

## **Peak District National Park Youth Rangers get recognition.**

### **Background**

In 2004 The Peak District was awarded £25,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Youth Ranger Programme involving children aged 13-15yrs of age living in and around the National Park.

The aim of the programme is to inspire and enthuse young people about the protected area in which they live. The young people receive practical educational based skills in conservation and natural heritage working alongside the rangers.

Skills that children learn while on the programme include navigation, interpretation of the landscape, woodland management, conservation tasks such as restoration of dew ponds and survival skills.

Since 2004 the programme has gone from strength to strength with 24 children already completed the programme. Six children have already represented the Peak District National Park by attending International Youth Ranger camps. Children have had the chance to link up with other Youth Rangers from nine other European countries supported by Europarc .

### **Gesause International Youth Ranger Congress**

Four Peak District Youth Rangers were given the opportunity to attend the Youth Ranger Congress in Gesause National Park in Austria in August 2005. One-hundred and twenty children attended in total and the youth rangers were able to shadow a ranger and given valuable practical work experience. This was challenging as one of the projects involved building a log bridge across an alpine gorge. This involved a line of children of all nationalities working together to pull avalanched logs from the bottom of the gorge. No mean feat! Team work prevailed and the children proudly showed what European co-operation can do (Title of Picture ) Building bridges with Europe. Children also gave presentations about their own protected area and a cultural evening where national dress and foods from their country were shared.

### **Accreditation**

The 2006 intake of rangers which will involve schools from both Sheffield and Derbyshire, will now receive accreditation for being involved in the Youth Ranger Programme both through ASDAN (an awarding body) and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The program will now be an equivalent to 1/2 a GCSE through ASDAN awarding body and fulfills the Bronze level requirements of the Duke of Edinburgh Award, thus encouraging participants from a wider social background and giving them an incentive to be involved in conservation and heritage tasks as well as having fun at the same time.

In October 2005 the Youth Rangers both past and present shared what they learnt on the programme at an event held at Losehill Hall. This was attended by the chief executive Jim Dixon and Authority Members of the National Park as well as teachers and families. The participants not only gave presentations on their experiences and demonstrated their Youth Ranger website but also gave recommendations on how they perceived the programme developing in the future. With that in mind, I can see that I will be kept on my toes for a good while yet.

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For further details of the Youth Ranger Programme visit:

[www.youthrangers.com](http://www.youthrangers.com)