Field Studies and the Natural Environment

Definition
Learning outside the classroom in the natural environment can encompass a range of places or habitats, including: school grounds, local parks, allotments, wasteground, hedges, walls, gardens, reserves, woodland, country parks, farmland, zoos, botanic gardens, quarries, cliffs, coastal areas, ponds, rivers, moorlands and mountains. Of course, very few, if any, of the places listed are actually natural; the majority, if not all, of the UK environment has been directly or indirectly affected by man in some way or another.

Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Learning opportunities</th>
<th>Range of provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels of support</td>
<td>Web resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning opportunities
Learning outside the classroom in the natural environment is typically termed ‘field studies’. This involves:

- use of the environment as a resource for learning by developing investigative, enquiry and other skills
- studying the local or wider environment to promote knowledge and understanding of the interaction between natural and human systems
- encouraging the development of caring attitudes and values, so that each person develops a sense of responsibility for his or her actions and empathy with the environment.

Range of provision
The range of provision includes the following:
Local authority
Local urban parks, botanical gardens and country parks may offer all you need. They are usually managed by local authorities or charitable trusts, are easily accessible and often free of charge.

Field Study and Outdoor Education Centres
Run by local authorities, charitable trusts or private companies, and offering specialist or mixed programmes of activities, visits and field studies on a day or residential basis.

The National Trust
Caring for important wildlife sites and natural landscapes is central to the work of the National Trust, whose nature advisers are experts in the conservation of flora, fauna and other features.

National Parks
Britain’s 14 National Parks contain a huge range of landscapes, habitats, history and rural communities. They provide opportunities for learning, recreation and exercise in beautiful natural surroundings.

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
This is the UK charity that Peter Scott founded to safeguard the welfare of wetlands and their wildlife. There are now nine specialist visitor centres across the UK.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The RSPB has 200 nature reserves in rural and urban areas throughout Britain.

Wildlife Trusts
There are 47 Trusts working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone in the UK. The Trusts safeguard and care for nature reserves and encourage sustainable use of open spaces and the countryside.

The Woodland Trust
The UK’s leading conservation charity for native woodland. It organises events to promote woodland as a social and environmental asset to society and encourages tree planting to ensure sustainability.
British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquaria (BIAZA)
Zoos and aquaria can give young people an insight into a natural world they may never see in the wild. Close but safe encounters with some of the earth’s incredible range of exotic creatures can be awe-inspiring, fascinating and informative. These facilities are run by a mixture of private companies, charities and local authorities.

Levels of support
Learning support is widely available from information for self-led visits to fully tutored sessions and courses. Many of the larger organisations have their own education services with professional teaching staff and well established programmes linked to the curriculum.

Many organisations offer free preview visits to allow teachers and leaders to plan and prepare for their group. It is also a good opportunity to discuss your detailed requirements face to face. Increasingly, providers produce handouts and even lesson plans for pre- and post-visit work.

Field Studies and Natural Environment Web resources

www.naturalengland.org.uk
Natural England works for people, places and nature, to enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promote access, recreation and public well-being; and contribute to the way natural resources are managed so that they can be enjoyed now and in the future. The website has a section for researchers, teachers and young people, and many downloadable lesson plans, publications and resources.

www.field-studies-council.org
The Field Studies Council is an environmental education charity committed to helping people understand and be inspired by the natural world. It publishes extensive resources and runs day and residential fieldwork activities and courses for student and qualified teachers and young people, unaccompanied young people and families, at 17 field studies centres across the UK. The ‘Campaigns and Projects’ pages have summaries and links to research reports on outdoor learning and fieldwork.
The Forest Education Initiative aims to increase the appreciation and understanding of trees and woodland among young people, particularly aged 5-11. Teachers and leaders will find particularly useful the freely downloadable learning materials, information on professional training opportunities and list of local groups throughout the country.

Countryside Access – the official website for the Countryside Code, this site contains educational resources for teachers and group leaders, a list of local walks in your area and maps of the new right of access to Open Access Land (where there is a ‘right to roam’). It has links to the websites of Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales.

Website with information about the National Parks. The ‘learning about’ section has links to education services and to 15 National Parks in England, Scotland and Wales.
http://web.ukonline.co.uk/scoutnotebook/
Scout Notebook is a collection of training materials collected from Scout leaders throughout the country, available for free download to anyone training young people. It includes guidance on outdoor cooking, camp-fires, first aid and survival techniques, as well as suggestions for games and songs which will be popular with a range of ages.

Back to categories