



# GOING WILD FOR WELLBEING PROJECT NEWSLETTER



Issue 2. | September 2021



## Wild Adventures

August was a pivotal month for the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's Wild Skills Wild Spaces (WSWS) programme. Participant numbers grew and new friendships were formed; a new 12-week eco-therapy course began at Llyn Coed y Dinas in Welshpool and as, one group of participants came to the end of their 12-week course, changes in Covid-19 restrictions meant that it was possible to arrange their first off-site reserve visit to Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve near Machynlleth. This wetland reserve is home to a rich variety of wildlife, including ospreys and most recently beavers.

Leaving the vegetable beds to fend for themselves at partner site, Cultivate Community Gardens in Newtown, WSWS staff and six participants were excited to explore a new habitat. With an abundance of flora and fauna to be identified, Eurig (Community Reserves Officer) was on hand to share his knowledge and all enjoyed learning from one another. While the ospreys had already left the reserve to overwinter in warmer climes, the sun shone magnificently, everyone was in high spirits and the visit ended with lunch in the café and the chance for participants to socialise over food.

\*Listed as one of the five ways to wellbeing, learning has been linked to improved ability to cope with stress, increased self-esteem, better social interaction and being hopeful (Mind, 2017).



## Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve



Eurig informing participants about dragonfly habitats



Buff-tip Moth caterpillars that participants identified





# Youth Sessions at Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve



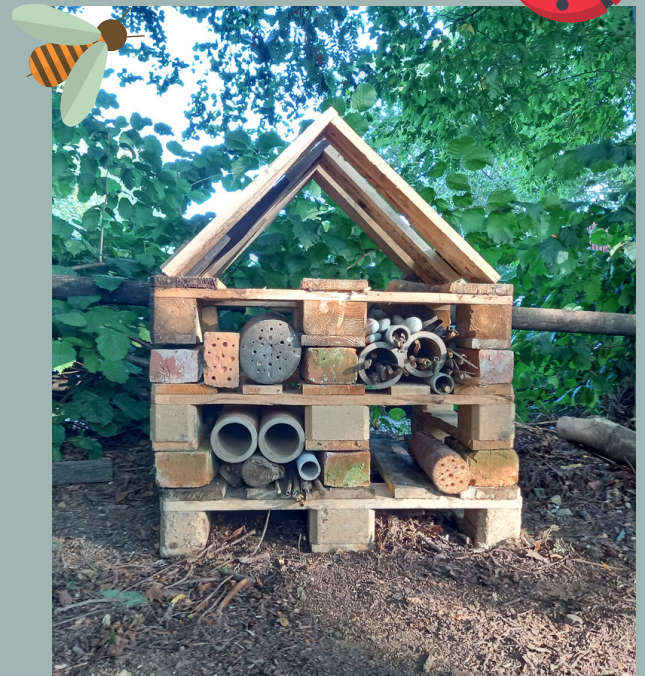
A young participant removing nails from dangerous, broken pallets which we later used in the construction of a bug hotel



Identifying pond life

Young participants have been continuing to improve conditions for wildlife and the community at Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve in Welshpool.

To help gain a better understanding of the wildlife that they are helping, young people on the programme were keen to do some nature identification in the form of pond dipping. They were surprised and delighted to find small minnows, amongst lots of other fauna. This inspired individuals to do more to help wildlife thrive in the area, so they have been planning, constructing and monitoring a bug hotel and a hedgehog house.



Planting spring bulbs in recycled pots



A participant weeding and spacing wild strawberry plants

Both staff and participants have been enjoying getting their hands dirty reviving some of the planting beds that were cleared last month at Severn Farm Pond: turning and weeding soil, generating new compost and planting spring bulbs, all while learning about the benefits of gardening without the use of any chemicals and pesticides, and with only peat-free compost. Many of the young people are keen to visit the reserve again in the spring to see how their beds have progressed.





# Ecotherapy at Llyn Coed y Dinas

## Mindfulness in nature

### How does it help?

Mindfulness allows us to be more present in the moment and when we practice mindfulness in nature we often are more easily present as a result of just being **in** nature.

Participants have been busy getting to know the plant life and wildlife on our reserves. They have been given simple activities to do on their walks around the reserves. On this occasion participants discovered and learnt about plant galls.

### What is a 'gall'?

A 'gall' is defined as a growth on a plant that is made of plant tissue but caused by another organism, such as an insect, fungi, bacteria or a virus.

Insect galls are named because of their ability to induce galls on plant life to host their eggs that supports them through early life stages.

Photographed (top right) are a selection of insect galls that were collected and identified by participants.

Autumn is a wonderful time for spotting these mystery growths on plant and trees.

Have a look at an Oak tree the next time you're out in nature to see if you can spot one - or hundreds!!



A selection of plant galls found on our reserve



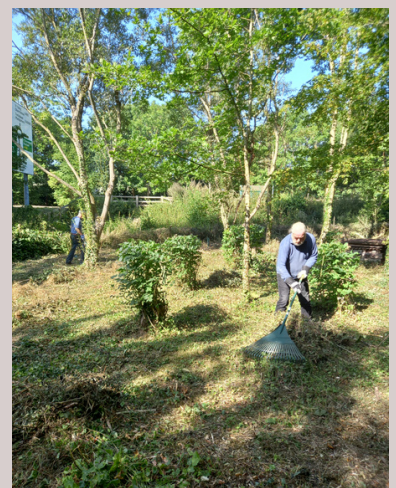
One of the participants sketching out in nature, following a bug hunt. A great example of how modern technology can be used in nature and have a positive effect on wellbeing when used as a resource for learning.

Here at Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, staff and participants use the **iNaturalist** app to connect with nature and to explore and share our observations of the natural world.

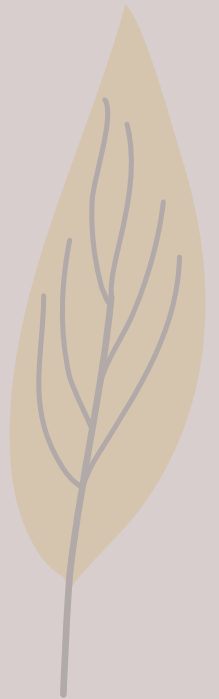
## Practical greenwood tools for conservation



Making green wood mallets to be used for various jobs around the reserve, such as making dead hedges, which are valuable wildlife habitats



Participants clearing brush at our reserve, working alongside the reserves officer



## Words from Haydn Lavin, support worker from Bryntirion (Powys Teaching Health Board)

Albeit I'm relatively new to my job as a support worker in the Community Mental Health Team at Bryntirion, but since witnessing the WSWS initiative in full flow it's been great to see how the freedom, space and being immersed in nature has a positive impact upon clients' mental health and general mood. One client in particular, who has an interest in nature and foraging, has really embraced the initiative and on their first session became totally involved in building hedging / barriers to protect bird nesting sites and enjoyed the company of the team. After that first session, the client told me several times how much they had enjoyed it and 'what nice people' the WSWS team were.

Fran and the team have a great attitude, giving clients structured activities, whilst at the same time the freedom to engage in specific interests. What's more, the clients have the choice to either work together as a team or alone - whatever suits them.

Having the opportunity to take a bit of time out and enjoy the peace and tranquillity that nature offers, whilst engaging in physical activity that will benefit the natural environment, seems to be a win-win result for clients and nature alike.



### Participant Testimonial

"I have nothing but good things to say about the people here... and their ability to provide a secure environment where you feel invited and welcome. Because it's such a positive environment, it allows you to put your anxieties to one side and just enjoy the time you're there."

Anon.



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.



Severn Farm Pond Nature Reserve in Welshpool



Hapa Zome techniques



Red Admiral on leaf art

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  
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.montgomeryshirewildlife.co.uk)

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

1. Autumn is a great time of year for foraging; check out the Wildlife Trusts website for some tips: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/where-to-see-autumn-wildlife/foraging](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/where-to-see-autumn-wildlife/foraging)
2. There are some brilliant free smart phone apps to help you identify flora and fauna, such as iNaturalist
3. Find a quiet spot, where you can sit and sketch out new findings
4. As we move into autumn, non-migratory birds will be on the lookout for extra food; leave a feeder outside your window for some special close-up views



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



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

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

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