

# Into the Woods - Taking Learning Outdoors

Local schools in Bridge of Allan and Dunblane have been making the most of an opportunity to get out into the woods at Kippenrait Glen over the past few months, thanks to a project organised and funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, with support from Stirling Council. The project was closely linked to the Curriculum for Excellence and offered teachers the chance to gain new skills and deliver learning in a new and exciting way.

Kate Walters, outdoor woodland learning specialist who has lots of experience of using the 'Teaching in Nature' approach delivered the project on behalf of SNH, and provided teachers with all the skills needed to venture out of the classroom into the nearby woodlands at Kippenrait Glen to find out what makes them so special.

One of the schools who took part with enthusiasm was St Mary's Primary School in Dunblane. Not only did Mrs Currie's Primary 7 class visit the woods many times to complete their 'Science in Nature' topic, they also carried out interesting experiments to test various theories. For example, Laura did experiments to test the effects of colour on plants; Charles carried out rock erosion experiments and David investigated how worms broke down different materials in the soil. They also created transient art in the woods and undertook the John Muir Award using new resources to improve their ability to 'discover, explore, conserve and share' – the four aims of this Award, named after the famous Scottish conservationist. Parents were invited to view and share all the exciting work they had done.

Recently, members of the class entered the Edinburgh International Science Festival – Sci-Ku Competition and have just won two prizes for their poetry.

Kate Walters of Magenpie Environmental Education said "It was fantastic to have so many teachers from all the local schools taking part in this project and gaining confidence in taking learning outdoors. They bravely ventured out on training sessions to the woods in all weathers, and then went on to take their classes out to undertake some great projects outdoors".

Local Scottish Natural Heritage officer, Caroline Crawford said "Kippenrait Glen is an ancient wildwood with fantastic biodiversity. Not only is it an important site in UK terms, but has been designated as a special European site too. We wanted to ensure that this biodiversity is conserved now and in the future, and what better way to do that than to engage with and enthuse local schools about the site. It has been a pleasure to see the impressive range of school projects that we have been able to support, and we very much hope to build on this in the future."



Primary 7 class at St Mary's Primary School in Dunblane with Caroline Crawford of Scottish Natural Heritage (left) and Kate Walters of Magenpie (right). (photo credit Kate Walters)