



Nature Play: Micro Hike

Looking Closely at the World

When we say “wildlife,” we usually think about animals, like squirrels, birds, and fish. But there are hundreds of tiny animals around us all the time. Going on a nature hike to look for wildlife does not have to involve leaving the city, or even your yard. When you go on a micro-hike, your eyes, not your legs, do most of the work as you look for tiny animals that we overlook every day. A close-up examination of a small section of lawn, window box, or other green space, reveals unimagined hills, valleys, forests, and strange creatures! When you slow down and look for them, it is amazing what you can see!

Motivating Questions: What kinds of plants and animals live outside? Are there animals or plants in our yard that we’ve never seen? What do you think we’ll find if we stop, and look really closely?

NOTE for Grownups: it is fun to do these activities with your children but remember when they (not you) lead the activity they learn problem-solving skills and gain confidence.

Materials: Object that can define an area (empty picture frame, hula hoop, milk-jug ring, etc.), or a line (string, yarn, ribbon, etc.). Optional: magnifying glass, paper for record keeping.

Go on a Micro-Hike:

- Place an empty picture frame, hula hoop, or a piece of string on an interesting part of the lawn. The area can be as big or small as you want.
- Now get close, maybe even lie down, and pretend that you are suddenly the size of an ant. Explore what you see in the frame or inch along the string. If you have one, use a magnifying glass to help explore your new perspective.
- Take time to observe and explore your tiny bit of land. What do you notice that you have never seen before? Do you see small plants? Tiny animals? What else?
- If you don’t have time to take a micro-hike, or just want to get started observing insects, find a rock or piece of wood in your yard and turn it over. What kinds of creatures do you see?
- We rarely think about it, but all the tiny insects and plants that make up our yards help to keep them healthy. The plants you see can provide food and homes for a variety of animals. Insects and other tiny animals eat those plants, and sometimes even defend them from other animals. These tiny animals can provide food for bigger animals like birds. The more kinds of plants and animals you have, the better for all of them!

To help continue your exploration:

<https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2010/05/find-and-count-bug-hunt.html>

<http://invitationtothebutterflyball.blogspot.com/2010/05/take-micro-hike-on-your-belly.html>

<http://thenaturegeek.blogspot.com/2015/06/try-it-micro-hike.html>

<https://www.voyagerscommunityschool.org/nature-based-learning-the-micro-hike/>

<https://www.earthrangers.com/wildwire/take-action/get-outside-and-go-bug-collecting/>



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For those inspired by the microworld, here are some ideas for how to encourage insects and other small creatures to thrive in your yard.

<https://www.redtedart.com/simple-bug-hotel-for-kids/>

<https://www.fix.com/blog/guide-to-making-your-own-insect-hotels/>

Micro Hike Images from the Web

