LESSON SUMMARY

To give students an opportunity to investigate tree stumps and decaying logs and to discover the nature and importance of this specialized environment to the forest community.

FORESTS ONTARIO

Focus on Forests

Activity Information

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials: Paper, pencils, clipboard, camera (optional), magnifying glasses, and collection jars.

Setting: Outdoors

Key Vocabulary: stumps, decompose, environment, rotting, decay

ACTIVITY

Step 1 Plan a trip to an area that has a number of stumps or decaying logs. With careful supervision, have your students search the area for tree stumps and shout 'stump', when they find one. Gather around the stump and explore it. Ask questions such as:

- What does it feel like?

- Is it soft in some spots? Why?

- What plants are growing on the tree stump? How many?

- Why do you think the tree became a stump? Was it fire, insects, cutting or disease?

- What signs show this?

- What can you do with and old/new tree stump?

Step 2 Explore the stump to locate rot. Dig out a handful of the wood rot and compare it with a handful of soil for weight, appearance, texture, and smell. Have your students use the palms of their hands to grind down the wood rot to make soil. Discuss the importance of this process occurring in nature (i.e. as wood rots it returns valuable nutrients to the soil).

Step 3 Have your students use magnifying glasses to observe activity on or near the stump. Describe any animals present. What are they doing?

Step 4 Have your students hold hands and form a small ring around the stump. Have them observe plants, fungi, mosses, and types of bushes within their circle. With the same number of students, form a similar-sized circle beside the stump. Observe the ground plants within that ring. Repeat again further away from the stump. Compare plants and fungi on the forest floor with those located near or on the stump. Do the same types of plants, fungi, and mosses grow on tree stumps as on the forest floor?