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Create a Critter!

TOPIC: SCIENCE

THEME: Trees and Nature

Aim – To gain an understanding of how different creatures are adapted to live in different habitats, specifically a woodland habitat.

Introduction

This activity is a creative way to get pupils thinking about the biodiversity of a woodland space. Why are insects, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles the way they are? What makes them thrive in this environment? They can then use their imaginations, and the knowledge gained, to create their own creature to live in their woodland space.

Curriculum links – England

- Working scientifically
 - Planning different types of scientific enquiries to answer questions, including recognising and controlling variables where necessary
 - Reporting and presenting findings from enquiries, including conclusions, causal relationships and explanations and degree of trust in results, in oral and written forms such as displays and other presentations
- Living things and their habitats
 - Describe the differences in the life cycles of a mammal, an amphibian, an insect and a bird
 - Describe how living things are classified into broad groups according to common observable characteristics and based on similarities and differences, including animals
- Evolution and inheritance
 - Identify how animals have adapted to suit their environment in different ways and how adaptation may lead to evolution

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Curriculum links – Scotland

- Biodiversity and interdependence – SCN 2 – 01a, SCN 2 – 02a
- Biological systems – SCN 2 – 14a, SCN 2 – 14b

Resources

- Clay
- Natural materials found near trees in your school fields, hedgerow or woody area

Activity: Investigate what lives in the woods

1. What creatures can your pupils find and what can they read about? Lift up some logs and see what is living beneath. What can they observe when they walk in the woods? Do they know any of the birds that live there? Is there evidence of other animals living in the woods? (this might be plants that have been eaten by rabbits or deer, footprints – of humans or animals – nests and burrows, dens or setts). Use pit fall traps, quadrat sampling or just observation to discover what lives in your wood.
2. At the same time consider what a woody area is made up of. As well as the trees, there will be shrubs, plants, hedgerows, fungi all growing in the area. What is the soil like? What is it made of? Is it the same everywhere in the woody area? Is it dry or is it damp? You could even do a soil pH test to see if it is acidic or alkaline. How much light gets into the wood – is this the same everywhere? What happens at different times of year? Why does this happen? Does the temperature change around the woody area and throughout the year? Measure the temperature in different places and on different days.
3. Choose a few creatures that live in your woodland and discover more about them. Look at where they live – which parts of your woody area do they make their home in? Do they live on the ground or up in a tree for example. What do they feed on? How do they move - can they fly, can they climb the trees, do they run along the ground? How have they adapted to live in that space?

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4. Now that the pupils know about the habitat and the creatures, it is time to invent their own. They can use a piece of clay or things they can find in the woods (being careful about what they use) to make their creature. They need to think about where it lives, how it moves, what it feeds on and what might feed on it!
5. When they have created their critter, they should tell the rest of the class what it does and why you have made it that way.

Take action

Use your knowledge to help keep the creatures who live in the wood safe. Consider what you can do to help – can you make sure you don't drop litter that might be dangerous to animals that live there? Even better can you organise a clear up of other people's rubbish?

Key skills

- Devising scientific methodology
- Supports enquiry and research skills

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