

Insect investigations

Activity created by Landcare Education - ph 92964727

Focus: Observation, classification, adaptation

VELS Links: Domains and Levels: Science (3, 4, 5)

Directions:

Collecting insects from plants

Have the students break into groups containing between 3 and 4 students.

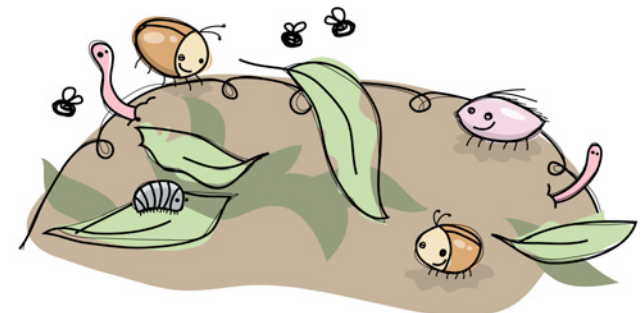
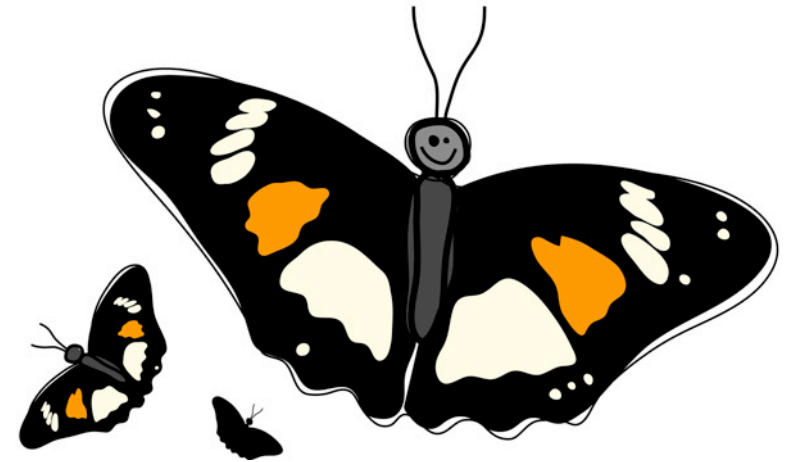
Materials per group

- 1 white cloth
- 1 magnifying glass
- 1 collecting jar

Hold the white cloth out horizontally - two students can hold the cloth while the other students gently shake a branch above it. Insects will fall out of the branch onto the white cloth and at this point the students can put the insects in their jars and then observe them taking note of some of the features of the insects present on their cloth. Features to check for could include wings, antennae, size, how many legs, how many body parts, colour, mouthpart etc. Have the students try to identify why particular insects are in the bush ie is it their food source, or their home?

Please make sure students return the insects to the place that they originally found

Collecting insects from the ground



Have the students break into groups containing between 3 and 4 students.

Materials per group

- 1 collecting jar
- 1 magnifying glass

Have the students **gently** lift up rocks, bark and leaves that are on the ground. When they find a creature have them gently lift the insects into their jars using a leaf as a guide.

Use the magnifying glasses to take a closer look at the insect(s) - Have the students try to identify whether the insect they have collected have wings, antennae, six or more legs, three or more body parts, a sucking or biting mouth part.

What do the insects do in the soil? How important are they?

Answer to the above question

Insects that live on and in the ground help turn material such as leaves and bark that falls onto the ground into an organic mix. This mix when fully broken down by insects adds nutrients to the existing soil and helps hold moisture in the topsoil. Some ground dwelling insects can also aerate the soil, which means that they make very small tunnels in the soil, which enables roots to move more easily through the soil and also provides the roots with the small amount of air which is one of the things they require to grow.

Note:

Children need to be careful collecting insects. Please make sure that they use leaves to lift the insects into their jars and not their fingers as they may be bitten. Let them observe the spiders but not collect them as firstly, they are not insects and secondly they may be venomous so it is best to leave them alone.

Ensure that all creatures that are caught are treated with care and that they are safely returned to the place where they were collected.

** Place creatures that were collected from under rocks next to them rather than under them!*