



WORDS FROM THE WOODS

Week 11- 15th June 2020

Tips and ideas for learning and connecting outdoors during Covid-19...

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Beautiful Birds

The rain and warmth has meant even more growth in nature and hopefully more minibeasts, which in turn will feed the chicks and fledglings of the birds we are looking at this week. With this extra time at home I have found great joy in the amount of bird song that has surrounded us, it was particularly noticeable when we were in complete lockdown as human mechanical noise was reduced and nature seemed to become braver. I have tried to improve some of my nature knowledge and have found out how useful a phone app which identifies bird calls is, although it can have some funny results sometimes! It can be really satisfying when you start to recognise an animal or spot something beautiful and this releases one of the happy chemicals in your brain, dopamine, which is one of the many ways that nature can be so good for your well-being. However, I don't usually get hung up on children

learning the name of everything you find, I want them to enjoy and appreciate it and begin to notice the features, which later on in life will help them learn the names of things if this is of particular interest. Having some basic knowledge on names can be useful though, so that the language of nature is not forgotten.

Bird Spot

Even though I can hear so many birds around, it can still be tricky to spot them! So, what you need to do is spend some time sitting still in the outdoors, maybe you have a bird feeder or could make one to attract the birds to you. A simple idea from the woodland trust is opposite. You also need to think about what you are wearing, bright colours will be noticed by the wildlife, but darker colours will make you more camouflaged. Maybe you have a blanket you could wrap yourself in that would work and I am sure younger ones would love a grown up to snuggle up with. Once you have found a comfortable spot near a feeder or some bushes and trees where you can hear the birds then it is time to become silent and start to look around you. This is a great opportunity to not only spot birds, but also notice what else is around you. How long can you manage to stay still and quiet? Having this moment of stillness and being able to notice what is around you is also great for well-being, but don't expect younger children to be able to do it for very long! If you do spot something then if you have binoculars you can try and have a closer look or maybe you have a camera with a zoom on it that can get you closer and take a picture too. If you want to have some help with the bird song you can hear then I recommend the BirdNET App and below is another link for a bird id sheet



http://treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activities/pdfs/pdf_simple_birdseed_feeder.pdf

http://treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activities/pdfs/pdf_garden_birds_spotter_sheet.pdf

Make a nest

In the video this week you can see me hiding in the grass to spot some birds and I read a book about a special bird. There is a clue on each page so that you can guess, 'Who am I?' I also try to make my own bird nest using some sticky weed or goosegrass. This is so much fun to play with as it will literally stick to your clothing and many a childhood involves tricking your family and friends and sneakily putting some sticky weed on them somewhere. Not only can you make a nest in the video, but you can make a nature crown to wear and add lots of lovely flowers or nature treasures. Have fun, you may even make a nest big enough for yourself, like the picture!.. <https://youtu.be/kChSNWIZD24>



Take a breath

When outdoors it is a good idea to take some time to be 'mindful', like in the bird spot section where you spend some time just noticing what is around you using your senses and allowing your mind to be in the 'present' without wandering off and thinking about something else (although it will do this too, you just need to be conscious of this and bring your thoughts back again!). As well as using your senses you can also use your breath/breathing to allow this mindful state and there are lots of lovely little exercises people can do for this. Recently I have done some cloud spotting where you lie with your hand on your tummy and feel your breath coming in through your nose and out through your mouth. Or how about this week you could try when spotting birds to look at the sky and imagine gently blowing a cloud or a bird across the sky. Take a breath in through the nose then gently blow out and blow the cloud or bird or maybe even a tree. You can do this with a leaf in your hand too, hold it up in front of your face and then blow it gently, like you would a candle flame without it going out. Watch the leaf gently move. A relaxed state of mind may happen as a result of this mindfulness, but this is not really the purpose of it and interestingly children can achieve a relaxed state through just being involved and absorbed in a physical activity due to the way their brain waves behave compared to an adults'. A baby's brain waves (the Delta waves) behave the same way an adults' do when they are asleep and then from the age of 2-7 the Delta waves behave the same way as an adult who has meditated. Our brains are just so interesting! Introducing ways of being mindful from a young age though can be a really important life skill for us all and our well-being, so give it a go.

Random acts of Wildness

Here are seven suggestions from the Wildlife Trusts to try out for the next week:



You can find the Wildlife Trusts 30 Days Wild pack here for lots of ideas and a wallchart to keep a record of your wild acts <https://action.wildlifetrusts.org/page/57739/petition/1>

play • learn • connect