



Brighton & Hove environmental education

Run your own School Wildlife Club



Autumn Term

Environment Club

Ongoing Activities



Woods Mill, Henfield,
West Sussex BN5 9SD
www.sussexwt.org.uk
01273 492630

Create a 'School Grounds Year Book' - documenting your activities and findings through the different seasons, using photos, databases, drawings, writing inspired by the outside etc.

Create signs, information boards and fact sheets for your grounds or wildlife area.
Laminate and display permanently outside.

Make giant sculptures of flowers and bugs, using withies, reclaimed materials or clay, and display in the area.

Get involved with the development and maintenance of school gardens and wildlife areas.

Gardening projects - vegetable patch, container gardens, hanging baskets, herb gardens etc.

Write letters to local businesses and garden centres asking for supply of seeds and resources.

Build a compost area. Organise collection of schools organic waste. Observe changes over time.

Draw maps of your grounds. Use to record species of plants and animals found on the site.

Survey your grounds.

Choose a few trees, bushes and hedges. Keep a detailed record of them throughout the year.
How wide or tall are they?

How do the colours change throughout the seasons?

What animals are living in them / eating from them?

Dates of appearance and disappearance of seeds etc.

Dates of appearance and fall of leaves.

Set up a bird feeding station and monitor visitors to the site.

Which birds come?

How many of each type?

How long do they stay for?

What is their favourite type of food?

Record your findings on the Nature Detectives Website - www.naturedetectives.org.uk.

Compare your findings with national results.

This site is a fantastic resource and well worth checking out for lots of additional and seasonal ideas.



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Grounds for Wildlife

Warm up - School Grounds Treasure Hunt

Talk about the importance of school grounds for children (fun and learning) and wildlife.

Build up children's familiarity with their school grounds by creating your own treasure hunt. This would include questions about the built and natural environment specific to your grounds, such as;

- Find somewhere to throw away your old apple cores
- a tree with a bumpy bark
- a soft piece of moss
- somewhere minibeasts might love to hide
- something that smells strong
- 3 spikey leaves

Main Activity - Homes for Wildlife

Talk about the wildlife you might find (or wish to find) in the school grounds, and what conditions they need for survival.

How could you make your grounds more wildlife friendly?

The best way of encouraging wildlife into the grounds is to provide the right habitats (and hence food and shelter).

Survey your grounds.

Draw a map of the area. Identify places that might be suitable habitats for different creatures. Look at specific ways you could improve your grounds for wildlife.

Look at the SWT activity 'Wildlife Developers Move In' for more ideas on wildlife and their conditions for survival.

Closing Game - Grounds Bingo

Children draw a 3 x 3 grid and write the names of eg 9 different plants they might find in their grounds, in the cells.

The adult then holds up one specimen.

Children identify it and cross off if they have it written down.

The winner is the first to form a line of 3 correctly identified items.



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Pond

Warm Up - Pond Dipping

What's in the pond at this time of the year?

How does it differ from the spring and summer?

Main Activity - Pond Maintenance

September and October are good months to clean out a pond.

If your pond is becoming too shallow, clear out some but not all of the silt as it will contain a lot of eggs and larvae. The silt can be composted.

Remove excess vegetation - at this time of the year you should be aiming for about 2/3 of the water to be clear of plants. Take care not to damage the pond liner and leave any vegetation on the side to drain overnight so pond creatures can return to the water.

Prevent leaves falling or blowing into the pond by covering the pond with a net. Ponds should not be netted all year round as other animals eg frogs and hedgehogs can get entangled - check netting regularly for casualties.

Closing Games - Pond Parachute Games

Introduce the parachute to represent the surface of a pond. When underneath the parachute, the children are creatures living below the surface of the water, when on the parachute they are creatures living above the water. Most of the well known parachute games can be adapted to fit this context.

~Elicit 4 different pond creatures, assigning one to each child as you go around the circle.

~Create a ripple on the surface of the pond, allowing the ripples to get bigger and bigger as the wind gets stronger. Allow children (pond creatures) to experience what it feels like under the wavy water, either sitting, lying or standing.

~On command 'Pond' group raise parachute above their heads. Call out name of one pond creature eg newt. All newts run under and change places. Continue with other creatures. Introduce predator, eg great diving beetle or fish. When creature called out, they run to the other side of the parachute for safety, trying to avoid being eaten by the predator.

~3 or 4 pond creatures 'swim' around under the water. Another child is a heron. They remove shoes and get on top of the parachute. They have to catch their dinner by tagging the children underneath the parachute.

~Create a tent by sitting on the edges underneath the parachute. Use as a space to discuss pond ecology, pond maintenance or what it might be like to be a pond creature.



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Birds

Warm Up - Winter Food

Imagine you are a small bird and need a lot of food to keep you going throughout the day. Make a menu of all the things birds might eat. Go for a walk and see how many things on the menu can you find.

What happens in the autumn to the list of foods you have?
How does this affect the birds?

Main Activity - Making Bird Feeders

Make a winter treat for the birds by mixing lard or suet with bird seed - a messy job which children enjoy once they have got over the initial fear! Tie string onto fur cones or through a plastic cup / coconut and squeeze the mixture into the gaps. Hang from a tree or birdtable.

It's also a good time to clean out bird boxes. Wear gloves and a dust mask. Empty out the contents and wash with hot water and a mild detergent. Rinse well.

Closing Game - Winter Survival

Discuss the importance of trees to birds for shelter / cover and for food. What happens to the birds in the autumn / winter when the leaves fall off and there are less invertebrates around?

Have a selection of hoops around to represent trees. Children are birds, and have to run between 'trees' for food and shelter.

Introduce a predator eg fox / bird of prey which tries to catch the birds. Birds are safe when in the trees, but can only stay 5 seconds on each tree / hoop. Only 3 birds in each hoop.

In autumn when the leaves fall off, the birds do not have so much cover or food. Slowly remove hoops, and see the effect on the birds survival.



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Minibeast Homes

Warm Up - Making Minibeasts

Create a set of laminated cards with pictures of minibeasts on (the 'Minibeast Snack Pack' is a good resource).

Give each pair of children a card. They then collect resources from outside (eg sticks, leaves etc) to create a model of their minibeast (either 2d or 3d), trying to make it as anatomically similar to the cards as possible, ie looking at the number of legs, body segments, joints in the legs etc.

When complete, look at all the models, trying to guess which minibeast they created.

Main Activity - Making Minibeast Homes

Many minibeasts need sheltered conditions to survive the winter.

Make a bug home by collecting dry and tough hollow plants stems eg fennel, cow parsley, bamboo or old elder. Cut into 20cm lengths, tie into bundles and fix firmly to branches, fences or walls.

Alternatively, encourage solitary bees by painting or rust-proofing an old tin can, filling the bottom with waterproof glue and packing tightly with paper straws cut 1cm shorter than the can. Place under the eaves of sheds, among wood piles or on fence posts.

Make sure there are log piles, bundles of twigs or piles of stones and broken flower pots for minibeasts to overwinter in.

Alternatively, create a bug tower - for instructions see

<http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/page00062.htm>

Closing Game - Who am I?

Pin a picture or name of a minibeast on the back of one of the children. S/he asks the others questions to discover his own identity. The other children can only answer Yes, No or Maybe.

or

Tell children facts about an animal: its habits, its food, its predators, its shelter etc, and the children must try to work out what animal it is.



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Spiders

Warm up - Spider Webs

Take a walk around outside looking for examples of spiderwebs.

Choose a (empty!) spider web.

Make sure it is empty - no spider in the middle or hovering near the edge. Tap or blow on the web to see if there is any scuttling of spiders - there is an abundance of empty webs in September / October.

Spray the web with either contact adhesive or hairspray, and then with some silver craft spray.

Sweep your piece of black card forward from behind the web to catch the web on the card

Main Activity - Make Spider Webs

Look at the photocopy showing a spider making his web.

Collect 3 sticks about 30cm long.

Lash together to make a star shape with 6 prongs.

Alternatively, drill 6 holes in a conker and insert shorter sticks to form the basic shape.

Use wool to create a spiders web, wrapping the wool around each prong in turn.

Make a small spider out of eg pipecleaners to place in the middle.

Closing Game - Tangled in a Spiders Web

This works best in an outdoor area with lots of trees or bushes. It can be adapted for indoor use by positioning children as 'trees'.

You will need about 6 - 10 small balls of wool (approximately 10m in length).

Children tie one end of their wool onto a tree (or loosely to a 'trees' ankle?). They walk around the trees, going under and over other bits of wool, weaving a web as they go. When all children have used up all their wool, and a web has been created, they then try to roll back their wool, de-tangling their webs as they go.



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Trees

Warm up - Autumn walk

Walk around your site looking for signs of autumn - different coloured leaves, seeds, berries, perhaps even squirrels and spiders waiting on their webs.

You could;

- collect leaves / seeds to bring in for the art work
- ask the children to find natural objects the same colour as a sample you give them
- give the children a card with some double sided sticky tape on for them to create an 'autumn rainbow' or picture with pieces of leaves etc they have collected
- go for a 'mirror walk' - choose an area, near some trees, where children can walk, looking up at the leaves above them by holding a mirror above their nose and under their eyes to give a feeling of being within the canopy.

Main Activity - Leaf art

Using the leaves collected in the autumn walk, you could;

- try some leaf printing, perhaps mixing paint to match the colours on the leaves
- make your own autumn leaves by rolling out clay, pressing the leaves in to make an impression, and cutting around
- make a picture of an animal associated with autumn (eg hedgehog, squirrel) using leaves, seeds and sticks collected earlier

Closing Game - Autumn memory game

Put 6 - 10 specimens from autumn trees on a tray - these might include acorns, sycamore keys, conkers, conkers cases, beech nuts, hazel nuts and different autumn leaves. Make sure the children know what each specimen is, then cover with a cloth.

Play Kim's game. Give a couple of minutes to memorise, then remove a specimen. Children have to remember which is missing.

Alternatively, if all the specimens come from the school grounds, children have to run around outside, finding another example of each.



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Halloween

Warm up - Bat and Moth

Explain how a bat uses a signal echoing back off its prey to home in on moths (bat food). The moths can sense the bat's presence and take evasive action.

Arrange children in a circle at least 3 metres across.

Two children are blindfolded, disorientated, and stood in different parts of circle - one the moth and one the bat.

The bat has to capture the moth by listening for the echo of its call, the moth must avoid being eaten.

The bat calls out 'BAT' to which the moth must respond immediately 'MOTH'.

Both can then move inside the circle, calling and replying.

Other members of the circle, link hands to prevent bat and moth leaving.

Once caught, swap roles.

If too easy, make the circle bigger and have more than one moth at a time.

Main Activity - Spooky Wildlife Quiz

Print out the halloween quiz, cut up each question and hang in different places around the grounds.

Children have to locate questions and guess the answers.

Whilst outside, they might like to look at tree trunks and try to find any 'eye's or 'faces' staring out at them from the bark. They could extend this by creating spooky faces on trees using either natural materials or blu-tacing eyes and other facial features on.

Closing Activity - Apple Bobbing and Pumpkin Carving

If you've grown your own pumpkins, its a great time to weigh and carve out.

Also, try apple bobbing. Hang up some string like a washing line. Hang other apples from this. Children have to try to eat the apple with their hand behind their back.



Environment Club Halloween Quiz

1. What is Halloween?
 - a) a festival celebrating the dark
 - b) a dance done by ghosts
 - c) an ancient feast for the dead

Answer c - a long time ago, people believed it was a time when the dead were invited back to this world to feast with their loved ones

2. The smallest type of bat in Sussex is the Pipistrelle. How much does it weigh?
 - a) 4 grams
 - b) 40 grams
 - c) 400 grams

Answer a - 4 grams – that's about the same as a handful of crisps

3. The emperor moth lets off a strong smell called a pheromone. Why?
 - a) because it feeds off very smelly nectar
 - b) because this smells very nice to female moths
 - c) because it's body rots slowly throughout it's life

Answer b - the pheromones attract female moths – they can smell it over a mile away!

4. How do bats 'see'?
 - a) they have very small eyes behind their ears
 - b) they can't see at all
 - c) they make high pitched squeaks which bounce back off nearby objects

Answer c - this is called 'echo-location'

5. Toads have a warty skin. Why?
 - a) to stop people touching them
 - b) because they have a terrible disease
 - c) because the warts give off a kind of poison

Answer c - the poison tastes horrible, and helps protect them against their prey

6. The feathers on an owl's wing have special frayed edges. What does this help them do?

- a) fly silently
- b) look more attractive to their mate
- c) fly upside down

Answer a - fly silently – this means it is easier to hear their prey

7. There are 3 types of newt in Sussex. You don't see them in winter. Where do they go?

- a) they hibernate
- b) they are eaten by other pond creatures
- c) they migrate to a hotter country

Answer a - they hibernate somewhere humid and safe, like under a log pile

8. Some bats can live for over 20 years on a diet of moths, beetles and other flying insects.

How many gnats can a roost of 100 pipistrelles eat in a month?

- a) about 2 hundred
- b) about 9 hundred
- c) up to 9 million

Answer c - up to 9 million - they must have a huge appetite!

9. How many eyes do most spiders have?

- a) 2
- b) 8
- c) none at all

Answer b - most spiders have 8 eyes, arranged in 2 rows of 4

10. A long time ago, people thought frogs were a good medicine and ate them alive to cure which disease?

- a) whooping cough
- b) wrinkly skin
- c) bulging eyes

Answer a - whooping cough - today we often say people have 'a frog in the throat' if they have a tickly cough.



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Gardening - plants

Warm up - Squirrel Nut Hunt

This is an activity to get children thinking about seed germination and in particular about the part animals play in the process.

You will need a collection of small objects (eg acorns, beads etc). The children are squirrels. Share out the objects so each 'squirrel' has about 10 objects, representing 'nuts' that they want to store for the winter. They go off to find places to hide their 'nuts'.

Main Activity - Planting

Go on a walk and collect examples of seeds and berries. Try to identify, then plant in labelled pots. Some children might like to draw the seeds / seed heads, before planting, then laminate and use as labels for the pots.

Keep pots outside, as many of the seeds may need the frost to activate their growing.

Monitor throughout the term.

Sweep up autumn leaves and compost.

Cut back dead growth on plants - you might want to leave seed heads on plants to provide a little extra food for wildlife throughout the winter.

Plant spring flowering bulbs.

Closing Game - Squirrel Nut Hunt (continued)

Go out and try to find the 'nuts' you hid at the beginning of the session.

How many did you hide initially?

How many could you find?

Discuss how easy it is to lose the nuts, and how these 'lost' nuts may well germinate and grow into new plants.



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Compost

Warm up - Soil Sampling

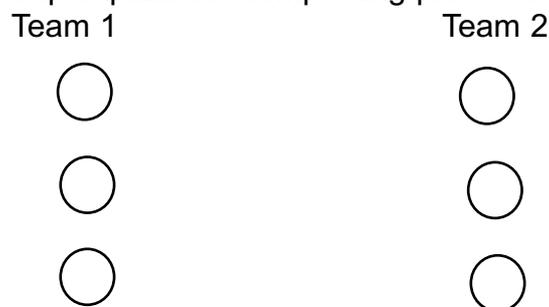
Have a selection of soils for children to compare and examine using hand lenses. Include garden soil, home-made compost, shop-bought compost, manure, chicken manure and comfrey liquid etc. What do they look, feel, and smell like? What are they made of? Which looks the best / worst soil for growing?

Main Activity - Minibeast Hunting

Look at minibeasts found in compost area and wormery. Look particularly at different types of worms. Are they similar or different from earthworms? How many different types can you find? Look carefully at natural composters eg slugs and snails - Where do they live? What do they eat? What don't they eat?

Closing Game - Composting Game

A team relay game to help explain the composting process. Set up using hoops as follows:



Hoop 1 contains variety of items [either real or in picture form] some suitable, some not suitable for composting.

Talk about things that compost and things that don't.

Race 1: Teams run relay choosing best items to add to heap [hoop 2]. When all team members have run, look at the resulting 'heap' and discuss chosen items.

Race 2: Teams run again, running round second hoop and back to the start - this stimulates heat production by aerobic bacteria breaking down the material.

Race 3: Teams must pick up items from the heap [heap 2] and transfer them to a new heap [hoop 3] - this stimulates turning of the compost to reintroduce air.

Race 4: Could repeat race 2, or one of the following; run with a jug to add 'water' to a drying out heap, or run with drying materials such as straw or crumpled newspaper for a heap that is too wet. Alternatively, could miss out this stage and race to remove the now completed 'compost' and place in/onto the garden which could be another hoop.

Then sit down and relax! Discuss the processes necessary for compost production and it's importance in the garden.



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Christmas

Warm up - Christmas Warm up Race

Sit children in 2 lines facing each other.

Give each a Christmas wildlife name eg holly, ivy, mistletoe, robin, icicle, turkey, goose, partridge in a pear tree etc.

When you call their name, they get up, run around the rest of their line and back to their seats.

The winner is the first person to sit back down in their seat.

Main Activity - Christmas Decorations

Go outside and collect any natural resources that look festive (evergreen leaves, berries etc). You may need to bring some things in if your grounds are not well stocked.

Stick a tea light into a lump of clay or plasticine.

Decorate with the natural objects found outside and add a bit of glitter and tinsel for a Christmassy feel.

Closing Activity - Icy Decorations

Create ice decorations by using any resources left over from the decorations (and lots of glitter).

Put in a saucer or shallow container with water and a piece of string and place in the freezer (or just leave outside if a frost is forecast).

Next day, when frozen, remove from the container and hang up outside in the playground for everyone to enjoy and watch as they slowly melt.