

## Building strong families in the outdoors

*This is an example of a Family John Muir Award. It allows participation for children of all ages, as part of a family group. This Award is a collective achievement for each family, rather than each individual.*

Twelve families from Edinburgh achieved their John Muir Family Award during a week long holiday project delivered by With Kids. The Award was offered to families who attended a community drop-in service, which aims to reduce isolation by helping local people build confidence and develop supportive relationships. After achieving the Award, parents and carers reflected that they, and their children, felt more included, more active and more connected to their local wild places and community.

### Why the Award?

Ian, a community worker at With Kids, chose to deliver the John Muir Award in response to requests from the families. The drop-in sessions offered indoor and outdoor activity (in a small outdoor play area) and it became clear that the families preferred to spend their time outside. The Award gave an opportunity to experience more natural outdoor spaces whilst providing a focus to the holidays. Ian shaped the Award activities to meet the aims of the drop-in service, creating opportunities for positive inter and intra family engagement.



### Keep it local

The Award was based in wild places in and around Edinburgh. The choice of location was essential.



**“The areas are local to the people who participated and the intention was to encourage participants to go back to those places in future, as they not only provide an important corridor for wildlife but a resource for the community for activity and fun.”**  
Ian

The families can access these places easily, without needing their own transport, and for free. Some are already talking about their return visits.

**“As a family we are definitely going outside more as a consequence of taking part in the John Muir Award – we have been back to the Hermitage and the Braid Burn Valley Park since, we have also been getting out more in the garden.”** Alison

## **A river ran through it**

The Award was themed around the two rivers that run through the wild places visited. The families learned about the rivers and surrounding environments through practical activities such as sensory games, river dipping, building mini boats, and paddling which engaged the adults and children. They discovered wildlife living in and around the river through surveys, created feeders and homes for the birds they spotted, and cleared up rubbish from the river and banks. The group talked about how important it was for their families to take responsibility for wild places, and felt a sense of pride for the work they were doing.



## **Having fun and building connections**

Many of the parents reflected that they really valued spending positive time together as a family, and with other families. It helped them to build relationships and feel more included and part of a community.

**“Being involved in The John Muir Award activities was brilliant as it was good to meet other families who were in the same financial situation as me. It offered me the chance to socialise with other adults as I find it quite isolating at times when I am on my own with just me and the kids... it was fun to be with other families who just got on so well.”**

After successfully completing both the Discovery and Explorer levels, some families are now planning their Conserver Award. They will be working towards it independently, without the direction of With Kids, as the parents now have the experience, relationships, confidence and motivation to take their kids outdoors.

**“For me the John Muir Award was a great bonding experience with my family. I got to spend quality time with my kids. There were many great activities involving being out in the healthy fresh air and learning lots more about our environment, important knowledge for all of us. It was also a fun time spent with other families. All together as one happy team!” Shona**

