

JOHN MUIR AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

The main engagement initiative
of the John Muir Trust

Our Conserve Audit shows the value and impact of John Muir Award participation and how this made a difference to wild places in 2015. It quantifies and demonstrates the collective effect of individual responsibility and action across the UK.



Image: Andrew Macdonald

John Muir Award Conserve Audit 2015

The John Muir Award is the main engagement initiative of the John Muir Trust. The ambitions of the Trust are to protect, enhance and care for nature, so that our wild places are valued by and for everyone. It runs the John Muir Award, for free, to encourage people to connect with wildness – from what's on our doorsteps in urban settings to remote coastlines and mountain landscapes. It also recognises the importance of putting something back, and the benefits this can bring – for people and for places. There's an imperative for us not just to be passive in our enjoyment of the outdoors, but to be 'active conservationists', as wilderness visionary John Muir urged.

So this is what being 'active conservationists' looks like in 2015, through involvement in the John Muir Award:

- 36,200 days of 'Conserve' activity
- carried out by 33,488 John Muir Award participants
- valued at £1,291,710, based on Heritage Lottery Fund figures
- over 7.5 hours of 'Conserve' activity per participant

27,356 participants are represented in the Conserve Audit via 1,074 responses, a sample of 82% of all those involved in the John Muir Award in 2015. A third of all activity was carried out by participants from excluded backgrounds – many who would not normally engage in positive action for the environment – contributing almost **10 hours each on average**.

Our last Conserve Audit, in 2011, recorded responses representing 24,432 days of activity, generating £977,280 of activity in total for the year. Our 2011 Conserve Audit had great value in demonstrating the impact that Award participation has on wild places – not just for the John Muir Trust but for partners, funders, and everyone involved.

Activity in 2015 took place over an extensive range of geographical locations and across a rich diversity of habitats, from **mountain landscapes** and **coastal plains** to **woodlands** and **school playgrounds**. Data was captured to measure everything from **invasive species control** to **surveying earthworms**, and **tree planting** to **litter picking**.

What is the John Muir Award?

The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme that supports and encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places.

Participation has Four Challenges at its heart:

Discover a wild place

Explore it

Do something to **Conserve** it

Share your experiences

johnmuiraward.org

What is a Conserve Audit?

A Conserve Audit is a monitoring exercise. It identifies the amount and type of activity carried out to meet the Conserve Challenge of the John Muir Award. It's a great way of capturing the breadth and quantity of action undertaken by people through their involvement.

It lets us see how diverse activity comes together both regionally and UK-wide to make a significant impact on the environment. Data can be used to summarise activity by region and by organisation.



29,939m²

of **invasive species** cleared by
6,684 people

including rhododendron, non-native evergreen, Himalayan balsam, lodgepole pine, Japanese knotweed, laurel, bamboo, sitka spruce, salmonberry, larch, western hemlock, holm oak, gunnera, snowberry, hottentot fig, Japanese rose, pheasant berry, duckweed and sycamore



4,692m²

of **pond restored or created** by
over 1,700 people



5,421

people **making feeders** for birds, butterflies, red squirrels, ladybirds, hedgehogs, insects and bees



4,599

people in
196 groups

worked on over 18,000m² of **wildflower areas** with species including daffodils, bluebells, poppy, lavender, primroses, sunflowers and many more



12,533

trees planted by
3,819 people

including wild cherry, fruit orchard, hazel, ash, hawthorn, oak, holly, silver birch, elder, alder, willow, crab apple, rowan, maple and many more



8,712

people in
389 groups

maintained or created 3,900 wildlife habitats for birds, bees, butterflies, minibeasts, moorland species, peat bog species, frogs, newts, small mammals, bats, hibernaculum, amphibians, hedgehogs, field mice, voles and doormice



63,103m

of **footpath created, maintained or improved**

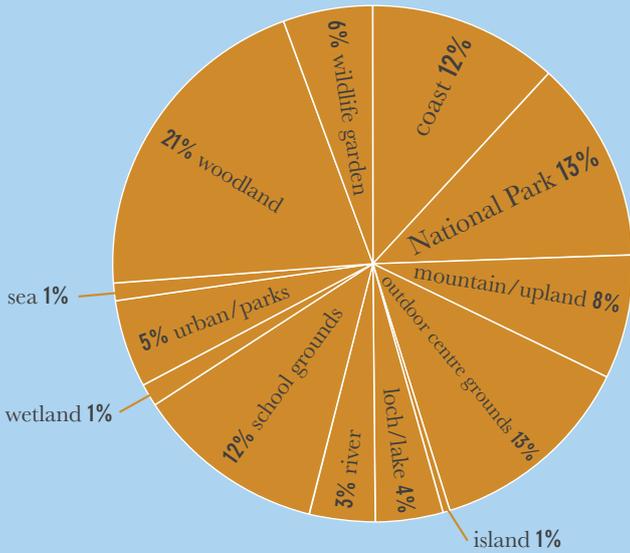


19,339

people cleared 8,442 bags of **litter** and **recycled** 1,162 bags



Habitats activities took place in



“We have now helped to conserve the woodland over an eight year period.”

“The Conserve activity is the most powerful challenge. It’s often when the ‘penny drops’ and a real connection is made.”

“We’ve changed how we feel about wild places. We’ve gained a lot more respect.”

Surveys

With growing interest in Citizen Science – gathering, recording and analysis of scientific data by members of the public – surveys are a popular way to get hands-on with nature and contribute to the scientific community in a meaningful way. Information and resources offer increasingly sophisticated and engaging support, too. Almost **7,000 participants’** survey contributions were audited.

What was surveyed?

Birds, trees, plants, bees, minibeasts, otters, bats, fungi, lichens, rare summer migrants, red squirrels, riverfly, butterflies, earthworms, hedgehogs, frog spawn, badgers, wetland birch, water voles, newts, Japanese knotweed, basking sharks, Himalayan balsam, rhododendron, wood mice, breeding birds, New Zealand flatworms, corncrakes, shells, grouse, cetaceans, seaweed, pendunculate oak trees, dragonflies, moths, Japanese wireweed, ladybirds, eider ducks, twayblade, nightjars, coral reef fish, grey seals, peat soils. Plus: litter, human impact, climate change, tested sands for pollution, coastal erosion, water & air quality.



OPAL Surveys (used by 98 groups) explore the health of our soils and trees, the quality of our air and water, the distribution of invertebrates, and the importance of hedges.

Campaigns

National, regional and localised campaigns are strongly represented in the Conserve Audit – from **Grow Wild** and **RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch**, to **Your Park** and **Wild Park** initiatives in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, to a dog mess poster project in St. Helens – with active campaigning being monitored by 110 groups.

Grow Wild inspires communities, friends, neighbours and individuals across the UK to transform local spaces by sowing, growing and enjoying native wild flowers.



GROW WILD

Impact

57% of groups referenced **Leave No Trace** and **45%** mentioned **Minimum Impact** principles in relation to their activity.

Specific initiatives highlighted included:

Countryside Code, Scottish Outdoor Access Code, Green Travel, Reduced/Reused/Recycled waste, Reduced/Audited/Alternative energy use, Monitored/Reduced/Audited Food Miles, Created/Applied Environmental Policy

Conclusions

This year-long initiative highlights a real commitment to the aspirations of the John Muir Trust to protect, enhance and care for nature. The Conserve Audit provides a comprehensive insight into the contribution of John Muir Award participants to maintaining, improving and restoring wild places during a full calendar year.

It demonstrates that individuals and groups can make a meaningful impact on their environment – locally and, cumulatively, nationally. The financial value of this activity, estimated at almost £1.3 million, is significant. It highlights the merits of working in partnership to achieve mutual benefits. Cross-sector partnerships are very much in evidence – the John Muir Award can be seen as a catalyst for making links between the environmental sector, formal education, youthwork, a broad range of ‘inclusion’ audiences, outdoor learning/ outdoor centres, and health. It helps to connect NGOs, charities, schools and youth groups, families and individuals with national policies, initiatives, plans and indicators.

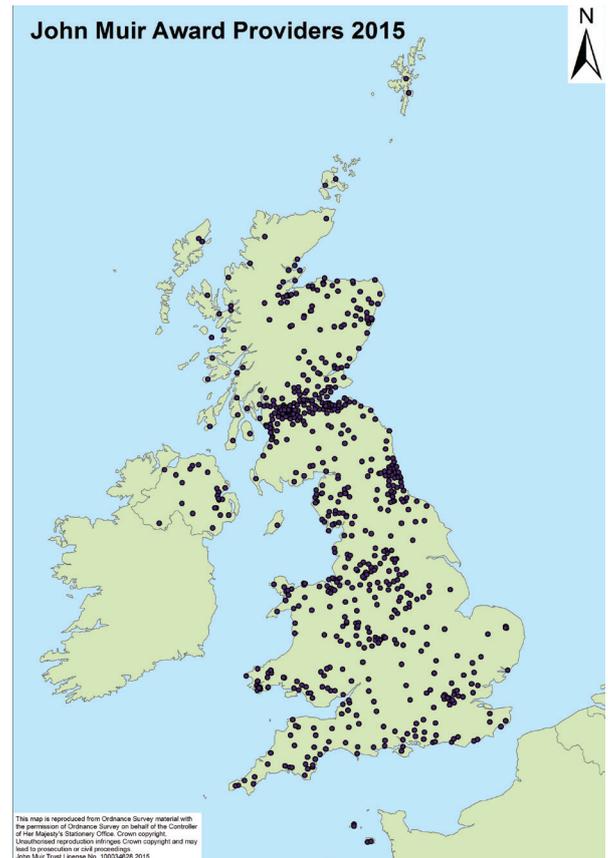
Findings are being used to demonstrate outputs of using the John Muir Award by regions and by specific organisations. The exercise is informing and supporting a number of key working relationships.

Fundamentally, carrying out a Conserve Audit over a full year has shown that people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy and value exploring their relationship with wild places by taking responsibility, by making a contribution, by getting their hands dirty.

The John Muir Trust would like to thank the hundreds of Provider organisations for contributing and enabling us to demonstrate the impact that the John Muir Award can help them to make.

“It is not enough for people to be in sympathy with the plight of the natural world, but that they must become ‘active conservationists’, as campaigners, as practical project workers, as scientists, as artists, as writers.”

John Muir



The John Muir Trust values the support of Heritage Lottery Fund to the John Muir Award in England, and Scottish Natural Heritage to the John Muir Award in Scotland.



John Muir Award
41 Commercial St
Edinburgh
EH6 6JD
0131 554 0114
info@johnmuiraward.org
johnmuiraward.org

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