

# BIODIVERSITY

Communications Toolkit

## Fife Air Cadets Conservation Group

### Lead and partner organisations

- Fife Air Cadets Conservation Group (FACCG)
- The Forestry Commission Scotland

### Aims and objectives

- To encourage hands-on, skills-based learning
- Promotion of sustainability and biodiversity messages

### Target audience

- Air Cadets
- Explorer Scouts
- Local families / community

### Background

In 2001, the 2311 Glenrothes/Leslie squadron of the Air Training Corps (ATC) decided to undertake a conservation challenge to mark the 60th anniversary of the ATC. The group contacted local Countryside Rangers and they developed a programme.

The first project the group undertook was a small piece of work in an urban countryside park. And from there, it has snowballed! There are now around 100 members consisting of Air Cadets, Explorer Scouts and local families.

Since its inception in 2001, almost 30,000 volunteer hours have been completed – 6,206 in the last year alone.

The group lay hedges, build dykes, clear woodland, improve drainage, grow vegetables, plant trees, construct and re-open footpaths. They learn about history, plant identification, fungi, native trees and wetlands, while promoting self discipline, loyalty, commitment, responsibility, leadership involvement, healthy living, adventure and active citizenship.

But the main aim is to have fun whilst working hard!

### Summary of activity

The main focus of their work is in their own county of Fife where numerous conservation projects have been completed, working with Countryside Rangers, landowners and other environmental organisations. Each project undertaken regularly involves 30 – 50 individuals.

The group empowers young people by giving them the opportunity to make important decisions on what tasks and activities are undertaken, and how funding is spent.

When asked what would encourage them to volunteer more regularly, most young people highlighted that better transport would make it easier for them. So, in September 2006, the group launched a transport plan to promote cycling, car share and reimbursement of public transport fares.

They also applied for funding for a minibus to facilitate the inclusion of young people from outlying areas, which has been granted. The running costs for the vehicle will be covered by funds raised through bag-packing in local supermarkets and money made from carrying out environmental improvements for long-term sponsor Smith Anderson Packaging and Exonmobil.

# BIODIVERSITY

Communications Toolkit

A Green Trailer was purchased early on and allows the group to be self sufficient when working on projects without having to borrow equipment each time.

The group has been involved in a number of unique projects, including:

- **Czech Mates**

In 2005, the group participated in Czech Mates - an expedition to the UNESCO world heritage site where they spent time exploring Prague, its history and carrying out local conservation tasks.

- **Polaska Alliance**

This year (2007), in recognition of the strong relationship between Scotland and Poland, FACCG is running a project called 'Polska Alliance'. It intends to work with three Polish youth groups to undertake two major conversation projects in Scotland and Poland.

- **Colin Burt Reserve for wildlife conservation**

A member of the group, Caroline Burt, decided to embark on a wildlife project in memory of her late husband. She set up a partnership project with the group and purchased a piece of land in Glen Dochart, near Killin. Named 'Project Woodland' the project involves the creation of woodland and the site has scope for a diverse number of habitats.

The group has worked hard on the site and a phase 1 survey of the area by a senior ecologist has shown a great diversity of species growing in the wetland and grassland areas, including the discovery of a new species of fungi.

## Outcomes

The project has gone from strength to strength and the enthusiasm of all concerned is abundantly clear. The group's intention for the reserve to become a wonderful place for the much wider community is clear.

Local landowners, environmental groups and Countryside Rangers all work very closely with the group and the respect it has earned within the local community has resulted in an increased understanding of biodiversity issues, as well as an influx of people willing to volunteer their services to the group.

## Further information

The Forestry Commission Scotland  
t: 0131 334 0303  
e: fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk  
www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

Fife Air Cadets  
www.fifeaircadetsconservationgroup.co.uk  
www.projectwoodland.org.uk