

Creating Hiding Places For Animals

Creating small-scale habitats provides valuable shelter and feeding stations for many creatures.

Log piles

In woodlands, dead wood falls to the ground naturally and a specialised set of species have adapted to live and feed in this habitat. However, in our increasingly tidy parks and gardens, dead wood is removed or burned, instead of providing the refuge and food it has offered for over a hundred years.

A pile of logs simulating fallen trees will attract a wealth of wildlife. Cool, damp hollows beneath the wood will shelter moisture-loving creatures such as worms, slugs and snails. Beetles and woodlice will bore into the wood creating a maze of tunnels. Toads, newts and frogs often shelter in woodpiles during the summer, along with small mammals such as wood mice, shrews and hedgehogs. In the autumn, a variety of toadstools may grow.

- Site your log pile near shrubs or hedgerows where it will remain shady and cool.
- Use a mixture of logs which retain their bark.
- Adding leaf litter to the pile can attract even more creatures such as hibernating toads and hedgehogs.
- Try not to disturb the pile too often. If you prise open the rotting wood you are destroying the habitat you created.
- You will need to add more logs as the pile decays over time.
- Use logs of different sizes so that pupils can investigate under the logs easily.



Stone piles

- Piles of rocks and stones also provide cover for insects and small mammals. Small insect predators will hunt for prey in the pile.
- Use a range of different sized rocks and stones.
- Put piles in different places to encourage a variety of species. Creatures that use the pile in a damp, cool area will be very different from those creatures that use a pile in a dry, hot area.
- Create small scrapes in the soil and cover with larger rocks for larger creatures to shelter beneath.
- Try not to disturb the piles too often.

Fact

- A stag beetle grub may spend up to 5 years living and eating in dead wood, before pupating and emerging as the well-defended beetle!
- Song thrushes use larger stones as anvils to crack open snail shells.



Common Shrew



Woodlouse sp

Contacts

- To source some logs for your school grounds try a local park or nature reserve.
- Creating Small Habitats For Wildlife In Your Garden by Josie Briggs (ISBN: 1-86108-188-X)