

BUG HUNTING: ACTIVITY GUIDE

Exploring the world of insects through activities like tree tapping and meadow sweeping can be a thrilling adventure for children. Not only is it exciting to discover the hidden critters, but it also teaches valuable lessons about nature and biodiversity.



Ideal time for bug hunting:

The best time of the year to go bug hunting in the UK is during warm spring and summer months when insects are most active. You are also likely to find more insects on dry, still days. However, damp days can be good for finding slugs and snails, and dewy mornings can be great for spotting spider webs

How to bug hunt:

Three popular techniques for bug hunting are tree tapping and meadow sweeping and quadrats. When tree tapping, all you need is a small stick or mallet to gently tap the trunk or branch of a tree. This will disturb any bugs residing in the tree, causing them to fall onto a white sheet below for easy observation. In meadow sweeping, you can use a net to sweep through tall grass or flowers to capture bugs hidden in the vegetation. Using a quadrat, you simply count the insects you find within a defined (1mx1m) square. Of course you can just head out and turn over logs and stones and see what you can find.



Common British minibeasts:

Critters you may encounter in the UK while bug hunting include:

- Insects (grasshoppers, beetles, ants, butterflies, bees, flies)
- Centipedes and millipedes
- Arachnids (spiders)
- Mollusks (slugs and snails)
- Crustacean (woodlice)

Where to bug hunt:

There's no need to go far to when bug hunting. Mini-beasts live pretty much everywhere: parks, hedgerows, churchyards, beaches, however, the less "tidy" an outside space is the more biodiversity you are likely to find.



Equipment for bug hunting:

Containers to temporarily hold bugs, a magnifying glass and a field guide to help ID the creatures are all useful pieces of equipment. For tree tapping you also need a stick to tap the tree and a white sheet to catch the bugs. Meadow sweeping requires a net. Other useful kit includes a quadrat. CNL has all this equipment available for community groups and schools to borrow.

National Curriculum links:

- Science: food chains; life cycles; classification; habitats & biodiversity; seasonal changes.
- Outdoor Learning: observation, critical thinking and teamwork.



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Health and safety considerations and other responsibilities:

- Always handle all wild creatures with care, and return them to their habitat at the end of a bug hunt
- Ask the land owner's permission before heading out.

Useful Links:

- Woodland Trust: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2023/05/minibeast-hunt/
- Woodland Trust spotter sheets: www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activitymenu/?cat=minibeasts

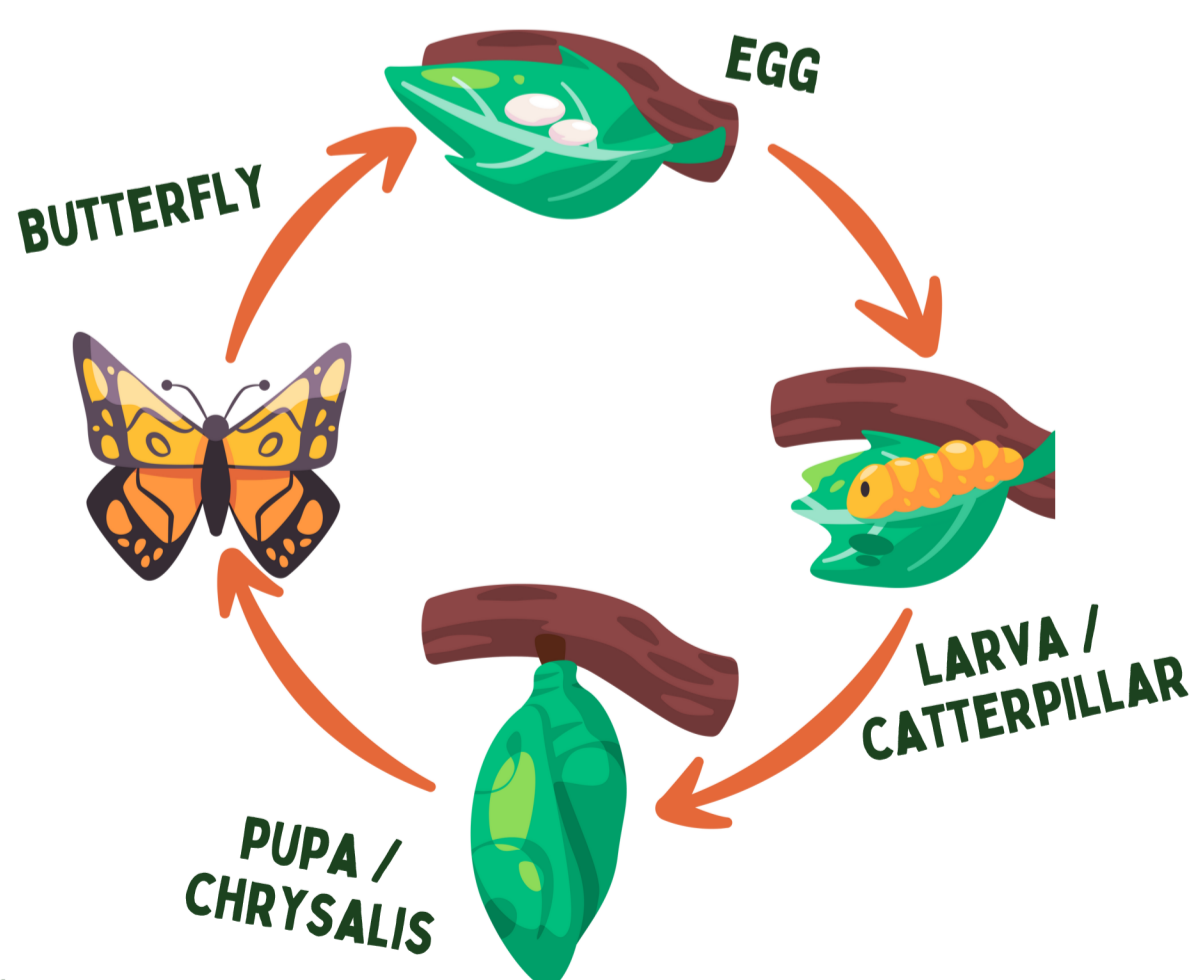
Ten Top Insect Facts

1. Ladybirds are natural pest controllers as they eat aphids that harm plants. They also come in a variety of colours, including red, orange, and yellow.
2. Woodlice are not insects but crustaceans and are commonly found under logs and stones in the garden.
3. Bees are busy workers who pollinate flowers, helping plants produce fruits and seeds. They communicate with each other by dancing to share information about food sources.
4. Butterflies taste with their feet and use their antennae to smell.
5. Dragonflies have been around for over 300 million years and are expert fliers.
6. Ants are incredibly strong and can carry objects up to 50 times their body weight.
7. Grasshoppers produce their distinctive sound by rubbing their hind legs against their wings.
8. Moths are nocturnal insects attracted to light sources at night.
9. Beetles are the largest group of insects in the world, with over 350,000 different species.
10. Spiders are not insects but arachnids and play a crucial role in controlling insect populations in the ecosystem.

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is a biological process where insects undergo dramatic physical changes as they grow. The process involves four stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. During this transformation, the insect's body structure changes significantly.

Many insects undergo metamorphosis including: butterflies; beetles; ants; houseflies; dragonflies; bees; and grasshoppers.



Additional Activity: Building a Bug Hotel

Building a bug hotel is a fun, easy and creative activity to do with children of any age.

Collect the following materials:

- A sturdy wooden frame or box
- Bamboo sticks
- Hollow plant stems
- Pine cones
- Straw or hay
- Twigs and sticks
- Small rocks or pebbles
- Moss



Fill the box with the above natural materials that will attract insects. These materials will provide shelter and nesting sites for insects.

Find a suitable location in your garden to place the bug hotel. Make sure it is in a shady spot away from direct sunlight and protected from strong wind

