At home

As you walk collect some items from the woodland floor that will remind you of your visit fallen petals, twigs in bud blown down in the wind, lichen, cones etc.

When you get home, find a small place in your garden or find an old shallow container and create your own woodland spring garden.

Plant any recently fallen twigs with leaf buds, keep them watered and watch the buds burst into leaf!

If you have any cress, grass or flower seeds you could sow a glade in your woodland garden.

more family fun

www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt-families

www.naturedetectives.org.uk

Booklet by Lauren McIntyre and Chris Meakin
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Forestry Commission England

WOODLAND TRUST

playing through the seasons

spring

WESTONBIRT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

Woodland Trust nature detectives

Nest challenge

Spring is the time for many birds to build a nest, ready for egg laying and bringing up their hatched chicks.

Can you build a nest that could hold a clutch of eggs, and withstand the wind? Look for materials on the woodland floor that you could use – for example dried grasses, twigs, sticks, and lichen. Now find a low fork in a tree and build your nest.

If you want to give yourself an extra challenge, try using just one hand – the bird only has its beak after all! If there are two of you, you could use one hand each and work together.

When you have finished, look for several small stones, cones or other objects that could be your eggs. Place them in your nest to see if it will hold them.

Then, with your eggs still in the nest give the branch a little shake to see if your nest would stand up to the wind!

Tracks in the mud

With so many new animals moving round the woodland you may be lucky enough to see a footprint or two. Look around burrows or places where animals would come to drink.

deer track

Find a stick and a muddy spot. Use your stick to make these footprints in the mud.

Can you create a trail of tracks?

You could create a trail for a friend to follow!

A new world

Spring is the time for many baby animals to be born, exploring the world for the first time.

Imagine you are a baby squirrel, vole, robin or another woodland animal. Find a place where you might have been born. From this place look around you – what do you see, hear, smell, or feel?

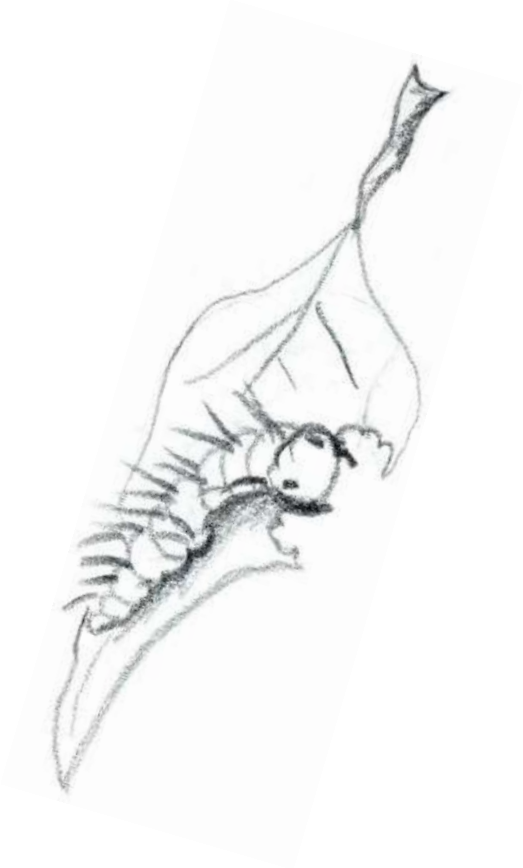
Remember what size your animal is, where they go and what they like to do when you explore.

First steps of a caterpillar

What a delicious smell...
Good enough to eat...
This leaf so soft under
my feet,
It smells delightful!

Leaf hairs tickling my
tummy...
What a sweet aroma!
Crawling over bumpy
veins to the edge,
Wow – I'm a long
way up!
It's a long way down!

I can't resist this leaf...
...Chomp



Journey stick

In many countries people have developed the idea of creating a journey stick to help them tell the story of their journey to others. It involves tying objects and colours to a stick that represent different experiences, feelings or parts of the journey.

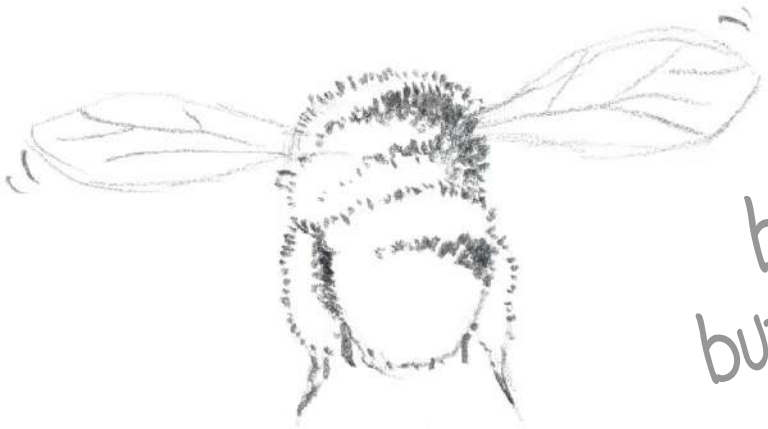
You will need to bring pieces of different coloured wool or thread with you on your walk.

As you walk look for a short stick.
Then choose pieces of wool to show places,
feelings and to attach objects
to create your own journey stick.

What colour is the sound of a robin singing?

Spring symphony

Spring is a season full of sound. Find a quiet spot, be still and listen for a while. You may hear woodpeckers drumming as they make their nesting hollows, birds singing, cuckoos calling, bees buzzing, rustles from birds or squirrels in the undergrowth, the breeze in the tree tops or if you're unlucky, the sound of falling rain!



buzzzz...
buzzzz...

Look around you on the woodland floor – what could you use to make those sounds? Find a way to make as many spring sounds as you can.

Then decide which order you want to play them - if you're with a friend, you could play different sounds at the same time.
Now you're ready to perform your spring symphony to the woodland. Maybe a bird or two will come and join in!

What have you spotted?

☐ **frogspawn**

look in lakes and streams for frogspawn or tadpoles

☐ **butterflies**

peacock butterflies with deep red wings and 'peacock eyes'

☐ **pine cones**

see how many different types of pine cones you can find

☐ **bluebells**

bell-shaped flowers which can be found on the woodland floor

☐ **caterpillars**

big ones, fat ones, small ones and hairy ones!

☐ **catkins**

can you find any new catkins opening for spring?

☐ **flowers**

look for flowers high up in horse chestnut trees

☐ **blossom**

can you see the white blossom of hawthorn or blackthorn?

☐ **birds**

birds will be out looking for food, how many can you see?

☐ **bats**

listen out for bats at dusk, you might see them if you're lucky

☐ **dragonflies**

look for dragonflies hovering above rivers and lakes

☐ **eggs**

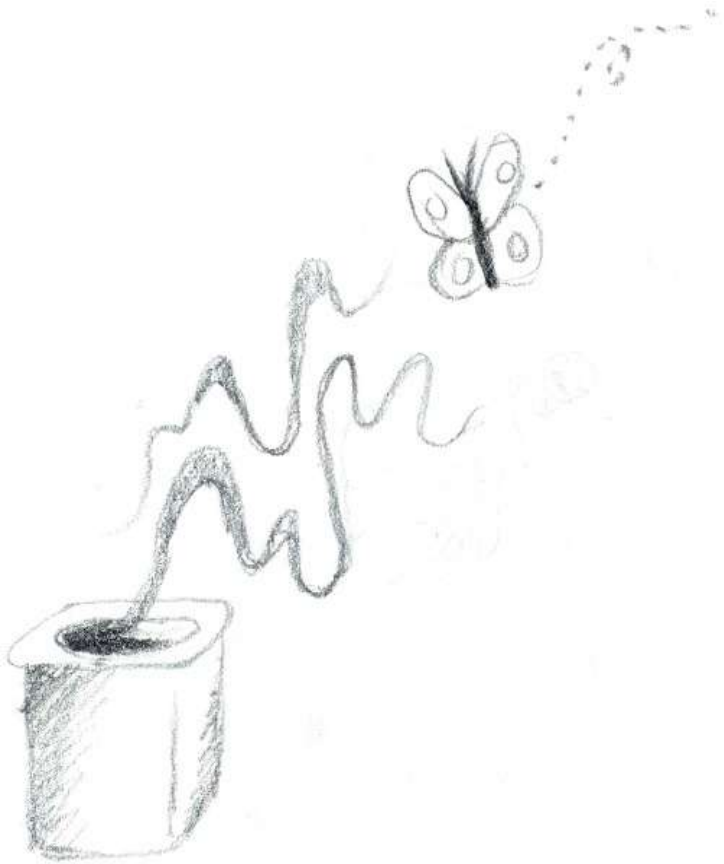
butterfly or moth eggs under leaves

Woodland Trust
nature detectives

Scents of spring

You will need to bring an old container such as a yoghurt pot with you for this activity. Look for things on the woodland floor, pick them up, crush them or break them between your fingers and smell. Add any smells to your pot that you like to make a spring woodland scent. Use a stick to mash them together.

Which animals may be attracted to your woodland scent? A bumble bee? A badger? A blackbird? You could find a place in the woodland to leave your woodland scent, for the animals to smell as they wander past.



Rainbow flowers

Look out for rainbow colours in the woodland flowers.

You might spot an exact match in the spots and stripy patterns that show insects where to land, leading them to the nectar. You might find them on the underside of the petals or on different flower parts.

If you find flowers that have fallen from the tree, try creating a flower rainbow!

Texture trail

How many textures can you touch?

Soggy decomposing leaves

Lacy skeleton leaves

Silky flower petals

Tickly lichen

Flexible grasses

Rough tree roots

Furry moss

Rigid bark

Brittle twigs

Prickly pine needles

Smooth flower buds

Crumbly rotten wood

Waxy evergreen leaves

Gritty soil from a mole hill

Sticky horse chestnut buds

Mini-beast city

Many mini-beasts (invertebrates) have spent the winter as an egg or larvae ready to hatch out or transform into an adult mini-beast. On a warm spring day, many will be actively scurrying around looking for food whilst trying to avoid being eaten.

Find a good place where a variety of mini-beasts might like to live. Remember not all live in dark damp places, some prefer bright sunny glades!

Build a mini-beast city using things you find on the woodland floor, somewhere they can hide from predators, somewhere they can bask in the sun to warm up and get moving, somewhere they can find food. Why not give them a mini-beast playground too.

Next time you visit you may find some mini-beasts have moved in!