



NATURE CALLS

A series of nature-based outdoor activities

NATURE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION (NCF)

Did you know that the outdoors, teeming with plants, animals, birds and insects can transform into an immersive and captivating classroom? Nature Calls is a series of nature-based activities designed to encourage students to explore their surroundings, and stimulate their wonder and curiosity about nature.

Students, especially in urban areas, do not get to spend much time outdoors and in nature. But, a small park, an empty or abandoned plot of land or garden in school or at home, even in a crowded city or town can transform into a nature hotspot! For example the bark of trees, leaf litter and shrubs are home to ants, mantids and spiders. Concrete walls and small water puddles can house moths, bees, wasps, dragonflies and even frogs!

We present a series of nature/outdoors activities designed to encourage children to observe and experience the natural world. These activities feature a range of plants and animals that students are most likely to come across in and around their homes, gardens, parks, school campuses and playgrounds.

The design of these activities is deliberately kept simple. In a world filled with technology and other distractions, where learning typically happens in a closed-room environment, our aim is to encourage children to slow down, observe the abundance and diversity of life that surrounds them, and help uncover the sense of discovery and wonder that the natural world offers.

Tips to Teachers

- Share the theme of every activity with your students a few days before you actually do it. On the day of the activity, encourage students to share their understanding, ideas and questions about the theme before you start.
- Emphasise that observing nature does not mean that they must try to identify or name every animal, plant, bird or insect that they come across. Instead, the purpose of these activities is to see how well they can describe in their own way what they observe, and using a medium (written, sketches, poems, pictures) they are most comfortable with. Encourage them to describe an animal or plant that catches their interest in as much detail as possible. With the first such species that you observe together, ask them questions like, what is the insect doing? Can you describe the place we are seeing it in? Do you remember seeing this insect elsewhere? Can you see the insect interacting with any other forms of life? What according to you is unique about this insect? Do you know of a name for it in any language?
- Encourage your students to keep a nature journal. This can even consist of a few sheets of one-sided paper stapled together. Let each student decide how she wants to record her observations – as descriptions, poems, sketches, or even collages made of pressed plant parts that she finds interesting. Open-ended questions like, “If I were a

dragonfly..." or "If I were a ficus tree...", might help steer students to make a start.

- All activities can be done individually or in small groups. Encourage students to share and discuss their observations with each other at the end of every activity.

Conclusion

We hope you and your students enjoy these activities. We also look forward to hearing about your experiences in doing them as well as any suggestions on making them more engaging to students.

Acknowledgements

Activities featured here are part of a more extensive compilation called Nature Calls. Designed as nature/outdoor activities for children from the age of 8 to 14, this is an educational resource developed by the Nature Conservation Foundation, and supported by Wipro Applying Thought in Schools, Bangalore. Nature Calls is freely available online (www.edu.ncf-india.org), with each activity provided in the form of a high-resolution PDF file that teachers can print and use in their classrooms. The online resource also has additional information listed under each activity, a contest encouraging children to send their observations, and space for any questions that teachers or students may have about the activities/topics covered in them. Teachers (especially from areas with poor or unreliable internet connectivity) who would like to receive a printed copy of these activities are requested to write to us at Nature Conservation Foundation (edu@ncf-india.org).

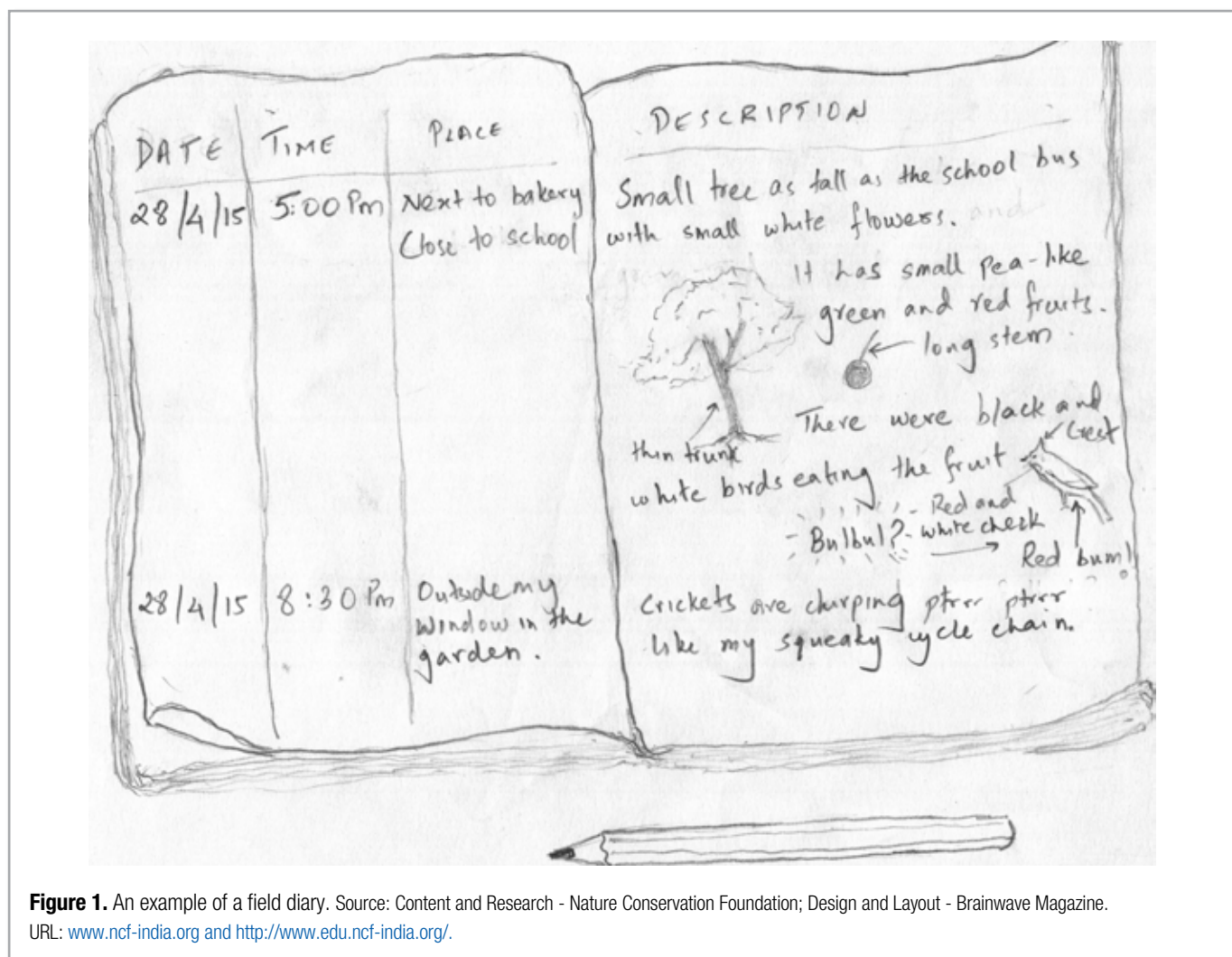


Figure 1. An example of a field diary. Source: Content and Research - Nature Conservation Foundation; Design and Layout - Brainwave Magazine. URL: www.ncf-india.org and <http://www.edu.ncf-india.org/>.



Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) is a non-profit organisation focussing on research and conservation of the natural world. NCF's Education and Public Engagement Programme runs several projects to engage with children and adults in ecological observation. NCF also develops, displays, and distributes nature education material. For any queries, please contact edu@ncf-india.org