



WITH SOFIA THE OWL ON THE FOREST TRAIL



Zavod za gozdove Slovenije
Območna enota Kočevje



European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas



WITH SOFIA THE OWL ON THE FOREST TRAIL



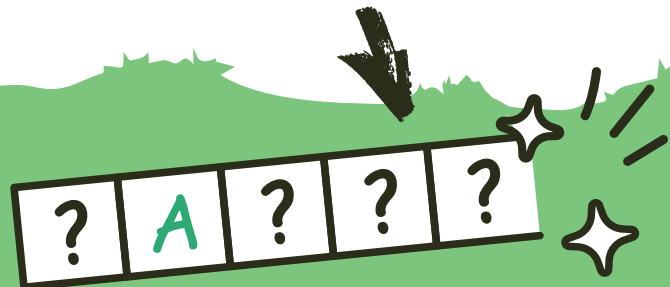
OFF TO THE FOREST, ON A HIDDEN PASSWORD HUNT

Welcome to the »Rožni studenec« forest trail! Your guide will be Sofia the Owl, a Eurasian Eagle Owl who knows the forest inside out. Together you will be discovering the secrets of the forest as well as getting to know various trees and forest animals. Along the way you will learn why forests are so important and why we need to protect them.

Follow the owl tree marks along the trail and curiously observe the world around you.

Look for questions about the forest and its inhabitants: in the booklet they are marked with a green bubble and a number.

Think carefully, mark the letter in front of the correct answer and write it in the table at the end of the booklet. If you get it right, the hidden password will be revealed at the end. GOOD LUCK.



FOREST TRAIL MAP



First of all, take a good look at the map of the forest trail. It has marked corners for exploring and discovering different aspects of the forest. Stop frequently, listen to the sounds of nature, observe the surroundings and above all enjoy the beauty and mystery of the forest. Add to this curiosity, enthusiasm and wonder and your experience of the trail will be complete.



THE MIGHTY FOREST

Forests can be found almost anywhere in the world. Coniferous forests (taiga) grow high in the north, whereas deciduous, coniferous and mixed forests dominate in the temperate zone, and rainforests in the tropics. Forests currently cover one third of the Earth. They also cover a third of Europe and more than half of Slovenia, which is the third most forested country in Europe after Finland and Sweden. Foresters contribute greatly to this as they look after our forests.

The word forest does not only refer to a large group of trees but to a connected whole of living organisms (plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and non-living environments (light, water, air, minerals, etc.) that together form a stable and rich habitat – a forest ecosystem.



FOREST PICTURE

Collect different natural materials such as fallen twigs, leaves, fruits, stones or dry grass. Draw or build an owl on the forest floor using the materials you have collected. Remember the rule: do not pick the plants or damage the trees.

TOGETHER IN THE FOREST

The forest trail you are walking on is named after the Rose Well or Rozenbrun. This used to be a drinking water source which is probably why the first inhabitants of the Kočevsko region made the nearby area their home. The townspeople of Kočevje have always loved to meet for walks and picnics in the surroundings of the Rose Well.

Forests provide us with fresh air and food, and a place for many different experiences and activities. In the forest we can relax, exercise, play, socialise, gather forest fruits, explore and learn about nature. Trees release special substances - phytoncides. When inhaled together with the forest air, they improve our health and strengthen our immune system.

- E Their leaves can be used to make sweets
- P They produce large amounts of carbon dioxide
- F They produce antibacterial substances, phytoncides

1?



FOREST RIDDLE

Find a small natural object you can hold in your hand. Ask the person next to you to close their eyes and open their palm. Place the object in their hand. Ask them to feel it and try to find out what it is. Then switch roles.



FORESTS ARE DIFFERENT

Almost one third of the Earth is covered by forests! They come in many different types and vary a great deal in their characteristics. It depends on where they grow, what the soil is like, how much sun and rain there is, and the temperature of the area.

In the Kočevsko region there are mainly beech forests and mixed, fir-beech forests, but oak, hornbeam and spruce forests are also common. Along the river Rinža the characteristic alder logs can be found. Some of the trees in our local forests are proper giants, up to 50 metres tall - like the Queen of Rog Fir Tree. The oldest native tree species is the beech, which survived the Ice Age and later spread across Europe.



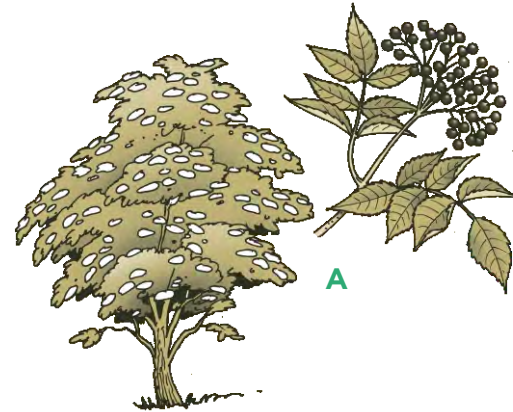
2?

Which trees are the most widespread in the Kočevsko region?

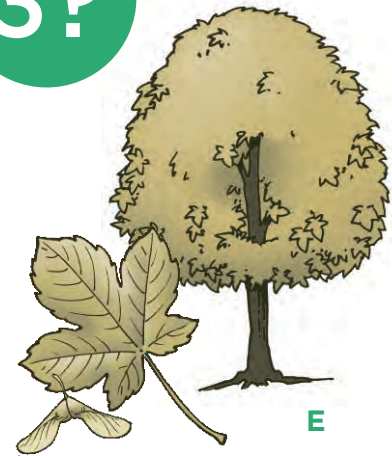
- R | Pine and cypress
- ! | Beech, fir and spruce
- V | Acacia and poplar

3?

Eurasian Eagle Owls feed most commonly on small mammals, like dormice. And dormice like beechnuts. Help Sofia find the right tree where her prey is hiding.



A



E



I

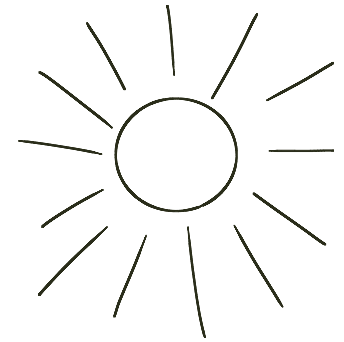
FORESTERS LOOK AFTER THE FOREST

Foresters spend a lot of time in the forest, keeping it healthy and functional. They observe it closely and then plan care, protection and conservation work. They care for diseased, damaged and pest-infested trees and protect those that have been eaten by wild animals. Trees felled due to disease and human demand for wood products are replaced by new ones. This is called rejuvenating the forest. They also do important work to protect special trees, forests and waters.



DO YOU KNOW...

... that Slovenia is one of the few countries with free access to forests? At the same time, we are required to treat the forest responsibly and observe proper forest etiquette.



4?

- J To climb trees
- D To cut down as many trees as possible
- E To look after the forest - inspect trees, plant new ones and protect nature

WHY DO FORESTS MATTER?

As you are discovering and learning, forests have many benefits. Most importantly, they protect water, which is essential for plant, animal and human life.

Did you know that we drink the same water that dinosaurs drank? There are two reasons why this is possible: the total amount of water on Earth does not change and water is always cycling around, through and above the Earth. It is warmed by the sun, so it evaporates and rises into the atmosphere as vapour. This process is called evaporation. Another is called transpiration: plants pump water through their roots and release it back into the atmosphere through the leaves. The water vapour in the air condenses into clouds and finally precipitation, and most of it falls back to the ground. This completes the water cycle.

- J** | Water turning into ice
- B** | Water flowing from the roots to the canopy
- R** | The process of water evaporating into the atmosphere

5?

WHAT IS
EVAPORATION ?



Forests help retain water and prevent flooding. This is very important in the Kočevsko region where karst soils allow water to pass through quickly. This means that without forests there would be no clean water. Therefore forests are crucial for clean drinking water.



What do forests do with the rainwater they receive?

6?

- Z** | They heat it to 50 degrees Celsius
- M** | They colour the water green to make forest water
- O** | They hold the water, filter it and slowly release it into groundwater

THE FOREST IS HOME TO WILD ANIMALS

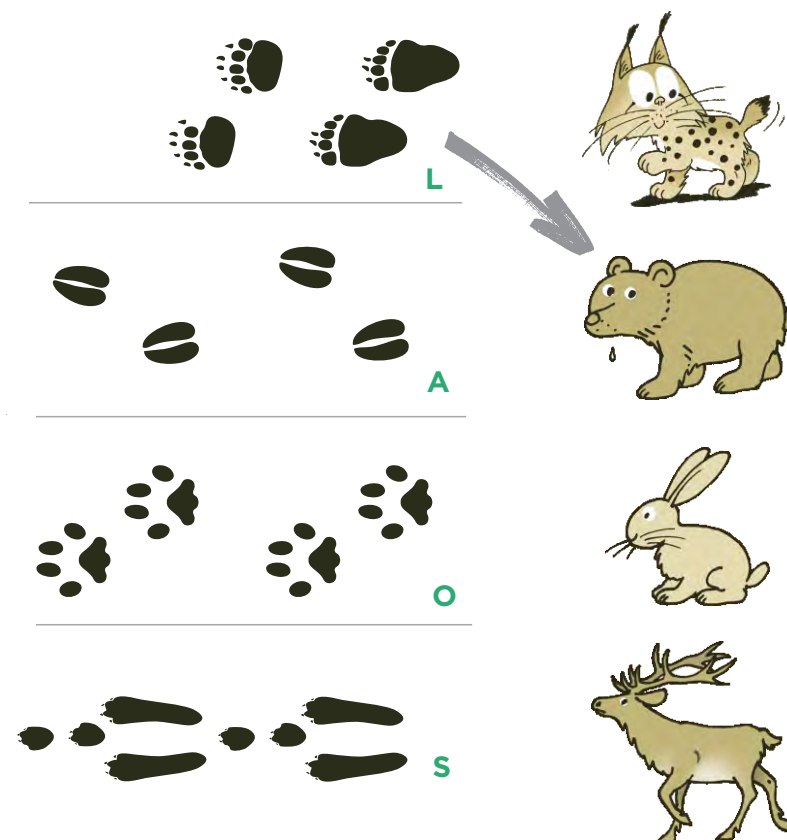
Forests are full of life. They are home to insects, birds, rodents, herbivores and carnivores. Each of these animals plays an important role in the forest.

The forests in the Kočevsko region are home to the brown bear – our largest carnivore. Although brown bears are omnivorous, they mostly eat plants, and their droppings help spread the seeds of the plants they eat. The Eurasian lynx, Europe's largest wild cat, and the wolf also live in our forests. A typical rodent is the dormouse, an excellent climber and a real record-holder when it comes to sleeping – it can sleep for up to six months. The white-tailed eagle can be seen near large bodies of open water. With an impressive wingspan of up to 2.5 m, it is one of the largest eagles in the world. The mysterious Ural owl nests in old tree hollows, whereas the Eurasian eagle owl is primarily found on hidden rock ledges. If walking quietly and carefully, one may also spot deer and roe deer.



7?

Which trail should Sofia the Owl choose to find a tasty lunch? Match the silhouette of the animal with its trail and choose the letter in front of the correct answer.

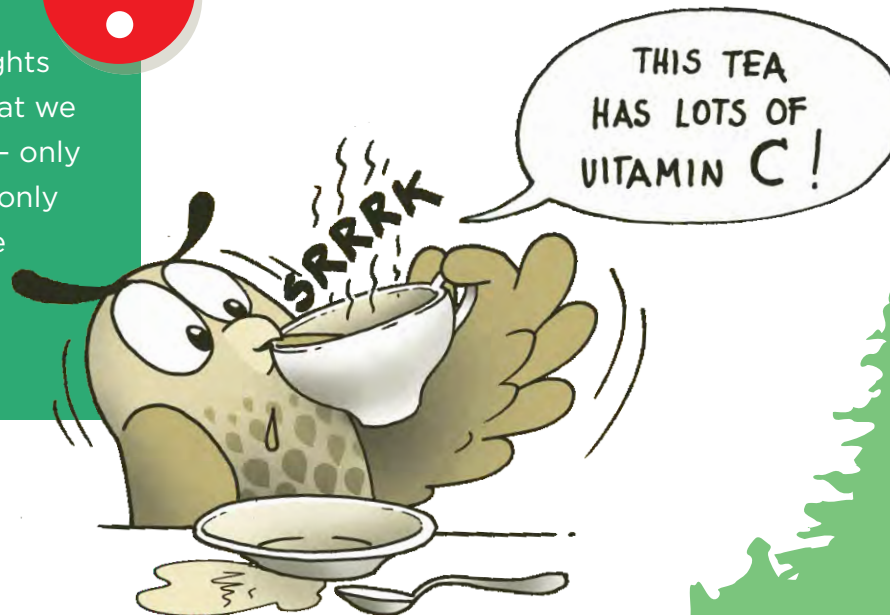


FOOD FROM THE FOREST

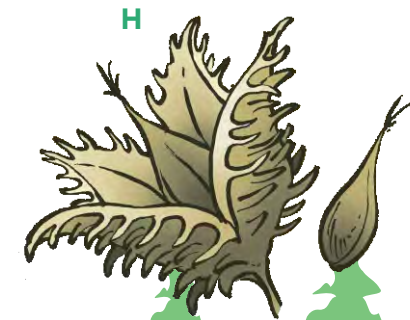
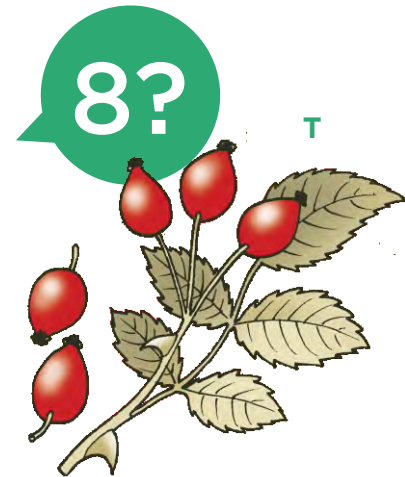
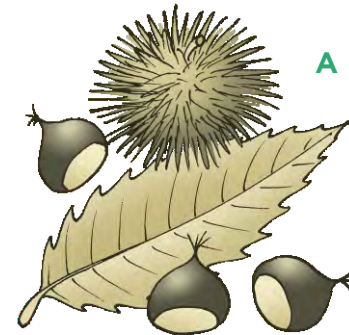
Food from the forest is a proper treasure trove of health. It is full of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, as well as fresh, seasonal and extremely delicious. The forests of the Kočevsko region are home to many edible plants

In spring, the smell of wild garlic fills the air, while stinging nettle leaves can be used either in soups or as a side dish. In summer, we make spruce tip cough syrup. On woodland edges and clearings we can find all sorts of wild berries such as strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. In autumn, we enjoy sweet chestnuts and edible mushrooms such as penny buns and chanterelles. .

 The forest has many delights to offer. It is important that we gather them responsibly - only as much as we need and only what we know well. Some plants can be very poisonous!



Which plant does Sophie the Owl prefer to make tea from?



FORESTS ARE THE LUNGS OF THE PLANET

Forests have a huge impact on climate and climate change. Their canopy creates shade and cools the heated atmosphere, making it pleasantly cool under the trees. Trees clean the air and absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, which they convert into food needed for growth with the help of sun and water. In this process, known as photosynthesis, they produce the oxygen we breathe. Forests are literally the lungs of the planet.

Because of so many vital things they do forests need to be valued and protected for future generations.



ONE MATURE TREE...



9?

What would happen to the climate if all the forests were cut down?

- G The Earth's temperature would decrease
- ♥ There would be a lot of CO₂ left in the air, it would be hotter and drier
- A Nothing, because forests are only important for animals



WELL DONE!

Now you know a lot about forests and their importance for our planet! You are now ready to become a YOUNG FOREST GUARDIAN!

You will achieve this by continuing to respect forest etiquette, not destroying plants, not scaring animals and never leaving rubbish in the forest. You can take part in clean-up actions and tree-planting projects organised by your local foresters. The forest will thank you and reward your efforts with its treasures and beauty!

HIDDEN PASSWORD

Write the letters/characters before the correct answers to the questions in this booklet in the boxes. Let the hidden password always guide you on your journey through the forest.

3	9	1	6	5	4	7	8	2



Title

WITH SOFIA THE OWL ON THE FOREST TRAIL

Original title

S SOVO SOFIJO PO GOZDNI POTI

Web address

<https://www.lu-ocevje.si/images/PDF/LUK%20-%20Knjizica%20Sova%20Sofija%20-%20WEB%20ENG.pdf>

Content

Irena Kavčič / Slovenia forest service, Regional unit Kočevje project team

Editorial

David Šušel

English translation

Mojca Masterl Štefanič

Illustration

Samo Jenčič

Design

Tadej Šulman

Publisher

Podjetniški Inkubator Kočevje,
OE Ljudska Univerza Kočevje

1st online edition

The publication was created as part of the project „Inovativno po gozdni učni poti Rožni studenec“ (Innovatively Along the Rožni Studenec Forest Educational Trail). The content is the responsibility of the Podjetniški inkubator Kočevje (The Kočevje Business Incubator), a public institute for entrepreneurship, education and other activities. The managing authority designated for the implementation of The Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2014–2020 is the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food.

Kočevje, May 2025

CIP - Cataloging in Publication Data
National and University Library, Ljubljana

37.091.33-027.22:630(497.4Kočevje)(02.053.2)

KAVČIČ, Irena, 1981-, biologinja
With Sofia the owl on the forest trail / Irena Kavčič ; [illustration Samo Jenčič ; English translation Mojca Masterl Štefanič]. - 1st ed. - Kočevje : Podjetniški Inkubator, OE Ljudska Univerza, 2025

Translation of the work:
S sovo Sofijo po gozdni poti

COBISS.SI-ID 241461251
ISBN 978-961-07-2798-9 (PDF)

