

Nova's Nocturnal Nature Trail: Classification Keys

Learning objective: To be able to construct and use a branching classification key to identify living things based on specific characteristics.

Nova the owl is helping scientists identify creatures found in the woodland. Use the characteristics in the word bank to complete the branching key below. Start with the 'Living Thing' box and create a path by answering 'Yes' or 'No' to the questions until every creature has its own final box.

Word bank: Has feathers? · Can fly? · Has six legs? · Is it a mammal? · Beetle · Sparrow · Bat · Earthworm

1. 1. Look at your completed key. If you found a creature that has feathers and can fly, which animal is it? Explain how the key helped you decide. (2 marks)

2. 2. Why is it important to use 'Yes' or 'No' questions when creating a classification key? (2 marks)

3. 3. If you discovered a new insect that was not on your list, where would it fit in your key? Describe the characteristic you would add. (2 marks)

4. 4. Is a beetle a vertebrate or an invertebrate? Use your key to identify its group. (1 mark)

5. 5. Think of another creature that could be added to the 'No' branch of the 'Has feathers?' question. Where would it go next? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a large branching tree diagram in your notebook. Start with a box labelled 'Living Thing' at the top, and draw branches downwards for each question from the word bank, ending in boxes for the four creatures: Beetle, Sparrow, Bat, and Earthworm.



Extension challenge: Research a fifth animal, such as a frog or a goldfish. Add a new branch to your key to include this creature. Write down the questions you used to ensure it is correctly classified.