

INV. 3 ACTIVITY—OBSERVING NEIGHBORHOOD ANIMALS

Review

If we were in school, you would have built a terrarium and observed animal behavior and plant growth over time. Since we are not in school, we are going to observe animals outside. You can do this from your window, or ideally by going outside in your yard, neighborhood, or nearby outdoor space.

Action

Together with your guardian, head outside to your selected outdoor space with a notebook and pencil, and perhaps a container and spoon. There are some options for you to select from:

1. You can observe birds.
2. You could observe squirrels or other small animals like chipmunks or frogs.
3. You could observe animals that live in leaf litter, under rocks, under things that have been lying around for a long time (sometimes a garbage can, a hose or flower pot) or under logs
4. Or you could observe animals that fall in a pit-fall trap.

The focus question: What can we learn about the animals near our home?

If you decide to look for animals in leaf litter, bring a clean plastic container with a lid and a spoon.

Remember the safety: *If you don't know what it is, don't pick it up.* Search for insects and other small organisms for 15 minutes. See if you can find ants, isopods, worms, or other harmless organisms to collect and observe. When you are ready to collect, use the spoon to transfer an organism to your container. If you found the insect on a leaf or on wood, put some of the leaf or wood in the container with it. Keep the container closed and out of the sun as it will heat up rapidly. Collect one or two organisms for temporary observation.

To make a pitfall trap, dig a small hole using a spoon or trowel. Make the whole big enough for a cup and lower the cup down so that the top of the cup is in line with the earth material. Put a piece of apple or carrot in the cup and some leaves. Visit the cup every 24 hours to see what fell inside. Animals will not be able to get out without your help, so check it regularly.

In your notebook, draw pictures of the animals you chose to observe and what you learned about where they live, what it eats, how it protects itself, where it finds food. You can learn a lot about animals by watching their behavior.

Record the focus question in your notebook and revisit after the outdoor exploration.