Looking at Logs
Youth Activity Guide

Supplies Needed:

- Fallen Log
- Magnifying Glass
- Nature Journal
- Pencil

Instructions:

A fallen log in the forest may seem boring, but take a closer look! When plants die, their nutrients are recycled back into the environment. This process is known as decomposition. Organisms such as fungi, bacteria, and insects all help with decomposition. An easy way to remember these decomposers is by using the acronym F.B.I. – fungi, bacteria, and insects. Decomposers get their energy by breaking down dead matter (such as a fallen log) and help return the nutrients to the soil for future generations to use. Decomposers play an essential role in the forest.

Find a fallen log. Carefully observe it. Use the magnifying glass. Record observations in the nature journal. Caution youth to be careful before they touch items; some plants can have thorns, be poisonous, etc. When in doubt, do not touch something. Additionally, remember to treat nature with respect and not to damage anything.

Here are some things to consider:

◯ Do you think this log has been dead for a short time or a long time? Why?
◯ Can you predict how the log died? What evidence supports your prediction?
◯ What kinds of plants are growing on the log? Describe them.
◯ Are any animals present on the log? Examples include ants, beetles, termites, lizards, etc.
◯ Is there any evidence of animal activity in, on, or under the log? Examples include insect holes, spider webs, bird holes, animal dens, animal waste, beetle tunnels in the bark, etc.
◯ Are any fungi (mushrooms) present? What do they look like?

Developed By: Kasey Bozeman, Extension 4-H Specialist, 2020.

References:

MaineNatureGreyhounds. (2020, March 30). The fallen log PLT activity #23. MaineNatureDiary. https://mainenaturediary.blogspot.com/2020/03/the-fallen-log-plt-activity-23.html