



HABITAT MAPPING TEACHER SEMINAR

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WHAT IS A HABITAT MAP

Visual representation of your school grounds

Drawing/Sketch/Model

Shows “habitats” including trees, hedges, grass verges, log piles etc marked on along with buildings, yard area, car park etc

Any areas related to biodiversity included, for example bird feeders and compost bins



WHY CREATE ONE?

Good starting point for the Biodiversity theme.

Assess what kind of habitats/space you have.

Make plans for practical improvements/projects

Begin to notice and identify some simple species

Should be created early in year 1 of the theme. Will be repeated in year 2

Before and After



WHO?

Primary:

- GS Committee
- One class could be given responsibility to create and maintain, 4th to 6th would be most suitable

Secondary

- GS Committee
- TY Class
- JC Geography Class



PREPARATION

Make use of any old planning documents available for your school and grounds to get idea of shape etc.

Or you can look up your school on google maps “satellite view” to get an idea of the shape of your boundaries and relative position of buildings, yard etc.

Make a rough sketch on a blank page showing:

- the shape of the school grounds
- position of school buildings
- school gate/car park and any other landmarks

Keep lots of space on this page to add in features. You can mark on the buildings smaller proportionally to the rest of the map to leave room for adding details when you go outside.



YOU WILL NEED...

Blank map with boundaries and buildings marked on.

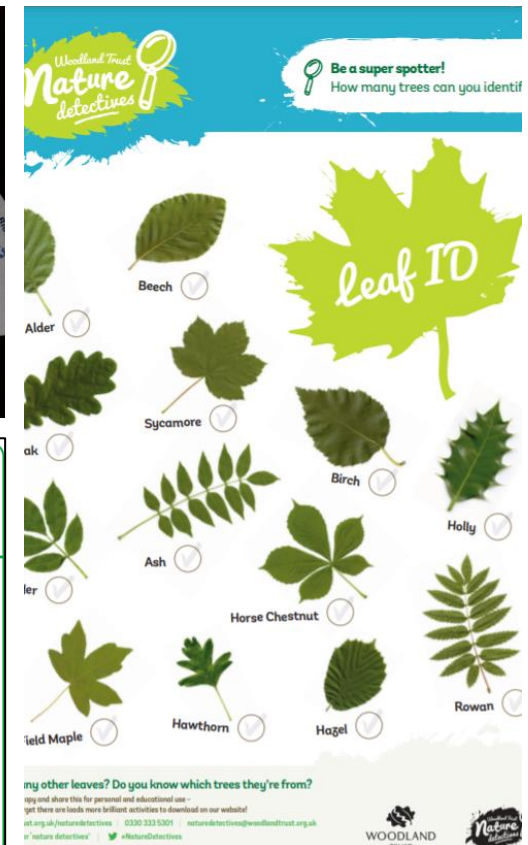
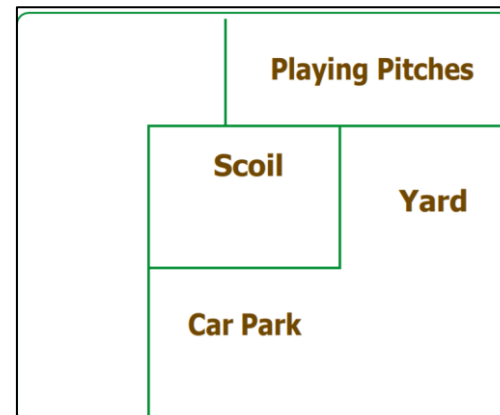
Habitat Mapping Checklist

Wildlife Id Books/Swatches/Charts. See examples below. Use a combination of what you have available.

- Nature Spotter Sheets
- Biodiversity Data Centre Swatches
- Collins Complete Guide to Irish Wildlife

Camera/Tablet to take pictures

Paper and pencils to take notes, draw sketches etc.



ASSIGNING ROLES

Depending on the size of the group taking part you may wish to split into groups and divide up the following tasks:

- Marking on habitats, buildings, features to map.
- Checking off features/ideas on checklist
- Identifying plants, animals seen
- Taking pictures/making sketches



GETTING STARTED

Once you head outside orient yourselves with the map. Ask students to identify where they are on the map. Use key landmarks already on the map. Do this regularly as you move around.

Walk around the entire grounds and mark all areas you find on the map. Use codes/symbols to help fit. Don't worry if it is messy, this is just the sketch.

Notice and mark in on map and checklist as much information as possible.

Identify as many different species as you can but don't worry about ones you don't know.

Photograph or sketch interesting or important areas.



THINGS TO INCLUDE

Hedgerows (show full length of them on map)

Any Trees or bushes

Patches of ivy, nettles, brambles etc

Grass verges

Playing pitches/Astro etc.

Raised beds, window boxes, pots etc

Wildflowers, areas of uncut grass

Bird Feeders, Bird/Box Boxes, Insect Hotels

Any animal sightings or signs they have been there

Any time the surface/habitat/plant species changes

IDENTIFYING SPECIES

Don't worry if you don't know what every plant/other species is.

Pick a few you don't know and try using resources you have as a group to id them.

Photograph/sketch its key characteristics and look up later/ask other classes, staff members/care taker for help.

Put it down temporarily on the map with the information you do know, "large, deciduous tree", "small, thorny bush" etc. You can build on this later.

If there are a group of 5 trees, patch of flowers etc which you can not identify note whether they are the same type of all different, for example "small mixed woodland area".



ANIMAL SPOTTING



Pay special attention to any animals observed including birds and insects



Note what kind of habitat they were in/on.



Look out for any signs that animals have been present including tracks, trails, feathers, fur or droppings.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

After you have collected this initial information you can now:

Create a master version of the map and add information collected from each group.

Choose what kind of map you wish to make- 3d model, birds eye view sketch, photo based etc.

Use colour codes, symbols or codes and a legend to make map easy to read and understand.



Note the following features on this map:

Distance shown

Colour Coding

Mixture of drawings, symbols and numbers as codes on map

Legend with descriptions

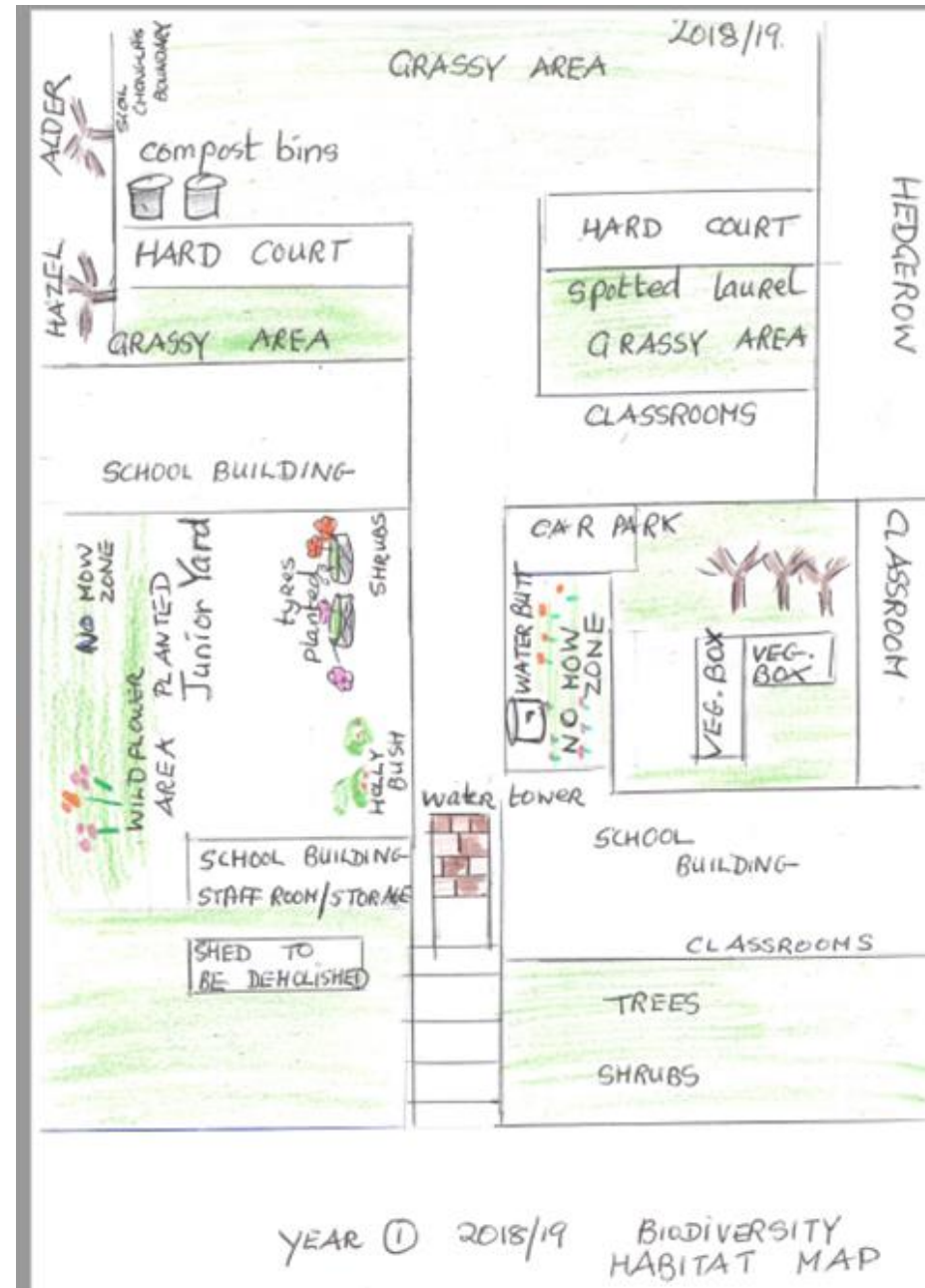
Creation of tree trail

More in depth descriptions of some key features given to one side.



SIMPLE SKETCH

You can alternate between writing in descriptions and drawings and avoid using a legend if you have enough room





3D MODEL

Can use variety of materials including lego, figurines, arts and crafts materials etc.

FOLLOW ON WORK

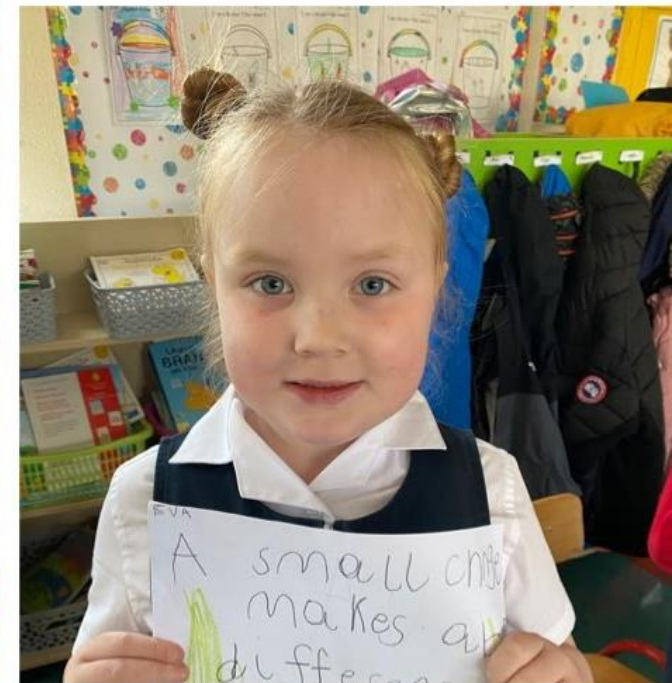
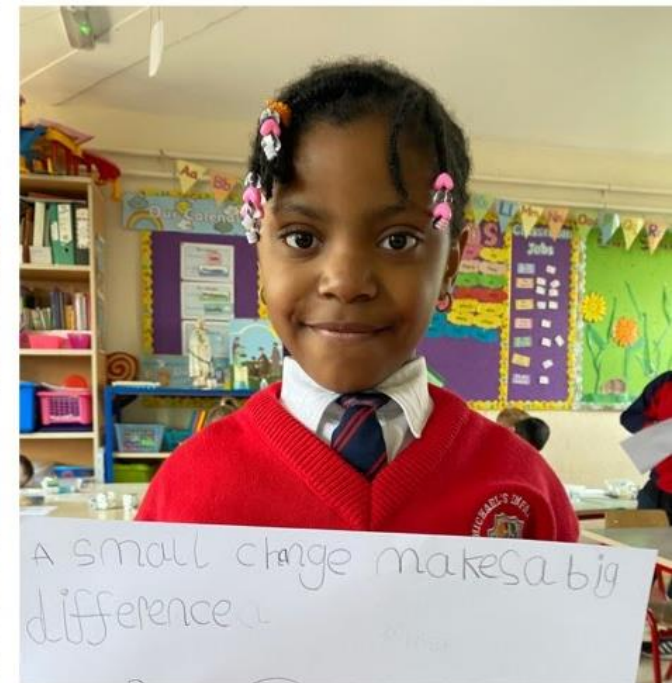
Assess your habitats and the Biodiversity found on your school grounds during the mapping.

Did you have lots of different types of habitats, species of plants etc?

Did you observe any animals or signs of animals on your grounds?

Do you have any space to make practical improvements?

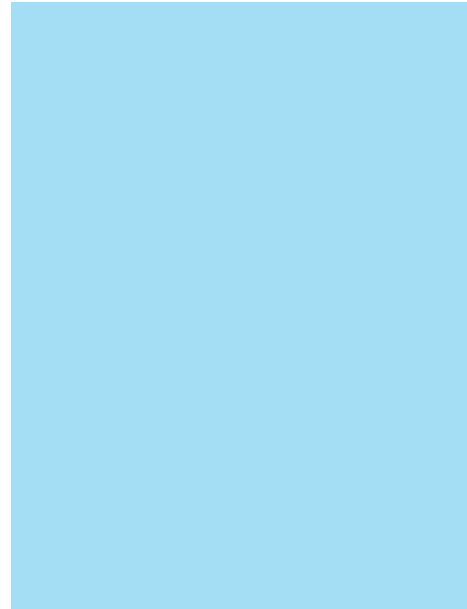
Consider what the areas were like that are already high in Biodiversity. Can this be replicated elsewhere?



IMPROVING YOUR HABITATS

If you have limited space consider

- Bird Feeders
- Bat or Bird Boxes
- Window Boxes/Pots for planting
- Small Insect Hotel



IMPROVING YOUR HABITATS

With more space consider

- Allowing some grass verges/areas of grass to grow long
- Adding log/leaf piles
- Planting native trees/hedgerow or linking existing areas of trees/bushes
- Creating wildflower area
- Installing small pond
- Creating mini woodland
- Creating outdoor classroom
- Building raised beds/herb garden/polytunnel



CHOOSING WHICH IMPROVEMENTS TO MAKE

Space

Cost

Aims

- Attract Pollinators
- Create learning opportunities
- Improve space for outdoor learning
- Increase number of plant species
- Attract birds/mammals etc
- Citizen science projects

OTHER IDEAS

Create a nature trail around the school with key habitats, features, species names marked on.

Create signage showing for example what kind of insects may visit the bug hotel, birds use the feeders, wildflowers have been planted

Survey the birds visiting feeders, insects visiting wildflower area etc.

- Make this an interclass competition
- Submit your findings to a citizen science project
- Carry out a project on what kind of bird food/sheltered/exposed areas attract the most birds
- Track the increase in for example pollinators as you create wildflower areas



SEASONAL/ PRACTICAL CHANGES

Use pictures to show how
your grounds change with
the seasons or as you add
features.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

For Mapping	For making practical improvements
<u>Habitat Mapping Guide</u>	<u>Native Tree Planting Guide</u>
<u>Nature Spotter Sheets from Woodland Trust</u>	<u>Pollinator Plan</u>
<u>Edible Plants in School Grounds</u>	<u>Gardening for Biodiversity</u>
<u>Wildflowers of Ireland</u> by Zoe Devlin	<u>Creating a mini pond</u>
Search flowers by colour with <u>Wildflowers.ie</u>	<u>Making a simple flower bed</u>

ANY QUESTIONS?
CONTACT CLARE AT
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