POLLI:NATION

Evaluation Report Summary - March 2019

Learning through Landscapes

HERITAGE FUND

This is a partnership project with: Learning through Landscapes, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, Field Studies Council, OPAL, University of Stirling, TCV and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust

About the project

Polli:Nation has been a three year project managed by Learning through Landscapes (LtL) and running in more than 250 schools across the UK.

With the dual aims of:

- Effecting culture change by engaging and enthusing children and young people to protect pollinating insects
- Increasing the abundance and diversity of pollinating insects in school grounds and local community spaces

The project brought together partners with a range of complementary experience and knowledge to develop and deliver a project in primary, secondary and special schools across the UK.

Led by Learning through Landscapes, supported by a steering group of scientific and environmental organisations, the project has engaged over 35,000 children and young people in more than 250 schools across the UK as they have learnt about the importance of pollinating insects in the world today.

Pupils have been supported by LtL facilitators, schools staff, parents, experts and other volunteers. They started by surveying their school grounds for pollinating insects, planned how they could change their grounds for the benefit of those insects then created habitats and food sources to encourage more to visit their grounds.

They have created meadows, bug hotels, orchards, growing areas, planters and more – all to encourage more pollinating insects into their grounds.

At the end of the project they resurveyed their grounds and uploaded their findings to the OPAL website. Partner organisations analysed the data and found that they had been successful – there are now more pollinating insects in the projects school grounds!

'I didn't know there was, like, different pollinators. I didn't know that butterflies and moths and flies were pollinators. I know the different bees, like honey bee, the bumble bee, but I didn't know moths and they were pollinators'

Year 6 pupil, Scotland

Key Outputs

35,721pupils were involved in the project and it is estimated that 7,800 of these pupils were more intensively or regularly involved.

2,185 adults were involved in the project

Volunteer hours worth at least £309,075 (around 22,610 hours) were recorded

Evaluation findings

Educational Evaluation findings

Impacts on young people

- Young people have substantially increased their knowledge about pollinators and their ecological importance.
- Young people have engaged in and understood their conservation actions in response to the decline in pollinator numbers.
- Pupils have become motivated to continue to participate in conservation actions and changed their attitudes towards pollinating insects.
- Other impacts on some pupils included increased confidence, improved literacy through contributing to the Polli:Nation blog, and an interest in related careers.

Impacts on teachers and schools

- Teachers reported positive changes to their attitude towards the environment.
- Teachers reported improvements in their confidence in leading activities in outdoor spaces, regardless of their previous levels of expertise in this area.

Survey analysis findings

Over 14,500m2 of wildflowers were recorded as part of the Polli:Nation survey

The area of wildflower habitat surveyed has increased over the life of the survey

The area of short grass surveyed has declined over the 3 years of the survey

The most popular habitat to create year on year has been to add pots, build raised beds or plant flower beds with 125 groups (84%) carrying out this work. Creating wildflower meadows/verges was the second most popular (66% carried out this improvement).

Over three years 18,866 pollinators were recorded and there were 2,867 two minute quadrat searches which represented 66 hours of survey time or 20 days of school!

Statistical analysis indicates there was a significant increased pollinator abundance with the area of pollinator feeding habitat and number of plant species in flower. In addition, more pollinators were found where the quadrat contained more flowers, damp places and wildflowers. In particular hawthorn, thistle, and nettle improved the likelihood of finding insects.

The education evaluation was undertaken by the University of Stirling. The survey analysis was undertaken by OPAL, Butterfly Conservation and Buglife.

The project legacy

For successful projects

- Maximise the hands-on and practical aspects of a project
- Engage pupils with visiting 'experts'
- Engage with pupils more regularly and in more in-depth and sustained ways
- Link projects to the needs of the curriculum
- Understand the balance between high-quality data and pupils getting involved in scientific data collection

The structure of the project proved very successful – from steering group to facilitators and the provision of grants. This meant that our team based across the country, supplemented by our network, ensured that schools felt supported and inspired.

The project engaged children from 3-18, school staff, parents and hundreds of volunteers in all four nations of the UK.

Schools achieved amazing things in their grounds – from setting up new campaigns, helping to save rare bees, to creating whole meadows of wildflowers and orchards. Pupils showed that they could make a real difference to their environment and the wildlife that lives there. If these children and young people are anything to go by our environment is in safe hands!

The project won the environment section of the national lottery awards 2018.

To see the full report visit and learn more about the project visit www.ltl.org.uk/projects/pollination

The project legacy

As a result of the project:

- More than 35,200 square metres of land were changed for the benefit of pollinating insects
- The project website has been developed to ensure that any school can undertake a Polli:Nation project in their own school grounds – with free resources available for every stage of the project
- A webinar can be viewed via the project website that explains more about the project and the associated research
- A maintenance guide for schools and grounds staff is available from the website to help all schools keep their grounds pollinator-friendly.

Particularly heartening are the numerous cases of pupils who, according to their teachers, were mostly disengaged with learning before taking part in Polli:Nation, but have suddenly shown great enthusiasm for this project specifically.

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Bumblebee Conservation Trust
TCV The Conservation Volunteers
UNIVERSITY of STIRLING
FSC Bringing Environmental Understanding To All
Butterfly Conservation
buglife
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