



Family Fun Activities and Investigations

The following are sites where families can participate in programs or interact with exhibits to learn more about ecology and the environment. Please contact the sites specifically to learn about their current exhibits and calendar of events.

Anita C. Leight Estuary Center

(410-612-1688) <http://www.otterpointcreek.org>

Assateague Island National Seashore

(410-641-1443 ext.232) <http://www.nps.gov/asis/>

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

(410-228-2677) <http://blackwater.fws.gov>

Irvine Nature Center

(410-484-2413) <http://www.explorenature.org/>

Marshy Point Nature Center

(410-887-2817)

<http://www.co.ba.md.us/Agencies/recreation/countyparks/marshypoint/index.html>

Northpoint State Park

(410-592-2897)

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/central/northpoint.html>

Oregon Ridge Nature Center

(410-887-1815)

<http://www.co.ba.md.us/Agencies/recreation/countyparks/oregonridgelodge/index.html>

Career Connections



Take a few minutes to discuss with your child these different career opportunities for people interested in ecology.

Biologist

A scientist that deals with the origin, history, characteristics, habits, etc. of plants and animals

Botanist

A scientist that deals with plants and plant life

Forester

A scientist that plants and takes care of forests

Marine Scientist

A scientist who studies plants and animals that live in the ocean

Museum Curator

A person in charge of a museum

Naturalist

A scientist who studies and observes plants and animals in their habitat

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A Parent's Informational Guide to:

Eco- Detectives



Grade 3



Eco-Detectives

Eco-Detectives is a unit of study in which students will investigate the decomposition process and its role in the natural world. It is designed to be taught in conjunction with a scientific investigation about decomposition.

Throughout this unit, students utilize a variety of scientific and mathematical skills to extend their understanding of ecology. The Baltimore County Public Schools Essential curriculum which is built upon the indicators of the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum that are addressed in this unit are listed below.

Indicator: A. Constructing Knowledge

1. Gather and question data from many different forms of scientific investigations, which include reviewing appropriate print resources, observing what things are like or what is happening somewhere, collecting specimens for analysis, and doing experiments.

A. Support investigative findings with data found in books, articles, and databases, and identify the sources used and expect others to do the same.

B. Select and use appropriate tools, hand lens, or microscope, centimeter ruler, spring scale, balance, Celsius thermometer, graduated cylinder, and stopwatch to augment observations of objects, events, and processes.

E. Follow directions carefully and keep accurate records of one's work in order to compare data gathered.

Indicator: E. Flow of Energy and Matter

1. Recognize that materials continue to exist even though they change from one form to another.

A. Identify and compile a list of materials that can be recycled.

B. Identify what happens to materials when they are recycled.

C. Observe and record the sequence of changes that occur to plants and animals that die and decay.

D. Ask and develop possible answers to questions about what happens to the materials that living things are made of when they die.



Unit Vocabulary

Encourage your children to use the vocabulary listed below when telling you about what they are learning during this science unit.

bacteria—a type of decomposer that cannot be seen with the naked eyes

decay—break down into smaller pieces

decomposer—an organism which breaks down dead plants and animals into soil

fungi—a type of decomposer

mold—a type of decomposer

organism—a living thing

recycle—to change something from one form into another form



Books to Read

Take some time to read a few books about ecology with your child. Books about decomposers can be found in the non-fiction section of the library (call numbers 579-580). The non-fiction section of your school and public library also has books on this topic. To find books in the catalogue, use the search terms: decomposition, fungi, mushroom, and/ or bacteria. Possible books are listed below:

Magic School Bus Meets the Rot Squad, Linda Beech

Diary of a Worm, Doreen Cronin

Molds and Fungi, Buffy Silverman

Protists and Fungi, Gareth Stevens Publishing

One Small Square: Backyard, Donald Silver

Internet Sites



Go to on-line website at www.bcps.org/offices/lis. Select "Databases" link to open the Database Portal. Use the following login protocols for databases you wish to use.

SIRS Discoverer/ SIRS Discoverer WebFind

User Name: bcps

Password: sirs

BrainPop

User Name: bcps

Password: brainpop