



# Countryside Jobs Service®

## Focus on Environmental Education and Outdoor Activities

In association with the  
Countryside Education Trust



11 May 2020

### From London to lambs....

Lambing is underway as I write, on our farm in the New Forest. We have a residential centre here, with a range of animals for visitors to interact with: goats, sheep, horses, pigs, ducks, geese, turkeys and chickens. And, to ensure that everyone can



*Spring Arrivals (Countryside Education Trust)*

taste success, we also have small mammals for animal handling, and to top things off, two tortoises both creaking on in years as they approach their 70th birthdays. Lambing is the best time of the whole year, fraught with the potential risk of a life-threatening situation but still hopeful as each lamb emerges with the promise of spring and the joy of the simple pleasures of animal antics.

In normal times, I would be listening out for lamb news from my cupboard of an office and occasionally helping out one of the more competent members of the team. Now, however, I am anxiously awaiting WhatsApp messages, and hoping there is no need to call out the vet, as the Covid 19 crisis has meant that only our three most senior education officers, two of whom live on the farm, are involved this year. Naming rights are being shared around the team; we are on D this year, hence Dexter, Dotty, Demelza, Didgeridoo, Delilah, Dave, Delphi, Doris, Ding, Dunbar, Dizzy – you get the picture.

To make up for being away from our lovely sites – the farm, with its productive garden and Heritage Orchard, and our treehouses in ancient woodland looking glorious with spring flowers after this year's coppicing - I have been reflecting on our work. We were set up in 1975 to encourage people of all backgrounds out into the countryside; and when we added our residential centre some years later, there was a focus on bringing city children to have a formative experience on a farm.

One of the joys of hosting our inner city schools is the belief that the school staff have that these can be life changing moments. Perhaps you feel the same way? I certainly do, recollecting a trip from inner city Hackney to Box Hill by train, a forever climb, the smell of the countryside, views unhindered by houses and clouds of butterflies: I forgot my lunch and ended up eating an eclectic bunch of food from my highly ethnically diverse schoolmates' lunchboxes. Just a day trip but one that changed my views about how wide horizons could be, what the countryside felt like and how new friendships could be forged over shared food.

That is not to say that particular challenges don't arise from transplanting children to radically different spaces. We run an orienteering game in our woods, which we love as it gives children a real opportunity to roam, perhaps for the first time ever. Staff are stationed at any risky points, such as ponds and boundary gates, and teams of kids follow clues independent of adult intervention. Last autumn, one group of 9 year-olds became quite hysterical and had to be retrieved by one of their teachers. They couldn't explain what had happened to their teacher or to us, but in the evening the children confided in our cook that they worried constantly about knife crime where they lived and had imagined the worse. A sad but useful insight.

On another occasion, children from a different school were trekking along a river through beautiful woodland. After a period of quiet one of them asked if they had left London yet, which amused us all, and provided a good jumping off point for a bit of emergency geography for children who had not previously been outside their borough.



*Den – Bushcraft Skills  
(Countryside Education Trust)*



Livestock presents its own challenges. A cow is a terrifying prospect if the biggest animal you have encountered previously is a large dog and it makes no difference that our cows (Dexters) are very friendly. We used to keep Hampshire Down sheep but they proved too large for 7 year olds (and us) so we now have Shetlands, which are small and curious about people, and miniature Southdowns, which look like teddy bears. It is worth thinking about who your visitors will be before buying stock of any description; from our own experience, be careful about geese!



Toddlers holding hands – Orchard Explorers (Countryside Education Trust)

Giving children skills that can be transferred to inner city environments is worth considering. It may be possible to grow similar seeds to the ones that we plant together in our productive garden. But a perfect solution is bird watching. We have a bird hide which is much loved and provides an opportunity to learn about the need to focus and to sit quietly in order to wait for the birds to arrive on

our feeders. We then tally them up so that the children are learning how to record information too. Even if the school doesn't have the capacity for bird feeders, parks and playgrounds will have their own inhabitants. According to the RSPB more than half of UK adults can't identify a sparrow and a quarter can't say for sure if they have ever seen a starling or a blue tit so this is an easy win in most environments.

On that note, in the absence of cars and planes, the garden sounds full of birds. I will go and brush up on my song ID, and count the days until I can get back to the farm.

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For more information about the Countryside Education Trust, visit [www.cet.org.uk](http://www.cet.org.uk) or follow us on [www.facebook.com/CETnewforest](https://www.facebook.com/CETnewforest); our Owls Clubs (outdoor playgroups) facebook page [www.facebook.com/LittleOwlsBigOwls](https://www.facebook.com/LittleOwlsBigOwls) has vlogs from our youngest resident farmer, aged 6 and ideas for home education activities.



Morning feeding at Home Farm (Countryside Education Trust)

**Nature Days is an independent outdoor learning provider.** Based on Gower, South Wales, we have been providing quality outdoor learning for 14 years and have the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality badge. Being a small independent operator allows each trip to be customised to the client's needs. We aim to bring classroom learning to life by building on student's knowledge and adding experiential learning. We cater for all school ages and provide INSET training for schools. We are publishing school grounds specific resources. You tube channel provides challenges for children to undertake in their gardens. #Nature Days and [Nature Days.co.uk](http://NatureDays.co.uk) blog.



## Coming to know our natural community through education

I'm writing this at a time when it's hard to think of anything beyond



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COVID-19, the measures that are in place to mitigate its spread and the human tragedies playing out across the world. Our schools, nature reserves and field centres have been closed for weeks now, access to natural environments is patchy and inequitable and 'normal' already feels unfamiliar. My 'normal' is working towards a PhD thesis which tries to document what happens when young children and teachers at two schools go outside. I use video and observations to better understand how everything interacts - humans, activities, stories, plants, toys, birds, weather, computer games. What I'm hoping to find out is how any of this relates to care for the natural world and [learning for sustainability](#).

I had planned to write something here about how outdoor or environmental education can't, and doesn't exist outside of social and cultural systems, and what that means if we hope it might support young people to develop skills and values to live within the means of our planet. But it feels hard to speak in generalities,



or to think about what things will be like 'after' this global trauma. Maybe I can touch on some of it by thinking about what we're all living through.

We've already had to adapt to big adjustments in our daily lives. We've been reminded of all the functions that schools and other institutions perform just below the surface. Schools feed children, provide safe outdoor spaces for play, refuges for our most vulnerable children. Beyond the more crucial and subtle processes of Earth, parks, paths, woods and other greenspaces also allow us humans to exercise, find peace and maintain our wellbeing in the face of crisis. As such, we cannot ignore how unequal access to quality greenspace is, particularly in urban areas.

Having to change how we do things recently has exposed the complexity of the systems we depend on and are part of. People have adapted their behaviour out of care, or maybe even love, in order to protect others. Presumably we aren't staying at home just because we understand the science, or because we've been told to, but because we understand that our actions have consequences, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our communities. We're aware of how we relate to the other humans around us, and we do our best to act ethically, even if it affects what we want to do.



© Chris Mackie

This process should be at the heart of environmental or sustainability education - the hope being that we can extend this care, concern or love beyond our human communities. Educators aspire to help others not only 'understand' what's going on

around them, but foster relations that allow them to be 'response-able', to act in caring ways. As [Aldo Leopold wrote](#), *"We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in... It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land and a high regard for its value."*



© Chris Mackie

However, it's easy to imagine how this often plays out in real world outdoor and environmental learning - the young child carefully relocates a ladybird, builds a bug hotel, hugs a tree or plants a seedling. But then they sit down to a snack from home, a tiny nugget of mass deforestation and biodiversity loss wrapped in plastic, or leave the clean water that they've been kick sampling behind and return to the polluted air or monoculture lawns of their communities. This sounds cynical, but when we look seriously at learning (not just children's) in context and in all its complexity and ask, "Does this demonstrate love, respect, and admiration for land and a high regard for its value?", I'm not sure we always get the answer we hope for.

This isn't necessarily because we're doing things wrong, but that human individuals are entangled in systems so complex (and compelling) that isolated interventions are ineffective in the face of global forces and the discourses, or stories, that give them power. This isn't news of course - when Donella Meadows [outlined places to intervene in a system](#), back in 1999, the two most effective and challenging were the paradigm out of which the system arises, and the power to transcend paradigms. Thomas Berry's words from over 30 years ago still ring true:

*"We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story... The Old Story - the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it - is not functioning properly, and we have not learned the New Story."*

Integrating new stories (and there should be more than one) of the world should be a core part of all education. New ways of framing the world might integrate rather than separate scientific, embodied, cultural and aesthetic knowledges. Direct experiences of the natural world are rich starting points for developing relations that might position humans as more response-able members of the biotic community. However, only by extending and integrating these beyond 'environmental', 'outdoor' or 'sustainability' education into experiences that make sense as part of a coherent (if changed) culture is this likely to have a significant effect. Parents, early learning and childcare practitioners, teachers, pupil support assistants, gardeners, farmers and specialist environmental educators all have a



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lot to learn from each other, and alongside policy-makers, government and cultural creators, have a responsibility to craft a society whose culture shows our children why and how we value and care for the world around us.

If learning in, for, about, with and from rich natural environments were a core part of citizens' lives, the ethical decisions that we make every day would hopefully become clearer, if not necessarily 'easier'. If we can raise our children to know that we are members of a natural community, in reciprocal relation (meaning that it's not just about taking) with the other living beings and systems of this planet, then I think there's hope. As we see right now in our human context, people are willing to make sacrifices and adapt their behaviour because they care about members of their community. Our job as educators is to find ways to nurture the energy held in that relationship through joy, not just fear.

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**Plymouth Marjon University offers full and part time degrees** and postgraduate courses in outdoor adventure education. Located in Plymouth, right between Dartmoor and the spectacular South West coast. We offer small class sizes with experienced and passionate teaching staff. Find out more at [Marjon.ac.uk/OAE](#)



## Hope in Nature

*'If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.'*

Rachel Carson – A Sense of Wonder

'How many of you were ever children? Close your eyes for just a moment and remember where you loved to play. Remember the sounds, the smells, the feelings...'

Chances are some of those places have been built on or ploughed up. People need houses and they need food.



(In the Moment Photography)

When I ask this question at conferences or training courses many adults call to mind gardens, fields, roads, railway sidings, woodlands and parks. They identify freedom, adventure, mishap and learning how to get along in life as direct outcomes of their playful, often risky, connection with other children and the natural world.

They quickly note that few children today have these experiences. At the moment many more are denied access to green space, quarantined in their homes or learning at home because schools are closed. The inequalities of access to nature have become even greater during this coronavirus pandemic.

Five years ago, there was outrage in the media that [nature words were being lost from a children's dictionary](#). The beautiful [Lost Words](#) book resulted, and public campaigns ran to fund copies of it for schools.

For many people this was something of a wakeup call, the realisation that generations of children have become disconnected from nature.

The reasons for this gradual removal of children from nature are complex. The results have become obvious.

HSE chair Judith Hackitt, quoted in the Telegraph (2012), said: "Health and safety laws are often wrongly cited as a reason to deny children opportunities, contributing to a cotton wool culture." Play England, ROSPA and many other watchdogs have championed the basic need of children for adventurous play so that they are able to keep themselves safe and learn effectively.

*(In the Moment Photography)*

There is hope. At Forest School people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, explore the natural world together, learning to navigate the ups and downs of life as they struggle with climbing to the next branch, persevering to light a fire in the rain, learning to tie a new knot and secure their shelter, compromising on the design of a woodland den.

Nothing beats the delight of sharing the moment of a fledgling learn to fly or watching an urban fox slink through the undergrowth as a 'giggle of children' reaches the Forest School site. The invitation to lay on the ground and witness the quiet, wiggling, shiny path of a centipede's hasty escape under a log is truly enchanting. Hearing the sharp intake of breath that accompanies someone's first sighting of woodland butterflies dancing in a clearing never ceases to thrill me. This is one of the deepest joys of facilitating nature connection.

Opportunities for 'epic adventure', sometimes requiring bravery and a willingness to try something new or physically challenging, is an important element of young people learning that 'discomfort' may be ok and sometimes reaps huge rewards.

I have walked long distances, into the woods with three-year olds, on days when the rain comes down in sheets. Not a whimper from any of them. Used to playing outdoors, whatever the weather.

Toddlers exhibit 'grit and determination' when learning to walk. Somehow, we steal this away. Forest School offers a multitude of ways to rekindle this quality, even in the most reluctant teenager or anxious adult.

The value of long term nature connection for mental health and wellbeing has been reported on by [Natural England](#) and is the subject of exciting research studies into the outcomes of Forest School, such as the [Hare and the Tortoise](#) and the [Breeze Project](#).

A deepening understanding of the value of trees for the health of the planet alongside the health of people has led to many tree-planting projects around the globe. Understanding the complexity of woodland ecology and learning to care for trees is a core aspect of quality Forest School.

Together the Forest School community is seeking ways to educate adults, provide children and young people with the richly playful, learning afforded by access to wild, natural woodland spaces whilst promoting the well-being of woods and people.

The important contribution of Forest School to our nation's ecological awareness and wellbeing of children and young people is recognised in the Government's 25-year environment plan.

*(Where The Fruit Is)*

Forest School is a holistic, nurturing, learner centred approach, building on our rich heritage of woodland history, bush craft, environmental and early years education alongside adventurous outdoor learning, across cultures and through time. It is an innovative approach, using ancient wisdom.

*(Where The Fruit Is)*

Over the last quarter of a century these ideas have grown as a grass roots movement until the [ethos and principles](#), first agreed by the Forest School community in 2002, were adopted by the fledgling Forest School Association in Autumn 2012.

Eight years on, this national professional body has become the voice of UK wide Forest School and the governing body for qualifications, with the aim of promoting best practice, cohesion and quality Forest School for All. We support Forest School movements in Ireland, Canada, USA, and China through training and collaborative initiatives.

The Forest School Association is a founder member of the Forest Education Network whose 2019 conference '[Putting the Forestry Back into Forest Education](#)' provided a valuable opportunity for practitioners and landowners to learn together.



2020 has already been a year of great challenge as scientists, governments and businesses seek to find ways of mitigating the damage of a global pandemic and the devastation we continue to wreak on our planet's ecology.

In this difficult and unsettling time, we have been forced to face a future that may be irrevocably changed by a virus. We are dealing with the current challenges of Covid19 and wondering how we will come together to rebuild and restore our communities in the aftermath.

Forest School offers a hopeful, holistic answer to the eco-anxiety of us all. Children, young people, families and intergenerational communities will again be taking action, planting trees, caring for nature because as we play together in woodland sites, through the seasons, we learn that we belong together. We are part of nature.



*'No-one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced.'*

Sir David Attenborough

### The Walking Library for Forest Walks

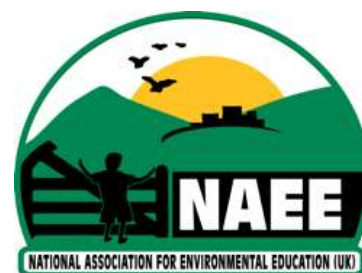
What book would you take on a walk in the forest? What brings the forest into your living room without leaving home? Find out more about the Walking Library for Forest Walks and suggest your title here: <https://www.nationalforest.org/campaign/the-walking-library>

Submissions welcome until 29 May. The Library opens digitally on Twitter @NatForestCo for seven days from 16 May.

**Staffordshire's largest conservation charity offers** exciting nature themed activities for children, schools and families across the county. We have also launched a lockdown friendly suite of activities called GetWild@Home that you can access on our website here [www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/wildathome](http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/wildathome) and GetWild TV on our Facebook page here [www.facebook.com/swtactivities](https://www.facebook.com/swtactivities) contact [getwild@staffs-wildlife.org.uk](mailto:getwild@staffs-wildlife.org.uk)

## Supporting Environmental Education in Schools: the role of NAEF

Since the 1960s the National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) has been a key organisation specifically supporting the work of schools and teachers. Starting out as the National Rural Studies Association, our purposes were originally to support the growth and delivery of environmental education activities within the school curriculum. That was at a time when we were just starting to become aware of the environmental issues being caused by how we are living on this planet. NAEE is still run by members and volunteers who care passionately about environmental education.



Our main charitable objective is to advance environmental education within all types of school setting and institutions responsible for teacher education. Principally this is by:

- providing resources, information and ideas, including a journal for teachers to assist them in curriculum development
- providing bursaries for schools to enable them to take pupils to experience the natural world at environmental centres in the West Midlands
- collaborating with organisations that have related objectives



*Kenrick sponsored environmental investigation at Martineau Gardens, Birmingham (NAEE)*

Our journal Environmental Education was first published in 1971 and is aimed at practitioners and policy makers. Every year we produce 1 paper journal and 2 on-line journals which are free for our members. Back copies are available to view on our website [naee.org.uk/ee-journal](http://naee.org.uk/ee-journal). The journal gives an insight into the Association's work with schools and NGOs and features case studies, book reviews and articles including young writers.

The benevolence of the family of the late Hugh Kenrick means that West Midlands schools can access bursaries of up to £400 to visit outdoor learning centres where their students will have environmental education experiences, predominantly outdoors, and always led by a centre teacher. These Kenrick grants currently support visits to Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Martineau Gardens, Mount Pleasant School Farm and the RSPB's Sandwell Valley Reserve.

In return schools must submit a report that demonstrates the environmental aspects of the visit, and how this is enhancing curriculum work and environmental awareness across the school.

Our website [naee.org.uk](http://naee.org.uk) is a window into the work of the Association with regularly updated feature articles on environmental education practice in schools, additional book reviews, weekly updates highlighting the work of like-minded organisations, blogs and comment on relevant environmental policy and practice, and Twitter and Facebook feeds.

The development of environmental education in schools has not been smooth. In the 1970s a range of innovative A level, GCE and CSE courses in environmental science and environmental studies were developed. Following the introduction of a centralised national curriculum in the late 1980s, environmental education's specific curriculum area was lost. In many schools, however, it survived, and continues today. Although the national curriculum encourages a study of climate and biodiversity, this is very limited and much of it is optional. NAEE supports the calls for this to be a core part of every young person's experience of school.

Environmental education remains more than just studying the natural world and 'green' issues. It includes the built environment and ways that as humans we relate to the places where we live, and fosters caring, responsible attitudes, inspiring young people to take action in order to live more sustainably. This is something that can give them a sense of identity and a pride in their local environment and community.

NAEE sees that environmental education can be classified into education about the environment, education for (the preservation of) the environment, education in the environment. In the environment also means the world outside the classroom. In addition to the journal and the website NAEE has produced curriculum documents which are freely downloadable as pdfs from our website.



*Collecting the hens' eggs on a Kenrick visit to Mount Pleasant School Farm (NAEE)*

Two handbooks give guidance on incorporating environmental education into different subject areas of the curriculum. The first starts from early years through to Key Stage 2. The second booklet carries on into Key Stages 3 and 4.

A more recent handbook has drawn out curriculum opportunities from the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It contains curriculum analysis and case studies that can support teachers in engaging young people in learning about local and global issues.



*Environmental art produced by a group of Year 9 students on a Kenrick-funded visit to Birmingham Botanical Gardens (NAEE)*

A new initiative that is waiting for formal approval by the DfE is a natural history GCSE. If approved, this will enable young people to study ecological issues with an emphasis on practical skills. It will also enable them to appreciate just how dependent we are on the natural world for our wellbeing and survival.

To support and encourage the role of future generations NAEE is supporting Teach the Future which is a student-led campaign to repurpose the education system around the climate and ecological problems that we face. One of their 'asks' is for the establishment of a government commissioned review into how the formal education system is preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis. Another is to ensure that all trainee teachers are prepared to teach about these issues.

Once the Coronavirus crisis has become a historical memory the work of NAEE and related organisations, in conjunction with the rising tide of well informed young people, will become even more important as we face up to the twin challenges set by the Paris

Agreement on greenhouse gas emissions and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Nina Hatch  
NAEE Executive Chair

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**We have 4 fantastic centres**, with 3 in Hampshire and 1 in South Wales. Across our centres we deliver a range of adventurous and environmental activities designed to engage students and provide a memorable outdoor learning experience that they will cherish. Get in touch at [bookings.hoc@hants.gov.uk](mailto:bookings.hoc@hants.gov.uk) to find out more.



## Working towards WILDER Lives

By Dawn Preston, Education Officer (Swanwick Lakes)

Today I had to WhatsApp message my furloughed education colleagues with exciting news – I found a water hog louse in my less than year old mini washing up bowl pond! Many of you will no doubt share my excitement whilst others may well shrug and say 'well, it's no [insert charismatic species of choice here]'



Swanwick Lakes Wildlife TOTS water stick insect found at pond dip session  
© Dawn Preston

but in my work as an outdoor educator I have come to realise the value in observing, learning about and sharing enthusiasm for everyday wildlife encounters, as well as the special ones.

Out of the 23 scheduled events we should have delivered through May 2020, over half were planned with family audiences in mind. So why do we offer so many 'edutainment' sessions for families? As an organisation and industry, we know we are in challenging times - not only the current Coronavirus restrictions but the now obvious, critical effects of the ecological and climate emergencies. There is now far wider public recognition of the urgency and scale of changes that need to be made to reverse these declines. In fact, an Ipsos MORI poll published in April shows that 66% of Britons believe that in the long-term Climate Change is as serious a crisis as COVID-19.<sup>i</sup> However, awareness and concern do not always translate into action.

Research has shown that people have to care about wildlife and the natural world – have a real connection to nature - before they will take action to save or help it.<sup>ii</sup> With this in mind we are actively broadening our offer based on research showing that just imparting wildlife knowledge – as in perhaps more traditional field studies or environmental education – is not enough to foster this connection to nature.

'The findings indicate that contact, emotion, meaning, compassion, and beauty are pathways for improving nature connectedness. The pathways also provide alternative values and frames to the traditional knowledge and identification routes often used by organisations when engaging the public with nature.'<sup>iii</sup>

We have begun to plan, market and deliver events and programmes for children, young people and families actively using the five pathways to

nature connection framework and I talk through a couple in more detail below.

### Wildlife TOTS

Our sessions for children under 5's and their parents or carers are run monthly at several different locations with the aim of this repeat contact increasing wildlife awareness for everyone attending, as well as enabling parents and carers to feel more confident in taking their young children out and about to natural spaces independently. Ecophobia is a growing concern – children being given negative messages about the natural world that they have no agency to do anything about, so we are actively choosing to deliver positive interactions with 'everyday' wildlife to support our young children's innate interest in the world around them.

As an example, we were due to be going pond dipping with our Swanwick Lakes Wildlife TOTS this month, and our connection to nature session aims looked like this:

#### 5 Pathways to nature connection: -

1. Contact: With the invertebrates & plants found in pond plus other incidental surrounding (i.e. ducks/small birds/adult dragon & damselflies)
2. Beauty: Make a scrap collage of our pond
3. Meaning: Recording new learning in logbook
4. Emotion: Expressed in logbook or at end of session reflection
5. Compassion: Careful moving & looking at pond life; returning everything to pond once pond dip completed.

Activity to take home - Wildlife WATCH make a wildlife pond / edible pond

The 'log-books' are small journals that are given to TOTS participants for the children and parents and carers to use to document new things they have found out about as well as their thoughts and feelings about these – often new or first time – experiences. Many of our TOTS children will attend our monthly sessions for two or three years, so these logbooks are a wonderful way of tracking their first hand encounters with wildlife, the seasons and different habitats, as well as their developing physical, emotional and social skills.



Blashford Lakes Wildlife TOTS observing a cinnabar moth caterpillar © Tracy Standish





At the other end of the age range, our work with young people has an increasing importance for us, not least because these individuals will soon be making decisions and taking actions as adults, and we need these to be pro-environmental and in support of wildlife and nature's recovery. We know young people become more independent and want to step away from attending sessions with their families - our Wildlife Rangers and Young Naturalist's sessions are aimed at 12 to 18 year olds.

### Young Naturalists

Since October 2015, this monthly meeting group that are based at Blashford Lakes have explored in depth the wildlife at many reserves and amazing locations, undertaken a wide variety of conservation tasks, and practiced bush craft skills. They often camp out or have residential stays at inspiring places such as their most recent trip to the Countryside Education Trust's Home Farm Centre at Beaulieu.



Young Naturalists checking the moth trap Blashford Lakes  
© Lianne de Mello

This programme is supported by the Cameron Bepolka Trust and was set up to counter the lack of fun but informed groups where under 18's can meet up and share their love of wildlife. As one of our Young Naturalist's expressed it:  
'All things to do with nature are usually aimed at young children, but this is really cool.'

All our education and engagement work is now supporting the Trust's two aims of creating a WILDER Hampshire and Isle of Wight with more people on nature's side and more space for wildlife to thrive. Our clear and ambitious aim of achieving 1 in 4 people taking positive action for nature by 2030, gives a clear focus for our work helping children, young people and families to find ways to increase and deepen their connection to nature.<sup>iv</sup>

As a member of Trust staff this is hugely inspiring and only increases my enthusiasm to get out and deliver more of these opportunities. On that note, I've just heard the blackbird beginning to sing in next door's garden, so I am heading back out to see what other everyday wildlife I can find to observe, learn about and share my enthusiasm for!

For further information:

Young Naturalists Blog: <https://blashfordlakes.wordpress.com/category/young-naturalists/>  
Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust WILDER 2030: <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/our-strategy>

References:

i <https://c-js.co.uk/3aQB3iX>

ii Rosa *et al* (2018) Nature Experiences and Adults' Self-Reported Pro-environmental Behaviours: The Role of Connectedness to Nature and Childhood Nature Experiences *Front. Psychol.*, 26 June 2018  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01055>

iii Lumber *et al* (2017) Beyond knowing nature: Contact, emotion, compassion, meaning, and beauty are pathways to nature connection. *PLoS ONE* 12(5): e0177186. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177186>

iv <https://c-js.co.uk/2WdXQzZ>

## Explore the shore, in the field and at home, with Beach Academy



Teaching kids to look closely, to focus, to notice and be patient (Beach Academy Wales)

If the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown has taught us anything it's how much as a species we need the outdoors. It's our forgotten resource, a place of refuge, release and re-invigoration. Millions of adults could only dream of taking the family to the beach on a sunny Easter day this year and we need to remember how vital that freedom to explore nature and our local environment is to our health and well-being.

Kids too. Currently confined to bedrooms or cooped up in class learning, socially isolated and learning about nature through screens and tablets with the real connection to the outside world banned because of a virus.

And this needs to change. I think we have forgotten how to love the outdoors, we have taken it a bit for granted until we needed it most. We have let our busy days turn into a wild life, rather than take a moment to let wildlife calm our busy days.



My aim has always been to help kids, families and schools connect with the coast. I want to help educate, inform and engage in vast beach classrooms where the blue planet and its wonder is the only lesson. The more they know about an intertidal animal or plant, the more personally they feel connected to it. This is great news because we, as humans, care most about the things we feel most connected to.

Nature connectedness has been proven to improve health and well-being. Educators world-wide teaching outdoors have always known this. It brings us happiness and pleasure and we pass that on to the kids that we teach.

For me, one of the simplest ways to strengthen connections to nature on the beach is the act of identifying and naming. The need to name things starts very early and stems from a need to understand the world. I find I'm a walking and talking encyclopaedia with some cool facts thrown in and constantly expanding my own knowledge to pass on.

The beach is my classroom. Here, I am not afraid to show kids animals that sting and bite, to handle them correctly, to understand their anatomy and the reasons for their adaptations for survival. I teach kids how to look closely, to focus, to notice, be patient and to record. I won't shy away from a washed up jellyfish swarm and will go in search of a whale to stimulate conversation and debate, to help kids feel, see, discover, empathise and invoke an emotional response.



*In search of starfish for live anatomy session  
(Beach Academy Wales)*

### Coast in the Post

But during these unprecedented times, we need alternative and unique solutions. As a Beach Teacher, I may not be able to do what I do, but I know what I know and even now, stuck in my own home, I'm sending Lockdown Learning Resources to kids across the UK and offering free fun Facebook Learning linked to our intertidal and marine environments.



*Strandline identification with Emma  
(Beach Academy Wales)*

'Coast in the Post' provides Coastal Kits linked to nature, art, numeracy and literacy that combine raw materials sent in the post (collected from south Wales beaches) with digital resources (worksheets/ideas/instructions) sent via email for parents to print, interact and learn from the objects. Kids are measuring the length of Orcas in their kitchens, comparing their sea snail with a garden snail, unzipping gull feathers and making crab lines for future beach trips.

### Open for business

The beach environment is an extremely hard place to work. It's unpredictable, wild, ever-changing uncontrolled, open to the elements and certainly throws up unknowns in the forms of marine wildlife and human hazards. It's incredible. I love it. Beach teaching is raw and challenging with my knowledge of the natural world being tested daily. Beaches are an exciting, untapped learning environment ready to be discovered by enquiring minds.

When beaches re-open, I'll be ready once again. My new dinky hub at Rest Bay, Porthcawl packed full of wonderful colourful beach stuff, offering trips and lessons to all and Rockpool kits to hire, will fling its doors open.

I have an outdoors optimism that people will realise what they have missed. I only hope that we don't forget this time in

world history and grab every opportunity we can to get outside and learn lessons from our incredible planet.  
Emma Lampert, Beach Academy Wales

### How to 'rock' a Rockpool

Nature recovers, fast. With our renewed enthusiasm for the outdoors, we need to be more mindful this time around of our human impact. To help families and schools get back on the beaches and taking part in one of the UK's favourite beach pastimes, Rockpooling, I have created a free resource, How to rock a Rockpool.

Last year I made a start launching my 'How to rock a Rockpool' campaign at the European Marine Science Educators Association Conference. This simple 'How To' guide on the activity of Rockpooling contains a Rockpool



*Handling techniques taught in the field  
(Beach Academy Wales)*



code of conduct, animal handling techniques, correct equipment to use, plus options for pre-fieldwork eco-equipment that can be made at home or at school.

To support the guide, I offer staff training days, at any time of year, on any UK beach, school Rockpooling trips and Teacher Trugs plus family Rockpooling kits and events. For your free copy of the 'How to rock a Rockpool' guide, please email [beachacademywales@gmail.com](mailto:beachacademywales@gmail.com) and if you would like to work with me or book training or a trip please get in touch.

Together we can protect intertidal marine environments for the future.  
[www.beachacademywales.com](http://www.beachacademywales.com)

**To support families at home and teachers**, ORCA have produced free lessons, activities and worksheets about wonderful whales and dolphins! We have 10 lessons so far, with more added each week. Pop your details in the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ORCAlessons> and we will send you all further info. [www.orcaweb.org.uk](http://www.orcaweb.org.uk)  
[anna.bunney@orcaweb.org.uk](mailto:anna.bunney@orcaweb.org.uk)

## Planning Your Environmental Education Programme

The health and the breadth of our ecosystems is in steep decline. Species are becoming endangered and extinct at an alarming rate. And at the forefront of our battle with the



(Debs Rylands)

degradation of nature is the environmental educator. This article is designed to help you to take the first steps towards designing your environmental education programme. This is a huge area, but don't forget, Wild Ideas can help without cost to your organisation.



Our environmental educators are the roads to a lasting relationship with nature; building connection, understanding and affection for wildlife and biodiversity. Positive outcomes from the delivery of practical conservation and land management, our policy development and programme planning hinge upon the support of diverse groups in exploring our roots in nature and understanding the impact of our decisions.

Protecting our environment depends heavily on the buy-in of our wider communities: dedication to changing practices, purchases, challenging authority – every aspect of our lives impacts our natural resources, biodiversity and the health of our living landscapes. Beyond this, the evidence of the positive impact of nature on well-being, educational attainment and physical and mental health is overwhelming.

### So where do we start?

It is easy to jump into recruiting volunteers to deliver a series of engagement activities without a firm plan for outcomes, funding and development. This is, eventually, insupportable to your organisation's aims, budget and values. Following the key stages will help to develop a programme of environmental education which supports organisational needs while engaging your target audience.

### Identify your aims

What are you trying to achieve? This could be participation in a citizen science project, lobbying, recruiting volunteers or national engagement in a campaign... By identifying the organisational outcomes and what you want from participants, you will be able to start to recognise your target audience. You may have more than one aim, but it is important to recognise the most important of these.

### Engaging your audience

Once you understand who your audience is and what you want from them, we need to know how best to engage with them. Remember that this can include some trial and error, but some research into other projects' successes and failures is a good start.



(Debs Rylands)

If your programme is aimed at a certain geographic community, then community engagement is a great way to ask your audience what they want to see from your efforts. There are many ways of doing this, from online surveys, using targeting (such as Facebook ads) to leaflet drops and physical events in the community. Know what you want to ask and then choose the most appropriate method.

Your methods of engagement will also depend on your resources – funding, staff and access to property to deliver activities, for starters. Do you need partners or funding to be able to provide a programme or certain activities? Knowing your audience and outcomes will enable you to identify potential partners and develop the connections. It is undeniable that one of the most effective ways to create this connection is the opportunity to get up close and personal with nature in a space that participants can revisit independently.

This is a huge area, but you can find out more at [wild-ideas.org.uk/working-together/](http://wild-ideas.org.uk/working-together/)

### Designing your Evaluation

How will you know you have succeeded? Looking back to our initial aims, together with the needs of our target audience will give you the basis of your goals and targets. Your goal is the vision of what you are trying to achieve. For example: increase income through engagement events or engage more people with our organisation.



(Debs Rylands)

For the purpose of evaluation, you need to turn these into targets. How much money do you want to raise? By when? By setting 'SMART' (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) objectives, you have set the basis of your evaluation, which will help you to understand what is going well, what isn't and what to change, based on this understanding. Find out more about setting targets at [wild-ideas.org.uk/SMART](http://wild-ideas.org.uk/SMART)

This should always happen before preparing your programme as the exercise of target planning will support your understanding of the type of activity required and when by understanding what you want to change, especially in terms of community behaviour.

We think that the most logical framework will indicate the goal first, then the changes (outcomes) that need to occur to achieve the goal and your target audience, then

your outputs (what will be delivered to produce effect those changes) which will enable you to plan the activities which will deliver the required outputs. You can download an activity planner here: [Wild Ideas Activity Planner](#)

### Designing your Programme

OK, so you know what you want to achieve, by when and, to some extent, how you want to achieve this. It is, of course, imperative that there is flexibility in delivery. Not only do we need to be able to revise when our programme brings unexpected outcomes, methods and topics need to be heavily influenced by the staff members and volunteers who are delivering your programme. It is their enthusiasm, their knowledge and their skills which will provide an engaging and successful package of environmental education.

We work on a belief that people should be empowered to improve their communities and shape the services that they receive. Any environmental education programme needs to be designed to enable participants to be able to gain understanding and affection for our natural world, in order to take action and influence their wider communities. We are building a relationship with our participants, who will be ambassadors not only for nature, but for our organisation and our partnerships.

And of course, methods and topics must be influenced by the staff members and volunteers who are delivering your programme. It is their enthusiasm, knowledge and skills which will provide an engaging and successful package of environmental education.

Activities could include:

- Practical conservation activity
- Identification skills
- Survey skills
- Craft and design
- Creative media

### Recognising Participation

All activities have the opportunity for accreditation to increase engagement and improve employability for participants. These could include: AQA Unit Awards, John Muir Conservation Award, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, NICAS and NVQs in practical conservation.



Oscar, who won the Big Torbay Snail Race as part of the Torbay Green Spaces Project  
(Debs Rylands)



Developing, funding and delivering your programme is a huge area and we hope this has given you a few ideas. The Wild Ideas team are available to provide advice and support at every step of the way. We offer development, project management, funding and training support as well as resources to help you along the way. Our project delivery is designed to come at no cost to your organisation, so if you would like help to take your environmental education programme forward, get in touch to see how we can help: [hello@wild-ideas.org.uk](mailto:hello@wild-ideas.org.uk)

**BeVenturesome usually run outdoor pursuits** school trips to the Alps. For now we are running an AdventureAtHome series encouraging young people to try and squeeze some adventure into their lives in these challenging times. For the directory of activities check out: <https://beventuresometrips.co.uk/adventureathome/>

**Wild Minds is based in South Derbyshire**, with over 18 years of experience, delivering environmental education to children and adults including schools, families, community groups, corporate clients and the elderly, connecting people with nature. Activities include: Wild Rambles; Meditation & Forest Bathing; Kids Clubs; Birthday Parties. Find us at [www.wildmindsnature.co.uk](http://www.wildmindsnature.co.uk)

**Working across the Midlands and further afield**, we offer Forest School programmes, training and skills days. Environmental education and outdoor learning, including staff inset. We can come to you, or visit our Staffordshire woodland. Visit [www.creativeoutdoorlearning.co.uk](http://www.creativeoutdoorlearning.co.uk), email: [enquiries@creativeoutdoorlearning.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@creativeoutdoorlearning.co.uk), call Colin Manning on 0789 979 3967, or visit Creative Outdoor Learning on Facebook.

## Outdoor Wellbeing for Teenagers and Adults

We all have five basic needs: Survival, Belonging, Power/Self-worth, Freedom and Fun. Currently, in day to day life, these needs can be forgotten, disregarded and ignored. 'Outdoor Wellbeing for Teenagers' aims to nurture the five basic needs:

**Survival** – Participants work together and alone to build dens, erect tarpaulins, gather materials to make a fire, then cook/bake over the fire.

**Belonging** – The ethos is always be inclusive. The aim is to nurture a sense of belonging for everyone taking part. That means different things for different people.



*Building dens (Gillian Watt)*

**Power/Self-worth** – It is hoped that all participants experience a sense of achievement, accomplishment, pride, importance and an outer sense of being heard and respected and feeling competent and attaining recognition. Participants have a say in the planning of sessions, so that the activities are relevant.

**Freedom** – Freedom is the need for independence and autonomy; the ability to make choices, to create, to explore, and to express oneself freely; to have enough space, to move around and to feel unrestricted in determining choices and free will. Sessions also encourage and support participants to move freely and to create and share independent thoughts.

**Fun** – We all need fun! Fun includes experiencing enjoyment, laughter, relaxation and learning.

Gillian (AndBreathe) teams up with Agnes (Wellbeing with Agnes) for these outdoor sessions. Our aim is to actively promote an environment where adults and children have an opportunity to feel that their five basic needs are being met, because if these needs are not being met, we can all 'behave' in a way that is perhaps not helpful. Gillian is a trained Forest School leader, an educator and wellbeing facilitator and Agnes is a qualified mental health nurse and mindfulness facilitator.

'The Outdoor Wellbeing for Teenagers' sessions are based on the principles of Forest School, including the aim of encouraging and supporting mental health and wellbeing in teenagers. Within the sessions, we share mental wellbeing tools and offer time to discuss mental health, either as a group or individually. There are also unprompted discussions shared amongst the teenagers about their mental health. These conversations can be supported by the leaders, if necessary. In general, we all feel more relaxed in the outdoors and this plays a big part in these sessions. There are many examples of the positive impact of these sessions, including one teenager who had been out of school for eighteen months and is now back in school full time. Another had problems sleeping and is now sleeping much better.

We offer similar sessions for adults. I recognised the possible benefit of these sessions for adults after attending a local whittling session. I was asked what had drawn me to the whittling session and I explained that I planned to develop mental health sessions in the outdoors and wanted to improve my whittling skills, in order to be more skilled when assisting others. This sparked an



unprompted conversation about mental health amongst the group. The leader shared later that these people had been attending for some time but had never shared in this way before and she could see how beneficial it had been for them.

There are many studies sharing the benefits of the outdoors on our mental health, including the study on 'Forest Bathing' in Japan. <https://qz.com/804022/health-benefits-japanese-forest-bathing/>

We all recognise how beneficial the outdoors is for our physical and mental wellbeing. The evidence is in and this places us all in a perfect position to encourage future generations to appreciate and understand the benefits of the outdoors.

Find out more at [www.andbreathe123.com](http://www.andbreathe123.com) or on facebook @andbreathe123



*Creating environmental art (Gillian Watt)*

## Are we blindly betraying the environment we are trying to save?

If I was to rewind 35 years and ponder my future in conservation and education there are three books that I wish had been written: George Monbiot and Feral, Mark Cocker and Our Place, Isabella Tree and Wilding, and without blowing my own trumpet, Children Learning Outside the Classroom Ch.13 by myself. For me these are wonderful books that bring masses of well referenced material together and anyone studying or thinking of studying conservation and education would glean a great insight. For those of us who have witnessed and experienced the 'micro-management' years, three 10 year blocks of Countryside Stewardship in my case, we can mildly despair at the prescriptions we were led to apply that have been well critiqued by all three authors. The conflict between SSSI designation, their preservation of status through 'gardening' and the experience of rapid landscape and biodiversity change has been profound and worrying to witness. 'Bottom-up' concern simply has not been listened to, red grouse and ring ouzel have disappeared and heather moorland is changing and us human beings struggle to view the countryside through a lens other than preservation and status quo. Change is rapid now, and a fascinating period to study and question what we did in the past with a view to where the science is saying we will be in the future, there is much to be done and I would encourage anyone to examine the change. The annoying view is that despite relevant policy and substantial knowledge there is a lack of political will and "nature remains on a losing wicket" Tree 207. I like the phrase 'cognitive dissonance'; we know so much but somehow 'things' just don't seem that serious to act upon just yet so we need even more natural rapid change. "We must all recognise that we have been engaged in a monumental, communal act of cognitive dissonance" Cocker 280.

A further worrying observation is that despite my efforts to engage children with the outdoors, and I have tried with over 122,000, the young teachers I see today are more cautious and less accustomed to the outdoors themselves than they were twenty years ago. This, I suggest, is because they have not had outdoor play experiences themselves as children and thus need more 'hand-holding' in their training. The observation comes from 10 years, delivering PGCE teacher training days for university students and it is very obvious when student teachers engage with rural primary school children out of the classroom, who is comfortable with the 'space' and 'opportunity' and who is not. To help the young teachers I encourage a style of direct sensory experience; seeing, touching and feeling, where safe, to stir the children's emotions involving plants or animals, to turn a psychological key that creates a memorable emotionally charged experience. This is referred to as "real experience environmental education" Gurnett 177, using biophilia as the hook and demonstrating the environment as it is as opposed to a sanitised or anthropomorphised version.

Are we really going to hell in a hand cart; as an eternal optimist I have to hope not, but as Cocker 285 so wonderfully says "personally I have a problem with hope, not because I don't feel it, but because it steadily becomes an objective in its own right, a distraction confusing and diluting the real issues". "It also draws an imaginary line between those who are assumed to be able to face the truth and those for whom it must be replaced with calming reassurance". "Ultimately a tissue of half truths meshes with something far more powerful and potentially destructive – myth".  
Dave Gurnett 2020

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### Dave Gurnett

Dave Gurnett has worked as an Education Outreach Officer for Exmoor National Park for 15 years and formerly as a Ranger for 16 years, having originally trained as a secondary school teacher. He manages his own smallholding inside the National Park, with experience of government agri-environment schemes spanning several decades. The views contained in this article are his own, and not representative of his employer.



*Dave Gurnett*



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The CJS Team would like to thank everyone who has contributed adverts, articles and information for this CJS Focus publication.

Next edition will depend on coronavirus, keep an eye out for updates.

Details believed correct but given without prejudice, Ends.