

Wildlife in Our Woodlands: A Close Up



What is a log pile habitat?

You may find log piles in a woodland where trees have fallen over and broken up. You can also create a logpile habitat to encourage nature to a new space. They can be created in gardens and even on balconies. Around log piles you may find fallen dead leaves, and plants such as brambles, moss may grow on a log itself. The damp area around logpiles are a perfect place for interesting fungi too. Though logpiles are mentioned as a habitat in this guide, we can also include rocks and manmade items such as flowerpots as a similar habitat. If these logs, rocks, flowerpots etc., remain in place for a period of time, small flora, fauna and fungi will start to colonise!

Why are they important?

A log is a vitally important place for a whole host of invertebrates. A single log can be classed as a microhabitat and an animal may spend their entire life on or under one log. Log piles provide animals with shelter and safety, especially small mammals and amphibians. Animals such as worms and woodlice are detritivores which mean they eat dead plant and animal matter, lots of this is found under and around piles of logs. Just a small logpile habitat can attract vertebrates such as birds and amphibians who can find themselves a tasty invertebrate snack!



Key words

Carnivore

An animal or plant that feeds on an animal

Fungi

An organism that eat organic matter: mildews, molds and mushrooms

Microhabitat

A small area of habitat which different to its surroundings

Decomposer

An organism that breaks down organic matter

Habitat

The physical environment in which a plant or animal lives

Omnivore

A living thing that feeds on both plants and animals

Detritivore

An animal that eats organic matter, such as worms and slugs

Herbivore

An animal that only eats plants

Invertebrate

An animal that does not have a backbone

Soil

The top layer of earth, a mixture of organic matter and minerals

Fauna

Animal life

Flora

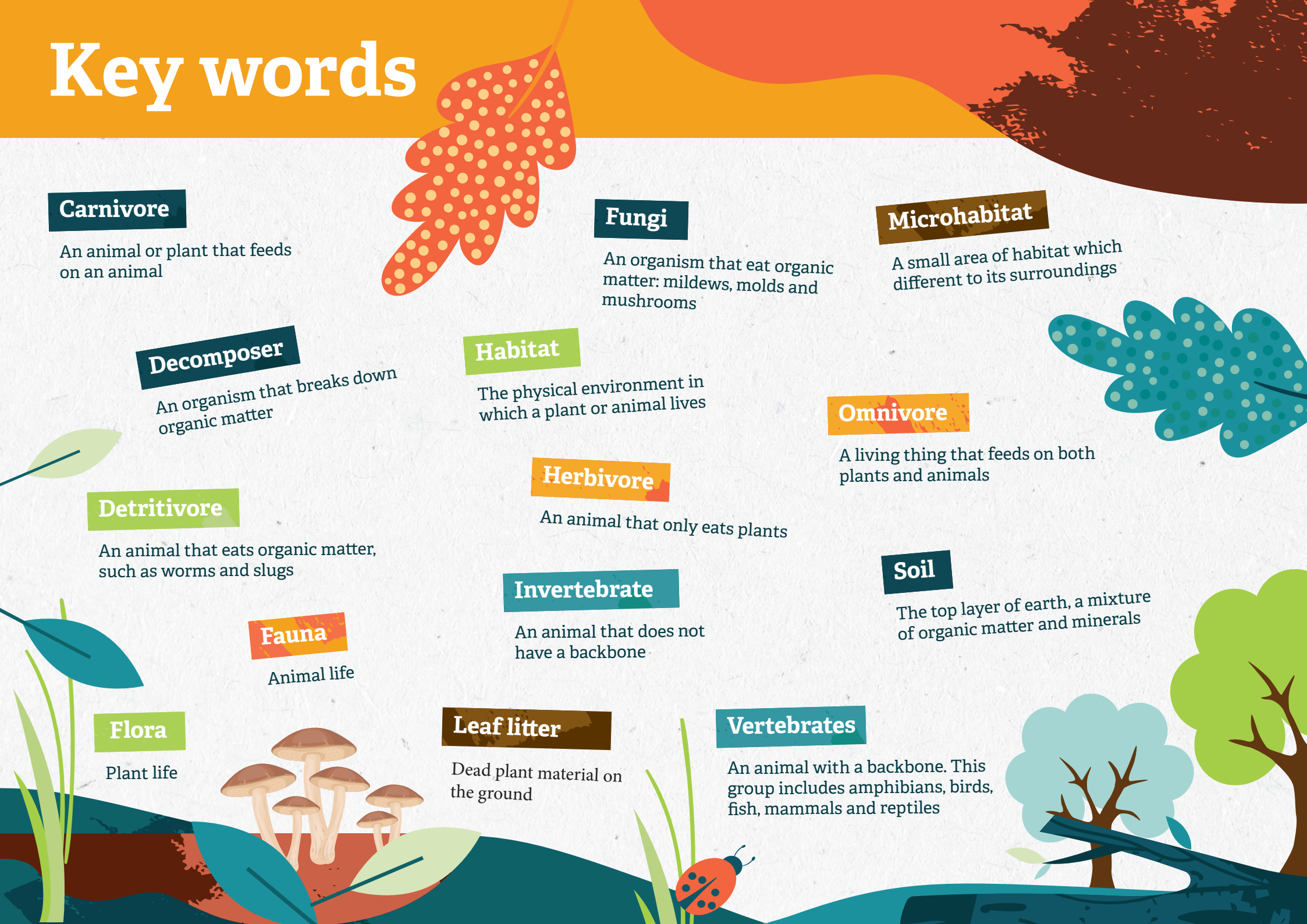
Plant life

Leaf litter

Dead plant material on the ground

Vertebrates

An animal with a backbone. This group includes amphibians, birds, fish, mammals and reptiles



How many birds, mammals, plants and fungi can you spot?



Tick the ones
you've spotted!



Birds



Mammals



Plants



Fungi

Birds:

1. Robin
2. Blackbird
3. Thrush
4. Jay
5. Dunnock
6. Wren
7. Great spotted woodpecker

Mammals:

1. Fox
2. Squirrel
3. Hedgehog

Plants

1. Ivy
2. Moss
2. Bramble

Fungi

1. Turkey tail
2. Sulphur tuft
3. Candle snuff
4. Dead man's finger
5. Fly agaric mushroom

Amphibians

Safety first:

Cover any cuts or scratches on your hand if you're touching the soil
Make sure you take a responsible adult with you



Make sure you are not disturbing important wildlife areas or uprooting plants when you're looking

Ask an adult help you to look under any heavy logs

Wash your hands after minibeast hunting

All the animals you'll find in the UK are harmless if you handle them carefully.

- Hold animals gently so you don't harm or scare them
- Avoid picking up centipedes as they can give a nip in self-defence.
- Avoid putting any invertebrates with delicate wings in your pot.
- Only hold worms in your hand for a short time as their skin can dry out
- Be very careful holding amphibians, they are vertebrates so have a bony skeleton just like us which makes them fragile

How to go on a minibeast hunt

Be prepared:

- A bug pot (or a clean used yoghurt pot, jam jar or similar)
- A spoon or a twig
- Spotter sheet from this habitat guide
- A phone or camera to take photos (optional)
- A magnifying glass (optional)



On your marks, get set, hunt!:

1. Try searching under logs and in long grass for minibeasts – underneath stones; the underside of leaves; tree bark and dead wood, and under the top layer of soil.
2. Once you have found a minibeast, use your spoon or twig to gently lift it into the pot.
3. It's important to only lift one minibeast at a time, so that they don't hurt one another!
4. Once it's in your pot, have a close look at it – can you find it on your ID sheet? If you can't, try and take a photo and you can look for it in books or online when you get home
5. You could draw your minibeast too – but it's best to be quick, so that it isn't in the pot for too long.
6. When you have finished looking, put your minibeast back as close to where you found it as you can – this is so that it can find its way back home.
7. Gently lower the pot so that the minibeast can crawl out by itself.
8. Make sure you put any logs or stones carefully back down the way you found them so the animals still have a roof on their house but you don't squash them
9. Keep going for as long as you like – there are always more minibeasts hiding, you just need to find them!



Activities

Spot the difference: 6 to spot!



Make your own logpile habitat on paper

Can you make the log look like a more inviting home for some of the animals you may have seen while minibeast hunting? When you're finished why not add some of your favourite animals that you've seen to their new log microhabitat.



Make your own log-pile habitat in real life...



It's easy to make a home for minibeasts in your garden, on your balcony, or even just on a windowsill.

- Don't clear away all the leaves in autumn. Rotting leaves are a great food source for detritivores (check out the key words list!)
- Flower-pots make a great hiding place and home for animals such as woodlice and slugs

Flower-pots make a great hiding place and home for animals such as woodlice.

Use an area of your garden or shallow container to create a mini woodland floor. Cover it with soil.

Add lots of bits of wood, these are places for invertebrates to shelter. When the wood starts to rot, don't replace it - the rotting wood releases nutrients which are good for plants, animals and fungi!

Keep the floor of your woodland damp but not saturated with water.

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