



# GOING WILD FOR WELLBEING PROJECT NEWSLETTER



Issue 3. | October 2021



## A time for change

As the air temperature starts to cool, hedgerows come alive with the temptation of lip staining berries and leaves start to turn shades of rust, copper and maroon, the Wild Skills Wild Spaces (WSWS) team have been eager to share some of nature's autumnal treasures at Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's reserves with new participants.

### Nature highlights on our recent outings...



Pond dipping at Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve, Welshpool



Pale Tussock moth caterpillar spotted at Dolforwyn Woods Nature Reserve, Abermule



Fly Agaric toadstool spotted at Dolforwyn Woods



A plateful of apple fritters



### Wild cooking

Having so many apples around has meant lots of campfire cooking on our reserves, including some delicious apple fritters, made by dipping in batter and then frying until crisp.

When we ask participants what they enjoy most about coming to sessions, many tell us that they favour cooking on the campfire. Some individuals come with a personal goal of trying new things; foraging, preparing and cooking their own food provides an array of sensory experiences.



Two young participants peeling, coring and chopping apples

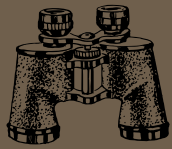


Apples caramelising over coals





# What to look out for this autumn...



Conkers



Autumn treasures



Sweet chestnuts

## Autumn woodlands

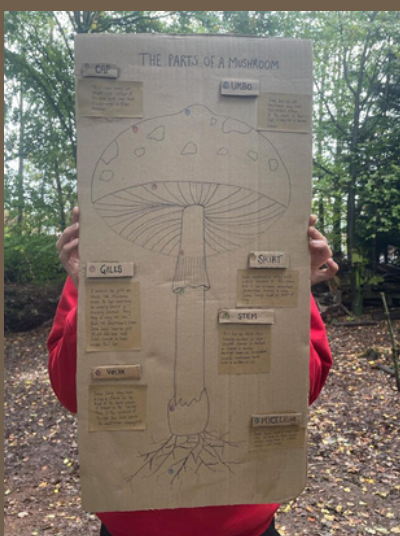
Autumn is a time of hunting for conkers, kicking through great drifts of fallen leaves, roasting chestnuts, and roaring bonfires. The woodlands are transforming; the once green leaves taking on fiery shades; bursts of red and purple berries and shiny brown acorns and nuts tempting thrushes and squirrels. Winter is around the corner, so everyone is making the most of the last warm days, and what better place to do that than in one of our wonderful woods?



Shaggy parasol mushroom hand carved by a WSWWS participant



October has seen us out and about with groups on fungi forays at our Dolforwyn Woods Nature Reserve. With more than 15,000 species found in the UK, fungi make up a kingdom of their own. These curious things are neither plant, nor animal, and their diversity is stupendous. Chicken of the Woods and King Alfred's Cakes, Ballerina Waxcaps and Scarlet Elf Cups, blewits and boletes; some are delightfully named, some delicious, and others poisonous. Every habitat is home to an array of fungi, and autumn is the best time to explore this little-visited world: you may be surprised at how many you find!



Fungi play an important role within our ecosystems, helping to recycle nutrients from dead or decaying organic matter, and providing food and shelter for different animals. The Wildlife Trusts manage many nature reserves sympathetically for the benefit of all kinds of wildlife, including fungi. Try leaving log piles and dead wood to help fungi and the wildlife that depends on it.





# Youth Sessions



A nature walk through Dolforwyn Woods Nature Reserve



Charcoal sketches

This month, the team have welcomed three new groups of young people and, with a huge variety of natural resources to choose from on our sites and reserves, it's been a great time to bring out young participants' creative sides. Many have enjoyed autumn scavenger hunts; connecting with nature through their senses; taking notice of the magical displays of wildlife that the season has to offer; taking the time to look in nooks and crevices that we often walk past without thought.

Inspired by their findings, participants have created collages and Haikus, sketches and sculptures made from clay and even wands, whittled from coppiced wood from our reserves.



An autumnal Haiku (Japanese poem with 17 syllables)



Participants experimenting with different whittling techniques to carve a wand



## Art therapy

According to mental health charity MIND, creative therapies should aim to help individuals communicate feelings that they struggle to put into words. We believe that doing arts and crafts activities, using materials found on the forest floor, provides the opportunity for young people to engage with nature on a personal level and initiate discussions with each other and staff.



A clay self-portrait made using natural materials



Making charcoal on the fire by compressing sticks of Hazel in a tin at a high heat



# Practical Skills for Conservation



Participants from Bettws Lifehouse in Welshpool have been carrying out important conservation work at Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve. Eurig (Conservation Officer) explains 'we have been focusing on learning about nature and enjoying the challenge of gaining some basic green woodworking skills'.

So far these young individuals have helped clear coppiced wood to form a dead hedge that will benefit wildlife; they have produced their own hand tools made from green wood; and learned how to operate different tools in a safe and efficient way.



## Coppicing



To coppice means to cut back a tree at its base to allow regrowth. This allows us to sustainably obtain timber from one small area of woodland. In the meantime, allowing more light to the ground encourages a wider variety of flora to grow, enticing different animal and insect species.

Autumn is the best time of year to do this, as we don't need to worry about nesting birds and the trees are generally dormant.



## Dead hedging



This means to form hedges made of cut branches and other foliage which might otherwise be burned. Dead hedges provide great habitats and protection for wildlife and when they begin to break down, adding nutrients back into the earth, they can be reconstructed and added to.



# Words from Ponthafren Project Worker

As a one-to-one project worker at Ponthafren, I have referred several people to the WSWS course. One in particular was a very anxious person but was made to feel welcome and has found confidence on the course, allowing them to participate. Our clients report that they have had a fun time, learnt new skills and have enjoyed meeting new people.

I have found that the referral process is easy and Fran is great at communicating updates about those I have referred and their progress throughout the course. The open day available to staff to find out more about the offering was useful and helped us to make decisions about who we felt would benefit.

This course has allowed us a new avenue to encourage our clients to get out into nature, meet new people, work alongside others, find new interests and deal with some of their anxieties whilst in a supportive environment.

I look forward to being able to refer others to the course.



## Powys Carers Service - Credu

"The process of referral is simple and the outcomes are profound so I urge all my colleagues in the community sector to get people referred into the scheme." Dux – Young Carers Outreach Worker



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.



Our referral pathway is always open



Meet some of the WSVS Team!

### 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  
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

**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.montgomeryshirewildlifetrust.co.uk)

### 4 top tips for connecting with nature and wildlife.

1. Look out for seasonal fungi in wooded areas. They love warm, moist habitats
2. Go conker collecting - lots of fun can be had with these little treasures
3. If you see a pretty leaf, pick it up - press them at home to preserve for arts and crafts
4. Keep bird feeders topped up and watch out to see who visits



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd  
Addysgu Powys  
Powys Teaching  
Health Board

CardiffMet  
**cawr**  
Centre for Health, Activity  
and Wellbeing Research

MetCaerdydd  
**cyigll**  
Canolfan Ymchwil ar gyfer  
Iechyd, Gweithgarwch a Lles