

The 2008 Discovery Project

The Discovery Project contains a programme of activities that provide a wide learning experience for children relating directly to local biodiversity and cultural heritage. The school field trips and Ranger Club activities provided a hands-on sensory encounter with the natural environment helping to raise awareness and interest in the AONB. The activities were structured to provide information on the area covering biodiversity, minibeasts (aquatic and terrestrial), landscape, meteorology and geology in ways that provided lots of fun for the children.

School Activities

Discovery Days

The day provided a practical approach to observing and investigating a range of wildlife, offering activities in both the classroom and field environments.

Participating Schools	No. of children	Activities
		All of the following activities were included on every day:
Crayke (2 nd June)	33 (Age 9-10)	Exploration of the AONB using maps and quizzes. Observational exercise during the coach journey. Biological field work techniques leading to data collection to monitor floral diversity increase at Sandlands SINC. Plant lifecycles - need for light and water. Sampling and identifying mini-beasts.
Hovingham (3 rd June)	20 (Age 7-11)	
Ampleforth St Hilda's (3 rd June)	16 (Age 7-11)	
Sheriff Hutton (10 th June)	36 (Age 10-11)	
Amotherby (11 th June)	28 (Age 10-11)	
Terrington (16 th June)	26 (Age 8-11)	

Welburn and Neasden Twinning

A new venture this year was to facilitate an exchange programme. Welburn Primary School and Neasden Primary School (Ings Estate, Hull) had two days together, visiting each others schools and local areas. The children prepared presentations about their school and community life and showed the visitors around their school. After visiting the school a short walk and picnic lunch was held so the children got to look around each others neighbourhoods and to chat informally with each other.

The children from Hull were taken into Pretty Wood near Welburn; they had a picnic by the Four Faces Monument and used pooters and magnifying glasses to catch and identify mini-beasts as they walked. When in Hull the children from Welburn got to see a large skate park and also East Park, which has undergone major investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund. They visited the city zoo in East Park where they held reptiles and small mammals.

The exchange involved all 9-11 year olds at both schools – 22 children from Welburn and 45 from Neasden.

Both schools plan to follow up the visits with comparative 'My Place' studies and to use the friendships between the children to encourage them to develop IT (e-mail and digital photography) and letter writing skills.

Ranger Club Sessions

May 2008 : Magical May in the Howardian Hills

Held at Baxby Manor Farm (Husthwaite) in the clubhouse for the gliding club, with access to the mosaic of wetland, grassland and hedgerow habitats surrounding the gliding strip. This was the first time that the Junior Ranger Club sessions have been held as far west as Husthwaite and promotional material was sent to schools up to 8 miles west of the AONB boundary. This promotional work paid off as several children from these schools chose to attend for the first time, a positive step to attract new children this far into the five year project.

The children had the opportunity to enjoy wind-based fun as they made windmills, had a paper glider competition and learnt about windpower and renewable energy. They got 'Wet and Wild', pond-dipping in the stream – as always this proved a popular session with places being filled several weeks in advance of the event. Mini-beast hunting was also popular and this time the session focussed on learning about how farming and wildlife can benefit each other (the farm is in Stewardship) and on food chains. The children made insect homes to take home and also set small mammal traps ready for the predator and prey session the following morning. Predators and prey was a new topic for the Junior Rangers. The traps that had been set the previous evening were emptied under the watchful guidance of a licenced volunteer and the children's faces lit up at the sight of live mice coming out of the traps. This session was linked into barn owl habitats on the farm and was supplemented with owl pellet analysis and spider/spider web activities. Every session included a craft activity and the sunny weather meant that even these could be completed on the picnic benches in front of the gliding school

All sessions were very well received by children and parents. The majority of those booked onto the sessions attended, although a few didn't turn up as usual (but they had all paid in advance so no income lost). An improved procedure for registering children in and out worked, and a combination of staff and volunteers from both the AONB and YWT delivered the activities.

Ranger Day	Activities	No of children attending
Landscape 'Gales and Gliders' Wednesday 28 th May (am)	Learning about wind currents over our rolling landscape and about cloud formations. Making cloud charts, paper gliders and windmills. Finding out about windpower and other forms of renewable energy.	19
Biodiversity and Agriculture 'Bugs: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' Wednesday 28 th May (pm)	Hunting for mini-beasts in the hedgerows and grassland on the farm and identifying what was caught. Learning how wildlife and farming can benefit each other. Making insect homes to take home.	22
Biodiversity and Agriculture 'Predators and Prey' Thursday 29 th May (am)	Emptying the live mammal traps and identifying the creatures (wood mice). Learning about food chains and habitats (focus on hedgerow and boundary habitats) including owls and small mammals and spiders/spider-webs. Dissecting owl pellets to find mammal remains and making AONB arachnids out of pipe-cleaners and egg boxes.	22
Biodiversity 'Wet and Wild' Thursday 29 th May (pm)	Stream-dipping and identifying the finds. Making translucent window stickers of water creatures using glass paints on acetate.	30

August 2008 : Summer Fun

Initially planned as a two-day Ranger Club, the bookings were slow coming in so the modification was made to accept bookings for one session only. Unfortunately numbers were lower than for the half-term activities, as many of the regular Ranger Club attendees were away with family on summer holidays. However, the vast majority of the feedback relating to the two sessions remained positive and a wide variety of activities was offered.

The aim of the sessions was to compare the geology, fossils and rock-pool creatures at Filey with the geology, fossils and stream-life in Hovingham. Drawing links between the geology of the area and

building the concept that the AONB was once under the sea (hence the sea creatures in the local limestone). Rock-pooling and stream-dipping are enjoyed by most children and the two-days of activities once again enabled comparisons of the different creatures in the two contrasting habitats (why are they different?, how do they differ?, are any similar, etc). As usual arts and crafts were built into the sessions; beach art at Filey and fossil-making in Hovingham.

Ranger Day	Activities	No of children attending
Summer Fun : Filey Tuesday 5 th August (all day)	Rock-pooling, finding out about cliff formation and coastal layering, learning about long-shore drift, fossil-hunting and beach art. Parachute games with an ecological theme.	12
Summer Fun : Hovingham Thursday 7 th August (all day)	Fossil-hunting in Hovingham and identifying the different types of rock/stone around the village (are they all local? where have they come from if not?). Casting fossils to take home. Stream-dipping and identifying the catch.	20

The following sessions have been planned for later this year

October 2008 : Amazing Autumn in the Howardian Hills

Bookings are now open for the October Junior Ranger Club sessions which are to be held in the cricket pavilion at Ampleforth St Martin's, Gilling East. We have agreed access to the parkland and woodland close to the pavilion and the building itself will be heated throughout the sessions – whatever the weather there will be plenty for the children to do both indoors and outdoors.

The planned activities are:

Ranger Day	Activities	No of children attending
Biodiversity and Landscape 'Nature Detectives' Monday 27 th October (am)	Plaster cast animal footprints. Owl pellet dissection. Searching for natural tracks and signs in the woodland. A natural/un-natural trail. Wool caterpillar camouflage game.	
Biodiversity and Landscape 'Creature Comforts' Monday 27 th October (pm)	Where do animals go when it gets cold? What makes a good habitat for a creepy-crawly? Mini-beast hunt in the log piles and leaf litter. Building habitat piles. Shelter building. Paper-chain caterpillars.	
Biodiversity and Landscape 'Fantastic Fungi' Tuesday 28 th October (am)	Learning about fungi, composting and decomposers. Fungi search (and i.d.). Making clay toadstools and a wormery to take home.	
Cultural Heritage, Landscape and Biodiversity 'Howardian Halloween' Tuesday 28 th October (pm)	Making bat boxes for Gilling Castle grounds. Apple bobbing using local native fruit. Making Halloween trees to take home – two methods (one more tricky than the other) - both involving sticking, cutting, 3D effect.	

December 2008 : Festive Fun in the Howardian Hills

Bookings will open at the end of October for the December Junior Ranger Club sessions which are to be at The Arboretum, Castle Howard. The venue has been used once previously (also in December) and it provides a warm secure base for winter activities (freezing fog last time didn't spoil the fun). Plenty of 'back-up' activities have been scheduled for indoors in case the weather proves inclement. We will also have a native tree branch set in a bucket of sand for the children to decorate throughout the two days. Below are listed the activities if the weather is fine.

The planned activities are:

Ranger Day	Activities	No of children attending
Biodiversity and Landscape 'Feed the Birds' Monday 22 nd December (am)	Bird walk and visiting the bird feeding station. Making bird cake feeders to take home and feeding stations. True/false bird game and activity linking birds with their food sources.	
Landscape, climate and seasons 'Snowflakes and Icicles' Monday 22 nd December (pm)	Making kaleidoscopes to learn about light refraction. Making icicles from borax and water in a jar and starting growing crystal trees to take home and watch as they grow over the following days. Paper and tin foil snowflakes to decorate the tree.	
Landscape 'Star trekking' Monday 22 nd December (eve)	The value of dark night skies. How the constellations got their names. Designing constellations (real or imaginary), cascades of stars and clay decorations (inc. spray paints, glitter etc).	
Biodiversity and Landscape 'Festive Fun' Tuesday 23 rd December (am)	Start with a walk around the arboretum collecting extra items to decorate the crafts with. Then make willow wreathes, Yule logs and fir cone mobiles. Lots of gold and silver spray, glitter, glue, etc!	