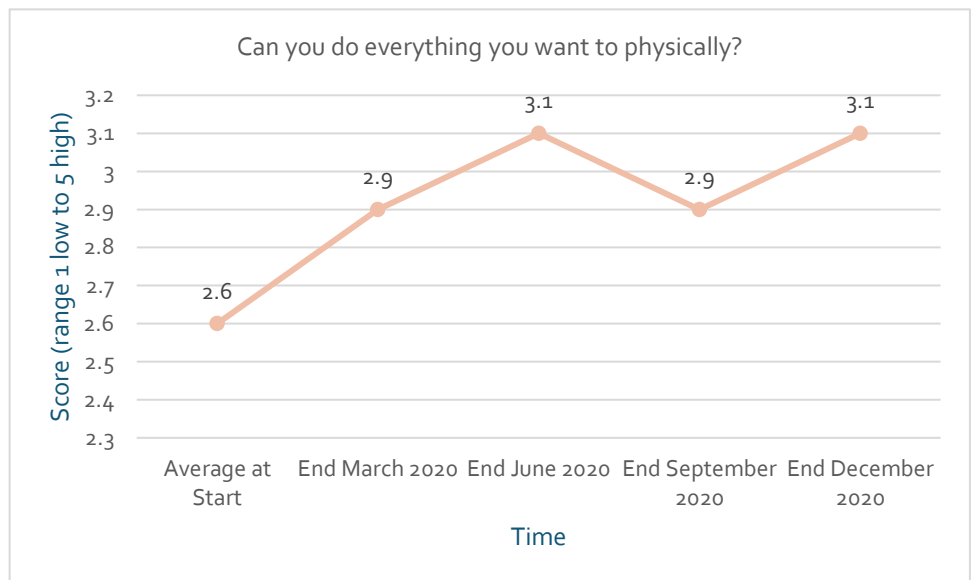
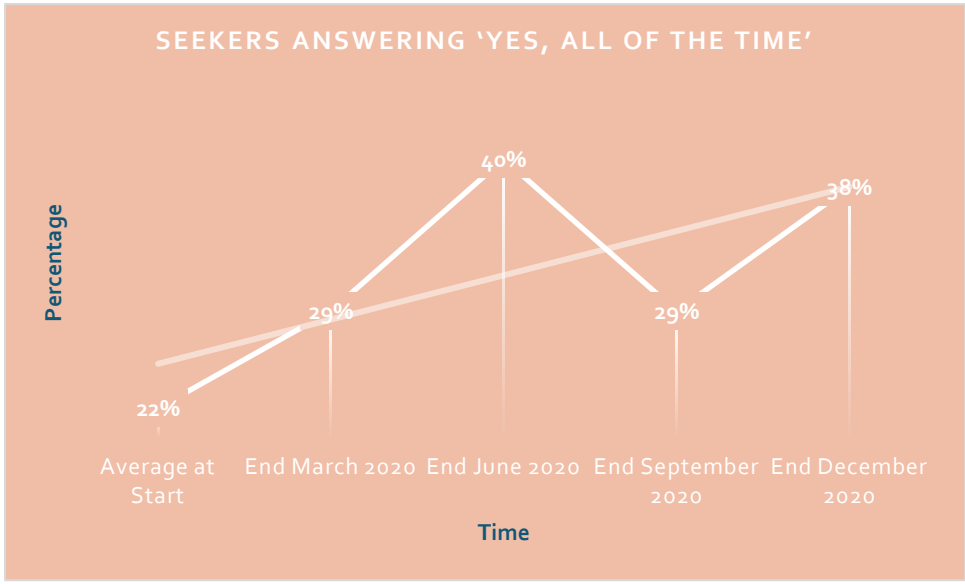


Figure 22 Seeker's physicality; average over time

The data shows an average improvement from some of the time, to most of the time with a peak improvement in the middle of the project, followed by a small dip in September and an increase by the end of the year. This may be due to going out and about more, in order to seek the seasons or may be due to other reasons.

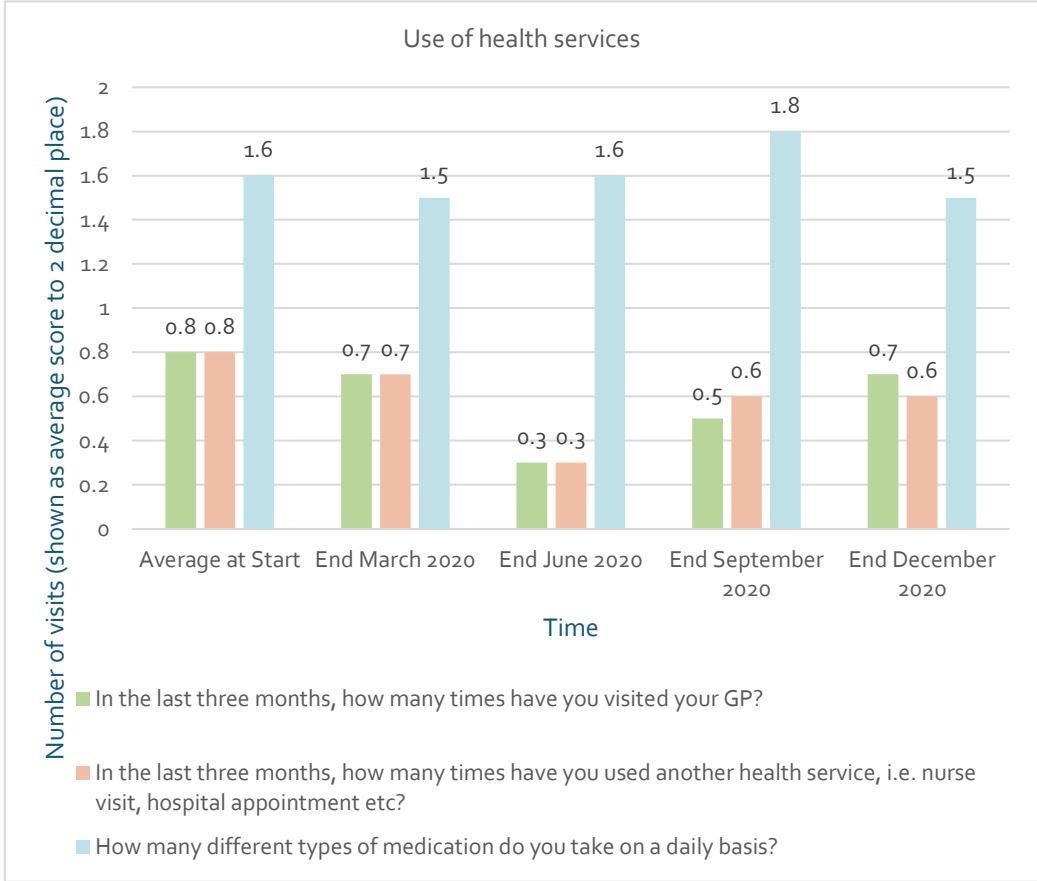


The percentage of people who can do whatever they want physically at all times increases dramatically from 22% to 38%.

There was a large increase during the summer period but the trend-line overall is positive.

Figure 23 Seekers who could do everything they wanted to physically; numbers over time

LOOK CLOSER AT USE OF HEALTH SERVICES



We can see reductions in use of GP appointments, and nurse or hospital visits, but very small changes in medication use, with a small increase in September.

Overall medicine use reduced on average by a very small amount, from a start score of 1.6 (average number of different types of medication taken per day) to 1.5 at the end of the project.

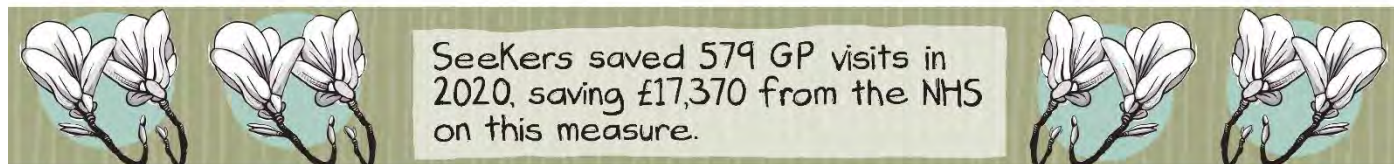
Very large falls were seen in use of GP and other health appointments between March and June 2020, although this mirrors a national trend, as during the pandemic availability of health services fell dramatically.

For both health service visit questions people could select the answers: 0, 1, 2, 3, or more

Figure 24 Seekers use of health services; averages over time

than 3. Anyone who selected more than three was assumed to have 4 visits. For medication people could select answers: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or more than 4 types of medication. Anyone who selected more than 4 was assumed to have taken 5 types to remain consistent.

When looking at the change in GP Visits, we used a cautious estimate of assuming that people saying they visited their GP more than 3 times was 4 visits. This means our Seekers visited their GP 173 times between January and March 2020. If that record of visiting was maintained during the next three quarters of 2020 we would expect 692 visits during the whole year - but we actually had just 113; a saving of 579 visits. The percentage of people not visiting the GP at all (0 visits in the last three months) increased from 56% at the start to a high of 74% at the end of June, and ended the year at 64%. We know that each GP visit costs the NHS £30¹⁰ and that means our Seekers have saved £17,370 worth of GP visits.



'Other health service visits' means our Seekers visited other health services 161 times between January and March 2020. If that record of visiting was maintained during the next three quarters we would expect 644 visits during the whole year, but we actually had just 119; a saving of 525 visits. The percentage of people not using other health services at all (0 visits in the last three months) increased from 58% at the start to a high of 74% at the end of June, and ended the year at 62%.

Looking at consumption of medication, we can see from the start data that our Seekers collectively take 305 types of medication every day, which would be an expected 111,325 medicines per year. However, this falls to just 43,618 medicines during the year; a saving of over 67,000 medicine doses. The people taking no daily medicine falls slightly during the year from 45% to 39% but the biggest impact is on people taking more than 4 different types of medication daily, which falls from 7% to 0%.

These measures have not been scaled up to our whole **72 Seasons** cohort; the reductions are actual reductions reported directly by Seekers. We can't attempt to extrapolate what caused these reductions. Covid-19 meant that GPs had fewer visits than usual, people stayed home and did not visit hospitals or nurses at the same levels prior to the pandemic, nor did people engage in usual activity, and people were concerned about visiting health services which were overwhelmed, or full of people infected with Covid-19. We are not implying that the reduction in use of services is due to this project, but it is a positive for the health services and individuals concerned.

LOOK CLOSER AT SLEEP

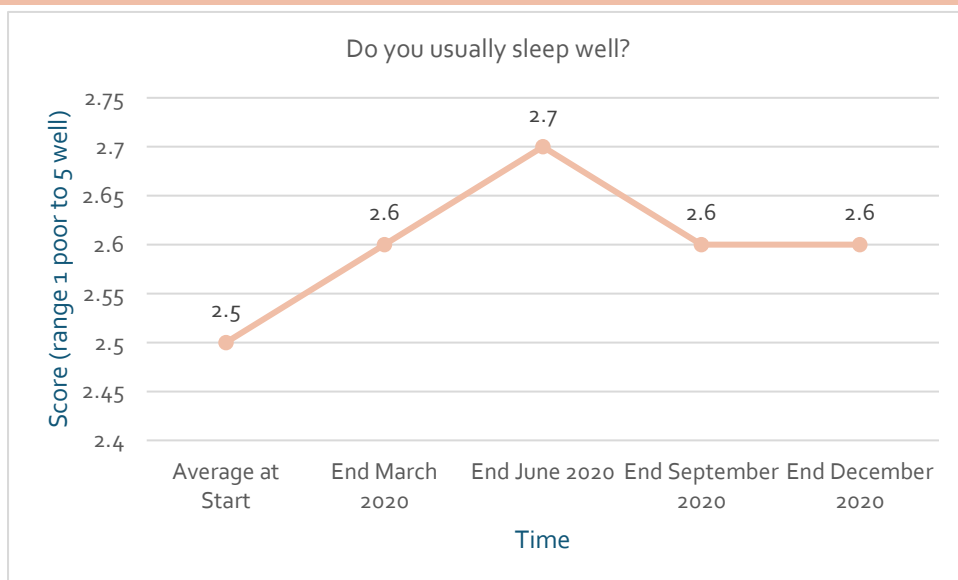


Figure 25 Seeker's sleep scores; average over time

We did not expect to see many changes in sleep during this project - even though sleep is an important part of wellbeing and overall health.

We can see there were improvements over the first 6 months of the project which then saw a small fall in average scores. In the end the average person taking part in **72 Seasons** slept slightly better at the end of the project than they did when they joined.

¹⁰ Source – NHS - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2019/01/missed-gp-appointments-costing-nhs-millions/#:~:text=Each%20appointment%20costs%20an%20average,of%202%2C325%20full%20time%20GPs>

Health Questions	Average at Start	End March 2020	End June 2020	End September 2020	End December 2020
Do you usually sleep well?	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.6
People who answered 'yes, always'	11%	13%	14%	12%	13%
People who answered 'yes, mostly'	47%	49%	54%	48%	54%
People who answered 'yes, sometimes'	23%	25%	24%	25%	18%
People who answered 'no'	20%	15%	8%	15%	15%


Figure 26 Seeker's sleep scores in full


In addition to a small change in average scores, there was a small increase in people who always and mostly slept well, and a reduction in those who never slept well.


On the whole people ended sleeping slightly better than they started. There is a fall in people sleeping badly during the year, which is the opposite of what you would expect if people are living under high stress levels during a pandemic.

We can compare this to our control group research. Here, not one person 'always' slept well: 0 compared to 13% of Seekers in March/April 2020. In January 2021, just 6% of our control group 'always' slept well, compared to 13% of our Seekers.

If you think of sleeping well 'always' or 'mostly' as positive sleep answers, our control group in April 2020 had 50% in the positive sleep area, while our Seekers had 62% sleeping well in March 2020. Sleeping better may well be linked to gaining more exercise time, or a reduction in hours worked, as many people no longer had commutes during the lockdown periods.

"Interesting and makes one more aware of the changes in nature."
Seeker, December 2020 

"Very enlightening and I notice more of what's going on around me."
Seeker, Mid September 2020 

"Great to be involved with. Helps you to focus more on nature & landscape - gives you a reason to really look & observe the changes going on around all us in the natural world - whatever is happening in our 'human' world."
Seeker, December 2020 

"Good for mindful moments."

Seeker, Mid September 2020 ❄️❄️❄️

"Creating mindfulness"

Seeker, December 2020 ❄️❄️❄️

"An exercise in observation."

Seeker, Mid September 2020 ❄️❄️❄️

One of the ways our Seekers talked about *72 Seasons* was as a way to build 'mindfulness' or a way to observe. Although the project was designed to create a connection with noticing nature, there was no thought of using 'mindfulness' until Seekers found it worked in that way for them. This impact on calming can be seen in the anger results.

"Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, reduces anger, fear, and stress, and increases pleasant feelings. Exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to your physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones."¹¹

"Research has also shown that mindfulness mediates the relationship between nature connectedness and wellbeing. People with a strong connection to nature are more likely to spend time in nature, and thus experience the wider benefits of exposure to nature."¹²



¹¹ <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/how-does-nature-impact-our-wellbeing#:~:text=Being%20in%20nature%2C%20or%20even,the%20production%20of%20stress%20hormones>

¹² <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12671-018-0883-6#:~:text=Research%20has%20also%20shown%20that,benefits%20of%20exposure%20to%20nature.>

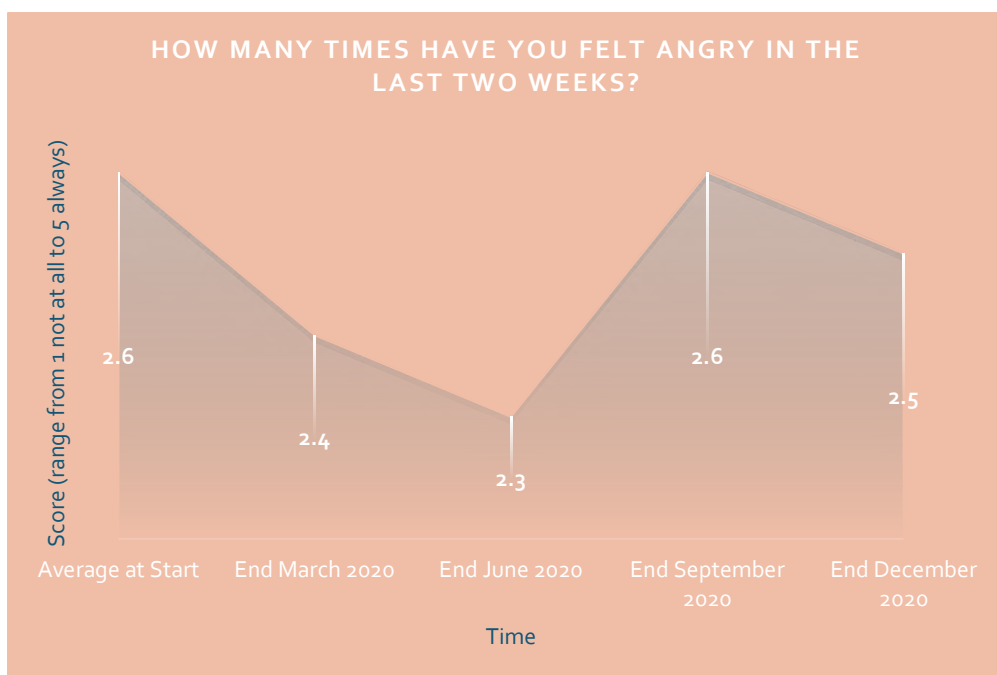


Figure 27 Seeker's feelings of anger; average scores over time

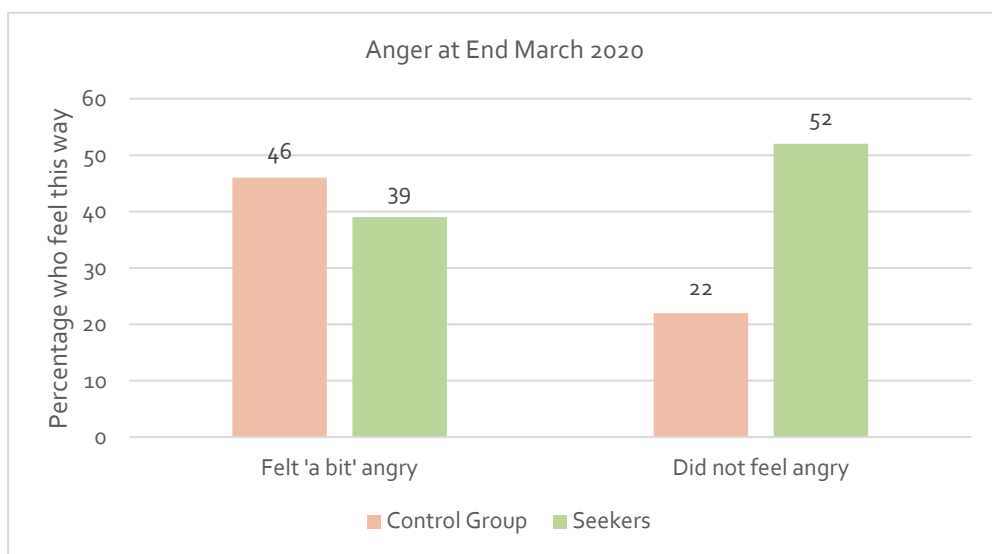


Figure 28 Anger; Seekers compared to control group

Over the year there is a mixed pattern, but by the end we see average anger scores have decreased and there is a noticeable drop in the summer months. A decrease in scores here shows a reduction in anger.

The period between March 2020 and June 2020 was the most turbulent in fifty years: lockdown and a pandemic led to many complicated emotions and we have reasonably expected a rise in anger at this time. Again, this is not a change we can explain away with just the *72 Seasons* project, or just the impact of the pandemic, it is layered and multi-faceted and all we can do is guess at the reasons why.

The change in Seeker anger can be more clearly explained when contrasted with our control group.

In April 2020, 46% of our control group was 'a bit angry', while only 39% of our Seekers felt the same. In April 2020, 22% of our control group did not feel angry (answered 'not much' or 'not at all'), which contrasts dramatically with 52% of our Seekers in March 2020. To summarise, much less anger was seen in our Seekers than in the control group.

"A really interesting way to enjoy nature even more, and an opportunity to easily learn and engage with others in a relaxed way. Brilliant!"

Seeker, Mid September 2020



LOOKING CLOSER AT SEEKER WELLBEING

We used the Warwick Edinburgh Scale of Wellbeing¹³ to measure wellbeing during the year. This is a positively worded scale which can be compared to national results. Results fall between 14 (worst) and 70 (best). Higher scores are better, and mean a person has higher wellbeing. The UK average is around 51, and the NHS considers that anything under 40 is indicative of mental health issues.

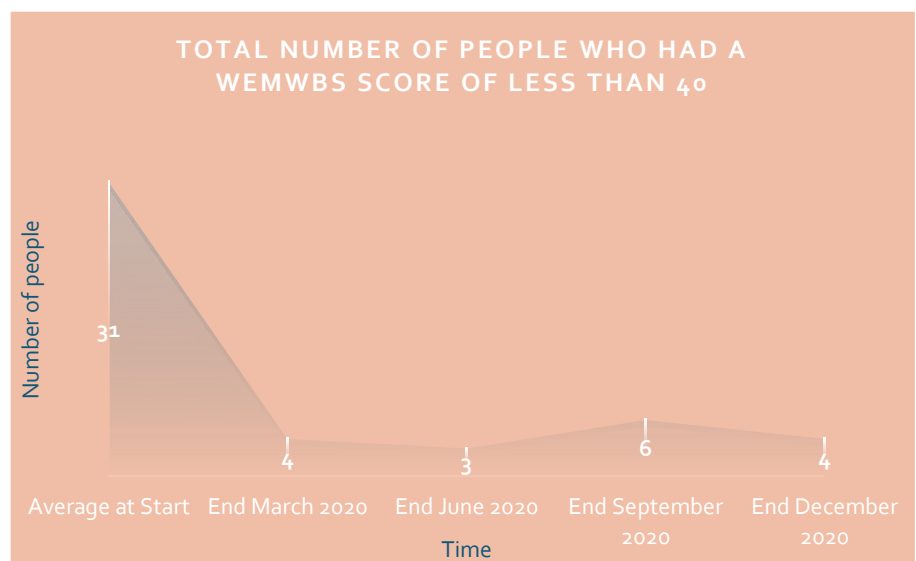
Health Questions	Average at Start	End March 2020	End June 2020	End September 2020	End December 2020
WEMWBS Score	48.1	49.4	51.2	50.3	50.4
Total number of people who had a WEMWBS score of less than 40	31	4	3	6	4
Total number of people who had a WEMWBS score of 40-50	95	27	20	22	29
Total number of people who has a WEMWBS score of over 50	86	36	27	24	39
Range of scores	19-68	19-67	34-50	32-52	28-72

Figure 29 Wellbeing scores in full

Wellbeing scores in our Seekers increased during the year and stayed remarkably steady overall. The range also narrowed over time. Starting scores were between 19 and 68; at the end of Winter scores were also between 19 and 67; but at the end of Spring, Summer, and Autumn scores were only as low as 34, 32, and 28 respectively. This indicates that **72 Seasons** can pull people out of mental ill health, alongside increasing overall average wellbeing. Some Seekers did have very low scores at the start point and at the end of March 2020 although, by the end of the project, the lowest score was 13% higher than the lowest start score.

Figure 30, shows how the number of people with poor wellbeing (a score under 40) reduced during the project year.

Although all our results are anonymous our use of tracking codes means we can compare individual start and end scores. When people joined the project 31/212 or 15% had scores under 40; that falls to 4/67 or just 6% at the end of Winter. Despite it being one week into the pandemic, **72 Seasons** helped 27 people out of mental ill health.




¹³ Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) Copyright NHS Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved

Figure 30 Seekers with low wellbeing over time

Figure 31 shows the range of wellbeing scores and how they changed over time.



Figure 31 Wellbeing scores of Seekers and range of total scores

"I have enjoyed being part of 72 seasons- it's really drawn my attention to the smaller parts of nature that might go missed. When out walking I find myself thinking of what season we might be in and looking out for those things. I can see why this would promote positive mental health and encourage more people to get out and about."
 Seeker, January 2021 

"I am enjoying the process. It is making me take more notice of the earth."
 Seeker, End January 2020

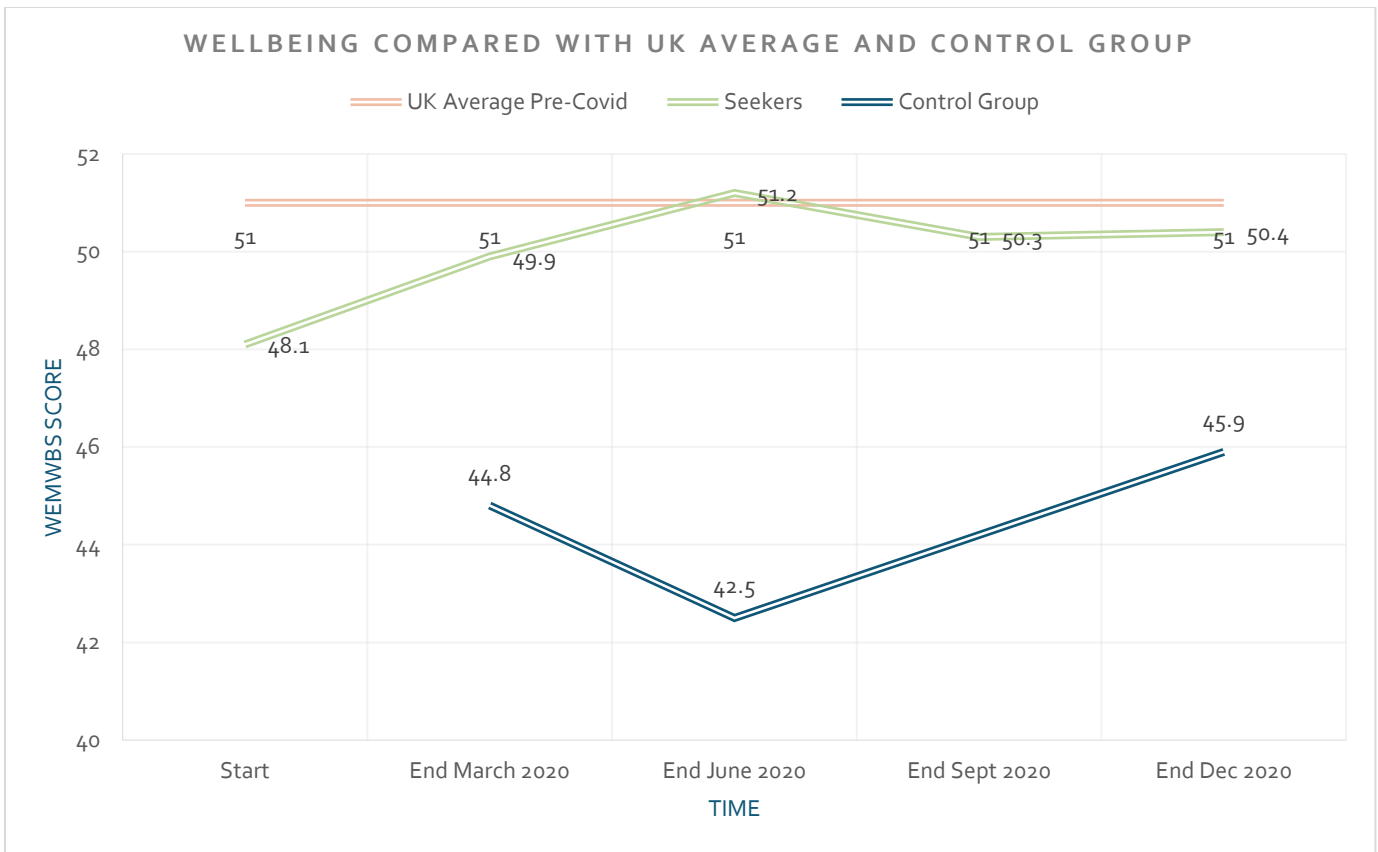


Figure 32 Wellbeing scores of Seekers and control group

This graph shows how our Seekers’ wellbeing increased during the project. As we have mentioned many times, the project began before the pandemic began and ended after the pandemic, and we have had to compare two different lifestyles. The top line represents the UK average wellbeing in a ‘normal’ year, that is, not during a pandemic. When the pandemic began, after a week or two to adjust, we carried out some wellbeing research with a control group, a group of individuals who live in Pendle. Our control group showed wellbeing scores plummet after 23 March 2020 as a national lockdown was introduced. We saw those scores fall even lower into Summer and even at the end December those scores had not rallied. As a nation, UK wellbeing had taken a battering. One subheading in collective resilience is **“Covid-19 and mental health: a perfect storm?”**, as all the factors which are likely to contribute to falling wellbeing are happening during the pandemic – isolation, fear, inability to reach services, increases in economic deprivation are occurring all at once - to large numbers of the population. **“In the UK, the number of people suffering from high levels of anxiety has more than doubled since before the crisis, primarily because of loneliness, but also due to impacts on money, education and health”¹⁴**

"Makes you WANT to be more aware & stay more "tuned-in" to nature."
 Seeker, Mid September 2020 🌿

However, those taking part in *72 Seasons* have seen remarkable resilience and managed to increase and maintain their wellbeing. In fact, their wellbeing at the end of the project ended very close to the national average pre-covid. This could well be due to the impact of taking time ‘bit by bit’, ‘season by season’ and not having to see the whole picture - especially when the whole picture was a quite overwhelming picture of illness, death, viruses surging out of control, and fears of the NHS being overwhelmed. In the film we made, talking to Seekers during the project lifetime, many mentioned the comfort of looking for something smaller and tangible - insects around a stream, or rainbows in the sky - as opposed to thinking about what was happening in the world.

¹⁴ A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

LOOKING CLOSER AT SEEKER CONNECTION AND LONELINESS

We measured connection with people as part of the project. People who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements received higher scores than people who were not sure or who disagreed:

- I get out of the house as much as I want to
- I keep in touch with friends and family
- I am not lonely
- There is always someone I can talk to about my day-to-day problems
- There are many people I can trust completely
- I am content with my friendships and relationships

This turns a question about loneliness (in itself a negative word and emotion) into a positive score, based on a positive scale. Our Seekers saw improvements in their connection over time and there was a resilience to their scores, which is possibly unexpected.

Health Questions	Average at Start	End March 2020	End June 2020	End September 2020	End December 2020
Connection Score	22.4	22.7	22.7	23.7	23.5
Total connection score 12 or less	3	0	1	2	0
Total connection score 13 to 23	110	37	19	22	37
Total score 24 and over	99	29	29	28	35

Figure 33 Seeker loneliness scores in full

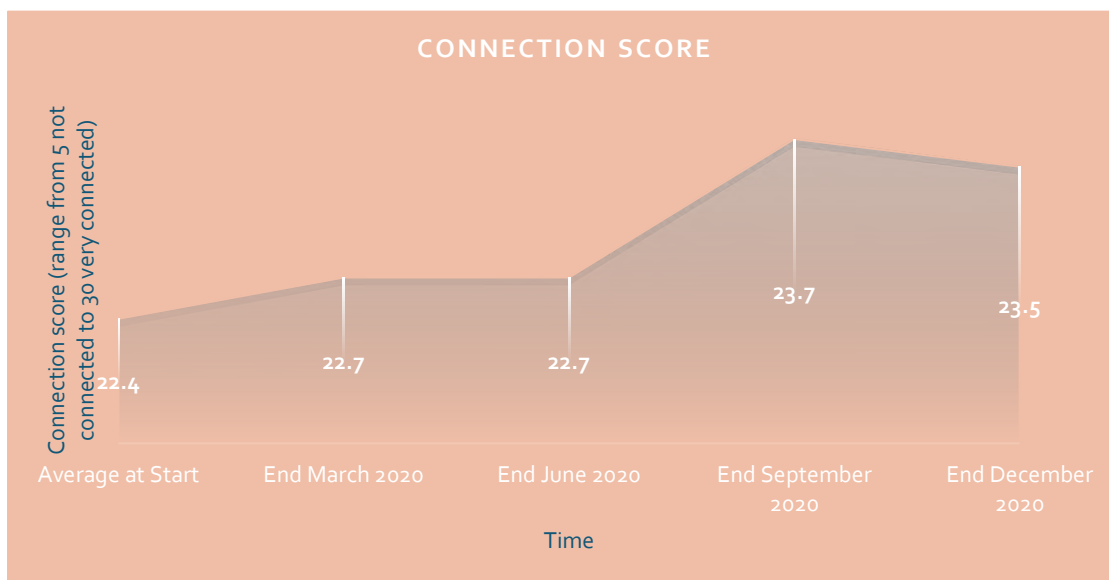


Figure 34 Seeker connection scores; average over time

Scores were fairly consistent during the first half of the project and then they grew. Can we infer that taking part in **72 Seasons** helped Seekers feel more connected overall, showing reductions in loneliness, even during a pandemic? It does seem to be the case, when the scores are contrasted with our control group.

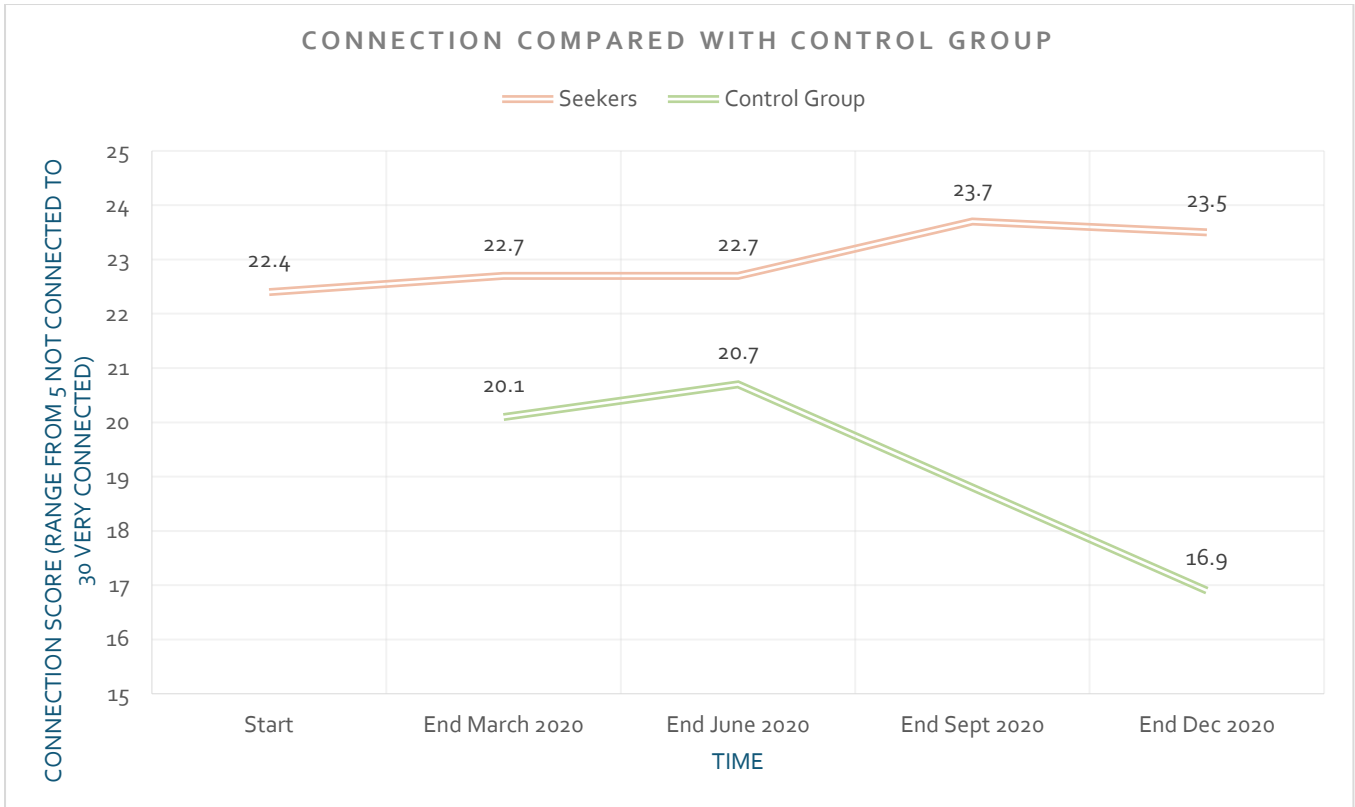



Figure 35 Seeker loneliness scores compared to control group

The control group had much lower scores than Seekers overall (their averages were 9% lower in March/ April) and then our groups took divergent paths with our control group seeing falls in connection (which is to be expected in 2020 and during the pandemic), while our Seekers saw improvements in connection and ended the year with average scores 4% higher than at the start of the year (and a staggering 22% higher than average non-Seekers).

We did notice how well some of the Seekers connected over social media. In one three-month period, the Facebook group saw 160 posts, and over 1880 reactions to posts in the closed group. That’s an average of 12 posts each week, which shows a large amount of engagement. These statistics are taken from the least locked-down period of the beginning July 2020 until the end of September 2020.

"All positives from me. I liked the way group members connect over photos that we have posted. Emails aren't pushy but prompt me to think about the seasons"

Seeker, January 2021 

LOOK CLOSER AT HOW ENGAGED PEOPLE WERE:

We understood quite early on that some people enjoyed the project and others were really involved, spending a lot of time engaging with the concept and taking a level of ownership of the season. We can compare the results to see if those who were more involved received more impact in terms of health and wellbeing, or whether the impact was similar regardless of how much time Seekers inputted.

We consider 'very engaged' to be Seekers who completed more than 15 surveys and therefore took part for a minimum of 6 months; this cohort ranged between 17 and 23 respondents, as not everyone completes each survey. Our cohort of 'less engaged' completed fewer than 5 surveys, which was less than the whole project average. These respondents ranged from 26 to 130, as not everyone completes each survey.

"It's a project that encourages you to look at your surroundings in more detail and thus with more care."

Seeker, Mid September 2020 

A table showing all the results for this comparison can be found in the appendix, but ultimately it was clear

that being very engaged or less engaged does not matter that much. Those who were very engaged actually saw increases in their GP visits compared to less engaged (although these are small sample sizes, and it may be that one or two of our very engaged developed a complex medical issue which could throw all these figures out), and our very engaged cohort took less medication over the year than our less engaged, but on the whole results were positive for both groups. This tells us that health and wellbeing benefits occur from taking part, and people do not need to get really involved to see improvements.

If we look at the number of measures which moved in a positive way, the 'very engaged' cohort had 10/12 or 83% of scores move in a positive way, while the 'less engaged' cohort saw 9/12 or 75% of scores move in a positive way (for example, higher wellbeing, or less medication use). These are average scores, and we have used a system where a score which moves in a positive direction is scored one; a static score is scored 0.5; and a negative score is 0, to give us an overall picture of movement.

LOOK CLOSER AT HOW PEOPLE FELT WHEN THEY JOINED

Is this project something that can help anyone's wellbeing to improve? Even those with low wellbeing when they join? By comparing results of those who started with low wellbeing (a WEMWBS score under 40) with those with medium wellbeing (a score between 40 and 50) and those who started with average or high wellbeing (a score over 50) we can see that there is a remarkably consistent improvement for anyone, regardless of their wellbeing.

How did health and wellbeing change, analysed by wellbeing at start of project.

Age	Number of health and wellbeing positive changes	Percentage
WEMWBS Score of less than 40, indicating very low mental wellbeing*	7/12	58%
WEMWBS Score of 40-50, indicating low mental wellbeing	7/12	58%
WEMWBS Score of more than 50, indicating average or higher mental wellbeing	7.5/12	63%

Figure 36 Wellbeing segmented positive changes

*There were 28 people who started the project with a WEMWBS score of under 40 and only 4 people had such a low score at the end of the project.

The scoring system is as before: average scores which move in a positive direction (for example, less anger or better sleep) are scored with a 1; scores which remain the same are scored with a half point for staying the same; and those which move in a

negative way are scored as a zero. Regardless of people's wellbeing at the start, they experienced the same positive impact on health and wellbeing.

But when you look at how many are in each segment (low, medium and high wellbeing) the project pulls lots of people out of low mental wellbeing - and across all ranges of wellbeing we saw consistent increases in connection to nature and increased physical exercise.

"The seasons were accurate and it has kept me going through the pandemic - it has been a great help in getting me outdoors and noticing things. I think it would be a great project for people with depression and anxiety at any time."

Seeker, December 2020



Leaf Peepers Admire Autumn Colours

Figure 37 Leaf Peepers Admire Autumn Colours; Season from 13-17 October. Illustration used in the project by Cath Ford.

LOOK CLOSER AT SEEKER'S WORK STATUS

If we exclude 'others', which were small numbers of people who were students and unemployed, most people taking part fell into one of three categories: working full time, part time, or retired. Comparing changes across the three segments as before shows that people who were retired saw more improvements than those working part time, and that those working part time saw more improvements than those working full time. This may indicate that those who possibly had more time to devote to the project had more positive outcomes, or alternately that those who worked less had fewer stresses to their health and wellbeing.


How did health and wellbeing change, analysed by work pattern.		
Work pattern	Number of health and wellbeing positive changes	Percentage
Working full time	9.5/12	79%
Working part time	10/12	83%
Retired	11/12	92%

Figure 38 Work status segmented positive changes

The scoring system is the same as before; 1 point for each positive move, ½ point for staying the same, with 0 for a negative change.


Once we remove the unemployed and students it's clear that the project has moved people in the directions we wanted. They felt healthier overall, slept better, were less angry, took more exercise, less medication, and consumed fewer health services overall. Wellbeing saw huge increases in the first 12 weeks (which was mostly before the pandemic), which were not maintained all through the year. Overall, despite the pandemic, people taking part in *72 Seasons* increased wellbeing and connection to others and connection to nature regardless of whether they worked full time, part time, or were retired.

"It's been lovely being connected and taking part. It's made me a lot more observant, it was fortunate it coincided with Covid which naturally made observation more possible as I was outside more than normal."

Seeker, January 2021 

This group is an interesting result – basically once you removed those who are unemployed, students, or not working due to illness (just a handful of people), it shows that almost all the results are really positive. We can't use *72 Seasons* as a way to fix lifestyles, but it can improve almost anything else.

"Very easy to complete, and doesn't take much time."

Seeker, May 2020 

LOOK CLOSER AT SEEKER AGES

Our cohort can be roughly segmented into three by age, with a group of under 40's, those aged 40 to 59, and those aged over 60. It does need to be noted that our ages are slightly approximate as we used year of birth rather than date of birth due to using it as a way to track people anonymously over time. This means age could be out by up to 11 months either way, but there will not be huge changes possible.

How did health and wellbeing change, analysed by age.

Age	Number of health and wellbeing positive changes	Percentage
Under 40 years old*	11.5/12	96%
40-59 years	9/12	75%
60 years or older	10/12	83%

Figure 39 Age segmented positive changes

*small sample size at the end of the project, only 8 people under 40 completed the final health and wellbeing questionnaire

The scoring system is the same as before: 1 point for each positive move, ½ point for staying the same, and 0 for a negative change. The really positive impact is on under 40's; is this an indication that we have become less connected to nature over time? It also indicates that this needs to be tested as an approach with younger people.

Back during the original project planning time, while in conversation about what nature can do for us, Cathy Hopley, programme manager for PHLP, explained, **"I remember my mum telling me to get out for some fresh air in order to feel better, but also pointing out wildflowers and the first signs of spring and autumn to me... we knew too that watching the birds, or a quiet contemplation anywhere outdoors could calm your mind – well before 'forest bathing' was a thing!"** And this became a focus, the questions started to be reframed as what we had lost in terms of connection to the natural world. Cathy also said, **"I also have a vivid memory of cycling to uni in Manchester one morning, the first time I lived in a city, and realising that the trees were coming into leaf, and it really made me stop and re-connect with that nature and realise that wildlife was everywhere - not just in the countryside. And seeing the small things, wherever you are, like shiny conkers and icy puddles, can bring a smile to your face on the darkest of days."** Ultimately the project became a way to reconnect for people who had always known these parts of the natural world, but a chance to build a connection for younger Seekers, who may be not as familiar with nature.

"Actively looking for the different species of grass on a walk I took last summer, in response to one of Cath's drawings, made me see the places I was used to in a very different way" Cathy Hopley continued.



Morning Sunshine Lights The Grass

Figure 40 Morning Sunshine Lights The Grass; Season from 13-17 August. Illustration used in the project by Cath Ford.

LOOK CLOSER AT SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES

Many nature projects confidently expect volunteers to walk miles, dig ditches and trees, and generally expect a high level of physical wellbeing in order to take part. This project was designed differently, with an online only version which could appeal to people with busy lives (full time jobs and young children, for example) or for those who had disabilities which may make more traditional volunteering difficult. Of course, while planning this in Autumn 2019, we could not have predicted how important this element was to be to the project as all traditional volunteering stopped during lockdown in March 2020 and very little has managed to happen since, due to different restrictions over time.

Our data showed this fact to be true for us; of the 51 individuals taking part in the project who said their activities were limited in any way (a lot or little), only 6 of them were volunteering elsewhere. This is a rate of volunteering of 12%, compared to 20% across the rest of our project cohort. Only one of the six was volunteering with the nature-based organisation, the Ribble River Trust.

How did health and wellbeing change, analysed by disability status.

Disability	Number of health and wellbeing positive changes	Percentage
Limited a lot*	6.5/12	54%
Limited a little	10/12	83%
Not limited	11/12	92%

Figure 4.1 Disability segmented positive changes

*This was a very small sample as only 4 people who were limited a lot by disability completed the end assessment

The scoring system is the same as before: 1 point for each positive move; ½ point for staying the same; and 0 for a negative change. Although our end sample size is small, and should be treated with some caution, we can see that we created a high number of positive changes in health and wellbeing for those who were limited a little or not limited, but this rate of change was not borne out for those who had more limited days.

"It's been so good. How fitting that this survey arrived the same day the vaccine has been approved. One door begins to close as a chink of light appears for the future."

Seeker, December 2020 

Despite many negatives for people whose health limited them a lot during 2020, taking part in *72 Seasons* still led to fewer GP visits, more exercise, less anger, more sleep and large increases in wellbeing alongside increases in connection too.

This imbalance could be due to the project itself and would require further research in the future, or may well be caused by the nature of the pandemic, which disproportionately affected people with disabilities.

"Disabled people are experiencing increasing levels of psychological distress, social isolation, a lack of social care support, workplace discrimination, food poverty, and unequal access to health care... the crisis has exposed and amplified the structural inequalities that for decades have excluded, discriminated against, and marginalised deaf and disabled

people”, from the disability report ‘Abandoned, Forgotten and Ignored’¹⁵, which goes on to explain that “over 60% of Disabled people questioned said they had struggled to access food, medicine, and necessities.” Possibly people with disabilities were experiencing such dramatic hardship in many ways, that a nice-to-do project simply fell by the wayside?

We may be about to see an increase in those with limited health conditions as long Covid arrived in 2020 and the long-term impacts of shielding for more than a year come to the fore. There is also a note of caution that things might get worse with ‘Abandoned, Forgotten and Ignored’ warning that “the redesign of public spaces to promote social distancing is often being implemented at the expense of accountability ... The apparent failure of the Test, Track and Trace system to accommodate different communication and access needs, Disabled people may be at higher risk of contracting the virus or not getting tested when necessary”.



The Snow Creates Silence

Figure 42 The Snow Creates Silence; Season from 27-31 December. Illustration used in the project by Cath Ford

¹⁵ <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/coronavirus-updates-and-information/campaigns-news-during-coronavirus-crisis/abandoned-forgotten-and-ignored-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-disabled-people/>

CONCLUSIONS

72 *Seasons* has helped people feel better, and has been proved to work with a range of people - even during a pandemic. At its heart, it is a way to get back in touch with nature - or to get in touch with nature - that feels enjoyable to take part in and almost incidentally has many health and wellbeing benefits, encouraged people to be more active, and which has contributed to less anger, better sleep, and has protected individual wellbeing during a year when it was at real risk. Seekers felt more connection to each other and to nature itself.

Dr Miles Richardson in his detailed research into nature connectedness asks, **"Is this the key? That feeling of connection with nature – so simple, so basic, and yet so often ignored. Could it help us heal some of our most pressing modern ailments – from the climate emergency to mental health?"**¹⁶


We originally chose to measure 'connection to nature', as it seemed to be the gap. Lots of research existed to show how getting back to nature helped people: how it lowered blood pressure and helped people feel calmer, fitter, and happier. Lots of other research has highlighted that the gap between people and nature is growing, and we are losing the skill of identification and knowledge of previous generations. Few had focussed on building a connection for people.

We choose to design an inclusive project which could build connection to nature across a wide range of people – from wherever their start point was. People who knew nature well could take part. People who had never really noticed nature could take part. People who liked to go for long walks could take part. People who struggled to walk further than the bus stop could take part. People who had time on their hands could take part. People with busy lives could take part. This was designed to be a truly democratic project which could increase the wellbeing of anyone who took part.

"I will continue taking photographs and watching for changes again as I walk in the countryside. It would be good if the Facebook group could continue to post comments and photos and keep in touch. I think I will take up diary writing next year as I haven't done that since a teenager."

Seeker, December 2020 

"You have been consistent, reliable, inspirational and built an online community. Well done."

Seeker, January 2021 

Although we could never have prepared for the year that we ran the project in, what was noticeable was how much our Seekers made the project their own. They felt free to build it into their own lives with some seeking from the doorstep as they shielded from Covid; others while dog-walking;

others seeking while on their daily walk, during a run, or in their own garden. Our Seekers seemed to enjoy the process too - not just the end product. We hope to have created lifelong skills for those who took part; an ability to regularly connect with the natural world around them.

Ultimately, we have created a tool to use to get people to connect more with nature. We have tested the project and measured health and wellbeing, and found that helping people to connect more with nature does bring them joy. Seekers saw increased physical health, exercised more and felt less angry after taking part. Despite the turbulence of the year, Seekers maintained and increased wellbeing and felt less loneliness, remaining connected even during 2020.

¹⁶ Dr Miles Richardson, Nature and Me, <http://ncxrg.wp.derby.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2021/04/NatureMe-Booklet-2021.pdf>

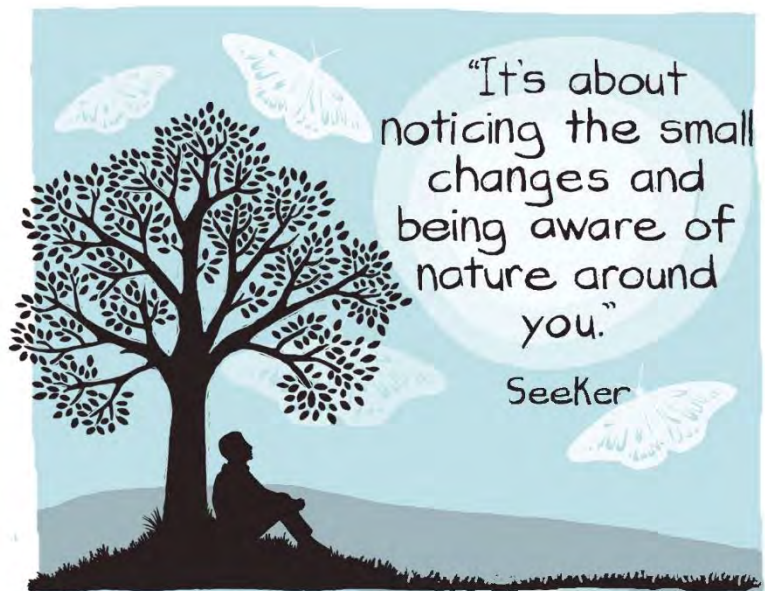
There are clear benefits to health services from such a project, and volunteers donated a lot of time to it. We also have a product - both the possibility of creating a physical product of the seasons, but also a project framework which can be replicated and used to help others go on their own 'adventure in nature'.

We also have a group of passionate and committed advocates; those who volunteered so much of their time and goodwill in 2020. We want to work with them and encourage them to share their stories and adventures with others.

In the 21st Century, we know that mental health is a challenge, and also a growing area of work:

"Looking beyond therapy and medication. We should resist the temptation to pathologise mental health, or to assume that therapy or medication are the only tools we have for supporting it. Instead, the pandemic has shown the value in a both/and approach that emphasises community approaches alongside clinical ones"¹⁷

The social model of health¹⁸ says that we should not look at mental wellbeing as something that goes wrong for the person, but the systems around the person as the part that needs fixing. It's like the idea that if a flower isn't blooming, we need to fix the soil and conditions, not the flower. Work like that is important, and right, but not always easily afforded. But it is an idea we have to fund properly, and connect the systems together to make every person bloom. **"We need an approach to mental health which asks not only 'what's wrong with you?' but also 'what matters to you, and what resources can you draw on?'"**¹⁹



"I have enjoyed the project. Observing wildlife was something I did before and will continue to do but monitoring the seasons in such detail is something I may continue with."

Seeker, December 2020 

As a result of this research, the next steps we have planned for 2021 are: to try and create a shareable model; to work with our existing advocates; and to test the project in real life as originally hoped once Covid-19 restrictions ease

fully. We hope to prove that supporting a wide range of people to engage in connecting to nature is enjoyable and effective, and can have a remarkable impact on health and wellbeing.

"Will miss it but hopefully carry on noticing the world around me."

Seeker, December 2020 

¹⁷ A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

¹⁸ <https://www.hsj.co.uk/service-design/the-need-for-a-new-social-model-of-health-ensuring-all-parts-of-the-system-work-together/7025238.article>

¹⁹ A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

"The whole project has been done particularly well. I have enjoyed every aspect of it. It has been far more valuable to be than I could have anticipated- a real blessing.

Thank you so so much"

Seeker, January 2021



This whole project was conceived, executed and analysed by The Evaluator. This report was written by Kirsty Rose Parker, founder director of The Evaluator and an experienced project manager and evaluator, who previously specialised in arts, regeneration, and wellbeing projects. Kirsty has an educational background in Maths and Economics which covered many statistical topics, leading to an MA Hons in Economics from the University of Edinburgh.

Kirsty has 16 years of charitable project management experience including working with vulnerable adults, young people, and a wide range of partners including artists and audiences, and 9 years' experience of arts development. She is trained in negotiation, motivational interviewing and 'social return on investment' and is passionate about helping organisations to run the most effective programmes they can.

The Evaluator is based in Lancashire and can be contacted via:

Kirsty Rose Parker

Tel: 07837 896698

Email: Kirsty@theevaluator.co.uk

Website: www.theevaluator.co.uk



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Evaluator**
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All measurement tools initially considered:

- Campaign to End Loneliness Scale
- CNS - Connectedness to Nature Scale
- Dartmouth COOP -
- ENB – 4-item Engagement with Natural Beauty Scale
- GAD7 – Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- GHQ-12 12-item General Health Questionnaire
- HoNos – Health of the Nation Outcome Scales
- INS – Inclusion of Nature with Self Scale
- I-ROC – Individualised Recovery Outcomes Counter
- Nottingham Health Profile
- NR-6 – 6-item short form Nature Relatedness Scale
- PHQ-9 Patient Health Questionnaire
- RAND-36
- Recovery Star
- ReQoL – 10-item Recovering Quality of Life Scale
- UnRecovery Star
- WEMWBS – Warwick-Edinburgh Scale of Wellbeing

In addition; The Evaluator has already created Resilience Scales and Connection (Loneliness) Scales

Here is an excerpt from an email sent to Seekers on 18 September



WHAT HAVE YOU NOTICED RECENTLY?

Please let us know what seasons you have spotted in the last couple of weeks. [Click here to complete the survey.](#)

Here are your next seasons to spot.

New Season: 18 - 22 September; The Swallows Leave

Swallows are summer visitors to the UK. They start to arrive here from Africa in April. By early June most swallows have started breeding and by July, the first brood of young has usually left the nest and flown away. The parents will normally then go on to raise a second brood, sometimes even a third.

By early September, most swallows are preparing to migrate. They flutter about restlessly, and often gather on telegraph wires. Most leave the UK during September, with early broods of youngsters being the first to go. But a few stragglers may hang around into October.

The return journey to Africa takes about six weeks. Swallows from different parts of Europe fly to different destinations. Ours end up in the very south. They travel down through western France and eastern Spain into Morocco, before crossing the Sahara Desert and the Congo rainforest – finally reaching South Africa and Namibia.

Swallows migrate during daylight, flying quite low and covering about 320 km (200 miles) each day. At night they roost in huge flocks in reed-beds at traditional stopover spots. Since swallows feed entirely on flying insects, they don't need to fatten up before leaving, but can snap up their food along the way. Nonetheless, many die of starvation. If they survive, they can live for up to sixteen years.

You may have noticed them not being around. You may have noticed them gathering on wires? Or you may have noticed nothing. This is an unusual ask, to see if you can spot something missing! Feel free to

tell us if you like this or not in the next survey, or reply to this email. I do read every comment and try and bear them in mind when planning questions to ask, and things to look out for.

New Season: 23 - 27 September; Thunder lowers its voice

Another unusual ask this time, we like to keep you on your toes! And, to take a few risks. Will there be any storms? Will there be low and growly thunder? Maybe nothing will happen and you'll have to help us choose how we can replace this season.

How about some fun facts about thunder storms:

- Thunder is the sound caused by lightning. The intense heat from lightning causes the surrounding air to rapidly expand and create a sonic wave that you hear as thunder.
- The average temperature of lightning is around 20000 °C (36000 °F)
- The typical **thunderstorm** is 15 miles in diameter and lasts an average of 30 minutes.
- Nearly 1,800 **thunderstorms** are happening at any moment around the world.
- In ancient times, philosophers such as Aristotle believed that thunder was caused by the collision of clouds.

New Season: 28 September - 2 October; Black Elderberries Dance in the Wind



Black Elderberries Dance In The Wind

I think this might be a bit late already. I have spotted a few elderberries ready now, what about you? There might be some left though, so I won't worry just yet.

I was going to share an elderberry recipe, but there was some fears about elderberries being poisonous on the Facebook group. I think they are fine, if cooked, but can be poisonous if raw. Either way, I don't want to share something which could be dangerous, and who knows what being poisoned does to your wellbeing! I'm imagining not good.

I wanted to mention harvest festivals and the autumn equinox too. Harvest Festivals used to be celebrated at the beginning of the Harvest season on 1 August and was called Lammas, meaning 'loaf Mass'. Farmers made loaves of bread from the new wheat crop and gave them to their local church. They were then used as the Communion bread during a special mass thanking God for the harvest. The custom ended when Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church, and nowadays we have harvest festivals at the end of the season.

At the start of the harvest, communities would appoint a strong and respected man of the village as their 'Lord of the Harvest'. He would be responsible for negotiating the harvest wages and organising the fieldworkers. Traditionally, harvesting began on 24th September in medieval England.

The end of the harvest was celebrated with a big meal called a Harvest Supper, eaten on Michaelmas Day (29th September). The 'Lord of the Harvest' sat at the head of the table. A goose stuffed with apples was eaten along with a variety of vegetables. Goose Fairs were and still are held in English towns at this time of year.

Then the autumn equinox is celebrated on Tuesday 22nd September 2020 at 2.30pm. The Autumn Equinox is the first day of the autumn season and occurs when the sun passes the equator moving from the northern to the southern hemisphere. The North Pole begins to tilt away from the sun. Day and night have approximately the same length. Autumnal equinox is near 22 September.

Which is also the day local restrictions come back in Lancashire. Lots going on, mostly man-made things. See what you can see nature quietly getting on with?

Your next email, will arrive on the 2nd October.

Thanks for being a season Seeker,

Kirsty

Please note the layout of this blog has been amended for inclusion in the report. The full version can be seen at <https://www.theevaluator.co.uk/18-reasons-to-love-winter-a-creative-evaluation-of-wellbeing/>

18 REASONS TO LOVE WINTER; A CREATIVE EVALUATION OF WELLBEING

72 Seasons is a year-long research project, designed by Kirsty Rose Parker (founder & director of The Evaluator), to measure how being more connected to nature makes us feel. We do that through working with a team of volunteer seasonal Seekers. We have planned a whole year - 2020 - where the seasons change every 4 or 5 days, originally inspired by the ancient natural calendar in Japan.




Our seasonal Seekers agree to complete health and wellbeing research surveys and then they start their adventure. Trying to notice the changes in nature, we are building a community around Pendle Hill who look a little bit closer, a little bit more often, even just from their gardens and windows as the world changes. We had never heard of Coronavirus when this project began on 1st January 2020; but despite the changes in our daily lives and massive upheavals in our wellbeing, nature soldiers on, and so do we.

Here we share the results of the nature we have spotted. 180 people began this journey with us, a few have left and a few have since joined. We are a community that ebbs and flows, and people can choose how involved they get.

In 2020, we changed the season 'Winter' into 18 smaller seasons and asked our seasonal Seekers to go out and about as much as they normally would, and see what they spotted.

The beautiful seasonal illustrations are by local artist, Cath Ford. [You can check more of her work out here.](#) Cath lives in Blackburn and she knows the nature we know. She is a very talented artist and we feel very lucky to be working with her.

Originally, we had planned that this season would be called 'Frost Adorns Bare Branches' but this was something our seasonal Seekers disagreed with and we chose a new season to replace it, based on what our Seekers saw.

 <p>Bare Branches Are Stark</p> <p>Season; 1 - 4 January: The Earth is Unyielding</p>	 <p>The Earth Is Unyielding</p> <p>Season; 5 - 9 January: Bare Branches are Stark</p>	<p>This image of a misty Pendle Hill was taken by Stella Nuttall on 5th January 2020.</p> 
<p>This image of bare branches was taken by Sam Root on 5th January 2020.</p>	<p>Season; 10 - 14 January: The First Snowdrops Emerge</p>	<p>This image of snowdrops emerging was taken by one of our seasonal Seekers on 10th January 2020.</p>




This image of a snowdrop was taken by Sally Lambert on 12th January 2020.



Season; 15 - 19 January: The Robin Calls



The Robin Calls



This image of a Robin was taken by Kirsty Rose Parker on 16th January 2020.

As time went by, our seasonal Seekers gained confidence in the project and started to connect more with us as a group. People started feeling able to share images of nature that meant something to them. They started to share what they noticed.



This image was taken by Anita Vine on 19th January 2020.

This image was taken by Sally Lambert on 19th January 2020.



Season; 20 - 24 January: Frost Crackles Underfoot



Frost Crackles Underfoot

Season; 25 - 29 January: The Earth hides in Grey Mist

This image was taken by one of our seasonal Seekers on 28th January 2020.



This image was taken by John Rose Parker on 28th January 2020.



Originally, we were going to call this season 'The Earth is White' but very little white was found by our Seekers. One explorer shared a little tiny bit of white earth, and another spotted some white, but overall, there wasn't much white to be found.

We only keep a season if more than 50% agree with it. Our seasonal Seekers complete short surveys throughout the project and we ask them if they have noticed a season or not. We occasionally ask them other questions too.

What are people saying about taking part in 72 Seasons?



"I am enjoying the process. It is making me take more notice of the earth."

What are people saying about taking part in 72 Seasons?



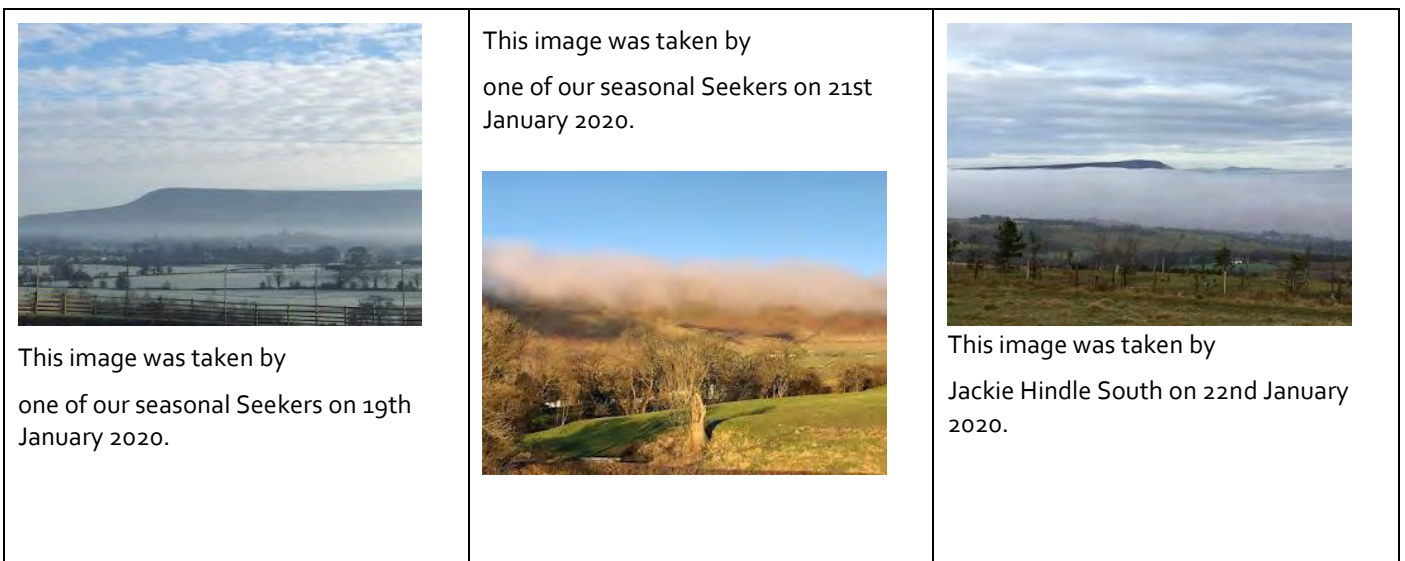
"Yes I'm enjoying it and it has encouraged me to keep my own nature diary of all the things I see."

What are people saying about taking part in 72 Seasons?



"Yes I am enjoying it, I am noticing things and I think, when I notice them, spending a little more time just noticing and watching. Thanks"


When we change a season, we look for what people are sharing and telling us and then rename it. It was clear people were sharing images of mist.



In the image above, Pendle Hill is hidden by the mist! That is actually quite common around here. If you can't see Pendle, you know the weather isn't great. It's also what the famous book by Robert Neil is named after; 'Mist over Pendle' is a dramatic retelling of the events of 1612 which led to the Pendle Witches being tried for witchcraft at Lancaster Castle, culminating in 10 lives lost.

It was about this point where people began to start sharing many more nature images. Kirsty Rose Parker explains, "I was feeling a bit worried about the project as so many of the first seasons seemed wrong. Even though everyone agreed it was a really mild January, it was difficult to trust the process at that time. However, looking back, so many seasons being incorrect right at the start seems to have given our nature Seekers confidence to take part more and be more vocal."

Not just vocal, but visual too! People were really taking time to look around, to notice the finer details in nature and to share those images with a like-minded, local audience.

 <p>This image was taken by Sally Lambert on 22nd January 2020.</p>	 <p>This image was taken by Sarah Martin on 26th January 2020.</p>	<p>This image was taken by Jackie Monk on 26th January 2020.</p> 
<p>Season; 30 January – 3 February: Morning Grass Glistens</p> 	<p>This image was taken by Cathy Dobney on 30th January 2020.</p> 	<p>This image was taken by Caroline Porter on 2nd February 2020.</p> 

People also started to look out for previous seasons and to notice that things were early or late, sometimes missing. Here one of our seasonal Seekers had remembered the snowdrop season from earlier in the month.

And another remember the season about Robins and shared an image after spotting one. One person told us, "it has encouraged me to keep my own nature diary of all the things I see"




And, talking of remembering previous seasons, Cathy Dobney spotted some white. we really loved the subtlety of this image!

It was about this point, about one month in, when people really began interacting more with each other. Caroline's picture above of snowdrops created a discussion about what the 'white thing' is in the background? Litter, a heron, a goose, a spot on the camera? We just don't know.

 <p>This image was taken by Sam Root on 2nd February 2020.</p>	<p>Season; 4 - 7 February: Spring Winds Shake Raindrops</p>  <p>Spring Winds ShaKe Raindrops</p>	<p>This image was taken by Leanne Duckworth on 4th February 2020.</p> 
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We had planned to call this season 'Spider Webs Glisten', and Cath Ford had drawn a lovely image. We will try and work this into a future season, in Autumn. Sam's image above was one of the few webs spotted, so we changed this season too.

This was another change - the mild weather did make for a lot of new seasons! Originally, we had planned to call this season 'Spring Winds Thaw the Ice' but there wasn't much ice to thaw. One seasonal Seeker did find some ice, but we had to wait quite a few more days for ice to be seen.

 <p>This image was taken by Sally Lambert on 11th February 2020.</p>	<p>Season; 8 - 13 February: The Curlew Calls</p>  <p>The Curlew Calls</p>	<p>Season; 14 - 18 February: Spring Is In The Air</p>  <p>Spring Is In The Air</p>
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Two seasons correct in a row! Whoop!

One of our seasonal Seekers noticed a meeting of herons and shared a photograph on St Valentine's Day; maybe love was in the air? Another Seeker told us that she always felt that herons were a good omen, and we found out collectively that a group of herons is a 'siege'. It was lovely to see the group really starting to bond.

 <p>This image was taken by</p>	<p>Season; 19 - 23 February: The Earth Becomes Damp</p>	 <p>This image was taken by</p>
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Stella Nuttall on 14th February 2020.



The Earth Becomes Damp

Anita Vine on 24th February 2020.

Stella mentioned they once saw a meeting of 27 herons! Have you ever seen more than one heron at a time?

At this point in the year, Storm Ciara was recent and people across the UK were flooded. Storm Dennis finished on the first day of this mini season. There was so much rain, it was literally torrential. It was a sad time.

But, nature comforts. Here a seasonal Seeker shared a photograph, possibly thinking of 'white' but another Seeker commented, "Oh how pretty that looks. Like a Christmas Card."

Season; 24 - 28 February: Haze First Covers the Sky



Haze First Covers The Sky

This image was taken by Cathy Dobney on 27th February 2020.



3

Season; 1 - 5 March: Plants Show Their First Buds



Plants Show Their First Buds

Unsurprisingly it proved quite tricky to get photographs of haze. Luckily, one of our plucky Seekers managed it.

We really love this image from Cath. They are all special, but there is something about this one. This season is also where the natural world and the weather seemed to start changing into something more hopeful. Maybe that is why?

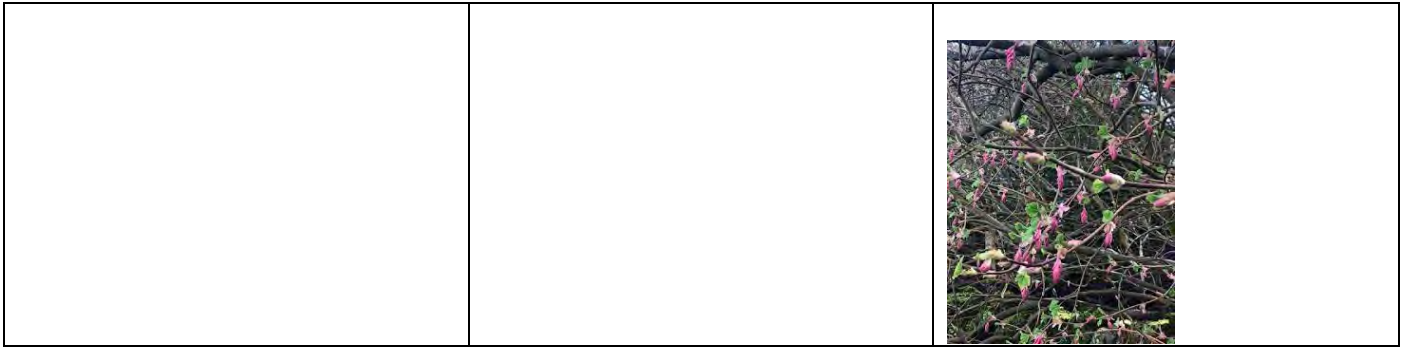
This image was taken by Sarah Martin on 1st March 2020.



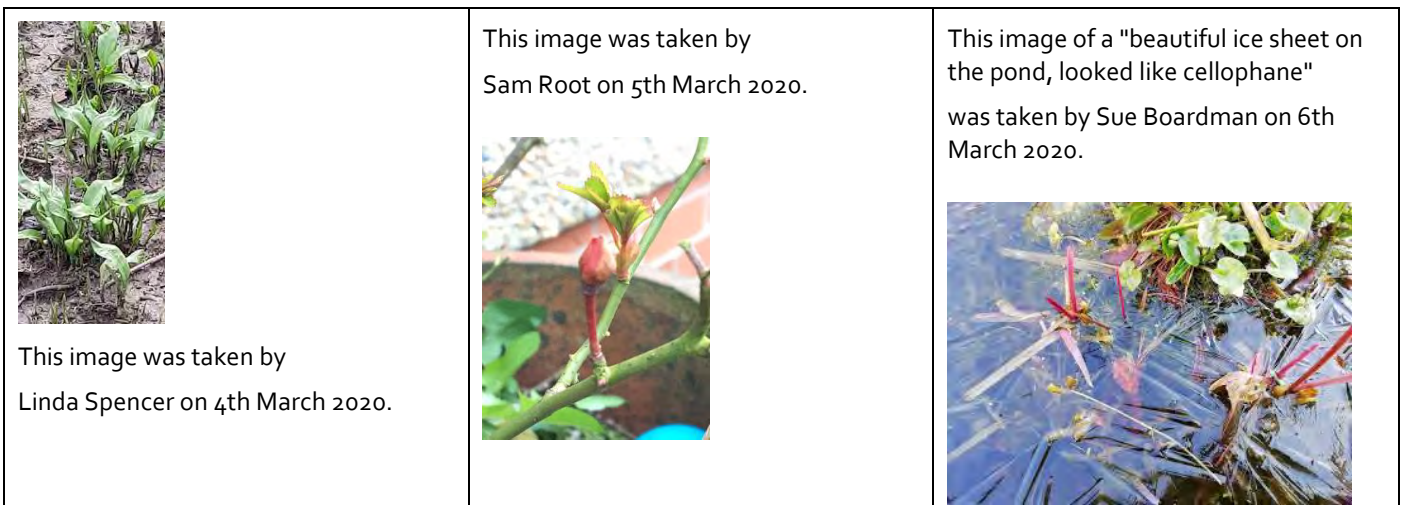
These images were taken by one of our seasonal Seekers on 1st March 2020.

Another seasonal Seeker took a nice picture of redcurrent buds on the 4th March, as we had shared a blurry version! It really was starting to feel like we are all in this together.

This image was taken by Sarah Martin on 4th March 2020.



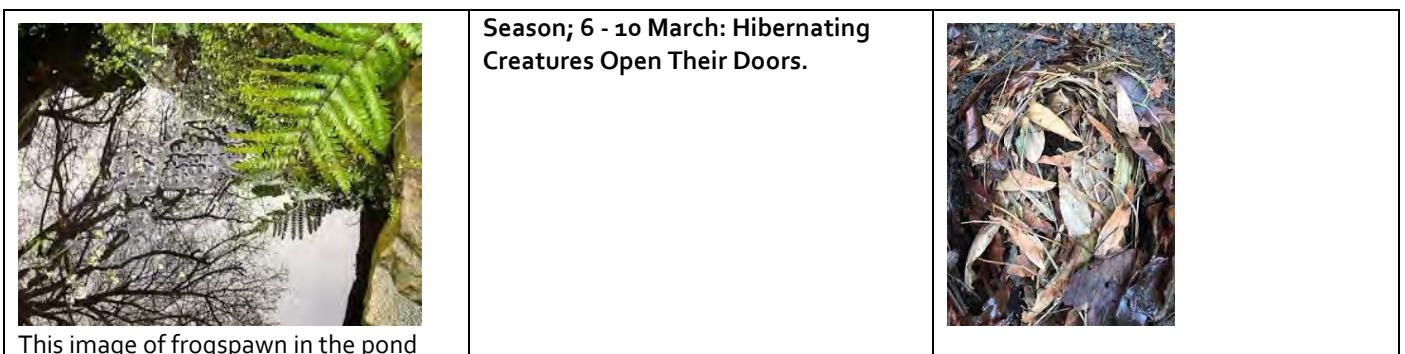
People were starting to share their feelings more about nature. One seasonal Seeker told us, "Ooh spring makes me feel so happy!", as they shared an image of wild garlic emerging in Townley park.



It is nice when a season is correct and everyone spots it. Then there is a feeling, a certainty, that this is right. It's hard to explain. It is linked to a feel of community. This quote by Alan Bennett helps to explain it...

"The best moments in reading are when you come across something - a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - that you'd thought special, particular to you. And here it is, set down by someone else, a person you've never met, maybe even someone long dead. And, it's as if a hand has come out, and taken yours."

While organising permissions for these photographs, we noticed how many of our names are plant or nature related – surnames like root, earthup, rose, for example. We wondered if having a natural surname means genetically you are more likely to enjoy nature? Or possibly just more predisposed to notice more nature? Or maybe you are always likely to have this many nature names in any selection of people? We haven't asked for personal details in this project, so it's not a tangent we can go and follow!



was taken by Judith Cunliffe on 7th March 2020.



Hibernating Creatures Open Their Doors

This picture of 'a mouse's house' was taken by Suzi Earthup on 20th February 2020.

Frogspawn is actually a well-known indicator of Spring and nature. You may be wondering why the seasons didn't include this? It's actually a core part of the project - we deliberately didn't choose frogspawn because our seasons need to be open to people who might not have a garden – or might not be able to walk to a remote pond. It doesn't mean it wasn't lovely to see these, but our research project is designed to be equal access - regardless of where you live or your abilities. This was to prove crucial towards the end of the month.

After just explaining how important it was that the project was open widely, this season does seem to require access to a garden. However, although hedgehogs might be quite famous hibernators, bumblebees, some butterflies, ladybirds, bats, and slow worms are all creatures commonly found in the UK that hibernate.

This was a special photograph to share though, as so few of us ever get to see a mouse's house.



This image was taken by Kirsty Rose Parker on 8th March 2020.

Season; 11 - 15 March: The Butterbur Flowers.



The Butterbur Flowers

This image was taken by Sally Lambert on 11th March 2020.



This image was taken by Sally Lambert on 11th March 2020

Season; 16 – 20 March: The Magnolia Blooms



The Magnolia Blooms

We managed to find a bee that did look like it had just woken up. It spent about twenty minutes sat on the dandelion warming up before flying away. Another seasonal Seeker explained, "that will be a Bumble Queen. They sometimes sunbathe to warm up before they can fly."

Butterburs do look quite strange and alien when they flower, and can be seen in wild grounds but particularly near canals and streams. Cath Ford, our artist was thrilled to get to draw a butterbur!

People often have Magnolias in front gardens and they are quite distinctive and easy to spot, regardless of whether you own a magnolia or not. They are scented, so worth sniffing if you see one.

Our seasonal Seekers responded well to this one, as Tammie began Magnolia watch on the 18th March. This season is possibly a little early, but the majority of people agreed with it, so we have kept it.



This image was taken by Tammie Beckett on 18th March 2020.



This image of "mine has less buds than Tammies" was taken by Stella Nuttall on 18th March 2020.



This image was taken by Kirsty Rose Parker on 26th March 2020.



This image was taken by Sue Boardman on 1st April 2020.

At this moment in time, the world began to slow down for Coronavirus, but it was a good time to spot wildlife. Our seasonal Seekers shared some really lovely wildlife images.

We also are very pleased that this project can all be done from home, and that it continues to run and to provide solace in difficult times. Many people know that nature continues and provides comfort, but paying attention to the subtle changes we hope will help wellbeing for everyone taking part.



This image was taken by Pamela Wilkinson on 17th March 2020.

This image of "my first bee" was taken by Sheila Moss on 19th March 2020.



This image was taken by Sally Lambert on 19th March 2020.

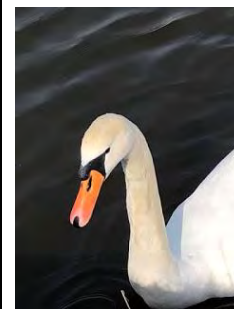


This image was taken by Yvonne Carter on 20th March 2020.



This image was taken by Sheila Moss on 20th March 2020.

This image was taken by Sarah Martin on 24th March 2020.



This image was taken by Sarah Martin on 25th March 2020.



This image was taken by Sue Boardman on 26th March 2020.



This image of "dragonfly larvae" was taken by Sue Boardman on 27th March 2020.

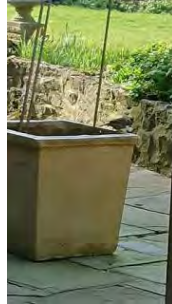
Season; 21 - 25 March: The Sparrow Builds Her Nest



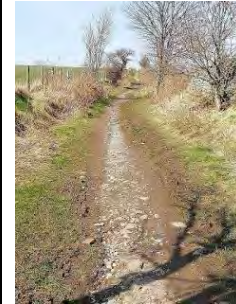
The Sparrow Builds Her Nest

This image was taken by Michelle on 25th March 2020.

Michelle shared this image and then asked, 'does this count as a nesting sparrow?' And we have to admit, this season was nigh on impossible to photograph. Thank goodness we have Cath's beautiful images to accompany the seasons.



This image "although we are now at home, we share each other's journeys" was taken by Sue Boardman on 26th March 2020.



It has been such a comfort to have a group to talk to about nature, to share our daily walks with, to keep working for (although here at The Evaluator we can work 100% from home, so we are doing).

When we first planned this project, we had thought it would impact on people's wellbeing, but had not envisaged just how much it would impact on our own - or how our wellbeing would be collectively challenged during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Season; 26 - 30 March: The First Cherry Blossoms



The First Cherry Blossoms



This image was taken by

Stella Nuttall on 27th March 2020



This image was taken by
Sam Root on 29th March 2020.

This image was taken by
one of our seasonal Seekers on 31st March 2020.



And that brings us to the end of Winter. The *72 Seasons* continue; they will throughout the whole of 2020. It seems fitting to end on Cherry Blossom, as the Japanese season of Sakura is famous across the whole world, and it was the ancient natural Japanese calendar which inspired the whole project.

In 2020, for the project *72 Seasons*, we are working with a group of volunteers - our seasonal Seekers - to rename the year in nature. Every 4 or 5 days we start a new season. Our Seekers are helping us to notice the changes in nature. Throughout they project they complete health and wellbeing surveys as we monitor the changes that they feel as they move closer to nature.

Our ultimate goal is to have an agreed list of *72 Seasons* which are easily noticed, things you can see even if you don't have a garden or are able to go for long walks or reach the wilder spots. We are running this project in the area around Pendle Hill and it will be a Lancashire-specific, or possibly North-West-specific, list of seasons when complete. We also hope it will have been fun for people to take part in. We had planned to do some of the work purely online and some in person. The in-person elements have been postponed but the online only has positively thrived.

Here is a blog post all about how Spring went. [We did this for Winter previously and there is a link to that post here](#), in case you prefer to read in order.

If you have just read all about the changes in Winter, you'll have noticed that people started to keep an eye out for previous seasons. Well, the magnolia crept into this season...



Pictures by Tammie, Ellen and Helen, who were delighted to find the magnolia blooms.

I do really like the way people take on noticing the 'season', it becomes personal to find it. I even find myself looking at my list as I go for a walk and thinking about what I might be able to notice in advance and what might be taking its time. You cannot rush nature, it does its own thing, and you have very little control in general. I think that is the comfort of the project. Most of the seasons chosen are mostly free from too much person-interference, and the changes are designed to put you in the bigger natural world.

We never could have predicted that this project around noticing nature and wellbeing would have such a turbulent year to follow. It almost feels unreal that in 2020 we happened to carry out a year-long nature project that people can take part in from home. As a researcher you cannot get much luckier than measuring wellbeing with a group of people both before and during Covid and hopefully continuing as we come out of Covid. We have measured wellbeing and health in detail during the most impactful year, with dramatic changes in life and huge effects on wellbeing. We have been there, live, measuring away and running the project, mostly just as planned. It is also crucial to note that nature almost feels like the only silver lining of Covid; our rivers cleared up, the skies were free of aeroplanes, and traffic was almost silent. Looking at Spring happening, quite

normally, while the whole world around us changed beyond all recognition, was a source of comfort for me and for many others taking part in the project.

"This year with lockdown I somehow feel even more aware of nature and how it is thriving and blossoming without us - almost as if it is benefiting from our absence. Quite humbling."

"I don't know if it's what we are going through at the moment but I'm noticing the different trees and how they open up and the different time trees open up... the glorious different green colours in the trees. I've noticed the blossom and spring flowers and been sending photos to my mum as she has missed seeing all the spring flowers while out and about. It makes me realise what we take for granted usually and is opening my eyes to the wonder around the beautiful part of Lancashire I am so fortunate to live in and be able to see while in lockdown."

"Really enjoying taking part. It's particularly good to focus on nature during these weird times."

Season: 31 March - 4 April; Daffodils Dance in the Breeze



Pamela took the left photograph on 9 April and Veronica took the photograph on 31 March

This was a new season - one we created based on what people noticed, as our original estimate of 'Thunder Raises its Voice' proved wrong. We do replace quite a few seasons. 'Kirsty Daffodil' is a nickname of mine. I resisted using daffodils as I thought it was a bit too much about me! The daffodils won through though. I suppose it wouldn't be a British spring without them.

And the seasons were already starting to blur! Proving that the seasons do "march on without us" as one Seeker said. There was a real feeling of excitement as Spring, sprung!



Jackie took this wonderful image of redcurrants flowering with Pendle Hill peeping through in the background, Sue took the photograph of Solomon's Seal springing up among the daffodils and then a different Sue shared a collage of Spring flowers.

Season: 5 - 9 April; The Swallows Arrive.



As I write this post, the season is 'The Swallows Leave' and their time with us is brief, approximately five months - When they arrive, they chatter, they raise one or two broods of young, and then they go. They know how to make an entrance, and how to keep us keen! The shapes of them flitting and swooping over the canal, has brought me much happiness this year - consternation also, as I try to remember which is a swift (all black) and which is a swallow (white, below).

Caroline managed to get a photograph of a swallow on 12 April. They are so fast it can be hard to catch on camera.



Season: 10 - 14 April; Yellow Forsythia Gleams



The first image here was taken by Marian on 9 April and the second by Veronica on 31 March.

Our Facebook group of seasonal Seekers continue to learn together. I send out longer emails explaining the seasons and do try and research and share interesting snippets. In that way people can choose how involved they want to get.

One seasonal Seeker, Deborah mentioned "The garden smells wonderful after last night's rain and the hellebores are at their best at the moment. This smell is 'Petrichor' (thanks Kirsty Rose Parker, hadn't heard this word before so I looked it up) it's the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil. The word is constructed from Greek Petra (πέτρα), meaning "stone", and ἰχώρ (ἰχώρ), the fluid that flows in the veins of the gods in Greek mythology."

It is wonderful to get feedback on how people are using the information and learning more.

People started to share the parts of spring that meant something to them...



On 10 April our spring Seekers were on fire! Anita found a butterfly - Sally shared this blossom she found and Sue found a horse chestnut tree starting to grow its flowers.

Not all of the group were out and about as - some people were shielding at home at this point. People started to share more paths, and larger views, for the people who were not getting out so much - a series of virtual walks and paths, organically created within the group.



Chelle shared this Spring View on 13 April, Sue shared an 'Into a Silver Birch Wood' on 10 April and Judith shared this Early Morning View of Pendle' on 11 April. Note the magnolia, creeping into shot there, almost stealing the limelight. I noticed that people were echoing our style of describing the seasons, and making it their own.

In this project we aim to try and engage the senses - sometimes we ask people to touch - or feel the breeze. It is not all about just looking. In April, the scents of the season were also being noticed.



Sue found a carpet of wild garlic on 15 April, Deborah shared garden smells on 11 April and Sue shared a blossom photograph on 15 April.

Season: 15 - 19 April; Lambs Jump in Green Fields.



It's an iconic image of Spring, and particularly so in our neck of the woods. Lambing time and spotting the first lambs of Spring simply had to be included. We wanted to be a bit more specific and asked people to notice the lambs jumping and being playful if possible and to take a moment to notice the green of the grass and to watch them play. Lamb pictures were popular!



Photographs by Anita on 19 April, Yvonne on 18 April, Sue on 18 April, Sally took a picture of Barnoldswicks famous rainbow sheep, Marian took a picture of these zworbeles sheep on 17 April.



Two further pictures of lambs, both by Sally.

Just a note of explanation on the famous rainbow sheep - I live in Barnoldswick and this was in the height of lockdown, so people could only go for a walk. Most people tried to go out every day and sometimes we would see friends on the street and stop for glorious five-minute chats across the street or path. Whoever would have predicted how beautiful those moments of connection were and how vital they felt. We actually went for a few family walks to go and find the rainbow sheep after a friend of ours had shouted across the street that was what they were doing. The rainbow sheep had become a local tourist attraction and celebrity. It felt like everyday there was a picture of it shared on social media. The rainbow was the symbol of supporting the NHS, along with clapping every Thursday at 8pm on the doorstep. I have a 4-year-old who enjoyed trying to spot the rainbows. I was working throughout lockdown, as my role transferred easily to working from home, but during this hot and sunny spring we would often try and go for a walk about 3.30 or 4 pm, in time to be home to watch the briefing. Writing about that feels a little surreal now. It feels like an awfully long time ago and a whole different time and routine already.

Season: 20 - 24 April; The Tulip Blooms



Sometimes we really get a season right and this was one of them. It just worked perfectly.



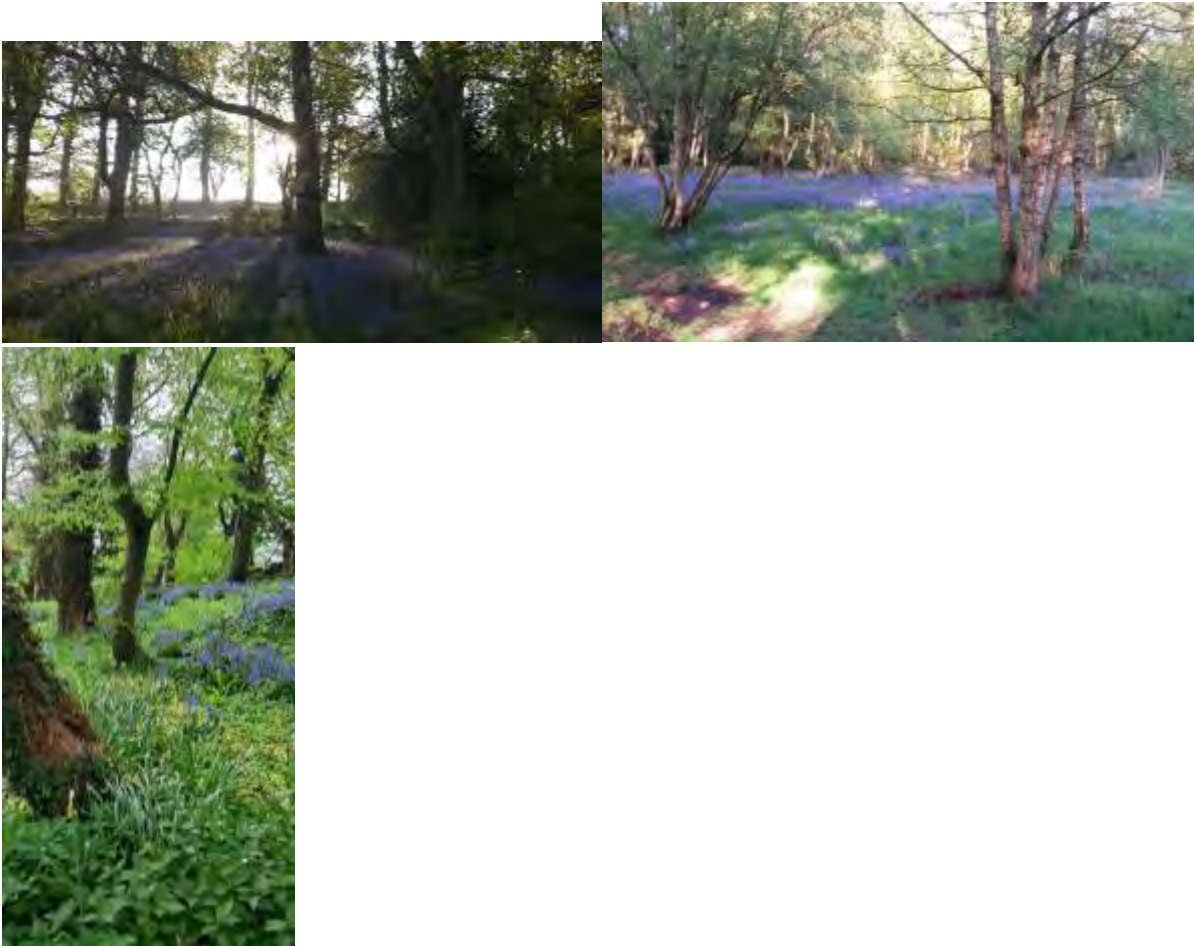
Photographs by Sue on 20 April, Christine on 20 April, Ann and Sue on the 21 April



Photographs by Pamela on 24, Michelle on 22, Carol on 23, Jackie on 21 and Sam on 21 April too.

Season: 25 - 29 April; Bluebells Carpet the Woods





Photographs by Stella - she took this shot on 25 April, and Janet took the left one on 29 and Caroline found this bluebell carpet on 5 May.

Most years recently I have been to visit the Bluebell woods, but this year it wasn't possible for me or for many other people to do so. I did feel very grateful for being able to walk to lots of lovely nature spots, and this reminded me that not all of us were even able to do that. It also helped me understand more about how the individuals who were shielding enjoyed the pictures of the wilder areas. The Bluebells do make a lovely carpet!

The English and Spanish Bluebell Identification Quest was strong in our Facebook group. Spanish bluebells are invasive in our country and out-compete the more delicate, stronger smelling (in a good way) English bluebell. They can be tricky to tell apart and our seasonal Seekers were keen to learn the differences and to find the rarer English bluebells.

Here are some Spanish ones;



Photographs by Michelle on 25 April, Kath on 24, Sam on 6 May (we kept the debate going a fair while!) and Kath on 9 May.

Here are some English ones, they are a bit harder to find: -



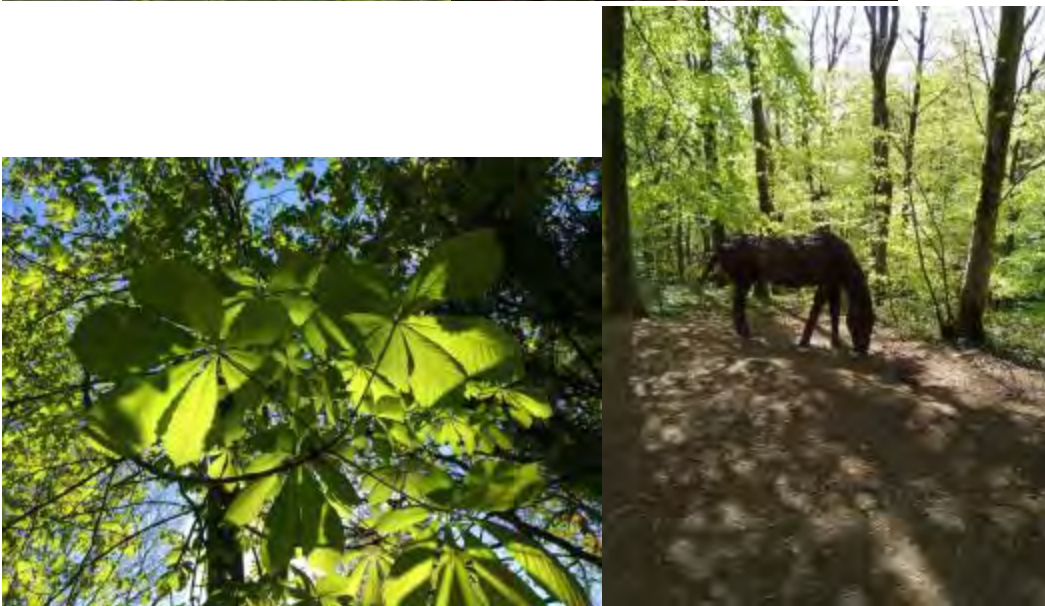
Photographs by Sam - who took the first two photographs on 6 May, - Cathy also found this patch on 6 May, - Georgie took this close up on 26 April and Leanne found this clump on 7 May.

The flowers are longer and thinner, and there are usually less of them. They are not as vigorous as the Spanish ones.

Season: 30 April - 4 May; Trees Turn Green Again



This season really brought out the photographs and people started to share more images. I wonder if it's because trees from a distance are particularly photogenic?



Photographs by Sarah took this picture of green trees on 2 May, Leanne's 'Silver Birch Found Its Leaves Again' on 4 May and Sam took this atmospheric shot of green leaves on 2 May. The last photograph is Jill's woodland on 6 May.

At this point we also had a discussion about the Oak and Ash trees and the old saying about them. 'If the oak should bloom before the ash, then the world will have a splash, if the ash should bloom before the oak, then the world will have a soak.'



Sue took this image of a bare ash on 3 May. "The ash looks to be the last one to bloom and we've already had our soak!" explained Sue.

I just wanted to mention Sue's dedication here, she shares regularly and is an active part of our Facebook group.



Here is Sue's before and after trees! "My husband is getting fed up walking with me as I take so long looking at everything and taking photos!" she explained. Sorry to Sue's husband, but we are very pleased! That's exactly what we hoped would happen during this project.

During this time; the group took us on a virtual walk...





Down Anita's road, stopping by Caroline's Spring Bank, through Sarah's woodland entrance, to Jill's deep woodland, noticing Sue's fruiting Lichen and just enough time to watch Liz's geese and their baby goslings before making a wish and watching Georgie's sunset.

Frog digressions



Cathy shared this photograph on 9 May, and Judith shared this one on 7 May.

I love it when the group go off on one of their own interests - like poo detectives (which I am happy to encourage, but do not want to share pictures of poo here - spoiler alert - they were mostly fox or hedgehog!) It means they are connecting more, and this was important at this time.

Frogs were popular. People would talk about them. "We've had two dead ones this year. The first seemed fearless whenever we went near the pond and just kept sitting there, then found it dead in the pond a few days later. The other was just sat on the path!" from Michelle. John was also concerned "I've just seen my first tadpoles - incredibly late - and in a bit of water which will dry up soon so they'll probably die. The lake they normally breed in is already totally dry so none there." he explained.

Frogs however did gift me one of my favourite photos from Spring!



Janice on 8 May - gold star! This frog looks like the most content frog ever, so clearly some are thriving somewhere.

Season: 5 - 9 May; Wisteria Cascades.



Wisteria Cascades



Anita shared this wonderful Wisteria on 11 May. We chose items for the seasons that could hopefully be fairly easily seen, items that most people might be able to spot. We think at least one house in most towns has a Wisteria and they are often at the front. Is that correct? Also, we only keep the seasons that more than 50% of our Seekers have agreed and found. If it doesn't make the magic 50% it is replaced. Some make it with 100% agreeing and others are trickier.

One Seeker did say:

"I'm intrigued as to how the various seasons are chosen, which flora and fauna are selected and why some prominent ones left out?"

I'll try and answer that here. We try and match as many of the original Japanese *72 Seasons* as we can - although that's probably only a third of the seasons, and then we have to tweak them. There are bears and exotic plants in Japan. They grow rice and lots of other differences, that cannot translate to Pendle and the area around Pendle Hill. One of my passions, is about making sure that people are included. My professional background includes working with vulnerable adults, and I always want my projects to be open to as many people as possible. It was very important to me, and the whole Pendle Hill team, that you did not have to have a garden, or be well enough to climb Pendle Hill to be able to take part. We want to measure wellbeing across lots of people. I also wanted to see if the project could have an online component so that people who worked full time or worked shifts, or were carers or parents of young children could still take part. Those factors meant we have tried to select the

parts of nature that are easy to spot from pavements. When writing them I often thought 'could I see this on a walk to the bus stop, could I see it in a garden I walk past?' So, it's actually about including people rather than prominent nature. We never knew how important that online component would become. We do still hope to be able to complete some face-to-face elements of the project, hopefully in 2021.

Season: 10 - 14 May; Blossom Petals Scatter the Ground.



The images throughout the project by Cath Ford are all wonderful, but the ones with shoes feel particularly noticeable to me. As soon as I see these shoes, I feel like I am looking down at Cath's feet! If you want to know more about Cath's work, [her website is here.](#)



Few blossom images were shared in this season - Some seasons really pop and some don't. That's the nature of an experimental project like this one. No matter how much people enjoy the seasons, people have other things going on, or they struggle to sustain the same level of enthusiasm all year around. However, one of our Seekers shared these heart shaped petals, on 1 May.

Season: 15 - 20 May; Birdsong Fills the Sky



This season is new, we actually moved a few seasons around - some were a bit early, some a little late, and others just didn't work as well as we had planned. When that happens and we need a new one, we read all the comments carefully to see what stands out.

One Seeker told us:

"The seasons are spread out much more- start earlier. I am really enjoying the project. I look forward to looking at the posts and appreciate the range of followers, ranging from the experts who know or research all the names, people who are comfortable to ask questions and me who gets easily confused regarding the season we're supposed to be in, not great with Facebook and still comfortable. It's wonderful to join with others who appreciate nature, it's colours, textures..."

And another said:

"Noticed lots of birds have nests and chicks. We have blue tits, coal tits, blackbirds, goldfinches, sparrows."

And another said:

"I enjoy participating. I have seen baby goslings and baby moorhens on the river. Swifts and swallows and house martinis during the day and plenty of bats at night"

Which all combined to give us the confidence to move the seasons, and to decide on birdsong as the defining season here.

Season: 21 - 25 May. The Lilac Flowers.



The Lilac Flowers

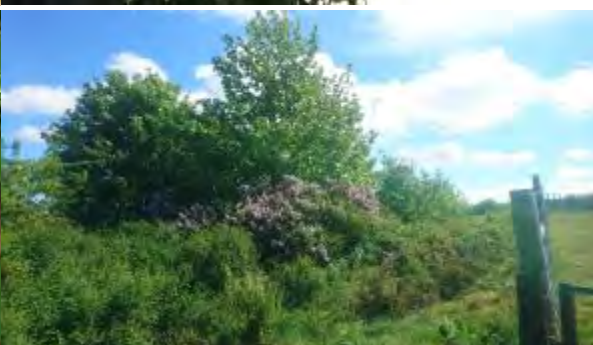
Did you know that Lilac in flower on 25 May has been immortalised in literature?

The People's Revolution of the Glorious Twenty-Fifth of May is depicted in Terry Pratchett's, 'Night Watch', which has a similar story to Les Miserables. Survivors of the revolution are said to wear lilac, each year on 25 May to commemorate their survival. Following Terry Pratchett's announcement that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, fans called for 25 May to become 'Wear Lilac' day in support (now memorial) of Pratchett and to raise awareness of the illness and to raise vital funds for the Alzheimer's Society UK.

As a Terry Pratchett fan myself, I had always wanted to include The Glorious Twenty-Fifth and was delighted that this season worked out so well! Also, Night Watch is a wonderful book. Well worth a read.



Photographs by; Stella on 17 May, Cathy on 21 May and two photographs of White Lilac by Sue on 22 May.



Photographs by; Kath on 22 May - Sam, Michelle and John, all on 21 May.



Photograph by Michelle, "look what the wind brought on 22 May." Lilac was another win!

Season: 26 - 30 May; Cow Parsley Lines the Hedgerows



One of the really nice parts of the project is that people can take part in lots of different ways. Some are really knowledgeable about nature and some are new to lots of the seasons. That is one of the special parts of nature, it doesn't judge and does welcome everyone.

One Seeker told us:

"I'm not sure what cow parsley looks like! I'll check on the internet."

And another said:

"The project is educating me all the time"



Sally took this photograph on 26 May and John took this on 29 May. Then Sally found a whole swathe of cow parsley on 28 May.

A few other shares - we do seem to love trees as a group!



Tim shared a 'Sunrise Through the Old Oak Tree' on 26 May, Sally shared this beautifully framed image on 12 May, Marian shared this Hawthorn blossom on 11 May and Jill was back sharing the woods again on 31 May.

Season: 31 May - 5 June; The Elder Flowers.



The Elder Flowers

We often see elders on the paths, and public parks, and along the canal locally. They are pretty hardy and seem to thrive in a range of places. Due to their flowers being quite distinctive, they are a good one to 'spot'. And 'spot' people did!



Photographs by; Sally took this on 31 May - Sam took this one on 4 June - Tim found these on 4 June and Cathy found this on 31 May



Photographs by; Caroline found this on 5 June and Michelle found these frothy ones on 5 June.

The elder also lasted really well this year.



Caroline took this gorgeous picture of an elder still flowering 13 June and John found this on 4 June.

As I write this part of the post, (it takes me a long time to do a whole season story!) the season is about Elderberries. We have come part way in the cycle. Nature really does just keep on going.

Season: 6 - 10 June; The Blackbird Fledglings Leave the Nest



The Blackbird Fledglings Leave the Nest



Photograph taken by a friend of mine, who isn't actually taking part in the seasons, but did give me permission to use the photograph. This is by Philippe and was taken on 8 June showing an empty blackbird nest. I was so pleased to see this as it can be really hard to spot an absence. We want the seasons to be a nice mix, which shows the varied wonder of nature. Sometimes that is about noticing some change, or noticing when something stops, or a feel that these less tangible seasons are part of the wonder of nature. We do think they are important parts of the whole make up of nature affecting wellbeing. It is something that is more intangible, and harder to describe a feeling.

One Seeker told us:

"It makes me stop look and listen more. I look up and down not just in front 😊"

And another explained:

"An insight into local nature in our immediate environs, plus the feelings that invokes."

This makes me feel more confident that we are creating the space for those feelings to happen. People are exploring nature with all their senses, as they wish and finding what works for them.



Just at this time, Sue posted this image with the caption 'Pendle brings us all together' which was so fitting - in fact it's the vision for the whole project. Together for our landmark. Bringing people together from both sides of the hill. I think I'd have said Together for our hill! [You can read about the project aims here on their website.](#)

Let's share some of the wildlife noticed by our Seekers...



Photographs by; Pamela took this photograph of Peregrine Falcons nesting at St Mary's Church in Nelson, Michelle took a photograph of this dragonfly on 27 June. The 8 June must have been a great time to spot rabbits and hares, as Tricia captured a 'Baby Bunny' and Sue found 'Mr Hare'. Apparently, Mr Hare is a regular visitor to the garden, but rarely stops for photographs!



Photographs by; 'Hi Cows' by Sue on 29 June and Blackbird spotted by Ellen on 21 May.

We haven't set wildlife as seasons so much, as they can be hard to spot and we explained about how we are trying to make sure that people don't have to be able to venture far to be able to take part. At first that was mostly to include people with disabilities who perhaps couldn't walk to the hill, but during the year this widened to include everyone who was limited in their range by Covid, (which turned out to be everyone, literally everyone!). However, the next two were wildlife we did think everyone stood a chance of seeing.

Season: 11 - 15 June; Butterflies Flutter



Butterflies Flutter



These great action shots were captured by Michelle on 17 June and Sally on 16 June.

Have you noticed how many images I've shared from Sally? I think she must be our most prolific photographer! Thanks, Sally, for all your images, and I'm sorry I had to leave so many out too.

Season: 16 - 20 June; Bees are Busy



This photograph of a Bee being busy was taken by John on 17 June.

In terms of wildlife, bees and butterflies are both pollinators, and both at serious risk of decline. It's wonderful to see them and I think they absolutely deserve a place in the seasons, and should be noticed. I wonder if part of the reason they are at risk is that people take them for granted? We still have chance to change this. As bee expert Dave Goulson says, insects breed fast and they just need a few more flowers to thrive. Many of us can do a bit to help by growing a few bee friendly flowers and avoiding weedkillers. We can also all enjoy the fluttering of butterflies and the buzzing of the bees.

Season: 21 - 26 June; The Days are Long



Oh, what a lovely season, one of my favourites - Summer solstice, and the longest day. I think this is a really beautiful image by Cath too. We are currently discussing what we are going to do with all the images and how we are going to share them. We'll keep you posted!



This is a photography by Sam called "the days are long and so are the shadows!" I could not love this image more. It works so well with the season, and the project full of seasonal Seekers, and the image Cath created above.

Time for one last nature walk in Spring... (our seasons don't really match up to Spring and Summer, but we call them that as people seem to understand it better than first quarter, second quarter and so on!)



Jackie shared the mossy wall at Townley on 8 June and then Sue lent us her expertise to share a lush meadow on 29 June, a horse chestnut in flower on 9 June and pine cones on the tree also on 9 June.

Wait a minute is that the same meadow Sue shared earlier?



I think it might be! Let's hope Sue is still taking part (the programme is anonymous - only names on the Facebook group which is private) and will take some pictures later in the year!

Season: 27 June - 1 July; The Scent of Roses Fills the Air.



The Scent Of Roses Fills The Air



Sarah captured this rose on 27 June, Michelle caught this lovely climber on 27 June and Sue found this older, wilder rose (preferred by bees!) on 29 June.

Our final season of Spring - is all about Roses. This was a must, as I'm Kirsty Rose Parker, the lead on this project, and I love roses! What a way to leave and move into more summery seasons, with the scent of roses all around us!

Thanks for reading.

Summer!

It wasn't the sunniest and warmest of Summers in the main. Maybe all the sunshine was allocated to Spring? I think if I'm honest this season struggled a bit more than the others. Lots of people did manage to go on holidays, including me, and staff shortages meant an extremely busy Summer when not away. One Seeker explained "I am enjoying this project but feel I've contributed less lately due to family commitments during the school holidays." Maybe everyone spent more time in nature and less time-sharing pictures, or our seasons maybe didn't pop quite as much, but luckily our intrepid seasonal Seekers adapted well and sought out quite a lot of nature to share with others.

I think it shows how resilient the project and the concept are. A year is a long time to run an activity with people, and there has to be peaks and troughs within that year. Also, as an experimental concept, running for the first time, it's always tricky to predict how much people will 'get it' especially since this project is a little deliberately vague so people can make it what they want it to be. I only hoped that some people would stay with us for the whole year, I did expect quite a lot of people to drop out. Spoiler alert! They didn't, well not many did!

Let's take a look at what happened.

Season; 2 – 6 July: Trees Create Dappled Sunshine



Trees Create Dappled Sunshine

I have a little confession to make here, this is what I think of as 'my' season. It's my birthday in this time and when I was writing all the seasons and planning it out, I did decide to create something that is special for me. That special thing is when trees create dappled sunshine. I love to walk through a woodland or through just a couple of trees where beams of sunshine fall down through the canopy, and one footstep is lit up and glittery and the next in shadow. I think it's one of the most beautiful things in the world, and a little bit of everyday magic. Luckily, our Seekers agreed with me and this season made the final cut.

We keep a season if more than 50% of our Seekers agree with it. They can agree in two ways; 'yes I noticed this' or 'yes I think this is right but did not notice it myself' and we gave that option to account for busy lives, or trips away or just times when people had other things going on.

I do love the way our Seekers notice wonderful little moments and then share it. On the 2 July one person captured a spiderweb which has captured many raindrops. One person said "These are like beautiful jewels" and another "Amazing that it can hold all that water and possibly even survived the heavy rain we've had to catch that many droplets - incredible!".

Spider web fact- Spider silk is stronger by weight than steel. Spider silk is lighter than cotton and up to 1,000 times thinner than human hair, yet it's also incredibly strong for such a wispy material.

In the emails we sent to people explaining the new seasons to look out for we would share snippets of information and some knowledge about each season, to help encourage people to keep learning, which is one of the five ways to wellbeing. The five ways to wellbeing are a core part of this project, the principles underline the whole piece of work. It's that the five ways - connect, take notice, keep learning, be active and give back, are proven ways to help us feel better. That's quite important during a pandemic, when our wellbeing is much more fragile.



This photograph of birds feeding was taken on 5 July by one of our Seekers. Isn't that an amazing photograph? Really in the moment, perfectly timed, and crisp focus too.

Our Seekers were out in force that Sunday, also spotting...



An elephant hawk moth, daisies and a field of lavender.

One day later, 6 July a Seeker shared a photograph of wild strawberries. "I've been picking and eating wild raspberries on my walk" one Seeker mentioned and another "Wild strawberries are tiny with a surprisingly good flavour."

Season; 7 – 11 July: Hot Winds Blow



It's January as I write this, and it's cold and windy. But I can think back to when the wind is hot, I can remember the feel of that on my skin. I can remember the warmth. It's a hard season to capture in a photograph, and most of our Seekers seemed to be looking down. Maybe they were avoiding those hot winds?



Mushrooms taken on the 7 July, and both ladybirds also spotted (do you like what I did there?) on the 7 July.

One place where it's always windy, hot or not, is our anchor, Pendle Hill. All our Seekers live around it, within half an hour or so. This project is funded by the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership.



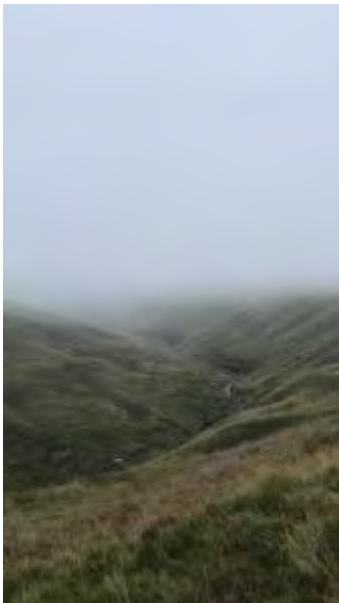
This image of Pendle Hill was taken on the 11 July. We did keep this season.

Season; 12 – 16 July: The Raspberries Turn Red



Some raspberries, red ones, at Quarry Hill in Nelson, taken on the 12 July. It looks like a gloriously sunny day on that photograph.

Yet look at this, taken just two days later. The Great British weather in Summer is a moveable feast!



Fog on the hills taken on 14 July.

Then back to sunshine again. Impossible to predict. I know, I tried! This time our Seekers found flowers



Pink flower taken on the 15 July, same as the yellow flower, and the photograph of the white flower was taken on the 12 July. I don't know the names of all of these flowers, except for Cow Parsley on the right.



Taken the day before our new season on 16 July, one Seeker was cleverly anticipating the next season.

Season; 17 – 23 July: Lavender Feeds the Bees



Lavender Feeds The Bees



Great timing as this was taken on the 17 July. I also love how this seems to match Cath's drawing perfectly. The colour, shape, stance, everything is just spot on. Sometimes, there is a season like this where everything works- the timing, the weather, the noticing, all in perfect alignment and this was one of those seasons. Lots of people saw lavender with bees on in real life and there was 100% agreement this season, but it was quite tricky to photograph. That doesn't matter though, it's nice to think of people watching the seasons in real life, and not always through a screen. Especially this year, where screen use is probably higher than it ever has been.



Amazing that one of our Seekers managed to photograph this, which was taken on 19 July.

72 Seasons has been a really democratic place, where anyone could share knowledge and information, stories, and wonder. It has remained a really pure group on Facebook, which is drama free and all about nature in this area. Not everyone taking part in the project takes part in the Facebook aspect, it's not necessary, but these blog posts do have a heavy Facebook influence. The amount of knowledge shared is wonderful. Here are just a couple of examples.



A hazelnut developing 19 July.



A Chicory Field on 21 July, identified via the hive-mind. "I wonder if it was planted/sown or if it has just taken over the field? you sometimes see it on roadside verges too" one Seeker mused and another thought "I think chicory too". Little snippets like this happened many, many times, and each time it helped the group to connect a little more. One Seeker told us they were "Enjoying to growing feeling of being part of a community." in Summer.

I originally planned the connect aspect of the project to be purely about connecting to the nature around you, and it evolved to be more. That's exciting, when an idea starts to find its own path.

Season; 23 – 28 July: The Hollyhock Grows Tall



The Hollyhock Grows Tall

By Summer, our Seekers were confidently going off-piste. Sharing what they noticed as they looked for the seasons but not always sharing the seasons!

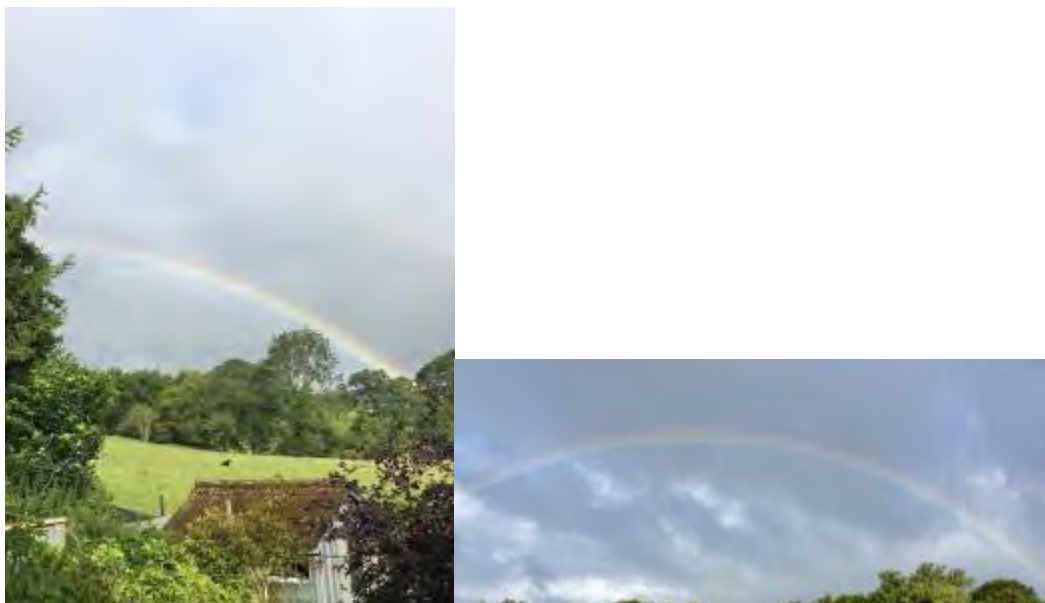


One Seeker found a clump of mushrooms, and titled the picture 'Bleeding Fairy Helmet' thankfully, as I don't know about you but my mushroom identification skills leave a lot to be desired. A newly sheered sheep made an appearance and this season the group had long discussions about invasive and dangerous plants like this Himalayan Balsam, spotted and photographed on the 24 July. I recognise the plant by its smell mostly, it's a sickly-sweet smell which immediately reminds me of walks in my childhood but I have no idea why.

The weather was also noticed, although sadly not much sunshine was found. That tricky Great British Summer again.



The 26 July saw our Seekers drawn to water, with both of the above photographs taken then. The water level was high for summer, do you remember the weather? It was really mixed. "A very poor July weather wise so far" one Seeker told us. Another said "July has just been so atypical this year! Up on the Bowland Fells we have had very little other than heavy cloud & rain, with some fierce winds." and another explained "A rather wet July, lots of mist on Pendle Hill. Then a sudden break in the cloud gives you such amazing views. Has been cool in the evenings."



On the 28 July they found rainbows. Which kinda proves how mixed the weather was. *72 Seasons* in one day? Not quite. One person did say "Perhaps we really do need *72 Seasons* - the weather is so changeable."



Damp Earth, Humid Heat

Another season which is a tricky one to photograph. While I mention that, how well has Cath Ford, our artist, done? She has represented concepts really well throughout. I'm sure there must be a few head scratching moments when I send her the titles, but I don't see that in what comes back. It all feels beautiful, and right, and often seamless and timeless, like that image has always been a part of that season, and Cath revealed that to me.

Our Seekers loved the images too "The illustrations were 'spot on' And illustrated the seasons well." one Seeker told us in Summer, "Love the images - they are really inspiring and draw me in." continued another and "The illustrations were brilliant" and "Love the pictures of each season" and we could go on!



A cloudy Pendle Hill 30 July. There is a famous book called 'Mist over Pendle' and it's such an apt title. I often think of it, as I see Pendle peeking from the mist.

As we left July and entered August, our Seekers kept taking notice. Flowers were spotted.



Both of the above were taken on 1 August. The 'Mallow Half and Half Petals' attracted some attention, as the group tried to work out what caused the unusual colouring? "Virus infection and complicated genetic effects (epigenetics) are other possibilities. Whatever the reason it's interesting and Beautiful." was the ultimate consensus.

And I dug up some potatoes I'd grown and took a moment to show off!



Oh, these potatoes, they look so innocent, but in reality... I have a four-year-old son, and during lockdown we planted these potatoes together. We checked on them most days, and even gave them a bit of watering. I taught him how to earth up the potatoes. We talked about them and about eating them for four months. Then, when they were cooked, said 4-year-old refused to even taste one. Aaargh, Kids!!

Season; 3 – 7 August: The Breeze is Hiding



I mentioned that we keep the seasons which get more than 50% agreement. Some are only just over the 50% but a decision needs to be fairly applied. This was one of those slightly more controversial seasons. One Seeker told us "The weather has been different each day recently from calm and still to stormy." and another was blunter, "The breeze was most definitely blowing, not hiding!" which did make me laugh at the time!



Blackberries Stain Fingertips

This is a new season and replaced 'a cool wind blows' as less than 50% of our Seekers agreed. One person explained there was a "Warm wind blowing." and another said "During this period we had just about the only day so far in 2020 when there was NO noticeable wind or breeze at all!" which again, I loved. I do really like the honesty of our Seekers, and I sometimes think they like the seasons I get completely wrong more than the ones I get right! The process by the way, when we have a gap, is that I read all the comments from this season and have a look at what people were sharing at that time. There is usually one thing that is mentioned most. This season was Blackberries. I wanted a description linked to an action, as it is surrounded by two more passive, watching type seasons. I actually really love the description I came up with in the end. Is that too big headed?



This image of Blackberries was taken on 8 August.

While talking about the 8 August, our Seekers enjoyed chatting about the old aide memoir of cut the lavender back to 8 inches on the 8 August (8 month). We mostly agreed this maybe was more suitable for further south gardens. "Not cutting mine back.....it is covered in bees and the flowers are not over yet" one Seeker explained.



Here is a lovely picture of Lavender in Sunshine taken on 8 August, just to confirm the point!



Ahh. The Great British Summer is back. 'Foggy View' taken on the 8 August. Lots of different weather in different parts of our area on 8 August.

Wildlife spotting continued;



Caterpillars spotted on the 11 August and Chicken on a wall spotted on the 13 August. Quite intrigued about the chicken! I don't remember noticing this at the time. Do you think there are some hidden steps, or is the garden much higher? Is there an intrepid chicken run type flying contraption just out of shot? It feels like there is a story here. I would have asked more questions had I spotted that one!

Season; 13 – 17 August: Morning Sunshine Lights the Grass



Morning Sunshine Lights The Grass



All of these images were taken on the 13 August, the day the new season began. The third one is such a close match to Cath's drawing.

It's lovely when people remember the previous seasons.



Feeding bees, and dappled sunshine spotted in the forest, both on the 15 August.

Sometimes it's just what catches people's eyes, and this bright red poppy is certainly eye catching!



Poppy photographed on 16 August.

Season; 18 – 22 August: The Apples are Ready to Harvest





Taken on the 19 August I think this photograph works particularly well with Cath's drawing. I feel like I can put my hand into the image, and pick an apple. Do you know how to tell if an apple is right? You hold it in your hand and twist ever so gently and if it is ready, it comes away easily. If you have to yank it away from the tree, it's not ripe.

Season; 23 – 27 August: The Sunflower Stretches High



The Sunflower Stretches High





All of the above were taken on 23 August, the sunflowers were stretching high against lovely sunny blue skies.

Season; 28 August – 1 September: Earth and Sky Begin to Cool





Another tricky image. I'm starting to think I put all the difficult ones together! People did share images which evoked feelings though. It's a season of change, and you can see warmth and coolness here and transitions too, with a sunny canal shot from the 29 August, a tree leaves image which feels colder also from the 29 August and a 'Spectacular Sunset' taken on 30 August.

Season; 2 – 7 September: The Orange Leaves Start to Show



There is a poignant feel to this season, as the leaves start to change. There is also a quote, unattributed, and often misquoted (possibly by me) that the trees are about to show us "how beautiful it is to let things go". Do you feel this? I'm not sure I do yet. But I do know that *72 Seasons* has made me enjoy winter and autumn and to look forward to every change, not to miss the days before. Spring and Summer will always have my heart, but I've learned to see the act of noticing change as the important part.



These leaves were spotted on 5 September. Don't forget this is a taste of Autumn to come, not full autumn yet, as this next image shows. Tomatoes ripening in the sunshine. I can almost smell the warmth of that spot nestled by the dry-stone wall.



Tomatoes growing in a photograph taken on 6 September.

Season; 9 – 12 September: Spider Webs Glisten



Spider Webs Glisten

This was another season which was better in real life. Many people spotted the webs and this season received 97% agreement overall. However, the wispy-thin-ethereal-ness of spider webs are not so easy to capture on a photograph. Our Seekers did manage though, just a little later. Practice makes perfect possibly?



Elderberries from 12 September and Fox and Cub, a wildflower from 12 September

The group carried on connecting this season in other ways. There was a lively discussion around Elderberries. One person asked "Haven't you got to be careful about elderberry cordial? I've seen something somewhere about there being something unpleasant in it which can be a problem when you don't know how much is in the berries themselves." and another, answered "Wikipedia link and others say that the plant contains compounds that generate cyanide. Various reports of poisoning, also seems to be little evidence of health benefits." Although, confession time again, I've made elderberry cordial every autumn for three or four years now and I am convinced it helps me catch less colds. That could well be a placebo effect!



Also on the 12 September, this photograph of Holly Berries.

Some of our Seekers really do discuss timing and the changes in nature, almost having a sense of the pattern of the world. One person noticed that here saying "amazing that the holly berries are already red." and another explaining "They do seem to be reddening quite early. I also spotted some less "ripe" berries too."

Season; 13 – 17 September: Tree's Drop their First Leaves



90% of people agreed with this season, but few photographs were shared. Maybe everyone was busy with back to school and work routines and there wasn't time to go and explore, just to notice?



Great photograph of a Honeybee in Passion Flower was shared on the 14 September. One of our Seekers explained "Pleased to see this honey bee working the passionflower in my garden. She was there for ages. Hoping she passes on the message. They haven't got long now before they have to hunker down in preparation for winter." One Seeker agreed, "it's a stunning flower very exotic looking." Another replied "Our garden has been so busy with bees and coloured butterflies today. So good to see. Didn't manage to get a pic."



Butterfly photograph taken on 15 September.

And another Seeker captured a butterfly photograph for the other Seeker who didn't get one. Isn't that a fine example of good sharing!

Spider webs had a surprisingly long season, with people spotting them and remembering them all the way through September.



One Seeker found these fantastically lit examples in a field on the 14 September. I really love the way the sunlight picks them out.



21 September a spider in its web is found!



29 September was the best day for Spider webs, maybe an important date in the arachnid calendar? I think this is a really important set of photographs as it shows you can look for nature and the seasons from the wildness of huge vistas or in your back garden or just walking along a street. That's the most special part of it, it's everywhere, and persistent, and beautiful, and, easy to miss.

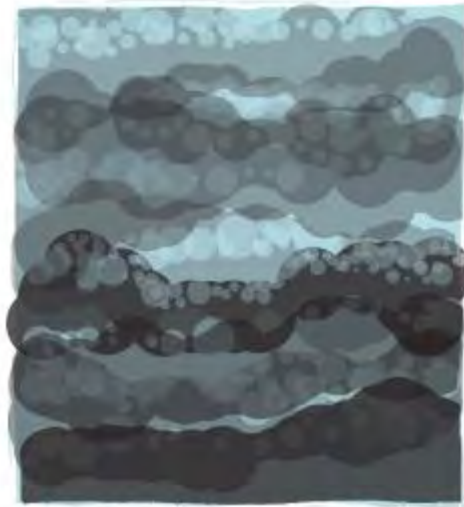
Season; 18 – 22 September: The Swallows Leave



The Swallows Leave

They did leave, one Seeker said "Think ours have gone 😞" and another "I've not seen mine for quite a few days now" and one reported a friend from Whalley had confirmed this "the swallows have left 😞 there must have been 150 on the wires last night. It's so quiet without them." Although this felt like a bit of a sad season, it's important to try and get some balance. Without them leaving would we notice the return as much? And, think of that, 150 gathered on the wires. Like a huge party!

Season; 23 – 27 September: Thunder Lowers its Voice



Thunder Lowers Its Voice

One of my favourite bits about this season was how our group all support each other - including me, and Cath Ford too. Cath posted on this one "Right, anyone got any thoughts about how I can draw thunder? These sound-based seasons are a challenge." And we all rallied round, and talked mostly about lightning! Being no help whatsoever as it turned out!

What do you think of the final drawing? I spent a moment looking at it then, and it certainly raised a feeling of being 'unsettled'. I love it when art provokes a feeling.



Both swan photographs were taken on 26 September. As an aside this season we had a discussion around swans. One Seeker explained "The swans on the canal near me had four babies grow all the way up this year. Every time I walked down there it always made me smile to see they still had four. I have been taking pictures of them all year and they have genuinely turned into my lockdown pals!" and another "The Skipton Canal Basin swans have managed 11 cygnets this year. All thriving"

There are no seasons about Swans, as they can't be easily spotted in everyday life. Obviously, that's different if you live near a canal, but making this project accessible to everyone is a really important part of it.

Season; 28 September – 2 October: Black Elderberries Dance in the Wind



Black Elderberries Dance In The Wind

This was our last season of the quarter of the year that mostly relates to Summer. Our *72 Seasons* don't easily match the established four, they are much more subtle and ever-changing.



This image of elderberries was taken on 28 September. Another Seeker did capture a fantastic video of them dancing in the wind, but I can't seem to share a video from a closed Facebook group.



29 September (Spider Web Spotting Day) was also time to spot a Poisonous Mushroom.

One Seeker explained "May be beautiful - but highly poisonous!!!" and another "Oh dear! From my childhood (and I'm very old!) my parents (who were experts (???)) told me not to touch them and if I did and licked my fingers, I'd get a very upset stomach. My fungus book (with perhaps 1,000 varieties to choose from) indicates that it's a Shaggy Ink Cap (or Lawyers Wig) which seems reasonable. Of course, the fact that I'm still here (and do pick and eat wild mushrooms) indicates that they must have got something right!"

I think that's another important point. When we first started discussing this project, we used to talk about things like how we used to know nature better and modern life has made us a bit too far removed from it. I don't think I talked about mushrooms with my oldest son? But because of this project, I know I have with my youngest. And, I'm so proud that we have managed to put a group together who have that knowledge and can share it, or learn it.

Autumn next. I shall be writing up that adventure shortly!

Please note all photographs have been image described in their captions, to make sure this post is accessible to the widest possible audience.

If you have any questions or thoughts on this blog post, please send me an email at kirsty@theevaluator.co.uk - I'm afraid I had to turn comments off, as it was just getting filled with spam robot stuff which no-one wants to see.

Welcome to Autumn, our final adventure in nature. This season has an added layer of poignancy, as there is a sense of ending running throughout. Our seasonal Seekers were really engaged this season though, there was a lot of spotting and sharing. Maybe they were making the most of the project while it lasted? Maybe it was more needed as Autumn included another lockdown? Maybe we just got the seasons spot on this time? Maybe the group had got to know each other much better and felt more comfortable together? Maybe it was all of the above.

Season; 3 – 7 October: Conkers Peek from Spiky Shells



Conkers Peek From Spiky Shells

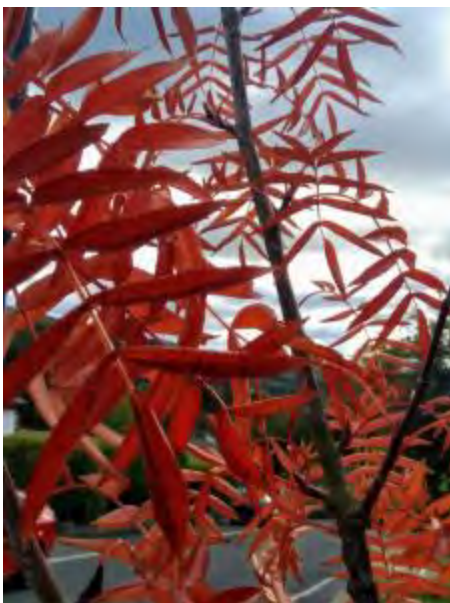
Who doesn't love conkers? They are one of the best toys we are given from nature in my humble opinion. I think a 'horse-chestnut' or 'conker' tree is probably the most commonly identified tree in the UK. Then there is the joy of opening the spiky shells and finding a big one, or a triple, or a double and the beautiful colours and shiny ness of new conkers too. It just feels like the right season to launch Autumn.



Images; conkers in the trees and conkers around a shell taken 4 October, conkers in my hand taken 6 October, expansive and gorgeous Pendle Hill view taken 6 October and red autumn leaves also taken 6 October.

In Japan, in the original ancient natural calendar, this season is 'The Paddy Water is First Drained'. That is a real culture difference, isn't it? Paddy fields are not in our national psyche, in the same way that conkers maybe aren't in Japan. I mentioned in a previous post, that the seasons are inspired by the ancient Japanese calendar, but are mostly translated into nature-based happenings which are easy to spot, without having to go too far into the countryside. We have tried to keep as many as possible from the Japanese seasons, but some just can't work here - The Elk Sheds its Horns and The Bear Retreats to its Den are both seasons in this period in Japan, for example, and I've not spotted many Elk or Bears in my everyday wanderings!

Season; 8 - 12 October: Red Leaves Glow



Images; yellow autumnal leaves from 8 October, red leaves on building taken 10 October and close up of red leaves from 12 October.

This was a good season which was kept as 100% agreed that this was happening. Many red glowing leaves were found, on buildings, peeping over walls, amongst forests and towering over parks and car parks. There was even some spotted on the way to the bus stop, which is my consistent litmus test. Can you see this season if all you do is walk to the bus stop? If yes, it fits, if no, it does not. This season, that was again more vital than ever I could have anticipated. This area of Lancashire, around Pendle Hill has had some of the strictest restrictions for almost all the year, and little exploration has been allowed.

Season; 13 -17 October: Leaf Peepers Admire Autumn Colours

Nature's palette is really vibrant and wonderful at this time of year, and it's a great idea to admire some colour and enjoy the show the trees put on for us. Leaf peeping is quite an American term, but it just means enjoy looking at the leaf colours, and maybe take a photograph. It's also something that changes over time, you can look each day and note subtle differences, or look at groups each week and note sweeping changes.





Images; a hairy and later flowering clematis 13 October, orange leaved tree with red leaved shrub taken on 16 October, vibrant red tree also taken 16 October, bare tree from the same day, bright white snowberries also from the same day.

Obviously, all our Seekers were out and about on the 16 October making the most of the blue skies and crisp light. Many of them told us they enjoyed kicking the leaves which had fallen, and a couple suggested that the season should include that, but I try and keep the seasons something that anyone can enjoy, even if not able-bodied or able to get out and kick leaves.

Season; 18 – 22 October: Holly Berries Feed the Birds



Images; leaves taken on 20 October; cows taken on 22 October. I love how creative and nicely framed these images are.

People agreed with the season but obviously found it tricky to photograph - they got there in the end, as you will see a little further down.

72 Seasons is primarily a research project. We wanted to know if we could bring people closer to nature, if we could make people feel more connected to nature and to measure their health and wellbeing as we did that. As I write this blog, we are also carrying out analysis on all the results. As part of that work, I keep reading the comments people have made during the year.

This season people were telling us that "The seasons seem to be back in synch now after our blip over the summer months when things didn't seem to fit our *72 Seasons* very well! Autumn is fitting better! 😊"

Others mentioned "The nights are drawing in and the leaves are dropping from the trees" and more that "The Redwings are flying around the hedgerows on Billington Moor having arrived from Scandinavia. The Hawthorns are shedding their leaves now as are the Sycamores and Birch." I really love the range of people taking part. Some are very knowledgeable, others like detail and others like big sweeping changes "Getting darker earlier and a chill in the air." Some notice animals, some notice birds, some notice flowers.

- "Squirrels burying nuts"
- "The last of the blackberries on the country lanes, which I have been enjoying on my walks for the last few months."

- "Time for planting bulbs"
- "I have seen lots of different formations of geese flying over"

72 Seasons is a project that anyone can engage with, whatever their expertise or interests. It designed to work for a really wide variety of people.

Season; 23 – 27 October: The First Frost Falls



The First Frost Falls

Ahh, the crispness of a frost. When the air feels sharper and everything is outlined and clearer! This season was one of the trickier seasons, it was kept but with only 58% of the Seekers agreeing. Maybe there were pockets of places which had some frost, and other areas that didn't? Maybe there wasn't any frost at all but most people thought it was a blip in the weather and that frost would return next year.



Image; snail defying gravity with ease 24 October

Season; 28 October – 1 November: The Pumpkins are Carved



The Pumpkins Are Carved

I mentioned in the Summer seasons ([you can read that previous blog post here](#)) that I chose the first July season to be one of my favourite things. This one is my youngest's favourite. He loves Halloween a lot. We watch a lot of American Halloween cartoons all year round and I know some of the most popular Halloween songs off by heart now, including such dreadful classics as 'Halloween night' and 'Scary, flying shark'. Did you know there was a tradition of singing? If you didn't, its coming! We always end up with what's popular in America over here eventually, don't we? While thinking about this season, is it nature? Pumpkins being ripe is probably a season, but not something you can easily find on a walk to the bus stop. This is quite a man made and nature combined season. It's the only season that is a bit on the cusp, but I have to admit I wondered how our Seekers would find this one? Yet this season was kept with 100% agreed.



Images; autumn leaves on the floor 30 October, bird eating holly 30 October, another bird eating holly also on 30 October and pumpkin image taken on 2 November.

Also, our Seekers spotted birds eating holly berries now. These are a couple of great action shots.

Season; 2 – 6 November: Hedgehogs Shut their Doors



Hedgehogs Shut Their Doors

Well certainly a challenge to photograph this official season! Not sure it's actually possible. Thank goodness we have Cath Ford drawing all the seasons, I mean not only is she brilliant, but it brings all these trickier seasons to life along with the others. It's also a nice season to imagine, hunkering down and hibernating and time to be cosy.

You can see colour changes in the photographs as you look through a whole season. The green starts to go and browns and oranges start to arrive and this selection of images really shows that.



Images; bare tree with blue sky taken 4 November, black ash buds 4 November, horse chestnut buds and witches' broom in tree also from 4 November and frost, mist and flooded fields from 5 November.

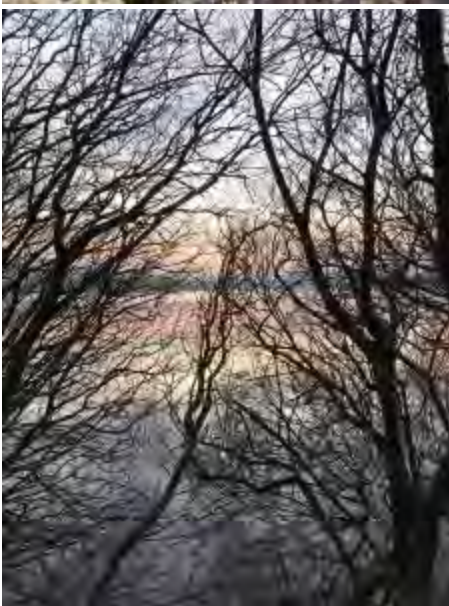
Witches broom is a deformity in a woody plant, typically a tree, where the natural structure of the plant is changed. A dense mass of shoots grows from a single point, with the resulting structure resembling a broom or a bird's nest. It is sometimes caused by pathogens. I used to think these were birds' nests, but I love the name, witches' broom. It's evocative, and descriptive, and oh-so-ap for Pendle, which is internationally famous for witches of course.

This season coincided with back into national lockdown, and our seasonal Seekers had to explore even more locally than before. Thank goodness there is always something to look at in nature. We have certainly needed the comfort and reassurance of something happening as usual this year.



The Trees Are Bare

Season; 7 – 11 November: The Trees are Bare



Images - all of the above taken on 7 November; tree full of red berries, bare trees full of starlings, bare trees in front of sunset, bare trees in the park, colourful gum tree, and bare tree in garden.



Images; leaves clinging to trees on 8 November, green moss on dry stone wall 8 November.

These two images both feel very peaceful. It is quite a calm season, having bare trees.



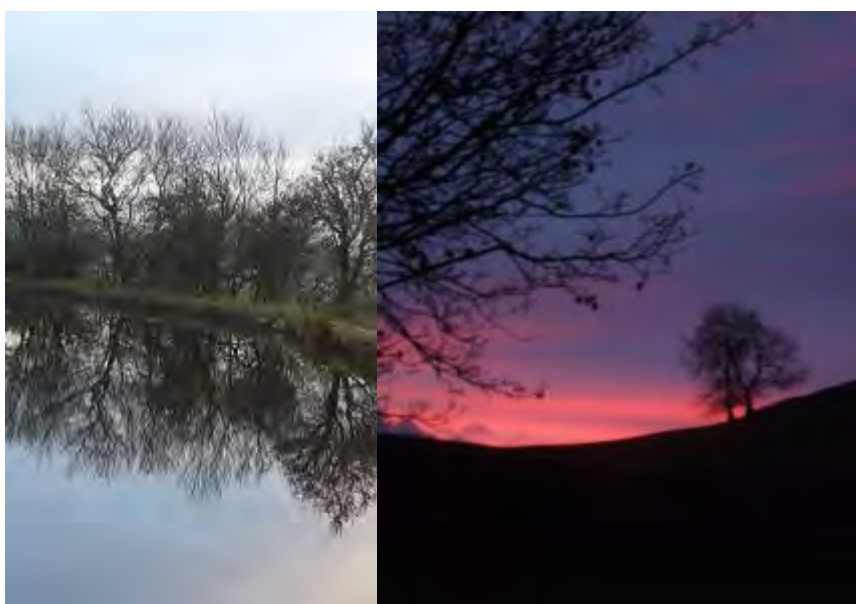
Images; two different paths through trees on 9 November

I do really love how the paths here are so different, yet taken on the same day. One with mixed colours and shapes and one orderly, like each one has a wood artist, one who is messy and one who is ordered! I wonder if one is a managed forest and one not, or if it something to do with wind and seed dispersal many years ago.



Images of two different bare trees, left from 9 November and right from 10 November.

When the above left image was shared, our Seeker captioned it 'Moody Bare Tree' and it got me thinking - they have a bit more personality when they're naked! What do you think? Do you see a different side to the trees when they lose their leaves? Have you noticed this before? This is how the whole project works by the way, each season is designed to encourage you to either look at something new, look at a change or to look again at something you know well. The whole project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, who fund a lot of building work and once told me that people always tell them they look up more after a place has been 'done up'. Well, this project is about looking up, down, sideways and again!



Images; Bare trees with crisp reflection taken on 10 November, autumn sunset featuring bare trees from 11 November.

We haven't had many sunset and night images shared; it was lovely to see this one.

Season; 12 – 16 November: Honking Geese Fly By



This is a new season, which replaced one which didn't make the final cut. The abandoned one was 'The Land Freezes'. It feels quite dramatic to say that. I know the weather seasons have been harder for people than the ones about things. Wonderfully explained by one of our Seekers "I think that because there have been more weather ones there is less push to go out and look for specific things. I like looking for things!" I replaced this with a season which encompasses sound and imagery too, and hopefully fills skies across Pendle and nearby. I personally live in an urban part of the area, and the geese fly over my house twice a day, at dusk and at dawn. It's quite a vibrant sound, and the formation is just like Cath's drawing above. If you have Instagram, think of following her work on there.

Fun fact, I thought of Cath's Instagram ([which is here](#)) because at the moment she keeps sharing her nail varnish and clothes combinations and my nails are currently painted in the exact shade of the sky above! We know how to live a

rock and roll life in lockdown!!

In all seriousness though, *72 Seasons* has had an added level of importance in lockdown, and during covid. It became a comfort and inspired people. One Seeker told me they were going to take up a photography course soon after enjoying taking photographs of these seasons. Another said "I'm consciously trying to notice more and have started to do little What's app quizzes with families like "what 5 birds do you think I saw this morning". Something fun and cheerful. 2nd wave is definitely harder!"

Season; 17 – 21 November: Puddles Galore!



Who doesn't love splashing in puddles? Not us, as 100% of people agreed with this season. There is a Scandinavian saying that there is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing - which might be said everywhere it's cold and rainy to be honest. But, it's certainly something I have appreciated since moving to the far east of Lancashire about 15 years ago. It does rain, a lot. So, you have to put on some weather proof clothing and go out regardless, as if you wait for nice days, you might be waiting a long time. Of course, as soon as I mention that, there is a day of glorious weather!



Images; Blues skies and gorgeous weather and views of the rolling countryside and moors taken on 19 November



Also spotted on the 19 November, is this bright yellow waxcap fungi. Waxcap fungi like grasslands with poor nutrients and because of that are quite hard to spot, and are a species in decline. There just aren't enough places left which are not used in some way. [You can read more about waxcaps here.](#)

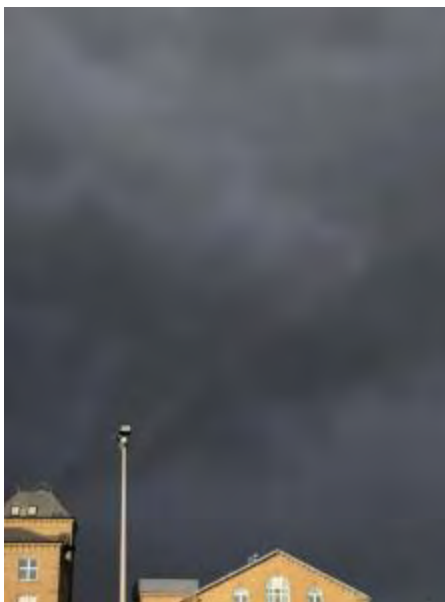


Image taken on 21 November 'Wet Puddle Walk'

This was one of my photographs, I had some fun out splashing in puddles and shared a collage. Also showing off my new wellies too - they are Muck Boots are So, great, really thick soles so your feet don't get cold, but it does make them So, heavy to walk in. "Nice new wellies! And thanks for enjoying the puddles for us in them." one Seeker said. But I told the group I wasn't brave enough to walk through the middle of the top one! I had visions of disappearing down up to my neck, which was a scene I remembered laughing at in The Vicar of Dibley, which is an old tv show now. One person replied "Exactly what happened to our

daughter when she was about 18 months old - she disappeared into a puddle she jumped into (the drain cover had also disappeared) Thankfully she was still holding my hand." Can you imagine how much your heart would be beating if that happened? I'd be too scared to let them splash in puddles. So, puddles galore but stay safe folks!

Season; 22 – 26 November: The Rainbow Hides Unseen



Grey skies with rainbow from 22 November.

Hidden rainbows were the season we went out to meet three Seekers in person, don't worry, this was in between lockdowns and we stood outside their homes, and travelled in separate cars, so it was all very Covid-secure. What it was, though, was a really marvellous day out! I started working from home full time on the 16th March 2020, and this day, the 27th November was the first day I had left the office for work. I was so excited! I asked three different Seekers to talk on camera about their experiences during the year. I was really keen to do this while the project was still happening and to capture the project, live. Our three interviewees; Jackie, Caroline and Sue, were wonderful hosts, making us all feel welcome and pretty hardy agreeing to stand outside with us for the whole couple of hours we were there. The wonderful Caroline and Dave from Huckleberry Films ([their website is here](#)) did all the hard work, setting up cameras and sound equipment, recording, and then creating the film. I just chatted to people and asked some questions. I'm really grateful to everyone who made this happen, and also to Cathy from the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership ([their website is here](#)) who supported the film financially, through National Lottery Heritage Funds.

[You can see the film here.](#)

I do hope you have watched the film, it's incredibly heartwarming and a lovely piece of work, telling the story of noticing nature and how connection matters.



Images above all taken on 26 November; autumn sunset through a tangled frame, misty field, giant horsetail, a misty sunset and turkey tail fungus.

Talking about the giant horsetail one Seeker explained it was a "stunning and an incredible plant, although not keen on them in my garden" and another that "I'd never seen them before. Certainly, wouldn't want them in my garden either!" and it was through lots and lots of moments like this, our Seekers connected with each other. I am still sad that we weren't able to get the Seekers to meet each other in person, but we proved the resilience of humans, and nature, and connection can cut through that.

Season; 27 November – 1 December: The North Wind Brushes the Leaves



Image; Frost tipped grass from 1st December

As December began, we were coming to the end of the research project, and this was our last month together. This was when we asked people what they might do next year as the project ended?

Just carry on looking at nature

I'll be doing more noticing

Will miss it! *72 Seasons* has got me thinking about doing a photography course, or just learning a bit more about how to take better photographs of the natural world.

I'll just keep observing!

I would miss it if it disappeared. I hope that it continues so that we can see which Seasons have been adopted / adapted / thrown out / replaced. It's provided a welcome break from Covid and a great opportunity to engage with the natural world.

Sad. 😞 Keep looking out for detail and not lumping seasons together - hoping this will help get me through winter which I always find hard. Thank you. I have enjoyed it.

I have enjoyed the project. Observing wildlife was something I did before and will continue to do but monitoring the seasons in such detail is something I may continue with.

Carry on watching the seasons unfold - but I don't wish to carry on with this project

I feel really sad 😞 Not thought further ...

Birds' sightings trees coming into bud sighting of flowers or wild herbs

No issues. Carry on enjoying the great outdoors

If you could produce a calendar, I would continue doing it next year.

I think it's really sad. How will we get through January and February!! Thank you so much for doing this project.

No

I feel sad, it has really kept me in touch with the outdoors and I have enjoyed the **72 Seasons**. Next: I am going to spend more time outdoors and notice the mini seasons more

I will continue taking photographs and watching for changes again as I walk in the countryside. It would be good if the Facebook group could continue to post comments and photos and keep in touch. I think I will take up diary writing next year as I haven't done that since a teenager. I wish I had started this year. It would have been interesting to look back on. The project has been very good for me and helped to keep me positive. Thank you, Kirsty. Oh, and I've enjoyed the art work so much and if a calendar was made, I would love a copy to keep one as a reminder.

I will miss it, but I will continue to walk one hour every day and will continue to take my daily photo for the river ribble Trust

I will miss seeing the pictures. Not thought about next year yet!

Will miss it but hopefully carry on noticing the world around me

No thoughts but have been on walks and taking notice of my surroundings

I have noticed most things out on dog walks, so every day. It's been such a good project enabling you to observe more instead of walking past. We will keep walking Pendle and trying the different loops. We are still discovering different parts, even now!

The above are all the answers we received. Although not everyone was gushing about our project a large number plan to continue their connection with nature. That's a cheering thought, that there will be lasting change.

Season; 2 - 6 December: Morning Walkers Crack Icy Puddles

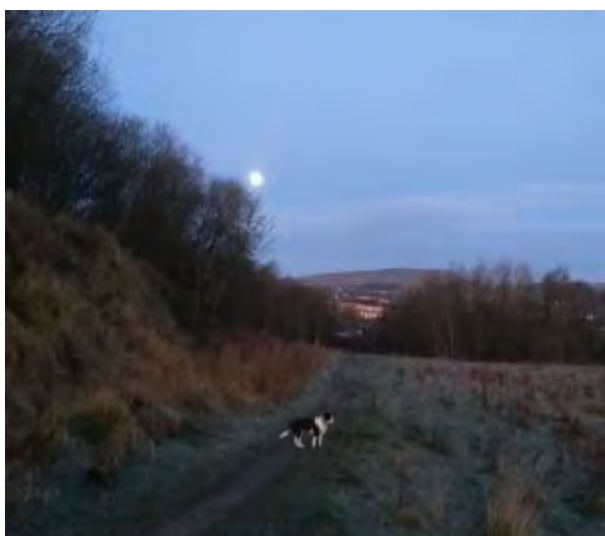


This is a new season and replaced 'The First Icicle Forms' as no one found any icicles. They may have been very well hidden or in fact they may not have actually existed this time. Our volunteers did find icy puddles though and a few mentioned overnight ice, and one talked of spotting puddles in the morning and I put as many comments together into one season as I possibly could - so this was a truly co-produced season. Maybe you recognise one of your comments?



Bare tree in icy puddle taken on 3 December, budding trees from 4 December.

Season; 7 – 11 December: The Sky is Cold, Winter Comes



Images; autumn sunrise on 7 December, and sunrise behind bare branches also from 7 December.

It was, very, cold!

Season; 12 – 16 December: Evergreens Stand Alone



I love the detail of this image, it's just a perfect vision of this time of year. Would also make a cracking Christmas card too!

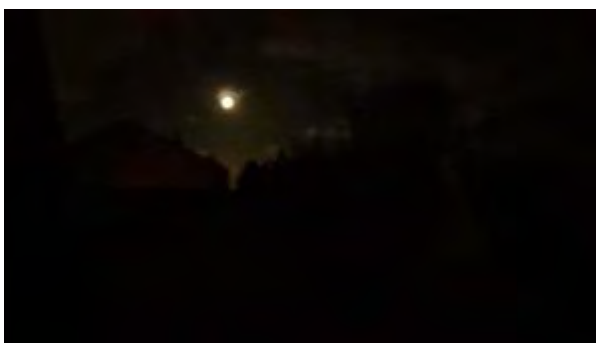


Images; Snow on Pendle hill taken on 14 December.

Season; 17 – 21 December: The Sky is Dark



I remember when planning this project, I did an exercise with a group about finding their birthday seasons. Someone came up to me and told me this was their season, and they didn't like it! I did think about changing it, but I'm glad I stuck to it. We need to get better at enjoying all the seasons and weather, and dark skies are a great time to stargaze, or to celebrate the Winter Solstice. And, luckily, 92% of you agreed this season was a keeper.



Image; Dark sky on 19 December.



Images; Daffodils sprouting on 17 December and an expansive view taken on 17 December.

Are the daffodils really early this year to sprout? Or is it something that always happens and only time I noticed? Also, I wanted to share the image of the grasslands, which looks to be on Pendle Hill itself to me. Doesn't that look like it will have a dark sky soon?

Season; 22 – 26 December: Frost Patterns Fallen Leaves





Images; frosty leaves on 22 December, frozen puddle and brown leaves taken 24 December, frosty green leaf and frosty puddle also taken on 24 December, then frosted window and another puddle from 25 December - Christmas day!

Our Christmas seasons. Whatever your thoughts on Christmas, it was clear we all love frost patterning leaves. ice, and frost in general are endlessly fascinating if you like pattern. Beautiful, fleeting, fascinating.

Season; 27 – 31 December: The Snow Creates Silence



This is it, our very last season. I wrote in the email sent to our Seekers, that we were taking a fairly large risk predicting snow, at the end of the year, and not just any snow but the soft fluffy kind which affects soundwaves and creates silence. Waking up on the 27 December, you would have never believed snow was coming.





Images; All of the above were taken on 27 December.

But it did, snow fell. The right kind, on the right day, as though finally the weather had read my email and that the whole universe conspired to align the seasons for us. What a way to end.



Images; Robin and bare trees from 28 December

Loved this stunning image of winter - snow, a robin, it's just wonderful. Total fluke too according to the photographer!



Images; Snowy hill from 28 December, snowy evergreens from 28 December, more snowy trees also from the 28 December, an undisturbed field of snow from 28 December and a snowy garden from 29 December.



All the above images taken on 30 December; ice close up, ice looking like fur, frosted leaves, canal towpath frosty in the morning, ice on car roof



Images; 31 December frosted spiders web and snow tips in garden.

I can't believe we ended on such a high. We got the very last season so exactly right!

Thank you to all our volunteers. Did you know 310 people took part in seeking the seasons with us in 2020. They donated a huge amount of their time, and enthusiasm for nature and created a community which gave a lot of people a lot of solace during the most difficult of years.









Please note all photographs have been image described in their captions, to make sure this post is accessible to the widest possible audience.


If you have any questions or thoughts on this blog post, please send me an email at kirsty@theevaluator.co.uk - I'm afraid I had to turn comments off this blog, as it was just getting filled with spam robot stuff which no-one wants to see.

Thanks for reading, thanks for seeking.

Kirsty

Connection to nature score	Trend over time	Equivalent to:
Very engaged	Increase 	People saw increases over the whole year; a 12% increase in scores
Less engaged	Increase 	People saw increases at first, but this tapered off over the year, a 2% score increase in total
Connection to nature bringing joy		
Very engaged	No change 	We didn't change minds, people believed at start and continued at end
Less engaged	Decrease 	Again, this belief is already formed
Health in general		
Very engaged	Increase 	Average scores showed an improvement in general health equivalent to more people feeling their health is 'good', this increase was more pronounced during the first twelve weeks and then saw a small fall over the rest of the year but ended higher than the start
Less engaged	Increase 	Even engaging only, a little helps improve general health
Physically do everything want to		
Very engaged	Increase 	People saw large increases in physical health moving from being able to do everything they want to physically some of the time to most of the time
Less engaged	Increase 	People engaging just a little also saw increases in physical ability
How many GP visits in last 3 months?		

Very engaged	Increase 	This result is surprising, and does not fit with the overall project pattern. Maybe one or two individuals have had a lot of appointments and skewed the result? Or this could be a Winter effect?
Less engaged	Decrease 	Overall a small decrease in GP visits was noted in this group. Large decreases can be seen at the end of Winter.
How many other health service visits in last 3 months?		
Very engaged	Decrease 	There has been a decrease in visits to other health services
Less engaged	Decrease 	Engaging just a little also decreased visits to other health services
How many different types of medication taken every day?		
Very engaged	Decrease 	We can observe a reduction in medication taken daily
Less engaged	Increase 	Less engaged do not see a positive impact on medication
How many days exercise in an average week?		
Very engaged	Increase 	Nationally lockdown saw an increase in exercise levels, and this is true of our groups
Less engaged	Increase 	The initial increase could be due to lockdown, but the sustained one indicates people are being more active, a whole extra day a week on average
How well people sleep?		

Very engaged	Increase 	Some increases in sleep can be seen, consistent with more exercise and better health overall
Less engaged	Increase 	Less engaged people also saw improved sleep, possibly the project cannot take the credit for this?
How often people feel angry?		
Very engaged	Increase 	Has Covid-19 and the pandemic affected our anger levels? All answers signify people feeling angry 'not much' of the time.
Less engaged	Increase 	Has Covid-19 and the pandemic affected our anger levels? All answers signify people feeling angry 'not much' of the time.
Wellbeing score		
Very engaged	Increase 	Taking part in <i>72 Seasons</i> , at any level, increases wellbeing
Less engaged	Increase 	Taking part in <i>72 Seasons</i> , at any level, increases wellbeing
Loneliness score		
Very engaged	No change 	As loneliness scores plummet in our control group, those highly engaged in the project retain a healthy level of connection
Less engaged	Increase 	Those taking part just a little have seen an increase in connection over the year including a large increase in the first twelve weeks