

Looking for Minibeasts in the Fairfield Orchard

Four main activities can be used, in almost any combination to show children the diversity and interest of looking at invertebrates and the variety of different habitats they inhabit.

Minibeasts are small and delicate creatures and can be easily harmed. Try not to handle the creatures but use a soft paintbrush to touch and transfer them into collecting pots. The invertebrates can also be observed in situ. After you have looked at them carefully put them back where you found them.

Activity 1 looking under logs and stones

This activity is good for investigating ground living invertebrates. Carefully lift logs and stones to see what is under them. Make sure that the logs and stones are replaced slowly and put back in exactly the same place.

Activity 2 – Tree and Bush shaking

Very simple in that you only need a sheet and a child at each corner to hold it taut. Hold the sheet under the branch/bush. Shake the branch vigorously and watch what happens. Look out for all the different types of caterpillar, flying insects and munchers of leaves that may come down. A tree supports so many different species. Hawthorn trees are particularly good for this activity, supporting a large number of different invertebrates.

How do the species found on the tree compare to the species found in the other activities. Insects are found all around with different types in different places, but all within a very small area.

At the end of the activity, shake the sheet. The creatures will find their own way back home.

Activity 3 - Leaf litter challenge

You will need a garden sieve and a white tray for this activity (cat litter trays are ideal). Put a few handfuls of damp dead leaves into the sieve.

IMPORTANT! Check for any sharp objects or dog fouling before handling the leaves.

Gently shake the sieve over the tray. You will be surprised how many creatures can be found.

Activity 4 - Grassland sweep

You will need a sweep net and a large see-through plastic container (a large sweet jar is ideal).

Again this will be very different from bugs found from other activities.