



KINGFISHER AWARD SCHEME 2023 REPORT FOR THE NINEVEH CHARITABLE TRUST

Overview

The aim of the Kingfisher Award Scheme project is to provide school children with the opportunity to get out of the classroom and go on to local farms to explore the natural environment and to touch, feel and see the relationship between wildlife and farming.

The project successfully took place as planned in four counties this year: Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Somerset. For Dorset and Gloucestershire, this was the first time the project was run in these two counties and we are delighted to report that these were also run very successfully.

The summer activities make up the main part of the project's annual expenditure and consist of four main components in each county: field days, research project & presentation, family picnic & award ceremony, and staffing & support for schools.

Field Days

Almost 670 children from 18 schools took part in the field days in May or June, depending on the county. Themes for the field day activities in each county are agreed with the farmer/s on each individual farm so that they can showcase the work they do both in relation to food production and the conservation of wildlife. The themes in each county this year were as follows:

- Cornwall: What lives on a traditional mixed family farm?
- Dorset: Bovine Buffet, Pollinator and Plant ID, Organic Farm Foods
- Gloucestershire: Market Garden, Farm Wildlife, Cows and Soil
- Somerset: Wheat & A Treat, Pollinators & Bumblebees. Reptiles, Amphibians & Habitats

In order for the children to explore the different aspects of wildlife conservation and food production on the farm they are visiting, they are divided into smaller groups and spend time at a number of different activity stations.

For example, at the farm in Berkeley Heath, Gloucestershire, the children were shown around the market garden, show different growing methods such as organic and no-dig, and were given the opportunity to plant their own bean and take this away with them. The Farm Wildlife station was located beside a diverse stretch of hedge with permanent pasture alongside. Children explored the different habitats here and the species living in them, both plants and animals and talked about biodiversity and why it is important for the farm.

"The children really gained a lot from [the scheme] and have been enthusiastic about the no dig concept and conserving nature around their gardens etc. It was a thoroughly informative day, with many aspects of farming life to consider." – School Staff Volunteer

At Home Farm in Curry Rivel, Somerset, in the Wheat & A Treat session, the farmers took each group on a wheatfield walk and talk, teaching the children about animal feed, flour and bread-making. The children were taught how to recognise a variety of crops and discuss the processes they go through to become the foods we all know. They then had a turn at hand-milling some wheat and making some delicious edibles with the flour.

"I wasn't much interested in the countryside before I did this but now I've found out lots!"

Student, Somerset School

Favourite activities were reported as being feeding pet lambs, handling poo, bee observation, moth identification and dissecting owl pellets. Teachers commented positively on the hand-on style of learning opportunities provided, which engaged children well who sometimes had difficulty engaging in a classroom setting and inspired them to get involved in the presentation back at school. This style was also welcomed by parent volunteers because it enabled them to support their child if they chose to continue working on the project in their own time and with extended family members.

"We had the most fantastic morning and learnt a lot. We are very inspired about continuing this back at school. Thank you so much for sharing your lovely farm with us."

Class teacher, Cornwall School

Research Project & Presentation

When the children returned to their respective schools, they had between 4 and 6 weeks to work on putting together a presentation. It is impressed upon the teachers that the focus of the display must be led by the children and should focus on the activities they participated in on the field day. The children used an imaginative range of different resources to produce their display including baked goods, drawings, card games, board games, posters, live experiments, poems and stories. The level of detail, creativity and factual accuracy in the class projects was also a testament to the impact this project has had on the students' learning.

"So amazing and engaging. The children were completely enthralled.... We had a great time and learnt so much. There are lots of brilliant ideas I can use in the classroom."

Class teacher, Cornwall School

Competition Judging and Family Picnic Celebration

The school children and their teachers are usually invited back to a celebratory picnic in July, along with their parents, friends and families. In Dorset, Gloucestershire and Somerset the picnic was held at the farm itself. Each event includes a range of activities run by volunteers to keep family members entertained whilst the judges are making their rounds, talking to the children who have put the displays together. Activities included welly wanging, making flower seed bombs, modelling clay owls and hedgehogs, producing a collaborative poster and planting a beanstalk.

In Cornwall this year, due to challenges with pupil and family attendance in previous years, we tried out a different approach: the judges visited each of the 6 schools, which enabled them to meet all the children involved, see everything that the children had made and spend more time talking to individual children about what they had learned. Although this required considerably more commitment in terms of the judges giving their time, it did mean that many more children could participate in the presentation and schools could timetable the event within the school day.

"The whole display had a great impact with good factual content relevant to the field day. It was clear that the children had been fully engaged and were allowed to develop their own area of interest. The judges particularly liked the poem/song/rap, fingerprinted honeycomb, pompoms, wormery and pollinator garden. Well done!"

Judge's feedback, Cornwall

In all counties, each school's display focused on different aspects of the field days and were of a very high standard. The creativity was evident as was the diverse learning that continued after the field day. In Gloucestershire, one teacher described how a forest school

area that they used to have in the school grounds had been abandoned in recent years, but after visiting the farm her class decided that they should make the most of this area and have been regenerating it as a class. This class came second place and as such received some prize money, which they are planning to spend on plants or equipment for the forest school.

Staffing and Support for Schools

The project would not be possible without the support, time, commitment, enthusiasm and knowledge from the army of volunteers who help make the Kingfisher Award Scheme (KAS) happen. The KAS coordinators in each county build excellent relationships with their local team of helpers, who fill a huge range of roles from activity station experts, picnic makers, guides and chaperones, judges and many more.

Schools are fully supported throughout their involvement in the project to ensure the children and teachers are well prepared for their day in the field and their subsequent presentation on picnic day. The KAS coordinators are meticulous with their planning in order to ensure that events run smoothly and everyone enjoys these days safely.

"We have been so impressed with the way it was run and delivered...It was a real uplift for the class and school community which was fantastic!"

Headteacher, Gloucestershire School

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January 2024

Photographs from the Kingfisher Award Scheme 2023
Field Days



Competition and Picnic Celebrations



