



Rainforest Crime Scene

LESSON PLAN

What Can Be Learned?

This activity serves to consolidate some of the students' learning about rainforest animals, their habits and adaptations. It also highlights the fact that some of these animals are under threat from predators such as feral cats and foxes.

Materials Required

- animal name cards
- a variety of animal reference books (see the More Information pages)
- animal footprint charts or Tracks and Traces books
- the 'evidence' (see the list of 'exhibits' in the activity description)

The Activity

The idea of this role-playing scenario is to discover which animal has been responsible for the killing of a forest bird (pick one, perhaps a green rosella, which is native to Tasmania).

Each student or group of students takes on the role of an animal found in Tasmanian rainforest.

These could be:

- Platypus
- Spotted-tailed quoll
- Eastern quoll
- Tree frog
- Dusky antechinus
- Snake
- Fox
- Feral cat
- Owl
- Bat
- Pademelon
- Tasmanian devil
- A human

The teacher (or mature student) plays the part of the Park Ranger, who leads the investigation.

The scenario (one is detailed at the end of this activity) runs so that the Ranger has called all the animals together in order to investigate a 'murder in the rainforest', which has occurred. This could be one of a number of such killings that have recently taken place.

The animals will be presented with evidence found in the forest.

After each piece of evidence is brought to light, the animals will be questioned. Any animal that can give good reasons why they are not guilty will be ruled out as the 'murderer'.

For example - we first find out that the murdered animal is a bird. The frog might raise his 'hand' and say in his/her defence "Birds are not part of my diet, I only eat insects" - and so will be found not guilty and can move out of the witness stand and to the gallery to help with the investigation.

Students may need to refresh their memories as to some aspects of their animal's habits, diet or behaviour, and can refer to reference books to help their own defence.



Rainforests E-Set suited to lower secondary students.

*** As for the guilty party - the evidence can be produced to make it a feral cat or a fox.

The fox is the guilty party for the purposes of this example scenario:

The evidence:

The evidence may be presented in the following order:

Exhibit 1: Bird feathers (ask each animal whether they hunt birds)

Exhibit 2: A short growling/grunting noise was heard in the forest (ask each animal what sound they make)

Exhibit 3: A scat, that is, animal poo! This can be made from plasticine or clay, refer to a reference book on scats for pictures (ask each animal if their scats could possibly look like this or be this size (don't make it too big), they may need to refer to a book).

Exhibit 4: Scratch marks on a tree - show a picture or photograph of these. (Ask each animal if they either climb trees or have the ability to make scratch marks on tree bark)



At this point, the animals left on the stand will probably be the spotted-tailed quoll, Tasmanian devil, fox, feral cat, and possibly a human.

Exhibit 5: Footprints found all around the murder site. Show a picture of some smallish prints (this will rule out the human)

Exhibit 7: We know that the attack took place during the day (this rules out the quoll and the Tasmanian devil, who are nocturnal. Feral cats and foxes have been known to hunt during the day and night).

Exhibit 6: Some distinctively ginger-coloured fur (making the fox the guilty party)

Foxes were fairly recently introduced to Tasmania, with potentially devastating consequences for Tasmanian wildlife.

Many of Tasmania's smaller animals exist only in this state - partly because predators such as the fox have had a part in their demise on the mainland.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Valuing Rainforests E-Set - Lesson Plan