



SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST



Restharrow Scrape Development Project

Nature Holiday Club Evaluation

Proposal (What we wanted to happen)

The aim of the Nature Holiday Club was to identify 16 vulnerable children from schools in the surrounding area and offer them a place at our club, where they would engage with nature, learn about the environment, habitats and animals and enjoy their time outdoors. The 4-week club was planned to run alongside the KS2 Programmes for Science “Living things and their habitats”, while also included numeracy and literacy. Due to COVID-19, we wanted to give children the opportunity to learn outdoors in nature, which is proven to aid mental and physical health. We wanted to enhance their knowledge and appreciation for their local heritage, and hopefully develop their skills and ability to identify and appreciating living things.

What actually happened

12 holiday club days were carried out for a total of 26 children. These were run 3 times a week for 4 weeks. Due to the number of applicants we added an extra day, allowing 6 more children to take part, and 4 additional children were able to join on one occasion.

We got a small fund of £79 from Discovery Park to aid with purchasing materials.

We secured a marquee totally free of charge from Shade or Shelter for 1 month, who also travelled from Tunbridge Wells to put up and take down the marquee.

We conducted activities including planting a sun flower seed, a plant ID walk, a bug hunt, moth trapping, making a bee hotel, pond dipping, a seashore treasure hunt, a bird and reptile walk, bird ringing and making bird feeders, as well as lots of games! These activities fell within the KS2 curriculum for Living things and their Habitats, and did include literacy and numeracy in either game or recall format.

What went well and why

Becky - Despite the short time for planning I think planning was efficient. We were able to put together a proposal in 1 day for Trustees, update the risk assessment, then create a programme of activities, leaflet, consent form and COVID-19 guidance form for schools in less than 1 week. We contacted schools and filled our 16 spaces within a couple of days, encouraging us to add another day, which was filled in another few days. I believe this was down to the time and dedication of both Sharon and myself at this point. Ideally, we would have had a lot more time for planning, and would have been able to split time over other tasks too. The actual holiday club went very well, with almost all children enjoying all activities. I again believe this to be down to the time dedicated to preparing for each session. The moth trapping, games and crafts were particularly popular. I think constantly engaging the children works well, although can be exhausting.

Sharon – The content, group size, location, the space we used, establishing links with school, organization, the timing, and the number of hours children attended, as well as the fact that it was free.

Katie - I think the sessions were structured well with a good range of types of activity and content covered, it was great that content was tailored toward the national curriculum. I also feel a higher

adult to child ratio helped the children gain more from the sessions as it allowed them to ask more questions and gain more input during activities. I think that the children seemed to enjoy the more 'hands on' activities such as the pond dipping, moth traps and bird ringing.



Week 2 - loving the moths

What didn't go well and why

Becky - Not having a fully qualified First Aider helping with the club. I took an online First Aid at Work course, which gives you all the information, and has tests for each module, but does not count as a full qualification. Steffan was on hand if necessary, but having a person helping run the club with the qualification would be best.

Some schools passed on the information to relevant teachers and I never heard any more. This was mainly due to COVID as schools were not operating the way they normally would, however having a more effective way of getting in touch with schools would be better.

A lot was planned and changed during the running of the club and I feel it took over a lot of my priorities and time. In future, more effective planning would be beneficial to allow time for other work activities. I think having more help in preparing for each session, rather than just planning, would be very useful. This was partly because I wanted to oversee the preparation, and partly because it was easiest done at the observatory, but it is closed due to COVID and therefore volunteers were not able to come in to help.

As for the running of the club, I think some children struggled in longer walks, which was surprising and a little to do with a lack of exercise during lockdown. I think have a more detailed plan which can differentiate activities for levels of knowledge and learning would also be better.

Sharon - A lack of volunteers, the virus which limited group size and use of facilities, lack of funding.

Katie - Activities that were disrupted by the wind and keeping children engaged during longer walks.



Week 2 - Playing a plant match up game as a recall from the previous weeks' learning.

Feedback from children and parents/guardians

85% of children gave the Nature Holiday Club a 5/5 for enjoyment, while the other 15% gave it 4/5. 52% of children gave the Nature Holiday Club a 5/5 for how much they learned, 42% a 4/5 and 6% a 3/5.

91% of children said they would come again, with a holiday club or a monthly weekend club being the most popular. The moths were particularly popular amongst the children, with almost all exclaiming it was their favourite part of Week 2 (when we focused on bugs and other invertebrates).

The feedback from parents was particularly encouraging, especially from one carer: "X has trouble mixing and has come home really full of ideas on building and enjoying more wildlife environments and knowledge. X has enjoyed this club so much I would love her to continue learning in this environment. It is the first holiday club she has been keen to come each week and has been keen to tell me about friends and knowledge she has gained".

When asked what whether the parents/guardians have been told anything about the club, all said several things the children have learned during the sessions, such as "[I've been told] facts on butterflies and bees. X can identify birds better and has told us loads of things about plants and flowers". "Different species of bees and why they are important to our world." "Told me about walks, exploring and pond dipping - he loved it all. He told me plant names like Granny's toenails!"

Future improvements

We will dedicate more time to plan each activity in a detailed manner, allowing for the acquisition of materials and ability to prepare for each session much earlier. This greater depth of planning will also enable us to deliver differentiated activities.

We will recruit more volunteers and have volunteer time dedicated to preparation as well as present during the club. The use of other adult expertise in the volunteers will extend the learning opportunities available.

We will have planned activities for any longer walks, as well as a better structure of walks and breaks.

We will have a more dedicated outdoor learning space, or access to an indoor space (a lot of planning was restricted due to COVID, however access to a building would greatly ease a lot of issues caused by weather).

We will acquire funding would enable a lot more materials to be used and take pressure off our own funding. More funding which would allow greater scope for teaching opportunities and resources which would enable children to access learning more effectively.

We will create an action plan which will ensure children who attended will have opportunities to continue their learning at the Field Centre.



Week 3 - Pond dipping

AP8

“Commence outreach with local schools, youth groups and other community groups”.

This Nature Holiday Club has included outreach to local schools and young people within the area.

All schools are within the 15-mile radius. Therefore, all children accessing the holiday club will benefit from gaining knowledge about their local area and nature reserves. Due to the positive feedback the children gave, they will hopefully continue to use the reserve in future. In addition, all children were given membership forms, and one family signed up for family membership. Most parents or guardians did not know about the observatory before, and therefore it has not only engaged the younger generation, but their parents and older siblings too. There are now 26 young people from the local area who have been made aware of our reserves, their importance and who have loved spending time here.

As we targeted vulnerable children, we have not only made contact with the local schools, but hopefully given an opportunity to children who may have never had a chance like this, to access a free holiday club which has immersed them in nature. As heritage relies on a continuity of people engaged with their local environment, inspiring these young people will help ensure that heritage is maintained.

The result of the holiday club is hopefully 26 new young members, and at least 1 young volunteer, with the potential for 3 more volunteers (a mother and Sharon's sister and old neighbour). These young people have learned about the heritage of this area.

At least 120 hours have been volunteered.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the RHS was inaccessible to the Nature Holiday Club, and therefore we couldn't use it and engage the children directly with the scrape. However, we did see much of the rest of the reserve and walked to the shore, and have therefore seen different habitats and living things.



Week 4 – Observing bird ringing

A more in depth look at each HLF point

PEOPLE WILL HAVE DEVELOPED SKILLS.

Assistant Warden gained Designated Safeguarding Lead training and First Aid at Work training.

Assistant Warden also has developed skills in education and communication with children through volunteer and Trustee Sharon Irvine. Organisation of children's activities, group events, delegation of tasks, communication with schools and local newspapers/press, greater knowledge of local wildlife and KS2 curriculum and design and creation of posters, leaflets, certificates and booklets.

Sharon Irvine has developed skills in plant and insect identification and natural history.

Katie Ansell has developed skills in teamwork, the facilitation and organisation of activities, engaging children in learning and tailor to individual needs, how to structure a session/club/workshops, better knowledge of KS2 curriculum.

All attending children have developed skills in field survey methods, identification of plants, insects, reptiles, birds, and aquatic and other invertebrates.

PEOPLE WILL HAVE LEARNT ABOUT HERITAGE.

Assistant Warden gained knowledge in research and planning of the holiday club.

Volunteers learned more about the local wildlife of the area.

All attending children have gained knowledge of the heritage and ecology of their local area, and its importance. They have learned ways to preserve this important area, and about sustainability. They have also developed map reading skills, vocabulary, and numeracy skills.

Parents and guardians of attending children learned about the Observatory and what it does to monitor and conserve the local wildlife. We have had several children and parents sign up as members as a result, to maintain a link with the reserve and observatory.

PEOPLE WILL HAVE VOLUNTEERED TIME.

Sharon Irvine was the main volunteer, and aided in the entire development, planning and implementation of the nature holiday club. She volunteered around 100 hours of time.

Katie Ansell helped with the final two weeks of the holiday club and volunteered around 28 hours of time.

Ed Byers aided in the preparation for the sessions, by cutting bamboo etc., and volunteered around 4 hours of time.