Play & Learning Newsletter

27th November – 1nd December 2023

**Brave, worried, owlet, nocturnal, swooped, branch, silent, hunting**

Wonder words to use with your child:

The lovely book ‘Owl Babies’ by Martin Waddell has inspired this week’s play and learning experiences, making the most of the children’s current love of the ‘dark’ and also introducing some beautiful vocabulary and notions of different feelings. The children have enjoyed using 4 soft owl teddies to re-enact the story (there has been lots of owl play and games involving them!) and also create cosy homes to put them in. They have shared ‘owl treats’ (worms and mice) between the owls using their subitising skills (and working out how many cuts to make on a play dough worm to create the correct number of worms – very tricky!) The book has also been great for introducing the word ‘nocturnal’ and finding out about other nocturnal animals using information books.

The children have also been comparing nocturnal with hibernation and how they are different. There has been lots of talk about whether the children would like to hibernate or be nocturnal. The Flying Fish have been voting for which they would prefer, which stimulated some great mathematical talk about quantities and comparing them.

The children have also been enjoying the challenge of creating lairs for their bears which are dark and cosy. This has encouraged them to come up with ideas, problem solve and use previous experiences to support new ones – all very important learning behaviours. We have had lots of bears to choose from and it’s been very interesting to observe the children’s thought processes as they chose which bear to use and then how to build the ‘lair’ to fit them. Just the type of active thinking that we like to see!

Possibly the most exciting thing to happen all week though was the arrival of Elvis the Elf, fresh from the North Pole, to learn how to be kind and caring, just like the children are to everyone in the pre-school crew. He is a bit cheeky though and we are ready for the next two weeks to be full of challenges and puzzles that he will set us!

 ***Sounds and Letters/language focus:*** The Flying Fish have been continuing to play games which have focused on them listening out for the initial sound of a word. We have said familiar words but changed the initial letter (so they realise the difference in the sound) and been helping the adults workout what words might say in books by using the picture and the initial letter sound given by the adults.

The Starfish have enjoyed sharing different owl books and developing their vocabulary around owls and nighttime. They have also enjoyed beginning to learn some of our Christmas songs!

 **Out & About sessions:** This week we took our torches (these have been such a hit!) on our Out & Abouts to Feadon Woods to explore nooks, crannies and holes that we found in search of bugs, owls and fairies! There was lots of investigating what happens when you shine torches through leaves and looking at the intricate details of them, working out which ones were best to use and noticing any holes in them. The children were very keen owl spotters and were over the moon to spot a nest in the hollow of a tree. We could see that there were lots of leaves, sticks and feathers sticking out of it. When we got up to Feadon Farm we were able to ask one of the workers about the hollow and she told us that a tawny owl was nesting in it! We then got to see the resident owl at the farm as well and found out all about how to tell if an owl is nocturnal or diurnal (awake during the daytime) – it’s all to do with the colour of their eyes!

Ideas to support your child at home:

Go for a night time walk! Going for a walk in the dark is such a different experience and great for encouraging your child to tune into the different sounds and sights that darkness brings. This week will see a full moon (8th Dec) so even better for a dark walk as the moon (clouds permitting) will help create shadows as well. Lots of lovely language to be developed and understanding about the natural world. PLUS (and possibly the most exciting part of it if you are little) - they get to use their torches too!! A win win experience! 😊