



Yorkshire
Wildlife Trust



#TeamWilder Communities in Action

CASE STUDY: Green Hand Gang, Great Horton

Tell us a bit about your group/community



We called ourselves the Green Hand Gang because the name felt right for what we wanted to do. We are interested in nature and environmental things, and we want to get our community more involved in this too.”

Great Horton has some hidden pockets of wild green space and we started out as a group of explorers, discovering the spaces, enjoying them and seeing how much wildlife they supported. We soon started finding jobs to do to look after and improve the spaces and thought that other people might feel the same as us in wanting to look after them. One of our missions is to share these wild green spaces with our wider community and get more people using and valuing them.

How did you get started on your #TeamWilder journey?



I first met Sarah and Ellie at school, I really enjoyed the activities that we did in school, especially the campfires and so I joined the club at the village hall. I told my friends how much fun we had, going on adventures and exploring the area and so I told my friends about it, and they joined too.”



When you spend time in a place you begin to feel attached to it. This sense of belonging has a natural consequence of wanting to care for and nurture the space and its wildlife. You become inquisitive about the differences in the spaces and why some habitats are better than others for particular wildlife. Discovering something unexpected is thrilling and motivates you to learn more and put this learning into practice. We have a community garden where we spend a lot of time and get to watch it change through the seasons and this space has been great to experiment with and try out our ideas about making it more nature friendly.

What actions have you taken for wildlife in your community and why?

We have planted flowers in our community garden and planted wildflower seeds and bulbs in other places too. We tidied up our own garden and planted seeds to see what would happen and we got lots of flowers and bees visiting. Once we had done this and seen that it worked, we knew we could help other people with their gardens too.

We got really into learning about bees this year and we are not as worried about them stinging us as we were before. When walking about we could see where the best places were for bees and where there were no bees, and this helps us see where we need more flowers and what we could plant to make it better for bees.

We have done lots of litter picking and it makes you feel really good to see it all tidy and it is fun doing it too.





We have done lots of exploring and we wanted other people to be able to explore too so we have created wildlife trails for people to follow. This has taken a lot of time because we needed to chat to people on the way and ask them to put signs up on their walls. Sometimes we have to knock on peoples' doors, and it is really nice when they are friendly, it makes you feel really happy that there are nice people in our community. When we are on walks sometimes trees, branches and brambles are in the paths, so we use tools to make the path clear again.

What resources or support have you used?

It has been fantastic to work in partnership with other organisations on this project. The group get to build relationships with new people and expand their horizons.

We have always worked in partnership with The Youth Association, Ellie is a brilliant force in the lives of these young people and being new to nature too she has been part of the same journey that the group have been on. The Youth Association's involvement in this project has been funded by Pears Youth fund.

We have also worked with the Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust, they have visited and supported our sessions in great Horton and enabled us to run some wonderful and inspiring trips to the Yorkshire Dales.

“ We went to the Yorkshire dales and met up with Fiona from the Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust, who also came along to our school too. We went to these caves and had a big walk into the hills – we got to learn more about the wide range of nature in Yorkshire.”

With Active Travel funding from The West Yorkshire Combined Authority we were able to create waymarked street trails to help people find their way around and install an information board about the trails, local greenspaces and our community gardens. The funding also provided the young people with an explorer's kit.

“ We got some boots and a waterproof coat and trousers and also a rucksack with things in, a first aid kit and a bug pot, a magnifying glass and some sheets with plants, animals and birds on so when we saw things we could find out what they are.”

One resource that has been important is a mix of native UK wildflowers that are low-growing. These are perfect for small community spaces and for gardens and yards:

■ www.wildflower.co.uk/products/wildflower-seed-mixtures/lw12-low-growing-80-20.html

We also found these websites fantastic for finding out more information about bumblebees and other wild bees:

■ www.nhsn.org.uk/identifying-bees-bee-resources

■ www.bumblebeeconservation.org/identify-a-bumblebee



JON HAWKINS



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How have you empowered or involved others?



We always talk to people when we are out and tell them who we are and what we are doing. We tell people that they live on the trails that we are making, and we talk to people about their gardens. Lots of people want us to tidy their gardens up and it doesn't take very long to do this with litter pickers, when it is looking nicer, we put some flower seeds in to make it better for wildlife. We have also run two community events so that we can meet new people who feel the same as us about our community and our environment."

There are some other organisations that look after spaces for nature that are not too far away from us. Our plan for this year is to bring these organisations together to create a bit of a local green network. By closer and more co-ordinated working we could build much more momentum locally for people and for wildlife.

What differences have you noticed as a result of your actions?



Our community garden looks much better because we have been working on this for quite a while. We have planted a lot of seeds and bulbs, and we are looking forward to seeing what happens in the spring. We saw some little yellow 22 spot ladybirds this year in our garden and we haven't seen them before."



When we did our community event, we had more people come than before to see what we are doing. It is surprising when people come along and lots of people who come are also interested in nature. We think that more people than before are interested in nature in our community."

Sometimes improvements in perception are hard to see but one important contribution that these young people have made is to alter people's ideas of young people and their contribution to their community. By demonstrating how much they care and how interested they are in both their local nature and the people who live here they cannot fail to inspire others to have a bit more hope in the future and to counter the despondency that is so prevalent in under-resourced urban communities.

How did it make you feel?

We feel useful and helpful to our community. It feels good when you meet other people who also care about nature because you don't feel like you are on your own.

What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife whilst doing this?

The first time that we saw rabbits was my favourite nature moment. We catch butterflies and let them sit on our hand and you can see them really well, this year for the first time we saw lots of little blue butterflies. When we saw the 22 spot ladybirds, we had just been talking about them and Sarah said that she hadn't seen them in two years and then we found one!

What do you plan to do next?

We are waiting for spring now to see if our bulbs and seeds have worked. We also have a plan for our community garden that we made from doing the wildlife garden bingo, so we need to work on this for next year. In the winter we want to put a bird feeder up in the cherry tree. We are also going to the city centre once a month for a new club and hope that we meet other young people who feel the same as we do about being outdoors, nature and the environment.