



# GOING WILD FOR WELLBEING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Issue 5. | December 2021



## Season's Greetings!

As the year draws to a close, the Wild Skills Wild Spaces (WSWS) team look back on what has been a busy yet highly rewarding seven months, since our launch in June 2021. Nature has - and continues to be - a therapy for so many, and winter is no time to neglect our mental health and wellbeing.

Winter can be a particularly challenging time for many people and their mental health. And those who need nature the most are often too isolated, lonely or low in self-esteem to appreciate the benefits.



The lack of daylight hours can make it challenging for many to get outside. This is where the WSWS team come in. The project has already – in just seven months – demonstrated the success of bringing people into contact with nature to help them build confidence, improve self-resilience and feel connected with the natural world and their community.





# WSWS 2021 Highlights!



Winning the NHS Forest 2021 Award for Engaging People with Nature. Pictured: The WSWS team with Head of Health and Wellbeing, Carla Kenyon



Forming a sense of community with participants and a shared value for nature and wildlife, while supporting people's mental and physical wellbeing. Seeing participants learn and grow and become more resilient and empowered



Getting the WSWS vehicle meant we were able to transport participants to other MWT nature reserves



Sharing the awe and wonder of nature and wildlife



Taking participants to visit other MWT reserves, and seeing and hearing how much they had benefited from these trips



Watching the confidence and self-esteem of our younger participants grow and newly-formed friendships flourish



# Adult Sessions

The focus this December has been simply getting ecotherapy participants outside, regardless of the weather - providing it has been safe enough to do so!

As the old saying goes, 'there is no such thing as bad weather, just a poor choice in clothing'. We agree, but gathering around a fire has helped to keep those spirits lifted as we approach the coldest time of the year.

The Wildlife Trust has created a challenge to help you connect with nature every day from 25th Dec to 5th January. Check out a few ideas and tips below for connecting with nature and wildlife for your wellbeing.

Sign up to #12dayswild here [12 Days Wild | The Wildlife Trusts](#)

We've enjoyed getting into the festive spirit, looking at ways we can enjoy Christmas while considering wildlife and the planet.

Check out these sustainable wooden decorations made by our groups from natural materials.

Dutch oven cinnamon swirls



A great way to bring a sense to community to our sessions is enjoying a shared love for food. There is nothing quite like campfire cooking with others







# How to have an eco-friendly Christmas and enjoy wildlife over the festive period



Shiny wrapping paper is pretty, but it's not recyclable! The same goes for glittery paper.

Use brown paper or recycle old gift wrap.

Sellotape is made of plastic but you can buy brown paper tape - or get creative with some ribbon or string. Better yet, go for a reusable option like a box, bag, or cloth!



Avoid throwaway plastic, go homemade, and keep wildlife in mind. It'll add a sweet personal touch that'll mean the world to someone this Christmas!

Go on plenty of wildlife walks and notice nature around you. Listen out for winter birdsong along the way.



Decorate your home with evergreen foliage that can be mindfully foraged on a walk. Set an afternoon aside to make a rustic wreath or garland to lend your home a personal touch.

Make some birdy baubles and decorate a tree in your garden for the birds. Covering pine cones or filling oranges with a mixture of peanut butter, coconut oil and bird seed will keep the birds in good supply over the winter. Don't forget to keep their water topped up too. Wait patiently and see what arrives in your garden.



Winter can be a great time for you to start stargazing, or appreciate the beauty of the moon. Look out for clear skies at night.





# Youth Sessions

This month has been all about having lots of fun in the build-up to Christmas!

As usual, there has been a lot of food on the campfire; a highlight for many of our young participants this month has been gingerbread pancakes!



Gingerbread pancakes



Campfire mince pies, prepared and cooked by some lovely young people



We have been embracing the mud and all things messy! At Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve, one group of young people have been keeping the birds in good seed supply. They cut their own wood cookies (circular pieces of wood) and covered them in a homemade floury paste and bird seed; each week they have been topping them up.



Some of the young people on the programme have been crafting Christmas wreaths and decorations to hang on their trees at home.



There have been lots of Christmas party games and challenges, with a lot of laughter in-between.







Welshpool High School participants (pictured right) have been out along Montgomery Canal picking litter on their way to Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve, where their weekly WSWs sessions take place. Their efforts have made a huge difference within their local community.



# Practical Skills and Conservation

This month young participants from Bettws Lifehouse have been helping with the removal of the damaged boardwalk at Severn Farm Pond in preparation for it being replaced in the new year. Tasked with using tools and lifting heavy planks, the group have risen to the challenge and have been enjoying the process. Work here will continue into 2022, and hopefully, by spring, a replacement boardwalk will be in place.

The teamwork and communication hasn't gone unnoticed - a big well done to all involved!





# CPD Training



## Safety First!



Youth Engagement Officer, Mark and Trainee Reserves Officer, Jo from the WSWs team went on a two-day first aid course in December, at Arthog Outreach centre in Shropshire. They were guided through 'real-life' scenarios with the helping hand of Chris the trainer, and given the opportunity to practise different techniques like tying slings, using splints and doing CPR. We hope they never have to put any of their first aid knowledge to the test, but the safety of our participants is paramount and we need all our staff to be knowledgeable and confident in case of emergencies.







# Winter Gathering



A big thank you to WSWS participants past and present, and to their referrers, for their attendance at our end-of-year event on 17th December – it was wonderful to see so many faces! The winter gathering was an opportunity for us all to connect with each other, while enjoying the benefits of being out in nature. With mulled apple juice and tasty seasonal treats – kindly donated by Welshpool supermarkets Tesco's and Morrisons – to enjoy around the fire, plenty of good conversation and Christmas crafts, it was also the perfect way to get into the festive spirit.

We will be back in 2022 (week commencing 9th January) with more sessions, and look forward to seeing those familiar faces again in the new year!

Wishing you all a happy, healthy and relaxing break.

Warm wishes,  
the WSWS team –  
Fran, Eurig, Mark & Jo.



Merry Christmas





This hugely successful project is all about boosting mental health through its '5 ways to wellbeing', which are connecting with nature, being active, taking notice, learning and giving back.



Photo: © Ross Gallier

### 5 top tips for connecting with nature and wildlife this winter

- 1. Physical exercise:** wrap us warm and head out on a walk before work.
- 2. Window gazing:** if you can't physically get outside, move yourself closer to the window and direct sunlight.
- 3. Fireside time:** winter offers the perfect excuse to appreciate our age-old friend, the fire; feel its warmth and unwind near the flames, inside or out.
- 4. Arts and crafts:** if you see a pretty leaf, pick it up - then press it at home to preserve for crafty projects.
- 5. Wildlife watching:** keep bird feeders topped up and see who visits.

Our referral pathway is always open

#### How do I get someone involved?

If you think this could benefit someone you know, email us at [ecotherapy@montwt.co.uk](mailto:ecotherapy@montwt.co.uk) for a referral form. Once we've received your completed form, one of our team will be in touch with you and the participant by phone or email with further information before sign-up. We will also keep your referral pathway updated throughout the process.

We take referrals from primary and secondary healthcare, such as:

- GPs and nurses
- 1. **Wrap us warm and head out** Powys Teaching Health Board
- Child and Adolescent Mental health Service
- Adult Mental Health Services
- Integrated Autism Services, (IAS) etc.
- Statutory Services - Powys County Council (PCC)
- Youth Intervention services
- Family Intervention services
- 4. **Keep bird feeders topped up and watch out to see who visits**

Email us: [ecotherapy@montwt.co.uk](mailto:ecotherapy@montwt.co.uk)

Stay up to date with the project by visiting us on:



Website: [home | Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust \(montwt.co.uk\)](http://home | Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (montwt.co.uk))

