



Wild Health – Our Impact:

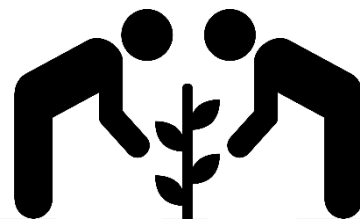
2019-2021



Reached 351
participants



1355 attendances to 318
wild health sessions



2010 hours of action for wildlife across
61 nature reserves and local green spaces

2210 recreational hours across 53 nature
reserves and local green spaces



Wild Health is working with communities to help them understand and appreciate the wildlife on their doorstep through community participation in nature conservation and recreation. Underrepresented groups within local communities across Gwent have been working with Wild Health to improve their health and wellbeing by accessing nature.

Within Wales one in six species of wildlife, plants and fungi are at risk of disappearing, Wild Health is raising awareness and understanding of wildlife across Gwent. It is reaching past traditional audiences and engaging a more diverse range of people who may not have an in-depth understanding of the natural environment. Engagement with Wild Health is the stepping stone for local communities to become passionate about reversing the decline of Welsh wildlife.

70% of 115 participants increased their understanding and appreciation of wildlife

This is evidenced by the feedback of community partners;

“A number of participants commented that the Geocaching activity inspired a curiosity about wildlife. The facts that Ian disseminated during the walk impressed members of the group, with some commenting that it led them to conduct research and appreciate their local wildlife. One group member has started to take pictures of wildlife on walks.”

“They learnt about a wide variety of wildlife and showed particular interest in the birds. The parent of one has explained how their daughter now looks out for birds in the sky.”



Wild Health has reached over 350 people, worked with 35 partner organisations and delivered nearly 320 sessions to a diverse range of participants. This has included supporting participants across the breadth of the autistic spectrum to engage with and enjoy time in the natural environment; people with physical and mental health conditions have benefitted from the great outdoors; alongside young people who are economically inactive. The open access nature of the Wild Health project means it can reach everyone and support everyone to access nature.

95% of participants reported an improvement to their health and wellbeing

Feedback from community partners highlights the personal impact Wild Health can have on participants;

“One Woman, Louise, had not left her home for a long period of time due to anxiety and depression. She had number of physical challenges which meant she experienced great pain most of the day. Which with some encouragement, Louise became very instrumental in working with Gwent Wildlife to organise a nature and history walk in Tredegar. Louise described this activity as “a changing point in my life” it was a great challenge for her both mentally and physically but achieving and learning about an area she had lived in and loved for years inspired her and was instrumental in her recovery.”

Case Study – Coleg Gwent

The Wild Health Project has established, maintained and indeed strengthened its relationship with Coleg Gwent by working with the students who are studying Independent Life Skills (ILS) at the Campus. Students learn how to manage their own money, cook their own food, make career choices and increase self-esteem, confidence and skills to live an independent life in their community. All courses are one year in length and students can progress either within ILS or possibly apply to mainstream courses at the College. All conservation tasks contribute towards the students' Community module, promoting citizenship.

These courses are suitable for students from a variety of educational backgrounds. They aim to develop confidence, self-esteem and independence in life and work skills. Students cover a mixture of vocational and creative skills, as well as continuing to improve literacy, numeracy and other essential skills. There are no formal entry requirements, a place is offered based on an interview and an assessment of individual needs. Working alongside Newport City Council Countryside Department (Green Services), the Wild Health Project has drafted a timetable of recreational activities and work based tasks which will add value and complement current provision. Examples of this include: invasive species removal (laurel at Allt Yr Yn), litter picking, coppicing, Bush craft, educational visits, wildlife walks and geocaching. All work based and recreational tasks will contribute to the development of a portfolio and record of achievement.

A notable success – GWT have now been written into Coleg Gwent Life Skills Group Scheme of Work. Newport City Council are now fully committed to working in partnership with the College in recognition of the contribution they are making to their conservation objectives.

Robert commented – “Ian and Marc met us at Allt-yr-yn woods so that we could help cut down the Laurel as they were taking over the woods and woodland plants can't grow and die.

We worked as a team to chop and saw up the branches to make them easier to burn.

I really enjoyed the day and had fun chopping up the branches. I sawed a massive log to make it smaller and easier to burn. Dylan sat on the one end to hold it steady.

We learnt about ‘King Alfred’s cakes’ that we found. They are fungi that grow on the dead Ash tree. If you spark it, it will smoulder for hours and soldiers make a cone of birch bark to carry them so they can use them to make a fire when then camp”.

The Project has been hugely successful in its first term and has now been drafted into the College's Scheme of Work.



Case Study – The Integrated Autism Service



Autism friendly activities have been delivered to this relatively new service aimed at positively engaging with adults and children who live with autism. Support is also provided to parents, families and carers.

Locations have included Tredegar House Newport, Caldicot Castle Monmouthshire, Cwmbran Boating Lake Torfaen, Parc Penallta Caerphilly and Parc Bryn Bach Blaenau Gwent. This represents a large geographical area offering opportunity to engage in a local area and further afield. Several families accessing the service have done just that. Two families from Cardiff and Bargoed travelled to Newport.

Activities have focussed on recreational opportunities, raising awareness of local green spaces whilst getting people closer to nature. One parent commented:

“It was just good to meet other parents in the same situation supporting a child living with autism”

Several families have returned to engage on a more frequent basis than others and conversation has evidenced the fact that the children in particular have shown a real interest in re-engaging due to the informal atmosphere, conducive learning environment and the amount of fun they have.

Up until recently the invite to sessions was advertised on social media to adults and young people alike. This meant that issue based and educational material had to span the generations to inspire all, (see cuddly birds comment, below) irrespective of functioning.

We are currently working on pooling individuals of similar abilities in the hope that sessions can be more specific to the needs on an individual basis and create new social circles for some. Working closely with service users and trained staff is again another glowing example of organisational co-production, with continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Thank you for arranging this activity. We (Maria grandma, me grandpa and Courtney 6 and Layla 4) had a good walk of a mile and a half, which the children are reluctant to do without an objective which you furnished ; which I appreciate was a lot of work in placing the 'birds'. We all learnt a lot about nature too and felt revived. Thank you again for being so welcoming and we will be going on further 'expeditions'.

Best, Phil Brown (retired GP)

Activity Case Study – Geocaching

Geocaching is a fantastic community engagement tool utilising a “health by stealth” approach. But don’t take my word for it……. Some feedback from service users and partner agency: *“One of our staff members is right into his geocaching since you showed him, he’s out all the time doing it with his boy!”* *“Look at how engaged he is (re:J), I’ve never seen him respond so well to anything”* - Session comments from Dave support staff Aderyn

Throughout the duration of the project, utilising technology and effectively bridging the gap between the digital age and the great outdoors, geocaching has played an instrumental role. It can take the focus away from the activity and encourage access to wild spaces in a conducive learning environment in a safe, fun way. The activity can be themed to anything (tree id, history, wildflowers, 5 ways to wellbeing etc) and can be undertaken on any local green space / walking trail / park, over appropriate terrain for the target audience and for as long or as short as is achievable, providing equality of opportunity. Several wheelchair users who have engaged with the project through Monmouthshire Mind have downloaded the app on geocaching.com, created a free profile and are out there doing it in an unsupported manner, a huge achievement!!

Essentially the activity involves following a directional arrow on a gps unit to a hidden ‘cache’. Coordinates can be inputted to search for permanent caches that are hidden all over the country (65,000 in Wales alone), and can be done via an app on smart phone too. Permanent loops with an educational / environmental theme have been created in Parc Bryn Bach Tredegar and the British Pontypool by two Wild Health Project groups, Younger Persons Blaenau Gwent and Wednesday Warriors Torfaen.

Both loops highlight previous industrial activity and species colonisation in the aftermath of industrial decline. They are also providing an opportunity for members of the public, who have a free account, to access each cache. Visitor numbers are up in the hundreds individually and thousands collectively! Outcomes for this are as follows:

- Regular health walks for the groups / members of public in the undertaking of maintenance / increasing levels of physical activity
- Social and digital inclusion
- Sense of belonging and pride / improved mood

Evidence from comments made by members of the public when logging their visit on geocaching.com indicate that there has been increased awareness on the following:

1. Biodiversity
2. Accessible green spaces
3. Behaviour change

“I was especially pleased to finally explore something that I have always intended to look into but have never found the moment. I was really interested to hear about all the different situations in which you have used geo caching as a learning tool. Your enthusiasm is infectious and here we are within an hour of coming home signing up for an account. We can’t wait to see what’s in our area and also what we might find while visiting and travelling further afield. I can see that there are many avenues of exploration waiting for us - getting outside and moving is an added bonus. I hope lots of other people (of all ages) have the opportunity to learn about this exciting tool from you. Tora (9 years) says she had a lot of fun hunting and following the compass arrow. Many thanks to you.”



Wild Health's Network of Partners

