

**Dysgu yn yr  
Awyr Agored  
Cymru**

**Outdoor  
Learning  
Wales**



## Outdoor Learning Wales November 2017 Bulletin

**Outdoor Learning Wales (OLW) is a national network, facilitated by Natural Resources Wales. OLW aims to increase the understanding, appreciation and sustainable management of natural resources in relation to Wales by drawing expertise, knowledge and inspiration from a range of partners, leaders and educators.**

The aim of this bulletin is to update our members in Wales on news, projects and initiatives related to sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).

### OLW Update:

Your local network group still has time to apply for the **small project fund of £300!** A little can go a long way. Get the form in before the end of December and you can use the money to purchase shared resources including books, campfire and cooking equipment, run a small local event or to pay for group meeting admin such as refreshments, venue hire, etc.

Each group has the same time frame available to claim the **Year of the Sea** themed project fund of £500 where you can use the money to get some CPD on beaches, coast or river based learning, purchase shared equipment for source to sea activities, run a small outdoor learning session linked to the theme, etc.

### **Network Group Meetings:**

**Group:** Gwynedd, **Date:** 14/11/18, **Venue:** Treborth, **Time:** 4pm

**Group:** Newport, **Date:** 29/11/18, **Venue:** St Andrews Primary, **Time:** 4pm

**Group:** Cardiff, **Date:** 29/11/18, **Venue:** Llanishen Fach Primary, **Time:** 4pm



### **Events:**

Cookout Night! All welcome, no experience required to join in.

**Group:** Vale OLW, **Date:** 14/11/18, **Venue:** Nightingale Cottage, Porthkerry Park, **Time:** 4pm

Skillshare. Looking at the Natural Progression tool, orienteering skills and willow weaving. All welcome!

**Group:** Torfaen, **Date:** 21/11/18, **Venue:** George Street Primary, **Time:** 4pm

Get involved in discussions and networking via: **Facebook** -

[www.facebook.com/groups/outdoorlearningwales](http://www.facebook.com/groups/outdoorlearningwales) **Twitter** - [https://twitter.com/\\_OLW](https://twitter.com/_OLW)

[www.outdoorlearningwales.org](http://www.outdoorlearningwales.org)

### Natural Resources Wales

Sue Williams gave a talk on the multiple benefits of outdoor learning to a packed house at the Reardon Smith Theatre in Cardiff, alongside Kirsty Williams and Iolo Williams. The **Professionally Speaking** event is an annual affair delivered by the **Education Workforce Council** with this year's theme being about the learning potential of the Welsh natural environment. The event was filmed and is available on Youtube.

Education staff have been planning training sessions on Connection to Nature, Assessing Outdoor Learning, Connection to Nature for a Healthy Future and Teach on the Beach ready for the spring. Many of these will be in partnership with Techniquist so look out on their website for upcoming events.



More outdoor learning resources such as activity and session plans, information notes and guides are regularly being uploaded to the [website](#) so keep an eye out!

### Recipe of the month

#### *Potato and Mushroom Scones*

Ingredients:

500g Potatoes

25g butter

100g plain flour

100g mushrooms

Extra flour and oil for cooking

Makes approx 20 scones



- Peel chop and boil potatoes until soft
- Mash the potatoes with the butter
- Add the flour and mix together
- Tear off small chunks and flatten slightly into discs 1cm thick, using extra flour if needed.
- Cook on a hot, oiled skillet for 3 – 4 minutes each

### Quote of the month

“From a very early age, I had to interrupt my education by going to school”

*George Bernard Shaw*

### Activity of the Month

#### *Nature Shapes*

The simple activity of looking for shapes in nature can bring lots of opportunities to explore the outdoors and there are many ways to do it.

Keep the shapes simple for less able learners and more complex for more able learners.

- ✓ Hunt for bigger shapes within the wider environment e.g. triangles in the landscape, to finding the smallest shapes in the bark of a tree for instance possibly using magnifying glasses.
- ✓ To extend learning use a tally sheet and place learners into teams to shape hunt, then make a graph of which is the most popular shape in the local green space. Repeat in a different nature space such as the beach and compare findings.
- ✓ Provide shaped frames for learners to look through to add a different perspective to how they view nature in different scales. Take a photo and make into a collage of nature shapes.
- ✓ Make shape outlines using sticks, stones, soil, etc then use contrasting natural material to fill in the shape. For more able learners you can apply percentages of covering the shape e.g. fill in half the shape, fill in quarters using different coloured leaves, etc.

### Fact of the Month

Did you know that the goldcrest is the tiniest full-grown bird in Britain and is just over 3 inches long?

### Collective noun of the month

A chine of polecats

### Species of the Month

#### *Polecat / Mustela putorius*

Polecats are found throughout Wales where valleys and farms are a favourite habitat but they can be found in gardens, low lying woodlands and grassland areas.

Once, polecats were widespread throughout Great Britain, but were nearly exterminated by 1915.

With blackish guard hairs and yellow under fur on the body, they have a ‘black and tan’ appearance; banded “bandit” face: pale muzzle, ear tips and ‘eyebrows’, with a broad dark band around the eyes; darker legs and belly, short fluffy tail; is the size of a ferret. Males can grow to 33-45cm, with females being a little smaller at 32-39cm. Males weigh around 0.8-1.9kg, females 0.5-1.1kg.

Polecat dens are commonly found in rabbit burrows, especially in summer, but they frequently move into farmyards in winter, when they may den in hay bales, under sheds and in rubbish tips. Polecats have territories that vary in size according to habitat and food availability. For males they have been measured at 16-500 ha, and for females about 25-375 ha. Territoriality seems weaker in polecats than other mustelids, possibly because they move around more to exploit seasonally abundant food sources. There are often

piles of scats near den sites, but little evidence that scats are left around the territory to defend its borders. Polecats have scent glands either side of the anus, and they produce a pungent, repellent scent. In summer, rabbits are a main food source as polecats are small enough to hunt them within their burrows. In winter, common rats become a favoured food, and sites with good rat populations become usual habitats. Birds may be taken and frogs in spring, when gathered to spawn.

Pole cats live up to 14 years in captivity, probably five years in the wild. They have one litter a year, with 5-10 young born blind and hairless in late May-early June. They begin to take meat from 3 weeks, and stay with their mothers for 2-3 months. They reach adult size by autumn, and breed at one year old. Pregnancy lasts between 40-43 days. Male polecats play no direct part in rearing the young.



In addition to its protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the polecat has recently (2007) been added to the list of UK BAP mammals, protected as species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. Habitat fragmentation, persecution by gamekeepers and being killed for their fur drastically has reduced their numbers. The polecat population was reduced to about 5,000, but is now more than 46,000. Road accidents are a major threat as they tend to be attracted to other road kill items for food. [www.mammal.org.uk](http://www.mammal.org.uk)

### **Plant of the Month**

*Hairy bittercress / Cardamine hirsuta*

A common annual herb with rounded leaves that's considered by most gardeners to be a weed.



It can grow through the winter, though usually stays in a compact rosette form close to the ground. In winter, you'll often find it growing on bare soil in flower beds and vegetable patches. Related to the pretty cuckoo flower, bittercress is a much drabber plant with insignificant white flowers and pinnate leaves. The arrangement of flowers and seed heads is typical of members of the mustard family

Bittercress has an explosive seed mechanism by which seeds can be dispersed up to 1m (3ft) away or considerably further if carried by the wind. Seedlings may appear at most times of the year, but mainly in the summer or early autumn. As it is frost hardy it can survive the winter and will flower as temperatures rise in early spring, producing several generations in a season.

Its leaves and flowers have a delicious, peppery, tangy flavour that can be added to a winter salad for a peppery taste. Works well with goats cheese and beetroot. It can also be added to soups, salsa and pesto. [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)  
[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)



### **Courses/Events:**

#### ***Funding for Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing***

A new Welsh Government [funding scheme](#) will support the Natural Resources Policy, making clearer links between Wales' natural resources and wellbeing. Grants will be available for cross-sector partnerships delivering improvements in local environment quality, green infrastructure, and ecological resilience.

#### ***LlyG, Coed Cymru and Caerphilly Council***

Timber framing course in Caerphilly

Date: 12-16/11/18

Venue: Caerphilly Borough Council workshop Aberbargoed

Cost: £100 per person - covers 5 days tuition plus refreshments

#### ***I Dig Trees***

This partnership between TCV and OVO Energy are offering free trees to community groups.

Contact: [www.tcv.org.uk/communities/i-dig-trees](http://www.tcv.org.uk/communities/i-dig-trees)

#### ***John Muir***

The Lost Words section has added free [Conker](#) and [Bramble](#) poster downloads alongside other free [info and resources](#).



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**Contributions:**

Please submit suggestions for content or items of interest for upcoming bulletins by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month.  
All submissions are subject to Coordinator approval.

**Disclaimer:** *OLW and NRW are not responsible for the content, standard or reliability of the linked websites, courses or resources from this bulletin from external sources. Listing should not be taken as an endorsement of any kind. We cannot guarantee that these links will work all the time and we have no control over the availability of linked pages.*

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