Discover and share your curiosity in nature
Our Education & Public Engagement Strategy for 2020-2025
Foreword:

Three hundred years ago, Carl Linnaeus published the first edition of a book, believing that he would be the first to name and classify every animal, plant and mineral in existence. His curiosity in the natural world had no bounds and, though he remained in Sweden for most of his life, he became an epicentre of scientific discovery.

Today, the Linnean Society of London embraces the entire sweep of the natural world, encompassing science, history and art. Our history is rich in stories of academic excellence, discovery and discussion.

In 2020, it may be difficult not to look at the world a little bleakly. Our delicate ecosystem appears to be balancing on a thread and at the same time we are spending more time indoors than any previous generation. How does this indoor, screen-filled and nature-blind life affect our view of the world, its resources, and the species that live alongside us? And, looking inward, how might this be affecting our mental and physical health?

The Linnean Society and Linnean Learning is in a unique position to create opportunities for everyone to re-engage with nature in a variety of ways. And by making use of the talents of our staff, our Fellowship and the experience of others, we can make a difference.

Joe Burton
Education & Public Engagement Manager (2017-2020)

A quick note on our taxonomy!
‘Linnean Learning’ is the name of the Linnean Society’s banner for projects which work with young people under 18 years old (as well as their teachers and parents).
Overview
We want to see a world where curiosity in the natural world is shared by all ages and backgrounds. We will do this by using our heritage to create opportunities for everyone to appreciate and learn more about nature through creative, interdisciplinary learning.

Key Priorities

» Collaboration:
We will prioritise collaboration and the open sharing of our resources to everyone’s benefit.

» Diversity & Representation:
We will prioritise increasing the diversity of our audiences as well as showcasing under-represented groups within each of our projects.

» Strengthening our niche:
We will proritise the strengthening of our niche as an organisation that uses taxonomy and our heritage as starting points to understand the breadth and importance of nature.

Strategic Objectives

1. Centre the Linnean Society as a truly inclusive forum for teaching, learning and dialogue about the natural world.
2. Promote excellence in Public Engagement with Research.
3. Make use of our rich history and collections to share the importance of nature with digital audiences.
4. Support teachers to nurture curiosity in the natural world through opportunities which are nature-based and student-led.
5. Foster interdisciplinarity by connecting natural science with art, literature and history.

Inspired protestors at the Green Man Festival
Objective 1: Centre the Linnean Society as a truly inclusive forum for teaching, learning and dialogue about the natural world

Our Rationale

We believe that the Linnean Society is a unique venue and platform for valuable dialogue about the natural world, both on individual and societal levels, and we strongly believe that these discussions will produce optimal outcomes with a diverse audience. The Society champion’s inclusion and in order to fulfil this goal we need to ensure that our programmes are open, accessible and inviting to all.

Our Approach

The Society will place inclusion at the forefront of ongoing and new engagement initiatives which will continue to engage existing audiences while expanding our reach. We will explore new concepts for events, workshops and alternative uses for the Burlington House space. We will market events in new locations and assess our communication style and audience reach. Working on an evidence-based system, employing robust assessment processes, we will evaluate our impact with attendees and third parties to fine-tune our short and long term goals. Finally, our filmed events will continue to be published online with a renewed emphasis on dissemination and engagement.

Key Deliverables

» The Society will engage with external communities and connect speakers with opportunities to engage the public in regional and international events under our banner.
» The Society will host free workshops in the Discovery Room specifically targeting new audiences from diverse ages, backgrounds and interests.
» The Society will trial new styles of events, e.g. informal quizzes, debates, music.
» An analysis of current impact of public engagement events will be undertaken.
» The Society Vodcasts will be assessed and engaging segments may be used as publicity material on social media platforms.
Objective 2: Promote excellence in Public Engagement with Research

Our Rationale

The Linnean Society has a long history of encouraging debate, discussion and observation around natural history and its conservation, as well as giving a platform for experts to engage and be challenged by academic peers and the public. We recognise the importance of learning the skills to effectively engage the public with research and ideas.

Our Approach

The Society will engage with researchers and science communicators to provide a platform for delivering high quality public engagement with research; supporting researchers with training, grants and awards.

Key Deliverables

» The Society will support other institutional student conferences through funding and awards for public engagement.
» The Linnean Society Student Conference will be secured as an annual event for postgraduate students to focus on communicating their research to a public audience.
» The Society will invest in delivering student skill sessions in the Discovery Room for researchers to improve and diversify their public engagement and science communication skills.

Alex McGoran, Winner of the 2019 Linnean Society Student Conference
Objective 3:
Make use of our rich history and collections to share the importance of nature with digital audiences

Our Rationale

The Linnean Society sits in a unique position of legacy and historic importance. Our collections are substantial, inspiring and give a wonderful insight into our natural world. We believe that our collections can have great impact on engaging people with the natural world.

Our Approach

While the Society will always be open and eager to carefully show its’ collections to the public, we recognise that this face-to-face engagement approach is limited in its potential reach. We will therefore develop and tailor our digital engagement portfolio to connect with a variety of local and global audiences, as well as being available to react to new trends and opportunities.

Key Deliverables

» The Society will invest in increasing our digital reach to ensure that content is accessed as widely as possible.
» The Society will create digital media products focussing on the Linnean Society and its Collections.
» The Society will establish a integrated media production partnership with its journals to bring this quality content to new audiences through digital animation.
» The Society will react to opportunities to collaborate and create unique digital content.

Carl Linnaeus, in Mythical Creatures and How to Name them. A Linnean Learning Video.
Objective 4: 
Support teachers to nurture curiosity in the natural world through opportunities which are nature-based and student-led

Our Rationale

Nature-based and student-led learning shifts the pressure away from teachers as the source of knowledge and encourages young people to engage with the natural world and use reflection and information-gathering to come to their own conclusions, taking on the mantle of the expert.

Creating these learning experiences can be daunting for teachers who have limited time, resources and specific training. Linnean Learning is well positioned to offer support in the form of simple practical guidance and resources.

Our Approach

We offer primary and secondary schools free physical and digital resources that complement and expand on the national curriculum. We will engage with a wide range of practitioners to gain expert advice which can be shared with teachers.

Key Deliverables

» Linnean Learning will follow a new set of ‘Linnaeus-inspired’ values: namely exploration, recording and learning. Our resources will be aligned with these values, to aid teachers in exploring all topics covered in the national curriculum from KS1 to KS4, within the academic remit of the Society.

» Linnean Learning will provide educational grants for school projects that promote active learning in nature.

» Linnean Learning will provide teacher CPD sessions to explore nature-based, student-led and interdisciplinary learning.

» Linnean Learning will develop a network of teachers to act as forum for discussion and sharing of best practice and advice.

» Linnean Learning will develop strong partnerships to share resources and increase impact.

Portrait of Linnaeus drawn by Leo, 10 as part of the Linnaeus’ New Portrait Competition
Objective 5: Foster interdisciplinarity by connecting natural science with art, literature and history

Our Rationale

The Linnean Society recognises that natural history brings together science, art, literature and history in a meaningful way. We believe that an appreciation of nature through other subjects can lead to a deeper curiosity in science and scientific careers, and can reduce anxiety when discussing important scientific issues.

Our Approach

Through the lens of creativity and artistic freedom, we will explore scientific concepts and the natural world as a whole. We will work with professionals who cross perceived boundaries between subjects, and run engagement projects which recognise those who successfully make use of interdisciplinarity.

Key Deliverables

» Linnean Learning will continue to run the BioMedia Meltdown outreach programme in London schools and instigate a new evaluation project to investigate its impact.
» Linnean Learning will explore further opportunities to exhibit participants’ work, through the Society’s platforms and in external institutions.
» Linnean Learning will explore new audiences for BioMedia Meltdown, including hard-to-reach communities and people with SEND.
» Linnean Learning will work with teachers of science and art to create a dialogue within schools, and also to create a forum where art and science teachers can share ideas and resources.
» The Linnean Society will create an artist in residency programme for the Discovery Room to generate new artistic perspectives from the Society’s history and collections.
» The Linnean Society will use the Discovery Room for public workshops which explore natural history through interdisciplinary means.

Darwin sitting and pondering evolution in this BioMedia Meltdown Competition entry