

INVESTIGATING INVERTEBRATES

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Invertebrates may instigate curiosity or aversion but with the help of teachers, environmental educators and the enthusiasm of primary pupils, they may inspire a long-term fascination and a green transformation. Welcome to Module 2 of the BES Connecting Schools to Nature project!

INVERTEBRATE SURVEYS

Following the digital start to our schools project, this module has seen the team and our fantastic project volunteers deliver in-person workshops to over 700 pupils from 23 schools across the North East. The aim of these sessions is to encourage pupils to observe invertebrate species in their school grounds and to think about what changes can be made to improve their habitats through green transformations.

Equipped with sweep nets and beating sheets, pupils have been conducting 'bug hunts' within their school grounds, using magnifiers and insect pots to identify a whole host of fantastic species! With field guides and the expertise of staff and volunteers, pupils had the chance to classify what they found. Being more familiar with the species around them allows pupils to feel closer to the natural world and appreciate that even the smallest of animals contribute to their local ecology. By reporting their findings, pupils can take charge of their learning through citizen science.

an active part in their learning encourages long-term action and participation in their school's green transformation and may inspire the next generation of budding ecologists.

PLANT POWER

Alongside bug hunts, each pupil planted their own pollinator-friendly marigolds. Classes are encouraged to think about how this green transformation will benefit invertebrates and where the flowers should be placed around their school. Schools have also been encouraged to apply for initiatives beyond the project, including the Woodland Trust's 'Free Trees for Schools' campaign.

Co-design between teachers, pupils, and professionals is important – by giving teachers and pupils the opportunity to design their ideal green school grounds, both parties are at the heart of this process and have ownership over how their school will be transformed.

CONNECTING SCHOOLS TO NATURE IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND PROJECT

Working with partners MammalWeb Ltd and SMASH-UK, we will improve school children's connection with nature, deliver green transformations to schools in disadvantaged areas, and help create the 'Environmental Educators of tomorrow' through the training and codesign of the project with teachers and ecologist volunteers. The project runs until March 2023.

This project is funded by the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. It is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

If you would like to take part or support the project in any way, please get in touch with outreach@britishecologicalsociety.org

HAVING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT AND SOMEONE WITH EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE WAS BRILLIANT... THE GENEROSITY OF THE PROJECT HAS REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE TO OUR SCHOOL.

The online 'Encounters' platform maintains engagement with the invertebrates that pupils may see in their daily lives. Quizzes and activities challenge pupils to identify different species and think about the important roles they may play in ecosystems. Following our workshops, classes are also encouraged to take part in further bug hunts to earn points and badges for their school and to submit their findings to local citizen science projects. Taking

THE TIME TO REALLY THINK AND CONSIDER THE SCHOOL GROUNDS HAS BEEN INVALUABLE. WE HAVE A LOT OF 'GREEN' AREAS THAT ARE NOT UTILISED. THIS PROJECT SHOULD BE THE FIRST STEP IN CHANGE!

NEXT STEPS

This autumn term the focus will turn to birds. Schools will receive items such as nest boxes and bird feeders and will be supported by a new set of resources and tasks on the Encounters platform to help them learn and connect to their local birdlife. Green transformations will remain a key theme to the project, and the project team will work closely with teachers and pupils to make their ideal green schools a reality. ✨

