

Outdoor Activities



These resources were first developed as part of the Eyemouth Gateway to Good Health initiative. This community-led pilot was supported by Joint Health Improvement Team and Scottish Borders Council, involving local community members, voluntary and community groups as well as schools. The aim was to promote and support health and wellbeing by extending the range of opportunities that can encourage families in the Eyemouth area to make healthier choices part of their everyday lives.

We have now been approached by others for delivery of the training. We hope these resources will empower local workers, volunteers and families to feel confident taking people outdoors to enjoy and explore the local area. Connecting with nature and other people, being active in the outdoors and learning about safe, healthy outdoor cooking can be shared among generations and accessed by all ages and abilities. This can contribute to ways to be well, physically and mentally.

We would also request that anyone delivering activities in the outdoors follows good practice and 'leaves no trace'.

With thanks to:
Field to Fork
Berwickshire Marine Reserve
Joint Health Improvement Team
Scottish Borders Council

Thanks to Julie Barclay for Design work

To download further copies of these resources, please go to the Outside the Box website, www.otbds.org



Activity level: difficult

Activity level: all

Activity level: age

Nature

Mindful



Art

Problem solving

Bushcraft / survival

Physical

FIELD
TO
FORK



outside the box



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Outdoor activities



CLIMATE

CHAT



How to deliver outdoor activities in your community



Activity level: difficult



Activity level: all



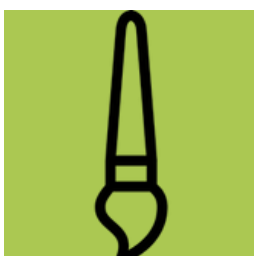
Activity level: age



Nature



Mindful



Art



Problem solving



Bushcraft / survival



Physical

Capture the flag

30 mins

What to do

Together discuss boundaries and hazards.

Person who is 'it' stands at flag with eyes closed counting to agreed number while others hide to await their opportunity to attack.

Aim of the hidiers is to 'capture' the flag when it is unguarded, while the aim of the guard is to spot the attackers and call them out. The guard must, as game goes on, be prepared to seek out the hidiers while still keeping an eye on the flag.

The first person to capture the flag will be the next guard. If no-one does, the guard remains.

Variations

If you don't have a flag, use a central tree as the base.

Where there is no cover e.g. on the beach or playing field, the guard can be blindfolded, staying close to the flag but pointing to where they hear sound of movement is coming from and so putting attackers out.

Where

Woodland, possibly elsewhere – see Variations.

Aim

To develop awareness, stealth, tactical thinking and have a lot of fun!

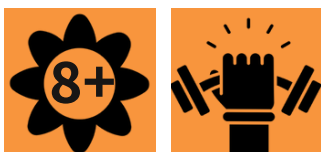
You will need

- An area of fairly open ground, trees and other cover but not too heavy undergrowth
- A flag – a tall stick driven into the ground in middle of area with a bright fabric attached

Safety

Check the area for trip hazards, areas of brambles/ nettles, low branches, broken branches still hanging.

Decide boundaries of area the game is to be played in.



Dough bugs or Rock bugs

30 mins

What to do

Dough Bugs

Make the dough into a body shape for your beastie.

Use tiny twigs, seeds, tiny stones, petals, leaves to add wings, legs, eyes, antennae, tongue and whatever else a mini beast needs to help it get around, feed and protect itself!

Find a place for your bug to live that is safe from predators!

Rock bugs

Make sure your pebbles are clean and dry.

With a pencil draw on the design of your bug – this could be as a real bug (see the identification sheets) or your own invention. You can either make the whole pebble into a bug or have the picture of the bug on the pebble.

Carefully colour or paint on the colours.

Variations

Hide the bugs in your space in places where they might live and challenge others to find them.

Where

Woodland, green space, beach.

Through designing and making own, participants will be aware of what is around them and of the features and characteristics of invertebrates.

You will need

For the Dough Bugs

- A lump of Play dough, salt dough, plasticine, clay or damp mud
- Natural materials that you find on the ground

For the Rock Bugs

- Smooth, flat, bug shaped pebbles, pencils, Sharpies or other permanent pens, acrylic paints or nail varnish!
- Pictures of invertebrates/identification charts

Safety

Check the area for anything harmful or undesirable if scavenging.

Take care not to leave anything unnatural such as pens, salt dough or plasticine behind.



Clay faces

30 mins

What to do

Everyone is given a lump of clay.

They choose their tree/surface, e.g. sea wall to press the clay onto as a base for their face.

Mould facial features if wished, then use loose natural materials found in the environment to add further features such as hair, eyes, teeth, beard, eyebrows, etc.

When finished take tour of faces and so that creators can introduce their characters.

Variations

Add lump of clay as a head/body to the top of a chosen stick and form your character/monster/ animal/fairy.

How might the tree/character feel? Make up a story about them.

If using a tree, make the spirit of that tree using only materials from that tree, e.g. its leaves, twigs, seeds.

Where

Woodland, beach, green space.

You will need

- Clay (from the land or shop bought)
- Natural foraged materials
- Dress for outdoors
- Means of cleaning hands wipes/water

Only use items that are no longer living or part of a living thing.

Safety

Care as moving around the space of trip hazards and when picking up that avoid sharp, stingy or other items that might harm, e.g. fungi.



Insect homes

30 mins

What to do

Secure a wire or twine hanger around or onto your bottle, mug or can. Avoid puncturing the sides as that will allow water in. It should hang with the open end pointing slightly downwards. Ensuring it stays dry is important as insects can succumb to fungal infections in winter if exposed to damp.

Stuff it tightly with materials which will allow the bugs to crawl into or among them.

Hang in sunny, sheltered spot where they will be little disturbed and wait for the beasties to move in. Lacewings and ladybirds will particularly like this shelter though all insects need a warm, dry spot to hide in bad or cold weather, many will need a spot to hibernate over winter.

As the material rots down, add more to keep it packed, cleaning it out and replacing stems in late spring once the insects have emerged.

Where

Woodland, green space.

Aim

A bug hotel can be built on a larger scale using paving slabs or pallets, with bricks between to create different storeys. The spaces can be packed with different materials within flower pots or pipes.

Other homes for insects such as leaf piles, stone piles and log piles can be created. These are particularly good for beetles as well as other invertebrates.

Variations

To consider the life cycles and needs of insects and take action to help them.

You will need

- A large plastic drinks bottle with the end cut off, an old mug or a clean food can
- Wire or twine
- Area where there are dry, dead or hollow stems, pine cones, seed heads

Safety

Adult help may be needed in cutting the plastic bottle and ensuring care with sharp edges.



Bug hunt

30 mins - 1 hr

Safety

Warn against picking up biting/stinging insects, animal faeces, fungi, poisonous berries, etc. Instruct in use of pooters to avoid inhaling insects!

Hygiene

Equipment, especially pooters, should be cleaned thoroughly after use.

What to do

Depending on age range, talk about why bugs are important, what jobs they do, the food chain, etc. Talk about likely places to find bugs (ask questions!) – suggest dark/damp/under rocks/ inside plant stalks, etc. Demonstrate safe/humane collection of an insect.

Agree a time limit when everyone will come back with their bugs.

Split into pairs/small groups as appropriate. Spread out in your chosen area and begin your hunt.

Leader can support informally as the hunt goes on. Share ID charts round as appropriate.

Come back to base and take turns to look at each lot of bugs. See if people can name their bugs, use ID charts for help. Return quickly to previous location. Wash your hands!

Where

Woodland, beach, green space.

Aim

Learning about how invertebrates live, learning to identify some of them, respect for nature.

You will need

- A collection container, a small paintbrush or plastic tweezers, a magnifying glass, insect ID book/chart, insect 'pooter' (optional) and small net. You can use old takeaway containers etc or buy special bug kits online
- ID charts: FSC have good waterproof ones, habitat-specific, £3.75 each
- Dress for outdoors

Be gentle with bugs, only take one of each, try to remember where they were and put them back there after examining. Respect habitats, replace displaced stones or logs.



Meet a tree

30 mins

Respecting nature: Avoid causing damage to trees.

What to do

Pair or group participants, one putting on a blindfold. Their partner(s) are now their guide, their eyes and so carefully must lead them by the arm to a selected tree, all the time remembering their partner is unable to see, so needs to be instructed to lift their feet to step over fallen twigs, avoid low branches and to stretch out their hands as they approach the tree!

They then 'hug their tree' wrapping their arms around to smell it, feel its girth, its bark texture, any protruding branches or leaves, any lichen or moss, reaching up to discover any higher features as well as down to the base and roots.

They are then brought back to the starting point by a winding, devious route and are turned around a couple of times. They remove their blindfold and try to identify 'their' tree – may return to the one they think to check. They will discover that the woodland is a collection of very individual trees. Swap roles and choose a different tree.

Variations

Make bark rubbings by placing paper on the bark and using a wax crayon on its side, rub over the paper.

Encourage finding other clues as to the identity of 'their' tree – buds, leaves, seeds (either on tree or fallen depending on time of year, though take care with accuracy as other leaves may have blown in). Use a tree ID chart to confirm.

Work out the approximate age of the tree (without cutting it down!) by measuring its girth 1m from the ground then divide this by 2.5 if tree in the open, 1.25 if in a woodland. (Not all trees grow at same rate due to species, situation etc so if you would like more accurate guide see Owl Scotland website.)

Measure its height by walking away from the tree, every so often looking through between legs to look at the tree. When get to point that can see the top of the tree, mark that point and measure back to the tree trunk. This is its approximate height!

Where

Woodland or area with different trees that are accessible.

Aim

To encourage use of senses other than sight; to foster trust; to enhance observations of the characteristics of trees (note the bark of different species is distinctive but does alter with age).

You will need

- Scarves or bandanas, one per pair/group of 3
- Paper and wax crayons for rubbings
- Tree ID charts
- Measuring tape



Safety

Check the area for trip hazards, uneven ground, low branches so can warn participants.

Set boundaries of area to work in.

Tree climbing

10-20 mins

What to do

Rule of thumb: don't climb higher than the height of the top of supervising person's head OR 3x their own height (this should be checked with insurers!) Always have two feet and a hand, or two hands and a foot, in contact with the tree. Assess each branch – especially if wet or slippery. Is it living? (How can you tell? Talk about difference before they start climbing.) Can it take my weight?

Where

Woodland.

Aim

Developing physical and coordination skills and strength, assessing risk, finding a safe quiet space in nature.

You will need

A tree
Sturdy footwear

Safety

We recommend the tree is climbed with 1:1 supervision and that one person at a time is in a tree. Check the tree for suitability, e.g. avoid dead branches, avoid thin saplings, do not climb very poisonous trees (e.g. yew). Check the ground underneath for obvious rocks, etc. You may also want to double-check that your insurance provider will cover this activity.

"Climbing trees and falling out of them is all part of growing up and having small injuries helps children learn about risks. We take the view that it's a good thing to try to equip children and young people and help them make informed decisions about the risks that they take". ROSPA

Be mindful of nature. Avoid disturbing obvious habitats, especially during birds' nesting season.



Miniature treasure hunt

15 mins

What to do

Each participant given a container and challenged to find as many different natural items as possible to fill it – so the smaller the better.

Come back together and compare items:

- Who has most?
- What is most interesting/unusual?
- What is most common?
- Are they all natural? Finding nurdles on the beach would lead to discussion of plastic waste in sea.

Variations

Start by decorating your boxes/containers.

Limit time given to search.

Do a nurdle hunt/removal. Contact Sea the Change with your finds.

Other scavenger/treasure hunts, e.g. Texture Hunt, Spot Signs of Spring. Lots of ideas on RSPB website.

Where

Anywhere, in one area or on the move.

Aim

To focus attention on small detail and foster sense of wonderment.

You will need

Small box, e.g. matchbox or similar small container for each participant.

Safety

Check area beforehand for items that would cause harm.

Move around carefully paying attention to what is at your feet as well as eye level.

Be aware of plants that might be spiky or sting.

Tip

Encourage only to collect items that are no longer part of living thing, no creatures. Take a little where there is a lot.



Scavenger hunt

30 mins

Establish clear rules about what shouldn't be collected – no flowers, living plants or creatures.

What to do

Give each participant or group a list of 'treasure' or 'scavenging' items and collecting bags. Ask them to collect as many items as possible from the list.

On regrouping, share what each has discovered. Use magnifying glasses to examine detail. What was the best thing they found? What was the most surprising? How do the items link to one another and to the wood? If there are nibbles in a leaf, who ate it?

When you are finished, return the items to nature.

Variations

Use scavenged pieces to make a temporary piece of artwork or use the items as a stimulus for story telling or poetry.

Use unnatural items to discuss the ways we use woodlands/care for nature.

What am I holding? game – each person in the group chooses one item from their collection and holds it clasped in their hand or behind their back so others can't see. They then describe it or have the others guess what it is by asking yes/no answer questions.

Where

Anywhere.

Aim

To encourage participants to look closely at their surroundings, at the detail and variety of colour, texture and shapes there. It is a great introductory activity to an area.

You will need

- A list of things to look for/collect for each group/participant – this can be pictorial for younger children or non-readers. The list can include items of different colours, textures (like soft, smooth or prickly) or shapes and sizes (large, small, round or pointed). Alternatively specific items can be identified, like a shiny thing, an oxygen maker, your favourite thing, a feather, something dead, something red, a leaf shaped like a saw, three different kinds of seed, a leaf that has been eaten by something, something that smells lovely or horrible, something made by people, something we should look after, something a mouse might eat, something beautiful etc depending on the age and stage of the group, the location and the season
- Collecting bag or box for each group or participant
- Magnifying glasses, optional



Safety

Outline the search area and its boundaries.

Warn of things that might sting, spike or be harmful in some way.

Natural masterpiece

30 mins

What to do

Working in groups of 3-4, pairs or singly create a space for their masterpiece by clearing an area of leaf litter/other debris, perhaps 1m x 80 cm and framing it with suitable length sticks if wished.

To help focus ideas, give a theme as stimulus, e.g. a creature that belongs to that environment, a face, a scene, a mandala pattern. Groups/pairs discuss their ideas so that everyone has an idea of what they are trying to achieve and how it will look (important everyone knows which is the bottom of the picture, if that matters). Remind them of what they should/shouldn't use and why as they forage and create. Once complete, take a gallery tour of all the masterpieces, viewers being invited to comment positively on each one. Take photos as record.

Variations

Be part of the picture e.g. foraged items to create the beautiful wings of a butterfly then lie down to be its body.

This can also be done indoors by foraging items, then back inside creating masterpiece on cardboard, sticking down with PVA glue to give something slightly more permanent.

Make masterpiece a 3D sculpture - inspiration can be gained from work of Andy Goldsworthy and others.

Where

Anywhere.

Aim

To use natural foraged items to build a picture or pattern.

You will need

- An area where there are loose natural materials, e.g. twigs, leaves, stones, shells, cones, driftwood, seaweed, etc.
- Some open space

Safety

Check the area beforehand for items that would cause harm.

Tip

Only use items that are no longer living or part of a living thing.



Stick frames and wild weaving

45 mins

What to do

Find 4 sticks of similar thickness, either all same length, or 2 long and 2 shorter. Choose different, interesting sticks or ones that are all the same colour and texture.

Lay them on ground to make square or rectangle shape with ends of sticks overlapping.

Lash each corner as tightly as possible, using a square lash knot (for detailed instructions on this knot look at the Muddy Faces website).

Add a hanger if you wish.

You can now use your frame to choose a view, zoom in on the detail of something interesting close at hand or frame a piece of work, natural or otherwise.

Variations

Either twist creeper stems or more wool/string around your frame and then decorate it with natural materials you find, poking them between the creeper/string. Remember only to use what is not still living.

Create a web of twine or wool back and forth across the frame then weave finds such as fine twigs, grasses, feathers, long thin leaves, stems into it to create a wild weaving.

For younger children, frames could already be made so that their activity focuses on the weaving of their collection.

Where

Woodland, beach.

Aim

To create a frame that can be used to focus on the natural world or display collections while practising traditional lashing and knot tying skills.

You will need

- An area where there is a supply of loose twigs
- Lengths of twine/string or wool (30-40 cm)
- Scissors



Tip

Respecting nature: best to use sticks from the ground, rather than breaking from a living tree.

Safety

Teach safe carrying of sticks, pointing them away from the body and face, and those of others.

Show how to break sticks over knee or with foot on ground.

Perfume or potion

15 mins

What to do

Give each participant a container and ask them to collect natural items for their perfume – so pleasant smelling, or potion – unpleasant smelling. Crush between fingers to release the smell to test before adding.

Now find a mashing stick – a short strong stick to use to break down and mix the ingredients.

Add a little water to the containers and continue mashing to create the perfume or potion.

Discuss do they like the perfume/potion they have made, how would they describe it, how does it make them feel? What was the strongest smelling ingredient? Any surprising smells?

Share the creations and vote on which is best perfume, best potion.

Variations

The same method can be used for making natural paints. This time choose the same variety of leaf, berry, petal. Pulverise them to extract the pigment mixing with just a small splash of water. A tiny bit of honey added will help consistency. Which gives the best colour?

Make some natural paint brushes too by attaching bristles of grasses, feathers, seed heads to the end of a stick with an elastic band or string.

Where

Woodland, garden or green space.

Aim

To encourage use of sense of smell to become aware of natural world around.

You will need

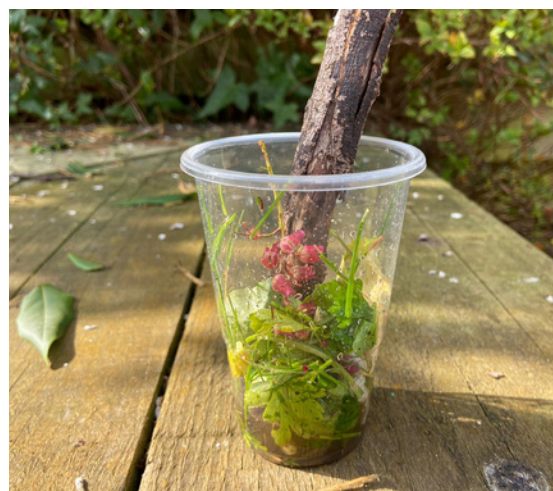
- An old container such as a yogurt pot for each participant
- Some water
- Short sticks

Safety

Check area for anything that might be unsafe and cause harm, either remove or warn e.g. fungi/poo.



Remind people that they shouldn't pick anything that is part of a living thing (unless permitted) and no creatures.



Be still and breathe

15-30 mins

What to do

Within earshot encourage participants to lie on their back (or if preferred sit with back against a tree trunk) and keep very still, closing eyes and taking a few deep slow breaths!

Now slowly and softly guide them to focus on what they are absorbing about the world around through their different senses.

Focus on what you can feel – on your skin, through the parts of your body touching the ground/tree? Allow a few minutes to absorb these sensations.

What can you hear? Listen hard and notice what is the tiniest sound? Which sounds are loud or soft, which come and go?

What different things can you smell? Are they pleasant or not?

Open your eyes – what can you see? What is the highest point of the sky you can see? How are the clouds moving? What shapes and patterns are they making? What other shapes and colours can you see? What else is moving above you?

Variations

Try this in various places and find your own special place to be. A place to be calm and connect with nature.

Where

Woodland, green space, beach.

You will need

- Ideally an area where the ground is mossy, soft grass, crunchy leaves but clear of anything sharp, stinging, litter or animal poo, either under trees or out in open

Safety

Check the area beforehand for suitability as above, awareness of hay fever sufferers if on grass when there is pollen.



Signs of animals, tracks and casts

1 hour

What to do

When we are in the woods we may not manage to catch sight of wild animals but it doesn't mean to say they are not there and they will be leaving behind tracks and signs.

Brainstorm what evidence animals might leave behind – footprints, hair and fur, nibbled cones/ nuts/leaves, poo, worn trails, homes that are holes in the ground/tree or nests, day beds (areas of compressed vegetation).

Search for some of these signs and any animal tracks. Can you identify the animal? A footprint ID chart is useful, see RSPB website.

If you find a good footprint of an animal track, take a cast of it to preserve it like a fossil.

Create a barrier around the track by pushing a strip of plastic or thin card into the ground to surround the track, taking care not to damage it.

With approximately 1 cup of water per cast in a container, sprinkle plaster of Paris onto the water until it builds up to reach the surface. Mix to a custard consistency.

Pour the mix into the mould and leave to set for at least 30 minutes.

Once set, remove the dry plaster cast from the ground and gently brush away any debris from your cast.

Variations

Create a track trap for animals on a known run by creating an area of sand that the animal will run through, hopefully leaving its track.

Where

Woodland.

Aim

To connect with and learn about the animals that live in/ use our outdoor spaces.

You will need

- Pictures of animal signs (optional)
- Old plastic drinks bottle/cereal box
- Container
- Clean stick for stirring
- Animal Track ID chart
- Plaster of Paris
- Water



Safety

Great care needed with plaster of Paris as it becomes hot as it sets.

Prints in clay

30 mins

What to do

Find a flat surface, such as a tree stump to work on.

Roll out a lump of clay with the rolling pin (baking paper will stop it sticking to the surface), using 2 sticks of approx 1.5 cm diameter either side of the clay to help achieve uniform thickness.

Choose a leaf or several leaves and arrange them on the flat surface of the clay. (Leave part of the leaf or stalk off the edge of the clay so you can easily peel it off).

Lightly roll over the leaves to press them slightly into the clay.

Carefully peel the leaves off and see how the clay shows the details of the leaves. Notice the veins or marks of any hairs?

Trim the edges of the tile to neaten, poke 2 holes in the top if you want to be able to hang it and leave the clay to dry completely.

Variations

Paint or glaze the tiles.

Create species specific tiles, e.g. an oak leaf with an acorn.

Where

Woodland, green space.

Aim

To appreciate the intricacy of plants, using the beauty of nature for art.

You will need

- Clay
- Rolling pin
- Flat surface, e.g. tree stump
- Variety of leaves, baking paper (optional)
- Non-sharp knives



Bat and moth game

15 mins

What to do

Group form a large circle in the open area.

One child is chosen to be the bat and is blindfolded to represent hunting by night.

Another is chosen as the moth and both enter the circle, the rest of the children become the cave wall standing still and quiet.

Explain how bats build up a sense of the world around them by making calls as they fly around and listening for the returning echo - echolocation. In this way they can tell how far away something such as its prey is, how big it is, its shape and where it is going.

To hunt the moth, the bat claps (to represent its call) and the moth then claps back the echo. The bat now knows where the moth is and hunts it down, clapping again as often as it wishes. The moth must always reply immediately.

The moth must try to avoid capture to survive. If the bat calls when it is close to the wall or grabs one of the cave walls, the cave wall calls 'Wall' and the hunt goes on.

Once the moth is caught, it can consider itself eaten and the roles can be changed.

Variations

More moths can be added, and the circle can be made smaller if it is proving too difficult for the bat!

Where

Green space, woodland.

Aim

To introduce predator-prey relationships and how bats communicate, while being active.

You will need

- Open area
- Group of 8+
- Blindfolds

Safety

Area clear of loose material that would be a trip hazard.



Woolly caterpillars

10-20 mins

What to do

Intro talking about caterpillars, camouflage and what to look for and where. Talk about predators/ food chain.

While the participants are otherwise occupied (and not watching!), the leader hides or scatters the woolly caterpillars in the chosen area. Everyone then sets to work trying to collect as many 'caterpillars' as they can.

Where

Any outdoor area, green space or woodland, could work at beach too.

Aim

Focussing in on natural world to spot 'hidden creatures'.
Learning about and understanding camouflage.

You will need

- A selection of coloured yarn - brighter colours for younger ones, 'natural' coloured for older participants. Chop up into 'caterpillar'-sized lengths
- Small containers for participants to collect in

Be mindful of nature. Avoid disturbing obvious habitats. Do not overuse a particular site or area.



Top predator game

10-20 mins

What to do

Intro chat about the food chain/web.

Decide on two or more teams. Team members form a line - from the stream to an area around 30 metres away. Each person has a container. The person in the water has a holey bucket.

Person in stream must quickly fill their bucket and empty the water into the next person's container... who then dashes to the next person and passes the water on...until the end person who fills an intact bucket. The game illustrates how top predators are last in line in terms of prey and have to use a lot of energy to obtain often poor pickings of food.

Where

Area with safe body of water - small stream is ideal.

Aim

Developing physical and coordination skills and strength, learning about nature and the food chain.

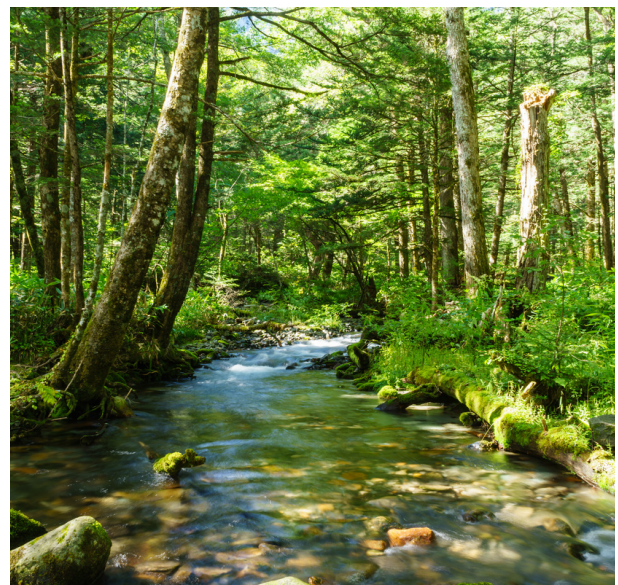
You will need

- A stream
- An assortment of containers
- A holey bucket
- Wellies

Be mindful of nature. Avoid disturbing obvious habitats. Do not overuse a particular site or area.

Safety

Check out the stream area and be sure everyone is aware of any deep pools, supervise those at the water.



A fistful of sounds

15 mins

What to do

All stand very quietly and hold up one hand with fingers outstretched.

For every sound heard, fold down one finger until they are all down (this may be done with eyes closed to increase focus).

Discuss the sounds heard – which are man-made, which are in nature? Which are dominant, which are background, which need to be listened for more carefully. What is the quietest sound heard? Did anyone hear birdsong?

Try again recording only natural sounds or only birdsong – who can get to 5 different sounds, or maybe even 10?

Variations

Try this at different locations and at different times and compare.

Can we imitate the sounds we hear? What could we use around us to make a similar sound? Have different children/groups make different sounds and compose a symphony!

Concentrate on birdsong – how many different calls are heard, can they spot the caller, can they imitate the sound, over time can they learn to identify different species from their call? Help with identification can be found on the RSPB website. Use natural materials to imitate the different sounds and make your own woodland symphony.

Where

Anywhere but to capture bird life best next to hedge, trees.

Aim

To build awareness of surroundings through sense of hearing, particularly nature sounds.

You will need

- No resources needed, an outdoor area, with trees or hedge if possible

Safety

Sit if children have difficulty standing with eyes closed.



Make a nest

30 mins

What to do

Spring is a good time for this activity when the birds will be busy collecting material and building their nests. See if you can observe any of it happening. Look in the still bare hedges and trees for any of last year's nests.

To make a nest, take a rough bundle of long dried grasses and make a loop weaving in the ends to create a nest shape.

Find soft materials to line and fill in the gaps.

Place your clutch of eggs in the nest – think of how many each species typically lay. Many eggs are speckled – rolling the clay/Play dough egg gently on the forest floor will achieve this.

Variations

For older children, try building a nest with only one hand as if you have just a beak and marvel at the effort and skill of many birds.

Learn more about the nesting habits of different species that are around your area.

Make a giant nest all together where you collect sticks and weave them to form a large circle that you can all sit in.

Get the group to act out a scene to demonstrate how cuckoos lay their eggs in other birds' nests.

Where

Woodland.

Aim

Empathise and understand more about the seasonal activity of birds around us.

You will need

- Supply of nesting material such as dried sticky grass, dried grass, fine twigs, dry bracken or ferns, mosses, lichens, feathers (you may need to bring some to supplement what can be found)
- Clay
- Play dough
- Cones or pebbles to represent eggs

Return the material once you have done the activity for the birds to use, especially if in the nesting season. Take care not to go too close to nests in the nesting season, as the parent birds may abandon their eggs or chicks if disturbed.

Safety

Take care of eyes when weaving and working with twigs.



Mini raft building

1 hour

What to do

Individually or in pairs, collect sticks of roughly same length and experiment with how to tie them together to create a raft. The simplest designs work the best but attaching a weight or keel directly underneath will help keep the craft upright.

Add a sail (large leaf or fabric), flag or any other features if wished.

Test them in some shallow water with their passenger aboard. Discuss the design features that work well.

Make modifications if wished and try again.

Variations

If rafts are sturdy enough have a race. Line them up and let them go down a flowing stream to a prearranged spot downstream. First one to arrive intact is the winner.

Tether the rafts with a piece of string if you want to keep them from floating off.

For night time treat, place a tea light on the raft and cover with the top section of a plastic bottle without lid to keep off the wind, and float for a magical effect.

Where

Woodland, beach.

Aim

To work at a design, being willing to experiment and modify

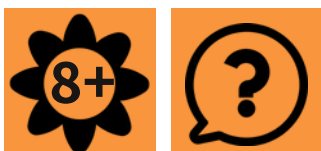
You will need

- Loose sticks
- Twine/string/elastic bands
- Stick person or small natural object to be passenger
- Large shallow plastic storage box containing some water if no suitable test site available

Respecting nature: ensure no non-natural materials are left in the environment.

Safety

Choose site carefully for testing rafts – shallow, quiet water, with gradual banking.



Pond or stream dipping

30 mins - 1 hr

Safety

Water safety: general advice would be to do pond-dipping safely from the edge (not in the water, and avoid leaning over the pond), stream dipping with supervision depending on age/ ability and nature of stream.

Hygiene

Equipment should be cleaned thoroughly after use, and especially if they will be used in different water next time.

What to do

Depending on age range, talk about what you might find and where. Support (as necessary) to fill tray or container with a few cm of water from the pond or stream. Demonstrate approaching cautiously and quietly, looking for and finding something of interest. Lower your net gently into the water, swirl around gently and empty contents into the container. Agree a time limit when everyone will come back with their bugs.

Split into pairs/small groups as appropriate.

Spread out and begin your dipping. Leader can support informally with dipping.

Come back to base and take turns to look at your catch. See if people can name their bugs, use ID charts for help. Return quickly to previous location. Wash your hands!

Where

Pond/stream.

Aim

Learning about how water creatures live, learning to identify some of them, respect for nature, assessing risk.

You will need

- A collection container or tray, spoons to look at creatures closely, a magnifying glass, pond/stream life ID book/ chart and net. You can use old takeaway containers etc or buy special dipping kits online
- ID charts: FSC have good waterproof ones, habitat-specific, £3.75 each
- Wear waterproofs/wellies

See also the RSPB website for ID sheets and 'Wild challenge' activity resources.



Be gentle with creatures, move slowly and cautiously, only take one of each, try to remember where they were and put them back there after examining. Respect habitats, replace displaced stones. Avoid having too many people in one section of stream at once.

Natural crown

30 mins

What to do

Bend the willow stems or ivy strands into a circle to fit your head, continuing to weave the ends around until they are completely woven in and the circle is quite secure.

If wished, add a further stem, ivy strand, clematis stem to make the ring thicker.

Decorate with seasonal natural materials that have been foraged, poking them between the strands of the ring.

Variations

Make it a wreath to hang on a door or wall, by adding a twine hanger.

Try in different seasons such as with evergreens in winter.

Make a dreamcatcher in same way by weaving a circle. Attach coloured wools across the circle and hang 4 or 5 items (e.g. feather, cone, shell) from it with lengths of coloured wool. Hang vertically to catch your dreams.

Hang horizontally and make a mobile.

Where

Woodland, green space.

Aim

To develop awareness of plants in different seasons and create something beautiful to celebrate the season.

You will need

- Bendy stems – willow, ivy, clematis or honeysuckle
- Secateurs (adult use only)
- Natural materials

Tip

Only gather natural materials that are no longer part of a living thing or that there are plenty of for decoration.

Safety

Care for own and others' eyes when handling long willow stems.



Journey Stick

30 mins - 1 hr

What to do

Everyone finds a stick they can carry easily – not too big! Depending on age/ability, leaders can support participants to cut length of twine or wool and wrap round their stick.

Now you all go on a 'journey' – in pairs or singly – you can walk a route or wander about in a chosen area.

Look out for interesting things to attach to your stick – a feather, a flower, a pretty leaf, seaweed... tuck them into the twine or attach with extra twine if tricky.

Come back to base and take turns to tell the story of your 'journey' and why you chose the objects on your stick.

Where

Woodland, beach, green space.

Aim

Observing the natural world, creating a unique story around your place in the natural world.

You will need

- A stick – 30-80 cm
- Coloured wool or twine
- Scissors
- Dress for outdoors, good shoes and have a rough route planned – you can go for a woodland walk or through a variety of different spaces, including the beach open green areas

Nobody needs to talk, they can simply show their stick if they prefer to.

Safety

Respect others with stick, avoid sharp sticks, leaders keep scissors safely. Avoid routes with lots of roads to cross or busy places.



Paper bag kite

30 mins

What to do

Decorate your bag in any way you like - with patterns, a face (the open end is the bottom).

Attach streamers cut from tissue/plastic bags to the bottom of the bag.

Fold 3 cm of the open end of the bag over to add strength. Attach 2 pieces of string/twine about 80 cm long to bag corners by either taping or threading through holes (as in picture) to form 2 loops.

Cut another 80 cm plus length of string and tie the 2 loops together.

If wished attach stick or squashed cardboard tube to end of string and wind up to make handle.

Go out and fly your kite – you will need to run with it or stay on the spot and spin round to catch the wind.

Where

Beach, green space.

Aim

To enjoy physical activity with distraction of flying a simple kite.

You will need

- A paper bag – lunch bag type ideal, but any will work, stronger the better (a plastic bag will work too)
- String or twine
- Stick/cardboard tube (optional)
- Felt pens/crayons/tissue paper/stickers/colourful plastic bags
- Tape (optional)

Safety

Supervision and care with scissors and if using plastic bags, check area for trip hazards.

Keep well away from overhead wires.



Quadrats

30 mins

What to do

Have an introductory talk, depending on level, about sampling, ecology surveys and maybe Citizen Science. Give a demonstration of how to (make and) use the quadrat.

To make a quadrat, choose four even sized, straightish sticks (about 1m each). Set them in a square then bind them using a square lash knot. (See Stick frames for detailed instructions.) Once you have your quadrat ready, take a few steps away from others and gently cast it onto the ground. Where it lands is your sample area.

Learners can work in pairs or singly. You may want to kneel on something so you can study the contents of your quadrat. Depending on the level of the participants, you can simply support identifying each species found, you can count the numbers of each species (using tally marks) or carry out more intricate calculations, see FSC website for further guidance on this.

Come together at the end, share the species counts and ID notes, add up the tally marks and talk about getting involved in Citizen Science activities.

Where

Anywhere, ideally somewhere with a variety of plants growing on the ground.

Aim

Learning about the diverse flora of a place by focussing on a small sample area, science.

You will need

- A quadrat or hula hoop (twine/wool and sticks to make your own)
- Tape measure
- ID guide for local plants
- Pen and paper
- Clipboard



Wildlife bingo

30 mins +

You will need

- A bingo sheet, examples available on the RSPB website, use pictures for non-readers
- You can copy the grid shown below
- Something to lean on, a pen or pencil each

What to do

Pair up or go alone – for a walk or just wandering about the woods, beach or field – and see what you can spot. Don't collect them, just notice them. Cross them off on your card as you see them. You can aim for a whole line or a whole card.

Where

Any outdoor location, especially green space/ woodland, very good for walk activity.

Aim

To encourage participants to observe nature. It is a great introductory activity to an area, and helps to develop a sense of place. (It can also distract 'reluctant' walkers!).



Find a rainbow

30 mins - 1 hr

What to do

Each person is given a card. Strip the backing from the tape and start hunting! The aim is to find a 'rainbow' of colour (don't be too strict about this, allow for creativity/artistic licence!). You could collect things like petals, twigs, leaves, feathers etc – any natural objects which will stick on. No living animals!

After an agreed time/when everyone is finished, come together and show your cards – or set up a 'picture gallery'.

Where

Anywhere outside.

Aim

Observing the natural world closely, noticing detail and colour.

You will need

- A piece of card with a strip of double-sided tape on it.

Safety

Avoid anything which might be poisonous.

Tip

Respecting nature: 'Take a little where there's a lot.'



Mixed bag

Sometimes it's nice to give people a free rein - or sometimes there may be someone who just doesn't want to join in with what everyone else is doing. It can be useful to have a mixed bag of activities for times like this. This can also be a great resource for parents in those long summer holidays! There is no need to use expensive kit, everyday and recycled objects can work perfectly! We have listed some suggestions for what to put in it here.

- Magnifying glass
- Small net/container
- Cards with double-sided tape for collecting
- Crayons/pencils and (waterproof) paper
- ID charts
- Air-drying clay
- Tape measure
- Chalk
- Wool or twine
- Map of the area
- Compass



General guidance for outdoor sessions

Think about having the following:

- Relevant risk assessment(s)
- Landowner permission (if appropriate)
- Consent/medical forms (with emergency contacts)
- Session plan (and Plan B!)
- Equipment/kit
- Designated first aider and first aid kit
- Insurance.

Always check the weather forecast too, beforehand and on the day. Check you have your phone charged and a signal.

This will seem a lot to begin with, but you will soon get into the swing of things. Encourage people to come wearing suitable clothing (lots of layers are best) and footwear for the outdoors. This could be wellies roomy enough to accommodate thick socks! It's good to keep a supply of emergency waterproofs/gloves etc in case anyone comes under-dressed.

Suggest that participants bring their own water and a snack (if desired). Let them know if you plan to provide additional drinks/snacks.

Please ensure you adhere to latest Scottish Government Covid guidelines, see NHS Inform website. You might want to ask people to bring their own sanitiser and a face covering if appropriate.



Blank site risk assessment

Venue: Landowner:	Assessment carried out by:
Postcode:	Signature: Date: Review Date:
Location Grid Reference: What3Words:	

Areas to check	Hazards	Risk	Level	Control Action	New Level
Access to the site • Public rights of way • Roads • Parking					
Boundaries around the site • Barbed wire • Streams, ditches, roads, tracks					
Other people using the site • Rangers, contractors • Walkers, cyclists, horse riders • Other children					
Canopy layer • Deadwood in overhead trees • Leaning, dead trees					
Shrub layer • Deadwood in smaller trees • Leaning smaller trees					

Areas to check	Hazards	Risk	Level	Control Action	New Level
Field layer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branches sticking out at eye level • Poisonous plants • Prickly plants 					
Ground layer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden logs lying in the grass • Broken glass, rubbish and rusty metal • Fungi • Dog faeces • Pond, stream, boggy areas • Slope, embankments • Holes in ground 					
Structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter • Fire pit • Camp area • Benches 					
Animals on site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer ticks • Rats in/near water courses • Dogs 					

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CHAT



Find out more on our website



An Outside the Box project, funded by the Scottish
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Communities committed to climate action



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