

## NATURE

## Activity N01

**Theme**

Class activity (CA). The students make or identify a habitat in the school grounds and investigate what lives there. The focus is on minibeasts (i.e. ants, spiders and other creepy-crawlies!)

**Objectives**

Allowing students to watch creatures over time and to observe and record their

numbers, characteristics and behaviour.

Observing small creatures in their natural habitats – this can work even in small spaces and with limited resources.

**Curricular Strands**

SESE, Science-Plant and animal life, Variety and characteristics of living things, Environmental awareness and care

**Skills**

Questioning, observing, predicting, sorting, identifying

**Time**

35 minutes to set up; 15-20 minutes a week to study habitat over the school year

**Links to Green Schools**

Improving your school environment

# Who crawls there?

## MAKING AND EXPLORING A HABITAT

**WHAT YOU NEED**

- Old logs
- Old carpet and rocks
- Tape measure
- Pencils and paper
- Plastic gloves
- Pooters for collecting insects (see [www.blackrock-edu.ie](http://www.blackrock-edu.ie))

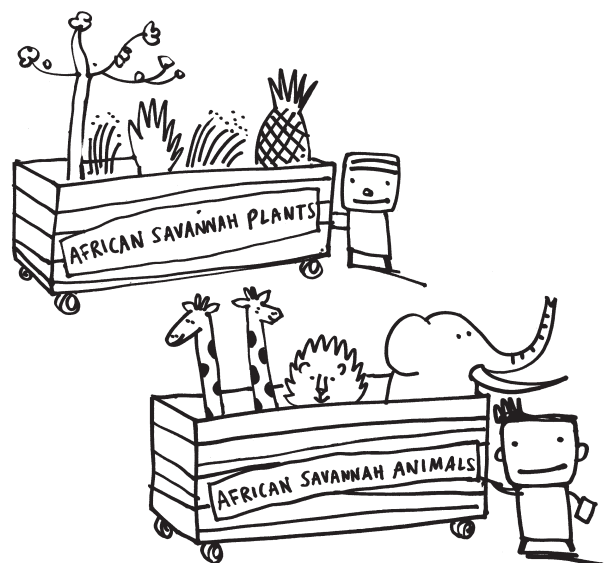
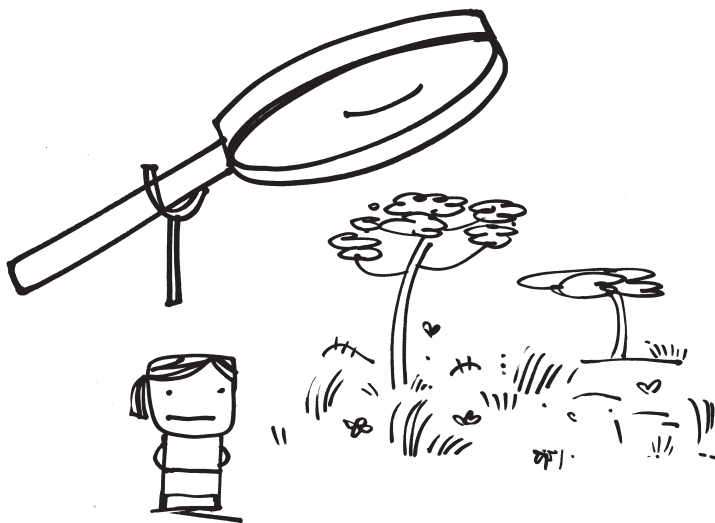
**WHAT YOU DO**

**Note:** Always wash your hands after investigating your habitat!

- 1 Start by asking students if they think there might be any areas in the school grounds that provide a home for minibeasts.
- 2 Any existing minibeast habitats can be examined, and

the creatures found can be compared to those attracted to the new habitat you make.

- 3 Ask students to collect small sections of old carpet or old logs. Alternatively, the teacher can provide these. The habitat does not need to be very big, and the materials don't need to be dirty (at least to start with!).



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- 4 Find a damp, shaded, well-protected area of the school grounds.
- 5 Place the old logs and carpet in the area, and if the weather is dry use a watering can to dampen them a bit.
- 6 The students can measure the area of their habitat and draw a map.
- 7 Leave the habitat for a week and return with the maps made previously.
- 8 Note any changes on your map in a different colour, with the date marked at the top.
- 9 Carefully lift up the carpet, rocks or logs to see if there are any minibeasts to be found. Make sure you put things back where you found them after your observations.
- 10 Use pooters (see [www.blackrock-edu.ie](http://www.blackrock-edu.ie)) to collect some minibeasts to study. Treat the minibeasts carefully and return them to their habitat afterwards.
- 11 Use the INTO identification keys, worksheets and teacher information provided with this pack (by kind permission of INTO) to identify and study any minibeasts found.
- 12 Return to the habitat on a weekly basis and record the weather, plant growth and any minibeasts that are present.
- 13 Present your findings on a chart in the classroom.

### Questions

- 1 What effect do weather, changing seasons or the presence of plants have on the habitat?
- 2 Are there more minibeasts as the weeks pass?
- 3 Draw a bar chart of number of the number of minibeasts over time and display it in your classroom.
- 4 Can you find a food chain or a food web in your habitat?

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### Go further

1 This is one of the easiest habitats to create in your school grounds to study, and it allows the students to develop the skills of observing, recording and investigating creatures in their habitats.

There are many more ways to create a habitat in all types of school environment; urban, suburban or rural schools can create a habitat for studying plants and animals and their local environment (see below).

<p>Only concrete in your school yard? Try...</p>	<p>Filling old buckets, tyres, raised beds with soil and native or wild plants. See <a href="http://www.blackrock-edu.ie">www.blackrock-edu.ie</a> for a diary of what to plant and when.</p>
<p>Not enough space in the yard? Try...</p>	<p>Making window boxes and hanging baskets out of recycled two-litre drink bottles. For a window box, cut a long rectangle out of one side of the bottle and pierce small holes in the base. For a hanging basket, cut the top off the bottle and cut two small holes on either side of the bottle and pierce holes at base. Hang the basket up with string secured with the lid. Students can paint designs on to the bottles.</p>
<p>Just waste ground? Try...</p>	<p>There are a lot of wild plants that grow on waste ground. The school could set up a day to clear the area or scatter new seed (see <a href="http://www.blackrock-edu.ie">www.blackrock-edu.ie</a> for how to plant wild flowers, trees and shrubs), and students could use the plant and minibeast identification keys to name what you find (<b>Note:</b> children should not be involved in clearing litter).</p>
<p>What about winter? Try...</p>	<p>Habitats for study do not have to be outside! Mini- woodland, wetland and desert habitats can be set up on a small scale in old basins with the appropriate plants. How are plants adapted to where they live? See <a href="http://www.blackrock-edu.ie">www.blackrock-edu.ie</a> for excellent ideas on making your own indoor bottle gardens, minibeast observatories and pond environment.</p>
<p>Find a tree and try...</p>	<p>Trees can provide a habitat for all kind of minibeasts, birds and plants (such as ivy and lichens). Find a local tree in your area; draw a map for its location, measure its width and height, estimate its age and look for plants and animals living on it. You can even go further and compare different trees. What kinds of trees seem to attract more creatures?</p>