

The Green Wave Programme: Research results

Summary Sheet

Background:

Aircraft manufacturer, Airbus, has committed to support the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity through *The Green Wave Programme*, within the scope of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Green Wave aims to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity among children, young people, families and educators, helping to inform and engage tomorrow's decision-makers in the crucial task of protecting the Earth's biodiversity and halting its loss.

In August 2009, Airbus conducted a UK wide survey of 1,500 children aged 5 to 10 years and 1,500 parents to analyse children's knowledge of nature. The children were given a picture survey, which questioned their knowledge of wildlife, the natural world and habitats. Parents were questioned on how they perceive their child's knowledge of biodiversity and their child's engagement with nature.

Key research results:

- Four out of ten children can't tell the difference between a bee and a wasp.
- 37 per cent of youngsters don't know what a bee looks like, with more than a third mistaking it for a wasp. Three per cent even got a bee mixed up with a fly.
- 13 per cent were baffled by a centipede with seven per cent of those mistaking it for a caterpillar and five per cent believing it was a worm.
- Thirty per cent of children had no idea what a mouse looked like, with six per cent getting it confused with a gerbil.
- Almost two thirds struggled to tell a toad and a frog apart.
- 25 per cent of youngsters didn't know what a beaver looked like, 21 per cent of those thought it was an otter, while two per cent believed it was actually a badger.
- More than one in ten got a blue tit confused with a budgie, while almost one in five had no idea a polar bear lived on the Arctic ice caps.
- 13 per cent of children didn't know what a tulip looked like, with one in ten thinking it was a daisy or rose.
- 15 percent were confused by a yellow dandelion, with 4 per cent believing it to be a sunflower.
- Boys were six times more likely to mistake a tulip for a daisy, and twice as likely to confuse a dandelion for a sunflower when compared to their female counterparts.
- 83 per cent of the children said they enjoyed learning about wildlife and the environment, but more than half admitted they wished they could be taught more about it at school.
- More than three quarters of youngsters enjoy going for walks in the countryside to spot wildlife, but 12 per cent say they never get the chance to do this.
- Nearly 70 per cent of parents worry that their child doesn't know enough about nature, wildlife and the environment.
- 69 per cent of parents worry that their child spends too much time indoors playing computer games.

- A staggering 73 per cent of parents believe their child spends less time playing outside than they did at the same age, with the majority of parents spending more than 40 per cent more time outside when they were a child.
- Over half of children (52 per cent) spend under two hours per day playing outdoors.

Conclusions:

Biodiversity is crucial to safeguard life on earth and its loss is a major contributor to climate change. There is a very real need for children, as the future guardians of our planet, to champion this cause. However the survey has highlighted that children are spending significantly less time engaging with nature and more time engaged in 'virtual' activities. Their knowledge of biodiversity and awareness of its importance is in decline, at a time when we need future generations to be more engaged and aware in order to halt its loss.

Children are interested in animals and insects from an early age, but many don't even know the basics to identify them. They want to learn more but are not getting the opportunity to do so. Who is to blame? Are educators neglecting a vital part of children's education, or do parents have a duty to introduce their kids to the great outdoors?

The survey highlights an urgent need to engage and educate children about the natural environment. Parents and educators need to supply them with the knowledge that will help them to preserve the planet. We need to educate children about the importance of biodiversity today, in order to preserve it for tomorrow.

Support:

Dr Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), commented: "Biodiversity supports many basic natural services for humans, such as fresh water, fertile soil and clean air. Biodiversity helps pollinate our flowers and crops, clean up our waste and put food on the table. Without it we would not be able to survive. But globally, biodiversity is under threat. If current biodiversity loss rates continue, this will lead to a crucial loss of vital resources together with genetic and cultural impoverishment.

"The survey results show that children's knowledge of biodiversity is in decline at a time when we need future generations to be more engaged and aware in order to halt its loss. This highlights a very real need to educate our children as the future guardians of our planet, to provide them with the knowledge they need today to preserve the natural world for tomorrow."

Airbus' involvement

On 3rd September, Airbus is sponsoring an exclusive lecture on biodiversity at the Royal Geographical Society as part of *The Green Wave* campaign. World-renowned National Geographic photographer and conservationist, Joel Sartore and Dr Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary for the Convention on Biodiversity, will deliver a call to action to include biodiversity in the wider debate alongside climate change and poverty, emphasising the need to reach out, engage and educate children.

Rainer Ohler from Airbus said: "As part of Airbus' responsibility as an industry leader, we have pledged our support the Convention on Biological Diversity's *The Green Wave* programme.

The aviation industry is aware of its 2% contribution to manmade CO₂, and we are fully committed to reducing this impact through technological advancements. However, Airbus is also committed to putting resources and expertise into supporting the people and organisations tackling the remaining 98% of manmade CO₂ such as loss of biodiversity and deforestation which accounts for around 17% of global green house emissions.

"We hope our commitment to the Green Wave goes some way to affecting this change."

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