

Forests and Community



LESSON PLAN (PRIMARY)

INVESTIGATE
FORESTS

Investigating how we Benefit from Forests in our Daily Lives

Aim:

To link the school with the wider community in relation to local community woodlands and forests

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; Global citizenship;
Connecting with the wider community

New Words/Focal Nua:

Coppice
Wildlife Corridor
Interconnectivity
Sustainable Forestry

What is a coppice?

A coppice is a group of trees that are cut back almost to the ground and then regrow. Hazel and willow are both used for this purpose to make charcoal, fencing posts and weaving rods, bean-poles.

There are also many other trees that can be coppiced but grow back a bit more slowly, examples: Ash, Oak, Cherry, Beech, Spanish Chestnut, etc. This work is done in the winter when the leaves have dropped. Trees that are coppiced usually have very strong root systems and can live for hundreds of years.

What is a wildlife corridor?

It is usually a linear space for wild creatures and plants to travel along. Stonewall embankments are an example. Our native hedgerow system is another.

The importance of our native hedgerows is often overlooked. They act like a network of linear woodlands in our landscape and are very special and valuable spaces. They also act as wildlife corridors for both wild plants and animals, shelterbelts from prevailing winds and noise, seed banks, flood defense, etc.

They have a vital role in the interconnectivity of biodiversity within ecological communities. The same is true of old stonewalls and embankments. Always plan for local hedgerows to be connected to the local woodlands and forests, to help local wildlife to be able to travel safely through your built community environment.

Background Information:

Forests have always been of great importance to people and their communities. Our ancestors got their food by hunting and gathering plants from the forests. Before people began to clear forests for farming and for land to build on, forests covered about 60% of the Earth's surface area. Today, forests only cover about 30%. In Ireland, we have temperate forests. In other parts of the world, there are tropical forests. All are essential both in local and global terms.

Despite the developments of civilisation, people still depend on forests for their survival. Forests are of huge importance economically and environmentally. Forests provide a wide range of products not only timber and firewood but also food, medicine and fibre. Communities around the world are linked to



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forests through products and associated livelihoods; we encourage schools to explore these links. We also encourage schools to examine the communities at risk of losing their homes due to illegal logging and agriculture. Investigate ways of alleviating poverty through sustainable forestry, while improving livelihoods and creating green jobs. Where possible explore indigenous communities/engage with local communities and share their knowledge and expertise. Finally, remember that the natural beauty of the forest offers a special source of enjoyment to all communities.

Equipment:

- ✓ Activity Sheet per group
- ✓ Clipboards
- ✓ Pencils
- ✓ Tablet/Camera to record work

Safety:

- ✓ The usual Health & Safety precautions apply when taking a class out to a local woodland/forest.
- ✓ Wear appropriate clothes and bring a change of shoes.
- ✓ Walk to the woodlands if at all possible.

Methodology:

1. Find out where your local wood is and carry out some research with the class prior to visiting.
2. Find out the history of the woodland/forest, it's name in Irish, etc. Invite a grandparent to come in an talk to the class about the woods.
3. Search Google Maps and find an aerial view of the woodland or forest. Is it connected to any other woodland by hedges or stone walls? Find and record the GPS position – this can help when carrying out surveys here.

4. Visit the woods and use the Activity Sheet to explore and record the visit.
5. If possible, invite a local Forester/Council Biodiversity Officer/ Heritage in School Specialist/ Community Biodiversity Champion to meet you at the wood and bring you on a short tour. Or invite them to your school to talk to the class about the local woods before the visit.
6. Record any information signs with pictures. If there are no signs, find out how you can help the local community to get educational signage installed.
7. Write a short article for the local community circular or social media (with photos).

Extension:

Contact your local Tidy Towns Group or Men's Shed, as they will be working on Community Pollinator Projects. Suggest creating a local Community Tree Nursery or planting a Community Woodland in some local 'waste' ground. This would become a wonderful resource for the whole local community, humans and wildlife alike. **(See LEAF Website for more resources on creating a tree nursery, planting trees and woodlands).** If there is a local woodland or forest, help to get some educational signage installed, which you can use to benefit school walks and the wider community.



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Useful Links:

LEAF Theme – Forests & Biodiversity:

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

Green-Schools & Biodiversity Theme:

<https://greenschoolsireland.org/themes/biodiversity/>

NeighbourWood Scheme & Native Woodland Scheme:

<https://treecouncil.ie/tree-advice/forest-service-grants/>

All Ireland Pollinator Plan:

<https://pollinators.ie>

Green Communities:

<http://www.greencommunitiesireland.org>

Coillte and Community – Recreation in Forests:

<https://www.forestryfocus.ie/social-environmental-aspects/recreation/>

Maps:

<https://www.osi.ie/blog/irelands-best-forest-trails/>

<https://www.google.ie/maps>



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STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET (PRIMARY)

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1. Name of your Local Woodland:

2. Why is it called this? (www.logainm.ie for Irish Place Names)

3. When was it planted? _____

4. Can you find it on a map (OPW Ordnance Survey Maps or Google Maps)?

5. Ask a grandparent or community person who would remember the woods when they were young. Was it used for other things (e.g. timber, was it a working woodland, was it used as a coppice, is it part of an old house)?

6. What tree species have you found on your walk (collect some leaves, seeds, bark from the ground)?

7. Have you found any evidence of animals (tracks, droppings, feathers, sounds)?



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STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET (PRIMARY)

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8. Are there any signs along the way? If so, what do they tell you? Are they easy to read? How could they be improved?

9. Can you list 4 ways that this woodland is benefitting your local community and the local wildlife community?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

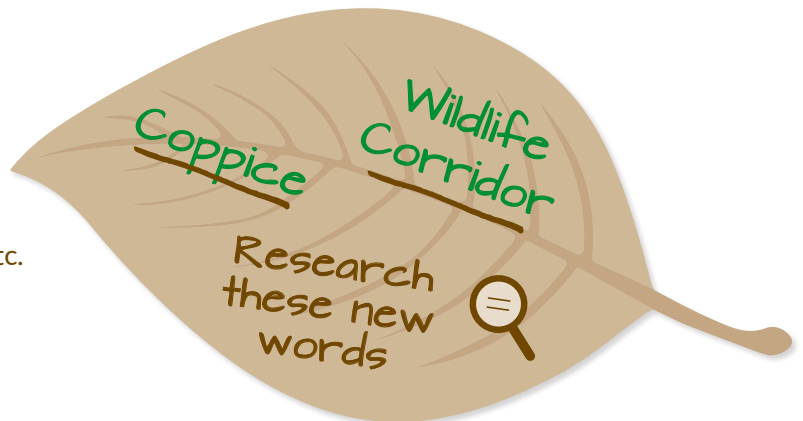
4. _____

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

What kind of career can you have working with woodlands?

Forester, Ecologist, Educator, Farmer, Carpenter/Woodworker, Artist, Eco-tourist Guide, etc.

Can you invite anyone in to speak with your class?



Write Letters:

- To your local Council Biodiversity Officer or Forestry Officer to find out more about your local woods/forest
- To your local Tidy Towns/Parish/Community Council, to get involved in your local woods/forest to create paths and put up signs/owl boxes
- Organise a bat walk in your local woods – find out more at <http://www.batconservationireland.org>
- Write a letter to your ancestors, asking them what the forest was like when they were alive. What tribes lived there? What did they eat? What trees did they make medicine from?



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Answers to Activity Sheet Question 9

9. Can you list 4 ways that this woodland is benefitting your local community and the local wildlife community?
- A. It cleans our air
 - B. It cleans our water
 - C. It protects our soil
 - D. It is home to lots of plants and creatures such as woodlice, worms, spiders, birds, foxes, badgers, etc
 - E. It is a lovely place to walk and spend time in nature
 - F. It helps to prevent flooding downstream, as the roots hold the water and the trees soak it up
 - G. It is part of our history and culture and connects us to our ancestors



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