



Woodland mini-beasts

Curriculum themes

Science Variety of life
 Plants and animals in the local environment
 Habitats

Resources required

2 x sets of animal cards
5 x white trays
5 x pitfall pots
5 x magnifying pots
5 x pooters
5 x sweep nets
5 x beating trays/tarpaulins
5 x Bugs on Bushes Identification Guides
5 x Leaf Litter Identification Guides
5 x recording sheets
Clipboards and pencils

Background information

Best time of the year for the activity

Late Spring to early Autumn.

Timing

This activity will take 1.5 – 2 hours

Location on the farm

In the woodland along Ashes Beck.

Introducing the activity

A habitat is a place where a plant or animal lives. Most of Britain used to be covered by woodland habitats – but today the total coverage is only 9%. Woodlands are made up of layers and have several different micro-habitats where animals can live. The aim of this activity is to look at the variety of plants and animals in the woodland and to see if different animals live in the different layers. The layers are the soil, leaf litter or ground layer, field or herb layer, Shrub layer and the canopy layer (see recording sheet).

Undertaking the activity

Introduction

Find a suitable place in the woodland where there is some space and the ground is not too steep. Ask the children to stand and look at one section of the wood. Distribute the packs of animal cards amongst the children. The children should read what is on the card and place the card in the correct place in the woodland in front of them. Stand back and look at the cards – describe the layers that you can see and introduce the words soil, leaf litter/ground layer, field/herb layer, shrub layer and canopy layer. Collect the cards.

Mini-beast hunt

The aim of this part of the activity is to sample each layer in the woodland to find out which mini-beasts live there. Explain that it is hard to sample the soil so this will be left out.

Leaf litter/ground layer – Pots can be dug into the leaf litter the day before to see what mini-beasts are caught. Alternatively the children can use pooters and look under dead wood on the ground to see what organisms they can find. Give common names to the animals found and record on the sheet. The keys can be used to help identify the animals.

Field/herb layer – Sample this layer using the pooters and the sweep net. Record the animals you find on the sheet.

Shrub layer - Sample this layer using the pooters and the sweep net. Record the animals you find on the sheet.

Canopy – Ask several children to hold the tarpaulin under branches and either knock the tarpaulin into the branches or if the branch can be reached shake the branch so that the organisms fall into the tarpaulin. Record the animals you find on the sheet. Think about what other animals may live in the canopy that you can't catch.

Follow-up ideas

Produce a table and combine the class results together.
Discuss which animals live where in the woodland.

Present your information as a display with the woodland layers and pictures of the animals in each layer.