

Exploring Irish Nature Habitats



Better World Programme

Experiencing Nature

It is important to state that in Scouting we are not overly concerned with the learning of the names of plants and animals; this knowledge will come in time. We want you, at this stage, to explore and discover and open yourself to experience the world around you. Use all of your senses in this discovery, listen to the hum of the bees and the different songs of the birds. Taste the fruits and nuts of the forest from the sweet to the sour be careful however and make sure you know what you are eating..stay away from mushrooms as they are particularly difficult to identify the edible ones from the poisonous. Feel the wind and rain in your face and the mud at the bottom of the stream you are crossing, ooze between your toes, or the smoothness and grittiness of different rocks. See the wonder of the landscape and smell the freshness of the air and the fragrance of the heather and wild flowers. Once you understand the beauty of our planet and the interaction of each of its elements, it will be easier for you to conclude why we must conserve, why we must protect, and, most importantly of all, why we must live in harmony and not exploit the world around us.

Woodcraft is not only a knowledge of the names of plants and animals, but a deeper and more meaningful relationship with our surroundings. It is the experience of nature through all the senses that provides the mind with a more intensified picture of the interrelationship between all things on the planet and enable us to harmonise with them.

Through the use of all of our senses we become aware, and begin the learning process. Seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting; each sense provides unique information to the brain. The combination of sensory information greatly increases the experience.

Using all the senses allows a fuller picture to be developed in the mind. A tree, for example, can be seen and recognised. The leaves have their own shape. Are they shiny or furry as you feel them? Do they have a smell and a taste? The bark can be smooth or rough. Could you identify it blindfolded by touch alone? By using as many of the senses as possible more information is channelled into our memories. To experience nature you have to get out and explore it fully. Here are some simple exercises that will help you explore and improve your sensory skills.

Hand-Oak

Sit under an oak tree and compare the lines on your hand with the branch structure and roots of the tree. Before long you will find comparisons between the lines on your hand and your chosen tree - a personal connection.

Mirror walk

Walk along a forest track holding a mirror at your waist, facing up. You will notice many things - tree patterns, birds, stars, cloud formations.

Nature is a living and dangerous place for all living things. Bigger animals and species feeding on smaller prey within the food chain



Colour Palette

Collect small specks of colour in the area of your exploration. The specks of colour can be placed on the back of a sticky label. You will notice that many difference colours are present and that there really are 40 shades of green!

Time alone

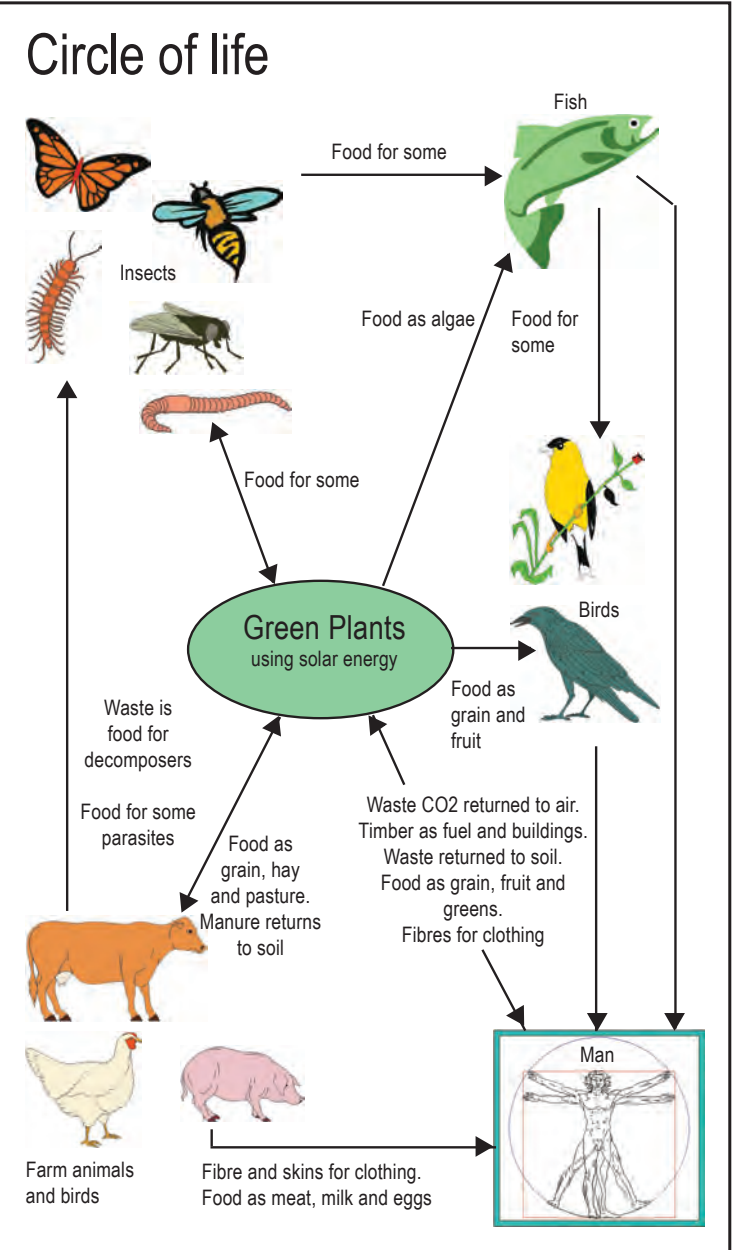
Stand silently and alone for 10 minutes in a forest and listen. How many sounds can you hear. Try and become aware of the noise you make as you travel through the forest, if you can hear the noise so can every animal.

Smell

Smell the air around you and smell every plant you can find.

Lie in the high grass

Lie on your back in long grass and look to the sky. Feel the wind around you and see the waves of wind drifting over the grass.





Wading birds



Sky Larks



Sea Holly



Thrift



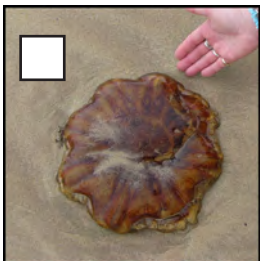
Dolphins/whales



Oyster catcher



Shells



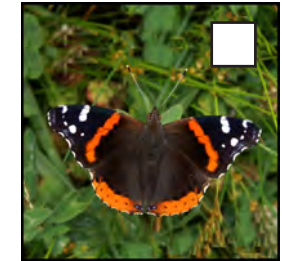
Jelly fish



Coastland - spotter sheet



Sand hopper



Red admiral



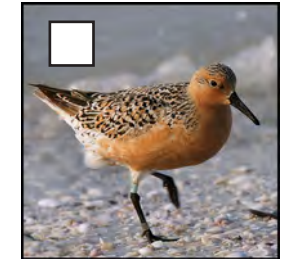
Crabs



Bird and animal tracks



Seals



Knot



Seaweed



Limpets



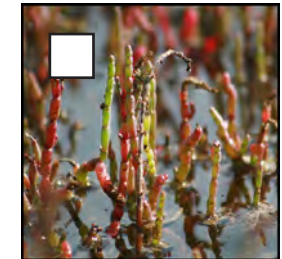
Lapwings



Gannets



Gulls



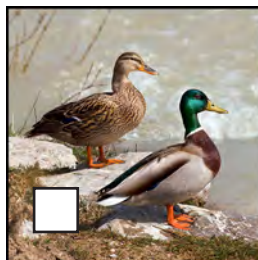
Glasswort



Kingfisher



Stickleback / fish



Ducks



Bull rushes



Yellow flag iris



Swans



Herons



Otters



**Inland waterways
spotter sheet**



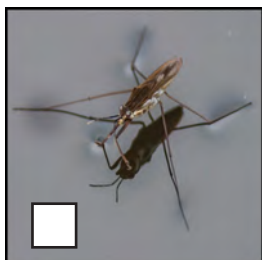
Dragon flies



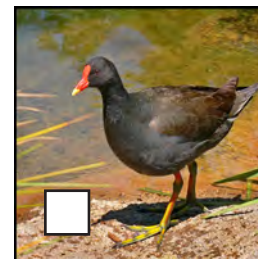
Clouded yellow



Rats



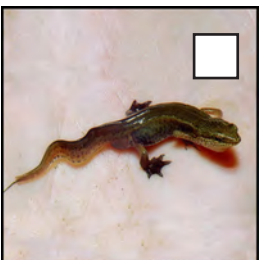
Pond skater



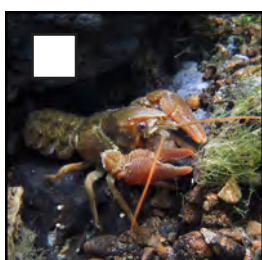
Moor hen



Water boatman



Newt



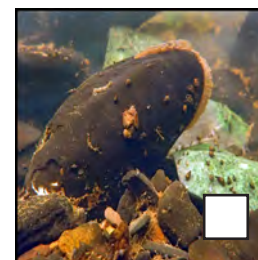
Crayfish



Mosses



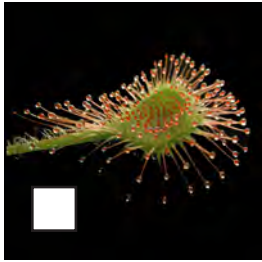
Tadpoles/frogs



**Freshwater mussel
shell**



Water horsetail



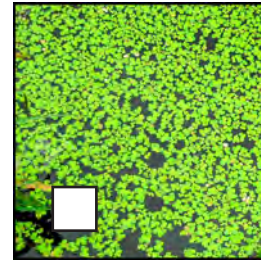
Sun dew



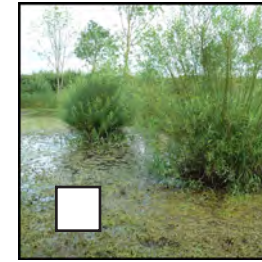
Dragon flies



Bog cotton



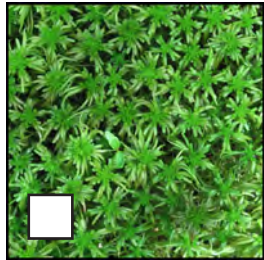
Duckweed



Willow



Red grouse



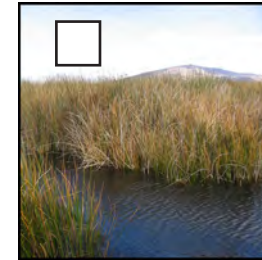
Sphagnum moss



Cranberry



Bogland - spotter sheet



Reeds



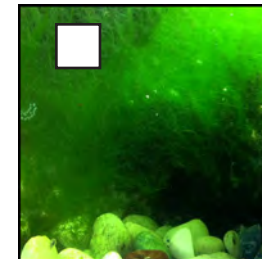
Painted lady



Moths



Bog oak stumps



Water net alga



Layered turf



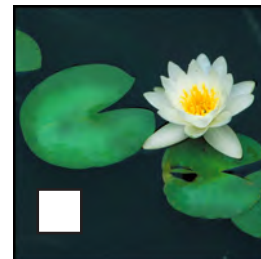
Alder



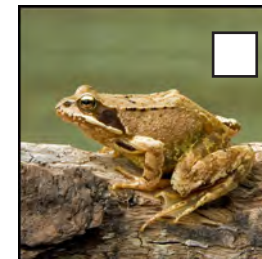
Bladderwort



Butterwort



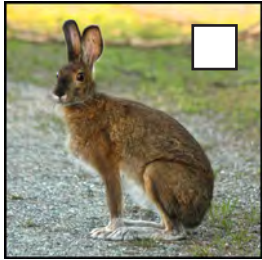
Water lily



Tadpoles/frogs



Ladybirds



Hares



Sky Larks



Peregrine Falcon



Meadow pipits



Feral goats



Raven



Red Deer



Geology



Mountain side spotter sheet



Rowan ash



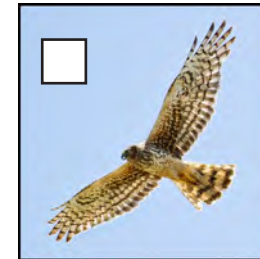
Grayling



Ferns



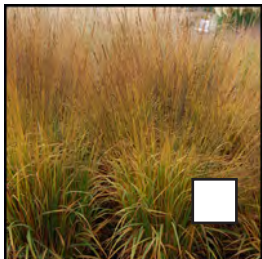
Marsh club moss



Hen harrier



Common
butterwort



Purple moor grass



Gorse



Bracken



Sika Deer



Tormentil



Frochan berries



Orchids



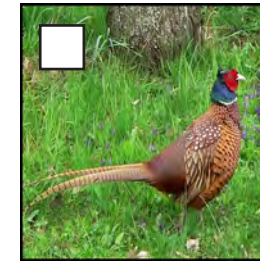
Sky Larks



Foxgloves



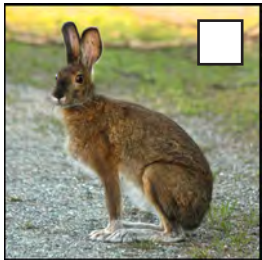
Thistles



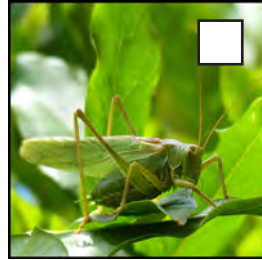
Pheasant



Dandelion



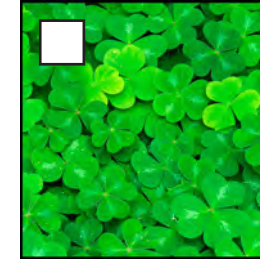
Hares



Cricket



Meadowland - spotter sheet



Clover



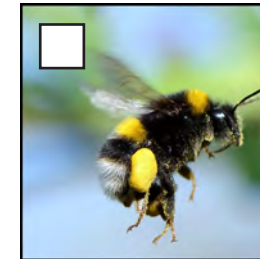
Butterflies



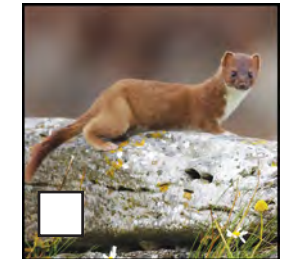
Damsel flies



Owls



Bees



Stoat



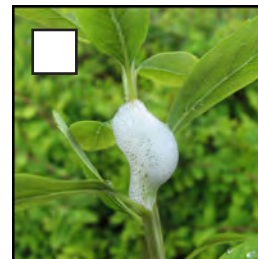
Bracken



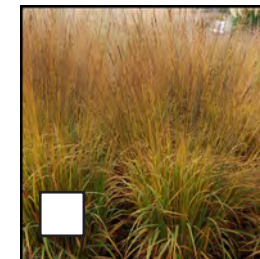
Heather



Wild flowers



Cuckoo spit



Grasses



Snails



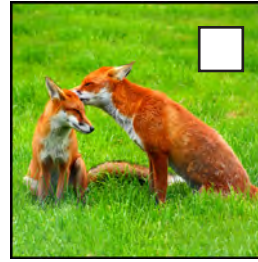
Poppies



Crows



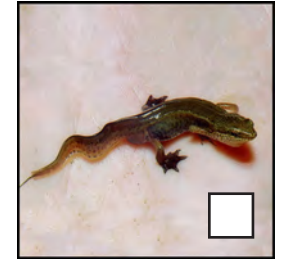
Bats



Foxes



Tadpoles/Frogs



Newts



Nettles



Earthworm



Farm land - spotter sheet



Farm animals



Large white



Barley



Animal tracks



Buttercups



Oats



Wheat



Vegetables



Starlings



Cowslips



Flies



Beech tree



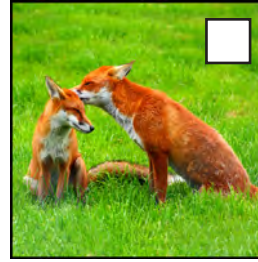
Kestrel



Mice



Sloe berries



Foxes



Foxgloves



Bees



Hedgehogs



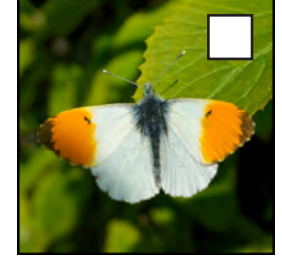
Blackberries



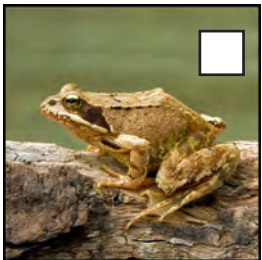
Hedgerow - spotter sheet



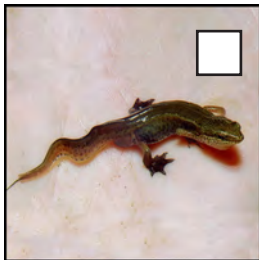
Pigeons



Orange tip



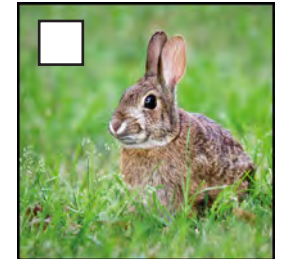
Tadpoles & frogs



Newt



Owls



Rabbit



Bindweed



Dog rose



Nests



Wild flowers



Spider webs



Rose bay willow herb



Fungi



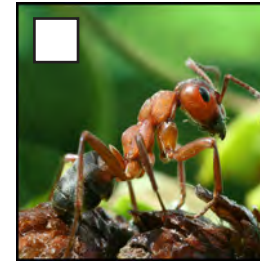
Trees & Leaves



Badgers



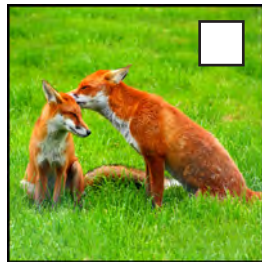
Bluebells



Ants



Beetle



Foxes



Wild garlic



**Woodland/Scrubland
spotter sheet**



Birds



Speckled wood



Lords and ladies



Animal tracks



Lichen/moss



**pine cones &
seed pods**



Snow drops



Squirrel



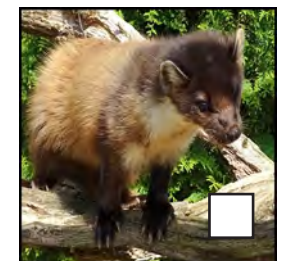
Slug



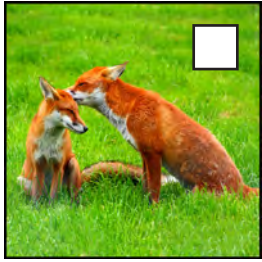
Woodlice



Spider webs



Pine martin



Foxes



Hedgehogs



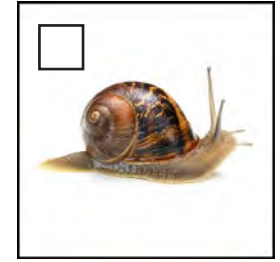
Ladybirds



Bats



Centipede



Snails



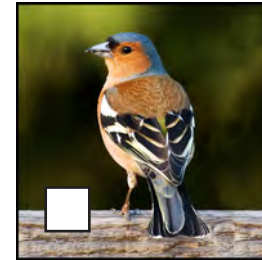
Earth worm



Spider webs



City and Urban spotter sheet



Birds



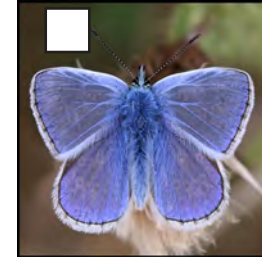
Butterflies



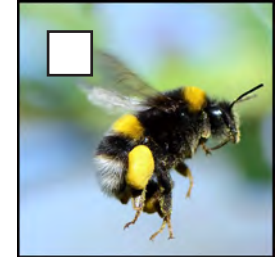
Caterpillar



Nests



Moths



Bees



Slug



Dandelion



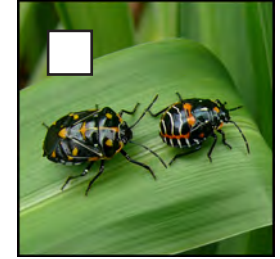
Ivy



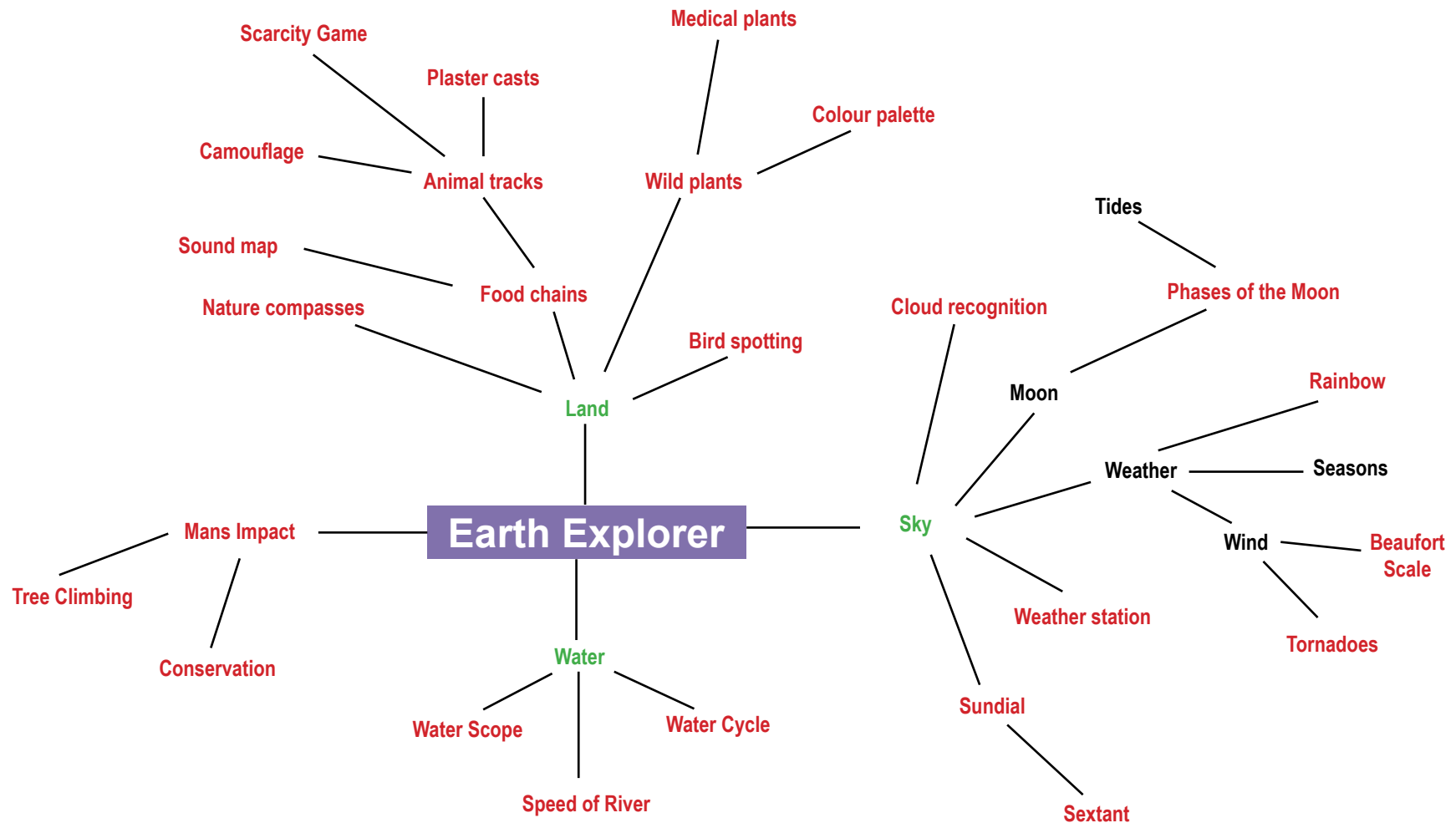
Ash seedling



Fungi

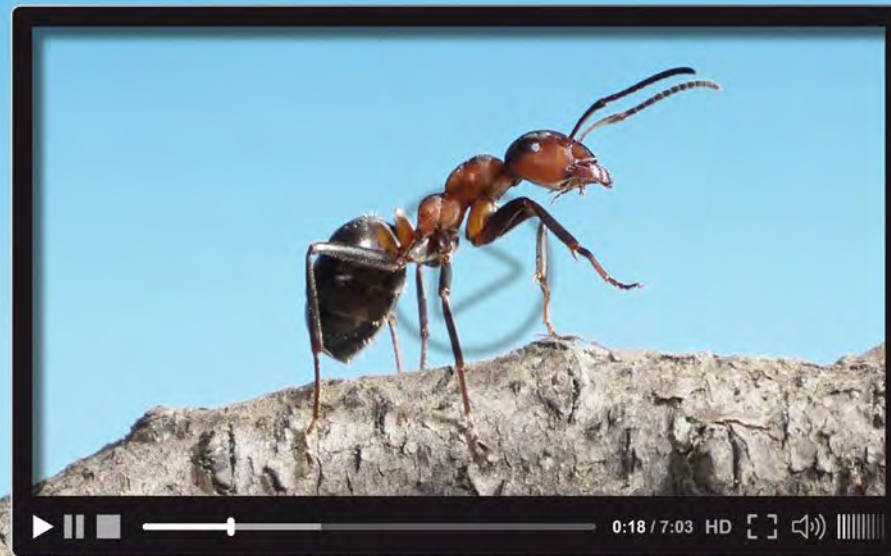


Bugs



This resource has information on items coloured orange

Earth Explorer theme chart



The Mission
You and your team
are to produce a
series of nature
movies - like a BBC
David Attenborough
documentary -
exploring and
showing the diversity
of nature in your
community or
campsite

Earth Explorer

UNDERWATER SCOPE

Hey Tuck!
What are you
doing?

Nothing *really*.
Just some simple
oceanography.

The only things
you need to make an
underwater scope are a
pair of scissors...

...and a
2-liter soda
bottle.

An easy way to start your
cut in the bottle is to
squeeze it in the middle
and make a small cut.

Cut the shape out below for your viewing pleasure.



Now just submerge the
scope halfway into the water
and start exploring.

I wonder if this is
how goggles were
invented?

The End!



Science Bit

Survival is essential to all living things - it increased its chances of reproducing. In the food chain - there is always a predator and this simple fact has caused insect and animal species to evolve a number of adaptations that help them find food and keep them from becoming food. Some animals' colours and patterns resemble a particular natural background. This is an important component of camouflage in all environments. For instance, tree-dwelling animals are mainly brown/green; birds of the forest floor are brown and speckled; in each case the animal's coloration matches the hues of its habitat. Similarly, desert animals are almost all desert coloured. This is taken by zoologists as evidence that camouflage is influenced by natural selection, as well as demonstrating that it changes where necessary to resemble the local background. Military uniforms, too, generally resemble their backgrounds; for example khaki uniforms are a muddy or dusty colour,



Camouflage



Animal Tracks

Colour Palette



You will need a name tag label sticker - this is your colour palette. Collect small specks of colour in the area of your exploration. The specks of colour can be placed on the back of a sticky label. You will notice that many different colours are observed and that there really are '40 shades of green'!

Stalking

If you want to observe animals at close range you will need to stalk up (creep up) on them slowly and quietly.

There are a number of techniques, from a stoop to a flat crawl - see diagrams.

Always approach the animals from downwind and wear clothing with subdued colouring.

Use whatever cover is available and peep out from the side rather than the top.

Avoid using the skyline where an outline would be clearly seen.



Animal Tracks



Deer



Fox



Hare & rabbit



Hedgehog

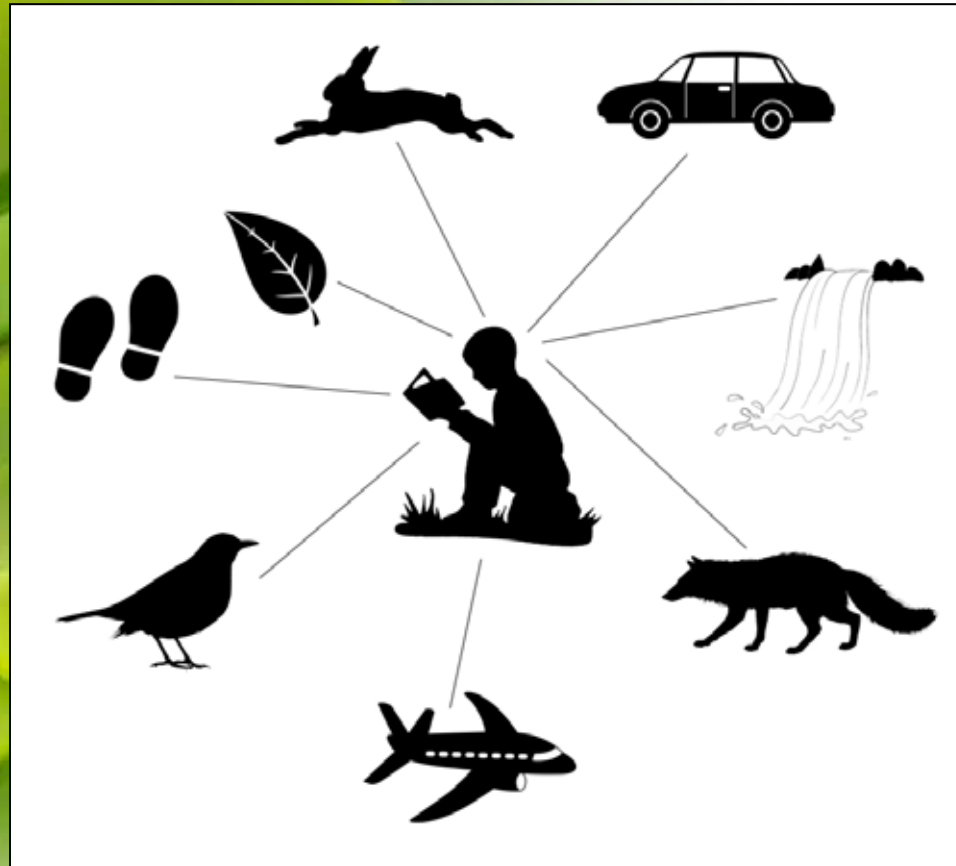


Squirrel



Badger





How to use a sound map

Place participants in different place so there is a bit of distance between them and they can sit down in silence without hearing each other.

Participants are give a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen

When settled in their spot they place an X in the middle of the paper. X marks their location.

Participants stay still for a short while (try 5 minutes) and start to listen to what is making sounds around them.

Participants mark on the paper the sounds they can hear and where they are coming from, for example there may be a stream behind them, sheep in a field in front of them, birds singing above and to their side. They should be still and quiet and really focus on sounds they can hear.

You can draw, or write the sounds you can hear around you.

The sound mapping exercise helps participants to slow down and pay attention to the detail around them, it also helps give them a better sense of the wider space.

When the exercise is completed it should be possible to compare sound maps. So a sound to the right of one person will be to the left of another.