

John Muir Award

As a result of The Fairfield Association becoming a member of the John Muir Trust (<http://www.jmt.org/>) it will offer volunteers the opportunity to gain volunteering/conservation awards through the Trust.

The John Muir Award was launched in 1997 by the John Muir Trust and has rapidly become **the** major award linked to nature, the environment and conservation. There are different levels of award but each one consists of the following four challenges:-

Discover	a Wild Place (or places) for yourself
Explore	your wild place
Conserve	take some personal responsibility
Share	your experiences

The Wild Place, in the case of the Fairfield Association, would be the Nature Reserve and through volunteering involvement, individuals would learn about it, explore it and do something tangible to conserve it. The fourth challenge, sharing the experiences, could be achieved by writing blogs, posting on Facebook, talking to friends and peer groups etc..

There are three levels of Award which encourages a progressive involvement over a period of time. The same four challenges (above) are repeated for each level, with increased involvement in time, activity and ownership:-

- **Discovery Award** (introductory level) - minimum 4 days (or equivalent)
- **Explorer Award** (intermediate level) - minimum 8 days (or equivalent)
- **Conserver Award** (advanced level) - minimum 20 days (or equivalent) over 6 months

The awards are open to individuals of all ages and from all backgrounds. Current and regular volunteers with the Association could sign up for the Awards and have their hours logged. Over the course of a volunteering year there is the possibility to achieve the Conserver Award, having taken part in many different volunteering activities such as tree pruning, hedge laying, hay making, planting saplings, removing self seeding trees etc.. They could also take part in bio blitzes, bird walks, wild flower recording and the like.

This could also appeal to new volunteers, particularly young volunteers, as in many ways it is the conservation equivalent of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The John Muir Trust owns and cares for some of the UK's finest wild landscapes including Ben Nevis, Schiehallion, Sandwood Bay, Quinag in Assynt, part of the Cuillin on Skye and 3,000 acres on the remote Knoydart peninsula. The Trust organizes regular work parties for members to volunteer in these wild, beautiful and remote areas and it might be that some Fairfield volunteers might be interested in expanding their horizons in this direction.

Graham Brandwood will co-ordinate the awards on behalf of the Association.