



PRESS RELEASE

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Bushcraft and birdboxes on the agenda for Syrian refugees

Refugees resettling in the UK have been getting out into the countryside, thanks to a joint initiative from Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees and The Ernest Cook Trust.

Syrian families, who came to the UK through the Government's Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme, enjoyed a picnic and learning some countryside skills, including bushcraft and building their own bird boxes.

Three sessions were funded and run by The Ernest Cook Trust, based in Gloucestershire, following an approach from Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees.

The Ernest Cook Trust is a UK-wide educational charity, which creates outdoor experiences for children, young people and their families, on its own estates and with partner estates across the country. It also offers grants for outdoor learning activities.

"Coming out of lockdown, we were aware that many young people had missed opportunities and experiences. We were delighted to collaborate with an organisation working with refugees as these families were particularly likely to have faced challenging circumstances," said Emily Crawley, Head of Learning at The Ernest Cook Trust.

"This is exactly the type of work we like to undertake, as it helps children and their families in the community to get outdoors and in touch with nature."

Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees is a small, volunteer-led charity, aiming to ensure refugee families and asylum seekers in Cheltenham feel welcomed and supported.

Isabel Ruckelshaus, of Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees, said: "The teenagers had a wonderful time. The past year was challenging for them, having to succeed at school in a foreign language and environment amidst the pandemic. The Ernest Cook Trust offered them a perfect opportunity to learn new skills, have fun and enjoy a much-needed break."

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During the first event, the families enjoyed a picnic together, and the next two sessions were just for the teenagers.

They visited the Education Workshop at The Ernest Cook Trust's Fairford headquarters, where they learnt how to build their own bird boxes, which they then took home to put up locally. The final session was at The Ernest Cook Trust's Redwood Outdoor Learning Centre in Slimbridge, where they did some team building and learnt bushcraft skills.

Emily added: "The feedback was really positive, with great engagement, especially from the young people. One of the adults said it really increased their confidence in speaking English. We are hoping this may lead to further programmes next summer."

For more information about work The Ernest Cook Trust carries out, visit <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/>. For details of Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees, visit <https://www.cheltenhamwelcomesrefugees.org.uk/>.

Additional information:

<https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/everything-outdoors/#community>

<https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/news/2021/10/youre-welcome/>

