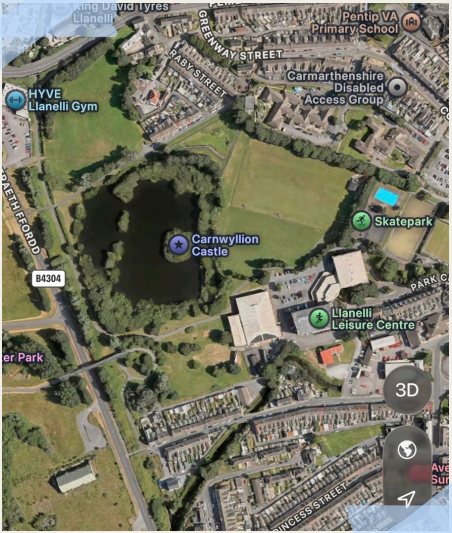
ECEY6005
Part 1

Sustainability in the Early Years.



2017308
Tiegan Dickeson

Discover....
My Chosen Natural Area is Carnwyllion Castle





or what I knew it as was 'the pond by the leisure centre'.

Discover

Why I chose this area?

I chose this place for a number of reasons. First of all, I can easily visit it more than once if necessary because it is close to where my family live. One of the key messages of the John Muir Award is that nature can be discovered anywhere, not just in famous national parks or remote countryside. This pond is proof that even a small local habitat can support an incredible amount of biodiversity.

Secondly , my boyfriend spent a large portion of his early years near this pond, therefore the location holds special significance for him. I had no idea this was such a lovely natural area until he took me here for a walk. I had always thought it was just another area of the town based on the surrounding roads, but strolling around the pond made me realise how serene and wildlife-rich it is. The visit felt more significant because he was able to explore a place that brought back many pleasant childhood memories for him and this made it meaningful..

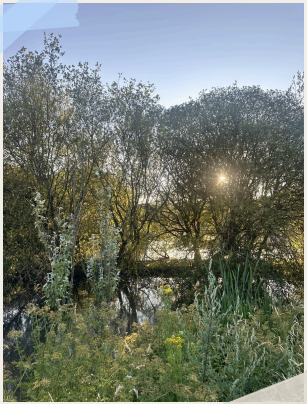
I discovered a hazel tree growing next to the path while I was exploring. This instantly brought back memories of my childhood visits to my grandparents. I used to pick hazelnuts from the trees and share them with my mother. Discovering another hazel tree reminded me of those times and made me recognise how closely nature can relate to our personal experiences.

Lastly, I want a serene location where I could detach myself from daily existence and a structured everyday routine. I frequently catch myself hurrying through everyday tasks without pausing to really take in my surroundings. I was inspired by this endeavour to slow down, pay more attention to my surroundings, and enjoy the natural environment that's right outside my door.



My First Impression.

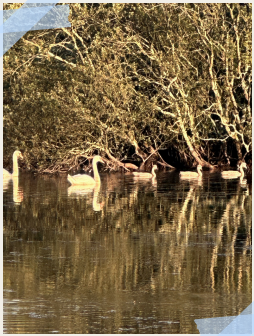
Despite living near busy roads, I was struck by how serene and tranquil the place felt when I first arrived. I could hear the birds calling, insects buzzing and the soft murmur of the gentle movement of water as the sounds of traffic soon faded. Reeds, grasses and a variety of blooming plants around the pond. I immediately felt more at ease because of the serene mood created by the water's reflection of the sky and surrounding trees. The beautiful diversity of habitats in such a small area was one thing that caught my attention. There were grassy banks, reed patches, open bodies of water, trees that offered shade and small islands where birds could safely build their nests away from humans and predators.



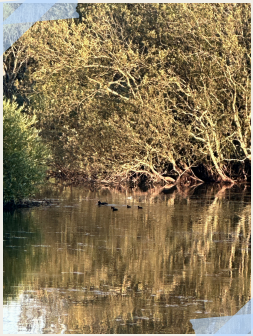




Explore







Instead of just passing by, I took my time strolling gently around the pond, pausing frequently to observe what was going on. I noticed a lot more animals by being silent and taking my time than I would have if I had hurried about. It served as a reminder that patience and close observation are rewarded in nature.

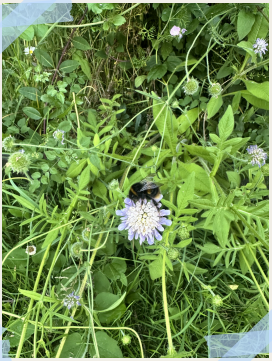
I saw more wildlife the longer I stayed. The pond appeared serene at first, but after observing it for some time, I saw that it was busy. The same area was shared by birds, insects and tiny mammals, all of which were vital to the ecosystem.

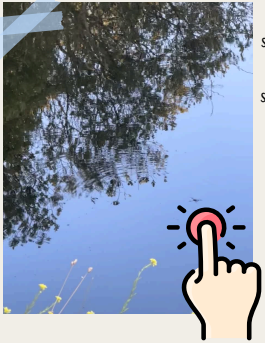
A family of swans floating elegantly across the pond with a few baby cygnets trailing closely behind was one of the first creatures I observed. It was evident how protective the adult swans were, and the cygnets remained near their parents. Observing the family relocate together made me realise how crucial secure, unaltered habitats are for helping the young and shielding species from harm. I also noticed ducks nearby, with ducklings trailing behind them in tidy little lines. The ducklings learned where to swim, where to locate food, and how to keep safe by imitating everything the adults did. Observing how the elders led them around the pond and maintained the family's unity and that was interesting.

I also saw a rat was cautiously strolling along the pond's edge as I carried on with my stroll. Rats are an essential component of the ecology even though they are sometimes seen as pests. By consuming seeds, plants and other organic matter, they aid in the recycling of nutrients and supply food for predators like foxes and birds of prey.As afraid as I was at first, I was reminded by seeing one that all species have a part in the natural world.

I observed a number of bees working hard to gather pollen and nectar around the flowers and grassy areas. They travelled from flower to flower, assisting in the pollination of plants that many other species need on for food and shelter. Bees are among the most important creatures in the environment since without them, many plants and wildflowers would find it difficult to procreate.







Around the pond, I also saw a variety of tiny insects. One particularly intriguing species glided across the water's surface like a spider. After paying closer attention, I saw that it was moving smoothly without sinking by taking use of the water's surface tension. I found out they are called 'Water Striders'. They were very funny to watch as it seemed they were all racing each other. I had also seen many dragonflies they were constantly flying over the surface of the pond. They moved incredibly quickly and often hovered in one place before darting away. I learned that dragonflies spend most of their lives underwater as nymphs before emerging as adults, making ponds an essential habitat for their survival.

This served as a reminder that ponds are home to numerous little animals that are crucial components of the food chain yet are simple to ignore. These insects assist the pond ecology while also serving as food for fish, frogs and birds. Every level of life was present in the pond, from big birds caring for their young to microscopic insects floating on the water's surface. I was able to understand how interconnected every area of the habitat is by taking the time to observe rather than just passing by. One of the main points of the John Muir Award was reaffirmed by my visit, we can better comprehend the natural environment and the reasons it is so crucial to preserve it by slowing down, paying attention and spending time in nature.

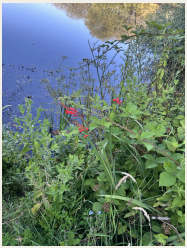
There were many different kinds of plants all around the pond and I quickly realised how few of them I knew. Instead of simply walking past as I usually would, I used plant identification on my iphone to scan a number of leaves and flowers. I did this by swipping up and google lens would identify these flowers and plants for me. As a result, I was able to recognise some species that I otherwise would not have recognised. Using technology in conjunction with outdoor exploration was an interesting experience. It proved to me that technology can enhance rather than diminish education. My curiosity was sparked by each new plant I discovered.



Dock



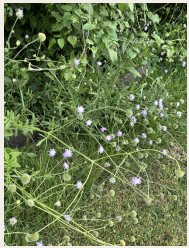
Butterfly-Bush



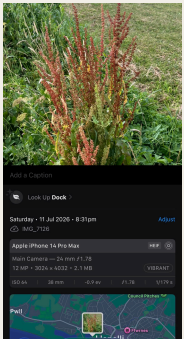
Cardinal Flower

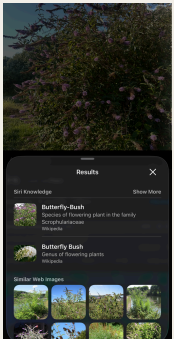


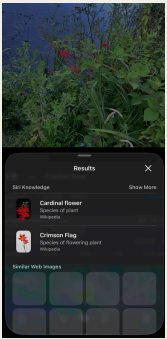
Willow

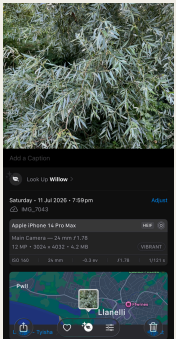


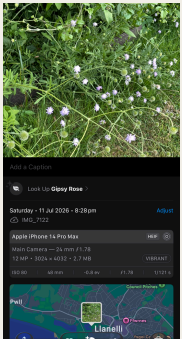
Gypsy Rose











Conserve

Even though I thought the pond was beautiful, I also saw signs that people don't always value the environment. Unfortunately, there was litter all over the pond, plastic bottles on the floor around, and i saw an old tyre floating in the pond and this was the most distressing sight I saw, observing this got me thinking about how people affect nature. Tires are among the things that can harm ecosystems, contaminate water and endanger animals. Rubbish and plastic litter can easily be confused for food, trapping birds and other creatures. The pond is obviously a significant home for numerous animals and it was disheartening to witness. Myself and My boyfriend Elliot did pick some of the litter up that we could and placed them in the near by bin to support conserving the natural environment.







The John Muir Award's conservation component inspired me to consider how I may contribute to the preservation of regional wildlife. I took care to respect the environment during my visit by keeping on approved routes and not upsetting any birds, especially those with young babies. I thought about how my actions can impact wildlife and took care to leave no litter behind. I was motivated to consider getting more involved in local conservation efforts in the future after seeing the tyre and rubbish. The animals' habitats could be improved by even an hour of litter picking assistance as we had also done as we walked around this beautiful area.



"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks!" - John Muir





This experience also encouraged me to be more environmentally conscious in everyday life by recycling, reducing waste and appreciating the importance of local green spaces. Conservation is something everyone can contribute to, regardless of age or experience.

Reflection

My perspective on nature has evolved as a result of completing this John Muir Award. I've come to the conclusion that you can have deep ties with nature without going to mountains or forests. An amazing variety of birds, insects, fish and plants coexisted in a comparatively tiny area in a nearby pond in Llanelli. I think the most important thing I've learnt is how important it is to slow down. I was able to see things that I would have missed if I had just taken the time to watch instead of hurrying through. I felt more at ease, more a part of the natural world, and more conscious of my own duty to preserve these areas when I left. Furthermore I do wish I had collected more evidnce of myself and my partner trying to help conserve the area, however I didn't want to spend more time looking through my screen, I had wanted to support the environment and be present in doing so.





As and as someone who works and trains in early childhood education, this experience has reaffirmed the significance of providing children with regular opportunities to explore natural areas. Children benefit from outdoor activities in terms of their curiosity, self-assurance, resilience and environmental respect. Young children who like nature are more likely to preserve it as adult and overall this project has taught me that even tiny local environments may have a big impact on communities, animals and people's well-being, which makes them worthy of appreciation and protection.