

Trail Blazers Teachers Notes

This activity links with the Travel and Camp on Durable Ground principle of Leave No Trace

A Trail or Track is a path generally with a rough dirt or stone surface. They are most often used by walkers and in some places are the main access routes to remote settlements; however some trails can also be used for hiking, cycling, or cross-country skiing and less often for moving cattle herds and other livestock. Whilst trails can be planned, similar to this activity, many trails have arisen through common usage.

When creating trails it is important to consider what surface you're walking on. Durable surfaces, such as rocks, gravel and sand, are more resistant to impacts and so are more suitable for trails. Some natural surfaces, such as grass and soil, are more easily damaged by our footsteps and can take longer to recover than more durable surfaces. All of these surfaces play important roles within the ecosystem and so we must consider the effect our footsteps can have.

Fionn Fact!

One of the most well known trails in Ireland is The Wicklow Way. This trail is 129 km long, it would take almost a week to walk the trail from start to finish!

Fionn Fact!

One of the most famous trails in the world is the pilgrimage route to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, where tradition has it that the remains of the apostle Saint James are buried.

Soil is an ecosystem in which millions of living creatures live and interact. A single spade full of rich garden soil contains more species of organisms than can be found above ground in the entire Amazon rainforest!

Sand, and in particular sand dunes, are important wildlife habitats that support a rich community of highly specialised plant and animal species. In addition, they play an important part in defending shorelines against the constant buffeting of waves and erosion.

Leaves are an important micro-habitat. A micro-habitat is a small specialised habitat that can be found within a larger habitat or ecosystem. Leaf litter (leaves on the ground) provides a suitable home for many insects, spiders and molluscs.

Rocks are also important micro-habitats. If you have ever looked under a rock before, you probably saw lots of insects scuttling away. Rocks make great shelters for insects because they protect them from predators and provide shade in hot weather.

Aoife's Tips....

Pre-established trails are a great way to travel in sensitive landscapes and help minimise the impact our footsteps will have. When there are no designated trails, it is best to travel on durable surfaces or when travelling in small groups it is best to disperse in order to spread out the impacts. By taking into consideration the impacts our footsteps can have we can aim to Leave No Trace on Ireland's natural environment.

For more information on the Travel and Camp on Durable Ground principle and the other Leave No Trace principles visit:

www.leavenotraceireland.org

