

Connecting People with Nature

An Activity Guide

by Tree Steele



Introduction

In the fall of 2008, Tree (James) Steele, an Evergreen State College student in environmental studies, volunteered to research, design and deliver print-ready copy for the Washington Fish and Wildlife Office Connecting People with Nature Activity Guide. Working with Information and Education specialist, Taylor Pittman, Tree produced a user-friendly tool for facilitating the FWS Connecting People with Nature priority.

The goal of this guide is to make getting people outside easy for our WFWO staff. The outdoor exercises and explanations on how and when to deliver them are designed to make preparation for conducting CPWN activities quick and understandable for non-teachers or informal educators.

This guide benefited from the curricula of several established non-formal educational programs, most notably the Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, WA; the Chehalis Basin Educational Consortium (Educational School District 113) in Olympia, WA; and Tree's work with the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. As a result, this teaching booklet is filled with hands-on, inquiry-based activities for FWS place-based education.

The FWS plans to use the booklet as a basis for workshops in environmental education principles and delivery. Tree has agreed to allow FWS to modify, reproduce and distribute this material as part of the agency's ongoing commitment to getting people outdoors. With the help of people like Tree, the FWS hopes to inspire the awareness that as humans we already are a part of nature, and through practices of re-connection, such as these activities, we will come to better understand and care for it.

Acknowledgements

U.S. FWS Washington Fish and Wildlife Office
Lacey, Washington

Mrs. Steele, Graphics artist
Portland, Oregon

U.S. FWS, Branch of Visitor Services and Communication
Portland, Oregon

Kathy Jacobson, Director
Chehalis Basin Education Consortium, Educational Service District 113
Olympia, Washington

The Wilderness Awareness School
Duvall, Washington

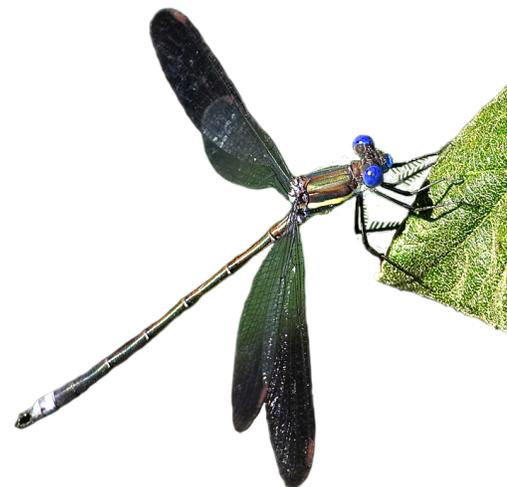


Table of Contents



Icebreakers 1-6



Lessons 7-13



Focusing Activities 15-26



Departure 27



Field Guide 29-35

ICEBREAKER



First impressions are important, especially when working with children. When groups are formed and individuals introduced to one another, opinions, feelings, and ideas about how the remainder of the time spent together will play out are also formed.

Introductions can be awkward, which is why it is up to the instructor (you) to help facilitate and lead them. Standard introductions may be made but they will not leave a lasting impression. It is very important that during this time you are enthusiastic and show the group that you are there for them. A good way to start out is by telling the group your name, where you're from, what you do, and something **interesting** about yourself. An example would be: "My name is Tree. I grew up in Portland, but have been living in Olympia for a little over a year. I'm currently going to school, and I spend most of my time studying chemistry and ecology. My favorite super hero is Captain Planet." Something interesting should be something that everybody can answer. For example, you might want everyone to say their favorite super hero, color, place, or food. The beginning activities in this guide have many different purposes, but the idea behind all of them is that the time first spent together is fun for everyone!

ICEBREAKER



ALL AGES

Audio

15 – 30 minutes

ANYWHERE

Two Truths and a Lie

TIPS AND HINTS

During the game it is good to remind the group several times to tell two things that are true and one thing that is a lie.

WHAT?

This game gives a short insight that tells something interesting, not just about the person but about their personality too.

WHY?

To get the group to listen to each other, and get familiar with one and other.

HOW?

For this game allow only one person to talk at a time. One person will tell the group three things about themselves, things that only they will know which two are true and which is a lie. It is up to the rest of the group to figure out which is true and which is false. Have one person at a time guess whether or not one thing the person said about themselves is true or not. After everyone has guessed have the person tell what is true and what isn't.

ICEBREAKER



AGES 8+

Experiential

10 – 30 Minutes

ANYWHERE

Bob the Weasel

WHAT?

This is an introductory game that gets the group familiar with each other by breaking physical boundaries.

WHY?

One key step in getting a group to be comfortable with each other is by giving them permission to be physically close to one another.

HOW?

Have your group stand in a very tight circle with one person in the middle. Everyone's shoulders and arms should be touching so that the person in the middle cannot see the others' hands, which are being held behind them. Hold an object (the "**weasel**") behind your back, making sure the person in the middle can't see the object. Now, in unison, the circle must bob up and down, still packed between neighbors, with everyone chanting: "Bob the **weasel!** Keep it goin,' Keep it goin'". Now start passing the "**weasel**" on the outside of the circle, making sure the person in the middle can't see it and doesn't notice it being passed around. It is the job of the person in the middle to point to somebody who they think has the **weasel**. They have three guesses to find it!

TIPS AND HINTS

Some children may need a little coaxing to get close, but make sure that you are not making anyone uncomfortable.

ICEBREAKER



AGES 6-18

Audio, Visual

15 – 30 minutes

Open Space

Take a Step Forward

TIPS AND HINTS

WHAT?

This is a short game that allows the group to become familiar with things that others in the group have done.

WHY?

To get people thinking and familiar with one another.

HOW?

Have everybody in the group stand in a line facing the person guiding this activity. Tell the group that anybody who has an answer to the question can take steps forward. You will continue asking questions. For example you may say: "Take a step forward if your favorite color is purple." Then you may say: "Take a step forward for every country you've been in." You can either have everybody take their steps back to the same line after each question, or have a specific line where the goal is to step to it first.



Pass the Pat

WHAT

This is a hand game designed to break the ice by getting close to one another and playing a fun game together.

WHY?

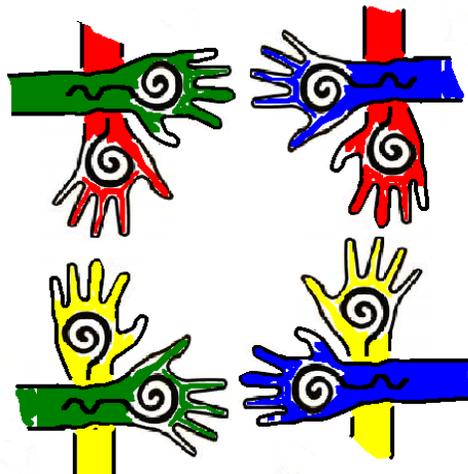
When working in a group it is important that everyone feel comfortable with each other. It is important that everyone in the group know each other so that they will respect each other.

HOW?

Have your group (yourself included) sit in a circle so that they can easily reach out in front and to the sides. Have them put their left hand on the ground, palm open and down. Then have everyone place their right hand, palm open and down, on the ground over their neighbor's left arm, making sure that everyone in the circle can see every hand.

First we will try one motion, but this will change. At first you will tap the ground with the palm of your right hand; this is the "pat". After you have patted the ground the hand to the right of yours (this should be two neighbors to your right's, left hand) now has the "pat" and has to pat the ground. The pat continues around the circle in a counterclockwise direction going from hand to hand, until it reaches the beginning again. If someone does not pat the ground after they have received the "pat" then they must take the hand that had the "pat" out of the circle. Once the circle has gotten down to two people, or a very small number, allow everyone to rejoin the circle, and announce that it's time to learn a new motion.

The next motion is someone patting the ground twice. When someone pats the ground twice, it sends the "pat" in the opposite direction (back to the hand it just came from). Play this out for a while and let people get the hang of the motions, and start paying attention. Now it's time for a third motion, the knock. When someone knocks their knuckles against the ground the "pat" continues in the same direction, but skips one hand.



TIPS AND HINTS

Depending on your group, you may not want to play competitively, that is, have people sit out when they forget or mess up the pat. You may want to just keep going, with everyone remaining in the circle. This is especially true with younger kids, who are slower at learning this game.

ICEBREAKER



ALL AGES

Experiential

10 - 30 minutes

OPEN AREA

Plant and Animal Aerobics

TIPS AND HINTS

Make sure that everyone has plenty of room before you start any aerobics!

WHAT?

This icebreaking activity is meant to get kids going by moving around and mimicking animals and plants.

WHY?

This not only helps kids get some stretching in before the day, but also gives them a chance to start thinking without having to interact directly with others.

HOW?

Animal Aerobics

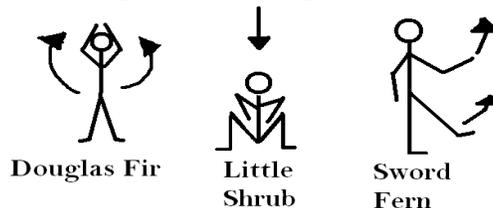
This is a very free form exercise that doesn't have many boundaries. You and your group can either stand in a circle to do this or in any other formation, as long as everyone can see the leader of the activity. Instruct everyone to do the same motion you do for each animal named, or create their own motion for the animal. You may want to start out with something easy that everyone knows like a bird, an example of a motion for this would be waving extended arms up and down. Name different animals as fast as you feel comfortable, but try to spend at least one minute with each animal. You can ask other people in the group to name animals and make up a motion. If people seem to be getting bored it's a good time to start asking.

Plant Aerobics

This activity is a little more structured, but still has room for personal touch. There are three plants that are mimicked in this game; the Douglas Fir, a little shrub, and a Sword Fern. These motions are repeated each time they're said. My preference is the following order sung with a melody:

A Douglas Fir, a Douglas Fir,
Little tiny shrub,
and a Douglas Fir
A Douglas Fir, a Douglas Fir,
little tiny shrub,
and a Douglas Fir,
A Swoooord Fern,
A Swoooord Fern,
Little tiny shrub,
And a Douglas Fir.

Repeat your order, increasing or slowing down the speed each time it is repeated. You can also try Robot Style with rigid movements and a robotic voice, or ballerina style dancing the forms with grace.



LESSONS



The activities in this portion of the activity guide are meant to teach about specific parts of nature. Before playing the games, try introducing the themes, e.g. for Seals and Salmon you would talk about the food chain and the relationship between the two organisms that live near us. Before starting some of these activities you may want to talk about safety and the expectations you have of the participants.

Make sure to get involved! It is important that you are an active participant in these activities to not only help model them, but to bring equality and enthusiasm to the group.

LESSONS



Ages 8+

Experiential

½ - 1 Hour

OPEN FIELD

Seals and Salmon

TIPS AND HINTS

Chinook and Chum **salmon** return to many streams and rivers that enter into the Puget Sound after spending time in the ocean. Chinook come into the South Sound earlier than Chum **salmon** do.

Have you or anyone else seen the **salmon** and **seals** at the 4th Avenue bridge in downtown Olympia? Has anybody else had any other **salmon** or **seal** experiences?

WHAT?

This is an engaging activity that gets everybody running while teaching about some of the ecology of Puget Sound.

WHY?

This fun activity acts as a superb way for experiential learners to understand the concepts of **seal** hunting habits as **salmon** return upstream.

HOW?

First designate boundaries of the area you will be playing in, the metaphorical mouth of the river. This area should be about 20 feet wide for every **seal** that is designated, and should be generally rectangular in shape like a small football field. Next choose one or two people who will be the "**seals**" and divide the remaining people in the group into Chinook and Chum **salmon**. Have the **seal(s)** start in the middle of the field, and line all of the **salmon** up on one end of the space facing the **seal**. It is now the **salmon's** job to go upstream, and the **seal(s)** job to tag **salmon**. When a **salmon** is tagged they must sit down in the place they were tagged. Send the **salmon** across the field one species at a time (send the Chinook first). Have the **salmon** go back and forth across the field until only one of each species is left.

LESSONS



AGES 6+

Experiential

½ - 1 Hour

OPEN SPACE

Animal Noises

WHAT?

This is a game where everybody gets to make their own animal noises and search for the right noise while blindfolded.

WHY?

This game helps kids make a positive connection with an animal that they like or have just learned about.

HOW?

Have each person choose an animal, and make up one distinct noise for that animal that they will use for the remainder of the activity. Designate a space for this activity. This is usually between 10 and 30 square feet. Blindfold one person and have the rest of the group start walking around in the designated space making their noise repeatedly. Have one specific animal, or noise, be the target of the person blindfolded. Put the person with the blindfold into the space and have them *gently* search for the person making the right noise.

TIPS AND HINTS

There are other activities in this guide where each person in the group must choose an animal. If playing more than one of these games, have everybody in the group stay with the same animal.

LESSONS



AGES 10-14

Experiential

1-2 HOURS

OPEN FIELD

Squirrel Olympics

TIPS AND HINTS

Choose your group wisely! While this is an amazing activity that can get kids having a lot of fun while actively understanding how an ecosystem works, it is intense! When given the chance to "steal" from one another, emotions often escalate to a serious level. Choose your group wisely so you can keep things fun!

Individually wrapped candies work well as "acorns," adding both the lesson of patience and a fun snack at the end of the game.

WHAT?

This game is designed to get children to think about how hard animals have to work to survive in the woods. By mimicking **squirrels**, children will get a chance to expend plenty of energy and see just what is necessary to survive limited food sources, and fierce predators.

WHY?

This activity gives its participants an opportunity to get actively involved with the direct workings of an ecosystem. When those participating face "being eaten" and "starvation", the skill that is required to truly live in the wilderness is revealed.

HOW?

Materials

2 or 3 "acorns" (small identifiable objects such as candy, bouncy balls, cards, etc.) **per person**

In this activity the participants will all start out as "**squirrels**." Place all of your objects or "**acorns**" in the center of the designated playing field, which should be about the size of a baseball field (if your group is between 10 and 20 people). Each squirrel will have a "nest," which is simply a spot that they will recognize and can return to in the playing field. At the beginning of the activity only allow one person per nest. They must gather as many "**acorns**" as possible, but they may carry only one at a time. There's a catch: if a "squirrel" is not at their nest, then other "**squirrels**" can steal their food (while still only carrying one at a time).

The goal of the game is to have as many "**acorns**" as possible by the end of each round. At the end of the first round tell your "**squirrels**" that only those who have 4 "**acorns**" or more survived the winter. If time allows, it is good to have the first round be a practice round. Collect the **acorns** again and put them at the center. Those that did not "survive" must sit out until the game is finished (usually lasts 3 or 4 rounds). For the next round, simply increase the number of **acorns** required to "survive" the winter.

After round two or three, it's time to throw in another aspect, predators. Choose one or two of the "**squirrels**" that did not survive to be your new predators. It is now the predator's job to try and tag as many of the **squirrels** as possible. Predators may not "eat" the **squirrels** when they are at the food source or their nests. Predators may not guard or wait at these places either.

Bat and Moth

LESSONS



ALL AGES

Experiential

15 min - 1 Hr

Open Space

WHAT?

Bat and Moth is a more confined nature-based version of Marco-Polo.

WHY?

This is a fun activity that helps children make the connection between how an animal can hunt for food without sight but with sound.

HOW?

Have the group get in a circle so that each person can stretch out their arms without touching their neighbors. Next designate one person to be a bat and one person to be a moth. Have the Bat and Moth come to the middle of the circle, and put a blind fold on the bat. Now spin the bat around 3 times, and let the moth start moving around the circle. Now the bat must use its echo location, by saying "bat" out loud. Every time that the bat says "bat" then the moth must respond by saying "moth" out loud. The bat and moth must stay on the inside of the circle. If the bat starts to walk out of the circle, have the nearest person say "tree" or "rock" out loud and gently point the way back towards the inside of the circle.

TIPS AND HINTS

This is a good introductory game that can take anywhere from ten minutes to an hour!

LESSONS



ALL AGES

Experiential

30 Min – 2 Hrs

OPEN FOREST

Snowy Plover

TIPS AND HINTS

Bells or anything that makes noise can be tied to the egg to provide an extra obstacle for the crow!

Candy or snacks, is always a good prize

WHAT?

This is an exciting game that most kids love. The group gets to mimic local wildlife and act out their interactions. In the wild, snowy plovers must diligently guard the eggs they are incubating because they make nests in the sand that give them little protection. Crows will try and snatch their eggs right out from under them at whatever moment they can!

WHY?

This activity acts as a way to teach children about how some birds must constantly protect their eggs while they wait for them to hatch. The snowy plover is a good example of a local bird that does this.

HOW?

Materials

- 1 Bandana
- 1 Small identifiable object, the "egg"

This game can be broken down into two phases. For both parts you will need one person to be the designated "**Snowy plover**." For the first section have the **Snowy plover** stand in the center of the space you have allotted (this space can be anywhere from the size of the infield of a baseball diamond to multiple football fields). Make sure that there are places for people to hide from the **Snowy plovers'** vision in your space. Place your object, or "**egg**" underneath the **Snowy plover** and tie a bandana over their eyes so they can't see. Instruct the remaining people, or "**Crows**" to go hide. After all of the **Crows** are hidden have the **Snowy plover** remove the bandana and spot as many of the Crows as possible without moving from their spot. If the **Snowy plover** cannot identify the person who they see, have them name what article of clothing they see. After the **Snowy plover** has spotted as many people as they can, put the bandana on them again. Now have all of the **Crows** find a new hiding spot that **MUST BE CLOSER** to the **Snowy plover** than before. After the **Crows** are finished hiding, remove the bandana and have the **Snowy plover** search again. After the **Snowy plover** has spotted all of the **Crows** they can, have them put on the bandana. Now is the second phase. Tell the participants that it is now night time. For this round the **Snowy plover** must leave the bandana on. The remaining **Crows** must quietly try and steal the egg from underneath the **Snowy plover**. If the **Snowy plover** hears any noise they are to point in the direction from which they heard it, if they point to the **Crow** that made that noise then that **Crow** must sit out with the other **Crows** that were previously spotted. The Crow that gets the egg is the crow that gets to eat!

Creek Critters

LESSONS



ALL AGES

Experiential

1/2 - 1 Hour

Creek/Pond

WHAT?

An activity that gives students a chance to explore what is living in the local watershed and get to know these organisms better.

WHY?

It is important to see what type of things are living in local watersheds because we do not often get a chance to see these organisms up close, let alone play with them!

HOW?

Materials

Dip nets
Buckets
Ice cube tray
Macroinvertebrate Field Guide
Turkey baster (optional)

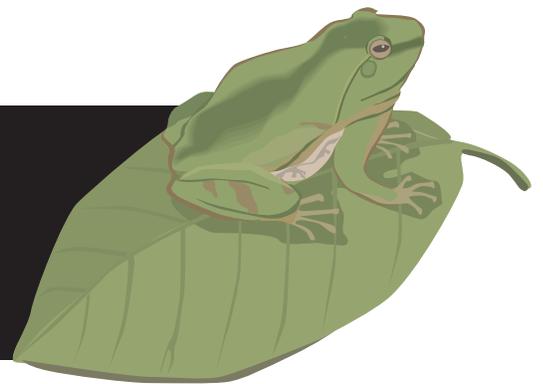
First fill up whatever buckets you brought with water. Now have the entire group go out with dip nets and scoop up the bottom mud and leaf litter. Make sure that the group spreads out so as not to impact one area too much. When everyone has gotten a scoop with some critters in it, have them put the net in the buckets full of water and dump out their nets. If the group is very young, or you do not feel comfortable with them gathering the samples, you may take a dip net and get a few good scoops of the *benthic* material yourself and place in the bucket.

Now have the group split up into pairs and have each pair fill up an ice cube tray with water. Now have one member from each pair come up and with either a dip net (which can be tricky), or a turkey baster, have them scoop up individual organisms and put a few different types in different cube containers in the ice cube tray. After everyone is done exploring their creatures have them gently put them back in the creek.

TIPS AND HINTS

White buckets and ice cube trays make it easier to see your collected specimens!

FOCUSING ACTIVITIES



The activities in this section of the guide are intended to focus the participants' attention on one specific idea. There are many different ways of doing this, depending on the setting, the group, and the idea being focused on. Since our focus is mostly on nature and connections in nature, most of the activities in this section are intended to bring a specific part of nature into focus. This can present some special challenges, because many of these nature activities are based outdoors where distractions are abundant and happen randomly! During these activities it is important that the instructor remain focused on the activity, and calm and focused themselves. Doing so will help create a more focused learning environment. Talking slowly and quietly, as well as getting on the same eye level as the rest of the participants, are some other ways to help create a good focusing environment. Keep your goal of focus in mind! Children will find ways to get focused and interested in nature. Even if their way doesn't follow the lesson plan, it can be a positive and constructive thing that will achieve the goal of focusing.

**FOCUSING
ACTIVITIES**



AGES 8+

Audio

10 – 30 minutes

Forest

Nature Sound Map

TIPS AND HINTS

Cupping your ears and turning in different directions can help you hear more!

Some good questions to ask at the end of exercise:

- What type of sounds did you hear?
- Which sounds did you like best? Why?
- Which sounds did you like least? Why?
- Which sounds had you never heard before? Do you know what made the sounds?

WHAT?

This activity gives the group individual quiet time where they focus on only one of their senses.

WHY?

To help calm the group down and give them a chance to see how much is really going on even though something may be quiet and dull at first glance. This activity also helps children adjust to being in nature alone, without constant entertainment being provided.

HOW?

Materials

Paper
Pen/ Drawing Utensil

Instruct everyone that they will be sitting with their eyes closed, without talking, for this activity. Give everyone in the group a piece of paper and a drawing utensil, and have them mark an X in the middle of the paper which is to represent where they are sitting. When they hear something they are to draw an image representing that sound, or whatever made the sound, in relation to the X on the paper. Have everyone in the group choose a spot that is not close to anyone else in the group, and where they will be able to sit for a while. Begin!

FOCUSING
ACTIVITIES



AGES 8+

VISUAL

10 – 30 Minutes

ANYWHERE

Frog Mystery

WHAT?

This short game works well to focus the group's attention and establish a quiet atmosphere.

WHY?

Gives a break from more learning based activities, and gives the group a chance to goof around with a fun game without talking.

HOW?

Have the group stand in a circle facing inwards with one person in the middle. Before the person goes into the middle they must first get out of hearing distance while a "frog" is chosen by the group. After a **frog** has been designated, the person in the middle may return and go to the middle of the circle. It is now the **frog's** job to look somebody else in the circle in the eyes, and stick their tongue out at them without being seen doing so by the person in the middle. Twenty seconds after somebody has been "eaten" by the **frog** they must sit down in the circle. The person in the middle has to guess who the **frog** is before everyone has been eaten.

TIPS AND HINTS

**FOCUSING
ACTIVITIES**



ALL AGES

Audio

5 – 30 minutes

ANYWHERE

Green Glass Door and other Riddles

TIPS AND HINTS

WHAT?

Riddles and other logic games.

WHY?

Riddles act as a good way to focus the groups' thinking and bring their attention back to the group.

HOW?

Green Glass Door

Behind the Green Glass Door is a land free of pollution and full of pristine environments. Everyone is to go through the Green Glass Door to this land, and they must bring one thing with them. Begin by asking a member of the group if they would like to come and what they would like to bring. The person must respond, "I would like to go through the green glass door with my _____." If their object has one letter twice in a row then they may go through, if it does not, then they cannot come through the Green Glass Door. For example one may bring a Collie, but not a dog; one may bring a zoo, but not a lion.

Riddles

State the riddle, and allow people to ask yes or no questions.

What runs all day but never walks; often murmurs, but never talks; has a bed, but never sleeps; has a mouth, but never eats?

A River

What is as big as an Elk, but weigh nothing?

Its Shadow

Give me food, and I will live; give me water, and I will die. What am I?

Fire

What do you get when you cross a Frog and a Hare?

A Bunny Ribbit

What do you call a coyote with a clock around its neck?

A Watch Dog

At night they come without being fetched, and by day they are lost without being stolen. What are they?

Stars



Nature Haiku

WHAT?

A poetry activity about nature, that takes place in nature.

WHY?

Nature haiku explores new forms of expressing ideas and feelings about nature. This is a very calming exercise.

HOW?

Materials

Paper
Pens/Pencils
Clipboards or other flat surfaces

First, hand out paper and pencils to everyone. Explain that a haiku is a form of Japanese poetry that has three parts: the first has five syllables, the second has seven syllables, and the third, five syllables. An example of a haiku is:

Birds and Bees Flying

(Birds-and-bees-fly-ing: 5)

Apple Flowers are blooming

(ap-ple-flow-ers-are-bloom-ing: 7)

Soft blades of new grass

(soft-blades-of-new-grass: 5)

Once everyone understands how to write a haiku, have them sit quietly and alone (have them separate if they need too). Have them write at least 3 haikus about nature, an experience they had with nature, or a plant or animal they like.

TIPS AND HINTS

If there is one thing being focused on in the day, such as a specific ecosystem or animal, have them write about it.

**FOCUSING
ACTIVITIES**



AGES 8-14

Visual

30 Min – 1 Hour

Forest / Marsh

Nature Hike Bingo

TIPS AND HINTS

Often children will miss seeing habitats such as nests in trees, holes in the ground, etc. Help them out with these and probe them to wonder: What might live in it? Can you find out what animal lives there? How would you do that?

Snacks as a reward are a great motivator!

WHAT?

This activity is essentially a more active, nature-based version of Bingo.

WHY?

This is a good way to get kids motivated to focus on specific parts of their environment that they may not regularly notice or be very interested in. This is also a good way for the participants to get more familiar with the names of local wildlife.

HOW?

Materials

1 Bingo Sheet per Person

Candy or other Treats (optional)

During a nature hike have children identify either a habitat, animal, plant, track, or mushroom. Once they identify one of the above, have them name the habitat, animal, plant, track, or mushroom. If they don't know the name, tell them the name, or you can have them look it up. Once this is identified, write the name in the correct box on the bingo sheet. For example, when a bird is seen and has been identified, then you would write that name in the "Bird" box in the "Animal" category.

<u>Habitat</u>	<u>Animals</u>	<u>Tracks</u>	<u>Plants</u>	<u>Mushrooms</u>
Shell	Amphibian	Print	Non-Native	On a Tree
Cavity	Insect	Web	Deciduous	A Group of
Exoskeleton	Bird	Free	Ground Cover	Mold
Burrow	Rodent	Feather	Shrub	Brown Cap
Nest	Fish	Scat	Evergreen	On the Ground

<u>Habitat</u>	<u>Animals</u>	<u>Tracks</u>	<u>Plants</u>	<u>Mushrooms</u>
Cavity	Amphibian	Print	Non-Native	Blue Cap
Shell	Insect	Feather	Deciduous	A Group of
Exoskeleton	Bird	Free	Shrub	Mold
Burrow	Fish	Web	Ground Cover	On the Ground
Nest	Rodent	Scat	Evergreen	Brown Cap

<u>Habitat</u>	<u>Animals</u>	<u>Tracks</u>	<u>Plants</u>	<u>Mushrooms</u>
Exoskeleton	Rodent	Scat	Shrub	A Group of
Nest	Amphibian	Feather	Evergreen	On a Tree
Shell	Bird	Free	Non-Native	Brown Cap
Burrow	Insect	Print	Deciduous	On the Ground
Cavity	Fish	Web	Ground Cover	Blue Cap

**FOCUSING
ACTIVITIES**



AGES 6+

Experiential

½ - 1 ½ Hour

DRY SPACE

Animal Masks

TIPS AND HINTS

When choosing animals help children explore more than just basic descriptions about the animal. Try and relate the animal to the mask maker. What does that animal represent? Is it fast? Are you fast too?

Construction paper, for added attachments, or glitter are little extras that can make a mask more vibrant and interesting!

WHAT?

An activity that allows each individual to choose an animal that they relate to and make a mask of it.

WHY?

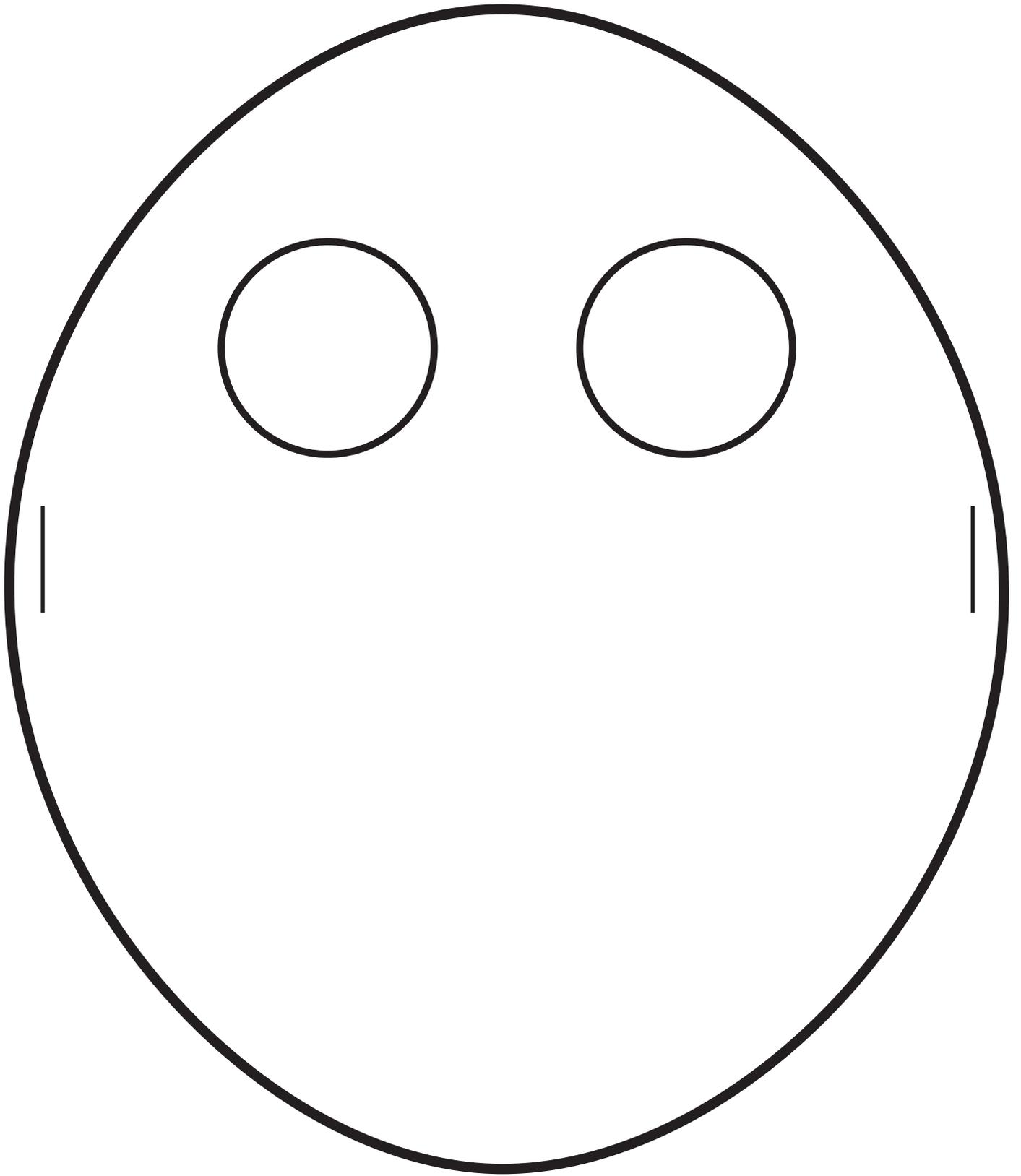
By learning about local wildlife, comparing and relating that specific species with one's self, a bond or link between the local environment is formed. Allowing time and attention on one animal helps to make the participants more focused. Spending time with one animal will also help participants retain what they have learned.

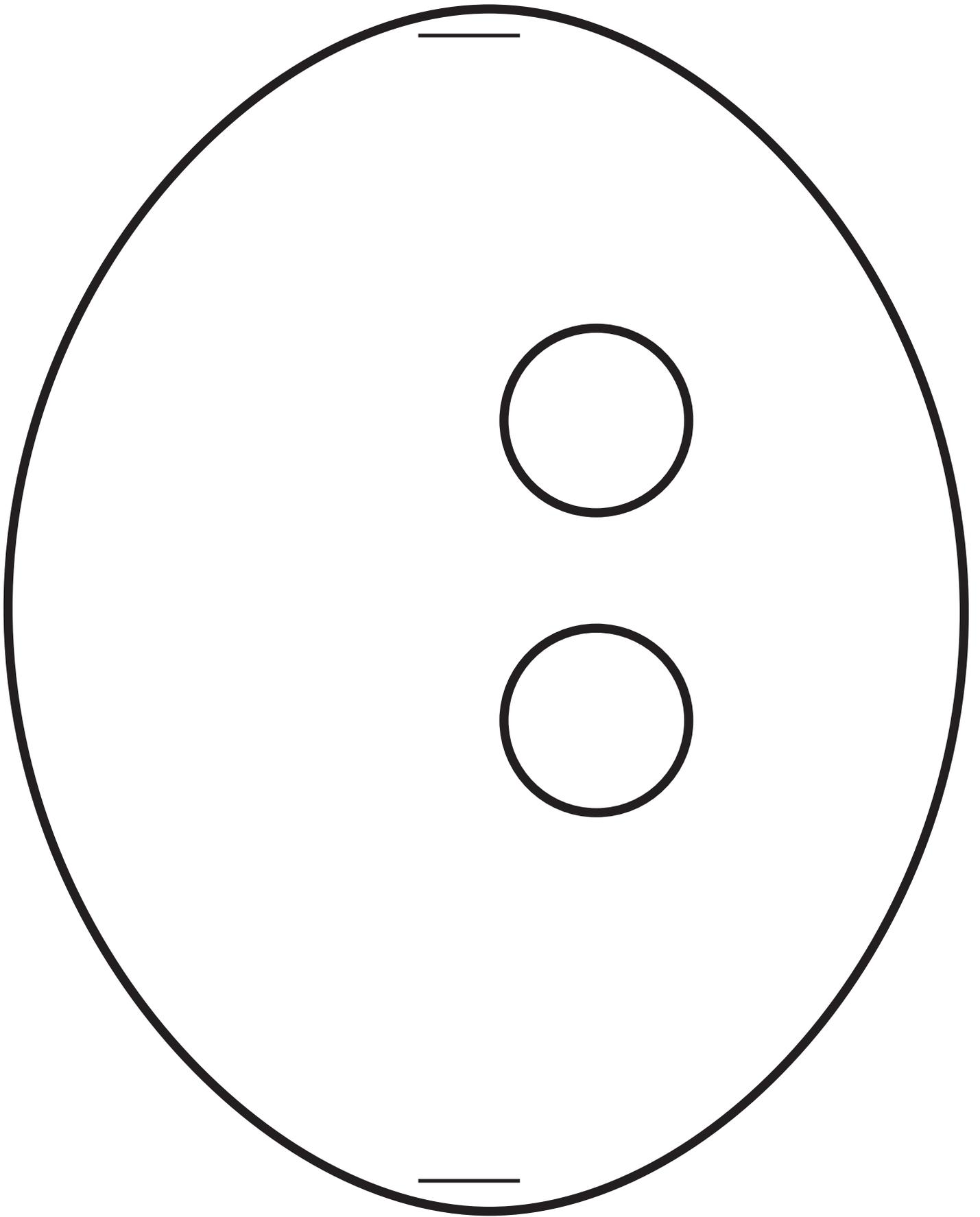
HOW?

Materials

Paper Cardboard
Scissors
String
Drawing Utensils

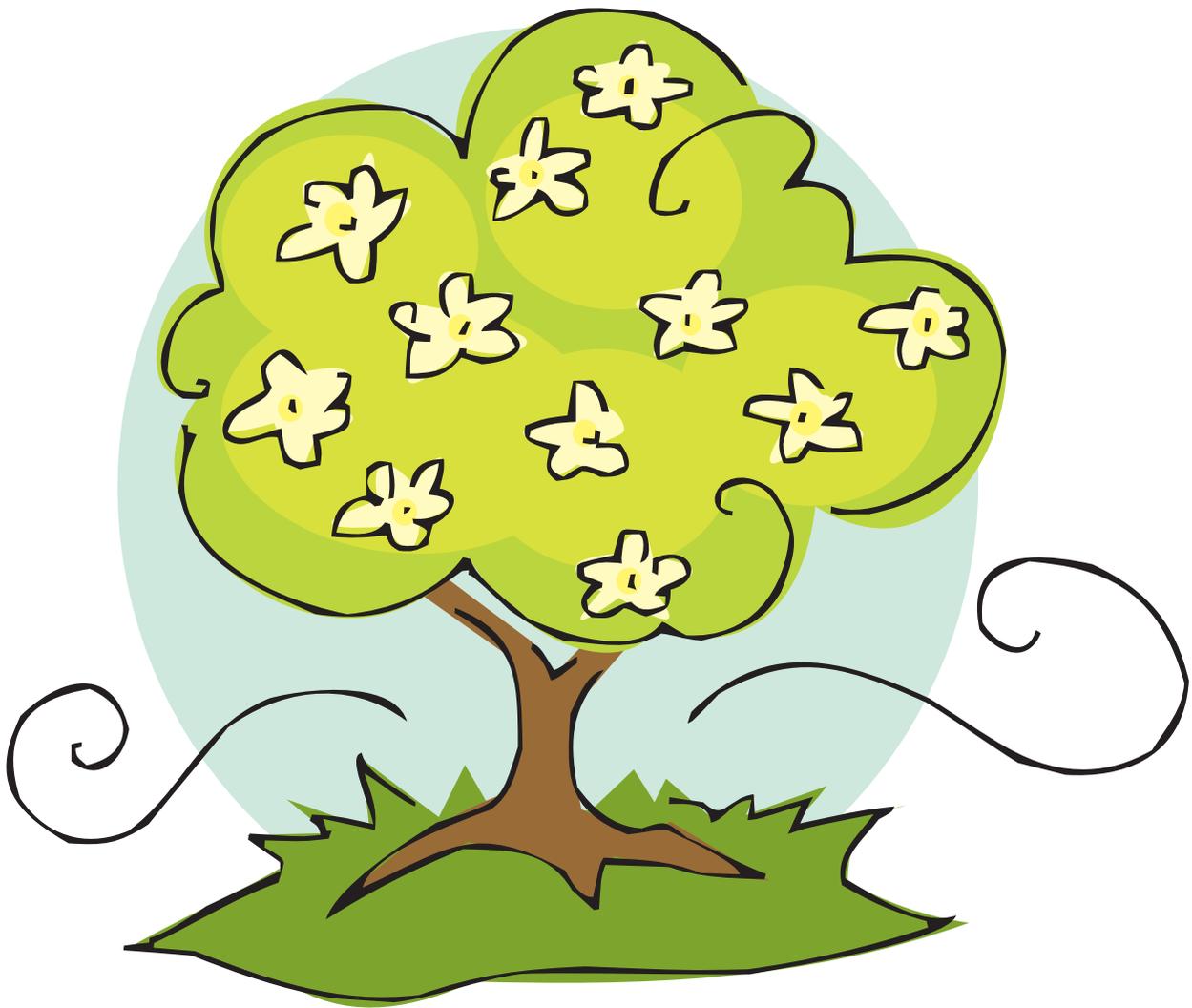
Start out by talking to the group about some local plants and animals, many of which they may have seen around their homes. The field guide at the back of this book has some information on local plants and animals. (Refer to other field guides for more extensive information.) Once everyone has chosen an animal have them draw an outline of what they want their mask to look like. After they have the outline done, cut out the image and eye holes. Now it's time for them to decorate! During this part of the activity encourage people to work quietly, and with their own mask. Bring lots of different art supplies such as, colored pencils, markers, pens, or paint. After they have finished their mask, poke two tiny holes on each side of the mask. Now take some string and wrap it around the back of the mask makers head to see how long a piece you will need. Take this piece of string and tie it to each end of the mask. After everyone is done let them play and show off their new animal forms to one and other!

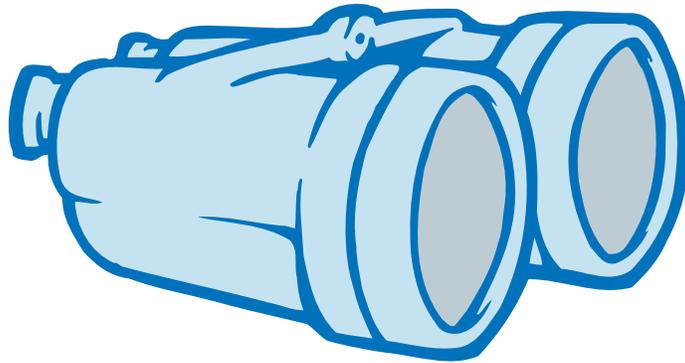




A Note on Departure

Departing from the group, or disbanding the group, is a very important time for reflection on the day and things done. Take advantage of these last moments with each other to go over the workings of the day and quickly recap the learning material. You might want to have your group sit in a circle so that everyone is facing one another. Go around the circle and have each person say one thing that they learned that day. Also have them tell the group their favorite part of the day.



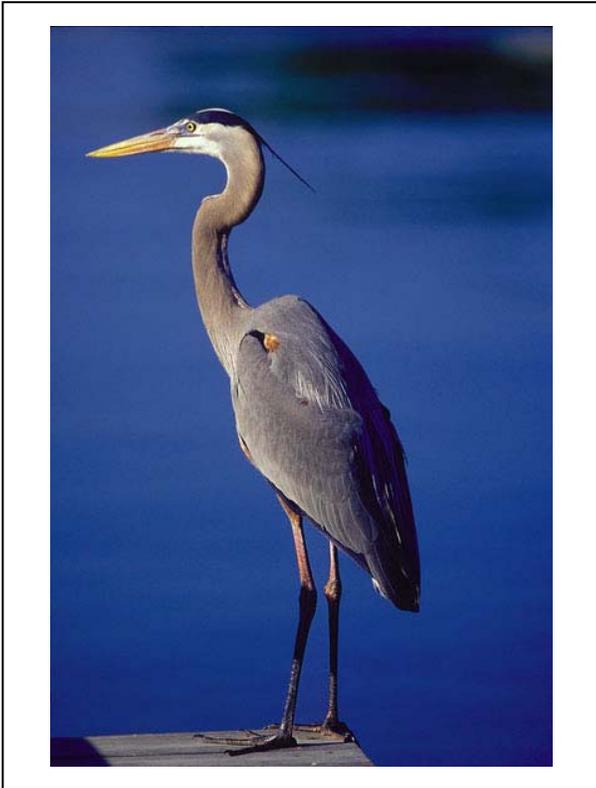


Field Guide

This field guide is meant to guide teachers in sharing native species' names, appearance, habitat, cultural symbolism and ecological role with their students. Since many people do not frequently interact with these organisms, it is our goal to help them find ways to relate to the organism as part of their everyday life. These examples can be used to find other resources with similar information and to think more deeply about how the elements of an ecological system can be presented to make them meaningful to students of all ages.

Great Blue Heron

(Ardea Herodias)



Description: Usually standing between three and four feet tall, heron are seen frequently along creeks, ponds, and other open areas of water. It is a long, slender bird, with bluish gray wings, neck, and body, with a white crown stripe, and a black plume extending behind the eye to the neck., The wingspan of the Great Blue Heron can reach between five and six and a half feet, while it usually only weighs between 4 and 8 pounds!

Habitat: Great blue herons always live near sources of water, including rivers, lake edges, marshes, saltwater seacoasts, and swamps. They usually nest in trees or bushes that stand near water and breed at elevations of up to 5,000 feet. They tend to avoid marine habitats along the east coast and instead live inland. These herons may be easily startled when approached, but they aren't afraid to live near humans and can often be seen in more urban aquatic environments.

Symbolism: For most animals and people, legs connect us to the Earth we live on. They not only connect us to our planet, but also enable us to move around it. It's hard to miss a Great blue heron's long, gangly legs which it uses to wade in deeper waters. With all of this in mind it is easy to see that the Great Blue Heron stands as a symbol of the deeper parts of life being explored, and that massive towers are not required to remain stable, for on it's very own thin legs it supports its disproportionately large body. When we get the chance to see a Great blue heron in the natural world, it will almost always be alone, standing in water while looking intensely for its next meal beneath the water's depths.

Ecological Role: Great blue herons connect to the web of life as predators. They eat fish, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and small mammals. Great blue heron populations are currently not threatened or endangered. While many birds, especially predatory birds, are in decline, the Great blue heron remains abundant. As an important marshland predator it helps maintain fish, rodent, and amphibian populations in balance.

Red-Tailed Hawk

(*Bufo jamaicensis*)



Description: The Red-tailed hawk is a frequently seen large hawk with long broad wings, and a vibrant red tail. It usually has a pale chest with a dark band across its belly. It is usually 18-26 inches long, but its wing span is usually between 4 and 5 feet. While this may seem like a large bird, red-tailed hawks usually weigh only 1 – 2 pounds.

Habitat: The Red-tailed hawk can be seen in many places, from your very own backyard to snow covered fields or blistering deserts. They seek out open areas with scattered elevated perches, including agricultural areas, fields, pasture, park land, broken woodland, and scrub desert. They breed in the summer from Alaska to Labrador, southward to Mexico and the Caribbean and down to Panama. In the winter they disperse throughout southern Canada and go southward.

Symbolism: Hawks are known throughout many cultures as guardians, representing visionary power. This can be understood as we most commonly see them far above us, using their keen eyesight to view the land below. The Red Tailed Hawk particularly has been viewed as representing a rising in ones understanding of the world, and finding balance with that knowledge. The red on its tail reflects the intense energy within all life.

Ecological Role: Just like the Great blue heron has remained one of the few predatory herons with abundant populations, the Red-tailed hawks are one of very few birds of prey that remain a common predator in many ecosystems. Occurring frequently across most of North America, the Red-tailed hawk serves as a very important rodent population moderator which, if lost, could cause a huge rise in rodent populations and throw whole ecosystems into chaos!

Western Gray Squirrel

(*Sciurus griseus*)



Description: The western gray squirrel is the largest native tree squirrel in the Pacific Northwest. It is silver gray on the back and creamy white on the underside. The long bushy tail is edged with white, but dark hairs in the tail give it a pepper-gray frost effect. The ears are long, with a light reddish brown area on the back, and are not tufted.

Habitat: Oak prairies and late successional forests are the preferred habitat of the Western gray squirrel. They can commonly be found at elevations up to 5,000 feet or more. Their range reaches from central Washington to central California.

Symbolism: Squirrels in our culture today are common symbols of hyperactivity. For a long time before, they have been symbols of activity and preparedness. Gray squirrels are very enthusiastic and tend to be larger than red and black squirrels.

Ecological Role: The Western gray squirrel is endangered in Washington and can only be found in a few places. Western gray squirrels used to be an essential part of the diets of foxes, coyotes, and raptors, but their numbers are so low right now that every squirrel counts. Have the predators of this species suffered greatly due to the decline in its populations? The answer is no, for the Eastern gray squirrel which is more adaptable than the Western gray squirrel, has come to the Pacific Northwest and started to take its place. The Western gray squirrel is mostly in decline due to habitat loss; Eastern gray squirrels have been introduced and can live in habitat degraded beyond the Western gray squirrels use. While the Eastern gray squirrel has helped maintain the diet of many of the predators of the Western gray squirrel, it is still considered a nuisance due to its competition with Western gray squirrels for their prime habitat.

Black Bear

(Ursus Americanus)



Description: The American Black bear is usually between five and six feet long, standing at about 3 feet at the shoulder. These big black furry mammals usually weigh between 300 and 600 pounds; however females are slightly larger and tend to be between 400 and 800 pounds. They have mostly black fur coats with a brown snout. They also have small round ears and a short tail.

Habitat: Black bears can be found all over North America, however they prefer forested and shrubby areas. They can be found anywhere from hardwood and conifer swamps to rather dry sage and pinyon-juniper habitats, even tide flats and agricultural fields. Black bears usually hibernate in hollowed-out dens they make in tree cavities, under logs or rocks, in banks, caves, culverts, or other shallow depressions.

Symbolism: Black bears are known as symbols of power and strength. The mothers are especially known for their ability and fierceness in protecting their young. Bears have also stood as a symbol of wisdom for a long time and an awakening of the unconscious. Much of this wisdom is said to lie in bears knowing that change and transformation are brought about by visualizing new outcomes. Bears have taught us in the past that through quiet introspection comes the art of turning ideas into reality.

Ecological Role: Black bears remain today an important part of many ecosystems as an apex predator. Even though Black bears are often the top predators in an ecosystem, they still forage often. Only ten to fifteen percent of their diets are made up of animal matter. They often eat things such as herbs, nuts, berries, as well as carrion, insects, and salmon. They have even been known to eat tree bark! Black bears have very long ranges and distribute a large amount of nutrients around their territory.

Kincaid's Lupine

(*Lupinus sulphureus ssp. Kincaidii*)



Description: Kincaid's lupine is a perennial species in the pea or legume family (Fabaceae). With its low growing habit and unbranched flower stalk, Kincaid's lupine is easily distinguished from other species of lupine. Its aromatic flowers have a slightly reflexed, distinctly ruffled banner and are yellowish-cream colored, often showing shades of blue on the keel. The leaflets are deep green with a smooth upper surface. The plants are low-growing, 16-30 inches, with flowering stems that exceed the height of the branched crown. Flowering typically occurs in May and June. Seeds are dispersed from fruits that open explosively upon drying.

Habitat: Kincaid's lupine is found mainly in the Willamette Valley, Oregon where it occupies native grassland habitats. These dry, fescue prairies make up the majority of habitat for Kincaid's lupine. Although Kincaid's lupine is occasionally found on steep, south-facing slopes and barren rocky cliffs, it does not appear capable of occupying the most xeric oatgrass communities on these south facing slopes. The plant's distribution implies a close association with native upland prairie sites that are characterized by heavier soils and mesic to slightly xeric soil moisture levels. At the southern limit of its range, this species occurs on well-developed soils adjacent to serpentine outcrops, where it is often found under scattered oaks

Symbolism: Lupines have stood as a symbol of imagination for a long time. The name lupinus actually means wolf, due to the mistaken belief that ancient peoples had that lupines, which were voracious in nature, robbed the soil of nutrients. This belief is proven to be faulty by the discovery that Lupine's actually add nitrogen to the soil. Romans long ago used to the Lupine as a fertilizer, and ate its seeds as a food source high in protein.

Ecological Role: This endangered plant often exists where red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and/or Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*) are the dominant plant species. Tolmie's mariposa, Hooker's catchfly, broadpetal, rose checker-mallow, and common lomatium are other species that act as indicators for the Kincaid's lupine. Species such as the Himalayan Blackberry are speedy non-native plants that crowd out Kincaid's lupine when sharing the same ecosystem. While the entirety of the ecological role of Kincaid's lupine is not fully understood, it is safe to say that no ecosystem goes unchanged when an entire species is lost, which is the path of the Kincaid's lupine if habitat degradation is not stopped.

Fender's Blue Butterfly

(*Icaricia icarioides fenderi*)



© Andrew Ladanyi

Description: The Fender's blue butterfly is a small blue butterfly with a wingspan of approximately one inch. The upper wings of the males are very blue with black borders. The upper wings of the female are completely brown. The undersides of their wings are creamy tan, with black spots and a white border.

Habitat: Fender's blue butterfly occurs in native prairie habitats. Most Willamette Valley prairies are early habitats, requiring natural or human-induced disturbance for their maintenance. Fender's blue butterfly is typically found in native upland prairies, dominated by red fescue and/or Idaho fescue, where its primary larval food plant, Kincaid's lupine, or its secondary larval food, plants sickle-keeled lupine and spur lupine, also occur.

Symbolism: Butterflies are known to be symbols of transformation, and of joyous dancing. They may often seem like they are dancing when they fly around, or land on flowers. Seeing butterflies "dance" can remind us to not take things so seriously, and awaken to a sense of lightness and joy.

Ecological Role: the Fender's blue butterfly is endangered due to the fact that most of its native habitat has been converted into agricultural land. Fender's blue butterflies, like all butterflies, are very important to ecosystems because they help pollinate different plants. If the Fender's blue butterfly continues to decline, what will pollinate the species that depend on this butterfly?

**U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Washington Fish and Wildlife Office
510 Desmond Dr. SE, Suite 102
Lacey, WA 98503**

Telephone: 360/753-9440

<http://www.fws.gov>

April 2009

