



# Outdoor Learning during Lockdown!

## Activities - Games - Ideas

This pack from Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service is for schools remaining open during the COVID-19 lockdown period, and includes ideas and activities for outdoor and environmental education. Some of the activities in this handbook are our own creation but many are adapted from a variety of other sources. There is a wealth of good ideas online and we have provided some links to useful resources. Please follow social distancing guidelines when taking part in these activities.

The Countryside Ranger Service would be happy to provide more advice and support if required - get in touch at [countrysideranger@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:countrysideranger@aberdeencity.gov.uk).

## Art & Music

### Find a Rainbow in Nature



The aim is to find natural items in your outdoor space of all the colours of the rainbow. You can use paint swatches, different colours of card and paper or create your own by colouring in - then when you are ready head outside and try to find items exactly the same colours as on your sheet. You could also search for things which are the same colours as your hair or your socks!

If you come across any litter make sure you pick it up and put it in the recycling or the bin, whatever colour it is.



### Outdoor Orchestra

Use whatever you can find to create your own outdoor orchestra and make music. Make a drum kit out of pots and pans, rustle dry leaves, bang sticks on the fence, see if you can whistle with a blade of grass, or just bring your musical instruments outdoors. The louder the better!

### Environmental Communication

Create your own multimedia project to inform people about an environmental issue. Discuss an issue close to the heart of your class or group, perhaps litter, climate change, deforestation or another challenge to the natural world - and what should we do about this? To communicate to people we can create posters, signs and make videos. You could also share these on social media. The Countryside Ranger Service Facebook page is here and we'd love to see what you get up to!  
<https://www.facebook.com/Aberdeen-City-Council-Countryside-Ranger-Service-280078812133223/>.



Think about the small changes individuals can make and how this makes a huge cumulative difference to the world we live in. Make a resolution to take action - you could plant a tree, avoid wasting food or collect some litter.

### Create a Sound Map

This is an immersive experience in which you create visible representations of the sounds around you. With a sheet of paper, draw a small picture of yourself in the very middle, then draw the sounds you hear in the directions you hear them. This can be as literal or as abstract as you want, e.g. some pupils may try to identify the source of the noise and for example draw a car, while some may draw dots to represent short sharp noises and scribbles to represent a rumble. It can be very interesting to observe how the children interpret the soundscape. You can get more information on this from the Sensory Trust here:

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/sound-maps.htm>



### Sing the Ladybird Song

(To the tune of I'm a little teapot)

*I'm a little ladybird, red and black,*

*Here's my spots upon my back.*

*When I see the sunshine, watch me fly,*

*Far away into the sky.*

For more songs to sing out in nature check out this song sheet from Sam Olive:

[https://www.owlscotland.org/images/uploads/resources/files/Songs\\_from\\_Sam\\_Olive.pdf](https://www.owlscotland.org/images/uploads/resources/files/Songs_from_Sam_Olive.pdf)

## Science

### Watch the *Wild North East* Video

Watch this brilliant video to find out about the amazing wildlife and rich biodiversity that can be found on our doorstep in the North East of Scotland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4owgIBdMx3U>.

### Make a Bird Feeder

The RSPB gives us some advice on how to create your own bird feeder made out of recycled materials here: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-kids/games-and-activities/activities/make-a-recycled-bird-feeder/>. You can use anything out of your recycling like an old water bottle or yoghurt pot, and bird seed is often available from supermarkets. Think of some sensible places to put your bird feeder, such as close to a trees or a hedge so the birds have some

shelter and somewhere that isn't too busy with disturbance, but make sure it's somewhere that you can see and will appreciate the birds when they visit. Remember, if your bird feeder gets broken or mouldy, remove and replace it as soon as possible.

It may take a while for the birds to realise your feeder is there but once they do, sit back and watch the birds and try to work out what they are as you never know what might turn up. Watch this video from the Countryside Ranger Service to learn about the birds you might find:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KcoTRYEQSB8>.



Why not make some cardboard binoculars out of the middles of two toilet rolls to help focus? Report any birds you spot to NESBReC (the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre) here: <http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/> to add to a huge database of biological records.

### Leaf Matching

This activity works best if you have several different species trees in your outdoor space, but it can be adapted if you don't have any or if they are all the same by using pictures or leaves collected from elsewhere.

First we need to find out about the trees and their leaves which grow around us. Collect a variety of leaves - can you spot the differences and name the trees? The Woodland Trust can help you ID trees on their website: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/>.

Now we can tell the difference between the leaves we are going to have a relay race (this would often be done as individuals but a relay will allow distancing and prevent clumps of children around single trees). A staff member will hold up a leaf and the first child has to go find a match, this is repeated with varying species until each child has a shot (you'll probably have a good deal more children than tree species, this isn't a problem, just repeat the species).

Now we know more about our trees why not make a factsheet for each species. Draw the leaves, seeds and flowers and look up some facts and folklore about our trees.

### Design your Perfect National Park

The aim is to design your ideal National Park - considering wildlife, people, paths, pollution and anything else you think is important.

Start by discussing wildlife and the natural world, and take a look at the birds and trees around the school. Use this discussion to talk about the importance of wildlife and the natural world and the threats to it; how do we protect land? Introduce National Parks - we have two in Scotland, research them (<https://cairngorms.co.uk/> & <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/>) and take a look at the resources on the John Muir Award website (<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/initiatives/national-parks>).



You can now design your perfect park, either drawing it or creating it using natural materials outdoors, for example stones could represent mountains, pinecones or leaves to represent forests, sticks or rope to represent paths.

Things to think about:

- Where is your park?
- What is the climate like?
- Where is the water and how does it flow?
- Are there woodlands, wetlands, grass, mountains, cliffs? A mosaic of habitats is always best.
- What animals are there and how do they live?
- Are there any threats like pollution, fire, litter, climate change?
- Policy decisions - if the threats come from people how should we deal with that?

Discuss the advantages of connecting with nature. For older children these discussions can go into some detail. Can we or should we fence the park? This will prevent the animals moving too! Who will protect the park and keep it safe; do you want a ranger service? Do you want paths to keep people away from sensitive areas? Do you want signage, car parks and bins? How will this all be paid for? Will you charge visitors, and will you have a café/ gift shop & charge for parking? All of these are real world conservation arguments.

### **Countdown Camouflage**

This game involves some running around and hiding and is a great way to burn off some energy.

The game needs to be outside in an area with lots of hiding places such as trees and bushes, but tables, benches and playground equipment could also be used. Select one pupil to be a prey animal and the rest of the pupils are predators. For example we could have a rabbit as the prey and foxes as the predators, or whatever else the class come up with. The prey stands at one end of the area preferably on a visible line (made of sticks, a rope or coloured cones) and the predators line up some distance away. The prey child then counts loudly down from 30 while looking away from the predators. Every 5 seconds the prey turns round, and any predator seen must return to the starting line. You may need an adult to referee this! So to avoid being seen all the predators must hide behind something every 5 seconds, while trying to be the first to reach the prey.

Before and after the game explore how some animals hunt with camouflage and how others hide. Research the different types of camouflage in the natural world and try to think of examples of each. There's a nice child friendly list here- <https://oakdome.com/k5/lesson-plans/powerpoint/animal-camouflage-pictures-and-information.php>. Try designing your own camouflaged animals if you are feeling creative.

### **My Plant Is Growing! – A Simple Guide to Planting**

Thanks to the Duthie Park Ranger Service for this activity.



It looks like you want to grow a plant! First, you have to decide what kind of seed you will plant. Ask your grown-up if you have any seeds at home you can use. Don't worry if you don't have any – you can get seeds from some vegetables and fruit! There are seeds inside peppers and tomatoes, strawberries have lots of tiny seeds on the outside, or you can use dried beans. You could also collect seeds from trees in your playground - perhaps conkers from horse chestnut or sycamore "helicopters". You can try a few different ones to make sure you have some growing.



To plant your seeds, you will need a plant pot and some soil. Instead of a pot, you can also re-use a big empty plastic bottle after your grown-up cuts the top off. Now fill it with soil and gently place the seeds on top. You don't need to bury them deep as they are very small – just sprinkle some soil over them. That's it! Now you need to be patient... Don't forget to write down the details about your seed.



Now that you have planted your seed, you have to look after it a bit so it will grow. Keep it on a sunny windowsill and give it some water if the soil becomes dry. That's all it needs!

When your plant begins to emerge from the soil, you can start recording its growth. Make a note of the date and count the leaves if it has any. Then place a ruler beside your plant and measure how tall it is. Now it's time to draw a picture of it. Make sure to keep an eye on your plant as it grows. You can measure it every week after it starts growing. If it gets too big for your plant pot, a grown-up can help you replant it in a bigger pot or outside. Then hopefully it will grow even more and make flowers or even fruit and vegetables that you can eat! Yummy!!



## Maths

### Create a Map of your Outdoor Space

Create a map of your playground or outdoor space. Measure distances using paces or metre sticks to try and make it as accurate as possible. Make a legend or key to show the features of your map such as fences & walls, playground equipment, paths and buildings. You can check on google maps if your map is correct. Why not make a treasure hunt once your map is complete?

### Symmetry Stick Insects

From Creative Star Learning, this maths challenge teaches us about minibeasts as well as symmetry. Begin by thinking about what makes an insect an insect - such as having six legs, a head, thorax and abdomen and sometimes wings as well. Perhaps you can find some real ones outside, or look online or in books as a reminder.

Then you can gather sticks and create your symmetrical stick insect. Depending on the age and stage of your class you can add complexity such as angles, fractions and scale.

<https://creativestarning.co.uk/maths-outdoors/stick-insect-symmetry/>

### Tree Measuring

This pdf from Outdoor & Woodland Learning Scotland teaches us how to measure different aspects of trees such as height and diameter. You could try looking through your legs or simply hugging a tree - this includes maths for all stages.

[https://www.owlscotland.org/images/uploads/resources/files/TreeMeasuring2019.6\\_December.pdf](https://www.owlscotland.org/images/uploads/resources/files/TreeMeasuring2019.6_December.pdf)



## Literacy

### Washing Line Storyline

Use a washing line to create your own stories outside. Set up a piece of string (or wool, rope, whatever you have available) between 2 trees or on a fence and use it to peg up cards with parts of your story on. You can start with pre-written cards so you and the children can mix and match storylines, or let the class's imagination flow and start with blank paper allowing them to come up with their own characters and ideas.

<https://creativestarning.co.uk/early-years-outdoors/story-lines-outside/>

## Tree Guardians

Use clay (preferably clay without nylon or plastic re-enforcing fibres) to create faces on tree trunks - these are the "Tree Guardians". Try to use the natural features of the tree to create the faces. How many eyes, noses, or ears do they have? Once the children have made these characters they can give their guardian a name and concoct stories about it. Create a fact card for your creature and attach to the tree below it. Encourage the children to take a tour of the 'zoo' and meet all the creatures.

### The Blind Wizard of the Woods

In your outdoor setting (this works best in an area with nearby wildlife) chose one child to be the wizard and place a pile of sticks (one for each child) in front on them. The wizard is blindfolded in some way.

The rest of the group stands in a large circle around the wizard and you tell a story, along the lines of: "This is a very special woodland, and this old wizard has lived here for over a hundred years. The woodland is enchanted and home to more wildlife than any other wood. The animals that live here are all protected and cared for by the wizard. To keep warm through the winter the wizard gathers firewood each spring. It is such a special wood that this small pile of sticks in front of him will keep him warm and cook his food through the long cold winter. Some of the local villagers have found out about this magical firewood and try to steal it from the wizard, however though he is old and blind he is still quick and smart and always catches the villagers, turning them in to frogs with one point of the finger as soon as he hears them sneaking in."



After the story you can choose one pupil to sneak in to the circle and try to take a stick. If the wizard in the centre hears them and points at them they must go back to the start - acting like a frog. Then choose another pupil and repeat this until (or if!) someone manages to steal a stick from the magic firewood pile.

Once the group is used to being quiet, discuss what else can be heard - perhaps there is some bird song. Listen quietly and try and identify how many different songs you can hear. You can also try and identify the birds and compare the calls to those on the RSPB website:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/>.



## Useful Links

### **Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service**

The Countryside Ranger Service works for a biodiverse, best value and socially inclusive future for all the city's countryside resources. We work in partnership to offer quality environmental education and recreational opportunities for all.

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/leisure-culture-and-parks/countryside-ranger-service>

### **Aberdeen City Council Duthie Park Ranger Service**

The Duthie Park Ranger Service provides a variety of activities in the park for schools and community groups throughout the year.

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/leisure-culture-and-parks/parks-and-gardens/duthie-park>

### **Aberdeen Play Forum**

At the moment the Aberdeen Play Forum is has loads of great lockdown activities on their Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/AberdeenPlayForum/>

### **Creative STAR Learning**

Creative STAR Learning is based in North East Scotland and has a variety of blog posts focusing on curriculum linked outdoor education.

<https://creativestarlarning.co.uk/>

### **John Muir Trust**

The John Muir Trust has a site dedicated to resources for the John Muir Award. Many of these are excellent classroom-based activities or individual outdoor activities.

<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/>

### **OPAL Citizen Science Surveys**

OPAL surveys host a variety of citizen science resources from bug hunts to air quality monitoring that can be undertaken safely outside with minimal or no resources.

<https://www.opalexplornature.org/surveys>

### **OWLS (Outdoor & Woodland Learning Scotland)**

OWLS has some great outdoor learning resources for any age or stage.



<https://www.owlscotland.org/resources/>

### **The Sensory Trust**

A collection of creative activities designed to engage the senses and connect with nature.

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/index.htm>

### **Woodland Trust**

The Woodland Trust has a variety of activities based around woodland and trees many of which can be undertaken on school grounds on their Tree Tools for Schools online resource page.

<http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/categorymenu/?cat=activities>