

Exploring Bugs with a Simple White Sheet

 mothernatured.com/animal-exploration/lay-a-sheet-and-shake-a-tree/

August 16, 2012



Yesterday, my family and I were playing in the backyard when one of my 1.5 year old twins, spied a creature on a tree. She turned to me, pointed her finger and boldly said, ‘spider!’

I was so proud. That was the moment I decided the twins were ready to join in with their big sister on more complex wildlife activities.

The twins are still only toddlers, so we have been encouraging wildlife appreciation through singing nursery rhymes, wildlife songs and encouraging pet love with a gentle hand.

But it was time to introduce them to some other little creepy crawlies. My eldest daughter came along for the ride too, because this activity really has no age limit.

Exploring bugs with a white sheet

What you’ll need:

- a white sheet (white is the best, but any light coloured sheet would work).
- A magnifying glass

Safety:

There were a lot of spiders during this experiment; this activity should be fully supervised. I watched my girls very closely to ensure they didn’t touch spiders or bugs I knew weren’t very safe.

What to do:

It’s really simple.

1. Lay the sheet under the tree and spread the sheet out.
2. Shake the tree and the branches. Give it a good vigorous shake.

Observe and discuss bugs:

To identify the insects you found, visit this online site:

<https://www.insectidentification.org/bugfinder-start.asp>

Here’s what we found:







There were many bugs that were too small for my camera's photographic abilities too!

We found seven different species of bug, plus three arachnids.



Helpful prompts to encourage curiosity

Explain predator-prey relationships.

Why are there bugs and why are there spiders? What roles do they play in their tree environment?

- Do an experiment.

Try putting the sheet under different types of trees. Score how many animals you get from each tree. Think about why one tree may have more bugs than another. E.g. We put a sheet under a golden cane palm tree and received one bug. We thought it might be because lilly pillies are native to Australia and golden canes are not, therefore Australian bugs haven't adapted to eating golden cane palms.

- Look closer.

After your sheet search, look closer at the tree. Are there any animals that didn't fall onto the sheet? Why didn't they fall but others did?

- Study a local wildlife field guide.

If you'd like to learn more about the creatures you find, why not refer to a reference book. You can buy them at your local bookshop or borrow them from the library.

Do you explore bugs with your kids?

Meet Penny



Penny Whitehouse is a mother of three, with tertiary qualifications in wildlife biology and early years education and 12 years' experience as an environmental education officer, she is a perfect storm of the passion, knowledge and skills required to get younger generations connecting with the natural world.

Nature Play Pack

Trackbacks

1. [...] Lay a Sheet and Shake a tree really is just that. An activity that takes two minutes to prepare and will fill your whole afternoon with bug discovery. [...]
2. [...] LAY A SHEET AND SHAKE A TREE ::: Wildlife Fun 4 Kids Filed Under: Backyard Tagged With: crafting connection, digging, seasonal wisdom, September 24 2012 Issue, Wildlife Fun 4 Kids [...]
3. [...] Lay a Sheet and Shake a Tree [...]
4. [...] shake a tree and see what falls out [...]
5. [...] Lay a Sheet and Shake a tree really is just that. An activity that takes two minutes to prepare and will fill your whole afternoon with bug discovery. [...]
6. [...] garden most of the time. In our previous house, we didn't find a snail once (and we actively look for creepy crawlies) but as soon as we added a veggie garden it was almost like it was an open invitation for snails to [...]