

Environmental Education with the Countryside Service

Exploring Marine Habitats

Rockpooling: dip a net into the water to discover which sea creatures call rock pools home.

Hunt for natural treasure washed up along the shoreline: *the smallest shell, a bird's footprint, something smooth, the roundest pebble....*

Create artwork out of natural materials found on the beach.

Play the **Limpet game** to develop a better understanding of predator/prey relationships and learn how the tide plays such an important role for marine wildlife.

Rivers and Ponds

Explore the wonderful world of freshwater invertebrates through **kick sampling (flowing water) or pond dipping**. Use key charts to identify and group the animals you find according to their characteristics. **Investigate the freshwater food chain** and discover who eats who. Find out how each animal is adapted to their habitat. **Take part in practical field investigation techniques**, measuring river transects and flow.

Design and build a raft out of natural materials or recyclable 'junk' modelling. Race the rafts downstream to see whose design is the fastest.

Minibeasts and Habitat Studies

Discover the minibeasts that live amongst the grasses, rotting wood and leaf litter on the reserves. Investigate how they move, feed and the role they play in managing our environment. With the help of charts and keys, identify the animals and explore how they link together through food chains and webs. Play minibeast bingo.

Use your senses to explore wild spaces, **hunt for natural treasure, collect colours and use natural objects to create clay monsters and sculptures.**

Bird Hides

The reserves of the Axe Estuary Wetlands are an important site for many bird species. Boasting a selection of five covered bird hides, the reserves are a popular birdwatching destination for birders across the South West.

A visit to the Wetlands will be rewarded with a wealth of bird species to see.

Visiting groups can use our selection of binoculars to observe the birds in view from the comfort of the hides.

Animal Adaptations – Bird Beak Adaptations for Feeding

Explore the relationship between a bird's beak and its ability to find food in different habitats.

Birds have different shaped beaks depending on what they eat and what their food source is. Birds may get their food from mud, water, seeds, wood, or they may catch it in the air. The different shapes of beak allow access to various food supplies.

Visiting groups can investigate which beak type is the most successful at gathering food by playing the Best Beak game. Children can then design their own bird, taking into consideration what its habitat is and what it likes to eat, making sure it has the correct adaptations to cope.

Watch the feeding behaviour of wading birds such as Curlew, who use their long bills to feel around for worms and crustaceans in the estuary mud.

Mammals of the Marshes

The Wetlands has a thriving mammal population which ranges from the tiny Pygmy Shrew to the elusive Otter. Become a wildlife detective and **hunt for evidence of mammal life**, looking for footprints, droppings, nibbled nuts or munched-on vegetation.

We have a collection of small live mammal traps which allow visiting groups the opportunity to discover and observe the small mammals of the Wetlands, such as voles and mice up close.

The Wetlands has a resident Barn Owl, a top predator for small mammals on the reserve. **Dissect a Barn Owl pellet** to discover the bones and fur of dined on mammals and whatever else the Barn owl has caught for a meal.

Activities can be tailored to suit your group's needs and tie in with topics already being studied in class. Most activities can be adapted to suit all age groups. We are experienced in leading activities for groups as young as pre-school, or older groups such as GCSE or A level students.

