

Preparation

- Identify an area of your home (backyard, balcony, window) or local park that would be suitable for small animal observation.
- Print/ copy the task sheet OR create a copy on A4 paper or in a scrapbook.

Purpose

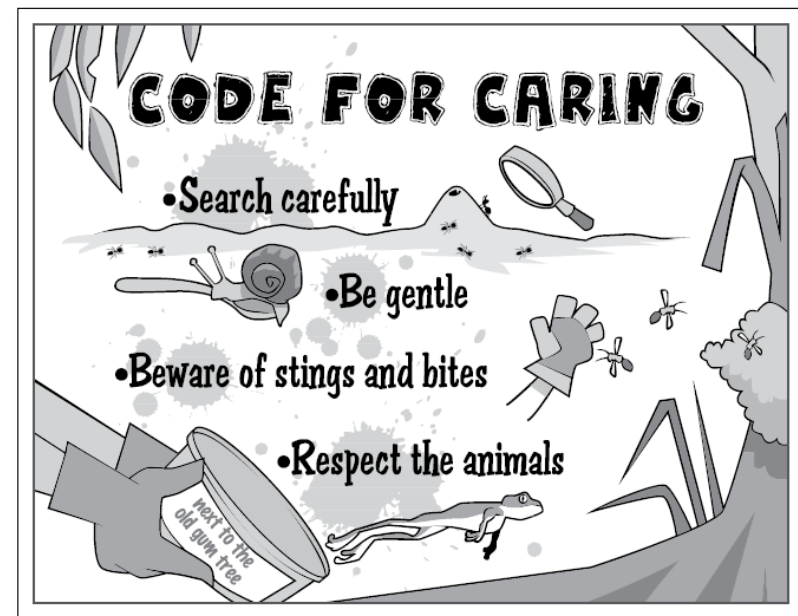
- Observe and identify small animals in their habitats using your senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing).

Description

1. Students predict the small animals that they think they will see in a selected local area (see 'Preparation').
2. Students explore a local area. They draw and write their observations of small animals they find, including where they were found.

Optional: Take photographs of the animals.

Note: Students are not collecting the animals, they are observing them. Children should be supervised while observing small animals especially snails. If students handle snails, slugs or their slime, ensure they keep their hands away from their mouths and wash their hands with soap afterwards.



EXAMPLE:
A sample 'Code for caring'.

Before the task

- Find out which animals students predict they will see in their backyard, local park, or looking from their balcony or through a particular window.
- Support students to list these (writing and/or drawing) as 'predictions'.
- Discuss a 'code for caring', agreeing on the ways students will care for the small animals they find (see below).

After the task

- Discuss what was found. You might ask guiding questions such as:
 - How many different kinds of small animals did you find?
 - Which animals did you see lots of?
 - What were the animals doing as you watched them?
 - Were any animals difficult to see?
 - Did you find dead animals or parts of an animal?
 - What was the most surprising animal you found? Why is that surprising to you?
 - Did you find different animals in the same habitat? Compare those animals. How are they similar? How are they different?
- Students represent their observations on the task sheet. Students may wish to share a photo or drawing of the animals they find with others (classmates, teacher, family members).

Explore some more

- Create a map of the area explored to show where the animals were found, and what the animal habitats included (light and shade, trees and shrubs, long grass, asphalt, logs, wet and dry areas, flowers, weeds). Create a key to represent the different habitats on your map.
- Play a guessing game where students role-play one of the animals they found, acting out how it moves by focussing on body parts, how they think the animal eats, how they think the animal protects itself etc. Family members guess which animal is being acted out.
- To help identify what was found, refer to '[A guide to Australian insect families](http://anic.ento.csiro.au/insectfamilies/)' (<http://anic.ento.csiro.au/insectfamilies/>)
- Read more about insects on this [CSIRO blog](https://blog.csiro.au/miniature-lives-identifying-insects-home-garden/) (<https://blog.csiro.au/miniature-lives-identifying-insects-home-garden/>) To help you identify what was found, search for 'backyard biodiversity bug guide csiro'. Download the PDF.
- Consider getting involved in this [Junior Landcare campaign](https://juniorlandcare.org.au/campaigns/whatsinyourbackyard/) (<https://juniorlandcare.org.au/campaigns/whatsinyourbackyard/>)
- [Watch Minibeast Heroes](https://iview.abc.net.au/show/minibeast-heroes) on ABC iView (<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/minibeast-heroes>)



SAFETY

Encourage students to wear gloves to protect their hands when picking up rocks and moving leaves and logs so they can observe the small animals underneath. Remind them not to touch animals, as they may bite or sting them. Be aware of allergies that students might have, for example, plant allergies. Students might also suffer from allergies to different substances and detergents as well as the latex used in disposable gloves.

Introducing 'Local Safari'



To find out about the small animals that might be found in and around their home and garden, students will explore small animals and the habitats in which they live.

Task

Students will draw, write about, and explore the animals they find. Students are encouraged to take photographs if possible.

Code for caring

Establish a 'Code for caring' to help students search carefully without disturbing the search area.

This could include:

- Replace stones and logs after searching under them.
- Leave all plants and gardens undisturbed.
- Leave all dangerous small animals alone.
- Wear gloves to avoid bites and stings.
- Use spoons and damp brushes to avoid crushing small animals.
- When observing animals, keep them in a labelled container that has air holes and after a short time return the animal to where it was found.



Note: Students are not collecting the animals, they are observing them. Children should be supervised while observing snails. If students handle snails, slugs or their slime, ensure they keep their hands away from their mouths and wash their hands with soap afterwards.

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For further information see the CSIRO website, www.csiro.au, and search for 'Backyard bugs' to find a guide of some of the more common small animals.

Observations: Local safari search

Name:

Date:



Search around a local area for small animals such as:

Slugs, snails, earthworms, ants, slaters, millipedes, centipedes, aphids, spiders, earwigs, cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, cicadas, flies, bees, ladybirds, dragonflies, butterflies, moths, wasps, mosquitoes, silverfish, crickets, lizards or birds.

Name of animal:

Name of animal:

Description of the place I found it:

Description of the place I found it:

Drawing of the animal:

Drawing of the animal:

Name of animal:

Name of animal:

Description of the place I found it:

Description of the place I found it:

Drawing of the animal:

Drawing of the animal:

Name of animal:

Name of animal:

Description of the place I found it:

Description of the place I found it:

Drawing of the animal:

Drawing of the animal: