

Sustainability

What I have discovered, explored and
how I can conserve

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As there is limited wildlife and places to discover in my garden I decided to visit Bryngarw park which is within walking distance of my house. Not only did I document my adventure at Bryngarw, I also included the walk home from the park to compare and contrast different environments.

There were many areas to explore during my visit at the park and I felt at peace and enjoyed listening and looking for local wildlife.

Although I could have attended the park alone, my mother joined me as she was able to identify things that I may have overlooked. Also, my knowledge of plants and some animals were poor therefore I needed someone who could help identify and educate me further. This also enabled us to reflect and enjoy nature together.



Why?

I chose Bryngarw park as there are not many places to engage and immerse myself fully with nature. Additionally, there is limited wildlife in my garden therefore I believed this was an opportunity to discover nature.

How?

We walked to the local park to increase our health and well-being through keeping fit. As this was within walking distance I did not want to pollute the air with further emissions which is easily avoided.

Senses

Saw

- Variety of flowers and trees
- Newts
- Squirrels
- Tadpoles
- Terrapin
- Spider webs
- Butterfly
- Bees
- Ducks
- Birds
- Waste
- River
- Moss growing on the trees
- Fungus
- Pinecones
- Blackberries
- Shadows from the trees

Heard

- Birds singing
- Bees
- Wind blowing through the trees
- River flowing
- Vehicles passing near by
- Ducks
- Other families discussing the wildlife

Felt

- Flowers
- Branches brush against me
- Twigs breaking under my feet as I was walking by
- Flowers and leaves
- Natural and homemade playdough
- Pinecones
- Leaves
- Stones near the river
- Bark

Smelt

- Honeysuckle
- Lavender

Emotional

- At one with nature
- Relaxed
- Upset with the amount of waste found

Exploring wildlife



Robins

During the tour of the park I noticed several robins along the way however, most were found beside the water. Upon some research I found that during hot weather, robins need to cool down and this is why you can find them beside ponds (Jennifer Bové, 2010).

I was unaware until I discovered and researched that robins can be seen all year round. However, people may not be aware of this because commonly you can hear robins singing in the winter and during the year they are quieter (Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, n.d, Scottish Wildlife Trust, n.d).



Bees

- Bees can fly up to five miles to collect food
- A colony of 60,000 bees will fly the same distance from the earth to the moon everyday

Bees see a high amount of ultraviolet light and these are reflected from flowers although, they cannot see red. With this being considered to invite more bees into the garden to help pollenate, people should avoid the colour red (The British Beekeepers Association, n.d)





Spider Webs

Although I dislike spiders I found this web and the patterns it had created fascinating.

I later researched how webs are formed and this made me appreciate spiders more as I was able to see them as art.

Did you know?

- It can take two hours to create a new web
- Only 17 of 37 species from the United Kingdom create webs in order to catch prey

(British Arachnological Society, n.d, Hendry, n.d).

Tadpoles

Although it is unclear from the picture, there were many tadpoles swimming in this area. As I sat and watched them I reminisced about my childhood as I would be fascinated by this pond. When I returned home I knew this was an area I wanted to research further.

Also, I realised that some schools including mine no longer organise trips to nature locations such as this however, circles of life are taught every year.





Small Pearl- bordered Fritillary Butterfly

- Widespread in Scotland and Wales
- Wing Span range 41-44mm
- Lives in damp grassland or woodlands

(Butterfly Conservation, n.d).

Newts

Trying to identify the breed of newt was difficult because of the murky waters however, upon some research it is similar to the Palmate newt.

Facts

- They can grow to nine centimetres in length
- Can be found further from water in comparison to other newts
- They eat tadpoles, invertebrates and occasionally other Palmate newts
- Usually found in water between February to July in order to breed then move to land

(Amy Lewis, 2020).



Terrapin

We were made aware that there was a terrapin in the pond which had been released into the wild. The park rangers aim to capture this creature as it has been killing the young chicks however they currently cannot reach it because of the depth of the pond thus until it is removed chicks are at risk.

Upon some research I discovered that terrapin's are being found in more rivers and ponds as owners are releasing them as they believe they would be better in the wild. Although, this is limiting the creatures chance of survival as they have a lot of needs that may not be met in nature. Having a terrapin in the pond can danger the life circle of some of the other animals that also live in the pond as they eat their food sources or areas they use for laying eggs and even places they use for shade. It is thought that there is currently over 4,000 wild terrapins in the United Kingdom (Froglife, 2016).



Mallard ducks

- These ducks are seen all year around
- Males have a dark green head with a yellow bill whilst females are mainly brown with an orange bill (RSPB, n.d)

Whilst at the pond spectators would feed the ducks bread however, from a young age I was told ducks should not be fed this. After doing some research this was correct as ducks could rely on this food source that can lead to a lack in other nutrients. This could later translate into wing deformities thus preventing them from flying whilst also reducing their life expectancy (Jane Warley, 2018).

Typically young children feed the ducks however, education is key if families do decide to do this. Further information available at One Kind Planet: <https://onekindplanet.org/why-shouldnt-feed-ducks-bread/>

Grey Squirrel

When we first visited the park on Sunday we were unable to find any squirrels although, when we returned on Friday we found three.

- Native to North America however, was brought to Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century
- Can live to ten years old although, typically live three to four years in the wild
- Estimated population of two million in comparison to the red squirrel which is 161,000
- As well as eating hazelnuts and acorns they also eat fungi, bark, eggs or young from birds nests (YPTE, 2020, The Mammal Society, n.d).



Flowers



Yellow flag Iris

- Blooms between May and July
 - Medicinally used to stop blood flow as it has astringency
 - It is known for taking over small ponds therefore is recommended to be planted in a basket to avoid this
- (The Wildlife Trusts, n.d, Plantlife, 2020).

I admired this flower as the bright in colour and the odd shape was unlike anything I have seen before.

Buttercup

As I stumbled upon the buttercup I remembered being a young child and holding it beneath my chin to see if I liked butter as the old wives tale.



Daisies/ Shasta daisy

There are many activities children and adults can conduct using daisies. In both my childhood and within my setting I have taught children how to make daisy chains. Additionally, games such as 'He loves me, he loves me not' is played amongst children (The Wildlife Trusts, n.d).

Although these are enjoyable past times for children they are also a valuable food source to bees and hoverflies. In spite of this, some people treat daisies as weeds which can neglect the wildlife and the joy they bring to children (Plantlife, 2020) .



***Myosotis sylvatica* (Forget-me-not)**

- Flowers between April and June
- There are many myths regarding this flower as people associate it with memories
- There are two colours of forget-me-nots the blue flower symbolises trust and respect whilst the pink flowers symbolise love and romance

(Flower Meanings, 2020).

Honeysuckle

As we approached the honeysuckle it was apparent there was a large area that was filled with this flower as there was a powerful smell.

- Honeysuckle supports several wild species
- The white admiral butterfly which is sadly declining relies upon this flower
- It was once believed that having this plant growing around an entrance to the home brought good luck and stopped evil spirits (Woodland Trust, n.d).





Pinecones



Red poppies



Water lilies and pads





Acorn

Seed/ fruit
from trees

Helicopter
seeds



Blackberries

Trees



As we passed the pond I was drawn to the beauty of the trees and how all are different. We could hear a lot of birds singing from multiple trees in this area.



I was intrigued by this area as I could not understand the purpose of them being balanced on an inclined surface. I later discovered that this is important for some species such as the stag beetle. Additionally, plants and insects rely upon this as a food source. It is important on land for these reasons though it can also benefit within watercourses (Cook, 2016, Humphrey and Bailey, 2012, p.13)

Reflection

After completing two trips to the park I realised that I could have measured the circumference of the trees and divided it by 1.25 to find the approximate age of the tree (Opal Explore Nature, 2010). If I was revisit the park again I would find it interesting to find the age of some of the trees.

I was drawn to this tree as we could hear many birds singing and although we could not see which birds they were we stood and listened to them for a few minutes. However, when they were quieter we could hear transport passing although we were far from the entrance of the park which made me reflect on how nature is being effected because of the continuous transport.



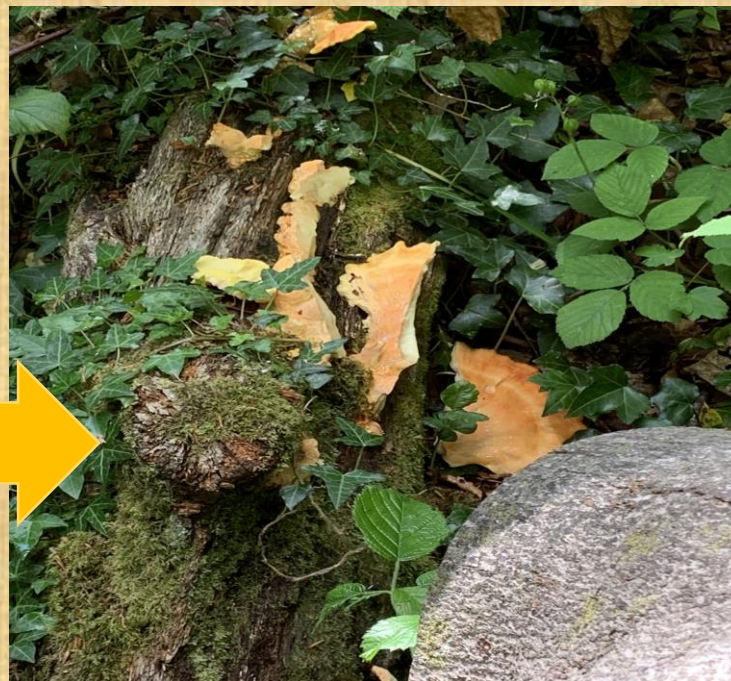
Patterns from the shade

In our local woodland there was plenty of trees that provided shade although, it was rare to find the patterns of shade they make on the floor. It made me appreciate nature and how patterns are formed in the simplest way.





Sunday
31/05/20



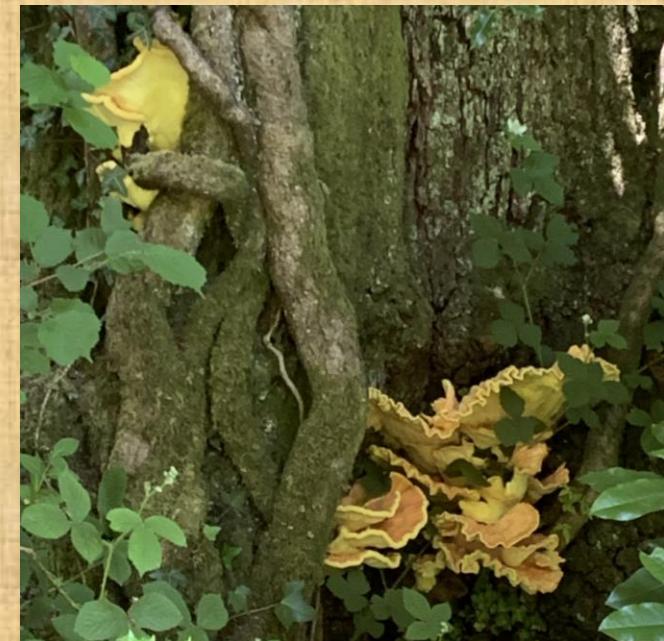
Friday
5/06/20

On Sunday we came across this fungus growing off a deceased tree and I was fascinated by it as I have not seen this before. On our second visit on Friday we found it to have broken off. It was unclear what had happened and led to discussions between myself and my mother. After looking closely at how it had fallen and how it has been broken it appears to be cut off. I have now discovered that people cook with this fungus and this could explain what happened in this time frame.

Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*)

- When young it appears as orange and yellow however, with age it turns cream
- It has a potent fungus smell
- Grows in late spring to autumn
- Supports wildlife such as some beetles and deer
- It is edible although, it needs to be cooked and some people have experienced dizziness and upset stomachs
- Additionally, if the fungus grows on a poisonous tree it is no longer edible
- It has been reported to taste similar to chicken

(The Why Files, 2011, Woodland Trust, n.d)





Moss

Unfortunately I was unable to identify the type of moss as it was very similar to several types that I have researched. Although, I was able to find the benefits of moss which are listed below

- Absorb high quantities of water
- Provide habitats to invertebrates
- Home to microscopic invertebrates

(Kate Lewthwaite, 2018).

Oyster Mushroom

- Edible fungus
- It can vary in thickness due to age of the fungus
- Usually found on hardwood trees
- Some supermarkets sell this fungus
- They have a subtle nut flavouring however, they also taste like oysters
- By consuming this fungus it can reduce cholesterol levels

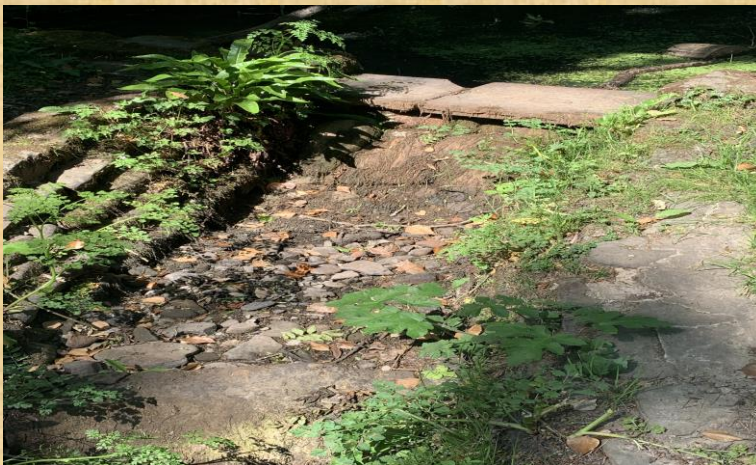
(Woodland Trust, n.d).



Water

Whilst at the river we played childhood games such as skipping the stone, twig races “Pooh sticks” and throwing stones to make the biggest splash. As a child we would always play these games and it made me wonder how many children are familiar with these now.

We looked for fish yet, we could not see any although, later we did find a fish that had been trapped in a tyre in the water and sadly died because of this. Upon further inspection it was apparent that much waste has been left in the river which angered me.



These photos were taken on my first visit to the park, usually there are many streams flowing down to the main Garw river. As we have had several weeks of sunshine this has caused many of these streams to dry out leaving dry river beds. This leads me to believe that habitats could be affected.



Human waste

The keeper of the Garden was a piece of art that I initially admired though, I noticed on the back of this sculpture there was an information source people could have listened to although it appears to be deliberately damaged. This infuriated me as this was a source for people to learn more about the surrounding environment and because of this damage people can be losing out on useful information.



Upon closer inspection there were few plastic bottles and wrapping floating above and below the duck pond.

Also, I was surprised at the amount of waste we stumbled upon during the walk.



As we are currently experiencing Covid-19 and people are trying to keep themselves safe this picture demonstrates how neglectful they are to the natural environment in comparison to their health. Unfortunately, I did not have gloves or appropriate resources to dispose of this mask however, when I returned the mask had moved further up the path. I later removed this from the site as I feared for the wildlife's well-being as they could get caught in this item.

We later discovered this maintenance road sign was amongst the trees below and made me wonder how this found its way to this area of the woods.

At this point I was disappointed in the human race as it was clear we are disposing materials into nature instead of conserving it. However, industries need to be more responsible of where their materials end up as it is clear local factories could be throwing waste into the river.



Before I saw the skip I noticed they were constructing a nature classroom to which I was pleased as it could encourage children to be involved in nature and to help educate them. In spite of this, I then found the skip full of materials that could have been recycled and many plastic materials that could have been avoided. I then noticed the amount of wood on the left hand side although, it is unclear whether these pieces will be used to create another project or if it will be disposed of. If a child was to see this it could be confusing as people are told to recycle yet, construction workers could be contradicting this.

When I returned I looked closer at the waste and found nails had not been removed from the wood which indicates it will not be recycled. Although, it could be argued that they will be removed at a later date.



During my second visit we followed another path that was previously cordoned off to the public however, when they reopened the area they had not removed it instead, pushed it to the side. This angered me as staff ask the public not to litter as it endangers wildlife yet they do not follow these rules. As the fence has multiple holes, it could endanger the wildlife. The public should be responsible for their actions and this includes staff at the park as the public may notice how they do not respect and conserve the natural environment which could lead to an increase of people littering also.





There was an area that enabled us to look closer at the river yet, it was apparent this part of the river had some plastic bottles and many tyres. Tyres were buried by many pebbles and upon closer inspection I found a fish that had unfortunately died as it was trapped between the tyre and the pebbles.

This was upsetting as nearby factories seem to be throwing supplies into the river and could lead to decreasing the number of fish.

On my return a member of the public attempted to pull this out of the water. Unfortunately there is currently nowhere to dispose of this safely and could possibly remain here until a member of staff notices or is made aware.



Near the river we discovered an old fireplace grate however, both my mother and I were unsure how this ended up here. This demonstrates how things thrown into the river can affect nature and effects other people and the surrounding environment



Exploration

THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES

THE CHILD IS MADE OF ONE HUNDRED
THE CHILD HAS
A HUNDRED LANGUAGES
A HUNDRED HANDS
A HUNDRED THOUGHTS
A HUNDRED WAYS OF THINKING
OF PLAYING, OF SPEAKING
A HUNDRED
ALWAYS A HUNDRED
WAYS OF LISTENING
OF MARVELING, OF LOVING
A HUNDRED JOYS
FOR SINGING AND UNDERSTANDING
A HUNDRED WORDS TO INVENT
A HUNDRED WORDS TO DREAM
THE CHILD HAS A HUNDRED LANGUAGES
(AND A HUNDRED HUNDRED HUNDRED MORE)
BUT THEY STEAL NINETY-NINE
THE SCHOOL AND THE CULTURE
SEPARATE THE HEAD FROM THE BODY
THEY TELL THE CHILD
TO THINK WITHOUT HANDS
TO DO WITHOUT HEAD
TO LISTEN AND NOT TO SPEAK
TO UNDERSTAND WITHOUT JOY
TO LOVE AND TO MARVEL
ONLY AT EASTER AND CHRISTMAS
THEY TELL THE CHILD
TO DISCOVER THE WORLD ALREADY THERE
AND OF THE HUNDRED
THEY STEAL NINETY-NINE
THEY TELL THE CHILD
THAT WORK AND PLAY
REALITY AND FANTASY
SCIENCE AND IMAGINATION
SKY AND EARTH
REASON AND DREAM
ARE THINGS
THAT DO NOT BELONG TOGETHER
AND THUS THEY TELL THE CHILD
THAT THE HUNDRED IS NOT THERE
THE CHILD SAYS:
NO WAY. THE HUNDRED IS THERE

-LORIS MALAGUZZI
FOUNDER OF THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH



(Malaguzzi cited in Oberlin Early Childhood Center, n.d).

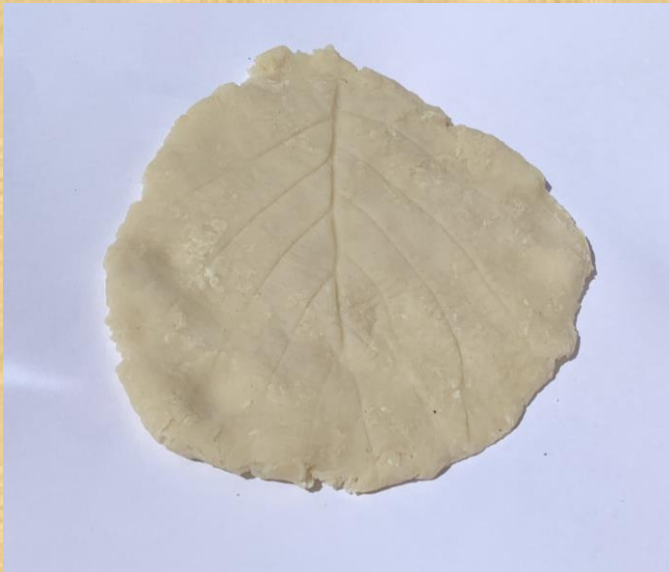
Playdough - Imprints

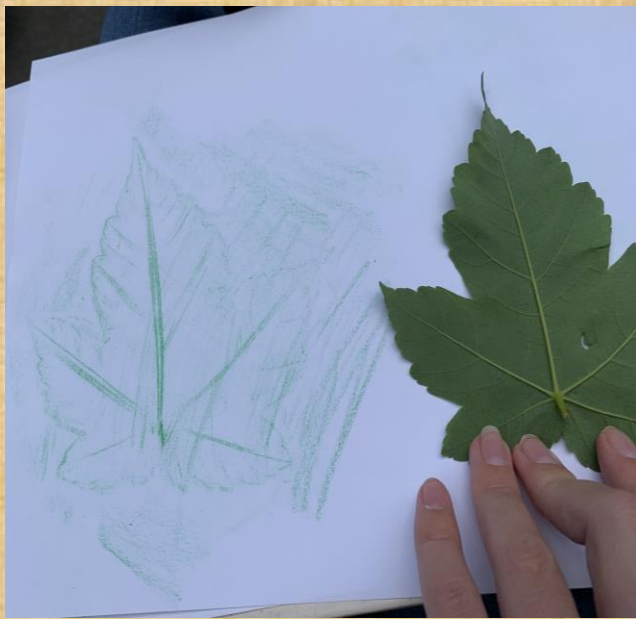


After reflecting on my first visit to the park I wanted to experiment and be more creative. This led to collecting resources as we walked which I later would experiment with in the playdough. As this was a practical way to explore different resources, it enabled me to experiment with and discover patterns.

I made my playdough using flour, salt, cream of tartar and baby oil however, when I would make this for children I would usually use food colouring. I did not use this as I wanted to make a natural dough that would not effect the natural environment although, some patters were not as prominent and using a colour could have shown the imprints better. Not only did I want to be creative and study patterns and imprints in this activity I wanted to have a transferable activity that I can later perform with children.

This was an activity that my mother was not familiar with and enabled me to share some creative ideas with her which also led us to use sustained shared thinking.

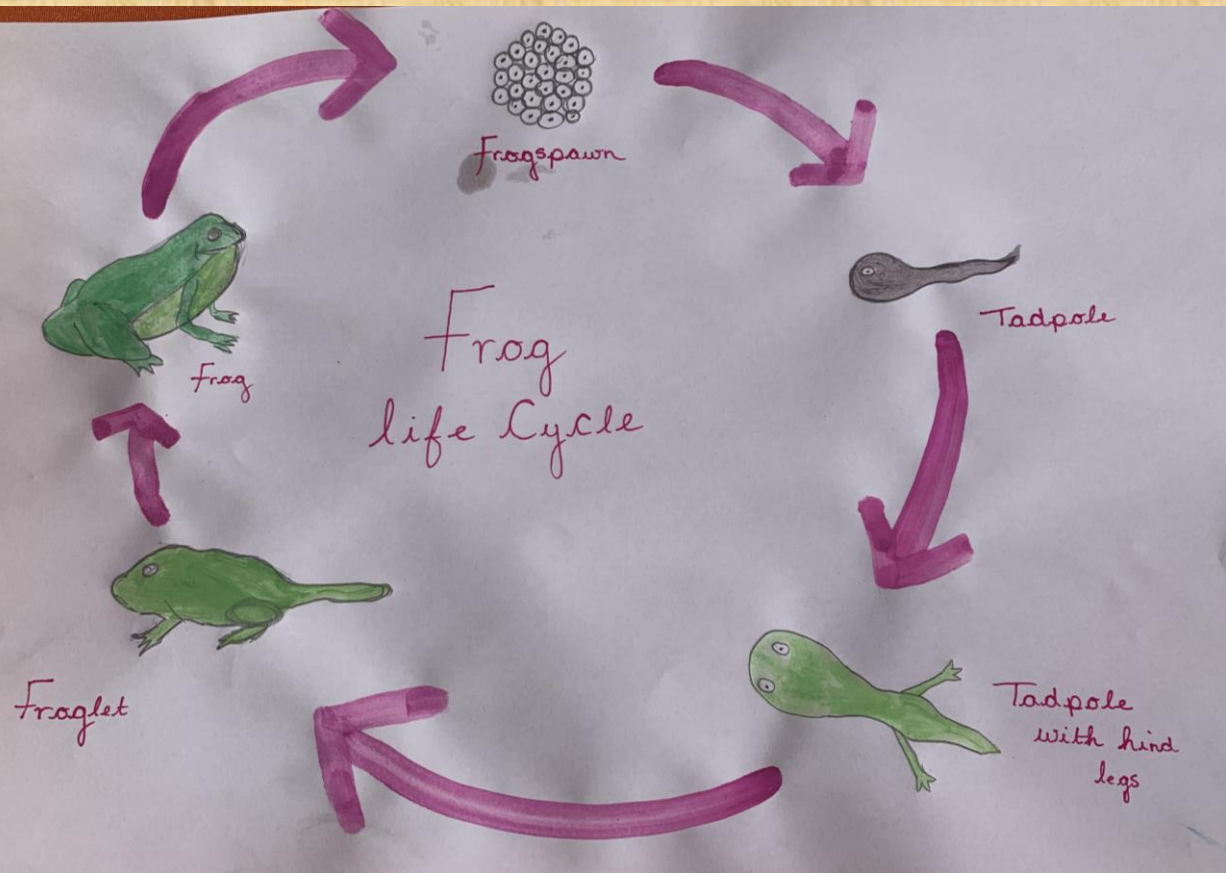




I have performed this activity at my setting multiple times and I have never appreciated the creativity and details in it. Doing this activity enabled me to connect and appreciate the beauty and the final details they have.

Having transferable activities that I can later use with children was important when exploring items in more depth, as I can reflect on what I have learnt and adapt for children at a later date.

I have developed my understanding and knowledge by doing this activity as I experimented with different textures.



Frog life cycle

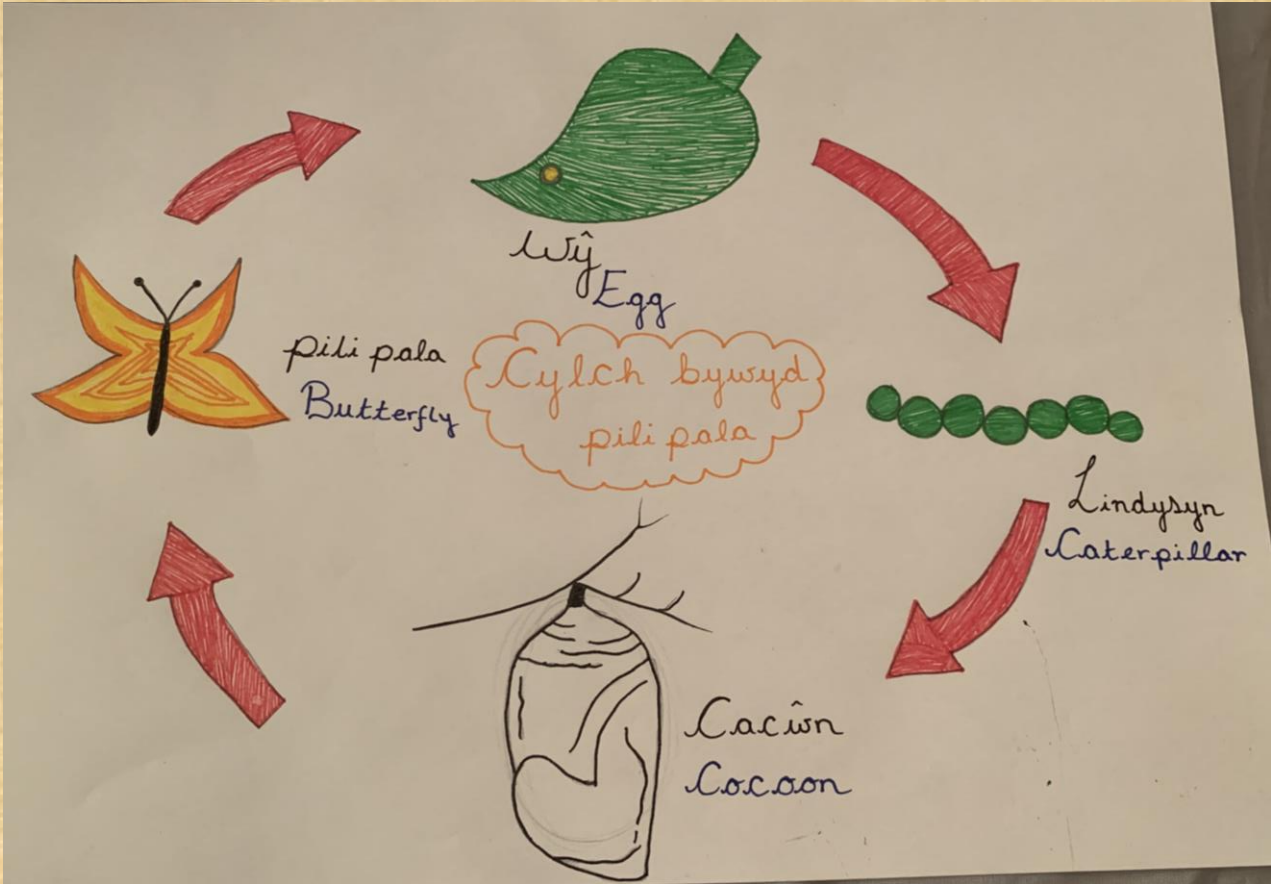
After visiting the frog pond at the park I was inspired to research further into their life cycle. I would regularly complete this activity in school however, it has become a chore which I unfortunately did not understand fully and can become uninteresting at times to both myself and the child.

On the other hand, I can teach and inspire children with my new understanding and create an interesting activity that engages children with nature whilst developing their understanding.

Butterfly life cycle

This is also a regular activity I would complete with children though, I have always been fascinated by butterflies since childhood. Completing this life cycle enabled me to develop my knowledge further whilst also developing my creative skills.

Unfortunately, we only found one butterfly during both visits to the park, this has led me to research and find alternative ways to attract more butterflies to the area.





Ladybird



Strawberry



Ivy leaf

Rock paintings

Whilst at the park we discussed how the pebbles near the river looked like other objects which led to this activity. We collected three pebbles and decorated them as we envisaged during the visit. This activity enabled myself and my mother to think creatively together and also spend quality time and sharing common interests. Also, as the ladybird and strawberry was decorated using watercolour paint this can easily be removed to restore its natural beauty.

This leaf was decorated by my mother, as we sat by the duckpond she was inspired to design this leaf using crayons, coloured pencils and pens. She also taught me techniques to use when drawing and colouring to resemble the leaf.



My mothers inspiration

Upon returning home we both were inspired by some of the pictures that was taken. By drawing we could analyse the picture thus, noticing intricate details that could have been overlooked in photos.



Robin

As I saw many robins during my visits to the park I was inspired to draw this creature once I returned home. I have not drawn in such detail before and wanted to challenge myself which led to this attempt to draw the bird. Also, I found this calming and believe I would continue to build on my new skill.

**Please refer to the video
I have created containing my
discoveries and experiences
at Bryngarw park**

Conservation

awen Parc Gwledig Bryngarw
Bryngarw Country Park

Mae Parc Gwledig Bryngarw yn un o blith 11 o safleoedd Porth Darganfod ar gyfer Parc Rhanbarthol y Cymoedd, yn ailgysylltu cymunedau'r cymoedd ac ymwelwyr eraill â'u treftadaeth naturiol a diwylliannol.

Bryngarw Country Park is one of 11 Discovery Gateway sites for the Valleys Regional Park, reconnecting valleys communities and other visitors with their natural and cultural heritage.

Parc Rhanbarthol y Cymoedd

Valleys Regional Park

Diolch i Lywodraeth Cymru, Tasglu'r Cymoedd a chyllid Parc Rhanbarthol y Cymoedd, rydym ni wrth ein bodd ein bod ni'n buddsoddi mewn canolfan addysg newydd ym Mryngarw.

Bydd y ganolfan yn ein galluogi i groesawu hyd yn oed rhagor o blant ysgol lleol a grwpiau eraill i ddysgu am y bywyd gwyllt a'r fflora a'r ffawna a geir ym Mryngarw, a'r cefn gwlad ehangach.

Mae dyluniad y ganolfan yn cyd-fynd â'i hamgylchedd lleol a bydd yn cynnig golygfeydd o Afon Garw sy'n llifo'n gyflym o'i drysau plygu a'i feranda gorchuddiedig.

I gael rhagor o wybodaeth am ein rhaglen addysg neu gyfleoedd llogi ystafelloedd, dewch i ymweld â ni, ffoniwch 01656 725155 neu e-bostiwch bryngarw.park@awen-wales.com

Thanks to Welsh Government, Valleys Taskforce and Valleys Regional Park funding, we are excited to be investing in a new education centre at Bryngarw.

The centre will enable us to welcome even more local school children and other groups to learn about the wildlife, flora and fauna found at Bryngarw, and the wider countryside.

The design of the centre is in keeping with its local environment and will offer views of the fast-flowing River Garw from its bi-folding doors and covered veranda.

For further information about our education programme or room hire opportunities, please phone 01656 725155 or email bryngarw.park@awen-wales.com

@BryngarwCountryPark @BryngarwPark @bryngarwpark
bryngarwcountrypark.co.uk

Ein Cymoedd Ein Dyfodol Our Valleys Our Future

Uywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

New Education Centre

As we finished our walk we noticed they were building and wanted to know more. The sign provides a summary of their aim which is to support children and teach them about wildlife. Currently there is no further information regarding this centre however, it demonstrates a need to educate children and inviting them to engage with nature. Having a centre such as this may help engage children in nature and encourage them to preserve wildlife and be responsible for their actions. By educating children on these matters it could help them make wiser decisions in the future. The park encourages this as it has recognised exploring the natural environment is essential to children's learning (awen, n.d)

Butterfly garden



As I was disappointed to have found one butterfly during my visit in Bryngarw park, I hoped I could attract and supply a food source to these creatures. After some research I discovered they like some fruits including oranges and as our oranges were no longer edible we provided this food source to avoid throwing it in our recycling bin.



Attracting more birds to the garden was key, as unfortunately we rarely see birds thus making bird feeders may attract them to the garden. I made these bird feeders by recycling yoghurt pots and mixing lard and bird seed together. Within minutes of hanging them we already spotted a bird trying to eat from them. In the past we have made these bird feeders with children especially in the winter though, this has not happened for many years. I can convey my knowledge and perform this in the future to help conserve birds.

Additionally, after discussing my ideas with my farther he built a bird house from left over wood from the garage.



Approximately eighteen months ago I heard that the company Lush were advocates for reducing plastic waste and after watching the effects it has on oceans and wildlife I decided to reduce the number of plastic I use. I believe that this company is not advertised enough considering the benefits it has on the planet. However, their competitors that use the plastic packaging are more affordable thus demand will be higher.

Before the creation of the black plastic pots on the right, similar pots were created in China, to reduce their carbon footprint they are now made in Poole which is only a mile away from their contents to lesson their carbon footprint (Lush, 2020). In addition to this, they created solid shampoo bars which is currently in the carbon positive packaging which removes thirty three times its weight in carbon dioxide (Lush, 2020). The shampoo bars have also avoided nine million bottles being in landfill which could possibly enter our wildlife and oceans in 2013. They also reported ten million tonnes of waste comes from packaging therefore, by using Lush's solution this can be avoided (plastic expert, n.d, Lush, 2020). Also, the black tops on the bottles are recycled by the shop to create furniture in future shops (Lush, 2020, Lush, 2020). To ensure I can reduce the amount of waste I produce I use these products to ensure wildlife is protected and they do not suffer because of my actions.

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