



Outdoor



Time
50 minutes

Process Skills
Observing
Communicating



Materials

For the Class:

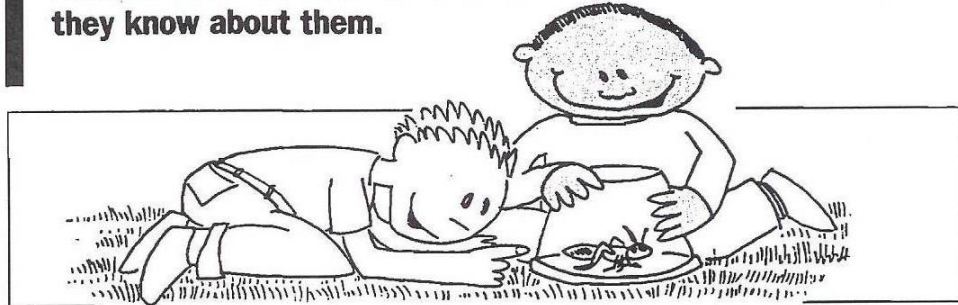
- 1 small nonflying animal, such as a pill bug
- pin or nail
- plastic container
- marker
- roll of masking tape
- 6–8 hand lenses
- a sheet of chart or butcher paper
- What-We-Know-about-Animals List
- Questions-We-Have-about-Animals List

For Each Pair:

- small plastic food container with lid
- Lab Book, p. 77
- lapboard or hard surface for writing outdoors

Animal Hunt

Students collect small animals in the garden and tell what they know about them.



Outcome

Students record what they know about a garden animal and pose questions to pursue.

For the Teacher

Many garden animals are constantly on the go. It is often hard to get more than a quick glimpse of them at any given time. Collecting small animals in the garden is one way to closely observe them without hurting them, but it must be done carefully. Small animals are hard to catch and can easily be damaged by a hasty grab. Encourage students to be as gentle and patient as possible.

Demonstrate animal collection for students before they try it on their own. It is easiest and safest to use a small container to collect the animals. Quickly pop the container over flying animals while they are resting on a leaf or a sheet of paper. Coax crawling animals with a stick. Such methods not only ensure that the animal will be in one piece, but also that it will be safely tucked away once it reaches the classroom. An adult should supervise the collection of animals. You will want to make sure that the children do not select a poisonous or stinging animal, such as a centipede, black widow spider, or brown recluse spider.

Try to replicate the animal's natural setting in the container. If it is a climbing animal, provide a small branch. If it is an animal that lives in the soil, put soil as well as a block of wood or a rock in the container. Captive animals will survive for a few days without food, but they do need a source of moisture, such as a bottle cap full of water. A slice of apple, celery, potato, or carrot will also provide moisture, but be sure to replace it every few days so that it does not spoil. You may also want to supply leaves from the area in which the animal was found.

If you keep the animals over the weekend, place them in the refrigerator to slow their metabolism and decrease their need for food. This will not harm them. When you have completed the activity, you will want to have students release the animals in the same place that they were found. Animals should not be kept more than a few days.

Preparation

1. Review the use of a hand lens.
2. Punch 10 small holes in the lid of each plastic food container to create an animal hotel, and place a piece of masking tape on the container.
3. Catch a few different kinds of small animals, such as pill bugs, slugs, and beetles. Place them in one of the food containers, along with some leaves and some water.
4. Arrange for a volunteer or aide to help with animal collecting and transcribing students' ideas, and to free you to take small groups of students to the garden.



Getting Started

Lead students in a discussion of animals that they can identify in the garden.

List their responses on the chalkboard. Explain that students will be bringing garden animals into the classroom for a closer look before returning them to the garden. **Where in the garden will we find animals? How can we look for animals without hurting them or disturbing their homes?** Show students the containers they will be using to collect animals. Discuss why they are called animal hotels (they are temporary shelters). **How can we make these hotels similar to the animals' homes in the garden?**



Action

1. Use the animals collected before class to demonstrate how to catch small animals using the techniques described in the beginning of the lesson.

2. Take groups of 6 or 8 students to the garden at a time.
3. Divide each group into pairs. Each pair should have a Lab Book, lapboard, pencil, and animal hotel. Instruct students to write their names on the container's masking-tape label.
4. Challenge students to walk quietly and alertly to ready themselves for the hunt. When students are in the garden, ask them to freeze where they are. Tell them to look carefully, both on plants and on the ground, for small animals.
5. Allow each pair to collect only one animal. When students find an animal, help them complete their lab sheet at that time, so that information about where the animal was found will be accurate.
6. Encourage students to consider where the animal was found when adding soil and/or leaves to their animal hotel.



7. Encourage students who have not found an animal to search in another area of the garden.
8. When each pair has an animal, return to class. If a pair is unable to find an animal, give them one of those you collected earlier.
9. Ask students what they know about their animal. Ask students what they would like to know about their animal. Help them record their questions on the lab sheet.
10. Store the animals in a cool part of the classroom. See the beginning of the lesson for suggestions on food and water.



Assessment

After everyone in the class has found an animal, write the names of animals collected on a class list of familiar animals.

Do these critters have anything in common? Are they all animals? Why or why not? Add to the What-We-Know-about-Animals List students' ideas about what criteria to use in identifying an animal. Then help students compare their new ideas to those they suggested earlier. **Do you want to make any changes on the chart?**

Digging Deeper

- Ask older students to come to class to help students research their animals in books or magazines such as *Ranger Rick* or *My Big Backyard*.
- Encourage students to set up a habitat for their animal in its container.
- Challenge students to see how many animals they can find on one garden plant. Chart the results to discover which plant has the most animals.

- Find out how individual students feel about their animal, and the reasons for their feelings. Do they like the animal? Are they afraid of it?

Teacher Reflections

- Did the activity help you assess what students know about animals?
- Did students make detailed observations about their animal and its behavior?
- Can you think of ways to help students form good questions?

In the Garden

Make sure newly planted beds are adequately watered. How do you get children to water the soil evenly? Show them how to do it in a zigzag fashion, moving the hose or watering can slowly back and forth. It's fun and it keeps your garden from being flooded in some sections and dried out in others. For more information about watering, see Gardening Know-How for the '90s, pp. 13-14, 45, 47, 72-4.



Animal Hunt

Names _____ Date _____

Our animal visitor is a _____.

We think our animal may eat _____.

We found our animal on _____.

Questions we have about the animal:

