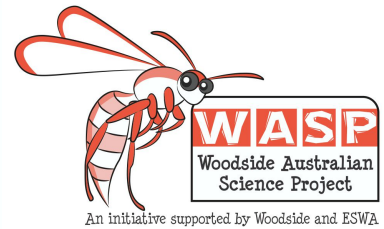


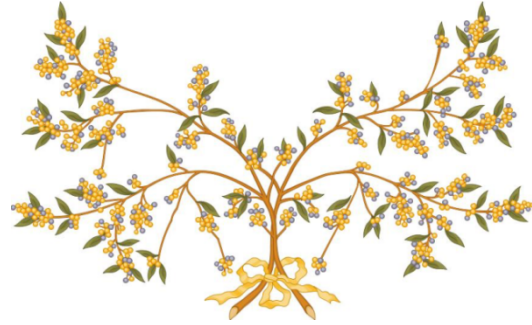
What Are Resources? – Student Activity



We define a resource as **‘anything that is useful’**. For the following examples, write down what you think should be done and give reasons for your decision.

1. Useful to whom? Should we only consider things resources if they are useful to humans?

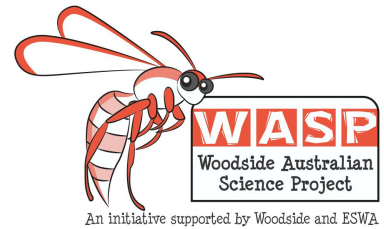
Example 1: The wattle tree in our garden is dying of old age. Some of its branches fell down during the first storm of winter. Luckily, it did not cause any damage to the house or garden. Galahs have been nesting in a hollow in the main trunk for the last four years. We can cut down the tree and replant another. That should last for another 15 years, but the galahs will lose their nests.



Does the dead tree count as a resource? Is what is left of the tree useful?

How could a scientist help in solving this problem? What are your ideas for dealing with the dead tree?

What Are Resources? – Student Activity



2. Useful for what? Are all users equal?

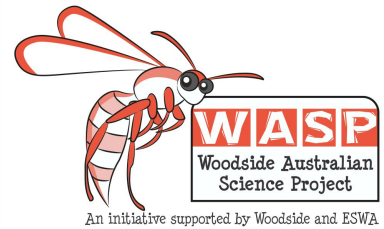


Example 2: A piece of wetland lies at the edge of a housing estate. If the wetland were drained, this land would provide more homes for people and more jobs for builders. Currently, it is the source of a terrible mosquito problem for people in neighbouring houses. On the other hand, the wetland also provides one of the few breeding areas for endangered long-necked tortoises, and shelters winter nesting places for many water birds. The mosquitos provide food for the frogs and birds.

Should the land be drained to become a resource?

How could a scientist help in solving this problem? What do you think could be done with the wetland?

What Are Resources? – Student Activity



3. Useful for how long? Once a resource, always a resource?

Example 3: Chert and flint are naturally-occurring, quartz-rich minerals. They are commonly found as nodules (lumps) in chalk, limestone and greenstone. When sharply struck with another stone, the rock breaks, creating a sharp cutting edge. Chert became highly valued by early man for making stone tools with sharp edges for cutting and piercing. This advance in technology was very important because mankind could now kill and butcher their own meat, and defend themselves and their resources effectively against other animals, including other humans. This invention marked the beginning of the Stone Age. Good sources of chert were strongly defended and tools were traded across great distances. Tribal chiefs were often buried with these precious tools. The tool pictured comes from a grave in Drenthe, Holland.

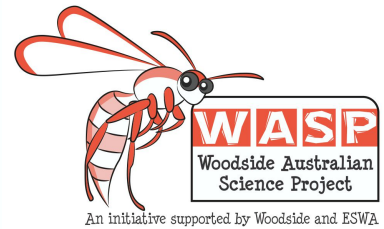


Was chert considered a resource in the Stone Age?

Is chert considered to be a resource nowadays?

What do modern people use to make sharp edges for cutting tools?

What Are Resources? – Student Activity



Example 4: Cladding is the material placed on the outside walls of houses to seal them from the effects of weather. Many houses that were built in Australia just after World War II were cladded with asbestos tiles and sheeting, which were popular roofing materials at the time. Previously jarrahwood was used for walls, but had by then become a scarce and expensive resource. Asbestos, however, was inexpensive, was easy to form into flat boards, was relatively easy to cut and drill and was a good insulator against summer heat. For these reasons, asbestos was a wonderful resource, and soon many people were using

asbestos tiles and sheeting in their homes all across Australia. Even school laboratories and domestic kitchens had asbestos pads, which were used to insulate hot equipment. Mineral asbestos was mined at Wittenoom, Western Australia, in the Hammersley Ranges. In Wittenoom township, asbestos fibres blew around in the wind and children played amongst heaps of mining waste. By the 1960s, people were becoming worried about a deadly lung disease, which was affecting mainly asbestos miners, their families, and others who worked with asbestos. Scientific studies around the world found that loose fibres in asbestos caused scarring in lungs which eventually led to death. Workers had been bringing home fibres in their clothes, which later affected their families. The demand for asbestos plummeted, as people didn't want this health risk in their homes. In 1966, the government shut down the town of Wittenoom and even the roads to this ghost town are slowly being closed.

Why was asbestos *once* considered to be a “wonderful” resource?

Why is it no longer considered to be a resource?

Why do people who wish to replace their old asbestos cladding or roofs have to hire special companies trained in asbestos waste removal?

If you find some old broken asbestos sheeting in the garden, should you just put it quickly in the bin?

Why was it necessary to have scientists study the cause of the mysterious lung disease? Why didn't they just ask the miners what their opinion was?