



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



Forests are More than Trees

Group Leader Guidelines

Lead students to a **forested** area (not a single tree in the middle of the prairie) and pick a tree to investigate **together**. Sometimes it helps to stop and sit, or crouch down, to look at the tree more closely (plus it helps wiggly students to focus!)

1. Encourage students to look at each level of the forest:
tree tops, branches, trunk, roots and forest floor.

Ask these simple questions for each tree you explore:

- Is anything living here? What? How do you know?
- What could animals/insects eat here?
- Where could animals sleep or hide here?
- Where can animals find water to drink here?

2. Encourage students to complete a journal square for at least three of the trees you visit. Their sketch or word description should reflect the specific things they discovered about the tree.

3. When students are ready to move on, find a new tree or place in the forest to explore.

*Note: If your trees are marked with a Forests are More than Trees sign, you can refer to the Tree Guide for more information about the tree you are investigating.

What's in a Tree?

