

FITNESS

# Sporting the best outfits

In need of a fitness wardrobe refresh? **Abi Jackson** reveals spring's brightest picks

The future's bright, folks. Not only is the spring blossom in full bloom and the sun finally putting in some very welcome appearances (thank you very much), but from Pantone naming "Greenery" as Colour of the Year, to the full-blown fling fashion's currently having with all things pink, it's now 100 per cent acceptable – in fact cool – to show your true colours in all their vivid, feel-good glory.

And what better way to brush off any lingering winter cobwebs than with some bright new fitness kit? Forget the "rules" about playing it safe; this season's punchy patterns and "here I am!" colours will have you raring to go and counting down the hours till your next workout.

Put a spring in your step with our top picks...

- ◆ **Bellum Active QSKIN Antibacterial & Odour Control Run Top**, currently reduced to £30 from £53 ([www.bellumactive.co.uk](http://www.bellumactive.co.uk))
- ◆ **Adidas Ultimate Long Tights**, £64.95 ([www.adidas.co.uk](http://www.adidas.co.uk))
- ◆ **dhb Women's Marl Run Singlet**, £16 ([www.wiggle.co.uk](http://www.wiggle.co.uk))
- ◆ **The North Face Stow-N-Go IV Bra**, £40 ([www.thenorthface.co.uk](http://www.thenorthface.co.uk))
- ◆ **Acai Activewear Dropped Back Vest**, £29; **Nikki Print Sports Bra**, £54; **Basic Leggings**, £64 ([acaiaactivewear.com](http://acaiaactivewear.com))
- ◆ **Acai Activewear Workout Shorts**, £39; **Nikki Print Sports Bra**, £54 ([acaiaactivewear.com](http://acaiaactivewear.com))
- ◆ **Adidas Techfit Graphic Bra**, £24.95 ([www.adidas.co.uk](http://www.adidas.co.uk))
- ◆ **Adidas Techfit Capris**, £29.95 ([www.adidas.co.uk](http://www.adidas.co.uk))
- ◆ **Adidas UltraBOOST X Running Shoes**, £129.95 ([www.adidas.co.uk](http://www.adidas.co.uk))

**Tried and tested: 3 of the best... sporty headphones**

- ◆ **Happy Plugs Sport Headphones**, £39.99 ([happyplugs.com](http://happyplugs.com)) Available in a choice of colours, including a punchy cerise and bold cobalt blue, these feature a "lock-in" design to help them stay put, along with "tangle free" cables and an easy-teach remote control panel so you can adjust your music as you go.
- ◆ **Sol Republic Relay Wireless Bluetooth Sports Earphones**, £59.99 ([store.hmv.com](http://store.hmv.com)) With dual audio modes for indoors and outdoors, these quick-charge



The colourful Adidas Techfit Graphic Bra with matching shorts

wireless earphones promise up to eight hours of play time to liven up those workouts. Super lightweight, the in-ear buds are specially designed for a snug, comfy fit.

- ◆ **Urbanista Boston Bluetooth**

*The ideal time to nap is between midday and 3pm, when the body naturally feels sleepy*

**Earphones**, £59 ([www.urbanista.com](http://www.urbanista.com))

We love the bright colourways these earphones come in. They're water-resistant (so a bit of drizzle is no excuse!) and the "silicone wings" design means the earpieces stay put with minimal discomfort.

**Well-being news**

Is napping the map to happiness? There's a reason they're called "power naps", but according to new research

from Hertfordshire University, as well as feeling more productive, people who take short naps are happier than those who take longer sleeps. Unsure how to master short naps? Sleep expert Dr Guy Meadows has teamed up with Bensons for Beds to produce the following tips:

- 1) 10 to 20 minutes is the ideal napping length. Any longer and you run the risk of going into deep sleep and waking up groggy.
- 2) The ideal time to nap is between midday and 3pm, when the body naturally feels sleepy.
- 3) Get comfortable by sitting in a comfy chair or lying on a bed. If you can, use an eye mask and ear plugs to block out unwanted light and noise.
- 4) Even if you don't sleep, use the quiet time to rest, relax and recharge.
- 5) Napping is a skill that can be learnt, just like any other activity. Regular practice can result in you falling to sleep very quickly and waking yourself up without needing an alarm. ■

For further tips, visit [www.bensonsforbeds.co.uk/sleep-school](http://www.bensonsforbeds.co.uk/sleep-school)

FISHING & SHOOTING



Alastair Robertson  
@Crumpadoodle

## Are lasers the answer to predators?

To Auchnerran, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) demonstration farm in Aberdeenshire.

The plan is to see how, on a Scottish farm twixt hill and strath, modern farming, wildlife and shooting can live in balance with one another. GWCT is still in the final throes of a baseline study; finding out what is already on site. But what is already there is extraordinary, at least to those of us who live in towns or relatively sanitised arable country. In the space of two hours we saw lapwings, oystercatchers, ducks, pheasant, buzzards, snipe, a huge number of rabbits and brown hares. A healthy population of resident woodcock has also been recorded.

Nothing much can move at the moment without being recorded, including a flock of pretty indifferent black faced sheep.

What we didn't see, but which are known to be there, were pine martens, badgers and goshawks, all of which are protected. In normal circumstances a goshawk might not be the most desirable predator on a shoot.

But from a game and wildlife research viewpoint the goshawks are a bit of a plus for Auchnerran, as are the badgers and pine martins.

What Auchnerran observes and discovers about predator and wildlife management should eventually feed into government policy.

Of course, whether Auchnerran comes up with the "right" answers depends rather where you stand on things like raptor and predator control or whether you approve of shooting in the first place. Auchnerran has, however, been chosen by the EU LIFE programme to test laser "fencing": seeing whether non-lethal beams can be used to keep foxes, stoats and weasels and even farm animals out of sensitive areas. It works well on seagulls on airports but whether it deters sheep, rabbits, rats or predators in general has yet to be seen.

First indications are that while it works on flocks of birds – shift one and the rest will follow – it may not be so effective on individually minded species. And before you wonder: yes, it is against the law to zap a protected species with lasers. But whatever wildlife solutions may emerge GWCT still has to make the farm pay. Come Brexit and uncertainty over farming subsidies this may prove tricky. But income already includes letting a few walked-up shooting days as a demonstration to hard pressed farmers that rough shooting, if you look after the wildlife, can produce useful extra income, if not a new combine. ■

[www.gwct.org.uk/auchnerran/](http://www.gwct.org.uk/auchnerran/)

WELL-BEING



# Natural state of mind

Taking a moment to be truly aware of our surroundings can reignite our sense of wonder, says **Claire Thompson**

Who has never gazed enviously at a bird soaring through the sky? Or delighted in the uplifting tunes of nature's songsters? Birds are an everyday source of beauty, wisdom and wonder.

They're also the ideal inspiration for the practice of mindfulness. Bird flight is a wonderful symbol of our freedom to soar through life without constraint, and mindfulness similarly enables us to invite freedom into our lives. Birdwatching is also the perfect entry point to rekindle our innate bond with the natural world.

**Mindful Meetings With Birds**  
You can begin without even leaving your house. "Window-birdwatching" is the ideal exercise to enjoy while eating breakfast or taking a break from daily chores.

As I sit here writing, I need only turn my head to look out of my window to see a blackbird, a robin, a great tit and a wren. The blackbird, with striking

bright orange rings around its eyes, is pecking for worms. In the corner of the garden, the red-breasted robin is perched on top of a bush. In the tree, the great tit catches my eye with its smart black mask and white cheeks as it hops from branch to branch.

Why not try window-birdwatching yourself? Look out the window. What can you see and hear? You will almost certainly see a bird or two. There's no requirement to be able to identify the various species. Although this can enhance your birdwatching experience, my book focuses on guiding you through being curious, paying attention and enjoying what you notice, reigniting a sense of wonder. This is the essence of mindfulness.

**Rediscovering Mindfulness**  
Let's begin with a simple exercise. Find a quiet place to sit for a few minutes. Start by noticing where you feel your breath. Do you feel it in your nostrils? Your chest? Your abdomen? Notice where your body touches the ground. Are you experiencing any physical sensations or emotions? Notice any thoughts you have. Become aware of what's around you.

*"In the tree, the great tit catches my eye with its smart black mask and white cheeks"*

**Clockwise from main: Claire Thompson birdwatching; a robin; a great tit; her book, inset**  
Photographs: Jeremy Peters



What can you see? Hear? Smell? Touch? Taste? Just notice what you encounter without seeking to label it or achieve anything in particular. Noticing our experience in this way is the first component of mindfulness. Mindfulness is something we do. It isn't a concept, an idea or a belief. What's more, we all experience it already – it's our natural state, prior to the accumulation of social and environmental conditioning. Mindfulness is less about learning a new skill than rediscovering one we already have.

**How We Notice**  
The second component of mindfulness is how we notice. Mindfulness is usually defined as paying attention, on purpose and non-judgementally to our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment. How we do this involves infusing our awareness with a particular set of "colours" or attitudes. It's like cultivating a garden, which flourishes when a set of elements are present such as water, nutrients and light.

The non-judgemental part of mindfulness is about observing and kindly welcoming our direct experience as it is, without seeking to change it. Left unchecked, our narrating minds automatically judge and label our experiences of life.

Mindfulness is learning to be aware of these judgements, taking a step back and keeping an open mind.

**Mindfulness Of Breath**  
By bringing our awareness to our breath, we can train ourselves to become grounded in the present moment. Find a quiet place to sit, close your eyes and bring your awareness to where you feel your breath. Observe any sensations, experiencing each breath as it happens without seeking to change it. Follow the sensations as the air comes into your body, and out again. Your mind will wander, which is perfectly normal. When you notice this, recognise any thoughts arising and bring your attention back to the sensations of the breath. This noticing is a moment of mindfulness. If you have to bring your mind back a million times, simply do so, with kindness. Remember to practise regularly, ideally once a day. ■

Extract taken from *The Art of Mindful Birdwatching: Reflections on Freedom & Being* by Claire Thompson, published by Leaping Hare Press at £8.99. To receive an exclusive 20 per cent discount, visit [www.leapingharepress.co.uk](http://www.leapingharepress.co.uk) and enter the code 'Scotsman' at the checkout; <http://mindfulness-of-nature.com/>