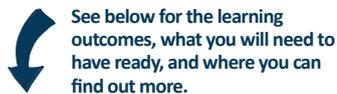


Enjoy your local woodland



See below for the learning outcomes, what you will need to have ready, and where you can find out more.

Learners will have/be able to:

- These will vary according to what you want your learners to come away from their visit with – empathy, understanding, skills etc. Involving the learners in planning a visit can deliver additional outcomes

Sunship Earth (Micro Parks, Earth Studios)
Snow/Earth Walks – available from www.eartheducation.org.uk

Sharing Nature with Children I & II
(Microtrails) by Joseph Cornell,
Dawn Publications, available from Amazon

Forest Education Initiative
Forest School activities
www.foresteducation.org

Learning and Teaching Scotland
www.ltsotland.org.uk/outdoorlearning

This is an activity encouraging you to just go outdoors and enjoy being amongst trees, whatever the season or weather. This is an opportunity to remind ourselves why woodlands and forests are so important to us, as humans (Soak in some of the wonders of the natural world).

Some woodlands are designated for their biodiversity and conservation value – some activities are restricted by law. In Scotland there is open access for responsible users, but it is always advantageous to contact the farmer/owner of a particular woodland site, before visiting with a group of school children. Be sure, in Scotland, that you cover relevant aspects of the *Know the Code (Scottish Outdoor Access Code)*, and elsewhere in England and Wales – *The Country Code*. There are many opportunities, even for urban schools, but these will depend on your location – here are some ideas!



See opposite for advice on woodland resources near you...

Activity 1

You may just want to take a walk and enjoy a picnic for what may be your learners' first experience of a real, mature, woodland. There can be opportunities working with Rangers and Community Woodland members, or conservation volunteer groups for your learners to watch/practice some practical woodland management/woodcraft skills, within safe and closely monitored conditions. These could contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change e.g. planting trees, coppicing, making hurdles/baskets, chopping wood, making charcoal etc.

There are many activities available that help us develop our sensory awareness of, and build a personal relationship with, our woodlands and natural heritage. Many of these can have their origins traced back to Steve Van Matre (Institute for Earth Education) and Joseph Cornell (Sharing Nature Foundation) who worked together in the 1970s. Their activities are reliable, tested and timeless, and provide a different perspective in viewing the natural world.

Some suggested activities, which are relatively easy to support and can be drawn from their sources, are:

- Earth and/or snow walks
- Micro– parks / microtrails
- Earth Studios



You may be lucky enough to have anything from a woodland, or orchard, to a few trees, but even a few trees offer much to be appreciated! However, you may wish to take the opportunity to go beyond the school grounds, in which case these are other options....

Farm woodlands

The Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) networks with and advises farmers across Scotland, who are willing and able to host school visits to their farms and farm woodlands. RHET have regional staff able to undertake risk assessments focussed on school visits. It is worth visiting their website www.rhet.org.uk, or getting in contact (0131 335 6021), to find out what is possible in your area. Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) have a number of regional groups providing accreditation for farms, and work with farmers through local networks. Visit their website www.face.org.uk. If you are located in a rural area, some of your parents may be farmers with suitable woodland sites, or you may know the neighbouring farmers and be able to be make direct contact.

Forestry Commission (England, Wales and Scotland) [FC] forests

The FC has forests of various ages and mixes across Britain. Most have a recreational element in their management where accessible to local population centres. For information on places to go and visit locally, visit the website www.forestry.gov.uk/recreation, or contact the local forest district office, or visitor centre – there may also be Rangers available at some Forest Parks to lead your visit. You can join the mailing for the FC free magazine *Forest Life*, which has interesting articles and ideas for recreational activities – family, art, music, gardening, walking, cycling etc.

Local town parks and country parks

You may have these local authority run resources within a manageable distance – again they may have variable amounts of true woodland, but they generally have a number of mature trees – both native and exotic. Some may be public botanic gardens /arboretums. Country Parks generally have an associated Ranger Service, and rangers may be able to lead your early sessions, or provide training, until your staff build up confidence to do something themselves.

Crown Estate woodlands

The Crown Estate holds some of the oldest, ancient native woodlands across Britain, as well as managing a large area of broadleaf and conifer plantations across their several estates. For these reasons, even in Scotland, where there is generally open access to these woodlands, it is advisable to make contact with the Estate office or farm manager if you wish to visit a particular site. Risk assessment would have to be carried out by/for the school for the purposes of a site visit.

Community woodlands

There are a growing number of community woodlands across Britain. These are woodlands that are managed and/or owned by the local community themselves. Again there is huge variety as to their age and species mix, but they are places your learners should know about on a number of levels. Many are contributing to mitigating the effects of climate change by involving new planting and small industries supporting a viable wood fuel industry. In Scotland there is an association, formed in 2003, supporting the growing number of Community Woodlands and obtaining funding for their projects – take a look at the website www.communitywoods.org. The Woodland Trust has established a Community Woodland Network across the UK, in response to the enquiries they have received – take a look at www.frontpage.woodland-trust/communitywoodlandnetwork. Volunteers carry out much of the work, and this contact is a useful way to introduce this aspect of responsible citizenship.