

Five Ways to Wellbeing and Wild Places

“Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

John Muir

Echoing Muir’s words from over a century ago, the inextricable links between healthy natural environments, wildlife and people are well recognised. There is a wealth of evidence on the health and wellbeing benefits of connecting with nature, including supporting people to reduce stress, encourage physical activity, boost resilience and improve the immune system.¹

The [John Muir Trust](#) aims to inspire people from all walks of life to experience the benefits of wild places, including the positive health and wellbeing impacts that can be gained through spending time enjoying and caring for nature.



Five Ways to Wellbeing



The [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#), developed by the New Economics Foundation in 2010, bring together evidence-based actions that individuals can use to improve personal wellbeing. This simple model has been widely promoted through public health, NHS services, education and a range of health, community and environmental organisations; and via tools, such as the [happyplace app](#), that help individuals embed the actions in their day-to-day lives through the places around them.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing resonate strongly with spending time in wild nature - in densely populated cities, along riverbanks, road verges and disused railway lines, in public parks and private gardens, as well as more rugged and remote natural environments. By connecting with wild places we can slow down, take time to tune in, breathe, relax and clear the muddle. The [John Muir Award](#)’s Four Challenges - Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share - can be an ideal tool for linking the benefits of connecting with nature with easy to understand wellbeing goals for groups and individuals.

Connect – with the people and wild places around you

Be Active – enjoy activities outdoors in nature, from gentle walks to adventurous sports

Take Notice – tune in to wildlife around you and to how you feel in wild places

Keep Learning – try new things, rediscover old interests, challenge yourself or improve a skillset

Give – do something to care for wild places and your local community

“I felt a great feeling of peace from being away from technology and in nature. This has helped to reduce my feelings of anxiety and contribute to my wellbeing”

Young Futures John Muir Award participant, Green Light Trust, Suffolk

¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/127020>

Five Ways to Wellbeing through wild places

We see many organisations and individuals putting the Five Ways to Wellbeing into practice to help inspire and connect people with wild places. See below for ideas and examples of how they can be integrated into what you do, including activities that can lead to a John Muir Award.

<p>Connect With the people and wild places around you. Walk and talk with others outdoors. Make friendships. Find communities of shared interests and place. Spend time in a familiar place, observe changes and get to know its wildlife and visitors. Explore the Five Pathways to Nature Connection in your wild place.</p>	<p>Be Active Being outdoors provides opportunities for physical activity. There's something for all levels of mobility and fitness - journeys, practical conservation tasks or walks, sports, games, dance and drama on outdoor stages. Impulses to play and explore can motivate us to move more.</p>	<p>Take Notice Be aware of the world around you. Look closer and tune in to your surroundings. Use all your senses and take time to stop, appreciate and enjoy. Follow your curiosity. Find beauty in nature. Reflect on how wild places make you feel. What makes your local nature special?</p>	<p>Keep Learning The outdoors is a lifelong 'classroom', with endless learning possibilities. Find out about fauna and flora. Investigate landmarks and social heritage. Monitor local biodiversity. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Swap skills with others. Share knowledge, crafts, words and stories.</p>	<p>Give Do something to help care for wild places and your community, locally and globally. Take active stewardship and personal responsibility for making a positive difference. Join a community group or volunteer your time. Taking action can be rewarding and help develop a sense of belonging.</p>
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Looking for some ideas? Use the suggestions below as a launch pad for your own activities and settings...

<p>Collaborate with others, from whole class/school projects to joining a local wildlife group. Seek out peer learning opportunities. Talk to family, friends and colleagues about experiences, in person or virtually. Meet new people and bond through common experiences. Focus on teamwork and trust. Tackle challenges together. Organise and lead a guided walk for the community. Get to know leaders, instructors and teachers in new settings. Spend time together in close quarters on residential.</p>	<p>Experience local pathways and nature spots. Go orienteering, geocaching or on a scavenger hunt. Play environmental games. Hike, camp and cook outdoors. Canoe, cycle, gorge walk, swim, paddle, climb. Join a health walk group or try woodland tai chi. Wildlife-friendly gardening. Grow your own food. Work with a 'challenge by choice' ethos. Be an active conservationist - plant, remove, build, restore, dig, chop, drag, repair.</p>	<p>Tune into seasonal changes. Focus on senses - map sounds, walk in silence, notice textures. Take solo time outdoors. Weather watch, cloud spot, stargaze. Draw, sketch, write, paint with mud or make smelly cocktails. Try new activities that help you look at the world differently. Take before and after photos. Keep an individual or group diary, journal, blog or scrapbook. Reflect through discussion around a campfire - this could be part of a Four Challenge Review.</p>	<p>Build confidence through learning new skills and using tools e.g. willow weaving, woodwork, photography, film, creative writing... Learn about local wildlife through nature study. Meet personal and group challenges - physical, social, and emotional. Learn to work with others through joint projects. Take responsibilities for goal setting, planning and decision-making. Learn to overcome fears and manage risks. Present your experiences and share with others.</p>	<p>What will help your wild place to flourish? Could you create and tend a wildlife habitat, clear litter, adopt a beach, plant for pollinators or contribute to a citizen science survey? Actively apply leave no trace principles and consider access rights and responsibilities. Campaign or fundraise. Talk about values, lifestyle choices and our place in the world around us. Give (and receive) personal feedback during sessions. Thank volunteers, present John Muir Award certificates, and acknowledge achievements.</p>
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