

SPOT THE INVISIBLE STRINGS

Some relationships may not be as obvious, requiring you to look carefully and think deeply about the impacts on nature. Can you think of any connections you didn't see? How about these interactions?



Dead Trees, Even Better

There's a saying that there are more living things in *dead* trees than *living* trees. Dead trees provide vital habitat and food for a wide range of wildlife. Whether they're picking out insects from the wood or creating a new home, there's something for every animal. As trees decompose, they also release nutrients back into the soil, helping fertilize the soil for future plants.

Accidents Happen

Have you seen any tufts of "cotton" on the underside of evergreen leaves? These are the egg sacs of the woolly adelgid - a tiny, parasitic insect that feeds on the sap and stems of certain trees, like the hemlock. Woolly adelgids, like other invasive species, were accidentally introduced to the United States in the early 1900s and can kill trees in as little as two years.



The Human Impact

Humans are also part of nature and can drastically influence the outside world. Next time you buy fruit at the store, remember it was once just a flower pollinated by insects. The materials around your home, like wood, brick, and cotton, came from nature. Take time to slow down and experience the natural world. And remember, everything is connected... even us!



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BLUE RIDGE
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Nature's Relationships

"When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

-John Muir



Ready to discover the many connections within the natural world?
Use this brochure to learn about some of the relationships found in
nature and see if you can spot any of these dynamics in action!

Many plants depend on animals, such as insects, small mammals, and birds, to reproduce. A flower's shape, size, color, and smell can help attract certain pollinators. Did you know butterflies LOVE bright colors, like red, yellow, orange, and pink?! Some flowers even have ultraviolet colors that guide pollinators to their pollen.



FIND A COLORFUL POLLINATOR



SEARCH FOR A PURPLE FLOWER



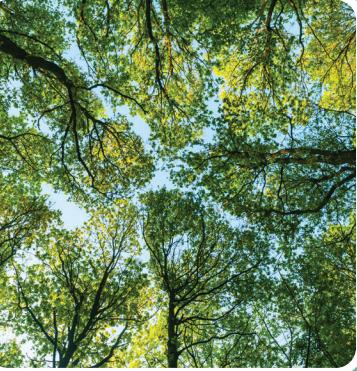
SMELL FIVE DIFFERENT PLANTS



FEEL THE SUN ON YOUR SKIN



LOOK FOR WATER BY THE TRAIL



LISTEN TO THE TREES FOR 1 MIN.



OBSERVE A SPIDER IN ACTION

Small critters, like flying insects, may find themselves caught in a spider's web - you might even accidentally walk through one! Spiders build intricate webs to catch food and protect their eggs. They can even travel by releasing a strand into the wind! Though they may look a little scary, spiders serve an important role in their environment and help keep insects at bay, especially mosquitoes.



IDENTIFY AT LEAST ONE BIRD

When building homes out of natural and man-made materials, animals are very resourceful. Birds, like hummingbirds, are known for using lichen and the webs of spiders to construct their nests. The sticky webbing helps anchor their tiny nests to tree branches. Spotting a hummingbird's nest can be tricky since they're about the size of a golf ball!



FEEL LICHEN GROWING NEARBY



FIND THREE INTERESTING FUNGI



LIFT A LOG & SPOT MYCELIUM



UNCOVER A FALLEN TREE

Fungi help decompose everything in the forest, from fallen trees to leaf litter. Mycelium, which is the root-like part of a fungus, primarily breaks down organic matter and absorbs nutrients. The fruit of a fungus, or mushroom, is what we see above ground, and it is a vital food source for other organisms.

Think about the ways you are connected to nature. Maybe it's the food you eat, your favorite park to play in, or the flowers you planted outside! There are connections all around us and everything we do impacts the natural world. Today, take time to...

CONNECT THE DOTS

Have you ever spotted a scaly, leaf-like structure growing on rocks and trees? This is called **lichen**, a complex organism made up of algae and fungus. These smaller organisms live together in a mutually beneficial relationship called **symbiosis**. The fungus provides protection for the algae, and the algae provides food for the fungus.

Trees provide coverage and shelter for countless species. If you stand beneath the trees and look up high at the leaves, this top layer is called the **canopy**. Breaks in the canopy allow the sun to reach the forest floor, which lets small plants and wildflowers grow. However, storms, insects, and disease can cause trees to fall - sometimes wiping out entire forests.

Just like you, most living things need nutrients, water, and sunlight to thrive. The forest provides a home for a wide range of plants and animals, and different species will seek out specific spots depending on their needs. Some species prefer to live along a streambank, while others live high up on mountaintops.