

Environmental Education Project



At:

ROSLISTON FORESTRY CENTRE

Burton Rd, Rosliston, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE1 2 8JX

MUSIC WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOLS

National Forest Information Sheet for Music Teachers

Schools often think of 'The National Forest' as the official Visitor Centres such as Conkers, Rosliston, or Snibston - which have education officers and classrooms.

However the Forest comprises 200 square miles, including 100s of small and medium sized woods (and other habitats). Many of these are within walking distance of schools and offer free access.

To find out if there is a National Forest site close to your school ring The National Forest Company on 01283 551211. You may find that even if you don't have a National Forest site nearby, you may have a local park or even a parent at the school who owns land nearby which you could use. You could ask the Governors or PTA if you need to find a local site, as many of them will live on the doorstep and know everything!

There are 3 main ways in which you can use the Forest:

1. Plan a formal visit to a Visitor Centre, and chose from a range of planned sessions or tailor-made programmes on a wide range of curriculum subjects -IT'S NOT JUST SCIENCE AND GEOGRAPHY! See The National Forest Educational Visits Guide for details, or ring 01283 551211 for a free copy. Charges vary for visits.
2. Plan a visit to a local woodland close to the school, and book a National Forest or County Council Ranger (depending on your location, and who owns the wood!) to come and help you, to risk assess, or even to pre-plan your visit for you. Again, charges vary.
3. Make regular (or one-off) informal use of an adjacent Forest site or your school grounds. You can book time with a ranger to help you organise the activities in advance if you want to. You could borrow activity packs and equipment if you need to. Charges may apply for ranger time or equipment.

Try your local County Council or Forest Visitor Centre first if you need help or advice, or ring the number at the top of this sheet!

Some ways you could develop music education to link in with The National Forest:

There are lots of different outdoor activities and environmental games which develop listening and performance skills. Many have been written by or adapted from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) or Earth Education materials. A selection of these are outlined below.

Alternatively, you could invite a musician to accompany you on a Forest visit to help the children to appreciate the world around them from a musical point of view. This could help develop their composition and performance skills. Or you could simply take a tape recorder outside with you and play relevant pieces of music to the children - eg sit by the River Trent and listen to 'The Blue Danube'!

IDEAS....

Nb for all these ideas remember the Health and Safety implications of work outdoors eg. No blowing through plant 'tubes' to make a sound unless you are sure the plant is not poisonous. Handwashing before eating or rubbing eyes, faces etc etc.

Woodland Performance! (idea from Learning Through Landscapes)

Explore an outdoor area, collecting sticks, stones etc with which to make instruments. In groups, the children can then create their own piece of music, working out when each 'instrument' is played. They could make up a story/ script, explaining what is happening in the music, & have a narrator, or just stick to the music - whichever is most appropriate for their age/ability.

Create a score for the performance using a long sheet of paper with ledger lines/bars, and a different line for each instrument (like with an orchestral or choral score). Use different symbols (rather than notes) for the different instruments, working out for themselves how to show 'loud, soft' etc. Or you could keep it very simple for R,KS1- just letting them play their sounds without having to write anything down.

Making and using instruments made of wood, scraps, grasses etc also provides links to other subjects, eg Science, Art, Design/Technology.

Sound Maps (Earth Education)

Give each child a piece of paper /pencil and ask them to put an x in the middle of their sheet. The x is them! Each child then chooses a spot away from everyone else in a wood (but within a specified and patrolled area for

health and safety reasons). They sit down for 5-10 mins and 'map' the sounds they can hear. They could use symbols eg wavy line for the wind or musical note for bird song, etc.

Find Your Flock (RSPB)

Explain to the children that they are birds, and that they don't have telephones or radios to get in touch with each other -only their calls or songs. They must imagine they are in a wood, and have to find the rest of their 'family' or flock just by sound. Give each child a card (or whisper in their ear) teaching them a simple bird sound (eg 'Teacher teacher' is the call of a bluetit -honestly it is!, 'caw caw' for crow, 'little bit of bread and no cheese', sounds like a yellow hammer and 'cuckoo' or 'chiff chaff chiff chaff' are calls of the cuckoo and the chiff chaff!) It might be an idea to show the children pictures of these birds too. Give each sound to at least 5 children, but make sure they keep their bird a secret.

When they are all clear about what they are doing, get them to flap around like birds, making their sound, and finding all the rest of their 'flock'.

Nb Don't play this game with a group if you have a headache as it is very noisy.

Listening Game (many sources!)

The idea of this activity is to find out what is going on in a wood - or anywhere outdoors - without trampling round disturbing everything. It is also a good way of calming the children down after a noisy game...

Ask the children to get into a circle, without making any sound, and zip their mouths closed. Then ask them to shut their eyes and try and hear as much as they can about what is going on around them. Time them for a minute, then ask what they heard. You could discuss why they would or wouldn't hear certain noises eg. If birds or animals hear us in the woods they often hide quietly because they are frightened of people (why etc). You would not hear a barn owls' wings as it flies because it relies on being silent to catch its prey.

Owl and Mouse/ Bat and Moth (RSPB and others)

Get all the children into a circle, and tell them they are a forest of trees at night. In the forest there are lots of animals going about their business looking for food. One of these is a mouse, searching through the leaves on the forest floor for nuts, berries etc to eat. Another is an owl, sitting silently in the branches and listening out for its dinner... a nice tasty MOUSE. Now ask for a volunteer owl and mouse, and blindfold them both, as it is dark in the forest at night. Ask the mouse to crawl around the floor pretending to look for food, and put some bells around its wrist/ ankle to sound like the rustling of leaves on the forest floor. The owl then has to listen for the bells and try to catch the mouse. Make sure they are both crawling as it is safer than

walking when blindfolded! Also make sure the circle of trees is big enough for the mouse to have a fighting chance, and that the trees stop either from crawling away from the circle and banging their heads on anything.

When the owl catches the mouse it is 'game over'!

With the bat/ moth the setting is the same, but you can explain that bats use a special kind of sound called 'echo-location' to find their prey, which we can not hear. Bats send out a sound signal which bounces off trees, leaves and other solid objects and helps them find a nice juicy MOTH to munch. Moths flutter round drinking nectar from flowers, and every time a bat comes near, it can tell the moth is there because of the way the sound bounces. So while the children are crawling round in blindfolds the bat calls 'bat' 'bat' 'bat' out loud, and every time the moth hears it he shouts 'moth' - if the bat forgets to call, the moth does not have to say anything. If the bat carries on calling he can work out where the moth is - and when he catches it, it's game over!

You could set a time limit for both these games, so that if the moth/ mouse has not been caught in a certain amount of time he/she is the winner.

You could also...

Take out a dictaphone and record forest sounds.

Borrow/ watch an RSPB video to learn about bird song.

Ask the children to do a sound survey of their garden or the school grounds (maybe on the sound map principle)

Get the children to make up or imitate forest sounds eg what noise does a snail make when it is eating your garden plants? (nb on a still night you can actually hear this)

Work out which environmental sounds are deliberate eg bird song, bird 'alarm' calls, and which are accidental/ circumstantial like a bee's 'buzz'. Use natural sounds for a starting point on a discussion on what is music and what is just sound.

Have fun!

Kate Allies, 13/05/03

