

**Dysgu yn yr
Awyr Agored
Cymru**

**Outdoor
Learning
Wales**



Outdoor Learning Wales Bulletin March 2015

Outdoor Learning Wales is a national network, drawing expertise, knowledge and inspiration from a range of partners, leaders and educators. Outdoor Learning Wales (OLW) aims to increase the understanding, appreciation and sustainable use of Wales' natural environment.

The aim of this bulletin is to update our members in Wales on news, projects and initiatives related to natural resource management.

OLW Update:

Great news for 6 network groups throughout Wales!

Following the February funding round these groups have successfully applied for project grants to deliver a broad range of local activities. Projects to engage learners with agriculture through to coastal environments have been given the go ahead, showing that the broader remit of OLW has been taken on board by the membership. We will hopefully be able to update you on how these exciting projects once they are underway.

www.outdoorlearningwales.org

Don't forget OLW has a Facebook group and Twitter presence.

Natural Resources Wales Education Team Update:

Weeklong sustainability events for secondary and primary schools were held in the North and South this March, to showcase some of the sustainability activities developed by the education team. These sessions were hands on and the activities allowed pupils to make connections between the environment and the impact of human behaviour.

The team have also been trialling renewable energies sessions, sessions about the causes of flooding and water quality. Educators have also taken part in CDP events on a range of topics from literacy in the outdoors to environmental science.

For more information on upcoming training opportunities delivered by the team, please contact sarah.jones@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk



Quote of the month

"And this, our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."

William Shakespeare

Fact of the Month

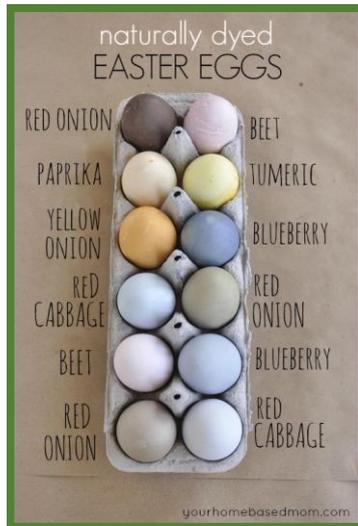
Did you know that Horses use facial expressions to communicate with each other?

Collective noun of the month

A cete (sēt) of badgers

Activity of the Month

Naturally Dyed Eggs



To prepare the dye you will need around 400g of:

Purple cabbage - chopped
Beetroot - chopped
Red onion skins
Yellow onions skins
Blueberries

You can also use:

2 tbsp. paprika
2 tbsp. turmeric

You will also need enough hard boiled eggs for each child to try several if not all of the dyes.

Place each of these things into 480ml of water along with 1tsp salt and boil for about 10-15 minutes.

Strain the water and place in a jar or bowl and add 1tbsp white vinegar to each dye. Allow them to cool before using.

Cover your table with plastic and or paper because this can get a bit messy!

Place all the dyes into small plastic cups and write the name of the dye on the cup

Use plastic spoons to place the eggs in and out of the cups, leaving them in the dye for 5 minutes or so and observe the reactions.

Natural dyes do not dye as quickly or as strongly as shop bought dye so you need to have patience if you want brighter colors. For really bright colors you may need to leave it in the dye for an hour or more.

www.yourhomebasedmom.com

Plant of the Month

Stinking Iris

Iris foetidissima

Don't be alarmed by the name! This beautiful plant, which is an evergreen perennial is a British native and can also be found in North Africa, and western and southern Europe where it grows in open woods and moist, shady areas and is easy to cultivate in ordinary garden soil. Stinking iris becomes increasingly drought-hardy with age, so it makes a good candidate for areas of dry shade too. It can tolerate coastal conditions and is a good choice for cliffs overlooking the sea. This evergreen iris loves moderate shade but also does well in considerable sunlight. Its large evergreen sword-shaped leaves do not fade away as the majority of other irises do.

The flowers can vary in colour from a dull purple tinged with yellow to a pale yellow with darker veins, depending on its overall location and the pH levels of the soil. Blooming usually occurs in early summer and later develops into a pod of brilliant orange berries in autumn. These interesting berries last throughout the winter. The dried ripe flower capsules and seeds are used in dried flower arrangements. The seeds have also been used in the past as a dubious coffee substitute.

The stinking iris has thick, creeping rhizomes and can be grown either from seed or by dividing these rhizomes. The seeds can take nearly two years to germinate and should be planted in autumn, as soon as the seeds have ripened. The rhizomes should be planted just beneath the soil in a semi-shaded location.

Blooms don't open all at once so flowers seem to be around longer than many irises too. Each bloom, after only a few days, begins "going to pod." The burst seedpods make good cuttings for bouquets and as cuttings they last even longer than they do in the garden.

The leaves are long and narrow, and the plant grows in clumps reaching anywhere from 1-3 feet high.

The crushed leaves have a rank 'roast beef'-like smell and the flowers are not fragrant at night.

Warning – all parts of stinking iris are potentially poisonous. The underground stem is poisonous and can cause vomiting and violent diarrhoea. The sap can cause skin



irritation and blistering. It is also poisonous for animals which normally avoid it because of the smell whether fresh or dried.



It known by many names including:

Adder's mouths, Bloody bones, Blue devil, Blue seggin, Dabiduba (Bengali), Dadmari (Hindi), Dagger-flower, Dragon-flower, Dragon's tongue, Fetid iris, Field lily, Flag, Foetid gladwyn, Gladden, Gladding-root, Gladdon, Glader, Gladin, Gladwin, Gladwine, Gladwyn, Glaive lily, Gliei (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Iris, Iris Ddrewllyd (Welsh), Iris puant (French), Lever, Lirio fetido (Spanish), Lírio fétido (Portuguese), Poison berries, Ricottaria (Italian), Roast beef plant, Scarlet-seeded iris, Seggin, Snake fiddles, Snake's food, Snake's meat, Snake's poison, Spurge plant, Spurgewort, Stinking gladdon, and Stinking gladwyn. Foetidissima is derived from Latin foeteo (to stink, have a bad smell) meaning 'very bad-smelling, fetid or stinking'.

Medicinally, use of the stinking iris is mentioned in the writings of Theophrastus (c.372-c.287 BC) the Greek philosopher. In India it has been used to treat ringworm. Today the plant is rarely used in this capacity in Europe although, like others of the Iris species, it was once taken as a purgative (the fresh root was steeped in ale) and was also prescribed in infusion for treating nervous disorders, and easing pains and cramp.

www.plantingflowerbulbs.com
www.plantlife.org.uk

Recipe of the month

These 'campfire doughnuts' are very simple to make.



Make up a batter using:

- 70g butter
- 500g plain flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 70g sugar
- 1 egg
- 260ml milk

- Sieve flour and baking powder into a bowl and rub in butter. Mix in the sugar.
- Beat egg and milk together. Make a well in flour mixture,

then and pour in the egg mixture. Mix together to form a soft dough.



You also need vegetable oil for frying.

At the same time, make some jam sandwiches with three slices of bread each (a triple-decker sandwich).

- 1) Cut off the crusts and cut into squares.
- 2) Dip each jam sandwich into the batter.
- 3) Fry the batter soaked sandwich in some oil.
- 4) Fry until they go golden brown (ok, some of mine are a little more 'brown' than 'golden').

Remove, drain any oil, and sprinkle with sugar.

You should end up with some square shaped doughnuts/fried jam sandwiches. (This definitely isn't health food).

They actually taste quite a bit like doughnuts (try to visualise a doughnut as you eat it, and not a fried jam sandwich!).

www.getoutwiththekids.co.uk



Species of the Month

Sand lizard

Lacerta agilis

This is a small species of lizard that is found across Europe and into parts of Asia. The sand lizard is one of only three species of lizard natively found in the UK along with the slow worm and the common lizard.

The sand lizard inhabits grass and heath-lands along with coastal dunes throughout its native range which extends from the United Kingdom, east across Europe to Mongolia. Within these habitats they are associated with older, more mature stands of heather and the deeper, tangled marram grass, respectively. Despite having a fairly wide distribution however, sand lizard populations are sparse and are completely extinct from certain areas of their native habitats.

The sand lizard is a relatively small, yet "stocky" lizard species that is usually of a light brown colour, with darker markings running down its back. Male sand lizards however, are known for their remarkable colour change, as their skin turns from a dull brown to a bright green during the mating season, in order to more easily attract a female to mate with. These are Britain's only egg-laying lizards.

Sand lizards mate in the early summer from May to June, when males begin to show off their new green patterns in order to attract and impress a female mate. Female sand lizards lay their eggs in burrows dug by the females during June and July in loose sand where they are incubated by the sun and not by the mother. The eggs hatch in approx. 1-2 months depending on weather conditions. As with other lizard species, very little care is provided by the parents for their young who are independent from a very early age. The young are very similar to the adults, though colouration is less vivid and they grow to around 16cm - 20 cm in length.



As with other reptiles, the sand lizard is a cold blooded animal and must therefore, first warm itself up before it is able to hunt for food. Sand lizards spend the daytimes basking on a rock in the hot sun, which warms their blood up, re-charging them for an evening of hunting. The brownish colour of the sand lizard's skin acts as a good camouflage when the sand lizard is sun-bathing.

Like many other lizard species, the sand lizard is a carnivorous animal meaning that it has to hunt and eat other

animals in order to survive. Sand lizards primarily feast on a variety of invertebrates including insects, grasshoppers and spiders, which they watch closely using their excellent sight before powerfully grabbing hold of their meal with their strong tongue.

The small size of the sand lizard, coupled with its sluggish nature when warming up during the day, makes these animals a prime target for hungry predators. Birds, dogs and cats are the most common predators of the sand lizard, along with habitat destruction or total loss caused by humans.

Today, habitat loss has pushed these lizards into smaller and smaller areas and sand lizard populations across Europe are now under threat. Although once abundant and widespread, populations have disappeared over much of the species former range, including coastal dunes, the Wealden heaths, the New Forest and Wales. It is now largely confined to the dry heaths of south Dorset, southwest Surrey and the Merseyside sand dunes. Re-introduced populations exist in the New Forest, the Weald, south-west England and Wales. A long established, introduced population is present on the Isle of Coll, Scotland. The species is absent from Ireland.

The sand lizard is considered to be an animal at threat from extinction in the wild and is protected in much of its natural range. Priority Species in the UKBAP, Protected Species under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and CroW Act 2000. It is an offence to disturb these lizards in any way, kill, harm or injure them, cause damage to their habitat, possess, sell or trade them in any way

www.a-z-animals.com

www.bbc.co.uk

www.herpetofauna.co.uk

Landscape of the Month

Biomes

Biomes are general ecosystem types.

Biomes are very large ecological areas on the earth's surface, with fauna and flora (animals and plants) adapting to their environment.

Biomes are often defined by abiotic factors such as climate, relief, geology, soils and vegetation. It is a large area on the Earth's surface that is defined by the types of animals and plants living there.

A biome can be partially defined by the local climate patterns.

You may also have more than one type of biome within a larger climate zone.

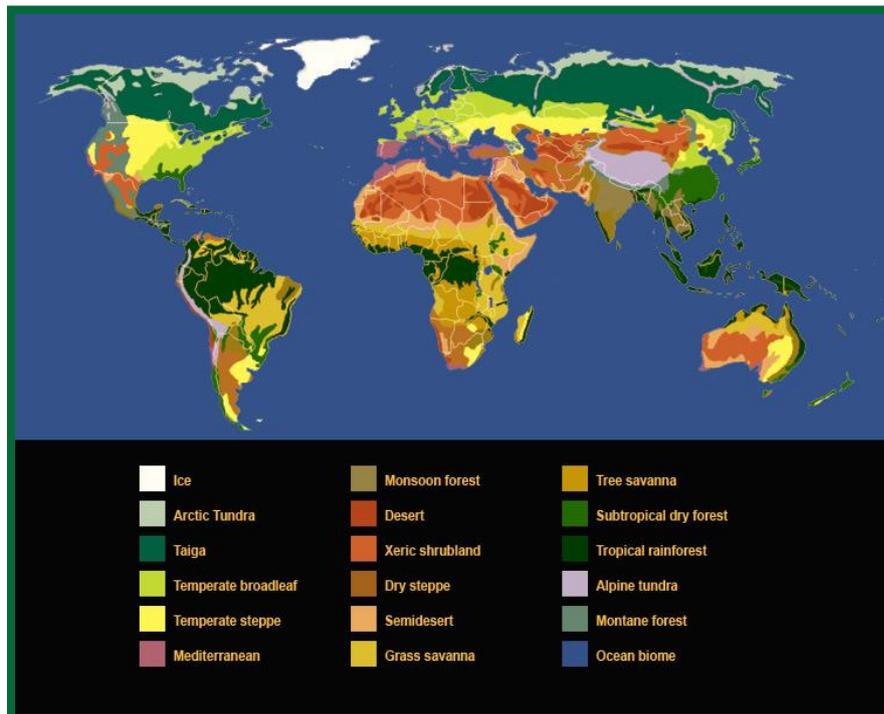
A biome is NOT an ecosystem, although in a way it can look like a massive ecosystem. You may find many units of ecosystems within one biome

If you take a closer look, you will notice that plants or animals in any of the biomes have special adaptations that make it possible for them to exist in that area.

There are five major categories of biomes on earth.

In these five, there are many sub-biomes, under which are many more well defined ecosystems.

- The Desert Biomes: They are the hot and dry deserts, semi-arid deserts, coastal deserts and cold deserts.
- The Aquatic Biomes: Aquatic biomes are grouped into two, freshwater biomes (lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, wetlands) and marine biomes (oceans, coral reefs and estuaries).
- The Forest Biomes: There are three main biomes that make up forest biomes. These are the tropical rainforest, temperate and boreal
- The Grassland Biomes: There are two main types of grassland biomes: the savannah grasslands and the temperate grasslands.
- The Tundra Biomes: There are two major tundra biomes—the arctic tundra and the alpine tundra.



Biomes play a crucial role in sustaining life on earth. For example, the aquatic biome is home to millions of fish species and the source of the water cycle. It also plays a very important role in climate formation. The terrestrial biomes provide foods, enrich the air with oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide and other bad gases from the air. They also help regulate climate and so on.

<http://eschooltoday.com>

<http://www.geography4kids.com>

Courses:

Cardiff OLW Networking and Skill-sharing Day

May 15th 2015, 2pm – 6.30pm - Bute Park Education Centre, Cardiff

Join us for as little or as much as you can!

An opportunity to network with other educators and outdoor providers while learning new skills and picking up new ideas. Workshops by Out to Learn Willow, Pontcanna Allotments and Natural Resources Wales. As well as Storytelling with Cath Little, skill-share sessions from other Cardiff school based staff and much more. Everyone welcome, from Cardiff and beyond, OLW member or not!

There is no charge for this event but booking is essential. Parking costs will be reimbursed

Contact: sheena.oleary@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Cyfleon

Join us for a 2 day study tour of Scotland including the Internationally renowned Auchlone Nature Kindergarten...

15 and 16 April 2015 (Part 1) 2 full days TBA (Part 2) 1 CPD day based on the Auchlone philosophy.

Are you interested to provide a rich, naturalistic learning environment outdoors that will offer risk and challenge? This course is for practitioners who are keen to develop their knowledge and understanding of working within the outdoor environment. It will provide practitioners with the opportunity to visit the Auchlone Nature Kindergarten and learn from the 'Mindstretchers' trainers about its approach to learning and teaching. Practitioners must be prepared to attend the follow up sessions and complete a small action research case study in their own setting. This course is for anyone working in the EYFS & Foundation Phase. COST: £650

Contact: info@cyfleon.co.uk

Dragonfly Creations

Courses held at our new Gower woodland workshop - Gelli Hir Farm, Three Crosses, Swansea.

May 2nd, 3rd & 4th - Green Woodwork & Artisan Furniture

May 30th & 31st - Introduction to Green Woodwork

August 22nd & 23rd - Introduction to Green Woodwork

September 19th-22nd - Green Woodworking, Artisan Furniture & Shave Horse Construction

Classes are open to anyone with an interest, young or old, beginning or wanting to expand one's experience. We provide a range of interesting courses in green woodwork. Set in our peaceful rural farm & woodland site on Gower, near Swansea. While learning the art of green woodworking we encourage an intimate relationship with the surrounding natural environment.

Contact: <http://www.dragonflycreations.co.uk>

North East Wales Wildlife

Basic Amphibian Training - April 25, 2015 2:30-11pm

This course covers basic ecology and identification of amphibians including newts and natterjack toads. The afternoon will consist of indoor workshops and talks followed by a site walk to identify species, highlight good conservation practice, and legislation. The evening session will provide good practice for survey techniques and identifying amphibians in the dark. Participants will need to bring wellies with them, and will need to ensure that they are cleaned of all mud and debris for biosecurity reasons. Refreshments will be provided however please bring snacks and wear warm clothing. We will be having a meal in the evening, the cost of which is included in the price of the course.

The course will take place at: eni Liverpool Bay Operating Company, Point of Ayr, Station Road, Talacre, Flintshire, CH8 9RD.

Cost: £30

Contact: KWilson@newwildlife.org.uk

Green City

Composting and Vermiculture – April 8th, 6.30-9pm, £15

Discover the science and practice of successful composting, maintaining a healthy wormery and fixing common compost problems. Get hands on in this half day workshop where you'll learn to site and set up a compost bin and wormery, find out how to prevent and fix common problems, discover how to use your compost and make your own 'worm tea' to take home.

Cosmetics from the Beehive – April 30th, 6.30-9.30pm, £30

Discover the many amazing products collected from the beehive including beeswax, propolis, pollen & honey. In this hands-on workshop with Bee Fruitful you'll learn how and why bees collect and produce these products, how they are harvested and how we can make use of them, including candles, cosmetics, polish & the regulations involved in selling them. In the second half of the workshop you'll learn how to make your own beautiful shaken hand cream and honey bath bombs to take away with you.

Unusual edibles – May 20th, 6.30-9pm, £20

Growing your own fruit and vegetables can be a far more interesting journey than you ever thought possible – and your garden can become a cornucopia of food while still looking wonderful. In this workshop our tutor Eirlys Rhiannon of Eating Our Gardens will introduce you to many exciting possibilities and a whole host of unusual edibles. Skip the veg favoured by the supermarkets, and venture instead into the world of fresh flavours and perennial garden delights.

Contact: www.greencityevents.co.uk



Non-Native Species online training

Free online training in biosecurity is now available through the Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) e-learning site. The e-learning is based on an existing package developed by the Environment Agency and is ideal for use by anyone working in the field, including staff, volunteers and contractors. To take the training you will first need to register with the site. Once registered, you can take a test and download a certificate once you've passed.

Contact: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/elearning>

Other News:

Urdd - Geraint George Scholarship

The aim of the scholarship is to give individuals 18-25yrs the opportunity to foster their communication skills and can help people in Wales and beyond to appreciate the natural world and understand the factors that affect it. Competitors are invited to send communications work, in any medium and on any environmental issue relevant to Wales.

The winner will choose one of two options:

- Visit Triglav National Park in Slovenia where they will have the opportunity to learn about the park and participate in activities.

- Attend EUROPARC conference held in a different part of Europe each year, where they will learn about the work going on in different countries and visiting sites

In addition the winner will benefit from establishing a strong connection with a mentor in Snowdonia National Park or the Natural Resources Wales to help develop their career in the environmental field. The work of the winner and three other top competitors of the scholarship will be displayed on the website of the Snowdonia National Park and Natural Resources Wales.

Contact: <http://www.urdd.cymru/en/eisteddfod/competitions/geraint-george-scholarship>

Forest School SNPT – Job opportunity

Part Time Experienced Project Support Officer

Required to provide administrative support for Forest School Swansea Neath Port Talbot (SNPT), a charitable organisation providing an innovative learning and recreation experience for children in woodland and natural settings. 20 hours per week: times flexible, over 4/5 days per week, Mondays to Fridays

Salary £16,054 pro rata - Closing date: Monday 13th April 2015

Contact: info@forestschoolsnpt.org.uk

Wales Volunteer of the Year Awards 2015 – Nominations close April 10th

Do you know of an inspirational individual or group that has made a real difference to their area or to the lives of others? If so, why not nominate them for a Wales Volunteer of the Year Award? It's your chance to get these remarkable people the recognition they deserve.

There are six categories for nominations:

- adult (25 years and over)
- young volunteer (under 25 years)
- 'green' volunteer (individual of any age who volunteers with an environmental organisation or project)
- trustee
- groups (two or more individuals, whether as an informal group or a formally constituted organisation)
- international (for individuals who have volunteered with international partners/organisations in Wales)

Contact: <http://www.wcva.org.uk/what-we-do/celebrating-the-sector/wales-volunteer-of-the-year-awards/>

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Contributions: *Please submit suggestions for content or items of interest for upcoming bulletins by the 20th of the month. All submissions are subject to Coordinator approval.*

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