**Junior Inter Regional Championships 2024**

Written by the East Midland juniors in the minibus returning home

Our trip to the Junior Inter Regional Champs (JIRCs) was great fun. The minibus journey there was long however we made the most of the time by playing card games, listening to music, and in Ellie’s case, sleeping! There was plenty of giggling in the dorm rooms and time spent cheering on our team mates. It was a great opportunity to bond with the other juniors and, even though we were the smallest squad there, our tall EMJOS flag definitely made us stand out.

The individual day was held at Mallards Pike in the Forest of Dean. The competition area was mostly made up of runnable forest with some areas of dense undergrowth. The complex network of ditches provided an amazing technical challenge while the overall gentle contours provided a fast area with a vast path network aiding navigation. On the whole the individual event was an enjoyable experience and posed a challenge to all.

After the individual we drove to the accommodation in the Mendip Hills. We were put in rooms with the East Anglian juniors in the lodge. As soon as we got there it was time for dinner. We had sausages and mash followed by donuts. After the prize giving, we enjoyed a night full of music and dancing at a ceilidh organised by some of the Scottish juniors. It was organised chaos but, after Ellie dragged us up, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the night.

We woke early on the second day ready to compete in the relays [first race start 8:30am!]. After a buffet style breakfast with cereal, toast and other things it was soon time for the relays to start. In the girl’s class we had Ellie, Cara and Hannah running and in the boys/open class it was Eoin, Imogen and Josh. We were really pleased with our great teamwork in the relays with lots of cheering for our team mates as they ran up the big uphill finish. We all completed our courses with no disqualifications and neither of the teams needed to use the mini-mass start. We then refuelled with a lunch of baguettes, crisps, chocolate bars and fruit.

After the relay all the teams stayed for the prize giving before setting off home to all parts of the UK. This year the team had a great set of results finishing 10th of the 12 regions, despite having the smallest team of any region. We were also 3rd of 5 teams in the small region category.

In the individual Eoin and Ellie had good runs, both coming 7th in M14 and W16 respectively. Cara and Imogen made great starts to their EMJOS journeys, coming 20th and 29th in W14. Hannah finished 16th in W18 in her last JIRCs individual race and Josh wasn’t feeling 100% and so cut his run short to save his legs for the relay.

In the relays our girls team pushed hard through the tough terrain, with all having great runs, to finish in 9th place. In the boys relay our team of Eoin, Imogen and Josh also did really well to finish in 23rd.

Over the 2 days there were some great results, especially from the new members, Cara and Imogen. A huge congratulation to all 6 members.

In conclusion, the weekend was really enjoyable and a great experience of Southern terrain. It was a brilliant way to get to know people from other regions and to make new friends or socialise with old friends. If you are between the age of 12 and 18, please consider if you would like to participate next year as we’d love to take a bigger team to JIRCs in 2025 in the Lake District.