



**St. David's Care in the Community,  
Pembrokeshire  
Getting out and having fun!  
Summer 2010**



Working in partnership with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Ranger Service, a group of 14 residents from St David's Care in the Community achieved their John Muir Discovery Award, under the guidance of their leader Liz Taylor. St. David's supports adults with learning difficulties and aims to tailor its programmes of activity to meet participants' abilities, aims and goals. Ian Meopham, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Ranger, used the John Muir Award with this group as they had all previously attended day trips and showed an interest in learning about the National Park. Ian commented that the John Muir Award is;

***"A fantastic way to get people involved and interested in wild places"***



Their Award activity was focused in Prendergast woods near Solva, where group members returned for each session. Ian led the participants through a programme that focused on enjoyment and new experiences for the participants. Whilst also enabling them to do something positive for the environment.

**Focus on birds and beasties**

When the group first arrived in the woodland they did not notice the wildlife around them. After spending time sitting quietly, listening and looking more closely at their surroundings, they began to tune-in to the environment. They learned to identify bird song of garden birds, including blue tits and robins, and also heard the call of buzzards. The

group got close to other life in the woods by using nets to 'swish' through the undergrowth. They caught an abundance of flies, beetles and little moths that had been successfully hiding! An underwater world of life was also uncovered when 'fishing' in the river and an exciting discovery of otter spraint was found, proving their presence in the river. After experiencing such a wide range of species the group were inspired to do some follow up research. Individuals were able to deepen their understanding of biodiversity, ecosystems and how every creature and plant is linked. Staff members from St. David's commented that the project;

***"Opened up a whole new world of nature, creepy crawlies, plants and other wildlife"***

They also reflected that not only did the experience offer enjoyment and a new learning opportunity for the participants, but it also allowed them to develop life skills;

***"Improves people's concentration and ability to focus"***

***"Builds teamwork, involving all elements of society"***

**Making a contribution**

After observing, identifying, researching and recording all the wildlife in the woods the group were enthusiastic about doing something to help make a difference to the place and biodiversity. They assembled and erected bird boxes in the hope of encouraging birds to nest in the woods the following spring.

The participants also made a difference to Prendergast woods by undertaking maintenance on an area of young woodland. They cleared around trees to allow plenty of light to get through, and any gorse or brambles were cut away.



When not being in the great outdoors, the group had plenty to occupy themselves inside. This included lots of research on what they had discovered outdoors and the participants really got into recording their findings and writing up their activities in their individual Record Books. They also pressed and laminated the flowers and leaves they had collected. As well as creating their Record Books the group created a display of their experiences by writing up their story and selecting photos show at the final presentation. This tackled the 'Share' challenge of the Award.

### Celebration and Success

A fantastic display and presentation was held at Oriel y Parc, the National Park education and visitor centre – the group had not only prepared a display board, but also gave a slide show and talk about the project, which allowed them to showcase their work and gain a sense of achievement. This was followed by the presentation of their certificates so they could gain recognition for their efforts and celebrate what they had accomplished.

Everyone was able to take part and contribute throughout the entire project, and it was fun and rewarding for all concerned. The group felt they were able to make a useful contribution and gained a sense of self worth.

To sum up, Liz Taylor said of the John Muir Award;

***“A wonderful scheme that can be tailored for people of all ages and abilities. Good fun and a great learning experience for all – you can’t beat it!”***

### Next Steps

Due to the success of the Discovery Award, the group are now keen to build on their achievements and develop and extend their work and relationship with the National park, the community, and wild places. So they have signed up to progress on to the Explorer level Award, where they will not only revisit the woodland, but also explore a Coastal Zone consisting of heathland and beach with the ultimate aim of creating an exhibition.

John Muir Award:

[www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org)

St David's Care in the Community:

<http://www.stdavidscare.com>

Pembrokeshire Coast NPA:

<http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk>

