



Royden Park – A Place to Grow!

The Royden Park Project is situated on the Wirral Peninsula and provides employment training in a horticultural setting for adults with learning difficulties. The John Muir Award has been enthusiastically embraced by staff, volunteers and participants to support the ethos of the Project: helping them appreciate the beauty of their local wild places as well as providing a structure for activities. Whilst the Project involves



maintenance and conservation of a range of locations, the group decided to focus their John Muir Award on one place, within an historic walled garden. This is a diverse area of flower and herb borders, specimen plants, woodland and a pond. Many of the group already had favourite places within the garden and knew it a little, but wanted to delve deeper.

This is the story of their John Muir Award, in their own words....

Spring

“We noted the new life in the garden, the carpet of bluebells and primroses, the slow unfurling of the fern fronds and the fresh new leaves in the woodland area. And it wasn't just plants. A huge variety of birds visit this sheltered environment ranging from tiny wrens and tree creepers to magnificent kestrels. We've even seen buzzards soaring above the nearby fields.”



“We began to learn more about the birds identifying their songs and to note where they nested. The kestrels reared their young in the Old Coach House and we were able to watch their development through a camera link. It was also exciting to hear the tapping of the woodpeckers, and to watch the adults going in and out of the tree whilst their chicks called from within the nest.”

Summer

“As Spring moved into Summer, we turned our attention to bees and other insects. We cultivated and managed a beautiful laburnum arch and were able to stand underneath the hundreds of flowers looking for different types of bees.”



“As part of the work in maintaining the garden, we generated a lot of organic material through mowing the grass, and clearing the plants and woodland. We also discovered how compost becomes warm as the materials break down and a search through the leaves revealed a selection of invertebrates which aid the process”.

“Our studies took us beyond the walls of the garden to visit a nearby mature woodland. We also went pond dipping and discovered all sorts of creatures that change shape as they metamorphose to become adults. It was wonderful to compare this to the small pond in our walled garden where we were thrilled to find newts. On sunny summer days we caught flashes of turquoise and emerald as damselflies and dragonflies darted about.”



John Muir inspires us!

“Alongside the exploration of the garden we learned about John Muir: his childhood in Scotland, his emigration to America, and his life of discovery and conservation. We didn't walk a thousand miles but we did walk a thousand steps around the garden noting what we saw (thanks, Mission:Explore John Muir, Mission MEJM001!). Our wild place is not as grand as Yosemite National Park but we have begun to care for it through our Conserve activities. We have already built our 'Bug Hotel' and are hoping that several species will take up residence. There are plans for more bird boxes and several bird feeding stations. We have cleared an area for a wild flower garden and intend to introduce more nectar rich plants to encourage bees and other pollinating insects.”



Let's Celebrate

“We shared our experiences and achievements by inviting families and friends to an Award celebration, (John Muir himself even attended - well an acceptable look-alike!). All of the group who had contributed received their well-deserved certificate.”

“Staff and volunteers have become aware of the increased confidence of group members and a greater willingness to contribute and interact. For us the success has been twofold - greater awareness of the environment and greater personal development.”

Mark Humphreys, Royden Park Project Wirral Evolutions Team Leader