

Essential information

Age range:

7-11 (children either side of this range may enjoy this activity dependent on ability)

Group size:

Dependent on resources available to the leader

Time needed:

Approximately 40 minutes

Curriculum links:

Science Unit 4B Habitats and 6A Interdependence and adaptation, Citizenship Unit 03 Animals and us and 06 Developing our schools grounds. Also can support literacy, key skills and thinking skills.

Setting:

Classroom

Mammal Detectives workshop leaders notes

Background to workshop

In this workshop children must use their investigative skills to solve the mystery of the stolen hazel nuts. They will learn about a range of mammals living in the woodland habitat by reading information about the animal's appearance, behaviour and diet. This will be circumstantial evidence in helping to solve the mystery. The children will then examine physical evidence 'found at the scene of the crime' and use pictorial keys and descriptions to identify the objects. As a group they will then have to re-evaluate their findings and come to a conclusion as to which mammal is guilty.

Materials needed

- Mammal Detectives PowerPoint presentation and/or handouts of the workshop downloadable from the free resources section of the website.
- Hazel nuts nibbled by a dormouse OR printout of a nibbled hazel nut downloadable from the free resources section of the website.
- Honeysuckle leaves for each group. NB These will not be available in the winter.
- Magnifiers and pretend evidence folders, bags or boxes can also add to the fun.

Running the workshop

Divide the class into groups of 5 or 6. Each group can give themselves a team name e.g. 'the awesome investigators'. Notes have been added to the PowerPoint presentation as a guide to the story. These can be printed out or viewed in 'note page' view to help you as you go. You will need to highlight key bits of information to the children in the suspect profiles and offer assistance in the identification stages.



Extension activities

- Investigate further the plight of the hazel dormouse and the effects humans have had on the population and what is being done to protect them. Visit www.ptes.org/dormice
- Use the workshop as a starting point to talk about hibernation in British mammals (dormice, bats, hedgehogs). Have a competition to build the best insulated dormouse nest with different materials and a digital thermometer. Use a cup of warm water to represent the dormouse.
- Learn how to look after small mammals in the schools grounds by making a small mammal feeding station.
- Create a woodland food chain or food web including the mammals from the workshop. Get the children to act out each role and link together with a tape measure.
- Bake some dormouse shaped cookies to sell to raise funds for conserving this endangered species. You could even hold a Mad Hatters Tea Party for the whole school or club and get the children to design games and quizzes.