



What is a NATURALIST?

Here at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, we define a **naturalist** as “someone who enjoys being outside and learning about nature.” Anyone can be a naturalist!

Naturalists are:

- Curious (We ask questions!)
- Full of wonder (We love making discoveries!)
- Observant (We notice what’s happening in nature!)
- Quiet (We don’t want to scare wildlife!)
- Respectful (We are kind to plants and animals!)
- Patient (We know it can take time for things to happen outside!)
- Prepared (We bring what we need and dress for the weather!)
- Adventurous (We are always willing to try new things!)
- “In the Moment” (We focus on right here, right now!)

We keep track of what we see and do outside in our nature journals. Nature journals help us remember what we learned and experienced outside.

We use our senses outside – we see, hear, smell, touch, and sometimes even taste things (always being safe, of course).

We share our discoveries with others, we leave no trace, and we help make the world a better place!





Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Tips and Tricks for Group Leaders at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

- **Do** remind your students what it means to be a naturalist – being observant, quiet, curious, etc. This is a great way to get everyone focused and back on track!
- **Do** stay in front of the group. That way, everyone will have the same chance to see wildlife and share their discoveries.
- **Do** stop and sit down from time to time with your students. It's important to have quiet time in your group and work on your journal pages.
- **Do** ask questions to keep students engaged. (Ex. what do you see? What do you hear? Who might have made this hole? etc.) Even if you know the answer, allow them to make discoveries, even if they're "wrong."
- **Do** foster participation from all of your students.
 - If someone is reluctant, give them a "job" to do, or ask specific questions.
 - If one student is answering everything, encourage them to give others a chance.
 - If students are distracted or unfocused, bring them back into the task by asking a direct question, or encouraging them to explore a specific object.
- **Do** let the students figure out how to use the equipment - this is part of their learning process!
- **Do** encourage students to fill out their journal pages completely. Remember, they do *not* have to be perfect. (For example, you do not have to spell words for them...they can sound them out).
- **Don't** feel like you have to know all the answers. "I don't know" is acceptable, but "I don't know, but let's sketch it or make some notes and see if we can find out together when we get back" is even better! We encourage you to come back with unanswered questions!
- **Don't** be afraid to jump right in and explore, journal, and share discoveries with your group of students – everyone will enjoy themselves more if you're involved, and you can lead by example!

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

- Rachel Carson

