

BIODIVERSITY

Communications Toolkit

Young people

Who are they?

For our purposes, young people are defined as any person from age 5 to age 17. Young people are an important biodiversity audience both now and in the future. By engaging with them today it is hoped the biodiversity message will be inherited by the next generation and so on.

What messages work?

Research tells us that young people agree biodiversity is important, however interest tends to wane as young people enter their mid-teens, so engaging with young people as early as possible is vital.

Messages to consider include:

- We are all part of Scotland's incredible variety of living things – the animals and plants that exist everywhere around us. This is our biodiversity. It is fragile and shrinking but we can all help to protect it.
- Scotland's biodiversity helps us with many areas of our lives and ensures we live healthy lives.
- Animals and plants are all around us and the outdoors offers lots of things to enjoy, as well as the opportunity to learn more about the country we live in.
- Doing just one simple thing can help nature survive and grow: we can all make a difference.

How do you reach them?

Young people are traditionally a difficult group to reach. Therefore, additional avenues have to be utilised to communicate with them.

Here are some suggestions to help your organisation communicate with young people:

- If your budget allows, consider advertising, sponsorship or endorsement opportunities on cartoons; children's television; TV soaps (selective advertising or sponsorship); games; music; magazines (children's, teenage, fashion, music, computer games).
- A local celebrity endorsement can give your message credibility and provide a newsworthy hook.
- Get young people talking about biodiversity through social networking websites like Bebo and MySpace; viral marketing campaigns via text and e-mails; instant messaging services like MSN and video websites like YouTube.
- Host a local event, like a fun day at the local park to find different species and habitats. Make this a day for the whole family, with games; competitions; displays and demonstrations.
- Work with youth organisations like The Girls Brigade in Scotland, The Scouts and Girl Guiding UK. They regularly enjoy outdoor trips, so give them information on activities helping them conserve and enjoy Scotland's biodiversity. You could also suggest carrying information and reciprocal links on their websites. Develop national biodiversity campaigns and projects together, for example plant trees in local spaces or create a community garden.
- Target other youth organisations like Young Scot and Dialogue Youth.

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- Get involved with summer festivals like T in the Park and Live at Loch Lomond, which are traditionally held in rural spaces. Distribute information on local species and habitats, and steps people can take during the festival to ensure they don't damage biodiversity. There may also be opportunity to get artists involved in communicating messages. Ask the Events Manager.

You could also develop relationships with event organisers and encourage them to develop more carbon neutral events, make more use of local produce and reduce their waste. T in the Park has already made moves towards this by encouraging music fans to re-use their plastic cups.

- Engage with local schools. For example, launch a competition for pupils to develop slogans or produce posters on biodiversity themes, with winning entries displayed in the school, and in local hubs like libraries and community centres. Ask local press and radio stations to cover the competition.
- Word of mouth marketing is an effective way of engaging with young people. It works by identifying biodiversity 'Ambassadors' - carers and doers who encourage others to get involved.
- The Sunday Herald's youth supplement 'Fresh' is aimed at teenagers in Scotland. Talk to the editor about feature ideas that will illustrate what teenagers are already doing to help and how others can get involved.

Background Information

- 10-17 year olds place fun and leisure activities before the natural heritage, which comes much lower down their list of priorities.
- In terms of using the natural heritage, leisure, health and relaxation are by far the main choices, with young people also citing more sports and being with friends and family. It is clear that they mainly use the 'space' of the natural heritage to facilitate other activities, rather than being 'involved' in the natural heritage specifically.
- It is clear that for 10-17 year olds the importance of the natural environment appears to drop with age, particularly from S2 upwards.
- Four in 10 young people aged 10 to 17 are actively involved in the countryside. Again, the number drops as the age increases and again there is very little difference between girls and boys.
- Almost 9 in 10 of 5-9 year olds say they help to look after the countryside. There is no real trend amongst the different age groups or gender.
- 10-17 year olds, as with adults, start their current priority list with their education, but then state being with friends and family as their next priority. Healthy eating and playing sports, as priorities three and four, would tend to suggest these young people also prioritise their own health and well-being.
- School appears to be the main priority of 5 to 9 year olds, as it is for their slightly older counterparts, followed by eating the right things. The countryside is in fifth place.
- The main reasons young people aged 10 to 17 give for interacting with the natural environment are to play sports/do activities and go for walks, reflecting perhaps the priorities of effort and entertainment. Here too, the older age groups tend to 'do less' overall as they move up the school years.
- When asked what they particularly enjoy about the natural environment, around three quarters of young people aged 10 to 17 enjoy being out in the fresh air, being with family and friends and playing sports or doing activities. However there is a marked decline for sports activities in young people the further up the school years we go. Children aged 5 to 9 are much more open to liking everything about the countryside, primarily like playing/running around and having fun with friends and family.

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- Around 30% of 10-17 year olds have some knowledge of biodiversity, landscapes and special places for nature (e.g nature reserves), while significantly more claimed knowledge about climate change.
- 61% of 18-24 year olds show a desired level to become more involved in the natural environment in the future. Young people aged 10 to 17 years old have very similar opinions to adults with 40% wishing to do more, 52% to do the same and 8% to do less. This indicates they are perhaps more likely to be told to do something rather than choose to do it themselves. P6 and P7 children are most likely to say they would like to do more at 53% and 57%.

What can you do to make people more aware of and more involved in the natural environment?
(Base: 755 Young people 10-17)

- Make it fun and less do goody – 57%
- Go into schools – 57%
- Advertise more – 53%
- Tell us about the risks – 50%
- Opportunities for young people – 50%
- Tell/promote benefits to all – 35%

Young people and children state similar routes for their preferred sources for information as adults. Television and the internet predominate, although 5-9 year olds would also consider the zoo as a very good source of information.

10-17 year olds:

- Watch TV – 71%
- Go to a website/net – 68%
- Read papers/mags – 54%
- Go to a nature reserve – 47%
- Ask a teacher – 46%
- Go to a library – 40%
- Ask parents – 39%
- Ask a ranger – 36%
- Listen to the radio – 32%
- Use a mobile phone – 15%

5-9 year olds:

- Go to the zoo – 70%
- Watch TV – 66%
- Go to a website/net – 57%
- Read papers/mags – 36%
- Go to a nature reserve – 35%
- Ask a teacher – 59%
- Go to a library – 64%
- Ask parents – 69%
- Listen to the radio – 39%

(Source: Progressive Partnership (2007). Promoting key messages about the natural heritage – survey of public attitudes and involvement. SNH Commissioned Report 235)