

Caring for the UK's National Parks through the John Muir Award



Conserve Audit 2015 reveals that across the UK's 15 National Parks, over 12 months:

- 12,401 John Muir Award participants made a positive difference
- 65,933 hours (or 9,427 days) of Conserve activities took place in and around National Parks, of which 25% was carried out by people experiencing disadvantage
- Activity in Scotland's National Parks was valued at £225,395 and £68,310 in the Lake District National Park

What's a Conserve Audit?

It's a monitoring exercise to identify the amount and type of activity carried out to meet the Conserve Challenge of the John Muir Award. This includes practical action, campaigning, and minimising impact, and captures how participants make a difference to wild places. A summary of UK-wide activity carried out during 2015 is available at www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/conserve-audit-2015.

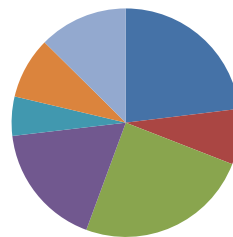
Conserve Activity in National Parks

A primary Statutory Purpose of each National Park is to 'conserve and enhance its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage'. This Audit shows a wide variety of ways in which people actively cared for these spectacular landscapes and their biodiversity over a 12 month period, through UK-wide John Muir Award participation.

Where did it happen?

From mountain tops, moorlands and coastlines to school and outdoor centre grounds, activity in National Parks and their surrounding areas was widespread in 2015. Over 95% took place through established groups including schools, adult learning centres, colleges, outdoor centres and youth clubs, as well as involving families and individuals.

"By completing the John Muir Award within the National Park, participants were able to learn about, and take responsibility for all wild places, not just those on their doorstep." Teacher, Mereside School, visiting Arthog OEC, Snowdonia



- Woodlands 23%
- School grounds 8%
- Outdoor centre grounds 25%
- Coast 8%
- Wildlife gardens 6%
- Lakes 9%
- Mountains 13%

A summary of activity shows:

- Habitat management – 126,435m² managed, including tackling bracken, gorse, weeds, beech, bramble, ivy, nettle willow, ragwort & horsetail.
- Woodlands – 27,567m² felled, coppiced and brashed.
- Footpaths – 23,492m maintained, created or improved.
- Invasive species – 12,323m² cleared, including rhododendron, non-native evergreen, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, laurel, sitka spruce and snowberry.
- Wildflowers – 2793m² planted and reseeded.
- Litter – 2430 black bin bags removed, with 20% being recycled.
- Fences – 2320m maintained, created and removed.
- Tree planting – 1530 trees planted, including wild cherry, fruit orchard, hazel, ash, hawthorn, blackthorn, oak, holly, silver birch, elder, alder, willow, crab apple, rowan & yew.
- Meadows – 1700m² planted, seeded, mown and raked.
- Wildlife habitats - 661 created.
- Feeders - 827 made for birds, butterflies, red squirrels, hedgehogs, insects & bees.
- Contributions to over 40 local, regional and National Park Biodiversity Action Plans.

Conserve Activity in all UK National Parks – Contributing to Park Plans

The Conserve Audit captured actions by John Muir Award participants in all 15 UK National Parks throughout 2015. An overview of what this looked like in Scotland's National Parks and how it relates to their strategic priorities is available [here](#). Activity in the Lake District National Park is summarised [here](#).

Findings from the Audit are relevant to the [8 Point Plan for England's National Parks](#) (March 2016), which aims 'to put National Parks at the heart of the way we think about the environment and how we manage it for future generations'. Whilst focussed on England, a number of its themes are relevant to all National Parks across the UK. Specifically, the Conserve Audit demonstrates outcomes in relation to:

Point 1: Connect young people with nature

Over 12,000 people engaged directly with National Parks (UK-wide) through John Muir Award participation in 2015, with 95% of these under 18 years old. Resources are promoted and produced by the John Muir Trust to set these experiences in the context of the [National Curriculum](#) in England and Wales and [Curriculum for Excellence](#) in Scotland. Further information is shared to highlight National Park special qualities, natural and cultural heritage, and the contemporary relevance of John Muir, considered to be the founding father of the National Parks movement.

"Connecting with the National Park allows me to get outdoors, get out of the house and do something that will actually make a difference." Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Youth Ranger

Point 6: Everyone's National Parks

Over 65,000 hours of volunteering and youth social action were carried out in National Parks in 2015 by people from all sectors of society. 25% of this was contributed by participants experiencing some kind of disadvantage – many whom would not normally engage in positive environmental action. (Information is available on '[Inclusion, Wild Places and The John Muir Award](#)'). John Muir Award involvement has ensured that for every person their experience has included 'taking responsibility for a wild place' and actively putting something back, collectively illustrated above. Learning about impacts on these unique environments – through considering minimum impact and 'leave no trace' approaches, access rights, and responsible behaviour – nurtures an appreciation of the importance of looking after our National Parks in the future.

Point 8: Health and Wellbeing in National Parks

Two of the '[Five Ways to Wellbeing](#)' (evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing identified by the New Economics Foundation and promoted by the NHS) are demonstrably met through Conserve activity. 'Be Active' and 'Give' are widely in evidence through this Audit as Award participants take practical action to benefit wildlife, habitats and communities. All four Challenges of the John Muir Award – Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share - encourage healthy, non-sedentary, outdoor activity which promote the 'Connect', 'Take Notice' and 'Keep Learning' strands. (For an illustration of how schools, mental health support groups and outdoor centres have used the John Muir Award to help promote these themes, see [here](#)).

Conclusion

The John Muir Award helps people connect with and enjoy the UK's National Parks, engaging people of all backgrounds to actively care for these unique natural environments. Through practical action to benefit natural heritage, the Award also helps to raise awareness of human impacts on nature, access issues, and the need to look after these spectacular wild places for future generations. Getting out and getting active delivers benefits to health and wellbeing for those living in and visiting the UK's National Parks, encouraging positive connections with nature and a deeper understanding of their special qualities.

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www.johnmuiraward.org

