

JOHN MUIR AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

John Muir Award News
Spring 2009

The John Muir Award is the main educational initiative of the John Muir Trust. It is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places which encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration. It is non-competitive and open to all.

Other kinds of wild

For Britain's mainly urban population, experience of wild places does not have to mean a long journey to the countryside...

MORE THAN 80 PER CENT of the people of Britain live in towns and cities. A similar proportion of John Muir Awards are based in urban settings. Pockets of green space and ribbons of wildness can take the form of school grounds, graveyards, canals and rivers, gardens and allotments, city farms and community gardens, beaches and woodlands – even the night skies.

The value of such places is that they are accessible and so can easily become an integral part of our lives. Our experience in them can be a long or a short exposure;

they can form a part of something else that we're doing, such as walking to work or taking a lunch break; and they offer stepping stones to 'bigger' experiences of wildness.

Urban environments can be the setting for encouraging and valuing contributions to conservation and increasing opportunities for enjoying and understanding biodiversity as part of the quality of everyday life.

This John Muir Award newsletter focuses on ways of thinking, activities and opportunities that can be applied close to home...

Continued overleaf

Inside this issue of
John Muir Award News

IRVINE BUTTERFIELD HONOURED
Perthshire writer receives John Muir Trust Lifetime Achievement Award p4

JOHN MUIR TRUST MEMBERSHIP OFFER
Special rates all year for anyone who completes a John Muir Award p6

WILD LAND IN ALL ITS GLORY
Photographer Keith Brame in Skye at the start of a challenging new project p7

CLIMATE CHANGE SEEN FROM 2050
Get involved with a new way of thinking about carbon reduction targets p12

PHOTOGRAPH (AND FRONT COVER): STEPHEN CUMBERLAND



Other kinds of wild (from page 1)

IN WINTER 2006, Christopher Somerville, a travel writer, set out to cross the British Isles looking for wild places. He aimed to find 500 and write about them in *Britain and Ireland's Best Wild Places*. 'One question, however, loomed large. What was wild? Would I have to travel to the rugged, unpopulated landscapes of the outermost north of Scotland, or the Atlantic outposts of the west of Ireland, to find truly wild places? Setting out on my journey, I would have said yes, absolutely. But I soon began to see things differently.

'I learnt to enter a disused quarry near Birmingham on the lookout for orchids, or to search for ancient trees in a beechwood within sight and sound of London, with the same sense of expectation that I carried on to the Pennine moors and up into the Scottish mountains. A week of scrambling on glacier-scraped granite, watching mountain hares and golden eagles in the back country highlands, would be followed by a few days hunting along canal banks in the Midlands for dripping brick tunnels full of bats, or following the 5,000-year-old trackways that seam the chalk hills of the south. All were wild places, I discovered.

'Once I embraced this way of looking at things, I found the wild waiting around almost every corner. It took me by surprise day by day – its capacity to hide just inside the thicket, just beyond the skyline...

'The wild waits for us everywhere – in the crack of a paving stone, in the crash of the seas against cliffs, on a lonely moor, between the bricks of a sheepfold wall. We need, as never before, the wonder and the delight of discovering wild places... of recognising their fragility and their growing need for protection.'



'The wild waits for us everywhere – in the crack of a paving stone, in the crash of the seas against cliffs, on a lonely moor, between the bricks of a sheepfold wall'
 – Christopher Somerville, *'Britain and Ireland's Best Wild Places: 500 Ways to Discover the Wild'*

Engaging with wild places

Here are a range of ideas, websites and organisations that John Muir Award Providers may find useful.

Year-long surveys

The BBC Breathing Places website links to a number of easy-to-access surveys and is generally a great source of ideas. www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/doingthings/simple/surveys.shtml

BEEWATCH – Report any bees you see in your garden or out and about. Run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

BIRDTRACK – An online bird recording scheme run by BTO, the RSPB and Birdwatch Ireland.

THE GREAT BRITISH SNAIL HUNT – Join the hunt for 9 species of snail and help map out UK distributions.

HARLEQUIN LADYBIRD SURVEY – Help monitor the spread of this invasive ladybird by reporting your sightings.

HOMES FOR WILDLIFE – Register your garden and get tips and advice on how to make it more wildlife friendly.

MOTHS COUNT – National Moth recording scheme from the Butterfly Conservation Trust.

THE UK BUTTERFLY MONITORING SCHEME – Set up a route and monitor what butterflies you see on a weekly basis.

Trees for cities

Trees for Cities is an independent charity working with local communities on tree-planting and landscaping projects. 'Our aim is to tackle global warming, create social cohesion and beautify our cities through tree planting, community education and training initiatives in urban areas of greatest need'.



Graham Norton, Comedian and TV presenter: "Trees make such a fantastic difference

– less pollution, more greenery and somewhere for the birds to perch and the dogs to wee.'

www.treesforcities.org

Gardens

Gardens have an enormous potential to act as havens for nature. There are 15 million gardens in the UK, covering an estimated 270,000 hectares – more than the area of all the National Nature Reserves. Together they form a patchwork of habitats for wildlife, supporting an estimated 1500 native species (BUGS research in Sheffield found over 1200 species of native plant, lichens, mosses and invertebrates). You can make a difference by making sure you have the right conditions for wildlife to thrive in your garden.

WILD ABOUT GARDENS
www.wildaboutgardens.org

Run by The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society, this website offers a whole range of top tips for making the most of gardens – many of these suggestions are suitable for school grounds and community green spaces.

GARDEN FOR LIFE
www.snh.org.uk/about/initiatives/g4l/



A partnership of organisations under the aegis of Scottish Natural Heritage. The Garden for Life website offers a guide to the wealth of information and resources available to you, including gardening for butterflies, birds and food, and in pots and containers. It also has sections on Gardening at Home, Community Gardening, Gardening with Children and Gardening for Wellbeing.

Plan Bee

Britain's bees have been dying in worryingly large numbers – last year, one hive in three was lost – and no one is sure why. Find out about what you can do to help bees and how important they are...



www.co-operative.coop/ethicsinaction/takeaction/planbee/

'Wildness is a necessity'

John Muir knew that the only way for people to value wilderness is for them to experience it – and they can do that close to home, argues **Graham White**

JOHN MUIR SPENT HIS LIFE campaigning to conserve Nature's wild places. From the 1870s until his death in 1914 he was increasingly aware that they could only be saved if millions of people valued them and fought for their protection.

Muir knew that the glories of a giant redwood forest, or the carpets of wildflowers in a High Sierra meadow, were being destroyed by the lumberman's axe and the shepherd's flocks. But how could anyone save them? An entire nation had to be brought to value these things – but how can we value something if we have never experienced it?

There was no radio or television in the 1880s, but there were books and newspapers; Muir wrote thousands of letters, hundreds of magazine articles and fourteen books. This was a starting point – but Muir knew that the only way to truly 'know' any thing is by direct experience. He wrote:

'I have a low opinion of books; they are but piles of stones set up to show coming travellers where other minds have wandered; at best they are smoke-signals calling attention – but no amount of word-making will ever make a single soul to know these mountains.'

Arguably, Muir was a pioneer of 'outdoor learning', or 'environmental education'. He spent decades enticing people into the mountains to show them the splendour he found there.

VISITS TO THE WILD

Muir's companions saw the flowers, the birds, the trees and the rocks; they drank from the wild mountain streams and sat by campfires under the stars and baked their bread in the ashes. Muir dragged them up peaks to witness the glory of sunrise and to savour the alpenglow of mountain sunsets.

After many battles with politicians, Muir knew that the only force that could match the power of the railway magnates, the mining companies and the timber-barons

was the democratic power of ordinary voters. The vehicle he created to put his new-born conservationists to work in 1892 was The Sierra Club, whose 600,000 members today constitute the most powerful environmental voice in the USA.

There was also a moral imperative behind Muir's argument. As a sincere Christian, he believed that all of Nature was a divine manifestation; that daily contact with Nature was a necessity for mental and spiritual health – and that people who lived in cities, surrounded by poverty, filth, pollution and vice, were inevitably degraded as human beings.

His cure-all for the dis-eases of body and spirit was simple contact with Nature; he felt that the hunger for Nature's beauty was present in everyone.

'Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home, that wildness is a necessity, that

'No amount of word-making will ever make a single soul to know these mountains'

mountain parks are useful not only as fountains of timber and rivers, but as fountains of life.'

Notice his emphasis: 'wildness is a necessity'. Daily contact with Nature – and occasional immersion in

complete 'wildness' – was as vital to people's physical, mental and spiritual health as food and water.

WHAT WE CAN DO

This raises questions about how we as teachers, youth-workers, volunteers and parents can give young people daily access to Nature and occasional 'deep contact' with true wildness. It also raises the issue of how we can maintain our own personal 'environmental health' through contact with the natural world. Many of us find such contact in our gardens, in parks or even through pet birds and animals – not forgetting that human beings themselves are, of course, manifestations of Nature.

• **Graham White is a writer and editor of John Muir's books, and helped to establish the John Muir Award**

Irvine Butterfield receives Lifetime Achievement Award



Irvine Butterfield (centre) accepts his Award from Trustee John Donohoe (left) and Nigel Hawkins (right)

IRVINE BUTTERFIELD, PERTHSHIRE BASED WRITER, photographer and mountain enthusiast, was presented with the John Muir Trust Lifetime Achievement Award at the Dundee Mountain Festival in November. Irvine has dedicated his life to the conservation of wild land and has authored five books on our high mountains. His enthusiasm for mountain country and wild land dates back to the inception of the John Muir Trust in the early 1980s when he signed up as the Trust's fifth member. He is a long-term and assiduous supporter of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, and has been instrumental in setting up the Mountain Bothies Association and more recently the Munro Society.

'Irvine's commitment has always been underpinned by his extraordinarily detailed knowledge of our mountain country, and by his profound, understated and yet transparent passion for its wild landscapes and its history,' commented Nigel Hawkins, the chief

executive of the John Muir Trust. 'His books on our high mountains, enriched by hundreds of his own superb photographs, have been a mighty inspiration to walkers and climbers, leading them on to share Irvine's passion.'

Irvine joins three other recipients of the John Muir Trust Lifetime Achievement Award. The first was the writer, broadcaster and mountaineer Tom Weir. He was followed by Dr Adam Watson, ecologist, writer and mountaineer and 'guru' of the Cairngorms. The third was awarded to Doug Scott, epic mountaineer and campaigner for communities living in remote mountain regions of the world.

All these individuals had followed in the footsteps of the conservationist John Muir in highlighting the importance of the wild places of home and of the world – and encouraging people to know and to love these areas and to take positive action to safeguard and conserve them for the future.

Raasay House hit by major blaze

THE RENOVATION PROGRAMME at Raasay House outdoor centre, Skye, has been severely disrupted as fire caused substantial damage. A John Muir Award Provider since 2003, the centre was due to reopen this Easter but has now suffered a major setback.

'Raasay House has been an inspirational venue, helping hundreds of young people

make a big difference to the island by caring for its nature,' said Toby Clark, John Muir Award Regional Manager. 'Knowing the dedication and spirit of the people involved I have no doubt that the centre will reopen and a new exciting chapter in its story will begin.'

• See www.raasayoutdoorcentre.co.uk

Gatherings 2008: Healthy People, Healthy Places

LAST YEARS' NETWORKING EVENTS looked at how contact with outdoor environments helps with our health and wellbeing, as well as how John Muir Award participation helps create healthy places.

WHERE WERE THEY HELD?
Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow – Centre for Alternative Technology, mid-Wales – Grizedale, Cumbria – Tomintoul, Cairngorms

WHO JOINED IN?
Community workers, environmental artists, Forest School leaders, teachers and pupils - primary and secondary schools, outdoor instructors, Country Park Rangers, volunteer services staff, youth workers, college lecturers, mental health workers, Trustees of the John Muir Trust, Glasgow Centre for Population Health Manager and University of Glasgow Research scientist.

WHAT PEOPLE WANTED MORE OF:
More examples of current John Muir Award activities and more Gatherings to meet others and update skills.

WHAT DID WE DO?
Each day included... a closer look at the Glasgow University John Muir Award Health Impacts report; links to wider health-related agendas and themes; opportunities to see what other Award groups are doing; practicing what we preach by discovering, exploring, conserving and sharing our experiences and ideas with a spirit of enjoyment and adventure.

THANKS TO:
All the case-study session leaders: Jackie McBurney, Marion Norris, Lou Evans, Eleanor Forster, Richard Philpot, Wendy Gray, Kirsty Catherine, Mrs King and pupils, Anne Marie Galbraith and pupils, Dave Straughton, Shane Lowe, Mark Birchall Fritz Hyrnyk, Ruth Forecast, Andy Nardone, Rob Rawlinson, Neil Duckworth, John Douglas, Amy Boud, Liz Cooper, Annie McIntosh, John McMulkin, Richard Strivens, Alan Melrose.



'Great to have focus time to learn how other people do things, and for learning new activities'

'A big well done for making the John Muir Award Gathering such a useful and fun event. I really enjoyed the whole day, and left with a renewed sense of inspiration for what I, and others involved in environmental education, are doing.'

'The case study sessions were great - lots more please'

'The real plus point for me was the cross section of attendance and in particular the school pupils – children are the future'

'The report on the Glasgow University Health Survey was given in a very understandable, simple fashion. I hope this will be the basis for more research'

'I've taken away with me a real passion to promote the John Muir Award and ethos of the John Muir Trust. Look forward to the next one'

John Muir Award Leader Training

TWO-DAY LEADER TRAINING residential courses give a thorough introduction to the skills, knowledge and approaches that are required for delivering the John Muir Award scheme.

Please advertise this to staff, volunteers and leaders who are interested in delivering the John Muir Award. The courses are aimed at those working with groups or organisations, but will be of interest to individuals. Ideally, those attending will have at least one year's experience of working with groups.

Training is not essential to deliver the John Muir Award, but can increase confidence and understanding. 'I always get so many ideas from days like today, thank you.'

Cost: £120 for two days, including food and accommodation. Reduced rate of £60 for charity representatives and individuals. For availability and application/ booking forms, visit www.johnmuiraward.org or contact Award staff at the Edinburgh office – call 0845 458 2910, email info@johnmuiraward.org

SAT 14TH - SUN 15TH MARCH
Cromdale Outdoor Centre, Morayshire

SAT 18TH - SUN 19TH APRIL
FSC Centre Rhyd-y-Creiau, Wales

TUES 21ST - WEDS 22ND APRIL
Comrie Croft Lodge, Perthshire

SAT 25TH - SUN 26TH APRIL
Bendrigg Lodge, Cumbria

MON 27TH - TUES 28TH APRIL
Bryn Beddau (Welsh Language), North Wales

SAT 3RD - SUN 4TH OCTOBER
Sir Arthur Grant's Centre, Aberdeenshire

SAT 10TH - SUN 11TH OCTOBER
Wiston Lodge, Scottish Borders

THURS 15TH - FRI 16TH OCTOBER
Kepplewray, Cumbria

MON 2ND - TUES 3RD NOV
Bryn Beddau, North Wales

...and one-day courses

DO YOU ALREADY USE the John Muir Award and want to explore how to get more from it?

These one-day courses and events will use your John Muir Award experience as a basis to look in detail at specific areas of interest. Visit www.johnmuiraward.org for full details.

JOHN MUIR AND HIS RELEVANCE TODAY?
Saturday 21st March • £20
John Muir Birthplace, Dunbar, East Lothian

Find out more about Muir's life and legacy by spending a day with staff and volunteers from John Muir's Birthplace. The programme includes a tour of the award-winning historic venue, with opportunities to explore the centre's interpretative aspects.

A guided walk around Dunbar will incorporate stories of Muir's adventures and visits to some of the boyhood haunts that inspired him. Local John Muir Award providers will be on hand to share some of their own experiences of integrating Muir into their Award activity.

REVIEWING OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES
WITH ROGER GREENAWAY
Wednesday 6th May • £50
Holyrood Park Education Centre, Edinburgh

This is the fifth year of this popular day exploring reviewing techniques and top tips. This practical (and slightly theoretical) introduction will offer tools and ideas for sharing experiences that can be used both indoors and outdoors.

EXPLORING SCOTLAND'S ROCKS
WITH ANGUS MILLER
Thursday 17 September • £20
Ecology Centre, Kinghorn, Fife
Saturday 26 September • £20
Mar Lodge, Cairngorms

How do rocks link Scotland's diverse geology, land use, heritage and people? This day will practically explore Scotland's geology and find out more about the stories behind the landscape.



A classic image by photographer John Beatty: hear his 'Spirit of Wild Places' lecture at the Trust AGM

John Muir Trust AGM in May

THE JOHN MUIR TRUST AGM & Members' Gathering will be held at Birnam, near Perth, on May 9th this year. John Muir Award Providers are encouraged to attend the day, which includes the Spirit of Wild Places lecture from renowned photographer John Beatty.

For further information and bookings, see www.jmt.org or call 0131 554 0114

Conservation work parties programme for 2009

VOLUNTEER WORK PARTIES made a real difference in 2008 to wild lands in the care of the Trust and our partner organisations (read about it at: www.jmt.org/working-with-our-partnership-organisations.asp). The 2009 work parties programme is now available online.

See www.jmt.org/activities-conservation-work-parties.asp



Membership special offer for Award participants

THROUGHOUT 2009, anyone who gains a John Muir Award, or who is helping with Award delivery, can join the Trust at the Concessionary rate of £15 (full price is £30).

Show your support for the Trust – and help keep the John Muir Award free and open to all – by encouraging people to join.

Join online at www.jmt.org and tick the concessionary rate, or call 0131 554 0114

'I'm proud to support the great work of the John Muir Trust and think joining is a fantastic way for people to offer support' – Leo Houlding, climber



John Muir Trust Wild Land Photography Project for 2009



Edinburgh-based photographer Keith Brame will travel the length and breadth of Scotland this year to take inspiring photos of people and landscapes from John Muir Trust estates

'MY BRIEF IS TO PHOTOGRAPH the land that the Trust protects and the people who live, work and volunteer on that land,' explains Keith as he sets out on his mission to help refresh the Trust's portfolio of images in 2009. Keith kicked off the project with a stunning sequence of images from Skye over the Christmas break, the last few of which were taken looking into Loch Coruisk from the summit of Sgurr na Stri, on the Strathaird Estate, on New Year's Day. 'It's as good a way to bring in the New Year as I can think of,' says Keith.

You can see Keith's images and follow his progress via his online journal (address below). Over the course of the year he will be visiting each one of the John Muir Trust's eight estates. These include some of the wildest

and most beautiful locations in Britain, such as Blaven on Skye, Sandwood Bay and Quinag in Sutherland.

As a charity, the Trust is extremely grateful for the goodwill of professional and amateur photographers alike who continue to offer their images to raise awareness of the beauty and value of wild places. New images of the landscapes, habitats and species that find their home in wild places safeguarded by the Trust are always welcome. Each year, some of the best images are printed in our stunning Wild Nature Diary and Calendar.

• Keith's online journal can be found at www.kbrame.blogspot.com. See also www.placebookscotland.com, click 'Photos' and search for 'John Muir Trust'

Where do you go to see stars?

EVERY COMMUNITY, even in towns and cities, has a local open space that is free from the worst of local light pollution and is a good place to look up at the stars. As part of the International Year of Astronomy 2009, the John Muir Trust is working with astronomers from the Royal Observatory Edinburgh and with Forestry Commission Scotland to help outdoor learning providers and communities find and nominate their best local spots for stargazing as 'Dark Sky Discovery sites'.

'This is a chance for people to rediscover the night sky that is right there above their doorsteps,' says Dave Chalton, Dark Sky project officer at the Royal Observatory



Edinburgh. 'We could be the first country in the world to identify local Dark Sky Discovery sites in this way. From these places, you can get fantastic views of the stars, planets and the Moon. They are windows into our understanding of the universe.'

As part of the Dark Sky project, two free workshops have helped inspire John Muir

Award providers to run basic astronomy activities with their groups. Award Providers have learnt more about the main types of objects that can be observed, why the night sky changes and some simple observing activities. The project culminates in Award Providers identifying their own local Dark Sky Discovery sites, creating local Dark Sky charts and identifying local Constellation stories.

'The training was lively and not too technical ... very useful practical advice that I will be looking forward to using with my group'

• Follow the growing national network of Dark Sky Discovery sites at www.darksky-scotland.org.uk. The project is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland. For the International Year of Astronomy 2009 visit www.astronomy2009.org

PHOTOGRAPHS: SAHELIYA AND THE GREEN TEAM



Young people discover wildlife as well as cultivated flowers in the heart of Edinburgh thanks to Saheliya and the Green Team

I'm definitely going to be bringing my geography students out here.'

In Glasgow, the (non-political) Groovy Greens youth project are completing their John Muir Award on a piece of waste ground at the back of their centre. 'Nobody was taking care of the area and it became full of dog fouling, litter and needles,' explains Education Group Worker Wendy Gorman. 'We wanted the young people to get to like their area, find out about the hedgehogs and deer on their doorstep – to spark an interest in nature. Looking locally was the only option for the group as they realistically can't depend on others to provide transport.'

Craig McLaren from Falkirk Council Education & Training Unit tells a similar tale. 'We like to put something back to places that are accessible to the young people,' he says. 'This means that pride is fostered locally, and young people can easily revisit their wild place in the future.'

Capturing a sense of pride in a place that means something to you is exactly the idea of the web-based project PlaceBook Scotland. People are invited to share their feelings about a place through poetry, prose, pictures, photos, video, sculpture, music or song – as a group of young people did in a joint project between Saheliya and the Green Team in Edinburgh (see below).

As Scotland basks in the success of its high-profile tourist campaigns, we should not forget the importance of our less iconic, but more local, wild nooks and crannies special to us. These green gems are definitely worth a closer look.

Toby Clark and Rebecca Logsdon

SCOTLAND

Wild about home

PROMOTING WHAT SCOTLAND HAS to offer is currently big news. Last year, VisitScotland, the Scottish tourism organisation, ran a winter campaign that celebrated all things white – especially wildlife. (They may have been inspired by the spotting of a white stag on John Muir Trust property earlier in the year.) Potential visitors were enticed to help pick white heather, spot white baby seals or ptarmigan, or experience dog-sled racing powered by white husky dogs. The campaign smashed its targets.

This year, we'll be inspired by Scotland's Homecoming events, commemorating the 250th anniversary of Robert Burns' birth. Add to that the impact of a global downturn and weakened currency, and many believe that there has never been a better time to spend more time closer to home.

Noticing what goes on closer to home is very much part of what the John Muir Award is all about, as a Perth High School teacher recently discovered: 'I didn't know we had this amazing wild place on our doorstep.

Finding the great outdoors in the heart of the city

AN EXCITING NEW PARTNERSHIP between Saheliya and the Green Team in the summer of 2008 offered an inspiring outdoor experience to a group of 14-25 year olds, along with the chance for to work towards a Discovery Award. The project focused on wild places at the heart of the City of Edinburgh including Cammo Estate, the Water of Leith and Redhall Walled Gardens.

The group got to know each other better through a series of team games. They found special places, created poetry and pieces of natural art, cleared an impressive quantity of rhododendron from the woodland and vegetation from the path network, repaired

steps and made small habitat piles for wildlife. A really interesting river dipping session along the Water of Leith helped the members of the group to identify some of the smaller creatures, while the visit to Redhall turned into an 'organic see and eat' experience where the group found magical spaces full of strawberries, peas, beans and raspberries.

'Everything was good. I especially liked to see the results after we cleared the overhanging branches from the paths' - Theresa

'I am so happy because it was a great team experience and we all enjoyed it' - Shazia



• See a gallery of the group's photographs on Placebook Scotland: go to www.placebookscotland.com and click 'Photos' then search for 'John Muir Award'

ENGLAND

Hidden biodiversity

YOU MAY HAVE TO LOOK a little deeper to discover the wilderness in urban areas, but once found, it is possible to enjoy it and care for the planet's wild places, wherever they may be.

Grounds4Change in Bristol works with local young people to reclaim urban waste spaces, turning them back into wild green spaces. Through activities such as litter picks, clearing invasive species and encouraging wild flowers, they are using their Award to learn about hidden biodiversity in their area.

Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale encourages participants of its 'Cleaner Greener Wardleworth' scheme to explore their

local area and link typically urban issues such as fly tipping and littering to much wider environmental issues. Through community clean-ups, promoting recycling and gardening they take responsibility for change at a local level for the whole community.

Positive Steps Oldham, together with Oldham Countryside Rangers, is delivering the John Muir Award to adults with additional needs. By spending time in a local urban park, the members of this group are able to find some valuable breathing space, away from the stresses of everyday life. The partnership has been so successful that the group are now working towards their Explorer Awards.



Positive Steps: a team of young adults get to work in a local park in Oldham

This is just a snapshot of what is going on in England – just some of many examples of how activity towards achieving a John Muir Award can help reconnect us to the wilderness, and how that wilderness may not be as far away as we first think.

Caroline Standing

PHOTOGRAPH: WEA REACH OUT



CAIRNGORMS

The granite jungle

I'VE JUST BEEN FOR a beautiful lunchtime walk in Anagach Woods, a community-owned woodland in Grantown on Spey. It is a fantastic area of pine woods, complete with red squirrels and capercaillie. For me, it's very easy to get out into nature and I probably take it for granted. But what about people who live in towns and cities; what's it like for them?

At the Cairngorms Provider Gathering last year, one of the items that grabbed

the attention of a large number of people was the work done by WEA Reach Out from Aberdeen. They are regular visitors to Glen Tanar in the Cairngorms National Park, but I was keen to find out how they managed to transfer their John Muir Award activity from the granite mountains to the granite city!

Reproduced above are some thoughts from a piece entitled 'John Muir – he gets you oot the hoose!' by Ross Weatherby

'JOHN MUIR GETS YOU OOT THE HOOSE!'

'Our John Muir Award perhaps takes a different slant to the norm. With our project right in Aberdeen city centre and all our students living in the town, we looked at what green spaces there were that were local and accessible. During our investigations the students could see how the Award could be adapted to city life.

'For example, in the Kincorth area we looked at the Gramps, what plant and wildlife lived there and what the impact of local business etc has had on the environment. A walk along the river Don showed how inaccessible it can be to those with a disability. And trips to local parks showed us how a simple clean-up can allow nature to once again plant a firm foothold into what had been neglected - and in some cases simply left to rot - in amongst the waste we ourselves as city dwellers have caused.

'Maybe there is hope for a green life within our cities and if one generation can educate the next by respecting what we have, then the ethos of the John Muir Award has once again made a difference.'

– Ross Weatherby of WEA Reach Out

from WEA Reach Out. Ross's words got me thinking about a couple of things. First, that there are wild places within urban areas where nature can prevail in the most unlikely circumstances. Second, that what people do towards their John Muir Award can play a real part in making a difference to people's everyday lives by helping to create pockets of wildness in our villages, towns and cities.

Alan Smith

LAST YEAR WAS ANOTHER successful one for the John Muir Award in Wales, with another rise in the level of participation across all regions and more than 3,000 Awards achieved. These Awards were completed both by individuals and by groups, and were wide-ranging in terms of ages, abilities and geographical area.

There were 10 National Trust working holidays over the course of the year, into which the Award was incorporated under the guidance of Del Davies. These open courses tend to attract urban based people from all over the UK and occasionally beyond, and the Award element offers an opportunity to explore parts of the Snowdonia National Park beyond the NT property where the volunteers are concentrating their conservation efforts. Del's vast and intimate knowledge of the region allows him to choose an activity and area which is suited to the group, the weather and other variable circumstances.

BENEFITS ALL ROUND

At Rhyl Community College, students on the three-month 'Skillbuild' course, which aims to improve basic skills and address difficulties with formal education, have been incorporating the Award in their programme. This has taken them out of their urban home environment to areas such as Loggerheads, Llyn Brenig, Agergwyngregyn Falls and Moel Famau. Paul Penlington, course leader, has found that student behaviour, progression

WALES

Town and country



PHOTOGRAPH: DEL DAVIES

Building experience: volunteers on a National Trust working holiday at Craflwyn help to construct a yurt

and attainment has improved dramatically: student expulsion rates have dropped to one a year, disciplinary statistics are now among the lowest in the college and staff absence through sickness is minimal. Staff and students

are not the only ones to feel the difference, either – the local environment has benefited from the planting of several thousand trees, flowers and hedges and the construction of numerous gates, stiles, fences and paths.

Hugo Iffla

The group's efforts have also helped protect little terns and natterjack toads.

Many outdoor centres in Wales also draw on urban areas for students: Plas Gwynant, for example, is run by Sandwell Council, while Arthog OEC is owned by Telford and Wrekin Council. Here students can enjoy quiet, safe rural locations away from the pressures of urban life and have their eyes opened to the wonders of the natural environment.

MORE GOOD NEWS

Award activity also takes place within the urban environment, such as a Year 10 SEN group from Cyfarthfa High School in Merthyr Tydfil, who amongst other things will be developing an area within the school grounds, building willow fences and a garden, and exploring a local woodland. An inclusion group working with Parys Training in Amlwch has aspirations to create gardens from derelict land, and there are many other examples of such activity throughout the country.

We are pleased to have gained grant funding from the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust. This will help us promote and deliver the Award to more marginalised communities and with more disadvantaged and excluded groups, while retaining the ethos of being open to all, which will be achieved through working in partnership with our Providers. A big thank you to all who have made 2008 such a good year.

CUMBRIA

Neighbourhood watch

YOUNG PEOPLE IN Great Clifton and Millom, West Cumbria, have been involved in activity that focuses on the wild places and wildlife on their doorsteps and in the grounds of their schools and youth centres.

The CrossRoads Outdoor Club ('CROCs'), based in the Methodist Chapel, Great Clifton, has been comparing the diversity of the chapel grounds with habitats further afield in West Cumbria. Its members are learning how to both preserve and increase the wildlife value of their area. They kicked off 2009 by taking part in the RSPB's Big Birdwatch, and later in the year will sleep over in the church hall and use night-vision cameras, moth traps and sand traps to record animals which visit. Key to the success of their initiative will be to share what they are doing with their local community by inviting them to visit and showing them the results.

At Millom School the students are also learning about their own grounds and have been given a derelict area to turn into a vegetable garden. They have researched the soil type and are learning about the wildlife that visits the area, as well as about other local wildlife gardening projects.

They are looking forward to cooking and tasting the fruits of their labours, and to producing a 'before and after' display of their work that will make a link between the school and the community.

IMPROVING ACCESS

Elsewhere on the west coast of Cumbria, Egremont Youthworks has been working with a local ranger and with the Friends of Harrington Reservoir. To improve access to a local nature reserve they have prevented the spread of reeds and willow that were



Karl Ladyman and Jamie Mavir, volunteers with Egremont Youthworks who have been involved with conservation work at Harrington Reservoir

encroaching on a pond and have cleared brush from a meadow area to support the area's wild flowers and grasses. While undertaking this conservation work they learned about the history of the site and spoke to members of the Friends of Harrington Reservoir to learn about how the reservoir has become a Local Nature Reserve and how it is managed.

Michael Reid and Jamie Sharpe were presented with their John Muir Awards by Maureen Dolan, chair of the Friends of Harrington Nature Reserve, at one of the Friends' regular meetings. 'We see the best of youth and the worst of youth on the reserve,' she said. 'We still have major vandalism problems, but this team did wonderful work every Tuesday over the winter, doing repairs, maintenance projects, tree work and footpath work. They were out in all weathers and were a real credit.'

CONFIDENCE BOOSTED

Karl Ladyman, a volunteer with Youthworks Egremont who achieved a John Muir Explorer Award through the Harrington Reservoir project, commented: 'When I first started, my confidence wasn't as good. I've got braver and do things I'd never done before. Now I'm going to Newton Rigg [further education college] two days a week [and spending] one day with Graeme [Proud, ranger].'

Graham Watson

Woodland Trust offers copses

THE WOODLAND TRUST is offering a free Hedge and Hazel Cope pack to the first 1,000 schools and youth groups to register online this year. Each pack contains 30 native trees, enough for a small grove or short length of hedge. They come with complementary educational resources and guidance on planting and maintenance – but hurry as the offer will be very popular.

New 'Seed to Tree Kits' are also available, including all the materials you need to sow and germinate a tray of silver birch saplings.

Register online now at www.woodland-trust.org.uk/hedge



Free resources from ARKive

ARKIVE EDUCATION IS a free-to-use multimedia resource bank for teachers and other educators. Making use of the stunning imagery available at the award-winning ARKive website, ARKive Education provides downloadable, ready-to-use modules on a wide range of curriculum topics (suitable for geography, biology, environmental education and citizenship lessons).

ARKive is a centralised library of film and photographs of the world's endangered species. Its resources are freely accessible online for private research and internal educational purposes. Hailed as the digital Noah's Ark, it has won numerous conservation, education and communication awards since Sir David Attenborough launched it in 2003 and has profiled more than 2,500 of the world's endangered species.



Go to www.arkiveeducation.org.uk and www.arkive.org.

'Health Impacts' leaflet published

THE RESULTS OF a three-year study carried out by Glasgow University Public Health Unit has now been summarised and published in leaflet format.

From the conclusion: 'Whilst the study findings clearly demonstrate the potential value of the John Muir Award experience ... the findings also highlight the extent of existing problems which require enhanced policy action. The implications are clear: more young people should have the chance to have this kind of experience, and efforts should continue to reach the least advantaged.'

For copies of the leaflet, contact your regional manager or download from 'Resources and Links' at www.johnmuiraward.org.



Two interesting and unusual ways to get involved in exploring the future links between...

Climate change and wild places

The View From 2050

LAST YEAR, THE DAVID HUME INSTITUTE, an independent charity named after the Scottish philosopher, economist and historian, presented a series of essays looking back from the year 2050. Scotland has met its target to reduce carbon emissions by 80 per cent. How did it do it? What was the journey to 2050 like? What were key milestones and issues along the way? Who were key players in making it happen?

In 2009, there is an open invitation to join in with this discussion. The John Muir Trust is inviting its members and interested parties, including Award Providers and participants, to get involved – and to give particular consideration to the role of our landscapes, biodiversity, and organisations such as the Trust in this journey towards 2050.

As Jeremy Peat, the director of the DHI, says: 'Your views would be welcome. This



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAVE

topic will remain with us for a while!

'[This initiative] is the catalyst for debate and that is what all good thinking thrives upon,' says Professor Anne Glover, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland. 'I hope as many people as possible are stimulated by the essays

and use the ideas to create their own imaginative pathways to 2050.'

- Find out how to get involved at www.johnmuiraward.org, and also see www.davidhumeinstitute.com



...and are we in **THE AGE OF STUPID?**

RECENT DOCUMENTARY FILMS such as Super Size Me and Fahrenheit 9/11 have achieved box office success while also raising awareness. In the wake of Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth', climate change again comes under the spotlight in 'The Age of Stupid' in March.

Directed by Franny Armstrong of MLibel fame, the film stars Pete Postlethwaite as a man living alone in 2055, in a world devastated by climate change. He looks back at documentary footage from 2007 and asks why more was not done to prevent ecological disaster. The filmmakers hope for an upsurge in

'I think I must have been the only normal member of the public at the preview screening. I didn't have a clue about global warming. I was totally blown away by the film' – Charlie

awareness of climate change issues and to influence political decision makers in the run-up to international talks later in 2009.

The UK premiere is on March 15th and from May it will be possible for any college, school, bookshop, campaign group or outdoor centre to organise its own screening of Age of Stupid.

- More details from www.ageofstupid.net

Get in touch with the John Muir Award – the educational initiative of the John Muir Trust

41 Commercial Street, Edinburgh EH6 6JD – 0845 458 2910
General enquiries – email info@johnmuiraward.org
www.johnmuiraward.org – www.jmt.org

JOHN MUIR AWARD MANAGER Rob Bushby, rob@johnmuiraward.org

WEST SCOTLAND

Toby Clark
3/4 Turnberry House,
175 W George St, Glasgow G2 2LB
0845 458 3184
toby@johnmuiraward.org

CAIRNGORMS

Al Smith
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square, Grantown on Spey,
Morayshire PH26 3HG
01479 870518
cairngorms@johnmuiraward.org

WALES

Hugo Iffla
Suilven, Marconi Lane,
Tywyn, Gwynedd LL36 9HN
0845 456 9398
hugo@johnmuiraward.org

EAST SCOTLAND

Rebecca Logsdon
41 Commercial Street
Edinburgh EH6 6JD
0845 458 2910
rebecca@johnmuiraward.org

CUMBRIA

Graham Watson
c/o Cumbria Youth Alliance
University of Cumbria,
Newton Rigg, Penrith CA11 0AH
01768 893656
cumbria@johnmuiraward.org

ENGLAND

Caroline Standring
41 Commercial Street
Edinburgh EH6 6JD
0845 458 3184
england@johnmuiraward.org

THIS NEWSLETTER is produced with the support of Scottish Natural Heritage, Dualchas Nadair na h-Alba.

It is printed on paper made from 100 percent post-consumer waste.

