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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FORUM

ENVIRONMENT AFTER SCHOOL

LINKING YOUTH SERVICE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Welcome to the wonderful world of Environment targeted specifically for Youth groups. This supplement is designed to be used by Youth leaders to facilitate the introduction and development of environmental projects in your organisation and individual group.

Northern Ireland's youth service plays an extremely important role in supporting and encouraging young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. You, as youth leaders therefore are in a prime position to teach and inform children about the importance of being environmentally aware individuals allowing them to gain the knowledge, and skills to lead sustainable lifestyles.

This supplement will provide some hands-on, practical projects to carry out, as well as links to many of the environmental organisations that currently have youth service programmes in Northern Ireland.

Finally, you will find a range of websites and further reading resources to help complement this supplement and the work of the various agencies that are included in the publication.

Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle

The first part of this supplement looks at ways in which the '3R's' can be promoted and incorporated into the work of youth groups.

Every year in Northern Ireland we throw away enough waste to cover the whole country! Most of this ends up in landfills, which are costly, unsightly and could have major impacts on the environment and our health. The Environment & Heritage Service has designed several fact sheets which give information on waste generation and recycling in Northern Ireland.

Fact sheet 1 – Northern Ireland Waste In Northern Ireland household waste levels have amounted to over 929,111 tonnes in 2002 alone, with each household contributing approximately one tonne – a figure which is said to be rising.

Fact sheet 2 – Waste Reduction Waste reduction refers to the reduction or elimination of the amount of waste produced initially and involves being economical with materials, energy and money, and developing products or techniques to minimise waste generation.

Fact sheet 3 – Reduce, Reuse & Recycle The amount of waste produced is strongly influenced by the consumer-driven lifestyle in which we live. However, the simplest measures taken by each of us can help to Reduce, Reuse or Recycle such waste which in the long-term will minimise the extent of environmental impact and save money!

Fact sheet 4 – Plastics This fact sheet identifies the main types of plastics used, why it is important that they be recycled and the various methods of recycling available.

Fact sheet 5 – Composting Waste This encourages learning about the benefits of composting and details the procedure to follow when commencing composting as well as information on how the process works.

Fact sheets 6, 7 & 8 – Paper, Cans and Glass These fact sheets illustrate the importance of recycling such materials and suggest tips for recycling and what you and I can do to reduce levels of waste.

Fact sheets 9 & 10 – What Happens to our Waste & Energy from Waste These fact sheets identify what happens to our waste after it leaves our homes, schools and workplaces as well as the benefits in terms of energy production which can be generated from such waste.

THE WASTE FREE 'CLASSROOM' - Reproduced from Environment & Heritage Service Information

A Waste Free Lunch

Plan your own packed lunch so that there is nothing to throw in the rubbish bin when you have finished. Think about how you are going to keep the food fresh and what sort of wrapping or containers you are going to use.

Explain what you propose to do. You may wish to:

- Use refillable bottles or flasks rather than cans or cartons,
 - Put sandwiches in a reusable container rather than a bag, cling film or foil,
 - Avoid food that has lots of packaging – bring fruit or vegetables instead and compost the left-overs.
-

Packaging Audit

In this activity you can find out how much packaging is used by your group each week. Look at all the things that may be packaged from your food to the paper, pencils and pens that you use. You can count the number of layers of packaging around each product and analyse the material from which each is made.

- Design a sheet for the group to record the items used each week. It should show how many loose items were used, how many packaged items, how many layers of packaging each had, what these layers were made from (e.g. card, paper, plastic, aluminium foil, glass) and whether the packaging could be recycled or reused or not.
- After a while collect all the record sheets and as a group find out:
 - ◆ The ratio of loose to packaged items
 - ◆ The average amount of packaging
 - ◆ Which packaging material is used most often
 - ◆ How much of the packaging can be recycled / How much can be reused
- If you like you could extend this by getting the group to analyse what is brought into their homes in an average week. They will need to tell their parents that they will be looking at all items brought into the house for a week.



Organise a trip to a local shop. Look at the various types of packaging. Choose one example of a product you feel is over packaged. Get the group to write about why they think it is over packaged. Why do manufacturers use so much packaging? A good example might be "Dairylea Lunchables" or a box of fruit. How did people package things 50 or 100 years ago?. Remember, being more 'green' and environmentally friendly also means that you are more likely to eat a healthier diet and lead a more active healthy lifestyle.

Activities and Resources to integrate waste management into after school clubs are available to download at:
www.wakeuptowaste.org/Education/Resources

Some of these downloadable Activities which can all be adapted for your group are:

Green Waste

Waste Material Leaf Bird – uses a combination of waste cardboard and 'Nature's waste' in the form of leaf litter

Paper Waste

Bird Template – this can also be used as a colouring page for younger children or for a Collage using **Textiles**

Metal Waste

Pebble Shaker – is an activity particularly suited to younger children. Tambourine – these can be made by children of any age. Both activities reuse washed aluminium waste.

Glass Waste

Smash Crash Poetry – a Language and Literacy activity

Textile Waste

Catwalk Display – old material makes a cool fashion statement!

Plastic Waste

Bottle Bowling – this Sports Activity reuses plastic drinks bottles

Bird Feeders – these reuse yoghurt pots and margarine tubs in a way that will help wildlife.

GROUP PLEDGE

Encourage the group to sign up to some individual and group pledges about how they are going to work towards their **Waste Free Group** by filling in a pledge sheet

WE THE UNDERSIGNED WILL:

- 1. Turn off any electrical equipment when not in use.**
When on standby, they still use as much as 85% of what they use when they are fully on!
- 2. Turn off taps when we wash our hands.**
If you leave the tap running, you waste up to 3 litres of water each time you wash your hands.
- 3. Ask our parents if we can walk or cycle to our group meeting.**
Cars cause a lot of pollution – the less we use them, the better for our environment.
- 4. Keep windows and doors closed when the heating is on.**
If it is too hot, we will turn the thermostats down.
- 5. Make sure that lights are not left on in an empty classroom and we will ask the caretaker to replace the light bulbs with energy efficient ones.**
- 6. Ensure that we minimise the amount of waste we produce by REDUCING, REUSING and RECYCLING as much as possible**

When the children have all signed up to the pledge, they can each receive a certificate available to download from: www.wakeuptowaste.org/Education/Resources

Other Projects for Your Group to Consider

- Collecting unwanted clothes 1 day per month
- Collecting aluminium cans
- Arts Project to create/increase awareness
- Designing flyers to promote the reduce, reuse & recycle concept
- Maintaining a wormery for organic waste material
- Developing more sustainable practices within your group e.g. banning the use of polystyrene cups
- Collecting old / used mobile phones
- Reusing plastic bags as opposed to choosing a new one
- Possibly acting as a host site for a bottle bank to be located for use by your group and local community



Example a of Youth Group Making a Difference

Clothes collections at Youth Initiatives:

One group involved in the Faith Waste Project is that of 'Youth Initiatives' located on the outskirts of Belfast. Youth Initiatives is a cross-community youth work programme which aims to awaken hope, inspire initiative and mobilise youth to make a vital contribution to their community and towards reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Upon visiting the youth leaders at the centre, it was felt that the Faith Waste Project was something which would be highly beneficial for the youth groups to become involved in. Since then, visits have been made to the centre by staff and a council waste advisor to educate the children on the importance of waste management, the need to reduce waste and what exactly they can do.

As a result of this, one youth group has organised a competition where each child was asked to gather together from home old clothes, shoes, books, cds and toys which they no longer use. All the goods collected will be donated to a local charity where it will have a second use and be of great benefit to others. A reward will be given to the individual who collects the greatest amount of goods.

Clearly, this is a small scale project which involves little time and effort. Nevertheless, aside from reducing the quantity of material being thrown out and land filled, it will benefit many individuals who are somewhat less fortunate.

Wildlife Gardening

Wildlife gardens are a fantastic way of introducing children to the theme of caring for the environment. They can provide Youth Service groups with an opportunity to explore real problems, making learning socially relevant, emotionally engaging, motivational and connected. Many grounds can be improved for wildlife, even if you do not have land there is still the opportunity to erect bird or bat boxes on buildings, plant climbers along walls and fences or get creative with window boxes.

So Why Create a Wildlife Garden?

As a variety of habitats are eroded, invaded, polluted and disappear altogether, gardens are becoming increasingly important refuges for wildlife. With a bit of 'know how' every garden or area of ground, however small, can be developed to provide your own private nature reserve. Walls, hedges, trees, flower beds, and even sheds and paths can provide a habitat for garden guests which can bring great pleasure and often offer a natural control of more unwelcome garden pests.

Whether they are herbs, flowers or vegetables, gardens have a lot to offer different wildlife species. Gardens afford shelter from the elements and protection from predators. They can provide sources of food and water and nesting materials, and some may even offer a habitat in which to mate and lay eggs. Wildlife gardens are an excellent environment for both leaders and children to explore various topics such as biodiversity, wildlife and conservation.

Wildlife Garden Features

Various features and environments can be created in order to establish a wildlife garden:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Insect Garden | 6. Bird and Bat Boxes |
| 2. Wildflower Meadows | 7. Compost Heaps |
| 3. Animal Refuge | 8. Mini Woodland and Log Piles |
| 4. Trellis | 9. Hedges |
| 5. Bird Feeding Areas | 10. Ponds and Marshes |



General Environmental Concepts

Peat free gardening

Natural peat bogs are fascinating wildernesses. Sadly, the last remnants are being stripped of their plants, drained, rotovated, vacuumed up and packed in plastic bags. Gardeners buy 60 per cent of the peat sold each year.

This does not need to happen as there are now a range of quality peat-free composts available. Many of these are made from recycled waste - another good reason to buy them.

Peat is not the best product on the market for mulching gardens, improving soil or planting trees and shrubs. For growing seeds and pot plants there are other composts, such as coir or composted wood waste, which give excellent results.

To save peatland wildlife you can:

- ◆ Buy plants grown without peat
- ◆ Buy peat-free composts
- ◆ Make your own compost
- ◆ Use alternatives to sphagnum moss
- ◆ Shop in garden centres refusing to stock peat from Sites of Special Scientific Interest



Water conservation – Every drop counts!

The public demand for water rises every year. Our rivers, streams and wetlands are in danger of dying a slow death as water companies bid to extract more water. Thankfully, people are realising that water is a precious resource which should be used wisely. You can make a real difference in your home and group by using water with care.

- ◆ Place a water butt beneath a down pipe to collect water from guttering around your house / building.
- ◆ Use a watering-can rather than a hose-pipe
- ◆ Mulch plants with peat-free compost to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.



Composting

Compost heaps not only get rid of your waste and turn it into a resource you can use but they are also a great habitat for wildlife. For a successful compost heap it would be best to get the caretaker and kitchen staff involved from your group. Any green or raw vegetable waste from the grounds, kitchen, or group can be used. Site your compost heap in a shady corner using a home-made box (well spaced wood planks) or a shop-bought compost container. You can even manage by just making a heap in a corner of the garden but waste breaks down more slowly this way. For more information see the website www.compostguide.com.

If you have limited space, you can still practice the art of compost making with a 'worm bin' in the back yard of your group. For more information on this see the website www.wigglywiggers.co.uk

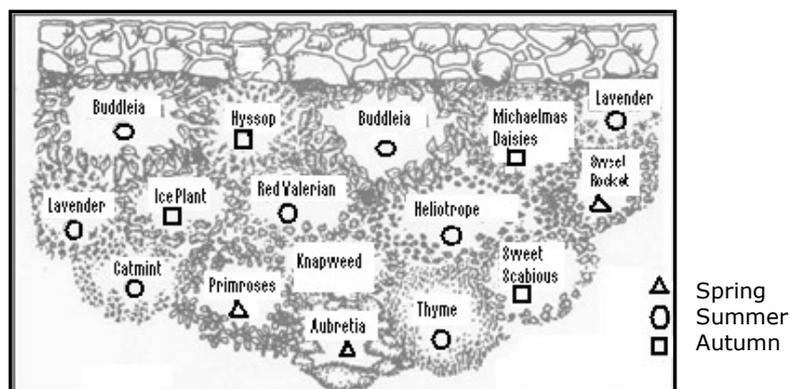
Tips for Wildlife Garden Success

- ◆ Put a pile of logs in a shady corner to help feed beetle larvae, solitary bees and hedgehogs.
- ◆ Don't use slug bait which is harmful to hedgehogs and birds. Instead set a slug trap by sinking a can of beer into the ground or place circles of sharp sand around plants.
- ◆ Put marigolds in the vegetable patch to attract predatory wasps and hoverflies which attack caterpillars, aphids and pest larvae.
- ◆ Dilute household detergent is effective against greenfly and blackfly. It is also believed not to affect butterflies and caterpillars.

Creating Habitats and Improving Biodiversity

Butterfly Gardens

Butterflies are on the wing from March until October. They need sugar-rich nectar from plants which are in flower throughout the spring, summer and autumn. Pick a sheltered, sunny spot for your butterfly garden. The diagram below shows the type of plants that attract butterflies and when they flower.



Nettle Feeders

The easiest types of butterfly to attract are nettle feeders. This includes Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Peacock. Grow nettles in a sunny, sheltered position. Plant them in an old tub buried in the ground to stop them from spreading and becoming a nuisance. Small tortoiseshells prefer young nettle growth so cut down part of your nettle patch in late June or early July (removing any caterpillars first) to allow the next generation of butterflies to benefit from the regrowth. The nettles can also be used to make nettle soup in early spring. **Be careful when picking nettles - even a casual brush can sting!**

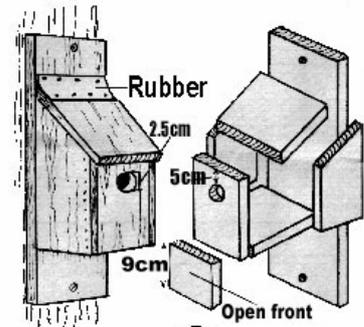
Helping Birds

Help birds by providing nest boxes and keeping a well stocked bird table. Cater for seed eaters by planting teasels and globe thistles.

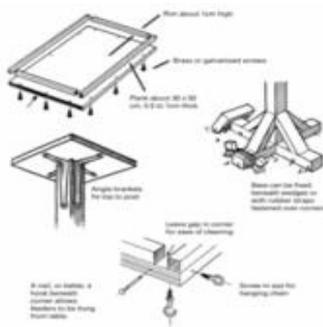
Bird Boxes

There are all sorts of nestboxes which cater for a wide variety of birds. The design illustrated is for a simple closed box to attract tits or sparrows. This can be easily modified into an open box for robins or flycatchers by cutting away part of the front panel. Vary the entry hole size according to the type of bird you want to attract.

Site the box in a sheltered position on a tree, wall or facing north-east or south-east to avoid prevailing wet winds and the heat of the midday sun. Make sure the box is at least 2 metres from ground, away from overhanging branches (to prevent cats), and clean the box every year when the birds are finished nesting (to avoid parasites).



Entry Hole Sizes:
Blue Tit - 25mm,
Tree Sparrow - 28mm,
Great Tit - 25mm,
House Sparrow - 29mm.



Top of Table - 60 x 45 cm

Table should be at least
1.5 m from the ground

Bird Tables

Construct a table from exterior grade plywood attached to a pole with metal brackets. A lip around the table will prevent food from blowing away, while the gaps in the corners allow drainage. Make sure you site the table away from shrubs or branches if cats are a problem. Remember to provide a variety of food: corn or cereals for house sparrows, fat for insect eaters, unsalted peanuts for coal tits and cheese for robins.

Meadows

Try planting meadow flowers in borders; poppies and corncockles make a colourful splash. Then perhaps consider making your own meadow. Once established, meadows require little maintenance!

Choose an area of poor soil, otherwise invasive grasses will take over. Strip back 10cms of top soil and lightly rake out a seed bed. Plant seeds or pot-grown plants in autumn, but be patient as some seeds take a year to germinate. When seeds have germinated and the grasses are 10 cm high, cut your meadow. To purchase wildflower seeds and plugs (wildflowers with root balls for immediate effect) contact Ecoseds who will also give advise on seed mixes and techniques. Ecoseds also offers a Resource Pack
Email: info@ecoseeds.co.uk Web: www.ecoseeds.co.uk

Example of a Youth Group Making a Difference

Killinarden Community Group garden for Wildlife:

Initially this group decided to create a sculptural garden, which grew into a wildlife project. They decided to focus on creating habitats for moths, specifically the Tiger Moth, giving each part of its life cycle a place to live. The group researched the habitats necessary for moths, and used dead wood and reclaimed wood to create these in their garden. The group planted heathers and ivy to encourage other insects and has put up a bird table and bird feeders. Now not only is the garden a great place for moths and birds, but for humans too. Salvaging scrap aluminium, they made small moth sculptures, and have painted murals on the wall of the garden. The group developed two newsletters for parents and the community and contacted the local parks department, which has provided the group with six native trees. This project has promoted environmental awareness in the community and produced a visual spectacle for people to enjoy.

Websites and further reading.

Waste Free Group, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

Web address	Content
www.nrwf.org.uk	A website dedicated to bringing representatives together from the statutory and NGO sectors.
www.wastewatch.org.uk	Waste Watch is an organisation promoting and encouraging action on waste reduction, reuse and recycling.
www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org/ulster_wildlife_trust/youth_and_education/?id=4	Wild about Waste project is an education package which links the issues of resource use and waste management with the threat to wildlife.
www.brysonhouserecycling.co.uk	Part of Bryson Charitable Group's activities aims to provide sustainable solutions to waste management problems by developing community-focused, accessible services delivered in partnership with local authorities.
www.eco-schools.org.uk	The Eco-Schools programme enables schools to become more sustainable and students more environmentally aware, through a supported and recognised award scheme.
www.kidsagainstwaste.org	Linked to the EHS 'Wake up to Waste' campaign, this site aims to inform children about Waste and Recycling issues, using interactive fun games and activities.
www.envirowise.gov.uk	Envirowise offers UK businesses free, independent, confidential advice and support on practical ways to minimise waste and reduce their environmental impact

Wildlife Gardening Resources

Web address	Content
www.yptenc.org.uk/docs/factsheets/env_facts/wildlife_garden.html	Online resource by Young People's Trust for the Environment.
www.wildlifegardening.co.uk/mainindex.htm	A website dedicated to conserving flora and fauna. You will discover the secret of making a haven for wildlife, on whatever scale.
www.ehsni.gov.uk/education/factsheets.shtml	Factsheets by the Environment and Heritage Service (Available as PDF).
www.wildlife-gardening.org.uk/	An online biodiversity forum where wildlife gardeners want to garden for the benefit of their local wildlife.
www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/organic_wildgardens.shtml	BBC site which gives good advice on creating and managing a wildlife friendly garden.

Further Reading

Baines, Chris (2000) <i>How to make a Wildlife Garden</i>	Francis Lincoln Limited
Baker, Nick (2002) Bug Book, <i>Discover the World of</i>	<i>Mini-Beasts!</i> New Holland

Useful Contacts for Youth Groups

An-Creagan Visitor Centre
Creggan
Omagh, Tyrone
BT79 9AF
028 8076 1112

Belfast Zoo
Antrim Road
Belfast
BT 36 7PN
028 9077 6277

Bryson Education Unit
Bryson Charitable Group
28 Bedford Street
Belfast, BT2 7FE
028 9032 5835

Carnfunnock Country Park
Drains Bay
Larne
Co. Antrim, BT40 2QG
028 2827 9501

Colin Glen Trust
163 Stewartstown Road
Dunmurry, Belfast
BT17 0HW
028 9061 4115

CVNI
Beech House
159 Ravenhill Road
Belfast, BT6 0BP
028 9064 5169

CAAN
The Stableyard
Barnett's Demesne
Belfast, BT9 5PB
028 9030 3930

ECOS Centre
Kernohans Lane
Broughshane Road
Ballymena, BT43 7QA
028 2566 4400

EHS
Commonwealth House
35 Castle Street
Belfast, BT1 1GU
028 9054 6645

Exploris
The Rope Walk
Castle Street
Portaferry, BT22 1NZ
028 4272 8062

Field Studies Council
Derrygonnelly Centre
Derrygonnelly
BT93 6HW
028 6864 1673

Groundwork NI
63-75 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast
BT15 2GB
028 9074 9494

International Tree Foundation
c/o 20 Birchwood,
Lisnamallard, Omagh
BT79 7RA
028 8224 6660

Killowen Outdoor Centre
Killowen Point
Rostrevor, Newry
BT34 3AF
028 4173 8297

Lough Neagh Discovery Centre
Oxford Island Nature Reserve
Craigavon
BT66 6NJ
028 3832 2205

Magilligan Field Centre
375 Seacoast Road
Limavady
BT49 0LF
028 7775 0234

Marble Arch Caves
Marlbank
Florencecourt
BT92 1EW
028 6634 8855

Mourne Heritage Trust
87 Central Promenade
Newcastle
BT33 0HH
028 4372 4059

Speedwell Trust
Parkanaur Forest Park
Castlecaulfield
Dungannon, BT70 3AA
028 8776 7392

TACT Wildlife Centre
2 Crumlin Road
Crumlin
BT29 4AD
028 9445 9739

The National Trust
Rowallane House
Saintfield
BT24 7LH
028 9751 0721

The RSPB
Belvoir Park Forest
Belfast
BT8 4QT
028 9049 1547

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
Castle Espie
78 Ballydrain Road, Comber
BT23 6EA
028 9187 4146

Woodland Trust
1 Dufferin Court
Dufferin Avenue, Bangor
BT20 3BX
028 9127 5787

Grants and Awards for environmental projects

Teaching Ecology Grants.

The British Ecological Society is offering a range of grants to enable teachers to make the teaching of ecology more innovative, interesting and exciting. Grants are available for undertaking research into effectively communicating the teaching of ecology; There are seven categories available ranging from £200 - £1,000, Deadline dates are Sept 30th, Jan 31st and April 30th. For more information on the awards visit

www.britishecologicalsociety.org/articles/grants/education/EEG/

RSPB Environment Awards.

Are you doing something that benefits the environment in Northern Ireland? Do you know someone who deserves recognition for environmental work in Northern Ireland? If so, you should apply or nominate someone for one of RSPB NI's 40th Anniversary Environment Awards. There are eight award categories covering the areas of farming, business, planning, school, volunteer, young person, journalist and an overall inspiration award. The awards are open to everyone. You can either apply for it yourself, or nominate someone you feel merits this award. All you have to do to enter is download the entry form at

www.communityni.org/index.cfm/section/news/key/RSPBaward and submit it along with an outline of what you or the nominee has done to deserve an award.

For more information contact Cara Gibney, Volunteering Development Officer, RSPB on tel: 028 9049 1547, email: cara.gibney@rspb.org



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Website: www.eefni.org.uk



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