

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



**Epping Forest Field Centre
Head of Centre's report on activity in 2011**



The Centre is managed by FSC for, and on behalf of, the City of London

Purpose of report: To inform the Joint Committee; I recommend that this report be RECEIVED

Criteria		2009 Actual	2010 Actual	2011 Targets	2011 Actual
Learner experiences		19,694	22,004	22,000	23,241
Volunteer days		410	502	500	389
People			Maintain Standards	Maintain Standards	We believe that we exceed standards; no known issues or concerns.
Quality				Maintain Standard	We believe that we exceed standards; no known issues or concerns.
Health & Safety			Meet the standard for Safety Shield Gold		 Met 100% of criteria; certificate awarded October 2011.
'Overall' visitor feedback score	Schools	4.9	4.9	>4.9	>4.9
	Families	4.9	5.0	>4.9	>4.9
	Adults	4.8	4.8	>4.8	>4.8

2011 was the **40th Anniversary** of the official opening of Epping Forest Field Centre and the year in which we received the Centre's **half millionth learner**, Isabella Lushington from Woodford Green Preparatory School, who visited the Centre with her class on 17 October. We were pleased to host the FSC AGM on 4 June and a successful open day on 4 September as part of our 40th anniversary celebrations. The achievement of a new all-time record of more than 23,000 learning experiences in 2011, whilst maintaining outstanding levels of 'customer' satisfaction, is pleasing. Local artist Janet Lazelle generously donated a banner for our entrance hall:



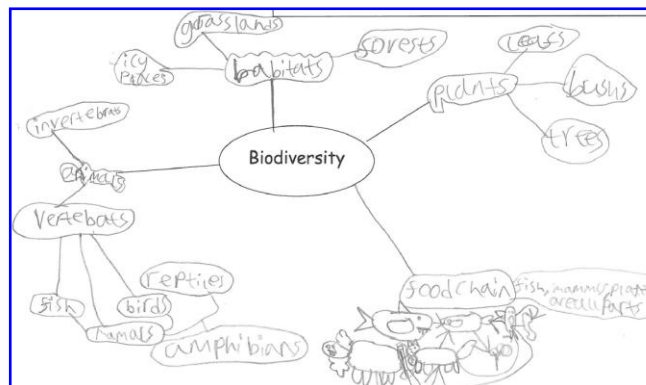
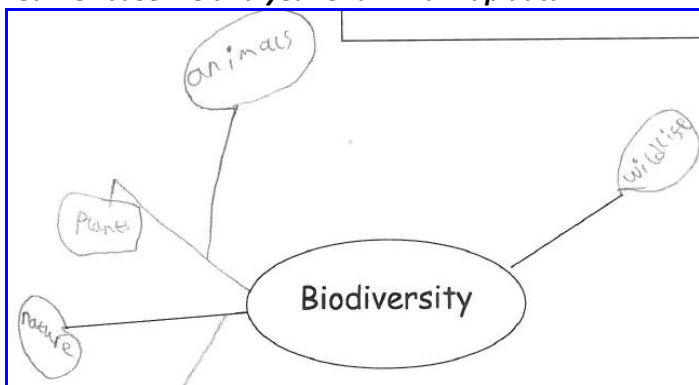
We initiated a three-year **City Bridge Trust (CBT)** funded **'Learning for Biodiversity'** project forming new school partnerships with 6 primary schools in economically deprived areas of London boroughs Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

"It was the best and most amazing day of my life and it was the first time I have been to a forest and I completely loved it." KS2 Learner

"I just had to write to thank you for the amazing work done to our wildlife area....it is absolutely superb...the children will be so excited." Head teacher

We researched and trialled innovative 'Green Space Kits' in the Centre which were then installed in the grounds of these partner schools to enhance biodiversity. Centre staff will continue to work with pupils and teachers to further enhance biodiversity in the school grounds for biodiversity teaching across the whole school.

Learner baseline and year end mind map data:



In addition to funding learning experiences for pupils in year 5 at Epping Forest Field Centre and at local learning sites, CBT funding also covers the delivery of family days. These were developed in response to our research that suggested that the target families do not frequently take their children to areas of open green space. The programme also recognises the value of families learning together.

During the first two weeks of August, sixty youths aged 8 to 14 mainly from Croydon and Lewisham visited the Centre as part of the **'Elevating Success' Summer Scheme**. The children took part in activities that had an emphasis on experiential learning, enjoyment, active participation and teamwork. The visit was part of the 'Elevating Success' two week summer scheme that aims to develop the skills and/or enhance the quality of life of individuals by offering them the chance to try activities and projects. Financial support for their visit was provided by the **FSC Kids Fund**.

Learner baseline and end of project questionnaire:

FSC FORWARD ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDING TO ALL
Learning for Biodiversity
 Name: Ben
 School: St. Antony's
 Pupil Baseline Questionnaire

Question:	Answer
1. What does biodiversity mean to you?	
2. Why is biodiversity important?	
3. I feel I know a lot about biodiversity.	Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree
4. How many times in the past year have you and your family been to a local wildlife area?	Never Once Twice Several times Lots of times
5. I feel I know about the plants and animals in my local area.	Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree
6. Name some animals or plants you may find in your local park.	Rabbits, Fox, squirrel and Owl.
7. How could you attract wildlife to your garden?	For bees bring nest for butterflies flowers for rabbits grasshopper small animals anything that is on the ground.

"It was a tremendous trip. I'd definitely come back and recommend it to everyone"
 KS2 Learner

The HLF funded **'Discovering Epping Forest'** (DEF) project continued through 2011 and is now in its final academic year. DEF learning experiences accounted for 75 group days in 2011. In the autumn term we delivered

module 1 for the final time with all 25 schools rating the programme in the highest category on a five point evaluation scale, suggesting that the formative evaluation process had worked well. Our teacher workshops also received 100% top marks. Impacts of the DEF project include:

- Other classes from the same school have visited the Centre and Forest independently of the project
- One school now has a 'Forest module' (integrated curriculum) which will continue after the lifetime of the project
- Another school has 'working weekends' with parents and the community
- Improved LoTC skills for teachers

FSC FORWARD ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDING TO ALL
Learning for Biodiversity
 Name: Ben
 School: St. Antony's
 Date: 17/06/11
 Pupil Baseline Questionnaire

Question:	Answer
1. What does biodiversity mean to you?	Biodiversity means the variety of wildlife in a place.
2. Why is biodiversity important?	Because if there were there's biodiversity some of the animals found in the food chain would die.
3. I feel I know a lot about biodiversity.	Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree
4. How many times in the past year have you and your family been to a local wildlife area?	Never Once Twice Several times Lots of times
5. I feel I know about the plants and animals in my local area.	Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree
6. Name some animals or plants you may find in your local park.	Grasshopper, cricket, spider ladybird, fire ants, beetles, sawtooth.
7. How could you attract wildlife to your garden?	With Flower and food.

It is pleasing to note the significant shift in teacher confidence with visits to Epping Forest and in their perceptions of the pupil knowledge of Epping Forest; teachers from 24 of the 25 DEF schools are now confident about visiting Epping Forest and using it as a learning resource (up from less than half at the start of the project). Similarly, the number of teachers that believe that pupils in their school are knowledgeable about the social history, natural history and human impacts upon the Forest has been trebled.

Thanks to funding from the **Epping and Theydon Garton Joint Charities** through the Associates of Epping Forest Field Centre, we were able to deliver two **'Family Biodiversity Drop in Days'** for families from these Essex parishes. Evaluation data shows that 'overall' enjoyment received a 100% rating in the highest category on a five-point scale.



"Fantastic Centre – the children really enjoyed themselves. Had an amazing time – Thank you very much"
 Family learners

Winter Wonderland Week, which was delivered in partnership with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust for the 17th consecutive year, enabled 56 subsidised learner experiences for students with a wide range of special needs. (EFFC costs were part-covered by the 'Associates' utilising a donation from Felix Dennis).

We were pleased to provide Map and Compass activities as part of the launch of the City of London's **Green to Gold** campaign on 6 June. The Green to Gold campaign aims to get more people involved in sport and activity across open spaces with one year to go until the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Over 120 local school children enjoyed a day of outdoor activities including our orienteering session and others such as football, rounders, army boot camp fitness and bike riding lessons in Epping Forest.

We continued to utilise project funding to develop new courses in new locations; offering outreach experience options to schools for which transport costs are a barrier is perceived to be an issue of increasing importance. We are currently using more than 40 learning sites across Epping Forest together with a further dozen learning locations outside of Epping Forest (West Ham Park, Garton Bushes, Valentines Park, four Newham Parks, Seven Kings Park, Lea Valley Park, Waltham Abbey and Roding Valley). We developed improved links with London Biodiversity/Parks/Community officers. We initiated collaboration with them on the potential for further utilization of other London sites and exploration of possible funding that working in these areas might attract. Our aspiration to link learning in Epping Forest with learning at sites local to schools, in school grounds and in classrooms remains strong. In October we were involved in delivering activities at Roding Valley Meadows as part of an event run by **Epping Forest Countrycare** (Epping Forest District Council). We have continued to build a partnership with this organisation and as a result have submitted a joint funding application that could see the Centre jointly delivering further family activities in the Valley.

Resources and activities developed from projects have proved beneficial across our core programmes and helps with our quest for continuous improvement alongside our 'core' course review systems.

Publicity actions undertaken by Epping Forest Field Centre staff in 2011 included:

- Improvement to information on FSC EFFC website, Associates website and project websites
- Experimenting with Facebook (60 'likes'), Twitter (40 followers) and YouTube
- Establishment of the Associates Publicity Action Team (volunteer support) including poster distribution

We have have worked collaboratively with the FSC HO team on the European project 'Mind the Gap' online resource that supports fieldwork.



The live feed from the webcam bird box proved extremely popular with Centre visitors, children and adults alike. It provided some excellent photo and discussion opportunities with groups of learners and a nice story for our newsletters.



More than 85% of our core school customers rebooked from 2010 and we were able to welcome 97 new teaching groups this year.

'I learnt new things and I am very grateful because I can use these skills later on in life', 'Fun and educational' (KS4/3 learners)

'Excellent ... every year there are improvements ... ever more relevant experiences for our students' (Visiting teachers)

'Tutor was excellent and very enthusiastic', 'All FSC staff very helpful and friendly' (Adult Natural History and Local Interest learners)

'The quality of teaching was superb', 'Unexpectedly wonderful' (A2/AS learners)

'We had a fantastic day', 'I would like to come again' (KS1/2 learners)

The 'Associates' Action Plan was approved at Associates of Epping Forest Field Centre AGM on 4 September and steps have been taken to progress actions over the period 2011-2014 plan to complete the transformation of the Associates into an active community-based organisation and a focal point for volunteering input. In 2011 the Associates transferred £7156.27 to fund activities. There are currently 366 members of the Associates.

We continue to work at developing long term partnerships and to maintain a flexible and creative business unit.

The figures for the first 3 quarters of 2011 show that we have reduced total CO₂ emissions by 8183kg. This is a 23% reduction in the first 3 quarters against last year. Improved insulation in the roof and walls and following our eco-code will have helped with this reduction together with milder conditions in autumn and fewer resident staff.

We were very pleased to achieve a score of 100% and a gold award as a result of reassessment by Northgate Arinso for health and safety this year. Facility improvements in 2011 have included a comprehensive redecoration of the Centre by City of London contractors. We have installed an insect hotel in the Centre grounds. This has received very positive comments from visitors.

2011 was a very good year for Epping Forest Field Centre setting a challenging benchmark for 2012 that we shall, of course, endeavour to match.

