

John Muir Award during COVID-19: examples of nature connection activity amid the pandemic

The John Muir Trust recognises that people's connection to wild places is vital for health and wellbeing; and, perhaps now more than ever, the value of having opportunities to connect with nature, exercise, de-stress and play is being widely recognised. We believe that encouraging active participation in caring for nature will help build a better more inclusive future for us all.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to support and encourage John Muir Award activity carried out within current [government guidance](#). To help share ideas and encourage connections with nature in the fresh air in a way that is safe, we've collated examples from various organisations, partners and individuals across the UK – showcasing how working towards a John Muir Award is helping people to look after themselves and support other people's wellbeing during this stressful time.

There's a wonderful mix of connections with wild places to share, capturing how people are sparking curiosity and learning, keeping active, lifting moods and nurturing wellbeing, improving relationships and celebrating creativity and resilience. We hope you enjoy them and feel inspired.

For support and guidance on wrapping up your existing John Muir Award activity, and/or planning new activity, visit our [dedicated webpages](#) or contact the John Muir Trust via email [here](#).

Contents – click the link to skip to the examples most relevant for you, or simply browse by scrolling below:

- [Education](#) – schools, colleges and outdoor centres
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Further guidance

Looking for further inspiration and ideas?

Visit our '[Award in Action](#)' webpages for a suite of Case Studies and Stories, browse our John Muir Award [Record eBook Feed](#), find links from the [Resource Guides](#), and search the latest social media content using #JohnMuirAward.

Requesting certificates and resources - feel free to request certificates using the [Certificate Request Form](#) as usual, however please note that our offices are closed, so all certificates and resource requests will be processed once it is safe to return to our offices. Your key Award contact will discuss an e-Certificate option during the crisis that may be helpful to you.



Education – schools, colleges and outdoor centres

Visit our [schools and colleges](#) webpages to see how the John Muir Award can support educators to deliver learning outcomes across the curriculum through practical, creative and engaging approaches.

Gardens and greenspaces

P6 Teachers from Balgreen Primary school in Edinburgh are currently supporting students to complete their John Muir Award at home, connecting to local greenspaces. Their students have been sharing all the amazing things they have been getting up to on their [school Twitter page](#), including using tools to make a minibeast homes, growing vegetables, sleeping under the stars, and creating videos.

“A thread full of fab pictures from one of our P6’s sharing how he has discovered, explored and conserved nature and the outdoors so far. He is fully embracing his John Muir experience, amazing work!” Hannah Gaunt, P6 Teacher

A pupil also shared their [own mini movie](#) showcasing IT skills too.



College responses

Students on the NQ Countryside Skills and Ranger Training Programme, being delivered by West Highland College UHI, in collaboration with Nevis Landscape Partnership, John Muir Trust, Woodland Trust Scotland and Jahama Highland Estates have engaged with and reflected on the impact of practical nature conservation.

Check out the [students Instagram page](#).

“The students have continued to engage with their Countryside Skills and Ranger Training programme despite the challenges of Lockdown. The situation has not dented their energy and enthusiasm in organising an Instagram page to celebrate what they’ve achieved prior to Lockdown, reflect on John Muir and share what inspires them to work for conservation.” Heather McNeill, West Highland College & Rory Stewart Nevis Landscape Partnership







Cross curricular learning at home

In a wonderful cross-curricular John Muir Award, teachers from the English, Music, Geography, RME and Biology departments are supporting Boclair Academy S2 pupils to continue to achieve their John Muir Award from home. Having visited Mugdock Country Park earlier in the year and completed a community litter pick, students have now been engaging at home via online Ecodrama theatre challenges, writing nature journals and creating their own bird feeders. Picture from the [school Twitter feed](#).

“I’m so proud of our S2 pupils, engaging with ECODRAMA online lesson on the incredibly import topic of climate change. They’ve also been unbelievable in spotting birds on their homemade bird feeders, 10,000 steps a day outdoors and creating videos about how the world might look in 2050 if we don’t make changes now.” Ruth Bone, Principal teacher for Global studies



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| <p>Proud teacher moment Danielle, a teacher at Newmilns Primary School East Ayrshire, shared her pride at comments from a pupil she was supporting at home to help complete a Discovery Award. Using the simple Four Challenge Review, she gave pupils the opportunity to evaluate what they had achieved and how they felt the Award had impacted on them. In Danielle’s words a ‘Proud teacher moment 😊’ Visit East Ayrshire’s Learning Outdoors Support Team webpages.</p> | <p><i>“After learning these things, I was always keen to go home and share my experiences with my dad. Still, even during Lockdown I have been continuing to teach my parents, and younger sister – things they can do to help the local wildlife, even just whilst out a walk with the dogs.” Pupil</i></p> |  |
| <p>Insta-success Using the John Muir Award to deliver curriculum outcomes Banchory Academy Outdoor Learning are sharing adventures through Instagram to help show how pupils can continue engage with and enjoy our natural environments, such as counting nurdles!</p> | <p><i>“Banchory Academy have started using Instagram as a way of sharing their John Muir Award experiences. They have managed to wrap up their Award this year and have already sent in new plans for next year.” Alan Smith, Cairngorms National Park Authority</i></p> |  |
| <p>New timetable new approaches West Calder High School Humanities department have taken steps to move their S2 John Muir Award online. Their first challenge was all about getting outside and finding everyday objects. For more inspiring ideas including #TurdTag with Keep Scotland Beautiful check out the Humanities department Twitter feed.</p> | <p><i>“Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to go outside and find objects to create your first name. Don't worry if you can't get outside, use objects around the house!” Mr Young, Modern Studies Teacher</i></p> |  |
| <p>Mission Ardroy Nearly 1000 Fife children were meant to attend Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre this spring, many to complete their John Muir Award. The residential centre staff created a ‘Mission Ardroy’ home learning pack to support schools share activities and ideas with pupils, parents and carers. The pack aims to help pupils complete their John Muir Award, encourage local outdoor learning, and continue the connection between the centre, schools and home.</p> | <p><i>“We’re seeing great examples of how children are connecting with wild places in their local area despite Lockdown. We’re excited to see the long-term effect of this connection!” Katie Scales, Ardroy Instructor</i> Watch Zoe's film - a 3 min pupil presentation response from Donibristle Primary School.</p> |  |

Youth engagement

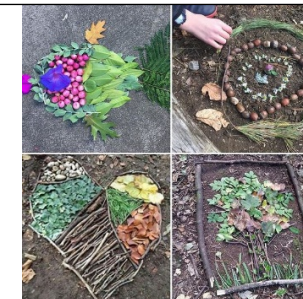
Visit our [Youth sector](#) pages to help take youth work outdoors creating opportunities for young people to try new things, have fun and gain a sense of place, while also feeling the health and wellbeing benefits of fresh air and nature connection. Also see [#YouthWorkAtHome](#) from the Awards Network.

Jump like a grasshopper, wriggle like a worm

Lambhill Stables Youth Group has gone online to engage young people and their families in activities that help keep them active and connected to both friends and nearby nature. [Visit Lambhill Stables Youth Group Instagram](#) for the latest updates from the group, including wildlife gardening 'how to' videos and minibeast exercise challenges.

We love their '[Learning about insects](#)' exercise film!

"Last week we set the John Muir Family Awards group a challenge – to create their dream garden space...what they would love to have in their garden, and what would benefit their local wildlife. These designs are fantastic! ...hedgehog houses, bird and squirrel feeders, flower gardens for the wildlife; seating areas, swings and basketball hoops for humans" Text on Instagram post



Shared goals

Urban Roots in Glasgow are using the John Muir Award as a tool to encourage families to make the most of time spent together in their local wild place, Malls Mire. Watch their [fantastic video](#) taking families on a virtual tour of the wildlife in the community woodland and sharing ideas for meeting the four Challenges.

"If you're looking for extra things to do getting your family outside, working towards something – a shared goal – then the John Muir [Award] is definitely for you ... The key is that you're getting outdoors, having fun, being responsible and giving a little bit back." Robbie, Urban Roots



Blown away...

St. Colm's High School and Cornstore Youth Club, started their Award focused on a community accessible part of the school grounds. The young people wanted to create a space for outdoor learning and nature, befitting a very special area of reflection. Since Lockdown [pupils are being supported](#) to continue time spent outdoors by bird watching, tree planting, and visiting local greenspaces, as well as taking and sending photos to their teacher.

"I'm blown away by some of the photos I've been sent. The pupils are truly engaging with outdoors and are very appreciative of the link with school and home. I feel it has been something very positive for the pupils to do and hope it is keeping them from obsessing over what we are going through." Clare Devlin, St. Colm's High School



Family engagement

The Family John Muir Award encourages a family unit (in its broadest sense) to meet the criteria and achieve their collective Award certificate. It helps nurture positive relationships through fun and adventure outdoors. Find out more on how the John Muir Award works for [Family Support organisations](#), as well as [self-guided Families](#).

Families getting outdoors

Under The Trees Ltd are partnering with Scottish Badgers to deliver the John Muir Award to families of all ages and backgrounds around England and Scotland. Families sign up and are being supported to engage with their own local wild places with weekly challenges. Check out their [Twitter feed](#) for ideas and achievements, and wonderful [Forth Valley family blog](#) example.

"Our John Muir Family Award has been taken up by 51 families - over 200 people are getting outdoors under Lockdown and working towards their Award. We have set challenges for families to follow, or to use to springboard their own ideas and adventures."
Jess, Under the Trees



At Home Engagement

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park has used the John Muir Family Award to continue to support people across Wales (and beyond) to connect with the special qualities of National Parks during COVID 19, creating remote opportunities, framed around the 4 Challenges of the Award. Visit their [dedicated Your Park facebook](#) pages for more.

"We are working with support from the John Muir Trust to encourage families to experience the outdoors, learn about nature and care for our wonderful wild places, from their doorstep or garden, as well as closer to coast." Tom Moses, Discovery Ranger.




Bringing nature indoors



This Glasgow based family have been using their Family John Muir Award to stay connected to nature indoors. They've got creative with caterpillar yoga, creating butterfly feeders for their balcony and even looking after their own orange -tip butterfly caterpillars. They are keen to share their ideas and have created this [amazing blog](#) all about what they are getting up to during their Award, including helpful links to the resources they have used.

"Spending the majority of time inside with youngsters is hard work, so we are going to do as many butterfly & nature activities as possible indoors; whilst working towards our John Muir Family Award." Mum

"I'm hoping a bee and a butterfly come , actually all the animals that can fly"- Jared (age 3)



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| <p>The Fairy Wood</p> <p>The Conway family discovered a small area of woodland on their daily exercise walks and instantly fell in love. Stella (age 4) was especially keen to 'pick up all the rubbish in the Forest'. They want other local families to enjoy this special wild place too, making magical fairy trails and sharing their fun.</p> <p>Find out more at Hawkhead Village Fairy Woods Facebook Group (and image credit).</p> | <p><i>"My two children have decided to spruce up our local woods we found during the Lockdown. They have put so much work and dedication into our Family John Muir Award plans and during these difficult times it's something we can do to help everyone."</i> Gillian Conway (Mum)</p> |  |
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| Individuals & adults | | |
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| <p>Find out how the John Muir Award can support adult community learning, development programmes and volunteering, and individuals taking part on their own, or with a group of friends.</p> | | |
| <p>Taking the outdoors in</p> <p>WEA Reach Out is an education organisation supported by Cairngorms National Park working with those either going through the criminal justice system, have substance misuse issues, have mental health problems, a learning difficulty or are long term unemployed. Having just started to use the John Muir Award to help Aberdeen students connect with their natural surroundings and raise confidence and self-esteem, staff have had to adopt a creative approach.</p> | <p><i>"During this uncertain time we are still trying to offer our students a way that they can see and engage with the outdoors. I'm sending pictures and videos of my daily exercise to the students who will in turn do the identifications from home. Once this is all over the group will visit the spots we have been working in."</i> Ross Weatherby, Education Co-ordinator</p> |  |
| <p>Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Staff Award</p> <p>Due to COVID restrictions, the Volunteer, Engagement and Programme team have adapted their staff John Muir Award plans and are now focusing their activities closer to home. Using the 5 Pathways to Nature Connection to inspire how they engage with their local wild places, they've placed their wellbeing and that of their family's at the heart of what they do. See more on their Record eBook.</p> | <p><i>"...with our current Lockdown situation, we must take the time to learn to 'be' in our own space and observe and take pleasure in the smallest of things, notice what nature shares this space with us."</i> Staff team member</p> |  |

Saunter more...

Sustrans Volunteer Coordinator, Laura, has been continuing her Award during Lockdown by connecting with local nature – including undertaking daily Muir-themed activities during John Muir Day celebrations. Read her accounts from being inspired to saunter outdoors and take more time over activities - to appreciating nature books and creativity.

Visit [Laura's Record eBook](#) for updates.

"I went on holiday last week - not far...just to the living room. But I stepped away from work, the news went off, WhatsApps was muted, and books came out that I have long been intending to read."

Laura



The John Muir Award is the Trust's main engagement initiative encouraging people to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places.

www.johnmuirtrust.org #johnmuiraward