U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Biologist-in-Training

A guide to exploring aquatic habitats

Hey Kids!

Did you know exploring nature is super-fun? It's also really good for your mind and body!

Let's take an adventure outside to discover something new about nature and about yourself! Try these fun activities, and you will earn an official "Biologist-in-Training" sticker!

- [ ] Sit near the water. Close your eyes for at least 1 minute. Count the sounds you hear.
- [ ] Look in and around the water. Can you find something from nature that is red? yellow? blue? Can you find other colors in nature?
- [ ] Slowly turn over rocks in the water. Look under them. What do you find?
- [ ] Make a piece of nature art from things you find in and around the water. Use a stick to draw in the mud, stack stones to build a sculpture, or arrange things like nuts, twigs and flowers to make a pretty picture.
- [ ] Catch a bug living in or on the water. Look at it closely and think about how it moves, what it might eat and how it breathes. Then carefully put it back in its home.
- [ ] Find fish to watch. How do fish swim? Move your body the way a fish does when it's swimming through the water.
- [ ] Ask a grown-up what they liked best about being in nature when they were kids.
- [ ] Show someone else one new thing you discovered on your nature adventure.

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Tips for Parents

Connecting your family with nature

You probably remember how much fun it was to play outside as a child, but you may not have known how good it was for you! Today's kids, however, spend less time outside than any previous generation.

Recent research shows that our children are suffering from too much time inside. Kids spend an average of 6.5 hours/day with television, computers and video games. What does this mean? If kids are raised without a connection to nature, they may miss out on many important health benefits. Nature is critical to child development - intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and physically.

As children's time spent in nature has declined, ailments such as obesity, diabetes, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression, anxiety, and asthma have vastly increased.

Kids who play outdoors regularly enjoy better motor skills, physical fitness and general health. They are more creative, deal with stress better, and tend to show improved test scores. Children with symptoms of ADHD may even have their symptoms and the need for medication reduced through regular outdoor interactions.

And remember, it's fun! Whether it's a National Fish Hatchery, a local park or your own backyard, there are lots of safe outdoor places you and your family can visit. And you don't need to be an expert on nature to enjoy it! Nature's health benefits come from simply observing, listening, and feeling the natural world around you.

Use the "Biologist-in-Training" guide on this card for ideas on exploring natural spaces. Allow yourself and your child a moment each day for free, unstructured play outside, and you'll feel closer to nature and each other!

For more information on connecting children and nature, visit www.fws.gov/children, or call 800/344 WILD.

The Biologist-in-Training program and related materials are offered through all National Fish Hatcheries in the Southeast. For program information contact your local hatchery, call 404/679 4157, or visit www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/BiT.