

Educational module “The ancient forest”

Brief description: The educational module “The ancient forest” is designed to teach participants about the importance of the old-growth forest for wildlife. First, the participants learn what characterizes an old-growth forest and why it is worth protecting, and then they gradually approach in a playful way different animal species for which the old-growth forest is important. The concept is suitable for participants from kindergarden age to the end of elementary school (10 years old). Three hours are estimated, including breaks and walks.

Zeit in Min.	Titel	Inhalt	Methode	Material
5	Getting started	Welcome and ask the question: why is nature worth protecting? Why do we need nature reserves? What is special about this area? Point out that this forest is very old.	Group plenum	
5	Entering the old forest	The participants go into the forest individually and quietly. When everyone is in the forest, ask the questions: What has changed? How does it feel to walk into such an old-growth forest?	Conscious and silent perception Group plenum	
5	Spontaneous camouflage 1	When ‘spontaneous camouflage’ is called out, all participants must hide while the instructor counts to 10 with their eyes closed. At 10, the instructor opens his/her eyes and may look around. Whoever is seen from her position must come out. For the first round of the game, play in a location with lots of hiding places and thick trees. Then discuss with the children which animals like to hide behind thick trees.	Hide and seek	
10	The old tree	After the hide-and-seek game, choose a particularly thick tree behind which several participants could hide. Let the children guess how old the tree is. If necessary, show a slice of tree with growth rings. Then tell a story from the tree's point of view. What has it experienced? Which animals come to visit it?	Telling a story	Tree story, tree discs if necessary
15	Search for tracks	The participants swarm out and search for traces of the animals reported by the tree (examples include badger burrows, nibbled cones, mouse holes, woodpecker holes, etc.). Then show and discuss together.	Einzel erkunden	

5	Spontaneous camouflage 2	Play round 2 at a different location with very thin trees. Almost all participants are found here. Then evaluate together: which type of forest do the forest animals like better? = the thick, old trees	Hide and seek	
20	Change trees variation: Blackbird and insect	All participants are insect larvae on a tree, only one participant is a blackbird. When the blackbird calls: 'Insects fly out', the larvae develop into beetles and leave their tree. In order to reproduce and become larvae again, they have to find a new tree. While they roam freely on the ground, the blackbird can catch them. All those caught become blackbirds. After a while, interrupt the game and ask what would happen if the woodpecker came now. At the end, discuss food relationships and pick up on the fact that there are lots of insects and therefore food for birds in old forests.	Fangspiel in der Gruppe	
10	Searching for habitat trees	Send the participants on a search for trees where insects and birds feel particularly at home. Then discuss the importance of deadwood.	Exploring individually	
30	Hedgehog house	Topic deadwood: who is happy about deadwood? Focus on the hedgehog and have small groups build hedgehog houses. The cuddly hedgehog then visits the little hedgehog nests and explains how he finds them.	Creative building with natural materials in groups	Cuddly toy hedgehog
10	Closing round	First, collect everything that has been done and then pass around an object of discussion with the questions: What surprised you today? What didn't you know about old forests?	Discussion round	„Object of discussion“
5	Farewell to the old forest	Ask the participants to say goodbye to the old forest when they leave it.		

Info about the hedgehog: In winter, the hedgehog hibernates, snuggling up in a warm nest of leaves. They usually hibernate from November to March. However, this depends on the temperatures. It wakes up again when the temperatures rise and it assumes that there is insect food for it again.

Info about the habitat tree: A habitat tree is usually an old tree that provides an important habitat for many animals and plants. It can have hollows, niches or cracks that provide habitats and food for many animals such as birds, bats and insects.

Story of the old oak tree: I am Elke, the old oak tree. I was once a small acorn that fell from my mother tree. A squirrel snatched me up and left me somewhere else for the winter. But then it apparently forgot about me and so I was able to grow. At first I was small and just a thin seedling, but with each year I grew bigger and thicker. And with each year I got a new growth ring. If you were to count them, you would know how old I am. But



that would require me to cut myself down and I really don't want to do that. So you'll just have to believe me when I tell you that I've been standing here for many centuries, firmly rooted in the ground. My branches have spread far and wide and provide shelter for many animals. Birds nest in my branches, squirrels nimbly climb up my trunk and bees buzz around my many leaves. Mice and other small rodents dig burrows at my foot. Many animals particularly like the many small cracks that I have developed over the years. For example, bats sleep in them and woodpeckers jam their nuts in to crack them open. But many of the smaller animals, such as insects, also love the cracks to provide a safe home for their offspring. Oh, and if you only knew who comes to eat my acorns in autumn. There are wild boars, hedgehogs, squirrels, all kinds of birds, mice and many more. I'm always happy about the animals that come and go, because they tell me what's going on in the forest. In return, I can tell them stories from the past. I can tell them stories of many wars when people sought shelter in the woods. Or of the time when I suddenly saw more and more people cutting down trees in the forest. It was a painful time for us trees. But time passed and the people in the area learnt how important we trees are for them and the many animals. Today I am particularly protected and am once again happy to see people walking under me or hiding behind me in play.



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