

# The impact of school visits to WWT Wetland Centres on pupil attitudes to nature

Final Research Report: October 2017



# Executive Summary

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## Project overview

This project aimed to understand the impact on primary school pupils of a visit to a WWT Wetlands Centre. Research was conducted with 20 schools whose Year 4 pupils visited and took part in a pond dipping session at Slimbridge, London, Martin Mere and Washington between June 2015-October 2016. The project aimed to see if such a visit changed the way pupils understand wildlife and nature and their role in helping to protect it.

## Research methodology

All pupils attending the session were asked to complete five (5) questionnaires; before their visit, immediately after their visit and then 2 weeks, 6 and 12 months later to measure the immediate, short, medium and long-term impact. A total of between n=410- n=529 pupils completed the questionnaire at each stage. Nine (9) schools took part in further qualitative research that involved pupils focus group discussions at each of the above intervals, observation of their visit session, video interviews on the day of their visit along with teacher interviews, again at each of the above intervals.

## Key findings

The visit experience appears to inspire children in HFSM<sup>1</sup> schools in a number of ways and more so than among those from LFSM<sup>2</sup> schools with a number of key indicators showing an increase in interest in wildlife and nature immediately and up to 2 weeks after the visit. However this appears to be a short-term spike, after 6-12 months attitudes and activity appear to revert back to pre-visit proportions. The qualitative research suggests that the drop in interest and activity is as a result of a lack of continued related stimulus at home or in their neighbourhood. But these are aggregated figures and there are many individual cases of children from HFSM schools being inspired to do something connected to wildlife and nature.

## Key conclusions

Overall it is hard to sustain interest at school due to the changing demands of the curriculum and only where topics are related to the visit does it have resonance among pupils. Even here, the pupil's new teacher is unlikely to be familiar with the Wetlands trip and will not necessarily refer back to it even though it might be relevant. The onus is felt by teachers to be on WWT to maintain interest among pupils and the school after the visit is over through resources and communications.

However we concluded that inspiring long-term change not only requires continued intervention by the school and WWT but importantly helping change family and community culture around and access to wildlife and nature.

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<sup>1</sup> HFSM = Schools with 20% or more pupils eligible for free school meals

<sup>2</sup> LFSM = Schools with less than 20% of pupils eligible for free school meals

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# Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

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## Summary

### Key findings

- The visit experience appears to inspire children in HFSM3 schools in a number of ways and more than among those from LFSM schools with some indicators showing an increase immediately and up to 2 weeks after the visit. However this appears to be a short-term spike and after 6-12 months attitudes and activity appear to revert back to pre-visit proportions. The qualitative research suggests that the initial increase is because the visit is something new and out of the ordinary, but that drop in interest and activity is as a result of a lack of continued related stimulus at home or in their neighbourhood.
- Pupils at LFSM schools were more likely to be exposed to and interested in nature than those from HFSM schools.
- Despite the above these are aggregated figures and there are many individual cases of children from HFSM schools being inspired to do something connected to wildlife and nature.
- Overall it is hard to sustain interest at school due to the changing demands of the curriculum and only where topics are related to the visit does it have resonance among pupils. Even here, the pupil's new teacher is unlikely to be familiar with the Wetlands trip and will not necessarily refer back to it even though it might be relevant. The onus is felt by teachers to be on WWT to maintain interest among pupils and the school after the visit is over through resources and communications.

### Activities around wildlife and nature

- Prior to their visit most children said they do some activity connected to wildlife and nature. Most commonly they said they visit places to see wildlife with their family (74 percent).
- Children living in rural or suburban areas were much more likely to have regular interaction with and appreciation of local, British wildlife whereas those in urban areas were more likely to cite endangered species based on visits to the zoo, abroad or school topics. By and large children from LFSM schools were also more likely to be enthusiastic about wildlife and nature prior to their visit.
- Short-term post-visit there appears to have been a slight increase in those saying they talk about wildlife and nature with their family. However the propensity to actually do something to help protect wildlife and nature seems to decrease after the visit.

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<sup>3</sup> HFSM = Schools with more than 20% of pupils eligible for free school meals

## Supporting the visit

- Positive changes in attitudes towards wildlife and nature were higher in schools where the visit day was part of a broader class topic and/or was followed up by related activities.
- Teachers valued the visits for both achieving curriculum-linked objectives and providing broader social benefits of going on an outdoor nature oriented trip.

## Enjoying the visit

- 87 percent of pupils said the visit was fun, 84 percent agreed it was interesting. Looking at or feeding the birds and the play area were the biggest hits, along with feeding the otters (where available) and in Martin Mere and Washington, the Wild Walk.

## Wanting to make a difference

- After 12 months 62 per cent of children said their visit had made them more interested in wildlife and nature.
- That said there was no significant difference in children's desire to make a difference concerning wildlife and nature as a result of their visit. Children from HFSM schools did express a short-term increase in wishing to do something, but in the long term this interested waned back to pre-visit levels.

## Learning impact

- **Knowledge:** 89 percent of pupils said they'd learnt something new as a result of their visit. Many were able to recall the names of the wildfowl they had seen along with the creatures identified in the pond dipping two weeks after their visit. Although this faded, after 6 and 12 months recall was still fairly good. They were also able to recall aspects of behaviour by the animals they saw including the wildfowl, pond creatures and otters.
- **Awareness:** Many children understood that the Wetlands Centre was there to help protect wildlife and the visit made it clearer what kind of wildlife was being protected. There was also a greater awareness around animal behaviour and how to interact with it, most noticeably when feeding the birds, but also from observation of behaviour while looking round the centre.
- Additionally some children came to appreciate that the Wetlands Centres are a natural habitat for many of the animals, rather than a zoo or other controlled environment.
- **Skills:** For many the trip was about confidence building, to feel able to approach and feed birds is a big departure from the norm for many of the children in the study. On a more obvious level and of value to teachers is the ability to identify and recognise animals using either the key cards or spotter sheets, looking for characteristics and matching them to the descriptions. It is noteworthy that most children didn't see pond dipping as a skill but even after 12 months many were able to describe how to do it.

- **Attitudes:** Across all schools in the qualitative study there were some children who appear genuinely to have had a change of attitude towards wildlife and nature claiming that they now felt much more positive towards it than before their visit.

### **Follow up activity**

- After 12 months 55 percent of children claimed to have subsequently been on a related visit with their family since their wetlands trip and 19 percent said they'd been back to a WWT Wetlands Centre. In the short term it was children from HFSM schools that were more likely to claim follow up activity, but in the long term claiming was higher among those from LFSM schools.
- Claimed return visits to a WWT Centre were noticeably higher among children where schools had conducted follow up activity than from schools that had not; 20 percent versus zero percent.

### **Recall**

- After 12 months 91 percent of children said they remembered their visit, 43 percent said they remembered a lot about it. Recall was significantly higher among those who had taken part in follow up activity than those who hadn't.

### **Sustaining long-term impact**

- Although teachers suggested that longer-term impact could be increased through WWT providing resources, visits and communications around what is happening at the centres, the likelihood of these channels being used will be limited by the need for schools to follow the curriculum that may not relate to what WWT does. Having resources that can be applied to a wide variety of curriculum topics (e.g. habitats, rivers, pollination, food chains) and to core Maths and English would help ensure that WWT is referenced over and above the visit itself.
- Pupils suggested a wide range of ideas that WWT could implement with many focused on creating stories around the animals at the centres to personalise the relationship with children, along with telling them (and their parents) directly what they could do to learn about and help wildlife. They also suggested outreach; both at schools and via licencing local wetlands that area easier to access for the less well off.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- Children clearly enjoy their visit to the Wetlands Centres and their teachers appreciate the value that such a visit can bring. Children believe they are learning new things and they are sharing their experiences with others. To some degree participating pupils appear more open to doing things to help or protect wildlife and its habitat as a result of their visit. However this is not a passion for most and few felt their attitudes had significantly changed as a result of their visit. Despite this one or two in each class said they had a complete change of heart about wildlife and nature as a result of their visit and were as a result much more interested in it.
- The research shows that changes in attitudes are greatly enhanced if the visit is part of a wider topic being covered at school, as well as the environment they live in and their family background.
- However the pond dipping exercise does not explicitly teach children about conservation, the importance of wetlands or the wider work of the WWT. The importance of wetlands and the wider work of WWT were covered more by luck than design by teachers during the self-guided elements of the day or in the case of London with the 'Down the drain' exhibition.
- If the objective of the project is to create a greater impact around topics of conservation and the importance of wetlands then this needs to be more clearly delivered as part of the visit day.
- One possible approach would be to add a further WWT guided element to the day that focused on the necessary topics. Alternatively, providing teachers a clear outline for a self-guided period that also focused on conservation issues.
- Additionally teachers believed that a continuing relationship with the WWT would help retain interest and awareness among pupils (and the school) via resources, outreach visits or event email updates on relevant topics. However the challenge here is to ensure that this relationship links into the curriculum or on-going school programmes such as outdoor learning or Forest School activity.
- The data suggest that the visit creates an immediate impact with children, exposing them to a new environment and challenging their preconceptions around wildlife, leading to a positive and memorable experience. Not surprisingly after some months the detail starts to fade but it is still a strong memory for them.
- The challenge is to help children hold on to this impact for as long as possible. The evidence suggests that having follow up at school really assists this. The data also suggest

that it is the big, weird and new experiences that really make memories; the flight of the crane, feeding birds as tall as yourself, things that are 'disgusting' like 'Down the drain' and the propulsion system of the nymph larvae.

- Building in the 'big impact' to make it happens by design rather than chance would ensure that children leave with a clearly memorable experience.
- However to sustain interest and change in attitudes and actions in the medium and long term, input will need to come from the school, the children's family and their wider environment as the evidence suggests that a single visit cannot hope to do more than stimulate change in the short term. In this scenario providing a regular feed of information, suggestions for activities families and schools can do, and reasons to return to a WWT Centre are possible paths to creating a life long interest in wildlife and nature.



## 1. Introduction

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The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) has a network of 9 visitor centres across the UK. Guided learning sessions are offered at 8 centres. During their visit, most schools have a 1-hour session led by a member of the Learning Team, and spend the remaining time exploring the rest of the centre. The majority of visits are from primary schools.

WWT currently offers free entry and a guided learning session to schools where at least 20% of pupils are eligible and registered for free school meals. This scheme is funded by HSBC. WWT commissioned Hope-Stone Research to evaluate the impact of the school visits on attending pupils.

This final report is based on the evaluation work conducted between May 2015 and July 2017. It also draws on a linked earlier study, School Visits to WWT Centres – Longitudinal Research.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Research Objectives

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The objectives for the evaluation were to:

- Understand the impact a school visit to a WWT centre has on pupils over time and what factors influence this impact. Impact includes changes in values, attitudes, behaviour and knowledge towards nature and wildlife.
- Use the research to identify the best approaches to ensure longer-term benefits.
- Measure the broader impact of the visit on schoolwork and teaching approaches, family activity and evidence of any consequential pro-environmental behaviour.
- Assess the value of visits to those on the free visit scheme as compared with paying schools.

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<sup>4</sup> School Visits to WWT Centres – Longitudinal Research by Heritage Insider Consulting, February 2015

## 3. Research Method

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### 3.1 Visit activity and location

As outlined above the research aims to assess the impact on primary school pupils of a visit to a Wetlands Centre over the short (within 2 weeks) medium (6 months) and long (12 months) term. In order to maintain comparability all schools groups taking part participated in a pond dipping session. Except for one school, the remainder of their visit was self-guided and varied between schools although all walked through the wildfowl areas and most visited the flamingos or otters and the play area. One school took part in second session connected to mini-beasts. The evaluation focused on three centres: London, Slimbridge and Martin Mere. However as part of the pilot one school that visited Washington was also included.

### 3.2 Participating schools

The 20 schools participating in the study are shown in Table 1 below. All schools had pre-booked their visit with the exception of the school visiting Slimbridge in June 2015 that was invited to visit as part of the pilot process. As a consequence, this school was not running any lessons or activities connected to the visit either before or after the visit. This may have affected some of their responses. (See Table 1 below)

**Table 1. Quantitative sample**

	Centre	School type	Visit Day	Questionnaires completed <sup>5</sup>
1	London	HFSM	May 2015	All
2	Slimbridge	HFSM	June 2015	All
3	Washington	HFSM	June 2015	All
4	Martin Mere	HFSM	Oct 2015	All
5	London	LFSM	Oct 2015	All
6	London	LFSM	Oct 2015	All
7	London	HFSM	Mar 2016	All
8	London	HFSM	May 2016	All
9	Martin Mere	HFSM	May 2016	All
10	Slimbridge	LFSM	June 2016	All
11	Slimbridge	LFSM	June 2016	All
12	Slimbridge	LFSM	June 2016	All
13	Martin Mere	LFSM	June 2016	All
14	London	LFSM	June 2016	All
15	Slimbridge	LFSM	July 2016	Pre-visit, visit-day, medium-term, long-term
16	Slimbridge	HFSM	July 2016	Pre-visit, visit-day, short-term, medium-term
17	Martin Mere	LFSM	July 2016	All
18	London	LFSM	Sept 2016	Pre-visit, visit-day, short-term, medium-term
19	Martin Mere	HFSM	Sept 2016	Pre-visit, visit-day, short-term
20	Martin Mere	LFSM	Oct 2016	Pre-visit, visit-day, short-term, medium-term

<sup>5</sup> Not all questionnaires were completed by all schools. The Slimbridge school July 2016 visit was too close to the end of term to complete the short-term survey. In the remaining cases one school failed to return their medium and long-term questionnaires, three schools were invited to the study too late to complete their long-term questionnaires.

### 3.3 Evaluation process

#### Part 1. Quantitative: Visit Group Pupil Tracking Surveys

This final report is based on data covering all five stages of the survey work. The analysis is based on questionnaires returned from twenty schools across four centres as outlined in the table above. The total number of pupils completing questions varied between stages from n=529 in the pre-visit survey to n=410 in the long-term survey (all sample sizes are shown below).

1. **Pre-visit:** Up to 7 days prior to visit n=529
2. **End of visit:** On the day of visit or if necessary, the first school day after n=462
3. **Short-term:** 2 weeks after the visit n=457
4. **Medium-term:** 6 months after visit n=459
5. **Long-Term:** 12 months after visit n=410

#### Part 2. Qualitative: Visit Group Evaluation

Additionally, a sub-sample of nine (9) schools, took part in a qualitative evaluation. Six (6) attended as part of the free visit scheme, three schools paid for the visit. Again, these took place over the same 5 quantitative stages outlined above. In detail they comprise:

1. **Pre-visit:** Focus groups with pupils (split into 4-5 groups of 6-8 depending on group size) and in-depth interview/s with the teacher/s to explore awareness, knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviour around wildlife, nature and the environment as well as awareness of the WWT and expectations of their visit, as well as any pre-visit preparation, links with the curriculum, other similar visits undertaken etc.
2. **Visit day observation and pupil interviews:** Observation of behaviour and other indicators of engagement by the pupils during their visit. Short, vox-pop style video interviews with pupils to obtain immediate feedback on their visit experience.
3. **Short-term, 2-week post-visit follow-up:** Focus group discussions with the same pupils as the pre-visit, along with more in-depth discussions with the teacher/s and assistants if applicable. This stage explores what pupils recall, what they have done differently, changes in awareness, knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviour and if this has had an impact at home.

4. **Medium-term 6-month post-visit follow-up:** Similar to the 2 week post-visit but with less emphasis on recall of the day and more focus on general attitudes, actions and awareness around wildlife and nature.
5. **Long-term 12-month post-visit follow up:** A repeat of the 6-month follow up along with asking pupils for their thoughts on some of the preliminary findings and general thoughts on outdoor play.

**Table 2. Qualitative sample**

	Centre	School type	Qualitative evaluation completed
1	London	HFSM	All
2	London	LFSM	All
3	Slimbridge	HFSM	All
4	Martin Mere	HFSM	All
5	London	HFSM	All
6	Martin Mere	LFSM	All
7	Martin Mere	HFSM	All
8	Slimbridge	HFSM	All
9	Slimbridge	LFSM	All

### 3.4 Linked previous research

In 2014-15 a mapping study was conducted for WWT titled **School Visits to WWT Centres – Longitudinal Research**. This research mapped school visits to WWT Centres including pre-visit preparation (by both schools and WWT), activities on-site, interactions between the school and WWT staff and volunteers, logistics during visits, any follow up activity. Where this research links directly into the long-term evaluation we have highlighted the key findings from the mapping report and indicated how these findings are supported or challenged by the new data. It should be noted that the mapping study worked with KS1 pupils while the long-term evaluation worked with KS2 pupils.

#### Notes on the data

Three of the five schools started to take part in the evaluation during May-June 2015 using the pilot version of the questionnaires. While many of the questions asked were the same as,

or similar to, those used in the final versions there were differences. For the purposes of clarity only responses to the final versions of the questionnaires have been included in this report.

Where there has been a statistically significant change this is highlighted in **green** if it is positive and **red** if negative. On a sample size of n=410 (i.e. the smallest wave sample – long term) the margin of error for a result of 50% is  $\pm 5\%$  so any difference in results less than 5 percent (or a 0.3 score) should be treated with caution as they are unlikely to represent a significant difference. This report only highlights differences where there they are significant.

## 4. Main Findings

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### 4.1 Who took part?

#### 4.1.1 Gender

The sample of respondents is roughly equal between boys and girls and this distribution remains the same through each stage of the evaluation.

**Table 1. Gender**

	Pre -visit n=529	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457	Medium- term n=459	Long-term n=410
	%	%	%	%	%
Boys	50	50	52	49	50
Girls	49	49	47	50	49
NR	1	1	1	1	1

#### 4.1.2 Age

Nearly all pupils made their visit when they were 8 or 9 years old, so by the time they'd taken part in the long-term follow-up over a third had turned 10 with most of the remainder turning 9.

**Table 2. Age**

	Pre -visit n=529	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457	Medium- term n=459	Long-term n=410
	%	%	%	%	%
7	4	4	4	0	0
8	52	54	47	25	5
9	41	40	46	58	51
10	1	1	1	16	41
11	0	0	0	<1	1

#### 4.1.3 Ethnicity

Many participating pupils found the question on ethnicity hard to answer or preferred not to answer and across each stage between a quarter and a third didn't wish to or couldn't give a clear response. Between 40-50 percent identified themselves as 'White British' and the remainder as 'Other' that included 'Black', 'Black British', 'Asian', 'Asian British', 'Mixed' and 'White other'. These proportions reflect the nature of the schools and their catchment areas and vary enormously. For example the schools that visited Martin Mere were almost 100% 'White British' while one school visiting Slimbridge was 100% non-White British. (See Table 3 below)

**Table 3. Ethnicity**

	Pre -visit n=529	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457	Medium- term n=459	Long-term n=410
	%	%	%	%	%
White any	41	41	40	56	54
Other any	33	33	32	19	25
DK/Refused	26	26	28	25	21

#### 4.1.4 School type

The proportions of pupils at schools with more than 20% claiming free school meals is lower than the hoped for target proportion of 57 percent) averaging around 40 percent. This is because finding sufficient qualifying schools was not possible due to a lack of relevant books and/or unwillingness to take part in the study.

**Table 4. School type**

	Pre -visit n=529	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457	Medium- term n=459	Long- term n=410
	%	%	%	%	%
High free school meals (>20%)	46	45	42	43	46
Low free school meals (<20%)	54	55	58	57	54

#### 4.1.5 WWT Centre

See above for school distribution across the four centres and below for number of responses by centre. (See Table 5 below)

**Table 5. WWT Centre**

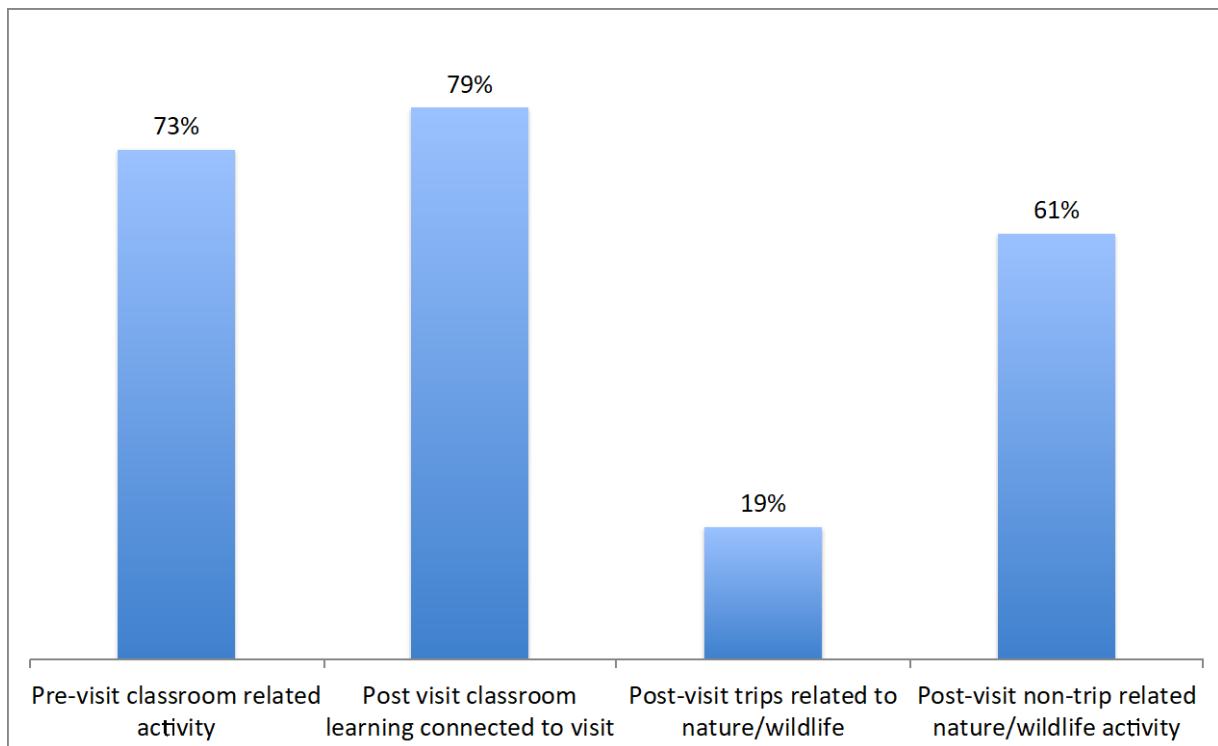
	Pre -visit n=529	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457	Medium- term n=459	Long-term n=410
	%	%	%	%	%
London	37	29	39	36	36
Slimbridge	28	29	28	31	34
Martin Mere	30	37	29	29	25
Washington	4	5	5	5	5



#### 4.1.6 Associated learning

Six months after the visit day each school was asked if the visit group had done any learning connected to their visit before and since their visit, further non-visit related activity or created any school resources related to wildlife and nature.

**Chart 1. Pre and post visit school activity** (Medium term feedback n=459)



#### 4.2 Activities: What do children enjoy doing?

Based on the options provided in the questionnaire the overwhelming majority of participating pupils said they would enjoy doing most things asked about. Therefore activities connected to nature didn't fair noticeably better or worse than indoor or more sedentary activities. Indeed in the pre-visit survey playing computer games scored the lowest response (65 percent) while playing in the garden or park the highest (87 percent).

Post-visit, the inclination to enjoy many activities decreased, including outdoor activities. In the medium-term (after 6 months) a factor at work could be seasonality with the follow up taking place during the autumn/winter when outdoor activity is likely to be less appealing. However the drop off continued into the long-term, i.e. after 12 months for 4 out of the 5 indicators, and significantly for 3 indicators.

**Table 6. Which of these do you think you would enjoy doing? (% response)**

Statement	Pre-visit n=458	Short-term n=385	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
Building homes for wild creatures such as birds, hedgehogs or insects	79%	74%	72%	76%
Watching TV or videos	72%	65%	59%	59%
Going on a nature walk and seeing wildlife ↓	78%	70%	64%	64%
Reading	80%	66%	63%	63%
Playing in my garden or local park ↓	87%	78%	72%	72%
Playing indoors with toys or games	79%	65%	56%	56%
Splashing in the waves at the seaside	68%	74%	71%	71%
Making things indoors (like Lego, drawing or making crafts)	75%	70%	68%	68%
Playing computer or video games	65%	61%	59%	59%
Going camping ↓	78%	68%	66%	66%

\*These questions were not asked of pupils in pilot schools during their pre-visit, visit-day and short-term follow up surveys.

The interim data suggested a possible relationship between those children from schools with more than 20% free school meals (HFSM) and those from schools with less than 20% free school meals (LFSM) when it comes to interest in outdoor play and activities. See Table 7 below)

However now all the data is available this relationship is no longer valid. Instead it would appear that in both the medium and long term, for both HFSM and LFSM children, there is a decline in enjoyment of outdoor activity based on these indicators. This suggests that attitudes are as related to age and lifestyle as measures of wealth and poverty.

That said those from LFSM started and finished at a higher base, i.e. they are overall more enthusiastic about outdoor activity than their HFSM counterparts both before and in the long-term after their visit. This suggests that opportunities at home and elsewhere along with family attitudes and habits play a part in this scenario, something that is explored elsewhere in this report.

**Table 7. Which of these do you think you would enjoy doing? (% response)**

	HFSM			LFSM		
	Pre-visit n=242	Short-term n=190	Long-term n=189	Pre-visit n=287	Short-term n=267	Long-term n=221
Building homes for wild creatures	71%	74%	69%	84%	↓75%	81%
Going on a nature walk and seeing wildlife	73%	76%	↓↓63%	82%	↓67%	↓↓68%
Playing in my garden or local park	81%	↓75%	↓↓74%	91%	↓79%	↓↓85%
Splashing in the waves at the seaside	70%	↓62%	71%	85%	↓79%	84%
Going Camping	70%	↓56%	↓↓64%	83%	↓73%	↓↓76%

↓↓ Long-term decline  
 ↓ Interim decline

### 4.3 Actions: What wildlife and nature related activities do children do?

Most children prior to their visit said they do some kind of activity connected to wildlife and nature. Most commonly they said they visit places to see wildlife with their family (74 percent) and qualitative research suggests this is often the zoo but also holidays and being out and about with grandparents to the park, going fishing or for a walk.

There are no clear positive patterns of behaviour change as measured by these indicators, indeed the data suggest a decline in wildlife/nature activity in the long-term even if children continue to talk about it with their families. (See Table 8a below)

**Table 8a. Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the sentences below (% agree)**

Statement	Pre-visit n=529	Short-term n=457	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
In our home we try to do things to help wildlife	58%	54%	50%	↓50%
I talk about wildlife and nature with my family	53%	59%	52%	52%
I visit places to see wildlife with my family	74%	65%	61%	↓60%

These indicators show a more pronounced reduction in wildlife and nature activity among children in HFSM schools than those in LFMS schools. Additionally, those from LFMS schools appear in the long-term to do more related activity at home and with family than those from HFSM schools even though prior to visit the claimed levels of activity at home was similar regardless of school. This may suggest that as a result of the visit LFMS homes continue to provide opportunities for further wildlife related activity for their children.

Talking about the topic of wildlife and nature has remained fairly consistent across both groups over the research period. This indicates that children are still engaged with the topic regardless of background, and is grounds to believe that, given the right stimulus, would turn this talk into action.

**Table 8b. Which of these do you think you would enjoy doing? (% response)**

	HFSM			LFMS		
	Pre-visit n=242	Short-term n=190	Long-term n=189	Pre-visit n=287	Short-term n=267	Long-term n=221
In our home we try to do things to help wildlife	56%	43%	↓43%	60%	57%	55%
I talk about wildlife and nature with my family	55%	60%	52%	52%	58%	52%
I visit places to see wildlife with my family	72%	67%	↓59%	75%	64%	↓63%

## 4.4 Exposure to wildlife and nature

### 4.4.1 Pre-visit exposure

Children taking part in the qualitative research were asked about their exposure to wildlife and nature both where they live and any trips or holidays they may have been on with family, friends or the school. There were noticeable differences between schools in part because of their HFSM or LFMS status but also because of factors such as ethnicity and family influences. Even within a class there was a wide variety of experience.

Some had been abroad and experienced big game in Africa in some cases as a foreign holiday, in others visiting family in their country of origin. This experience appears to have emphasised to children that wildlife is by definition exotic and foreign rather than on their doorstep.

*I went to Africa and saw a lot of Elephants and other wildlife out camping.  
Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

Those children from the more suburban or rural locations appear most likely to interact with wildlife.

*We've got six birds nests and seven squirrels in our trees and everyday I go out and put food out for them. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*We have a pond by the field and we grow stuff. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*My uncle owns a farm so I wake up early and help him. Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge*

*Me and my Dad are part of the RSPB and we go to Slimbridge. Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge*

*Last year I went on the WWT website and my Mum said I could adopt a Snow Leopard. Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge*

Perhaps the least exposed to local wildlife were those children at Millponds School (Slimbridge), where family visits specifically around wildlife appear very infrequent if at all.

#### **4.4.2 Pre-visit understanding of wildlife and nature**

The qualitative research revealed varying levels of interest among children to interact with wildlife and nature. There was sentimentality around pets; cats, fish, rabbits in particular while many fed wild birds or said they created habitats for insects.

*We sometimes feed the birds and we make little holes in the ground for the rabbits. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

Most children had a reasonable understanding of the difference between a wild and domestic animal. They also understood the idea of a habitat (a topic covered in the curriculum at this age).

*Wild animals hunting for prey while tame animals like pets, people would be giving food to them. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

*Stuff that you can't really look after but live in wild places like jungles, ponds, rainforests. Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge*

For many children this age it appears that the idea of wildlife is very much set in the context of endangered and dangerous animals living far away from the UK, in part driven by topics covered at school such as rainforests, deserts and in some cases the ocean<sup>6</sup> and other non-UK habitats and consequently animals such as tigers, lions, monkeys, snakes etc. were cited. Additionally some curriculum work around similarities between mammals and humans stimulated the mentioning of wolves.

*Whenever I think of wildlife I think of endangered species that I want to help.*  
Pupil, HFSM, London

*They're like creatures that live in dark forests...snakes and stuff like that...monkeys in the jungle.* Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere

*Like a jungle full of animals like they are dangerous.* Pupil, HFSM, London

Many pupils did associate wildlife with the area they lived in and were able to cite examples. These responses were more common from children in suburban schools (both HFSM and LFSM) and suggest that habitats such as back gardens, parks, rivers, nature reserves etc. are easily accessible.

*In trees and bushes and maybe on the floor.* Boy, LFSM, Slimbridge

*In our gardens.* Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge

*Right now in the nature reserve some swans have given birth to some cygnets.*  
Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge

*Outside at me Nan's because me Granddad does gardening, we feed the squirrels.* Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere

By contrast, only after promoting did many children with poorer, inner city backgrounds start to think about wildlife in their own neighbourhood. Initially this focused on insects then extended to small mammals such as squirrels and hedgehogs, while birds appeared to be an afterthought for most. Foxes were frequently mentioned and among those living near bodies of water, wildfowl itself.

*Every night at 10 O'clock there are foxes going past my house.* Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge

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<sup>6</sup> In part this may be driven by the science curriculum that looks at climatic zones and related habitats  
WWT School Visit Scheme Evaluation: Final Report October 2017

While children expressed sentimentality around pets and some enjoyed feeding local wildlife such as foxes and hedgehogs there was an element of awe and fear around more exotic non-native animals. The idea of the dangerous forest from fairy tales appears to still be strong in the imagination at this age.

While ethnicity and culture were not expressly given as reasons for attitudes, from listening to the children it would appear that these might play a role in shaping attitudes. As mentioned above the white working class attitudes in Liverpool expose children to wildlife through older relatives such as fathers who go fishing or grandparents who like feeding wildlife.

*By me Nan's there were two hedgehogs and me Nan caught them and we fed them. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*My Dad does, he loves it. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

By contrast the predominantly Muslim/Somali children in Millponds (Slimbridge) appear to shun wildlife as something unpleasant and to be avoided (unless in some cases it was big game in Africa).

Again those in better off suburban environments or even less well off rural locations seem to have a closer and more relaxed relationship with nature and wildlife than those in inner city locations.

#### **4.4.3 Pre-visit: School impact on attitudes**

School can clearly play a role in shaping opinions; school gardens, ponds and wildlife or nature orientated school trips can significantly affect children. Making homes for mini-beasts, bird feeders and growing plants in gardening clubs all appear to have an impact on children at this age.

*We go into the wooded areas and make homes for beetles. Pupil, HFSM, London*

## 4.5 Aspirations and empowerment: What do children wish to do that is connected to wildlife and nature?

The data suggest that wanting to help wildlife and knowing how to do so increases slightly after the visit and this desire and perceived knowledge is maintained into the long-term. What doesn't change and possibly decreases is the desire to work with wildlife or nature when they grow up.

**Table 9a. What children believe they can do or want to do** (Mean score out of 5 where 5=agree a lot)

Statement	Pre-visit n=485	Short-term n=458	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
When I grow up I want to work with wildlife or nature	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.0
I want to help wildlife and the places where it lives	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.2
I know how to help wildlife and the places it lives	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.8

Wanting to work with wildlife and nature is similar between HFSM and LFSM school children, while wanting to help wildlife is marginally higher among those at LFSM schools. Interestingly those children in HFSM schools are more likely to believe in the long-term they know how to help wildlife and nature.

**Table 9b. Which of these do you think you would enjoy doing?** (% response)

	HFSM			LFSM		
	Pre-visit n=242	Short-term n=190	Long-term n=189	Pre-visit n=287	Short-term n=267	Long-term n=221
When I grow up I want to work with wildlife or nature	n/a	3.3	3.0	n/a	3.1	3.0
I want to help wildlife and the places where it lives	4.3	4.4	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.3
I know how to help wildlife and the places it lives	3.7	4.0	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.0



## 4.6 Attitudes: How do children feel about wildlife, nature and wetlands?

### 4.6.1 Attitudes to wildlife and nature in general

As above children's attitudes towards birds and animals was very positive both before and after their visit so the visit itself doesn't appear to have made an impact overall.

**Table 10. Attitudes to wildlife and nature** (Mean score out of 5 where 5=agree a lot)

Statement	Pre-visit n=529	Short-term n=457	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
I like birds and other animals	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5

The data suggests that for children from HFSM schools the impact of the visit on this indicator is marginally higher than those from LFSM, but the difference is too small to confidently state this.

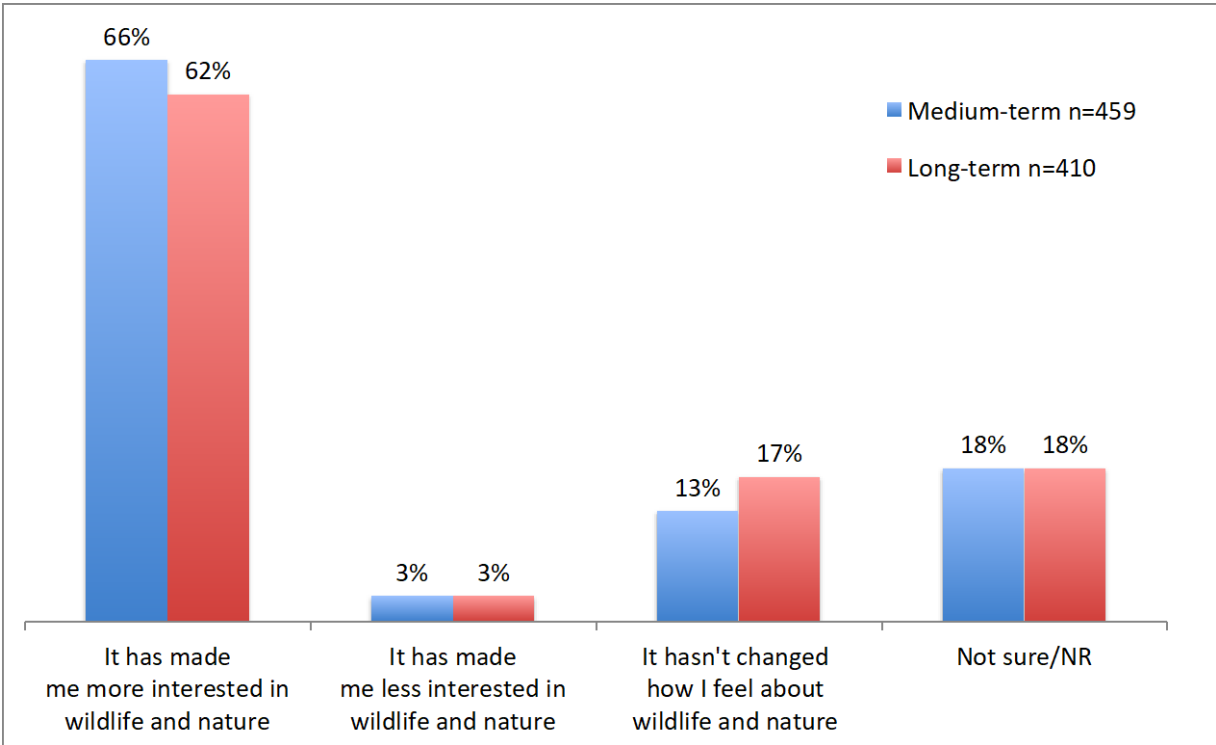
**Table 11. Attitudes towards birds and animals** (Mean score out of 5 where 5=agree a lot)

	HFSM			LFSM		
	Pre-visit n=242	Short-term n=190	Long-term n=189	Pre-visit n=287	Short-term n=267	Long-term n=221
I like birds and other animals	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.5

After 6-months the majority of children (64 percent) said their visit had made them more interested in wildlife and nature but after 12 months this had dropped to 52 percent. (See Chart 2 below). After 6-months the level of agreement with the statement was similar between children at HFSM schools and those at LFSM schools, however at 12-months those at HFSM schools appear to be less positive about this impact, with 56 percent saying it changed how they felt about wildlife and nature, compared with 67 percent of those at LFSM schools. Again, this suggests that sustaining interest is in part dependent on social and

environmental factors such as family interest and opportunities to engage with wildlife and nature. (See Chart 2 below)

**Chart 2. Do you think the visit to the wetlands centre has changed how you feel about wildlife and nature? (% response)**



## 4.6.2 Attitudes to wetlands

One consistent message that has remained the most cited attribute for the picture of a wetland is it's a home for wildlife. It also scores consistently high as interesting, amazing and pretty. The date also indicates an increase in the belief that such areas need protecting and that they are important for humans. (See Table 12 below)

**Table 12. Words and statements associated with wetlands** (% response, highest per survey in bold)

Statement	Pre-visit n=529	Short-term n=457	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
Scary	6%	6%	3%	4%
Interesting	72%	75%	79%	75%
It needs protecting↑	37%	36%	43%	44%
Boring	5%	4%	7%	9%
Dirty	21%	21%	17%	18%
Amazing	66%	70%	68%	66%
Waste of space	4%	3%	4%	3%
Fun↑	59%	65%	61%	55%
Home for wildlife↑	<b>77%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>82%</b>
Smelly ↑	14%	18%	19%	19%
Important for humans↑	29%	27%	29%	35%
Pretty↑	61%	65%	66%	68%
I want one near my house	56%	51%	52%	51%
I want to go there↓	66%	52%	53%	56%

## 4.7 Learning Delivery

### 4.7.1 Value of learning outside the classroom: Pupil perspective

The qualitative feedback points to the very high impact a school visit can have on children. When asked about previous trips children were able to recall considerable detail from trips taken going back to Year 1. While those commonly recalled with greatest enthusiasm tend to be adventure parks or similar attractions, children were almost as positive about trips with a clear learning component, for example to a museum to study the Egyptians.

Of even greater significance were outdoor learning and/or camping trips. For many children such trips had their first exposure to camping and staying in a wild area or being away from their parents' overnight. Their recollections are vivid, ranging from excitement to outright fear of the dark and the unknown.

*In the night we couldn't use the toilet and we had to do it in the bushes. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*We learnt about nature and how to make tents with bits and pieces. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

Children know they can learn on such visits and cite having a better connection with the subject matter, be it an Egyptian<sup>7</sup> mummy or a woodland environment.

*You got the museum, and you see lots and lots of things that go into your head and you just can't forget it. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*When you are here and you see a photo of it you don't learn that much, but when you go to a place you actually learn more. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

*You normally learn stuff you've never learnt before. Pupil, HFSM London*

The element of the unknown or different to the norm was also an attraction.

*Somewhere you don't know about so you find out new things. Pupil, LFMS, Slimbridge*

*If you see it in books its not that interesting but if you see it in real life it's like wow. Pupil, HFSM, London*

From a socialisation perspective children also believed they developed friendships with one another that are not possible within the school environment.

#### **4.7.2 Value of learning outside the classroom: Teacher perspective**

Clearly teachers understand the value of school trips and generally like to take each class on a trip every year.

*These school trips are vital, and if we don't do it these children don't see or do anything. Teacher, HFSM, London*

Trips act either as a summative approach to a topic being covered during the year, or a kick-start stimulant for a topic to be covered.

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<sup>7</sup> The topic of Egyptians is generally covered in Y4 hence a number of references to visits to museums to see the Egyptian collections

While it is very useful to have parts of the visit that link directly with a particular element of the curriculum, at this age there is some flexibility and it is relatively easy to find relevance even if not directly. For example the trip could be to a nature reserve but creative writing about the nature experienced could be the curriculum link.

Teachers concur with pupils that being out of the classroom and in direct contact with the objects or environment can have a much greater impact on children than watching a video or looking at a picture in class.

*I think sometimes taking them off timetable helps children to learn and enthuse a little bit more...when you ask at the end of the year what was the best thing they always say school trips. Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*I hope they'll get memories so they can link their learning to 'ah yes I remember that'. Teacher, HFSM, London*

*We love trips we go on as many as we possibly can. Teacher, HFSM, London*

*Children learn so much more on trips. Teacher, HFSM, London*

Additionally having an external person explain the topic provides both expert input and a new voice children are often more likely to listen to than their regular teacher.

The choice of visit location will be determined by the above factors but other criteria play an important role; cost of the visit, previous experience and thus confidence the venue will deliver, effective logistics, supporting resources for classroom and visit day use and good communications prior to the visit day.

*The children here can only really contribute a pound. Teacher, HFSM, London*

### 4.7.3 The choice of WWT for a school visit

#### Mapping Report

Motivation of schools and teachers to book a visit:

- Learning in a different setting to school [L][SEP]
- Spending time outdoors [L][SEP]
- Something can't see on a day-today basis [L][SEP]
- Opportunity can't get in school or at home. Particularly pond dipping [L][SEP]
- To have fun [L][SEP]
- For the children to realise this type of place exists (calm and dedicated to animals) [L][SEP]
- Think outside themselves for a bit [L][SEP]
- To let the children get close up to the animals and be able to feed them [L][SEP]
- For a different type of experience

Scheduling within the academic year: [L][SEP]

- Start of a topic - inspiring launch to new subject [L][SEP]
- End of a topic - putting previous learning in to context [L][SEP]
- An end of term/year 'treat' [L][SEP]

[L][SEP]

Teachers reported a variety of more pastoral aims for a trip including:

- Learning how to behave in different environments [L][SEP]
- Learning how to treat different living creatures [L][SEP]
- Get the children to care about the environment and recognise the good work for conservation that WWT do [L][SEP]

The links to the National Curriculum or specific learning objectives that teachers mentioned for a pond dipping session or wider visit were: [L][SEP]

- Mini-beasts [L][SEP]
- Life cycles [L][SEP]
- Habitats and different types of environments [L][SEP]
- How animals adapt to different environments and habitats [L][SEP]
- Our planet and recycling [L][SEP]
- Sustainability [L][SEP]
- Conservation [L][SEP]
- Writing in context (writing non-fiction about something they know about i.e. the visit). [L][SEP]

**Response to mapping findings:** The long-term evaluation study also identified many of these motivating factors and teacher feedback suggested that the Wetland Centres tick many of the necessary boxes for being a destination of choice for school groups. A key difference to the mapping study is that HFSM schools were able to visit for free (aside from travel and lunch costs). This is clearly a strong motivator and one that also means that the other drivers identified in the mapping study may be slightly watered down as the case to make for a visit is easier, particularly for the curriculum related criteria.

*I also like Martin Mere from a financial point of view that if we have over a certain percentage of school meals it is a free trip. Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere*

Because the pupils in the long-term study were in KS2 the curriculum elements were probably more important than the pastoral ones. This was particularly noticeable for the LFSM schools.

Habitat based science destinations aren't always that easy to find, particularly in comparison with museums. WWT provides the combination of the science investigation alongside habitat, two curriculum elements teachers said they were trying to address at the same time. Using key cards was the third element identified as a curriculum motivator. Additionally the Wetlands Centres were felt to provide an environment many of the children are unlikely to have experienced, and this is particularly true for HFSM schools.

*In terms of them being able to feel really outside the Clapham area... because a lot of them won't have been very far...given them some hands on real life experience of different habitats they're just not going to find in their gardens...which a lot of them don't have. Teacher, HFSM, London*

*Children don't have much experienced being outside their own community...it helps them understand more about the world they live in. Teacher, HFSM, Slimbridge*

Indeed some teachers were aware of the 'terror' and distaste some of their pupils felt for nature and wildlife that children expressed in the group discussions and believed the Wetlands visit could go some way to addressing these feelings.

Further curriculum boxes can be ticked for Geography (fieldwork) Art (pictures of what they have seen) and English (writing about what they have seen). Additionally teachers in HFSM schools felt the children would benefit in broader social learning terms.

*Hopefully it will raise the profile of Martin Mere with their families as well. Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*Put the science into context...broadening their horizons. Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere*

Some teachers believe the visit gives the children an opportunity to explore new environments in a physical, hands-on, way giving them a real life experience.

*Got that real life experience to talk about habitat confidently because they've been there. Teacher, HFSM, London*

*They experience it differently, they touch it, they feel it they smell it, they don't do that by sitting in the classroom. Teacher, LFSM, Slimbridge*

Additionally teachers suggested that the pressures at an indoor venue for the children to keep quiet and no run around too much applied much less at an outdoor venue such as the Wetlands Centres.

Finally, for one teacher the fact that there were birds from all over the world at the Wetland's Centre would make the visit relevant for those children who's families are not from the UK. Indeed, it could be argued that wildlife and nature present no cultural assumptions in the way that a history trip might, making it something all children can engage with on an equal footing.

#### **4.7.4 Teacher expectations for the visit**

Teacher expectations and hoped for outcomes roughly divided into two areas, curriculum learning and wider social impact.

From a curriculum perspective teachers highlighted the following hoped for outcomes:

- Knowledge of using identification keys
- Understanding different habitats
- Developing appropriate vocabulary
- Using maps
- Using scientific methods

*It gives a nice wow start to our topic which is habitats and diversification. Teacher, HFSM, London*

*Skills picked up at Slimbridge will feed into an enquiry led approach. Teacher, LFSM, Slimbridge*



A number of schools also planned to use the visit to address non-science elements of the curriculum including persuasive written and drawing.

Although the curriculum element was critical, all teachers believed the visit would deliver wider, social learning outcomes as well. For example:

- Developing an interest in wildlife and nature and why it should be protected.
- Support those children who don't have this kind of exposure and put them on a more even playing field with those who do.
- Encouraging children to mix in different social groups.
- Better understand unfamiliar environments.

*I would like them to connect with nature and have an interest in preserving it and why we need to preserve it. . Teacher, LFSM, Slimbridge*

#### 4.7.5 Visit management

##### Mapping Report

Differences between HFSM and LFSM schools:

- No significant difference in the overall structure of the day [L] [SEP]
- No significant differences in the way teachers organise students or the general behaviour of [L] [SEP] students [L] [SEP]
- HFSM schools did spend slightly longer playing than LFSM schools [L] [SEP]
- One of the HFMS schools had greater mix of ethnic groups and [L] [SEP] backgrounds, but this made no notable difference in communication between students, [L] [SEP] helpers, teachers or WWT staff and volunteers on this occasion [L] [SEP]
- Adult helpers from LFSM schools were slightly more engaged with children, and used more of the sites interpretation and signs. However, the data here is not consistent enough to verify this as a trend. More likely that engagement with students is down to whether the adult helper is teacher/ TA or parent [L] [SEP]
- LFSM schools allowed students to lead more, and more input in to the planning and schedule of the visit.
- Pupils from HFSM schools are less likely to have visited either the WWT Centre or similar place
- Accompanying adults also less likely to have visited similar places

**Response to mapping findings:** The findings from the long-term research roughly align to the above with the exception of the final point, the long-term study did not observe this phenomena. The key difference was that in the long-term report adult helpers and teachers at some (but not all) HFSM schools spend more time disciplining pupils and generally ensuring their behaviour was acceptable. This may also be a consequence of the older ages of these children compared with those in the mapping research.

## 4.8 Impact of the visit day

### 4.8.1 Use of time

#### Mapping Report

The mapping report cited nearly half the time spent was observed to be on non-learning activities with large amounts of time spent walking around the site as well as logistical activities such as lunch, toilet breaks etc.

**Response to mapping findings:** The long-term research also observed similar issues, however prior to visiting teachers indicated that walking around was an important part of the experience and would be counted as self-learning along with pastoral value. Certainly from observation while walking pupils were interacting with, commenting on and reading about the birds they were passing. That said there were occasions when the accompanying adult (often a TA or parent) appeared lost and was rushing the pupils rather than letting them explore as the teacher envisaged. It was also noticeable that LFSM schools were less likely to allow a free rein and were more focused on achieving curriculum-based activities than HFSM schools. Having to pay and therefore more likely to have to justify the cost may be influencing factors here.

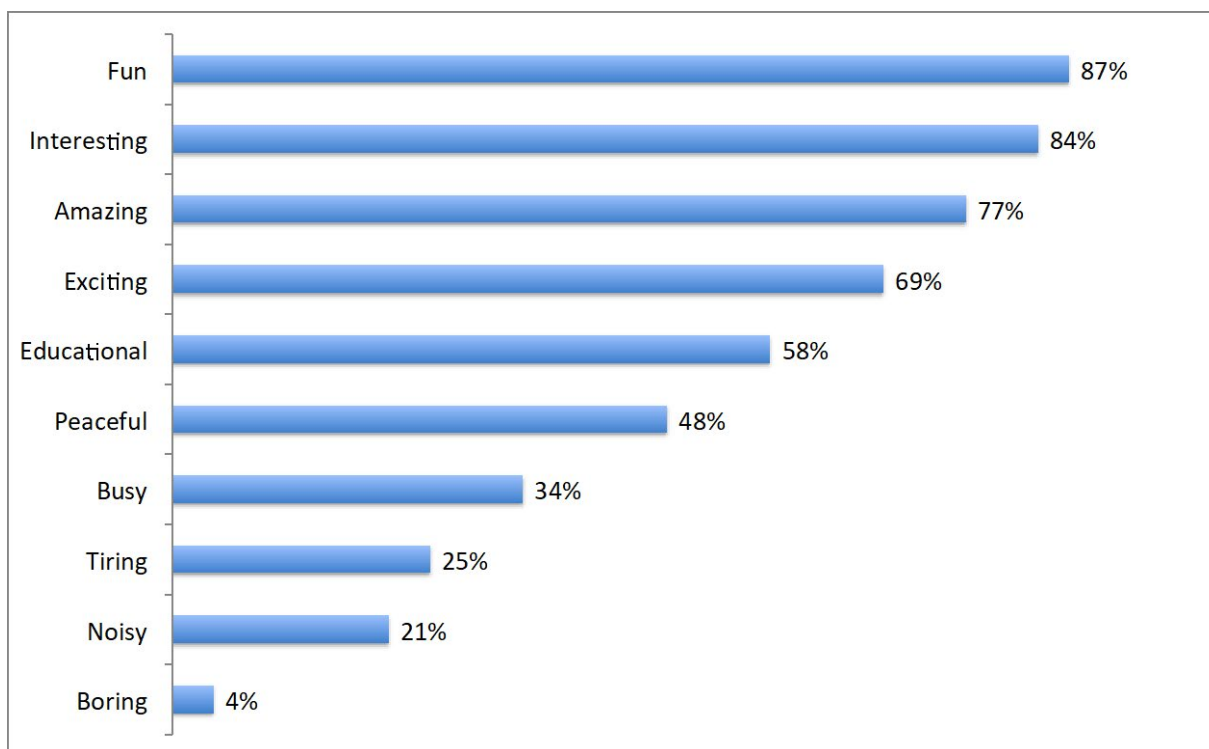
### 4.8.2 Previous visits

48 percent of pupils said this was the first time they had visited a place like the Wetlands Centre. A significantly higher proportion (54 percent) of pupils at HFSM schools said they hadn't visited a similar place before than those at LFSM (42 percent)

### 4.8.3 Enjoyment

On the day the overwhelming majority said the visit was fun, interesting and amazing. (See Chart 3 below)

**Chart 3. Words to describe their visit day (n=462)**



In the short-term (2 weeks later) a similar percentage still associated the visit with the words 'Fun' and 'Interesting'. What had decreased significantly were associations with the words 'Amazing' and 'Educational'. Despite this, even after 12 months most children still associated the visit with fun and interest, suggesting a memorable legacy. (See Table 13 below)

**Table 13. Words to describe the visit** (% response. No response due to option not being asked are shown as a dash)

	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
Fun	87%	88%	81%	78%
Boring	4%	4%	5%	5%
Interesting	84%	88%	85%	81%
Amazing	77%	14%	-	-
Educational	58%	10%	-	-
Tiring	25%	-	-	-
Noisy	21%	-	-	-
Exciting	69%	-	-	-
Peaceful	48%	-	-	-
Busy	34%	-	-	-

#### 4.8.4 Specific activities enjoyed

Aside from the universal enjoyment of the play areas (scoring 4.8 at all centres), the scores for specific elements of the visit varied between centres although for the three main centres in the study the level of enjoyment of the pond dipping was the same at 4.6. (See Table 14 below)

**Table 14. Specific activities they enjoyed** (Mean score out of five, where 5=enjoyed it a lot. No response due to option not being asked are shown as a dash. Highest scores in bold)

Activity	Overall	Slimbridge	London	Washington	Martin Mere
The pond dipping	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.9	4.6
Play area	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>	4.8
The Otters	4.6	4.6	4.3	4.5	<b>4.9</b>
Walking around looking at the birds	4.6	4.7	4.4	4.9	4.5
The hides	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.7	4.3
Wild Walk	4.5	-	3.7	-	4.7
The Discovery Centre	-	-	4.1	-	-
The Flamingo feed	-	-	-	4.5	-
Looking at amphibians	-	4.5	-	-	-
Back from the Brink	-	4.5	-	-	-
The Tropical House	-	4.6	-	-	-

#### 4.8.5 Learning impact

Feedback on the day of visit and in the short-term suggests that most children felt they had learnt something new about wildlife, wetlands and ponds.

**Table 15. Learning something new** (Mean score out of 5 where 5=agree very much)

Statement	Visit-day n=462	Short-term n=457
I learnt new things/something new about wildlife and wetlands	4.5	4.5

Observation and on the spot interviews suggest that overall children very much enjoyed their visit and learnt something new as result.

*This is the best trip I've been on in my whole life. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

*To see them in their habitat rather than just imagining them in your head, now we can remember it. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

#### 4.8.6 Specific visit elements: Pond dipping

##### Mapping Report

The majority of teachers were very happy with the quality of the led sessions. A small number of teachers felt that the session they had was not suited to the age group of the children or were not specific enough to what they had done in class.

**Response to mapping findings:** Likewise, the long-term research found that the led session, Pond dipping, was of good quality and addressed their learning requirements satisfactorily. While teachers felt that the session was well suited to the age of their pupils (they were KS2 rather than the KS1 observed in the mapping study) some felt that those more able pupils could have been given further tasks to keep them occupied while the less able completed theirs.

Pond dipping was the core directed learning component of the visit day and from both observation and subsequent feedback the children certainly enjoyed the sessions. The opportunity to 'go hunting' was appealing as was playing in water but there was also satisfaction and an element of competitiveness in seeing what they could find. Inevitably this led to some disappointment for those who only found very small creatures as compared with those who found fish or newts.

*I learnt about Lesser Water Boatman and the Greater Water Boatman. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*I thought it was quite exciting because you could see all the different animals that live in ponds. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*I never knew I could find a newt in a pond. And now I think I should stop my mum cleaning the loo because of the stuff that could ruin the nature. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*I enjoyed the pond dipping because I found lots of animals that lived in there. Pupil, LFSM, Slimbridge*

From observation two things impacted on the pond dipping; the weather and the classroom set up. In two cases the weather was very wet and cold, and this clearly affected the children's concentration and enjoyment. The classroom set up at Martin Mere is around tables, which lends itself far better to group activity than the rows of benches set up at the other two centres.

#### **4.8.7 Specific visit elements: Other highlights**

##### **Mapping Report**

Other highlights were feeding the birds and the otters, as well as dressing up as flamingos and using the play areas.

**Response to mapping findings:** As in the mapping study, the long-term research identified bird feeding and the otters as particular highlights, but also the Wild Walk (Martin Mere) and simply seeing the Flamingos. No doubt the pupils would have enjoyed dressing up, as Flamingos or anything else.

**Interaction with wildfowl:** There was a clear sense of nervous excitement around the bird life, particularly if they fed them. For many, being face to face with a swan or goose is a first time and scary experience. Taking part in such an experience gives a sense of pride and joy in what they feel they have achieved by being brave enough to be so close to wild animals without any barrier between them.

*The scariest part was when the Great Crane come flying at me and we ran. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*I never had a chance to feed any birds so today was my first chance. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

*What I've faced my fears on. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

*I wasn't expecting to go so close to the geese...it was quite scary. Pupil, HFSM, London*

Those children who outwardly demonstrate little or no interest in the idea of the visit were still moved by seeing chicks with their mothers, reflecting that fact that these are still children of 8-9 years old despite their bravado.

**Otters:** Those children that had the opportunity to see the otters awake and in some cases being fed were extremely taken with them.

*My favourite part was the Otters...when it was bouncing on the wall it looked like it was doing a back flip. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

**Wild Walk:** For children visiting Martin Mere, the Wild Walk also had a big impact, giving them a sense of adventure and discovery and a chance to get muddy.

*It was bit like an obstacle course...because it makes you feel like you're going on an adventure. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

#### **4.8.9 Impact: Pupil perspective**

Pupil feedback in the follow up discussions suggests the visit had a learning impact in a number of ways:

##### **Enjoyment**

Children enjoy school trips and the visit to the Wetlands centre was no exception. The Centres have the additional appeal of being outdoors where running and being loud is less of an issue, particularly when they have part of the day spent in a play area or in the case of Martin Mere, the Wild Walk.

##### **Awareness**

Many children understood that the Centre was there to help protect wildlife and the visit made it clearer what kind of wildlife was being protected. There was also a greater awareness around animal behaviour and how to interact with it, most noticeably when feeding the birds, but also from observation of behaviour while looking round the centre.

Additionally some children came to appreciate that Wetlands were a habitat for different animals and you don't adopt them they just come and live in the habitat there i.e. it's a natural habitat rather than a zoo or other controlled environment.

One of the biggest impacts was on visitors to the London centre who looked round the 'Down the drain' area. A number of children were clearly taken with the messages about what is flushed down the toilet or sink and after 2 weeks were still talking about it in horror and disgust but also fascination. This appears to be the only aspect of the visit days that children recognized as talking about environmental impact.

*Going down the plughole definitely made me feel differently. Pupil, LFSM, London*

*Use half less cleaning products, and my Mum starting using less. Pupil, HFSM, London*

### **Knowledge**

Pupils were able to recall the names of many of the wildfowl they had seen along with the creatures identified in the pond dipping two weeks after their visit although this recall had somewhat faded after 6 and 12 months. They were also able to recall aspects of behaviour by the animals they saw including the wildfowl, pond creatures and in some cases, the otters and non-native birds.

*I knew a lot about nature but now I know a bit more. Pupil, LFSM, London*

*I thought that (a duck fight) hilarious and shocking at the same time. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*My favourite part was when we were seeing the Flamingos because they looked like they were really good at balancing. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

### **Skills**

For many the trip is about confidence building, to feel able to approach and feed birds is a big departure from the norm for many of the children in the study. On a more obvious level and of value to teachers is the ability to identify and recognise animals using either the key cards or spotter sheets, looking for characteristics and matching them to the descriptions. It is noteworthy that most children didn't see pond dipping as a skill but after 6 and 12-months many were able to describe how to do it and what you shouldn't do as well.



## Attitudes

In every school there were one or two children in the 6 and 12-month follow up who appear genuinely to have had a change of attitude towards wildlife and nature claiming that they now felt much more positive towards it than before their visit. In part this is about overcoming a fear of the unknown.

*I didn't like wildlife before because I didn't know what they do but once I'd seen them I knew what they could do and I want to learn more about them.* Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere

*I want them to understand what nature's really like...I want to start looking after nature a bit more.* Pupil, HFSM, London

Additionally, some better understood the idea of local wildlife rather than just the exotic, although this was certainly a minority.

*Since Martin Mere I've been more into local animals to discover [as opposed to global wildlife like lions]* Pupil, LFSM, Martin Mere

For most, attitudes outwardly remain unchanged, a minority said they've always liked wildlife, for most it was a fun day out but denied any change of feelings about wildlife.

*It was interesting but it didn't make me feel any different about wildlife.* Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere

For a few, their distaste for the 'great outdoors' had not been altered.

*I'm not the kind of girl who does dirty stuff.* Pupil, HFSM, London

### 4.8.9 Short-term learning impact: Teacher perspective

Teachers were clear about what learning outcomes were achieved by their pupils.

#### Awareness

- Of human impact on nature via 'Down the plughole'.
- That such very different places exist quite close to where the children live.
- That unknown animals can and do wander freely outside of cages.
- What British wildlife means.

## Knowledge

- What creatures live in a pond.
- Animal habits and behaviour.
- Exposure to creatures they haven't seen before.

*Everywhere they went there were very different looking birds.* Teacher, HFSM, London

## Skills

- Investigation using keys and samples found via pond dipping

*We will use keys in science to identify animals and hopefully they'll link that back to what they did.* Teacher, LFSM, London

- Fieldwork based science.

*The kids got to experience something quite different to what they usually do...much better science work than if we'd been trying to do it in the playground...particularly the pond dipping.* Teacher, LFSM, London

## Attitudes

As one teacher pointed out it is hard to isolate changes in attitudes as they are seen to be changing constantly among children at this stage of life. However teachers felt that the visit could act as a catalyst for some children to develop an interest in wildlife, but were not surprised that this wasn't something all children were interested in. For those children who were interested, teachers said it was the school's and parent's responsibility to build on what the visit might have sparked off. Integrating nature and wildlife into the school day is seen as better long-term approach to embedding changes in attitudes.

*Something more to do with their world rather than just a separate trip.*  
Teacher, LFSM, Slimbridge

One teacher believed that the only way to address attitudes to habitat and conservation is to have a session that explicitly addresses this topic. His idea was to have a second led session that focuses on habitat protection and conservation. If there are sessions with very clear outcomes the children are going to take away a lot of learning from them. Environmental issues and British values (of which conservation is one) are in the curriculum so this kind of session would be of benefit (for geography and PHSE/Citizenship). He felt that while The Wetlands Centres had been specifically created to conserve and promote wildlife this did not come across on the pond dipping led visit days.

A further desired outcome for teachers, and one that is realised on the visit, is exposing children to real jobs that may inspire them when thinking about their futures. Seeing people work with animals is a good example for children who wouldn't otherwise be exposed to such work places.

*What I like about Martin Mere is that this is somebody's job and we can put the science in some real life context.* Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere

Overall while teachers clearly believe in the value of such visits (otherwise they wouldn't take children on them) they are clear that a single visit can only have so much impact, usually acting as a spark that needs to be supported at school or home, or a reflection of an existing interest, rather than creating a lasting change on its own.

*I don't think one trip on its own is going to change children's views...changing someone's attitude in one sitting isn't going to happen.* Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere

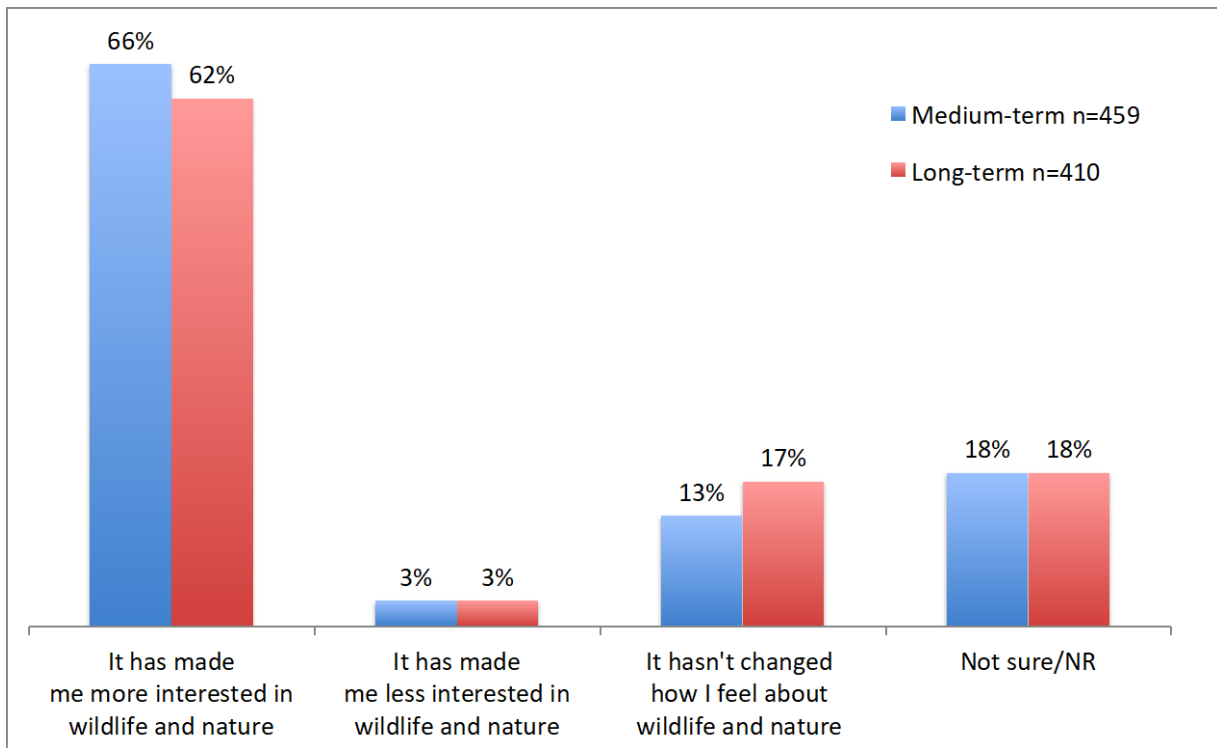
This makes legacy all the more important, making follow up in school is critical to ensure that the learning is embedded and reinforced or something tangible to take the messages back home.

*Would be nice to take something home – a booklet or leaflet – for the children and to inspire parents for repeat visits and stimulate conversation at home.* Teacher, HFSM, Martin Mere

#### 4.8.10 Impact on attitudes

In the medium-term, after 6 months, the majority (66 percent) of children feel the visit made them more interested in wildlife and nature and even after 12 months, nearly as many (62 percent) still feel the same. (See Chart 4 below)

**Chart 4. Attitudes towards wildlife and nature** (% response)



After 6 months this impact is similar between children from HFSM and LFSM schools. However after 12 months a gap in response appears to have opened up with just over half (56 percent) of those from HFSM schools saying they were more interested versus nearly two thirds (67 percent) of those from LFMS schools. (See Table 16 below)

**Table 16. Attitudes towards wildlife and nature** (% response)

Statement	HFSM		LFSM	
	Medium-term n=199	Long-term n=189	Medium-term n=260	Long-term n=221
It has made me more interested in wildlife and nature	67%	56%	66%	67%
It has made me less interested in wildlife and nature	4%	4%	2%	2%
It hasn't changed how I feel about wildlife and nature	12%	20%	14%	14%
Not sure/NR	19%	22%	19%	16%

#### 4.8.11 Impact on actions

Three quarters (74 percent) of children said on the day of their visit they would like to return to the WWT Centre soon although only half said they would tell others to visit.

54 percent were inspired sufficiently to say they wanted to find out more about wildlife and wetlands. This rose to 60 percent among children from HFSM schools, versus 50 percent among those from LFSM schools.

Qualitative feedback suggests that actions resulting from the visit appear limited and patchy. Many of the children said they would be more careful about animals in the future. In many cases children said they fed birds and animals in their garden or had built a bugs hotel, but this seems to be less driven by their visit than more general activity they were doing anyway. There were exceptions, where further activity does appear to have been inspired by their visit.

*I got a book about hedgehogs and I'm starting to make a home for hedgehogs in my garden. Pupil, LFSM, London*

*We went to the fox talk, the otter talk to help with my presentation on otters...red squirrel talk...we were there for pretty much every talk. Pupil, LFSM, London*

*We've done some stuff at home...to save the pond life...in our back garden. My Mum said shall we do more about helping wildlife. Pupil, LFSM, London*

*Before I watched TV but now I go to the park to see the animals. It has so much wildlife you can enjoy. Pupil, HFMS, London*

This suggests that the combination of the visit, parental interest and physical and financial opportunity all help to develop an interest and legacy.

In other schools some did tell their parents that they should be careful what they put down the sink, a response driven by what some had seen at the London Centre.

Across all schools there were pupils in the study who had re-visited a Wetlands Centre with family, in part because of their enthusiasm result from the school trip.

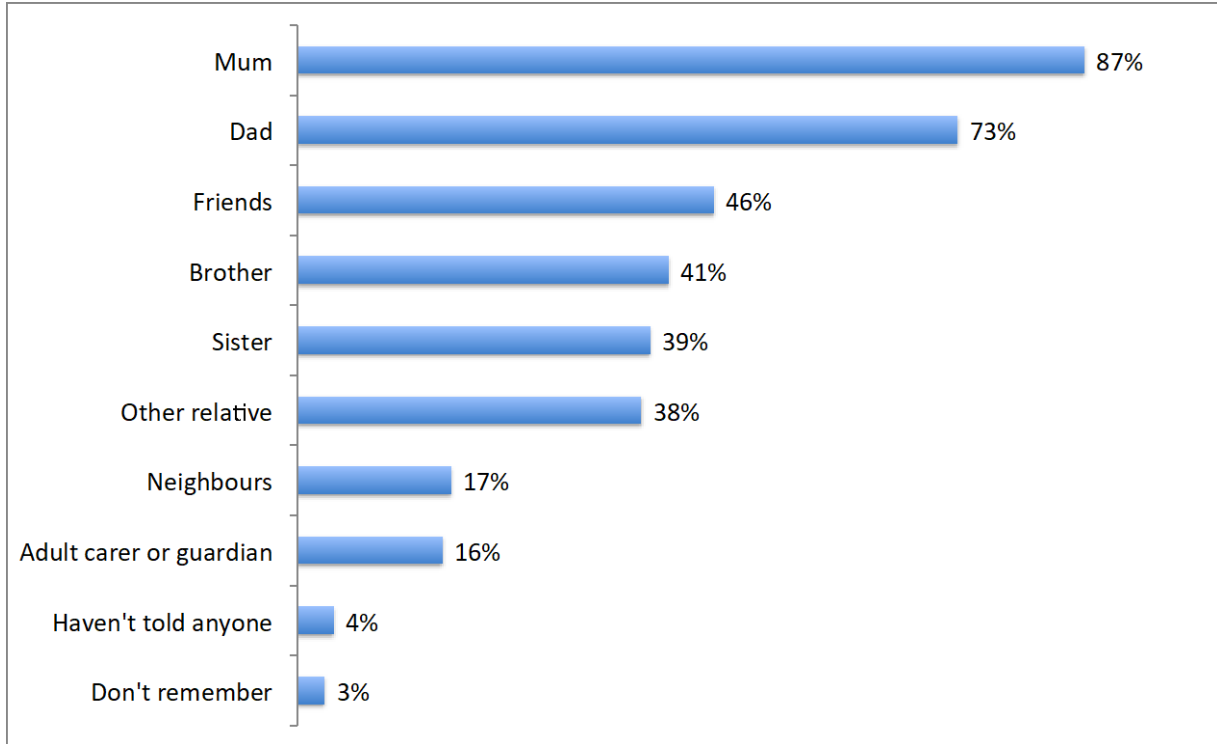
#### **4.8.12 Sharing**

Most children (85 percent) both planned to and did tell someone outside of school about their experience, with their Mum being the most likely person (87 percent) followed somewhat behind by their Dad (73 percent).

**Table 17. Sharing the experience** (% response agreeing)

Statement	Short-term % n=462
I will tell my family about the visit when I get home	85%

**Chart 5. Who did you tell about your visit to the Wetlands Centre? (% response n=385)**



## 4.9 Future recall

Two weeks after their visit virtually all children (97 percent) said they remembered their trip. This dropped to 91 percent after 6 months but remained at this same level (91 percent) after 12 months.

**Table 18. Do you remember your school trip to the Wetlands Centre (% YES response)**

	Short-term n=457	Medium term n=459	Long term n=410
Do you remember your school trip to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre where you did pond dipping? (All)	97%	91%	91%
Yes, I remember a lot about it	n/a	43%	43%
Yes, I remember a bit about it	n/a	48%	48%
No, I don't remember it/ NR/Didn't go on trip	n/a	9%	10%

Recall after 6 months appears to be partly influenced by related activity conducted at school. 13 percent of children who didn't do any related follow up activity at school said they didn't remember the trip versus 7 percent of those who did do school follow up.

After **2 weeks** all children were able to recount their visit in some detail, including names of the birds and other animals they saw, along with aspects of their behaviour experienced.

After **6 and 12 months** recall had become patchier but by and large most children recalled many elements of their visit day; feeding the wildfowl, otters, flamingos, play area as well as elements of animal behaviour.

*We had the bird spotting sheets and we saw Herons. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*When you touch the birds, the little ones, the mothers are going to get angry. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*All the creatures that live in the pond and how they live. Pupil, HFMS, Martin Mere*

*Watching the otter jumping into the water and trying to climb up the window. Pupil, HFMS, Martin Mere*

Pond dipping was spontaneously mentioned in some cases but in most was only recalled after prompting. That said, once reminded of it children seemed able to recount what they did in some detail.

*I caught a female newt, I know because it said on the little card they gave me, if it has spots on its belly then it's female. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*I learnt how to look after the creatures, because with pond dipping we could just dip our hands in, we had to do it with a net and put them in a tray. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

Teachers strongly believed that how much the children recall is determined by further exposure to the topic or visit once back at school. Ideally the topic needs to be covered after the visit, failing that there needs to be some visible legacy (e.g. a photo montage or visit book). In the case of Clapham Manor (London) both had happened and engagement and recall were noticeably higher than Millponds (Slimbridge) where the trip had been a one off and no pre or post related activity had taken place. At St Oswalds (Martin Mere) the sponsoring of an otter provided a regular reminder of the visit.



## 4.10 Follow up activity

In most schools some level of follow up activity had taken place since the visit with just under a half (48 percent) of children saying they had done something in school in the short-term (2 weeks after the visit). After 12 months 5 percent of children claimed to have subsequently been on a related visit with their family since their wetlands trip and 19 percent said they'd been back to a WWT Wetlands Centre. (See Table 19 below)

**Table 19. Questions on further activity after the visit** (% YES response)

	Short-term n=457	Medium-term n=459	Long-term n=410
Have you done anything about wetlands at school since your visit?	48%	47%	n/a
Have you been back to the Wetlands Centre since the school trip?	10%	16%	19%
Have you visited other wildlife places with your family since the school trip to the Wetlands Centre?	38%	55%	55%

Nearly twice as many children from HFSM schools said they'd returned to the Wetlands Centre since their visit within 2 weeks as children from LFSM schools (15 versus 7 percent). Further, 45 percent of children attending HFSM schools said they'd visited other wildlife places with their family within 2 weeks of their trip, compared with 33 percent of LFMS school children.

Even after 12 months the percentage claiming to have revisited a Wetlands Centre was higher for children at HFSM schools than those at LFSM schools (22 versus 16 percent). However children from LFSM schools were more likely to have visited wildlife places in general. This may suggest that children's enthusiasm had led to return visits but not a more general change in family or parental attitudes to similar visits. This could represent an opportunity to WWT in future visitor numbers.

Again, follow up activity at school may have an impact on subsequent visits to Wetlands Centres; 20 percent of those who had done follow up said they'd been back since their school visit in the 12 months after, as compared with none of those who hadn't done follow up activities.

#### 4.10.1 Teacher perspective: Short-term follow up

##### Mapping Report

How teachers followed up the visit back in class:

- Children making their own mini-beasts or animal and then describing what type of habitat it would have [L][SEP]
- Used poster of birds you can see in different seasons provided by WWT. Used as a reference to remember names of animals [L][SEP]
- Made bugs and mini-beasts out of play dough [L][SEP]
- Read Toad in the Hole story and linked to characters [L][SEP]
- Visited pond at school to see if remember animals [L][SEP]
- Home learning- put a caption under a picture [L][SEP]
- Made a WWT display in public area of school or a model [L][SEP] riverbank in the classroom. [L][SEP]

**Response to mapping findings:** All except one school in the qualitative study had planned their visit to a Wetlands Centre around work they were doing at school. Most immediately followed up their visit asking the pupils to write about their experience, often as a piece of persuasive writing. Other activities included...

- Photomontage of the visit
- A written piece on their visit experience
- Explored local habitat
- Compared WWT to local habitat
- Written letters to WWT
- Worked on classification
- Persuasive writing piece on why people should visit a WWT Centre
- Using key cards to identify characteristics

The activities arising from the visit identified in the Mapping Report appear to be rather more creative, but this is probably a reflection of the lower age group and different curriculum requirements.

#### 4.10.2 Medium and long-term follow-up: Pupil perspective

Related activity outside of school after 6 months has been limited but not noticeable less after 12 months. Some children said they were doing things to help wildlife, for example feeding or creating homes for them, but not significantly more than before their Wetland visit. A number of schools were pursuing more outdoor learning practices such as developing wildlife areas, conducting class sessions in the playground or running hands on science experiments, for example, filtration using the school pond and pond dipping itself.

As in earlier feedback those who are already committed to wildlife continue to be so, but for the majority there is little change.

*It made no difference because I'm the guy who normally sits in his garden with his binoculars at night. Pupil, HFSM, London*

Again, having access to or a family interest in wildlife and nature can help sustain interest and engagement with the boarder topic if not wetlands specifically.

*I've always been interested in wildlife because of my family, my grandma lives near a reservoir. Pupil, LFSM, Martin Mere*

*My family's been interested in wildlife for ages. Pupil, LFSM, Martin Mere*

However there are a handful of children across all schools that have been inspired to feel differently and in some cases to take further steps as a result of their visit.

*Before I went on the trip to the Wetlands Centre I didn't really care that much but after seeing all the pretty things that nature holds it made me have a bit more understanding about nature. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*Rushing around destroying habits is something I now try not to do, like when I go to the Spinney. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*If I had done that survey two years ago I would have said boring and stuff but I really like nature now I put stuff like interesting and pretty. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*After that I turned a little bit interested in animals and then we went to Slimbridge, I now want to be with animals, I've never done so much with wildlife. Pupil, HFSM, Slimbridge*

*Martin Mere has really changed my opinion about wildlife...started going on forest walks and going up mountains and things. Pupil, LFSM, Martin Mere*

One wanted to work there while another wanted to be a teacher and take their class there.

*I'd like to bring all my kids there. Pupil, HFSM, London*

*I want to work in the Wetland Centre, honestly...feeding all the animals, so fun. Pupil, HFSM, London*

### **Outdoor Play**

As part of our exploration of what barriers might exist to children spending more time interacting with wildlife and nature, we asked them what restrictions they had concerning outdoor play. Virtually all said they had some restrictions due to dangers associated with traffic and 'stranger danger'.

These restrictions varied between schools and between pupils. In more built up urban areas the dangers of traffic were often referenced with some children not being allowed out of their house or flat at all with their parents. In more suburban and rural locations many were allowed to visit the park, nature reserve or other open areas (such as fields) if accompanied by older siblings, relatives or occasionally, friends. In far fewer cases children were allowed out on their own within certain defined boundaries i.e. down to the shops and back. At the other end of the spectrum one wasn't even allowed in her own garden due to a dispute with the neighbours.

*... 'I've got lots of boundaries...but we've got a woodland behind my house that me and my friends go to.'*

*'I'm not allowed to play out my parents are over protective.'*

By and large children this age 9-10, were still keen to play outdoors when they can, particularly in the summer months, it was not deemed to be something only younger children would want to do. Judging by some of the feedback, those who were able to do this had interacted with nature by playing in ponds and rivers, ranging across fields and playing in the park.

#### **4.10.3 Medium and long-term follow-up: Teacher perspective**

Teachers reported limited spontaneous references back to the visit by their pupils in the medium (6-months after the visit) or long term (12 months after the visit).

*It's not something that gets explicitly mentioned. Teacher, Slimbridge.*

Most references occur when covering related topics such as habitats, or when many pupils had been doing the rivers topic during the summer 2017 term. While such a topic might present a good opportunity for the teacher to reference the wetlands trip, few did because they themselves weren't in a position to do so.

At the same time most teachers didn't make a point of referring back to the trip, primarily because they didn't go themselves (as they were the 'new' teacher of the class).

Those pupils more likely to make references tended to be engaged in some way with the topic, in particular if they belong to a gardening or similar outdoor related club.

Unfortunately such clubs appear to be only available in some schools and even here, their continuity patchy, depending on the enthusiasm of a particular teacher or parent.

More broadly teachers suggested that parents and families also had a role to play, as highlighted previously, activity at home can create and develop a child's interest in wildlife and nature on a long term and sustainable basis because it doesn't have to be determined by the curriculum. If parents are not interested however, then their children stand less chance of being interested too. Linked to the school trip, at least one teacher felt that however much enthusiasm the child brings home after their trip, if the parents don't respond positively, that enthusiasm can quickly wane.

*If your parents don't care it's quite hard to change. Teacher, London*

## 4.11 Influencing factors on the impact of the experience

### Mapping Report

Influencing factors that affect the impact or value of the experience:

- Teachers preparation [L]  
[SEP]
- Teachers input in to the organisation (lead teacher or other teacher)
- Motivation for the visit [L]  
[SEP]
- Perceived impact or benefit [L]  
[SEP]
- The way each individual experience is framed [L]  
[SEP]
- Accompanying adults [L]  
[SEP]
- Children's exposure to nature at other times [L]  
[SEP]

**Response to mapping findings:** The long-term research certainly supports the above-identified influencing factors that affect the impact of the visit experience. Additional factors that should also be included would be; level of follow up work back at school and family responses to the visit and any follow up they might instigate.

### 4.11.1 Why do some children feel differently as a result of visiting a WWT Centre?

During the final 12-month follow-up focus groups we asked pupils why they felt some children experienced a change in attitude towards wildlife and nature and why others did not. They were sanguine about this, saying that for those already interested it wouldn't make much of a difference.

*Some might have already thought really well about wildlife so it hasn't made much of an impact. Pupil, LFSM, Martin Mere*

Among those who were not previously interested, some would continue to be disinterested because they really preferred other things; sport, history, technology for example

*I like plants and nature but some people might be fascinated by other stuff...like technology. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

But some it was felt would change because the experience was new and opened their eyes to something they hadn't previously experienced.

## 4.12 Differentiating schools

### Mapping Report

The most influential factors that will help differentiate categories of schools visits are:

- Learning outcomes (KS level, what areas of the New National Curriculum the visit is covering, and what supporting work the class is doing in lessons) [L] [SEP]
- Teachers experience (have they visited WWT centre before, experience in managing out of school visits) [L] [SEP]
- Context to visit (start or end of topic, or 'treat') [L] [SEP]
- Management ethos of the school – for example, organisational culture, management [L] [SEP] attitude towards learning outside the classroom etc. [L] [SEP]

**Response to mapping findings:** The Mapping study identified a number of potential variables to differentiate schools that might subsequently help WWT tailor their offer better to individual school needs. The findings of the long-term research would concur with these factors but would also add the socio-economic environment and catchment of the school along with current relevant initiatives at the school, for example aiming for Forest school status, science week etc. Individual initiatives by teachers can also have a big influence, for example at one school in the long-term study, there was a science coordinator who organised for all classes to visit a WWT Centre, something that wasn't repeated the following year as she had changed roles in the meantime.

*Science has really dropped off; it's still taught as a subject but you need someone to really push it as a subject...I couldn't even tell you who's in charge of science anymore. Teacher, Martin Mere*

## 4.13 Creating long-term impact

### Mapping Report

The mapping report identified the following actions WWT could take if it wishes to engender a long-term impact of a visit on pupils:

- WWT should consider offering support and help to teachers after their visit to ensure maximum impact and benefit.
- WWT should redirect teachers back to the website and relevant information at the end of their visit and/or in the days following.
- Teachers are happy to send students home with further information, but it is WWT's responsibility to ensure this is engaging and encourages more long-term impacts.

**Response to mapping findings:** The above findings concur strongly with those from the long-term study that without teacher input any long-term impact is going to be down to the home and neighbourhood environment of the pupils, and where a poor social and environmental infrastructure exist further engagement with wildlife and nature is less likely to occur.

However the long-term research identified that teachers are very much focused on the short-term curriculum objectives when organising visits and while further resources may be used, there is a high chance they will not be. So yes, WWT should provide opportunities for teachers to further pupil engagement either at school or home, but pressures of the school year and curriculum may mean such follow up does not occur.

Therefore WWT may need to think of ways of directly working with pupils and their families. Possibly the most direct opportunity is a free family ticket to encourage a repeat visit, at which point further engagement and potentially longer-term relationships can be developed.

### 4.13.1 Creating long-term impact: Teacher feedback

Teachers were positive about the idea of WWT supporting a longer-term approach to the impact on pupils and primarily saw this as resources being shared with schools, along with school visit and a regular stream of communication about what WWT is doing and how schools could get involved with this activity. The idea of drip-feeding to keep topping up the topic was cited as a way of retaining teacher awareness of what WWT has to offer in terms of curriculum support. One teacher pointed out that giving pupils ideas to put into action was part of their philosophy and suggested that WWT could do this and the school would support it.



Teachers believed that WWT needed to be more in tune with the changing curriculum as pupils work through school – and have the visit packages and online and actual resources that schools can use or take up. E.g. habitats, rivers, pollination, food chains. Non visit based options are important as cost for trips is high and schools are very unlikely to take the same class back to the same place but not surprisingly visits from WWT would be appreciated. That said at least one teacher acknowledged that while useful it would defeat the object of a visit if it were instead of, rather than in addition to.

*If they could bring stuff to us instead of us going to them...which kind of defeats the object... Teacher, Martin Mere*

More than one teacher suggested anything that poses a question to pupils, either related to their visit such as ‘we have a problem, we need your help’ to visiting pupils and in turn they write back with their solutions or; curriculum related for other related topics e.g. what kinds of things live in different environments such as rivers in the UK and abroad, and at different stages in the river. Another suggestion was creating fact files that can count towards pupil’s reading record.

A final suggestion was to have a continuing and related programme of follow up that tracks the curriculum as pupils move from Y4 to Y5, would help the key messages to be returned to across a number of topics covered during KS2.

**The value of more than one led session:** Only one school took part in more than one led session, and the teacher believed this added considerable benefit to the pupils in instilling learning about the topics covered. Consequently he believed this was helpful in creating a more lasting impact.

#### **4.13.2 Creating long-term impact: Pupil feedback**

Pupils across all schools had a range of suggested actions that WWT and schools could do to instil long-term impact. Suggestions as to what **WWT** could do included:

- Better publicity of WWT does
- Small, affiliated Wetland Centres, or sponsored areas in local parks.

*I don’t see any Martin Mere adverts on the TV. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

*Maybe somewhere set up like Martin Mere in a park or somewhere for people who can’t afford to go to Martin Mere. Pupil, HFSM, Martin Mere*

- Bring animals to the school
- Online holiday club to make bug houses and other wildlife habitats
- Animals to pet

- Creatures to take home
- Run a treasure hunt to identify animals like Pokémon Go
- Named animals so the publicity and marketing could follow their story, providing a more personal connection with the birds.

*Tell you if they rescued animals and what happened to them and how they cared from them. Pupil, HFSM, London*

- Provide free entry for children, but also have additional paid for elements such as shows like the otters.
- A card game that is related to nature and wildlife – based on Dobble.
- Branded goods that raises the profile of Slimbridge such as a key ring to hang on your school bag.
- Train birds to entertain visitors (something already being planned).
- A tour guide – to reassure children that the birds won't hurt them
- A way of children helping out – young volunteers
- An easy way to display information about the birds via digital tagging via a mobile phone or tablet.
- A pack of cards you could carry around that describe each bird, what to feed them, what they look like – like Top Trumps, that could be used at WWT Centres or back at home
- Materials for children and parents telling them what they can or could do to help protect wildlife – (exactly the same as the BBC Do one thing! Breathing Places campaign)

*Give out some leaflets inspiring us to do something, like persuasive writing...when you read it, it might persuade you. Pupil, HFSM, London*

Suggestions what **schools** could do included:

- Allow children into surrounding fields and woods
- Animal or wildlife clubs
- Create more wildlife areas around the school grounds