



Natural Senses

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Natural Senses

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Contents

ACTIVITY 1	Natural Scents	4	ACTIVITY 8	Animal Snap	10
ACTIVITY 2	Animal Sniff	5	ACTIVITY 9	Canopy Walk	11
ACTIVITY 3	Camouflage Caterpillars	6	ACTIVITY 10	Squirrel Walk	12
ACTIVITY 4	Listening Hand	7	ACTIVITY 11	Night Line	12
ACTIVITY 5	Feely Bags	7	ACTIVITY 12	Meet a Tree	13
ACTIVITY 6	Sound Maps	8	ACTIVITY 13	Nature's Washing Line	14
ACTIVITY 7	Tickly Prickly	9	ACTIVITY 14	Scavenger Hunt	15

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Context

This booklet highlights the importance of sustainably managing our natural resources, focusing on using senses to explore nature.

Natural Resources Wales' purpose is to pursue the sustainable management of natural resources in all of its work. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales' well-being, and provide a better future for everyone.

Introduction

All the following activities and many more can be adapted for use in woodlands, coastal settings, local parks, school grounds, etc.

The activities have come from many different sources and have been altered and adapted over the years.

All the natural resources required to complete the activities listed are all easily collectible from local nature spaces if your setting has none available.

Please ensure that your activities are sustainably resourced and have minimal impact on the natural environment.

For example:

- Be aware of prickly, poisonous plants
- Guard any protected species on site
- Don't over use one area
- Leave nothing but footprints



PICK AND CHOOSE from the following activities to explore the environment to further develop a sense of place, encourage physical activity and promote wellbeing.

AIM

To encourage everyone to spend time being in and connecting to nature through first-hand, positive experiences.

To aid the development of cross curricula skills and knowledge required to meet the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales.





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ACTIVITY 1

NATURAL SCENTS

Overview

This activity allows learners to explore using their sense of smell, sight and touch to create individual smelly cocktails.

Supporting information & resources:

Small containers such as empty yoghurt pots or camera film cases

Small sticks or similar for stirring

What to do...

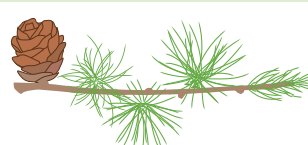
- ① Give each learner a small container. And ask them to collect natural objects such as leaves, petals, etc, whilst being mindful of the impact on the environment.
- ② Ask them to study and crush or break their items between their fingers and smell.
- ③ What do they smell like? Are they nice or unpleasant smelling?
- ④ The items can then be added to the pot. When sufficient material has been gathered, the learners should use a small stick to stir and mash their concoction together to make an individual scent.
- ⑤ Once complete they can share and smell each other's cocktails to experience a wide range of smells and compare and describe them.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS could work together using a bowl or bucket, to make a larger scale natural scent.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS could play the "Smell Factor," appointing a judging panel to decide which natural scent is the best.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- Ask learners to collect items of a set number, colour, texture or scent.
- Discuss which animals may be attracted to their creations.
- If their natural scent was a magic potion what spell would it be?
- Name the scent and make a pictorial or written recipe.
- Design packaging and a marketing campaign for different scents.
- Keep the cocktails/potions and observe changes over a set time frame.
- Try making different cocktails, for example, an autumn or spring cocktail, a horrible smell for a bad character in a story, use natural material from a different nature space, e.g. coast, woods, grassland.





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ACTIVITY 2

ANIMAL SNIFF



Overview

This activity develops awareness of how other creatures use their senses to locate food, each other and their home.

Supporting information & resources:

Several different flavouring essences (ideally colourless)

Cotton wool



What to do...

- 1 Create a set number of small cotton wool balls, e.g. 10.
- 2 Apply the different flavoured essences to each one but replicate a couple.
- 3 Hide the cotton wool balls around the area.
- 4 Ask the learners to look for the cotton wool balls, to smell each one without removing them from the location, and to see how many different smells they can count.
- 5 Discuss how everyone has a different level of sense of smell. How difficult or easy was it to pick out the different scents? Was one easier than identify than another? Describe the smells.
- 6 Another way to play this game is to have as many small cotton wool balls as learners.
- 7 Divide them into as many groupings as you have essences and apply the essence.
- 8 Hide the cotton wool around the area and invite each learner to find and pick up one cotton wool ball.
- 9 Once everyone has found a cotton wool ball, ask the learners to use their sense of smell to find others with the same scent, linking arms as they do so to create a "scent family."

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- By applying the same number of essences to a tree trunk or similar and then ask each 'scent family' to try to locate their 'home'.
- Investigate which animals and insects use their sense of smell and what for? For example, badgers use it to sniff out their prey at night time and ants use scent trails to find their way home and to identify friend from foe.





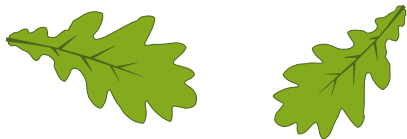
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ACTIVITY 3

CAMOUFLAGE CATERPILLARS



Overview

This activity supports the development of observational skills and resilience, and introduces the topic of animal adaptations, particularly camouflage.

Supporting information & resources:

Small pieces of a variety of coloured pipe cleaners, wool or similar

Camouflage: a disguise that makes a person or animal look like what is around them

What to do...

- 1 Place a set number of finger length pieces of differently coloured pipe cleaners, wool or similar, around your natural space – these are the caterpillars.
- 2 Keep back one each of the most naturally coloured pieces that suit the area in use, e.g. green, brown, black, seasonal colours.
- 3 Place each caterpillar in plain sight in different locations, at varying heights within learners reach e.g. ground level, mid-level, high level.
- 4 Make a mental note of where you place the more natural coloured pieces, e.g. a brown “caterpillar” on leaf litter.
- 5 Explain that the caterpillars need to be found – show an example.
- 6 Tell your learners that every time one is found, it must be brought back to the Leader before continuing the search.
- 7 As the ‘caterpillars’ come in, wrap each piece around a small stick.
- 8 Usually, the less natural, brighter colours will be found first, possibly leading to the need for clues to help pin point the location of the natural colours.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can count the caterpillars and name the colours.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can look at the sequence of collected ‘caterpillars’ on the stick and discuss why the brighter, less natural colours were found first.

Consider how camouflage is used by many creatures to hide from predators or to hide from prey.



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ACTIVITY 4

LISTENING HAND



Overview

This activity focuses on active listening skills to develop an understanding of natural and man-made activity in the area.

What to do...

- 1 Standing in a circle, ask everyone to hold up their hands in a clenched fist.
- 2 Learners should close their eyes and listen for a set length of time (depending on ability), raising one finger every time a different sound is heard.
- 3 Discuss sounds heard.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can just stand in a circle and listen. Discuss what sounds were heard. Were they natural or manmade?

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can replicate the activity in a range of different habitats and create a sound bank that can be tallied to show the most frequently heard sounds within a set area.



ACTIVITY 5

FEELY BAGS



Overview

This activity encourages learners to explore natural resources through a range of senses.

Supporting information & resources:

Collection bag or box

What to do...

- 1 Collect different natural objects from around your nature area.
- 2 Place them in the bag or box.
- 3 With closed eyes or using a blindfold, ask one learner at a time to choose an object to pull out.
- 4 They should explore the object through as many senses as possible except sight and describe how the object feels, smells, sounds, etc. and try to work out what it is.





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ACTIVITY 6

SOUND MAPS



Overview

This activity focusses on developing directional hearing.

Supporting information & resources:

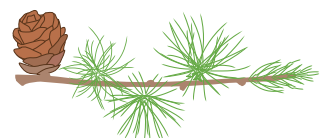
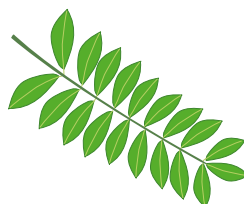
Clipboards, pieces of paper or card, pencils

What to do...

- 1 Give each learner a clipboard with card/paper and a pencil and ask them to locate themselves in a comfortable position, e.g. leaning on a tree, sitting on the grass, away from everyone else.
- 2 Ask them to draw a dot or a picture of themselves in the centre of their piece of paper.
- 3 This represents their current location.
- 4 Ask them to close their eyes and listen to the sounds for a set amount of time.
- 5 On hearing a sound, they should think of a symbol or picture to represent it, for example wavy lines for the wind. Instruct them to draw the symbol/picture on the "map," according to where the sound came from in relation to them.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can listen and point in the direction of each sound.

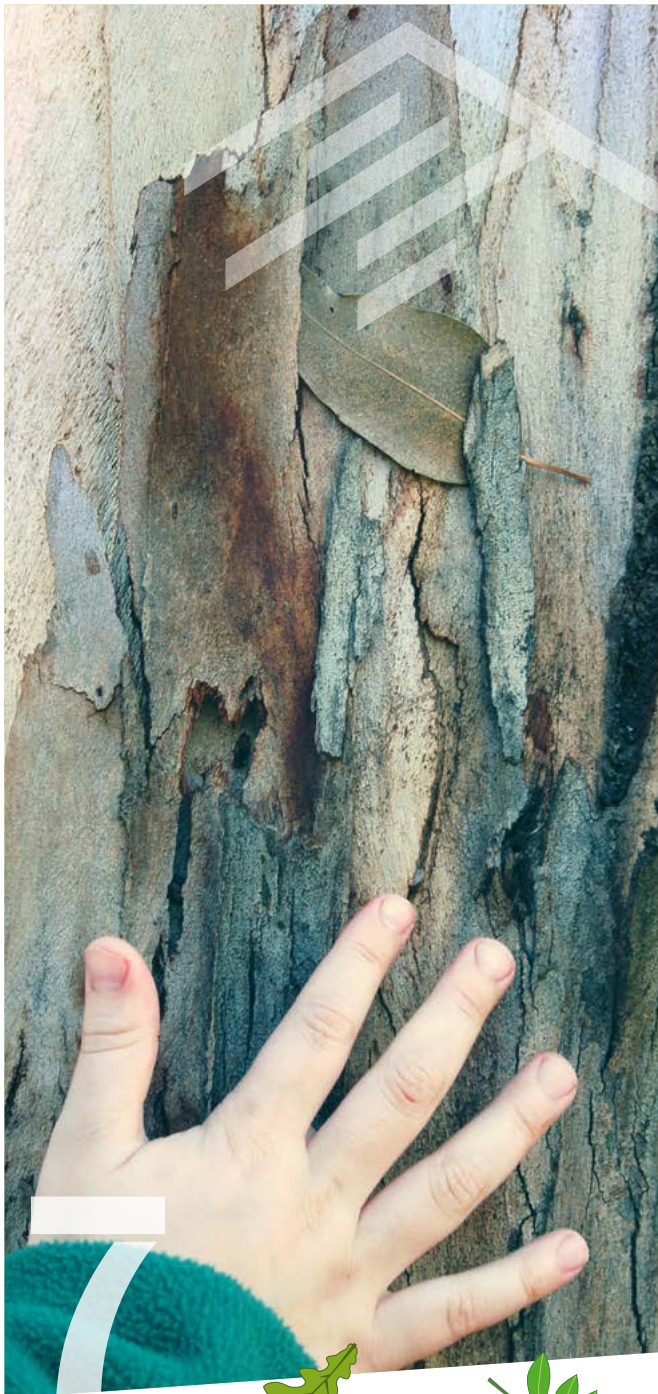
MORE ABLE LEARNERS can work together using the created sound maps to form one big sound map of the area. Replicate the activity in other local natural spaces and sound map the wider area. Which sounds are the most common?





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ACTIVITY 7

TICKLY PRICKLY



Overview

This activity focusses on discovering textures within the natural environment.

Supporting information & resources:

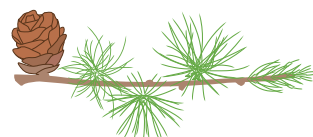
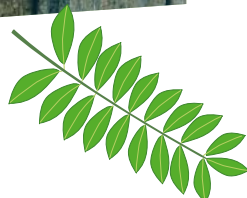
// **RESOURCE CARDS:** *Tickly prickly*
OPTIONAL - Collection containers, e.g. ice cream tubs

What to do...

- 1 Divide your learners into pairs or small groups.
- 2 Give out a pair of *Tickly Prickly* resource cards to each pair/small group.
- 3 Ask them to work together to each find three natural objects that demonstrate the texture or adjective, e.g. rough and smooth, crunchy and soft, etc.
- 4 When ready, find another pair or group and take turns to work out from the objects which words are represented by each pair/group.
- 5 The aim is to try and guess the other pair or group's two words.
- 6 This can be continued until all have been identified.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can be provided with containers, such as old egg boxes with texture words written in the bottom of each section. Collect one example of each.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can create their own list of textures and adjectives or complete the activity one on one.





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// Activities & Games



ACTIVITY 8

ANIMAL SNAP



Overview

This activity is a fun way to explore sound and hearing. For maximum enjoyment this is best played with a larger group.

Supporting information & resources:

// **RESOURCE CARDS:** *Animal snap*

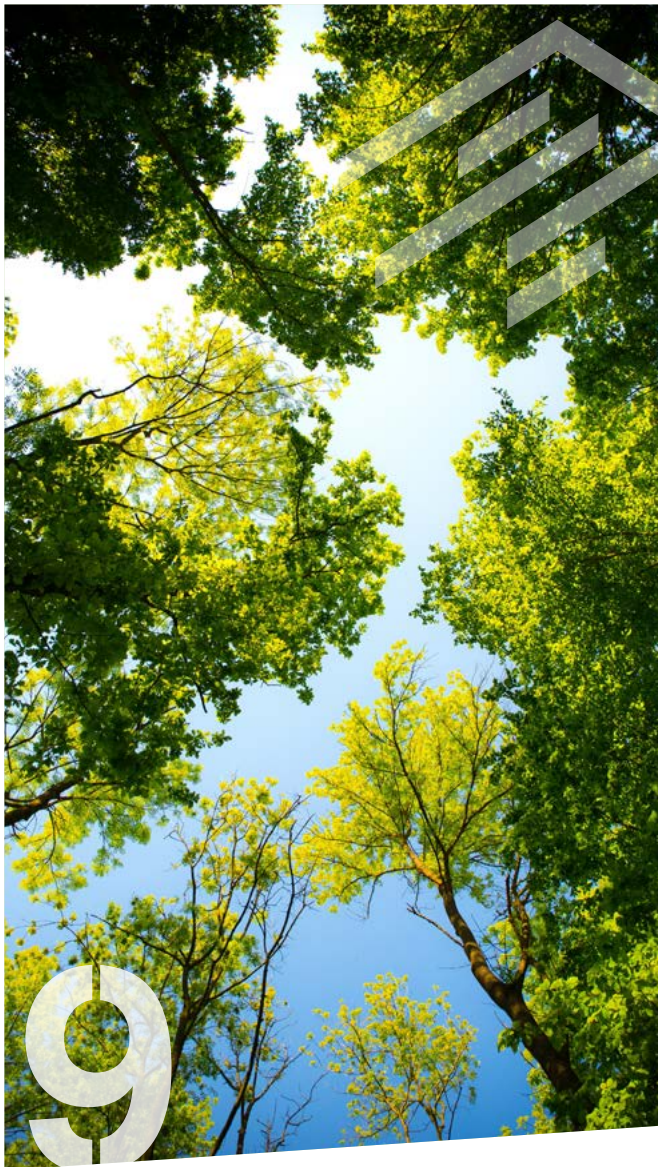
What to do...

- 1 Before playing ensure that you have one card per learner and as equal a spread of the types of creatures represented as possible. Leave out a set if required but make sure that the cards are well shuffled. For example, for a class of 20, use 5 cards of 4 different creatures.
- 2 To introduce this activity, discuss the kinds of creatures that you might find in the locality.
- 3 Consider the animals on the cards and ask what kind of noises they might make.
- 4 With the group in a circle, explain that each learner is to be handed out a picture card.
- 5 The cards can be looked at but should not be shown to anyone else.
- 6 On the command of the Leader, learners are to make the noise of their animal and then leave the circle to find others that are making the same noise to make an 'animal family'.
- 7 Learners can be asked to get into the animal families for other activities to encourage group socialising.



Natural Senses

// Activities & Games



ACTIVITY 9

CANOPY WALK



Overview

This activity encourages learners to look at the natural environment from new perspectives.



Supporting information & resources:

A5 sized safety mirrors

What to do...

- 1 This activity needs to take place under a tree canopy for best effect.
- 2 Demonstrate how to safely guide and use the mirrors at the start of the activity.
- 3 Depending on ability, ask learners to get into pairs or threes.
- 4 The pair or small group are to link arms firmly to ensure good support when moving around.
- 5 Give out a safety mirror to each group. They can choose who has the first turn with the mirror and who will safely guide them.
- 6 The mirror needs to be held at chin level so that when looking down into it, there is a good view of the canopy, so allow time to experiment with best view point.
- 7 The “guides” can now take the mirror holder for a woodland walk under the tree/shrub canopy.
- 8 The learner with the mirror can describe what they can see and how it feels.
- 9 Swap over when ready until everyone has taken a turn.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by moving the mirror into different positions.

BEETLE’S EYE VIEW – move the mirror to just below the eye and look down into the mirror. This gives a beetle’s eye view of the woodland canopy from the woodland floor.

BUZZARD’S EYE VIEW - hold the mirror just above the eyes (eyebrow level) and look up to see a buzzard’s view of the woodland floor.

RABBIT’S EYE VIEW – holding their mirror against their nose, learners can see what’s going on behind them, a special skill rabbits are able to do to detect predators coming up behind them.



Natural Senses

// Activities & Games



ACTIVITY 10

SQUIRREL WALK



Overview

This activity supports balance development, physical activity and resilience.

Supporting information & resources:

Suitable large fallen branch, tree trunk or logs

What to do...

- 1 Discuss how squirrels are adapted for living in trees by having strong claws for climbing and big, bushy tails for balance.
- 2 Ask the group how humans use their body parts to balance, e.g. arms out.
- 3 Challenge the learners to take turns to see if they can balance along the wood from one end to the other.
- 4 If they fall off encourage them to try again.

N.B. Wood can be slippery especially if wet.



ACTIVITY 11

NIGHT LINE



Overview

This activity explores the environment without the sense of sight and can be used to introduce the topic of creatures that do not rely on sight, e.g. nocturnal animals and soil inhabitants such as worms.

Supporting information & resources:

Rope, string or similar

OPTIONAL - blindfolds

What to do...

- 1 Wind the rope around several trees at the average shoulder height of your learner group, ensuring that there are no major obstacles at foot and body level.
- 2 Tie the ends carefully to ensure the rope is as taut as possible.
- 3 One at a time, with sufficient spacing between them, learners are to place both hands on the rope and close their eyes or wear a blindfold.
- 4 They can now use their hands and feet to move at their own pace along the rope.
- 5 Have a helper stationed at the end of the rope as a safety measure.



Natural Senses

// Activities & Games



ACTIVITY 12

MEET A TREE



Overview

This activity encourages tactile exploration in an area with trees.

Supporting information & resources:

OPTIONAL - blindfolds

What to do...

- 1 Depending on ability, ask your learners to get into pairs or threes.
- 2 The pair or small group are to link arms firmly to ensure good support when moving around - you may want to give a demonstration.
- 3 Give out a blindfold to one of the pair or the middle person in the group or ask them to close their eyes.
- 4 Ask your learners to guide the blindfolded member along a short journey to a tree of their choosing. They should consider the blindfolded person's health and safety as they do so and warn them of any changes in terrain. Numerical instructions can be given, e.g. turn right and take five large steps.
- 5 Just before reaching the tree, they need to say 'hands out' to guard against bumping into it.
- 6 The sightless learner can now explore the tree with their hands and arms, low down and as high as possible, looking for identifying characteristics.
- 7 When ready, return to the start point.
- 8 The blindfold can be removed, and the learner can search for their tree, looking for the identifying characteristics.
- 9 Continue until everyone has had a turn.



Natural Senses

// Activities & Games



ACTIVITY 13

NATURE'S WASHING LINE

Overview

This activity encourages the exploration of textures and development of fine motor skills.



Supporting information & resources:

String and scissors

Collecting containers, e.g. ice cream tubs



What to do...

- 1 Set up a small 'washing line' for each group - a piece of string tied between 2 trees, posts or railings.
- 2 The learners should work in small groups to collect objects from the surrounding area and group them according to texture.
- 3 The texture of each set of objects should be described and they can be sub-grouped into natural and man-made objects.
- 4 One object from each category should be tied to the 'washing line'.
- 5 Each group can take turns to look at the other washing lines and guess the textures and categories represented.



Natural Senses

// Activities & Games



ACTIVITY 14

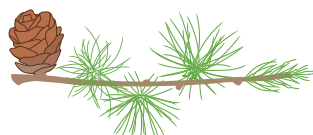
SCAVENGER HUNT

Overview

This activity explores the natural environment through colour, texture, sound, etc.

Supporting information & resources:

// **RESOURCE CARDS:** Scavenger hunt coastal
RESOURCE CARDS: Scavenger hunt land



What to do...

- 1 Depending on ability, give out scavenger hunt cards to individuals, pairs or small groups.
- 2 Ask your learners to collect as many of the items on the list as possible.
- 3 If the items are not moveable a picture could be taken, or a note made of the location.
- 4 Once each group has finished their scavenge, ask them to bring their collection to the starting point and go through the items collected.
- 5 **OPTIONAL** - award points for each item collected.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can be supported by an adult, provided with a pictorial scavenger hunt list, have a simplified version of the list, have items to be collected called out one at a time.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can have more complicated lists, create their own list and use the found items to create a natural art picture or a story that includes each of them.