

THE FROG POND NATURE RESERVE



"When we look after
nature, nature looks
after us"
John Muir

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This scrapbook documents my journey through the John Muir Award, inspired by John Muir, who believed nature should be experienced, valued, and protected. The John Muir Award encourages people to connect with and care for the natural world, and for me, this starts right behind my garden.

I am exploring Frog Pond Nature Reserve in Kentig Hull, a peaceful space sheltered by oak and ash trees, leading to a quiet pond. Having this so close to home allows me to regularly observe changes in nature and build a deeper connection with the outdoors.



Everybody needs beauty
as well as bread,
places to play in and pray in,
where nature may heal and give
strength to body and soul.

- John Muir



As part of this experience, I am also becoming more aware of the importance of conserving natural spaces like this - protecting habitats, respecting wildlife, and helping to keep the environment clean and safe.

Through this, I am recognising how important it is for young children to explore natural environments, supporting curiosity, imagination and hands-on learning.

This scrapbook captures my experiences and reflections, and how this journey is shaping my understanding of nature and my practice in Early Years Education.

Discover



I discovered Frog Pond Reserve. A Freshwater Habitat, full of life & a woodland full of wildlife.

My Special Place - Garden, woodland & Frog Pond.

- I noticed plants, insects and birds in my Garden.
- I discovered my garden connects to wild space
- I noticed the Oak tree in my garden and the woodland behind it with tall Oak and ash trees forming a natural habitat.

I discovered frogs, insects, birds and plants living together in a connected ecosystem

Ecosystem

A place where living things like plants and animals interact with non-living things like water, soil and Sun light.

At Frog Pond Nature Reserve, everything works together to create a balanced natural environment.



Sow Thistle

My Garden Oak Tree



The nature reserve behind my garden

The Frog Pond



Biodiversity

The variety of living things in one place.
This includes:

- Plants
- Animals
- Insects
- Fungi
- Trees
- tiny organisms in soil & water.

Frog Pond Wood has good biodiversity because many different plants, insects & birds, animals live there.

I learned that even a small woodland is full of connected systems where plants, animals, light and water all depend on each other.

On my walk I noticed:

- Silver light on wet bark
- green tinted light under leaves
- bright reflections near the pond.

These light patterns affect where moss grows, where insects gather, and how birds behave.

I discovered that wind & leaf cover change how light moves through the woodland, creating shifting patterns on the ground.



Light, Sound & Environment

I noticed:

- dappled light changes where plants grow.
 - Shady areas are cooler & damper
 - bird song changes depending on canopy cover.
 - quiet areas show deeper woodland.
- Light & sound affect how wildlife behaves.

I learned different parts of nature are connected & how habitats change along the way.



Canopy + Light Patterns

Habitats



Woodland life and Habitats

I discovered the woodland has different layers:

- Canopy (Oak & ash trees)
- Understory (smaller plants & branches)
- Forest Floor (mass, leaves, deadwood).

These layers create homes for many species.

Structure of a woodland.

Woodland Features

- Fallen logs - important for fungi, beetles & other invertebrates.
- Fungi - helps break down dead wood, recycling nutrients back into soil.
- Canopy - The 'roof' of leaves that create shade & shelter below.
- Understory - smaller plants & bushes growing beneath the trees.



Deadwood and nature recycling
I learned that deadwood is important because:

- It provides homes for insects & fungi
- It helps recycle nutrients into soil
- It supports birds

Deadwood is part of a healthy ecosystem.



Tree Facts

The Oak tree can support more wildlife than almost any other UK tree, including insects, birds, and mammals.

The Ash Tree - its light canopy allows a rich variety of plants to grow beneath it.

Tree roots - Help stop soil from washing into the pond and keep banks stable.

Leaf Litter - provides food for insects and helps build healthy soil.

Oak Tree - Quercus robur - can live for hundreds of years and supports lots of wildlife.

Ash Tree - Fraxinus excelsior - let sunlight through helping plants grow underneath.

Trees provide:

- Homes for birds & insects
- Food like acorns
- Shelter & shade



Deadwood

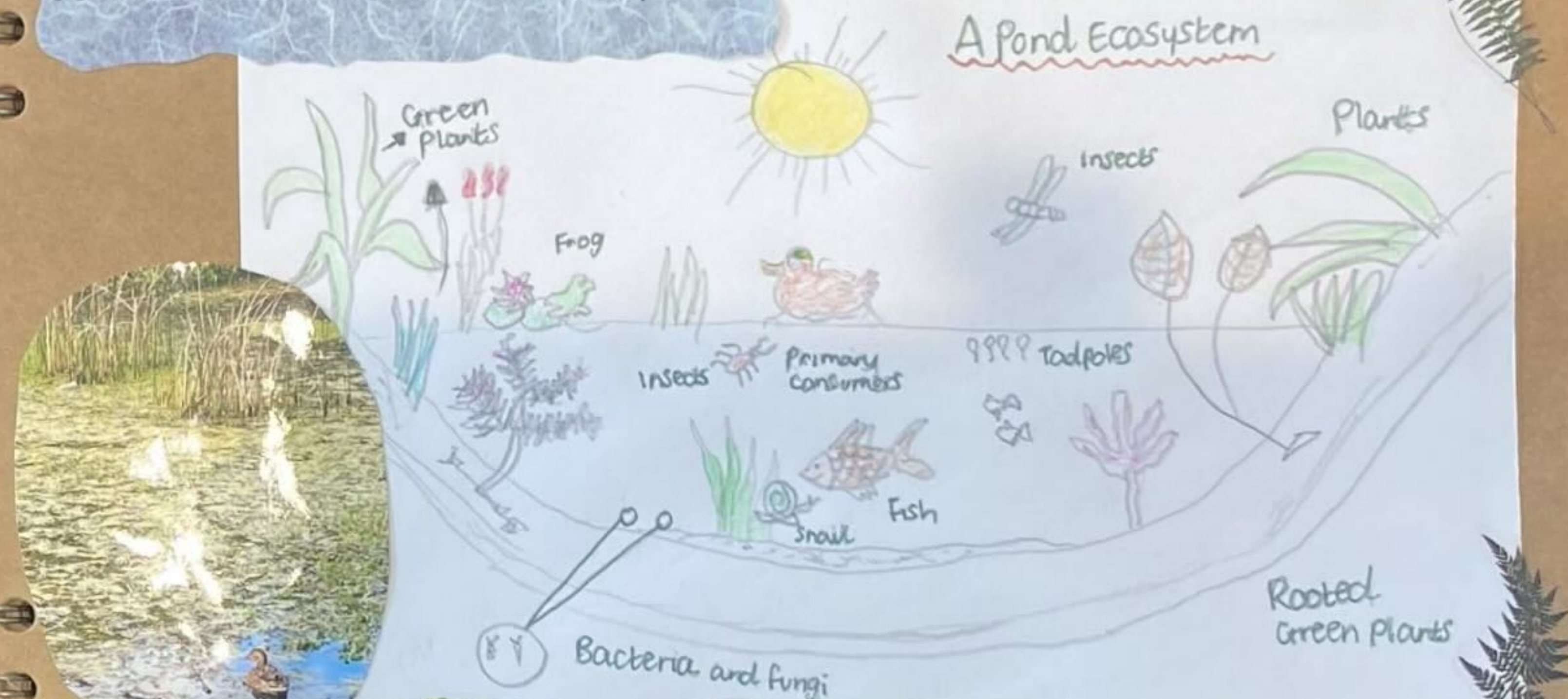


The Pond Ecosystem

- Freshwater Pond - A small but important habitat, supporting many species.
- Biodiversity - Healthy ponds have lots of different plants and animals.
- Ecosystem - Everything depends on each other, from tiny insects to trees.
- Clean water - Clear (not polluted)



A Pond Ecosystem



Plants Around the Pond

- Marginal Plants - grow at the edge of pond provide shelter for wildlife.
- Aquatic Plants - live in the water & produce oxygen helping animals survive.
- Algae - a natural part of ponds, but too much can mean the water is unbalanced.
- Fallen leaves - create food for microorganisms as they decompose, part of nutrient cycle.



Moss

I learned how moss helps keep woodland damp.

Moss thrives in damp, shaded habitats.

- velvety carpet on logs
- cushions on tree roots
- bright green patches near wetter ground

Mosses help by:

- holding moisture
- slowing soil erosion
- supporting tiny insects & micro organisms
- storing small amounts of carbon



Moss



Lichens

I discovered that lichens can indicate air quality.

Lichens are partnerships between fungi & algae. They grow on tree bark, branches, rocks & fences. They absorb water & nutrients directly from the air, rather than through roots.

A woodland with different lichen forms often suggests good air quality.

- Crusty grey patches on bark
- Leafy pale-green forms
- tiny branching 'miniature shrub shapes'

EXPLORE



My garden oak tree



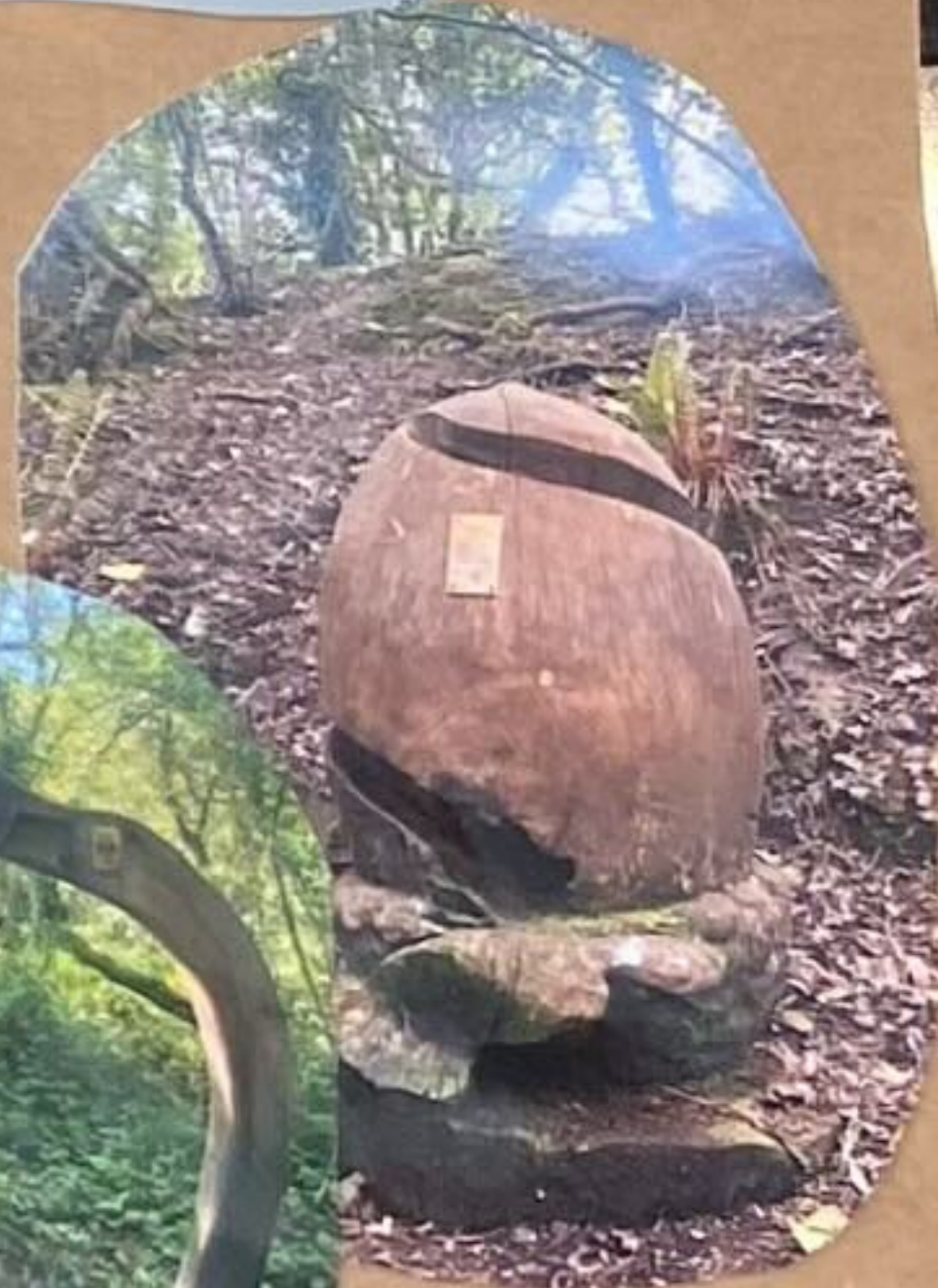
The winding lane (winter) over arching trees



Running water



Sculptures hidden in the woodland



My Journey to Frog Pond

I start at the oak tree in my garden & followed a path into the woodland.

🌳 Oak tree (garden)

🚪 Back gate

🌿 Winding woodland lane (part of reserve)

💧 Running water along the banks

🌳 Deep woodland with oak & ash trees arching overhead

🗿 Sculptures hidden in the woodland

🐸 Hidden frog pond appears suddenly

🦆 Ducks seen on arrival

More sculptures in the woodland



Walking through Frog Pond Wood, you're moving through a small ecosystem where air quality, moisture, trees, fungi, mosses, insects & birds are all connected.

The details you notice - lichen on bark, moss on stones, shafts of light through leaves - all tell you something about the health of the woodland.



Spring

What I noticed on the way
The woodland became quieter and more enclosed as I walked deeper in. I could hear running water and birds in the tree. The path felt natural & peaceful.



Moss



When visiting I feel calm, connected, and grounded in nature.

Even though the pond seemed quiet & not very full of visible life it was still a peaceful place. Being surrounded by trees & water made me slow down & really notice my surroundings.

Oak and ash archway

- a tunnel effect
- filtered green light
- cooler temperature underneath
- shelter from wind.

Feels like entering a different world as canopy closes overhead.

The woodland becomes easier to read once you begin linking what you see:

light → moisture → plants → insects → birds

Even a small woodland can reveal how environmental health appears in tiny details.



Light Beams (winter)



Ducks seen on arrival



A different aspect of pond.



Hidden Frog Pond



Woodland light and Nature

Sunlight passing through branches & leaves create dappled light, moving shadows, & bright & dark areas across the woodland floor.

These patterns change as the wind moves leaves & the sun changes angle.

In spring, before the canopy fully closes, extra sunlight reaches the ground, helping moss, woodland flowers & insects grow.



Dappled light
& moving shadows



Bluebells



Acorns starting
to grow



My Reflection

This place feels like a hidden natural world. It shows how woodland & water habitats connect, but also how important it is to protect them.



Sound Patterns

The woodland became quieter as I walked beneath the trees.

I noticed:

- Louder birdsong at woodland edges
- Wind sounding different in oak & ash leaves
- Water sounds near the pond.
- Ducks

Water and Pond Patterns

As the lane slopes toward the pond, moisture changes the habitat.

I notice:

- Softer ground
- Thicker moss
- More insects
- Frogspawn (Spring)
- Reflections in still water.

I see:

- ripples
- mirrored trees
- circles from insects touching the surface
- changing light reflections

(Spring) Reflections in the pond
(Winter)



Sensory Notes

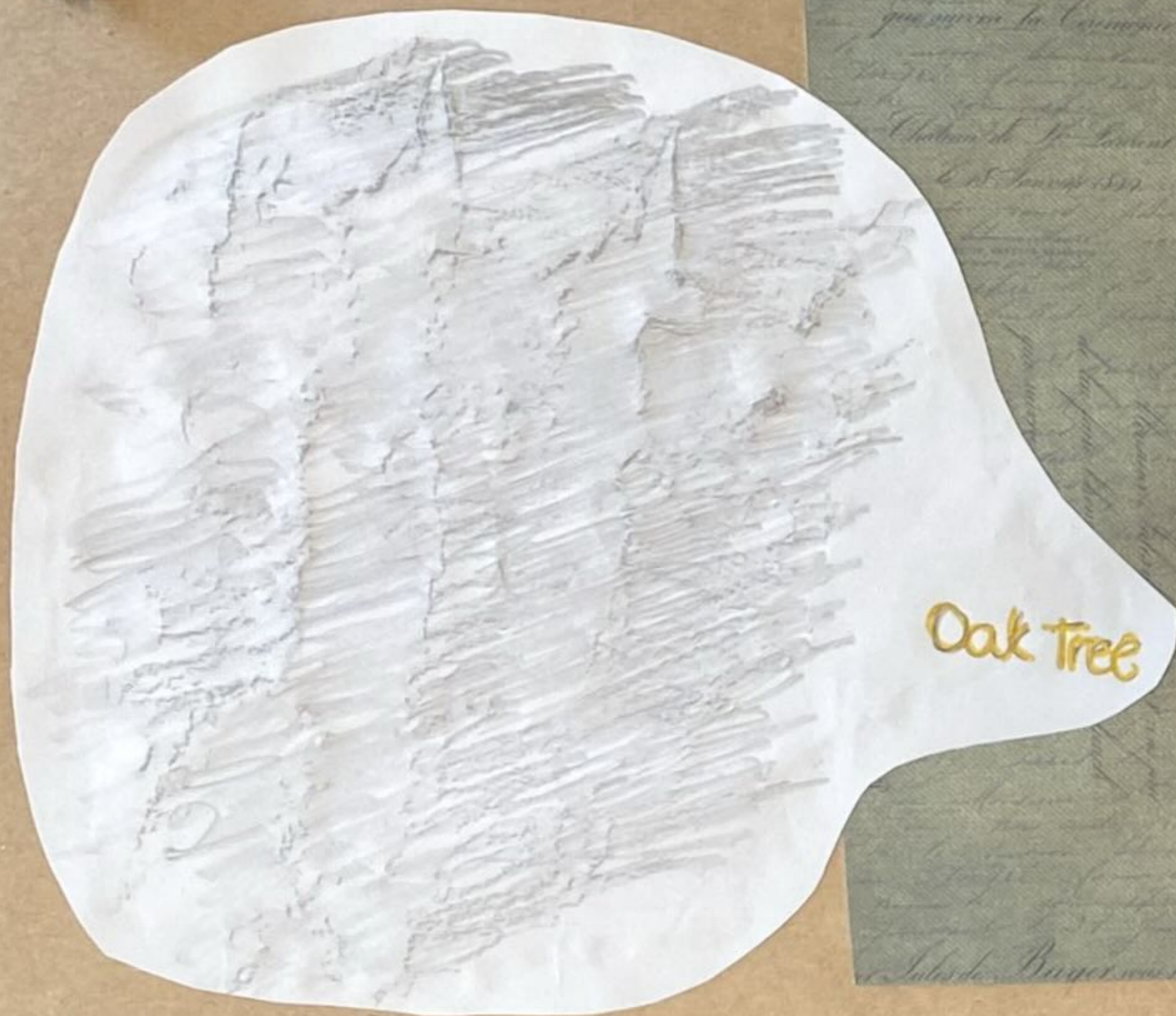
- Sounds: water flowing, birds, wind in trees
- Sight: sunlight shining through the trees, creating patterns on the ground. Tall trees, sudden bright pond.
- Feel: cool air, soft ground, damp surroundings



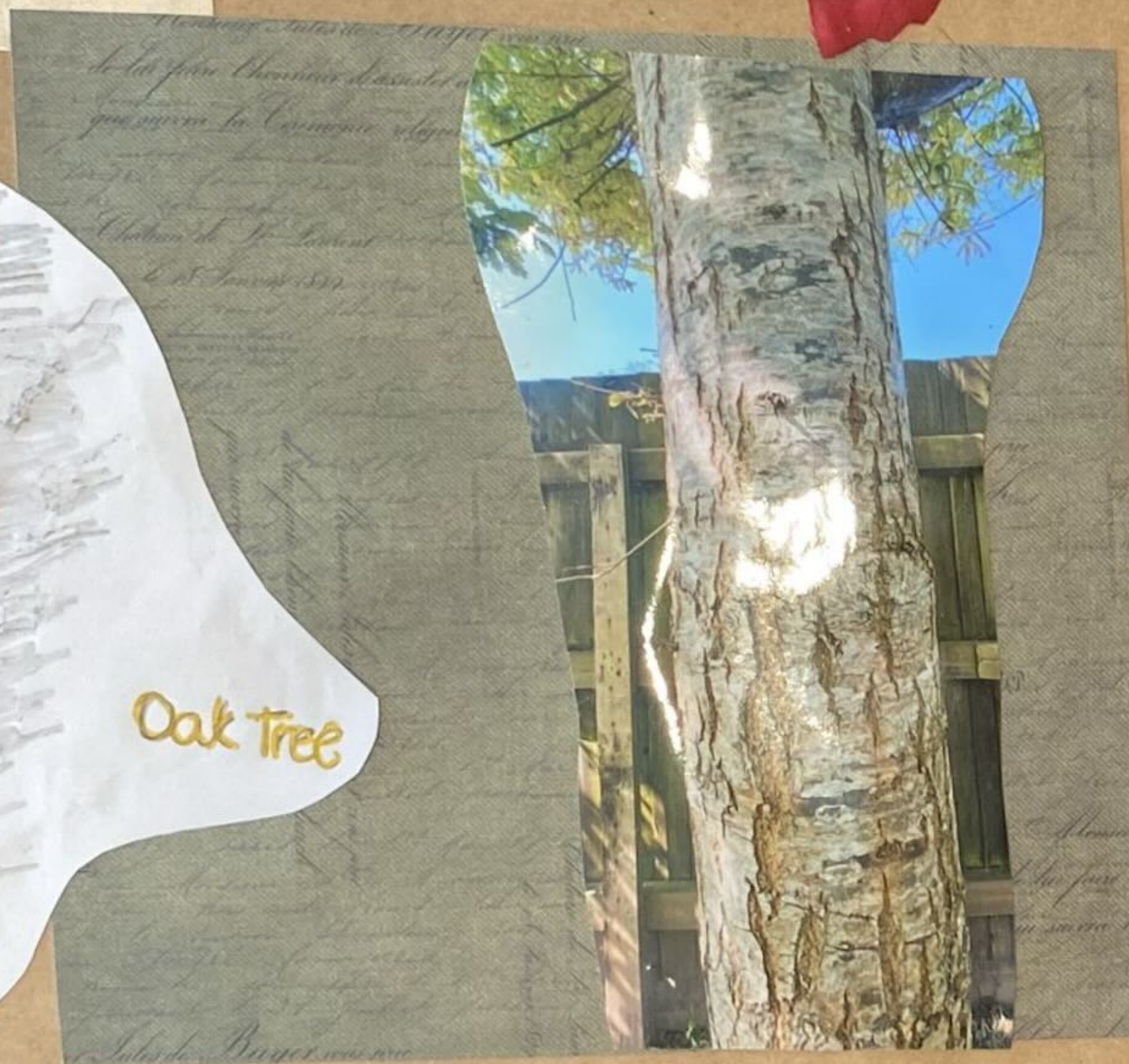
Bark Textures

- oak bark is rough & deeply ridged
- Ash bark is smoother with diamond patterns

Textures create habitats for masses, lichens, spiders & insects



Oak Tree



Ash Tree



My Observations

When I visited Frog Pond Wood I noticed some positive & negative signs. Ducks had returned to the pond, which shows it can support wildlife. However, I also saw litter around & in the water, which could harm animals & pollute the habitat. This made me think the pond may not be completely healthy. Litter can damage ecosystems, so it is important to protect & care for this environment.

Conserve

My garden, woodland & Frog Pond Wood form a connected wildlife corridor. Animals can move safely between habitats, which helps maintain biodiversity & a healthy ecosystem.

Conservation is important because it protects wildlife, keeps ecosystems balanced, and ensures nature can continue to support life.

Why it Matters

Protects biodiversity

- keeps a wide variety of plants & animals alive
- Supports insects, birds, mammals & plants
- Prevents species loss.



Ancient woodlands are important because they have developed over hundreds of years & support complex ecosystems.

Supports Clean air, water and soil

- Trees like Oak absorb Carbon dioxide
- Woodlands filter air pollution
- ponds help clean & support water life

What can harm nature:

- Litter & Pollution
- Habitat destruction
- Disturbing wildlife
- Loss of old trees & deadwood.

Why Clean air matters in Woodland

Pollution can

- weaken trees
- acidify soils
- damage lichens
- reduce insect populations
- indirectly affect birds that feed on the insects.

Healthy woodland air supports:

- Strong tree growth
- richer biodiversity
- cooler temperature
- cleaner water entering streams & ponds

For people, clean woodland air can:

- reduce stress
- Improve concentration
- lower exposure to urban pollution
- create psychologically restorative environments

Why Ponds are Important

The pond supports many living things:

- Frogs and tadpoles
- Insects
- Ducks, birds drinking and bathing
- mosses and wetland plants.

They help biodiversity by creating habitats woodland alone cannot provide

What I can do

I can help by not dropping litter, picking up rubbish if it is safe, and encouraging others to respect the area.

“Dead wood is important habitat for insects and fungi, so I leave it where it is”

You're not “cleaning a pond once” you're slowly removing pressure from an ecosystem so it can heal itself.

“I record wildlife to understand how the ecosystem changes over time”

“I help insects and small animals by providing safe shelter.”

“Staying on paths protects plants and stops habitats being damaged”

Everything links to the ecosystem

Even small actions help keep the balance between water, trees, animals and plants.



Litter picking around the pond.



Deadwood.



Bug hotel - painted by my daughter



Another bug hotel in our garden - for shelter.



Litter picking in the woodland.



Deadwood

A low-intervention Conservation Plan:

focused on protecting water quality, supporting biodiversity, and reducing human impact while allowing natural woodland processes to continue:

Protect & Increase biodiversity

- Leave dead wood & fallen leaves (important habitats).
- Protect mossy & damp areas (many insects live there).
- Avoid removing "messy" natural features.
- Encourage native plants rather than introducing new species.

More variety = more stable ecosystem.

Community Involvement

- Organise litter picks
- Share awareness about protecting pond
- Encourage family visits.
- Use 'Guardian of the Woods' (see ^{Shore}).

Support birds & Pollinators

Woodland health is closely linked to birds & insects:

- Preserve nesting areas (hedger, tree branches, shrubs).
- Avoid cutting back wild areas during breeding season
- Keep flowering plants for bees & butterflies
- Provide quiet zones where wildlife is not disturbed.

Keep woodland "wild-managed"

- Don't over-clean
- Leave fallen logs & branches in place
- Allow natural regeneration of plants
- Only intervene where there is pollution or damage.

Litter prevention (not just removal)

Litter is often a symptom, so prevention matters most.

- Put up small, simple signs like: "Help keep Frog Pond Wood clean"
- Add gentle messaging near entrances
- Identify where litter comes from
- Do short regular clean-ups

Impact: reduces nutrient pollution feeding algae in the pond.

Monitor changes over time

- Record water clarity
- Count bird / Frog sightings
- Take photos from same spot
- Note seasonal changes

Manage human impact

- Stay on designated paths to prevent soil erosion
- Create subtle "walk here" routes if paths are unclear
- Add signage to encourage respectful behaviour
- Monitor damage from footfall over time

Protect amphibian habitat

Frogs & other amphibians need specific conditions:

- Keep pond edges undisturbed in spring (breeding season)
- Avoid draining, digging or changing water levels
- Maintain shallow, vegetated areas for tadpoles
- Reduce disturbance from foot traffic near pond.

Who Can Help Protect the Pond?

- Bridgend County Borough Council - They manage local green spaces.
- Natural Resources Wales - They protect wildlife & habitats.
- Local community groups - They may help care for the reserve.

'I could contact these groups to learn more & help improve the pond.'



Questions I could Ask

- Is the Pond Healthy?
- Are there any conservation plans?
- How can people help protect it?
- What wildlife lives there?



Email
Sent to
SCBC →

Subject

Enquiry about Frog Pond Nature Reserve in Kenfig Hill.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently completing the John Muir Award and creating a scrapbook about a local nature area called Frog Pond Nature Reserve in Kenfig Hill.

I have been exploring the woodland and pond, looking at wildlife and learning about how the ecosystem works. I am really interested in finding out about the condition of the pond and how it is looked after.

I was wondering if you could help with a few questions:

- Is the pond considered healthy?
- Are there any conservation or maintenance plans for the area?
- What types of wildlife are recorded there?
- Is there anything local people can do to help protect it?

I would love to include your information in my project to help me share what I have learned.

Thank you very much for your time and for helping to look after local nature spaces.

Kind Regards

Danielle

Share



In this section, I am sharing my experiences of visiting the Frog Pond reserve. The winding lane beneath the oak & ash trees, the wooden sculptures along the path, and the wildlife around the pond make it feel peaceful & full of discovery.

I also want to share ideas to encourage more children & families to visit nature, such as a fairy trial & a 'Guardian of the Pond' character with mission for children to help protect wildlife & care for the pond.

Although I sometimes worry about the condition of the pond, it is encouraging to see ducks, frogspawn, birds & other wildlife continuing to thrive there.

Through this scrapbook, I hope to share both the beauty of this place & the importance of protecting it for the future.

The Walk



garden oak → woodland lane →
Shaded canopy → pond habitat.



Along the way I noticed:

- changing light patterns through trees
- quieter sounds under the canopy
- moss & lichens on bark
- more wildlife near the pond

Seasonal Patterns

- Spring buds
- Summer shades
- Autumn leaf fall
- Winter bare branches



Things to Look For:

- moss on tree roots
- lichen on bark
- bird calls
- reflections in the pond
- changing woodland light

Reflections

Wildlife at Frog Pond Wood



Dragonflies at Frog Pond Nature Reserve help keep nature balanced. They eat pests like mosquitoes, provide food for birds & Frogs, and show the water is clean & healthy.

Owls control small animals population, keeping the ecosystem balanced.



Butterflies - visit flowers and help with pollination.



Hedgehogs & small mammals live in leaf litter & come out mostly at night.



Bats eat insects at night helping control pests & keeping the ecosystem balanced.

Beetles - Found on forest floor, help break down dead wood.



Frogs - live between land & water starting life as tadpoles in the pond.





Robin

Small passerine bird known for it's orange or red breast & melodic song.

The Great Tit

UK's largest Tit - Black head, white cheeks, green back, yellow belly with black stripe.

Loud, two syllable "teacher, teacher"



Blue Tit

Small passerine bird of the family Paridae. known for vivid blue crown & yellow underparts.

Blackbird

A passerine bird in the thrush family Turdidae. Most familiar & widespread.

Birds expected at frog pond wood:

The Great spotted wood Pecker
Black, white & Red - known for loud "kick" call & bounding flight. Drumming shows the presence of mature trees.



Plants

- Oak trees
- Ash trees
- Brambles
- Ivy
- Ferns
- Moss
- Nettles
- Buttercups
- Daisies
- Bluebells
- Reed grass
- Pond weed
- Hawthorn
- Dandelions
- Blackberry bushes
- Greater Spearwort



Discovering the Flora

My exploration of Frog Pond Wood revealed a vibrant 3.2 hectare 'hidden gem'. I documented a diverse range of plant life, from the Oak and ash canopy to the hartstongue ferns carpeting the woodland floor. Near the water, I identified the Greater Spearwort thriving in the marsh - a vital part of this delicate wetland ecosystem.

The Greater Spearwort
or water buttercup.
Tongue-leaved crowfoot.
Prefers to grow in 40cm
of water in wetland
habitats.

Hart's-tongue fern
Hardy fern of damp,
shady places in woodlands

Where Nature Meets Art

The reserve's Sculpture trail perfectly blends history and nature. My favorite part was the species fence panel, which uses the wooden-carved silhouettes to teach visitors about local biodiversity. Additionally the acorn sculpture offers fun for children and adults alike with the interactive game features.

Hard fern / deer fern

Thrives in moist acidic humus-rich soil
typically found in woodland sites.

Acorn Run

Visitors can gather acorns
to roll down the carved
groove

The Oak Tree and Frog Pond Reserve

In a little garden, not too far, stands an oak tree strong and large. It's branches stretch, it's leaves all sway, watching children laugh and play.

Behind the oak, a path winds round. To woodland shaded, cool and brown. Tall oak and ash trees stand so wide, with leafy arms side by side.

The path leads on - step soft, don't rush - through rustly leaves and quiet hush... until you hear a "ribbit" sound - A Frog Pond hidden in the ground!

They call it Frog Pond Reserve, you see. A special place for you and me. Where frogs go splash and dragonflies glide, and secrets in the woods can hide.

Look close - what's behind the tree? A tiny door! Who could it be? Fairies live here, small and bright, pecking out in morning light.

Wooden sculptures, tall and old, tell quiet stories never told. An owl, a fox, a carved out face, all guarding this enchanting place.

So start beneath the oak so tall, in the garden where you call - And wander back, step by step. To the woodland safety kept.

For magic lies where trees are grown... Sometimes just behind your home.

This poem is about the strength & peace I feel in my garden & frog pond wood.

"The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness"
John Muir.



My Fairy Door

Fairy doors inspire stories, create fantasy & expand imaginations.

My Idea - Fairy Door Trail

At Frog Pond Nature Reserve, there are currently no fairy doors in this part of the woodland. I would like to create a small fairy door trail along the path through the oak & ash trees.

Why I chose This

A fairy trail would encourage more people, especially children, to explore nature in a fun and imaginative way. It could help people feel more connected to the woodland & appreciate the environment.

Do It Responsibly

- Place doors carefully so they don't damage trees
- Avoid disturbing wildlife
- Use safe, natural materials where possible.

What I Hope

I hope this will help people feel more connected to nature and take better care of places like this.

John Muir once said "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

Looking after the pond helps the whole woodland you're not just cleaning the water, you're protecting the 'heart' of the wood.

The Guardian's Call to Action

The Problem: I noticed the pond is facing threats from litter & pollution.

The Mission: The Frog Pond Wood Rescue Mission was created to restore balance.

The Goal: To ensure every creature, from the tiniest to the oldest, can thrive in a safe clean home.

Frog Pond Wood Rescue Mission

Guardians of the Green Pond

Behind the wall, in Frog Pond wood, something important is happening...

The Pond is still alive, with frogs, birds & dragonflies but it is getting a little too green.

The woodland needs guardians!

That's where you come in.



Mission Rule 1: Walk like a whisper
Step softly through the oak & ash trees.
Can you:
• tiptoe like a fox?
• move like falling leaves?
• stay quiet enough to hear birdsong clearly?
Listen... what do you hear today?

Mission Rule 2: The Tiny clean-up Team
Look carefully as you walk.

- Your job is to find:
- anything that does NOT belong in nature (litter)
- If you spot it:
- Pick it up safely (only if it's safe to reach)
 - Put it in a litter bin later
 - Say "we're helping the pond breathe better"
- Even one piece helps!

Mission Rule 4: Watch the Water World.

At the pond, stop and observe.

Can you spot:

- ripples?
- dragonflies?
- Frogs peeking above the water?

Remember:

We look with our eyes, not our hands
The pond is a living home.

Mission Rule 3: Protect the Hidden Homes

The woodland is full of secret homes.

Can you find:

- a log hiding insects?
- moss growing like a green carpet?
- reeds by the pond edge?

These are:

frog nurseries, insect hotels, bird hiding places.

Rule: Look, but don't disturb.

Mission Rule 5: Notice the Magic

Some things are easy to miss.

Look for:

- fairy doors in tree trunks
- strange shapes in roots
- sculptures hidden in the green

Ask yourself

- who lives here?
- what stories are happening right now?



Final Mission: Thank the Wood.

Before leaving:

Can you

- Turn around and say "thank you" to the trees?
- Listen for one last bird song?
- Promise to come back gently?

The woodland remembers kindness!

Extra Mission (Optional)

Be a Pond Watcher

- Notice changes each time you visit
- Is the water greener, clearer, busier with frogs?
- Share what you see like a nature detective.

Final thought.

The pond doesn't need to be perfect. It just needs care, patience and small acts of help.

And that's what guardians do.

! BE A FROG GUARDIAN !

I Will:

- ☐ Care for the woodland
- ☐ Respect wildlife
- ☐ Help keep it clean

Name: _____

PROTECT FROG POND WOOD

This woodland is home to: Frogs, birds, insects
ancient oak and ash trees.

Please keep it healthy:

- ✓ Stay on paths ✓ Take litter home or use bins
- ✓ Do not disturb the pond ✓ Leave plants, logs, and wildlife where they are

- The pond is a living home - not a place for waste.

Thank you for caring for this space

Protect • Respect • Care

The frogs & the oak trees can't ask people to be careful, so I made this poster to speak for them. By putting this up I am sharing the respect I've learned during my John Muir Award.

I want people to see the beauty I see and choose to protect it.



GUARDIAN OF THE FROG POND



Keep the magic alive

Woodland Care Ritual

- Say hello to the wood
- Walk gently & notice 3 things
- Help with 1 small act (like picking up litter)
- Say goodbye.

It keeps the connection emotional, not just practical!

The Message

I used oak viewfinders to look back at the site's industrial past, I am sharing this to show how a former industrial site can become a thriving refuge. Protecting these small pockets of woodland is essential for both local wildlife and our own wellbeing

With children: create a little gift offering for the fairies:

- Dandelion
- Seeds in an acorn cup

Whisper to let them know what you have left.

This book has been digitised into a pdf eBook in order to share with the wider community in the modern forum such as the BCBC website, local conservation website & social media, in order to spread the word in the modern digital age.

Bstorify

Bstorify.com