

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Environments to encourage wildlife

Fresh air and access to nature have a positive impact on children's overall well-being. Spending time in and around nature enables children to learn about their environment, recognise changes and patterns through the seasons and understand their own role in helping to look after local wildlife and their habitats.

This week's activity is focused on developing environments to encourage wildlife into your nursery.

Learning aims

- Be curious about the natural world
- Work cooperatively with others
- Collaborate with others to problem solve
- Develop understanding of how to care for local wildlife
- Develop vocabulary
- Notice shapes and patterns in the environment.



Resources

- Access to a natural space (this could be the nursery garden, a local park, or fencing and walls for feeders)
- A range of natural materials (logs, leaves, bricks, pine cones, etc.)
- Bird feeders
- Bird seed, fat balls (fat balls can be homemade)
- Low dishes/bowls for water (to ensure small wildlife can access) or you can use recycled containers
- Images of wildlife in your local area and their homes, e.g. fox's den, blue tit nest
- Optional – outdoor wildlife camera.

Activity outline

1. Start your activity by taking the children outdoors to investigate your environment to see if you can find any signs of wildlife. Look for clues that animals and insects may be visiting, e.g. tracks,

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footprints, holes or gaps under fences, animal or bird droppings, insects, caterpillars on leaves, fur snagged on thorns. Discuss your findings

2. Talk to children about what wildlife they have seen in their own gardens or natural spaces they may visit (birds, squirrels, pheasants, hedgehogs, foxes, bats) and talk about where the wildlife lives. Look at the images you have and discuss the features of the home and the materials that animals have used to create their homes
3. Think about what attracts wildlife to natural spaces (food, water, nesting, hibernation) and look around your environment. Pose the question – what can we do to help the wildlife in our area? Encourage the children to share their ideas. You can choose just one animal to focus on or to develop ideas for multiple wildlife
4. Look around your natural space again, this time thinking about different wildlife, e.g. 'Where would a hedgehog find food?' 'How would they get into the space?' 'Where would they sleep?' 'Can they find any water on the ground level?' 'What food do they eat and where would we leave it for them?'
5. Scribe children's ideas and encourage them to take photos of potential wildlife areas so you can revisit the images and discuss the possibilities
6. There are a number of ways to support wildlife, regardless of the natural space you have available. Discuss and implement some of these ideas with children:
 - a. Hang bird feeders filled with seed
 - b. Add a water bath for birds and insects
 - c. Hang fat balls on walls, fences or trees
 - d. Plant trees and bushes to provide cover for wildlife
 - e. Place low bowls of water around the nursery, keep them filled with clean water, particularly in the hot weather
 - f. Place a hedgehog box in a quiet area of your garden or create a natural space with leaves and twigs for hibernating hedgehogs
 - g. Create a hedgehog highway by cutting a CD sized square into your fence so hedgehogs can roam to find food
 - h. Plant flowers that attract butterflies and bees
 - i. Visit a local pond
 - j. Create an insect or bug hotel.
7. Ensure the children are involved in creating the habitats and looking after the wildlife, e.g. checking when the bird seed has gone and refilling your feeders or changing the bowls of water regularly. This will help them to develop their sense of responsibility and understanding of what animals need and how they can help

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8. Provide binoculars and cameras so children can observe the habitats and take pictures of any visiting wildlife.

Extension ideas

- Make your own fat balls for children to hang in their own garden space or to take to a local park and hang on a tree. Check out the RSPB fat ball recipe and instructions here:
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-kids/games-and-activities/activities/make-a-speedy-bird-cake/>
- If possible, add a wildlife camera to your outdoor space to observe any wildlife visiting your natural spaces.

Special considerations

Please ensure you never leave milk for hedgehogs - they are lactose intolerant and it will cause stomach issues. You can use this as a discussion point with children for how allergies can affect people too.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Developing quality outdoor provision](#) – live virtual classroom training.