



The forest after dark

Twilight adventures in the forest

Have you ever been to the woods at dusk?

Take a visit just before dark to see many animals at their most active. Use this sheet when you go on your twilight adventure and see what you can spot!

Have you decided what you are going to do during your twilight adventure? Here are some suggestions...

LOOKing

Many nocturnal animals have excellent eyesight and can see their prey in the dark.

Our eyes are nowhere near as efficient, so before it gets too dark, look for...

Rabbits

Although rabbits can be seen in the daytime, they are much more active at dusk and can be spotted on open grassy areas at the edge of the forest.

Tawny owls

Spring evenings are the best time to spot tawny owls, before the leaves are on the trees.

Bats

Although bats hibernate, you might be lucky enough to see one on a warm spring evening.



Minibeasts

Minibeasts, or to give them their proper name, invertebrates, can be found during the day, but are more active after sunset, when the air and soil cools. Lift rocks and logs to find them, or look underneath the leaves of the trees or plants at the side of the track.

Can you find:



Ground beetle?
Tick here



Woodlouse?
Tick here



Worm
Tick here



Slug
Tick here



Centipede?
Tick here

Reflective eyes

When you are walking through the forest, shine a torch into the trees and look for the reflection of eyes looking back at you – they might belong to deer or foxes.



Turn over for more activities



Listening



Some nocturnal animals rely on their excellent hearing to be able to survive in the forest at night – foxes can supposedly hear a mouse squeak from 30 metres away!

What night time noises can you hear in the forest?

Woodpigeons
roost in trees and take off with a loud flapping when you disturb them by walking past.

Blackbirds
sing loudly every evening just before nightfall.



Hedgehogs
come out of hibernation in spring, and may be heard rustling through the undergrowth looking for caterpillars and beetles to eat.



Humans
make a lot of noise, which travels at night – you might hear distant machines, cars, voices, music, aeroplanes...

Frogs
make a deep croaking sound from forest ponds in spring when they are attracting a mate.

Tracking

Try it!

Wildlife watchers look for clues that animals have left behind in order to find the animals that they are interested in.

Look for footprints, areas of flattened grass where animals might have laid down during the day, or fur on a fence.

Try leaving a trail for mum or dad to follow – what could you use to mark the route you have taken?

Hiding

Try it!

Small nocturnal prey animals such as mice and shrews need to be able to hide from their predators in order to survive.

Before it gets too dark, try speedy hide and seek. Get mum or dad to count to five while you hide yourself. It doesn't give you long, so you'll have to become really good at looking for hiding places.

Next time...

1 Find a badger sett and watch it at dusk to see if any badgers come out – be prepared to sit and wait very quietly!

2 Borrow a bat detector and listen for bats.

3 Visit the forest at night in the snow or under a full moon – you might be able to see much more.

The forest
after hours

Find out more at
forestry.gov.uk/afterdark