

Chirps and trills

This activity is ideal for any age group. Fall is the best time to sit outside and listen for the "songs" of the insects.

The objective is:

- to identify crickets and grasshoppers by their song.

Background:	<p>Most night insects are active in the fall. Anytime near or just after sundown is an excellent time to listen to their call.</p> <p>The males make the call by rubbing two body parts together - usually the forewing and the hindwing. Each species has its own chirp.</p> <p>The crickets are more melodious. The snow tree cricket has the highest chirp of all the crickets. You can distinguish its sound from other crickets by the even tempo of the chirps. Other crickets sound like they are a continuous trill.</p> <p>Grasshoppers and katydids make a scratchy almost raspy sound. There is almost no melody or tonal quality to their chirp.</p>
Skills:	The children should be able to listen for 5 to 10 minutes without speaking and be able to differentiate the sounds.
Age:	Grades 1 – adult
Activity:	<p>Explain to the children that different insects make different sounds. If possible, play a tape or CD with cricket and grasshopper sounds. Have the children imitate the sounds.</p> <p>Select different areas in the outdoors to listen for grasshoppers and crickets. If the children are very young, only concentrate on one insect sound. Older children can listen for both crickets and grasshoppers.</p>
Discussion:	<p>After 5 to 10 minutes, have the children identify the sounds that they heard. They may have heard other evening sounds, like a screech owl, too.</p> <p>Ask if anyone heard the snow tree cricket. If they did try to listen for it again and count the number of chirps in 15 seconds. Add 40 to this number and that is the temperature of the night air.</p>
Adaptations:	Take the children on a night walk. Stop periodically to sample the insect sounds in the area. See if they change depending on the location. Use a flashlight to try to locate the chirper.
Brownie Try It!	Animals (Animal Sounds)
Junior Badge:	Outdoor Creativity #10

Resources:	<p>A Guide to Night Sounds The CD contains 60 night-active mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects of North America. I found this CD at an Audubon book store. A booklet comes with the CD that gives background and shows a picture of most of the animals heard on the CD.</p>
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