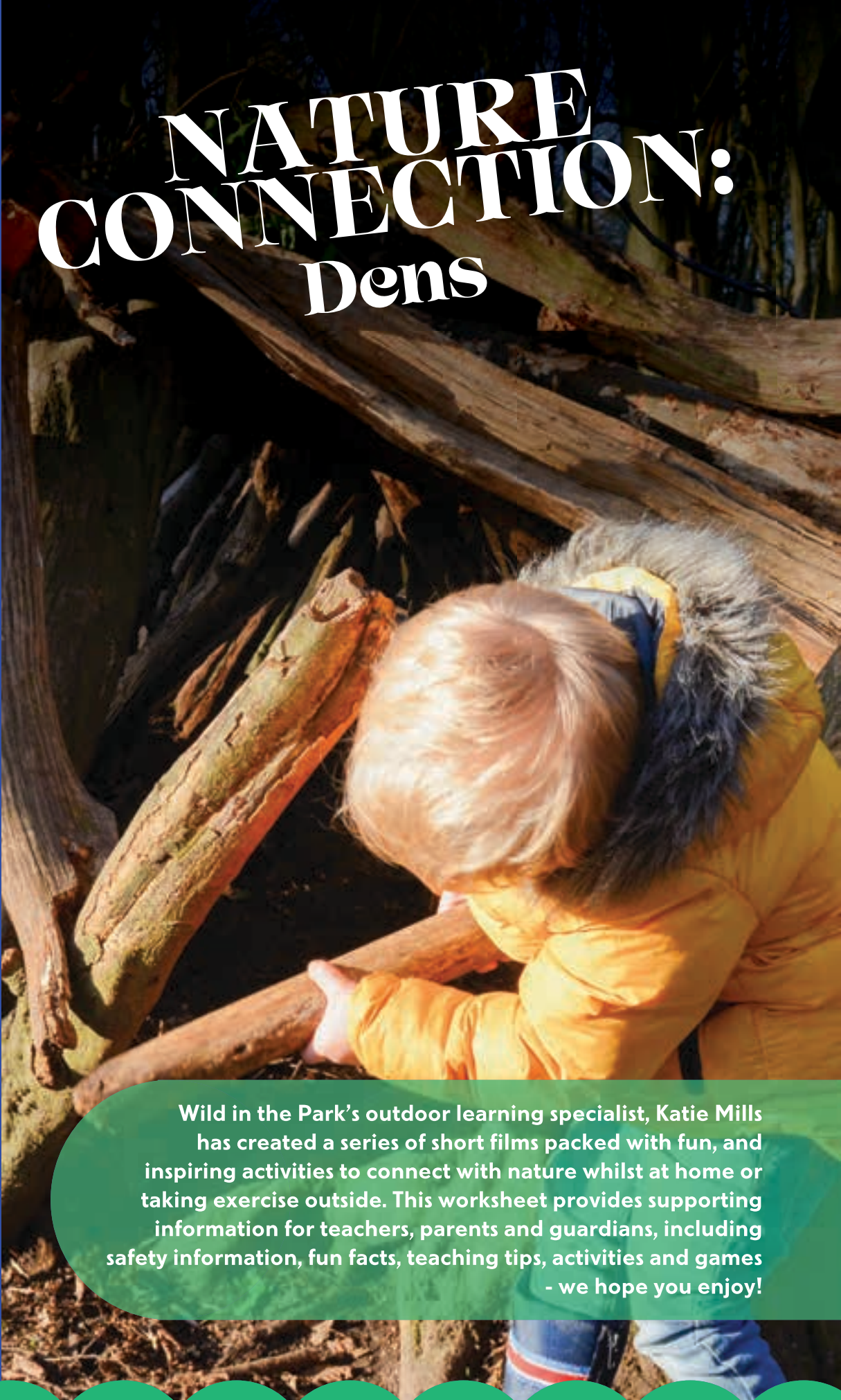


WILD IN THE PARK

NATURE CONNECTION: Dens



Wild in the Park's outdoor learning specialist, Katie Mills has created a series of short films packed with fun, and inspiring activities to connect with nature whilst at home or taking exercise outside. This worksheet provides supporting information for teachers, parents and guardians, including safety information, fun facts, teaching tips, activities and games - we hope you enjoy!

Katie Mills

Katie Mills is a passionate nature connector, speaker, National Park City Ranger, Forest School Leader and Forest Bathing Guide. In 2018, she founded Forest & Family, a social enterprise promoting nature connection for children and families. She designs and delivers a wide range of outdoor learning programmes for schools, businesses, green space custodians and cultural organisations such as Alexandra Palace and park.



Wild in the Park...

Wild In The Park enables children and young people to access leading outdoor learning facilitators and environmental specialists to become responsible park users and treasure community spaces and

resources. More information about the programme including other resources available for download can be found on our website www.alexandrapalace.com



Recording 2: Overview

Building Dens is a brilliant activity to do with children. They can be made almost anywhere and are great for extended free play that can last for hours!

Dens have the added bonus of helping children to develop different skills in the process; from problem solving structural challenges to

inspiring creativity and honing team working skills. In this recording, children recreate miniature stick based dens as an easy way to encourage them to play outside or use natural materials indoors. It also suggests ideas to inspire children to build indoor dens using a range of household materials.

Learning Opportunities

- Physical movement
- Gross motor skills
- Resourcefulness
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Imagination
- Creativity
- Role play and imaginative play
- Construction
- Patience
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Language and communication

Location

Inside or outside



Themed Dens

You can create imaginative worlds and hideaways by making themed dens. Children usually develop themes themselves but try some of the ideas below to get them started.

STORY DENS

Inspire the children's imagination with a Story Den. This often works best in a cosy and dimly lit den with the children gathering together by torchlight. Ask the children to create an improvised story together. Each child will take it in turns to add a new section to the story.

READING DENS

Keep out I'm reading! Create a relaxing space where children can hunker down with a book in their own cosy reading nook. They can decorate their den creating a calming space with comfy cushions and a snuggly blanket, which will encourage children to relax and read.

PICNIC DENS

Tea Time! Create a picnic and have it in the den. Ask the children to invite their favourite toys. They can bring along their favourite teddies and enjoy a range of miniature-sized tasty snacks and sandwiches, and pass the time playing games or singing nursery rhymes.

JOKE DENS

I say, I say, I say – How do you make a Joke Den?!!! Create a comfy cosy den using cushions, pillows and snuggly blankets. Ask the children to try laying down in the den so that their heads are on each other's bellies. Then each child takes it in turn to tell a joke. When they start giggling their bellies go up and down and so do the children's heads, which makes them giggle more. If the Joke Den is working well – you'll hear them giggling for hours!

Safety

- Supervise children when they are building dens. Check the den area and make sure materials are safe and pose no physical risk.
- Remove any nearby hazards e.g. loose shelves or heavy objects that could fall.
- Always supervise young children with sticks. Make sure sticks are away from eyes and faces and carried safely, pointed down with thumb over the pointy end.
- Always wash hands after playing outside and with natural materials, and before eating.
- Please follow the 'no pick, no lick rule': Do not let children put fingers or found objects in their mouths and discourage them from picking or breaking anything that is growing.
- Always do a shake test before entering a full-scale stick den to check it is secure

Tips

- Young children may need help with constructing their den but encourage them to do as much as possible themselves.
- Encourage children to come up with their own den designs and embellishments.
- Add decorations, fairy lights, signs and toys and encourage imaginative play and ideas.
- Talk about how dens provide shelter, warmth, comfort and safety.

