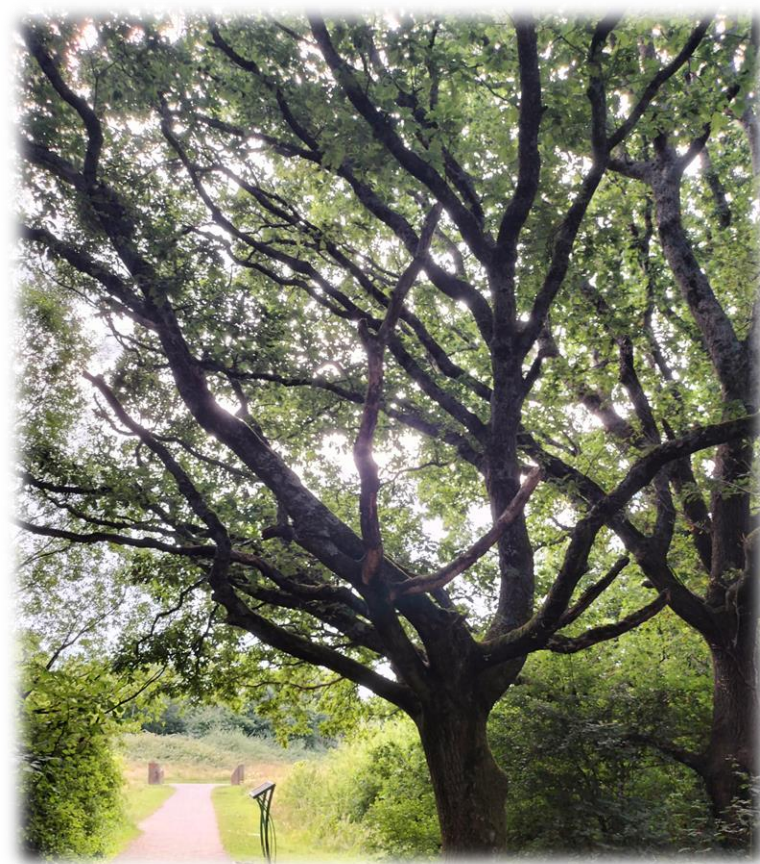




ECEY 6005

Sustainability in the Early Years: John Muir Experience

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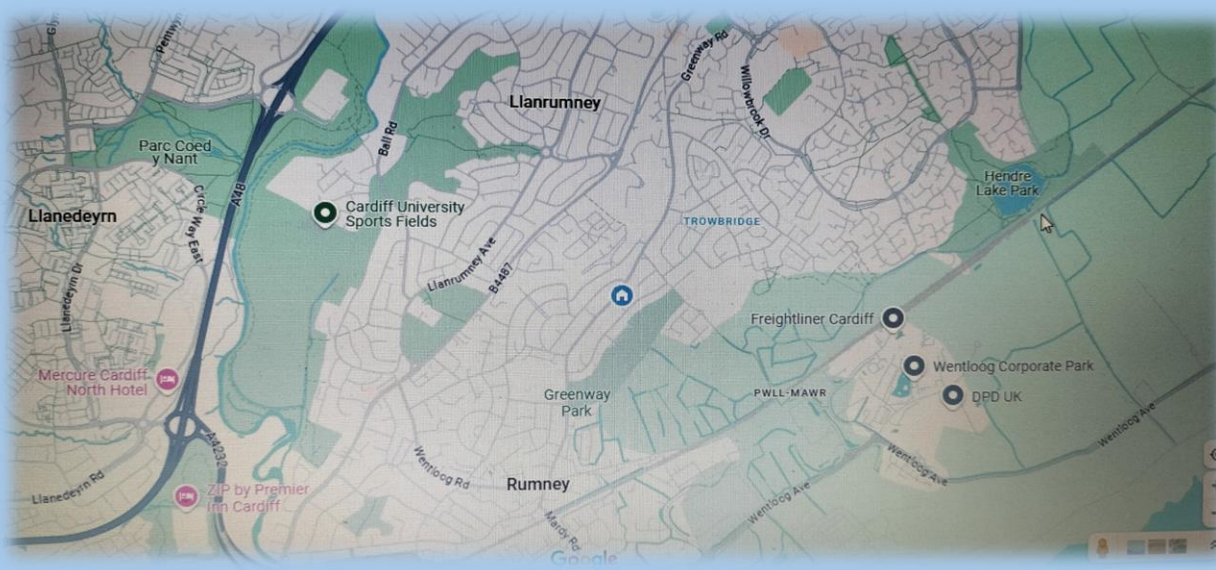




TIME TO DISCOVER:

Too often, we overlook the stunning landscapes woven into the fabric of our local communities. Cardiff is a shining example, where breath taking landmarks and rich Welsh heritage come together to form a tapestry of natural beauty and cultural pride.

Nestled in the heart of St Mellons, Hendre Lake offers a tranquil retreat where wildlife, water, and woodland come together. This peaceful haven lets you reconnect with nature right on the edge of Cardiff.



The Local Community

Hendre Lake is cherished by a vibrant and engaged local community, especially those from the St Mellons and Trowbridge areas of Cardiff. It's not just a scenic spot, it is a shared space where nature, wellbeing, and community spirit come together.



THE WONDERS OF WILDLIFE AT HENDRE LAKE

Hendre Lake is a peaceful corner of Cardiff where wildlife flourishes in every season. Birds like kingfishers, herons, swans, geese and grebes are often seen gliding over the water or nesting among the reeds. Beneath the surface, carp and perch move silently through the lake's depths, while dragonflies, bees and butterflies bring colour and movement to the surrounding wildflower meadows. The mix of wetland and woodland habitats makes it a rich environment for many species, and its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest highlights its importance to local biodiversity.

For Years

By Maya Anthony

In the hush of early light,
A mirror formed of liquid glass,
The lake whispers secrets of the night,
In ripples that gently pass.
Dawn's fingers paint in hues so bright,
On waters still and vast,
Reflecting skies with soft delight,
In moments that won't last.
As daybreak stirs the sleepy lake,
Birds sing in chorus above,
Nature awakens, all partake,
In this scene of tranquil love.

Am Lynnoedd

Gan Maya Anthony

Yn nhawelwch golau cynnar,
Drych wedi'i ffurfio o wydr hylif,
Mae'r llyn yn sibrdw cyfrinachau'r nos,
Mewn tonnau sy'n pasio'n ysgafn.
Mae bysedd y wawr yn paentio mewn lliwiau llachar,
Ar ddyfroedd tawel ac eang,
Yn adlewyrchu'r awyr gyda hyfrydwch meddal,
Mewn eiliadau na fydd yn para.
Wrth i dorriad y wawr ysgogi'r llyn cysglyd,
Mae adar yn canu mewn côr uwchben,
Mae natur yn deffro, mae pawb yn cymryd rhan,
Yn y golygfa hon o gariad tawel.

TIME TO EXPLORE:



Appreciation

Time to think

Breathe

Contemplation

Make time for yourself

Unwind

**A sense of
wellbeing**

Recharge

Slow down

At one with nature

During my daily visits to Hendre Lake, I slowly began to realise just how frantic and fast-paced my life had become. In the midst of juggling responsibilities and constantly racing the clock, I had barely given myself the chance to pause, breathe, and truly check in with my own wellbeing. It was in those quiet moments by the water, listening to the birds and feeling the soft breeze against my face, I started to reconnect with something essential. Over time, these visits became more than just a break from routine. They evolved into a personal ritual, an opportunity to tune out the noise and tune into nature. I began to understand the profound benefits of simply being outdoors, immersed in the natural world. The stillness of the lake, the gentle rustling of leaves, and the soothing colours of the landscape created a space for reflection, healing, and calm.



Eye Spy?

Whilst exploring the long grass areas and admiring the wildflowers in full bloom, I became captivated by the quiet bustle of life within the plants. Tiny insects, each with their own purpose and rhythm, moved delicately among the petals and stems, some shimmering in the sunlight, others almost hidden from view. What struck me most was the sheer intricacy of it all. In that gentle wilderness, there was a whole miniature world thriving, often unnoticed, yet utterly essential.



CONSERVATION: WORKING TOGETHER

Observing Hendre Lake's natural beauty was a powerful reminder of why conservation matters. Yet it was clear that litter posed a real challenge. Despite bins being available, rubbish had made its way into the water, nestled among foliage, and lined the footpaths. As part of my commitment to the John Muir Award, I organised a litter collection to help restore and protect this special space.

Friends and family of all ages rallied together, armed with gloves, bags, and a shared sense of purpose. As we cleaned, we chatted, spotted wildlife, and realised how much difference a few helping hands could make. What started as a simple clean up became a meaningful moment of connection to each other, to the space, and to the values of care and stewardship.

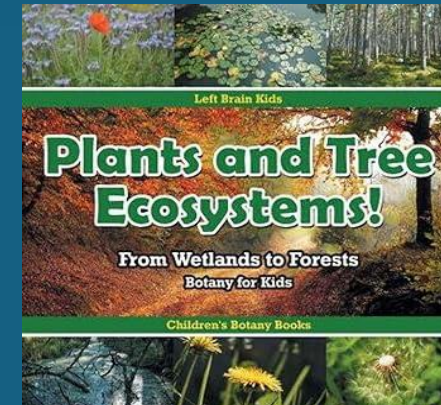
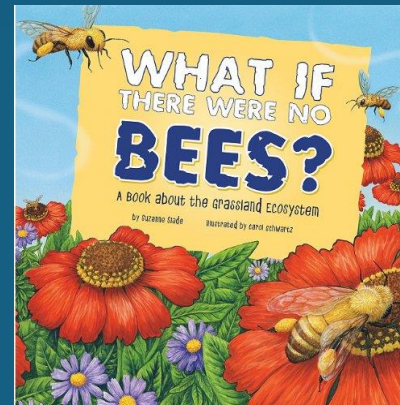
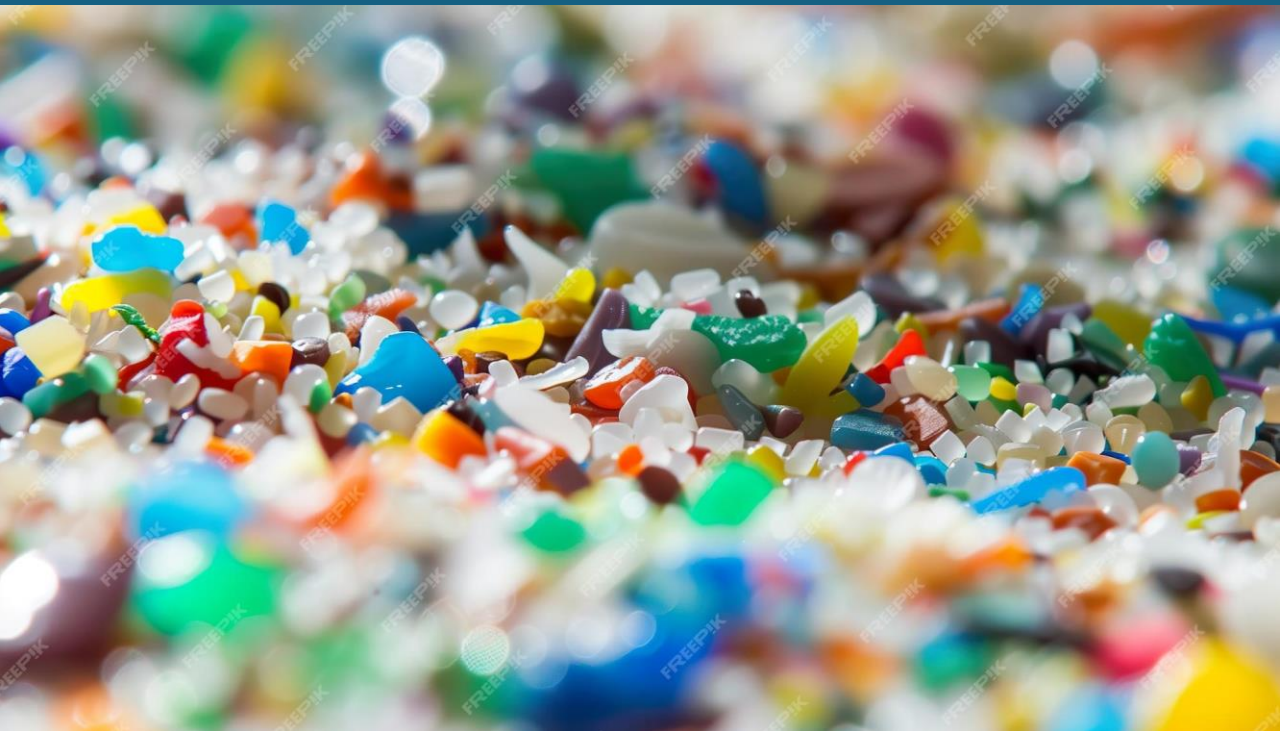
Younger participants were especially enthusiastic. They approached the task with curiosity, their energy was infectious, and they asked thoughtful questions about how litter affects animals and the lake's ecosystem. One child proudly declared, "We're helping the ducks!" a simple but powerful reminder of how early experiences can shape environmental awareness.

The experience not only improved the lake's appearance; it deepened our collective respect for nature. It reminded me that conservation doesn't have to be grand, it can begin with small, hands-on actions that are meaningful and lasting.



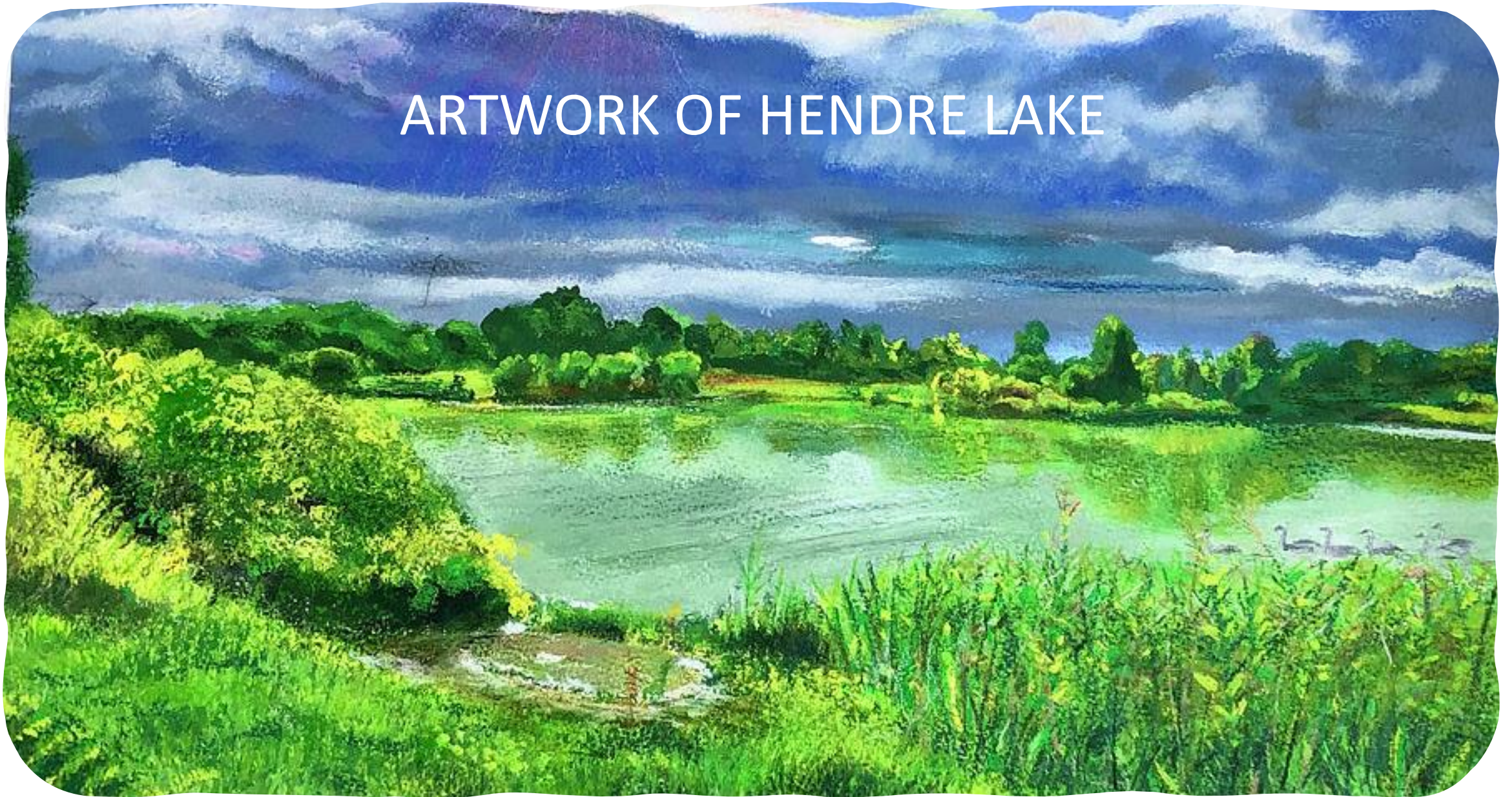
THE HIDDEN HARM OF LITTER

On my journey I have learnt that microplastics are small plastic fragments that can cause serious damage to the environment. They end up in oceans, rivers, lakes, soil, and even the air, often coming from broken-down plastic items or synthetic clothing. Animals sometimes ingest them by mistake, which can make them sick and spread harmful chemicals. These plastics also affect plants and tiny organisms in the soil, which are important for keeping ecosystems healthy. Over time, microplastics can reduce biodiversity, meaning fewer types of animals and plants survive. This disrupts how ecosystems work. Because they are so tiny, microplastics are hard to remove and can remain in the environment for years, causing long-term harm.



Books are powerful sources of information. They offer relatable stories that reinforce children's learning and provide something to reference and revisit as they relive experiences they have encountered through action.

ARTWORK OF HENDRE LAKE



A black and white photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen trees covers a slope. In the middle ground, a calm lake reflects the sky. In the background, more mountain peaks are visible under a hazy sky. The overall tone is serene and natural.

**"WE DO NOT INHERIT THE
EARTH FROM OUR
ANCESTORS, WE BORROW IT
FROM OUR CHILDREN."**

Barry Swenson, Governor



NATURE NURTURES

John Muir Experience

By exploring natural habitats firsthand, children begin to understand the value of our ecosystems. They ask questions, observe wildlife, and most importantly begin to care for the environment. Picking up leaves, noticing a feather, or seeing a swan glide across the water can inspire conversations about our responsibility to protect nature.

These hands-on experiences help children regulate emotions, develop empathy, and promote a sense of wellbeing. The outdoors provides space to reflect, collaborate, and learn to respect others and the world around them.

Group activities, such as nature hunts or storytelling under the trees, reinforce their experiences and nurture a growing sense of responsibility for the natural world. When early years settings embed regular nature visits into their curriculum, they foster not only well-rounded learners but compassionate, eco-conscious citizens.

Educators who embrace nature visits are not just nurturing young minds they are inspiring future conservers of the planet. Promoting a love for nature and the outdoors will echo John Muir's legacy for generations to come.



MY REFLECTION

Engaging with the John Muir Award has deepened my understanding of sustainability as a lived relationship, one through moments of discovery and care rather than taught in isolation. In early years education where curiosity blossoms through play and connection, the award structure **Discover, Explore, Conserve**, and **Share**, feels like an invitation to walk hand in hand with nature. Sustainability, at this stage is less about instruction and more about enabling a sense of wonder, agency, and belonging. A feather tucked into a pocket, a puddle jumped in, are not just fleeting experiences, but meaningful encounters that shape how children see the world and their place within it. The John Muir Award reminds us that the smallest acts of noticing can grow into a lifelong ethic of environmental responsibility.

