

How to: Bug Hunt!



Why Bug Hunt?

Bug hunting in your local environment gives you the chance to learn more about the wildlife living all around you, helping you to connect with the natural world.

We also encourage bug hunting to develop your observation skills and to help reduce anxiety about “creepy crawlies”. Look closely and you will find how amazing many of these tiny life-forms are.

We are using the term ‘bugs’ in this guide to cover most minibeasts – insects, true bugs and many other invertebrates (animals without a backbone).

Where can I Bug Hunt?

Bugs can be found anywhere and everywhere! Grasses, meadows and flowers are bug havens, attracting pollinators such as bees and butterflies, whereas log piles and tree bases are perfect for the animals that recycle rotting wood - including millipedes and woodlice.



How do I do it?

Handling bugs is delicate work. The best way to study them is to leave them in the natural environment. **Turn over** some logs or **shake** some grass or branches onto some plain white paper or cloth to reveal some hidden minibeasts! You could use a **magnifying glass** or phone camera to look a bit closer.

If you do want to pick up the bugs the best method is to **nudge** them onto your hand using your other hand, a paintbrush or spoon. Do not pick the bugs up using your fingertips – you might squeeze too hard and hurt them! If you would like to handle a snail, slug or worm, make sure you first wet your hand in **cold water**, or a bit of cold mud. This is to stop the animal getting hurt by the oils on our skin or getting too warm in our hands.

Always hold the animal **close to the ground** (in case it is dropped), stay calm and allow the animal to roam where it would like to.

Do not handle bugs for too long as they can become stressed and overheated and always **put them back** where they came from.



What am I looking at?

There are thousands of types of “invertebrates” (animals with no backbone) in the UK. It can therefore be quite difficult to know exactly what you are looking at!

But do not worry – there are many ways you can learn about your tiny neighbours.

Online ID: You can input details of your animal to websites such as *Buglife.org.uk* or download a spotting guide from websites such as *Opalexplornature.org* before you start.

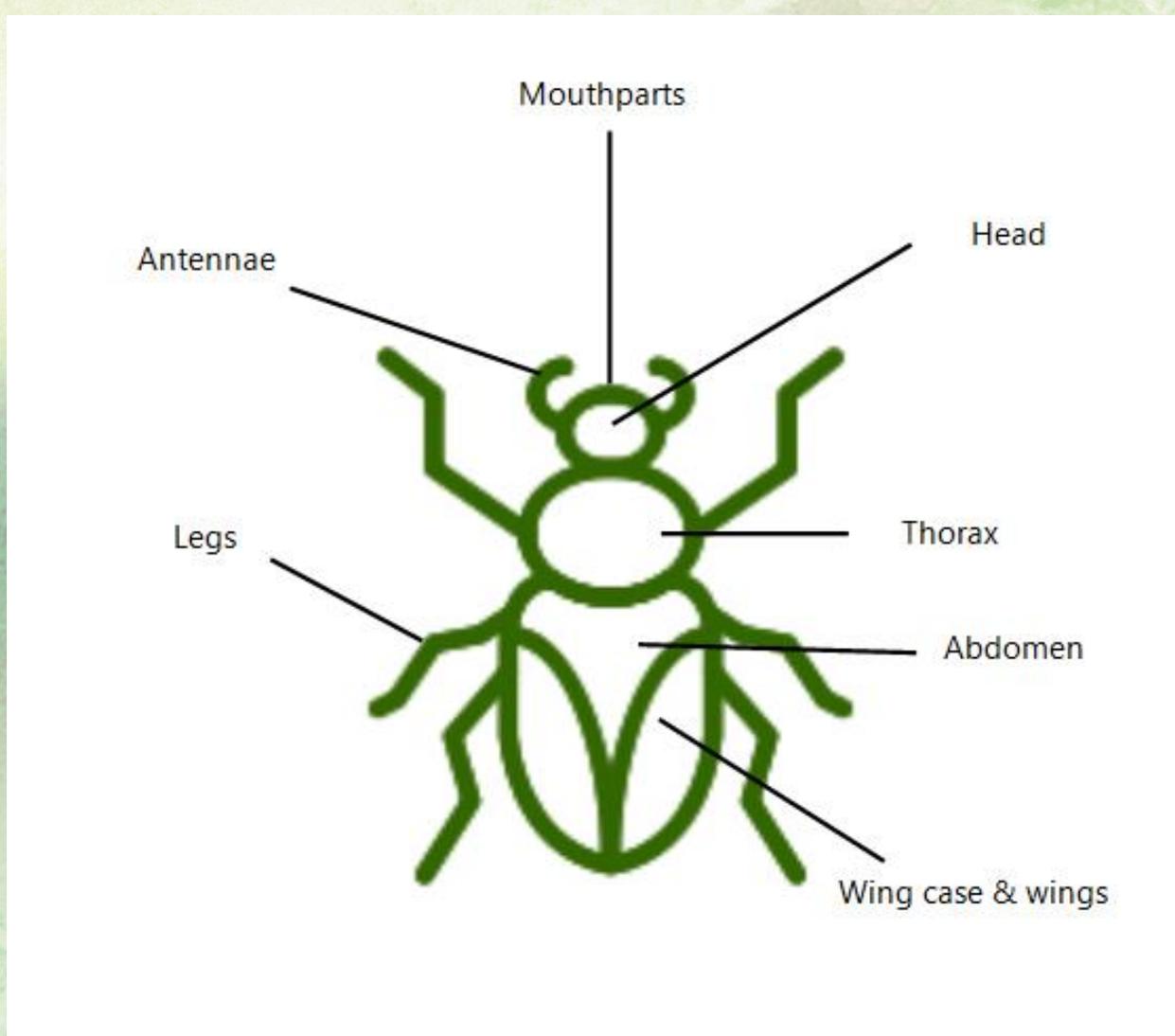
ID Guides: Printed ID guides are available for purchases through organisations such as the Field Studies Council and are not too expensive.

Apps: There are countless wildlife apps including “Picture Insect” and (for more child-friendly learning) “Animal Kingdom (Invertebrates)”.

Take a Photo: If all else fails, you can take a photo of your animal and upload them to specialists on the internet or your friends on social media to see if anyone can help!

Bug Jargon

"Bugs" include everything from our six-legged insects to legless worms, 'true bugs' snails and slugs, and even those with more legs such as spiders, centipedes, millipedes and woodlice. When identifying insects, you might be asked about certain body parts. The diagram below shows you where these are:



Recording Your Findings

There are many ways to record what you have found in your garden or local park. You might want to explore some of the following options:

Create a record sheet – To turn this activity into a science experiment draw up a scientific table to record data such as species, Latin name, date and location, weather. You could even measure your bugs with a ruler.

Take photos – Create an electronic catalogue of your finds.

Create a nature diary – Use a note or sketch pad to create a nature diary, you can include paintings and drawings of your animals, or print photos to stick in. Expand your knowledge by researching the animal and writing some fun facts on each of your pages.

Tally – Keep score of how many times you manage to find the same species.

Finally, don't forget to share your bug hunting adventures with us on our social media platforms!



Guide to Common Garden Bugs

Here are some of the animals you are likely to find to get you started!



Spider – There are over 650 species of spider in the UK.



Woodlouse – This is actually a crustacean, not an insect!



Centipede – This animal is carnivorous and can be quite fast and feisty!



Millipede – These animals eat rotting wood and leaves.





Snail – This is a “gastropod” meaning stomach-foot!



Slug – This animal has a tiny shell under its skin to protect its’ heart.



Earthworm



Black ant



Ladybird



Click beetle