

## **Our Beautiful Neighbourhood**

### **Notes for teachers doing a self-led workshop**

These notes are provided to support you to lead your 'Our Beautiful Neighbourhood' workshop. Please feel free to use and adapt these in whatever ways are most useful and appropriate for your class.

This document contains:

- An introduction to Our Beautiful Neighbourhood project
  - Brief introductions to 'biodiversity', 'habitats' and Wandsworth's habitats
  - Instructions for warm-up drawings
  - Instructions for collage activity
  - Brief introductions to some inspiring collage artists
  - Detailed information about Wandsworth's different habitats.
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### **Our Beautiful Neighbourhood project**

*Your school is invited to join us in an exciting new art project that encourages everyone to celebrate nature in Wandsworth. Large-scale, colourful artworks, created by participating schools, will be exhibited across the area, as part of a year of events for London Borough of Culture.*

*This project will focus on local habitats, and the plants, animals and insects that can be found there. Observational and recording skills will be developed through fun drawing and collage activities. Using art as a tool, students will communicate their learning about science and geography.*

*This project will connect your students and staff to the rich, diverse wildlife living on their doorstep, encourage curiosity and build awareness on how to support these vital spaces. The creative outcomes will be celebrated in public spaces across the borough for your school to visit and will be celebrated with a series of public engagement activities using the artworks created by your students as inspiration.*

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### **Introduction to the project**

*The workshop today is part of a big art project; children from all across Wandsworth are taking part. What you make today is going to go on display to the public next year in local shopping centres. So hundreds - maybe thousands - of people will be able to see and admire your work.*

*The project is called Our Beautiful Neighbourhood. We're going to learn about the plants, insects, birds and animals that live in the borough alongside us, and share our experiences of nature with other people by making art. Even though Wandsworth is a busy borough, full of houses and shops and schools and hospitals, it is also full of green spaces and wildlife. Our artworks are going to celebrate that and bring images of some of that wildlife into busy places like shopping centres.*

*So the plan for today is to explore some of the nature that is right on our doorstep, gather some natural objects, and bring those back to the classroom. We'll create drawings and collage based on what we find. We'll use different skills like collecting, observing, recording - and then communicating our observations in a bold, creative way.*

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## **Biodiversity**

*What is 'biodiversity'?*

*Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms (including animals, plants, and fungi) and the way all that life interacts with each other. There's biodiversity everywhere - not just in the countryside or the oceans or rainforests.*

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## **Habitats**

*What is a 'habitat'?*

*A habitat is the environment where different animals and plants live. It provides everything they need to survive.*

*Habitats can be as small as a puddle or as large as a forest. They can be found on land, in water, and even in the air.*

*All animals need the same important things to survive; water, air, shelter and food. And a healthy habitat provides those for all the living things that live there. And we all need to live in a thriving habitat too - because we also need clean air, water, food and shelter.*

*We often learn about habitats in faraway places like the arctic or the rainforest but there are habitats in our neighbourhood full of wildlife.*

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## **Wandsworth habitats**

*Wandsworth is home to 14 different kinds of habitats and 4000 different wildlife species.*

*There are habitats that we all probably know quite well like back gardens, playgrounds and*

*playing fields - even the bushes and verges you see next to railway lines or beside busy roads.*

*There are habitats like parks, riversides and commons, and some of those habitats are particularly special - because of what lives there or because they are in need of care and conservation. They're also important because of what they give us - they help to give us clean air, they give us space to enjoy being around plants, animals, birds - and they're spaces where we can have fun or rest or explore.*

*We're going to find out what lives in some of those habitats later on. But first we're going to explore the habitat that is right outside our door: the playground / park etc.*

*We're going to see what nature we can find.*

*What does 'nature' include?*

*Plants, birds, insects, stones, animals, feathers etc*

*In your groups, you're going to take a closer look at what's living in the habitat of our playground. You've got clipboards and paper and pencils - you can use these to draw birds, plants, insects, animals that you see. They might move, don't worry - try to capture what you can in your drawing, maybe just an outline or a shape.*

*We might find things we can collect and bring back to the classroom - like leaves, twigs, feathers. We can put them in our plastic bags. Because we are doing some research it is ok for us to carefully cut some leaves to bring back. Ask the adult in your group to cut any leaves you would like to bring back to put in your bag. We might also pick things up if they've fallen on the ground.*

*If we want to see wildlife, how do you think we should behave when we go outside?*

*Quiet, not running around etc. Be respectful of the living things we find. We aren't bringing any living things back to the classroom.*

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### **Nature specimens / examples**

If your class has collected a variety of nature examples then there's no need to bring in images as well. But if they haven't got many examples, you could give each table some images from the image resource provided. The nature and habitats in this resource can all be found in Wandsworth.

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### **Quick warm-up drawings**

Lay discoveries out on a piece of paper in the middle of each table.

*When scientists and naturalists study any habitat, one way they communicate their discoveries is by creating images of what they've seen. By carefully observing the size, shape, texture they're learning about what they've found. Here are some examples (see slides).*

*We're going to do some drawings to help us look closely at the textures and shapes and all the details of our discoveries.*

*Artists and designers also observe and draw nature too. Lots of different ways to do this. Some might look at the outline. Some might look at the overall shape. Some will look for ways to show the texture, if something is smooth or bumpy, rough or spiky, if it has lots of seeds or feathers.*

Some suggested ways of doing warm-up drawings are listed below. Feel free to adapt these - the idea is to get everyone drawing and looking. Pupils don't need a new sheet for each drawing - encourage them to fit a few on a page.

- 2 minutes to make a drawing of something
- 1 minute to make a drawing of something else
- Pick another thing. Look really carefully for 30 seconds...no drawing yet! Then draw it in 30 seconds!
- 15 seconds to draw just the outline of something. You'll need to be bold and fast for this one.
- 2 minutes for a continuous line drawing - once you start you can't take your pen off the page. How are you going to get details, textures in your drawing without taking your pen off the page?
- 1 minute to draw, using two different thicknesses (thick and thin pen)
- 1 minute to draw, using two different colours (if using coloured pens, pencils or crayons)

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### **Longer warm-up drawings**

If you have time you can do longer warm-up drawings.

*Now spend a bit longer making a detailed specimen drawing. Think about all the techniques you used in the quick warm ups. Did you make any marks that worked quite well? Did you find a good combination of pens? Now you have more time to create a detailed drawing, think about how you want to show the texture and details.*

*Choose an object and look carefully at its shape and texture. What colours, patterns, elements that make it distinctive. What makes it different from the others?*

**Make sure everyone has written their name, class and school on the back of their drawings in pencil.**

**Pack away pens as they won't need these for the collage activity.**

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### **Collage activity**

- Share collage examples (adjust how many you show and for how long depending on time and energy levels! You don't need to show any examples if you feel it would be better to dive straight into making).
  - Demonstrate making a collage, without drawing shapes out first.
  - Ask everyone to decide what they're going to make.
  - Invite pupils to select the coloured paper they need.
  - Encourage everyone to be bold, no need to draw first - start cutting and layering.
  - Make sure pieces are glued together but not glued down onto a background piece.
  - Ask everyone to write their name, class and school in pencil on the back.
  - Check the pieces are dry before putting them all in an envelope so they don't stick together.
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### **Inspiring collage examples:**

See slides provided for images.

#### **Mary Delany**

*Here are some images of plants - they were created by someone called Mary Delany, who lived around 250 years ago. How do you think she made these?*

*Mary Delany made 985 of these incredibly intricate collages of plants she observed - at the time it was the very best way of communicating the colours and textures of what she saw. This was about 50 years before cameras and photography!*

*We might think collage is a really simple thing to do. But these images show just how detailed and beautiful a collage can be. It is a way of making art that many professional artists have used for hundreds of years and still use - particularly because it is a good way of creating something bold and colourful. For some artists collage is a way of creating their work. For others, collage is a way of thinking through ideas or getting ready to make other artworks.*

#### **Henri Matisse**

*Henri Matisse was a French artist who made paintings and sculptures. He became unwell later in his life and couldn't go out or paint as much as he did before. He missed being surrounded by nature and people, so he started to make collages, cutting shapes out of paper and sticking them to the walls of his studio. When he did this he said 'I have made a little garden all around me'*

### **Bisa Butler**

*Bisa Butler is an artist working right now in America. She makes very detailed, layered textile artworks. Every shape and bit of colour you see here is a different layer of fabric that she's cut out and added to the artwork. She spends hundreds of hours layering up all these elements. Her images are portraits of people in her community, and people in the past whose lives she wants to share and celebrate.*

<https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2019/12/bisa-butler-artist-interview/>

### **Romare Bearden**

*Romare Bearden was an artist working in the last century. He was creative in lots of different ways - he made paintings and collages and cartoons, and he wrote songs too. His collages told stories and represented places that were important to him. He said that when he brought different fragments of paper together into one collage he felt as though he was bringing a community together.*

<https://beardenfoundation.org/>

### **Chantal Joffe**

*Another artist who uses collage to make portraits is Chantal Joffe. Her work often shows people she is close to or people who have a close relationship with each other - like parents and children. She has a studio in London and recently she made a series of collages that are on display in Tube stations that show people from the neighbourhood of Whitechapel.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chantal\\_Joffe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chantal_Joffe)

<https://art.tfl.gov.uk/projects/asundayafternooninwhitechapel/>

### **Lubaina Hamid**

*Lubaina Himid is an artist working in the UK right now. She started her career as a theatre designer. Her artwork feels quite theatrical - her work is often a bit like a scene with characters in costume and props. She uses collage to help to get ready to make her sculptures - so these collages here were preparation for this piece with life-sized figures that was on display at Tate modern.*

<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/lubaina-himid>

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## **Collage activity**

*We're going to follow in the footsteps of these artists and use collage to represent the nature we find around us. We're each going to make something individually. Together all our pieces will create a snapshot of what we've discovered and observed today.*

*Choose something you've seen - a plant, bird, animal, insect, stone, twig. It might be an object on the table, one of your drawings from outside or something in a photo. You're going to make a collage of it. Have a go at cutting straight into the paper without drawing first. This way we'll get bolder and more interesting shapes than if we draw first and try to cut around those lines.*

**Demonstrate** - choose an item of nature from a table and then select a piece of coloured paper. Cut out the shape of your nature item. Don't draw it first - just start with your scissors. Then cut out more colours/shapes to show the details and textures. Stick your collage together but don't stick it onto a background as we need to be on its own to become part of the final artwork.

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### **To finish: Three important things!**

**Don't stick your collage piece down** to another piece of paper or make a background. *To be part of the exhibition, we need your collages without any background.*

**Name!** Make sure each pupil has written their name, class and school on the back of their collage in pencil (not in pen as that might bleed through to the front of the collage)

**Exhibition!** *Your work is going to be sent away to be photographed and turned into the exhibition. You'll get your collage back afterwards. And you'll have the chance to come and see your artwork on display next Spring.*

### **To conclude the workshop:**

- Gather all collages into one envelope.
  - Gather any warm-up drawings into envelope.
  - Make sure envelope has name of class, teacher and school on it.
  - Ask one child who's finished their collage to write the name of the class and school out on a piece of paper in black pen and add to the envelope (so this can be used this for exhibition labels).
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## **Information about Wandsworth Habitats**

**Wandsworth priority habitats** have been selected as they are home to rare and declining or characteristic species. Conservation effort is required to maintain and enhance both the spatial area of these habitats and the quality and condition of them, to prevent harm or loss to the species they support. Habitats are more resilient to adverse impacts if they are bigger in size, better in quality, if there are more parcels and if these parcels are joined up.

**Nature Recovery Networks:** a joined-up system of places that help nature to recover and thrive. These networks include areas where wildlife is already doing well, and places where we need to restore or create habitats to connect the remaining patches of nature.

To make this happen, we need to improve, expand, and link habitats. This will help stop wildlife from disappearing and also bring environmental benefits to people. These helpful habitats can be created and cared for in many different places: through housing estates; across parks and greenspaces; along road verges; beside rivers and railways; in private gardens; and even on the rooftops of tall buildings!

**Priority habitats in Wandsworth are:**

- Acid Grassland
- Neutral (wildflower) grassland
- Rivers inc Tidal Thames
- Lakes, ponds and reedbeds
- Woodland and scrub (including veteran trees and dead wood)

**Priority nature recovery networks are:**

- Semi-natural habitats associated with transport corridors
- Open mosaic habitat inc where such habitat is provided as a biodiverse roof

**About Wandsworth Priority Habitats:**

**Acid Grassland (like Tooting Common):**

Acid grassland is a semi-natural grassland found on poor-nutrient soil lacking in lime (calcium). This grassland has a unique character and is unusual in London. Grasses on this soil have very fine leaves and grow amongst specialist wildflowers such as sheep's sorrel and tormentil. In the spring acid grassland can have a distinctive red sheen due to the flowering sheep's sorrel.

Relic areas of acid grassland can be found on Wimbledon and Tooting Commons. Whilst acid grassland is not the most diverse grassland habitat, it supports rare and specialist species that can't survive in soils with more nutrients. Acid grasslands are also important for many invertebrates, small mammals and birds.

This type of habitat developed as a result of disturbance from animals and humans which prevented scrubland and trees from growing. Grazing and/or mowing is required to maintain this habitat.



**Neutral (wildflower) Grassland (like Wimbledon Common):**

Some types of grassland are better for wildlife than others. If the grass is less frequently mown and not trampled, it becomes richer for wildlife.

Neutral grassland is a semi-natural grassland found on soils with a neutral pH, which means the soil is neither too acidic nor too alkaline (typically around pH 6–7). Plant species that can be found in neutral grassland include clover, yellow-rattle, sweet vernal grass and common knapweed. This habitat also supports a wide range of invertebrates, birds and small mammals.

Neutral grasslands are managed by hay-cutting and/or light grazing, which helps maintain species diversity.

**Heathland (like Putney Heath):**

Heathland can have great biodiversity value if managed in the right way. It is especially rich in invertebrates\* and also supports all six species of native reptiles, of which four have been recorded in Wandsworth – the common lizard, slow worm, adder and grass snake. The boggy areas form 'wet heath' and the presence of ponds and streams makes them an important site for dragonflies and damselflies.

\*Animals can be classified as either vertebrates or invertebrates. Invertebrates are animals that don't have a backbone. Some have soft bodies, like worms, slugs and jellyfish. Other invertebrates, like insects, spiders and crustaceans, have a hard outer casing called an exoskeleton. This protects their body a bit like a suit of armour. Vertebrates have a backbone inside their body. They include mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zvcpnrd>

**Woodland (like Tooting Common):**

The best examples of woodland are found on Wimbledon, Wandsworth and Tooting Commons, with smaller pockets in Battersea Park and Wimbledon Park.

Woodlands provide a variety of habitats (called microhabitats) and food sources for thousands of different species, from insects to mammals. For example:

- Holes in trees provide nest sites for woodpeckers and nuthatches
- A ground layer of herbs and grasses provide food for butterflies and tree roots
- Deadwood, including standing deadwood (dead trees that are still upright), fallen logs and branches and decaying stumps, supports a wide range of species. For example, deadwood provides habitats for many invertebrates such as stag beetles, supports wood-decaying fungi, provides roosting spaces for bats and offers shelter for small mammals and amphibians. Leaving deadwood in place (rather than tidying it away) is a simple but effective way to increase woodland biodiversity.

**Rivers and Tidal Zones:**

The Thames, Wandle and Beverley Brook rivers run through Wandsworth and provide an important wildlife resource. Kingfishers, herons and grey wagtails are regularly spotted by the riversides, as well as foraging bats at dusk.

**Lakes and Ponds:**

Most of the open spaces in Wandsworth contain ponds or lakes. They are all renowned for a variety of waterfowl, herons, winter-visiting tufted duck and shelduck. Some have a good variety of fish including carp, roach, pike and sticklebacks whilst most support some aquatic vegetation and invertebrates

**Reedbeds:**

Reedbeds provide a dense cover of vegetation at the edge of rivers that makes them ideal for our more secretive wildlife, such as the reed warbler and the house sparrow. A host of drab and colourful invertebrate species can also be found around reedbeds including moths and damselflies. (Nationally at least 700 species of invertebrates are closely associated with reedbeds).

Over the last few years, areas of reedbed have been created around the lakes on Tooting Common and Wandsworth Common, creating vital habitat for many species.

**Wandsworth Priority Species:**

Some key species are not solely reliant upon protected places or habitats but have adapted to share features within the built environment which might not otherwise be recognised as having biodiversity value.

In Wandsworth priority species that are often impacted outside of protected places or habitats include small mammals and some bird species, which can be harmed or displaced through changes to buildings or built environments. They have therefore been specifically identified as priority species which would benefit from a raised profile and a specific focus on measures to conserve and enhance them. This will allow actions to protect the species themselves, the landscapes that they rely on and to guide how built features and surrounding landscapes can be enhanced to better support them.

**Priority species in Wandsworth are:**

- Bats (all species)
  - Hedgehog
  - Black redstart
  - House Sparrow
  - Brown trout
  - Peregrine falcon
  - Starling
  - Swift
  - Stag beetles
  - Tawny owl
  - Pollinators including hoverflies, wild bees, soldierflies and wasps
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