Activity 6

Managing the countryside

Objectives
Children should learn
- About Open Access areas; what they are, what rights they allow and what restrictions may be in place.
- To respect wild plants and animals they find and leave them as they are.
- Past and present effects of farming on the countryside.
- Some activities help to manage the countryside in a sustainable way.

Activities
- As a class discuss what kind of plants and animals you can find in the countryside. Help the children to differentiate between farmed animals and plants (livestock and crops) and wild animals and plants.
- Either in the playground or on a countryside visit, ask the children to complete the ‘Countryside Treasure Hunt’ activity sheet.
- Link back to the Countryside Code activity and reiterate how path users can impact on wildlife and talk about the danger of eating unknown plants, which may be poisonous.
- Use the table of ‘Things to beware of’ to illustrate your points to the children.
- In small groups ask the children to write an imaginary report for a paper, or similar, on the dangers of picking or eating unknown plants in the countryside. Use illustrations to help communicate the message.
- Use the school grounds, a field trip to a farm or a Country Park or similar. In small groups get the children to carry out the survey activity ‘Kids Trails’.
- If the class has access to cameras and tape recorders use these to help record the findings.

Outcomes
Children
- Understand Open Access land restrictions and uses
- Understand how the countryside can be managed and sustained
- Understand the dangers of picking or eating unknown fruits and always ask an adult before touching.
- Consider how people visiting the countryside can impact on wildlife and explain responsible behaviour when exploring the countryside.
- Understand how farming and wildlife are linked and how one can affect the other.

Resources
- Countryside Treasure Hunt.
- Kids Trails Activity sheet.
- Things to beware of in the countryside.

Further information / resources
- To organise a day out in the Countryside, contact country parks at www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent or Kent Wildlife Trusts on 01622 662012 or email info@kentwildlife.org.uk.
- For farm visits see the Further Information section in Activity 3.
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Teacher notes

- Public rights of way sometimes cross farmed land and natural woodland. As well as livestock such as sheep, cows, pigs and horses there are lots of other animals, mammals and insects that live in the countryside.
- Hedgerows are an important source of food and shelter for animals. For example, a hedge will help field mice stay out of the sight of buzzards, kestrels and owls. Hedges are made up of lots of individual plants and trees and provide food for insects, small animals and birds in the form of leaves, seeds and berries. Insects living in the hedgerow also provide food for larger mammals and animals.
- A headland is a strip of unploughed land left to the side of a hedge and can provide a good home for wild flowers and grasses. These in turn can attract small insects such as bumble bees and butterflies.
- Historically there used to be more fields of smaller size. This was due to the way they were cultivated. When the tractor and combine harvester replaced the horse plough and hand scything it was possible to cultivate land quicker and more effectively. To help save even more time, and as machinery got bigger, some hedgerows were removed to make bigger fields.
- As hedges and headland were ploughed up insects and animals lost their habitat, shelter and food sources and certain species declined. This didn't just affect the insects and animals living in the hedge, but also their predators higher up the food chain.
- Some hedges were damaged by chemical sprays drifting off the crops and also by stubble burning (no longer legal).
- Now there are lots of schemes to help re-introduce wild (unmanaged) habitat and hedgerows. Landowners are encouraged to leave unploughed strips of headland around the field edge and in turn are compensated for the loss of productivity from that land. Other schemes help to pay for the purchase and planting of new hedgerows. Countryside Projects also co-ordinate volunteers to help re-plant lost hedgerows.
- Hedgerows were traditionally grown to mark boundaries. A ditch was dug around the land and, using the resulting earth, a bank was created. Small trees and shrubs were planted in the mound and then 'laid', once they reached a certain height, to form a stock-proof barrier. Wood from the hedge could then be cut, as it grew, to use elsewhere around the farm or home. The wood could be used to make things such as stakes, tool handles and fencing, or more simply as firewood to heat a house.
- Some birds nest on the ground and can be disturbed by people trampling on them. Birds also nest in hedges and trees and so these are traditionally cut back hard towards the end of the year when the young chicks have flown, only fresh growth is trimmed back during the summer months, along paths, to limit disturbance to nesting birds.
- Eating unknown fruit, berries and fungi can be dangerous as some plants are poisonous and have harmful effects. Some plants may cause you to come out in a rash just by touching them.
- Some plants and flowers are very rare and so should not be picked as they may disappear completely.
**Activity 6**

**Countryside treasure hunt – what will you find on your walk?**

Describe all of the things you find with words or pictures.

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<td><strong>Three Colours</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Three Smells</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Three Plants, trees or leaves</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Three Signs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Three Animals or insects</strong></td>
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Footpath Waymark
You can use a Public Footpath to go for a walk in the countryside, they are marked by yellow arrows to help you find your way.

Bridleway Waymark
You can use a Public Bridleway on foot, on a horse or on a bicycle and they are marked with blue arrows.

Stile
Stiles are used to stop animals escaping but they allow people to climb over fences and hedges and continue on their walk.

Gate
Gates are used in fences or hedges to stop animals escaping but they allow people to walk along the path without having to climb over stiles.

Fingerpost
Fingerposts are used to mark the start and end of a public path at the side of a road.

Tractor
Tractors are used for ploughing, lifting and pulling. Remember tractors and other farm machinery are working vehicles and not for playing on.

Crops
The countryside is a great place for a walk or ride but it is also where farmers earn their living. Always stick to paths to be sure you don’t damage crops.

Open Access
The Open Access sign means that you are entering an area of land where you can walk without having to stick to a path. These are specially marked areas and at all other times you should stay on the path.

For all visits to the countryside always follow the Countryside Code:
• Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs.
• Leave gates and property as you find them.
• Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
• Keep dogs under close control.
• Consider other people.

www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent

If you’re going on a trip to the countryside, print this sheet and take it with you. Keep a count of everything you see on your way.

Have fun and good luck!
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Things to beware of in the countryside

Describe all of the things you find with words or pictures.