

# OUTDOOR LEARNING

## Opportunities for Secondary Schools in the Tees Valley

**Tees Valley Wildlife Trust:** delivers a wide ranging education programme with the purpose of involving young people in wildlife and environmental issues. Our outdoor learning packages challenge the disengagement of young people from the natural environment by increasing their physical activity, freedom and experience of the outdoors.

We deliver the John Muir Award which empowers young people to take positive environmental action by undergoing four challenges. Recognition of achievement with a John Muir Award certificate helps develop young people's self-esteem and provides a positive experience to include on their curriculum vitae.

### Examples of the four challenges:

1. **Discover:** Create a 3D site map, identify habitats.
2. **Explore:** Go rock-pooling, hunt for mini—beasts.
3. **Conserve:** Do some litter picking , plant wildflowers.
4. **Share:** Create a poster, have a campfire discussion.

*“Whilst delivering the John Muir Award I’ve watched young people grow in self confidence, overcome challenges and improve their social skills and teamwork. The John Muir Award provides a tool for motivating young people to get involved in wildlife conservation”*

Becky Stanley Community  
Wildlife Officer at Tees  
Valley Wildlife Trust



**JOHN  
MUIR  
AWARD**

*wild places:*  
DISCOVER  
EXPLORE  
CONSERVE  
SHARE

**Our Outdoor learning packages engage disadvantaged young people and are inclusive to pupils who are at risk of school exclusion.**



## **More opportunities for exploring the Wider Environment.**

**Not all young people living in urban areas get a chance to explore rural areas.**

We can arrange guided visits to Local Nature Reserves and wilder rural areas such as the Durham Coast or North Yorkshire Moors National Park. This gives young people a chance to learn about local geography, different habitats and associated wildlife.

## **Improving Mental health and Well-being**

**Being outdoors in green spaces reduces young peoples stress levels and improves concentration.**

We have noticed when delivering the John Muir award that pupils start to take a greater interest in the wildness around them. Discovery of their environment results in an increase in learning about nature which in turn strengthens young peoples mental health.

During a session we incorporate time for young people to do their own self-led exploring. Prior to being given freedom to explore we set general boundaries and explain risks. Young people who are provided with a sense of freedom start to take more notice of their surrounding environment and nature becomes their teacher.

Many of our activities focus on developing teamwork skills this often results in young people building trust in one another and forming positive friendships.

All young people are asked to do something practical for wildlife conservation. This can be something simple such as making a bird feeder, bird box or planting a tree. This instils an understanding of positive environmental action.

Our outdoor learning sessions are designed to develop young people's communication skills. When sitting around a camp fire they are encouraged to share information about how they have enjoyed or not enjoyed the days activities. This type of informal interaction develops their self confidence.



## **Bushcraft skills.**

Our sessions often include basic Bushcraft skills which cover the art of using resources provided by our natural environment to survive and thrive in the great outdoors.



## Works Experience

These sessions are suitable for those who do not want the time commitment required for a John Muir Award .

They provide young people with a hands on experience of what it is like to carry out outdoor improvement work.

Activities always include a safety talk on how to use hand tools and equipment. Depending on the time of year young people can assist with maintaining woodlands, wildflower grasslands, ponds and footpaths.

Sessions are usually four hours in length and take place on Nature Reserves and green spaces in and around Middlesbrough



## Working with Special Educational Needs

**Our delivery is inclusive to all young people including those with Special Educational Needs.**

The confines of an indoor classroom can often feel formal and pressurised. Outdoor learning offers an alternative feeling of space and freedom. Time spent outdoors can assist in restoring mental fatigue and enhance mental focus.

Our educational leaders are experienced in providing support to young people with special educational needs. This includes young people with learning, emotional, behavioural or communication difficulties.

Activities are planned and adapted to suit young people's needs and designed to develop independence, self esteem and social skills. Ways in which we try to manage challenging behavior and reduce stress include

- Incorporating physical exercise into activities,
- Cutting down on demands,
- Encouraging independence
- Remaining calm but assertive.

*The students love going to TWVT every week and as a result they are healthier, more vocal, caring of each other and happier. This is great progress for our students with autism. It gives them a learning experience that you can not teach in a classroom.*

Linda Lord: Teacher at Beverley School in Middlesbrough



## What we can provide:

- A pre-planning visit in school to meet teachers and pupils.
- Activity and site risk assessments along with safety talks.
- The use of wellington boots and waterproofs.
- Personal protective equipment, tools and materials.
- Advice and assistance on transport to sites.
- Parental consent forms
- Experienced staff who are trained first aiders with full DBS.

## What you will need to do:

- If you are interested in your students undertaking a John Muir Award or works experience session please contact our office on 01287 636382 or email [info@teeswildlife.org](mailto:info@teeswildlife.org)
- Please note our outdoor sessions are very popular and we operate on a first come first served basis. If we are very busy you may need to join a waiting list for groups to sign up.
- You will need to provide supervisory staff for sessions that take place outside of school.
- For the John Muir Award you will need to plan in advance with our staff a minimum time commitment of 30 hours and complete a learning agreement form.
- If for any reason you or the students cannot attend a planned session you will need to inform our office at the earliest convenience.

**Our Bright Future is an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environmental sectors.**



**We are calling for policy makers to produce guidance to schools stating that at least an hour lesson time a day should be spent outdoors.**

## Contact Us

**Please telephone for more information or to make a booking.**

**Tees Valley Wildlife Trust**

**01287 636382**

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**Visit our website:**

**[www.teeswildlife.org](http://www.teeswildlife.org)**

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