



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





Winter Birds Snowshoe Hike

Group Leader Guidelines

On today's hike, students will be looking and listening for common winter birds.

Bird Watching Tips

1. **Stop, Look and Listen.** Our modern snowshoes can make a lot of noise depending on the snow texture. Students tend to spend most of their time looking at their feet. Take a few minutes every so often to stop and purposely look and listen for birds.
2. **Use our Feeders!** Many birds that visit our feeders are used to people nearby. Take advantage of this! Encourage the students to move a few steps at a time toward the feeders, stop to listen and watch, then repeat the process. How close can they get to the birds? How many different types of birds do they see? Are any birds calling? What do they sound like?
3. **Watch for Bird Signs.** This is a great time of year to see nests, feathers, and even bird tracks in the snow.
4. **No Expertise Required.** Encourage students to make up their own names for the birds based on the way they look, sound, or act. If you would like to know more about the birds you see, use the Winter Bird Guide we sent out with you.

Refuge Snowshoe Etiquette

- **Pick Up Your Feet**— Snowshoe hiking is definitely a workout! When students start to get tired and drag their feet, it is an even **bigger** workout. If students are getting tired, it's okay to slow down. Focus on the little discoveries right "under their feet".
- **Students Up, Snow Down**—While it can be great fun to fall into the snow, eat the snow, and throw snowballs, this behavior is better suited for the playground. Snow covered students quickly become wet and cold. Remind students to leave the snow on the ground and try their best to stay on their feet!
- **Icy Snow is Slippery**—The crampons (or claws) on the bottom of our modern style snowshoes provide good traction most of the time. When the snow is especially icy or well packed, remind students to use the "side step" going up and down hills.

