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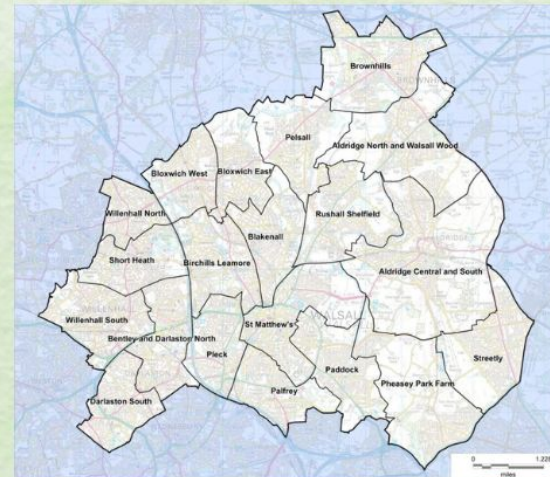
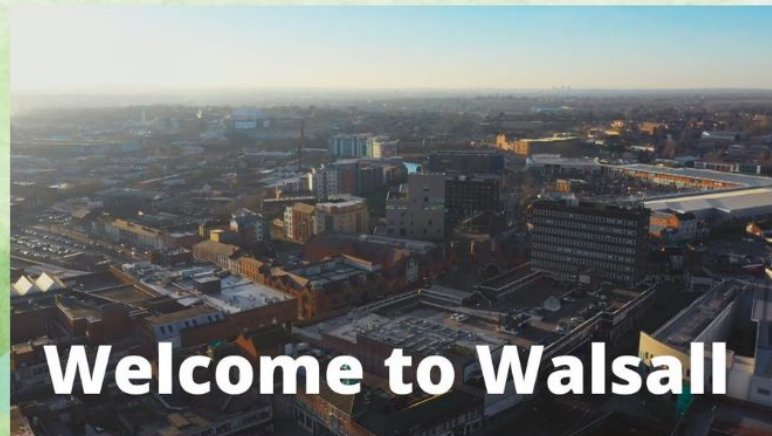
JOHN MUIR AWARD

By 2308275

Wing Yi Chu

DISCOVER IN WALSALL

Last weekend, inspired by the John Muir Award's Discover & Explore challenge, my family and I took the opportunity to visit Walsall Arboretum & Hatherton Lake, which is a perfect way to explore our new community after recently moving to the area a few months ago. Escaping the pace of everyday life, we were welcomed by the peaceful beauty of this historic Victorian park, with its wide open spaces, scenic lake views, and rich variety of trees and wildlife. Walking along the lakeside paths, surrounded by birdsong and greenery, we began to feel more connected to our surroundings. This visit helped us appreciate the local environment and gave us a meaningful first step toward feeling at home in Walsall, just as the John Muir Award encourages, by discovering and engaging with wild places.



DISCOVERING: WALSALL ARBORETUM



Visiting Walsall Arboretum for the first time was a powerful reminder of how nature and community can come together in one vibrant space. As I explored the park, I was amazed to learn that the Arboretum is home to over 10,000 species of trees and shrubs. The diversity of plant life is visually stunning and plays a vital role in supporting local biodiversity by providing shelter and food for birds, insects, and other wildlife. Every turn revealed something new: from quiet wooded areas with ancient trees to open lawns surrounded by flowerbeds buzzing with bees.

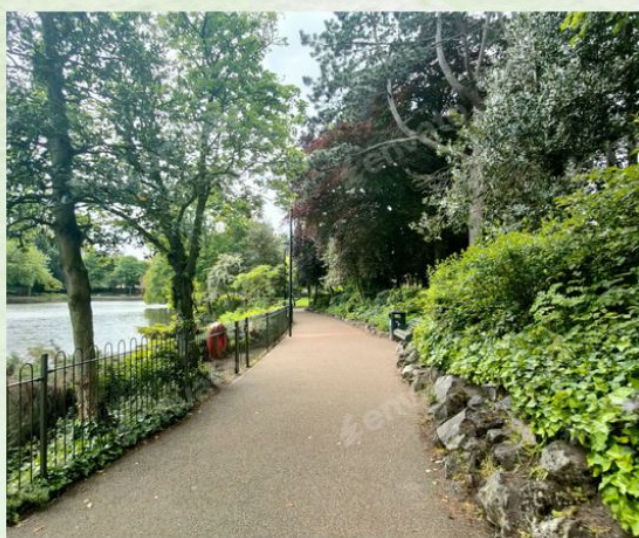
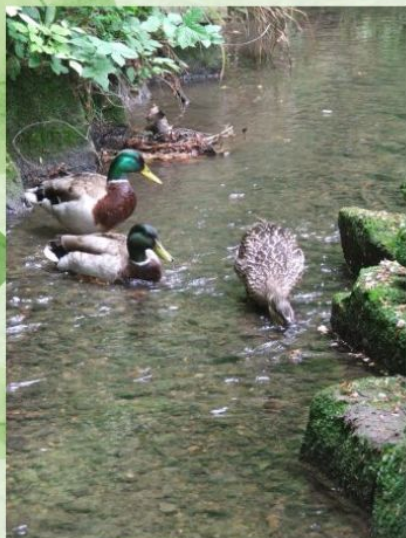
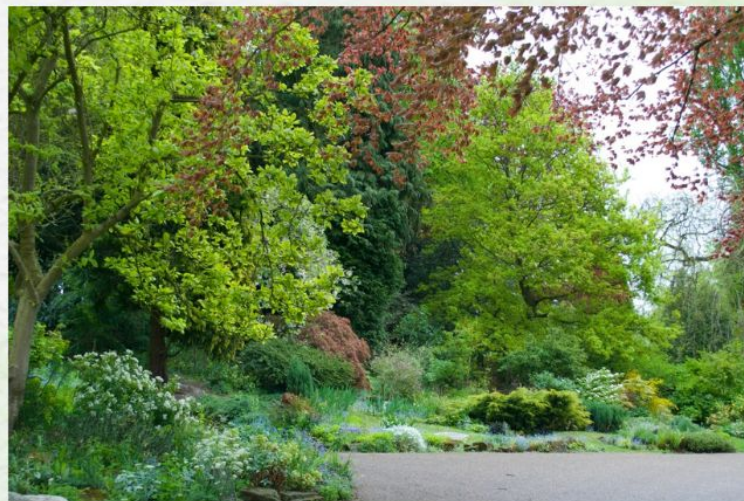


EXPLORE: CONNECTION TO THE ARBORETUM

As I explored Walsall Arboretum more deeply, I began to notice that beyond the well-kept gardens and family play areas, there are wilder corners that feel almost hidden places where nature is allowed to grow more freely. These areas, with untamed grasses, old trees, shaded woodland paths, and quiet spots near the edges of Hatherton Lake, create important habitats for local wildlife. Here, birds nest in the trees, insects thrive among native plants, and squirrels dart across leaf-covered trails. These less-manicured spaces are where nature truly takes the lead, and they play a crucial role in keeping the park ecologically balanced.



A FOREST WITHIN A TOWN



LOOKING BACK THE HISTORY



ALIVE WITH HUMAN ENERGY AND CONNECTION

Spending more time in Walsall Arboretum helped me see this space not just as a park, but as a living, breathing part of the community and a wild place in its own right.

Beyond its stunning landscape and biodiversity, the Arboretum feels alive with human energy and connection. I noticed how families naturally gather at the children's splash pad and playground, where laughter echoes and children play freely in nature. The jogging paths and open lawns invite movement, reflection, and a sense of freedom, while the calm waters of Hatherton Lake offer a peaceful setting for quiet activities like fishing or simply watching the ripples drift across the surface.



IN NATURE, WE ARE FREE



CONSERVE: PROTECTING THE BALANCE



However, keeping the Arboretum wild and healthy is not guaranteed. Increased foot traffic, littering, and lack of care can damage delicate habitats. Urban development pressures or reduced funding for park maintenance could also threaten its future. To protect this space, both nature and people need to be respected. Sustainable use, community involvement, and ongoing conservation efforts are key to making sure the Arboretum remains a place where wildlife and people can continue to thrive together.

TAKING ACTION TO PROTECT AND RESTORE THE WILD

I decided to take part in protecting Walsall Arboretum by joining community efforts to plant native species that support local biodiversity. These plants help create healthy habitats for insects, birds, and other wildlife, making the Arboretum a richer and more balanced ecosystem. I also make it a habit to pick up litter during our walks through the park, knowing that small actions like these help keep the environment clean and safe for both people and animals. These simple yet meaningful activities encourage others to respect and care for the park, creating a culture of shared responsibility.

By actively contributing to its restoration and protection, we're helping ensure that Walsall Arboretum continues to thrive for future generations. This way, the park can remain a wild, beautiful, and welcoming place for everyone to enjoy.



SHARE: INSPIRING CARE FOR WILD PLACES



Even after finishing the John Muir Award, I want to keep supporting Walsall Arboretum by volunteering with local conservation efforts and encouraging friends and family to get outside and appreciate the park. I hope to help make sure the Arboretum stays wild and full of life so that future generations can enjoy it just like I have.

Looking after wild places isn't something you do just once. It's an ongoing journey. I'm excited to keep playing my part because protecting nature is also about looking after our own wellbeing and the future of the community we live in.



A Promise to the Wild
In every tree and quiet stream,
I see a place to dream and breathe.
The wild is calling, soft and clear,
A special space we all hold dear.
I'll take care of this green place,
With open heart and steady pace.
Because when nature's safe and free,
It's good for all
both YOU and ME.