

## Editorial

This month saw a number of significant developments in NIFSA.

We are extremely excited that NIFSA has now become an accredited Open College Network Centre. This means that NIFSA can now offer Forest School qualifications independently of any other organisation. NIFSA primarily concentrate on delivering the tailor-made 12 week Forest School Leader Award Level 3. To date nearly 20 Forest School Leaders have been trained and accredited in Northern Ireland.



*Holy Family Primary School, North Belfast*

## **Holy Family and Currie Primary School Cross-Community Forest School Project**

NIFSA has started with classes from Holy Family and Currie Primary School. They meet every Thursday afternoon to explore Alexandra Park in North Belfast. The schools represent different sections of the community. There is a "Peace Wall" located in the middle of the park. Activities will take place on both sides of the wall.



*"Peace Wall" in Alexandra Park, North Belfast*



## Resources

The Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) network is a UK-wide citizen science initiative that allows **you** to get hands-on with nature, whatever your age, background or level of ability.

We develop activities and resources, including our national surveys, which allow you to get closer to your local environment while collecting important scientific data. We also arrange and take part in nature events and workshops around the country.



<http://www.opalexplornature.org/>

## Bug Count

**Help us investigate how the built environment affects invertebrates**

**Do you know what bugs are living near you? Take part in Bugs Count and discover the incredible variety of invertebrates that make their home around us.**

Find as many bugs as you can in our timed challenges and keep a special eye out for the six [Species Quest bugs](#).

Your findings will help scientists learn more about the distribution of invertebrates across the country and how the urban environment may be affecting them.

<http://www.opalexplornature.org/bugscount>

## What's living in your hedge?

Take part in the OPAL Biodiversity Survey and uncover the diverse range of wildlife in our hedges. You'll contribute to valuable research and learn more about the importance of hedges and how you can improve them.

Hedges support many animals by providing food and shelter. Berries and seeds are food for birds, while holes beneath the hedge are often home to small mammals. You'll also discover many invertebrates living among the leaves.

By telling us what you find, we can instantly rate the condition of your hedge and offer suggestions on how to improve it.

## How to take part

**Step 1:** Download the easy-to-follow instructions and guides in English, below, or [in Welsh](#).

**Step 2:** Find a suitable hedge to carry out the survey and answer the questions in the workbook. Use our guide to help you identify invertebrates.

**Step 3:** Submit your results using our [simple online form](#).



Please show care and respect to our environment. Many animals rely on hedges for food and shelter.



NIFSA - Promoting sustainable environmental education programmes in Northern Ireland