



Nature Notes

For life to exist there must be Sun, Air, Water and Soil. These are all gifts provided by Nature.

We cannot make any of these gifts, but Nature offers them to us. We can take care of these gifts by taking care of Nature so Nature can take care of us.

Habitats

JSP has many habitats but the three main habitats are;

Veteran trees, woodland and deadwood

Meadows and grasslands

Ponds and wetlands



All plants, animals and humans need certain things to survive and Nature provides things in the habitat in which we live.

What do you need from your environment to survive?

Habitats are big and small; it all depends on who is asking the question!

A small fish lives in a pond. The pond is the fish's habitat and to the fish it is quite large. A dog jumping in the pond might think it's a small pond. You might think it's a tiny pond and an elephant might think it's a puddle or not even see it at all!

Habitats can also fit one inside the other.

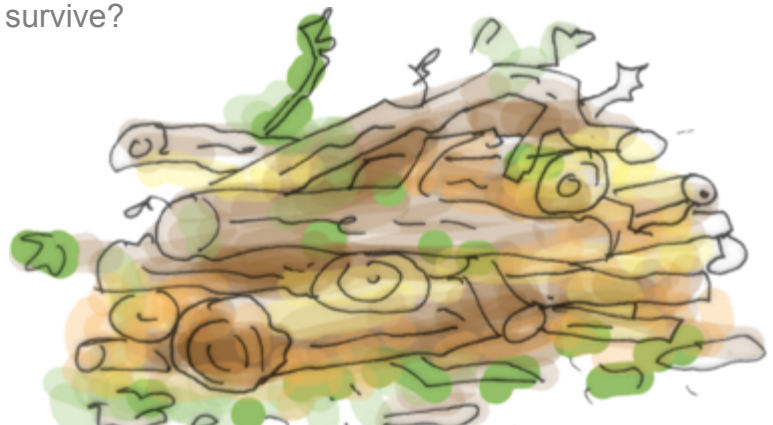
If JSP is a habitat how many smaller habitats within it can you see?

There are smaller habitats within a pond. A rock in the pond may be covered in moss, and in the moss live lots of insects; the rock is their habitat.

Can you think of all the things a bird needs to survive?

Can you think of all the things worms need to survive?

Can you think of things a fish needs to survive?



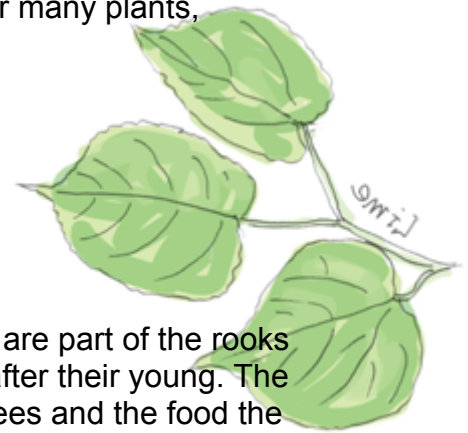
Trees are a very important and wonderful part of Nature.

Why are trees an important part of so many habitats?



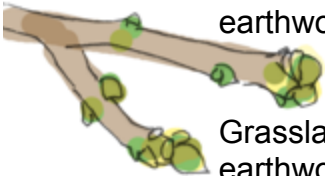
They hold the soil together, they catch the rain on their leaves and let it fall slowly to earth so it can be gently absorbed by the soil. The branches and trunk provide homes for bats, birds, insects, lichens, mosses and fungi, trees even clean the air and produce oxygen for us to breathe. On top of all of this they are great to climb and provide shade from the sun.

Trees are a very important part of many habitats for many plants, animals and people.



The rooks that live in JSP live high in the trees. The trees are part of the rooks habitat, providing a safe place to lay their eggs and look after their young. The rooks will feed off insects, seeds and earthworms. The trees and the food the rooks eat are all part of the rooks habitat and without these things the rook would not survive.

The earthworm needs soil in which to live. The earthworm feeds on dead plant material, like autumn leaves that have fallen to the ground. They also feed on tiny organisms that live in the soil. The earthworms give lots of gifts back to the soil by breaking down leaves for the soil to absorb and by creating lots of holes to let air and water deep in to the soil. Soil likes earthworms and earthworms like soil.



Grasslands and meadows grow in soil so they also like earthworms, because earthworms keep the soil healthy so the grasses can grow. Earthworms like grasses, because when the grasses die the earthworms have food.

Everything has a habitat within which it lives and within that habitat, Nature provides everything we need to live.

Grasslands, wetlands and trees are all habitats and each one of these habitats is important to the other, often with different habitats created in between each of them. Each habitat can also offer a home to different species at different times of the year. For example, a pond may be full of water in winter but just a muddy puddle in summer, some insects really like muddy puddles but not water!





Animals



There are many animals and insects in Jacob Smith Park. Some you can see and some you cannot. Some only come out in the dark, some are hidden and some are very small.

*Can you think of any animals that only come out in the dark?
Why would they only come out in the dark?*

There are many birds that live in the trees, some live in tree holes or bird boxes and many live in nests that they cleverly make. The best time to see birds is spring before the trees are clothed in their leaves.

Why do some birds live up in the trees?

As you enter the park, from Scriven Road, look up in the trees. High above are lots of Rooks nests. Rooks build nests close to each other, as they like to live in a community.

I wonder why some birds like to build nests close to each other and some do not? Do you have any ideas?

Some birds live separately in summer and together in winter. In winter they do this so they can keep warm.



Many animals are very small and live in soil or water. Do you know that in a teaspoon of soil there are many many organisms, most so small you cannot see them and all of them work hard to make healthy soil in which plants can grow.

There are some animals that live in the soil, underground, and they are large enough to

see.



*Can you think of any?
What would it be like to live underground?*

Insects love Jacob Smith Park. In fact there are more insects than any other animal! They live on the soil, on the plants, in trees, on deadwood, in deadwood, in water, under rocks, they fly, they crawl, they scurry. Insects are amazing!

See how many different insects you can see on your walk around the park and have a good look at deadwood but don't disturb it..



Can you describe where you see each insect? Is it dark, wet, dry or damp, is it hiding under a stone? Is it on the ground or above ground, is it on a tree or a fallen tree? Is the insect facing the sun or away from the sun?



What animals in JSP might eat insects?

Animals are usually very secretive and to find them or see them you have to be very still, very quiet and use all of your senses. You need to use your ears, your nose, your eyes and your heart to feel if an animal is close by.

Can you think of any other animals that might live, sleep or find food in JSP? Can you find any signs of them?



One animal which you can see anytime in JSP is a dog!

Occasionally you can see evidence of dogs in the grass. Can you guess what it is?

You wouldn't want to stand in it!

If you were a frog, a bird or a hedgehog what would you think about dogs?



Watch one animal that you see in the park and write a story or a poem about it. Notice what the animal looks like, how it moves, do you know what it eats, what habitat does it live in? What colour is it and where does it live?

Share your story with family and friends. See if they have any animal stories to share.



Plants

Plants are amazing and they are the most important organisms on the planet. Without them there would be no soil, no oxygen and no food.

Plants only require Nature's gifts to grow and they can grow almost anywhere on Earth. They are important to people and all other animals.

Do you have a plant to thank for breakfast?

In JSP there are many amazing plants, there are trees that are more than 400 years old, there are many species of grasses and wildflowers. There are also fungi and lichens, which are not plants at all and we often do not notice them, so see if you can spot any in the park.

Almost everyone loves plants, even if you do not know it. Most of us love to sit or play outside, enjoy lying in the grass, throwing dried leaves above our heads, climbing trees or making daisy chains. But imagine what it would be like without plants.

Imagine JSP without plants?
Imagine a world without plants!

Not only do plants make our lives happier, they also provide us with food, clothes. Plants that grew long ago have now turned to oil and coal, which we use for energy.

Plants have a very special relationship with soil. They are perhaps a little bit like best friends and help each other out. The soil provides food and a place for plants to grow. In return plant roots hold the soil together, protecting the soil from erosion, which can happen if the rain falls and washes soil away, or the wind blows and blows the soil away. Plants also shade the soil protecting it from drying out when the sun shines hot.

When the plant dies or leaves fall, the plant provides food for the organisms that live in the soil and they in turn provide food for the soil, so the plants can grow. This great friendship is called a cycle and nothing gets wasted in Nature's cycles, everything is put to good use.

What types of plants can you see in JSP?
What is the main plant in the woodland habitat?
What is the main plant in a grassland habitat?

