

2: SUSTAINER AND REDEEMER: GOD'S CARE FOR CREATION – Activity 6

Octopus and Coconuts

Equipment: A coconut, yoghurt pots or cardboard tubes, plasticine or modelling clay.

Activity: After talking about the octopus and the coconut, make plasticine octopuses hiding in 'shells'.

Purpose/teaching: God did not create animals for our benefit! God's other creatures have a relationship with him too (e.g. see Psalm 104) and God had his own reasons for creating them. Often human beings know very little about the creatures with whom we share the planet, and God pointed this out pretty bluntly to Job. Reading Job 39 can make a good introduction to this topic.

Octopuses are an interesting example of the limits of our understanding, and hopefully freaky enough to capture children's interest and imagination. Until quite recently people assumed that they were incapable of thinking, because they don't have a brain structure like ours. But we now know that they can solve problems by reasoning rather than instinct, for example finding ways to escape from tanks and unscrew jars! They have also been observed using tools; i.e. taking objects from their environment and using them for their own purposes. Coconut shells are the best known instance of this; octopuses have soft bodies and make a tasty snack for predators, so they will seek out coconut shells to use as shelters, even scuttling onto land. There is cool footage of this on You Tube www.youtube.com and elsewhere on the internet.

Some other interesting octopus facts: they are venomous and squirt ink, some species have detachable limbs which not only come off to distract predators who attack them, but are capable of wriggling even when detached, and some species change colour and shape to disguise themselves as floating sea-weed or swimming sea-serpents.

