

A day in the Sart-Tilman, Liège (Belgium) nature conservation area Comenius Project 2007-2009, "Biodiversity"

Translated by Cynthia MANISCALCO (student).



It was about nine o'clock when our guide appeared. He looked like Indiana Jones ! We found him very strong-natured. He introduced himself. His name was Gabriel. That is how we met.

After his introduction, we hit the road to look for life traces and remains, the day's ultimate aim. Gabriel asked a crucial question about the kind of life signs we can find in our forests.

There was a sudden silence... Bravely, Jérôme ventured to answer, and a series of questions shot out, each one better than the

previous one. Then we started walking and quickly found animal traces. The day went on with interesting explanations. It was already midday and we went to have lunch in the cafeteria.

After an excellent meal, with our stomachs full, we met a second guide. In groups, we set up a panel about endangered animal species in Belgium.

We left the place with newly acquired knowledge and after having presented our work to the other groups.



Some details on our busy day.



The aim of the morning was to find living animals' traces in the woods; the clues were hidden, but we learned how to spot and recognise them thanks to the numerous pieces of advice from our wildlife guide. We have been surprised by the abundance and diversity of these life traces.

The students started enjoying themselves, and were soon able to

discover the traces, the bunches of hair, the bones, the feathers, the remains, the excrements, the damaged pieces of barks.

Our first mission was to find them. We still had to interpret them and to identify their owners. So we

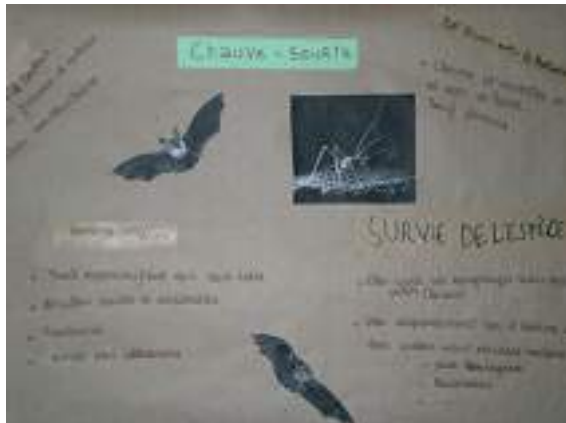


tried to think about finding out the answers. We did it thanks to clues, pictures and paths proposed by our guide.

For example, we learnt how to distinguish the pine cone remains eaten by squirrels from those eaten by field mice : the first ones give up the cone tip they hold between their forelegs, while the field mice nibble all the cone length.

The pets' excrements are homogeneous even though those of the wild animals have many little bones, hair, etc.

Our pupils learnt many things about animal life in the woods, but what they particularly learnt during this day is to observe, to think and to give a meaning to what they saw.



From now on, our strolls won't be the same ones any more and some activity organisers for youths were delighted to be able to pass on this knowledge to their cubs and sponsors.

The afternoon was dedicated to collecting information about endangered species in our regions : the dormouse, the otter, the beaver, the wild cat, the bat and the lynx.

From documents put at their disposal, groups of students made up panels presenting the animal description, its habitat, its food habits and, what

is most important, the likely causes of their increased scarcity (disappearance of their habitat, of their food, proliferation of their predators, ...)

