

# GREEN SKILLS PROJECT

## CASE STUDY 5: HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

15th April – 7th June 2024

### WHAT DID THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

The project was made up of a number of different tasks scattered around Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

#### Raised Wildlife Pond

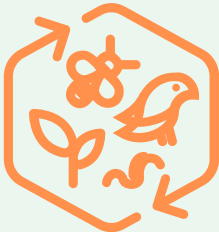
The creation of the raised wildlife pond included levelling the ground, digging channels, constructing pine sleepers, laying the liner, creating beaches and exit points for different species using rocks, aggregates and pieces of wood.

#### Willow Fencing

The rangers on site constructed a wire and pine skeleton fence, which the volunteers then wove through willow branches to create a thick layer of natural material along this fence. The volunteers also pushed through branches vertically to give it a natural appearance, inkeeping with the surrounding woodland.

### OUTCOMES:

#### INCREASED BIODIVERSITY



A wildlife pond is a thriving pocket habitat that supports a huge variety of species, including many invertebrates, freshwater plants and amphibians. Starting with invertebrates, wildlife ponds are vital for many different species life cycles. For example, dragonflies spend most of their

lives in water as nymphs. This also applies to many other invertebrate species that start life in the water. The pond will also support a wide variety of freshwater plants that cannot grow in other settings. These will provide wonderful cover for many invertebrates who find their way into the pond. Although raised ponds are not as good for amphibians, due to accessibility, with suitable ramps, it can provide a safe haven for many species, including newts, frogs and toads. The rangers on site also plan to create exit ramps in the future, boosting this habitat further. The pond will also be used by birdlife as a drinking spot, bath location and the increased invertebrate life will provide a better food source. The fence will also become a home to many different species of invertebrates supporting biodiversity in the area.





## INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY

The pond was designed so that the paths and surrounding area is wheelchair accessible, allowing all to connect with nature.

## EDUCATION & GREEN SKILLS



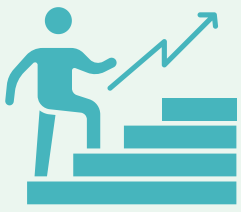
The pond will now be used by the Fireflies group Centre on site. This group that focuses on outdoor play, will use the pond for educational pond dipping sessions with children. This will help them to learn about aquatic life and promote a better understanding of the natural world, helping future generations to build a better future for biodiversity.

Four of the participants obtained two qualifications while on the course: Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture and Level 1 Award in Employability. The Practical Horticulture qualification covered three units where individuals learned how to safely and correctly use a nylon cord strimmer, maintain hand tools and plant a hanging basket.

The participants of the project learnt many skills including:

- The singular task of building the pond can be broken into three broad segments that were the most fulfilling and beneficial for the participants including measuring and levelling, construction and topography of the pond.
- These tasks taught the participants how to use measuring tapes, string and pegs, and spirit levels effectively.
- The construction of the wall using sleepers taught the participants how to use a range of power tools and how to strengthen walls by overlapping the pieces. By the end of the process, all participants could confidently assemble the layers without assistance from Groundwork East officers.
- When the participants focused on the nature and habitat types towards the end of the project, they learnt about how to lay a liner and fill it. As well as, learning about the varying levels in the pond to promote biodiversity.





## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The course not only imparts practical knowledge upon the participants but also aims to promote better physical and mental health, through working outdoors with others. The group have made strong bonds, looking to keep in contact with one another after the project. The project officers had seen the improvement of the participant's confidence and ability with physical tasks. All five individuals stated in the exit survey that their general wellbeing, mental and physical health had all improved over the course of the project.

Excellent and varied, I will recommend the course to others - A professional team of tutors!"

"Had a great time, met good people and would do it all again"

"I enjoyed stepping out of my comfort zone and banding with a new team."

"It was a very good course and I enjoyed every part of it"

"improved my confidence"

"very enjoyable, loved the experience... this is what got me active and feeling good"



## LESSONS LEARNT:

- The team saw a large number of drop outs for the project a few days beforehand. This left them a little shorthanded for participants when going into the first week. With this in mind, it is important to keep pushing recruitment right until the start of the project.