

Sustainability in the Early Years

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All photos that are not labelled are authors own.



Scolton Manor

Discover Scolton Manor



The Walled Garden



Ancient Woodlands

Scolton Manor, nestled in the heart of Pembrokeshire, is a place that holds deep meaning for me, a quiet area where the air is thick with birdsong and the scent of damp earth grounds me. Walking through its ancient woodlands or the peaceful walled garden, there's a sense of calm that gently settles the mind. The soft rustle of leaves underfoot and the warmth of the sun filtered through the trees create a sensory experience that restores a sense of balance and wellbeing. The beautiful and vibrant flowers within the walled garden provide a sense of positivity and calm. It's in these moments, surrounded by nature, that I feel most connected to myself and the world around me.

Discover Scolton Manor



For young children, spaces like this offer invaluable opportunities to explore, connect and learn in a way that nurtures both their development and a lifelong respect for the environment. Embedding this kind of sustainable, nature-based learning in the early years fosters curiosity, care for the planet, and emotional resilience from the very start. There is an old steam train on the grounds, filled with information for children to learn the history and explore it. There are multiple sustainable parks for children to play and explore, as well as all the muddy puddles and areas of curiosity. The musical instruments are my favourite for children as this provides another sustainable area for children to use their senses and curiosity.

Explore

At Scolton Manor, there is so much to explore, every visit reveals something new. From the striking Victorian manor house to the rich biodiversity of the woodlands and the carefully tended walled garden, the site is full of natural and historical wonders. Children can observe bees busy in their hives, spot wildlife among the trees and through the designated bird watching houses throughout the area, and notice the vibrant colours of wildflowers changing with the seasons. It sparks deep curiosity and a desire to understand how all living things are connected. The area is thriving and beautifully looked after, and clearly valued by those who maintain it. It offers an example of how humans and nature can coexist in harmony, benefiting one another.



Explore

This area is a wonderful area for children to use their imagination and curiosity, full of bug hotels and wonderful flowers, mud kitchen equipment and resources. There were two bee hives near to some flowers, which is wonderful for the environment, but children should be made aware of bee safety to explore this area.



Explore

Scolton Manor has a whole area dedicated to the bees and producing honey, known as The Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre. There is so much valuable information within here for children and adults to learn about how to care for and protect our bees in the environment. The wonderful flowers surrounding Scolton Manor are another way to care for the bees.



For more information
on The Pembrokeshire
Beekeeping Centre,
scan the QR code here.



(Scolton Manor Park, 2025)

Wildlife in Scolton Manor



Squirrels

Squirrels support tree regeneration by burying nuts, create habitats through their foraging and nesting, serve as prey for predators, and engage the public as a familiar and charismatic species. However, squirrels can damage trees by stripping bark, outcompete native species, and raid bird feeders or gardens, causing conflict with people.



Baby Newt

Newts help keep insect numbers down by eating pests, indicate clean water, support food webs as both predators and prey, and link land and water habitats in ways that benefit nutrient cycling and soil health. However, newts may be vulnerable to habitat loss or pollution, meaning ponds might need careful management to avoid overpopulation or imbalance with other aquatic species.

Wildlife in Scolton Manor



Robins



Robins help control insect pests, indicate a healthy ecosystem, occasionally spread seeds or pollen, and add cultural value with their iconic song. However, robins can become aggressive towards other small birds when defending territory, sometimes excluding other species from prime feeding or nesting spots.

Crows clean up carrion to reduce disease, disperse seeds through caching, balance pest populations by preying on small animals, and bring intelligence and behavioural complexity to ecosystems. However, they may raid the nests of other birds for eggs or chicks, gather in noisy flocks that can be a nuisance, and adapt well to human waste, sometimes encouraging litter problems.



Birds nest



Crows



Conserve

To keep Scolton Manor clean and protected, we need to nurture a shared responsibility by picking up litter, staying on paths to protect delicate plants, and teaching the next generation to care about their environment. In the early years, encouraging children to ask questions, care for living things, and notice the small details around them lays the foundation for sustainable thinking. By engaging with places like Scolton Manor, we not only support our mental wellbeing but also build the habits and values needed to protect and preserve such special spaces for the future. The area is thriving but more needs to be done to educate the children and parents on protecting the nature within this sustainable environment.

Loud bangs, shouting children and heavy footsteps can frighten wildlife, causing birds to abandon nests, mammals to flee their young, and sensitive species to avoid the area altogether. This disturbance can disrupt feeding and breeding, making habitats less safe and reducing local biodiversity over time. We can help by teaching children to move quietly, respect wildlife habitats, and understand the importance of sharing outdoor spaces with nature.



A forest school area is linked in this space, which could be an ideal way to teach children about caring for wildlife and the environment. Through hands on activities like bug hunts, den building and nature art, they can learn to observe without disturbing animals and appreciate the value of quiet, careful movement. Having guided sessions here could introduce ideas about habitats, food chains, and conservation in an engaging yet memorable way. By giving children a dedicated space to explore and connect with nature, we can foster respect, curiosity and lifelong responsibility for protecting local wildlife.

Conserve

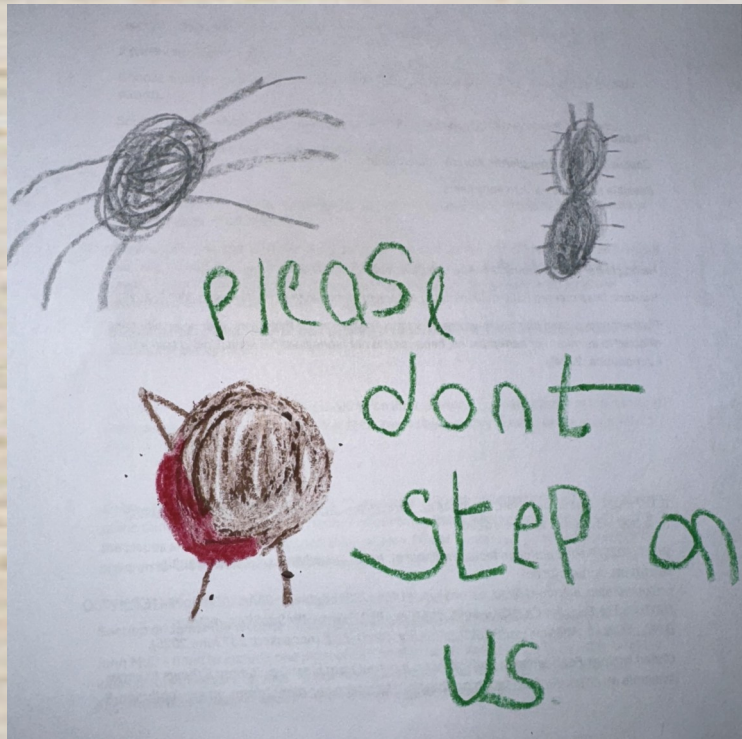


Dog poo was an issue within the grounds of Scolton Manor, which is an issue created by people in the area. Educating people on the dangers of dog poo could prevent this. Educating children in schools or through posters is a great way to do this and to protect our children and the environment.

Here are some examples of the rubbish I found close to the Eco Explorer play area, showing another issue that is created by people within the area. Within that area, there are no rubbish bins, which can lead to littering. To overcome this, more bins could be provided, or some posters, which encourage and remind both children and parents about the importance of taking their rubbish with them.



Share



Raising awareness about protecting the bugs and animals at Scolton Manor is vital in helping people understand just how important even the smallest creatures are to the health of the environment. One way to do this is by encouraging children and families to look closely at nature by spotting insects in the walled garden or listening for birds in the trees. From there, we can build understanding: bugs like bees and beetles pollinate plants, and birds help control pests and spread seeds. Without them, the whole ecosystem suffers.

To raise awareness, early years settings can lead projects based on mini-beasts and local wildlife, helping children learn what these creatures need to survive. Activities like building bug hotels and making bird feeders not only support these animals, but also help children take pride in caring for nature. These can be shared through photos, storyboards, or information boards around Scolton Manor or in schools to help others understand how simple actions make a big difference.

Signs and displays placed gently around the site can remind visitors to respect wildlife habitats—asking people not to disturb bug hotels, to stick to paths, and to avoid dropping litter that could harm animals. Even something as simple as a child-made sign saying, *“Please don’t step here, bugs live here!”* can be a powerful message.

By involving children in raising awareness, we empower them to be advocates for wildlife, teaching others to respect the natural world. This sense of care and responsibility ensures that bugs and animals at Scolton Manor continue to thrive, protected not just by conservation efforts, but by a community that truly understands their value.

John Muir

John Muir, born in Scotland in 1838, is widely regarded as one of the founding figures of the modern conservation movement. Though he spent much of his adult life in the United States, his deep love and respect for nature began in the Scottish countryside. Muir believed that wild places were essential for human wellbeing, and that everyone, especially children, should have the chance to explore and connect with the natural world.

In the UK, Muir's legacy lives on through the John Muir Award, a scheme that encourages people of all ages to discover, explore, conserve, and share wild places. It is widely used in schools and early years settings to help children develop a sense of responsibility and wonder for the environment. The award supports outdoor learning and promotes sustainability by encouraging hands-on experiences in nature, such as planting trees, building bug hotels, and taking part in litter-picking events.

By following Muir's example, we can inspire children to become caretakers of their local environment, recognising that places like Scolton Manor are not just beautiful, but also vital for wildlife and future generations. As Muir once said, *"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks."* His message remains as relevant today as ever: when we take time to connect with and care for nature, we not only protect it but we nourish ourselves too (John Muir trust, no date).



(John Muir trust, no date)