

# 2022 Impact Report

A year of connecting young people to nature







**"It was so good for him to be away from his everyday life, and to spend time with his peers as he doesn't get enough of this, and with other adults that clearly value him as an individual."**



# INTRODUCTION

---

**"Green Team days are James's best days. Improving his mood, confidence etc. On other days if he needed a lift, asking him about Green Team brought a smile. James has found nature and plants to be his happy place and may now look for a career in it."**

*James's mum*

The Green Team provides transformational experiences for young people like James.

Helping them to build a connection to the wonder of the natural world, and through positive activities in nature to be kind to self, supportive of others and to protect our planet for all.

Our 2022 Impact Report celebrates the positive change the Green Team family have contributed to in the lives of the young people we support, the communities we live in and the greenspaces we visit.



---

## OUR VISION

A Scotland where everyone values and can enjoy the natural environment.

## OUR MISSION

To provide transformational outdoor experiences that connect children and young people to nature, others and themselves.

# 2022 AT A GLANCE

This last year has been one in which some of the challenges we face have been clearer than ever. A nature crisis. A cost of living crisis. A mental health crisis. Against that backdrop we are delighted to have had such a productive year.



1817

young people took part  
in our programmes



2028

hours of programme activities



18

training sessions held



354

awards earned across John  
Muir, DofE, JASS & Hi5  
award schemes



4090

volunteer hours supporting  
young people or undertaking  
conservation tasks



1,000s

of trees planted, biscuits  
consumed & hot chocolate  
drunk around the fire.



COMING ALONG TO THE GREEN TEAM MAKES ALL THE OTHER STRESSES I HAVE IN LIFE SEEM INSIGNIFICANT. I'M ABLE JUST TO RELAX AND ENJOY BEING HERE.

# OUR PROGRAMMES IN 2022

## Skylarks/Green Angels

We were delighted to rebrand our Green Angels programme as Skylarks in December 2022. This name was chosen by participants to better reflect current times and move away from the stereotype of girls being angelic.

The Skylarks programme supports the positive wellbeing of girls and non-binary young people through environmental volunteering, gentle nature connection and spending time with others.



IT'S FUN, IT FEELS LIKE SOMETHING IMPORTANT. YOU LEARN ABOUT OUTDOOR THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE BUT EXPLAINED IN A FUN WAY, NOT LIKE SCHOOL. YOU GET TO HANG OUT/SOCIALISE WITH PEOPLE. IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE TOO MUCH CAN GO WRONG. IT'S A SMALL GROUP OF SAFE PEOPLE.

### Participant Outcomes



enhanced confidence & wellbeing



increased life skills  
(teamwork/communication)



developed positive relationships/felt less isolated

## Green Shoots

Green Shoots uses wilderness survival skills and nature connection activities to help young people develop life skills that give them the confidence and resilience to fulfil their potential.



THIS HAS PUT A MASSIVE SMILE ON MY FACE 😊 HE IS DOING AMAZING. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING MASON TO TAKE PART IN SUCH A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY.

Parent

### Participant Outcomes



enhanced wellbeing



improved teamwork skills



increased confidence and self-esteem



## Green Volunteers

Our Green Volunteers programme runs throughout the year, and this summer we took a group for a 5-day trip to the Isle of Eigg. Green Volunteers focuses on making a tangible difference to the natural landscape through conservation tasks. But it's not all hard work with plenty of space for learning and laughing.

IT IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN SOCIAL SKILLS AND WORK OUTDOORS FOR A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE ENVIRONMENT.

3 otters spotted around 20m away from us, we watched them play in the waves, diving down for crabs and feasting together for a good 30 minutes.

Playing wild games on a huge beach looking out to Rhum, the Cullins of Skye just creeping out of the mist.

"I felt really peaceful sitting alone on the beach after we'd cleared the litter, looking out over to Rhum"

"Spectacular sunset (being eaten by midges) and watching the sun dip behind Rhum in the distance. I felt close to nature"

Played the tippy tappy massage circle and shared appreciation of each other after a hard day of work.

"We cleared the path and I could see the difference when we walked back along"

"I felt close to nature when we walked through the woods looking for things. I felt close to nature the minute I stepped outside"

"We hiked up the Sgurr. I felt close to nature walking up the hill and enjoying the views, it felt like a long distance"

"being together and toasting marshmallows on the camp fire on the beach"

"I felt peaceful collecting shells beside the sea"

We were pleased to run our 5-day residential for the first time since 2017 and were particularly delighted by the feedback and the evaluation of the event. One of the evaluation tools that we used was the 'Love and Care for Nature' survey which measures change in attitudes to nature over the course of the 5 days:



**Average 'Love and Care for Nature' score increased from 5.3 to 5.9 (scale of 1-7)**

**92% of participants enhanced their 'Love and Care' across multiple areas of the survey\***

\* Responses have been excluded where a participant scored maximum points at outset and so no increase was possible.

# Green Volunteers

Our 2022 Residential was such a success that we are returning to Eigg for our 2023 residential by popular demand.



image credit: Eleanor Pratt



I've developed new friendships through the week, getting to know people really well that I had never met just a week ago.



I've had a great time and achieved what I hoped to achieve when I applied to be here. I've learned how to make new foods and look after myself and others in the group.



I've learned lots of new skills by being together and connecting with nature on Eigg.



My intention was to let go of some stress. This week I have done that, relaxing in nature and not letting my thoughts build up. I felt most relaxed chilling on the beach with everyone.

Green Volunteers is about so much more than a 5-day residential in the sun on the Isle of Eigg. The programme met 27 times at the weekend and on midweek projects with schools for a further 11 sessions. They worked at sites including Leadburn Community Woodland, Brunstane Burn, The Water of Leith and Cockburnspath Community Garden, undertaking tasks such as: building bat boxes, rhododendron removal, tree care, a lichen survey and path maintenance.

## Participant Outcomes

93% 

increased care for  
the environment

80% 

increased understanding of  
natural world

73% 

improved  
teamworking skills

## Nature Play

Nature Play helps parents and carers of pre-school children to spend time outdoors with their children - engaging in early years play, connecting with nature and developing their social interaction.

“MY CHILD GAINED CONFIDENCE, SOCIAL INTERACTION, ENCOURAGEMENT TO BE INQUISITIVE, A LOVE FOR NATURE AND THE OUTDOORS (WHATEVER THE WEATHER), FUN AND QUALITY TIME WITH MUM.



### Participant Outcomes (parents)

On a scale of 1-10, where 10 equals strongly agree, parents gave the following feedback:



9.6/10

I have more ideas of how I can use greenspaces for play with my children



9.8/10

I am more likely to use, and care for, the parks and greenspaces near me in the future



9.5/10

My skills and knowledge have increased and I feel more confident playing with children in greenspaces

## Green Schools



Green Schools offers a range of outdoor learning, environmental education and nature connection activities in school grounds and local greenspaces. The programme focuses on getting primary school pupils involved in activities that encourage discovery, exploration and a deeper understanding of the natural world – ensuring that good quality outdoor learning is available to all.



THE MAIN THING THAT I LEARNED FROM GREEN SCHOOLS IS HOW MANY LINKS CAN BE MADE TO THE CURRICULUM USING THE OUTDOORS AND HOW THINGS CAN ORGANICALLY TURN INTO LEARNING CONVERSATIONS AND EXPERIENCES. HOW THE LESSON OUTDOORS CAN THEN PROVIDE FURTHER LEARNING IN CLASS.

**participating teacher**





## Participant Outcomes (teachers)

On a scale of 1-10, where 10 equals strongly agree, teachers gave the following feedback:



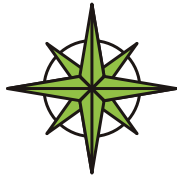
8.6/10

teachers said their pupils had a better understanding of the natural world



8.7/10

teachers said they felt more confident using outdoor play to develop skills and increase learning



8.1/10

teachers said they had more confidence in teaching about the importance of caring for nature

## Green Explorers & Holiday Activities

Green Explorers and our Holiday Activities give young people the chance to play, make friends and explore some amazing local wild places. Most days end with a gratitude circle, encouraging those taking part to reflect on their day together. Here's what some young people said they were grateful for:

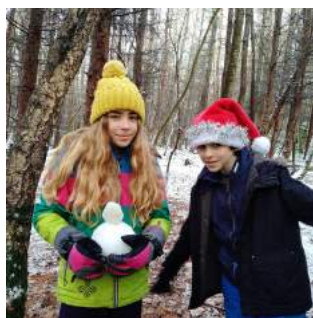
"that we get to do tonnes of fun activities outdoors."

"having my friends here and being able to chat with them."

"just being outside cos usually I'm very lazy."

"being able to find new places to go and explore and be out in nature."

"being able to see these wonderful places with friends and meet new people."



# Thrive

Thrive promotes positive mental wellbeing for young people through deep nature experiences, nurturing relationships and respite from daily life.



THIS PROGRAMME HAS REALLY HELPED ME BUILD MY CONFIDENCE BECAUSE THERE'S BEEN SO MANY NEW THINGS TO TRY. I'M NOT NORMALLY AN OUTDOORSY PERSON, BUT BECAUSE THERE'S SO MANY NEW THINGS, IT HAS REALLY HELPED TO SHOW MYSELF THAT I CAN DO NEW THINGS



## Participant Outcomes

70%



**enhanced their emotional and mental wellbeing**

88%



**increased their confidence & self-esteem**

94%



**improved participation/engagement**

A highlight of 2022 was to see two previous Thrive participants, continue their journey with the Green Team by getting involved as project leaders:

## HARRIS'S STORY



I started my journey with the Green Team as a participant on Thrive in 2021. I really enjoyed it and loved all the different tasks and places. It really helped me be more confident and reduced anxiety. I liked getting to meet other people who I wouldn't otherwise have met and was very interested to learn different fire lighting and ancestral skills. I think that Thrive is a brilliant programme.

When I left school I became a young leader with the Green Team and this has been an amazing experience. This has helped me attempt things I never thought I would be able to do. I now feel happy to try new things and skills that I have learned from volunteering include whittling, conservation, group facilitation and managing responsibility. However, it has also allowed me to learn to be more comfortable being myself, be able to deal with unpredictability, and manage anxiety.

With these new skills and through the support from the people at the Green Team, I have managed to get my first job working as an Environmental Educator. I am so grateful for being able to be involved with the Green Team and look forward to continuing to volunteer with them.



# ALEX'S STORY

In my early teenage years I had very low self-confidence and mood, and I felt a bit like my life didn't have much direction, doing things which I had no interest in and gave me no happiness.

I first got involved with Thrive in 2015 after being involved in a CAMHS (the NHS's Child and Adolescents Mental Health Services) project that encouraged young people to take part in positive activities with third sector organisations.

I thought this would be a good opportunity for me to learn new skills, meet new people and improve my confidence in a supportive environment.



I knew I wanted to continue to be involved with Green Team after that project as everyone I had met there were really nice and I enjoyed taking part in the conservation aspects of the programme. It was really fun being part of a team and seeing how much we could accomplish together. I started to attend Green Angels and went on residential trips, staying in various different locations and engaging in activities like survival skills, building willow archways and more.

I then talked to Mandy (Volunteer Coordinator) as I wanted to help run sessions and started helping with Green Explorers and Green Shoots. This year I started volunteering as a young leader with Thrive, helping young people to participate in a lot of conservation activities aimed to not only help the environment but also support their mental health in an outdoor environment.

One of my accomplishments when I first started volunteering was simply attending the sessions and talking to the participants.

I realise now that one of my strengths is that I can relate to people and build stronger connections. I also have a lot more resilience from volunteering no matter the weather. It has given me a more positive outlook on life. I have definitely changed as a person (and not just because I've changed my gender identity). I feel more independent and my mental health has significantly improved.

My hopes for the future are to continue my volunteering with green team and to start working with young people and adults who have additional support needs.

## Our Volunteer Leaders

During the year, 52 volunteers, like Alex and Harris, were involved in supporting young people to participate in projects – creating a safe and fun environment where young people can flourish. Throughout 2022, volunteers took part in training on child protection, food hygiene, environmental games and methodology, health & safety, first aid and conservation and ecology training. Their generosity in giving of their time, skills and knowledge is invaluable.

We are thrilled that their feedback shows that they are also benefitting from their experiences:



I HAVE TO SAY I HAVE HAD THE MOST AMAZING EXPERIENCE ... AMAZING LOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES, REALLY REIGNITING A LOVE FOR THE OUTDOORS AND INTRODUCING ME TO THE REAL FUN OF YOUTH WORK! I'VE ENJOYED EVERY SESSION.

We were extremely proud that Volunteer Edinburgh recognised the amazing dedication that Mandy, our Volunteer Co-ordinator, puts in to ensuring these positive experiences, as the winner of the 2022 Paul Bennett Volunteer Manager of the Year Award.

## Green Champions/Connections

The majority of this report rightly highlights the achievements of young people on our programmes. However, we should also highlight the impact of local companies, businesses and groups who have taken part in projects to enhance the ecology, biodiversity, accessibility and appearance of greenspaces in and around Edinburgh. We have worked with representatives from 11 organisations – improving the natural environment and encouraging individual wellbeing. Income raised from these sessions helped to support the valuable work that we undertake with young people.

IT WAS A WELL ORGANISED EVENT AND I REALLY ENJOYED WORKING AND MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

I WILL DEFINITELY RECOMMEND TO EVERYONE IN MY TEAM, THANK YOU!





## Green Wellies



We ran 8 Green Wellies days in 2022 – a programme for over 18s that provides the chance for our volunteers and members of the local community to gather, nurture wellbeing and take action to enhance the natural environment.

IT'S A RELAXED WAY TO DO SOME CONSERVATION PURELY FOR US AND MEET SOME OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GREEN TEAM THAT I WOULDN'T USUALLY MEET ON THE PROJECTS I AM INVOLVED WITH.

## ADDITIONAL WORK

As an inclusive organisation, we are always eager to develop new partnerships, explore new ways of working and to introduce a broader range of people to the benefits of spending time in nature. In 2022 this led to us running activities at events including the North Edinburgh Festival, working with children from Ukraine and organising sessions alongside some wonderful organisations - Edible Estates, Home-Start, Multi-Cultural Families Base, LINKnet Mentoring, The Welcoming, and Saheliya.



THANK YOU FOR A WONDERFUL EVENT ON FRIDAY - BOTH THE KIDS AND PARENTS REALLY ENJOYED IT!

LinkNet Mentoring

At the end of 2021, the Green Team's Patron, Peter Wright (then aged 74) completed a 941km fundraising cycle along the route of the watershed of Scotland. Through Peter's amazing efforts and the generosity of those who sponsored him, we ran 8 sessions and an overnight residential trip with Edinburgh Young Carers.

57 young carers have enjoyed days out in nature at sites including Baswinch Nature Reserve, Cammo Estate and Bonaly Country Park. We are delighted to have been able to provide them a break from their daily responsibilities and we look forward to more sessions with them in 2023.



# A FINAL WORD FROM OUR CEO

During 2022 our staff team and some of our wonderful volunteers were able to swap our outdoor gear for black tie attire to celebrate our Thrive programme winning the Health and Wellbeing Award at the Nature of Scotland Awards ceremony.



A couple of weeks later we held our first Green Team awards event. It was an amazing evening of ceilidh dancing and connecting with the wider Green Team family. This event allowed me to take a step back from the day to day challenges of running the Green Team and to reflect on how much we have achieved as an organisation. But more importantly it was a delight to hand out so many awards to the inspiring individuals who have made it happen, or through wonderful acts of kindness, huge feats of resilience or finding an inner confidence have made huge strides on their individual journeys.



It was also lovely to hear some of the stories from parents of participants. To hear about the positive change that engagement with the Green Team has had – the sort of personal and human impact that we hope the quotes throughout this report reflect.



Organisational recognition such as the Health and Wellbeing award are amazing but affirmation that we are doing the right things, from those that we work with is truly special. And by 'we are doing the right things', I mean the wider 'we'. Our organisation is indebted to those who generously give their money, time expertise, energy, encouragement and so much more – thank you!



To the young people who have been involved with the Green Team in 2022, I save the biggest thank you. You have made us smile, given us lots to think about, continually surprised us and kept us on our toes. You are the heartbeat of the organisation and you should be very proud of the year you have had.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Radway".

Penny Radway, CEO







**“Teagan has really enjoyed this programme, she was getting so excited for a Tuesday to come round so she can go out, made sure she was up on time and never late for school on a Tuesday, really relaxed and loved telling me all the stories when she got home, brought her out her shell more too. Everything about this from start to finish has just been amazing.”**





# THE GREEN TEAM

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH NATURE



@TheGreenTeamEdin



[www.greenteam.org.uk](http://www.greenteam.org.uk)



@GreenTeamEdin



@greenteamedin

