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### New learners. New impacts.

In the last academic year we engaged with over 116,000 people on both learning and leisure courses with Field Studies Council.

Thousands more people discovered nature where they live and work for the first time using our wildlife guides.

This report showcases how the Field Studies Council works with our learners and partners to deliver large scale impact.

This includes our rapidly expanding online communities who access our new training

courses and digital resources. We are also expanding our work into cities and towns where we have previously had no presence.

I'm proud of how our talented staff continue to adapt to new challenges. Together, we've worked with funders, partners, and donors to create and try new ways of reaching people from across the UK.

Independent evaluation and powerful stories tell us, again and again, how valuable and valued the experiences we offer are for learning and improved health and wellbeing.

Mark Castle OBE, FRSA, Chief Executive

From September 2022 to August 2023, over 100,000 learners from schools, colleges and universities joined us for outdoor learning at our day and residential field centres.

In 2023:

Over 5,950 adults trained in applied biodiversity skills online and in person, at our centres and at 28 partner locations.

Over 145,000 wildlife guides used by volunteer recorders, families and professionals.

Explore, discover and learn

"The focused time over 4 days is hugely important for us. We tried delivery at school in the past but on a residential run seamlessly between each other minds are 'on the job' hour by hour between sessions." Teacher

We welcome people of all ages and abilities to stay and study at our network of centres across England, Wales and Scotland.

They tell us there's no substitute for first-hand experiences in nature. Our charity gives learners a special opportunity to see and explore natural landscapes for themselves.

We see time and time again how hands-on practical activities in the outdoors bring a subject to life and create vivid memories which last. There is nothing like seeing it for yourself.



# The big impact of a residential: independence, confidence and self-esteem

For our younger visitors, residentials can be a first time away from home. A stay at our centres offers both time and space in which to connect with peers and teachers.

Significant contact time also allows teachers get to know their students better too, with the impact seen in learners being less worried about making mistakes or asking for help.

Being away from the usual classroom environment can help those learners who struggle indoors re-engage with the learning process outdoors.

Sharing new experiences, space, mealtimes and overcoming challenges together on courses build personal and social skills.

Teachers and parents report improvements in independence, self-confidence and self-esteem, qualities that suffered during the Covid pandemic.

We see the true impact of our residential on overall health and wellbeing. When we welcomed a group from a deprived urban primary school to the Lake District their teacher reported, "It had opened their eyes to a world outside to explore and enjoy.

The opportunity to see a way of living without TV and the internet, to let their brains breathe. It was a new experience for most pupils."

"The students live in inner-city areas and for the vast majority this was the first time they had set foot in the countryside. One asked me what 'wellies' were."

Teacher

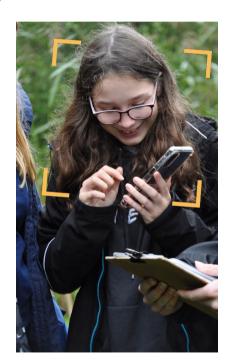
"I have never been so far away from home but I enjoyed it and I love the fresh air".
Student

# Developing knowledge, skills and great memories

Residential experiences provide time and opportunity to study in greater breadth, integrating classroom and real world knowledge across a number of curriculum subjects.

There is not a subject on the curriculum that can't be enhanced by outdoor learning.

The impact of an exciting residential where learners can see and experience nature for themselves can help fix it in the memory and recall it in exams. There's no substitute for experiencing the scale of a glaciated landscape, or watching wildlife first hand.



"Many aspects of the visit are alien to our students at first and seem a little daunting to them, but as the week progressed, they became more self-sufficient, and this is incredibly rewarding to witness."

"When we were on the field trip, we did maths, English and science, but it was like we didn't realise we were doing it." Learner on a residential

"Our students often fail to understand the terms "woodland" or "hay" during lessons, due to lack of exposure to countryside environments. The cultural capital we gain from field trips is immense." Teacher

# First hand STEM in the real, unpredictable, natural world

For our older learners on curriculum subject courses, a residential provides time for uninterrupted in-depth study.

Our residentials provide the time needed to develop practical and technical abilities, outdoor ecology and geographical skills. There is thinking time to design and redesign experiments. An outdoor learning residential offers the opportunity for learners to get to grips with all sorts of new equipment and learn how to use it in an outdoor setting.

Learners experience and learn to adapt to the real, unpredictable world and the complexities of dealing with the messy data that results.

For those looking at careers in conservation, ecology, and bioengineering solutions, what better way to integrate learning in the laboratory and natural world conditions?

From September 2022 to August 2023, we welcomed 1,444 residential education bookings for 40,311 learners from primary school pupils to post graduates.





We delivered 1,663 day and outreach courses to 60,350 learners from pre-school to post graduate level between September 2022 and August

#### Short of time? We're here for you.

The charity offers lower cost, local day courses making a big range of subjects more accessible to a wider audience.

From early years bug hunts to undergraduate studies or from entry level courses for the mildly curious to professional specialist qualifications, we can pack a lot into one day.

We run these courses at our specialist centres or interesting locations near where learners live.

#### **EYS Primary**

Day visits can be ideal for younger learners who come

to enjoy a busy day of outdoor activity and eco adventures.

The day can be the start of a progression of outdoor learning experiences that can be built upon throughout their time in education. It's also a useful introduction to using outdoor learning across the curriculum for teachers too.

#### Secondary

Residentials are not always possible or practical, but our day courses still allow for study in a range of natural environments. There is time to develop fieldwork and geographical skills, experience

nature first hand, and enjoy a day out of the classroom.

GCSE Rivers and A level Biology and Geography are very popular day courses. For those undertaking independent investigations, a gap between visits can embed learning between developing fieldskills and data collection but also give time to think about developing their research question.

We lead courses in fast changing urban areas too where learners explore and interpret London or Birmingham's regeneration areas.



### London and The Royal Parks

Our close partnership with The Royal Parks in London extends our ability to offer a range of courses in exciting built up and natural habitats, but within easy reach of tube and train stations.

Field Studies Council is the learning partner for the Royal Parks £8m Greenwich Park Revealed Project. Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery Community Fund, the project will reveal, restore, protect, and share the historic landscape, biodiversity and stories of Greenwich Park

A more recent partnership with the London Borough of Lewisham delivers outdoor learning in Beckenham Place Park.

### Birmingham

Our urban fieldwork days explore some inspiring well known textbook locations in the Second City including Perry Barr – location of the Commonwealth Games 2022 - and The Bullring.

We offer courses tailored to enhance students' fieldwork skills in fully accessible teaching sites.

### <u>Digital Resources:</u> Enhancing learner experiences

Digital enhances the hands-on experiences of fieldwork and outdoor learning.

The impact of digital resources helps learners make the most of their time in the field. Resources for preparation beforehand can help explain what to expect, or explore fieldwork skills.

Resources for follow up and reflection after the fieldtrip can further consolidate what has been learned.

The free resources pages for students and teachers on our website were visited over 482,000 times in 2023

A lot of work went in to refining and improving the content of the Digital Hub in 2023, which offers teachers accessible and student-friendly resources for all fieldwork topics required for the main exam boards in geography and biology.

"This saved me time and helped my students progress with their understanding of fieldwork skills." Teacher

It also includes knowledge enhancement and fieldwork skills courses

We are pleased to be able to offer free access to these resources by our customers and a wider education audience.





#### In 2023, we delivered:

- 200 biodiversity courses 120 in-person and 80 online.
- 125 different courses across 30 biodiversity subjects.
- This included 27 corporate bookings.
- 95 specialist tutors.
- 42 venues including 28 partner venues.
- 5988 course attendees - 1748 in-person and 4240 online.
- Rated 4.5 for overall enjoyment by 1868 participants.



#### Biodiversity training

In just 12 months, 51 organisations commissioned the Biodiversity team to deliver bespoke training online and in venues across the UK.

There is large demand for practical habitat surveying. This is because of gaps in biological data in the UK, especially specialist taxonomic groups which typically rely on a small number of people. Such monitoring skills are also integral for people wanting to progress in the environmental job market.

Field Studies Council uniquely brings together learning specialists, subject experts, and co-coordinators to deliver a portfolio of accessible training courses. Learners consistently rate their experiences with us as excellent and book again. Most also use their new skills and knowledge multiple times with different people.



"Good combination of very accessible, knowledgeable tutor providing supportive classroom and field work" Identifying Lichens Attendee

"I really enjoyed learning so many new things with each section - I really was impressed with the amount of information given." Discovering UK Seals Attendee





### Hearing the youth voice

Young people are integral to the future of the environment and many are keen to pursue their passion for the planet and turn it into a full time career. They want to use their skills to combat climate change and biodiversity loss.

Our popular courses for young people focus on areas which help inform future study and career choices such as marine science, ecology, geology, conservation and sustainability. Many courses are also eligible for The John Muir Award and Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.



#### **Youth Council**

Established in 2021 to equip young people with the skills to enact change and empower the youth voice in our organisation.

It brings together a diverse group of 14 young people, whose insight is vital in creating a relevant, purposeful and accessible offer for young people.

They meet monthly to discuss and evaluate our programmes, and collaborate with us.

In return, they access subsidised biodiversity training, develop transferable skills, and gain opportunities to network across areas they are passionate about.

#### Calling passionate young people...

"I thought I was alone" is a common statement we hear from young people awarded a Young Darwin Scholarship from the Field Studies Council.

Our charity has brought together people with a passion for a natural history, but who need support and friends to follow their dream.

Our impact is shown from the majority of scholars who go on to study biodiversity and have related careers because of the training and mentoring they receive from the Field Studies Council.

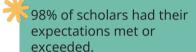
This year, we have increased and diversified our Young Darwin community by focusing on new locations, neuro-diversity, ethnicity and taxonomic interests.

We are grateful to the Youth Council and past scholars who have shaped and helped deliver our charity's unique approach.

"The Young Darwin Scholarship
is an amazing opportunity for
any young naturalist looking
to explore their interests and
meet like-minded people."

80 new scholars in 2023.

100% of scholars said they would recommend the scholarship to other young people.



93% of scholars stated that they learnt new and useful skills on the course.

"I came not knowing much about practical field studies and left feeling like there was a future in this industry for me."

Scholar



# WildiD

145,000 guides used by volunteer recorders, families and professionals in 2023.

200 shops spark nature curiosity by selling our WildID guides.

94% of people using WildID guides would recommend them to other people

23 bespoke guides were distributed through partnership projects in 2023.

Eight new guides launched in 2023, including: AIDGAP Plant Galls; WildID Fungi, Shark Eggcases, Dragonflies and Tracks.





# Publications, guides and gifts

The publications team engaged over half a million people in nature study in 2023. On average, four people use each guide we distribute – and 90% use guides multiple times.

Our customers vary hugely in age, location, and knowledge, but almost all look for and name more plants and wildlife because of our guides. About a third each go on to also: improve their garden for wildlife, submit biological records, or photograph or draw nature.

Publications remain at the forefront of beginner and advanced taxonomic skills; skills which are desperately needed for public and professional awareness to tackle biodiversity loss.

This year, the small team produced an amazing 125,000 WildID fold-out guides and AIDGAP books used by individuals, groups, and workplaces. A related gift range and specialist publications are also available.

"They are certainly lovely! I buy a guide for a family member every Christmas." Wildlife enthusiast

"We've used your wildlife fold-out guides for many years at the zoo and at the wildlife park, and we absolutely love them!" Trade customer

Please help spread the word If your favourite high street shop isn't yet stocking WildID guides from the Field Studies Council, please let us know. Email publications@field-studies-council.org and we'll send them a free starter pack.



Our leisure courses allow people to connect with nature through a varied range of activities including arts, crafts and walking.

Since the pandemic, we have continued to use our centres for wildlife-themed, active family holidays, and group bookings.

Our centres offer a great base for discovering the outdoors together with plenty of space to explore and enjoy the natural world.

In 2023 we had an increase in faith groups using our centres on a sole occupancy basis.

We have developed creative menus to ensure we can offer great, healthy food choices for all faiths and dietary requirements.

"I attended a family weekend.
Everything from the activities
to the food was excellent and
amazing value for money. We
made dens, set humane mammal
traps, made natural art, had a
campfire, went for a night-time
walk, learned how to read maps
and went river-dipping.
I'd book another weekend break
like this in a heartbeat!"
Leisure guest



432 people enjoyed our unique locations on art or creative courses

Our leisure programme had over 100 courses in 2023.
They encompassed creative experiences, and family

#### Influencing decision makers

Through our UK wide advocacy, we make the case for access to nature, outdoor learning and fieldwork residentials

We campaign and work with likeminded organisations to show that outdoor learning can improve a range of pressing policy concerns: educational attainment, health and wellbeing, and develop essential technical, scientific and green employment skills.

High quality outdoor learning is not guaranteed for everyone. We are working to change that through both our advocacy and charitable work.

We keep in touch with the 37

Members of the Westminster, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments who have a Field Studies Council Centre in their constituency or region.

Recently we have focussed on:

- The co-construction of the new Curriculum for Wales
- Supporting proposals in the Welsh and Scottish Parliaments for every school child to experience an outdoor residential.
- Responding to parliamentary inquiries into the 11-16 curriculum, education and training for land-based careers and teacher training.





#### Widening access, increasing opportunities

The benefits of environmental

everyone. So it's upsetting that

opportunities or wildlife guides.

financial and sometimes people

need additional support. Every

year, the requests for support

charitable funds. Even more so since the cost of living crisis has

come close on the heels of the

we receive far exceed our

pandemic.

many people face barriers to

taking part in Field Studies

Council's activities or even

accessing digital learning

Often these barriers are

education in the outdoors should be experienced by



Subsidies: Like a discount, but larger and tailored to help specific audiences, especially younger adults, and to help access for specific taxa. Look out for codes and offers online.

**Grants:** We give grants to help school groups visit Field Studies Council centres for inspiring experiences. This is an application process and reduces the cost of a visit.





Scholarships: We enrol Young Darwins on long term training and mentoring to follow their dreams to understand and protect the natural environment. This is an application process.

Placements: We fund interns to learn skills on the job across our teams, especially education skills. This is an application process organised as paid vacancies.



Demand for support through our Grants for Schools scheme remains high.

We are currently supporting 51 schools to access environmental education through first-hand experiences at our centres.



"The young people who attended the course benefitted greatly. For many of the students it was their first trip outside of London, and for some it was the longest they had stayed away from their families. This provided the students an opportunity to develop their confidence, resilience and independence.

The structure of the course ensured that as well as developing their understanding of multiple sections of the A Level Geography course, and collecting the data for their NEA, the students also spent a significant amount of time outdoors in a rural area. The students cited the experience of being in a totally new environment as one of their highlights, particular for those who had not seen the sea before..."

St Michaels Catholic College, Southwark, London.

# Please help disadvantaged people study the natural environment

Most grants and scholarships from the Field Studies Council rely on donations from generous individuals and families.

Our charity is oversubscribed four-fold when we offer support for disadvantaged children and young adults struggling to find their way. This is increasing as cost of living increases.

We urgently need donations to meet demand for support from children and adults in need. If you're able, please donate to Field Studies Council.





Donate £10 to create memories by giving a family in need a wildlife ID guide.

Donate £30 to give a child their first visit to the countryside.

Donate £50 to help save nature by educating young people about threatened habitat.

www.field-studies-council.org/donate

# Transforming understanding and practice

The Field Studies Council has made invertebrate training accessible and relevant to new audiences through our Biolinks project.

Biolinks has played a nationally important role by filling both a data and a skills gap.

For five years, we shone a spotlight on spiders, millipedes, slugs, and 20 other taxa where the UK is skill and data deficient.

By transforming biological records, wider society and government has the data to understand biodiversity, how it is changing and what can be done to protect and restore it.

Biolinks provided learning pathways from the introductory level to those for a career in biodiversity or regularly volunteering in biological recording. New tutors were also trained and developed.

We did it by offering both online and in person courses, thus broadening access.

The Field Studies Council is honouring their commitment to continue offering Biolinks courses since the funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund ended in January 2023.

"The Biolinks project has been, in our view, extremely successful and highly beneficial...It has certainly motivated us to submit records which we would not have had the confidence to do without the training the project has provided." BioLinks Learner



Biolinks has delivered inperson training for over 6,200 adults and online training for more than 16,800.

Course rated 4.8/5 for usefulness.

99% would recommend Field Studies Council training.

#### Trees for Climate Action

This is a follow-on project from the success of Forgotten Places, working in partnership with Trees for Cities and funded by the Lottery Community fund.

Field Studies Council's aim within the project is to work with young people in communities with little knowledge of trees, to co-design and distribute identification guides, and deliver bespoke training online and in-person.

The training covers tree identification, tree care, pest and disease, tree/woodland ecology and tree-related volunteer and career roles.

Project delivery: April 2023 -**June 2025** 

The project, for Glasgow and Bradford residents, aims to deliver.

- In-person training for 270 people.
- Online training for 90 people.
- Training of 12 new tree tutors.
- 10,200 people will benefit from two new tree guides.







# Helping disadvantaged schools

The Field Studies Council pioneered and ran activities to transform how disadvantaged schools can use high quality activities in natural environments to improve mental health, wellbeing, and a learner's engagement with school.

We were part of Nature Friendly Schools and worked with 188 schools across England, many located in disadvantaged areas.

We hosted 33 fully funded residentials for over 1.000 learners, developed and delivered training materials for over 1,000 teachers and shared 8,500 wildlife guides with all participants.

The project found that 94% of participating schools saw a positive impact on children's mental health and wellbeing, and resilience.

Schools benefited from the advice, training, equipment and resources which enabled them to meet their own priorities.

The project increased confidence and understanding of outdoor learning, leading more outdoor lessons taking place on a more regular basis.

Led by The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and supported by YoungMinds, Groundwork UK and the Sensory Trust, the Nature Friendly Schools project was funded by DEFRA and the Department of Education and supported by Natural England.

"We are able to use the outdoor learning area for so many subjects, we really hadn't considered this possible before the project."

### Cumberland Council Holiday Activity and Food Programme

Over 15 days of the 2023 summer holidays, local children aged 8-16 visited our Blencathra Centre for outdoor adventure, environmental and craft activities. Plus a hot, healthy lunch.

Staff ran days filled with physical activities including ghyll scrambling, mountain walks, orienteering, climbing, investigating freshwater minibeasts, bushcraft, team games, practical conservation, making bug hotel and owl nesting boxes, outdoor cooking and building mini boats for a river race.

Most children who came were eligible for free school meals, some had special needs, and others had arrived in the UK as Ukrainian refugees.

The children themselves reported the impact: being more active, learning new things, developing new skills, they felt more positive about themselves and felt less isolated.

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme is funded by the Department for Education.

"We were so pleased to know he was happy and engaging in the activities. It can be so hard and isolating and full of set backs having a child with extra needs. This week has been amazing for all of us."

540 places were filled with 111 individual children over the over the course of the programme.

81% of the children felt happy or very happy after their week, with nobody reporting being unhappy.

86% said they had made new friends.

100% of parents reported that their child had enjoyed the activity programme.

"She came back each day happy."

# Our talented people

Delivering the charitable mission of the Field Studies Council relies of a team of talented staff working across the UK, at our centres, in head office and from home.

Our charity blends front of house teams to welcome guests online and in-person: centre managers, tutors, administrators, hospitality, caterers and maintenance technicians.

They are joined by other specialists: course curators, publishers, marketers, accountants, people experts, property managers and a customer focused sales team.



We pride ourselves on having highly trained staff to make sure our learners have the best possible experience with us and we continue our excellent health and safety record.

Our staff completed over 1,800 training courses in 12 months to help visitors engage with nature safely during their time with us.



We train staff in safety, first aid, risk management and safeguarding. Plus specialist courses such as water safety or being a mountain leader.

We're reaching new and more diverse staff after we simplified our application process and broadened our advertisers. Equality, diversity and inclusion training for staff and trustees has also been a focus.

We've signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant. This brings benefits to military veterans and our charity as the veterans apply to use their skills in a new context.

#### **INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

We invest in people Standard

### Training the next generation

Young people have found structured career pathways into environmental or education work thanks to Field Studies Council.

We like to grow our own talent, too, and many of those we train find full time work with us. For example:

- We offer one year long higher education placements for those studying disciplines such as geography, biology, ecology, environmental science or education. They learn first-hand what it's like to work in an outdoor residential centre.
- Our trainee tutors scheme includes a Level 3 outdoor instructor apprenticeship. Through this 25 people have been recruited and many now work for us as tutors.
- We coach and support biodiversity tutors delivering courses online and in person for young and adults.
- We offer apprenticeships in other essential professions, including marketing, hospitality and catering.

"Apprenticeship with Field Studies
Council was a big turning point in my
career path. After graduating university,
and over a year of fruitlessly applying for
jobs in the environmental sector, I finally
had my foot in the door."

76 higher education placement students in four years – each coteaching groups, conducting scientific investigations, running community events, developing grant applications, and taking biodiversity surveys.

25 apprentices in four years - each trained in outdoor learning, from first aid to being a mountain leader.

**97 associate tutors** created and delivered biodiversity courses online and inperson, in 2023.





#### Working for the environment

Over the last decade we have pioneered significant carbon reduction and improved biodiversity across the charity's complex estate and operations.

We have since declared a climate emergency and set ourselves a new challenge of net zero emissions by 2030. We will be sharing this journey with our learners, our partners, our funders, and our staff.

#### Our ambitious plan involves:

- A new and detailed carbon management system.
- Investing in reducing carbon emissions across the charity, prioritising actions with the most impact.
- Developing nature recovery plans for our centres so that they can maximise their biodiversity and ability to store carbon.
- LED lighting upgrade programme at centres.
- Streamlined food purchasing to improve traceability and sustainability.
- Champion and showcase sustainability with our visitors, aiming to practice what we teach.
- Embedding the new role of sustainability coordinators to enable increased staff engagement.

#### At our centres

Our Location Based Reporting showed that we achieved a **carbon reduction of 65%** between 2011 and 2020.

We manage around 300 hectares and also look after:

- The National Nature Reserve at Slapton.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Veteran and ancient trees.
- Habitats for favourite mammals including hedgehogs otters and red squirrels.
- Eight species of bat, rare invertebrates, plants and birds including Spotted Flycatchers and the Ring Ouzel.



#### Leaving a legacy

In our 80th anniversary year, we reflected on the pioneering work of our founders. We celebrated the ongoing legacy of our early members of staff some of whom are pictured on the right.

We continue to receive bequests from those who want others to experience the profound and sometimes life changing impact of a field trip and connecting with nature. We are very grateful for the support of our charity.

Would you too consider leaving a legacy to the Field Studies Council?



The six wardens with Geoffrey Hutchings - a group taken at a stop on the coach trip round The Weald, during the Staff Conference held at Juniper Hall, November 1961. Left to right: John Sankey, Charles Sinker, Ian Mercer, Jim Bingley, John Barrett, Paul Holmes, Geoffrey Hutchings.

CELEBRATING



#### **Explore Discover Learn**

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Rhyd-y-Creuau
Preston Montford
Bishops Wood

Amersham
Ame

Blencathra

Castle Head

Our Centres

Residential centre 

Day centre

Our Impact: updated March 2024