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.

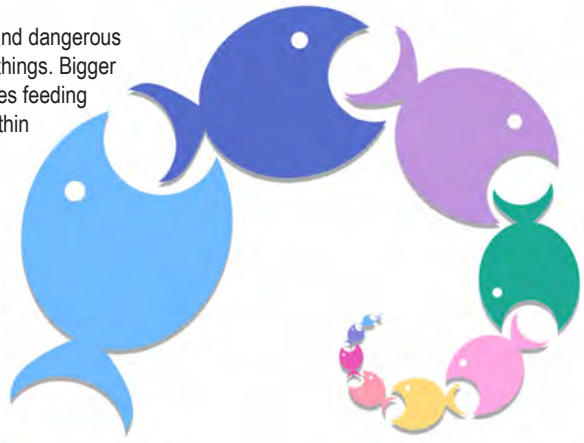
Hand-Oak

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.

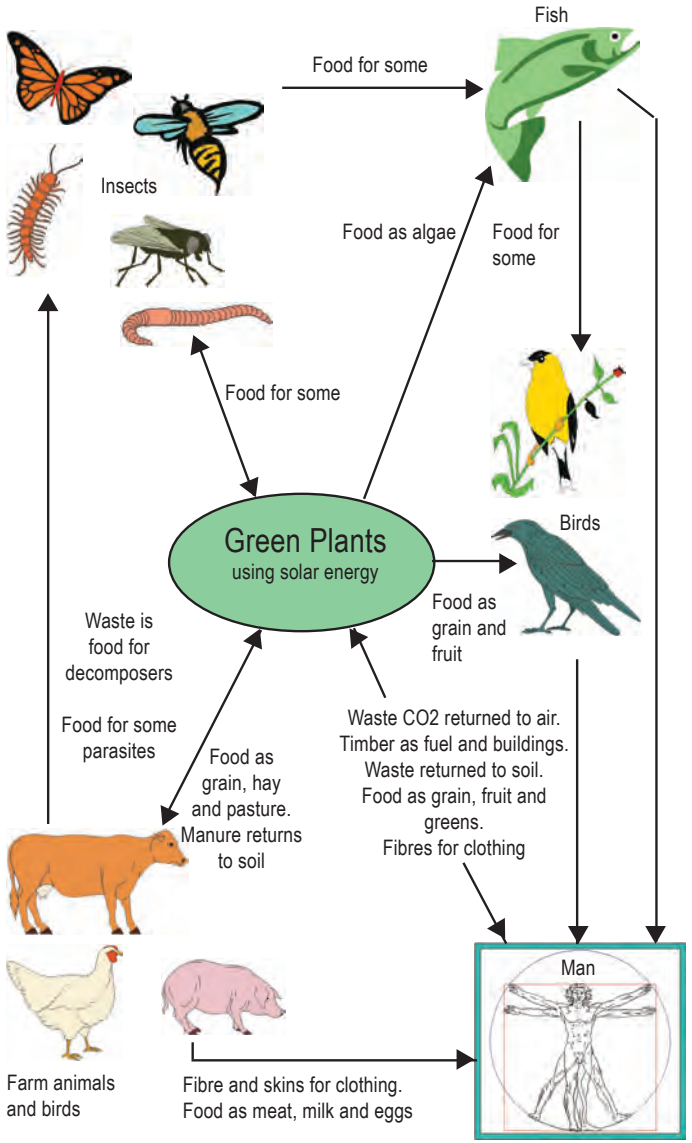
Smell

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.

Circle of life



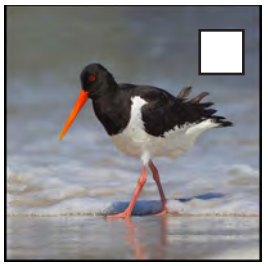
Wading birds

Sky Larks

Sea Holly

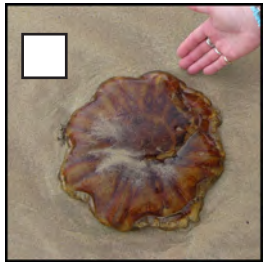
Thrift

Dolphins/whales



Oyster catcher

Shells



Jelly fish

Sand hopper

Red admiral

Crabs

Bird and animal tracks

Coastland - spotter sheet

Seals

Knot

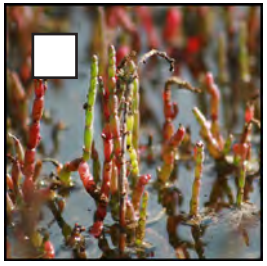
Seaweed

Limpets

Lapwings

Gannets

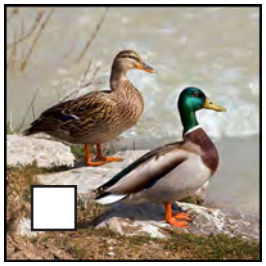
Gulls



Glasswort

Kingfisher

Stickleback / fish



Ducks

Bull rushes

Yellow flag iris

Swans

Herons

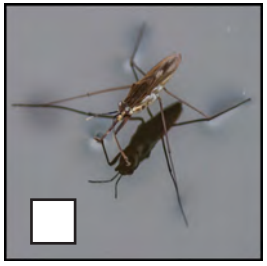
Otters

Inland waterways spotter sheet

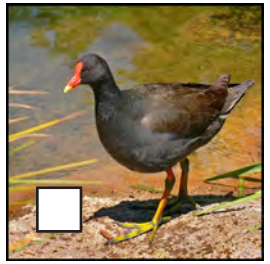
Dragon flies

Clouded yellow

Rats

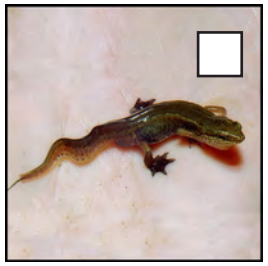


Pond skater



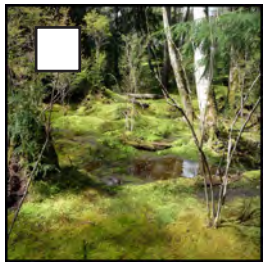
Moor hen

Water boatman



Newt

Crayfish

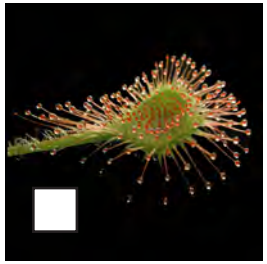


Mosses

Tadpoles/frogs

Freshwater mussel shell

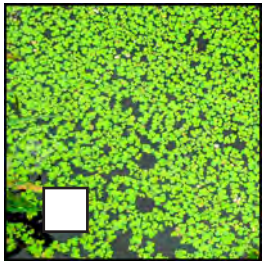
Water horsetail



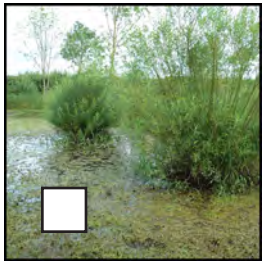
Sun dews

Dragon flies

Bog cotton

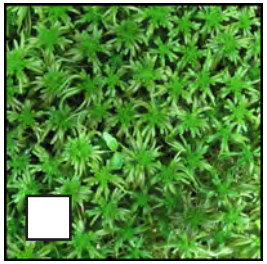


Duckweed



Willow

Red grouse



Sphagnum moss

Cranberry

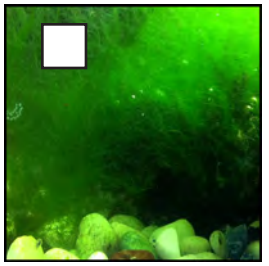
Bogland - spotter sheet

Reeds

Painted lady

Moths

Bog oak stumps



Water net alga

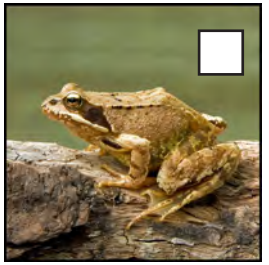
Layered turf

Alder

Bladderwort

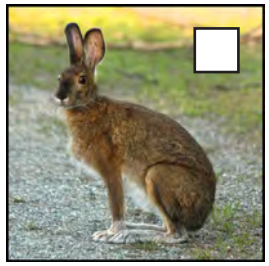
Butterwort

Water lily



Tadpoles/frogs

Ladybirds



Hares

Sky Larks

Peregrine Falcon

Meadow pipits

Feral goats

Raven

Red Deer

Geology

Rowan ash

Grayling

Ferns

Marsh club moss

Mountain side spotter sheet

Hen harrier

Common butterwort

Purple moor grass

Gorse

Bracken

Sika Deer

Tormentil

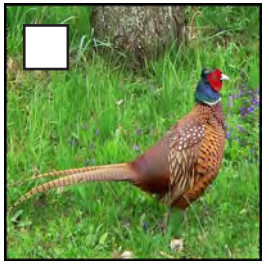
Frochan berries

Orchids

Sky Larks

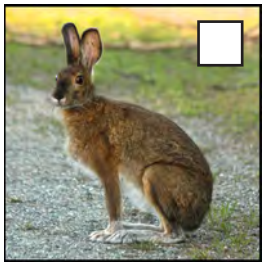
Foxgloves

Thistles

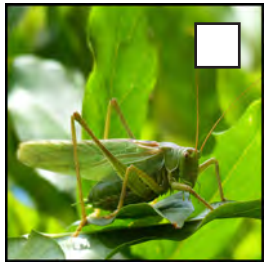


Pheasant

Dandelion



Hares



Cricket

Meadowland - spotter sheet

Clover

Butterflies

Damsel flies

Owls

Bees

Stoat

Bracken

Heather

Wild flowers

Cuckoo spit

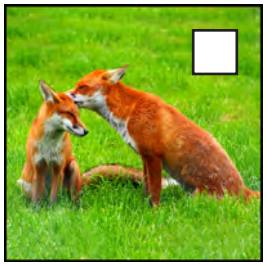
Grasses

Snails

Poppies

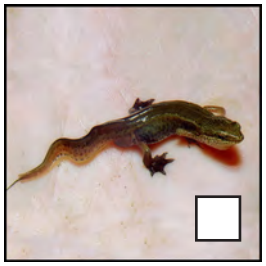
Crows

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

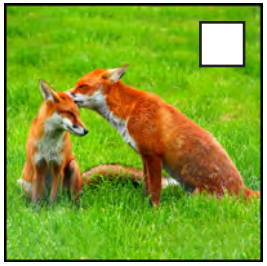
Beech tree

Hedgerow - spotter sheet

Kestrel

Mice

Sloe berries



Foxes

Foxgloves

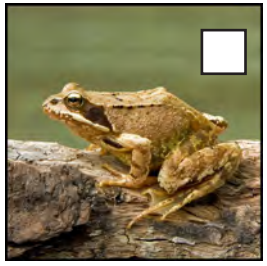
Bees

Hedgehogs

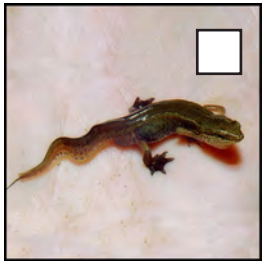
Blackberries

Pigeons

Orange tip

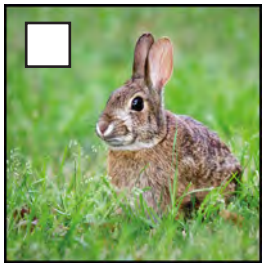


Tadpoles & frogs



Newt

Owls



Rabbit

Bindweed

Dog rose

Nests

Wild flowers

Spider webs

Rose bay willow herb

Fungi

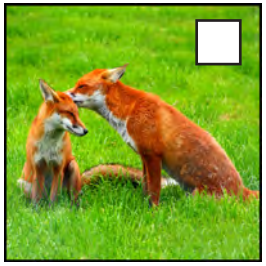
Trees & Leaves

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

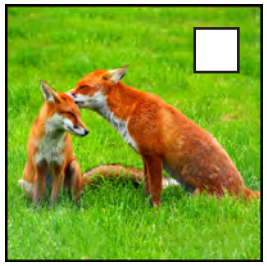
Squirrel

Slug

Woodlice

Spider webs

Pine martin



Foxes

Hedgehogs

Ladybirds

Bats

Centipede

Snails

Earth worm

Spider webs

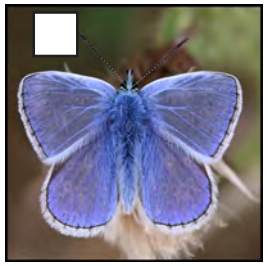
Birds

Butterflies

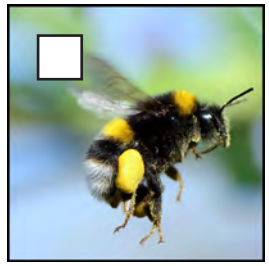
Caterpillar

Nests

City and Urban spotter sheet



Moths



Bees

Slug

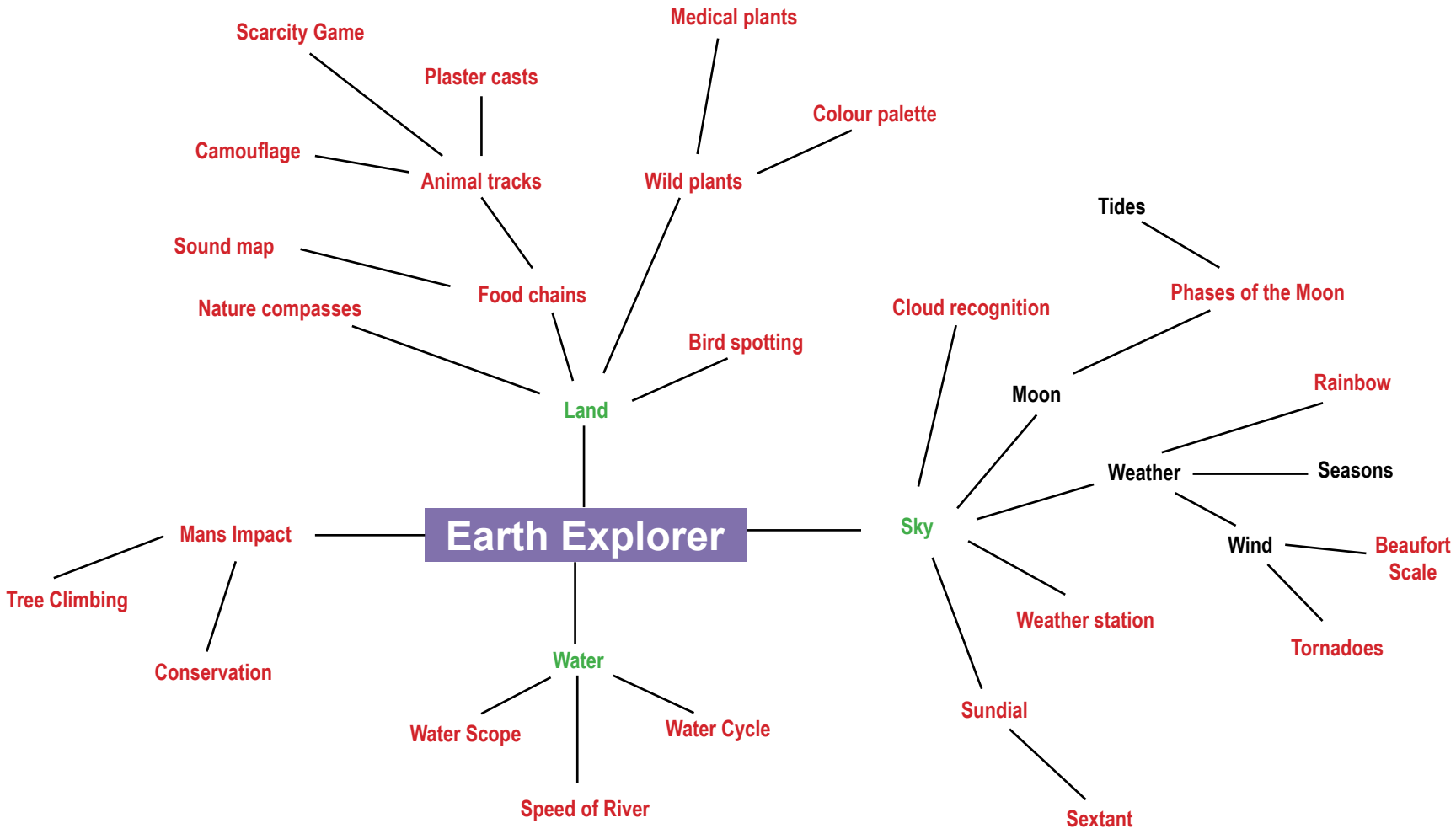
Dandelion

Ivy

Ash seedling

Fungi

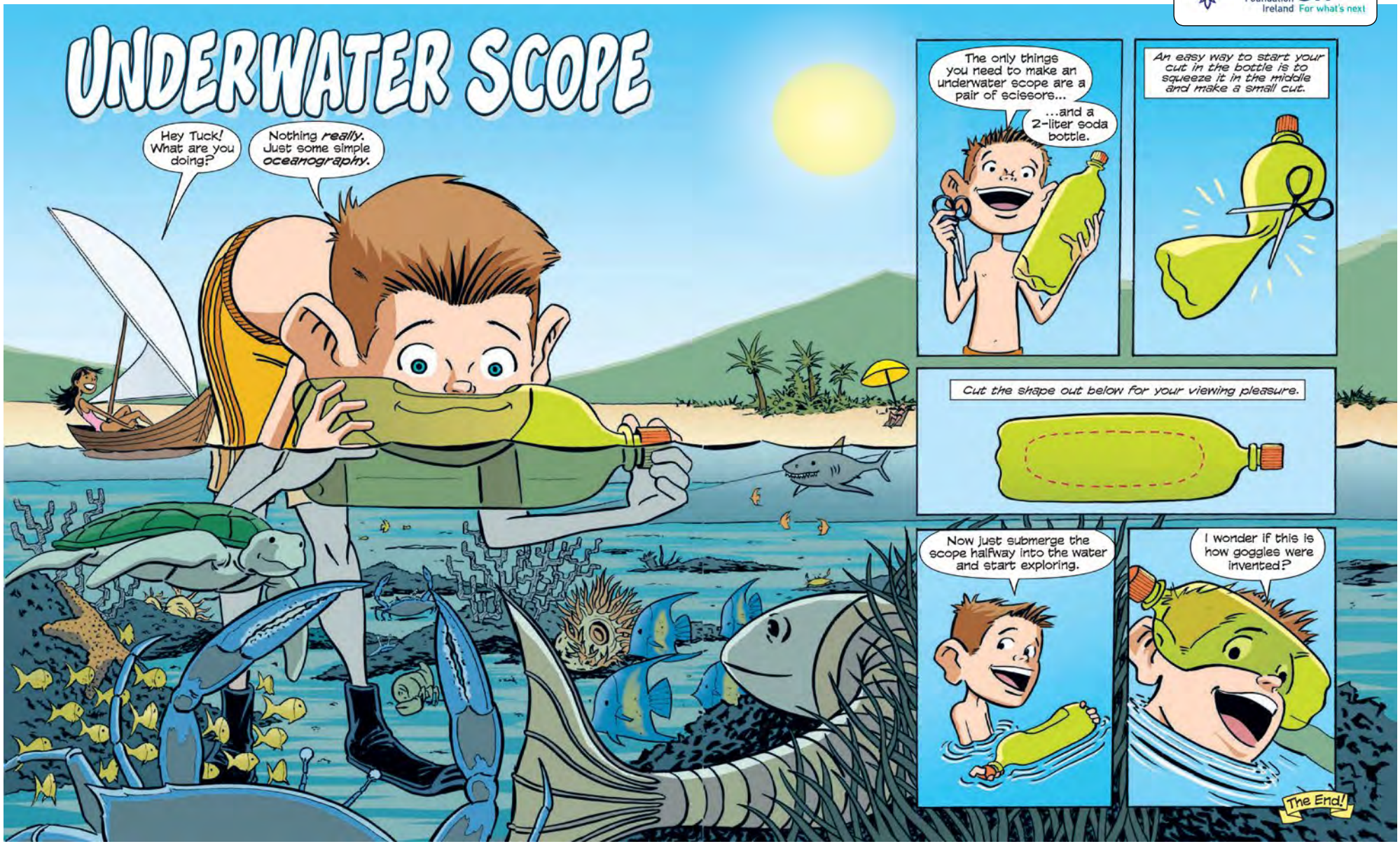
Bugs



This resource has information on items coloured orange

Earth Explorer theme chart


0:18 / 7:03 HD
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



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,


Science Foundation Ireland
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For what's next
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

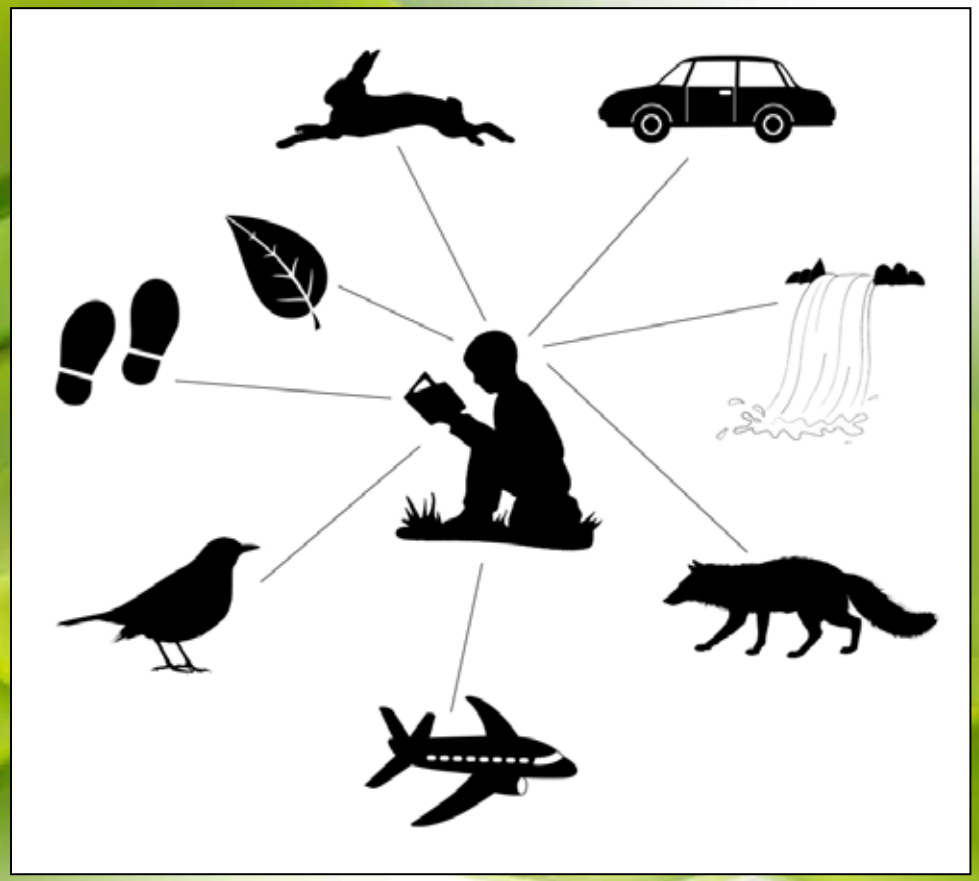
Fox

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.