

E.T. - A LOCAL WAY OF LEARNING

**Title:** ECOLOGY TREASURE HUNT

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**Grade Level:** 3-5

**Concepts:** 2. Ecosystem  
3. Carrying Capacity

**Disciplines:** 1.Science  
2.Social Studies  
3.Language Arts

**Objective:**

In the suggested exercises, students will identify things in nature following specific clues, select several items for writing descriptive sentences, and conclude with discussion on some possible interrelationships between the things collected and observed.

**Rationale:**

A first principle of ecology is that "everything is connected to everything else. Every living thing in a natural area is competing to grow and maintain itself. At the same time each living thing needs something from other living things. It also gives something to other living things.

The plants give energy in the form of food. They give oxygen. They get carbon dioxide and fertilizers from animals. Small plants get shade. Large plants provide the shade but protect the soil from erosion.

Some animals use food-from the plants. Other animals eat the plant eaters. They keep populations in control.

Bacteria and mushrooms eat up dead plants and animal wastes to recycle nature's leftovers. So do many small animals in the soil. The large plants get good soil conditions because of these animals.

If you would think about it, you could think of many ways plants and animals help each other. The best way is to go to where nature works. Take a walk or field trip to any wild spot. Look around. Poke around in the soil and in the old logs and things on the ground.

To help you learn how everything in nature is connected together, go on an ecology treasure hunt.

**Materials Needed:**

What you do need: Several small plastic bags. One medium sized paper or plastic bag. Some small tags. Two small baby food size jars. A pencil. A trowel would be handy.

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2. Write Abouts - Write a descriptive sentence or two on at least five of those listed.

The home of a large animal\_\_\_\_\_

A flying animal that sings\_\_\_\_\_

A place where animals raise their babies\_\_\_\_\_

A sign left by a large animal which tells you who he is \_\_\_\_\_

The biggest living thing in your study area\_\_\_\_\_

The protective coating of a large plant \_\_\_\_\_

(tell its color and how it looks)\_\_\_\_\_

A liquid which is important for life\_\_\_\_\_

The thing which gives energy to the life in your area\_\_\_\_\_

A group of living things which are all very much alike\_\_\_\_\_

3. In the classroom

Compare the different bring-backs and write abouts. Discuss why these show the interconnection of nature. Go to the library to find more about the things you found and how they help nature keep working. Write a report about your favorite thing you found or prepare a talk about it. Remember to include how it is connected to the rest of nature.

## ECOLOGY TREASURE HUNT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

Find the parts of nature's interconnected puzzle. Use the clues given below.

Take small samples of some of these to show to your classmates. Be careful not to take a lot of stuff because nature needs its parts. Don't wreck the ecosystem by being greedy. Write down the answers for questions which don't ask you to bring something back.

Note: Search for "bring-backs" could be done by small teams of students.

Where to go: Any wild place which isn't used by man very often. Get permission of tire land owner.

**Activity:**

Treasure Hunt #1 - Growing Season.

Find as many of these as you can in the time you have to work. Think carefully about each clue. Find the parts of nature's puzzle. What makes nature operate? Check off the clue when you find each thing, and place it in your plastic bag. Use only one clue for each thing.

**1. Bring Backs - Clues**

A small thing waiting to  
grow into something bigger

An animal which recycles  
natures waste.

The smallest bit of life  
that makes food from sun

A small animal with four  
wings

A plant, part which hitches  
a ride

An animal eaten by another  
animal.

Two plants which live  
Together

A color which captures sun  
energy

A hiding place for a small  
Animal

An animal which lives in  
dark places