PROGRAM:

CRITTER CRAWL



Objectives:

- Empower participants to explore the dirt and duff (see vocabulary).
- 2. Encourage participants to look deeply at a place they have walked all their lives, yet may have overlooked completely.
- 3. Foster a sense of wonder and curiosity about something as ordinary as the dirt under our feet.

Time for activity: 30 minutes

Complementary programs:

- Camouflage
- Meet-A-Tree
- All Aboard

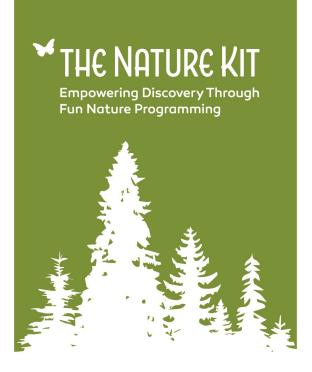
When to play: Daytime. Can be done at night with headlamps/flashlights.

Where to play: Outdoors, in a field, lawn, forest or other natural landscape.

Age level: 6-15. This activity can easily be

adapted for use with any age.

Players needed: 4-25



Materials needed

- Magnifying glasses
- Spoons (preferably metal)
- ◊ Pencils
- Note pads/paper

Use these questions to generate interest in the activity

- 1. Do you pay attention to what is directly in front of you? How about what is directly under you?!
- 2. How many creatures do you think are within two feet of you, excluding your fellow participants?
- 3. How can you change your perspective to see the world, and what lives in the world, from a different point of view (perspective)?
- 4. Read the opening quote to your participants:
 - The little things? The little moments? They aren't little."

-John Zabat-Zinn

- What do you think this means?
- How would you rephrase this quote in your own words?

VOCABULARY:

- Duff: Is made of leaves, branches and other organic matter that is slowly decaying into soil. Usually the top 2-5 inches above the actual soil. Duff is one of the most important parts of the forest floor.
- Insect: A small animal having an exoskeleton, 3 body parts (head, thorax and abdomen) and 3 pairs of legs (1 pair per body part, or 6 legs).
- Worm: An animal having a long, flexible, rounded or flattened body,
 without obvious body parts (appendages, e.g. legs, tails, etc.)

"The little things? The little moments? They aren't little." -John Zabat-Zinn

ACTIVITY

- Gather everyone in a circle. Tell them:
 - We often overlook things that are right in front of us, or in this case, below our feet.
 - We are going to play detective and look for things that are hiding in plain sight, though perhaps slightly camouflaged.
 - There is more life within 1-2 inches of the ground then there is above. We will be investigating this area with magnifying glasses.
 - We need to get into pairs with our friends/fellow participants.
 - Each pair will get a magnifying glass, a spoon, a notebook (or paper), and pencils/crayons.
 - Your job is to find as many animals and other interesting things as you can, and keep track of them in your notebook.
 - When you find an interesting animal or item, write it down.
 - You can also draw the animals you find in your notebook/on your paper.
 - You will search for animals and interesting things in this area (SPECIFY AREA e.g., "under these trees," or, "in this field").



ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

- The best way to find these animals is to crawl on your hands and knees using your magnifying glass to help you spot and examine things.
- Examples of possible things you might see are: insects, small plants, flowers, shells, worms, nuts, etc.
- You can search under the grass, under trees, under rocks. You may dig one to two inches under the surface of the dirt.
- Please do not hurt anything you find, we are simply investigating. You can draw pictures, write a poem, take pictures, but DO NOT hurt anything that you find.
- Let's see which team can find the most unusual thing!
- Let's see which team can find the most numbers of things!
- We have 15 minutes for this activity. Afterwards we will regroup and talk about what we found.
- GROUPS SHOULD START INVESTIGATING. Give them a two-minute warning before time ends.
- Call all participants back to central spot.
- You can assign someone in the group to compile a "master list" of everything the group found. You can compare it to other groups and their findings (and possibly have a competition).
- Use the questions provided for discussion.



HINTS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Have fun with this activity!
- Get on the ground and show your participants how to be an explorer. Show them how they might use their magnifying glasses and spoons.
- You might make this into a friendly competition by assigning points for each animal/artifact their team finds, another point for each picture they draw and special awards (perhaps plant some kind of hidden object [a Barbie doll?]) under the soil and give all the teams a hint so they work harder at finding things.

DISCUSSION: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Ask your participants the following questions to engage them in conversation:

- Did you notice anything new? Did you see something you've never seen before? What?
- Have each group share two of their most interesting finds. They can describe the item and/or show a picture of their "find."
- Where did you find the most interesting objects? (e.g., on/in the ground, on a leaf, flying through the air, on a flower, etc.).
- Why do you think you found your objects where they were?
- How did the tools you used help you find things?
- Do you usually look at the world (ground) like this? Why don't you/we?
- Look again at the opening quote. What do you think this might mean in the context of our activity?

"The little things? The little moments? They aren't little ."

-John Zabat-Zinn



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