

SHORT FILM WORKSHEET



Nurse Log Raising Baby Trees

Trees play a big role in forest recycling. By the time an old tree dies, it has usually been invaded by insects and fungus, pounded by woodpeckers and excavated by birds and mammals for nest holes. When it finally falls to the forest floor it has lived a long, productive life - but it has a long way to go yet. Lying on the moist earth worms, beetles, microorganisms, and fungus invade and begin to loosen up its wood. Moss blankets it and ferns and mushrooms root in it. A squirrel breaking apart a pine cone for its nutritious seeds perches on top to watch for predators. It loses a seed into the moss and next spring a baby tree will sprout. The seedling pushes up into the sunlight left when the big tree fell (leaving a hole in the canopy). It's roots take up the nutrients of the old tree, pushing deep into the softening wood. Go into any forest and you will see dozens of these dead trees playing this important role. They are called **nurse logs**, nursing new life along, with their nutrients. Count the species being helped along by the old tree's demise. How many do you see?



Observing Natural Science in Action

Look at this picture carefully. What do you see?

1) There are 6 different kinds (species) of living things in the picture.

Can you name them all?

2) This log is dead, but it is still playing a roll in the forest. How?

3) How is the squirrel using the log?

4) How is the small tree using the log?

5) How are the mushrooms using the log?

6) Why is a log like this called a "nurse log"?



Observing Natural Science in Action (KEY)

- 1) There are 6 different kinds (species) of living things in the picture. Can you name them all? **Squirrel, ferns, moss, tree seedling, 2 kinds of mushrooms.**
- 2) This log is dead, but it is still playing a roll in the forest. How? **It will break down and provide nutrition for the rest of the forest.**
- 3) How is the squirrel using the log? **The squirrel can sit up high and watch for predators while eating. In turn, the seeds it drops will root in rotting log and grow.**
- 4) How is the small tree using the log? **The log is providing nutrition and a place to root for the tree seedling.**
- 5) How are the mushrooms using the log? **The log is providing nutrition and a place to root for the mushrooms.**
- 6) Why is a log like this called a "nurse log"? **The log, though dead, will provide nutrition for seeds to grow, a soft place for plants to root and nutrition for the forest floor. It "nurses" along new forest growth.**

