Description: Students become ‘Nature Detectives’ using their senses to discover and observe different natural objects from the habitat area. They use touch, sight, smell and hearing to investigate sensory sets of ‘Mystery Nature Objects’ and audio recordings of animal sounds. At the end of each set they learn the name of its plant or animal. This activity is designed to be followed with Nature Detectives Walk.

Objectives:
• Students use their senses to make observations about native plants and animals.
• Students understand that using their senses helps them to learn about nature.
• Students learn distinguishing characteristics of certain native plants and animals to help remember and identify them on the Nature Detective Walk.

Print Materials:
• ‘How-to-do Activity: Mystery Nature Objects’
• Images: ‘Mystery Nature Sounds’

Kit Materials:
• ‘Mystery Nature Objects’ (selected from ‘How-to-do Activity’)
• ‘Mystery Nature Object’ paper bags—color coded in sets of 6 for easy management
• Audio recording: ‘Mystery Nature Sounds’
• Magnifiers or jewelers loupes: 6 (one for each group of students, more if available)

Teacher supplied:
• Fresh ‘Mystery Nature Objects’ as needed (such as red cedar leaves, cones). See ‘How-to-do Activity’ for suggestions.

Before Activity: Gather fresh materials as needed. Collect and sort materials into coded bags and clear plastic viewing containers (see ‘How-to-do Activity’). Set up audio recording in appropriate player. Plan to organize students into 6 groups.

Activity:
• Gather students together. Tell them, “Today we will be ‘Nature Detectives’, making discoveries and solving mysteries about nature. We can use our senses to find clues about nature. What are our senses? (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling). What do we use to see (point to eyes)? What do we use to hear (point to ears)? What do we use to smell (point to nose)? What do we use to touch (point to fingers)? We will use each of these senses to solve some nature mysteries.”
• Have students form 6 separate groups. Tell them they will use their different senses to try to guess objects they will pass around in each group. Pass out a Douglas fir cone or similar object, hidden in paper bag or plastic container, to one person in each group. Demonstrate and tell which sense they will use.
• Tell students not to use their voices but to raise a hand if they have a guess. Within each group, have them pass the object from student to student around the group. Make sure each student gets a turn. When all students have used their senses to guess the object, ask the entire class to share their guesses. Then identify the object. Ask students to use different words to describe the object. Help students think of words that appropriately describe characteristics. Compare different student’s reactions to the same object. Repeat with a new mystery object.

◊ Touch: Pass out the same variety of ‘Mystery Nature Object’, concealed in a paper bag to each group. Reach Say, ‘Reach your hand into the bag and feel the object. Use only hands, not eyes”. Ask, “Does it feel smooth? Rough? Hard? Soft? Wet? Dry?”
◊ Smell: Now use your nose to smell the ‘Mystery Object’ in your bag. Ask, “Does it smell sour? Sweet? Like food? Like medicine? Do you like the smell?”
◊ Sight: We can use magnifiers to help our eyes see small things up close. Pass out magnifiers. Demonstrate the use of a magnifier; hold the object in your hand and move the magnifier towards and away from the object until it is in focus. Have students use magnifiers to look at nature objects. Ask, “Does the object look bumpy? Prickly? Smooth? Shiny? What does its shape remind you of; a helicopter? Fish?”
◊ Sound: Ask students to close their eyes. Play audio recording: ‘Mystery Nature Sounds’; one animal at a time. Say, “Open your eyes. Give me a “thumbs up” if it sounds like a bird? Frog?” Then show the class the image ‘Mystery Nature Sounds’ of the animal that makes the mystery sound. Repeat with new sound.
• Conclude, “We can use our senses to identify natural objects and animals”.

Vocabulary
Characteristics: a distinguishing trait or property
Senses: the ability of perceiving by using a sensory organ; sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing

Washington State EALRs
Communication 1.1, 1.2 Students will focus attention, listen, and observe to gain and interpret information.
Science 1.1 Use properties to identify, describe and categorize living things.
Seattle School District Standards
Component: The student identifies, describes and categorizes living things based on their characteristics.
1.1, 1.3 Objects can be described in terms of their physical properties. 1.1Magnifiers can let us see things that we don’t expect. 1.3 Diversity of Life: Some plants are alike in the way they look and in the things they do, and others are very different from one another. 2.2 Describing things as correctly as possible is important in science and allows people to compare with one another what they see.