



Cameron's Cottage Newsletter

March 2023

Recent news/ events

Nature Escape Room workshops

Since September last year, we've been working with education researchers from Southampton University to create nature-based escape rooms. The aim is to create a transportable escape room style game to encourage young people to go outside into nature, and hopefully foster a greater connection to nature. Last week Sonja and the Southampton uni lecturers went to RSPB Sandwell valley in Birmingham to trial the prototype we had designed at Cameron's Cottage on their Young Warden group. It took a bit of time adapting the game to suit their site, but after a few runs it was a resounding success! The next steps are to trail the escape room with as many groups as possible that visit Cameron's cottage, as well as on student groups on the Southampton university campus.

Princes Trust do croquet

Last week we led a Prince's Trust group to learn practical woodworking skills - we made bird feeders in the morning and, at the young people's request, spontaneously made croquet mallets in the afternoon! We used cut rhododendron and drilled holes in the mallet heads, whittling the long handles to fit. We even managed to play a game of croquet- golf before the group went home.



New staff roles approved!

National Lottery Funding have approved two new paid roles at Cameron's Cottage: a 4 day a week education officer who will lead groups and manage the day-to-day running of the centre, and 4 day a week administrator to manage bookings. The next step is to have these approved by the RSPB and recruit for the roles. Watch this space!

Fruit trees at CC



As part of our garden plans, directed by Martyn Shears, we have decided to plant 12 fruit trees around Cameron's Cottage. The first 6 trees were planted by Winchester College Natural History group students who visited the site on the 21st February, and a Prince's Trust group will plant the remaining trees on one of their conservation days. Hopefully in a few years' time we will be able to reap the rewards of their hard work!

New storage at CC

In the last few weeks, we've been reshuffling our storage to help the centre function smoother and stay in line with safety regulations. Martyn, and his friend came and put up some cupboards in the lab to store out survey equipment. They look great and have helped free up workspace for our Southampton Uni ecology students coming next week!



Upcoming volunteer events

Volunteer monthly meet ups

We are trialling monthly meetups with volunteers to act as a social catch up between busy sessions, and a training opportunity to try out the activities we do with our young people. In the future we may also use these days to visit other education centres nearby. We also welcome your suggestions for things you would like to do on these days. The meetups will run on the fourth Wednesday of every month, from 10am till 12 noon at Cameron's Cottage. We can change the date if necessary if there is a better day for everyone, but the provisional upcoming dates are:

- 22nd March
- 26th April
- 24th May
- 28th June
- 26th July

It would be great to see you there! Please do let us know if a different day/time would work better for you, or if you have any ideas of things you'd like to do in the sessions.

Thank you BBQ

We will be having a volunteer celebration barbeque on Thursday the 18th of May, from 5 till 8pm at Cameron's Cottage. This is to say thank you to every one of you who have supported Cameron's Cottage in its first few years and will be a chance for us to let our hair down after a long week of events. More info on food preferences, etc. will follow closer to the time but save the date!

Upcoming volunteering opportunities

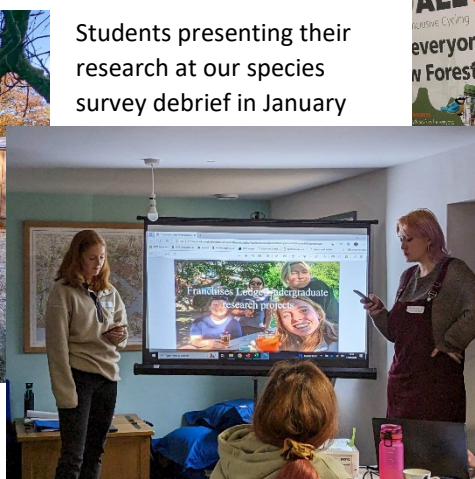
We've got lots of groups booked for the coming months and over the summer, including a Princes Trust residential, Boots on the Ground residential, and various young carer and family groups. For more info on them and to sign up to volunteer, please go to the 'Group Visits 2023' file attached to this email. This summer we will also be running a 6-week programme of Forest School sessions on site, for Sonja to complete her L3 Forest school Leader Course. We haven't determined dates or the target age group yet, but if you are interested, please do get in contact. Your availability and age-group interest may decide what we advertise!

We are also looking for volunteers to help plan and run our Official Opening Week events in the week of the 15th May. We will be having activities and talks every day, with the grand opening event on Saturday the 20th May.

Here's some photos of what we've been up to so far this year...



Frosty mornings at CC



Students presenting their research at our species survey debrief in January



Our volunteer fair stall