

20 | Final
23 | Report



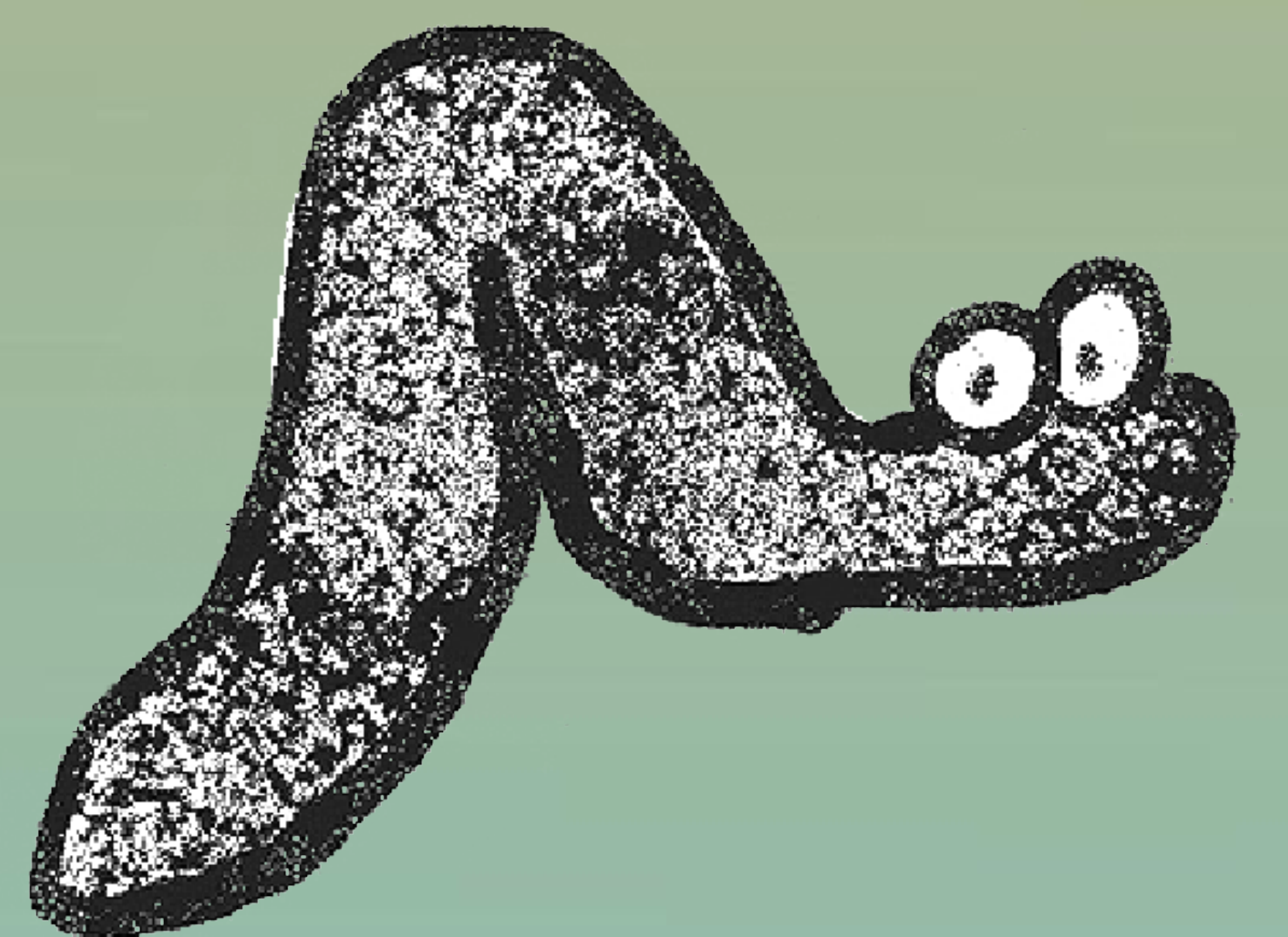
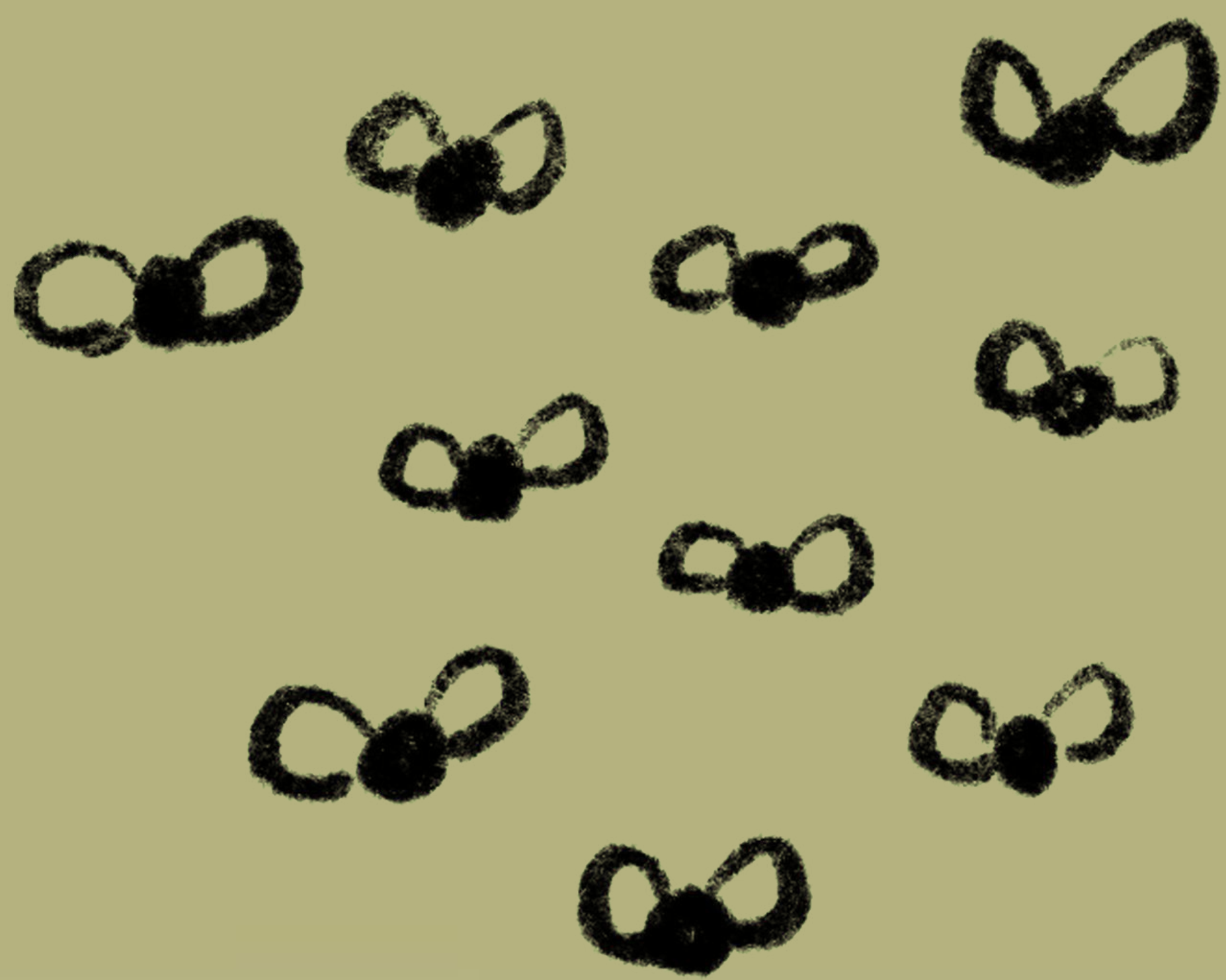
The all-5-senses educational programme about
peatlands
Designed for youth by youth

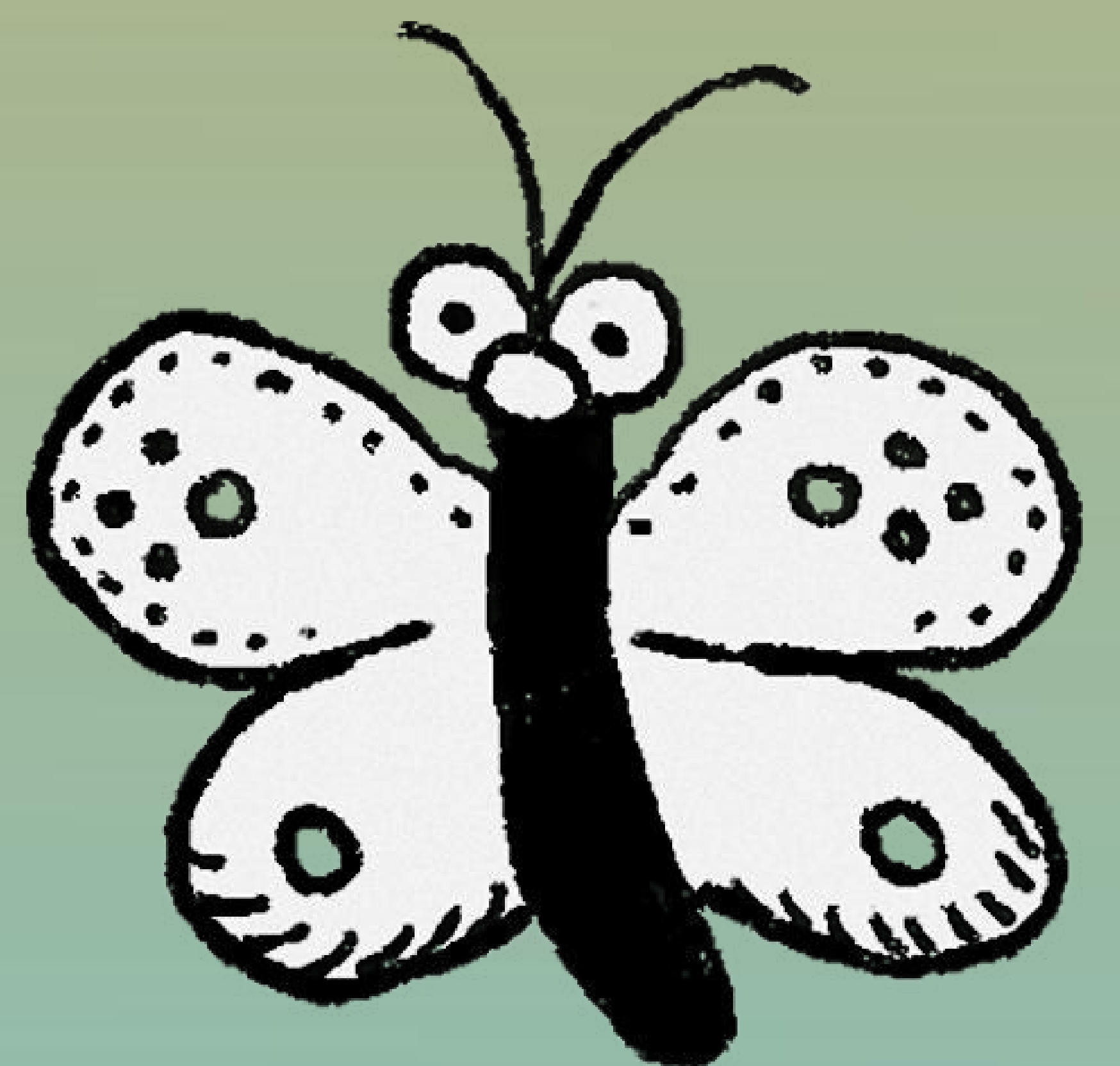


**An Roinn Cultúir,
Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta**
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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Department of Housing, Local Government and
Heritage in the framework of the Peatlands
Community Engagement Scheme 2023.

Thank you to Oonagh Casey Photography
for the pictures





What is Bog Academy?

Bog Academy is a two-day educational programme that was created in 2021 by RE-PEAT to inspire and teach young people between the ages of 7-12 about the multiple and largely under-appreciated wonders of peatlands.

RE-PEAT, as a youth-led collective, views young people as major stakeholders when it comes to climate, ecological, and social justice issues, seeing them as leading drivers for positive transformation in the present and the future. Thus motivating this programme created by youth for youth.



Bog Academy encourages children to experience peatlands in a non-conventional and tangible way. While the in-depth exploration of peatlands in-class allows pupils to develop more theoretical ideas about peatlands interconnectedness with life, space, time, local heritage, and culture. The excursion to their local peatland with a local tour guide allows them to visit and connect with a peatland in real-life. The content is adapted to locally relevant cultural references and stories, which help to demonstrate the place-based and historic connection that the children have with the peatlands in their area.

This year marks the 3rd edition of the programme. Upscaled to 7 schools, 14 classes, a total of 308 students participated in both the in-class activities and excursions to one of the 6 collaborating bog communities.

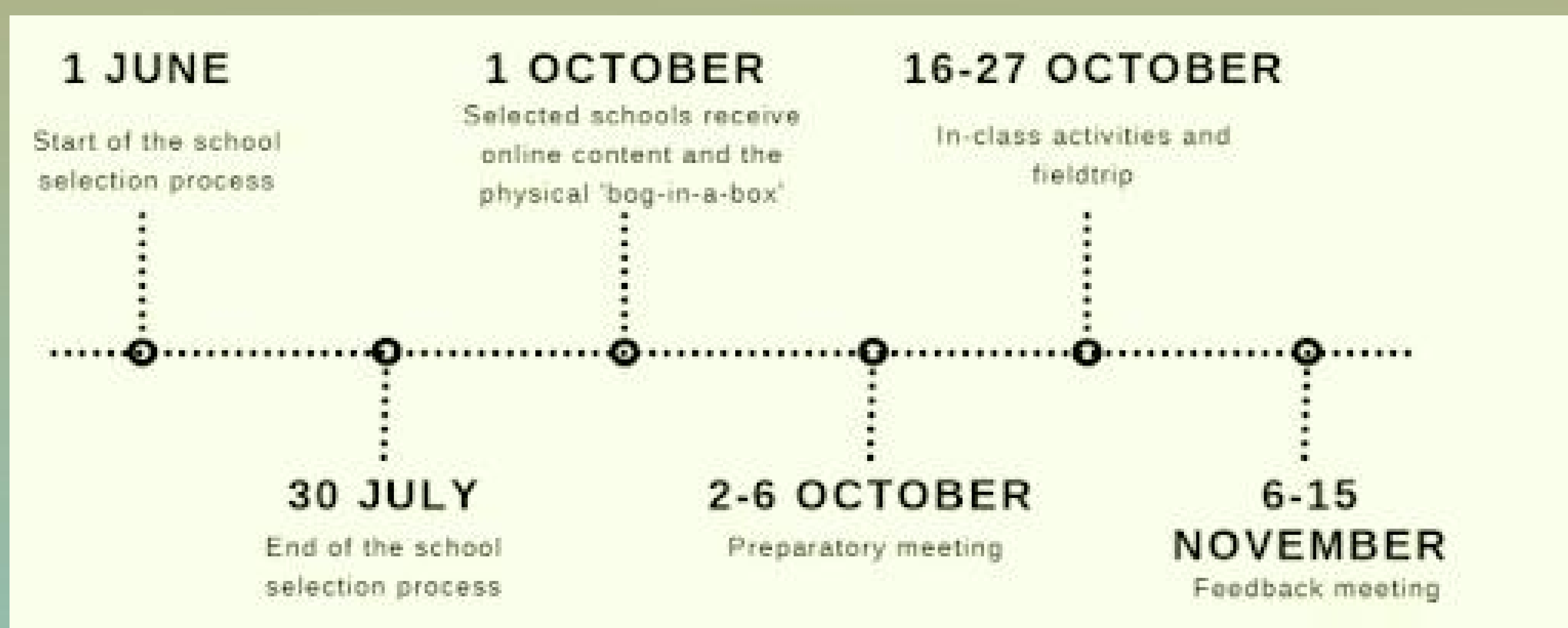


Schools and Bogs involved this year

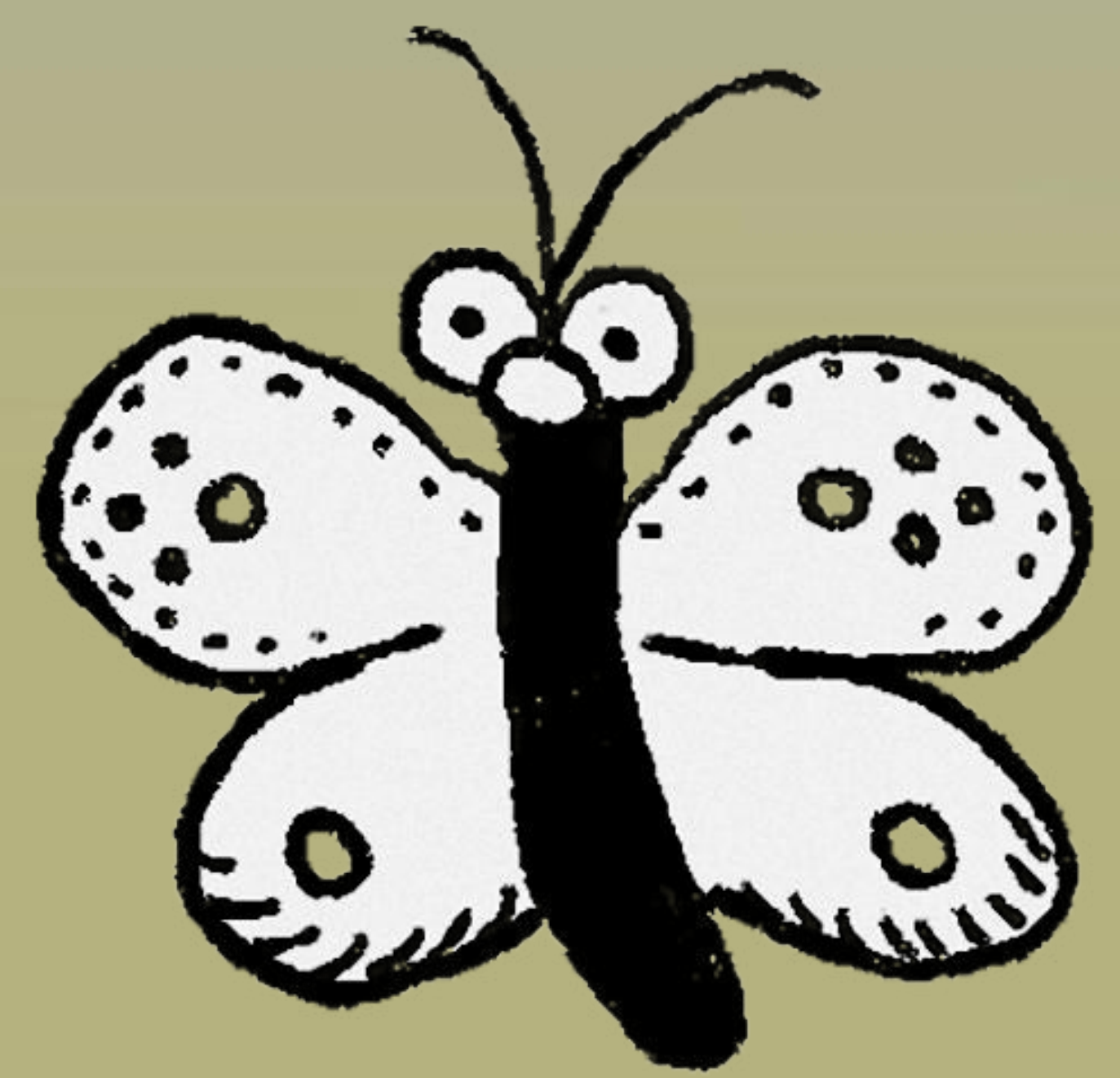


Collaboration with schools and bogs

To kickstart the project, we had to select our collaborators. The school selection was done via several channels. Firstly, we published on our social media platforms a post stating that we were looking for schools, encouraging them to register their interests. Secondly, we reached out to the schools we had put on the waiting list last year, amongst which two expressed still being interested. Lastly, we found on the government's website a list of all primary schools in Ireland. Using that list we randomly sent over 200 emails encouraging schools to sign up. The goal was to have a mix of schools situated close and farther away from bogs to raise awareness throughout Ireland. In total, we received 20 responses and selected a total of 5 extra schools amongst them depending on the amount of classes each school had, their proximity to a bog (as we wanted to ensure a mix) and the motivation of the school and contact person as communication and organisation would pass through them. As of today, we have 5 schools that requested to be put on the waiting list for next year.



Once the schools were selected, we reached out to their nearest bog communities and enquired if they could provide a tour guide and accommodate a school trip. From there on we communicated with the schools and the bogs and encouraged communication between them, to ensure a smoother organisation of smaller details such as parking spots, accessibility, required clothing. A timeline and some terms (e.g communication, prices) were agreed upon before starting the project.



Content

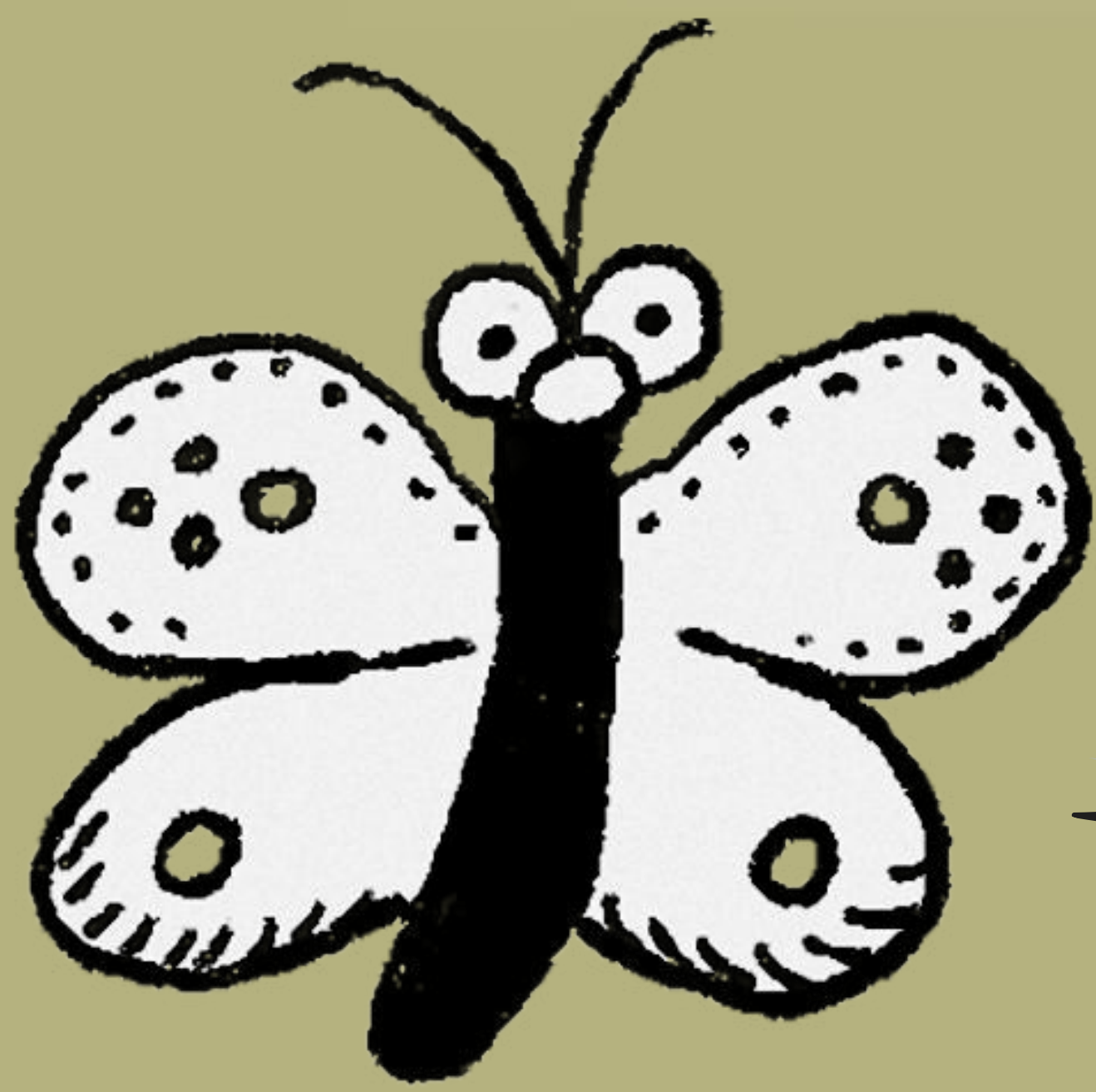
The content of Bog Academy 2023, similarly to the previous years, consisted of parts tailored to different age groups: LIFE for 6-8 year olds, SPACE for 8-9 year olds, and TIME for 9-12 year olds. The content has been adapted based on the feedback received from teachers who participated in previous years. The programme's content is presented in a dynamic format, combining information, engagement, and creativity. The first section delves into the fundamentals of bog formation, exploring the distinctive qualities and rich biodiversity of peatlands. This year's enhancements offer more age-appropriate and detailed insights, particularly in unravelling the complex role of CO₂ in the bog and its contribution to the greenhouse effect. Additionally, we created a unique short story for each age group that serves as a captivating conclusion to the first part of the programme.



The second segment, named "bog-in-a-box," engages participants through an exploration of the bog using their five senses. From touching sphagnum moss to savouring cranberry cookies and immersing themselves in the captivating soundscape of the bog, children are introduced to an array of interactive exercises. Tailored sight-based activities vary across age groups, with a lively game on the cycle of life for the youngest, a geography-focused quiz for the middle group (which is also a new addition), and the creation of a bog potion in a jar for the oldest. The sensory journey culminates in a creative activity, refined from the previous year, or an entertaining sundew game. A noteworthy addition to this year's programme is the cyanotype exercise, allowing children to craft a tangible reminder of their bog adventure - a cyanotype of a bog plant to take home and share it with their family. For the teachers we created newly designed work books with all necessary information as well as an instructional video about conducting the programme.



According to the feedback, the bog field-trip guides were satisfied with the level of knowledge that the students came into the field trip with, all rating it as excellent. This leads us to believe that the content of our educational program achieves its goal. All those who gave feedback, said they would recommend the Bog Academy to other schools in Ireland, that the experience and the communication with Re-Peat was generally positive and handled well.

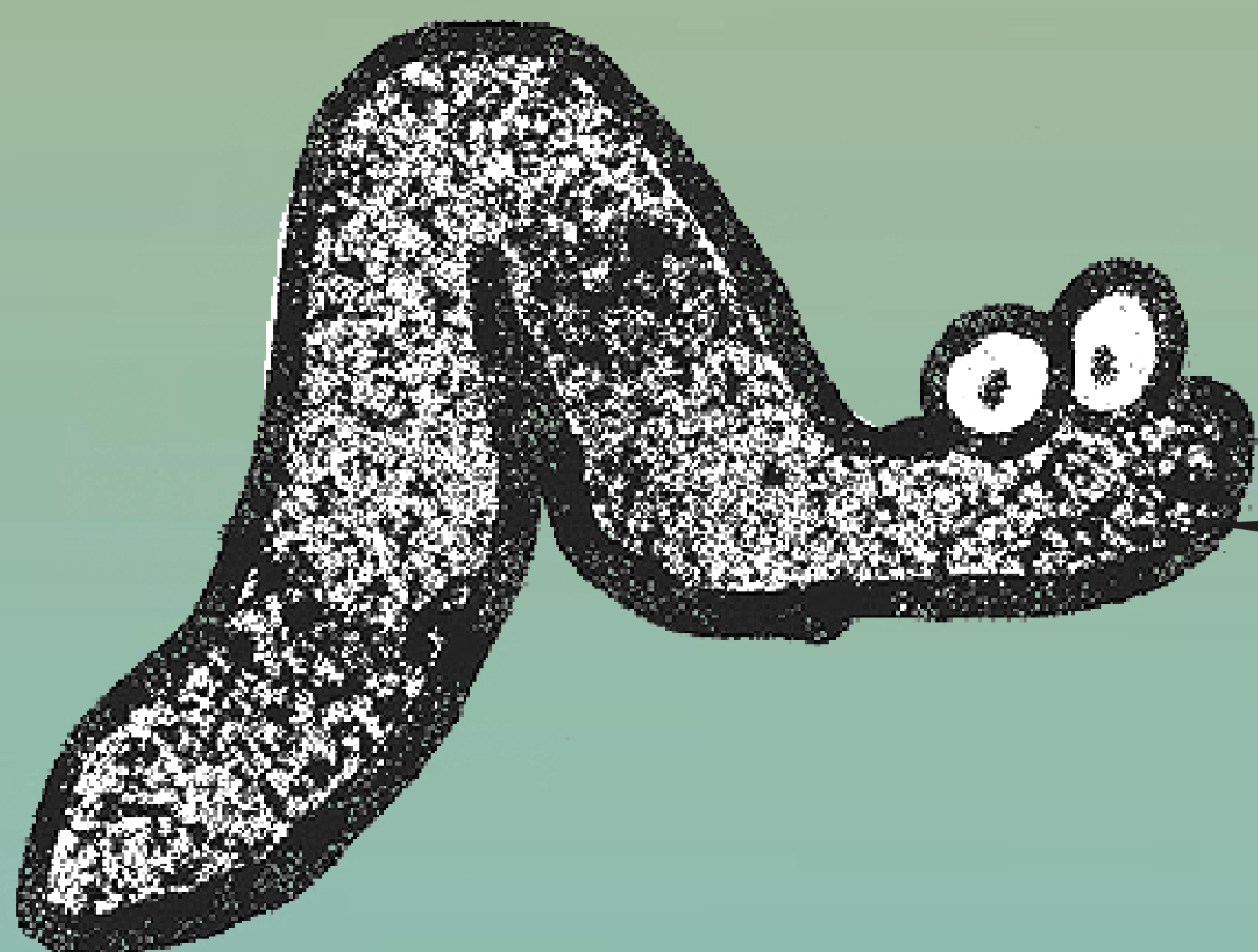


“What I enjoyed the most about the bog was actually going to collect the stuff from the bog and learning about many years ago when people built a trail for the bog.”

“This was an amazing programme for both the schools and our project.”



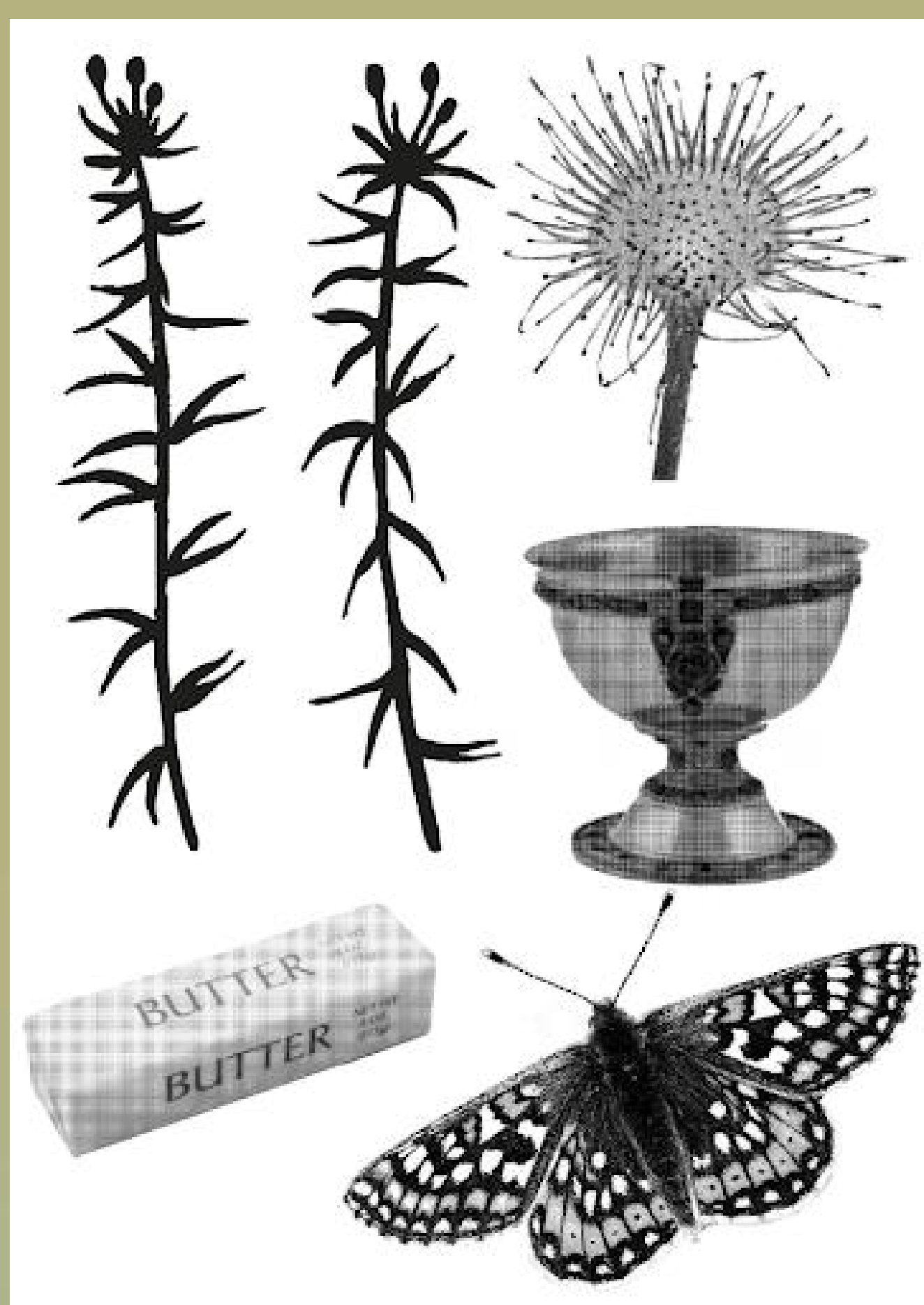
“Knowledge of Sphagnum Moss and Sundews, also bogs as carbon stores was fantastic.”



Bog-in-a-box packages

Box 1, sent from Amsterdam

- Printed elements (for example: teacher workbooks, Bog Academy Certificates, the Sundew Game and Web of Life Poster)
- Smell: Peatland Perfume
- Taste: Cranberry cookies and cranberries
- Tina Claffey's book 'Portal', showcasing Irish peatlands
- Bog Potion materials, including vinegar, linseeds and a large jar



Box 2, sent from England

- Cyanotype paper and some printed negatives as examples

Box 3, sent from Ireland

- Moss pieces, one per class

Ideas for the future:

- Boxes should be sent earlier to lessen the time pressure and allow teachers more time to familiarise themselves with the content, and have more leeway as to when specifically to teach it. This was echoed in the feedback received from the schools.
- In order to reduce costs, emissions and logistical complications, bog-in-a-box packages to be sent only from within the UK and Ireland.



Coordination

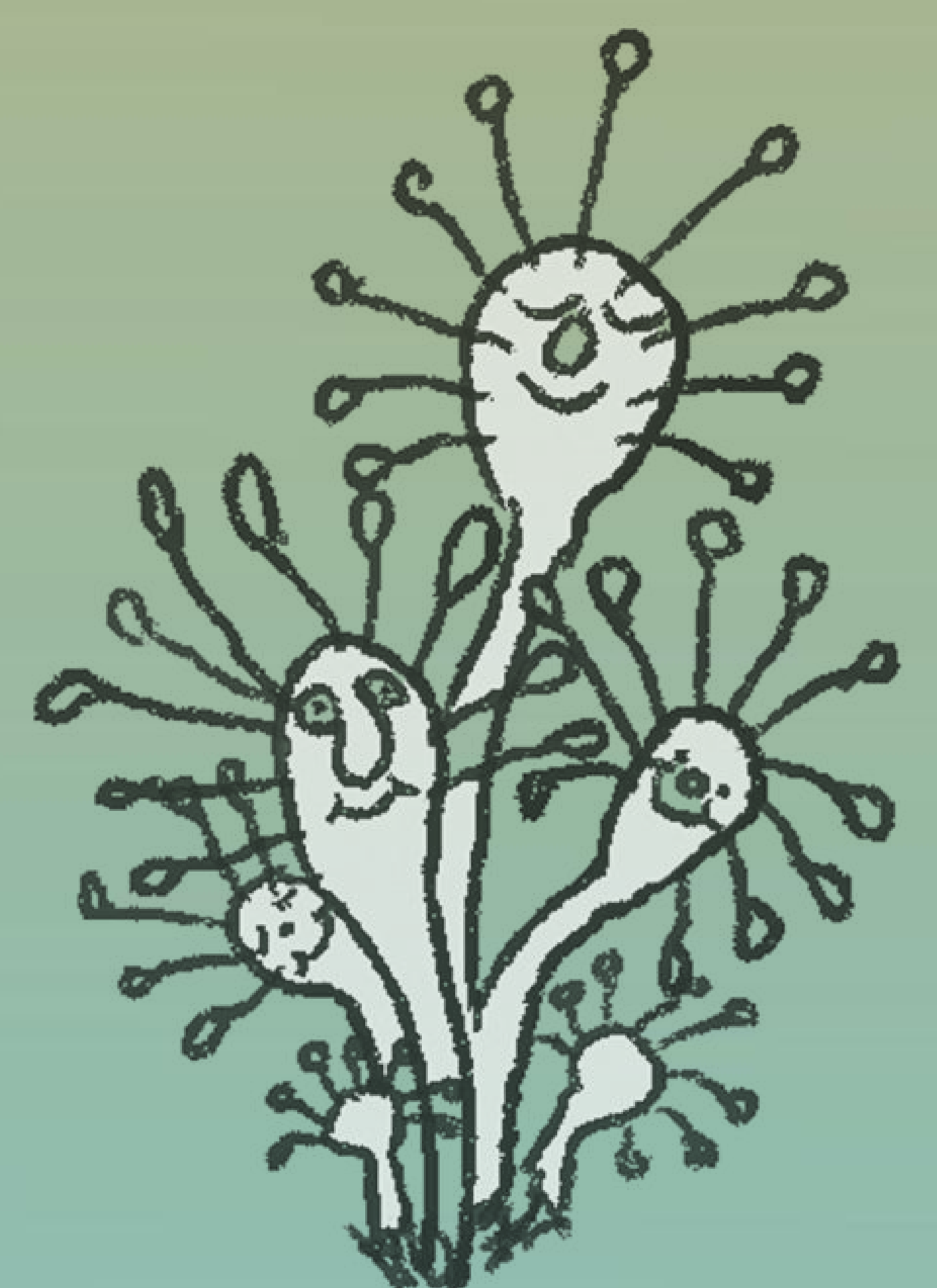
This year's coordination and project management showed huge improvements compared to last year, which allowed better time management and role division. This was achieved through an improved timeline system and a Gantt chart, divided into smaller milestones which were followed as best as possible from our side.

We had better estimation of the work load of each role from our previous experience and better estimation of capacity required. Sufficient number of people in the team created a more balanced role division.

According to the team members, the team worked together cohesively, always receiving support when problems arose or questions emerged. The only remark is about the time-line - it should be better managed to have less stress at crucial times. There is a need for several people in the outreach as this is the most demanding role.

Ideas for the future:

- decrease stress by timely keeping of milestones
- divide the outreach role between several people

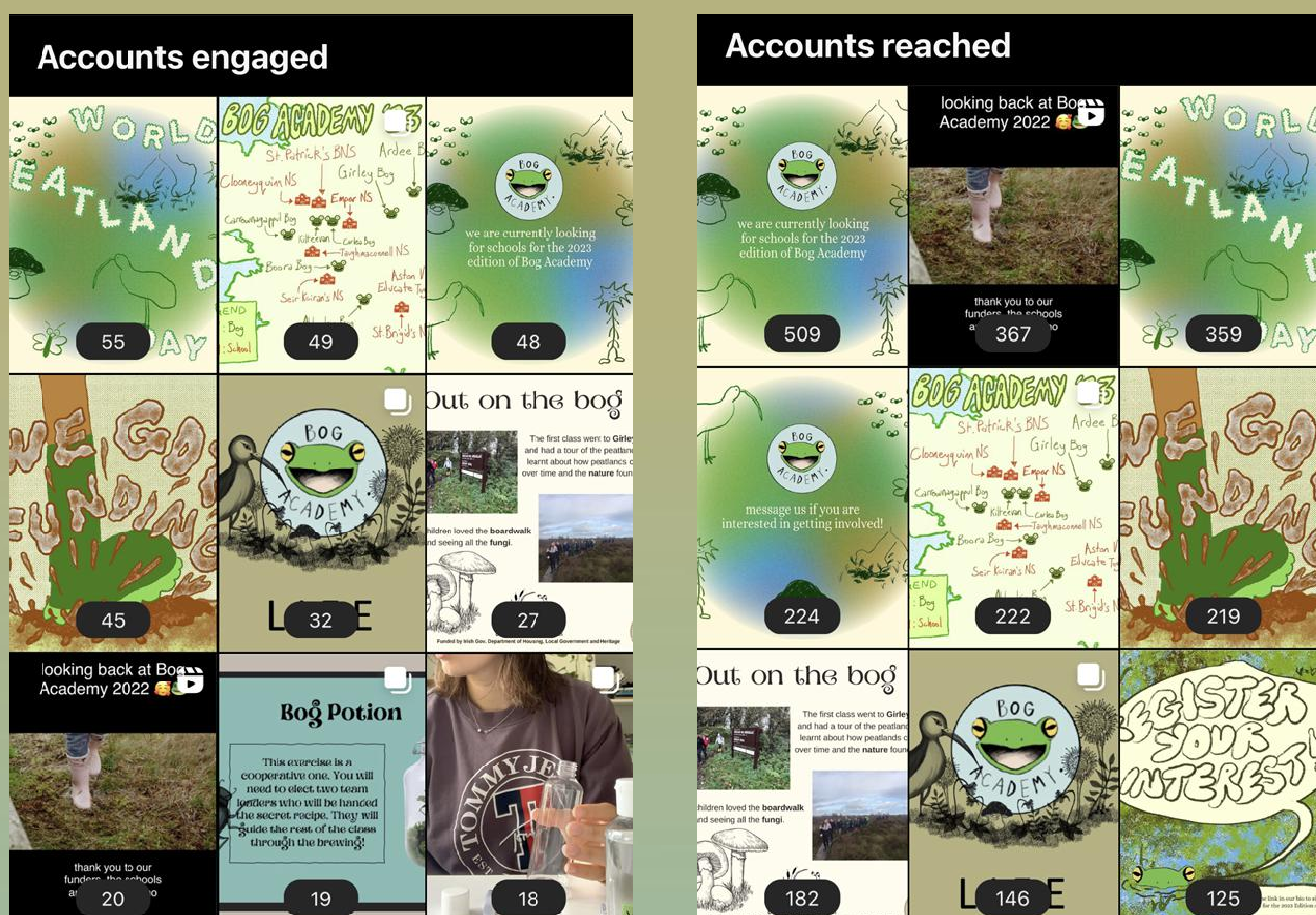


Social Media

The Instagram has gained many new followers (e.g. in the last 90 days, we have gained 59 new followers) and has continued an upwards trajectory, which has contributed to the programme getting more applications from schools.



Our most successful posts were purpose-made posts with bespoke illustrations, as opposed to examples of content pulled straight from the documents. Likewise, it was valuable to engage with schools and bogs through this platform.



Ideas for the future:

Moving forward, we plan to also start a LinkedIn page ahead of 2024 to engage on a more professional level.



Financial Reporting

Some changes had to be made regarding the budget, although nothing major. The main changes in the budget occurred due to changes in the number of schools, a higher than expected bus price, and delivery issues. Some boxes and items had to be sent more than once increasing the final costs.

However, there were also several things that made the budgeting easier to follow. Some of the field-trips were less expensive than last year, some were even free but we decided to make a donation to the community for the time they spent on the excursion.

We sufficiently estimated contingency, which allowed us to mitigate some of the unexpected costs. Thanks to our experience from last year, we had a good estimation of work hours needed, voluntary hours exceeded minimally.

The budget is attached to the final report.



Opportunities for the future

Transport

The buses were late in arriving at the bogs multiple times, leading to more rushed field-trips. This year, we took care of booking the buses but considering how many schools have close links to bus companies, asking the schools to organise the buses and then paying for them might be wiser.

Accessibility and Communication

One of the students going on the field-trip was in a wheelchair, which the bog and guide were not prepared for on the day. Despite prior communication with Re-Peat, who had facilitated contact between the school and the bog to address this specific student's needs, crucial information seemed to have been lost in the communication chain. Therefore, in the future, we will proactively ask schools to communicate with us, and the bogs directly, if they have students with disabilities, or other needs that may affect the field trip experience. We will ensure the information is passed on correctly. In general, we will be thinking about how the content can be made more accessible for students with other particular needs, for the next edition of Bog Academy.

Budget and financing

We realised this year that instead of budgeting for the number of schools we should budget for the number of classes, as these vary from school to school. Additionally, we noticed that buses were more expensive than expected so we shall take this into account in the future.

Obtaining Feedback from Schools and Bogs

Throughout the outreach process, schools and bogs were continuously reminded of the need to give feedback on the program once they had completed it. This ensured that there was more feedback than in previous years, however, despite including a clause about the need for feedback in the collaboration agreement this year, only 5 out of 14 responses were collected this year. Next year, we will endeavour to increase the response rate even more.

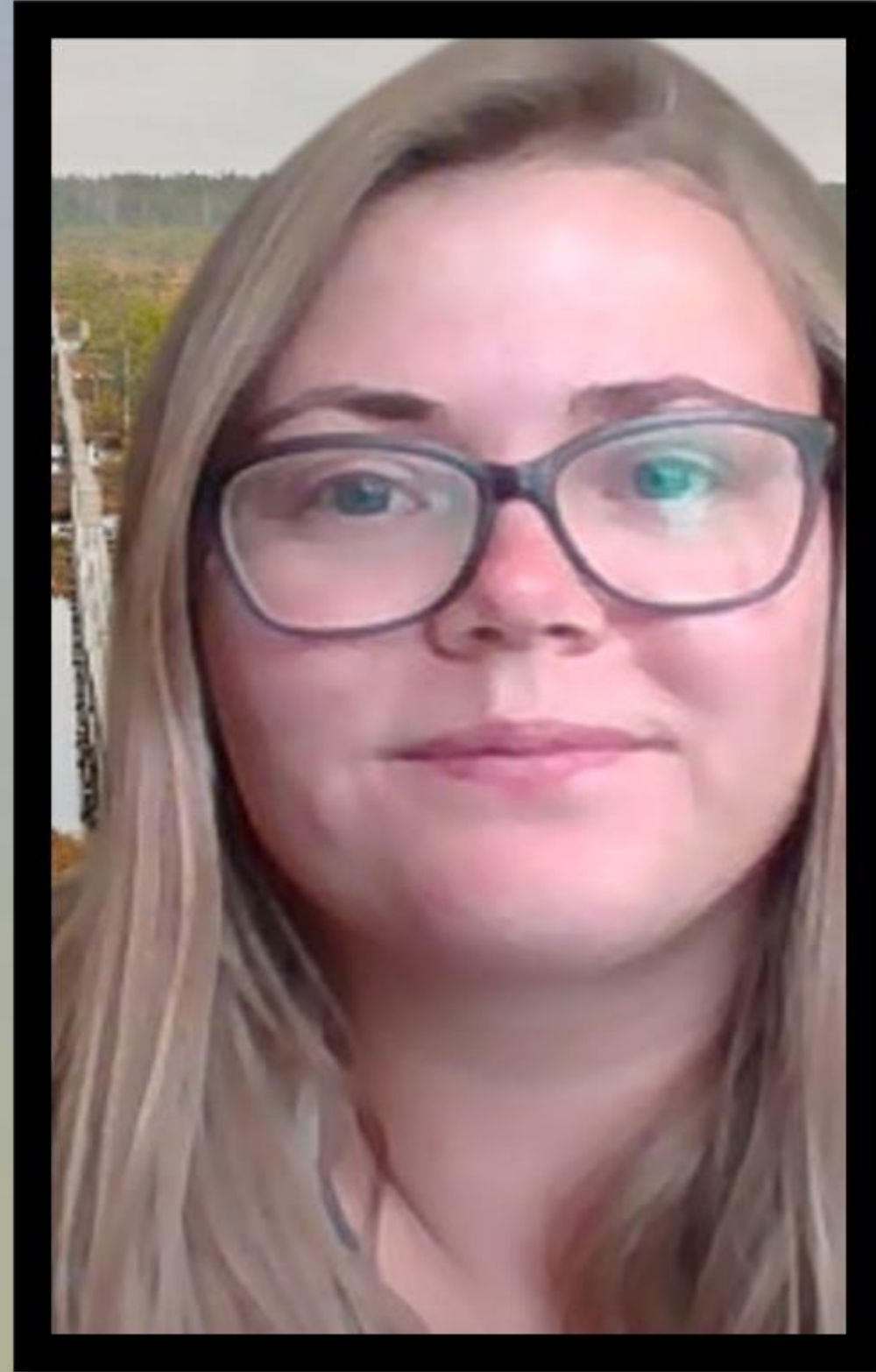
However, the feedback received was very constructive and forward-looking, which has sparked many ideas for improvement, which you can find throughout the report.

Content

Specific topics, such as the biodiversity of the bogs, specific flora and fauna, as well as the function of the acid of the bogs, were mentioned as information that the content should highlight more. One of the bog field-trip guides suggested that some of the course content should 'provide images of people enjoying and frequenting bogs', because the existing content may have portrayed the bogs as an uninviting, 'mucky' environment. We will review our content with this in mind. Another suggestion was to initiate a research project for the older classes, for a more in depth engagement with the content. The field trip could then be used to collect specific samples and take photos for this research. Logistically, this would present a bit of a challenge, as it would require more time and planning on the side of the teachers, but we will consider it for next year, as something extra to put on offer for schools to opt into.



Team Members



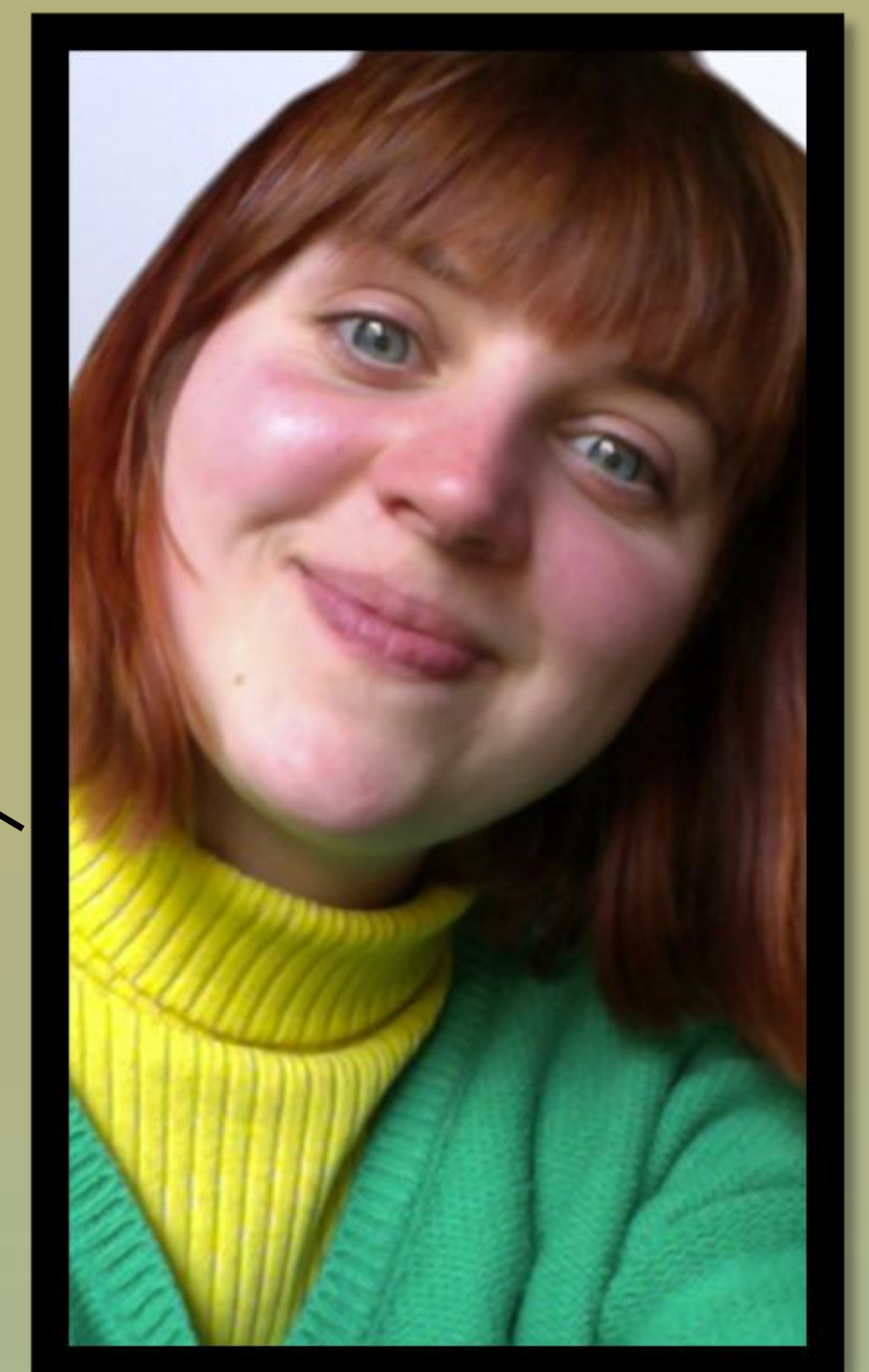
Mari-Liis Bagó



Theresa Hobe



Monika Narozna



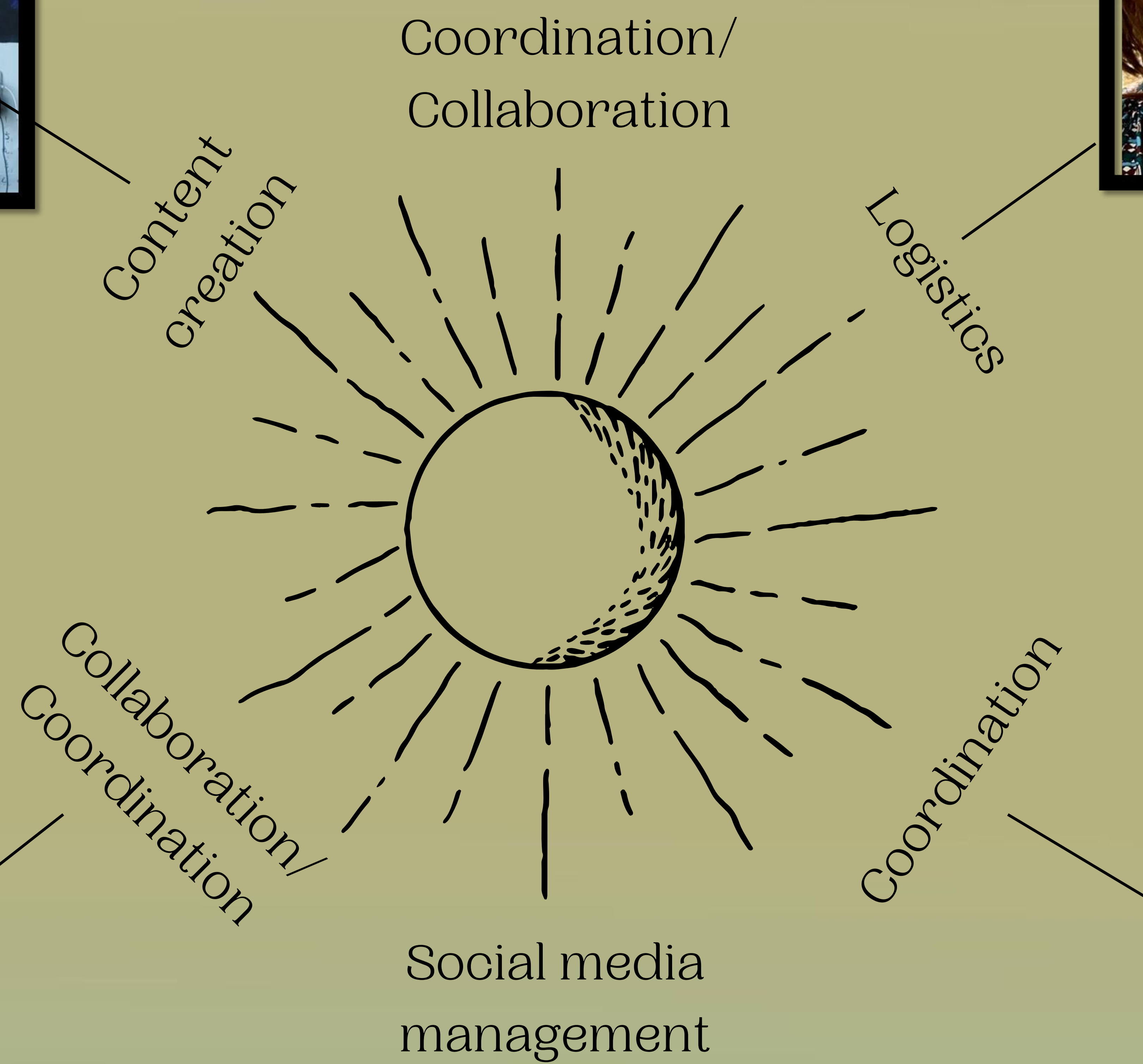
Frankie Turk



Flavie Bernadou



Lukas Fraser



Conclusion

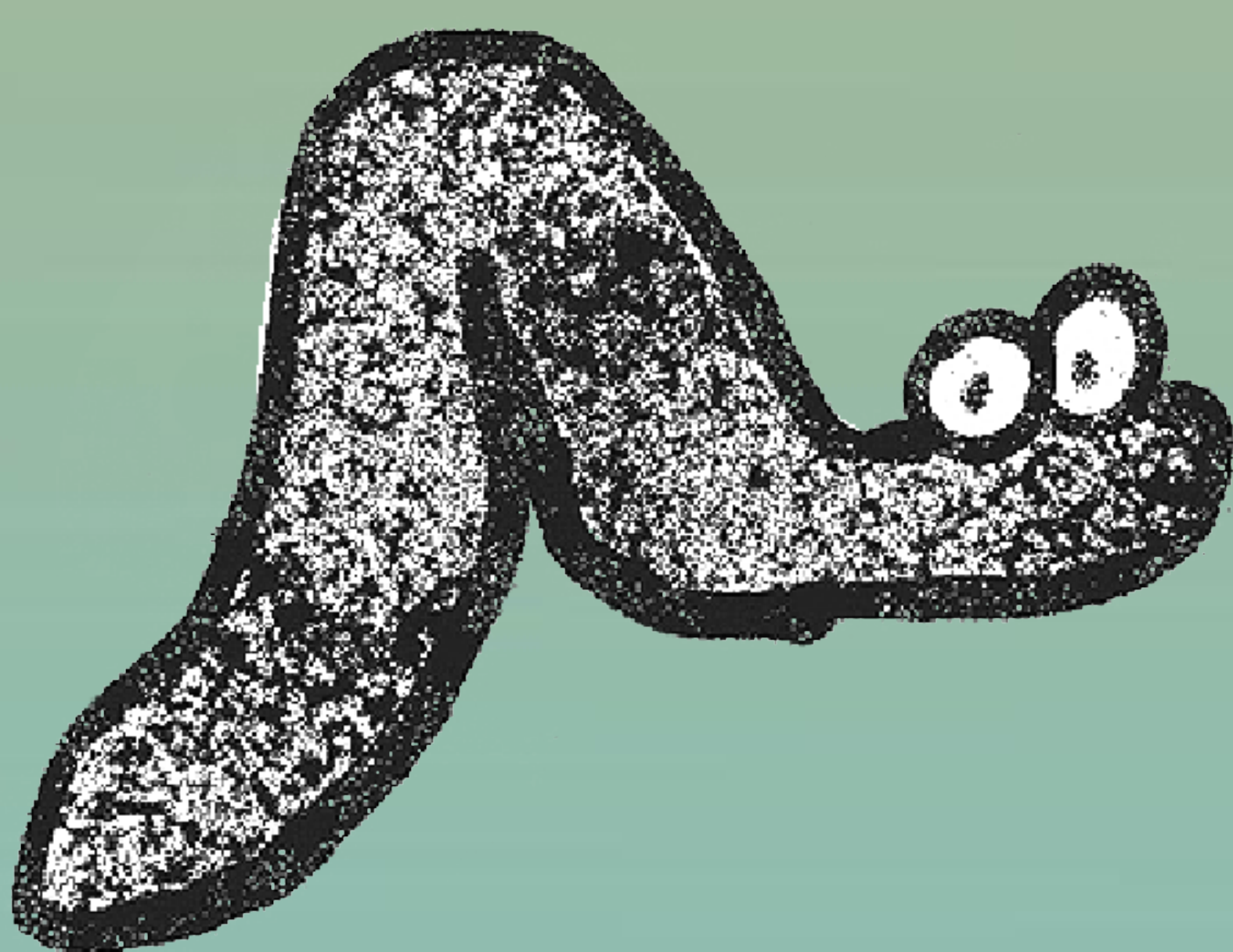
The project has had noticeable improvements on its implementation since last year's edition. We were able to include more smaller schools instead of focusing on larger ones, which allowed us to bring the programme to 308 kids out of 7 schools across Ireland.

The content and appearance of the guidebooks are taking the shape we have imagined, therefore we expect to have reduced hours on content creation in the next iteration and the ability to onboard more schools within the same budget.

We have included some new bogs in the programme and made some wonderful new connections with peat communities. This allows us to have a wider reach across the country, having more collaboration partners while investing and giving back to the communities.

All in all, the programme was a success once again and we enjoyed working on it. It was rewarding to get feedback, videos and audios from the teachers, pupils, guides and photographer, who shared a genuine happiness about the project. Looking forward, we see ourselves working further on the programme and aiming for wider outreach - including more schools and bog communities.







Thank you for all the participants and collaborators for successful implementation of Bog Academy 2023!

