



Merry Lea

Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College

Nature's Recyclers

3rd - 5th

Program Description

We know about paper, plastic and glass, but how does nature recycle? Through interactive exploration, students visit forests, prairies and wetlands to learn that everything in the natural world is eventually broken down into its basic parts. Get face-to-face with some wriggly recyclers and discover why decomposition is such an important process in nature.

Program Objectives

Students will:

- Discover how everything in nature is recycled and broken down
- Learn how all living things are made of elements that are eventually returned to the soil

Program Outline

1. Hike

Students head out on our trails to get a close-up view of the recycling process happening in nature. They participate in age-appropriate scavenger hunts, games and other hands-on activities.

2. Vernal Pond Exploration

While on the hike, students stop at one of our vernal ponds to search for macroinvertebrates and amphibians living in the water.

3. The afternoon is filled with a variety of age-appropriate activities. Options include:

- **Worm Castings:** Students see our active worm composting bin and discuss how humans can use worms to compost food scraps.
- Games

Vocabulary

- Recycling
- Decomposer
- Fungi
- Conservation
- Bacteria

Quick Facts ←

Season Fall: September - November
Spring: April - May

Grades 3rd - 5th

Program Length 4 hours

Maximum # of Students 80 Students

Standards Correlation

LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms Reproduction is essential to the continued existence of every kind of organism. Plants and animals have unique and diverse life cycles. (3-LS1-1)

LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience: When the environment changes in ways that affect a place's physical characteristics, temperature, or availability of resources, some organisms survive and reproduce, others move to new locations, yet others move into the transformed environment, and some die. (secondary to 3-LS4-4)

LS4.D: Biodiversity and Humans: Populations live in a variety of habitats, and change in those habitats affects the organisms living there. (3-LS4-4)

LS1.A: Structure and Function: Plants and animals have both internal and external structures that serve various functions in growth, survival, behavior, and reproduction. (4-LS1-1)

LS2.A: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: The food of almost any kind of animal can be traced back to plants. Organisms are related in food webs in which some animals eat plants for food and other animals eat the animals that eat plants. Some organisms, such as fungi and bacteria, break down dead organisms (both plants or plants parts and animals) and therefore operate as "decomposers." Decomposition eventually restores (recycles) some materials back to the soil. Organisms can survive only in environments in which their particular needs are met. A healthy ecosystem is one in which multiple species of different types are each able to meet their needs in a relatively stable web of life. Newly introduced species can damage the balance of an ecosystem. (5-LS2-1)

LS2.B: Cycles of Matter and Energy Transfer in Ecosystems: Matter cycles between the air and soil and among plants, animals, and microbes as these organisms live and die. Organisms obtain gasses, and water, from the environment, and release waste matter (gas, liquid, or solid) back into the environment. (5-LS2-1)