

Regaining Paradise: Sustainability in the Early Years

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“An understanding of the natural world and what’s in it is a source of not only a great curiosity but great fulfilment” -David Attenborough.



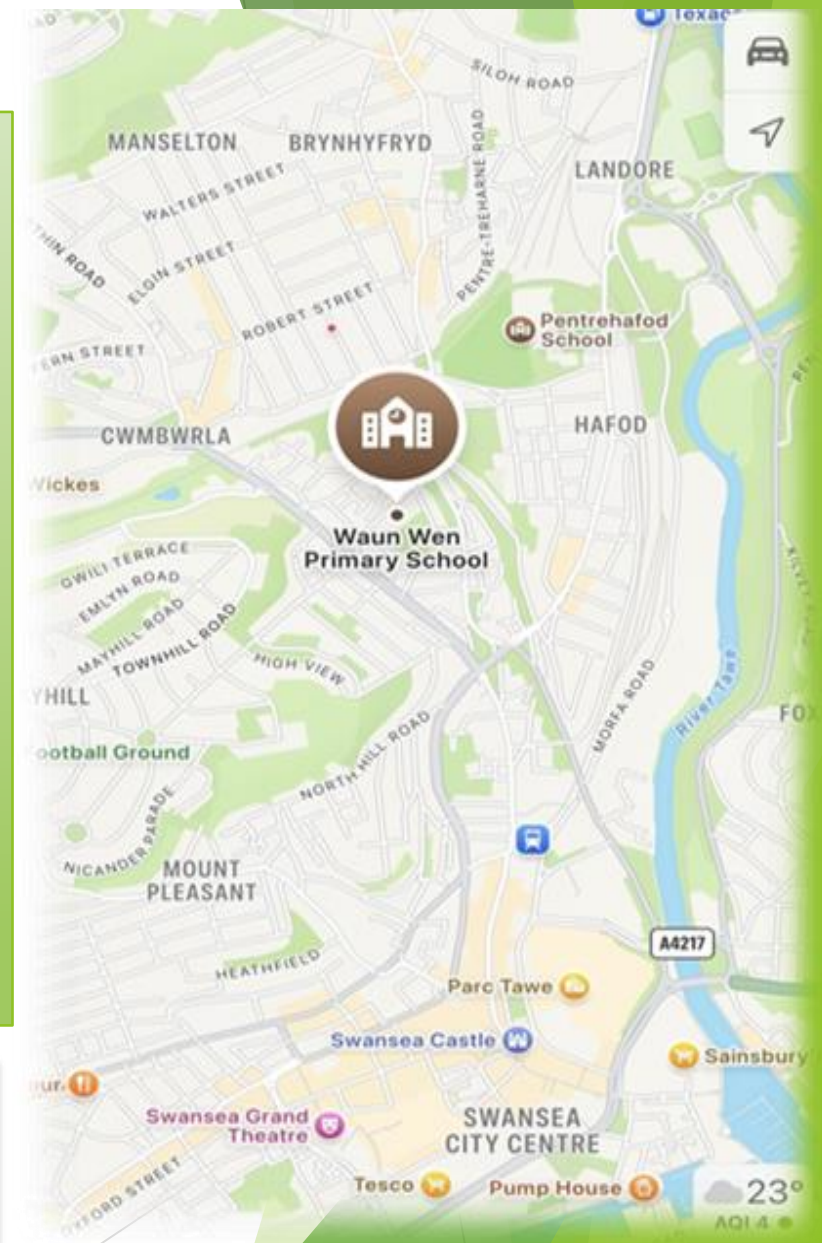
Discover

I chose to discover a small area of green space situated in our infant yard at school. Our school resides in the centre of a busy suburban area, where sadly, there is limited green space to be enjoyed by the community apart from the local park that is maintained by the local council.

I chose this area as it is not currently used for anything, and I believe that we could turn it into something that could be enjoyed by not only by wildlife but by our children and our staff whilst using the yard.

The area I have chosen is special to me as I have worked in this school for 17 years and seen many children pass through the school and enjoy exploring the area during minibeast topic work and activities and listening for birdsong and the rustling of leaves and trees during listening activities.

The area is already home to some insects such as worms, woodlice and ants that take up residence in the soil and under leaves and stones etc, but by adding specific plants, flowers, logs stones and bug hotels we could help attract others helping to 'regain paradise' in our little green space.





Unfortunately, we are not lucky enough to have lots of wild space at our school but a little area like this can hold lots of potential for encouraging nature to thrive.

When out on yard with the children, I often notice several birds visiting our green space and believe that we could make it more inviting for them.

Even though it is the only green space on our yard it makes me feel relaxed and at peace when sitting and observing the wildlife already attracted here, however I feel that with some conservation, we can help to attract more whilst making the area more sustainable and perhaps helping to create a sense of belonging and awe and wonder in some of our children.



The area was a little cluttered with bits of rubbish that had found its way into the yard and debris from old plant pots and equipment that had been broken whilst being used during playtime by the children, so my first protocol was to clear the area from anything that could be potentially harmful to any nature and wildlife, enabling the area to be more sustainable and welcoming.

Explore

I took some time at different intervals to sit and observe what birds were visiting our area. I didn't realise that we had several different birds visiting, some alone and some with others. Below are some of the birds I recognised:



House Sparrow

Visited frequently and often in large groups. They were very vocal when the yard was not occupied but as soon as they saw movement or heard voices they would quickly fly away to a distance at where they felt safe.



Robin

I only saw one robin visit in the time I spent observing but have previously seen more, I often wonder if it is the same one or maybe a member of the same family? I guess it never know.



Woodpigeon

Again, frequent visitors. Often come in twos, sometimes alone. Like to sit in the trees and seem like playful birds.



Blackbird

Lots of male blackbirds visible, perhaps due to their fondness of apples. Our yard is home to two apple trees that have been planted in the middle of two planting benches.



Magpie

I observed lots of Magpies, they would come and sit on the fence surrounding the school grounds and seem to be watching what was going on. These birds are very brave and would hop along the yard even when there were children playing.

A Traditional children's nursery rhyme about magpies. According to an old superstition, the number of magpies seen by a person dictates if they will have good or bad luck.

One sorrow,
Two for joy,
Three for a girl,
Four for a boy,
Five for silver,
Six for gold,
Seven for a secret never to be told,
Eight for a wish,
Nine for a kiss,
Ten for a surprise you won't want to miss.

*One of the magpies
that likes to visit our
yard, perched on top
of a tree.*



Caterpillars

As a child I fondly remember seeing caterpillars often. I would spend hours exploring the plants that I found them on and observing the caterpillars in awe. These days we tend not to see as many and RSPB believe that this could be due to the fact that people seem to like a more aesthetically pleasing garden area and rather than letting wildflowers and plants grow, they prefer to pave, deck and astroturf their gardens which discourages wildlife to visit and can even affect their existence.



Speckled Green
wood
Caterpillar



Peacock
Caterpillar



Comma
Caterpillar



Common Butterflies in Wales and the United Kingdom



Large Skipper



Brimstone



Comma



Gatekeeper



Holly Blue



Speckled Wood



Peacock



Orange Tip



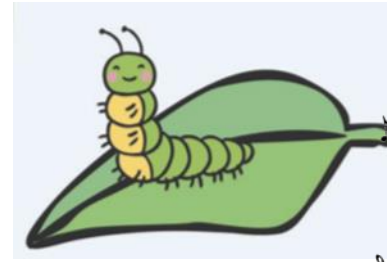
Common Blue



Green-veined White

Caterpillar Song

Theres a tiny caterpillar on a leaf, wriggle, wriggle,
Theres a tiny caterpillar on a leaf, wriggle, wriggle,
Theres a tiny caterpillar, a tiny caterpillar,
Theres a tiny caterpillar on a leaf, wriggle, wriggle.



He will eat the leaf around him 'till he's full, munch, munch,
He will eat the leaf around him till he's full, munch, munch,
He will eat the leaf around him, eat the leaf around him,
He will eat the leaf around him 'til he's full, munch, munch.



A cocoon is what he's spinning for his home, spin, spin,
A cocoon is what he's spinning for his home, spin, spin,
A cocoon is what he's spinning, a cocoon is what he's spinning,
A cocoon is what he's spinning for his home, spin, spin.



Then hell be a butterfly and fly away, flap, flap,
Then hell be a butterfly and fly away, flap, flap,
Then hell be a butterfly, hell be a butterfly,
Then hell be a butterfly and fly away, flap, flap.



Conserve: Litter Pick

I removed all the unwanted bits from our green space to make it safer and more appealing to the wildlife. The children helped me to recycle it into the correct bins, and they really loved learning what goes into each one. The area already looks more inviting.



LOOK AT ALL THE
PLASTIC THAT WAS
FOUND!



Conserve: Bugs and Insects



I introduced logs of different shapes and sizes to our area to encourage bugs and insects to use them as their habitats. Many bugs use rotting and decaying bark and wood for shelter and for feeding on.

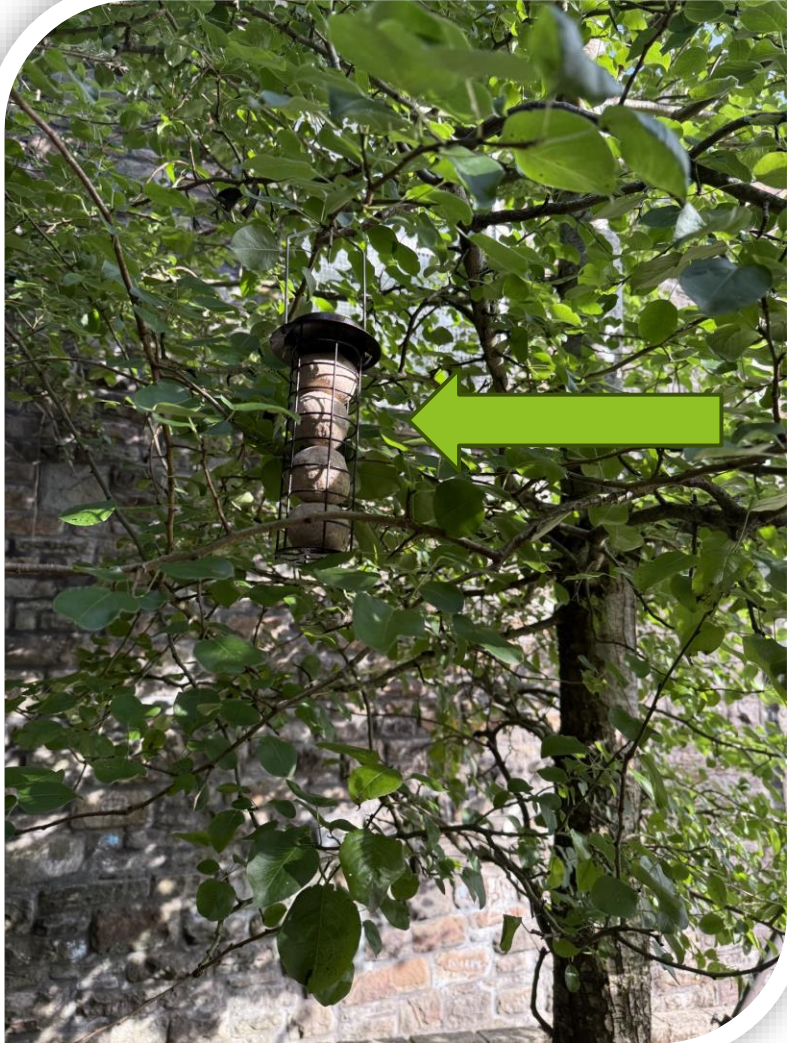
In future we will allow leaves and twigs to accumulate to provide valuable shelter and food sources also.

I also included some man-made bug hotels to encourage the insects to visit.



Conserve: Birds

Fat balls



Little Robin Redbreast enjoys eating fat balls.



Birdbath for cooling off in warmer temperatures and keeping hydrated.

Suet filled pinecones



Conserve: Butterflies and Caterpillars

Planting a mix of nectar plants in a cluster can help to attract butterflies as they can flit from one to the next, just like a buffet... yum!

To enable us to water our plants more sustainably, I introduced the use of a water butt. We can now use the water we collect from the rain to water our plants instead of using the tap water. Here it is ready and waiting to be set up. ➡



Lavendar



The plants in our green space



Hardy Geranium



Oxeye Daisies

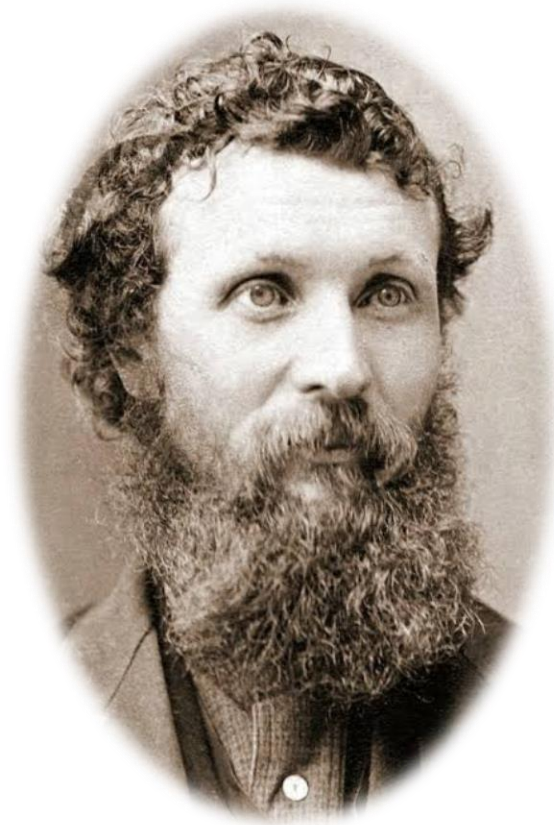


Guara Lindheimeri

John Muir

"The battle for conservation must go on endlessly. It is part of the universal warfare between right and wrong"

John Muir was born in 1838 in the Scottish port of Dunbar, he emigrated at the age of 11 with his family to the USA where he later became the founding father of conservation movement and devoted his life to safeguarding the world's landscapes.



John Muir was an all-rounder- explorer, inventor, writer and conservationist- who believed that appreciating nature was not enough and that people needed to become active conservationists through action and creativity. Though he is a historical figure, his message remains vital today.

"Keep close to Nature's heart...and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean"