

4. Into the Woods

Explore what a woodland is, what tree species are native to Ireland, and which species can be found in the different layers of a woodland. Examine what animals live in this habitat, including their food chains and homes. Explore different kinds of soil and investigate the soil in your local area. Finally, consider the future of woodlands and how they can be supported.

Notes

Ideally this unit would include a visit to local woodlands.

When investigating, refer to Skills: Working Scientifically on p. 82 of the Student Book.

When carrying out research, refer to Skills: Research on p. 114 of the Student Book.

Curriculum Information

Geography

Strand and Strand Unit

Natural environments: The local natural environment

- investigate and become familiar with some natural features in the local environment
- observe and explore ways in which these features have affected the lives of plants, animals and humans
- investigate the ways in which these features have been used by humans and the changes which have occurred as a result

Natural environments: Rocks and soils

- observe, collect and examine different soil samples in the immediate and other environments
- sort and group constituent materials in samples
- compare and contrast materials, focusing on certain criteria
- begin to explore the influence of soils and rocks on animal and plant life

Skills

A sense of place and space

- A sense of place
- A sense of space

Maps, globes and graphical skills

- Using pictures, maps and globes

Geographical investigation skills

- Questioning
- Observing
- Predicting
- Investigating and experimenting
- Estimating and measuring
- Analysing
- Recording and communicating

Science

Strand and Strand Unit

Living things: Plant and animal life

- observe, identify and investigate the animals and plants that live in the local environments
- observe and explore some ways in which plant and animal behaviour is influenced by, or adapted to, environmental conditions
- sort and group living things into sets according to observable features
- understand that plants use light energy from the sun
- come to appreciate that animals depend on plants and indirectly on the sun for food
- investigate the factors that affect plant growth

Skills

Working scientifically

- Questioning
- Observing
- Predicting
- Investigating and experimenting
- Estimating and measuring
- Analysing
- Recording and communicating
- Designing and making

Resources

- *Explorers Geography & Science 4th Class Digital: 4. Into the Woods: Unit Stimulus*
- Digital maps
- *Explorers Geography & Science 4th Class Student Book: 4. Into the Woods pp. 22–27*
- Materials for ‘Investigate: Local Soil’ on p. 25 of the Student Book: trowel or spoon, waterproof container, old newspapers, clear plastic bottle, water
- Materials for the ‘Working as a Scientist: Recording and Communicating’ poster activity on p. 27 of the Student Book: large pieces of paper, coloured pens and pencils
- Investigate template is available as an online printable

Useful Links

Find a charming and informative booklet by John Cross: *Ireland’s Woodland Heritage – A Guide to Ireland’s Native Woodlands*. It is packed with information and images on all aspects of Irish woodlands:

<https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Woodlands%20booklet.pdf>

Watch a video of the native woodland in Ireland. This might be useful to play in the background of a lesson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybKUkUHjpiY>

Find a range of woodland organizations:

www.woodlandleague.org

www.nativewoodlandtrust.ie

www.grown.ie

www.woodlandsofireland.com

Keywords

species, native, chlorophyll, sap, cones, habitat, biodiversity, nocturnal, food chain, canopy, shrub, field, ground, soil, nutrients

Lesson Suggestions

- Use the digital Unit Stimulus to examine the illustration of Irish woodland. Some of the plants include a birch tree, an ash tree and a willow tree. Some of the animals include a robin, a deer, a blackbird and a butterfly.
- Use the digital map of Ireland to locate your local woodland.
- Before children look at p. 22 of the Student Book, ask them to shut their eyes and picture an Ireland almost completely covered in woodland, with many of the same trees they would recognise today. How would it look, feel, sound and smell different from today?
- Before starting p. 23 of the Student Book, children list as many things as they can that live in woods. Then study the page and see what they missed.
- Before studying the woodland layers on p. 24 of the Student Book, remind children of the different trees they have studied, and of the pictures of woodlands they saw in the digital Unit Stimulus. Not all trees are the same height, so woodlands grow in layers. After studying the page, the children may want to reflect on how light or dark, cold or warm and wet or dry the top of the forest is compared to the bottom. How has this affected what grows in the different layers?
- Do children know, or can they guess, what is in soil? Study p. 24 of the Student Book to find out. If they are not familiar with the trees and plants listed in the righthand column of the table, they may want to research them online. Do they recognise them from the local area? If so, what does that tell them about the make-up of local soil?

Lesson Suggestions

- Carry out the ‘Investigate: Local Soil’ activity on p. 25 of the Student Book. Ensure the children wash their hands thoroughly afterwards. What did this investigation tell children about the local soil? Did this match their predictions based on what grows locally?
- Having studied this unit, how do the children feel about woodlands? How would they feel to know that woodlands are under threat? If time, they could look at the websites of other woodland campaign groups (see ‘Useful Links’). Try to capture their interest in woodlands based on what they have learned and ask for concrete ideas for how we can help to protect woodlands.
- As per the ‘Working as a Scientist: Recording and Communicating’ activity on p. 27 of the Student Book, create a poster persuading people to support native woodlands.
- As per the ‘Working as a Geographer: Observing’ activity on p. 27 of the Student Book, observe the trees in your local natural environment. Then complete the activities. If children have already researched tree species, they can use this information as well as everything in the unit. Ideally, they would have a chance to see these or other trees as part of their observations on a trip to local woodlands, where they can create drawings and records in the field.

Linkage and Integration

Geography & Science: 10. Habitats: pp. 58–63 – links to other habitats and their flora and fauna (and especially the contrasting rainforest). 20. Keeping Ireland Green pp. 108–113 – links to content on habitat protection and threats to native species.

Science: *Natural environments: Planet Earth in space; Energy and forces: Light* – links to content around life on Earth and its reliance on sunlight.

Language: *Starlight* 4th Class: 15. Get outdoors! pp. 170–181, 16. Our environment pp. 182–189 link thematically with this unit. These *Starlight* units also provide useful reminders of the features of persuasive text, which the children will use when creating the poster on helping to protect Ireland’s endangered woodlands.

Home/Parental Involvement

Children could ask adults at home to accompany them on a tree-finding mission. This could be simply in the garden or local park, or on a walk around the local area, or on a trip to nearby woodlands. Ask children to record what trees, bushes, leaves, seeds, birds and animals they see, as well as their personal responses to the sights, sounds and smells of the woodlands.