



Children appreciate minibeasts and the vital service they provide to soil, plants and ourselves.

Minibeast Magic

1



Keywords picture interpretation • exploration • critical thinking

- 1 Display the photos of soil minibeasts (**Resource File** pages 2–5) on your whiteboard. Ask the children what they know about them, which of them they have seen, etc. Start a discussion about them. You will likely hear negative comments about minibeasts. In this activity you turn that view around by leading the children to understand the creatures' vital role in the cycle of life.
- 2 Now display the *Minibeast Collage* from **Resource File** page 6. The children analyse the photos to discover information about the minibeasts such as (a) what they eat (b) where they live (c) whether they like dark or light places (d) if they prefer wet or dry places, etc. Invite the children to find something they liked about each minibeast. Assist, using information from *Minibeast Minifacts* (**Resource File** pages 7–14).
- 3 In this step the children understand minibeasts' role in recycling life. Go on a tour of the school grounds and look for minibeasts. See if you can match any of the information with what you observe together. Look in particular at the detritus/compost where you find minibeasts such as woodlice. Feel it, smell it and look at

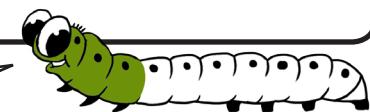
its colour. How is it different from soil? It is darker and richer because it is full of nutrients from dead plants that the woodlice and their friends make.

- 4 Outdoors, you may put some humus in water and compare it with another container where you put soil in water. What differences do the children see? When a plant drinks through its roots, it takes up the rich juice, thanks to the minibeasts. Make sure the children wash their hands after activity (avoid single-use wipes).
- 5 Back in class, plot this simplified nutrient cycle on your board: LIVING PLANT > DEAD PLANT > WOODLOUSE BREAKS DEAD PLANT INTO SMALL PIECES > SMALL PIECES ENTER THE SOIL > NEW LIVING PLANT TAKES IT UP. If you talk about recycling, or have a recycling bin, make the link. In this way the children understand that minibeasts are nature's great recyclers, as they constantly create food in the soil.

Use the Ninja Waħda Notice Board and tell the school about what you're doing.

Send photos of children

- discussing minibeast photos
- observing minibeasts in schoolyard





Children consolidate their knowledge and respect for minibeasts by making homes for them.

Minibeast Magic



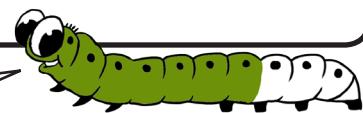
Keywords discussion • critical thinking • outdoors action for nature

- 1 This activity consolidates the importance of minibeasts as nature's recyclers, by building them homes in the school grounds. Ask the children whether they think your school needs minibeasts. If MINIBEAST MAGIC 1 was successful they should agree heartily. Ask how you can get more minibeasts to your school. Help the children realise that you can attract animals by creating their habitat. If anyone suggests bringing minibeasts to school, explain why this is not a good idea. Here are some reasons:
 - It's not right to make another place poor by 'stealing' animals from it.
 - Minibeasts won't find food and shelter if you don't have the right habitat.
 - They could die in transit.
 - If you have the right habitat minibeasts will come on their own.
- 2 From your first tour of the grounds in search of minibeasts the children should have a good idea of the kind of habitat they like. Make a list of items you need to create a habitat. Ideally, do this out in the school grounds together and find the right place. Link the discussion with the topic 'home' and connect the children's need for things they like at home, with minibeasts' similar needs. You are the 'grown ups' making a good home. Talk about where you can get these things from.
- 3 Back in class, see the *Minibeast Minihomes* suggestions in **Resource File** pages 24–26. Did your ideas match the drawings? Did you leave anything out? Where are you going to get the home-parts from? Discuss and find solutions.
- 4 Make the homes together and set them up in the school grounds.

Use the Ninja Waħda Notice Board and tell the school about what you're doing.

Send photos of

- children choosing site for homes the completed MiniHomes.
 children making MiniHomes





Children engage science and creativity skills to consolidate knowledge and respect for minibeasts.

Minibeast Magic

3



Keywords

outdoors observation • creative record-keeping • art and craft

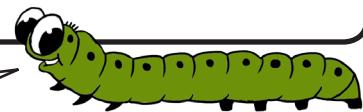
- 1 Give your minibeast homes some time undisturbed before checking if anybody is home. Now factor in a minibeast tour as a regular part of your curriculum. If you disturb homes too often they will be deserted – make sure the children understand this. During the tour, your children are going to be scientists.
- 2 Create a special diary for minibeasts, with date, weather and other associated topic links for which you want to develop the children's observation skills. About once a week visit the minibeast homes and check what's about. On site, the children fill diary information (weather, time, day, etc.) and either make a drawing of any minibeast they found, or tick a list you have prepared. You may use the *Minibeast Chart* in **Resource File** page 23. This is the science skills part of the activity, so make sure to talk about what you find, where you find it and why.
- 3 Back in class, the children bond with a favourite minibeast through a colouring-in exercise. You may use material from **Resource File** pages 15–22 or get the children to draw their own minibeast and create a bookmark with a message, e.g. *Minibeasts are Magic!* or *I (heart) Minibeasts* or *I'm a Minibeast Fan!* Link the bookmark with the idea of recycling.
- 4 The children should use the bookmarks, not put them on display. Tell them to take them home and talk to their family about them.

Use the Ninja Waħda Notice Board and tell the school about what you're doing.

Send photos of

- children recording minibeasts
- children making bookmarks

- bookmarks in use.





Children become aware that animals have voices and use them for the same reasons we do.

Nature's Voice

1



Keywords discussion • sounds and listening • outdoors sensory • family

- 1 Start a discussion about pets. Ask those who have dogs, cats, etc. how they know when pets are hungry/happy/annoyed/in pain, etc. Ask them to imitate sounds their pet makes to show these emotions. Expand the discussion to other animals the children may know of and have fun imitating voices. Ask if they think animals are like us. Make a link with our voices.
- 2 Play the *Animal Sounds* sound clips (Y2C in **Action Pack**) and see if the children can guess what animal is making them (answers in **Resource File** page 27). Let them imitate the animal sounds and talk about them, be creative and use adjectives to describe sound.
- 3 Listen to the recording again and focus on pattern. Take one, e.g. robin, and count through the pattern in such a way that the children notice the rhythm. A robin calling *tick-tick ... ti-tick-tick-tick*, would translate into: "One-two ... One-two-three-four." A Sardinian warbler calling *ch-ch-ch-ch-ch* would translate into: "One-two-three-four-five." Make links with number sequences, visual patterns if you like, and other representations of patterns.
- 4 Go outside and listen for bird song. In winter you should hear robins, Sardinian warblers, sparrows, maybe white wagtails.

Help the children single out birdsong from the din of man-made noises. Let them become aware of living things other than humans – this awareness will hopefully stay with them into adulthood and will make them consider other forms of life when making choices.

- 5 When sparrows come together they make a different collective sound, as individual chirps are drowned out. Show how the same happens to human voices: get one child to say a sound repeatedly, then two, and so on till you have a classful. Give the children listening homework: in winter sparrows gather in large numbers to sleep in trees in town squares. Find out if your town has such a place from the *Where Sparrows Go To Sleep* map (**Resource File** pages 28–29). If so, ask the children to get their parents to take them there some afternoon (around 4.30–5.30pm) to watch and listen to sparrows coming in to sleep. Ask them to think of words that describe the sound when they are there.
- 6 After a week or two's chance for the children to hear sparrows at a roost with their family, play *Sparrow Talk* sound clips (Y2D in **Action Pack**) and let the children try and guess which is the one of sparrows roosting.

Use the Ninja Waħda Notice Board and tell the school about what you're doing.

Send photos of children

- listening and reacting to sounds in class
- listening to bird sound outside.





Children hear more about nature's voices and bond with them through the story of a robin.

Nature's Voice

2



Keywords

outdoors sensory observation • storytelling • crafts • recall

- 1 If you have a robin in your school grounds, take the children out and listen to it. Let them 'talk' to it and softly imitate it. Take cushions and find a nice spot where to sit in a circle for storytelling.
- 2 Read the story *Ruby finds a new home / Ruby ssib dar gdida* in **Resource File** pages 30–31. As you read, the children make different voices as you come to them. If there are sounds they have never heard, let them invent. The third activity will introduce them to some of them.
- 3 After the story, discuss what happened and bring out how humans can help nature or destroy it.
"Would Ruby come to *our* school?" Remind the children that they are now Nature Helpers because of the minibeast homes they built.
Now for some craft. You can use material
- 4 from **Resource File** page 32 to make robin mobiles to hang in class, or create a story map with various materials for the children to show different parts or objects in the story. Then use the story map to train memory and speaking skills.

Use the Ninja Waħda Notice Board and tell the school about what you're doing.

Send photos of children

- dramatising story
- doing craft follow-up.





Children experience
nature's voices first hand.

Nature's Voice

3



Keywords outing • sensory investigation • creative music

- 1 This activity is best suited for spring. The children will hear and feel nature's voices and compose a symphony. If you have a green space in your school large enough for children to feel surrounded by nature, use it. If not, visit a woodland, e.g. Buskett. Or book a visit to Il-Bosk with BirdLife Malta.
- 2 Buy a set of children's stethoscopes. These will come in handy for all sorts of learning journeys (some websites have good prices, e.g. Aliexpress). Familiarise the children with the stethoscope. You may link other topics to this, but to connect it to this activity you must include listening to each other's heartbeat and knowing that we are alive because of the 'voice' of our heart deep inside us. Prepare the children for an outing to listen to nature's voices by generating a sense of mystery.
- 3 Once on site, find a space among tall trees with at least 60cm circumference. On your way start the listening journey. Keep the children quiet and listening for sounds as they walk. Stop at several intervals and ask what they heard. Once under the trees, discuss the sounds you heard. Which were more numerous, nature or man-made sounds? Why? Which were loud? Which were soft? Through this the children should understand that if you are loud you will never hear nature's voices.
- 4 Speaking softly, 'tune' the children's ears to the various nature 'voices' around you. At every sound, urge the children to softly imitate it.
- 5 Activity climax! Ask the children whether they think trees are alive (they should be aware of this from earlier Ninja Waħda activities). Ask how we know a person is alive. Say that we need to be absolutely quiet for the next voice: a tree drinking! Give each a stethoscope, then all go quiet and place stethoscope to a tree trunk. You may hear wood cracking, beetles inside and – most fascinating of all – a constant 'rushing' sound: the sap rising to the leaves! Make a big deal of this and get them excited. Tell them not everyone knows trees have voices because people are too noisy.
- 6 Create a symphony of nature's voices. Put children in twos or threes and ask each to choose a nature's voice from the ones you practised – don't forget the tree's heart! Record or video part of your symphony. You can use it later to make a short play for a school event, taking the audience through the children's learning journey, only this time they hear the children's symphony.

Use the Ninja Waħda Notice Board and tell the school about what you're doing.

Send photos of

- photos of children listening to nature sounds
- photos of children using stethoscopes to listen to trees.
- an mp3/wav recording of Nature's Voices symphony

