

Bucknell Youth Club Outdoors Activities Project Report

The Bucknell Youth Club Outdoors Activities ran 10 outdoor activities from April to October 2018, with a goal of offering the young people in Bucknell Youth Club a unique opportunity to experience new, inspiring, educational and fun experiences while connecting them to their outdoor environment, namely, the beautiful Shropshire Hills. This goal was certainly achieved, with the ends of session feedback forms accumulatively reporting 100% of the young people saying they found the sessions fun and enjoyable, and 95% saying that they learnt something new. The project was therefore successful in achieving its first goal of combining an enjoyable experience with education and connection with the natural environment of the Shropshire Hills.

The activities also aimed to introduce the young people to local people who use the environment in a variety of ways for professional and recreational purposes. This was indisputably achieved, with the young people being introduced to six different individuals who use and work with the land and its resources in a variety of manners. These individuals offered a great glimpse into their lives and work, which sparked fascination and a personal interest in the young people which I hope, and believe, will continue into their future lives.

Below is a breakdown of the 10 sessions and what they consisted of and what they achieved:

Session 1 - Monday 16th April: Mammal Bait & Camera Trap Setting

We took a walk around Bucknell Woods with Nathan Portlock and learnt about the local wildlife and the animals we might expect to see. In hope of getting to see some of this wildlife closer up, we set our own wildlife camera traps in the woods. During the start of the session, we were fortunate enough to see a family of deer which was very inspiring.

"I enjoyed the way we got to go up to the woods and set out cameras with all my friends"



Session 2 -Monday 30th April: Reviewing Material Caught on Camera

We looked over what the cameras had caught over the two weeks. We were lucky enough to have caught footage of a large slow worm, some mice, a stoat and some deer. Nathan then got the young people to do a mock-up report, where the young people created their very own nature documentaries which were performed to one another in a predominantly humorous and informal way.

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"Performing up on stage and seeing what we caught on the cameras in the woods"

Session 3 - Monday 14th May: Music Workshop

Nathan held a super music workshop around a campfire at Tru Woods. Some bought their own instruments, some were surprised to find talent on a new instrument, and with the guidance of Nathan they all worked together to create their very own masterpiece of outdoors music - followed by toasted marshmallows of course!

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"Playing music and having fun!"



Session 4 - Monday 21st May: A Talk-and-Walk with Alan Reid

Local Forestry Commission Wildlife Officer, Alan Reid, took the young people on a walk around Bucknell Woods, discussing the special wildlife local to the woodland and they might expect to find. Alan told the young people about the special 'Bat House' of the woods, and discussed where the clear felling had taken place, the plans to reintroduce native tree species there and why. We once again saw

some deer, which Alan told us would most likely be the same as we saw before as this is a mother doe with her two young that live in this part of Bucknell Woods.

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"Being able to wonder around by ourselves and seeing deer"

Session 5 - Monday 25th June: Site Visit to Brynmawr Farm

It was a fantastic trip to Brynmawr on a beautiful sunny summer's evening. Trevor gave us a tour of the organic farm and told us his personal story of why he converted to growing organically and what it means to grow organic. We then went on to look at the wildflower meadow and to learn about the importance of such meadows. The young people divided into groups and conducted a wildflower meadow survey to gain a deeper understanding of meadows and what it takes to be a 'healthy' meadow. It was a great introduction into flora identification for a lot of the young people.

"I liked seeing the different animals, especially the kittens, and I also enjoyed looking and searching for the different things in the meadow"

"I got to pick some flowers and learn lots of new things"

"The kittens and dog. I also enjoyed the pigs because they were all cute to see. Also learning about Trevor"



Session 6 - Monday 9th July: Creating a Wildflower Meadow

The young people picked up their spades and forks and set to work on creating their very own wildflower hay meadow! We were very lucky that the Parish Council were on board with our mission and kindly designated a green area for us to work within in Bucknell. The area was dug up, with roots removed, and sprinkled with a fine mixture of wildflower and grass seeds that were collected from a Shropshire hay meadow. This session really complimented our previous session where we visited Brynmawr and its hay meadow which gave some perspective on the importance of our meadows and wildflowers and their place in the ecosystem. We were able to combine this new understanding with some practical conservation work in this session, using tools and getting dirty.

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"Digging the ground"

"Planting the seeds"

Session 7 - Monday 16th July: Hedgerow Surveying

Another beautiful sunny evening, and we set off to conduct a hedgerow survey in a nearby field. By now, the young people had started to distinguish their own interests and they naturally separated into groups by which they could investigate these interests: Some had started to develop a real interest in flora and in the identification process; others enjoyed being hands on and shaking out the bugs into our collection trays and collecting and identifying these. We correlated our findings at the end and entered the data onto a national online database.

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"Finding the different leaves"

"Finding all the insects"

Session 8 - Monday 24th September: Shropshire Wildlife Trust Host Pine Marten Talk

We were very lucky to be joined by Stuart Edmunds who delivered a talk on the special and illusive pine martens. The subject captivated the young people and adult volunteers alike - with non-duty volunteers turning up so as to not miss out! It was a treat to hear all about the work that Shropshire Wildlife Trust is doing to research the colony of pine martens that occupy Clun Woods and to find out about some of the other unusual fauna in Britain.

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"I learnt a lot about different animals and a lot about pine martens (which are not birds). We also got to see some cool videos"

"Learning about pine martens and learning about everything!"

Session 9 - Monday 8th October: Wild Cooking with Rory Bunting

We headed off for an evening in the woods with local Chef, Rory Bunting, from The Oak in Wigmore. Rory showed us a variety of mushrooms that he had foraged and talked us through them and their various properties - all which was rather fascinating. The young people then got a chance to be hands-on cooking some twist-dough bread that Rory had put together using some of the mushrooms as a secret ingredient. While these were being cooked, Rory whizzed up a dish consisting of some wild boar and wild boar chorizo - with wild mushrooms of course. It went down very well, to say the least!

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"How we learned to make bread and I also really enjoyed learning about the different kinds of mushrooms and especially eating the wild boar"



Session 10 - Monday 22nd October: Contemporary Crafts with Danielle Flowers

Local artist, designer and contemporary crafter, Danni Flowers, gave an inspiring talk that offered an insight into the machines and tools she uses to create her unique pieces that are all made from local wood. The young people then had a chance to step into Danni's shoes and produce their own artwork using veneer sheets of wood. The results were astounding and it was wonderful to see how absolutely absorbed everyone was with the activity.

"What did you enjoy most about the session?"

"How we learnt to make pieces of artworks out of wood and how to cut wood too"

"Everything!"

