



John Muir at the Edinburgh Botanics

John Muir has featured prominently at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for many years. There's a John Muir Redwood Grove, a quote in the glasshouse, as well as intermittent exhibitions such as "Nature's Beloved Son" that highlighted Muir's botanical legacy last autumn and winter.

During this time a number of the Visitor Welcome Team chose to participate in the John Muir Award as an integrated part of their winter staff training. Key purposes were to get to know the Botanics in a different way, and to bring the varied skills and experience of team members to the fore.

"We spent time getting to know the Garden as a haven for wild creatures - tracking and identifying wildlife (including tracks left in fresh mud by badgers and foxes), listening to bird calls, taking photographs of wild flora and fauna, and exploring the use of maps for biological recording purposes. For the Conserve challenge we did some biodiversity recording which was submitted as part of the ongoing records of the Garden, and created bug lodges for the demonstration garden. We had plenty to discuss between us, and produced some poetry and a gallery of photos on Flickr."

Drew McNaughton, RBGE Visitor Welcome Team



Photo credit: Betsy Ogilvie



Photo credit: Linsey Wilson/RBGE

Regius Keeper, Simon Milne (right) congratulates members of the Visitor Welcome Team

A recent submission to RBGE Botanics Stories web pages showcases some of the creative ways in which the Visitor Welcome Team shared their experiences: "One of the John Muir Award challenges is about sharing. This can take many forms including painting, writing, poetry and even just discussing your experiences. Each of the challenges can include an element of sharing as there are no hard and fast rules defining the boundaries between them."

See more at:

stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/14806.

What did team members make of the experience?

“I focused on looking at the bullfinch, which is one of my favourite birds, and how we can conserve this beautiful, shy bird. The bird is declining in numbers throughout the UK; however it seems to thrive here in the Garden. This will be a project that I will continue to look at and share through Botanics Stories and Facebook.” Tamar Duncan

“The John Muir Award was a really enjoyable and worthwhile way for people on our team to share skills and get to know each other better. It’s added another strand to what we do and given us experiences we can pass on to our visitors.” Drew McNaughton



Photo credit: Drew McNaughton

“I have thoroughly enjoyed working on the John Muir Award. It has given me the opportunity to discover more about the Garden and see it in yet another different light.” Tamar Duncan

The relevance of Muir

John Muir’s influence helped to inspire people in many ways, one of which was the protection of the habitat essential for Giant Redwoods in Marin County north of San Francisco, now called Muir Woods. Through their activities in meeting the challenges of the John Muir Award the team found they can also help protect and encourage biodiversity within the Garden that will be enjoyed by themselves and visitors alike, for many years to come.

“I have found it interesting learning about John Muir, I’ve been inspired by his story. I’m already involved with conservation campaigning, teaching with eco-schools and of course engaging with the visitors of RBGE but the John Muir Award has provided the opportunity to share my experience, learn from others and to delve more into how to conserve nature.”

Tamar Duncan

Poem by David Brash:

Discovery

One man who looks at nature
A yearning for discovery
Passion unrecognised
A father of life, in lands unknown
Discoveries and learning to be told
A path created
For us to follow
To learn
To love
To grow



Photo credit: Betsy Ogilvie