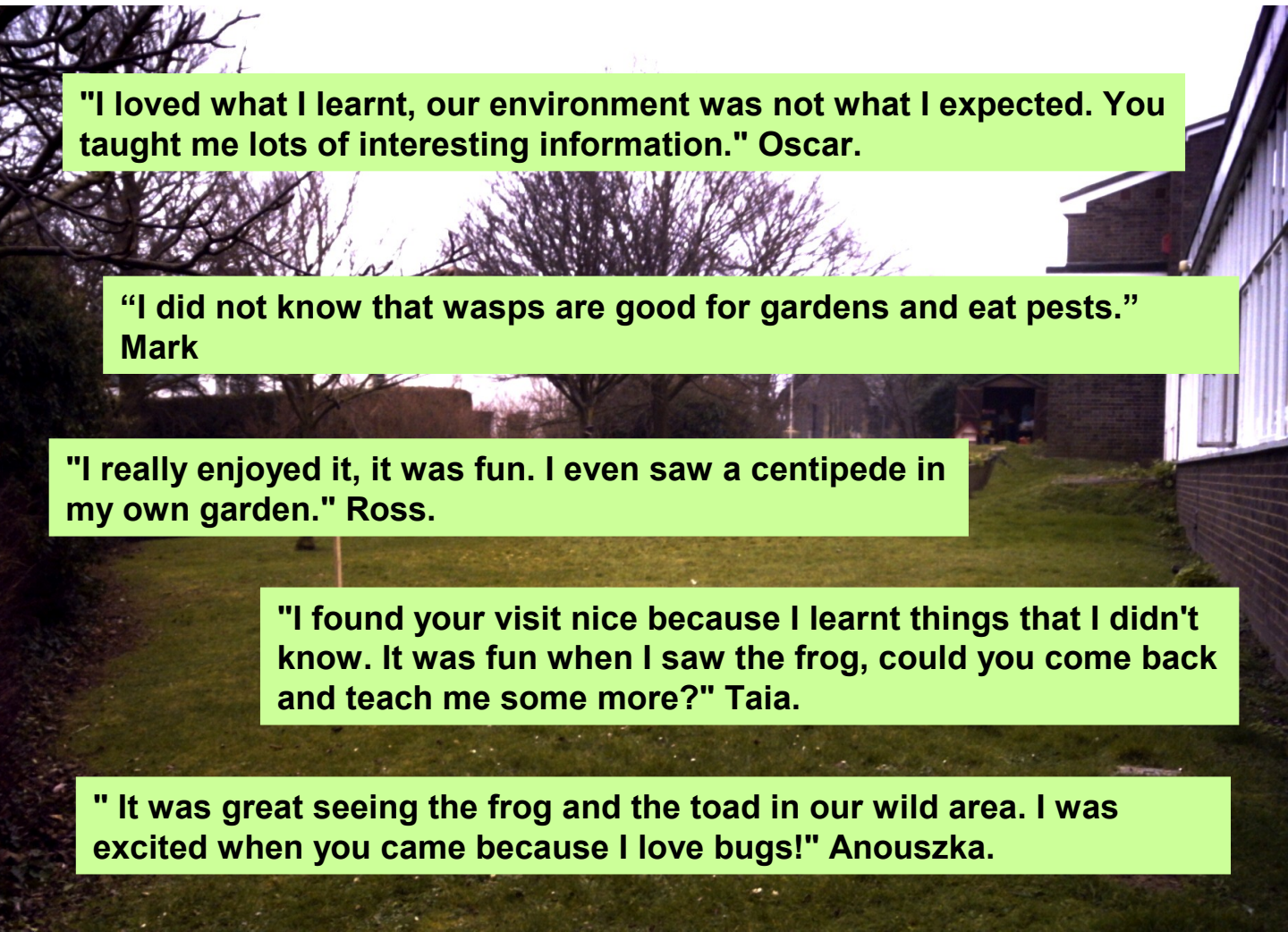


# School Grounds for Children and Wildlife

## An Urban Perspective

Inner city school grounds may sometimes appear to have little to offer wildlife. However, they are often visited by a wider variety of wildlife than you might imagine as plants and animals continue to colonise our towns and cities. From the air they take on a new perspective, a patchwork of micro habitats made up of gardens, parks, churchyards and other green spaces. These areas are linked together by green corridors, used by many animals as natural pathways much the same way as hedgerows in the countryside.

School grounds may be developed to encourage and help wildlife, provide exciting teaching opportunities and also increase wellbeing. School grounds attract wildlife from the surrounding area and in this way urban schools can have much to offer visiting wildlife. Urban wildlife can often be approached more closely, as we are considered part of their natural surrounding, providing unique opportunities for children to experience the natural world on our doorstep.

A background photograph of a schoolyard. In the foreground, there are bare trees and a grassy area. In the background, a brick school building is visible. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a candid feel.

**"I loved what I learnt, our environment was not what I expected. You taught me lots of interesting information." Oscar.**

**"I did not know that wasps are good for gardens and eat pests."  
Mark**

**"I really enjoyed it, it was fun. I even saw a centipede in my own garden." Ross.**

**"I found your visit nice because I learnt things that I didn't know. It was fun when I saw the frog, could you come back and teach me some more?" Taia.**

**" It was great seeing the frog and the toad in our wild area. I was excited when you came because I love bugs!" Anouszka.**

Urban habitats are particularly fascinating I have been working with school grounds since 1986, specialising in urban schools. They can provide their own unique challenges to encouraging wildlife. Examples of projects I can offer to schools are illustrated below

Helping urban schools to plan the development of their grounds, for teaching and wildlife, making the best use of limited space and connecting with the local surroundings.

Curriculum development, using a cross curriculum approach. Including science, geography, literacy, numeracy, IT, art, drama, citizenship and sustainability. Developing grounds as part of the curriculum and using the end results as a teaching resource.

Cultivation in urban space. Growing fruit, vegetables and flowers leads to an appreciation of new foods, understanding of how plants grow, where food comes from, caring and nurturing, awareness of plant and animal relationships, the seasons and much more.

Developing school grounds as an outdoor laboratory can provide exciting teaching opportunities, involving first hand experiences, problem solving, scientific techniques and predictions. Even schools with limited green space can undertake exciting science projects based on common animals e.g. snails and woodlice

Caring for wildlife. School grounds development encourages a caring attitude and understanding of conservation issues and an awareness that we can all make a difference

Teacher training sessions tailored for a single school or for a group of schools. These can include any of the topics above and include animal identification skills.

For further information, please contact Stephen Savage, biologist, author, environmental educator at [stevep.savage@ntlworld.com](mailto:stevep.savage@ntlworld.com)

