

Overview

Pack your bags and prepare for an adventure as we head into the wild! From deserts to jungles, to the bush and the ocean, we explore the great outdoors with the help of Play School's Wild Explorers Van!

Join our presenters as they conduct fascinating science experiments and learn more about the wonders and diversity of our natural world.

Is your playroom ready for adventure? Here are some suggestions for setting up your own Wild Explorers Van - perfect for endless pretend play, discovery and fun. Access upcycled materials wherever possible. Go on an excursion to your local op-shop or educators can ask families to help build reusable collections of the following items:

- Large cardboard boxes
- Rope and twine
- Hats / beanies
- Sunglasses / goggles
- Tools
- Blankets / sleeping bags
- Water bottles
- Bags of all shapes and sizes
- Old cameras
- Gumboots
- Torches
- Binoculars /small play telescopes / kaleidoscopes
- Earmuffs /scarves / gloves
- Umbrellas

Episode 1 - The Australian Bush

Follow up ideas

Map making

Create drawn maps of your outdoor play area, garden or a local park. Plot at least 3 main destinations of interest and mark the best way to move between places. Explore perspective and directionality as children think about how the route looks when viewed from above.

Ask children to swap maps with a friend and try following each other's directions. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4.**



Play School's special guest Sean Choolburra with Michelle, Matt and the Wild Explorers Van!

Nature Investigation

Add a literacy and numeracy component to an outdoor excursion or play at the park. Use paper, clipboards and pencils to record reoccurring things in your natural environment - birds, insects, lizards or different plants. Invite children to draw what they are searching for, then use a tally to keep count. Encourage children to have a go at numeral writing to record their total. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4.**

Art making with Ochre

We see Ochre made by combining natural clay, sand and water. There are other ways to mix Ochre too, check out this video from the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#). Matt and Sean show us how to use Ochre and dark cardboard to print animal track shapes. Encourage children to think of more ways to use their fingers, or toes, to create other patterns. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4.**

Check out [Play School Art Time's Australian Animal Educator Notes](#) for more creative ideas.

Songs	Watch at ...
'Going On A Big Adventure'	02.07mins
'Walking In The Bush'	03.19mins
'Jabbin Jabbin'	12.29mins
'Who Can?'	16.00mins
'Go Go Goanna'	19.55mins
Story	Watch at ...
'Little Bird's Day' (2019) by Sally Morgan and Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr	08.21mins

Episode 2 – Under the Sea

Follow up ideas

Wonder and delight with rock pools

Create a beautiful sensory play area by assembling a rock pool of your own. Start by creating the underwater scene in a large trough or deep tray. Make sure objects are arranged and secured to the base of the trough before filling. Arrange found objects such as; coloured sponges cut into shapes and coloured blocks (as coral), scrunched fabric, ribbons and wool (as seaweed), pebbles and large rocks. Check out factual videos and images of rock pools online for more inspiration.

Encourage children to bring their rock pool to life by making a short film! Include sea creature figurines or make sea creature puppets (as shown by Teo and Michelle). Use a device to record children's under the sea stories. Children can work in small groups and take turns at being the camera operator. Hold a movie screening at your setting next time you have a family / community event. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4.**

Experiment: What floats, what sinks?

Michelle fills a container with water and shows us how an egg sinks straight to the bottom ... but if lots of salt is added, the egg floats! See more fascinating water density experiments by checking out this link to [Questacon](#).

Go on a hunt for objects children think will float /sink. Fill a large container with water and experiment to see if their hypothesis was correct. Group items according to the result, then ask children to describe common features or differences. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.3 and 5.5.**



Michelle and Teo discover and make interesting objects from under the sea!

Windows film: Excursion to the beach

Many early learning settings around Australia are extending the idea of Bush Kinder to Beach Kinder. In this episode's Windows film we see children and educators from [Clovelly Child Care Centre](#) exploring their local beach. If your centre is located near the coast, consider what regular visits to your local beach could offer children and your wider community. Connecting with the outdoors is a great way to explore important messages around environmentally responsible practice together. Check out [Nature Play Australia](#) for more examples of practice.

Children's book suggestions about the ocean

- 'Atlas of Ocean Adventures' by Lucy Leatherland
- 'Commotion in the Ocean' by Giles Andreae
- 'Ella and the Ocean' by Lian Tanner
- 'Over in the Ocean' by Marianne Berkes
- 'Under the Sea' by Anna Milbourne

Check out [Play School Art Time's Under the Sea Educator Notes](#) for more creative ideas.

Songs	Watch at ...
'Going On A Big Adventure'	02.14mins
'Boats'	05.11mins
'Here Is The Sea' (animated song).	05.58mins
'Little Shell'	08.10mins
'Rolling Waves'	15.15mins
'Ocean Motion'	24.21mins
Told Story	Watch at ...
'Little Fish In A Big Pond'	11.15mins

Episode 3 – Rainforest

Follow up ideas

Investigate and create a rainforest

Tropical rainforests are made up of fascinating layers, from forest floor to the emergent layer right at the very top! Find out how each rainforest layer is different and investigate what animals can be found in each area. There are many interesting online diagrams, including this one from [DKfindout!](#)

Create a rainforest in your playroom using materials seen in the episode; include upcycled boxes, cylinders, fabric scraps and scrap paper. Work in stages to build each layer, focusing on the small details - each component of a rainforest has unique and important role to play in the overall health of the ecosystem! **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 2.4, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.5.**

Experiment: Do plants drink water? ...

Start by asking children this question. Listen to their developing understandings of water transportation in plants. Tune into the episode at 11.42mins. We see the paper tree slowly absorb water up into its branches. When you try the experiment, remember to use the time lapse recording feature on your device to observe the experiment afterwards.

Try this experiment with discarded cabbage leaves or celery sticks that are too old to eat.

Delve a bit deeper and discover the answers together: *How do plant roots help transport water? Why do some plants need more water than others? How does drought effect rainforests?* **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.3 and 5.5.**

More ABC Kids ideas and resources about rainforests

- [Play School Art Time: Rainforest](#)
- [Noisy By Nature - Mimicking Lyrebirds](#)
- [Noisy By Nature - Squabbling Fruit Bats](#)
- [Imagine This - How does a tiny seed grow into a huge tree?](#)
- [Imagine This - Why does a snake go “ssss” with its tongue poking out?](#)



Rachael and Teo go deep into the rainforest!

Windows film: Excursion to a rainforest garden

In this episode we see children and educators from Chifley Early Learning Centre explore the [rainforest garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens](#) in Sydney.



Rachael experiments with materials from the Wild Explorer Van.

Songs	Watch at ...
'Going On A Big Adventure'	02.30mins
'Let Me See You Do The Monkey'	06.54mins
'Would You Like To Be A Tree?'	10.45mins
'What Shall We Do While We're Waiting'	14.31mins
'Rain Song'	22.00mins
'I'm A Great Big Tiger'	25.03mins
Told Story	Watch at ...
'The Little Vine That Could'	17.27mins

Episode 4 – The Arctic

Follow up ideas

Arctic Explorers

There is so much to discover about the precious and icy Arctic! Locate the Arctic region on a globe or map of the world. Check out images of the Arctic including animals and landscapes via [National Geographic Kids](#) and NASA's [Climate Kids](#).

Pretend you are going on an expedition to the Arctic! Ask children; *What will you pack? What will you wear? What will you look out for? Where will you stay?*

Visualisation and movement

Dim the lights, play some atmospheric music (found online with key word search such 'sounds of a blizzard' or 'sounds of a snowstorm' - use audio only). Encourage children to move about the room as though walking through deep snow and icy wind. Pause audio throughout the experience and ask children to describe their Arctic imaginings; *What animals can you see? How does your body feel? What will you do next?* etc.

Guide children out of the pretend experience by turning down the music slowly as children imagine they are back where they started. Pretend to take off snow gear and feel warm again in the safety of their playroom.

Link to EYLF Outcomes including 3.2, 4.1, 4.3, 5.1.

Experiment: Understanding how ice melts

Michelle and Matt experiment to see which coloured ice cube melts faster, the one in cool water or the one in warm water. To add an early numeracy component to your experiment, invite children to time how long it takes for the cubes to melt. Use the stopwatch on your device, a kitchen timer or a sand timer.

Add another layer of complexity by using water at three different temperatures – cold water from the fridge, water from the tap and warm water from a jug. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.3 and 5.5.**

This is an interesting background article for educators published by [ABC News](#); it looks at the rising temperature of the ocean and its current effect on sea-level.



Matt takes his chopper for an icy adventure and meets Michelle the polar bear along the way!

Extend with some icy art

What you need:

- Large sheets of art paper
- Water colours (all shades of blue, mauve and grey)
- Paste
- Epsom salts
- Black felt-tip pens

Encourage children to use water colours to paint a snowy scene. Once dry, add strokes of paste then sprinkle lightly with Epsom salts to create a icy effect. Using another sheet of paper, children can draw Arctic animals with black felt-tip pens. Cut out animals, then paste to their Arctic landscapes. **Link to EYLF Outcomes including 4.1, 4.4, 5.3.**

Songs	Watch at ...
'Going On A Big Adventure'	02.53mins
'Softly Softly'	06.00mins
'In The Summertime' (Wintertime)	09.53mins
'Fairy Penguin Walk'	19.50mins
'Chubby Little Snowman'	23.30mins
Told Story	Watch at ...
'How To Keep Warm'	15.12mins

Episode 5 – The Savanna

Follow up ideas

Discover the wondrous animals and landscapes of the African Savanna! Here are some useful web links and books:

- [DKfindout!](#)
- [Taronga Zoo](#)
- [San Diego Zoo](#)
- [National Geographic](#)
- 'Here Is the African Savanna' by Madeline Dunphy
- 'Let's Explore: Safari' by Lonely Planet Kids / Christine Webb
- 'African Animal Tales' (various titles) by Mwenye Hadithi

Inform and enrich your discussions with children: Educators and families may be interested in this article from [The Conversation](#) – it relates to climate and environmental conservation in the Savanna.

Animal print sort-and-match collage

We see Teo arranging his photos of spotty and stripy animals in a scrap book. Try this using African animal images found online then print and cut, ready for collage.

Alternatively, children could paint or draw animals with spots and stripes, then use their own artwork for this experience. Add a few more groups such as plain fur, feathers, scales and skin!



Have fun creating your own animal print sort-and-match collage.



Teo and Rachael have a wild adventure on the African Savanna!

Sounds of the Savanna

Rachael makes drums using pots covered with grease proof paper. Using upcycled materials, create a collection of percussion instruments to reflect the sounds of the Savanna - animal footsteps/bird calls/breeze in the trees/rain fall etc. Record audio as children create their Savanna soundscape.

Extend by making African animal masks. Children can pretend to be on a wild adventure – moving around your room with their soundscape playing in the background!

Songs	Watch at ...
'Going On A Big Adventure'	03.18mins
'A Leopard Has Lots Of Spots'	07.42mins
'Leo the Lion'	13.42mins
'Everybody's Got A Little Rhythm'	23.25mins
Story	Watch at ...
'Giraffes Can't Dance' by Giles Andreae	17.40mins

Credits

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Notes for Families and Educators

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