

CALLANDER'S LANDSCAPE FAMILY AWARD IN SCOTLAND'S FIRST NATIONAL PARK



Callander's Landscape Partnership is a community led project within Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. They work collaboratively with the Park to improve the natural and cultural environment of the area as well as provide opportunities for more people to engage with their local landscape.

During the autumn/winter of 2020, Callander's Landscape offered the families the opportunity to work towards achieving a John Muir Award together. Ten families took up the opportunity. They were provided with activities that met the Four Challenges of the Award and were also encouraged and supported to incorporate their own ideas.

Why the Award?

Through using the John Muir Award staff were able to engage with local families remotely. It has allowed a structure to support families to look more deeply at the special qualities of the area, to find out more about John Muir and his connection to the National Park that they call home, as well as to give back to their local area. It has been a useful tool for the Callander's Landscape project team to adapt their engagement programme throughout the Covid-19 restrictions.

Family fun

The families began their Award journey taking part in an outdoor scavenger hunt set up by Callander's Landscape apprentices. They then took part in an array of activities encouraging an enjoyment of their local area through adventure, learning about the resident wildlife, playing games, and getting creative with natural arts and crafts. The sensory encounters were a big hit with many of the children; connecting to nature through the sights, sounds, and textures of the world around them as the signs of autumn crept in.



'The colours of the trees were amazing, green, yellow orange and even red.' Forbes-Hayes family

'We've been out exploring the local area and talking about how the colours and textures have changed now it's autumn. We went on our own scavenger hunt to find different textures and patterns.' MacQueen

'We have explored new parts of the forests around our house and gone away from our usual tracks to see what we could find. A favourite was spongy moss in the woods.' Flowers and pebbles childminding

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Other fun highlights included cold-water swimming, splashing in mud patches, having picnics, and hunting for conkers. There were lots of exciting wildlife discoveries to make too with bat seeking night walks, minibeast hunts, and rainy, snail-filled strolls. Many of the families greatly improved on their plant and animal knowledge.

Giving Back

Inspiring people to value nature and to help conserve the environment is at the heart of the work of Callander's Landscape and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Having spent time enjoying and connecting with their chosen wild places, the families gave back to nature whilst completing activities for their Conserve Challenge.

Acorns and conkers were planted to be nurtured into oak and horse chestnut tree saplings. Discarded litter was picked, reducing pollution effects on the soil, the water and wildlife. Bird feeders and nesting boxes were made and sited along with bug hotels for the minibeast. Whilst all of these wonderful practical activities were taking place, the families also took action to reduce their impact on the environment by increasing their active travel where possible and accessing the [cycle routes](#) within the park.



'We met lots of people we knew from school and work who were working in their allotment and either cycling or walking the railway line.'
Forbes-Hayes family

Helping Red Squirrels in the National Park

Red squirrels are not only one of our most loved mammals, but also an important flagship species that can tell us a lot about the health of woodland habitats. Red squirrels are a priority species targeted for action under the National Park's Biodiversity Action Plan - [Wild Park](#). Some of the Callander families chose to contribute to the conservation efforts for red squirrels by taking part in a citizen science project, [The Great Scottish Squirrel survey](#). Sightings of both red and grey squirrels were submitted to be added to a national database. This information will be used to directly influence the conservation work of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, who are also partners in Wild Park. If you see a red or grey squirrel, please [submit your sightings](#) to the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels Project. In the National Park or elsewhere in Scotland, these contributions are important in protecting this iconic species.

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'We've been lucky to spot red squirrels a few times and have watched them racing through the trees and collecting nuts.' Greenwood-Alexander family

'When we got home, we went on the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrel website to learn a bit more about the red and grey squirrels and why it is important to help protect the red squirrels and their habitat.' Cox family

Using the John Muir Award allowed Callander's Landscape an opportunity to engage with local families remotely during a time when face to face engagement was not possible. It aided staff in supporting families to access their local wild places within the National Park, boosting their wellbeing, deepening their connection with nature, and providing opportunities to take action for the environment.



'Families started their Award in October, following the changing seasons from bright autumn days through to winter, heavy with snow and darkness. It was challenging to run the Award without being able to be outside with families; this also impacted on families. With a pandemic in full swing and with so much uncertainty, it was hard for some families to stay motivated, but providing ideas and using the Award helped us do this.' Julie Wilson, Volunteering and Activities Officer-Callander's Landscape

You can read more about the family Award adventures on [Callander's Landscape's Record eBook feed](#).