

Dirt = danger?

Sophie Greenway, PhD student at University of Warwick's Centre for the History of Medicine, recently completed her secondment with the Trust at Brandon Marsh - investigating how our perception of dirt might stop us from engaging with nature.

My initial research on homes and gardens from 1930 to 1970 showed that public health advice about domestic hygiene in that period fed into a huge increase in the production and consumption of products for cleaning and pest control. Although they reduced the burden of relentless housework, these products have not been beneficial to our health or the planet's.

Back in the present day, the education team at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust encourages children to get outside and get muddy in the Mud Kitchens at both Parkridge and Brandon Marsh Visitor Centres. I was interested in modern attitudes to dirt, and spoke to the children's parents and carers about the balance between hygiene and exposing their children to dirt to build their immunity.

'If my grandchildren have muddy play I worry about germs and hate the mess!'

Survey response

Many appreciated the fact that children can get muddy at Brandon without the need to clear up and expressed guilt at the lack of opportunities their children had to get muddy. There were different approaches to dirt between generations. Some grandparents were relaxed about children getting muddy, whilst others were very concerned about hygiene.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust encourages people to interact confidently with wildlife and wild places. I hope my research can

Mud kitchen now open!

The brand new Mud Kitchen at Parkridge is now open to muddy little visitors! Book your children onto Nature Tots or Nature Families and get them mini-beast hunting and den-building at one of our wonderfully wet, majestically muddy nature reserves! Turn to page 18 to find out what else is happening at Parkridge!

encourage more people to experience nature by addressing concerns that might hold them back. The Mud Kitchens are a great asset for families and a place to allow children to make up their own minds about dirt and getting muddy.

 Thanks to staff, volunteers and the public for supporting my research this year. To read the full report, please email s.a.greenway@warwick.ac.uk

