

## Insect Explorers Activity Sheet

Lesson Title: Cycle of Life 2: Food Webs

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Today you will explore what types of insects live under, on, and around dead trees! To do this, you will need to go to an outdoor area, like some woods.

You will need these things for the activity:

- Paper and pen/pencil
- Plastic 2 Liter bottle with holes in the lid
- Magnifying glass (may need)
- Resealable plastic bag
- Wide-mouthed jar and funnel
- White coffee filter
- Goose-necked reading lamp

Once in a wooded area, find a rotting log to roll over so that you can observe the varieties of insects (and other creatures) that live there! Write down the types of insects you see on your **Insect Explorers** record sheet. If you don't know the type of insect you see, try to coax it into your plastic bottle with your pen/pencil so you can do an Internet search (at school or home) to determine what type of insect you have captured. You may see slow-moving pill bugs, sow bugs, slugs, snails, and earthworms; and faster-moving daddy longlegs, millipedes, centipedes, crickets, and click beetles; and maybe even bright-colored newts and salamanders! Also note that the dead logs may host tiny seedlings, mosses and lichens, mushrooms, and other fungi.

Write down other things you notice about the log and a standing dead tree if one is around (e.g., number of holes, sizes of holes, or other animals that may have inhabited the tree like birds).

Once you are finished with your investigation, roll back the log where you found it. Remember this is the creatures' home!

Next, gather some leaves and other debris anywhere around the perimeter of the rotting tree and put your collection (called litter) in a resealable bag, leaving the bag slightly open for air. At home, you will set up a device known as a berlese funnel to coax the insects from the litter.

Once you are back at home, set up your berlese funnel to see what type of insects live among the fallen leaves by dead logs/trees. Place an open coffee filter in the bottom of a wide-mouthed jar and set a plastic funnel into the top of the jar. Pack the funnel with the leaf litter and place a high-intensity lamp directly over the funnel, with the bulb close to the leaves. As the lamp heats up, the insects will evacuate their hiding spots, dropping down through the funnel and into the cooler climate below. The filter paper in the bottom of the jar will help you to see the tiny creatures. When you are done, let the insects go outdoors.

Next, do an Internet search to determine the name of any insects that you found that you couldn't identify.