



Leaf Litter

edition one, Spring 2014

Welcome to Leaf Litter, your one stop shop for all the latest news from Wild Sparks. We hope this, our first edition, finds you well wherever you are. Leaf Litter is designed to give you a flavour of all the great things that happen at the Wild Sparks holiday playschemes and a wee insight into the other activities we get up to out and about. We hope you enjoy it.

What Sparks?

Wild Sparks is a brand new way for children in the Blairgowrie area to get back to nature, learn new skills and have lots of fun. Children of all ages and abilities come together to dig holes, swing from branches, make wild and wonderful creations, adventure into never never land and get back in time for a marshmallow round the campfire. Ours is the home of risk, adventure, creativity, discovery and very grubby knees. Visit www.wildsparks.co.uk to find out more.



Diversity, Inclusion and Integration



At Wild Sparks we believe children learn best amongst a diverse friendship group. We celebrate difference and diversity by creating an environment in which children of all ages and abilities play together, cooperatively, not competitively. I saw this poster in a local play setting and thought it summed up the Wild Sparks ethos nicely.

Wild Sparks is currently interested in hearing from families or support groups for children facing challenges due to disability or emotional & behavioural difficulties. If you know a child that would benefit from attending our services but might need additional support, such as free transport, bursaries or a 1:1 worker then get in touch and we'll see what we can do.



The Wild Sparks flag in position (top) and being carefully crafted (bottom)

Everyone was excited to see the new whittled safety barrier and walls on the treehouse.



February 2014 Wild Sparks Playscheme

22 children aged 5 - 12 joined us over 3 days for our playscheme in February.

Under grey skies, with occasional bursts of sunshine, February's Wild Sparks... built dens, climbed trees, made catapults, bows & arrows and flags, played blindfolded games, dressed up, fell out & made up with friends, cooked on an open fire, investigated plants and animal tracks and made an intrepid expedition into neighbouring Beaver Territory!



Flag and tickling stick.



Gathering for an impromptu parade!



We discovered and tested out some excellent new trees for swinging and climbing.

'Stars' were awarded to the group for achievements in safe tool use and coming back to base super fast. (top) and our patience was tested as we waited FOREVER for popcorn over the fire (bottom).



Wild Spark of the Season “Charlie May”

Written by Karen Walsh, March 2014

Charlie May is our 6 yr old very energetic little girl. She loves walking, trampolining, swimming, dancing, riding and skiing! The only difference Charlie May has to other children is that she has Downs Syndrome or “Up Syndrome” as we like to call it!

When she was younger life at home was not so easy, her muscle tone was low and walking was a huge effort. We believed that the more physical exercise she could do the stronger she would get and she is testament to that. Here we are 6 years on going on a skiing holiday!



I saw the advert for Wild Sparks and had heard good reports about it. Charlie May needs to be supervised more than others her age as she does get tired, finds some things hard and sometimes wanders off!!! I was apprehensive that this would be too much for her, it is sometimes difficult to get the balance right in letting her go but keeping her safe. After speaking to Alice I felt more confident to let her try.

Charlie May Loved her first day coming back tired muddy and happy!! She was given extra help if required but more importantly she joined in with all activities and had fun. From a parents perspective I felt confident and reassured that Charlie May was in good experienced hands and was happy to leave her. Having a child with additional needs often means that it is hard to not be there, to allow them to have their own independence and feel confident on their own. Wild Sparks allows this to happen. From a physical point of view Charlie May gained confidence in her own ability by being able to challenge herself physically but in a safe environment. She gets to do the same as everyone else.

My advice to other parents is that I cannot recommend Wild Sparks enough. As a parent it is hard to let go and allow your child to achieve in a difficult situation and Forest School is a great place to do this for any child.

Huge Thanks to Karen for sharing her experiences. If you would like to feature in our next edition of Leaf Litter then drop us a line.

Easter and Summer Playscheme dates

Easter: Mon 7 - Friday 18 April, excluding Sat/Sun

Summer: Mon 30 June, Tue 1, Thu 3 & Fri 4 July
Mon 7, Tue 8, Thu 10 & Fri 11 July
Mon 28, Tue 29, Thu 31 Jul & Fri 1 Aug
Mon 4, Tue 5, Thu 7 & Fri 8 Aug

Sessions run from
9am - 5pm at
Scottish Woodland
Skills Centre, Bamff,
Alyth, PH11 8LF

Book early to avoid disappointment at www.wildsparks.co.uk

* Discount applies to any 5 days booked at the same time.

** Bursaries may be available for families experiencing hardship, get in touch for details.

Got the No-Wild-Sparks blues?

Here are some easy peesy activities to try with friends and families in your local woods or at home.

1. Stick pets (lower maintenance than hamsters and goldfish)

Find a stick... give it a name, use string to add some things to it like leaves and grass to make clothes and eyes... take it for a walk, take it to school with you, make it into a decoration for the mantelpiece, tell it your secrets. Collect food and make it a special place to play, sleep, explore, read or dance... send us your stick pet stories and pictures!

2. Find your Palm Tree

Use a pen to draw over a few of the lines on your palm to create a simple 3 or 4 lined pattern, like this:



Take your palm to the forest with you and wander about gazing into treetops until you find one that matched the pattern on your hand. This is your palm tree... lay down, head at the trunk and climb the tree in your mind. Spend a while with your palm tree until you've got to know each other, leave it a present, tell it a story and return for visits now and then.

3. Know that Tree!

Use books or the internet to correctly match up these tree twig pictures with their names, next time you visit the Wild Sparks play woods you'll be on first name terms with our most common resident trees!



Scots Pine



Rowan



Beech



Sycamore

Wild Sparks out and about

Wild Sparks works with different partners out and about in local towns and villages. So far we've made visits to over 15 schools to deliver taster sessions at after school clubs and with early years family support groups.

This spring we'll be starting a brand new project with Perth Women's Aid and running after schools projects in Kettins and Kirriemuir. We're also providing CPD to help staff build confidence and skills in outdoor learning with Rattray, Fossoway, Alyth, Kettins and Glendelvine primary schools.

Wee Wild Sparks - Starting 30 April 2014

From 30 April we'll be starting regular meet ups for parents/carers and pre-school/home schooled children, somewhere in Blairgowrie, on Wednesday mornings. We still need to finalise the exact location but the current plan is to meet Wednesdays from 10 - 11.30am for free play, games, stories, exploring and crafts. Email to register interest. £5 per child / £3 per additional sibling.

Wild Sparks Dunkeld

This summer Wild Sparks will be heading over to Dunkeld to run playscheme days every Wednesday from 2 July - 13 August. Children aged 4 - 12 can attend from 9.45 - 4.30pm for forest schools activities and woodland adventures! Full details online.

News from the office

We're a CIC!

Wild Sparks is now officially a registered Community Interest Company. We operate as a social enterprise on a not for profit basis, covering overheads through a combination of grant funding and income from services. So far we've received around £7K funding to cover start up costs such as materials, staff training insurance, website and marketing and office overheads.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Wild Sparks Outdoor Play CIC, to have input into our development and decision making please get in touch. We especially want to hear from folks with finance or legal expertise!

Policies and Procedures

Wild Sparks child protection policies and procedures are now available to view on the families section of the wild sparks website or linked from our new facebook 'Notice Board' photo album. Health and Safety policies and procedures and staff handbook coming soon. Happy reading folks!

Staff training

Alice Warren of Wild Sparks is working towards a formal playwork qualification which will enable the service to become Care Inspectorate registered in 2015.

Registration will mean all sorts of developments and improvements, not least the ability to accept childcare vouchers and sign up to other support schemes that benefit families. Please stick with us in the meantime!

We're recruiting

Wild Sparks is an evolving team, requiring both volunteers and staff on a sessional basis, mostly during school holidays. If you think you've got what it takes to spend 8 hours out in the woods, in all weathers, amidst organised chaos and a troop of diverse, energetic and adventurous 5 - 12 year olds then please get in touch!

Get in touch

This February the children developed the wonderful Wild Sparks intra-mail postal service, with letters shared each afternoon around the campfire. We liked it so much this will definitely become a regular feature.



In the meantime please send ideas, suggestions and feedback to us by email or snail mail.

We promise to publish any drawings, poems or other creative replies in the next edition of Leaf Litter AND on the Wild Sparks facebook page. Get sharpening those pencils now!

Contact details:

alice@wildsparks.co.uk

www.wildsparks.co.uk

www.facebook.com/wildsparksoutdoorplay

Flat 1, Bamff, Alyth, Perthshire, PH11 8LF

That's all from us for now, Many Thanks and farewell from
Alice and the Wild Sparks crew