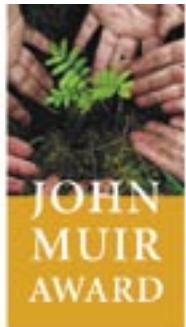


The John Muir Award



by
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Wild Places
discover - explore
conserve - share

What is it?

The John Muir Award is a national environmental award scheme. It encourages people of all ages to experience, enjoy and take responsibility for wild places both on their doorsteps and further afield - from source to sea, from local parks to mountain tops.

It offers a simple, adaptable framework centred around four challenges that represent not only a holistic approach to outdoor environmental activity, but the ethos of the Scottish conservationist John Muir. Participation involves Discovering a wild place for yourself, actively Exploring it, doing something to Conserve it, and Sharing your experiences.

Who uses it?

Organisations such as outdoor education centres use the John Muir Award to help give a context for environmental awareness and responsibility. Schools use it to link outdoor and residential experiences with curriculum-based activities. Ranger Services use it as a framework for introducing access issues, biodiversity and education programmes. Youth groups use it to integrate conservation and personal development outcomes. Families and individuals use it to give a focus for their own outdoor experiences.

Why get involved?

The John Muir Award is set up to...

- Acknowledge what organisations and individuals already do in terms of outdoor and environmental activity.
- Encourage more activity and responsibility for wild places and promote holistic outdoor experiences.
- Celebrate what's achieved.

Benefits include...

- Enjoyment and a sense of achievement.
- A focus and a structure to encourage environmental awareness, responsibility, understanding and appreciation.
- It can be used alongside existing schemes, initiatives and programmes and the National Curriculum.
- It's free!

How does it work?

There are three Levels of the John Muir Award – Discovery, Explorer and Conserver – which encourage a progressive involvement:



To achieve a John Muir Award, activity for each level should encompass all four challenges: **Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share**, and meet the minimum time required – it really is as simple as that! You just submit a Proposal Form outlining what you plan to do. Once this is agreed with John Muir Award staff you're on your way.

John Muir and the John Muir Trust

John Muir, born in the small Scottish ort of Dunbar, emigrated with his family as a child to America. There in his adopted homeland he became a founding father of the world conservation movement and devoted his life to safeguarding wild landscapes for future generations.

Since 1983 the John Muir Trust, guided by Muir's charge to 'do something for wildness and make the mountains glad', has dedicated itself to making Muir's message a reality within the United Kingdom. It owns seven properties in Scotland ranging from Sandwood Bay to Ben Nevis to Schiehallion, and works in partnership with several other organisations.

The John Muir Award was launched in 1997 as its main educational initiative of the Trust. Since then over 15,000 awards have been presented to a range of groups and individuals across Scotland, England and Wales and this year the first Discovery Awards have been presented in Northern Ireland too.



The John Muir Award in Action...

Below are a few examples of John Muir Award activity.

Sandbank Primary School, West Scotland achieved Argyll and Bute's Biodiversity Award for their exploration of their school grounds. Activities included mini-beast safaris and art and craft sessions, with a focus on species rich wild flower meadows and the diversity and quality of invertebrates found within this habitat.

Staff at Outward Bound centres in Ullswater, Scotland and Wales have embraced the concept – 'There's a groundswell of opinion amongst tutors who want to embrace environmental stuff, for which the John Muir Award is a brilliant tool.'

And asked what Muir's message for the 21st century might be, one (Scottish) participant commented: 'Conserve, that's what he'd say. Go and discover a beautiful place and make sure it doesnae get ruined.'

For further information about how you can get involved in the John Muir Award visit www.johnmuiraward.org or phone 0845 458 2910. ■

Author Notes

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Photo Info. from John Muir Award