



Springtime Science Activities for KS1 self-guide visits to Alice Holt Forest

Basic Information

All the activities below have direct links to the National Curriculum and will assist in the delivery of these parts of the curriculum in a practical and meaningful way. Children will also gain a greater understanding of the wealth of life in the forest and of the many opportunities for discovery and learning it offers. **Curriculum links are listed after each set of activities.**

The Lodge Pond, Easy Access and the Habitat trails are ideal routes for schools to use for these activities. The Lodge Pond Trail is sometimes muddy so boots are recommended there. If you wish to consider pond life, the small pond near the café is ideal provided no more than 15 children dip at once.

Identification charts and some photos are available for hire and can be requested on the visit booking form.

Discover Plants in Spring

1. Choose an area of the forest and observe the trees and plants carefully for signs of spring. Use photos or charts to identify spring flowers such as primroses, violets and wood sorrel, and to identify hazel and pussy willow catkins.
2. Look at the trees to see if they have leaf buds opening. You can try to identify the tree species from the leaves if they have opened. If they haven't, try to identify them by their buds, catkins or bark.
3. Look in the leaf litter below a large tree e.g. oak or sweet chestnut, to find last autumn's seeds, especially where light is able to reach the forest floor. Are there any new shoots coming up from them now the weather's warmer? You will need to look very carefully.
4. Identify the following parts of a plant: leaf, stem (trunk for a tree), bud, flower, petal, root, branch.
5. Worms will be busy taking the last of the dead leaves and debris down into their burrows...look for worm casts on the grassy areas of the forest. How might worms be helping the forest plants to grow ? (clue: light, water, air, soil)
6. As the longer lighter days offer more sunlight, trees, shrubs and ground plants all start to flower. How many can you find along the trails (especially Easy Access and Lodge Pond)?

Yr.1 curriculum links for plants

- identify basic plants
- identify basic plant parts (roots, leaves, flowers..)

Yr.2 curriculum links for plants

- growing plants (water, light, warmth)

Discover Animals and Birds in Spring

1. **Squirrels** – look for signs that these animals are around e.g. nibbled cones on the ground or their nests, called dreys. The nests look like big ragged bird's nests made of sticks and squirrels use them all year round. The young are kept warm and safe in the drey. Squirrels have live young. Not all animals do. Compare squirrels with the following creatures.
2. **Birds** – listen for bird sounds. Look around you and see birds feeding and taking food to their nests to feed their young. Can you see what food they're taking? Many eat caterpillars but what else? You may see them carrying sticks, moss and other materials to make their nests. Nests need to provide a safe, waterproof and comfortable home for the chicks until they fledge. Discuss how birds make nests and consider how different the nests of different birds are. At Alice Holt there are some nest boxes fixed to trees and the birds that use them don't need to worry about waterproofing.
3. **Pond creatures** - the pond near the café is home to lots of wildlife. Many insects live in the water and the pond is used by frogs and toads to lay their spawn. During the spring you'll see frog and toad spawn and then tadpoles in the pond. Later on there'll be tiny froglets which can often be found in the woods. In late spring and summer damselflies and dragonflies can be seen around the pond. If you pond dip you'll probably catch some dragonfly nymphs. They live in the water and they're fierce. They eat smaller creatures in the pond.
4. **Insects** – look carefully at the leaves on trees and plants. Are there any caterpillars to be seen? Is there any evidence that there have been caterpillars feeding on leaves? Can you spot any bees, butterflies or moths flying around? Caterpillars are usually camouflaged or they look fierce so they don't get eaten too easily. All of them are important for taking pollen from one plant to another and making sure seeds form in the flowers so new plants can grow next year. Did you know bees collect and eat pollen from spring catkins on trees (hazel and willow) as well as nectar from flowers. Look for bumble bees near catkins and flowers or going in and out of holes at ground level.
5. **Signs of animals** - look out for tracks of birds, dogs, horses, people, foxes and other animals. Other signs include animal droppings, feathers, fur and nibbled vegetation and nuts. There are lots of guides and charts available to help you identify the signs you see.
6. **Similarities and differences** – think about the creatures you've observed. In what ways are they alike and in what ways are they different? For example, do they move in the same way, do they live in similar habitats, or do they eat the same food, how do they look after their young?
7. **Be creative and constructive**
 - a) use materials from the forest floor to create 'sculptures' of forest creatures, making sure you have the correct proportions and number of body parts. Do this in small groups and be ready to tell the rest of the class all about your animal.
 - b) make a suitable home for a chosen forest animal either using forest floor materials or, back at school, any other materials available to you. You could make a bird's nest or a squirrel's drey with sticks and soft materials to line it. You could make a shelter for bumble bees near a food source using sticks, leaves, bark, dried pine needles etc.

Yr.1 curriculum links for animals

- identify and compare common animals

Yr.2 curriculum links for animals

- basic needs of animals & offspring
- simple food chains and habitats

Yr.1+2 link with Design and Technology- design purposeful, functional and appealing products