

Wild Things

Evaluation summary

WILD THINGS



Project partners



The Institute for
Research in Schools



About the project

The Wild Things research project offers students the chance to explore biodiversity in their local area and come up with ways to support and improve its health. Whether it's encouraging new species of birds or planting friendly flora, their work could have an immediate impact on their school grounds or local area. Students' findings will also contribute to scientists' understanding of how to better conserve local biodiversity and ensure that wildlife thrives through habitat restoration and sustainable management.

Through the project, students learn practical habitat surveying techniques, used by ecologists, to carry out their own research and find solutions to support and improve local biodiversity health. Wild Things has been designed to be accessible to students of varying ages and interests. Wild Things is a collaboration between IRIS and Pembroke College, University of Oxford.

Student registrations

The project attracted a higher proportion of younger students than average (27%) for IRIS research projects.

	24-25
Number	82
Post-16	37%
Female	55%

Aims

The IRIS evaluation was based on the aims of the project, which are to enable students to:

- learn about biodiversity beyond the curriculum
- develop research skills in surveying methodologies and learn to apply appropriate techniques to study habitats
- become familiar with the key issues regarding biodiversity decline and how to protect habitats
- appreciate how biologists work collaboratively to solve the big challenges facing our natural environment

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IRIS also evaluated the structure of the project, the appropriacy of the supporting resources and how the schools approached and ran the project.

Methodology

Data on the running and impact of the project was gathered from surveys and interviews.

Item	No of responses
IRIS pre-participation survey	73 students; eight teachers
IRIS post-participation survey	34 students; four teachers
Additional questions	26 students
Teacher interviews	Two teachers
Student interviews	24 students from one school and one college

Impact on students

Teachers told us that this project supported students to:

- Have a greater understanding of the real-world applications of STEM
- Have a greater interest in STEM beyond the curriculum
- Develop important transferable skills including leadership and teamwork

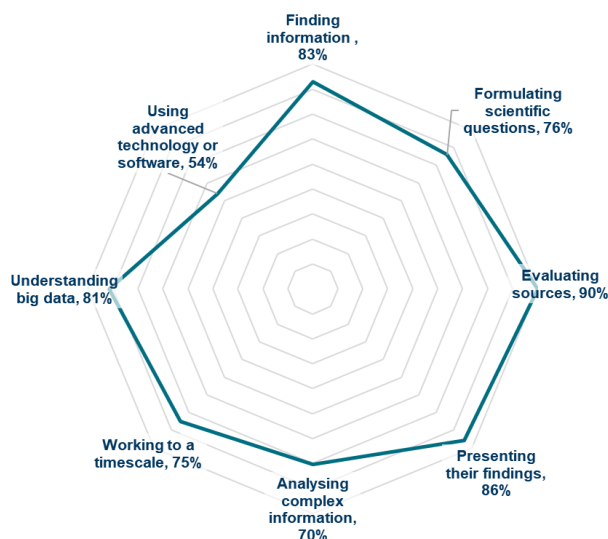
Impact on students' skills development

The project enabled students to develop a wide range of skills, equipping them with valuable abilities for future academic and personal success.

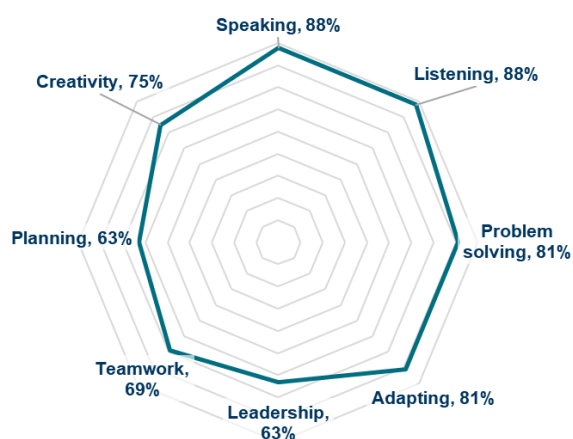
87% of students agreed that they developed important skills that will help them in the future.

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Through the project, students agreed that they had improved their research skills...



...and their transferable skills



Evaluation Summary

“It was a unique experience that I don't usually do at school. I found it really interesting and thought it gave me lots of useful skills.”

Year 10, female student

“The skills you gain are extremely useful and you build friendships along the way. The project may seem like a lot of work but when divided between individuals in your group it makes it much more manageable.”

Year 12, female student

“It has been challenging to work to deadline however it has been rewarding to increase my knowledge and gain transferable skills.”

Year 12, female student

“It was fascinating and gave me a much broader knowledge of STEM than school provides. It is a useful experience that can help you to build a multitude of skills.”

Year 10, female student

“It was amazing to work with people I usually wouldn't, and it gave me a unique perspective.”

Year 8, student

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Impact on students' knowledge of biodiversity and research

The project deepened students' interest in, and knowledge of, biodiversity. Students...

92% ...feel more knowledgeable about biodiversity

57% ...expressed an interest in getting involved with biodiversity in their local area

The project had helped students to feel more positive about STEM and biodiversity. Students...

90% ...now know how STEM can make a difference in the real world

68% ...feel hopeful about the future for biodiversity

The project made students feel more positive about scientific research. Students believe that...

97% ...I can make a valuable contribution to research

90% ...success in STEM is a team effort

"I enjoyed it way more than I expected. Learning about it has definitely fuelled my love for science."

Year 8, student

"Knowing more about the subject makes me care more about biodiversity."

Year 10, student

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Future career impact

The project helped students to explore new areas of science and opened their eyes to possible future careers. Students agree they...

93% ...know about a range of different STEM careers

70% ...feel more knowledgeable about jobs in biodiversity

87% ...better understanding what it might be like to study STEM at a higher level

73% ...are more interested in studying a subject related to biodiversity

"It is an amazing experience and helps decide your future career."

Year 7, male student

"Research has helped me find out more and see how people working in biodiversity do their day-to-day research."

Year 12, female student

97% of students rated their experience as 'good' or 'very good'.

100% of teachers felt the project had increased the science capital of their students.

Science capital refers to all the science-related knowledge, attitudes, experiences and resources that a person accumulates throughout their life. It is made up of things like going on trips to museums, knowing people who work in scientific professions and participating in extracurricular science activities.

Impact on teachers

Teachers expressed enjoyment from delivering the project. The project was recognised as inclusive and had successfully engaged a broad age range and interest level of students.

The project had broadened students' understanding of the scope of STEM and demonstrated how their skills could be applied across diverse contexts and career pathways.

Teachers found that running the project helped them to...

100%	...communicate the excitement of STEM to my students
100%	...enrich their working relationships with my students
100%	...make curriculum links to real world applications
100%	...increase their enjoyment of teaching

“[It has made] me consider how to extend and include research into planning A-level delivery.”

Teacher

“We've seen [students] actually developing some useful social skills as well as the overall learning about research and the impact that it can have. Because it is broad, because you can do it with small groups, because you can allow students to have a bit of free reign over which way they want to go... It was a really natural skill development, which I thought was really, really impressive.”

Teacher

“A great way to work beyond curriculum and with students who aren't studying my A-level subject.”

Teacher



PEMBROKE
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