

Forest Life Activity - The Nurse Log

Observations and Critical Thinking



Read about the Nurse Log “phenomena” in the activity below. On your next walk in the woods, look for fallen trees that are now rotting logs and overgrowth tree stumps. Examine them closely. Answer the following questions:

1. Do you see signs of animals feeding on top of the log or stump? (broken acorns, pine cones, animals scats)

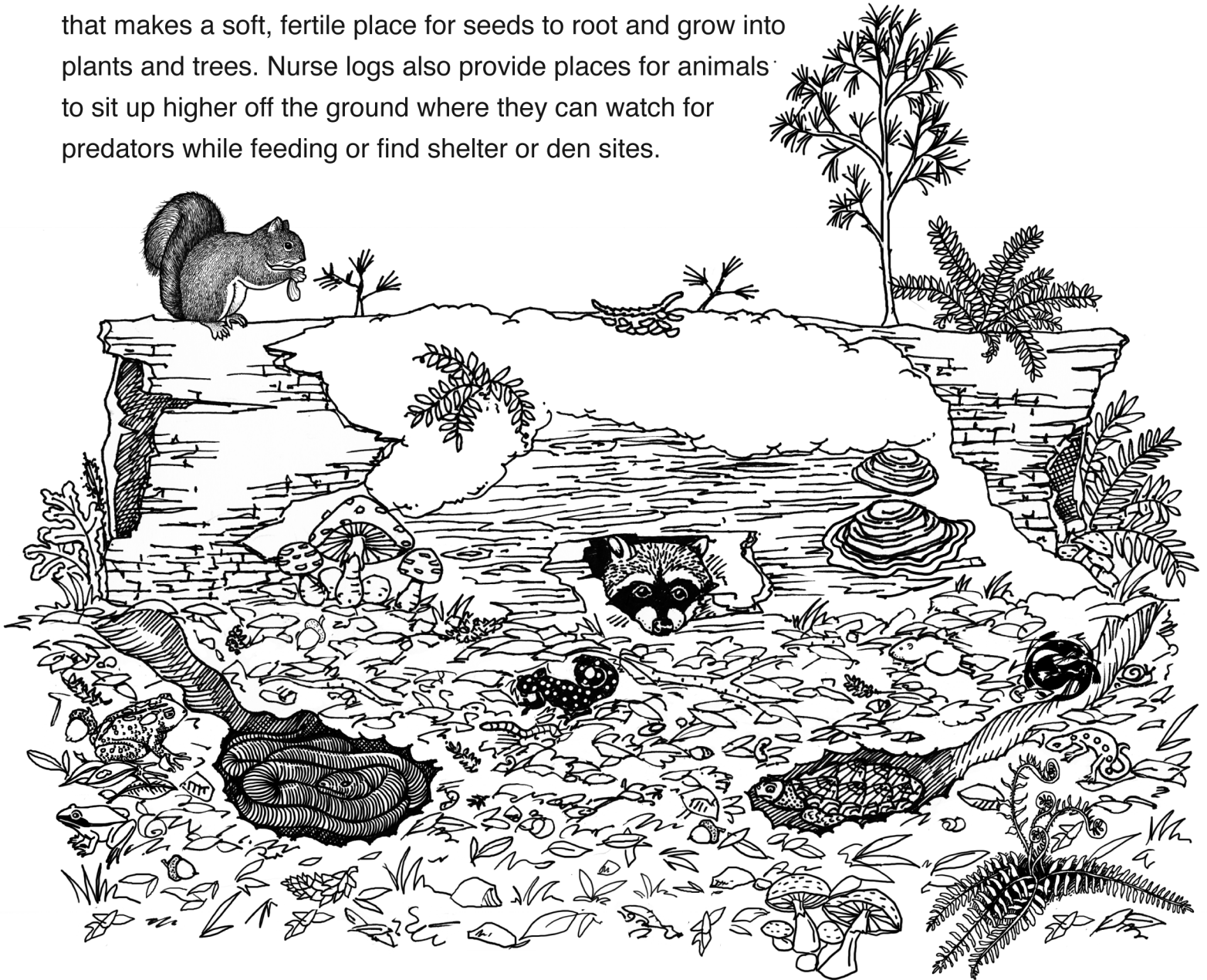
2. Do you see small tree seedlings growing on top of the log or stump?

3. If you saw both of the things mentioned above, can you make a connection between them? (HINT: How does animals feeding on seeds on the nurse log lead to seedlings growing on and rooting into the nurse log?)

4. Why do you think a nurse log is a good medium for rowing young plants?

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Everything in the Forest was once something else. Things break down and come back in a different form in an endless cycle. In the log lab exhibit, you will see things that help to keep the cycle going; without them there would be no available building blocks for new life. Check out the nurse log below. A nurse log is a rotting log or stump that makes a soft, fertile place for seeds to root and grow into plants and trees. Nurse logs also provide places for animals to sit up higher off the ground where they can watch for predators while feeding or find shelter or den sites.



See if you can find and color the many living things depending on the nurse log's help. Color the decomposers - mushrooms and fungus, the pine seedlings that have taken root in the rotting wood, 4 acorns, the squirrel midden (eaten cone) that helped provide the pine seeds, and the animals using the rotten log for shelter, like the raccoon, wood turtle, black snake, spotted salamander, toad, wood frog, red eft (newt), snail and vole.