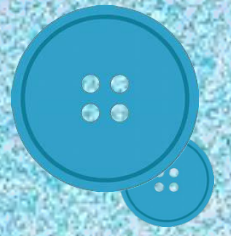


Jack Benney
Student Number: 2104744
(ECEY6005/C)

Regaining Paradise? Sustainability in the early years
Script Word Count: 3897
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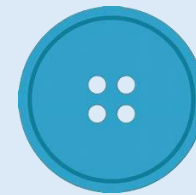
Loughor Paradise

Scrapbook by Jack Benney





John Muir Award



What is it?

The John Muir Award is an environmental education programme created by the John Muir Trust that helps people build a stronger connection with nature

It follows four key principles: Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share, encouraging people to experience, understand and protect natural environments.

The award is named after John Muir, a Scottish born naturalist, explorer and conservationist known for his work protecting wild spaces.

John Muir helped influence modern conservation and played a key role in the creation of early US national parks, including Yosemite National Park.

The award encourages people of all ages to appreciate nature and understand their responsibility in caring for the environment.



John Muir

“ Into the woods I go,
to lose my mind and
find my soul ”

- This John Muir quote, reflects the positive impact nature can have on emotional wellbeing, providing opportunities for relaxation, reflection and connection.
- Outdoor experiences are important in early childhood education as they can support children's confidence, curiosity, development and overall wellbeing.
- I believe connecting children with nature is a key part of early years practice.
- My experiences working with children have shown the benefits of outdoor learning in encouraging exploration and helping children understand the world around them.
- The award links to Early Childhood Education for Sustainability by helping children develop respect for nature, understand conservation and recognise their role in protecting the environment.
- Completing the award will help me reflect on how outdoor learning experiences can support children's learning, wellbeing and environmental awareness.

Dahl (2026)



A Bit about John Muir

- Born in Dunbar, Scotland, in 1838 before moving to the United States with his family when he was 11 years old.
- Famous naturalist, writer and conservationist. Described as the “father of national parks”
- Believed that people should spend time in nature and develop a deeper connection with the environment
- He helped campaign for the protection of important landscapes, including Yosemite National Park, which became one of the first protected national parks in the United States.
- In 1892, he helped establish Sierra Club, an organisation focused on protecting nature and encouraging people to explore the outdoors.
- “In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

Dan (2025)





DISCOVER



- For the Discover stage of the John Muir Award, I explored the Loughor area, a place I was familiar with but had not fully appreciated before.
- The experience allowed me to slow down, observe my surroundings and develop a greater understanding of the local landscape, wildlife and history.
- I photographed the Loughor Monument, the estuary and local plants to capture different aspects of the environment and their importance.
- The monument highlighted the connection between people, history and the landscape, while the estuary showed the importance of protecting local habitats and ecosystems.
- Exploring the plants and wildlife encouraged me to notice details I would usually overlook and recognise their role in supporting nature.
- This experience showed me that meaningful connections with nature can be created in familiar places and helped me develop a greater appreciation for protecting the environment.



Explore



Explored Loughor in more detail by investigating its wildlife, natural features and value as an environment for people and nature.



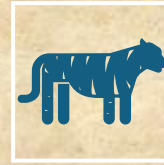
Considered safety factors, including uneven ground, muddy areas and tidal changes near the estuary.



Recognised that while the area was mostly well maintained, small amounts of litter showed the impact humans can have on habitats.



Observed wildlife including bees, woodlice and birds, developing an appreciation for how every species supports the ecosystem.



Understood the importance of protecting natural spaces and how even familiar environments can contain valuable wildlife and features.

BUSHES

These type of bushes
home many bugs and
insects!



Blackberry Bush



Laurel Bush



Spiraea Bush



Berberis Bush

Birds use these bushes to
create nests and keep their
babies safe!

**Delicious
treats for
Caterpillars
and Slugs!**



St John Wort Flowers

FLOWERS

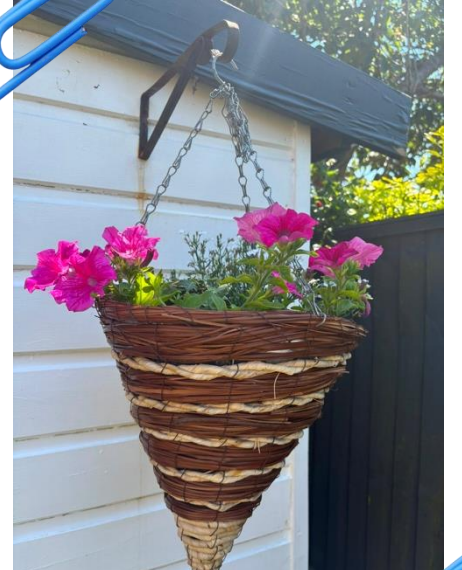
Bees collect honey
from these flowers
and then pollinate
them!



Buttercup Flowers

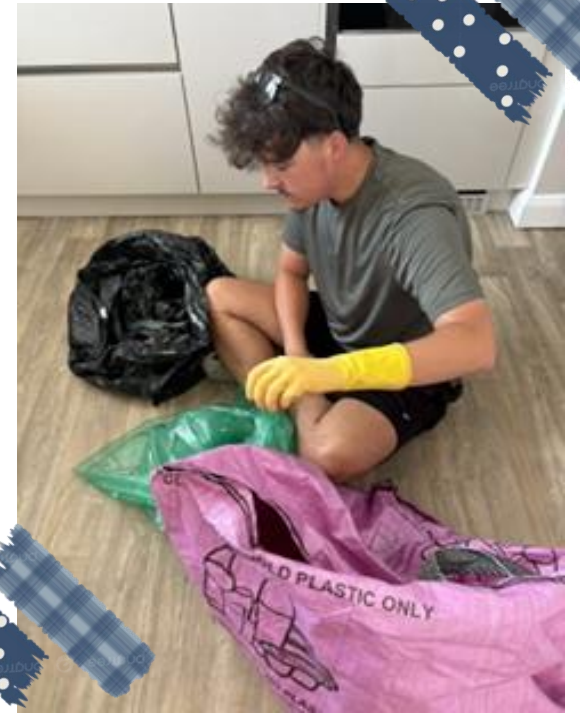


Cow Parsley Flowers



Petunia Flowers

Conserve



- Took practical action to protect the Loughor environment by moving from observing nature to actively supporting it.
- Completed litter picking to reduce human impact, protect wildlife and improve the local habitat.
- Created a bird feeder to support local wildlife and encourage biodiversity.
- Planted tomatoes to develop an understanding of caring for plants and the importance of natural processes.
- Recognised that small actions can make a positive difference in protecting the environment.
- Developed a greater sense of responsibility towards caring for nature and maintaining the connection between people and the natural world.

Making a Bird Feeder

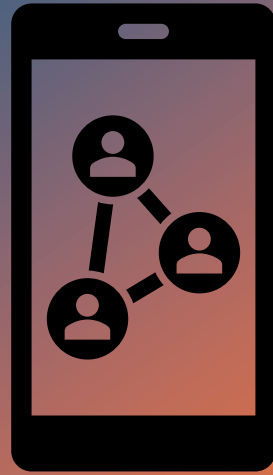
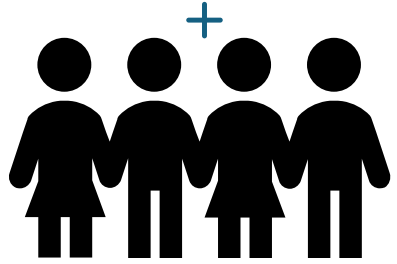


Planting Tomatoes

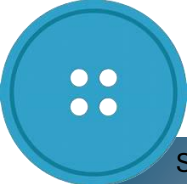
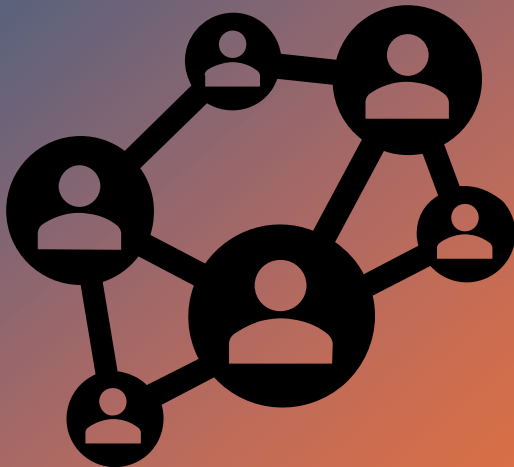
Lowering the carbon footprint and less plastic is being used.



Benefits wildlife by providing additional foods.



Share

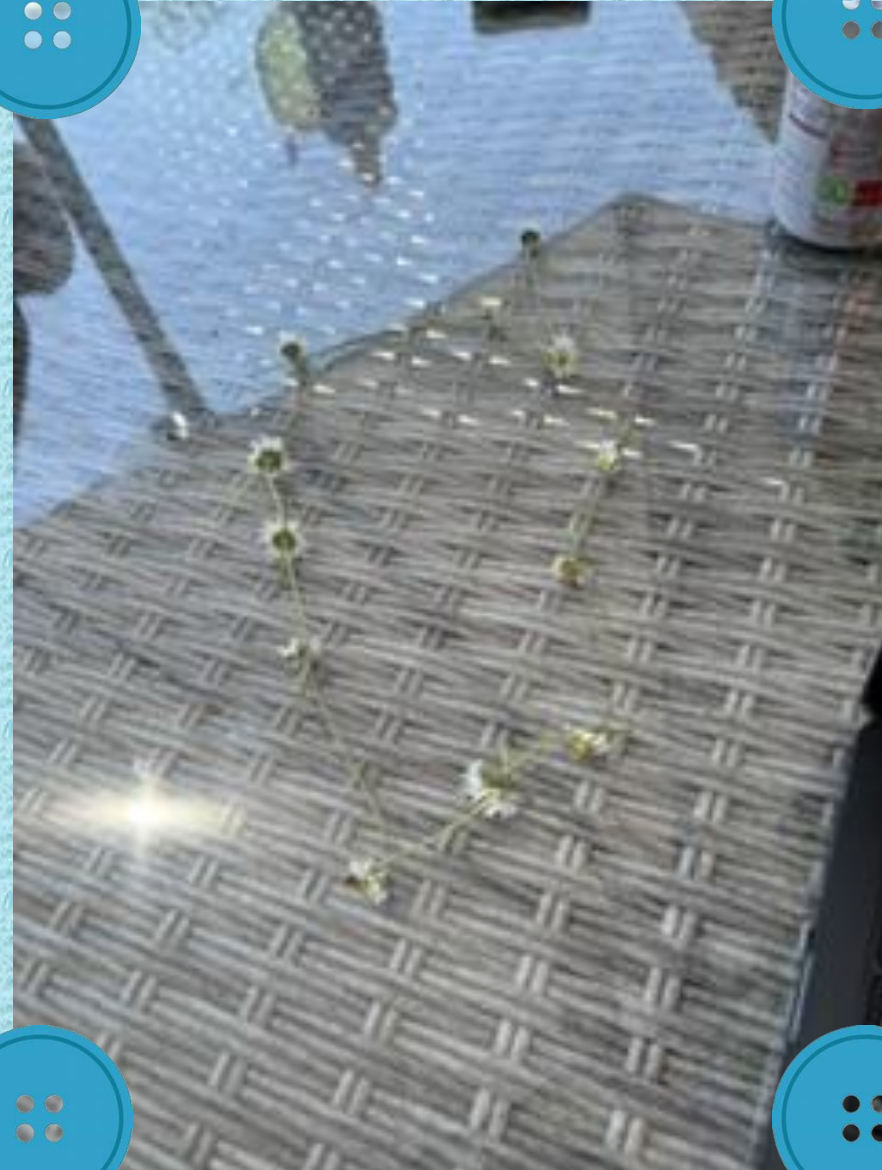


Shared my John Muir Award experience by communicating my learning and encouraging others to appreciate nature.

- Created an online scrapbook showing my journey, including the Loughor Monument, estuary, wildlife and conservation activities.
 - Shared my experience with my brother by visiting the estuary and completing litter picking together.
 - Highlighted that protecting nature is a shared responsibility and that small actions can make a difference.
 - Raised awareness of environmental issues in Loughor, including pollution concerns affecting the estuary and wildlife.
 - Demonstrated how sharing experiences can encourage others to value and protect natural spaces.
- 
- 

Nature inspiring Creativity and Kindness

- Spent time outdoors with my little cousin Rosie, who created a daisy chain using flowers from nature.
- Showed how natural materials can inspire creativity and create meaningful experiences without technology or expensive resources.
- Highlighted the importance of children spending time outdoors to develop imagination, curiosity and connection with nature.
- Recognized that simple activities can encourage people to slow down, appreciate their surroundings and support wellbeing.



Appreciating Nature and the Wonder it brings

- Recognised how fortunate I am to live close to the Loughor Estuary and have access to a natural environment.
- Identified the estuary as a place for walking, exploring, relaxing and reconnecting with nature.
- Recognised the positive impact outdoor spaces can have on physical and mental wellbeing.
 - Understood that protecting local environments benefits both wildlife and the wider community.





Linking nature with Creativity I decided to try and make a song about the beauty around me

Song About Nature – (Tune of Wheels on the Bus)

The Birds in the trees go tweet tweet tweet

Tweet tweet tweet

Tweet tweet tweet

The birds in the trees go tweet tweet tweet, all day long

The Bees in the flowers go buzz buzz buzz

Buzz buzz buzz

Buzz buzz buzz

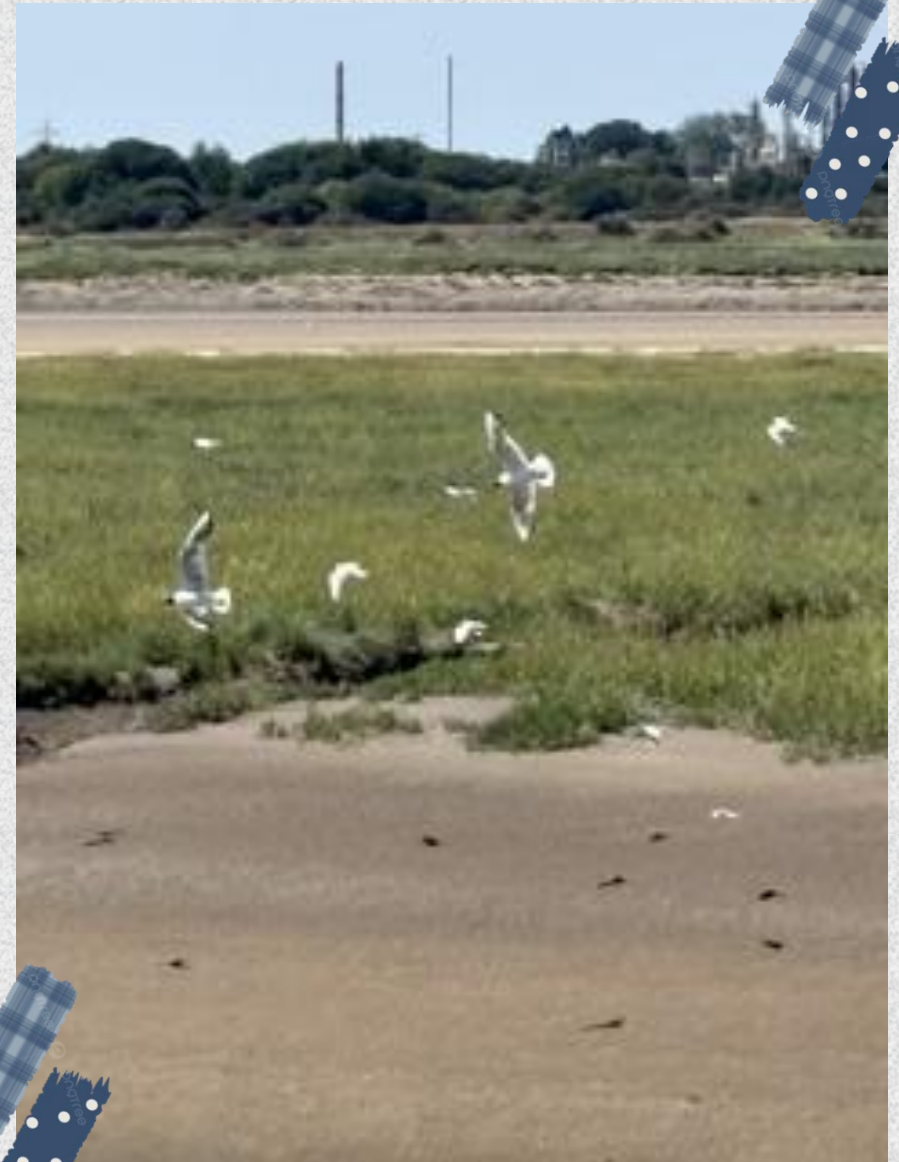
The bees in the flowers go buzz buzz buzz, all day long

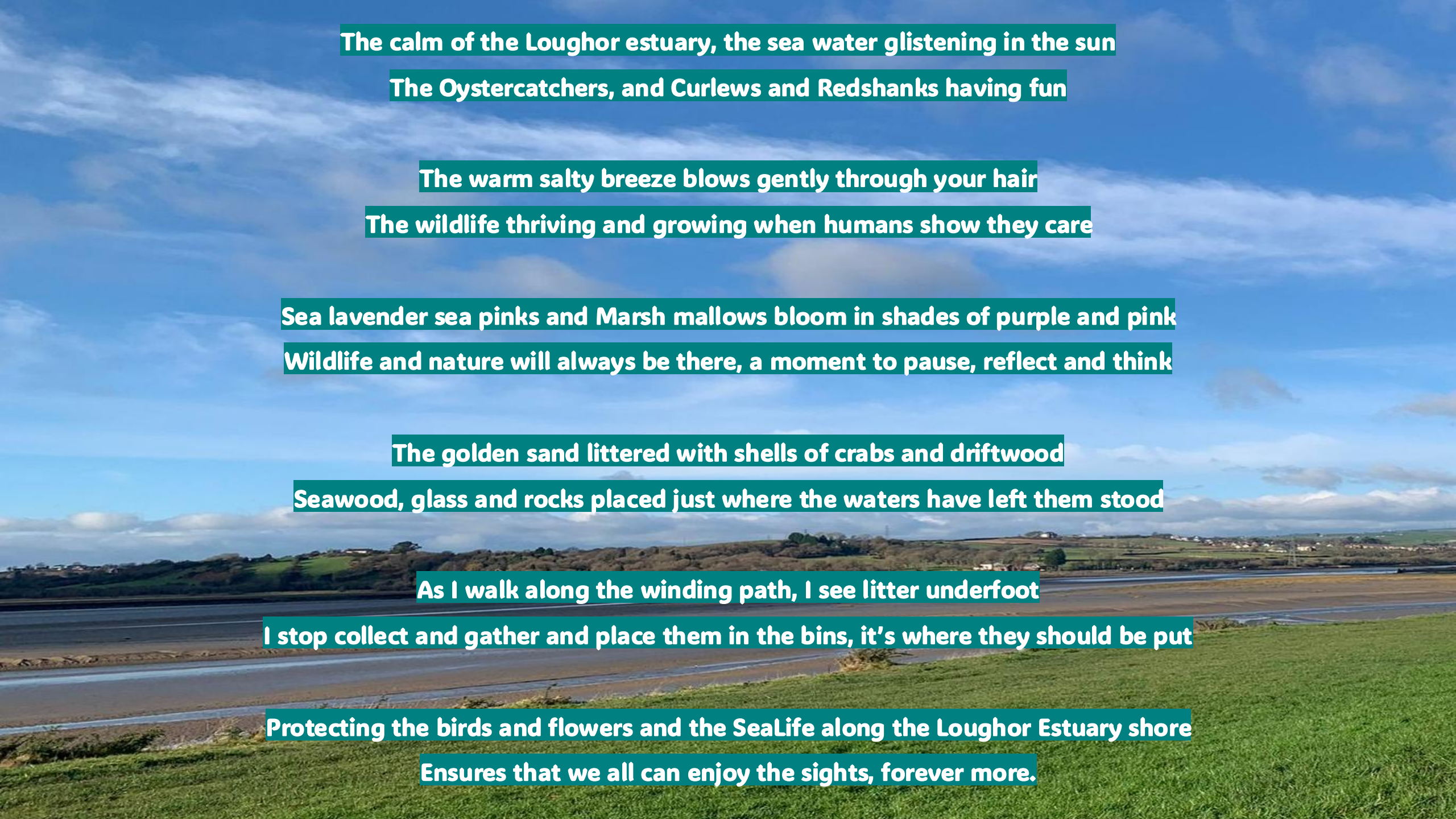
The water by shore goes swish swish swish

Swish swish swish

Swish swish swish

The water by the shore goes swish swish swish, all day long





The calm of the Loughor estuary, the sea water glistening in the sun

The Oystercatchers, and Curlews and Redshanks having fun

The warm salty breeze blows gently through your hair

The wildlife thriving and growing when humans show they care

Sea lavender sea pinks and Marsh mallows bloom in shades of purple and pink

Wildlife and nature will always be there, a moment to pause, reflect and think

The golden sand littered with shells of crabs and driftwood

Seawood, glass and rocks placed just where the waters have left them stood

As I walk along the winding path, I see litter underfoot

I stop collect and gather and place them in the bins, it's where they should be put

Protecting the birds and flowers and the SeaLife along the Loughor Estuary shore

Ensures that we all can enjoy the sights, forever more.

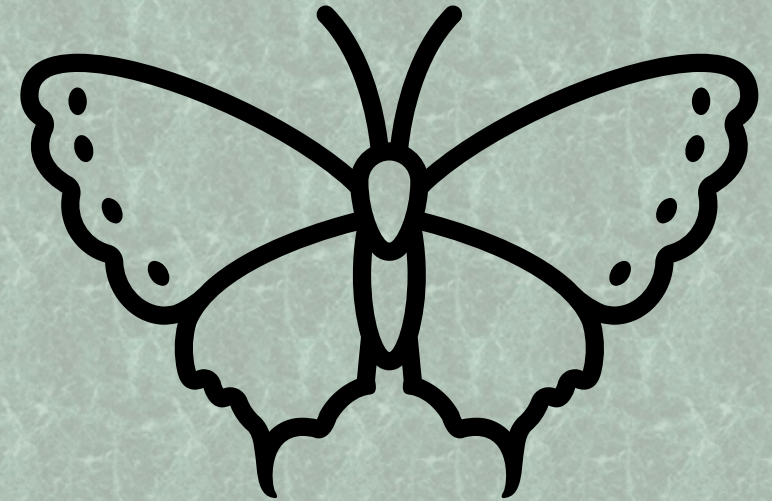
Reflecting on my experience



- Reflected on how my John Muir Award experiences connect to educational theories and my future practice in early childhood education.
- Recognised that my understanding of nature-based learning has developed through research, reflection and discussion, linking to Vygotsky's social learning theory.
- Applied Vygotsky's ideas of scaffolding, the Zone of Proximal Development and the more knowledgeable other to understand how learning develops through support and interaction.
- Developed a greater understanding of how outdoor experiences can support children's curiosity, wellbeing and connection with nature.
- Reflected on experiences such as exploring the Loughor Estuary and making a daisy chain with Rosie, recognising the importance of shared learning experiences.
- Understood that nature learning supports more than knowledge of wildlife, as it also encourages creativity, relationships and emotional connections.
- Recognised the role of early years practitioners in supporting children through questioning, guidance and encouragement.
- Identified that the John Muir Award highlights how nature can provide valuable opportunities for children's learning, development and wellbeing.



Conclusion



- Completing the John Muir Award highlighted the importance of building connections with nature and recognising its impact on children's learning, wellbeing and development.
- Developed a greater appreciation for the natural world through exploring, reflecting and sharing experiences with others.
- Recognised the value of outdoor learning in encouraging children to explore, develop curiosity and build responsibility for the environment.

Reference List

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Schneider, K. (2025) *12 things to know about John Muir*. Available at: <https://www.macsadventure.com/walking-holidays/12-things-to-know-about-john-muir/> (Accessed: 2 July 2026).

That was my Scrapbook about Loughor Paradise, are there any questions?

