

ACTIVITY: HOME SWEET HOME

Supplies Needed:

- Your child's favorite small stuffed or plastic animal
- Shoebox
- Natural materials collected outdoors:
 - Acorns
 - Twigs
 - Rocks
 - Leaves
 - Pinecones

Process:

1. Explain to your child that there are many animals that live outside.
2. Have your child choose a small stuffed or plastic animal to build a home for.
3. Bring a shoe box outside to collect natural building materials that they will use to build an animal home.
4. Gather enough to keep in a box so you can pull them out at anytime. They not only make great building materials for this activity, but can be used to create works of art.
5. Allow your child to independently create a shelter or home for their favorite animal.

Suggested Adult Interactions:

- Encourage your child to build a structure that can protect from all sides. It gets cold in the winter, windy, sunny, etc.
- Where do we store our food? How do we get our food? How do animals store food?
- Encourage the child to think about what kinds of homes are fit for different kinds of animals. Which animals live up high? Which animals live underground?
- What sorts of homes can you find right in your own backyard? Or at the park?
- When you are finished with the materials, return them to the outdoors to encourage respect for the outdoors

Skills Developed:

- Problem solving skills
- Spatial reasoning
- Small motor skills
- As your child works with the unique shapes of the materials found outdoors, they think creatively while putting pieces together.
- Respect for living things.
- Children also begin to understand the concept of animal habitats and what the needs of different animals are.

Reading Books:

- *Bears in the Forest* by Karen Wallace
- *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell
- *If You Were My Baby* by Fran Hodgkins (Board Book)

Adult References:

- *Discovering Nature with Young Children* by Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth

Next time you are here:

Head up to *Earth World* on the 4th floor to explore the homes of animals who live right here in Minnesota. You'll find out about the communities where ants live, see turtles and snakes and be able to compare what you've done at home to the habitats all around you. You'll also have a chance to touch our live snake or turtle and ask the animal expert all sorts of questions.

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Smart Play

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