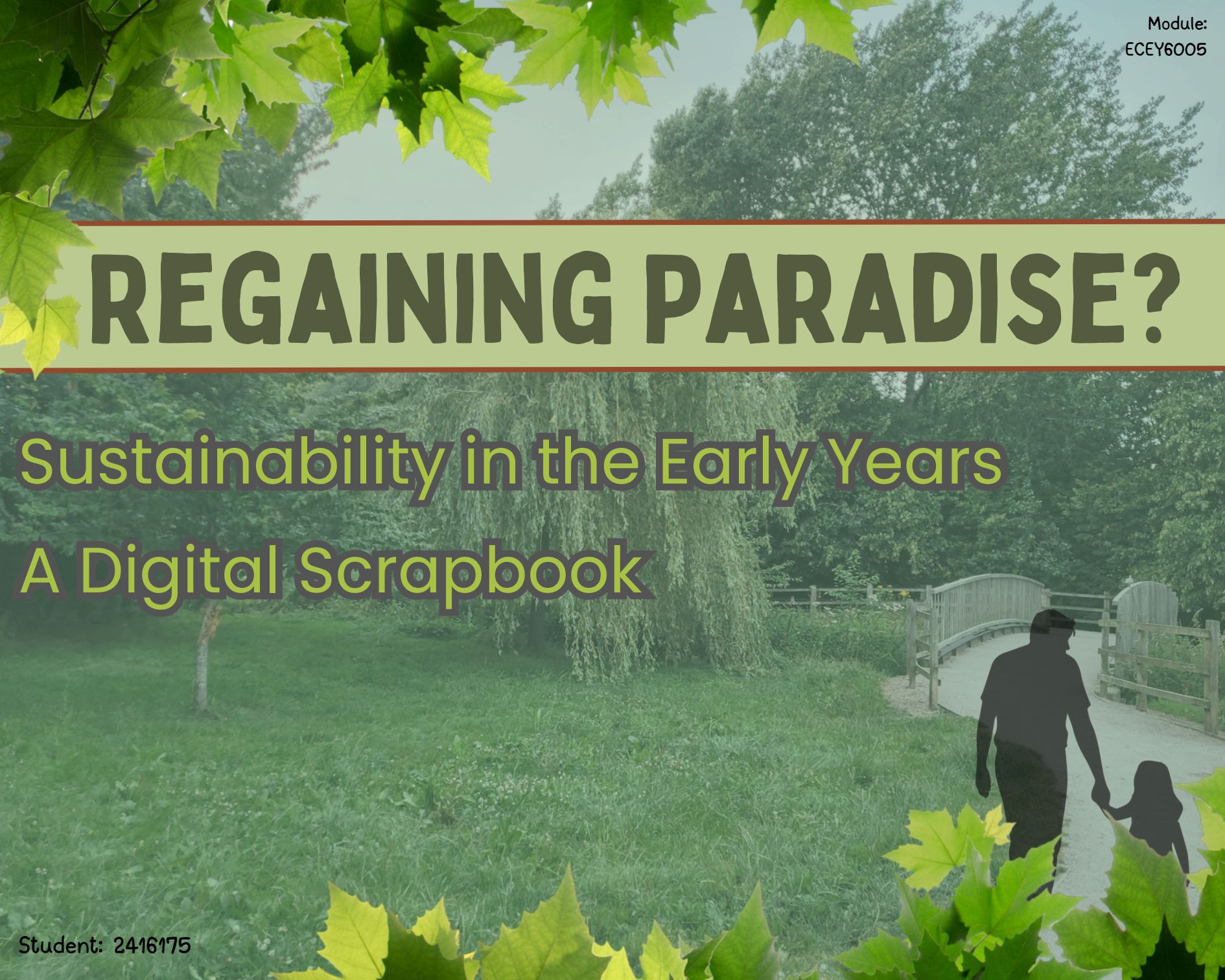
Module:
ECEY6005

REGAINING PARADISE?

Sustainability in the Early Years

A Digital Scrapbook



Student: 2416175

Scrapbook Aims:

This scrapbook has been created as evidence of my journey through the John Muir Award, covering the four key challenges of Discover, Explore, Conserve, and Share. Through completing these activities, I aimed to deepen my understanding of sustainability issues and develop a stronger connection with the natural environment. Along the way, I explored local wildlife, habitats, conservation initiatives, and the importance of protecting green spaces for future generations.

As part of this award, I have also reflected on how sustainability can be meaningfully incorporated into Early Years Education. This has encouraged me to consider relevant theories, criticisms, and examples of effective pedagogical practice that support children's environmental awareness and engagement with nature. These reflections will be explored in greater depth within my recorded presentation for this module, allowing me to critically examine the role of sustainability in early childhood education and my future professional practice.

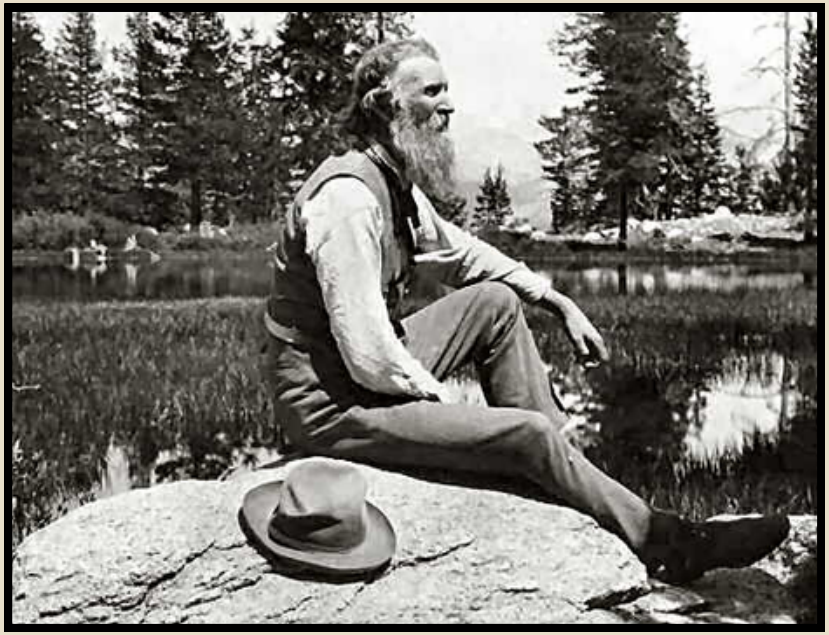
Contents:

- **Pages 1- 3:** Introduction, Scrapbook Aims, About John Muir
- **Pages 4- 8:** Discover
- **Pages 9- 21:** Explore
- **Pages: 22- 24** Conserve
- **Page 25:** Share
- **Page 26**: Final Thoughts
- **Page 27:** Thanks and Poem



All photographs, videos and artwork are author's own, unless referenced.

John Muir (1838 – 1914)



(John Muir Trust, 2026)

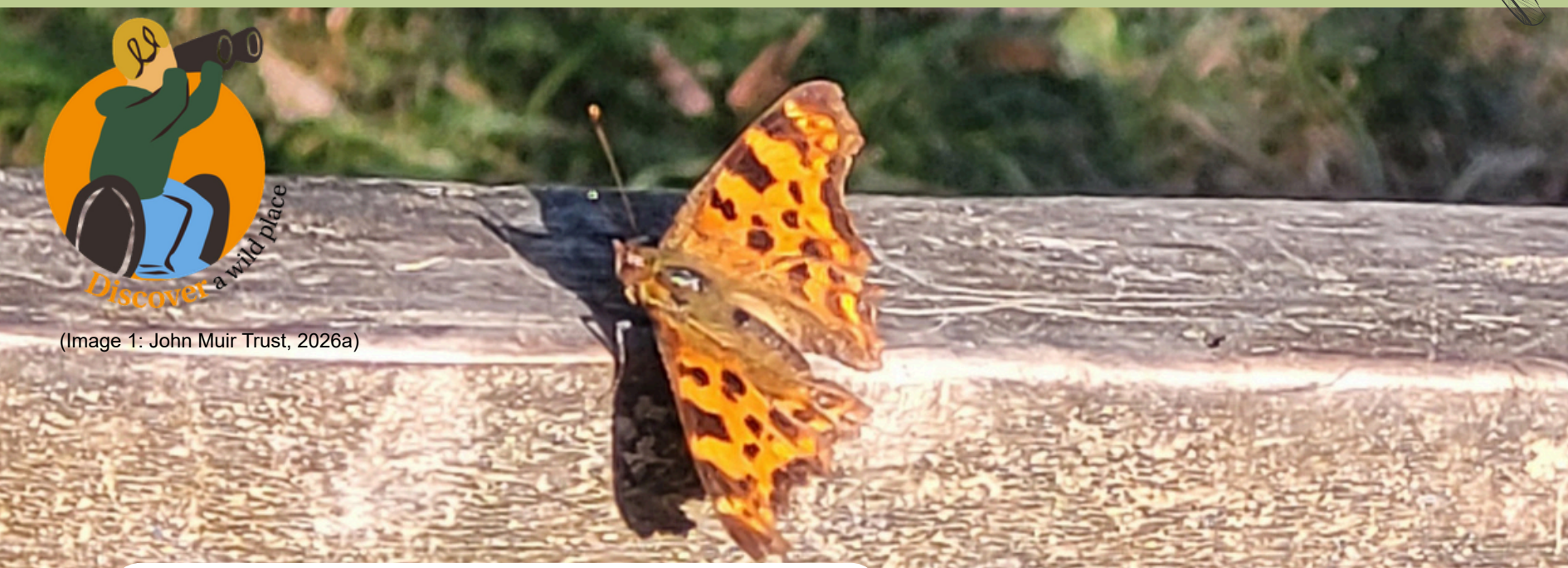
"I ONLY WENT OUT FOR A WALK, AND FINALLY CONCLUDED TO STAY OUT TILL SUNDOWN, FOR GOING OUT, I FOUND, WAS REALLY GOING IN"

(Wood, 2026 - Quote from John Muir 1938)

John Muir (1838–1914) was a Scottish-born naturalist, writer, and environmental campaigner who helped inspire the modern conservation movement. After emigrating to the United States as a child, he developed a deep appreciation for the natural world and spent much of his life exploring wild landscapes. Through his writings, he encouraged people to value nature and played an important role in the protection of places such as Yosemite Valley.

Muir believed that wilderness should be protected not just for human benefit, but because it has value in its own right. He saw humans as part of nature rather than separate from it and believed that spending time outdoors could improve wellbeing. Although some of his early views have since been criticised, he later showed greater respect for indigenous communities and their connection to the land. Today, his work continues to influence environmental conservation around the world.

Discover



(Image 1: John Muir Trust, 2026a)

Discover Section Contents:

This section explores:

- My chosen area
- A bit of history about the area
- Why I chose this area
- Changes to the area

Discover

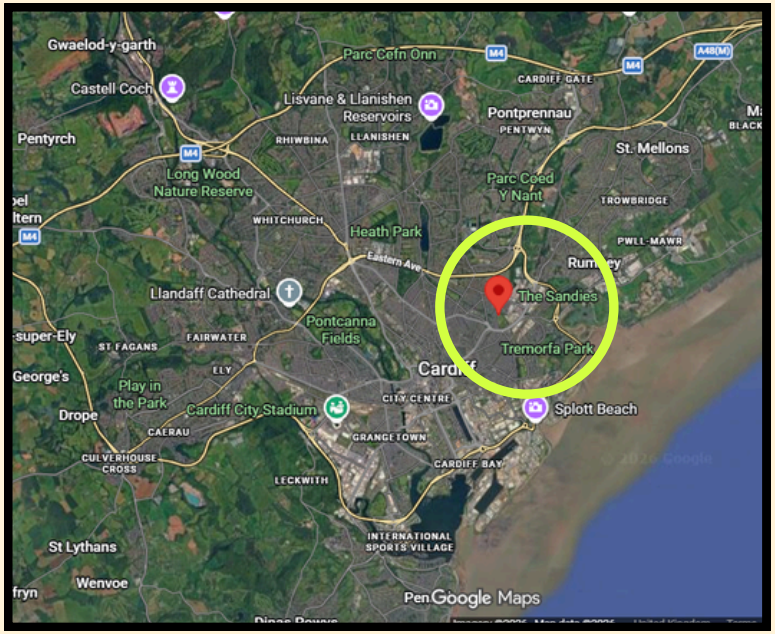
My chosen area:

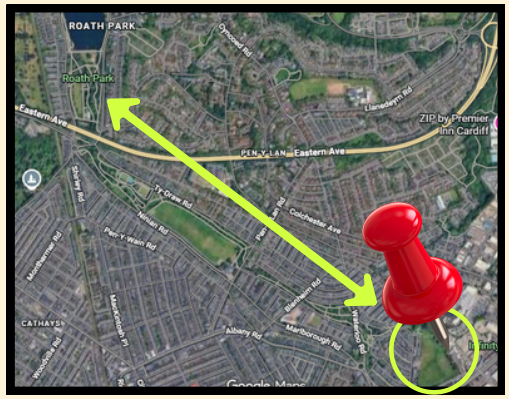
As part of my John Muir award and university module, I have decided to look at an area that was very important to me as a young child - the Harlequins playing field and Sandies park in Roath, Cardiff.



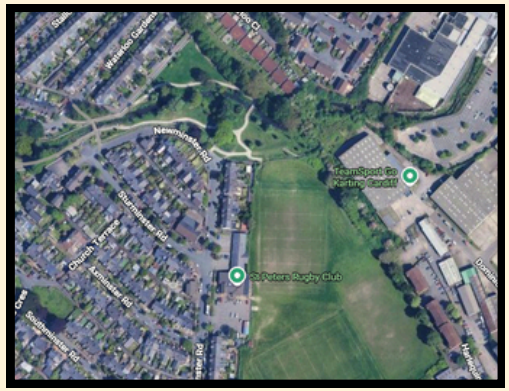
My Pacer, 2026

Take a look to at the satellite city map below to see where the location lies within South East Cardiff:

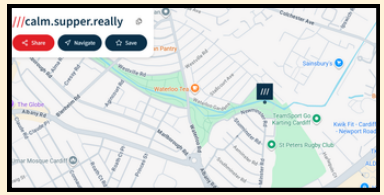




This map shows parks in Roath that connect my chosen area to Roath Park, a popular outdoor tourist attraction in Cardiff.



Here is a closer view of my chosen area - if you would like to visit this space, please use the 'What 3 Words' area code - ///calm.supper.really



(Google Maps, 2026; What3Words, 2026)

Discover

A bit of history

In July 1925, Cardiff Council purchased around 0.75 acres of land from the Tredegar Estate. Later, the western half of the area known as The Sandies was bought from the Penlline Estate in 1951, with the remaining section acquired from British Rail. Records from Parks Committee meetings show that in December 1950 the council agreed to buy 0.92 acres of land, including the brook next to Waterloo Gardens, for £10. In 1952, discussions began to purchase a further 0.68 acres from British Railways, which required the council to install a new fence along the railway boundary. After several years of negotiations, an agreement was finally reached with the British Transport Commission in late 1955, allowing the land to become part of the park.



Welsh Government RAF Medmenham 3612 8th September 1942 part frame

1942 aerial photograph showing The Minsters, The Sandies and The Harlequins (Cardiff Parks, 2026)

Cardiff's Green Spaces

Cardiff's green spaces have changed dramatically over time. Before the late 1800s, the city had very few public parks. As Cardiff grew, large parks such as Roath Park, Bute Park, and Victoria Park were developed to provide recreational space for residents. Over the 20th century, additional parks and open spaces were created, often from former estates or undeveloped land. Today, Cardiff's green spaces are valued not only for recreation but also for supporting wildlife, improving health, and helping the city respond to environmental challenge

Click on the links below for more information on the history of Cardiff's Parks

Cardiff Parks History (1890s–Present)

Cardiff Naturalists' Society – A Brief History of Cardiff Parks

Discover

Why here?

Growing up in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, green spaces for some were more difficult to come by – but I was really lucky! Even though I lived within a mile of the city centre, behind my parent's house was a fantastic natural playground!

memories





The view to the field from my childhood bedroom

I can still remember running down the small garden path and unlocking the back gate with excitement and anticipation for what outdoor adventure was to come - a bit like the wardrobe door in 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'! Every exploration was different, there was always something new to see, new to do, a new imaginative scenario to play out here. It wasn't just a field either – there was a river for fishing with nets, a bridge with a bank to climb, and even a forest to explore, although it wasn't really a forest, more the of trees that lined the back of the field – but to us, my brother and I, it was a real forest - a big forest full of possibility and wonder!

It was safe for us to explore here. Mum and Dad could pop out and call us in for tea. We could run freely in all weathers and there was never a real concept of time, and boredom – what was that?!?! It wasn't *just a field,* for me, and my younger brother, this was *our* playground. Our very own green space to play, learn and discover about nature and the world around us.

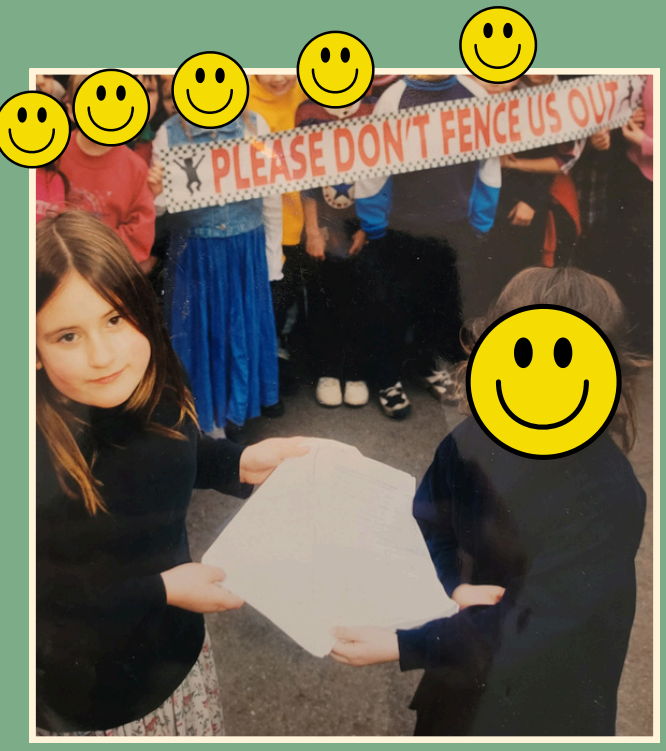
Discover

Change

Unfortunately, in 1997 the local rugby club was granted permission to fence off the field area. I was deeply upset by this decision, as the field had always been an important community space. Together with a friend and several of our fellow primary school pupils, I started a petition and took our concerns to the local newspaper (see photograph and newspaper article below). Although our campaign did not succeed in preventing the development, it demonstrated how much the field meant to local people!



The fenced-off field today!





Girls join fight to stop ground being fenced

(South Wales Echo, 1997)



A young, environmentally - conscious Girl Scout!

Explore

Explore Section Contents:

This section explores:

- **Trees:** exploration and observation, slow pedagogy, learning activity, storm damage and climate change
- **Plants, shrubs and grasses:** exploratation and observation artwork, looking closer-minibeasts, learning activity
- **The River:** exploration and observation, litter issue, flood risk, pollution incident

(Image 2: John Muir Trust, 2026b)

Explore



This pictures show the entrance to the Sandies park. Immediately you are struck by a fantastic selection of impressive trees!
There are accessible pathways and benches for people to enjoy leisurely walks. This area is very popular with dog walkers!









There are designated litter and dog waste bins for waste removal, but unfortunately litter can still be found here!



Explore

Trees - Observation







A wonderful variety!



GOLDEN ASH







YOUNG WEEPING WILLOWS





YOUNG COPPER BEECH

YOUNG CHERRY TREE





During my visits, I enjoyed observing a wonderful variety of trees throughout the area. There was a mix of young and mature trees, each adding its own character to the landscape, from the graceful weeping willow to the striking golden ash. Together, they created a diverse and beautiful habitat that supports local wildlife and enhances the natural environment.

Explore

Trees - Observation and Slow Pedagogy



Learning activity

Observing tree bark with different textures made me think about suitable learning activites I could do with children and so I attempted some bark rubbings with crayon!



LOOK, UP AT THE SKY. THERE IS A LIGHT, A BEAUTY UP THERE, THAT NO SHADOW CAN TOUCH
J. R. R. TOLKIEN
(Goodreads, 2026)

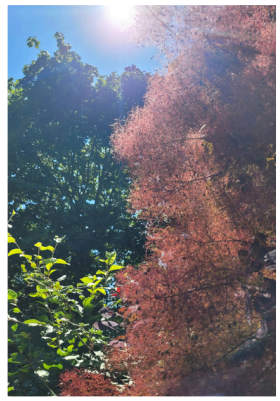
















Explore

Trees - Looking closer









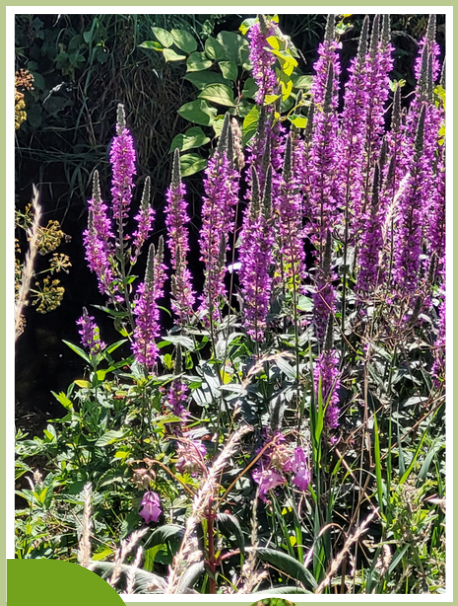




While walking around the area, I noticed several trees that had been badly damaged by recent storms, including Storms Darragh, Amy, and Eunice. Some trees had split trunks, while others had been completely uprooted or had large branches torn away by strong winds. Seeing this damage highlighted how powerful extreme weather can be and how it can change local habitats. These increasingly frequent and intense storms may be linked to climate change, which is causing more unpredictable weather patterns and putting greater pressure on natural environments.

Explore

Plants, Shrubs and Grasses - Observation



PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE



MAHONIA



DANDELION CLOCK





HEDGE BEDSTRAW

BURDOCK

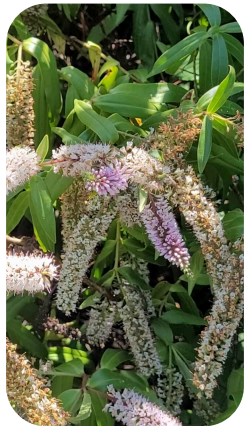


DAISY

SMOKE BUSH

SKIMMIA



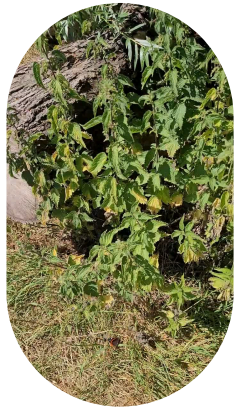


WATCH NOW

LOOK CLOSELY FOR THE BEE!

CAN YOU SEE THE BUTTERFLY?

WATCH NOW





Explore

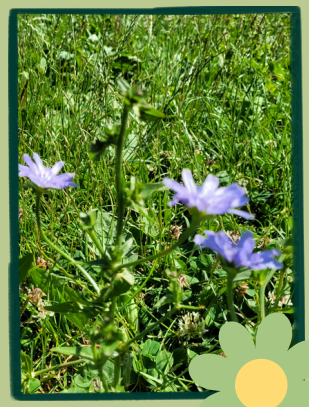
Plants, Shrubs and Grasses - Observational Activity



FOXTAIL BARLEY



SMOKE BUSH SEED HEAD



COMMON CHICORY

RAGWORT



I enjoyed creating some watercolour paintings of the some of the flowers and leaves I noticed in the area. Taking the time to be creative and truly think about nature I observed in this area was a very rewarding mindful activity which I must make more time to do going forward! As an early years practitioner, we often provide these opportunities for children, but forget how beneficial they can be for the adult aswell!





Time Out

Explore

Plants, Shrubs and Grasses - Looking closer



While exploring the area, I came across these striking orange and black striped caterpillars and wasn't sure what they were, so I decided to do some research. I discovered that they are cinnabar moth caterpillars. Their bright colours act as a warning to predators, and they mainly feed on ragwort, storing the plant's toxins in their bodies for protection. They play an important role in the ecosystem by helping to control ragwort populations. Later in their life cycle, these caterpillars transform into beautiful black and red cinnabar moths.

(Wildlife Trust, 2026)



Learning activity

Observing cinnabar moth caterpillars helps children develop curiosity about local wildlife. Learning how the caterpillars depend on ragwort introduces ideas about biodiversity, habitats, and why it is important to care for nature.

Learning Activity Idea: Build a Habitat!

Provide children with natural materials (leaves, sticks, grass) and recycled resources (cardboard, egg cartons) to create a habitat for a cinnabar caterpillar. Encourage discussion about what the caterpillar needs to survive, including food, shelter, and plants such as ragwort.

Learning outcome: Children begin to understand that living things depend on their environment and that protecting habitats supports wildlife and sustainability.

Explore

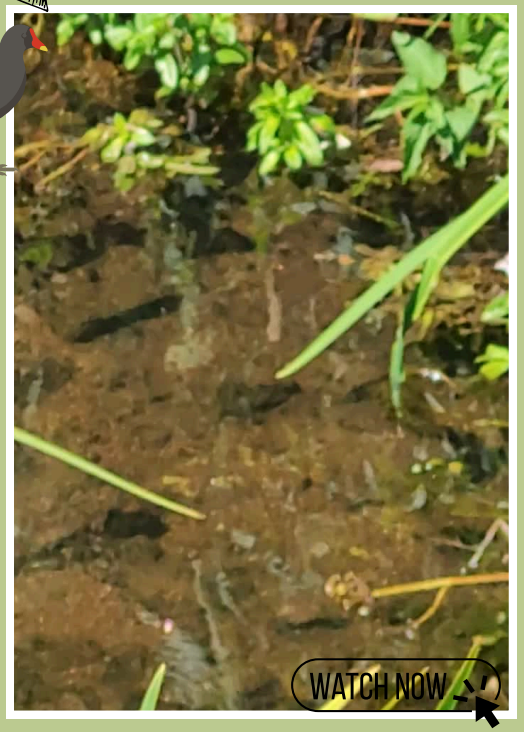
The Brook - Observation





AMAZING MOORHEN AND BABY VIDEO!





I have many fond memories of wading in this river with my fishing net as a young child! It was so enjoyable to come back and spend time obseving the different wildlife that lives here. From pond skaters, to moorehens, the small brook was full of life! Unfortunately it hasn't always been like this.....

CAN YOU SEE THE POND SKATER? CLICK ON THE VIDEO BELOW!





CLICK ON THE VIDEO TO SEE THE SMALL MINNOW FISH



LARGER FISH IN THIS VIDEO!



Explore

The Brook - a litter problem!



From afar the river looks healthy and clean, but if you look closely it's littered with unwanted items - some of which are a danger animals and humans, with sharp edges and rusting metals.





I found a disgarded office chair, cable reel, drinking cans and food containers. Whilst there, a local person told me that they had seen shopping trolleys, old bicycles, sheets of old metal, used car tyres, and several glass bottles.



Explore

The Brook - increasing flood risk!

Roath Brook has a history of flooding, particularly after heavy rainfall and high tides, which has put nearby homes and businesses at risk. To help reduce this danger, Natural Resources Wales completed a flood prevention scheme in 2018 that included building flood walls and embankments, improving bridges, and enhancing areas such as Roath Mill Gardens, Waterloo Gardens, and Railway Gardens. These improvements have significantly reduced the risk of flooding for local properties, while ongoing work continues to explore ways of managing any remaining flood risk in the future, especially as climate change is expected to increase extreme weather events.



(Natural Resources Wales, 2026)



A SECOND LAYER OF FLOOD DEFENCE WALLS SURROUND THE PARK TO PROTECT THE LOCAL HOUSING







THE BROOK NOW HAS TALL WALLS ON EACH SIDE TO PREVENT FLOODING

Explore

The Brook - a very recent disaster!



WalesOnline NEWS RUGBY FOOTBALL WHAT'S ON

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W > News > Latest Wales News > Cardiff

Hundreds of fish found dead in Cardiff park

Images show dead fish at the bottom of the small stream which was recently identified as one of the most polluted urban watercourses in Wales

Comments 2

NEWS By Ellie Gosley Senior Reporter

07:32, 15 Jun 2026



Hundreds of dead fish have been found at Roath Brook (Image: Natural Resources Wales)



NRW is investigating the cause of the fish deaths (Image: Natural Resources Wales)

(Wales Online, 2026)

In June 2026, a serious pollution incident affected Roath Brook and Roath Park Lake in Cardiff, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of fish. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) launched an investigation after reports from local residents, and while some live fish were still found in parts of the brook, the event raised significant concerns about the health of the waterway. The pollution is thought to have been caused by harmful substances entering a surface water drain, highlighting the importance of disposing of chemicals and waste responsibly. The incident also drew attention to ongoing water quality issues in the area, which had previously been identified as one of the most polluted urban streams in Wales, emphasizing the need for continued conservation and protection of local freshwater habitats.

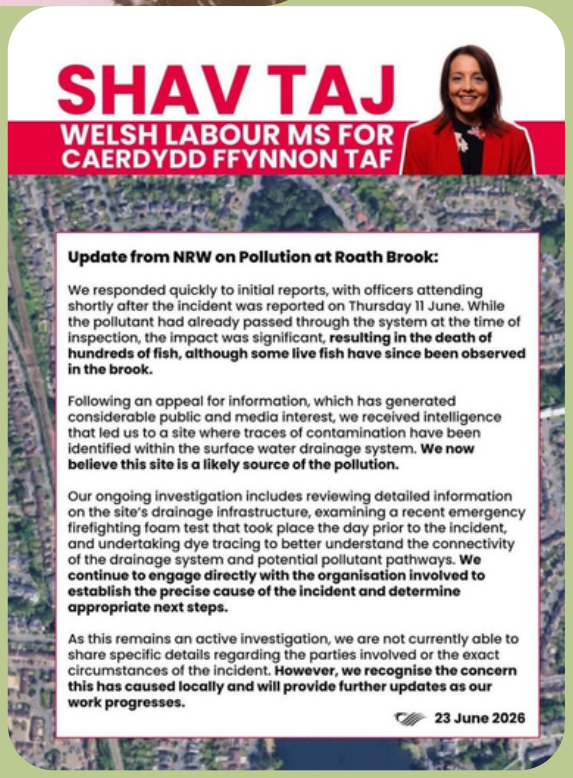
Explore

The River - a very recent disaster!













(Wales Online, 2026);
Nation Cymru, 2026)

Conserve



(Image 3: John Muir Trust, 2026c)

Conserve Section Contents:

This section explores:

- Bird feeder activity
- Litter picking activity

Conserve

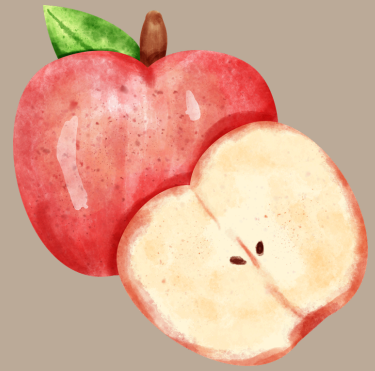
Supporting wildlife - making a bird feeder!

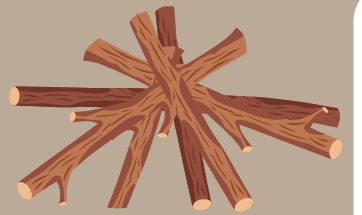














The Conserve part of the John Muir Award inspired me to think about simple ways I could help care for the local environment. With support from my university peers, I made an apple bird feeder, showing that conservation can be fun, easy, and something people of all ages can get involved in. Once it was finished, I hung it in my chosen area for the local birds to enjoy!

Conserve

Supporting the environment - litter picking



As part of my conservation activities, I spent time litter picking in the local area to help protect the environment and create a cleaner habitat for wildlife. Removing litter not only improved the appearance of the area but also helped prevent harm to animals and plants. This simple activity showed me that small actions can have a positive impact and that everyone can play a role in caring for and protecting local green spaces.







Share



(Image 4: John Muir Trust, 2026c)



WATCH NOW

How will I share my findings ?

Throughout my learning as part of this award, I shared what I learned in lots of different ways, from chatting with university staff and classmates to talking with local people and discussing ideas with friends and family. I also explored different learning activities with colleagues. These experiences showed me that even small everyday choices and conversations can make a difference, helping to support sustainability and encouraging a greater appreciation for the natural world. Sharing knowledge about conservation is important because it helps raise awareness and inspires others to take positive action for the environment. As a future Early Years Practitioner, I hope to make environmental education a key part of my practice by encouraging young children to explore, value, and care for nature from an early age.

Final thoughts

Completing the John Muir Award has helped me build an even stronger connection with nature and has made me think more about how I can encourage sustainability in my work with young children. It showed me that caring for the environment starts with the little things we do every day, the choices we make, the conversations we have, and the experiences we share with others.

This award reminded me how important it is for children to spend time outdoors, explore nature, ask questions, and feel like they can make a difference. By giving them these opportunities, we can help them grow into caring, confident, and responsible people.

Moving forward, I hope to keep getting involved in local conservation projects and inspire the children I work with to develop the same curiosity, appreciation, and connection to nature that this experience has strengthened in me.



I look back now through the years
At my childhood Paradise -
The park near my home, a world to explore
Bursting with nature's new life.
I look back now through the years.

Before the flood defence came,
All so wild, full of shrubland and meadow:
The flowers, the fish in the brook
Moorhens, blossom and bees,
Where squirrels rampaged through the trees.

The time when they fenced us all out,
The protest we made in our childish way,
Then open again, Paradise regained,
Now to save and preserve
For the rest of our days and beyond.

I walk again now through the trees of
That childhood Paradise
The park near my home, the world we explore
Still bursting nature's new life,
So how to conserve, for the sake of us all?

(Downs, 2026)

