

Where the Forest Teaches

*Nature education activities co-created by
practitioners from Northeast India*



Nature Conservation Foundation

Canopy Collective & Green Hub

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2026

Where the Forest Teaches is a collection of nature education activities rooted in the forests, wildlife, and lived landscapes of Northeast India. Co-created by educators, community facilitators, and practitioners during a shared learning process, this manual brings together games, practices, and experiences that invite learners to slow down, observe, sense, and connect with nature.

Designed primarily for use with children of different age groups, while remaining meaningful for adults, these activities draw on touch, sound, movement, curiosity, and play. They encourage learning with nature rather than about nature, nurturing attentiveness, care, and relationship with forests, trees, animals, and people.

This manual is intended for educators, facilitators, and practitioners working in diverse learning spaces—schools, communities, and outdoor settings—who wish to offer place-based, experiential nature learning grounded in local contexts. It reflects a shared belief that the forest can be a teacher, when we learn to listen.



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A NEAD in-DEED...

~ Pranav Trivedi



“One more activity manual?!...” This is an obvious and natural response that is expected owing to a large number of already existing activity manuals and resource books on nature education in India. There is no doubt that ‘Where the Forest Teaches’ adds to this milieu of activity manuals, albeit only quantitatively.

Qualitatively, it brings to you the fruits of labour of the workshop participants who put in their best efforts to develop these activities. Honestly speaking, very few attempts have been made to develop thematic, structured, outcome and target group-based (predefined) nature education activities by a group of practitioners in India. And still fewer efforts have gone into piloting or field-testing the activities developed. ‘Where the Forest Teaches’ is developed by addressing both these aspects.

It was thanks to Aparajita Datta of Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) and Nandini Velho of Canopy Collective that the idea of conducting a workshop for the educators from north-eastern Indian states in 2023 came about. Green Hub, a video documentation and conservation project of Dusty Foot Foundation also joined hands in this initiative. This led to the planning and conducting of the Decoding Nature Education (DNE) - a five-day residential workshop which saw participation of nearly 35 nature educators

from multiple organisations not just from northeast India, but also other Indian states. A natural fallout after the success of DNE workshop was a Nature Education Activity Development (NEAD) workshop planned as a five-day residential workshop entirely dedicated to activity development. Both, DNE and NEAD workshops were held at the most appropriate venue: Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh located in the Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot, where several initiatives of research, community-based conservation and nature education for school children by the institutions mentioned above supported over the years by the Pakke Tiger Reserve management of the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department had already laid the foundation for these workshops.

The NEAD workshop had at its heart the aim of facilitating the development of complete, effective, structured and thematic nature education activities addressing specific target groups with clear and predefined outcomes. The idea of activities designed with a predefined outcome along with a mechanism to take the feedback of the participants was central to the entire process. Drawing from the principles of Earth Education as emphasized by Professor Steve Van Matre and colleagues at the Institute for Earth Education, the three chief outcomes conveyed through these activities are: feeling, understanding and processing (see box for details under each). The NEAD workshop provided a rare luxury for the participants in the form of exclusive time for developing good nature education activities that can be used by them and other nature educators from northeast India as well.

During the workshop, four teams, each consisting of 6-7 participants were taken to different parts of Pakke Tiger Reserve for the necessary ambience to develop the activities. Their meals and transportation were taken care of



to let them work unhindered. Understanding that such creative pursuit could be challenging, especially as most participants were not used to such situations, we chipped in with tried and tested activities that were developed either by us or the Institute for Earth Education to motivate the participants. Salil Subedi, an accomplished musician and educator who was also one of the participants, helped in boosting the spirits of participants each day with different energisers and games. Thankfully, as nearly 60% of the participants of the NEAD workshop had attended the DNE workshop, the sailing was smooth as they shared the knowledge and learning with those who had not participated in the DNE workshop that laid the foundation of NEAD workshop.



At the end of each day, participants presented the activities they had developed, the merits of which were debated upon by all. The teams piloted (field-tested) some of these activities with real audiences (groups of local school children and other team members) successfully on the last day of the workshop. This helped develop their self-belief and confidence, while understanding the importance of the entire process of activity development. Later, after returning to their respective workplaces, they were given the

task of pilot-testing (team-wise) as many activities as possible from the ones that were not field-tested during the workshop. Feedback of the teams was received on this experience and necessary changes incorporated. We are happy that the group was able to develop about 25 activities. These activities are in that sense, the fruits of labour and love of all the participants and their respective institutions. I am glad that Professor Steve Van Matre, the founder of Acclimatization and Earth education has been kind enough to provide his valuable insights and encouraging feedback (A Letter from the Cove) for this collective effort of ours.

We do hope that you will use this resource in your respective work and provide us valuable feedback.

Happy Journey!





A Letter from the Cove...

Congratulations to everyone for all their work. I hope everyone enjoyed the experience. Our relationship with nature is one of the most important concerns in the world today.

One note of caution: in earth education we think learning is taking something in, doing something with it, and then using it. The most difficult is often the final part. What can the participants do with something in their daily lives? Without that part, much learning just fades away. We have found that it is crucial to provide the "follow-through" take-away tasks as an integral part of the experience. We like to say earth education ends at home.

Many years ago, after a workshop I conducted for the Gandhi Foundation, a participant said his mother taught him that the first thing he must do when he rose from his charpoy in the morning was to reach down, pat the Earth, and thank it for letting him walk on it that day.

I thought, now that's the way to start a day.

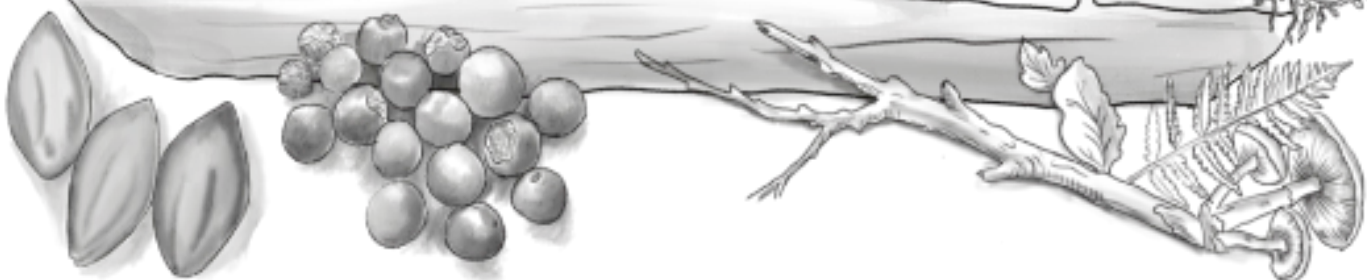
Thanks much for sharing with us what's happening in your arc of the planet,

SVM

Professor Steve Van Matre

Founder and International Chair, Institute for Earth Education, USA

Author of several books including Earthwalks and Earth Education: A New Beginning



Anticipated Outcomes

Feeling

*Joy at being in touch with nature, kinship with all living things,
reverence for natural communities, love for the earth*

Understanding

*EC-DC-IC-A (Energy flow, cycling of materials, diversity, community,
inter-relationships, change and adaptation)*

Processing

*Value building, setting up solitude, activating and sharpening the
senses (including special senses – beauty, place and wonder)*

[Source: “Earth education: a new beginning” by Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education]

Nature education activities included here are –

Thematic: have a clear message; **Outcome-based:** Focused on one (or more) of the pre-specified outcomes – Feeling, understanding and processing; **Multisensory:** involve the use of more than one sense; **Relevant:** Target-group specific; **Structured:** the entire process strengthens the theme or central message and **Field-tested:** piloted with simulated (workshop participants) and real audience (local school students)

01

A Magical Forest Adventure

Processing

60 mins.

Age 11–14

13 – 18



04

Wonder Wander

Processing, Feeling

45 mins.

All Ages

37 – 42

07

Jumping Jungle Jack

Processing, Feeling

60 mins.

All Ages

59 – 66



08

The Forest Art Museum

Processing

45 mins.

Age 11–16

67 – 72

02

Going Back to Our Roots

Processing, Feeling

2 hours

Age 15–24

19 – 26

05

Magical Friends of Forest

Understanding

60 mins

Age 11–14

43 – 50

09

Our River – the Great Giver

Understanding, Feeling

90 mins.

Age 13+

73 – 82

11

**In Search of the Forgotten
Treasure**

Processing, Feeling

3 – 4 hrs.

Age 11–14

89 – 94

03

Friends of Flowers

Understanding

60 mins.

Age 11–14

27 – 36

06

The Great Grass

Processing, Feeling

Half-day

Age 11–14

51 – 58

10

Nature's Palette Hunt

Processing

30 mins.

Age 11–15

83 – 88

12

Seeds on the Move

Understanding

60 mins.

Age 11–14

95 – 100

13

यह KYA था?

Feeling

1.5 hrs.

Age 11–16

101 - 108

14

In God's Shoes

Processing

75 - 90 mins.

Age 12+

117 - 122

15

Song of the Forest

Processing

2.5 hrs.

Age 10–14

123 - 130

16

The Jungle Chef

Processing

90 mins.

Age 13–16

131 - 136

17

What if...

Understanding

60 mins.

Age 14+

136 - 144

18

Reflection in the Sand

Feeling

45 - 60 mins.

Age 13–16

145 - 150

19

Weavers of the Wild World

Processing

1.5 hrs.

Age 11–13

151 - 156

20

The Tale Of Hornbill's Tail

Feeling

60 mins.

Age 11–14

157 - 166

21

A Day by the River

Processing

Half-day

Age 10+

167 - 172

22

The Cultural Connection

Processing, Feeling

1 -2 hrs.

Age 10–12

173 - 180

23

Stories of my Land

Processing, Feeling

60 mins.

Age 10–24

181 - 190

24

Leaf museums

Understanding

60 mins.

All Ages

191 - 194

25

Stones & Homes

Feeling, Processing

45 mins.

Age 10+

195 - 198



Acknowledgements

We thank the participants of the Decoding Nature Education and Nature Education Activity Development (NEAD) workshop that were held in Pakke Tiger Reserve in 2023 and 2024 respectively, for their active participation. The manual is due to the labour, commitment and the work of participants of the NEAD workshop who developed these activities and many who also pilot-tested them at their own sites.

We are grateful for the support of the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department, Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR) Management. We especially would like to thank Mr. Dhawan Kumar Rawat, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), PTR and Satyaprakash Singh, former DFO, PTR (2023-2025); Mr. Rubu Tado, former Range Forest Officer (RFO), PTR; Mr. Kime Rambia and Mr. Singku Maga, RFOs, PTR; Mr. Hare Tare, Mr. Chandan Ri, Mr. Ohey Tayem of PTR for their support in many ways in conducting these workshops.

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We are grateful for the support of NCF's field collaborators Mr. Tajik Tachang, Mr. Khem Thapa, Mr. Jitendra (Turuk) Brah and forest guards

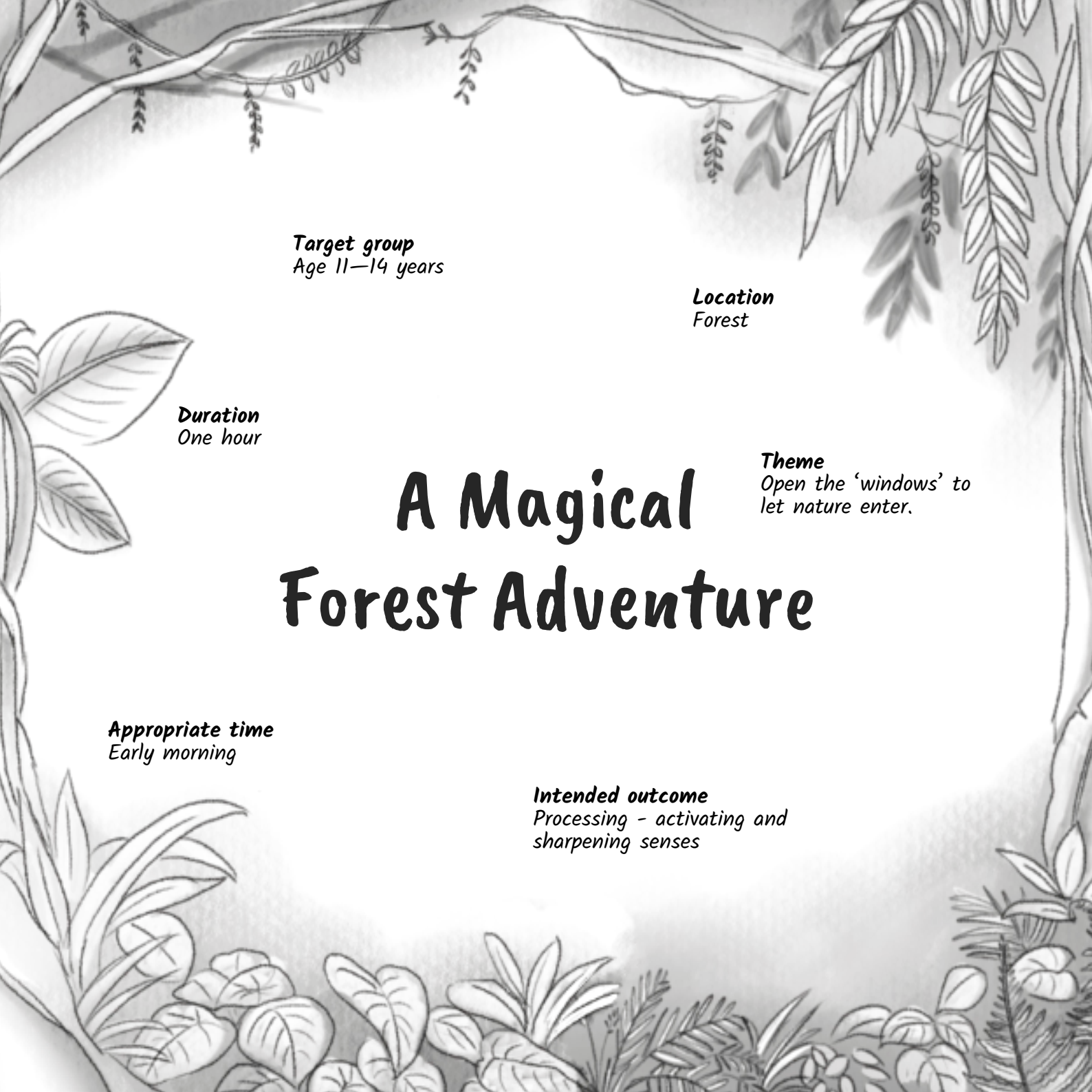


from PTR Mr. Darshan Kumar, Mr. Tana Takar, Mr. Raju Boro for support in field coordination and logistics.

We thank Mr. Ranjan Mallick and his team for the catering support provided during both the workshops.

We thank Ms. Nayantara Siruguri and Ms. Shilpita Mandal for their support in organizing the workshops and coordination with participants.





Target group
Age 11–14 years

Location
Forest

Duration
One hour

Theme
Open the 'windows' to
let nature enter.

A Magical Forest Adventure

Appropriate time
Early morning

Intended outcome
Processing - activating and
sharpening senses



Begin by warmly welcoming the children with an engaging introduction, inviting them to step into the magical wilderness. Before entering, **ask them to write down three things each under what they see, hear, and smell.** Once they've completed this (give two minutes for this), introduce a short, deep-breathing exercise to help them relax and connect with the silence within. Guide them to take slow, deep breaths for one minute, letting them imagine they're leaving the outside world behind. With eyes gently opened, explain that now they have inhaled the silence of the forest, **encouraging them to walk quietly and mindfully.**



As the group begins walking, a facilitator surprises them by emerging from behind a tree, holding a large leaf adorned with edible fruits, flowers, and leaves arranged like a platter. **The children are invited to select an item, smell it first, and then taste it** (facilitator to be certain that they are edible), describing its fragrance and flavour. Tell them to keep observing keenly to find out the bearers of what they just ate.



Continuing along the trail, another facilitator revisits their initial observations from the "see" section. If they've written general terms like "trees" or "leaves," the facilitator suggests they "zoom in" to explore these details more closely. The walk then focuses on the sense of sight, encouraging kids to **notice intricate features like tree bark textures, curled dry leaves (caterpillar's home), spider webs, lichen, and mushrooms** among others.

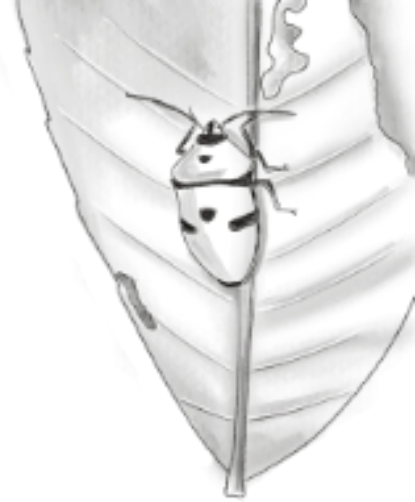
After some walking, the group pauses. **The children are asked to stand quietly with their eyes closed, paying close attention to the sounds of the forest.**

They might hear bird calls, rustling leaves, and the wind. The facilitators add to the fun by introducing subtle sounds like an animal call, footsteps in dry leaves, or clinking stones. **The children then guess which sounds are natural and which are human-made, emphasizing the importance of the sense of hearing through this playful, interactive activity.** If possible, show the images of the call-producers (birds, insects) without focusing on their names.





*“What we see is not what we feel” - said a great nature lover once. Facilitator continues, “Would you like to check it out for yourself? Well, **select 5 to 10 different objects and guess how they might feel. Then go close and actually touch it to figure out what it is like.** For each object that you touch, write down its expected texture and what it actually turned out like. You can also draw the objects that you touched to remember these special touches of the forest.”*



*Take feedback on the bearers of food items which they consumed at the beginning and **make sure that they see the plants which provide these edible fruits, leaves and flowers.** Link the food items with wild animals which live there.*

*At the end of the trail, the children sit where they stopped and take out their original notes. **They are asked to reflect by writing down what they now see, hear, and feel, comparing their initial thoughts with their updated observations.** A few are asked to voluntarily share how their perceptions changed during the walk. The facilitators wrap up by explaining how walking with awareness i.e. by activating all the five senses helps us truly appreciate and connect with the natural world.*



This activity offers children a hands-on, immersive experience in the outdoors. By transitioning from a structured observation to a free, mindful exploration, children learn to notice the subtleties of nature, such as the patterns on the bark, leaves, the aroma of fruits and different forest sounds. The contrast between their initial and final observations helps highlight how focusing on the senses enhances awareness and perception. This approach not only cultivates curiosity and a sense of wonder but also fosters mindfulness, encouraging children to be present in the moment appreciating the intricate beauty of the natural world, leaving them with a memorable and transformative outdoor experience.



Feedback mechanism

Take pictures of the filled-out pages from everyone's notebooks to figure out the changes in their experience before and after walking the trail.

Follow-up

During another field visit, children can be encouraged to find touches, sights, sounds and smells that they had not encountered on the previous visit.

Target group

Youth living around a forest area experiencing deforestation, hunting, and littering due to tourism.

Location

Forest

Duration

Two hours

Going Back to our Roots

Theme

Healing Mother Nature
heals us.

Appropriate time

Morning or Afternoon

Intended outcome

Processing - value building, removing
disguises, crafting more harmonious lifestyles
Feeling - reverence for natural communities

Pre-Activity Preparations

Recording of a story told by an elder about the forest and its importance for the community of life – both human and wildlife.

Two bags per group: one green bag for litter collection, one gratitude bag (with pre-hidden gratitude chit).

A designated “N-Mail to Nature” portal area (e.g. a ‘special gate’ with a branch suitable for hanging messages).



Begin by playing the recording of the elder’s story or ask an elder to share a story. Discuss the importance of the forest to the community and the negative impacts of deforestation, hunting, and littering. Also, let the elder share the joy, wonders and uniqueness of the forest and wildlife of the area and any personal anecdote about a transforming experience in the forest or while hunting.

Explain the activity’s goal: “Today, we will go back to our roots to get healed and show our gratitude for the same.”

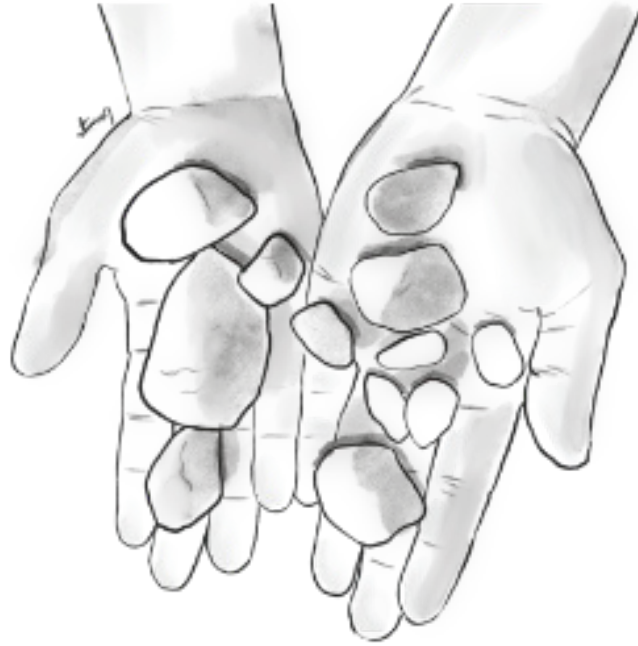
Group Formation: Divide participants into small groups of 3-5.

Barefoot Walk: Participants remove their footwear (including socks) and walk barefoot on the forest floor for a short distance (ensure the ground is relatively safe and free of hazards). Suggest that they close their eyes when they walk for a while to fully 'feel' the earth and the forest floor – which is living!!

Remind them gently that we are indeed connected to the natural world.

Special Material: Ask each participant to find one natural item (without disturbing or harming any plant or animal) that feels special or meaningful to them and their lives and carry it along.





The Door to a New Dimension

Entry into a New Dimension: Each group uses their special material and other natural items to create a small “door” on the forest path. Sharing about the door and the object that they found as special to their lives.

Transition: Announce (like you are casting a spell - changing the tone and keeping a serious face) that passing through these doors is like stepping into a new dimension, a space where negativity (ego, negative attitudes) is left behind.

Ask them to close their eyes for a minute, take a few deep breaths and leave all their negative emotions. They can even visualise this as dark stuff leaving with outgoing breath. ***The participants walk through the door, leaving their negative feelings behind.***





Green Bag & Gratitude Bag

Green Bag: Participants put their shoes back on and are given a green bag. Explain about Green Bag and collecting elements and things that don't belong to nature.

Gratitude Bag: Along the way, they collect something from nature that they are grateful for and put in the gratitude bag (a leaf, a smooth stone, a feather). They can also put positive thoughts of gratitude (written on a chit of paper or the bamboo sheaths!) for what they've got but may not be present on the path.

Gratitude Sharing Circle: Gather again and have a sharing circle. Each participant shares what they are grateful for and the reason behind their selection. The facilitator can prompt discussion by asking: What makes you grateful today? How does nature contribute to your happiness or well-being?



"N-Mail to Nature" - Messages & Promises

Portal: Lead the group to the designated "N-Mail to Nature portal".

Writing Promises: Provide paper and pens.

Participants are instructed to write messages or promises to nature – what they will do to protect and care for the environment (e.g. reduce plastic usage, plant a tree, stop littering). They can hang their messages on the portal (facilitators are requested to pick these letters and notes from the branch after the session and not leave them behind in the forest).



Reflecting on the Green Bag

Discussion: Gather the group and discuss the contents of the green bags. What kinds of litter were found? What is the impact of this litter on the forest and its inhabitants?

The facilitator can summarize the key takeaways of the activity, emphasizing the importance of gratitude, respect for nature, and individual as well as collective (community) responsibility in protecting nature. The activity culminates in a renewed sense of connection between the youth and their forest home, encouraging them to take action to protect it.



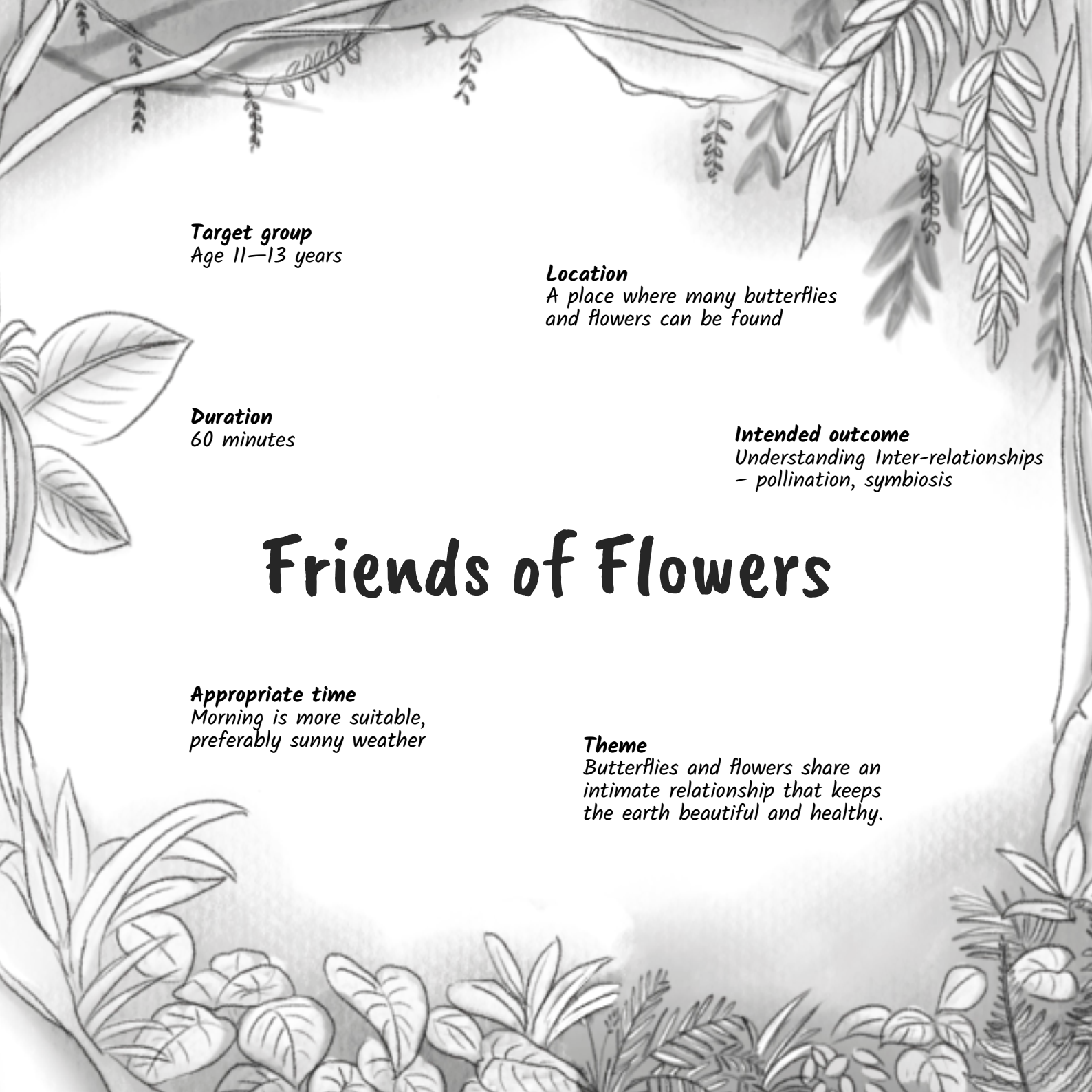
Feedback mechanism

The facilitator asks the participants about what would be good practices to reduce waste when they go back home. Examples: bringing reusable water bottles, shopping bags, and avoiding excessive clothing purchases.

Follow-up

Adopt-a-Trail Program, “Regular re-connecting with nature” walks for the youth and training them to become volunteers for taking outsiders on a similar adventure.

Local schools, colleges, and community organizations can adopt specific trails, maintaining cleanliness and promoting awareness. Develop a system for trail users to report littering or damage. Feature stories of responsible trail users on social media or at community events.



Target group
Age 11–13 years

Location
A place where many butterflies
and flowers can be found

Duration
60 minutes

Intended outcome
Understanding Inter-relationships
– pollination, symbiosis

Friends of Flowers

Appropriate time
Morning is more suitable,
preferably sunny weather

Theme
Butterflies and flowers share an
intimate relationship that keeps
the earth beautiful and healthy.

Pre-Activity Preparations

leaf collection, site selection, pollen shape waste from nature

Props/requirements

For pollen, you can collect small and light seeds from the forest that naturally stick to our body, or any small objects that stick easily to sticky tape. Get wide sticky tapes to tie around the 'legs' of the "butterflies". You can also just collect dry leaves to symbolically act as "pollen", Magnifying lenses (one for each team)



Context

This activity is focused on recreating the process of pollination by butterflies through narration, storytelling, and our own bodies. Create a story, script, poem, or song that describes the features of a butterfly and its act of pollinating a flower. It can be from the perspective of a butterfly or from a third person's perspective. One can take inspiration from existing songs or folklore from the region of work. Try to include as many behaviours and features of butterflies as possible.

A tested example (originally composed in Hindi in Arunachali slang) is given below:

*Hum aa raha hai (I am coming),
Jab dhup nikla hai (as the sun shines),
Hum jungle ghumega (I will roam the forest),
Aur basti bhi jayega (and visit the village too)!
Hum wahan milega, jahan hume milega... (You can find me where I find...)
Paani! Haan paani! (water, yes water)
Mitti! Haan mitti! (mud, yes mud)
Tatti! Haan tatti! (dung, yes dung)
Aur kya? (what else?)
Bhuk lag raha hai de! (I am so hungry!)
Arre haan, phool! Phool! (Flowers! Flowers!)*

The Nyishi song Pungen Pongling Babar Jarkamdo ("Butterflies gather together when flowers bloom") is also a good example of a folk song that can be sung while doing this activity. Create a script in such a way that the children should not need to know the lyrics or words to participate actively in the activity.

At least three assistants will be needed to conduct this activity.



Warm up activity

Lead the students to make a circle or semi-circle based on the warm up option chosen.

Option 1: *Ask the students if they have ever heard about rain drop clap. Answers might be 'yes' or 'no', so you tell them let us all do it together. In this activity students will clap with different numbers of fingers. According to the number announcement they will have to clap their fingers. First when you say the number one, ask them to hold out their left palm and tap on it with one finger, and 2 fingers, 3 fingers and up to 5 fingers now ask them to do reverse tapping of the similar process.*

Option 2: *Butterfly Clap, is another imitation based on how the butterfly flaps its wings. Ask students to stand in a semi-circle, and instruct them to clap when the facilitator makes the movement of butterfly wings. Ask them to clap based on the number of times the facilitator flaps the wings at different speeds and rhythms.*







*In this activity, the students will participate in creating a scenario where a flower is pollinated by a butterfly. They will “become” the flowers and the butterflies, and facilitator (s) will lead a scripted narration as a butterfly (or a group of butterflies if you have a team) that suggests that pollination is taking place. **You will need to “act out” a scene of pollination where you are the butterfly that is feeding on nectar from flowers (the children) and transfers pollen in the process.** You can explore different formats of storytelling, like writing a story, a poem, a song, or a street play. This activity will allow you to make the children participate actively in the narration without needing them to know the script beforehand.*

Make three groups of students. Two groups need to have 4 to 6 members, while one group should have up to 4 members. The first two groups will “become” flowers, and the third group will “become” butterflies; however, you must not let them know what they are about to “become”.



Ask the first group of flowers to make a small circle. Ask one of the students to enter the circle and kneel down in the centre; they must cup their hands and raise them straight up. **Put a few “pollen grains” you prepared in the hands of this student.** The other children surrounding this student must sit on their knees, raise their hands to make a V shape, and bend slightly backwards (they are imitating petals).



Ask the second “flower” group to sit in the same position. However, let the middle student’s hands be empty. **Tell them a “secret”: When the student in the middle receives something in their hands, the others around them must rise and bend in front, covering the middle student from above** (you would know that this would symbolise the flower becoming a fruit after pollination).

Ask the “butterfly” students to just imitate you and your fellow facilitators who are “butterflies”.



Now, get into your role as a butterfly and begin your song, narration, or script. **Fly around the flowers as butterflies, singing or saying your script or song out loud.** Alternatively, you can get your teammates to sing as you move around and act.

Go to the first flower. Pretend to “drink” nectar from the flower, and in the process, get some pollen onto yourself (through the sticky tape or by holding some leaves or other material).



*After some time, move to the other flower. **Stop near the second flower and pretend to drink nectar from it. In the process, drop some “pollen” into the hands of the student in the middle.** Eventually, leave the flower and leave the scene.*

As instructed, students forming the second flower would have assumed the shape of the fruit. The narration ends here. Appreciate all the students for their participation.



Ask the students about what just took place; eg. point to yourself and your group members and say “who were we?”, then point to the flower groups and ask “Who were they?”; “What were we doing on the flowers?” Pick up some pollen and ask, “What was this?” “What did we do with this?” “Can the flowers move and transfer pollen themselves? So if the butterflies and bees (you can have someone buzzing around and quickly passing by the group) weren’t there, would they be able to pollinate?” Encourage the students to think about the process, get their ideas of what they observed. What they just saw is an example of **inter-relationships in nature**. There are many such examples of interrelationships. As this particular one benefits both the members involved, it is called **symbiosis**. And, shall we all refer to butterflies as pollinators (and not by individual or common names) to remember and recognise the crucial role they play in nature, which gives us our much savoured FRUITS and Honey! Children can think about and name the other pollinators in nature.

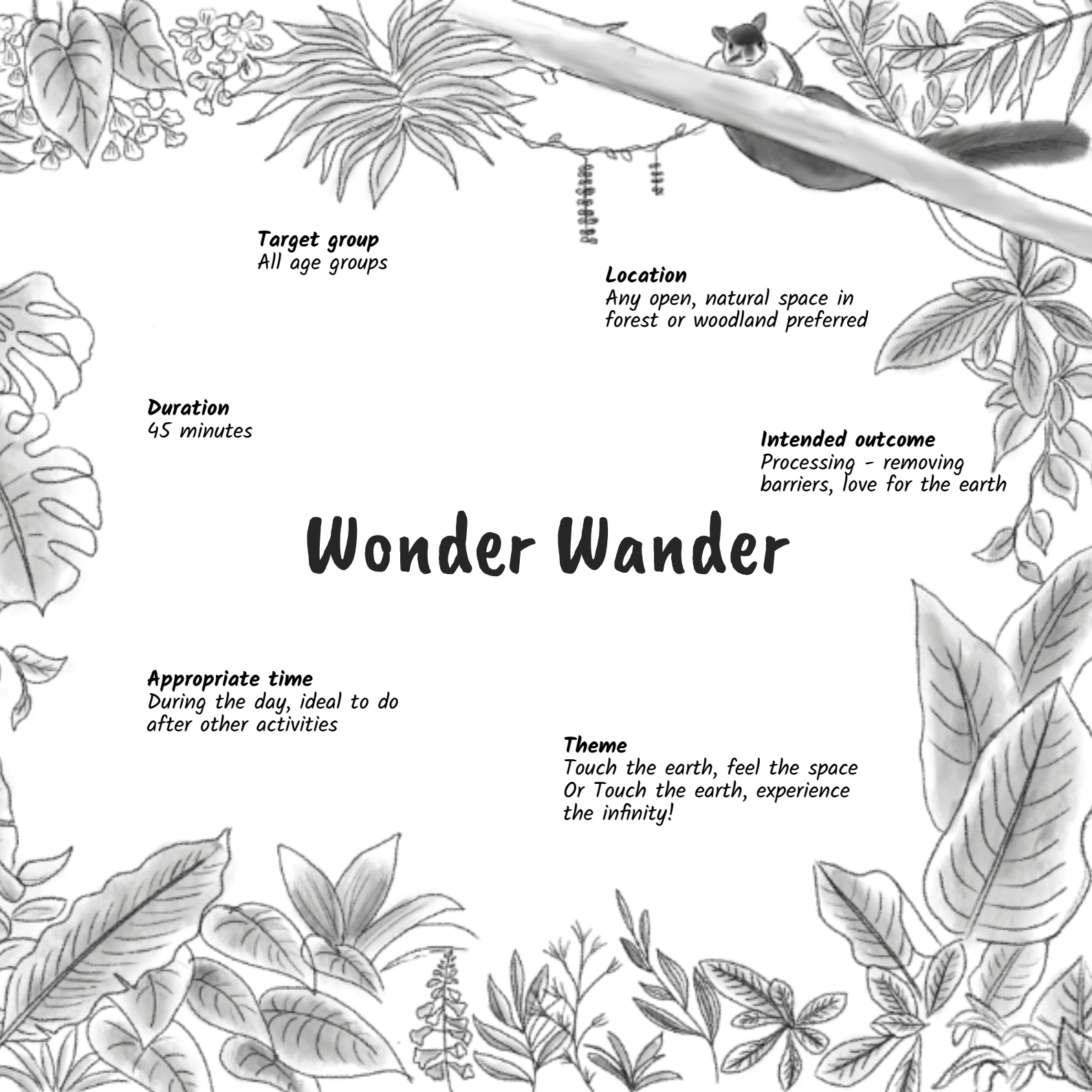


Feedback mechanism

How the children respond during the post-narration reflection and questions, will give you an idea about how much they could follow from your script, action or movements. You can also ask them how they felt becoming butterflies and flowers.

Follow-up

Lead the children on a walk to observe the diurnal pollinators (butterflies, bees etc.) and their special food. Ask them to notice signs of pollination. Have different prompts to help them observe more actively: keep track of the number of butterflies they see, how many different colours, where are they found, how are they moving and behaving, what does seeing butterflies make them feel, etc. Having a magnifying lens for each group of kids would be an added element of excitement besides helping a keener observation of flowers and insects.



Target group
All age groups

Location
Any open, natural space in
forest or woodland preferred

Duration
45 minutes

Intended outcome
Processing - removing
barriers, love for the earth

Wonder Wander

Appropriate time
During the day, ideal to do
after other activities

Theme
Touch the earth, feel the space
Or Touch the earth, experience
the infinity!

Pre-Activity Preparations

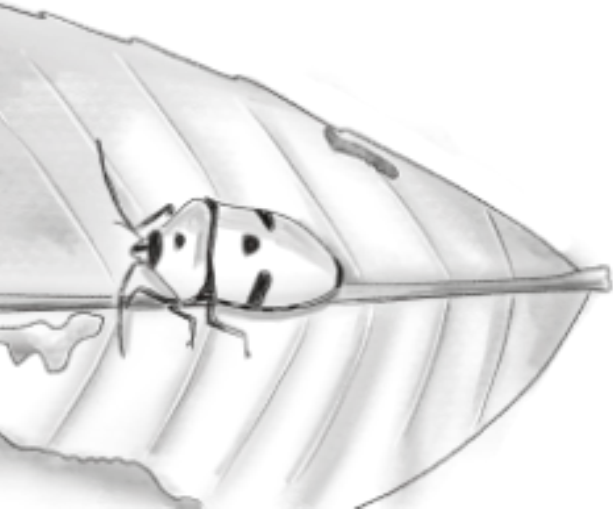
Recce the site

Props/requirements

Paper and Pencils (Paper kept on ground will tear if they draw with pencils...need to give a board to support the paper)



Ask participants to pick up a spot of their choice in the prepared area. Hand each participant a pen or coloured pencil.



Ask them to observe and feel their surroundings and share what they see or feel (5 minutes).

Now, ask them to lie down and look up at the sky (5 minutes).



While they are looking up, place the paper next to them on the ground.



*Ask them to **start scribbling whatever they see or imagine** on the paper (2-3 minutes).*

*At this stage **they need to close their eyes for a few minutes and feel the earth underneath**, while expressing gratitude for all the free services that the earth provides (5 minutes).*

After stipulated time, ask them to let go of the pen and keep lying down.

*Gently ask them to open their eyes and sit up.
Tell them that **they can now look at their drawing and share it with others.***

Feedback mechanism

Request and motivate the participants to share their experience (and doodles) in turn.

Follow-up

They can do this activity in the future to refresh themselves and to connect deeply with nature. It should be done in a safe, open and clean place.





Target group
Age 11–13 years

Location
Forest trail with
presence of hornbills
and their preferred fruit
trees, and under shade

Duration
60 minutes

Magical Friends of the Forest

Appropriate time
During the day

Intended outcome
Understanding - Inter-
relationships in nature

Theme
There's a magical bond that
connects many of our friends in
this forest!

Pre-Activity Preparations

Designate a trail with markers. Set up a "Fairy Garden" spot near a suitable tree. Identify two distinct trees along the path (one for the initial clue and one for the fairy garden).

Materials:

Trail Markers: Markers or Arrows (at least 6 bamboo sheets)

Clue Chits: 5 small cards with illustrated instructions or clues

Fairy Garden Materials: Natural materials (swing made from vines, small house from twigs, fallen butterfly wings, snail shells, seeds of different colors, nuts, seed covers, stones, fallen flowers, empty pupa cases of insects etc.). Create a boundary for the fairy garden using sticks or stones.

Wish-Writing Materials: Bamboo sheaths (one per participant) or handmade recycled paper chits if bamboo sheaths are unavailable, glue, pens.

Bluetooth Speaker: Pre-loaded with hornbill calls.

Model of Great Hornbill: made from wood and cardboard.



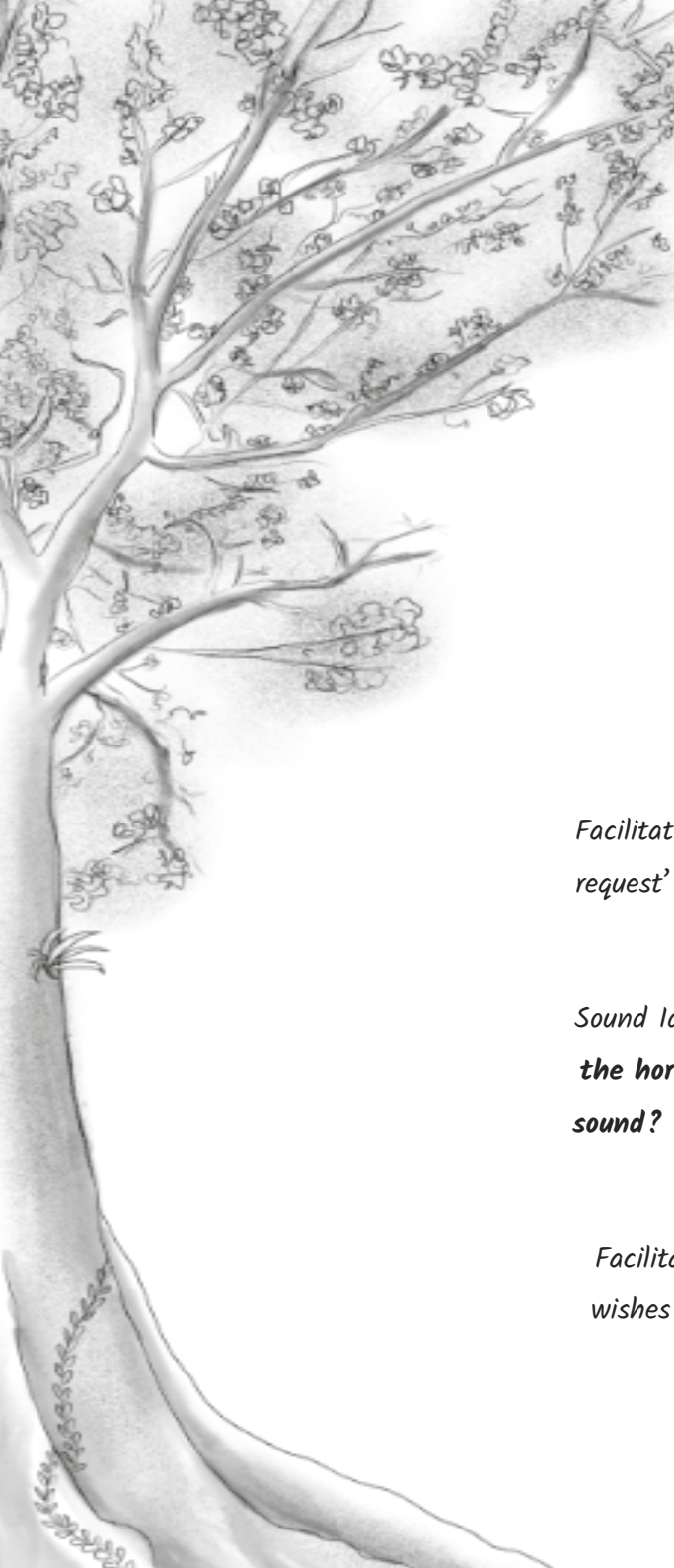
Starting Point – My Tree Friend

Facilitator: "Do you believe in magic? Well, this entire forest is magical and you will soon start noticing it...(The facilitator can show a magic trick if they know how to do it).

There were two ‘magical’ tree friends in the forest that were separated and we tried a lot to find them and connect them, but didn’t succeed! Can you help us find the first tree?"

Clue Hunt

*Divide children into small groups of 4-6 members. They must find the clue at the first tree, called "Here I am". **The first group to reach the tree gets to first hug the tree** (in a team encircling the tree), and later as other teams arrive, they too do the same. Each one mentally sends a ‘friend request’ to the tree (Will you become my friend?)*



Sound Message

Facilitator: "Hello everyone, did the tree accept your 'friend request'? Did it make friends with us? How can we know? Let's listen!" (Play a hornbill call).

*Sound Identification: **While holding hands in a circle, play the hornbill call. After the sound, ask: "What was that sound? Who made it?"** Encourage speculation; don't reveal the answer immediately.*

Facilitator: Legend says that magical tree can make our wishes come true. And our magical friend will lead us to another tree!



Crafting Gifts for Magical Friends

Facilitator: "Let's make gifts for our magical friends! Collect leaves, twigs, and other natural materials to create a gift, group by group."

*Nature gift Craft: **Children collect materials and create small crafts in groups at a designated area which is spacious. Tell them they'll also share these gifts and creations.***

The Fairy Garden

*Facilitator: "I hear there's a fairy garden nearby.
Let's take our gifts there."*

*Fairy Garden Placement: **Lead children to the fairy garden area (near the second tree). Children carefully place their creations in the garden.***



Wishes for the Forest

Facilitator: "You won't find paper here, but magical leaves! Use these leaves to write your wishes." **We found our second friend. Now, write your wishes for the forest on these leaves, including your hopes for your magical friends in the forest.** (provide leaves or bamboo sheaths).

Wish Writing: Children write their wishes on the magical leaves (bamboo sheaths), focusing on kindness and appreciation for the forest.



Seeds of Friendship

Facilitator: "But can we find where the magical friend is? (Play the hornbill call again and let the speaker be placed at the second tree which has to be discovered by the participants. **The second tree will have the clue in the form of hornbill species cut out that is placed by the side of the speaker.**

Facilitator: "Trees can't walk, but the hornbill helps spread seeds. Here's a seed, symbolic of how our friends help connect trees in the forest!" **(Show a seed and explain the role of hornbills in seed dispersal).**





Show a collection of hornbill-dispersed seeds (from a box) and let the children examine them closely. Just when they are about to finish, show the hornbill pictures and reinforce, so these are the magical farmers of the forest; carrying the trees to far off places and connecting the entire forest through their free ecological service: seed dispersal! Thank you magical friends of the forest! Good bye!!

Please adapt the activity to the specific location and available resources.



Feedback mechanism

Children share their good wishes for the forest and their experience in this magical journey.

Follow-up

Introduce students to Hornbill watch or e-Bird as ways in which they can record hornbills.



Target group
Age 11–13 years

Location
Bamboo Forest or any
forest area which has 1-2
types of bamboo

Duration
Half-day

Intended outcome
Feeling, Processing

The Great Grass

Appropriate time
First half of the day

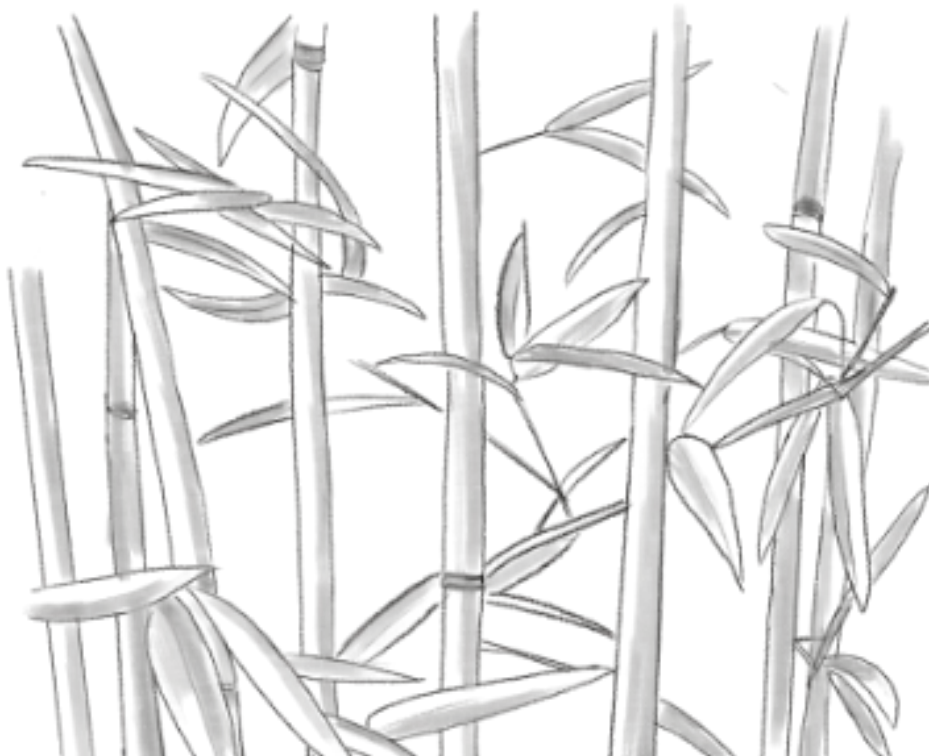
Theme
Don't forget the value of
bamboo! (Hindi: Bamboo ko
bhulo mat!)

Pre-Activity Preparations

Think about the bamboo crafts, games, and arts practiced in your community. Choose one craft, one or two games, and one art form suitable for children from middle or secondary school. Request at least 3 people from the community who are knowledgeable about these traditional bamboo crafts, and 2-3 members who know the traditional bamboo art forms (in this activity, dance).

Props/requirements

Adequate bamboo material according to the bamboo craft, game, or art chosen



Show a bamboo twig or leaf and say: this is a great friend of the forest living communities in Northeast India. We are going to learn some secrets of its life and uses.



Make 3-4 groups according to the number of participants.

Ask each group to visualize about their homes, and recall where all bamboo is used i.e. for household items, construction material, food, crafts, festivals, decoration, rituals, as well as for use in fields and forest. How many different species of bamboo do they find in their area, what use are they put to (and why). Ask them to make a list of all of these in groups. They can also draw a few of these objects made of bamboo teamwise.

Now that the context of the activity and the abundance of bamboo usage in household and culture is clear and evident, begin the set of activities in three parts and make it clear that these will be team activities where points will be involved:



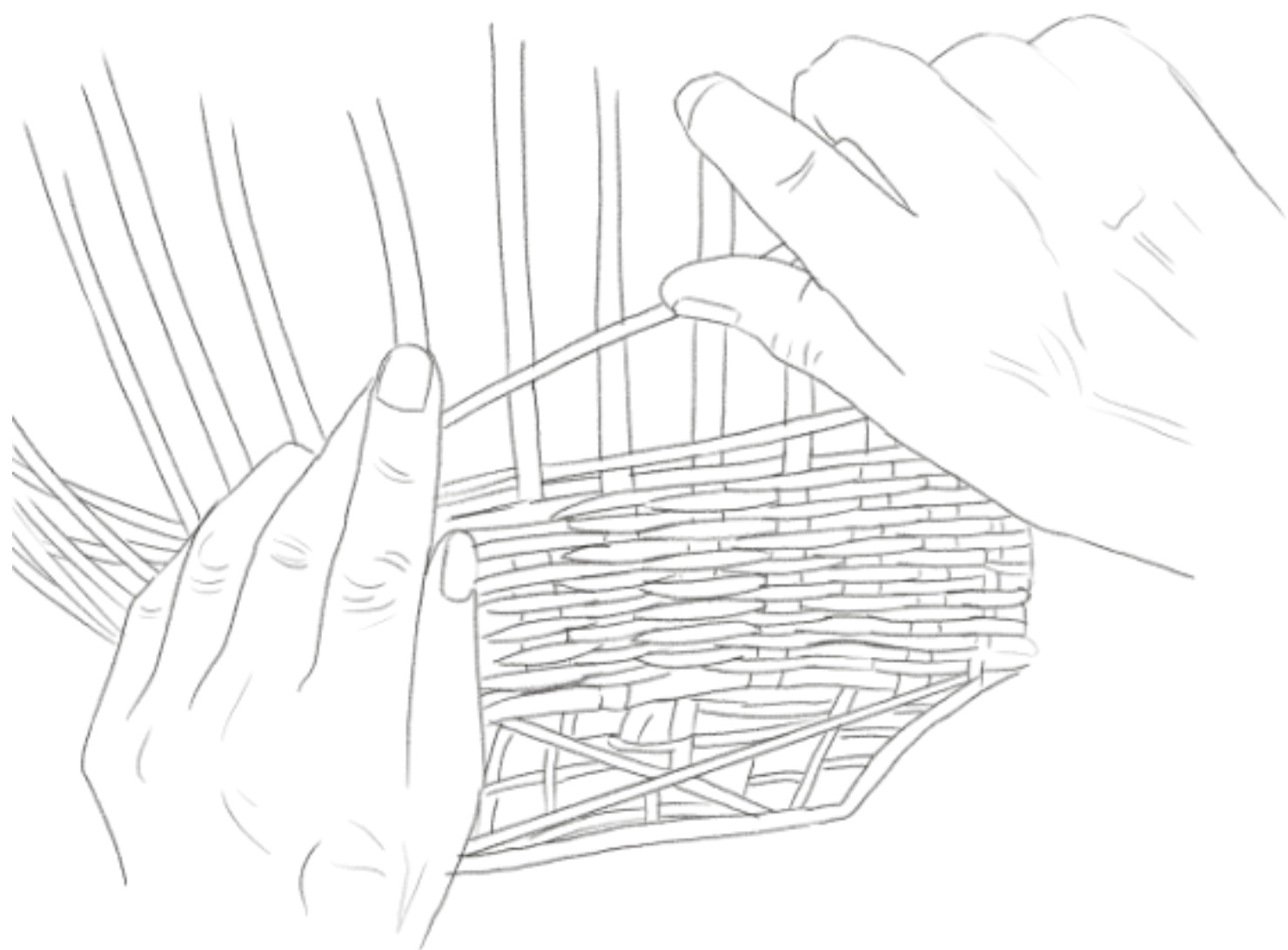
Bamboo games (Tako palok and Dapo for Nyishi community)

Play a game involving bamboo in the same groups.

Two bamboo games from the Nyishi community serve as good examples:

Tako palok involves racing on bamboo stilts.

Dapo is a bamboo wrestling game where two people standing within a drawn circle keep a common piece of thick bamboo on their shoulders on one side, and push onto the bamboo. The first one to be pushed out of the circle boundary loses.



Bamboo craft

Ask the different groups to create something out of bamboo strips, using patterns and techniques used in the traditional bamboo crafts. Request the crafts experts to help each group. Discuss the species and parts used and how.



Bamboo arts (Bamboo dance)

Invite traditional artists to teach the group by demonstrating and instructing the groups of children. Try some basic steps and get everyone to dance, sing, or create, based on the bamboo art relevant to the community concerned.



Once the importance of bamboo is established and experienced through the three different activities, **take the children to the forest on a bamboo trail, change the focus of use from humans to wildlife and ask students to share which animals use bamboo and how.** Show some examples if possible and a few obligate relationships between bamboo and local wild animals (can show a Giant Panda photo as one example, but preferably share the local examples). Insects, birds, mammals are important groups to include examples from.

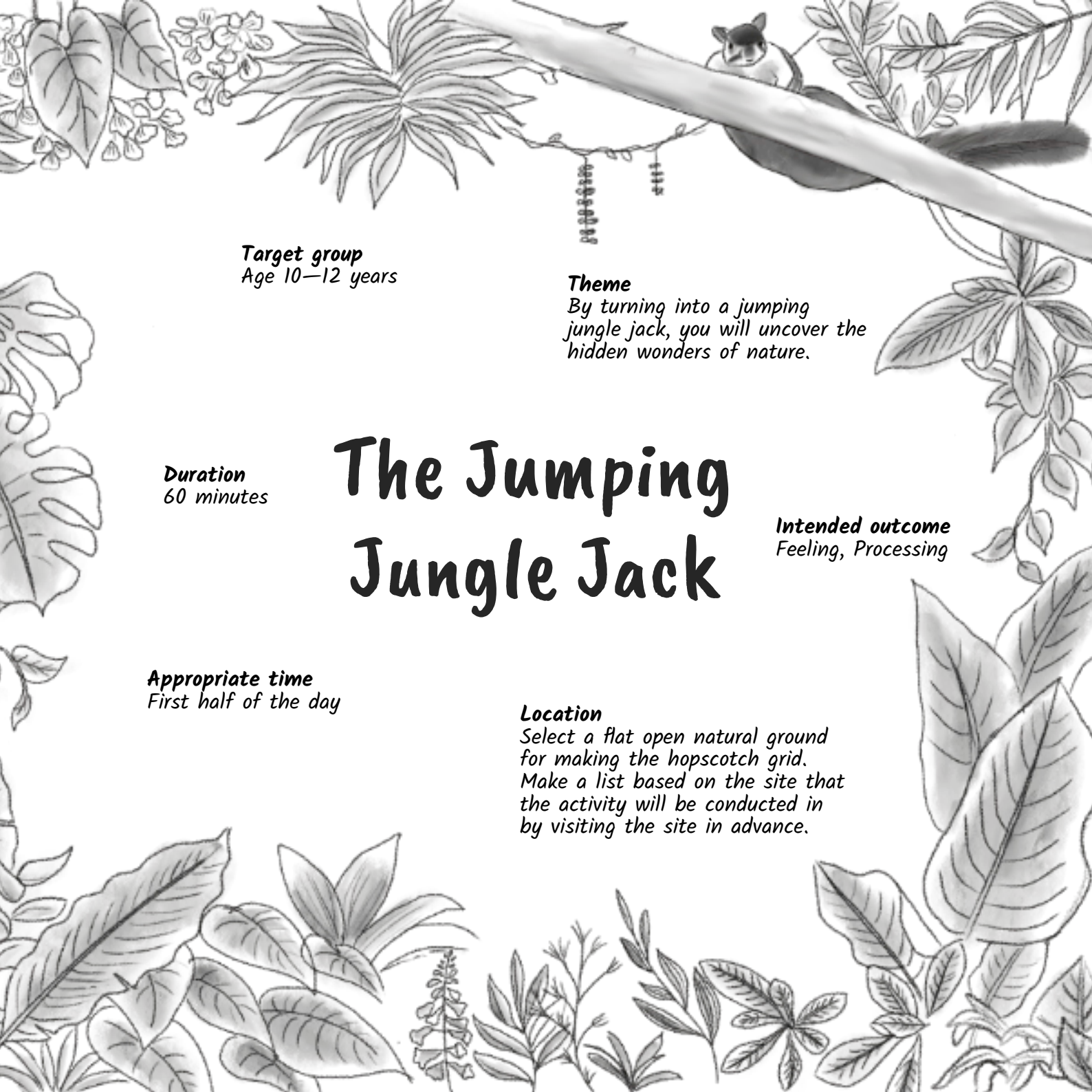


Feedback mechanism

Verbal or written sharing by children including their drawings of the experience or objects etc.

Follow-up

Workshops on bamboo art and crafts conducted by community members for the children



Target group
Age 10–12 years

Theme
*By turning into a jumping
jungle jack, you will uncover the
hidden wonders of nature.*

Duration
60 minutes

The Jumping Jungle Jack

Intended outcome
Feeling, Processing

Appropriate time
First half of the day

Location
*Select a flat open natural ground
for making the hopscotch grid.
Make a list based on the site that
the activity will be conducted in
by visiting the site in advance.*

Pre-Activity Preparations

Draw the required number of hopscotch grids in the selected area (one for each team of up to 10 kids) and find flat stones for using in the game. This will be a surprise for kids as they don't know who's made these!!

Props/requirements

Stones, chalk, clues with a list, 3 to 4 special gowns, caps or masks for the jumping jungle jack (can be self-made)



You will need 3 to 4 facilitators or volunteers to play this game with children.



Setting Up the Game

Begin in a mysterious tone that you're taking the children to play a game that is almost 3,000 years old!! Then without saying a word, let them watch the proceedings...

- > Go to the earlier chosen spot, where the grids have already been drawn*
- > Each hopscotch grid consists of 8 or 10 squares with the last one (no. 8 or 10) having a rounded margin (see picture) on the ground with chalk or a stick, numbering the squares.*
- > Look up at the kids in a quizzical manner with a smile...as if asking "you obviously know this game, don't you?!"*
- > Place a small pile of flat stones near the grid for playing.*

Team Formation & Rules

- > Now, invite them to play and make teams of up to 10 children each
- > Explain the method of playing the game and share the rules
 - > Each team plays the game simultaneously
- > Each square will represent a nature challenge that participants must complete to earn full points.
- > The team member who goes for the challenge must wear the gown and cap of the jumping jack.
- > They can put both feet when two squares are side-by-side, but when passing from a single square and while picking up the stone; they should hop on one foot.
- > When a player successfully lands on a square and retrieves the stone, their team must complete the nature challenge assigned to that number.
- > One student can go for only one grid, this way all children will get to play it. The task of finding things rests on the entire team.





Nature Challenges for Each Square

Example prompts:

Square 1: Find and describe four different types of leaves.

Square 2: Observe and draw an insect you spot nearby.

Square 3: Identify three different textures in nature (smooth, rough, soft, velvety).

Square 4: Listen and imitate a sound from nature.

Square 5: Spot something camouflaged or hidden and explain why.

Square 6: Find a natural object shaped like a letter or number.

Square 7: Spot three objects or creatures having yellow colour

Square 8: Look for two footprints of wild animals and guess whose these could be

Square 9: Find a natural hole in a tree

Square 10: Locate and show the home of any small creature



Scoring & Progression

The time to complete the grid is 15 minutes. The first team to complete all challenges wins.

There are four points for completing one square, and two for partial completion. If a team completes a challenge creatively or with unique observations, they earn five points per square (optional).

After finishing the hopscotch game, each team shares their discoveries, discussing what they found and how the experience was. Did it help change their perspective on nature?



Reflection & Awareness

Encourage participants to reflect on:

- > How much they noticed about nature that they usually overlook.*
- > The importance of engaging with the environment without disturbing it.*

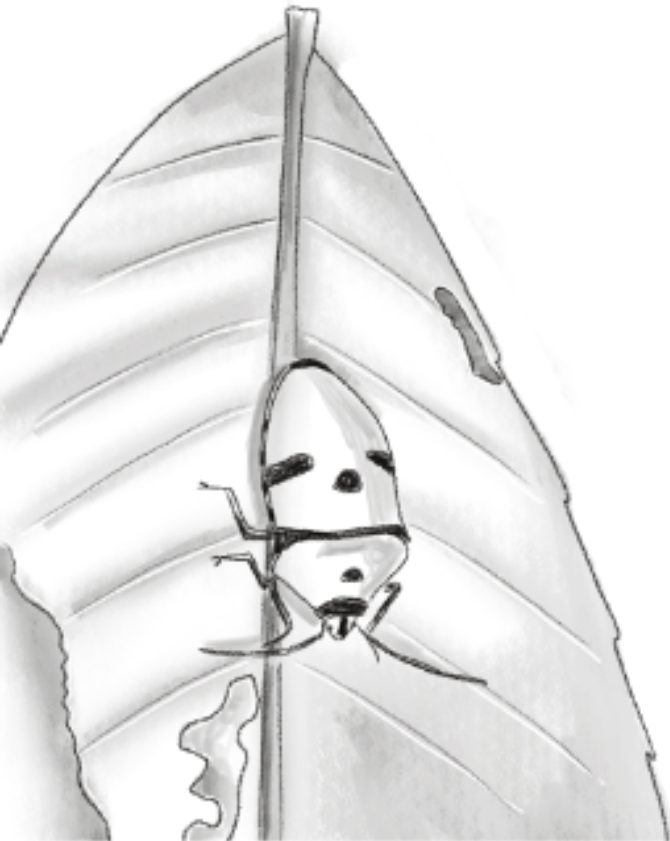


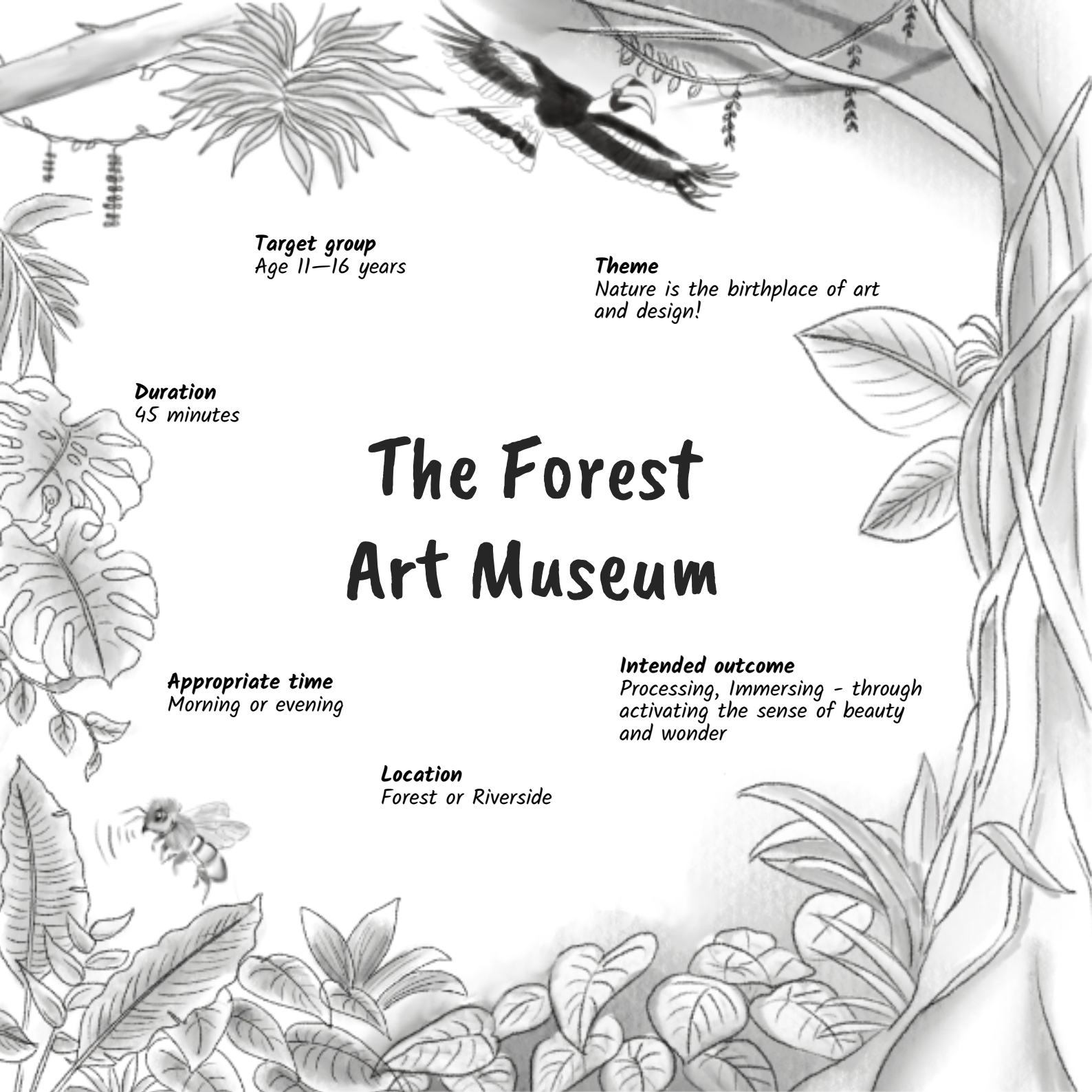
Feedback mechanism

They share what they have brought and what they noticed in their surroundings.

Follow-up

Participants write and draw their experience and learning through the game to be shared with the facilitator during the next gathering.





Target group
Age 11–16 years

Theme
Nature is the birthplace of art
and design!

Duration
45 minutes

The Forest Art Museum

Appropriate time
Morning or evening

Intended outcome
Processing, Immersing - through
activating the sense of beauty
and wonder

Location
Forest or Riverside

Pre-Activity Preparations

Reconnaissance of the site

Props/requirements

Small brightly-coloured tags stuck on ice-cream sticks as per need



Introduce students to the elements of art like colours, patterns, shapes etc in nature and forests by first showing some examples (bracket fungus on a twig, spider web, a unique leaf etc) and saying, "Welcome to the top-rated art museum of the world, a dynamic museum where beings, objects and forms keep changing, evolving and re-organising themselves! Yes, this is the Finest Art Museum and we are here to admire the works of hidden artists and designers who have put on display many such ideas for you to explore and get inspired from...! Are you ready to take up this challenge of locating the highest number of art and design ideas expressed here?"

Wait for their response and say, "Ok, so, let's go..."

Divide them in groups and allocate an area in the forest or a section of the trail to each group.



Ask students to find various kinds of shapes, patterns or colours in that area. It could be a spider web, patterns on a leaf, bark or stone, different footprints and signs. With this, they also need to think of the artist who must have made that art. They will also be asked to mark these spots with small tags of clearly visible colours. Their entire section then becomes a museum and they become the curators for some time.



The participants also draw any special design from their museum that they find most fascinating. The entire team also makes a collage of the designs, patterns and art found in their museum, give the museum a name and make the list of art vis-à-vis the artists.

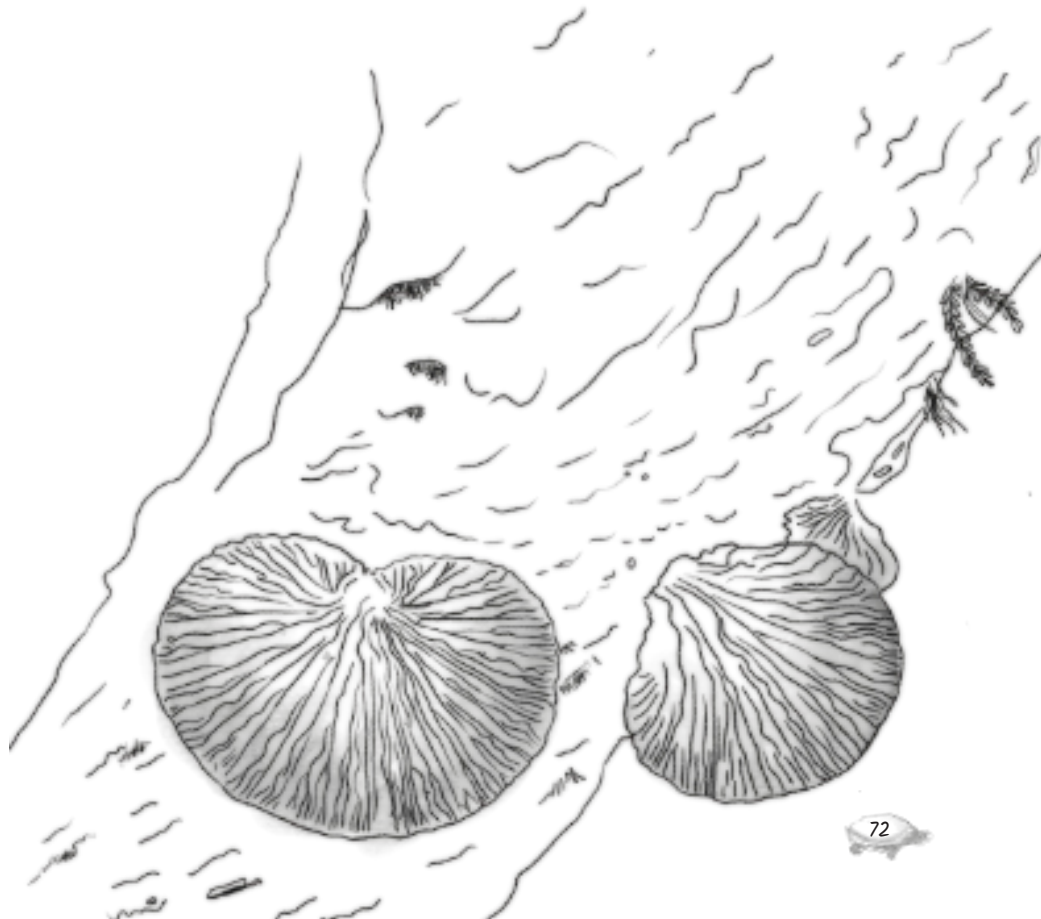
*The facilitator would then make rounds to check out each museum and discuss the art and artist and **explain the processes involved in the art**. The participants show the tagged art and also share their drawing.*

Feedback mechanism

The drawing could be one form of feedback and at the end of the activity, a verbal sharing can be done for detailed feedback.

Follow-up

The students can go back and find one example of such art each around their home or school working in the same teams and giving feedback in a later session.





Target group
Age 11–16 years

Theme
Let us make a river, better still
let's turn into a river!

Duration
90 minutes

Our River, the Great Giver

Intended outcome
Understanding - diversity,
inter-relationships
Feeling - reverence for
natural communities

Appropriate time
Anytime

Location
Preferably outdoors - with a large
open space (forest clearing, or
near a stream or river)

Pre-Activity Preparations

Survey the area where you wish to conduct the activity and check for available natural materials. Choose a spot that has plenty of fallen leaves, flowers and fruits; stones; twigs etc.

Props/requirements

Sounds (pre-recorded) of a flowing river, water splashing against stones, frogs, moving boat, water birds (kingfisher/fish eagle/duck) etc, few boxes of oil pastels, A 4 size blank papers, pencils (as per number of students)



Ask the students to **close their eyes and think of their favourite river**. Continue by asking them to **visualise the colour of the water, flow, the nature of its banks, any (aquatic and terrestrial) life forms that are in and around the river and a special or memorable experience that they have had with the river (5-7 mins)**.



They can now open their eyes and share with a partner the names of their river and what came to their mind.



If there are only a few students, there is no need to make teams, but if there are more than 15 students, please make 2 or 3 groups each having 8-10 students. **Their task is to use the natural objects (dry or fallen leaves, stones, twigs, small branches) available at the site to create a new river containing all that they can visualise**. Each team creates their own river and gives it a name. (20 mins). Each team can discuss the full plan and then spend a couple of minutes of silence visualising it together in a huddle before they embark on collecting the needed material.

*In the process, the facilitators keep chatting about what they are making and why (in a non-intrusive and encouraging way rather than quizzing or pestering them). Also, **they are to remind the teams that the river needs to be long and broad enough for one to be able to walk or sail in it to feel the flow and life!** (ideally each 'river' could be about 20 – 30 ft long and about 2-3 ft wide. This can be part of the instructions beforehand)*



Once the river is complete, students share about their experience and feelings of the river that they have created.

After that, everyone claps for team work. The situation is to be managed in such a way the students believe that the activity is over!







Well, a vital component of the activity begins now with **students asked to form a queue again** and facilitator (with a chuckle) looking at them and saying. “I’m sure you would like to experience and feel your river?! But, I wonder how we can do that...?! Any suggestions?!”



After a brief exchange of options, the facilitator leads them to the starting points of their respective rivers and forms a queue there.

Each student can **choose any element of the river** and imagine that he/she is one of them.

They are instructed to **now place their hands on the shoulder of the person in front of them**. This way the students form a long chain of each one placing their hands on the other’s shoulder. The student at the very front will be placing their hands on one of the facilitator’s shoulders.

Gently tell them to close their eyes, be aware and listen to their surroundings for a minute and imagine the river again.

Slowly, they can walk by putting their left foot forward followed by the right...

*At this point one of the facilitators will **begin to play the sound of the river** and other river-based sounds or bird calls on one or more blue-tooth device(s).*



*At this point one of the the facilitators at the very front of the queue will start to walk along the pattern of the river that the students would have created. **The facilitator needs to give more emphasis on the turns and bends of the river so as to generate a more realistic path of the river.** Facilitators will begin to play the sound of the river and other river-based sounds or bird calls on one or more blue-tooth device(s).*

As they walk, the facilitators who are standing on the sides have to make sure that the students are not stumbling into each other and are comfortable. If any student finds it difficult, they can be gently removed from the chain and the next one be joined by the facilitators.



*Once the last student crosses past the endpoint of the river, the facilitator will **begin to make a u-turn and form a semicircle with the students before stopping the walk.***

By this time, the river sound should also be turned off.

*The students are asked **to slowly release the hands from their friend's shoulders and slowly open their eyes.***

*Some students are given the opportunity to tell **which elements of the river they had imagined themselves to be** and share their feelings and experience.*



The facilitators can use the chain to represent **the interconnectedness of different elements that forms the river ecosystem and how each one helps in the health and function of the river**. Let them imagine the effect caused by sudden removal of any or few of their peers (representing the elements of rivers) being removed from the chain.

Now, they can all be taken to a **REAL** river nearby and asked to sit alone in silence to write their experience and their perceptions of the rivers as life givers.

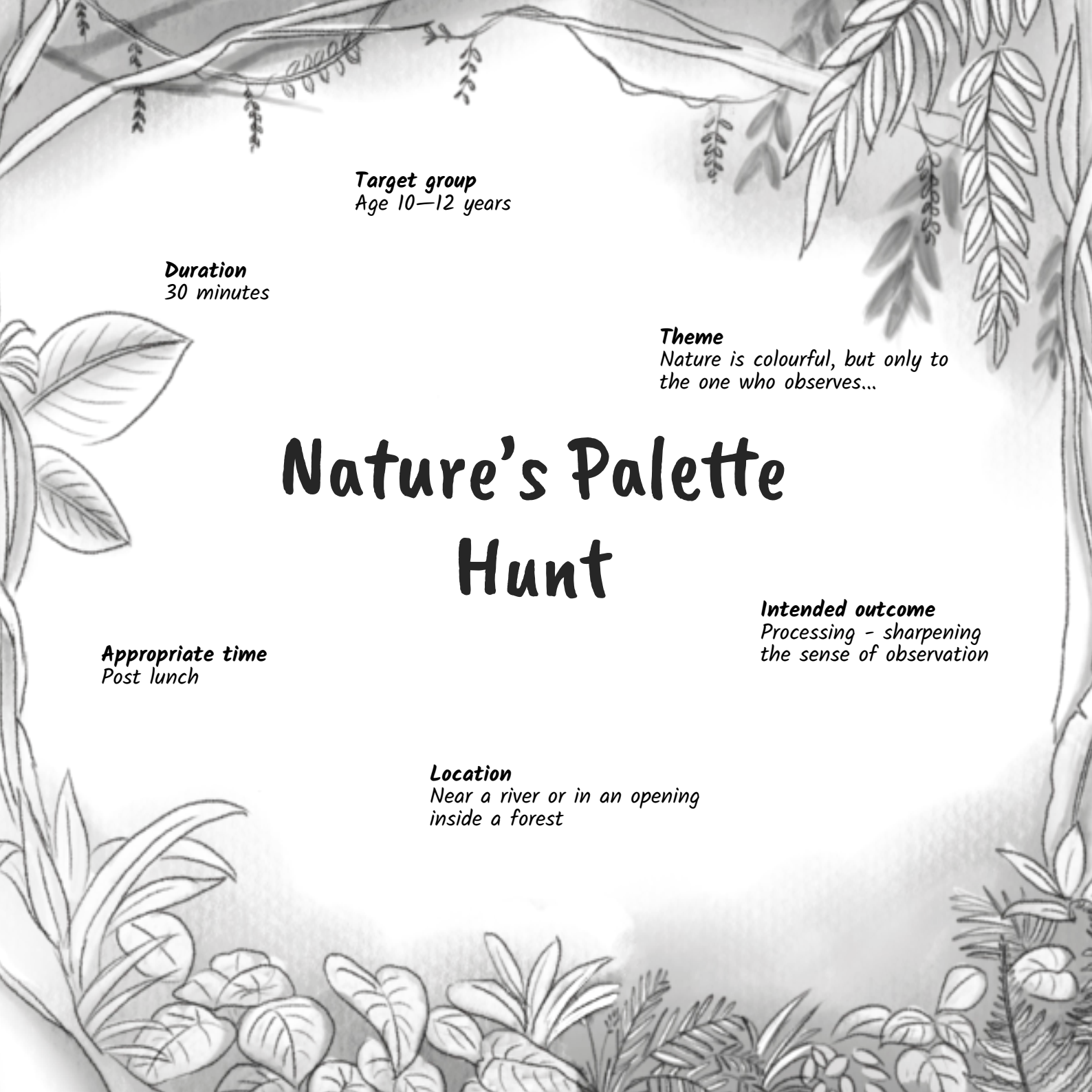
Feedback mechanism

Sharing of their experiences and their thoughts at the end of the activity. They can all draw their rivers and label the elements with the name of the river clearly displayed on the drawing.

Follow-up

A longish trip (half-day) to a nearby river to explore life and the flow. More activities can be undertaken here to bring students closer to the riverine ecosystem through feeling and understanding.





Target group
Age 10–12 years

Duration
30 minutes

Theme
Nature is colourful, but only to
the one who observes...

Nature's Palette Hunt

Appropriate time
Post lunch

Intended outcome
Processing – sharpening
the sense of observation

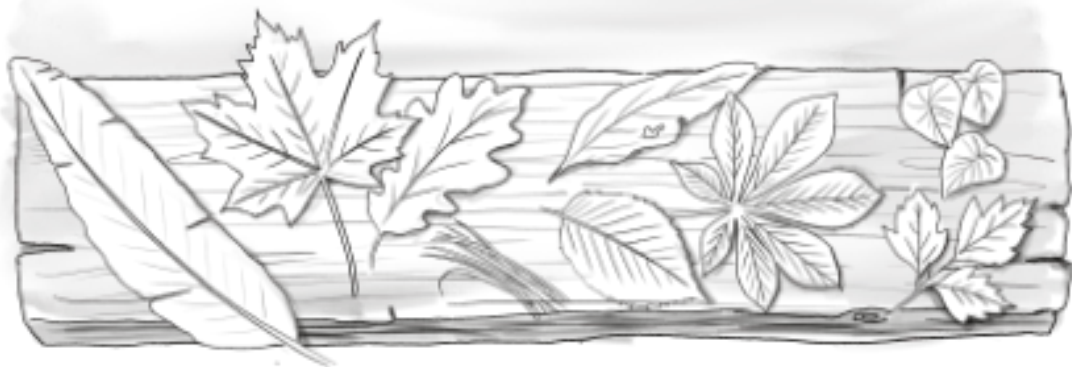
Location
Near a river or in an opening
inside a forest

Pre-Activity Preparations

Pre-made cards with instruction of the colours

Props/requirements

cue cards of colours



The facilitator begins by gathering the children in a reasonably open area within the forest. They are asked to stand apart from their friends, ensuring enough space for individual movement and exploration. The facilitator explains the rules: when they call out a colour from a cue card (e.g., red, green, yellow, blue, white, or a combination of colours), the children must search the surrounding area for a natural object that matches the colour and bring it with them within 45 seconds. These objects could include leaves, flowers, bark, moss, stones, feathers etc. Warning for minus points- no living thing should be disturbed or killed, no breaking of flowers, branches or twigs.



The game is designed to be light-hearted and interactive, sparking curiosity and creativity. To keep the energy up, the facilitator may encourage friendly competition by announcing "bonus points" for unique finds, like a brightly coloured (dead) insect or an unusual fallen flower or ask the kids to get a colour that is not announced so far! One round can focus on finding live objects, but not fetching them. After each round, the children regroup and showcase what they found, sharing their discoveries with others. The facilitator ensures that the collected items remain in the centre, clearly visible and ready for arranging later to sum up the colours of the forest display,





Once all the rounds are complete, the facilitator announces special finds like the "most colourful object," or "most unique discovery" etc as a gesture of appreciation, all participants receive a small prize, such as snacks, to celebrate their efforts. **Children can be asked to paint the object or colour that they liked the most and which they can take back home as a memory of the colourful forest.**

By hunting for colours in nature, they will learn to notice details they might otherwise overlook. The competitive yet inclusive nature of the game keeps it exciting, while the rewarding of all participants fosters a positive and supportive atmosphere.



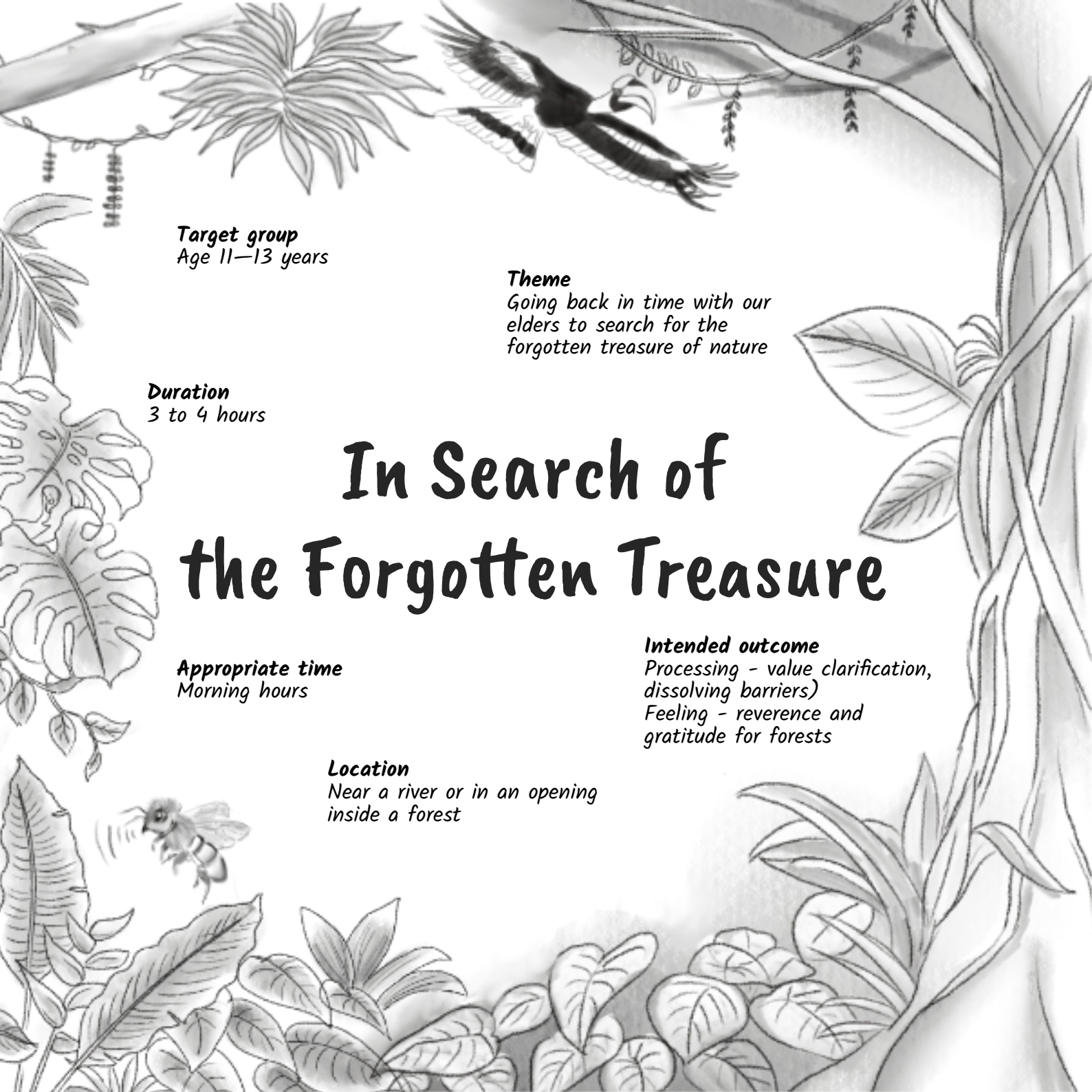
Feedback mechanism

Oral feedback by asking what they learnt and observed while procuring specific colours from nature.

Follow-up

The same activity can be done during other seasons to notice the changes that children observe. One can also design another activity that is more quantitative and focuses on relative abundance of different major colours and their shades in the forest and lead them to think about why it is so.





Target group
Age 11–13 years

Theme
Going back in time with our
elders to search for the
forgotten treasure of nature

Duration
3 to 4 hours

In Search of the Forgotten Treasure

Appropriate time
Morning hours

Intended outcome
Processing - value clarification,
dissolving barriers)
Feeling - reverence and
gratitude for forests

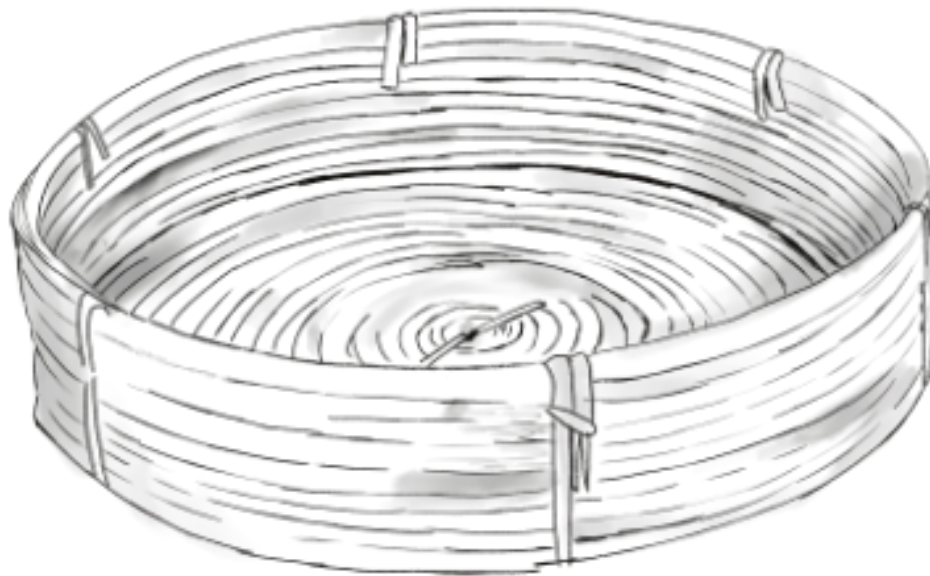
Location
Near a river or in an opening
inside a forest

Pre-Activity Preparations

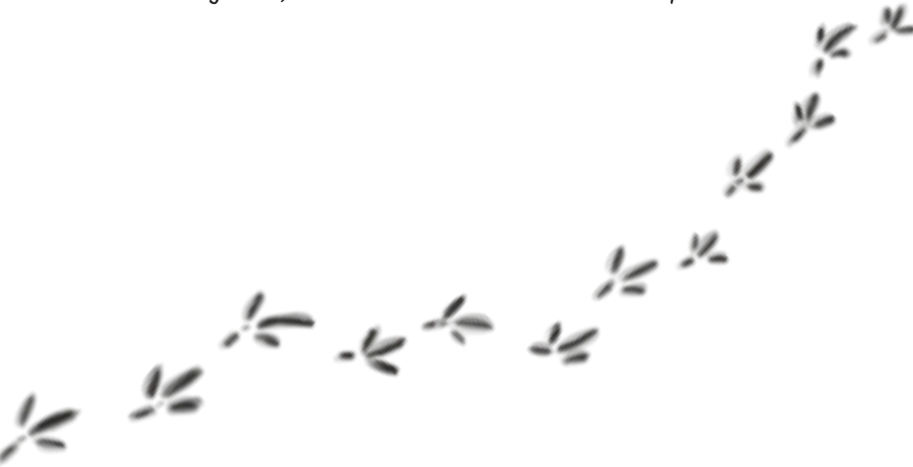
Ask elders to help children with the activities and tell them when and where to reach them. Get permission from the participating schools for the outdoor session.

Props/requirements

Photos of plants or mushrooms which are poisonous and/or cause skin irritation or itching, baskets to collect the ingredients



Pick up the elders from their respective places and assemble the students at a pre-decided place. The whole group is then taken to the riverside (Abuyuku), where the activities will take place.



*Let us discover the food that we have been eating since the time of our **ancestors** and which is forgotten or likely to be lost in the present time. And for that we need to go into the lap of mother nature who fulfils all our necessities. Since nature consists of so many living beings and their homes/habitat; we will meet her through all these. Before we start, we will caution you from touching or eating these (show pictures or actual parts of relevant plants or mushrooms to warn the participants and avoid any mishap)*

The facilitator starts by smelling some leaves, touching the barks of trees and gently prods children to observe different plants, smell the leaves by gently rubbing their fingers and feel various textures without harming the plants (the instruction given is **“Since they are also living beings like us, we will not disturb them in the important task that they are involved in!”**). Here, children can be encouraged to draw what they touch or feel and the elders can give the names and uses of these plants post-lunch.



After reaching the spot, form four groups; **one elder will be engaged with each group of children.**

The groups are now assigned different areas of the forest to explore and collect all the different types of edible plants and mushrooms with the help of elders in their group.



Now they will be asked to keep one leaf uncooked from each different edible plant collected and the rest will be used as per what they intend to cook (boil vegetables/sabji, chatni etc.).

Break for Lunch (if possible include a ritual or prayer that the community engages in before eating and explain why. Alternately, one can thank Mother Nature for all the gifts and a special, rejuvenating experience today!)



Post lunch, they will be asked the names of uncooked leaves in any language (local) and whether they know about the other uses of plants at home and if they know which animals eat these plant leaves/other parts. Children may also seek names/details of what they have drawn along the trail.

Elders will step in where there is no response from students or to fill in the gaps and provide additional information or stories, especially about their specialities and use by wild animals as food, shelter etc.

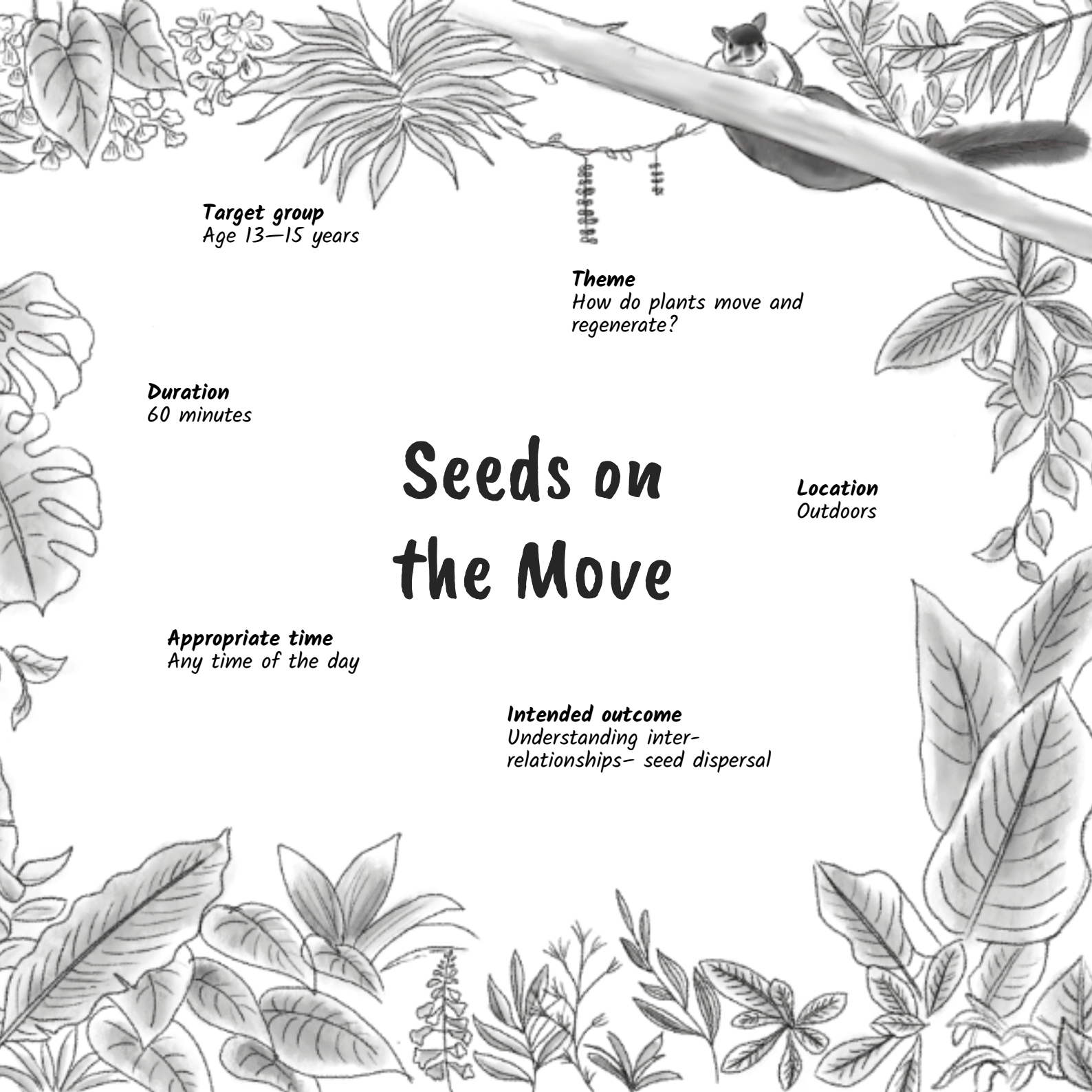


Feedback mechanism

Children will share their experience and learning verbally as well as through drawings and as written feedback.

Follow-up

Organise a longer duration trip (possibly overnight adventure to the forest with more emphasis on ethical practices of the community in harvesting nature's bounty and to give them a special experience of exploring the forest. They can write articles for local newspapers or school magazine etc. to share the joy of nature.



Target group
Age 13–15 years

Theme
How do plants move and regenerate?

Duration
60 minutes

Seeds on the Move

Location
Outdoors

Appropriate time
Any time of the day

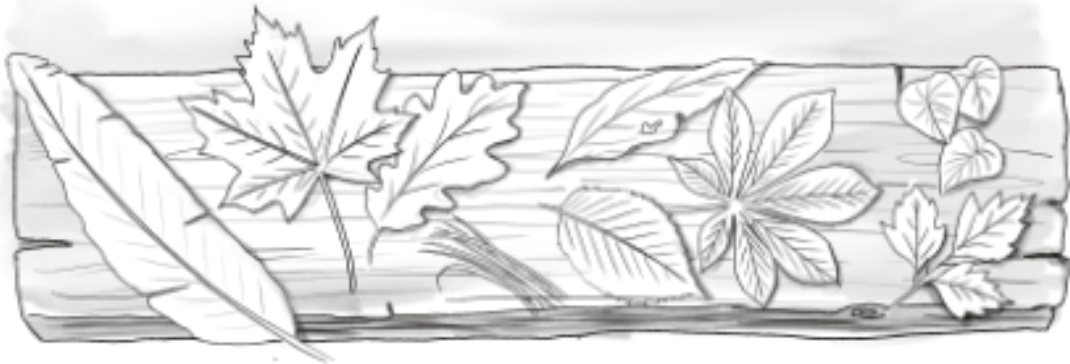
Intended outcome
Understanding inter-relationships– seed dispersal

Pre-Activity Preparations

Identify 15-20 native plant species with seeds during the time of conducting this activity. Find a trail where most of these plants are found.

Props/requirements

Collection of 15-20 locally available seeds and five containers to place the seeds in. Create cues for the plants to help students match the seeds to the host plants before the trail begins. Print some photos of key seed-dispersers for each of these plants to help children visually understand and remember the seed dispersers.



Set Up Seed Stations

Gather 15-20 locally available native seeds dispersed by wind, water, and animals.

Place identical sets of these seeds into 4-5 containers, ensuring each group has the same variety.



Group Task

Divide participants into teams of 6-8.

Each team must analyze their seed collection and determine the dispersal mechanism (wind, water, or animals).

They will describe the seeds' characteristics (shape, size, texture) and hypothesize their dispersers within 10-15 minutes.

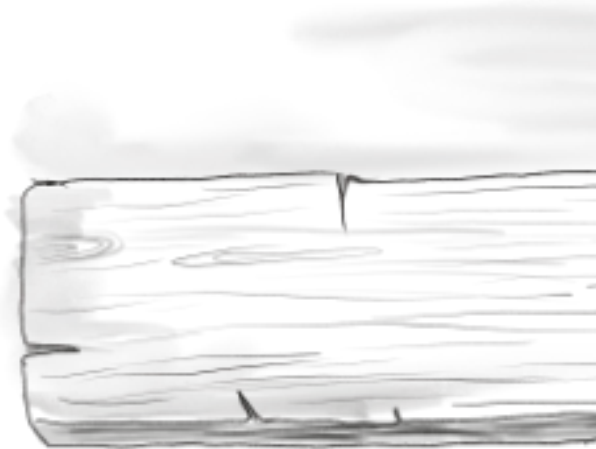


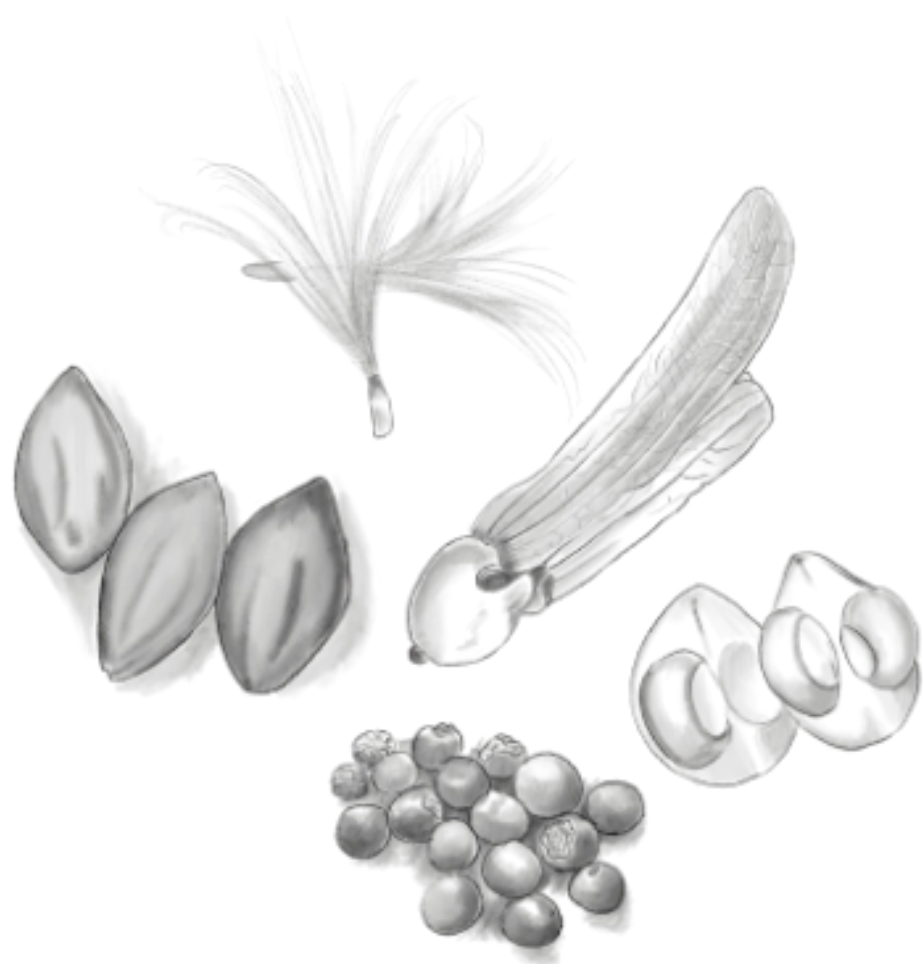
Discussion & Identification

Teams present their findings and justify their reasoning.

Facilitators guide the discussion, helping them recognize key seed traits (e.g., winged seeds for wind, floating seeds for water, hooks or special structures for sticking to animal skins).

If the dispersal mode of some seeds is unknown, facilitators can reveal the same.





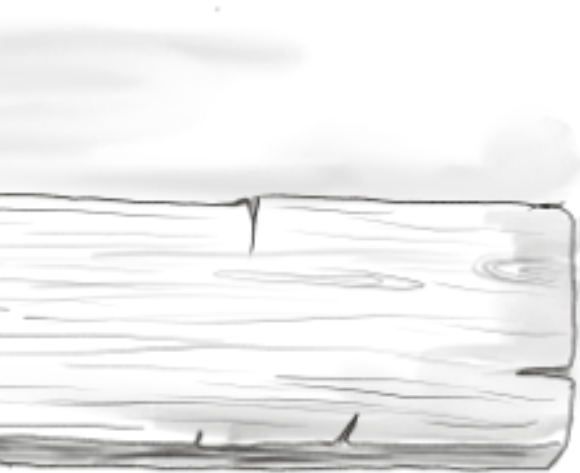
Outdoor Exploration

Participants take a trail walk to observe plants and their seeds in the environment.

Their mission: Identify the plants to which the different seeds presented to them belong!

The plants will have a small message with a cue attached to them, giving students hints about how their seeds look like and who could be their seed disperser (E.g., 1. My seeds are thin and black, if you come close to me, I will stick my seeds to your clothes so that you can take them far away and help me spread in a large area 2. My fruits are orange in colour and round in shape, you will notice many birds coming to my tree when my fruits are ripe.)

Groups work together to match seeds to potential dispersers based on these cues and experience the joy of exploration and discovery.



Interdependence & Co-evolution Discussion

Facilitators introduce examples of seed dispersal by animals leading to co-evolution (e.g., fruit-eating birds, bats dispersing tree seeds)

Show images of seed dispersers alongside their host plants to reinforce learning.

Reflection & Creativity

Teams share their observations and conclusions.

Encourage students to talk to their elders about seasonal changes in plant reproduction and seed dispersal.

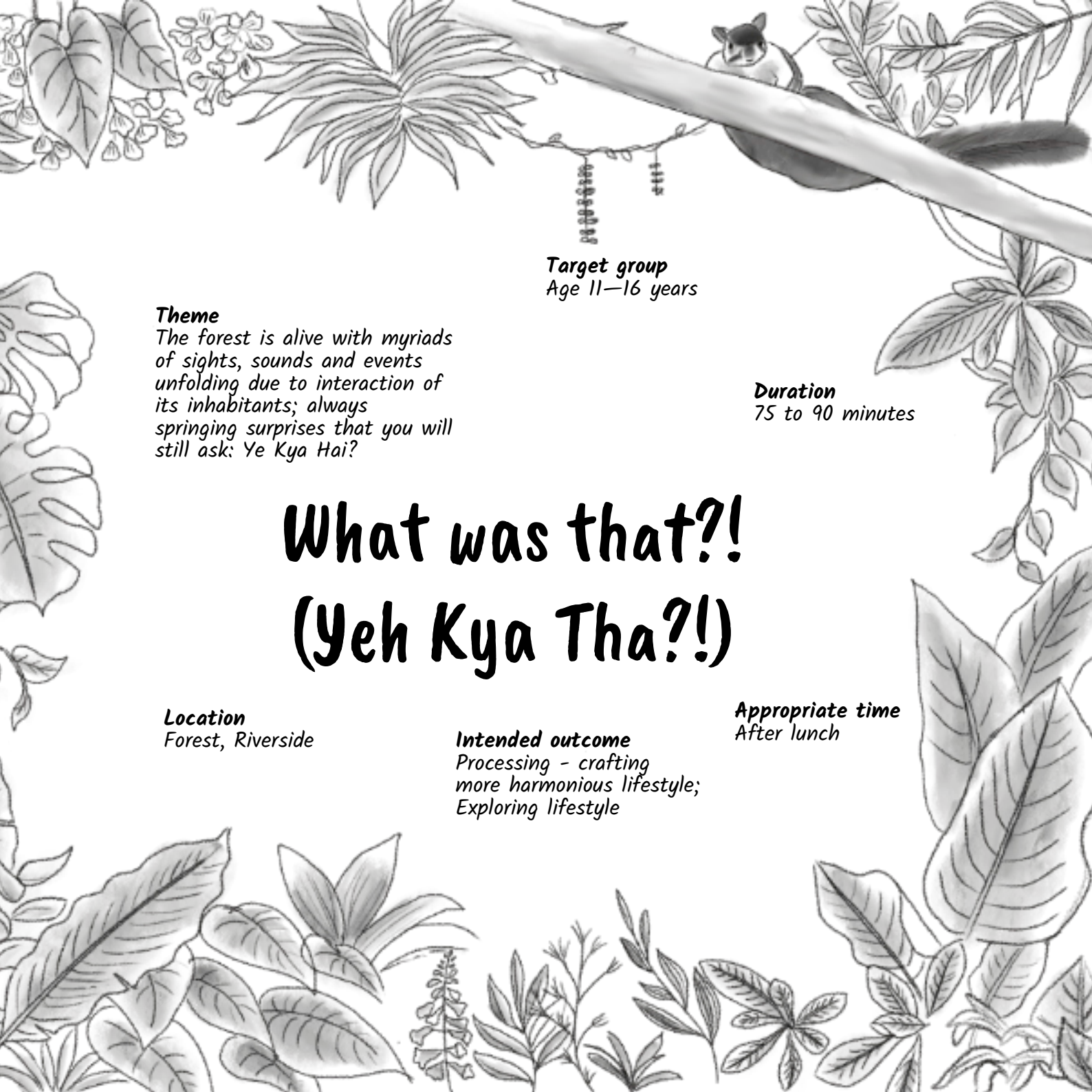
Feedback mechanism

Participants and observers share their respective observations

Follow-up

Observe closely the different seeds of plants around you and try to guess the disperser. Make a seed dispersal display in the school





Target group
Age 11–16 years

Theme

The forest is alive with myriads of sights, sounds and events unfolding due to interaction of its inhabitants; always springing surprises that you will still ask: Ye Kya Hai?

Duration
75 to 90 minutes

What was that?! (Yeh Kya Tha?!)

Location
Forest, Riverside

Intended outcome
*Processing - crafting
more harmonious lifestyle;
Exploring lifestyle*

Appropriate time
After lunch

Pre-Activity Preparations

Create a circle of seeds for the Circle of Magic

Laminated cards (printed or embossed) of animal foot-prints and signs

Clues

Clue 1: What Was That?

Clue 2: Follow me for more sounds

Elephant mask

Elephant sound playing through Bluetooth speaker

Outenga fruit (Dillenia indica tree) for sound

Paper and pen for sound map for each participant

PDF printed and online link



Briefing

Welcome.

Ask a question: **"Have you visited this Jungle before?"**

If yes, ask: **"What did you experience?"**

If not, tell them: **"You will experience a lot here and about our lives as forest protectors."**

Ask: **"Do you wish to see wildlife and special events of the forest? If you keep your five senses active (which ones?!), you will be able to enjoy and experience much more during the walk. Are you ready?!"**



Forest Detectives

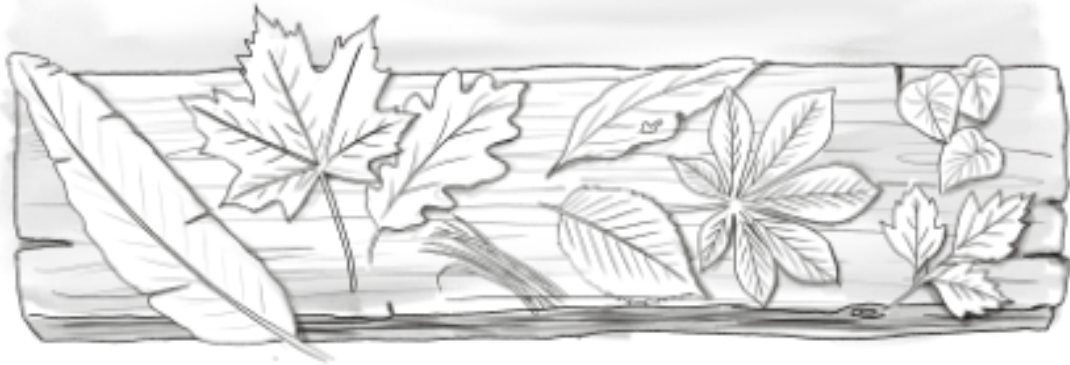
If they're ready, say: "Today, we will turn into forest detectives."

Instructions: Sometimes you see one thing, but it looks like something else (e.g., a leaf that looks like a cattle footprint – **show the climber *Bauhinia vahlii*'s leaf** if possible or give another example that you can actually show).

Ask the children **to look at things with a different perspective** and allow their vision to expand to all possibilities.

Find an open space to sit and share their observations in **the Circle of Magic**.

Connect: As they finish the activity, connect the next part of the walk in the forest with fruit falling down (Eg: Outenga, listen and search for its sound).





Sound Map

Ask them to close their eyes and listen to the sounds around for about 5-7 minutes.

*After opening their eyes, each child will create a sound map. They'll mark a reference point on the centre of the paper (where they are) and **map where the sound is coming from** (direction, relative distance - near or far) Also indicating the possible producer of the sound.*

Encourage a few children to share their sound maps.

At the end, discuss how the jungle is alive with many sounds, like the sound of things breaking, flowing streams, foot-step sounds on the path or bird calls.

*After this, **everyone will walk for approximately 50 meters in silence**, mentally noting the sounds.*



Sign Walk

Halt at an opening and divide the group into smaller teams of 3-5 kids.

*Sign survey: **Start looking for animal signs on the floor (footprints, scratch, droppings, food remains etc)** and elsewhere (butterfly pupa or larva, bird nest, claw marks on tree trunks, calls etc).*

Try and place a few signs(horns, antlers, jaw, teeth, skull, bone etc) along the way in case the ground is very hard. Groups will draw all the signs they find.

Share findings and show them pictures of animals and their signs.

Connect: When observing signs, you will sometimes see animals unexpectedly...one or two volunteers can keep an eye on animal presence and movement.



Jungle Surprise

Elephant mask surprise: The sound of an elephant will be heard suddenly!

The facilitator will quickly assemble children and hide behind a large tree.

*Soon, **they'll discover that it's a forest protector friend making the elephant sound to surprise them!** (Either the protector walks out of the bush or they chance upon him)*

Discuss how we face fear, joy, and hardship together.

This fun moment is inspired by a real experience at a jungle camp.



Final jungle surprise

"I have one more surprise for you. Would you like to hear it?" Create a jungle surprise at the end.

For instance in Pakke, recall the sound from the first activity: "What was that sound?"

Share: "I often wonder the same thing call while working in the jungle.



Feedback Mechanism

Sharing circle with participants about what is one new feeling, sense or experience they had on this walk today.



Follow-up

Participants are encouraged to write a reflective piece about their forest trail experience after returning home and share it with the facilitators. This reflection can mark the beginning of a lasting relationship with the forest and its life. They can use a good reference book shown to them e.g. "What Was That? (Yeh Kya Tha?!)"





Participants in the process of designing activities.

Participants in the process of designing activities.





Learning the framework for designing nature activities and games.

Group discussions ...



Groups pilot-testing the activities





Groups pilot-testing the activities

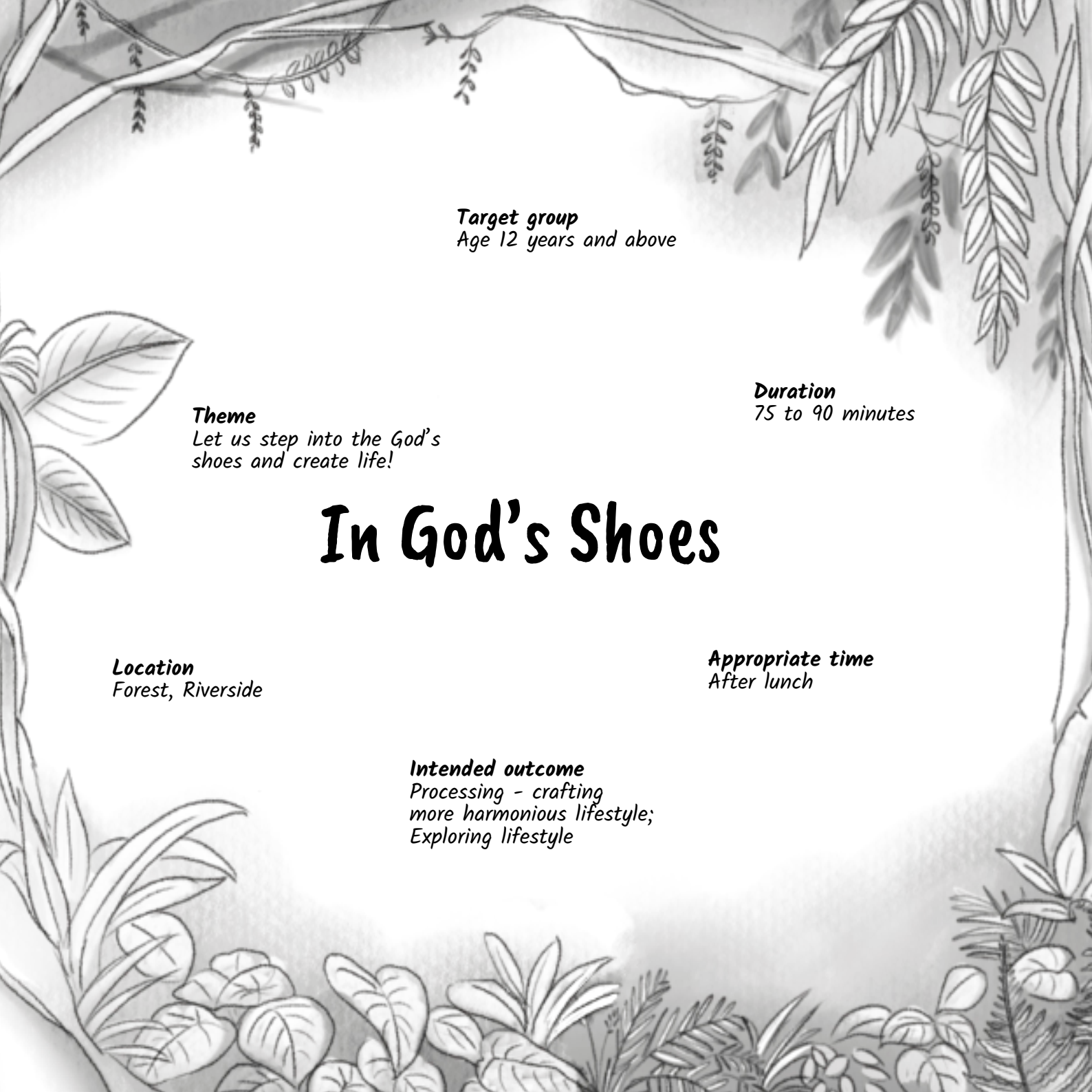


Different groups presenting and pilot testing their activities





Different groups presenting and pilot testing their activities



Target group
Age 12 years and above

Theme
Let us step into the God's
shoes and create life!

Duration
75 to 90 minutes

In God's Shoes

Location
Forest, Riverside

Appropriate time
After lunch

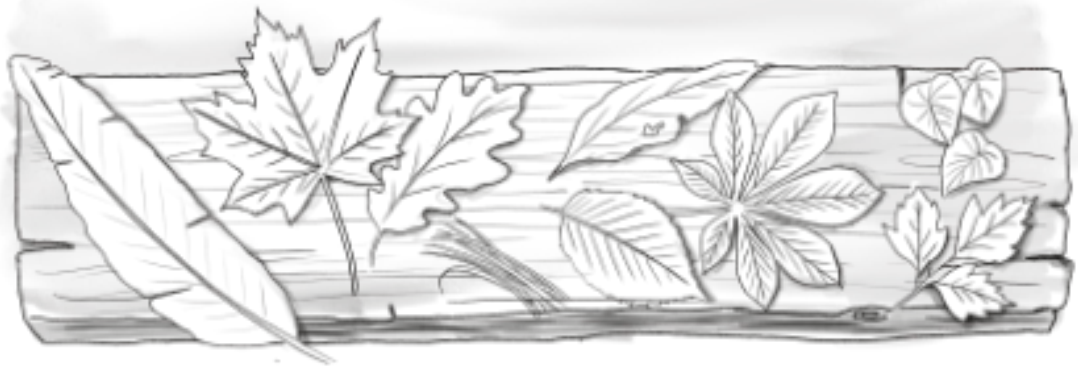
Intended outcome
Processing - crafting
more harmonious lifestyle;
Exploring lifestyle

Pre-Activity Preparations

Select an open space with sufficient natural materials available.

Props/requirements

Paper and Pencils





Creating the Forest Being (20 mins):

Each group will collect naturally available materials from the surroundings without harming or plucking anything.

Using these, they will create a forest deity or nature being and give it a name, imagining it as a guardian or spirit of the place.



Introduction & Group Division (10 mins):

Begin with a brief discussion on the idea of needs vs. wants and how different beings (humans, animals, nature spirits) may have different requirements.

Divide students into groups of 6–8 members.

Each group selects a spot slightly away from others for focused work.



Designing its Environment (15 mins):

Groups now build or describe an ideal environment for their being to survive.

They can either:

- a) List the things the being would need (in notebooks), or*
- b) Use **representative natural items**: e.g., a stone might represent water, a twig could symbolize shelter, a leaf a food source, etc.*



Presentation (5 mins per group):

Each group shares the story of their forest being and explains the elements chosen for its survival.

Encourage thoughtful explanations: “Why does this being need this?” “Is this a want or a need?”

Reflection & Discussion (15 mins):

Compare the needs of:

- a) Wild creature*
- b) Forest being*
- c) The students themselves*

Categorize the items as Needs (essential) or Wants (non-essential).

Reflect on how human needs often generate more waste, and how nature creates minimal or no waste.





Compare Needs: Ours vs. Theirs (10 mins):

Half the groups will now study a wild creature found nearby and list what it needs to live.

The other half lists things they personally use daily.

Educator Note:

Lead the discussion in a curious and reflective manner not to induce guilt but to inspire mindful living. Ask:

“How much do we really need?”

“What can we learn from nature’s way of living?”

“Can we rethink one thing we use or throw away?”



Facilitator Tip (as per guide comment)

To ensure this process truly supports the outcome, emphasize exploration and empathy seeing the world from the being's perspective. Let students experience the impact of excess consumption and consider alternatives. Encourage storytelling and imagination to connect emotionally, not just intellectually.

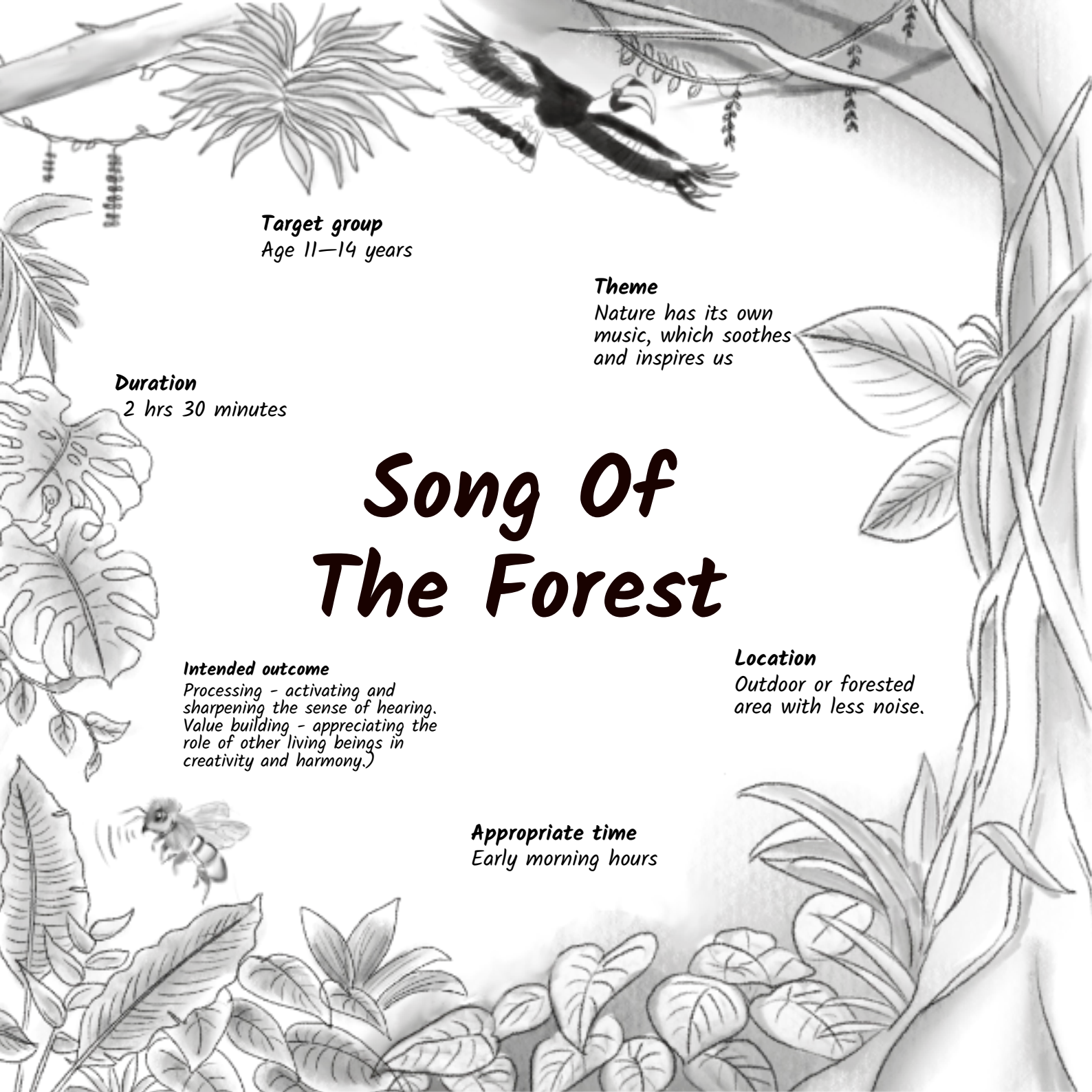


Feedback Mechanism

Each participant is asked to share their experience and understanding of the activity. They can also share how they can reduce the impact on nature through changing their lifestyle. A project can be assigned as part of lifestyle change i.e. making cloth bags for shopping, recycling paper, composting of organic waste etc. which would empower them to make and see the effects of lifestyle change. This can be done in teams with each team working on a voluntarily chosen (different from other teams) impact reduction task.

Follow Up

After a month, students can share the progress made by them in lifestyle change as individuals and as teams. They should be rewarded in a small way for the same and further tasks can be taken up along these lines.



Target group
Age 11–14 years

Theme
Nature has its own
music, which soothes
and inspires us

Duration
2 hrs 30 minutes

Song Of The Forest

Intended outcome
Processing - activating and
sharpening the sense of hearing.
Value building - appreciating the
role of other living beings in
creativity and harmony.)

Location
Outdoor or forested
area with less noise.

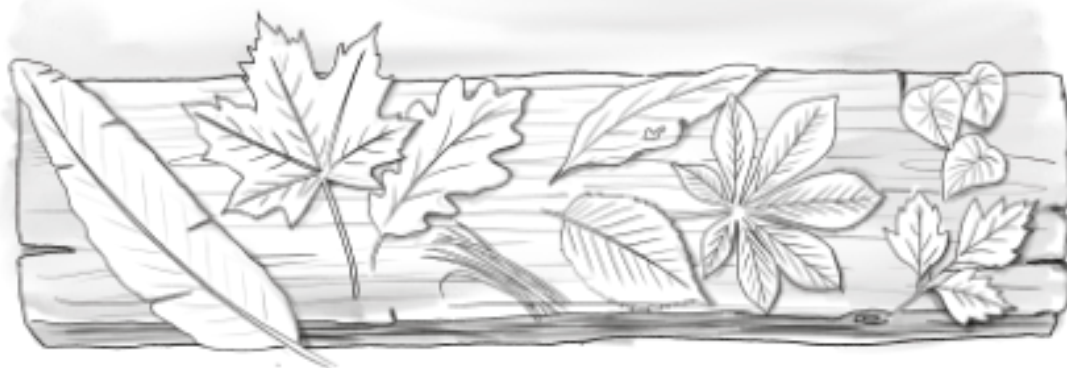
Appropriate time
Early morning hours

Pre-Activity Preparations

Select an open space with sufficient natural materials available.

Props/requirements

*Phone or sound recorder with bird calls, other forest sounds as well as city sounds;
small portable speaker(s) - if needed; few musical instruments that are easy to
carry along the trail (guitar, harmonica, flute, drums)*





*This activity draws inspiration from the fact that humanity across the world links nature with music. Flowing water of brooks and streams, bird calls, breeze and calls of wildlife are some examples of this. As music transcends the barriers of culture, language and time; it **connects communities from different parts of the world**. In this activity the facilitator will take the students on a nature trail, preferably in a rich patch of forest. Make teams of 6 to 8 students each. The activity begins with the facilitator asking the participants whether they like music and what kind. Also asking how music feels to them or what it means to them.*



Play the two contrasting varieties of music that you have recorded. **Lead them to the trail and announce that we are now going to listen to the Forest Symphony/ Orchestra.** Add in a hushed tone that “it is a widespread group with many invisible players! Let’s see how many players we can **spot and try to remember** the notes too.” The facilitator and volunteers point to the callers and imitate a few sounds, while encouraging participants to imitate and remember the sounds while also asking the students about the feelings that these sounds evoke adding that they should pay attention to these feelings of.....? (let them fill this blank as feedback).

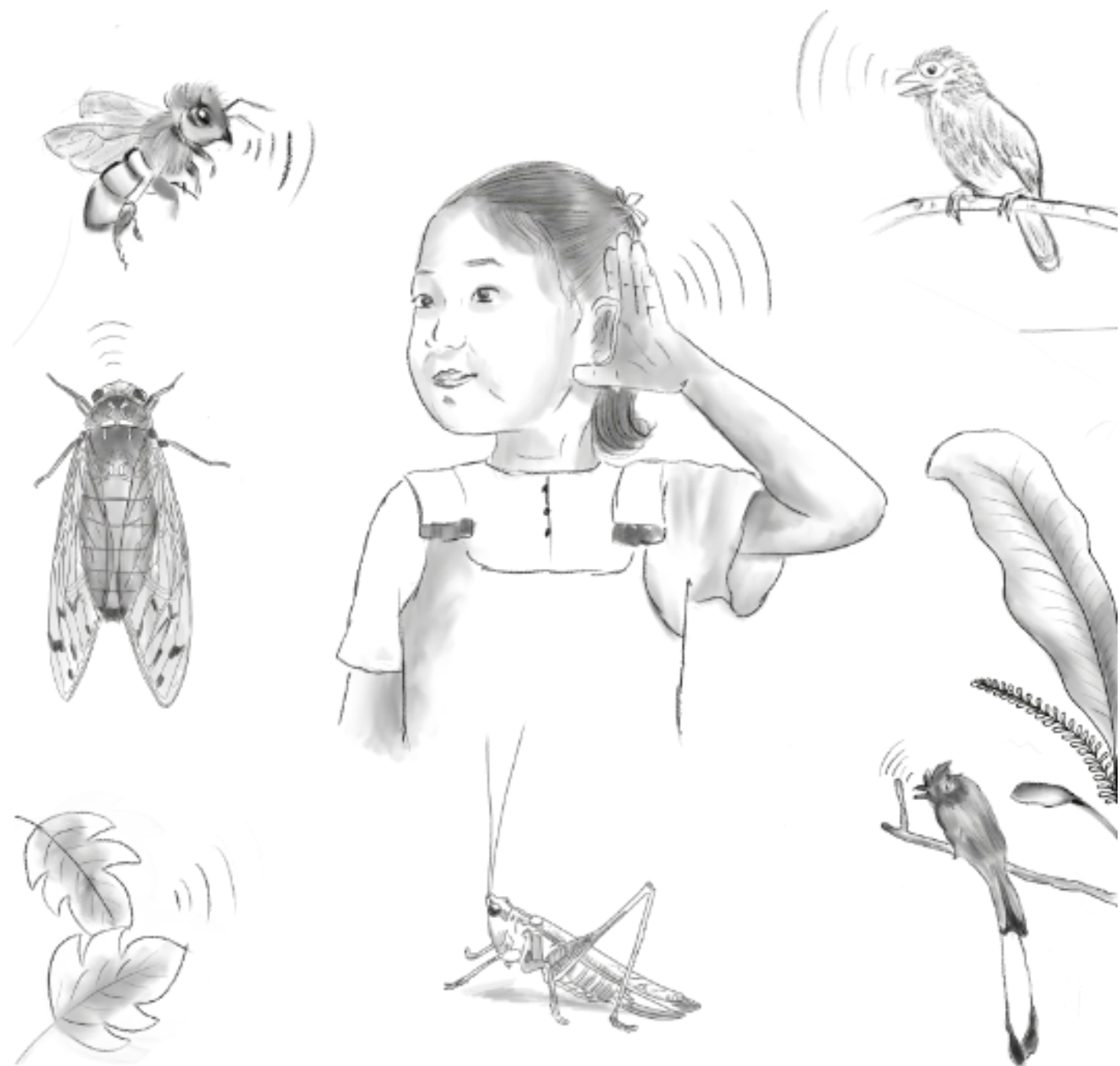


After a few responses from students, **the teams are sent to different areas to return with their accounts of the Forest Symphony/Orchestra.** Their task is not just to listen and remember, but also select two-three special sounds from the orchestra and make the others hear these. After they return it's time for silence. The entire group sits at one place in silence reflecting on what they heard.



Now, teams reassemble with ideas of different individuals to compose a few lines.. After this, the teams present their own music or song. **The lyrics should be based on nature and inspired by their experience.** Facilitators and volunteers can also record the sounds in their cell-phones to help the participants.





***Sounds of nature corresponding with
Hindustani music***

Sa is associated with sound of the peacock

Re with cow/bull

Ga with goat

Ma with crane

Pa with koel/cuckoo

Dha with horse and

Ni with elephant with the help of music or
vice-versa.



Feedback mechanism

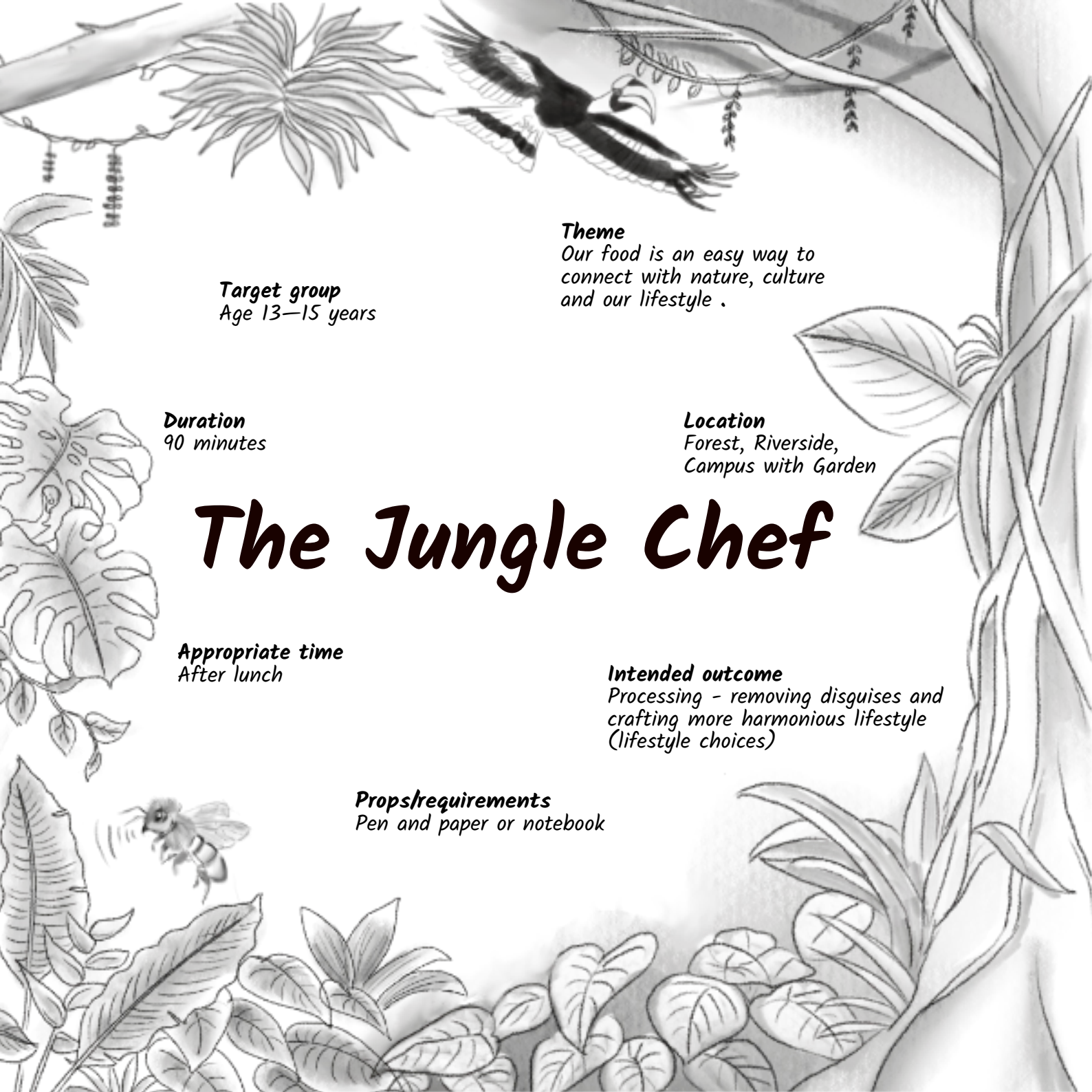
Students will be asked to share their experience verbally or in writing at the end of the event.

The students will be asked to prepare a similar song, poem or story on their own for the next meeting.

Follow up

The students along with the facilitator can perform the song, poem or story at a community event. The songs are displayed at the school for other students, teachers and parents to see.





Target group
Age 13—15 years

Theme

Our food is an easy way to
connect with nature, culture
and our lifestyle .

Duration
90 minutes

Location

Forest, Riverside,
Campus with Garden

The Jungle Chef

Appropriate time
After lunch

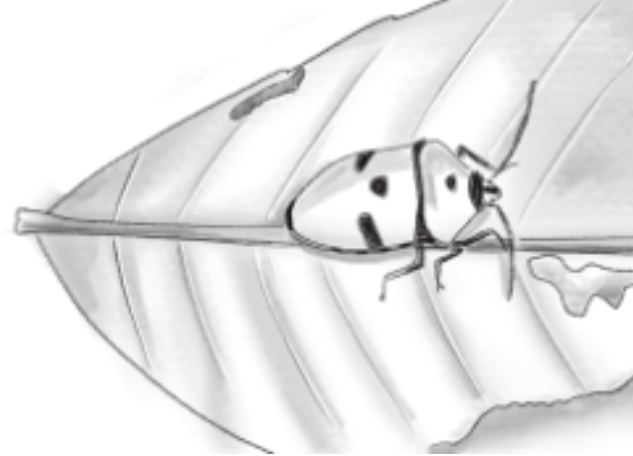
Intended outcome

Processing - removing disguises and
crafting more harmonious lifestyle
(lifestyle choices)

Props/requirements

Pen and paper or notebook

*Divide students into groups of 6-8 members each. **They will have to pick up different spots slightly away from each other to create their activity.***

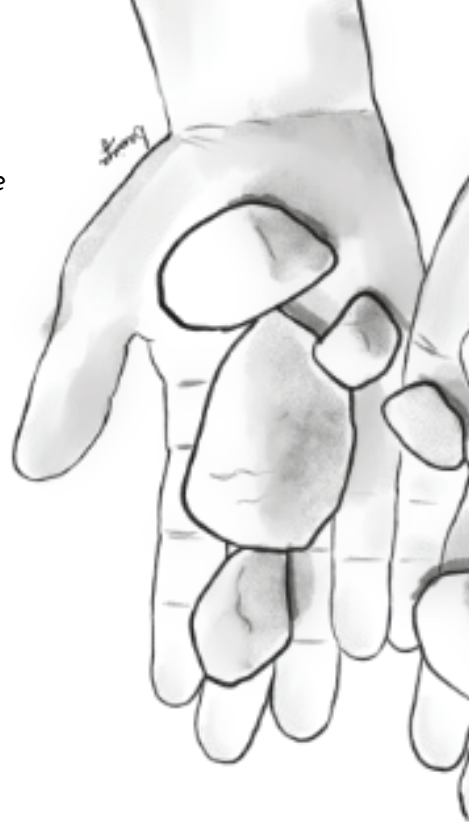


*Ask them to collect naturally found materials without harming, plucking, cutting what they will use to create a feast. **Ask the students to use the collected materials and prepare imaginary meals for everyone.** Before they start cooking the next task is for them to make a menu for their picnic (20 mins).*

*In the process of cooking, **they need to list down all the materials they use for cooking and the original source where they come from.** For example: rice, oil, etc from plants; masala and spices...so, when they make the menu, they have to list it as what it actually is e.g. daal is split legume seeds cooked with vegetable fat and natural pesticides (spices!), Rice is cooked seeds (cereal), chapati is ground and roasted cereals (wheat grains). The names can be as exciting and funny as possible, but the idea is to reach the actual plant part: seed, nut, leaf, flower, root, bark etc.*



The activity is to help them understand the actual components that are required to make food. From where does food come, the process of converting something into an edible form, the value of food and assess the participant's understanding of what food is.



Group Formation & Space Selection

- *Divide students into groups of 6-8 members each.*
- *Assign different spots slightly away from each other (forest, riverside, campus garden, or any open space with natural materials).*



Collecting Natural Materials (15 mins):

- *Ask students to gather naturally found materials without harming, plucking, or cutting.*
- *These materials will be used to create an imaginary feast.*



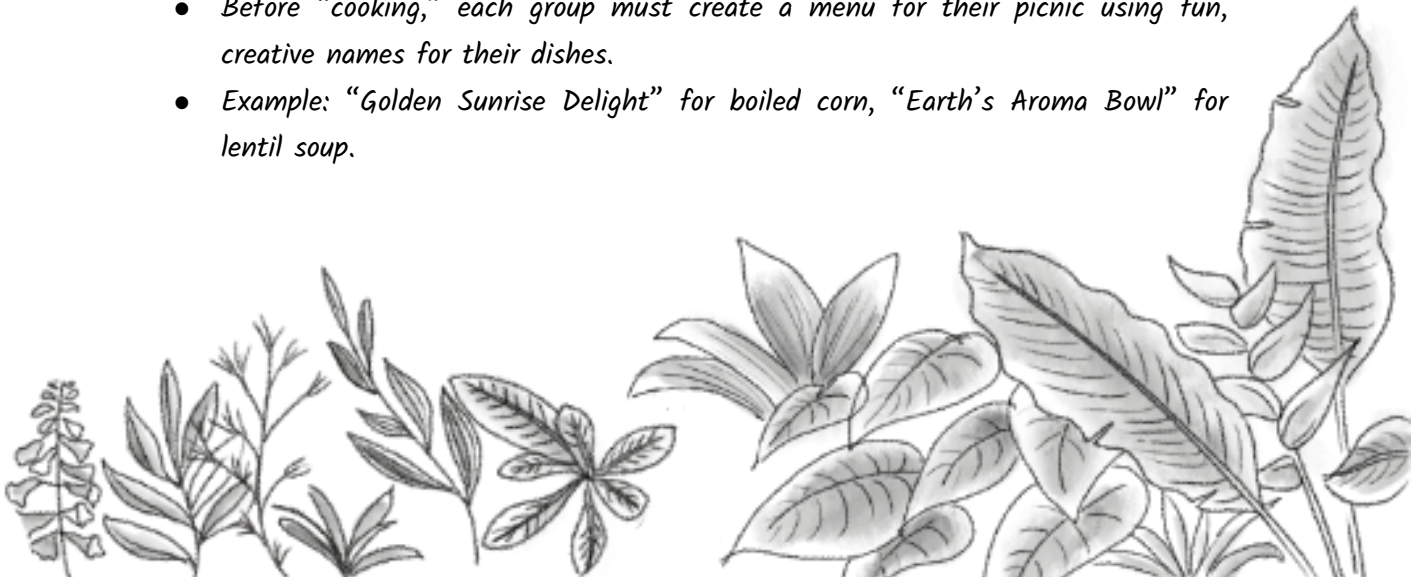
Ingredient Breakdown & Food Origins (30 mins)

While “preparing” their dishes, students must list down:

- *The actual ingredients their dish represents (e.g., Rice = boiled cereal grain, Daal = split legume seeds cooked with vegetable fat and natural pesticides).*
- *The source of each ingredient (seed, leaf, root, bark, flower, nut, etc.).*

Menu Creation (20 mins):

- *Before “cooking,” each group must create a menu for their picnic using fun, creative names for their dishes.*
- *Example: “Golden Sunrise Delight” for boiled corn, “Earth’s Aroma Bowl” for lentil soup.*





Dumb Charades Style Food Game (15 mins):

- *One group presents their “meal” to others. Instead of revealing the dish directly, they serve it as a mystery meal.*
- *The other teams must decode the actual components of the dish by guessing the base ingredients and their natural sources.*
- *Example: If a team presents "Forest Feast Stew," others must guess it is made of leafy greens, tubers, and legumes.*



*Spring a surprise by serving a locally made food dish (**traditional, vegetarian dish preferred**) and while they have it discuss the actual ingredients used.*

Reflection & Discussion (10 mins)

*Teams discuss how food has changed in their households and how much of it has retained its natural and traditional form. **The facilitator can initiate a conversation about food sources and sustainability.***



Feedback Mechanism

Once they prepare their imaginary dishes, they serve to everyone and tell the source of each ingredient (in real terms as per the examples given above) used for the dish, which other teams have to decode in turn.



Follow Up

They can initiate a discussion with their parents about the food sources used in the house and how food in their household has changed over time.





Target group
Age 13 years and above

Ideal group size: 15–20

Duration
60 minutes

Theme

Seasons are a window to learn about and adjust to climate change.

What if...

Intended outcome
Understanding -
Change, Climate

Location

Large open spaces,
preferably village
precincts or forest edge

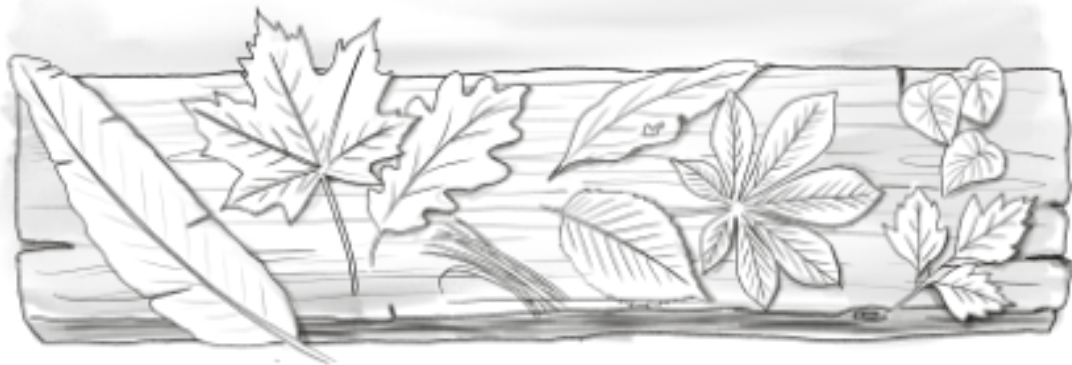
Appropriate time
During the day

Pre-Activity Preparations

*Identify and write at least two elements that represent each of the four seasons in a year. Create a playlist of sweet-sounding local music followed by at least six soundtracks that are produced by **human activities that harm the environment** (e.g. vehicle, factory, diesel generator etc.).*

Props/requirements

*Cut tags of different colours to represent the seasons and elements, **seasons written on a paper, marker pen to write various elements for each season** as the students share and playlist of one melodic sound and other different sound-tracks of human activities, datasheets for the scientists.*





Create a circle

Ask participants to name the seasons. **The moderator will note down those seasons.** The note will happen in colour coded chart papers (Eg: Summer in yellow, spring in pink, monsoon in green, autumn in blue, winter in white).



Also, ask them to name two prominent features of each season (E.g, **New leaf and flower for spring, mango and mosquito for summer, rain and rice for monsoon, leafless tree and bauhinia flower in autumn, snow and orange in winter**).



Divide the participants into four members representing the four seasons. **Give them each a tag of different coloured tag with the season written on it.**



Each member will stand on the spot representing each season. They will be called the season-character.

A student-volunteer will be assigned to each group as a 'scientist'



Now, the moderator will start to play melodic music of the region. The players will be asked to enjoy the music and listen to the instructions of the game. The instruction will be that, **whenever a new sound is played all participants will have to run randomly until the sound stops.** Then they need to choose the nearest circle and go there. Rule - the seasons cannot be together. The scientists do not run and are stationed in the same circle and whenever the music stops, the scientist makes a note of all those who have arrived at their circle.



Next, the moderator will start to play one of the sounds that causes the environmental hazard (***cars honking, generator sound***)



When all characters have taken their new position after the music stops, the scientist makes a note.



Assign two more members to stand besides the season-character along with name tags of the element. **Each one represents the elements and features of that season.** They will be called the element-character. (E.g., Winter season characters can be joined by Snow Leopard and snow. Summer season characters can be joined by heat and mango. Monsoon season character can be joined by rain and rice plants. Spring season characters can be joined by butterflies and flowers.)





The moderator again starts to play another environmentally hazardous sound on the speaker, and the players follow the same rule as above.

When the game is over the participants will again converge in a circle. In the circle, the data collector will share all the different combinations that had arrived in their circle, which includes the first round where all the seasons and the elements were in correct order.



After the scientist shares the different data that was observed after each round, the moderator will ask the students what they observed and then talk about climate change and the randomness of events that take place or will be taking place due to climate change.

*The moderator also needs to highlight the sounds that prompted each change and **link the different sounds to some of the causes of climate change.***

*It is recommended to end this activity on a slightly positive note so that participants are not left in despair. The participants can be asked to close their eyes and visualise an ideal world with everything in order and while this is going on, **in the background we can play a hopeful song like “we are the world, we are the children” or any local-relevant song** and end the activity on a joyful note.*



Feedback Mechanism

Sharing about people’s own understanding and experience of climate change.

Follow Up

Talking to their family elders about seasons and the changes that have occurred in their lifetime and how they have dealt with these. Also, linking this activity to what each child can do in her/his own way to make a difference in the era of climate change would be useful (it could be an illustrated talk or movie on lifestyle change).



Theme

Water calms and heals us; let us experience the silent healing of this stream/river today!

Target group

Age 13–16 years

Appropriate time

Late afternoon (in cold places), Evening hours elsewhere, as this is an end of the day activity.

Reflection in the Sand (And Water)

Duration

45 mins (considering that you'll choose either step 2 or 4, but if you have time and wish to do both then it will be 1 hour)

Location

River side with sand banks/stones on the bank

Intended outcome

Feeling - joy at being in touch with life)
Processing - setting up solitude



Pre-activity Preparation

Survey of the site

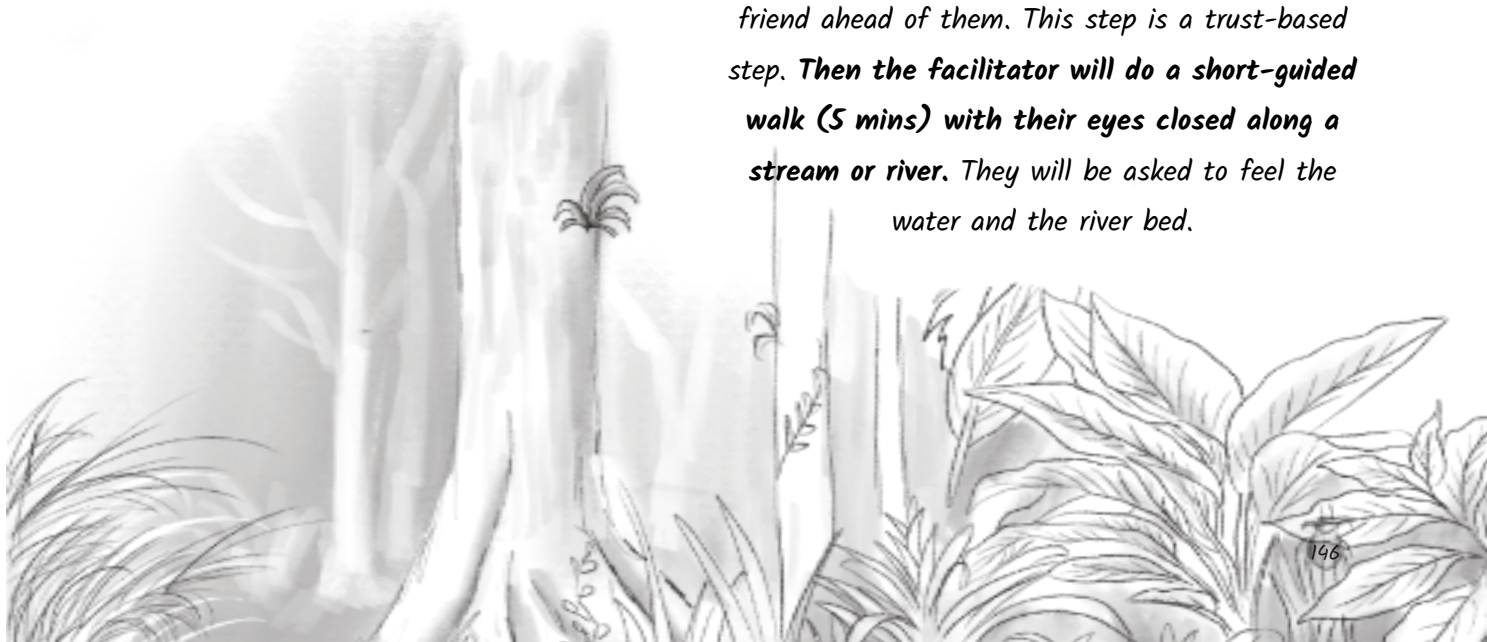
Props:

Special 'healing' stones to sit on and write feedback (can mark them in a creative way that can be eliminated later after the activity)



The facilitator will gather the students near a shallow stream/river.

*The students will be asked to leave their bags and baggage behind and stand in a line. The facilitator will then tell them to close their eyes and trust the friend ahead of them. This step is a trust-based step. **Then the facilitator will do a short-guided walk (5 mins) with their eyes closed along a stream or river.** They will be asked to feel the water and the river bed.*





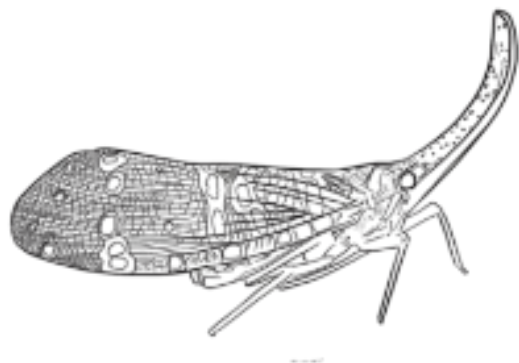
(15 min): They will then be asked to pick a spot (suggest the 'healing stones' as ideal spots) **to sit alone in silence and think about their day.** They can think about what they enjoyed the most or learnt and why. They can also draw or paint what they see now.

(10 min): At the end of this walk, the participants will be asked to wander in the river alone, **observing whatever catches their attention.** It could be stones, birds, insects, fishes etc. anything in and at the edge of the stream.





*(15 min): At the end of the solitude, they will gather at the sand bank and draw or sculpt sand structures or shapes of something special from the river walk. The facilitator can then close the activity **by asking a few students to share what they have made or drawn in the sand.***



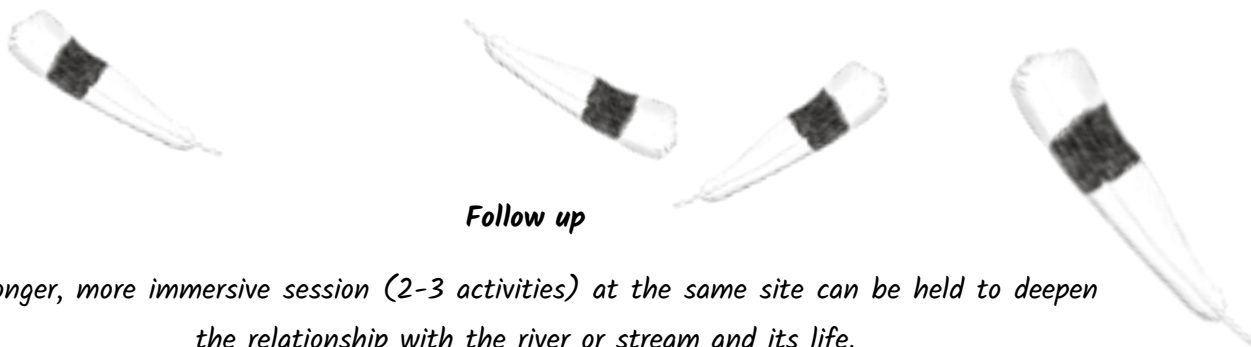
*At the end of this activity **the participants would be able to reflect on their experience of the day** and share it with others encouraging them to open up with their friends. It will also provide a calming experience.*

Note: Facilitator can choose to either offer step 2 or step 4 as a way of expression of art. Including both steps in the activity is not compulsory.



Feedback

Their sharing of the day's experience is important feedback. The drawings in the sand can also be considered as feedback.



Follow up

A longer, more immersive session (2-3 activities) at the same site can be held to deepen the relationship with the river or stream and its life.



Theme

*Nature inspires us to rethink
and redesign the things we
use as well as our lives*

Duration

1:30 hours

Location

*Forest or riverside (e.g.
Gobuk with indigenous
community)*

Weavers of the Wild World

Materials

*Bamboo sheets, pencils, pens,
crayons, galle (wrap), galuk
(blouse), fibre from tree*

Target group

Age 11–13 years

Intended outcome

*Understanding - habitats & niche;
Processing - sharpen the sense of
observation related to natural
colours, patterns and textures*

Pre-Activity Preparations

On-Site: Designate a trail where spider net is easily visible By facilitators:

Starting Point: A big tree (Any big tree that demands attention by its sheer size or key role – Bhelu / Awek / Bol Bok/ Dungong False Hemp tree (*Tetrameles nudiflora*) or Fig (*Ficus spp.*) or Semal/Silk Cotton tree (*Bombax ceiba*)



“Imagine nature as a giant, magical garden where every plant, animal, and tiny creature plays an important role in keeping it alive, beautiful and healthy. **Some of these creatures are like little artists, weaving wonders every day to help nature thrive!**



Now, changing the tone to a lighter one, the facilitator addresses the group, **“Hello beautiful people.. How are you?? Have you ever done time-travel? No?!** Don't worry, we will take you back to the time when things were simple and we were more connected to Mother Nature.”



Make a sound : Whoooooosh...we are in the year 1930 now!! In our activity, together we'll discover the “great weavers of nature.” **Let's get ready to meet and learn from the hardworking weavers of the wild.** But before that let's divide ourselves into two groups

Find a natural Weaver in the Wild: Take the students on the designated trail where they can search for the Nature Weavers. It can be any shoots, leaves and roots intertwined, climbers, spider webs etc. After they find it, we can ask them if they have any story or information to share about their Nature Weaver.



Adi Story of the Spider Web:

Spider Webs are believed to be parda (curtain) woven by spiders in order to protect the humans from ghosts or goblins etc. The Ghosts or the Goblins can see everything and everywhere but they are not able to look through the spider web. Thus the spider, being a friend of the humans protects them from the sight of Goblins or Ghosts.

In Shergaon, a village from West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, they believe the spider web to be a sign of prosperity.

Pattern Walk

“Every weaver makes a pattern and we can see patterns everywhere. So why not go for a walk and search for the hidden patterns in the wild and try drawing them on our magical bamboo sheets.” Facilitators can show real examples of one or two patterns on site.

Encourage the students to look out for different patterns in different elements of the wild. It could be in the stream, grass, leaves, sand or on the tree bark, rocks etc.

Team Assignment: Form 3 to 4 different teams and assign each to observe and document patterns in leaves, tree bark, flowers, or animal tracks.



- **Data Sheet Activity:** Provide participants with a structured data sheet containing rows and columns to record and visualize their observations. Suggested columns could include:

- **Object:** Name or description of the observed pattern.
- **Pattern Drawing:** A simple sketch of the identified pattern.
- **Made By (in Nature):** Identify the natural creator or cause of the pattern (e.g., plant growth, water flow, animal movement).

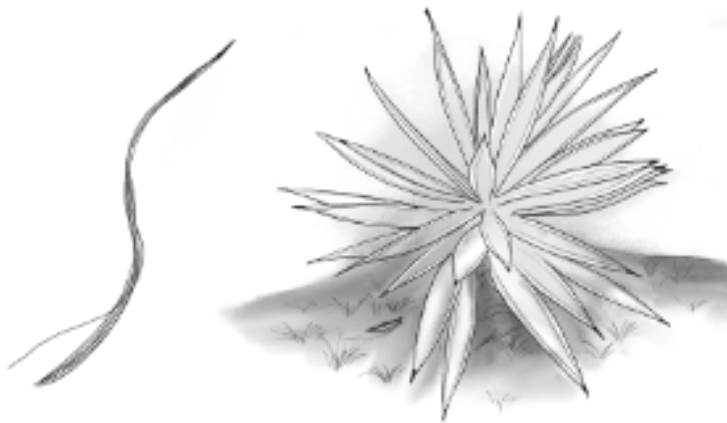


Epic Colour Adventure in the forest !

Since Nature is full of colours and patterns are incomplete without colours, how about going for an epic colour adventure in the wild and get the colours for the design.

Encourage students to match the colours that they find from the wild with crayons, colouring pens or pencils that each team will be given to get the closest version of the colours they found.

The magical patterns



Now, the students are ready to design the clothes (Galey/Galuk or anything traditional) with the colours and patterns they found from the wild and draw it on paper or bamboo sheets thus preparing design templates for the fabric.

The facilitator gathers the group and announces with a smile: “Now let's return to 2024 and reflect on the entire experience and how our relationship with Nature is in the present time!”



Feedback Mechanism

Children can verbally share or sit and narrate their experience in notebooks after reflecting a bit on how life and connection with nature was in the 1930s.

Follow-up

Conduct the activity (Fibre Detectives: Plants that help you weave magic!) - This activity can be conducted if students are close to a village and outside a protected area. This is a participatory activity where the facilitator helps the students in searching for plants from which fibres can be extracted to weave clothes. Please remember that children are only being shown the plants, and extraction does not take place. The facilitator has to keep fibres extracted from any plant (eg: bark of Sterculia) ready to show them at the end of their search. They can be shown a demonstration of weaving with these colours and fibres by the real craftsmen or community members. The kids can also try their hands at it.

Theme

Let us listen to and engage in a unique story of love, respect and gratitude between humans and animals.

Target group

Age 11–14 years

Duration

One hour

The Tale of the Hornbill's Tail

Location

Forest for students or Open community space for community members (preferably close to forest)

Intended outcome

Feeling - a kinship with All living beings

Understanding - inter-relationship of hornbills and plants

Appropriate time

Morning (between 7 am and 9 am) for outdoors, Evening (5 pm to 6 pm) for indoors

Pre-activity preparation

*A reconnaissance visit is advisable to find a forest trail preferably with big trees or hornbill nest trees to sit under with **the school children in a semi-circle around the storyteller.***



Props/requirements

*Picture of Great Hornbill (**Paga**), Local hornbill fruit tree seeds for the gift/present, Great Hornbill hornbill tail feather, message on the bark or paper, porcupine quill (**for the story**), digging equipment for planting seeds*



Facilitator 1 welcomes the kids saying “Welcome to_____ (name of the place, where activity is being conducted). As you will soon realize, this forest is full of fascinating tales weaved by the people who have lived here and interacted with its life. We have managed to invite a special guest (name), **who has a long and rich experience of this forest to share with all of you a very fascinating story.**

Facilitator 1 then brings them under the Bhelu tree (*Tetrameles nudiflora* which is a hornbill nest tree) where the storyteller is waiting.



Storyteller (can be facilitator 2 disguised as a local storyteller with necessary attire) then instructs the kids to sit in a semi-circle. **(S)he then introduces herself and asks if they have heard about a place called “Nagaland”.** The kids will respond and after that the storyteller will say that she is from Nagaland and she will share a folktale about a bird found in Nagaland that looks like this (showing the Great Hornbill picture) **and ask the audience whether it occurs in their area too.** Finally, she adds with a smile that through her story and on the wings of the hornbill, she will take them to Nagaland.



Zeme community (Nagaland) folktale:

Once there was a boy whose parents had unfortunately passed away, and he lived in the house of some relatives, but the man and his wife constantly ill-treated him. When he went with the other young people to work in the fields the woman used to give him food to take with him; **but she mixed rat's excreta with the rice and gave him a porcupine's quill** to take so that he could pick out what grains he could from the mess.



Every day the young men and girls used to gather in the field-house and eat together, but the boy was ashamed to let them see what his food was like, and always ate by himself, at a distance. One day he went to wash his hands and mouth before eating, and two of the girls, both of whom were fond of him, said to each other; **"Why does he never eat with us? Let us go and look at what food he has."** They went very quietly and unpacked his tiffin box, and found the rice all filthy and mixed with rat excreta.



“Oh!” they spoke. “So that is why he would not eat with us! Let us throw it away.” They threw it away, and each contributed a little from her own food and made it up into a parcel as before. They looked in his zu-gourd, but there was only water, so they threw that away, and each contributed zao kasang (alcohol) from her own gourd.

When the boy came back and opened his food, he found good rice instead of what had been there before, and he said to the others: “Who does this belong to? It isn’t mine. Mine is not like this.” They all said: “It must be yours. Look, every one of us has his own.” Still, he insisted that it was not his, and they insisted that it must be, but he refused to eat or drink any of it.

For several days this happened, the girls waiting till he had gone to wash and then supplying good rice and zu from their own tiffins, but every time he declared it was not his and would not touch it, for he guessed what had happened and was ashamed.



One day he said to the girl he liked the best: “What do you love most, me or your clothes?” She answered: “I love you the most.”

“Then will you give me some of your clothes?” he asked.

“Yes,” said the girl, and she gave him her clothes, and he put them on.



"How do I look?" he said.

"Oh, very fine," said the girl.

"Will you give me the neck of your zu-gourd?" he said.

"Yes," she said, and broke it off and gave it to him. He put it to his mouth like a beak, and said: "Now I'll get up on the field house and see how I look from there."

When he had scrambled up on the roof he called to her: "How do I look now?"

"Oh, very fine indeed," she said.

"Very well," said the boy. "If it looks alright from here, then I'll go up higher into a tree." He climbed up into a tree and sat there and became a hornbill, and cried out harshly, as hornbills do. When the girl saw what had happened, she began to weep and cried out: "You look very handsome, but come down and let us go to the village. Come down, and let us go!" But he was a hornbill, and was ready to fly away. "After a long while I will return," he said to her. "When you hear the sound of hornbills' wings overhead, come out of your house and sit outside; I shall be the last bird in the flight, and I will drop the very best of my tail-feathers for you."

So, he flew away, and the girl went weeping back to the village.

A long time later, after the girl had married, she heard the sound of hornbills' wings overhead, and she left the house and sat outside. As she looked up at the last hornbill in the flight, the hornbill dropped the finest of its tail-feathers, and it floated down and landed near her. The girl kept the feather and treasured it, and she and her husband had great good fortune and had splendid crops and became rich.





~Ursula Graham's Collection published in Naga journal

The storyteller: "You know when I was telling this story and you were listening to me intently, a hornbill dropped his feather. Can you go and find the feather which as you heard now is a sign of prosperity? Please be sure that one needs to look for and (with fortune) 'find' a 'fallen feather' to find a fortune..." she adds!



After two teams of kids have been made, they can start walking the trail to find the 'dropped' feather.

Facilitator 2 takes the kids inside the jungle to find the trail. On his way he says that the tree under which they were listening to this story was a hornbill nesting tree and how hornbill never builds a nest but uses an existing cavity and stays inside it to lay eggs. Then he goes ahead and shows another Bhelu tree, pointing out some distinct characteristics of the tree.

*The feather with a leaf packed in red ribbon can either fall from a tree **(where a volunteer hides before the activity begins waiting to drop it in such a way that kids notice it!)**, or will be hidden somewhere beside the trail. That leaf will have seeds collected earlier by facilitators.*

When one of the members of a group finds the feather, the facilitators applaud and appreciate their team. The kids might also notice the leaf packed with a ribbon that lies beside the feather. If they don't, the facilitator 3 will point that out and will say **"There seems to be something else that the hornbill has left for the one who found the feather, so can any one of you come and check?"**

The leaf (also referred to as the hornbill's gift or present) will have seeds of fruits eaten by both hornbills and other frugivores with a message (on a piece of bark or paper) saying -



Hello, children. My name is Paga and this forest is my home. You might not be knowing that I am the farmer of the forest carrying seeds of many trees far away with the fruits that I eat. And many other friends in the forest help in this work. Do you know who they are? (pause a little and add a few names if they don't respond)

Ok, tell me, would you also like to be one of the farmers of the forest? Just like you sow the seeds of crops, take these seeds of forest trees in far-off parts of the forest or near your village and plant them.

Wishing you all happiness, prosperity and luck.

Love

Paga

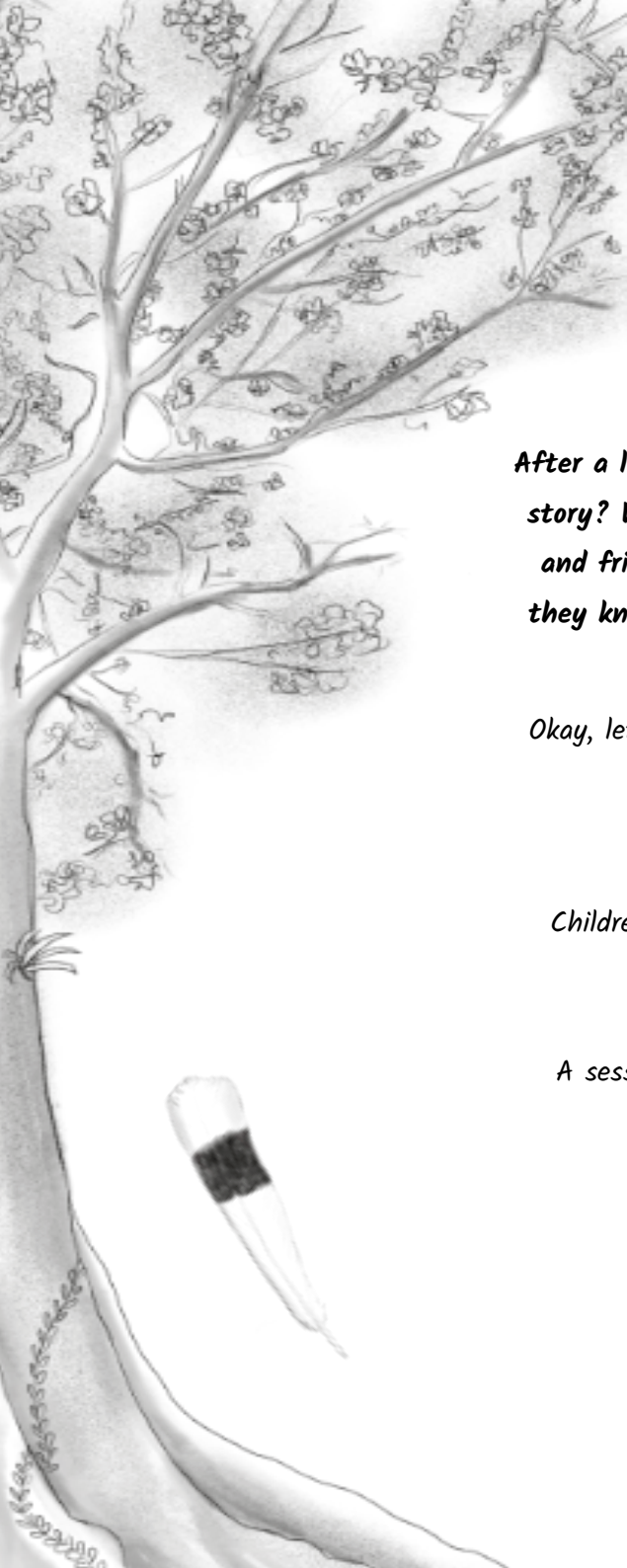
Facilitator 4 then says that “Oh! you have been given a huge responsibility by Paga, the hornbill. Let’s all thank him, and plant a few of the seeds right here as a memory of your visit, the rest you can carry back with you to your village. Please make a wish while planting each of these seeds and return it back to the forest”

The kids will wish and plant the seeds in a particular area prepared for planting and shown by facilitators.

Facilitator 5 will take over and ask “Thank you for returning the seed to the forest to grow into huge trees which will supply lots of fruits to the animals like hornbills...”

Can some of you tell me what you wished for?” *If they say personal wishes, we can add that “you can also wish that your seed one day grows into a big tree so that it bears many fruits which can be eaten by birds and other animals.”*





After a little pause, Facilitator 5 will ask, “Did you like the hornbill story? Will you go back to your homes and share with your family and friends? You can also ask your parents and grandparents if they know stories or folktales about hornbills and other creatures of the forest.

Okay, let’s finish with gratitude to hornbills and I want to thank you all for being such wonderful listeners.

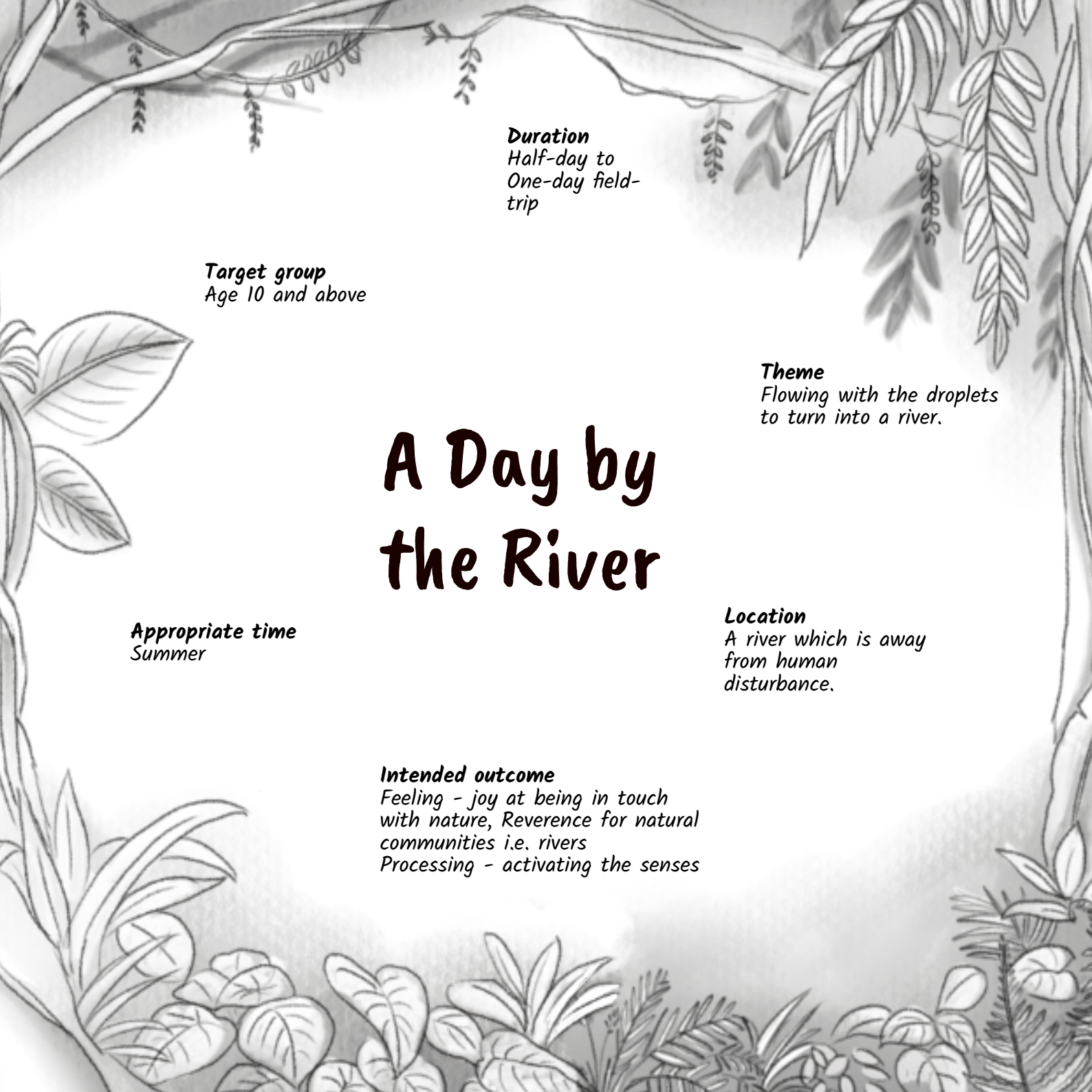
Feedback mechanism

Children will provide oral feedback on their experience and learning

Follow-up

A session for planting hornbill fruit trees in the school campus or nearby forest area





Duration
Half-day to
One-day field-
trip

Target group
Age 10 and above

Theme
Flowing with the droplets
to turn into a river.

A Day by the River

Appropriate time
Summer

Location
A river which is away
from human
disturbance.

Intended outcome
Feeling - joy at being in touch
with nature, Reverence for natural
communities i.e. rivers
Processing - activating the senses

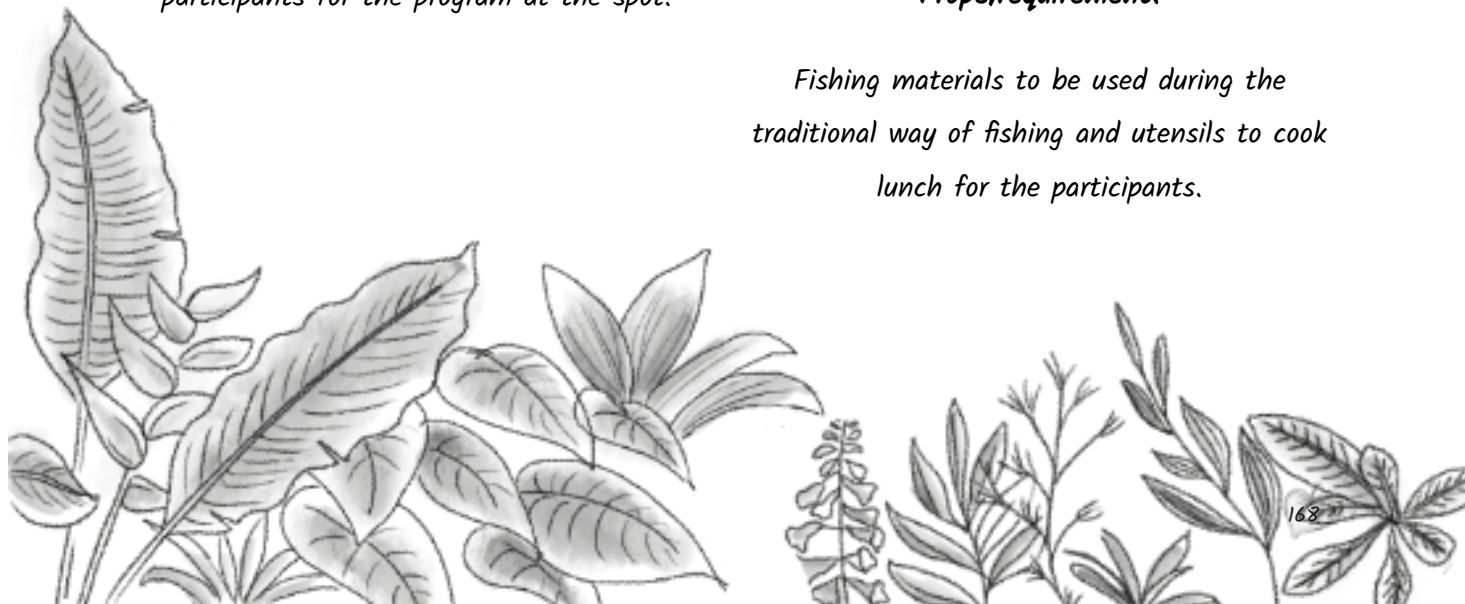
Pre- activity preparation

- *Identification or selection of a river away from human disturbance.*
- *Identify the group of local youth or villagers who are basically fishermen a few days before. Get them ready with all the equipment used for traditional fishing one day before.*
- *Collect all the utensils for preparing lunch for the participants on the day of the workshop.*
- *Inform the selected students of different groups one day before the workshop.*
- *Assigning one person to bring all the participants for the program at the spot.*



Props/requirement:

Fishing materials to be used during the traditional way of fishing and utensils to cook lunch for the participants.



Feel the peace and joy

When the students arrive ask them to sit silently on the river or stream bank dipping their feet in it and close their eyes.

Let them listen to the sound of the stream and feel the water on their feet for a few minutes.

Encourage the participants to share their experiences.

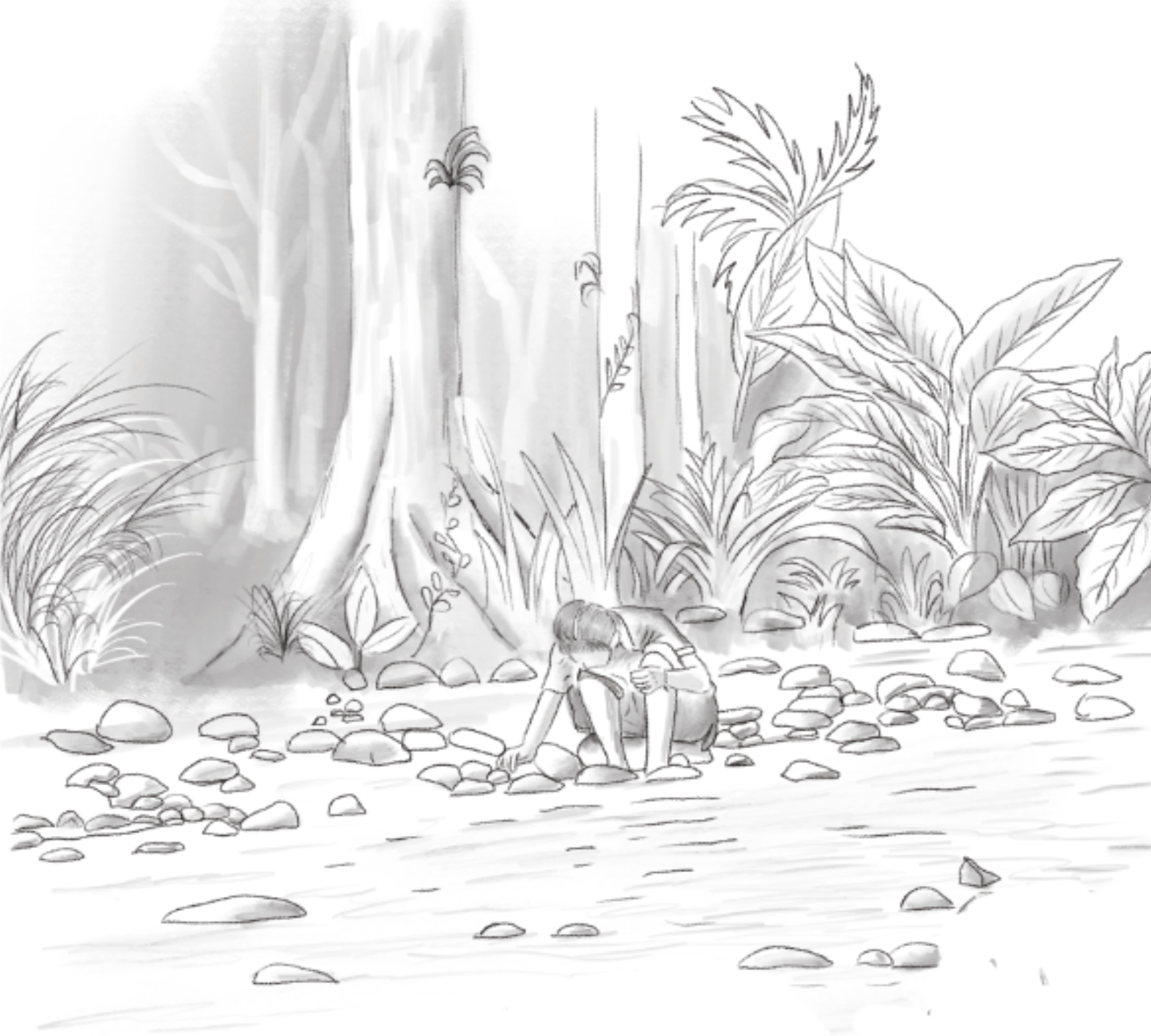
Observe and admire

*Make teams of students and let one volunteers lead them to different parts of the river to be there **for : 20 to 30 minutes observing the colours, patterns and life in the river***



Stories of the rivers.

- *Asking students about the importance of water for **humans and wildlife.***
- *Sharing with students the significance of rivers in rituals of the particular region by the person chosen from the village/ community.*
- *Sing local/cultural songs about the rivers together. For example, **Shertukpen song “Champling bodeno”***



Traditional method of fishing with the help of village fishermen.

- All the participants will be helping those fishermen for fishing.
- Natural fish poison will be used avoiding all the artificial harmful chemicals that have side effects for other aquatic lives.
- Leaves, barks and stones will be used for fishing.



Discuss how they felt and what they learnt while stressing how this activity helped them feel, observe, enjoy, respect and use (fishing) the river in a traditional way with minimum negative impact. End with a “Gratitude ceremony” for’ the river, where each participant comes forward and thanks the river for something special that they got today.

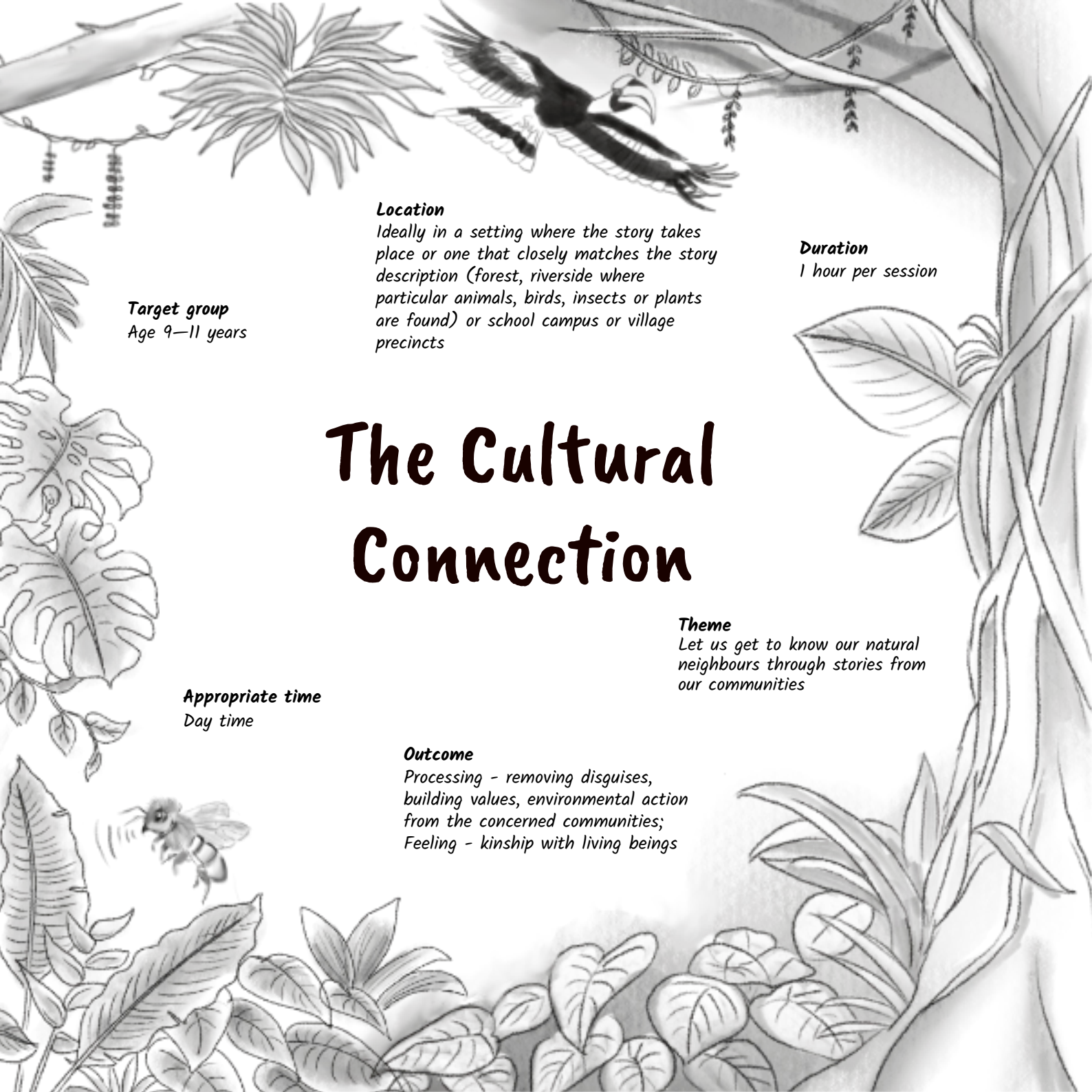
Feedback Mechanism

Provide time for quiet reflection to write or draw and share their experience of spending time with rivers. Compose poems or songs for rivers in their own dialect.

Follow up

One can organise a longer trip, where students who participated in the one-day outing can camp along the river and explore it in detail – both scientifically and creatively.





Target group
Age 9–11 years

Location

Ideally in a setting where the story takes place or one that closely matches the story description (forest, riverside where particular animals, birds, insects or plants are found) or school campus or village precincts

Duration

1 hour per session

The Cultural Connection

Appropriate time
Day time

Theme

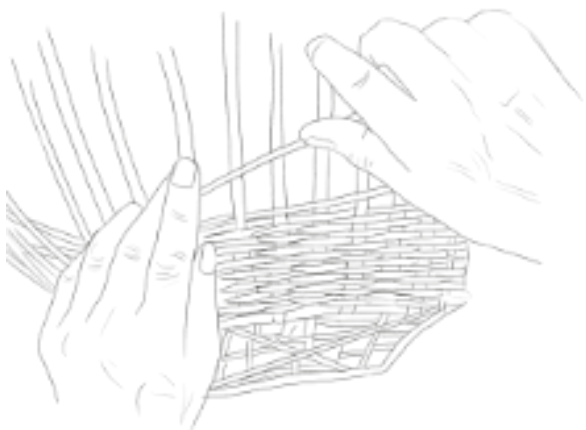
Let us get to know our natural neighbours through stories from our communities

Outcome

*Processing - removing disguises, building values, environmental action from the concerned communities;
Feeling - kinship with living beings*

Pre- activity preparation

*For the development of such an activity, the presence of at least one member of the community represented in the story is crucial. The activity will develop better through consultation with elders and storytellers of the community, **especially with reference to details of the story, words and names in local dialect, and the moral and/or ecological values held by the community.** It would be ideal to perform the storytelling in the language in which it has been traditionally told.*



*As an example, we can take the story of Esi Tabu (**checkered keelback, an aquatic snake species**), told by the Nyishi people of Arunachal Pradesh. The story illustrates how Esi Tabu lost its venom; humiliated by the great venomous Barta (pit viper sp.), Esi Tabu abandons its venom, which gets consumed by a particular species of ants, **hence causing their sting to be highly painful!***

Props/ requirements: 8x10 inch photos or illustrations of the creatures being portrayed



Transform the story into an experience

Depending on the nature of the story, think of a way in which it can turn into an experience for children.

*Some examples are as follows: a story that takes place in a forest and involves plants and insects can be a storytelling trail inside the forest, discovering the characters of the story in real life as the story is told; a story that takes place besides the river can involve experiences with and in the river or streams; a **story that illustrates people-nature relationship with respect to harvesting in a sustainable and ethical way** can be enacted on the village commons, or in jhum fields.*



Make a note of the characters from both socio-cultural and ecological contexts. Which creatures and places feature in the story? What is their cultural importance? What is their ecological importance and role? What is the central message of the story?

*Explore traditional/cultural ways of learning in your place; **what are important learning spaces traditionally? Are there any particular methods of learning? Are there particular people who are considered important holders of traditional knowledge? What are important values that the story proposes? Consider how you will incorporate these.***





*In the example of the story of Esi Tabu, there are three characters: **Esi Tabu (checkered keelback)**, **Barta (pit viper)**, and **fire ants**. The story illustrates the concept of venom. Some important ecological information from this story is:*

- 1. Snakes are venomous or non-venomous, and the story gives two commonly encountered examples of these.*
- 2. Habitats of both the snake species and how it is usually encountered by humans.*
- 3. Connection between different living beings who have similar mechanisms, e.g. venom in snakes, stinging in ants.*







Given these factors, and considering that it would be a matter of chance to find these snakes while conducting the activity, it is desirable to have a drama-based activity, where one curates a script-based storytelling, where children participate in “becoming” the characters. **It is also a kind of role play this way, which is helpful in value-building.** Each team member takes leadership of one of the three main characters, while the others become the “extras”.

(**Note:** If you are changing the way a story is told, like dramatizing an oral narration, it is recommended to consult elders of the community about the appropriateness and accuracy of the approach, script, and dialogues)

Begin by forming three groups of children, each representing the three characters: Esi Tabu, Barta, and the ants. The children are assigned to each character leader, who is responsible for arranging an “introduction” of the character with the children, and showing the children how to collectively “move” like the character.



For example, the Esi Tabu leader would prepare their group to introduce themselves in the following way:

Student 1 says: Hello, I am Esi Tabu! (pronounced isi taabu)

Student 2 says: In English, I am called, checkered keelback based on the pattern of my scales (upper part of the skin).

Student 3 says: I am usually found in water— lakes, ponds, rice fields, streams and rivers.

Moreover, they rehearse a way to “be” the character collectively, like moving in a single curved line like a snake.

Once the rehearsal is done, the storytelling begins with each character leader initiating the dialogue, and the children following them as instructed. It is important to keep children's roles and instructions very simple and easy to follow, so that they don't miss out on the actual story.

Summarize by referring to the missing characteristics of the creatures, importance of their specific ecological roles showing pictures of these creatures. Finally, you need to emphasize the message of the activity (how cultures view wild species and create a relationship with them through stories.)



Feedback Mechanism

Asking the children to re-tell the story together in the end would be a good way to find out if they have grasped the story completely, along with its significance.

Follow up

As you conclude the activity, prompt the children to go home and share the story with their family and friends if they don't know about it already. They can find out about more such stories of wild plants and animals that their community has. One can also identify a few good storytellers from among the children and motivate them to be the new storytellers of their immediate communities.

Theme

Using storytelling to explore
how communities are shaped by
nature, and how nature, in turn,
is nurtured by culture

Target group
Community and
youth

Appropriate time
Any time of the day

Stories of my Land

Duration
60 minutes

Location

Choose a setting with natural
surroundings (e.g., forest,
riverside, or campus garden)
that encourage a connection
with nature.

Intended outcome

Feeling - Reverence for
Natural Communities and
intricate nature-culture
relationship

Processing - value building

Pre-Activity Preparations:

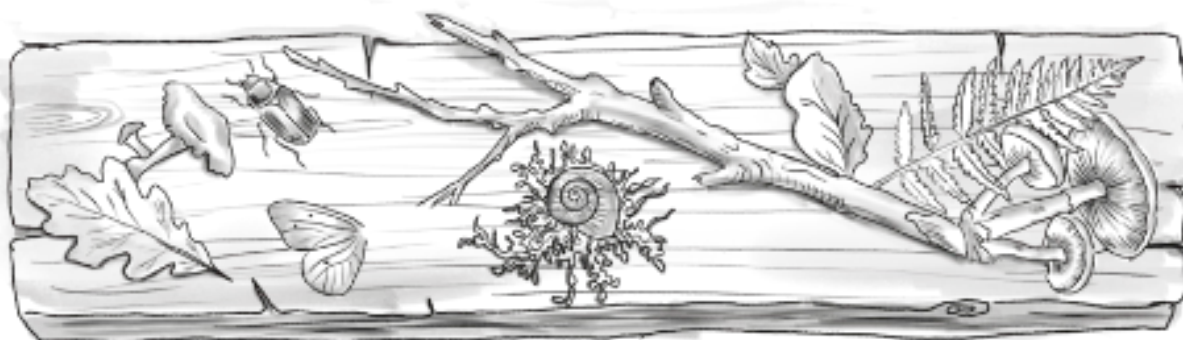
- *Location:* Choose a setting with natural surroundings (e.g., forest, riverside, or campus garden) that encourage a connection with nature.
- *Group Size:* Ideal for groups or communities of 10-20 people, but can be adjusted.

Props/Requirements

Provide natural materials (leaves, sticks, stones, seeds) or any available art supplies (e.g., paper, markers, colour pencils) to help participants create visual representations of their stories.



*Begin by asking the participants, “who would like to listen to a story?” After their response, introduce **the idea of stories as powerful cultural and educational tools** to pass on important messages, practices and moral ground of the community towards nature.*



*Explain that our focus today is on sharing stories that highlight how the community interacts with nature and how people contribute to environmental conservation or sustainability. **This could include personal experiences, local history, or ideas for the future.***



You may want to provide an example, such as a local story about how a village protected a nearby forest, a community garden initiative, or a traditional practice of conserving water. Basically, facilitators need to encourage stories about nature conservation efforts, local eco-friendly practices, traditional ecological knowledge, or even challenges the community faces regarding environmental issues.

Example prompts:

"Tell a story of a time when your community worked together to protect the environment."

"Describe a tradition in your community that reflects respect for nature."

"How did your community address a local environmental challenge? "

"Ethical and moral concerns towards wildlife and natural landscapes in your community."

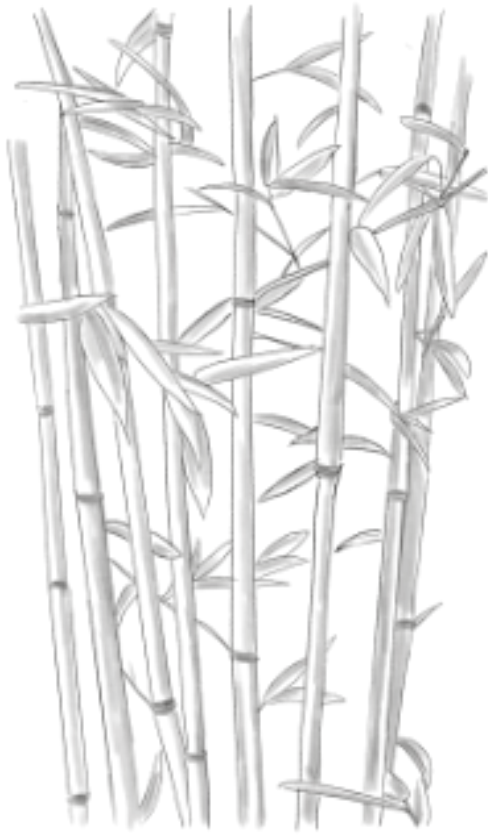
An example of a story that can be shared:

Once, in 1979, a young boy named **Jadav Payeng** from **Assam** saw something that deeply moved him: after a flood, **many snakes had died** on a barren sandbar because there was no shade, no trees, just scorching heat.

He went to the elders and asked, "Why doesn't someone plant trees here?" But no one took it seriously. So, Jadav took a bold step **and started planting trees himself.**







*At first, he planted bamboo, walking every day with a few saplings and watering them with river water in earthen pots. He kept doing it, season after season, year after year **alone**.*

*Over time, something incredible happened. The small patch of land turned into a **lush green forest** now known as **Molai Forest**, spread over **1,300 acres!***

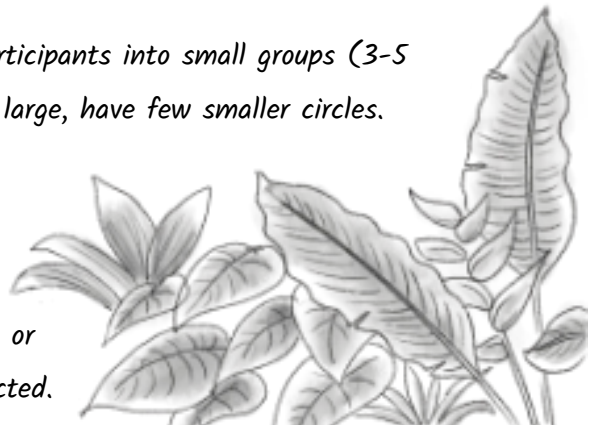
*This forest is now home to **tigers, elephants, deer, birds, and many other species**. Jadav didn't stop. He says, "If we cut trees, the earth will die. If we plant trees, the earth will live."*

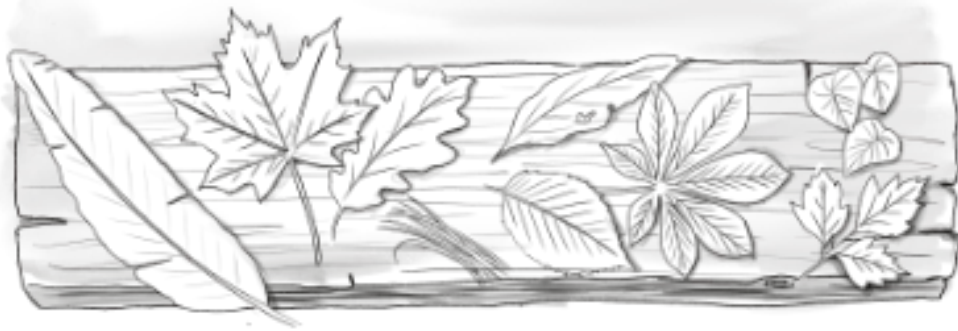
*Jadav Payeng's dedication shows that **even one person**, with love for nature and persistence, can bring back life to a dying land*



Formation of Groups: Divide the participants into small groups (3-5 members) or if the community is large, have few smaller circles.

Story Sharing: Each team will discuss their stories and one or two members will then share the stories that they have selected.





New Story Creation:

After sharing their individual stories, each group can collaborate to create a new community story that blends elements from each group or person's narrative.

They can create visual representations of their stories using natural materials they gather from the environment or by drawing illustrations. This could be a group mural, a sculpture, or a story map that depicts the journey of the community's green transformation.

*If possible, each group can **perform or act out their story** (e.g., a skit or drama), adding a dynamic element to the activity.*





*At the end of the activity, each group can share their **Green Story** with the whole community. This could be through storytelling, presentations, or performances. Discuss the common themes, ideas for improving the community's relationship with nature, and potential actions the group could take moving forward.*



Feedback Mechanism

Finish the activity with a group reflection. Ask participants to discuss.

How did the activity help them better understand the role of the community in environmental stewardship?

What new ideas or solutions emerged from the stories shared?

How can each person contribute to improving their community's relationship with nature?

Follow Up

Try to document and learn about different folktales, community actions and local governance systems that have helped to preserve natural resources at their respective sites.



Duration
60 minutes

Theme

These are not just leaves; they are special jewels that (reveal to us) connect us to the beauty and diversity of the forest.

Target group
All (students, youth, community)

Leaf Museums

Intended outcome

*Processing - special senses,
sense of beauty and wonder
Understanding - diversity*

Location

*Forest with good plant diversity,
choose a broad trail preferably
having an opening within 1 to
1.5 km distance from the
starting point*

Appropriate time

*Morning or
afternoon, especially
after a meal or rest*

Begin by welcoming every participant with a dry or fallen special leaf. After everyone has a leaf in their hands (including facilitators and volunteers), address the participants in a chirpy voice holding your leaf prominently:

“Hello everyone, here is a special welcome to a special place, from a special being! You will soon discover the meaning of what I’m saying. In the meanwhile, please **observe what you’ve in your hands – its shape, size, texture, colours and uniqueness**. Well, each one is unique indeed, and you will see it for yourself.”



After 2-3 minutes, get their attention by again showing a leaf and saying “so, most people will call this just a leaf!”. Add with a chuckle, “Just a leaf?! To me these leaves are a window to understand the world of the forest. You may wonder how? Let’s all start looking for leaves along the trail and figure out. But, before that we will form teams of 6-8 students. **The task of each team is to find 25 or more varieties of special, fallen (emphasize this again) leaves.** You can collect more as it will be of use! The leaves collected are special and special things are often put in a special place.....called a museum. So, after you have collected 25 or more different leaves, please arrange them in a museum.



*You may use other objects found here, but without disturbing the life in the area. **The museum with the highest variety of leaves, a good design, and a very special leaf (with the reason for calling it special) will be the winner!** Are you all ready?! Remember, only fallen or dry leaves are to be collected. Keep along the trail, but go on the sides in a safe way; watch before picking a leaf for any other creature.*



*Observe carefully and collect only the Special ones, just like you!! Shall we start? We have 15 minutes to collect, 5 minutes to organise and 10 minutes to make the museum. In short, 30 minutes at the most to finish everything. Then we will visit each team and admire the museums. **Teams will also visit one another's treasures after that.** Finally, we will announce the results!"*

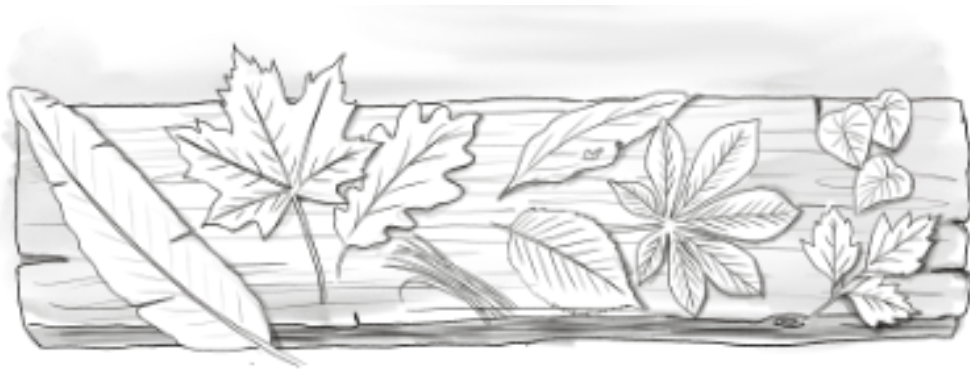
Feedback Mechanism

Oral feedback by participants on their experience and learning

*Written feedback with sketches of their special leaf or entire museum
summarising their experience and learning*

Follow-up

Encourage the participants to make a leaf collage and set up a permanent display of the collected leaves in school campus or science laboratory with identification of species. It will be a special memory besides being a useful tool for students and teachers alike. Pictures of leaves can also be used as the collected leaves may deteriorate over time.



Theme

Making a 'home' in the forest develops positive feelings and brings us closer to the forest.

Target group

All (children, youth, adults)

Duration

45 minutes

Stones and Homes

Location

River bank or dry river bed, preferably within a good patch of forest

Intended outcome

Processing - sharpening the senses

Feeling - reverence for natural communities

Appropriate time

Morning (pre-lunch) or afternoon

Pre-activity Preparations

Keep chocolates or small snack to distribute to participants

*Gather the participants to form a circle. The facilitator then asks them if they are ready for a very difficult challenge! **As they say 'Yes', make them repeat it 2-3 times to create the tempo.** Make teams of 7-8 members each.*



*Now, introduce the activity 'Stones and Homes' that involves making a home using locally available material without breaking or disturbing any living being around. **They will have 30 minutes to collect the material (mainly different sized or shaped stones) and build a home.***

*They can collect fallen leaves, seeds, twigs, flowers, or any other natural object without causing disturbance or harm to any living being. **Assign a specific area to each team to collect the material** from and also show the space where they will build their homes.*



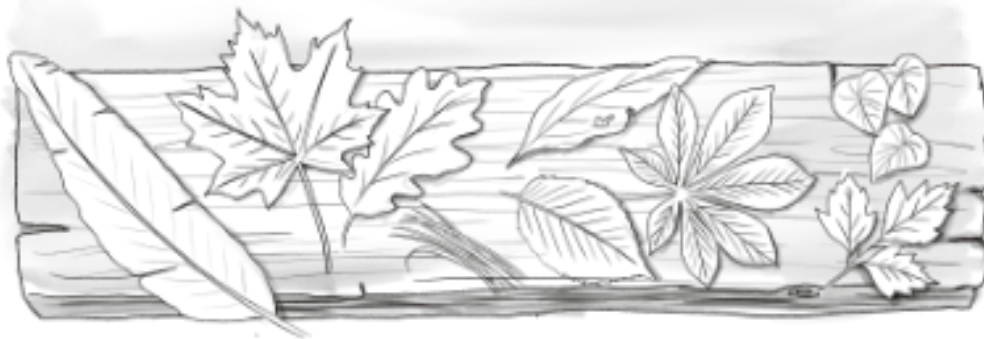
*After the homes are made by all teams, facilitators/ volunteers would go around, observe and give points to each team's creation **(20 for creativity, 10 for material, 10 for appearance and 10 for teamwork).***



- One or two members from each team will explain the main features of their respective homes.
- After careful examination and due consideration, results will be announced. **A small token of appreciation in the form of chocolates or some snack will be given to all.**

Feedback mechanism

Participants share their feelings and thoughts as they collected the material and created their respective homes. They can also make sketches of their homes.



Contributors

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Achili Mihu | Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 2 | Ahi Sitek | Gobuk, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 3 | Albert Tungoe | Kohima, Nagaland |
| 4 | Bethem Marai | Roing, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 5 | Chamali Milli | Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 6 | Dina Brah | Seijosa, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 7 | Dorjee Khandu Khrimey | Shergaon, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 8 | Dulley Gumbo | Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 9 | Eangba Konyak | Changlangshu, Nagaland |
| 10 | Hiareungambe Hingleu | Old Jalukie, Nagaland |
| 11 | Imcharenla Aier | Dimapur/Tuli, Nagaland |
| 12 | Joyshree Gogoi | Gobuk, Arunachal Pradesh |
| 13 | Karishma Pradhan | North Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh |



14	Lobsang Tashi Thungon	<i>Shergaon, Arunachal Pradesh</i>
15	Nandini Velho	<i>Northeast India</i>
16	Nayantara Siruguri	<i>Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh</i>
17	Pema Wangdi Thungon	<i>Shergaon, Arunachal Pradesh</i>
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19	Raju Boro	<i>Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh</i>
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23	Shilpita Mandal	<i>West Bengal</i>
24	Sylvia Hingleu	<i>Old Jalukie, Nagaland</i>
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The educators behind these activities.





***Where the Forest Teaches** is a collection of nature education activities rooted in the forests wildlife, and lived landscapes of Northeast India. Co-created by educators, community facilitators, and practitioners during a shared learning process, this manual brings together games, practices, and experiences that invite learners to slow down, observe, sense, and connect with nature.*

Nature Conservation Foundation, Canopy Collective and Green Hub