

Tips for a Successful Field Trip

Adapted originally from Quinlan, "Alaska Wildlife Week."

The purpose of a field trip is to provide...

- An opportunity to *experience* shorebirds, particularly in their natural environment.
- An opportunity to practice methods of scientific inquiry while conducting "field research." (These methods include observation, data collection, and teamwork.)
- An opportunity to consider, through direct experience, the interactions between wildlife and humans, including enjoyment, disturbance, and education.

When planning your trip...

- Familiarize yourself with the field trip and classroom activities. Plan ahead to include as many pre-trip activities as you can.
- Check tide charts, best viewing days and times, and the site layout. How much room will students have to spread out or work? Are there safety issues at this location? Are there special rules for visitors in this habitat (like no "picking" vegetation, staying on designated trails, etc.)?

On the way to the field site...

If you cannot walk to the area, plan some activities or songs for the bus trip. This will help students burn off a little excess energy and concentrate on their discoveries once they reach the site.

- A good bus ride activity is a "scavenger hunt" for items (for example, stop signs or certain tree or animal species, wetlands, examples of recent habitat degradation) that the bus will pass along the route.
- Play a round of *Jeo-Bird-Y* (found in the classroom activities section of the curriculum).

When arriving at the site...

Before letting students off the bus, remind them of the trip rules and proper outdoor etiquette. Plan a quick observation activity to get started on as soon as they get off the bus. This will give you and your chaperones a chance to get organized.

- Five minutes for each student to draw a picture of the site in his or her journal
- Five minute list of the characteristics of the site (the sights, smells, and sounds) and to record them in their journals
- If you did not have a chance to do the *Birding Code of Ethics* activity, incorporate it after their journal observations and just before their field studies.

Close-up studies...

Have individuals or small groups conduct special investigations. Allow 45 minutes or so for each close-up study. You may choose to have all the groups conduct the same activity, or you may assign each group or student a different close-up study. You will find ideas in the *Shorebird Field Study* activity in this section.

Sharing...

Have each person (or group) give a short summary of what he or she learned or saw and point out or show things of interest. It is important to do this briefly at the site so that all the students have an opportunity to notice the items they did not examine closely. Tell students to add the observations they may have missed into their journals.

Pollution patrol...

Return any living creatures to the place where they were found. Have students collect any trash left behind by the class or by other people. You may want to award a pollution patrol prize to the group that collects the most.

Follow-up...

Wrap up the field trip with a follow-up activity included in this section of the curriculum. Compile and discuss the data collected back in the classroom. Include your resource person in this discussion.

