

PROGRAM:

CRITTER CRAWL



Natural
Explorations

Objectives:

1. 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



THE NATURE KIT

Empowering Discovery Through
Fun Nature Programming



SAMPLE—NOT FOR REPRODUCTION

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 than 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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