



WILD PLANET TRUST

**Lower KS2 -
Using hair traps**

Science

Using hair traps to track wildlife

Learning Intention

We are exploring our local environment, looking for signs of wildlife.

Introduction

One of our research team, Andy, has been using hair traps to work out which species of duiker (dye-kur – small antelopes) are found in a forest reserve in Tanzania, Africa. Duiker are nearly impossible to find as they are very shy and well camouflaged, so Andy searches for their hair instead and then leaves a camera trap or extra proof.

Normally, Andy finds a track that is regularly used by animals, and then leaves the stem of a plant covered in sellotape (sticky side out) near the trail to catch hairs as the animals brush past. He needs to be careful not to hurt or catch the animals, as this might upset and disturb them. He checks the trap every few days to see if there are any hairs, then collects them and takes them away to look at them under a microscope.

If Andy wants to double-check, he can leave a camera trap. You might have seen these on TV – they are small green boxes that can be strapped to a tree or fence. When an animal walks close, they take a picture or a video. This can help Andy work out what species of animal are using the trail.

Task

What wildlife lives near your school? There are hair traps all around you already - check the fences and hedges around your school grounds for small samples of fur. This may be just a single strand of hair, but it could give an important clue! Collect the fur in a plastic bag, and bring it back to the classroom for analysis!

Common species, whose fur you might find:

Domestic cat

Dog

Sheep

Rabbit

Fox

Badger

A close look with a magnifying glass may help you work out which species left the hairs, or you could check a field guide or the internet.

