

For adults and children in the garden or outdoor space – supervision essential

We're all going on a bug hunt...

Natural England wants to give a million children the chance to discover the outdoors. The natural world is a fascinating place to explore and our natural habitats together with the creatures and plants that live there can provide endless sources of fun. From your own back yard to the wilds of our national nature reserves, now is the time to make the most of the outdoors and go wild!

Together with Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (www.goingwild.net), authors of Nature's Playground, Go Wild and Make it Wild (www.franceslincoln.com), we've produced these fantastic activity sheets to give you plenty of ideas of what you can get up to, what are you waiting for?

There may not be many large creatures in your garden but there will be multitudes of invertebrates. Organise an expedition to see what creatures you can discover living among the bushes and the long grasses.

What you need

- Old sheets or table cloths
- Sweep nets made from old pillow cases and some wire (eg. old metal coat hangers)
- Bug boxes – essential so you can get a good look at the little creatures
- Paint brushes

Sweep netting

With a sweep net you can catch a variety of beetles, bugs and flies. The nets should be lightweight, with a large opening, and used very gently so you don't harm anything. This is how to make a simple sweep net:

- Cut an old pillow case in half horizontally, discarding the half with the opening.



- Sew a hem at least 2cm/ 3/4in wide all the way around the cut edge, leaving a small section of hem open.
- Untwist the clothes hanger and insert one end of the wire into the opening in the hem. Thread the wire all the way around inside the hem, and then sew up the opening.

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Using a sweep net

- With the open edge at right angles to the ground, hold the upper rim of the net with two hands.
- Swing the net from side to side in a full arc as you slowly walk along.
- Stop sweeping after a short while and look into the net to see what you have caught. Use the paintbrush to pick up the smallest creatures; place the brush close to an invertebrate so that it has to climb onto it.
- Use a bug box or magnifying glass to get a better look at your finds.
- Return the creatures to the area where they were caught.



Bush bugs

What creatures can you find living in the bushes and trees?

- Place an old tablecloth or sheet beneath a shrub. Lay it out on the ground or ask the children to hold each corner.
- Shake the branches of the shrub gently but firmly over the outspread cloth.
- A variety of little creatures should fall onto the cloth, including small flies and beetles, ladybirds, caterpillars and glossy green shield bugs.

- Gently collect them with the help of a soft brush. Place them in bug boxes for further investigation.
- When the children have finished looking at their catch, they should place them back among the leaves of the shrub.
- Perhaps the children could make their own versions of the weird and wonderful bugs they find, using a little clay to make a body and then adding sticks for legs, grasses for antennae, leaves for wings and seeds for eyes.

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Safety tips

- Watch out for insects that might bite or sting.
- Make sure children are gentle with the creatures they find and return them to their habitat once they have looked at them.