

2306819



Nant Fawr – Big Stream



The John Muir Award

# Discover

Once, Nant Fawr poured freely across the open lands,  
A silver thread weaving through fields untamed.  
Its waters sang beneath open skies,  
A restless choir of echoing through time.

But iron came, rails claiming Lisvane's Green,  
And the Caerphilly tunnel delved deep,  
Stillling the brooks wild song,  
Softening its voice to a stream's gentle murmur.

Now it lingers as a green thread  
Drawn softly through the city's heart,  
Where foxes tread and wildflowers bloom  
A green corridor whispering of what once was

Each season paints it anew  
Springs tender hush  
Summers golden hum  
Autumns rustle  
Winters breath  
A quiet haven where nature endures.



Established in 1993 by Cardiff Council, Nant Fawr Woodlands (Big Stream) forms a green corridor that follows the Nant Fawr stream, stretching from Llanishen Reservoir to Roath Park Lake.

This corridor not only connects key ecological spaces but also traces the legacy of Cardiff's historic water system, Lisvane Reservoir was created as part of the cities early efforts to secure clean water.

Water from Lisvane Reservoir was first channelled into Llanishen's Reservoir, before being directed downward into Roath Park Lake, shaping the landscape and forming the very lifeline that nourishes this woodland today.

# Discover...

This lush green corridor winds through North Cardiff, connecting my home to my workplace like a gentle pathway through the landscape of the city.

There is a calming stillness here, the kind that invites deep breaths and slower steps. Considering the woodland is alive with flora and fauna, shifting gently with the seasons.

It is my favourite place for little adventures with my nieces and nephews and a treasured haven for outings with my forest school groups.

Nant Fawr is natural woodland, nurtured with care by a dedicated group of local volunteers who work year-round to protect, restore and preserve this special place for generations to come.

I love pausing beneath the canopy, watching light dance through the leaves as I wait for signs of life to stir, a sudden rustle, a bird overhead or a curious squirrel peering down.



# Explore....

## Beautiful trail path



I went exploring with my young nieces, we saw lots on the way...

## Flora

Explore Flora, this refers to all plant life  
In Roman mythology, Flora was the goddess of flowers, spring and blossoming life.



## Fauna

Exploring fauna involves studying animal life and understanding their roles within the ecosystem.



In Roman mythology, Fauna was a goddess linked to the earth



## The Stream

Exploring the stream, the movement, the sounds and the life it carries.



# Exploring the stream...

How are you making such big splashes?

Is it because you have got a bigger one?

## Along the Stream



Today we wandered beside a quiet stream, its surface flickering with light. The water moved with purpose, curling around rocks, whispering secrets we wish we could hear. We watched how it danced, sometimes gentle, sometimes bold, but always flowing.

The sound of it splashing against the stones was mesmerising. Not loud, just constant. We stood still and listened letting the cool breeze carry its rhythm into our thoughts.

We could not help but wonder...  
could we make a splash too?  
Skim a stone across its surface?  
Or find some sticks at the bridge to play  
pooh sticks, letting childhood curiosity  
drift downstream?



# Exploring...

## the stream



### Crossing over the bridge

It has become tradition now, every time we cross a stream, Poohsticks is a must. We dash to gather the best sticks, then line up on the bridge in quiet anticipation.

"one, two, three...go".

Who will win this time?

The water moves with the softest grace, carrying our little hopes downstream.



## Captivating Roots

What caught my attention most was the exposed root system of the large trees.

Thick winding and weather-worn, the roots gripped the earth like ancient fingers, holding tight through storms and seasons. Some were tangled like braided rope other stretched outward like veins feeding the forest.

They seemed both powerful and patient, steadily supporting life above while telling a story below.

I stood there for a while, captivated.

There is something humbling in seeing the strength beneath the surface.



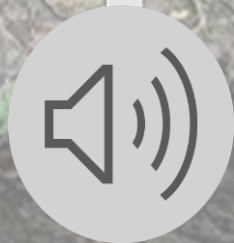
# Exploring....

## Flora and Fauna



As I wandered deeper into the woodland, I couldn't shake the feeling I might spot the Gruffalo himself. The trees arched above me like a canopy of stories and the rustling of tiny creatures in the undergrowth made my imagination spring to life.

Was that an owl's hoot?  
A fox's pawprint?  
A snake's slither?  
The forest felt alive, not just with wildlife, but with memory, a storybook world overlapping the real one.



What can you hear?



What can you see?



What could live here?

# Exploring the flora tapestry...

As we walked the path, we came across a variety of flora, each adding its own colour and charm to the landscape, noted below.

Nettles

Morning Glory

cleavers (sticky weed)

Brambles



# Exploring the flora... Cleavers

## (Sticky weed)



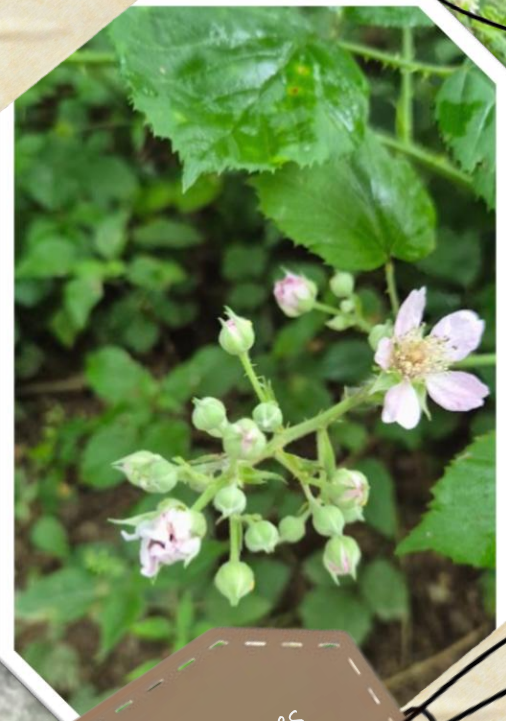
Cleavers, a wildflower native to the UK. Recognisable by its velcro-like stems that cling to anything they touch, cleavers quietly play a vital role in the ecosystem. In these dappled woodlands, it supports the caterpillars of various butterflies.

But Cleavers, 'Sticky weed' holds a different kind of magic for me. As children my cousin in North Wales, introduced me to its mischievous charm, chasing me and my sisters, sticking cleavers to our jumpers as we shrieked with laughter.

Now, that tradition lives on with my nieces, as we raced and or sometimes tip toe close and gently place a sprig on each others back, holding in the giggles, waiting to see how long it takes before they notice.



# Explore... Brambles and Stinging Nettles



Lilah (7) was captivated by the delicate bramble flowers, carefully photographing them and pointing out the subtle differences between each bloom.

The first sight of Brambles takes me straight back to late summer days. Scratched arms, juice-stained fingers and the quiet satisfaction of filling a tub, well half, if I didn't eat them all first.

Just as we thought we had escaped the sting of the nettles, the final stretch proved us wrong, Eveleigh (8) and I were promptly reminded of that familiar, tingling irritation, bringing vivid memories of past brushes with their stings.

Can you spot a dock leaf nearby, to help soothe the sting before it really sets in?



# Exploring Fauna...

While admiring the woodland flora, a ladybird landed on my arm.

Curious, we learned that ladybirds feed on aphids hiding among nettles.

Those same nettles support seed eating birds and serve as vital food for caterpillars or butterflies. A reminder that even nettles nurture the woodland web.



Honey Wood Butterfly

Young Ladybird



Adult Ladybird



Eggs



Pupa



Larvae

I learned about the life cycle of a ladybird, and to be honest I thought I already knew it. I was surprised to discover how complex and transformative it really is.



This experience reminded me how much there is still to learn about the natural world, even in the smallest creatures.

# Exploring Holly



We came across many clusters of green berries along the way, but just one red, gleaming berry stood out, perched high above, hidden safely beneath its spikey guardians. Come the winter months, these berries are vital for birds and mice.

Holly, is a fascinating plant, especially with their leaf variation. The spikey leaves are thought to be a defense mechanism against browsing animals, while the smoother ones then to grow higher up where they are less likely to be nibbled. Nature's version of selective armour!



Holly offers shelter for nesting birds and hibernating animals like hedgehogs. Its flowers feed bees and other pollinators, while the leaves sustain caterpillars of butterflies and moths.

Exploring...

Can you guess  
what this is...



# Exploring fern

The male-fern, one of many fern species, is especially striking in the way it unfurls.

Its tightly coiled fronds, uncurl in elegant spirals. Protecting the delicate tips as they emerge.



Hearts-tongue fern

Male-fern

# Exploring Moss...

We ducked and weaved our way through the woodland, narrowly avoiding nettles, holly and the occasional low-hanging branch, each step a dance, with caution and curiosity. Then, as if round a corner into another world, we stumbled upon it.

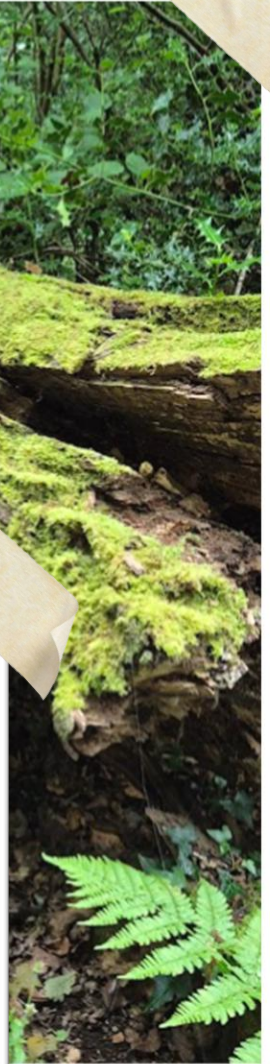
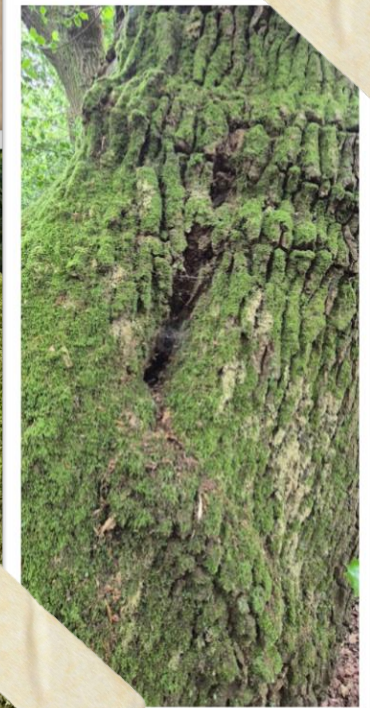
The forest floor softened with moss, ivy winding up roots like green ribbons and ancient trees arching overhead. Beneath one trunk, little gaps opened, just the sort of secret spaces where you could imagine fairies might dwell. It felt like a scene whispered out of storybooks.



# Exploring... MOSS

Magic Moss, small, spongy and full of secrets.

It is a non-flowering plant that does not grow from seeds but from tiny spores. Moss loves cool, damp places, often found hugging trees and beside streams.



Retains moisture, reducing flooding risks. Providing habitats for invertebrates like woodlice.



# Exploring Trees...

We explored the peaceful woodland path and took time to observe three of the many beautiful trees, oak, maple and alder.

Oak



Our old wise friend, the oak. Its broad, twisted branches reaching outward like open arms, providing a quiet refuge for squirrels and birds alike. Deep green leaves, and familiar rounded lobes, stood out with quiet confidence.



Alder



Nestled beside the stream, the alder trees looked perfectly at ease in the soggy earth. Their shiny, notched leaves caught the light, while tiny cone-shaped seed pods clustered among the branches. Their roots gripping the muddy bank quietly anchoring the land.

Maple



Maple, the leaves caught my eye with their sharply defined leaves. Dappled sunlight streamed through the canopy above, weaving delicate shadows across the woodland floor.



# Exploring...

We think the birds flying past here are wood pigeons. What do you think?

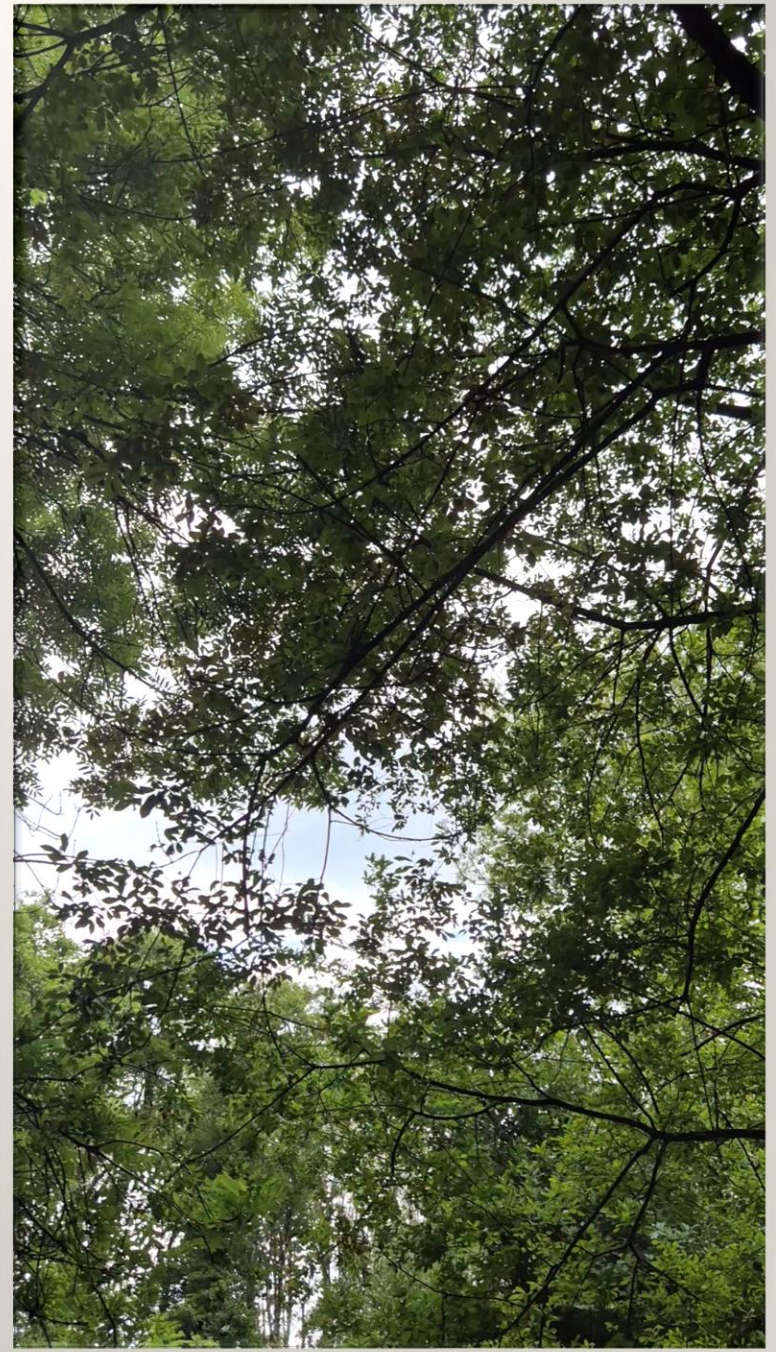


Blackbird



## Birds

The woodland was alive with the sound of... each bird adding its voice to the symphony. The soft, rhythmic cooing of wood pigeons, while the rich melodic phrases of blackbirds adding a touch of warmth and familiarity. Adding the more brash, laughing calls of gulls, sweeping from open skies, reminding us how these landscapes care all connected, from canopy to coastline.



# Discover... the meadow



Lilah tried to capture the bee. Can you spot it?



The meadow, nestled along the woodland's edge, became Lilah's canvas as she stepped into the role of photographer. Surrounded by a patchwork of wildflowers, she immersed herself in the colours, textures and shapes. Her lens saw beyond petals and stems; it uncovered the way nature composes beauty through dance of opposites and the quiet balance between.



White Clover



Red champion



Vetch



Buttercup

# Discover & Conserve



During our walk, we came across a tucked away spot, that seemed popular with local teenagers, evidenced by a makeshift swing and scattered rubbish. What should have been a peaceful nook of the woodland felt sadly neglected.

Eveleigh's reaction was immediate and heartfelt. She moved through the area, pointing out the litter, crisp packets, plastic bottles, etc. calling out each item with growing frustration. It was not just a disappointment she expressed, but a genuine sense of injustice at the disrespect shown to nature.

Determined not to let it go unnoticed, she declared we must return another day, better prepared and equipped to clean up.

# Conserve.

From my experience, I chose to focus on conserving the nursery garden, a familiar and meaningful place to many children.

My aim was to ignite a love for nature among the children by creating opportunities to observe and care for their environment.

By enhancing this concrete area, I hoped to invite wildlife in, providing shelter, food and a habitat for insects, birds and small creatures.

Whether through planting pollinator-friendly flowers or by adding a small log pile, the goal was to create a living classroom where nature could not only visit but thrive.

Empty tyres,  
as barriers

Weeds

concrete

Let's see what I  
managed to  
create in a small  
amount of time...



# Conserve...



Strawberries



Blackberries



Flower bed



Mint



Grass

Lemon Balm

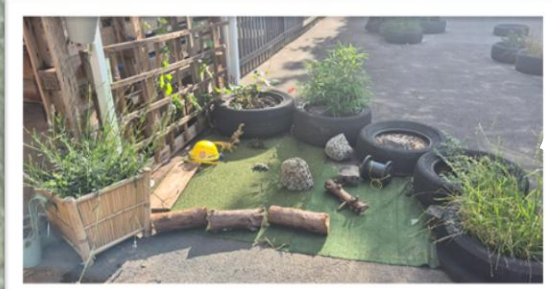
Are you ready to  
see the change...

To breathe new life into the garden and spark curiosity, I created distinct areas of interest. We sowed grass seeds to form soft green spaces for play and exploration, then introduced a variety of herbs, flowers and fruit plants to add layers of scent, colour and flavour. Each plant was chosen not only for its beauty or utility, but to attract pollinators and encourage biodiversity.



# Conserve...

July 2025



Potatoes Spearmint  
Mint  
Blackberries  
Lavender  
Rosemary  
Strawberries  
Bamboo

The mint is already drawing in the interest of wildlife.



# Share...

I have shared my knowledge with my peers, taking on the John Muir Award.



This learning journey helped me uncover more while also allowing me to appreciate the knowledge I already had. It has inspired me to pass that knowledge on.

I have shared my findings with my colleagues and showed them my scrapbook as they were interested.

With my nursery team and the children within it.  
Making our nursery garden more natural, incorporating life.  
Sharing the love for all things little too.

I was discussing this experience with a like-minded friend and she mentioned she had just learnt about the life cycle of a ladybird. It was a real pleasure to share our newfound knowledge with each other.

# Sir David Attenborough

Starting as a BBC trainee in the 1950's to becoming one of the worlds most influential environmental advocates.

He has held leadership roles in conservation organisations and received numerous honours, including multiple BAFTAs, Knighthoods and UN's Champion of the Earth Lifetime Achievement Award.



Sir David Attenborough has championed conservation through powerful storytelling, global advocacy and active collaboration.

His documentaries, Planet Earth, Blue Planet and A Life on Our Planet, have showcased the beauty and fragility of nature, inspiring global awareness.

He uses platforms like the UN Climate Summit and COP26 to call for urgent climate and biodiversity action. Additionally, he supports organisations such as WWF and the Wild Tomorrow Fund with recent work like Ocean highlighting marine protection in Scotland

# Sir David Attenborough



I find Sir David Attenborough deeply inspiring, not only for his lifelong dedication to protecting the natural world, but for the way he shares the passion with others. His storytelling feels personal and meaningful, almost like the gentle wisdom of a grandfather guiding me to see the world as anew.

Through his calm, thoughtful narration, he invites us to witness the planet's wonders, but also to understand their deeper value; ecologically, spiritually and culturally.

He does not just show us what is there, he helps us feel why it matters. The quiet yet powerful call to care is what motivates me to protect and conserve the wild places around us.



# Sir David Attenborough

"It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement;  
the greatest source of visual beauty;  
the greatest source of intellectual interest.  
It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living."

(WWF, 2021)

