

A family day out that offers grassroots fun and learning

Big Nature Day, Natural History Museum, 27 May

On Sunday 27 May the Natural History Museum will be holding its annual Big Nature Day event in the grounds of the Museum in South Kensington. The free event, the largest of its kind in the UK, will host more than 52 nature groups and give visitors the chance to enjoy a hands-on, interactive and fun-filled day exploring the outdoors and nature as well as learning about the importance of wildlife and the environment.

The day aims to create a new generation of naturalists as well as nurture existing nature lovers with activities that include:

- * making bird and bug boxes
- * worm charming
- * examining bat sonograms
- * learning how to attract stag beetles to their garden
- * discovering there's more to nettles than their sting

There will also be a giant insect style carnival parade through the Museum. The Museum's Wildlife Garden, home to foxes, a bee colony and a variety of bugs and insects, will be the focal point for exploring and discovering wildlife that exists in local green spaces and urban areas. There'll be experts on-hand to help visitors find out about the variety of UK wildlife, including ferns, frogs, spiders, stinkhorns and much more.

The day will also be a celebration of the achievements of the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) programme and a call for more people to get involved. OPAL is an England-wide initiative where national scientists work with the public to study biodiversity, air, water, soil and climate quality.

OPAL Director, Dr. Linda Davies from Imperial College London, said, "We are delighted to be holding Big Nature Day at the Natural History Museum. This day is what OPAL is all about, giving people of all ages and backgrounds a chance to discover and explore the natural world around them. We want to inspire a new generation of nature lovers and increase environmental awareness. Big Nature Day is one of our many ways of working towards this goal."

Visitors will be able to examine specimens, take part in experiments and talk with nature group members. There will also be special Nature Live events in the Darwin Centre's interactive Attenborough Studio. Big Nature Day marks the UN International Day of Biological Diversity and nature groups attending the day include the Mammal Society, RSPB, Woodland Trust, British Dragonfly Society and British Trust for Ornithology. Our younger visitors will be able to join and enjoy a carnival style parade through the Museum.

ENDS

Notes to editor

1. Image available in high resolution at: <http://www.opalexplornature.org/bignatureday-press>
2. The event URL is: www.nhm.ac.uk/bignatureday
3. Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is a nation-wide partnership initiative that will inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environments. It aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by stimulating interest through local and national projects which are accessible, fun and relevant to anyone who wants to take part. For more information, please visit www.OPALexplornature.org
4. The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme funds a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment. Imperial College London (the leading OPAL partner) was awarded a **£11,760,783** Changing Spaces grant in August 2007
5. The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

6. Details and timing of activities are:

Insect carnival workshops and parade

Make an insect hat at this drop-in workshop then join the carnival parade through the Museum led by an insect band.

Workshops 11.00–13.00 and 13.30–15.30 in the Darwin Centre Atrium.

Carnival parades at 13.00 and 15.30 – assemble by the workshop area.

Wildlife Garden drop-in activities (from 11.00 – 17.00)

Pond life – look under the microscope to see the fascinating animals that live in our pond.

Nettle activities – find out about the different uses of nettles from fabrics and dyes to teas and soups.

Bugs Count – see how many different sorts of bug you can spot with this survey.

Tree hunt – learn to identify different trees growing in the garden.

Ladybird chase – see how many spotted insects you can find in sunny places around the garden.

Worm charming

See how many worms you can encourage to the surface.

Sessions take place at 12.00, 14.00 and 16.00 under the trees in the Darwin Centre Courtyard.

Bee puppet show

Meet our bee puppets and find out how bees help to pollinate our plants.

Show at 11.00 in the Darwin Centre Atrium

There will be 3 nature-live presentations at 12.30, 13.30 and 14.30

Other activities include:

- Making bird boxes and bug hotels
- Nature quiz
- Attracting stag beetles to your garden
- Bat poo under the microscope