



Schools Tree Day – Who needs a tree? – Foundation

Teacher preparation

Overarching learning goal: Students will begin to recognise that trees are needed by all different kinds of animal for all sorts of reasons.

Teacher content information: There has been a dramatic shift in childhood activity from outdoor play to indoor activity in the space of one generation. Planet Arks 'Climbing Trees' research found that 1 in 10 children today play outside once a week or less. There is an emerging body of local and international research linking childhood contact with nature with a range of health and wellbeing benefits, including:

- Positive mental health outcomes
- Physical health benefits
- Enhanced intellectual development
- A stronger sense of concern and care for the environment in later life.

This activity is all about getting students outside to connect with nature in a fun and engaging way. They will build skills in classification by sorting natural objects into groups.

Student and classroom organisation

Step 1. Begin this activity by asking students to think about why trees are important. Some answers might include: for wood and paper; for fresh air; for shade; and for biodiversity and environment. Try to direct student answers towards the ways that trees are important to not only humans but to animals and other plants. In particular, how native trees are important for native animals.

For example:

- Native birds need trees for food (pollen, nectar, resident insects) and for nesting and shelter (using either constructed nests or natural hollows).
- Possums need trees for food (leaves, flowers, insects) and for shelter.
- Many insects also depend upon trees: trees provide food (e.g. pollen for bees, nectar for butterflies, anything for ants!), leaves and bark provide shelter for spiders and bugs.
- Other animals - such as snakes or native mice - don't live in the tree itself but depend on fallen branches for shelter on the ground.

Step 2. Give each student one (or more) of the animals on the worksheet and ask them to colour in their animals.

Step 3. Next ask students to talk about what they think their animal (or animals) needs a tree for. This could include food and/or nesting and shelter, remembering that some animals might not live in the tree itself but instead depend on fallen bark or branches.

Also ask students to think and guess what foods or types of nests/shelter each animal might use.

We've included a list of answers below:

Animal	Food	Shelter and nesting
Possum	Flowers, leaves	Hollows for nesting and shelter
Koala	Leaves	Lives in trees
Squirrel glider	Insects	Hollows for nesting and shelter
Snake	Insects, small reptiles	Fallen branches for shelter
Lace monitor	Insects, reptiles, birds, eggs	Hollows and fallen branches for shelter



Frog	Insects	Fallen branches and bark for shelter
Owl	Possums, squirrel gliders, other small animals	Hollows for nesting
Kookaburra	Insects, reptiles, small animals, birds, eggs	All parts of tree for nesting and shelter
Cockatoo	Seeds, flowers, insects	Hollows for nesting
Spider	Other insects	Bark for shelter and nesting, fallen branches and bark for shelter and nesting
Bee	Pollen	Hives in hollows
Murray cod	Other fish	Fallen branches in river for shelter

Step 4. Take it outside

In the next part of this activity, head outside with your students the largest native tree at your school. Ask students to think about where on the tree their animal might live. Students can then stick their animal to the tree (using masking tape) in the area they think it might live. Obviously students won't be able to reach all the parts of the tree where the animals live so they should just go as close as they can and explain their decision.

Talk to the students about where all the animals are and how the tree is important to them.

Finally, engage students in a brief discussion around the following questions:

- Can students see any of the animals that they attached to the tree actually using the tree?
- What other animals are using the tree?
- What animals have they seen using trees at other times and in other places?

Reflection/Assessment

Ask students to draw their own tree with one of the animals from the activity, or to write a story about that animal and how it uses the tree.

Taking part in School Tree Day is a great way to increase the biodiversity in your local area. As a class sign up to make a difference!

