



Nature Nuggets: It's a Bug's Life

Audience: 4-7 year olds and parents/guardians. Each station can accommodate 10-15 kids at a time. Younger and older siblings are welcome but content is geared towards 4-7 year olds.

Theme: Insects live very differently than we do! Discover what life is like from their perspective.

Materials:

Blankets for sitting

Books

Stuffed animals

Bug boxes

Hand lenses

Large plastic insect model (to show legs and body segments)

Small plastic invertebrate models (to hide for kids to find)

Pictures of grasshopper, mosquito, butterfly and fly with string necklace

Plastic food

Pliers

Syringe and beaker

Sponge and dish

Straw and party favor noise maker

Pictures of insect hotels

Additional supplies for insect hotel building

Insect stickers

1: STORY CRITTER CORNER

1 MNA

This is a free-flow activity so kids can come and go as they please. It will be a self-lead station on blankets with books and stuffed animals for parents to engage with their children.

Books:

Bugs, Bugs, Bugs

Lady Bugs

Insects at Your Fingertips

Bug Butts

Bugs are Insects

Step Gently Out

A Mealworm's Life

The Beetle Book

2: NATURE WALK

1 MN, 1 MNA

Introduction: Let's go on an insect hunt! You will search for insects and signs of insects using bug boxes, hand lenses and any other props you desire.

Theme: Insects live very differently than we do! Discover what life is like from their perspective!

Stewardship message: Insects are important for pollination and food for other animals. We should be kind and respectful of all insects and not hurt or kill them.

Optional talking points:

- Look under logs and leaves – why might certain insect live there?
- Look closely at tree bark – Are there any insects crawling around?
- See if you can see pollination in action – how do insects help flowers?
- Look for sign of insects decomposing organic matter – why are insects so important in the circle of life?
- Encourage the kids to look at things from an insect's perspective. We must look like giants! What would a leaf look like? Or a river?

Conclusion: Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of up-coming programs with the Natural Areas.

3: ACTIVITY

1 MN, 1 MNA

Introduction

Introduce yourself and thank the kids and parents for being there.

Ask the children:

- *Do you like bugs?*
- *What would it be like to be as small as an insect?*

Explain that today they are learning about insects at each of the stations. If some have already visited other stations, you may start by asking what they have learned or seen so far?

Explain that at this station, they are going to be learning about how insects hear, taste and smell differently than we do. Ask if they know how many legs an insect has?

Explain that all insects have six legs and three body segments. Show this using one of the large plastic insect models. (Note, spiders, millipedes and centipedes are not technically insects as they have more than six legs. Bugs are a specific type of insect that have a mouth like a beak and a head that forms a triangle.) Have them each go out and find a plastic invertebrate (that you have spread out near the station beforehand) and bring it back to the group.

Ask the children:

- *Does your animal have six legs?*
- *Is it an insect?*
- *Perhaps it is a spider, scorpion, millipede or centipede?*

Explain that insects also have antenna on their heads. These are not legs. Insects use their legs and antenna to hear, smell and taste. Now it's time to practice being insects for a bit!

Body

Hearing: Ask kids what they use to hear? Their ears!

- Show a picture of a grasshopper. Grasshoppers hear with their front feet. Have children pretend to have ears on their hands and listen to one another. Would this make hearing easier or more difficult?
- Show a picture of a mosquito. Mosquitoes hear with their antenna. Show where the ears would be on a plastic model. How would it feel to have your ears farther from your head?
- Ask the children if they think ears on their arms or antenna would make them better listeners?

Smelling and Tasting: Ask kids how they smell and taste? With their nose and mouth!

- Show a picture of a butterfly. Butterflies taste with their feet! Have them pretend to taste something by putting their foot on it. You can use plastic food for this.
- Show a picture of a fly. Flies taste and smell with hairs on their feet. They have very sticky feet so they can walk upside down. (Would you like to walk on a ceiling? If you had sticky feet like a fly, you could!)

Eating: How do you eat? You use a fork/spoon and chew your food with your teeth.

- Grasshoppers have mandibles and chew from side to side instead of up and down. This is like a pair of pliers. Have a child volunteer come be the grasshopper and hold the pliers. Have them wear the Grasshopper necklace and stand in front.
- Female mosquitos have mouths like a syringe. Demonstrate this with the syringe and water. Have another child volunteer come be the mosquito and hold the syringe. Have them wear the mosquito necklace and stand in front of the group.
- A fly's mouth is kind of like a sponge. It soaks up liquids by just touching them. Demonstrate soaking up water from a dish. Have another volunteer come be the fly and hold the sponge and water dish. Have them wear the fly necklace and stand in front of the group.
- A butterfly has mouthparts that work like a straw. Use the party favor to show how the proboscis coils up, and let the kids practice drinking water through straws. Have a fourth volunteer come be the butterfly and hold the straw and party favor. Have them wear the butterfly necklace and stand in front of the group.

****Allow time for kids to try each of the different ways of eating after conclusion.**

Conclusion

As we learned, insects use their senses very differently than we do!

Ask the kids:

- *Do you remember how many legs insects have? What about spiders?*
- *Do you think insects are cool?*
- *What do insects use to hear, taste, smell and eat?*
- *If you were an insect, how would you like to hear/smell/taste/eat?*

- *What insect that you learned about today is your favorite and why?*

Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of upcoming programs with the Natural Areas.

4: STEWARDSHIP CRAFT – Insect Hotels

2 MNAs

This is a free-flow activity so kids can come and go as they please.

Insects live very differently than we do and are important for pollination and food for other animals. Let's create safe places for insects to enjoy!

Steps:

1. Welcome kids and ask if they would like to build an insect hotel?
2. Show some pictures or examples from other kids.
3. Ask where they think insects might like to live?
4. What would insects want in a hotel?
5. Encourage them to get creative!
6. Remind them that whatever they build, they will leave in the natural area for the insects and other animals.
7. Encourage them to come back and visit their insect hotel.
8. Once they are finished, give them a sticker and thank them for coming.

Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of upcoming programs with the Natural Areas.

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