

# Why Are Trees Important?

This is ECO<sub>2</sub> COP30 Lesson 2 aimed at children aged 7 – 9.

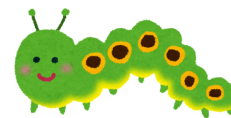
## Tree Habitats

*Slides 2 – 4*

A habitat is where an animal or plant lives. Trees are habitats. Can you think of any animals that live in trees?

If possible, go into your school grounds or local area and look at a tree. Discuss how trees provide shelter, food and water for wildlife: •

- Canopy of leaves provide shelter from the rain or strong sun.
- Bark / leaves provide camouflage to help hide from predators or prey.
- Holes in the trees provide homes and shelter.
- Twigs fallen from the trees can be used to create nests.
- Trees provide height, so animals can climb to safety from predators.
- Water droplets on the leaves provide water for animals to drink.
- Leaves, nuts, fruit and insects (which also live on the tree) are all good sources of food.
- Trees provide oxygen which animals need to breathe.



Look closely at a tree, or a few different trees, for signs of wildlife. For example, you might spot a nest in the tree branches, or you might see holes in the leaves where caterpillars have been eating them. Or you might see a spider or squirrel climbing up a tree trunk. If available in your school, equipment like magnifying glasses or binoculars can help the children look more closely at different parts of the tree.

Return to the classroom. Use slides 3 – 4 to explain that different animals live in different trees. Look at the examples of trees around the world and what wildlife they support.



Choose one of the following two activities to do in your school grounds or local area:

## Activity 1: Tree Material Homes

Trees lose leaves and branches due to weather and age. These natural resources can be used to make homes for minibeasts and other wildlife, especially in areas where there is little or no shelter:



Piles of sticks and leaves are popular with insects and small mammals.



Hide an old plant pot or container and fill it with sticks and leaves. Cover it with vegetation to keep it hidden.



Build a bug hotel using leaves, wood, pinecones and other materials.

## Activity 2: Build a Bird Nest

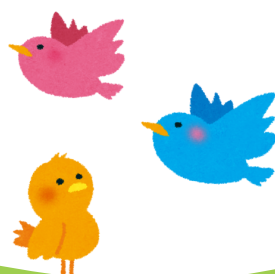
*Slide 5*

Look at the examples of different bird nests on slide 5; there are so many different shapes and designs. What materials do the birds use to build their nests?

Go into the school grounds. Carry out a bird survey; can you see any birds, or signs of birds, in the trees?



Can the children build a bird nest using natural materials (e.g. sticks, leaves, moss)? To make it even more of a challenge, you can ask the children to only use their middle three fingers, just like a bird's claw!



## Trees and Us

*Slides 6 – 10*

Trees play an important role in our lives. Start by reading the book, [the tree of hope](#), to introduce the importance of trees for us and our world.

Use slides 6 – 10 to explain that trees provide us with air, food, shelter, water and materials. Choose one or more of the following activities to complete with the children:

- **Shelter** – If it is sunny or rainy, take the children outside, first to stand in open ground and then under a tree. What difference do they notice when they stand under the tree? Discuss how trees provide us with relief and shelter from heat, rain and snow.
- **Materials** – If we cut down trees we get wood, a material we use to make buildings, furniture, paper and other objects. Sit in a circle as a class and pass round some items made of different materials, such as plastic, glass, wood and cotton. Do the children know which items are made of wood? What does wood look and feel like? Ask the children to stand up and walk round the classroom; what items can they see that are made of wood?
- **Food** – Bring in some different items of food. Do the children know which ones come from a tree? You may wish to give the children an opportunity to taste some fruit which grows on trees in your local area or country, such as apples, mangos, cherries, avocado, pears, papaya, etc.

## Deforestation

*Slides 11 – 14*

Using slide 11, explain that humans cut down trees to get wood and other materials, but also to make space for farms, homes, roads and buildings. But what happens if we cut down lots of trees? Show the image on slide 12. Ask the children what they think the picture is of. How does it make them feel?

Set up a tarpaulin or sheet in the middle of the classroom or playground. This represents a large area of forest full of lots of trees. All the children are owls. Owls are nocturnal so they sleep during the day and hunt at night. During the night time, the owls flap their wings and 'fly' around the classroom or playground hunting for mice. Shout 'day time' and



all the 'owls' have to fly back and sleep in the trees (stand or crouch in the on the tarp/ sheet). Then when you shout 'night time' again, the owls leave the trees and go hunting. Alternate between 'night time' and 'day time' but from now on, every time you shout 'day time' the owls will return to the forest to find that it has shrunk. This is because humans are cutting down the trees and the trees are struggling to survive as the Earth is getting warmer. Over the course of the game, less and less owls will be able to sleep in the forest as there is not enough trees left. End the game with a forest space just big enough for a few owls to sleep on. Ask the children what will happen if we cut down all the trees?

Use slides 13 - 14 to explain that cutting down large areas of trees is called deforestation. As we have just seen in our game, deforestation takes away animals homes, food and shelter. Deforestation is happening all around the world.

## Future Forests

### *Slide 15*

In the next lesson we will learn all about the wonderful ways in which people around the world are creating new forests and protecting existing ones.

Have a class discussion; how can we help protect trees and create more forests? Here are a few ideas:

- Reduce, reuse and recycle so less trees are cut down - reduce the amount of paper you use by using drawing on both sides and using all the space. Reuse scrap paper, cardboard products and wooden furniture instead of throwing it away. Recycle paper and cardboard if you can't reuse them.
- Teach others about trees - create a label for a tree to teach others about what type of tree it is and all the wonderful things that it does, such as cleans our air, provides homes for birds, etc.
- Plant trees - is there an opportunity to plant trees in your school grounds, or in your local area in partnership with a charity or organisation?
- Share books - books are made of paper which comes from trees. Instead of buying all new books, visit a library or swap books with your friends. Perhaps you class could organise a book swap?

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