

Case Study:

Nature Counts Citizen Science with Pollenize CIC



Pollenize



**green
communities**

Green Communities is an exciting, Plymouth-based partnership project which is shaping neighbourhoods in Devonport, Central Park, Keyham and the West of the City.

We have written a series of case studies to highlight the breadth of work taking place with these nature neighbourhoods. You can read these case studies at greenmindsplymouth.com/greenhubs



Overview

'Nature Counts' is a collaboration between Pollenize CIC and Green Communities, to conduct wildlife surveys using the 'Bioblitz' citizen science species counting methods.

Working across greenspaces sites in Devonport, Keyham and Central Park, the aim is to gather baseline data for local nature recovery and green space plans and to offer new and exciting opportunities for community engagement in nature conservation.

This Case Study has been authored by Pollenize CIC, meaning that all thoughts and conclusions expressed in this study belong to them.

What were we trying to do?

- Gather baseline data on presence and absence of plant species
- Collect data that can be used in wider city strategic documents, giving value to small scale, hyperlocal data sets
- Use the citizen science gathered data to involve local people in conversations around how spaces can be managed for biodiversity
- Increase engagement in nature
- Develop accountability and stewardship
- Help increase engagement in digital tools as means of monitoring plant and insects
- To connect with other potential park users/organisations as a way of increasing collaborative potential in green spaces

LEFT: Green Communities team member, Henry, works with members of the public to identify the insects they have found. Photo credit, Chris Parkes Photography

Why did we do it?

Our mission from the beginning of Pollenize is to explore how we could take macro environmental challenges and bring them to the micro local level, so our drive has always been to democratise and encourage accountability to our urban spaces. Facilitating data collection through citizen science can increase the inclusivity of the dialogue in how we manage our urban green spaces through collaborative approaches.

Collaborating on the 'Nature Counts Events' with Green Communities brings benefits, including enhanced community engagement and a broader reach through combined networks and joint promotional efforts. The collaboration allows for resource sharing, leveraging diverse expertise, and ensuring a uniform approach to data collection through the use of the iNaturalist app. The collaboration strengthens the overall impact of the events, leading to more effective conservation efforts and community involvement. Additionally, the shared learning and capacity building fosters a stronger approach to future projects, with the potential for increased funding opportunities and a more established local presence for both organisations involved.



Who was involved?

- Green Communities staff (PCC and National Trust)
- Pollenize
- Greening Devonport Group

Who funded it?

The Green Communities project funded the collaboration. Green Communities is based in Plymouth City Council's Environmental Planning Division.

When and where did it happen?

Six events took place between June – September 2024 in the following locations:

- Central Park (1 visit)
- Mount Wise (2 visits)
- Keyham (1 visit)
- Devonport Park (Upper and Lower) (2 visits)

"It's amazing how much you notice after doing things like this, he's really getting into it [bug hunting activity] now."

- Nature Counts event participant

LEFT: Green Communities and Pollenize staff explore a sweep net with members of the public. Photo credit, Chris Parkes Photography.

Overleaf (p.3): Jess from Green Communities teaches local children all about bugs. Photo credit, Chris Parkes Photography.



What were the results?

In the project you could see it having both quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

The quantitative outcomes were a data set produced from Floradex suggesting what could be planted to benefit the most number of pollinators, giving a 'planting by numbers' approach to improving biodiversity. This data set was available for each park survey. The limitations on this quantitative data set is that it is based on a presence and absence of species, therefore only monitoring at one point in time would mean that we could have missed other species that would be flowering at different times of the year, therefore a continuous monitoring effort going forward would help build a better picture of the biodiversity on site.

The qualitative outcomes were that all the participants enjoyed using iNaturalist once shown how to navigate it for the purposes of the events. As a general observation from participants using the app, it was agreed that it felt useful that the app was contributing towards a purpose of monitoring and their photos were contributing to something useful for nature.

The parks provide a space for lots of people, all with different perspectives of what a park should function as, but the majority of people attending our events shared the opinion that it was important to manage these spaces for biodiversity.



green
communities

How successful was it?

Across the 6 events, we had 59 participants attend, with some extra allowance for people passing by and stopping to talk at the event gazebo.

Amount of observations from 6 events – **1330 species records** (These are individual records of species, often including photos or sounds, that users submit. Each observation represents an encounter with a species)

Most observed plant species

- Central Park - **Red Clover**
- Devonport Park - **Common Knapweed**
- Mountwise Park - **Vipers Bugloss**
- Keyham Park - **Yarrow**

Most observed insect species

- Central Park - **Meadow Grasshopper**
- Devonport Park - **Honey Bee**
- Mountwise Park - **Thick-legged flower beetle**
- Keyham Park - **Heart & Dart Moth**

Key Learnings

- Continuous monitoring would allow for a more accurate picture of presence and absence of species across the flowering calendar.
- Consider a more collaborative approach to encourage more attendance to any potential future events. Understanding why people want to attend / get out of it? Perhaps more consultation with stakeholders who operate in the parks - and networks of stakeholders who have people who might be interested in these types of events.
- People care about their parks, and providing them with a means to help capture the importance was a success.

Next steps?

- Consideration towards further collaborating on plant and insect monitoring in park spaces with PCC.
- Consideration towards monitoring in Plymouth Nature Reserves / working with Friends of Groups.
- Looking at different parts of the City/parks that might not have received an opportunity to take part in an event like this for the future.