

Puffin Prize Entry- Nathan Nicholson

1) My favourite experience with nature: Skomer Island Visit:

My name is Nathan Nicholson; I am thirteen years old and love wildlife. Ever since I was little, I have enjoyed going on walks through the Peak District and even local walks. Over the years I have visited



A rabbit on Skomer

many places. However, my favourite place to experience wildlife at its greatest is Skomer Island (a small island off the coast of Pembrokeshire, Wales). On my annual visits to the nature reserve I have enjoyed seeing the large and diverse collection of wildlife found in such a small area. Some of my favourites are the seals, rabbits, and sea birds including the well known Puffins. The sea in which Skomer lies is also one of the greatest Marine Nature Reserves, which protects

and nourishes the sea life within.

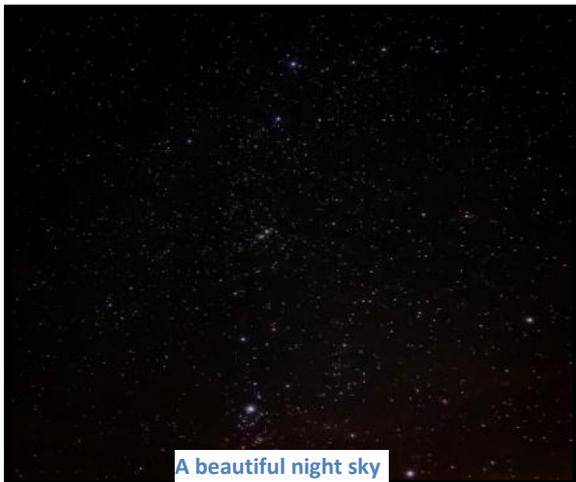
Of all of my visits, one has stood out the most. Last year in September, my family and I stayed overnight on Skomer, in the hope to witness the one and only Manx Shearwaters. The time away from the loud cars, large plumbs of smoke and large crowds of people was definitely worth it. On our night walks we were rewarded with beautiful star filled skies, which were definitely a sight to behold.



The Barn on Skomer Island

With the Shearwaters flying in from feeding out at sea, walking through the narrow paths became a struggle. The many birds flew in from every direction and clumsily stumbled around in the bracken, hoping to find their burrow. Hardly a second passed where we weren't dodging in and out of the frantic flapping of wings, desperate not to tread on them. Our red head torches revealed little

ahead, however the bright lights of the stars did us



A beautiful night sky

a great favour.



A Shearwater trying to find a good take-off point

The next morning we awoke in the cosy barn, in which

we were staying. After a short but filling breakfast we headed out to the Shearwater burrows, where

we would be weighing and recording the chicks.

After the short walk we were soon at our destination, where we were greeted by two of the helpful wardens. After a quick demonstration we one by one took it in turns to lift the chicks out of their

burrows. It was a great experience (like nothing I had ever done before). We would reach down into the burrow and grab the bird: cradling down its wings, in order to prevent its escape. Our hands would then re-appear with a small bundle of fluffy feathers which jumped and wobbled tirelessly. The wardens would then place them into a bag were they were weighed before returning them t o their burrows, which they greeted with open wings and a cheerful chirp.

My many experiences have helped me understand the importance of wildlife throughout the world, and the effects humans are having on them. I believe that it is now more important than ever to turn to more eco-friendly options and consider our everyday choices in more depth. For example re-cycling, using solar panels and even using zero emission transport. One of the most deadly pieces of litter is the ever growing army of plastic bags. These have become a big problem for wildlife and sea life alike. Through the increasing numbers on beaches, cliffs and the ocean, they have endangered many animals that use these areas to breed and live. Due to this, they have also become part of our eco-system. My many trips have definitely helped me to appreciate nature, and to be interested in preserving it.

Over the years this issue has become more and more apparent, and thankfully with that, organisations have risen and protests have begun, as we fight back for the freedom and safety of our planet.

2) Why I enjoy nature and how it makes me feel:

I enjoy nature, because it gives me a sense of freedom and it is always a delight to see a mountain hair at home in the peak district or sea bird when we are out walking on holiday. It is also nice to get exercise, and stay fit. During the lockdown me and my family have managed to seek out local walks. On our trips we have discovered many amazing tracks full of field's forests, rivers and much more. A way which helped my family and I get more involved with wildlife was the weekly Skomer podcast. This encouraged us to go out and explore more. I believe that these podcast and nature shows would encourage many people to explore nature's many wonders.



Weighing the Shearwaters



Swallows next to the Barn



Two Skomer Rabbits



Some Fungi