



# Outdoor learning activities for preschool and primary

Suitable for ages 3-12 years



# Treasure Hunt

Suitable for ages 7-12 years



## What you need:

- One clipboard with pencil attached by a string per child
- Treasure hunt checklist for natural objects (box for name and picture of object, box to tick it off and box for child to write description of object)
- Suitable outdoor clothing (thermal waterproofs and high visibility vests for younger children)

## Options for treasure hunt checklist:

- Feathers
- Petals
- Foot prints
- Stones
- Pinecones
- Bird calls
- Nature sounds
- Twigs

## Instructions:

- Split children into small groups and let them search the outdoor area for the natural treasure on their checklist
- When they find an object they tick it off and write a description of the object in the box provided

# Treasure hunt

## Learning outcomes:

Children practise observation skills, gain the confidence and vocabulary to describe what they see and learn more about common natural objects and sounds

## Things to be aware of:

- Weather conditions
- Terrain
- Staff to children ratio (4 adults for a class of 30 children needed)
- Check what wildlife is around the local area before making checklist
- Build in time to get to wildlife area if it is not on site
- Before the treasure hunt starts remind children not to disturb wildlife or pick flowers as it can injure the child and harm the wildlife



# Natural sculpture

Suitable for ages 5-12 years

## Equipment needed:

- Pictures or photos of birds for the group to study beforehand
- Appropriate clothing for collecting the materials outside

## Instructions:

- In small groups children collect natural materials like stones, twigs and leaves from an outdoor space
- The groups each create a 2D picture of a bird with their gathered natural materials using the photos of birds for inspiration if needed

## Learning outcomes:

- Children develop their ability to work in a team and their communication skills by articulating their ideas to their peers
- Children practise thinking creatively and having their own ideas with less input from the teacher
- Children combine scientific thinking by identifying body parts like the wings and legs with creativity to make them out of their gathered materials



# Natural sculpture

## Things to be aware of:

- Weather conditions could shorten time possible outside
- Some materials could be hazardous so educate children on what to avoid, for instance stinging plants or poisonous berries
- Have a discussion with the children about what can be used (like fallen leaves) and what could harm wildlife (like picking flowers)
- Check outdoor area beforehand to make sure there will be enough natural material to use
- Consider photographing the finished art pieces to preserve them



# Life cycle of a bird roleplay

Suitable for ages 2-7 years



## Equipment needed:

- Pictures of the life cycle of a bird to explain it to the children
- Suitable outdoor clothing

## Instructions:

- Using the pictures explain the lifecycle of a bird from a small embryo in the egg to an adult bird
- Demonstrate to the class how to act out each stage with actions before having another go with the class participating
- First stage: The egg- crouch into a small ball
- Second stage: bird hatches from egg- children act out the part of a small chick crouching up slowly from their egg position
- Third stage: juvenile – children kneel imagining they're in a nest. They practise flapping their wings and making bird noises calling to their parents
- Fourth stage: learning to fly – children stand up getting ready to fly
- Fifth stage: flying- children imagine they are slowly learning to fly and becoming more confident. Give them the freedom to run around the space pretending to be adult birds.

## Life cycle of a bird roleplay

### Learning outcomes:

- Children gain a basic understanding of the life cycle of a bird which can be built on in later years
- Children engage with biology in a fun interactive way
- Children gain self-confidence through a drama activity

### Things to be aware of:

- Weather
- Make sure it takes place somewhere with even terrain that isn't slippery, for instance a school playground
- Make sure there is enough space for children to run around without colliding with each other or any objects



# Bird watching

Suitable for ages 5-12 years



## Equipment needed:

- A pair of binoculars for each child if available
- Suitable outdoor clothing

## Instructions:

- Introduce the class to the common birds that could be found in the outdoor area that will be visited. Explain about their behaviours and appearance
- Take the class to the area and try to find either bushes or trees, or a bird hide to stand behind to reduce the chances of the birds flying away.
- Stand quietly for up to five minutes and observe the wildlife
- Have a discussion afterwards about the birds and wildlife seen and the behaviours they exhibited. Did they behave in a way the class expected?



# Bird watching



## Learning outcomes:

- Children get the opportunity to witness nature first hand
- They gain an understanding of respectful ways to observe wildlife from a distance without interfering or causing disturbances
- They build an early understanding of basic fieldwork which can be deepened as they progress through school

## Things to be aware of:

- The weather
- What wildlife can be found may be affected by the seasons. The teacher should explore different options of outdoor spaces first and observe what species are common there.
- Children should be educated beforehand on how to behave whilst out in nature and taught that we need to be quiet and respectful so wildlife is not scared away.

# Birdsong

Suitable for ages 6-10 years



## Equipment needed:

- Suitable outdoor clothing

## Instructions:

- Play the children recordings of bird calls from different species. include native and non native migrating birds from other countries. Play each recording three times to help the children hear the difference.
- Encourage the children to describe the calls. Are they high pitched or low pitched? Do they sound rough, soft or harsh?
- Take them outside and get them to close their eyes and listen for up to ten minutes.
- Get them to describe what they heard and ask if they could recognise any calls or did any sound similar?

## Learning outcomes:

- Children learn to start hearing the difference between bird calls and learn some common bird calls.
- They learn the purpose of bird calls and how they use them to communicate
- They learn some native birds, and birds that they see everyday in their local environment

## Things to be aware of:

- Weather
- Some bird calls can sound quite similar so encourage children to be patient and try their best to hear differences even if they can't tell what the birds are
- Try to find a quiet place to listen outside so noise pollution is limited
- Encourage children to be very quiet so they can hear better
- Spend some time working out what bird calls are common in the area and consider scheduling the activity for spring/summer if there are more birds at this time



# Birdfeeders

Suitable for ages 7-12 years



## Instruction sheet

- ✓ Plastic bottle
- ✓ 2x wooden sticks/rods or pencils
- ✓ String
- ✓ Bird seed
- ✓ Drawing pin
- ✓ Scissors

1. Use the drawing pin to create two holes on either side of the bottle at the bottom and widen it with scissors. Push the first stick through the two holes to create the first stand.

2. Do the same higher up the bottle at 90 degrees to the first holes so the sticks form a cross shape.

3. Make holes four cm above the sticks and widen them with scissors so they're about 7-8mm wide depending on the size of the bird seed use. Make them small enough that the seed doesn't all fall out!

4. At the neck of the bottle make two more holes opposite one another and then thread the string through to make the handle. Fill the bottle with bird mix.

5. With the lid screwed on hang it high off the ground on a tree or from a fence or wall and enjoy watching the birds come to visit your feeder.



# Birdfeeders

## Learning outcomes:

- Children will learn simple principles of bird nutrition. They will learn that small birds have a high metabolism that burns energy and therefore need to supplement natural food sources through the winter when it is scarce. Children will learn that birds need this energy to fly, breed and build their nests
- Children will also learn that sometimes feeding birds the wrong things or at the wrong times can actually harm them so it's important to check what you put in a feeder and when you use it
- Children will learn we can make a difference to our environment even if we don't have much space as bird feeders can be hung anywhere and be made out of recycled materials
- Sustainability and recycling is applied to productivity and creativity



## Things to be aware of:

- Be aware of what bird seed you use. Wheat is common in bird seed mixes but has little nutritional value. Bird seed mixes containing millet, corn, seeds and grain are good options. Some seeds are not suitable for birds so be careful of buying mixes not designed for birds
- Make sure there is sufficient adult supervision if doing the activity with younger years as the activity involves sharp tools and small seeds that could be a choking hazard
- The bird feeders will need to be checked to ensure they're safe and sturdy enough for birds to feed from. Bird feeders need to be hung securely enough that they won't fall and become litter
- Feeders should be a complement to natural food sources rather than a replacement as that will modify bird behaviour. Feeders should be removed in spring as birds can feed themselves and their chick through spring and summer

# Litter pick

Suitable for ages 5-12 years



## Equipment needed:

- Appropriate outdoor clothing
- Disposable gloves for each child
- Bin bags
- Litter pickers

## Instructions:

- Explain to the class the importance of cleaning their local environment (for instance beach, or forest), and why waste is everyone's responsibility. Educate the class on how waste affects different species when it's discarded in their habitat
- Explain how to responsibly dispose of waste in general, recycled, or compost waste bins
- Put children into groups of 3-4. One child minds the rubbish bag whilst the others collect rubbish before swapping roles
- After the rubbish has been collected the groups all sort their rubbish into the correct categories to be disposed of

# Litter pick

## Learning outcomes:

- Children develop their team work skills
- Children learn that they have responsibility for the environment and to clean up after themselves
- Children learn how damaging waste can be to the environment and wildlife and how to make a positive change to protect it

## Things to be aware of:

- Litter can be very hazardous so there needs to be adult supervision, protective gloves, litter pickers if available and children should be warned not to touch sharp objects. Children should be made aware of the hygiene risks and given time to wash hands afterwards





# Wildlife filmmaking

Suitable for ages 7-12 years

## Equipment needed:

- Appropriate outdoor clothing
- Video recorders
- Marshland: fishing nets, magnifying glasses, quadrant
- Woodland/ meadow: magnifying glasses, pooters, quadrants

## Instructions:

- Introduce the class to the habitat they will be visiting. This could be wetlands/marshes, meadows, woodland, coastal areas
- Teach children how to use a recording equipment such as camcorders
- In small groups the children will set up quadrants and monitor the species they find within their areas. In a marsh or coastal area the children can use nets to collect aquatic species
- The children take it in turns to film the wildlife and describe what they've caught and how they caught it as well as anything they know about the species on film



# Wildlife filmmaking

## Learning outcomes:

- Children practise team work whilst working together to make their films and develop their cooperation skills
- Children learn how to use traditional film equipment that they may not have encountered before
- Children learn how to capture wildlife behaviour on film.
- Children gain confidence communicating their ideas to their peers

## Things to be aware of:

- Adult supervision is required as equipment is expensive and children need to be taught how to use it carefully
- Some habitats have more risk for instance habitats with water, so more adult supervision may be needed or environments may have to be chosen for specific age groups
- Equipment may not be available so mobile phones and tablets are another option
- Children need to be educated on how to catch specimens safely and be respectful whilst filming them and their peers



# Nature sketching

Suitable for ages 3-12 years

## Equipment needed:

- Paper
- Clipboards with a pencil attached

## Instructions:

- Give children five minutes to sit quietly and look at their surroundings and wait to see if any wildlife comes into view
- Then give them twenty minutes to sketch what they can see both close up and far away



# Nature sketching



## Learning outcomes:

- Children learn early fieldwork skills of observation which can be developed in later years
- Children combine artistic and creative skills with scientific observation
- Children learn to respect their environment and observe from the outside without interfering or disturbing wildlife

## Things to be aware of:

- Weather conditions as children may be sitting still for a long time
- Children will have to learn the importance of being still and quiet so they don't disturb wildlife

# Flower Spotter

Suitable for ages 4-9 years

## Equipment needed:

- Clipboards with pencils attached
- Checklist of native flowers with pictures, tally boxes and a column for them to add their own descriptions of key features for each flower

## Instructions:

- Introduce children to native common flowers of the area and teach them how to identify them and tell them apart
- Using the checklists take the children to an outdoor space and see how many of the plants they can find. Encourage them to count how many of each species of flower they can find in the tally boxes and write their own descriptions of the plants



# Flower Spotter



## Learning outcomes:

- Children will learn basic flower biology and identification skills
- Children will gain an understanding of what plants are in their local area and what they need to thrive
- Children can practise working more independently to test their own knowledge and identification skills

## Things to be aware of:

- Children should be reminded to be respectful of the outdoor environment and protect it by avoiding trampling or picking plants

# Designing a pond

Suitable for ages 4-12 years



## Equipment needed:

- Drawing materials

## Instructions:

- Introduce class to pond ecosystems and show them examples of ponds. Explain the importance of ponds for a range of wildlife
- Take children outside to see examples of ponds if possible and ask them to draw diagrams of the ponds and makes notes
- Have a discussion about the design, structure and scenery of the ponds
- They can then design their own pond in class or as homework and present them to the class

## Benefits of having and creating a pond

- Creates a calm peaceful environment
- They are havens for wildlife
- They become natural water reservoirs
- They're accessible for all age groups

# Designing a pond



## Learning outcomes:

- Children are introduced to pond ecosystems and conservation
- Children learn about the wildlife in ponds and how to protect it
- Children explore their creativity and combine it with their scientific knowledge of what a pond needs
- Children learn that they can have a positive impact on their environment by creating homes for nature

## Things to be aware of:

- If going on a fieldtrip to visit ponds in the area make sure there is sufficient adult supervision to prevent drowning risk to children

## Picture references

Flower spotter

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## Outdoor treasure hunt

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