



PRESS RELEASE

May 2024

Students go wild with sculpture exhibition

Young people who have been learning employability skills with UK educational charity The Ernest Cook Trust, will once again be exhibiting alongside Quenington's biennial Fresh Air Sculpture.

And their creations – largely made from reclaimed materials - are taking on a wildlife theme.

Around 25 young people, from schools in Fairford, Cirencester and Witney, have been spending time at the Trust's Student Workshop in Fairford, creating ambitious sculptures from reclaimed materials and materials grown on the Trust's estates. It's all part of a Skills for Nature programme, run by The Ernest Cook Trust, which funds and delivers Outdoor Learning opportunities for young people and families.

The students' pieces will be on show in St Swithin's Churchyard, next to the entrance to Fresh Air Sculpture, and their collection will represent a wildlife park.

There will be an array of insect and bug homes and feeders; owl and bat boxes; and bird feeding stations. A section of the show will be dedicated to animals, and feature a life-sized gorilla made from roofing battens and ivy, as well as a tiger, a lion and a giant seahorse!

Some of the materials are reclaimed and come from the Trust's estates, including oak from felled deadwood, ivy removed from tree trunks, coppiced hazel, and junk metal.

The students have also made a range of benches, so there will be plenty of places to sit and picnic and enjoy the artwork, before or after visiting the main Fresh Air Sculpture exhibition, adjacent to the churchyard.

Pete Tatham, one of The Ernest Cook Trust's Outdoor Learning Officers in Gloucestershire, said the students had been working hard to produce some incredible artwork to put on show.

"We've picked a wildlife theme, and have a really eclectic mix of pieces," he said. "The students are aged between 12 to 19 and some we have worked with for as long as four years, learning skills that they wouldn't be able to pick up in school. They are all working towards a range of employability awards."

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The majority of the exhibits are being shown for the first time and have been made by current students. The giant metal seahorse was created by two students who have now left education and went on to get placements at a blacksmiths, following a weeklong blacksmithing training course run in partnership with Fresh Air last year.

Emily Bird, Curator of Education at Fresh Air sculpture, said: "We always welcome the Fresh Air Fringe that The Ernest Cook Trust students deliver. It's hugely popular with the public and the whole ethos of the work and programme fits so well with our aim to make the arts accessible to all."

This year's Fresh Air Sculpture runs from 16 June to 7 July, and The Ernest Cook Trust is once again supporting Fresh Air Sculpture's education programme. For more information visit <https://www.freshairsculpture.com/>.

The Ernest Cook Trust is a UK-wide educational charity which creates outdoor learning experiences for children, young people and their families, on its own estates and with partners across the country. The Trust's vision is for an environmentally engaged society with stronger connections to nature. For more information visit <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/>.