



Habitat Mapping in the School Grounds Lesson Plan

Theme: Forests & Biodiversity

Resource: Lesson Plan & Activity

Green School Step:

Step 3 – Action Plan

Step 5 – Curriculum Link

Step 6 – Informing & Involving

Curriculum Links:

- ✓ Living Things
- ✓ Myself & the wider community

Global Goals/SDG Links:

Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities -

Goal 13 – Climate Action

Goal 15 – Life on Land

Skills: Research; Observing; Recording; Investigating; Identification; New Words, Art.

Aim: To map current habitats in school grounds and to build on this map by putting in plans for new habitats in the school grounds

NOTE: There are two stages to this activity:

Stage 1: Habitat Map	Map current habitats – recording what we have (If school is only beginning)
Stage 2: Habitat Plan	Plan for new habitats – what we can add (If school has already started to work on a habitat map)

Background Information:

The government has declared a 'Biodiversity & Climate Emergency'. The most important action your school can take is to have space for wildlife habitats and biodiversity in the school grounds. We have to move away from concrete jungles to habitats and spaces for wildlife.

In this activity, you are aiming to record what you have in the grounds and start planning for more biodiversity habitats as school projects. There is most likely more biodiversity in your school grounds than you initially realise, eg. Ivy on fences/walls, wildflowers in the mown grass area, long grass in corners, trees, hedges, rubble/waste ground, etc. Do not be afraid to say that you are not sure what a plant or tree is – this can be the mystery plant/area that you can research with students. This map is a work in progress!

Keep the information general and add in as you learn more. Invite a local nature group, Council Biodiversity Officer or school community member to help. The Heritage in Schools Scheme has many Biodiversity Specialists on their

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panel, which schools can avail of at a subsidized rate. This can be of great help with your biodiversity mapping and action plan.

Resources:

- ✓ Current habitat map per group (or sample map if not)
- ✓ Habitat Map Checklist per group
- ✓ Clipboards/Pencils/Paper to take notes
- ✓ Tablet/Camera to record work

Methodologies:

Stage 1: Habitat Map What we have	Map current habitats
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1. Break the students into groups of 3-4 to work together with a copy of your Year 1 Habitat Map.
2. Working with your Year 1 Habitat Map, record the date, weather, North-East-South-West (use compass).
3. Walk the grounds of your school with students groups, making notes as you go based on the steps below. Use the attached checklist of sample habitats to help with this activity.
4. Include buildings, parking, playing pitches, concrete spaces, etc.
5. Make a note of any windy spots, cold spots, warm spots, shady spots, etc.
6. Include your neighbours – (community centre, housing estate, busy or quiet road)
7. As you walk the school grounds, record what you see - any existing trees, hedges, green spaces, thickets, overgrown spaces, wildflowers, bird boxes, drains, sloping ground or any wet areas.
8. On your walk, if you find any insects or see any birds, make a note of them too and where you found them.
9. If you want to bring maths (estimating/measuring, counting) into the activity, ask the different groups to measure the various lengths of ground (footsteps will do). Include these in the map.
10. Now you have completed mapping the current habitats in your school grounds.

Stage 2: Habitat Plan What we can add	Plan for new habitats
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1. Based on this habitat map, now you can start to add to it to identify spaces to include future habitats. These can include a small native woodland, mixed native hedge, wildflower areas, log piles, insect hotels, hedgehog and frog corners, pollinator spaces, beetle banks, ladybird corners, food garden, fruit trees and bushes, small wildlife pond, only for wildlife areas, etc.
2. Link the habitats together by drawing a simple nature trail, which connects them all together.

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3. Over time, you can start to create these habitats as part of your biodiversity actions.
4. Over time, you can also create signs at these 'habitat and biodiversity hotspots', as an educational nature trail for the wider school community to explore.

Focal Nua/New Words

Citizen Science: this is when people (young and old) help to collect data for research purposes.

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/kids-make-great-citizen-scientists>

You can submit sightings of wild plants and animals/insects that you find in your school grounds. If you are beginning – use the Backyard Biodiversity Sheet (see below). If you are feeling a bit more confident, you can record sightings at Citizen Science Portal Biodiversity Ireland (see below):

Plant-blindness: is defined as the inability to see or notice plants in your own environment, leading to a lack of understanding of their importance in our daily lives and our biosphere. It also leads to a lack of connection with nature. The same can be said of habitats. Start to notice the plants and habitats we pass by in our daily lives and this will lead to the cure!

Links to follow workshop with:

Green Schools Biodiversity Resources:

https://greenschoolsireland.org/resources/theme_category/biodiversity/

Green Schools Biodiversity – The Great Plant Hunt:

<https://greenschoolsireland.org/register-now-for-the-great-plant-hunt/>

LEAF Ireland Resources:

<https://leafireland.org/resources/>

LEAF International Resources:

<https://www.leaf.global/our-resources>

GLOBE – Tree Phenology

<https://www.globe.gov/web/european-phenology-campaign/overview/autumn-2019>

Backyard Biodiversity Survey Sheet:

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record-biodiversity/backyard-biodiversity/>

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Links to follow workshop with:

Citizen Science Biodiversity Ireland:

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record-biodiversity/>

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie>

Flower–Insect-Timed Count (FITC) Sheet:

<https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/fit-count/>

All Ireland Pollinator Plan Resources:

<http://pollinators.ie>

Heritage in Schools – Heritage Experts:

<http://www.heritageinschools.ie/heritage-expert/search-for-an-expert>

Heritage in Schools – Teachers Resources:

<http://www.heritageinschools.ie/teachers-resources>

Tree Council of Ireland:

<https://treecouncil.ie>

Wild Flowers of Ireland:

<http://www.irishwildflowers.ie>