



Mini-beasts and Habitats in your School

What are Mini-beasts?

“Mini-beasts” is a term that people use to refer to the small insects and other invertebrates that are commonly found around schools and homes. It includes animals such as spiders, ants, butterflies, bees, wasps, flies, woodlice, beetles, centipedes and many others! All animals need a place to live and mini-beasts are no different. With this worksheet you can explore the homes or ‘habitats’ that different types of mini-beasts like to inhabit.

Activity: Explore and Make Habitats for Mini-beasts

Objective: To observe over time the numbers characteristics and behaviour of mini-beasts

Materials: Old logs, old carpet, tape measure, pencils and paper, pooters/clear trays for collecting insects.

Method:

1 Existing Habitats

Begin by asking students if they think there might be any areas in the school grounds that could provide a home for any mini-beasts (e.g. spiders, ants, earthworms, woodlice etc). The students’ suggestions of existing habitats should be considered, and the locations examined (as described in Step 2).

2 Observing the Mini-beasts

- Use white trays or bug-viewers for collecting the mini-beasts.
- Be sure to remove the animals very carefully
- Use identification guides to identify and study any mini-beasts found. If you are not sure what something is in the field, take a photo, and you can do some research in the classroom afterwards. Use your Species Investigation Worksheets to record your information.
- Record all mini-beasts found.
- Safely return them to their ‘home’ after observation.
- Place any objects that were moved (e.g. rocks, logs) back in their original position.
- ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS** after your investigation! NB!





3 Creating a new habitat:

- Ask students to collect materials which are likely to provide shelter, and attract mini-beasts, such as small sections of old carpet, rocks and old logs. You can make the habitat area as small or as large as you wish.
- Find a damp shaded well-protected area of the school grounds.
- Spread the old logs and carpet in the area (if the weather has been dry recently, you should dampen the area with some water first).
- Measure the area, draw up a map and date it.
- Leave the habitat for a few days (at least a week) before returning with the original map.
- On your return, note any changes on your map, using a different colour and make a record of the date. Carefully lift up the carpet, rocks or logs to see if there are any mini-beasts to be found.
- CARRY OUT STEP 2 ABOVE
- Return on a regular basis and record the weather, plant growth and any mini-beasts found.
- You can then keep a record of your findings and present them on a chart to the rest of the school.



Scientific investigations:

- What effect does the weather, changing seasons and the presence of plants have on the habitat?
- Are there more or fewer mini-beasts as the weeks go by? Does this level off at any time?
- Draw bar charts to show the number of mini-beasts over time and display it on your LEAF notice board.
- Can you identify a food chain or food web in the habitat?

E.g. Grassland: Sun- Buttercup *BeeWoodland:* Sun- Plant (seeds) -
Mouse- Owl *Scrub:* Sun - Shrub (decomposing leaves) -
Earthworm- Blackbird- Sparrow hawk

Explore the idea that different mini-beasts live in different places!