

Animal life

These activities encourage children to observe the way in which animals live their lives around them.

In Search of Food

Bait traps with different foods to see which species are attracted by each. (Also see species surveys).

Insect Café

Quietly watch the insects visiting a group of different plants. Record the number of each insect type seen on each type of plant.

Invertebrate Restaurant

Place slugs or snails of the same species in a tub, with air holes, lined with damp kitchen paper and with a choice of different foods. Put in a cool, dark place, check the next day and release the animals. Compare the food choices of different species of slugs and snails. Similar studies could be carried out with other ground-living vegetarian or scavenging animals, e.g. woodlice. Food requirements can be quantified by measuring how much disappears in a set time.

Ladybirds and Aphids

Find a plant infested with aphids and take a cutting which is clear of them. Place the bottom of the stem in a bottle of water and plug the gap around it with cotton wool. Put the plant and bottle into a plastic sweet jar and carefully (using a paintbrush) move one aphid onto the plant. Cover the jar to prevent escape. Watch the aphid carefully with a magnifying glass to observe its feeding method. Record births over a period of a week or so, then introduce a ladybird and observe predation. Introduce more ladybirds (and maintain a supply of aphids) to observe mating; egg laying, larval development, pupation and the hatching of new adults. The food plant will have to be renewed regularly, as it will die and cease to provide food for the aphids.

Pond Predators

Within your pond dipping collection vessels or classroom aquarium you will be able to observe some of the predation which goes on in ponds and use this information to create food chains and even food webs.