WWT

GENERATION WILD

AVA'S DESTINY

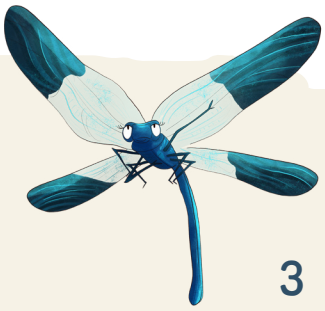
Creating lasting and meaningful connections with nature through storytelling and adventure

TEACHERS' GUIDE

Introducing
Generation Wild: Ava's Destiny

Generation Wild is a project connecting children with nature. It has been developed to benefit schools, children and their families as well as the natural world itself. The project is offered completely free (including free school visit and transport) to eligible schools in disadvantaged areas.* It is aimed at children aged 5-11.

This teachers' guide will talk you through everything you need to know as you work through the project with us. Please also share this information with any other adults involved, particularly those coming on the school visit.



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*Eligibility determined by the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. This varies by centre and is subject to change. Click here to check the eligibility criteria for your nearest centre.

Part 1:
Rationale and approach

Why was the project developed?

Evidence shows that connecting with nature makes children feel happier, increases their self-esteem and improves their behaviour as well as their physical and mental health. It also develops their creativity, imagination, teamwork, communication and observational skills. All of this leads to improved learning.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have fewer opportunities to connect with nature.

Just as children need nature, nature needs children too. It is only by experiencing nature that children will come to love it, respect it and take action to protect it.

What do we mean by connecting with nature?

Connecting with nature involves more than simply spending time in natural environments. In order to gain maximum benefit, people need to interact directly with the environment and wildlife around them. Rather than looking at nature from the outside, they need to experience it directly; feel it, hear it, smell it as well as see it. Most importantly, they need to feel part of nature, rather than separate from it.

All of the activities in Generation Wild are designed to connect people with nature through the five pathways identified by the University of Derby: senses, emotion, compassion, meaning and beauty.

Senses Beauty Emotion Compassion Meaning

Find out more

Linking with the curriculum

Generation Wild provides great opportunities to link with your curriculum. We have developed curriculum-linked resources for geography and science as well as ideas for how elements of the project can link with other curriculum areas. Schools that have taken part to date have told us that the project works best when it ties in with a class topic and some schools have even designed a new topic specifically around Generation Wild. The project runs across the full academic year so it's worth booking your participation for a term that allows this.

Engaging with disadvantaged communities

Many within underserved communities feel that nature is not for them. They worry that they won't fit in, that they don't have all of the right equipment and clothing, that they don't know the names of all of the animals. We believe that nature should be for everyone and aim to break down these barriers.

Why wetlands? Why WWT?

Being close to water is great for people's mental health. Our wetland centres provide the perfect start for schools and families wanting to explore nature. We have facilities such as restaurants, toilets and play areas as well as wilder areas where you can become immersed in the wetland environment. Guides are on hand to help people spot and enjoy the wildlife on offer. They are the ideal stepping-stone from visitor attraction to nature reserve.

Working together

Generation Wild has been designed to connect underserved children and their families with nature. We recognise that we can't do this alone. It is only by working together that we can create a long-lasting emotional connection that will stay with them throughout their lives.

WWT will:

- Provide a free school visit to kick-start the programme.
- Pay your transport costs for this visit up to a maximum of £15 per pupil.
- Provide a free family visit voucher for every child that takes part.
- Provide you and your pupils with access to the project website containing nature activities for all seasons.
- Provide access to curriculum-linked resources to help you to plan Generation Wild work into your wider curriculum work.

We would like you to:

- Read the illustrated story 'Ava's destiny' to the children before your visit.
- Sign your pupils up to the website.
- Get pupils to complete the 'Before visit', 'After visit' and '5 weeks later surveys' to help us demonstrate programme impact.
- Listen to Ava's audio updates on the website after your visit.
- Get your children to sign into the website at school and claim their school visit badge.
- Complete some of the nature activities from the website with your class and log that these have been completed.
- Set Generation Wild activities for homework and encourage children to do these at home with their families.
- Give out certificates and pin badges in assembly to any child that completes ten activities.

Please note: Our ongoing funding for the Generation Wild programme is reliant on us being able to demonstrate that children are completing the nature activities from the website in school and at home with their families. We appreciate anything you can do to help ensure that as many children as possible are able to compete ten activities and become Guardians of the Wild

Part 2:
Introducing Ava

We have taken an exciting, narrative-based approach based on the story of Ava the bird girl.

Prior to their school visit, children are introduced to Ava and her family through a digital illustrated story book. Here they also learn about ospreys and their lives. They witness Ava and her two siblings emerging from the egg, growing up and taking their first flights.

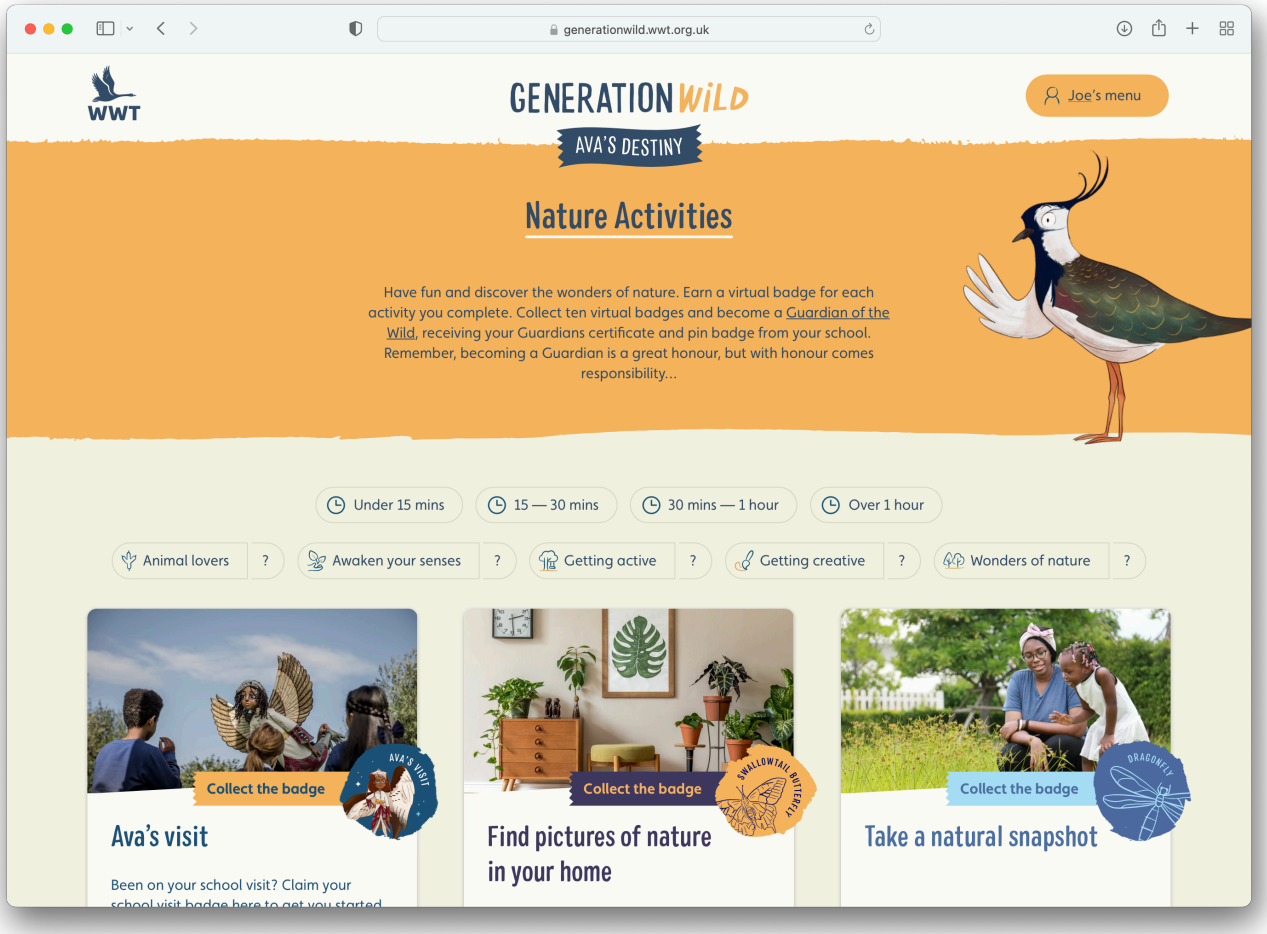
Ava is warned not to fly too close to the wetland centre because past persecution has led to a fear of humans. However, when she sees a giant nest, the temptation is too great. She lands on the nest and falls into a deep sleep. As she slumbers, an extraordinary transformation occurs as she becomes part bird, part girl. For Ava, nothing will ever be quite the same again...

At the beginning of their school visit, the children stumble upon the giant nest. Ava, in life-size puppet form, introduces herself and explains the concept of the Guardians of the Wild who she met in her dreams. Any child that connects with nature where they live can themselves become a Guardian, joining this important group who love and care for all living things. She invites the children to complete a trail where they can meet some of the Guardians and complete nature activities, beginning their quest to themselves become Guardians of the Wild.

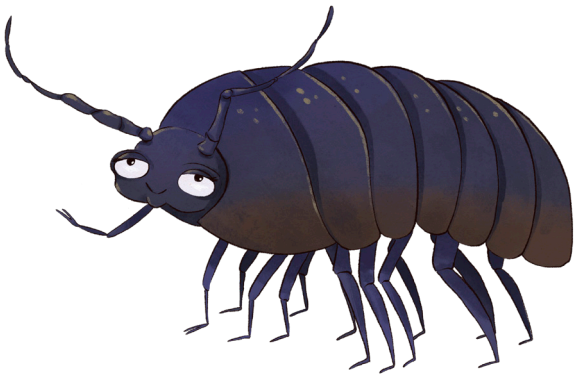
The children discover that Ava must travel to West Africa where she will be re-united with her family and have a chance to prove to the Guardians that today's children are different - they really care about nature and want to protect it.

The visit ends with Ava disappearing into the distance on her quest to find her family and the Guardians of the Wild.

Back at home and at school, children log into the programme website where they track Ava's migration, the story continuing through a series of audio 'blog posts' and culminating with a magical animation.



The website hosts a range of nature-connection activities that can be completed in school grounds, gardens and local greenspaces. Any child that completes 10 activities, whether in school or with their families, will be accepted as a Guardian of the Wild and will receive a Guardians badge and certificate.



Themes within Ava's Destiny

The narrative of Ava's Destiny covers a few different themes that might be worth discussing with your pupils.

Being different

Ava is not like other birds. She has wings and bird legs but much of her is human. This might be an opportunity to discuss what it might be like to feel different from those around you.

Being alone/isolated/separated from parents

Ava's parents have migrated to West Africa whilst she remains in the UK. It is worth bearing in mind emotions this might raise among children who don't live with their parents.

Migratory Journey

The website focusses on Ava's migratory journey as she travels to West Africa. Some children may have experienced migration, perhaps even to escape challenging situations abroad (eg refugee and asylum seeking children). This is a great opportunity for you to explore with your class how Ava might be feeling on this journey.

Part 3:
Preparing for the school visit

The following sections talk through the project activities themselves. This is all summarised in a checklist for teachers at the end of this guide.

Teacher briefing session

Before your visit, we invite you to attend one of our teacher briefing sessions where we will introduce the project in more detail and answer any questions you may have. This can be done in person, online or over the phone.

Introducing Ava's story

We ask that before you come on the visit, you don't mention anything that will happen on the trip or the remainder of the project. This is to keep the element of wonder and surprise when pupils stumble upon the nest and meet Ava for the first time (see school visit section). It's important that before your visit you read 'Ava's Destiny' to the children without reference to WWT or the project (as though it was just a normal story like any other you might use in the classroom). As you go through the story, you can click on the info buttons to reveal factual information linked to that part of the narrative.

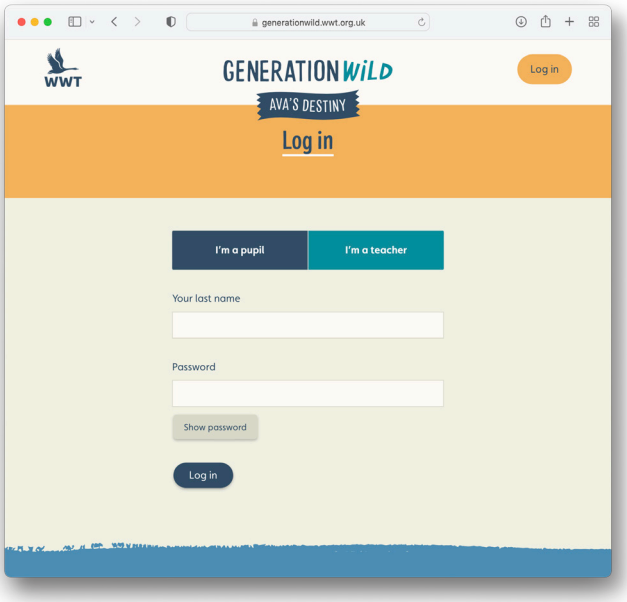
Linking with your curriculum

Prior to your visit, you might also like to look at some of the curriculum-linked resources to see where these could fit into your existing plans.

Setting up the website

Once signed up to the project, you will receive a log-in for the Generation Wild website. When you log-in for the first time, you will be invited to set up log-ins for each of your pupils. This means they will be able to start to enjoy the website with their families as soon as you have visited. Please also check that your class details are correct. You can then start to familiarise yourself with the website and how everything works.

It is really important that you set your children up on the website before your visit.



Research

As part of the ongoing evaluation of Generation Wild, pupils are asked to complete a short online survey: Before the visit >> After the visit >> 5 weeks later

These surveys help us understand whether taking part in Generation Wild is associated with changes in children's: Wellbeing >> Care and connection to nature

This information helps us ensure the programme is working for children and their families, secure future funding and continue to offer the programme free of charge.

The surveys should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Transport

We are able to cover the cost of your transport for the school visit up to a maximum of £15 per pupil. Your Bursar / Business Manager will receive details of how to re-claim this.

Clothing and footwear

Children and accompanying adults will be spending the whole day outdoors so please come dressed and prepared for the weather. Because the activities promote direct contact with nature, both children and adults may get muddy so please bear this in mind when suggesting to parents what the children should wear.

Accessibility and inclusivity

All of the Generation Wild trails are wheelchair accessible, but may involve coming off the hard-surfaced paths. If there has been heavy rain, parts of the trail may be a bit muddy. Generation Wild is delivered through a mix of audio and visual activities. Please let us know if any pupils need adaptations on the day.

We have produced a range of resources to help prepare SEND children for their visit to the wetland centre. Please feel free to edit these to meet your needs.

Health and safety

You can find a copy of our risk assessment on the resources for schools page of the website. If you require any further information to help you ensure a safe visit, please get in touch.

Part 4:
The school visit

When you first arrive on your school visit, no mention will be made of the activities to come. You will 'accidentally' stumble across the giant nest and meet Ava. Through a five minute puppet performance, Ava will introduce the story so far.

You will then split into groups for an activity trail. For safeguarding reasons, each group must be accompanied by an adult from your school.

Each trail consists of three listening posts, each with an associated nature-connection activity. The group leader will be provided with a map showing the location of each post. Upon arrival at each post, place the translatorphone on the sensor and an animal will introduce a nature activity for the children to complete. Please also read the instructions on the post as these provide more detail of what the children need to do. Older children may be asked to carry out an additional code-breaking task.

Unless stated, children can complete these activities as individuals, pairs or larger groups – whichever they prefer. The adult should play a supporting role, ensuring the children know what to do but should leave the children to work independently as far as possible. It doesn't matter if there isn't time to visit all three posts. These same activities are included on the website so any the children really enjoy can be repeated back at home / school. The adult should keep the group moving and avoid stopping on the journey between posts. There will be time in the day to have a good look around.

The experience ends with a further five minute puppet performance where the children will help Ava learn to fly. The experience ends with Ava disappearing into the distance as she begins her quest to find her family and the Guardians of the Wild.

We know that some of the children won't have visited the wetlands before. During the time when you are not involved in the above experience, do feel free to explore the wetland centre at your leisure. There's lots to see and do.

Repeat visits

We encourage repeat year-on-year visits so long as you bring a different group of children each year and have demonstrated a commitment to following up the project back at school. **Priority will be given to those schools where previous classes have completed and evidenced nature activities on the project website.**

Part 5:
Promoting the website and free family visits

During your visit, you will be provided with the following items (all one per pupil):

1. Envelopes containing a free family visit ticket and some information promoting the Generation Wild website.

Please write on each child's name and their website password (see 'setting up website' section above) and hand these out as soon as possible following the visit.

2. Guardians of the Wild certificates and pin badges.

Please don't give these out straight away. These are to be awarded to each child once they have completed ten nature activities and become a Guardian of the Wild. You will receive an email notification each time a child completes their tenth activity. It would be great if you could then award them their badge and certificate in assembly.

Because encouraging on-going engagement at home is such an important part of the project, it would be great if you could promote the website and free visits to families through any digital channels, newsletters etc.

Part 6:
Following up back at school

The project website

Follow-up activity is managed through the project website at www.generationwild.org.uk. It has two main elements, which are open to you as a teacher and to each family:

1 Nature connection activities

The website contains approximately 50 different nature connection activities. These activities have been developed with a range of children in mind and are divided into five different categories:

Animal lovers: These activities involve direct contact with, or observation of, wildlife. They promote empathy and kindness towards other animals.

Awaken your senses: These activities involve experiencing nature through the full range of senses. Through these activities, children become completely immersed in the natural world.

Getting creative: These activities involve making things, creating art with natural materials and exploring the environment through language and drama. They encourage creativity and imagination.

Getting active: These activities encourage enjoyment of nature through natural play. They are great for active learners who prefer a hands-on approach.

Wonders of nature: These activities encourage children to take a closer look and take time to appreciate the beauty and wonder of nature. Many are quiet, contemplative activities that have an element of mindfulness.

Each activity has an associated virtual animal badge awarded to each child once the activity is completed. Pupils are automatically awarded the badge when they complete and evidence an activity at home. You can also award badges to children through the pupil tracker if they complete them in school or are unable to evidence them at home.

Please work with the children to log into the website at school and claim their school visit badge. This will familiarise them with how to use the website and get them started. Once children have completed ten activities they become a Guardian of the Wild. You will receive an email alert to let you know and we ask that you arrange for them to be awarded their badge and certificate in assembly.

Any child that completes all of the activities will be awarded a free family membership entitling them and their family to visit the wetland centre free of charge for a whole year*.

*Limited to a maximum of 100 free memberships per year. If the unlikely event that the number of children completing all activities exceeds this, they will be allocated via a prize draw.

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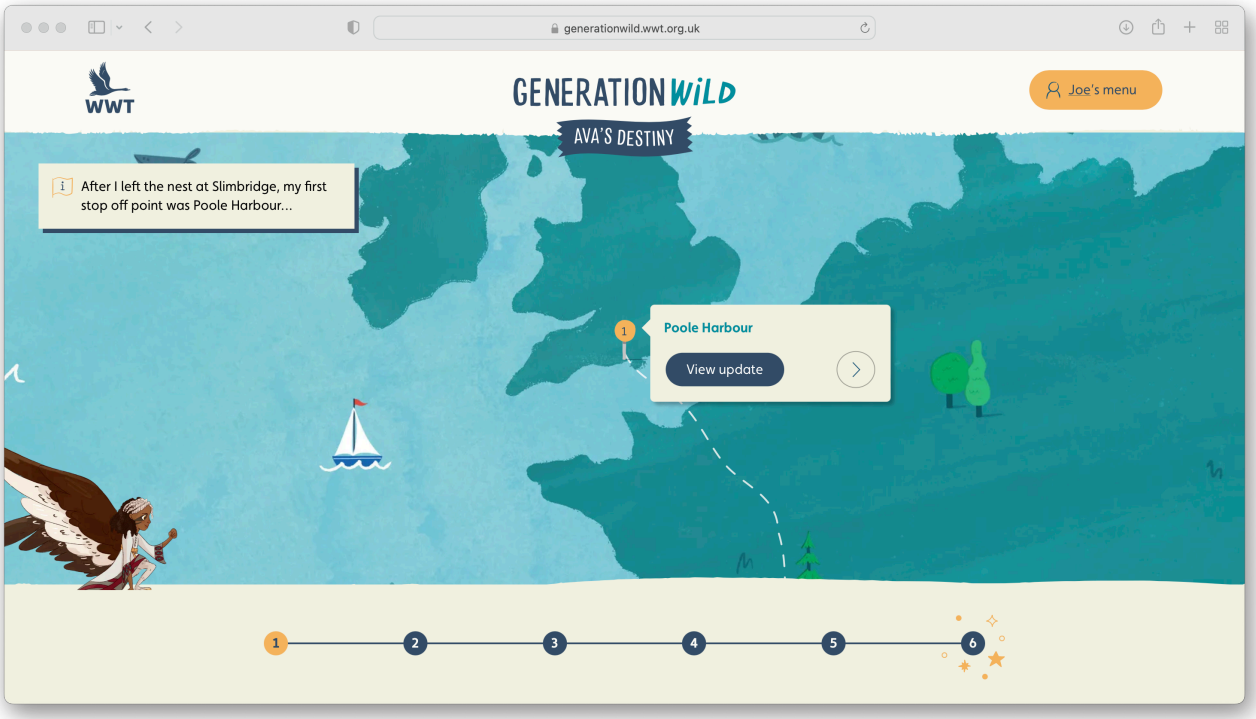
2 Tracking Ava's progress

Find out what happens to Ava by following her journey on the website. Her story is told through a series of audio blog posts.

Don't miss the magical animation that concludes Ava's epic tale when she finally meets the Guardians of the Wild!

You can complete this important part of the Generation Wild experience in a single sitting or split it into several sessions. Each audio blog post is 2-2.5 mins long and to complete all 6 including the animation takes approximately 20 mins.



Follow-up activity in school

It's up to you how long your continued engagement lasts. We are suggesting 4-6 weeks but this will obviously depend on where your visit fits into the school calendar.

As a minimum, we ask that you:

- **Log into the website** with the children and help them to claim their school visit badge.
- **Complete some of the nature activities from the website** with your class and log that these have been completed. These can be completed in lesson time, at break and lunch times, during after-school clubs or as part of Forest School sessions.
- **Set Generation Wild activities for homework** and encourage children to do these at home with their families.
- **Review how many nature activities each child has completed**, offering praise and encouragement.
- **Award children their certificates and badges** in assembly once they have completed 10 activities.
- Get the children to **complete the 'After visit' and '5 weeks later' surveys**.
- **Listen to the updates and watch the animation** to conclude Ava's story.

Part 7:
Checklist for teachers

Once your booking is confirmed

- [ ] Receive your log-in for the Generation Wild website.
- [ ] Set up website log-ins for each of your pupils (via the class settings page).
- [ ] Take a look at the curriculum-linked resources to see if any elements of the project can tie in with your existing curriculum work.

Preparing for your visit

- [ ] Read the Ava's Destiny story with your class. Explore their thoughts on what might happen next.
- [ ] Get pupils to complete the 'Before visit' survey

Immediately following the school visit

- [ ] Write each child's name and their website password on the take-home envelope and send these home with the children.
- [ ] Promote the website and family visits to parents.
- [ ] Get pupils to complete the 'After the visit' survey

Following up in school

- [ ] Help your pupils to log into the website at school and claim their school visit badge.
- [ ] Complete some of the nature activities in school and evidence these using the pupil tracker.
- [ ] Set nature activities for homework.
- [ ] Go into the pupil tracker once or twice a week to see how many activities children have completed - offer praise and encouragement.
- [ ] Award certificates and pin badges in assembly to children that have completed ten nature activities and become a Guardian of the Wild (you will receive an email notification).
- [ ] Conclude Ava's story on the website.
- [ ] Get pupils to complete the '5 weeks later' survey