

# 8 Seasons



**Spring** is full of newly awakened wildflowers, bird song is vibrant as birds busily call for a mate and make nests, frogs and toads head to ponds to mate and lay spawn.

**Summer** is an obvious time to visit the park and find all kinds of wildlife around us, when plants and animals seem to be most active and busy. Other times of the year also provide interesting things to observe about how things change with the passing seasons. Here are some ideas of what to look for in our other seasons.

**Autumn** is full of colour, as leaves change colour and softly fall and trees produce seeds. Some have hard prickly cases to protect the seed inside, others are soft and tasty as they want to be eaten so they can be transported somewhere new to germinate. Some have wings so they can be dispersed by the wind and may travel great distances before they find a suitable place to settle and grow next spring. Plants and animals are preparing to survive the cold months ahead.

Have you ever wondered what happens to all the insects during **winter**? Most adult insects die after summer but lay eggs for next spring under leaves or in grass. Some mammals hibernate or burrow underground and grow thick fur. Many birds migrate to warmer places. There are many different activities and things to see all through the year.

# ACTIVITY 1 HIBERNATION STRATEGIES



## INTRODUCTION

Mammals need to eat a lot of food to survive the winter months. When food is scarce, this is very difficult. Many small mammals go and make themselves cosy, underground nests during the winter, and sleep there on the coldest days. In this way, they save energy by being inactive.

## MATERIALS

- Cup
- Hot water (flask)
- Thermometer
- Red food colouring

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fill a cup with hot, red coloured water. This represents the warm blood of a small mammal. Give the mouse a name and take its temperature
2. Imagine you are the mouse and have to find a place outdoors to shelter over winter. Choose a place where you could keep warm and place the cup in your chosen spot. Explain the reasons for your choice. How could you keep your mouse warm?
3. Leave for five minutes
4. Collect your mouse. Take a temperature reading. How much heat has been lost?
5. Would you have kept warm enough to have survived in your chosen spot?
6. Collect at least four different materials to make a nest or shelter
7. Which materials are most effective and does a mixture of different materials make a difference?

## STAY SAFE

Be careful not to touch the cup and beware of hot water spilling out of it.

When searching for nesting material be careful to look where you are placing your hands to avoid dog mess or litter etc.

## REVIEW

Look for evidence of animal homes, tracks and signs in the ground.

Was finding a warm place difficult? You could make your school grounds, park or garden more attractive to wildlife by putting up bird tables, feeders and nest boxes, making habitat piles from dead wood and compost, having a thick hedge, trees and shrubs, or by leaving long grass, leaves, bricks and concrete slabs for cover.