

NATURE NATTER PROJECT IMPACT REPORT

Charlie Hill - Heeley Trust



APR 2024 - SEPT 2025

Nature Natter 6 weekly seasonal blocks: 2024/2025 64 sessions 56 participants

Nature Natter is our all-outdoors, all-weather group at the back of Callow Flats - Hang Bank Wood, Gleadless. It's a chance for people to come together, spend time in the woods, chat and do activities based on bush craft, nature connection and creativity. The group is about 8-10 people maximum and people can come each week or come when they can.

It has evolved into activities in the morning at the camp, a lunch break then a walk in the woods in the afternoon - people come to any or all of these depending how they feel on the day.

Nature Natter is often a stepping stone for people to gain confidence being in a group and outdoors whilst improving mental and/or physical health.

Many people go on to engage with other groups and trips at Heeley Trust and other organisations across the city.

Some have gone onto volunteer in the group and run their own sessions with our support such as the monthly bird walks and Fungi ID walks; others have developed their interest in the outdoors and gone onto apprenticeships with the River and Canal Trust, RHS Horticultural courses and Northern College courses.

The skills and activities in the sessions allow people to talk, make and connect to themselves, each other and the woodland, people have shared they feel a sense of belonging in these ancient woodlands after regularly attending Nature Natter. Most comment on how much better they feel after being outside with others and in a 'no pressure' environment.

Participant feedback: *'being outside makes it better - you don't feel closed in and its nice to get out in the fresh air and exercise'....'coming to Nature Natter is just like a little family group when you get to know everybody....no one judges you, not too many people - not overwhelming and you get to try new stuff and meet people, I'd definitely recommend it!'*



We work with **Gleadless Valley Wildlife Trust** and **Sheffield City Council** countryside rangers to do woodland management sessions where possible - learning to take care of woods and gaining knowledge of the woodlands.

'I now feel more connected to my neighbourhood, to local nature'

The sessions have been running for 3 years now in the same spot in the woods - our regular presence here has enabled us to build up relationships with local people who use the woods and often keep us updated about what is happening in the woods - wildlife sightings, what they think about the woods and also any anti social behaviour that we can report back to the rangers - creating an informal feedback loop for the community.



Monthly Bird Walks: 2024/2025: 13 Bird walks (volunteer lead) 24 participants.

The bird walks are delivered by a local bird expert and former Nature Natter participant. They lead the walk and help people gain identification skills for birds. We offer staff support on the day and marketing for the sessions. People may try this session and go on to attend Nature Natter or other outdoor sessions. Participants and the walk leader were keen to explore other areas also for bird spotting so we were able to fund some trips with **Local Area Committee Community pots**. The trips all took place using public transport to support people in getting to these places again. We went to Graves Park, Orgreave Lakes and Manor Fields Park.

Mushroom Identification Walks: 2024 /2025: 2 walks 6 participants

These sessions were led by a local person, having attended and shared their knowledge on a bird walk. They were keen to share their skills and local knowledge of the woods. We supported this with staff time and promoting the session.



Roshni wellbeing walks and day trips:

2024/2025: 6 walks in and around Sheffield 16 participants

We have been working with **Roshni** for over 4 years, supporting local well being walks in Heeley People's Park. The group built up confidence and were keen to explore other places for walking. This year, **Roshni** gained **Westfield Health** funding to pay for staff time with us and transport for the trips. We used public transport to support people going to these places outside of the trip. Most women had never been to places we visited - Burbage, Longshaw Estate, Graves Park and Rivelin Valley.

Participants feedback: *'these sessions helped me practice my English, talking to people in English on the walks'.*

when I walk in a group its much more fun and useful to talk to others about things in life'... 'coming out has helped me feel less lonely and is a lifeline to me'





Family Outdoor sessions: 2024/2025: 2 orienteering community events 49 participants

In previous years we have developed popular family woodland sessions, due to funding, it didn't happen this year, but we have been able to put on two community Orienteering sessions in the woods meadows in the summer holidays thanks to our skilled staff working together with funding from the **Orienteering Foundation**.

Feedback from participants: *'I saw this I was so excited it was in our woods and we could come' ...'its great to see people enjoying themselves in the woods - usually we don't see anyone'*





Nature Training for local groups

2024 - 2025: 3 sessions 7 participants

This summer we worked with **Happy Saplings** (a locally run toddler group) and **Valley Youth Hub** using **Local Area Committee Community Pots** to deliver two nature training sessions for their staff. This evolved from conversations with both groups wanting to develop their confidence in working outdoors with their groups and making the most of the amazing asset on their doorstep. The training was co-delivered by Heeley Trust staff and **Woodland Wellbeing**. The sessions have successfully inspired group leaders to use the woods for play.

Valley Youth Hub will run their first session this October half term. We hope this leads to more children and young people discovering, playing and caring for the woods.

Participant feedback : *'Takes me back to being a kid again - I used to be in these woods loads when I was growing up'*

'never knew you could there was so much to do here in the woods- and its just on our doorstep!'

'Loved every minute of it today'





Next steps:

Nature Natter plan to continue to develop partnerships with local organistaions and participants delivering regular nature sessions for the community .

It would also be great to build on the nature training sessions and find more ways to share outdoor skills in the community to extend the provision of outdoor sessions for the local community.

Working with local schools aswell would be a great opportunity to develop connections and love of the woods from a young age . This may support looking after woodlands more and in time potentially reducing anti social behaviours such as fly tipping, arson, and motorbikes use in the woods; protecting the non human world and making it a safe place for people to play and explore the wild ancient woodlands of Gleadless.

More participant feedback on the impact of Nature natter sesssions:

‘the distraction of doing an activity, chatting to people and being outside in nature all help me feel better’

‘I now feel more connected to my neighbourhood, to local nature’

Partners:

Roshni

Gleadless Valley Wildlife Trust

Sheffield City Council

Woodland Wellbeing

Valley Youth Hub

Happy Saplings

South Yorkshire Orienteers

Orinteering Foundation