

Re-Connecting with Nature

Hands On Activities and Leadership Skills Workshop



Participant Resource & Activity Manual

by Alan Warner
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Sponsored by
Nova Scotia Health & Wellness

About Hike Nova Scotia

Hike Nova Scotia encourages and promotes hiking, walking and snowshoeing throughout Nova Scotia. Hike NS strives to be the voice for hikers in the province. Its projects include:

- Fall and Winter guided hike series
- Leave No Trace outdoor ethics
- Nova Scotia chapter of the International Appalachian Trail
- Hiker Distance Award Program
- Safe Hiker, Re-Connecting with Nature and Field Leader – Hiking workshops
- Hiking Summit
- Advocacy for hiking in NS

Everyone taking this workshop becomes a full member of Hike NS and will receive a membership card, the monthly e-news and other perks. Contact Hike NS to hear the latest on hiking news, trails and events: www.hikenovascotia.ca or info@hikenovascotia.ca.

About the Re-Connecting with Nature Workshop Series

The aim of the Re-Connecting with Nature one-day workshop is to increase and strengthen the resource base in Nova Scotia of adult leaders who can help children and youth to spend more time appreciating, understanding and acting for the natural world while being physically active in the outdoors. Competent, confident and safe leaders are essential to facilitate positive experiences in nature for children and youth. The workshop is suitable for youth group leaders, recreation and camp staff, teachers, early childhood educators, parents and concerned citizens.

Participants in this workshop will have the opportunity to:

- understand the value and key concepts in reconnecting children and youth with nature.
- improve their skills in facilitating experiences in nature with others.
- identify valuable ideas, activities and resources for this work.
- have fun and get to know other resourceful people.
- strengthen networks of people committed to reconnecting others with nature

The Re-Connecting with Nature workshop series is offered through Hike Nova Scotia in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness with support from Acadia University.

About the Author

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Re-Connecting with Nature Core Concepts

WHY Re-Connect People with Nature?

To Grow Healthy People

- Dramatic decrease in time kids spend in nature and increase in time on screens
- Dramatic decrease in physical activity and increase in childhood obesity & health issues
- Time in nature strengthens mental health, increases focus and reduces stress
- Time in nature grows environmentally sensitive adults & advances sustainability

To Grow Healthy Relationships

- Time in nature with others builds positive connections and allows quality time together
- Special experiences together build community and social networks
- People are motivated to help and act for the planet when they are having fun together and feel supported. Guilt will not induce us to address the sustainability or health crises.

To Preserve a Healthy Planet

- Climate change is the survival challenge of our time
- We are all part of the web of life— “All things are connected”
- Nature and biodiversity are valuable and require protection from humans



WHAT needs to be done to re-connect people with nature?¹

Deepen the Feelings for the beauty and wonder of nature

- We need to help people to gain a deep connection to the earth and its life.
- Regain- We are trying to regain this attachment. Traditionally aboriginal peoples lived in nature and were connected to it. We have lost those attachments.
- Let's challenge “don't get dirty” and “nature is dangerous” messages.
- We need to grow a love of earth and appreciation for its creatures and communities. Most of all we want kids to be excited about the natural world so that they will come back!

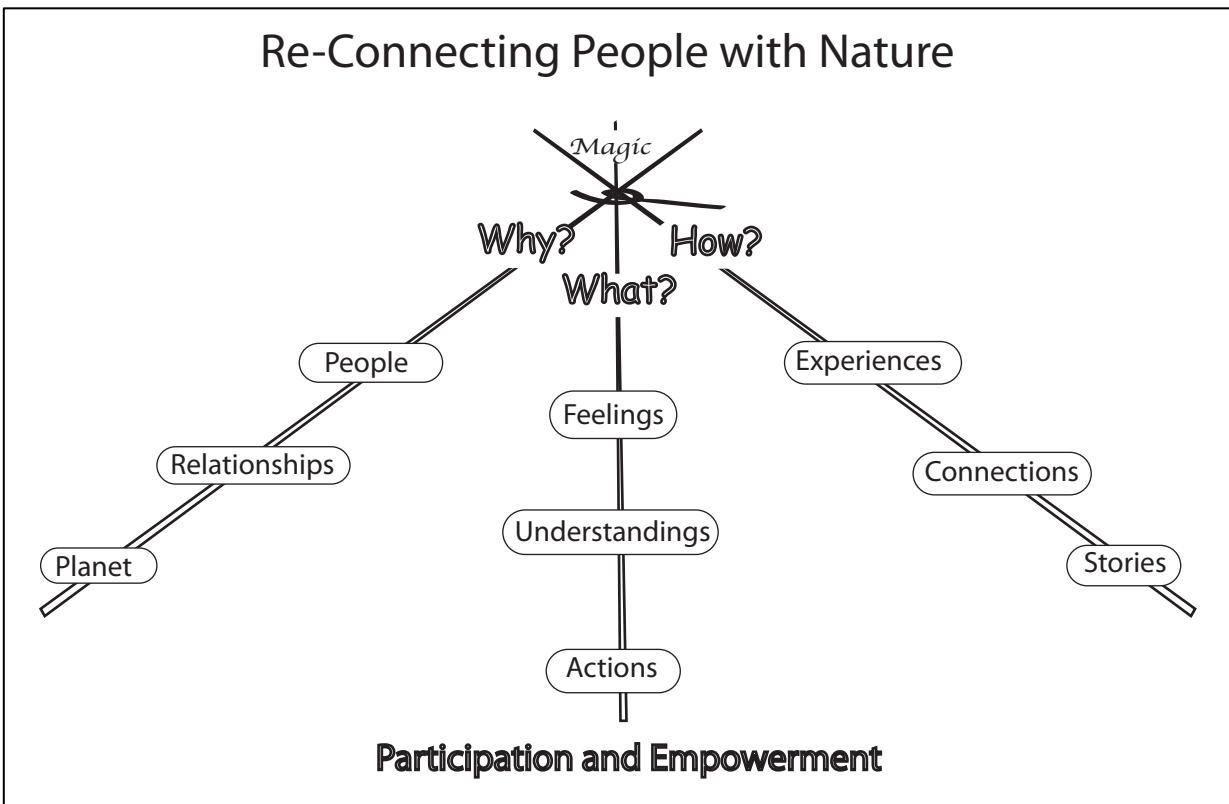
Build Understandings of key ecological concepts

- Need to understand big picture, the basic ecological concepts. There is no need to understand the parts of a frog, but instead the role of the frog in the pond community and the role of the pond in the water cycle. Key concepts are energy flow, cycles, interrelationships & change.
- Need to recognize that there are inherent limits to the planet's systems. There will never be more materials than there are now, the cycles just move them around.

Support Actions to live within nature's limits through personal decisions & collective action

- Feelings and Understanding are insufficient, because we understand does not mean we act.
- Model a sustainable healthy lifestyle. It is not what you say but what you do.
- Build *action competence*. We learn to swim by getting in the water and practicing, same with riding a bike. We learn to take action for healthy people and a healthy planet by practicing taking action, such as speaking up to challenge a friend or behaviour, or by modeling no-trace skills.

¹ The overall *what* and *magic* concepts are adapted from *Earth Education...A New Beginning*, by Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, Greenville, West Virginia, 1990.



HOW to Re-Connect People with Nature?

Create Engaging and Empowering Experiences

- Structure and present activities in a positive and effective manner so that everyone is engaged and participating.
- Carefully plan and design experiences from the participant's point of view.
- Focus on sharing and doing rather than showing and telling.
- Attend to the leadership guidelines.

Facilitate Connections with Nature

- As people get interested in nature, make sure you facilitate informal opportunities for them to explore, play and discover.
- Set up places and ways for people to spend time in solitude in the natural world. Make these opportunities special.

Use Stories to Teach

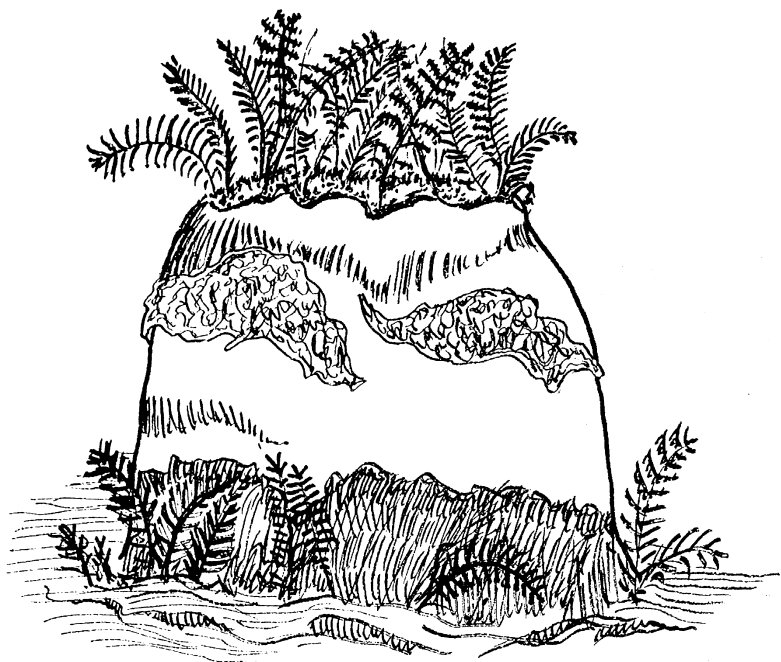
- People find meaning and adventure through engaging and integrated experiences where they take on roles and are a part of stories. Do more than provide a smattering of activities. If you provide meaningful story contexts, the experiences are more memorable and able to be connected to other places and activities.

An Integrated Approach: The *why*, the *what* and the *how* must be interconnected if we are to re-connect people with nature. Together they become a stronger structure symbolized by an aboriginal tipi (see figure). Each post supports the other and the tipi cover (which is imaginary in this instance) traces a circle where it meets the ground. That circle is the circle of life and our relationship to it.

Magic: Traditionally a rope ties the tipi together and in many ways we have metaphoric rope that ties everything together for the ultimate aim of re-connecting people with nature. Our rope is the

magic. Magic is the special touches, a story, a cool prop, a moment of silence, a twinkle in the eye, a mystery, a message in a bottle, the chickadee that hops through your magic spot because the young person is quiet, and so on. Magic happens because leaders do the extra special thing that show they care, or they get the person in a new position from which amazing things happen in nature. Magic is extra effort, but it builds the connections.

Participation & Empowerment: There is one final quality that drives all efforts to re-connect people with nature. This is *participation and empowerment*, the idea that all of this is for naught if we do not provide participants with the perspective that they can and should share with others and return to natural places on their own. If it all stops with the end of the experience we facilitate, then we are in trouble because there are not enough leaders currently to bring about the breadth and depth of changes needed to re-connect people with nature and facilitate a sustainable world. So throughout everything you do, facilitate participation, and encourage ownership and leadership.



Earthwalk Framework & Experiences

What is an Earthwalk?

An earthwalk is a series of guided activities in a natural setting that introduces participants to nature as a beautiful and wondrous place, building appreciation for creatures and communities. The aim is to provide new perspectives and ways of looking at familiar things carefully, while also enabling participants to discover new things. The focus of an earthwalk is on introducing the natural world as a fun adventure that people will want to continue to explore. The aim is to deepen feelings and appreciation using the senses rather than to necessarily communicate knowledge or understanding.

Typically an Earthwalk involves 4-6 sequenced activities covering 45 to 90 minutes depending on the group, timeframe and locale. The walk has a theme or story that ties it together so that is not simply a number of activities, but rather it becomes a smooth and flowing experience based on the connections between the activities. It can be undertaken in any natural setting and typically only covers a short distance. One goal is to communicate that one does not have to go far or cover much ground to have a wonderful experience appreciating the natural world.

Groups can vary in size but smaller groups are recommended, especially with children (less than 15) unless the leader(s) have a good deal of experience conducting earthwalks. Smaller groups allow for more personal dialogue and sharing, and also have fewer issues around minimizing environmental impact and managing the behaviour of children. Typically activities involve wandering off of trails and the experiences need to be tailored to the setting.

The leader serves as a guide and facilitator of the experience and should utilize the earth education leadership guidelines that follow in this manual. The aim is to provide a structure within which participants can explore and experience the natural world for themselves and share it with others. From a leader point of view, it is about setting up the experience and then sharing and doing it, rather than showing and telling. The goal is to maximize the time participants are exploring and appreciating in the natural world.

The Earthwalk concept and many of the ideas for activities in the following pages have been drawn from the work of Steve VanMatre and the Institute for Earth Education. This manual is intended to supplement *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle and Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980. Unfortunately the manual appears to be out of print and challenging to find. A wonderful resource for lots of these activities is *Earth Adventures, 3rd Edition* by Alan Warner, Janet Barlow and George Taylor, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010 (visit earthed.ns.ca).

Planning an Earthwalk

1. Define a theme/storyline based on participant interests and your goals.
2. Select 4-6 activities that can be completed in 50 to 75 minutes. Connect them with the theme.

- Start the walk nearby and return to finish at the same spot.
- Use activities that involve sharing, empathizing, and sensing the natural world.
- Define transitions which link activities together to create a flowing walk. Use a theme to tie the activities together.
- Activities should not depend on prior set-up, be able to carry the props with you.
- Use activities involving at least three senses.
- Come up with a way to hook the student's interest at the very start.

Leadership Tips for Structuring Earthwalk Activities

- *Circle up:* This is an important concept to instill from the very start. When you need to explain something, often a group will pay attention and hear the best in a circle formation (maximize engagement). Space yourself and your co-leader out so that there are participants between you to help with behaviour management.
- *Sit down:* Everyone should be at the same level and you should be able to make eye contact with everyone. Contact with the ground is important! Some students may not be comfortable sitting right on the ground right away, but if you do it, they'll be much more likely to.
- *Explain the Activity:* Make sure that you are holding a good focus object as you speak (leaf slide, sub scope, inflatable Earth, whatever) to hold attention.
- *Set your boundaries:* Make sure they are appropriate to the activity. Think about what you need, be it nooks and crannies (Underworld) or level ground (Tree Friends). Be specific when pointing out landmarks!
- *Hand out props:* Yep, do this last because otherwise they'll be totally distracted. This is a flow AND safety concern!
- *Do the activity!* Get right in there and participate – make sure that both leaders have the right props for exploring and get excited about what you find. Show that it's not just okay to participate, it's super fun.
- *Close well:* Circle up, sit down, collect props, chat about what they found.



Earthwalk Program Ideas

5-8 year olds	9-12 year olds
<u>Intro Warm-up Games (15 minutes)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is It • Turtle Tag • Squirrel in a Tree • Animals 	<u>Intro Warm-up Games (15 minutes)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is It • Turtle Tag • Squirrel in a Tree • Animals
<u>Earthwalk (60-75 minutes)</u> Underworld Dozen Touches or (Touch Trail) Song of the Forest Magic Planets (or Seat Airlines) Whiffs (or Scratch & Sniff) Rainbow Chips Options: Leaf Slides	<u>Earthwalk (60-75 minutes)</u> Leaf Slides Scratch & Sniff (or Whiffs) Secret Skeletons (or Sound Maps) Magic Planets (or Seat Airlines) Tree Friends (or Dozen Touches) Nature's Art Gallery (or Rainbow Chips) Options: Human Camera Eye in the Sky Faces in the Forest Leaf Slides
<u>Break (10 minutes)</u> <u>Optional Game (10 minutes)</u> Camouflage Bat and Bugs	<u>Break (10 minutes)</u> <u>Optional Game (10 minutes)</u> Camouflage Bat and Bugs
<u>Immersion Activity (45 minutes)</u> Wild Gardens	<u>Immersion Activity (45 minutes)</u> Wild Gardens
<u>Magic Spots (25 minutes)</u>	<u>Magic Spots (35 minutes)</u>

Earth Education Leadership Guidelines²

1. Careful Preparation

- Know your route well before you start—scout your activity areas!
- Have your props organized beforehand, not at the last minute.
- Know your activities well and the steps in each one.

2. Smooth Flow: It is to be one flowing experience, not a string of activities.

- Use a theme to make smooth connections between activities.
- Know your lead ins from one activity to another.
- Manipulate your props smoothly, otherwise you lose flow & everyone waits.
- Make sure you know the best way to handle logistics to make it smooth.

3. Caring and Strong Leadership

- Tune in to where participants are at when deciding it is time to move to next thing.
- Don't miss the teachable moment, flow with the group, but don't get trapped by one person while others lose interest.
- Give clear, concise, & concrete directions.
- Note potential behavior problems quick and set limits quick preventively, show you can be fun with magic and humour, but show you can be strong if you need to be.



4. Sharing and Doing Leadership

- Do all the activities with the participants, find neat things yourself.
- Use concrete examples and demonstrations when explaining directions.
- Let participants discover and share, let the experience, not the leader do the "teaching."
- Avoid lengthy discussions and talk.

5. Instill Magic and Enthusiasm

- Be into it, enjoy what you do, be positive and encouraging.
- Use the element of surprise, your sense of humour and fantasy.
- Have a twinkle in your eye and a spring in your step.
- Know your stuff, and your props, so you can be present with participants rather than worrying about what comes next.
- Pay special attention to doing lead-ins well.

6. Model Positive Environmental Behaviors

7. Question to Encourage Learning

- Question to create action and involvement.
- Question for learners to demonstrate learning.

8. Emphasize the Three R's: Reward, Reinforce, Relate

- Give lots of praise and encouragement.
- Have learners review and share their learning in their own terms.
- Connect one activity to another, connect outdoor experiences to participants' lives.

² Much of the above material is drawn from: *Earth Education...A New Beginning*, by Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, Greenville, West Virginia, p. 169-224

Sharing Nature Framework & Experiences



Sharing Nature is an organization and movement pioneered by Joseph Cornell that overlaps with earth education concepts and materials in numerous ways but offers a different conceptual framework for structuring learning that develops appreciation and understanding of the natural world. The full approach is developed in a number of books, the most famous of which is *Sharing Nature* (see below). In particular, Joseph Cornell has defined *Flow Learning* as a process through which to structure and lead experiences in nature.

Flow Learning™

There is a sequence for games and activities that, regardless of a group's age, mood, and culture, always seems to work best. People everywhere respond to this sequence because it is in harmony with deeper aspects of human nature.

This sequence provides a simple framework that allows you to structure nature awareness classes for best effect. You can meet people where they are in interest and energy level, and then guide them step-by-step toward more meaningful and profound nature experiences.

Flow Learning's four stages flow naturally from one to the next. Each stage contains nature activities that are easy to play, joyful, intellectually stimulating, and highly engaging. Flow Learning can be used successfully in sessions lasting from thirty minutes to all day. Although it was originally developed for teaching outdoor nature classes, it can be used to teach any subject matter, indoors or outdoors.

Stage 1

Purpose: Awaken Enthusiasm (symbolized by the Otter)

Quality: Playfulness & Alertness

Benefits:

- Builds on children's love of play
- Creates an atmosphere of enthusiasm
- A dynamic beginning gets everyone saying, "Yes!"
- Develops full alertness, overcomes passivity
- Creates involvement
- Gets attention (minimizes discipline problems)
- Develops rapport with the leader
- Creates good group dynamics
- Provides direction and structure
- Prepares for later, more sensitive activities

Stage 2

Purpose: Focus Attention (symbolized by the Crow)

Quality: Receptivity

Benefits:

- Increases attention span
- Deepens awareness by focusing attention
- Positively channels enthusiasm generated in Stage 1
- Develops observational skills
- Calms the mind
- Develops receptivity for more sensitive nature experiences

Stage 3

Purpose: Direct Experience (symbolized by the Bear)

Quality: Absorption

Benefits:

- People learn best by personal discovery
- Gives direct, experiential, intuitive understanding
- Fosters wonder, empathy and love
- Develops personal commitment to ecological ideals

Stage 4

Purpose: Share Inspiration (symbolized by the Dolphin)

Quality: Idealism

Benefits:

- Clarifies and strengthens personal experiences
- Builds on uplifted mood
- Introduces inspiring role models
- Creates group bonding
- Increases learning for everyone
- Provides feedback for the leader
- Leader can share inspiration with a receptive audience

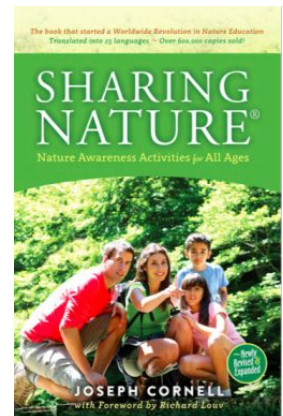
From Sharing Nature with Children II, formerly Sharing the Joy of Nature © 1989 Joseph Cornell

Sharing Nature®: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages

Joseph Bharat Cornell

Sharing Nature with Children sparked a worldwide revolution that connected millions of parents, educators, and children with nature. Published in over twenty languages, this classic has now been combined with Sharing the Joy of Nature to make a treasury of Joseph Cornell's best-loved nature games for children and adults. Foreword by Richard Louv. Color photos.

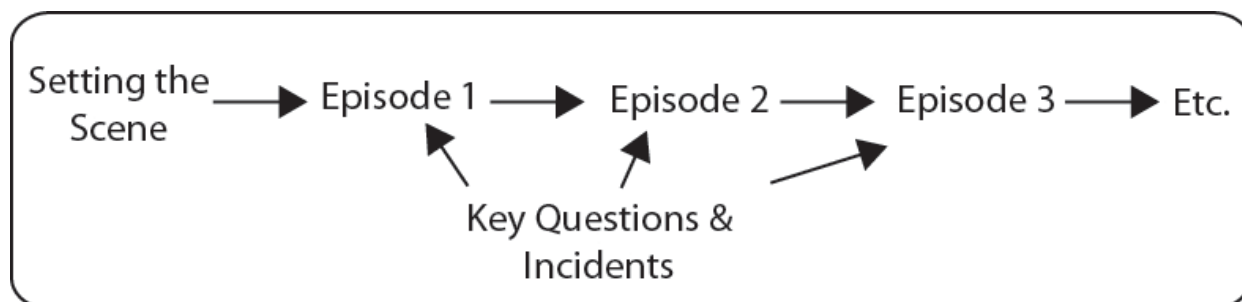
Learn more: <http://www.sharingnature.com/resources/books-cds.php>



Creating Adventures: Program Design with Storylines

Definition: What is the Storyline Approach?

An experience in nature can be much more than a collection of activities. Instead, the activities are organized and presented to participants as a series of sequential problems or episodes connected by a “storyline” or organizing pattern in which young people take on meaningful roles in the story to solve the problems. Depending on the program, the story and problems may involve participants taking on practical tasks and roles in the real world, re-living actual events in history, or taking on roles in fictional stories.



The Rationale: Key Elements of a Storyline Approach?³

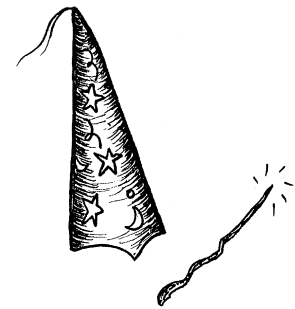
- *The Power of Story*: Story is a central part of human experience. We learn and share our lives through stories. They provide an understandable linear structure. The anticipation and engagement in a story draws us in. They are intrinsically motivating.
- *A Fun, Meaningful Context*: The story takes place in a meaningful context and has roles and interconnections that are meaningful within the context and as a connection to our lives.
 - For kids, the role and story maybe more important than the program objectives (kids would much rather be detectives sneaking in a leaf relative to going someplace to learn about photosynthesis).
 - For youth and adults, they need to know the objectives for the learning first (why they are there), but once they know them, they have much more fun if they can engage in a fun, storyline adventure. The storyline adds magic (e.g., the use of the gnomes in the workshop).
- *Holistic, Experiential Learning*: Storylines integrate the feelings, understandings and actions. They make the learning experiential because participants take on roles in the story and create the plot based on their own experiences and ideas. They are constructing their learning from their own ideas and experiences.
- *Co-Creation & Empowerment*: There is a partnership between leader and participants in creating the story. The leader may select the story but the learners create within the episodes. They take on roles in the story and develop an ownership for events as they unfold (e.g., once the kids become gnomes and build shelters, there is room for development and creation of their roles from there). Depending on the program, some storylines offer much more time for participants to create while others that are more limited due to short time periods.



³ These elements are drawn from the European Association for Educational Design as reported in *Creating Worlds, Constructing Meaning— The Scottish Storyline Method*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinmann, 1997.

Types of Storylines

1. *Construct an Atmosphere*: Participants actively construct a place: i.e., a park, natural area, beach, national park, shopping center, recycling centre, etc.
2. *Create an Enterprises*: Participants create a business, possibly a real one for fundraising efforts: i.e., an environmental store, making recycled paper, etc.
3. *Community Studies*: These storylines examine a location and often begin in the distant past and extend into the future: i.e., creating Ecotopia, or another community.
4. *Adventure/Journeys*: Storylines that follow real or imagined storylines: hunting for buried treasure, a wilderness trip using survival skills, obtaining a "Consumption License" which mirrors a drivers license for adults, etc.
5. *Historical Events*: Participants create roles within actual historical settings and events: a Mi'k Maq canoe trip across Nova Scotia in the 1600s, Thoreau at Walden, the Underground Railroad.
6. *Fantasy Themes*: Space aliens is one example... there are innumerable possibilities from science fiction to dragons and magicians, to hobbits and other mystical creatures.
7. *Mystery/Problem-Solving Themes*: Participants work through a problem-solving process, i.e., solving a mystery, an Acadian Scavenger Hunt, an environmental lawsuit vs. a corporation, etc.
8. *Book-Based themes*: Good books for topics have a strong plot, memorable characters, room for imagination, are unknown to students.

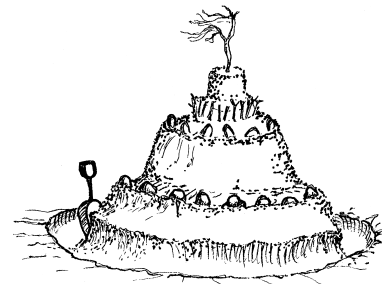


Developing a Storyline Topic

1. The storyline should follow a logical progression and a narrative sequence. The elements of the story—plot, characters, setting— connect the logical progression of episodes into an integrated whole.
 - Set the scene in place and time
 - Introduce the characters: people, animals, etc.
 - Pose the problem(s), challenges, conflicts
 - Cause incidents to occur which have to be dealt with
2. Give the participants tasks that arise from the context that the learner sees as significant and meaningful within it. Identify key questions that all learners must address: i.e., what will the forest look like, what creatures live in it, what do they eat, etc.

Characteristics of a Strong Storyline

1. Based on participant interests
2. Achieves program objectives
3. Has a strong hook to engage participants
4. Allows time for exploration & development of the storyline
5. Gives opportunities to develop practical skills & understanding.
6. Allows for diverse learning levels
7. Enables co-creation between leaders and learners
8. Pulls learners along with magic & adventure
9. Provides opportunities for follow-up and expansion



Worksheet: Developing Your Storyline

1. What are engaging, favourite or intriguing themes and interests of this group of participants?
2. What are the major goals you have for the program (storylines that mesh well with goals are great (like gnomes needing people to help teach others for an environmental education workshop)
3. Brainstorm storyline ideas appropriate for the learners and the goals?
4. What are the steps/episodes? How is the story developed? Organized?
5. How do you hook the participants at the start?

Feeling & Appreciation Activities

Vision & Observation

Leaf Slides

Synopsis: Everyone is invited to a slide show and selects a special leaf as a ticket for admission. At the natural theatre, the leader gives each person a slide frame. Each person puts the leaf into the frame. Everyone holds their leaf slide up to the light in a circle and then passes their slides around when the leader clicks.



Set-up and Props: You need one leaf slide per person. Take an approximately 40 by 20 cm light piece of cardboard and fold it in half to get a 20 by 20 cm (you could cut up an old filing folder). Label "Leaf Slide" across the top with the fold at the bottom. Then cut a 5 cm square viewing window through both layers of cardboard and the leaf is placed inside the cardboard like a sandwich. Pick a nice clear spot to circle up for the slide show. Find a narrow spot between the trees to form the entryway into the theatre so they can go in single file with you "at the door".

Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

- 1. Lead in...** Often when you go to parks and special places, they give you a slide show to start off. Well, I have one for you and we are going to be able to run the projector right out here in the middle of the woods. Instead of taking place in a dark room, we need a bright open area - like that one over there!" (S)he gestures toward a nearby clearing in the woods.
- 2. Introduce Leaf Ticket:** "But don't expect to get in without your ticket for admission. Get yourself a very special leaf you can find and meet me over there. Don't pick up just any leaf and make sure everyone has a different one. I'll check your tickets there."
- 3. Inspect leaves at door:** Move ahead to the clearing while they select leaves. As they arrive, put them in single file outside the theatre and give each leaf a quick inspection. Instruct them to keep their tickets as they enter the theatre and form a good circle.
- 4. Demonstrate how to make slide, then hand out frames:** Join the circle and note that "you not only hold the tickets in your hands, you also hold the slides for the slide show. I've got something here that will help you make your slide." Show the group a leaf slide frame and demonstrate its use. "This will complete your leaf slide. Simply place your leaf inside. You'll then be able to experience the incredible beauty in leaves."
- 5. Demonstrate how to focus slide.** Let them look at slides initially and then "Now I'll show you a different way to focus and view your leaf slide. Hold your slide up to the sky at arms length, close one eye, and bring the leaf right up to your eye. Then slowly move the slide back towards the sky until the leaf comes into focus. See what happens? You can see all the veins."
- 6. Conduct Show:** "Now it's time for the slide show. That's when we take a look at each other's leaf slides. Lets imagine that we form a circle of slides in a tray, just like the tray on top of a slide projector. When you hear the slide projector click like this (use an underworld clicker), pass your

slides around to the left. Use that same focusing technique to view each slide." Leader clicks until the slides have gone all around and everyone has their own back.

Human Camera

Synopsis: Participants work in pairs with one being the photographer and one the camera. The photographer positions the camera to take neat photos of natural objects by rapidly opening and closing their eyes.

Set Up and Props: None. Pick a locale with good footing as one person is blinded while moving.

Activity

1. **Introduce Human Camera:** Ask if anyone has brought his or her camera. Explain that you bought yours. In fact yours is not one of those expensive varieties.

2. **Explain Camera Features:** Ask one participant to stand up next to you and close his/her eyes. Introduce person as camera by noting film is inside top (head) and it has two lenses (eyes). Shutters (eyelids) cover lenses and must stay closed until the camera is positioned just so for the picture. The picture button is either engaged by tugging on the ear or by having camera make a fist and then picking up the thumb (your pick). The camera is versatile as it is a bipod and can be positioned. One must be careful when moving camera about and positioning it as it is fragile.

3. **Demonstrate Use of Camera:** Carefully move the camera (person) with their shutters closed into a neat position so as to capture a picture. Demonstrate a close up where you manipulate the camera into a position and then tilt the head properly. Push the button and take the picture. Point out some of the other possibilities—sky shots up trees, close-ups on trees, close-ups where the camera is on its knees, etc. Emphasize need to handle camera with care. **Emphasize safety when one person is leading the other in a pair with their eyes closed.**

4. **Split into Camera/Photographer Pairs:** Split crew into pairs with one being camera. Ask them to take 6 pictures and then trade roles. Ask them to remember their neatest photo and encourage the photographers to be creative.

5. **Encourage Photo Sharing:** As pairs finish, encourage sharing of some of individuals neat photos, do this as a group when everyone is done if there is time.



Rainbow Gems

Synopsis: Participants find and collect colours in nature by matching diversely coloured gems with the same colour in nature.

Set Up and Props: A white handkerchief or cloth and a collection of diversely coloured glass gems (like those from dollar store for planters). Have them in a nice cloth sack. Avoid lots of blues as they are hard to find in nature. Any area works.

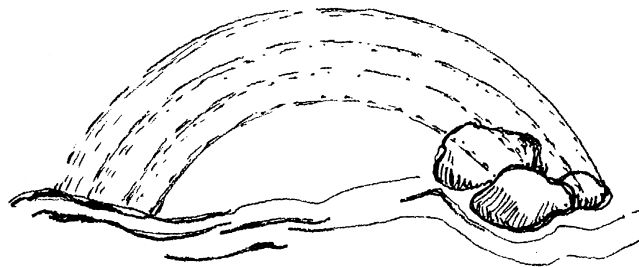
Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. Interrupt to Find Rainbow Gem Colour: Suddenly interrupt and notice a special natural colour on ground and pull out your sack of rainbow gems, open them on the white cloth, and be very pleased to find the gem that matches that colour— because it is a hard to find gem colour! Hold the gem and item next to each other (a coloured leaf often works well).

2. Tell Gem Story: Realize others are looking at you funny. Ask if they have gem collections. When they look puzzled, explain how you started yours (make up your own story) or ...

“One hot summer afternoon an old gnome was happily dosing on some grass overlooking a big vista. A small thunderstorm passed in the distance, and on the edge of it, there was a beautiful rainbow extending from the cloud almost back to his feet. Now he was not real sure exactly what happened next, but the rainbow seemed to dissolve in the sunshine and little drops of colour splashed everywhere. And the gnome



swears that most all of the colour drops dissolved into and became part of the colours in nature. But a few of them seemed to solidify and become gem drops. So the gnome ran around and collected the solid gem drops and that was the start of the gem tradition among gnomes. Pretty soon every gnome was carrying a sack of gem drops and using them as a tool to help people discover all the wonderful colours in nature. I received my sack from a pair of woodland gnomes and they challenged me to find every colour in it. So I am always looking out for the gem colours.”

3. Challenge Them to Find Colours: “Would you all help me? Take 2 or 3 gems and between here and the next spot, and see if you can find the perfect colour in nature that matches each of your gems. Find the colour on something small and dead so you can bring it back here and put it on this display cloth. If it is something too big to bring back, then simply share your colour match discovery with someone else. Don’t pick anything living.

4. Colour Search: Role model by finding your own colours, and help participants and be enthusiastic as everyone searches.

5. Create Rainbow Colour Display: At the gathering spot, have the group display their gems and the associated colour objects on the white cloth in a rainbow of colour... the reds start, then the oranges, yellows, greens, blues, & the purples end the rainbow. First place the gem with each natural colour, then the remove gems. Then pick up natural items as a bunch in cloth and have them decide which plant they would like to help by putting the natural materials under it to decompose.

Secret Skeletons

Synopsis:

Participants lie on back around base of a large tree and use their scopes to find and trace neat patterns and shapes in the arms (branches) and fingers (twigs) of the skeleton tree while they look up.

Set Up & Props: Marker. Make sure you scout out and find a good skeleton tree ahead of time.

Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. Introduce Secret: “Here is your special, secret mark. Hold out the palm of your hand. You'll discover the secret a bit later.” [Trace along one of the palm lines in each person's hand with a marker—do this at the very start of the Earthwalk rather than just before the activity].

2. Introduce Skeleton: Explain...“there is a huge skeleton over there and this season is a good time to see it well. It's a secret skeleton and it is so mysterious that sometimes you don't even realize it is there. It has a secret to tell which you might just be able to figure out.”

3. Circle Around Skeleton: Tiptoe to base of large tree with the group and form a circle around it. “It sure is a beauty, look at the huge arms (limbs) coming out from the base and reaching out to the tiniest fingers (twigs).”

4. Get into Eye Spy Position: “Now the only way to figure out the secret is to get in the proper position, which I call the eye spy position. And make sure you have your scopes out and ready to use.” [Demonstrate position— lie down on back with head up against trunk looking up, and motion for everyone to get into this position.]

5. Explain how to Explore Skeleton with Fist Scope: “Close one eye and point your scope to the first arm or branch of the skeleton. You create a scope by looking through your fist. Then move your scope out this branch until you want to jump to a higher branch. Then you can explore all the branches/arms, moving from the line of one branch to the next one with the jump of your scope. Give it a try and see what neat lines and shapes you can find in the skeleton.”

6. Encourage and Share Explorations: “What have you found that is neat? Try following one of the arms out to the tiniest fingers with your scope and see what you find.”

7. Provide Alphabet challenge: Challenge the group to find letters in the branches from the formations. Look for letters such as *Y, S, T, L, and A etc.*

8. Explain Secret: “Some people may see skeleton tree as dead but it is those arms fingers where you can find the secret of relationship to nature. Look at the lifeline is marked in your hand. That line is very special. Your line is different than everyone else's. It is your mark and you have it all of your life. But even though line is different, your pattern exists in other places, and that has to do with the secret.”

8. Find Your Line: The secret of the skeleton is that although all living things different, they are also similar. See if you find this secret by finding the same line your scope that is marked in your hand as line in an arm or branch of the skeleton. When you find your pattern, show it to someone next to you.



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Nature's Art Gallery

Synopsis: The leader walks away from the group and returns playing the role of an artist who needs help creating an art gallery in nature. Participants split up and each one arranges natural objects in an attractive spot to create a picture or sculpture.

Set Up & Props: A beret and a paint brush adds to the character development of the artist. The site can be flexible. Know how you will set up the demo example ahead of time and have a title card and marker.

Activity

1. Meeting the Artist: Explain that group is approaching a really neat art gallery and that you will go ahead to check that the artist is in. Go up ahead and put on an artist cap and grab a paint brush. Return to group as a crazy artist in distress.

2. Explain Problem: As the artist you are extremely distressed. Call out in an artist accent, "Ah, I am so happy to see someone. I have a show opening today, and I have only a few treasures to exhibit. The rest were lost in shipment. Can you possibly help me?..."

3. Explain Nature of Exhibit and Examples: "This is an exhibit of some of the natural treasures from the beautiful communities on earth, and here is one specimen from the forest community up here." Move group into the gallery and show one example of some natural items attractively arranged on a rock or a stump to form a collage in nature. Pull out a title card from your pocket and place it next to the artwork. Point out why you set each object the way you did--"here I was trying for elemental simplicity, this fascinating stick contrasts with the bright red color of these berries (etc.)."

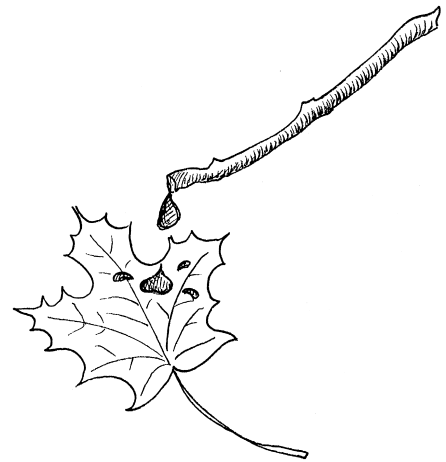
4. Explain That Exhibit is Lost: Exclaim that "everything is in a mess because the rest of the objects have not arrived yet—they won't make it for the opening later today." Finally, slump down on the ground, "Oh, it's just hopeless, I had such wonderful things for this show. They came from all over the world. How can I ever replace them?..."

5. Obtain Help and Explain Improvisation: You think you could help????... "Really?..." the artist brightens up. Maybe we could borrow some of those things to fill out my show from around here." So that's what we'll do with my exhibit. Improve!"

6. Artists Go to Work: Have each person or pair of persons choose a "pedestal or canvas" (stump, stone, or other neat spot on the ground) where they can work. Emphasize that they can bring items to their spot from nearby places but that they should not rip up live things. The artwork must be treated with great care. Give them a small title card to place next to their work when they are done.

7. Artist Invites Everyone to The Opening: Once everyone is done, conduct a tour of the gallery with each participant giving a brief description of their piece of work.

8. Leader Returns: Artist leaves at the end to tell their friends about the exhibit and the leader immediately returns, surprised to see the exhibit. At the end, it is decided that the art can stay but not the title cards. Others must discover the art for themselves.



Faces in the Forest

Synopsis: Each participant receives a picture frame and uses it to find natural faces in tree trunks, rocks, on the ground, etc.

Set Up & Props: A picture frame (approximately 24 by 30 cms) for each person made of wood or cardboard. The site can be flexible. Find a demo face ahead of time when you scout the area.

Activity

1. Demonstrate Finding Faces with Character Finder: “Since it is hard to see these Faces in the Forest, I have a *Character Finder* to help. Here’s how to use it:

- 1) Hold it at arms-length from you.
- 2) Look at the object through the frame.
- 3) Search for the faces.”

Demonstrate... find, and describe a couple of faces in tree or rocks.

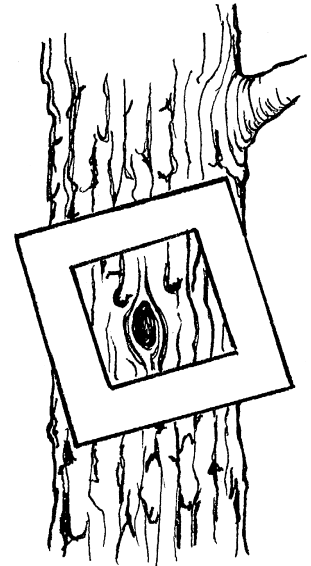
2. Label Feelings for Faces: “The extra challenge is not only to find the face, but also to find faces that portray different sorts of feelings... happy faces, sad faces, angry faces, etc. You don’t have to be able to find the real hard ones, that takes years, but you need to have the basic skill. What kind of face is the one I found here?... How about this one?...”

3. Create Partners and Explain Search Task: “As you go, remember where you found each face because at the end we are going to ask you to show the coolest face to everyone. Stick together and share your faces.”

4. Search for Faces: Encourage them and remind them of different types to look for.

5. Remind Them to Pick & Prepare to Share Coolest Face

6. Do Tour of Each Person’s Coolest Face



Eye in the Sky

Synopsis: Each participant holds a small mirror in their hands that they look down into as a way of exploring the branches and sky above their heads.

Set Up & Props: Each person receives a small mirror (10-15 cms square). One can cut a large mirror into pieces and mount it on cardboard. Scout the area carefully so there is interesting tree cover above the circle spots and through the short trail walk.

Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. Sparrow Story: Circle group in a pre-scouted spot and tell a story of how “some creatures have eyes that look up as well as down because they have to fear predators from the sky. One is a sparrow that eats seeds in fields and forests. It has to worry about hawks. If a hawk flies over, it’s amazing how quick a small bird will see it and freeze.”

2. Intro Eye in the Sky: “We need to watch all around us if we were a bird and as explorers we can use that skill to discover lots of stuff. But humans are not built to have eyes in the top of our heads so that we can easily look up. So we are always missing what is above us. What we need is a third eye, an eye in the sky,”

3. Hand Out and Demo Sky Eyes. “All you have to do is look down into the sky eye and you will be able to see all of the neat things over your head. Everyone try it and find something neat above you.”

4. Explain Walking and “Freeze”: “Form a straight line and explain group will walk slowly along a trail while looking down into the Sky Eyes so they are seeing all the neat things above them. Explain that if you call out freeze, that means a hawk is flying over. If everyone is not perfectly still, they will be dead.

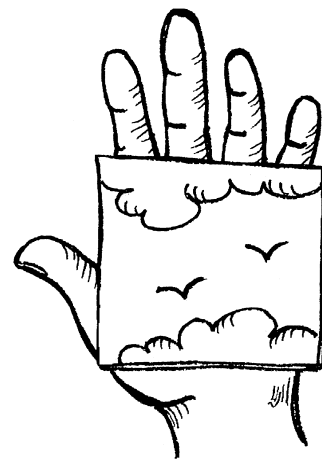
5. Start walking and call freeze or have others do it periodically.

6. Explain Search and Discover: Form group into circle. Each person then looks down into their sky eye and finds one neat spot they can describe above them. Take turns and have everyone else try to look down into their Sky eyes and adjust the angle to find the neat thing the person is talking about.

7. Ask Discovery Questions: Ask questions to encourage discovery...

- Find a safe place you would perch if you were a sparrow.
- Find a place you would wait if you were a predator bird waiting for a sparrow to move
- Find the shapes of letters in the branches (S, I, L, A, etc.)

8. Collect sky eyes and look up with your regular eyes to see what you were looking at.



Small Worlds

The Underworld

Synopsis: The group is introduced to the dark and mysterious underworld, the world beneath things where most humans never go. Each person is given a "sub scope" which allows one to see under things. The students' voices are taken away and they can only use cricket clicker voices when they want to share a discovery. The crickets then get down on their knees and explore and share the wonders of the world beneath things.

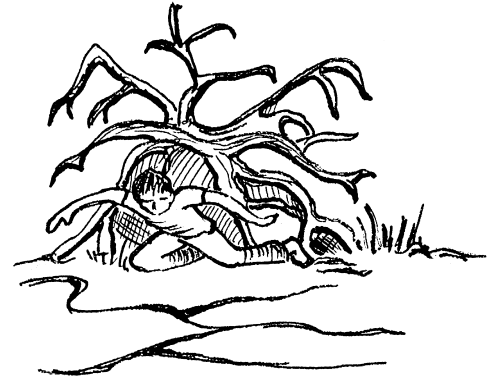
Set-up: A sub scope (dental mirror) and a clicker (used for training dogs) are needed for each person (say "click" "click" if you do not have enough clickers). Find a thicket with good ground cover, mosses, ferns and mushrooms to discover, with thick brush above so that participants cannot easily stand up. Pre-set a stick against a tree as the gateway into the underworld.

Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. **Lead in...** "Come over here and I will show you how to enter into a strange and unusual underworld."

2. **Introduce Underworld:** Huddle the group in a small opening underneath a clump of shrubs or small trees. Explain in a mysterious, hushed tone that: "There are intricate patterns and far-out shapes; there are dark areas and intriguing inhabitants of mysterious places; there are views never seen by the human eye and stories of life untold! All this awaits you on your visit to the Underworld."



3. **Introduce "Sub scopes":** "You see, this Underworld is always here, always around us, but it is impossible to enter it as human beings without the aid of two things. First we need a special device. You've all heard of a periscope used to view the outer world from underneath, like on a submarine. Well, this device is called a *sub scope*. With it you can experience the world underneath the world we usually see." Hold out a dental mirror and explain: "This sub scope will give you a vantage point that you have never been before. Simply use it to reflect the image of things under things." Demonstrate by holding the sub scope just under the gills of a mushroom or another neat thing so everyone is able to see its interior. "There is no end to the fascinating sights that await you."

5. **Introduce Cricket Clickers:** "And now for the second item you will need. We cannot go to the Underworld as human beings. I will give you the magic voice of the cricket that will enable you to visit the Underworld. However, once we enter the underworld and have the magic voice, you may no longer use the human voice. If you discover something that is truly amazing in the underworld; sound your cricket voice like this (click) to attract others."

6. **Explain Entry into Underworld:** "Of course as crickets, we must be small and down close to the ground. You will miss all the neat things if you stay on your feet. We have to make ourselves small and the best way is to shrink. Do you realize that we are mostly made up of air? So what we are going to do is take a deep breath, and then all at once blow all of the air out and you will shrink down to the ground, then you will be a small cricket in the underworld (demonstrate—take a deep breath and then as you blow out the air "shrink" to the ground). Once you are small, go out into the

Underworld on your hands and knees, and experience it. When you hear my cricket voice sounding repetitively, that is the signal to meet back here and return to our world."

7. Distribute Props, Enter Underworld: Hand out clickers to each person but keep them in a circle. After an initial trial of their new voices, do the shrinking process as a group to enter the underworld. Have the entry way involve moving under a stick lying against a tree as a doorway.

8. Encourage Discoveries and Sharing: Discover in the underworld with the detectives, help group members who are finding it hard to focus by helping them discover. Facilitate sharing.

9. Return to Human world: After about 5-10 minutes depending on the group, use the clicker to gather the group again, return through the doorway, and then grow bigger as you suck in air.

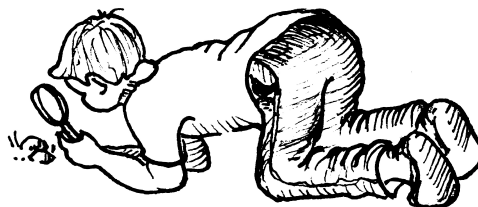
10. Do Sharing Circle: Note "Whew! Just in the nick of time!" as you collect the sub scopes and cricket clickers. "What was it like down there in the Underworld?" Have each person share one thing they saw which was neat.

Magic Planets (or Seat Airlines)

Synopsis: Participants go on a space journey using a magnifying lens (tri-magnifiers are best, see Resources section in manual) as an imaginary space ship. They zoom in on a tree stump or boulder and explore it from the air through the lens.

Seat Airlines is a similar activity except you line participants up in two lines as if they were passengers sitting on an airplane and everyone has a window seat. You take off and move forward until you all "dive" down simultaneously along the surface of the ground, exploring where you land with the lens.

Set-up & Props: Magnifying lens per person (tri-magnifiers are best, see Resources section in manual). Identify one group planet and know that there are other possibilities in the area for exploration. Seat Airlines is better if you don't have good identifiable planets— any area with ground cover works.



Activity

1. Lead In—Intro Journey Planets: Ask if anyone would like to take a trip to a really neat distant planet. Explain they will need a space ship to get there. Here is how the ship works....

2. Explain How Ship Works: Hold up a magnifying lens so that it is sideways between your two eyes and touching your nose. You enter the space ship through the lens that becomes the door. When you are inside, shut the lens so it covers your eye. Everything is now blurry as you look through the unfocused lens.

3. Pass out Ships and Blast Off: Give the participants a space ship (lens) and line them up in a single line. Have them practice getting into and out of their ship. Once everyone is ready, everyone goes into the ship and blasts off (following you in a single line while you narrate a journey over millions of miles (slowly move the line 20 to 75 feet forward and circle the group around a large stump, tree, or boulder planet with lots of neat things on it, moss, fungi, lichen etc.

4. Demonstrate Helicopter Exploration of Planet: Let me show you how to explore this incredible micro planet. Put your lens up to your eye and imagine you are zooming in on the surface of the planet in a helicopter. Move in right near the surface until it comes in focus and then

travel along the surface and look at all the neat shapes. Demonstrate with everyone watching and make some neat discoveries.

5. Crew Explores Planet: Have everyone get in helicopters and explore planet. [If there is snow you can drop flakes on planet and create snow storms.]

6. Explore Individual Planets: Have individuals split up in area and travel to and explore their own planet. Encourage inter-planetary travel in order to show each other their planets.

7. Return Journey and Sharing: Have group journey back to starting spot, exit their ship, and share one neat thing they saw on a planet.

Wild Gardens

Synopsis: Participants create and explore small micro gardens on the forest floor. Note that this is a long activity that often goes 45 minutes.

Props: A sack including:

10 small flags (red tape on thin dowels of popsicle sticks)

12 feet of string with ends tied together with 4 sticks or dowels strung on them

Sighting Tube or Magnifying lens per person (tri-magnifiers are best, see Resources section)

Pre-Setup Pre-scout the area for the best specific site. A good site will have neat forest floor communities near each other. Identify ahead where your circle will be where you will first sit down, and where you will set up your example garden. A conifer thicket is great as it is often dark with neat moss on the ground.



Activity

1. Intro Wild Gardens: Explain that there are small, beautiful wild gardens that are tended by woodland gnomes. Note that the best ones that they show others are often covered and only open occasionally for viewing.

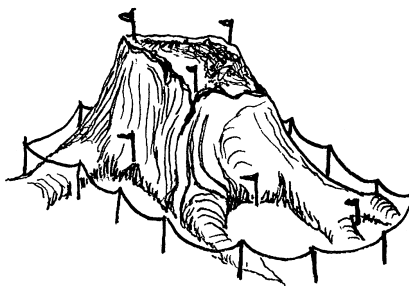
2. Covered Garden Up Ahead: “I can show you my favourite garden up ahead.”

3. Find Natural Gifts for Garden Visit: Explain that “it is a tradition of the Gnomes to bring a neat and tiny natural gift whenever you go to visit a Wild Garden. To view my garden, look around here for something very small, smaller than your fingernail to bring to the garden as a gift as a gift. Maybe a neat seed, a small nut or cone, or twig.”

4. Move to and Circle around Your Garden: “Walk lightly, carefully and quietly as you approach.”

5. Demonstrate & Practice Garden Viewing Position: “To view a garden, you must use this special position—get on your knees and lean on your elbows like this [demonstrate] with your sighting tube or lens up to one eye.” Everyone gets in viewing position before you uncover garden. Once everyone is in position, explain that when you uncover garden, they must look all around it and appreciate it to decide on the best place to put their gift.

6. Open Garden and Place Gifts: Give group time to explore garden and then give them the signal to place gifts one by one, announcing where they will place them.

- 7. Explain Setting Up Gardens for Tours:** “The Gnomes had a small set of props they use to give tours of their gardens. Here’s how to set up a tour of my garden and then you will all get the chance to discover your own garden and set up a tour for others.”
 - 8. Discover and Flag Highlights and Set Garden Boundaries:** “First, let’s find the coolest spots and attractions in this garden. Take a look with your scopes. Who has one?” Kids find neat spots and you place a sightseeing flag at each locale up to ten. Explain that “gardens often have informal boundaries so I have a boundary line to go around the garden to make it special.”
 - 9. Name Garden:** I need a cool name to attract people to my garden. Any suggestions?... I might call it “Ants’ Paradise”. Of course there can be cool things outside of the garden as well.”
 - 10. Explain Finding Personal Gardens and Area Boundaries:** “Now everyone gets to pair up to discover and set up their own gardens. There are all kinds of cool gardens around here. [Point to several specific examples nearby]. Now if you go too far to discover a garden, will you get many visitors? ... No. So we have boundaries. You can’t go any further than...” (Have kids work in pairs)
- 
- 11. Set Up Tours:** “Once you find your garden, explore it like we did here to find the neatest spots. Look carefully for a long while with your scope so you pick the best spots. Then set up your flags, your boundary line and give it a name.”
 - 12. Promote Tours & Bring Gifts:** “You will need to promote your garden to attract tourists so come up with a catchy way to attract people. ‘Ant’s Paradise is life’s coolest slice, come on over...’ When anyone takes a tour, remember they must find a small gift and place it in the garden like we did. Tell me when you are ready for tours and I will also announce your opening.”
 - 13. Crawl or Crouch Low When Moving:** When you travel you must crawl or stay in a low crouch, otherwise you miss other gardens and may step on them and hurt them. Stay low.
 - 14. Hand out Tour Sack,** Students create and explore gardens and set up tours. Help those who are struggling. Be enthusiastic and encouraging.
 - 16. Encourage and Take Tours When Gardens are Set-up:** Monitor when kids are ready to give tours, help them attract tourists and take tours yourself with others.
 - 17. Do Sharing Circle Around Your Garden:** When tours are winding down, call crew around your garden and have them each share one thing special that they saw in a garden.
 - 18. Demonstrate Taking Down and Gnome Knot:** Explain that a Gnome skill is taking down the garden set-up so no one would ever know you were here. That means carefully finding all 10 flags and rolling up your boundary line around the 4 posts (demonstrate). Count to 10 flags as you pull them out. Demo the “Gnome Knot— Group 4 posts on the string, then twirl string around 4 posts tightly and loop it under your finger at the last twirl and pull tight.
 - 19. Students Take Down Gardens and Return Prop Bag to Leader.**

Touch

Meet a Tree (Tree Friends)

Synopsis: Participants are split into pairs, a leader and a visitor, and the visitor is then led to and introduced to a tree friend while his/her vision is "blocked." The visitor gets to know the tree through the sense of touch, and then is led back to the starting point. The visitor takes the blindfold off and then must return to find the tree by sight. The pair then switches roles.

For older youth and adults, this activity may be pitched as an open ended "tour of touch". Instead of the leader taking the visitor to a specific tree, the leader gives the visitor a tour of the area and lets them explore various objects and touches while blindfolded.

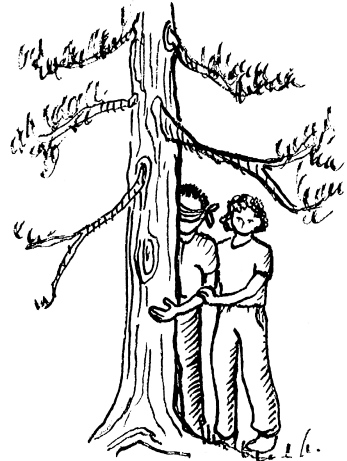
Set-up and Props: There needs to be one vision mask for each pair of participants. Pick an area with a lot of trees to give choice, but make sure it is an area with relatively good footing and an absence of thick bushes and undergrowth. The risk management issue for this activity is that the leading child will be silly or cavalier with the visiting child, and that the visitor will fall and get hurt. This is a major concern and must be dealt with through (1) choice of a good site, and (2) careful instructions to the participants.

Activity

1. **Lead In...** Point out that you have a great chance for them to practice meeting the kinds of friends that are most frequent out here in the forest. Move the kids to the area where they will meet the new friends.

2. **How to Visit Tree Friends:** Explain that these friends are a different—tree friends to be exact. But emphasize that you don't meet or get to know tree friends in the same way you get to know people friends. In fact you have to meet them in a different way because they are shy, they do not like their friends looking at them at the very start. So, here's what you have to do:

- Have kids form pairs—leader picks pairings to get good combinations.
- One person is the leader, and one person is the visitor
- The leader decides on a tree friend s/he wants to introduce the visitor to. The leader takes the visitor over to the tree friend and allows the visitor to get to know the tree.
- But there is a catch, trees are shy and you can't look at them when you are getting to know them. So, that means the visitor must wear this vision mask during the whole time he or she is getting to know the tree friend.



3. **Review Process:** So we will start here (demonstrate with a volunteer), the visitor puts on the vision mask and the leader takes the visitor to a new tree friend. The visitor gets to know the tree, then the leader leads the visitor back here, and the visitor takes off the vision mask. Then the challenge is for the visitor, using your eyes, to go back and find your new friend. After you have done this, you will switch roles and the leader will become the visitor and the visitor will become the leader. Also, to make it tougher, the leader can spin the visitor around at the start and the end so that it is harder for them to know where they are headed to meet their tree friend.

4. **Important Expectations:** Two things are very important about getting to know a tree [Cover these next two points in a serious tone]:

- When you meet your tree friend, you have to get to know your friend very well—without using your eyes. You want to feel its shape, the touch of the bark, how many branches there are. You might want to rub it with your cheek, give it a hug to know how big it is (include your own ideas). Get to know it real well. [While you are saying these things, demonstrate with a nearby tree]

- Second, the leaders have to be very careful when they are leading the visitor. You have to hold the person carefully and lead them like this [demonstrate with one of the children—hold the visitor at the shoulders or side, do not pull visitor using arms]. Lead the visitor slowly and carefully and tell the visitor if the footing is bad. If I see that any leader is not being careful, the leader will lose the chance to continue and will have to sit over here. Everyone will get the chance to be the visitor so you all will realize how important it is for the leader to be careful.

5. **Do Activity:** Start the activity and supervise to make sure everyone is being careful. If a given pair is too slow or fast, talk with them to help everyone finish at near the same time.

6. **Final Sharing About Friend:** When everyone is done, have everyone sit in a circle. Go around and have each crew member share one thing they really liked about their new friend. Each person has to come up with something different.

Touch Trail

Synopsis: Participants use their sense of touch as another way to discover neat shapes. They become moles, creatures with an incredible sense of touch and almost no sight. They then crawl along the ground following a "mole trail," a string winding between the trees. Each mole then shares a favorite touch.

Set-up & Props: 30 meters of cord wound around a stick or board. Identify a spot where the ground is relatively smooth and easy to crawl on. You can set the trail out ahead of time. For older participants you can dispense with the string and have the participants turn with their backs to the circle and slowly crawl out exploring freestyle.

Activity

1. Lead In—Introduce Using Sense of Touch:

Point out that you know one little animal that gets around by using its sense of touch rather than its eyes. Have them guess what you might be thinking of... "It's a mole."



2. Explain How Moles Move by Touch: Ask if anyone knows what a mole is? Explain that a mole

is a creature that lives below or on the ground and has very poor eyesight. It gets around by relying on its sense of touch and it can discover all sorts of neat shapes. Explain you can turn them into moles that will allow them to use their sense of touch to find all kinds of neat shapes.

3. Set Up Mole Trail: Explain that you are laying out a mole trail as you unwind the cord and make a large circle with it by stringing it around trees. Make sure you return to the start of the string with the end to create a continuous circle of string (use up most of the string). Explain that some moles like to follow a cord above ground as they then can feel their way along.

3. Explain Use of Touch Tool: To turn them into moles, they must have their vision blocked, because moles feel rather than see. Moles also spend all of their time down crawling on the ground. This is where the touch tool (blindfold) comes in. It is used to turn you into a mole by blocking your eye sight and that makes you really depend on your touch to find shapes.

4. Arrange Group on Mole Trail: Have each person stand by the cord and turn in same direction (i.e., clockwise). Give them their touch tools. Explain that you put their touch tool over their eyes which will turn them into moles and they must immediately become small like a mole and start to crawl around the rope circle on the ground feeling all of the neat touches with their hands. [Spread the moles out on the cord so that they do not run into each other when they are crawling.] Explain that moles always crawl and they do not make noise!

5. Monitor Speed of Moles: Monitor the crew so that they do not run into each other on the mole trail, slowing down or speeding up individuals as appropriate. Make sure everyone crawls.

6. Share Neat Touches: Finish and form a circle and have each person share one neat touch they experienced as a mole.

7. Wind Up Mole Trail

A Dozen Touches

Synopsis: Participants work in pairs to find small natural objects that they put in a “touch box” with each compartment labeled with an adjective describing a touch word. They then trade their box with another pair and while blindfolded or with their eyes closed, they have to guess what the word is based on their touching it.

Set-up & Props: Tape or glue a strip of paper over the top of an egg carton and print “Touch Box” on it. Decorate the box and label with crayons, markers or coloured pencils. Write the following touch words in the bottom of the compartments of the carton: wet, dry, rough, smooth, soft, hard, round, flat, dull, sharp, fuzzy, prickly. Put a different word in each compartment. Have a blindfold for every two participants. Any area is suitable.

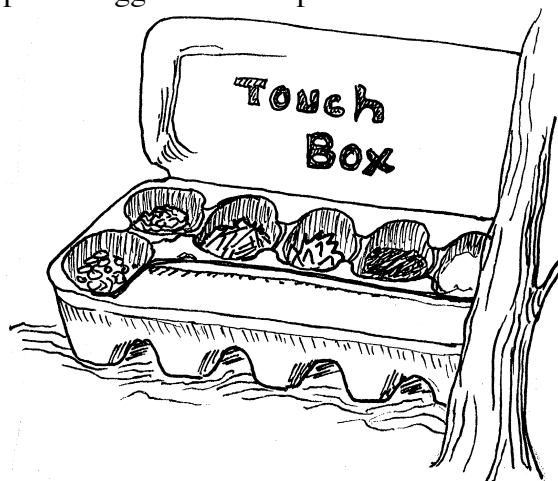
Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. Intro Touch Box Challenge: Has anyone ever collected a box of touches? I have, I am an expert at it. I challenge you to see how good you are. Here is a box for a ‘dozen touches’... You thought it was an egg carton but its not! Here is the challenge. There is a touch word written in each compartment of the box. I want you to work in pairs and find a small natural object that has the feel described for each word. Put that object in the right compartment. When you return with your box full, we are going to have a guessing game.

2. Pairs Find Touches. Help pairs as they search for touches to fill their box. Separate the pairs from each other.

3. Split Pairs, Trade Boxes & Guess Touch Words. When the pairs return with the boxes full, have one person from a pair share their box with a person in another pair. In turn that person’s partner shares their box with the first person’s partner. In each case, give the guesser a blindfold, and then (s)he tries to guess the words in each compartment by the feel of the object. The person with the box helps the guesser and tells him or her if (s)he has the correct answer.



Smell

Scratch and Sniff

Synopsis: Introduce the sense of smell with an aromatic natural item. Then demonstrate the process of scratching an item to release the scent while you put special potion on the object with a scent catcher sponge. The potion helps to catch the scent molecules in your nose. Participants then scratch and sniff across an area. At the end they pair up and share their favorite sniffs.

Props and Set-up: You need a potion bottle with potion in it, a bowl to pour the potion into, plus a scent catcher (small piece of sponge) for each person. It is nice to have it open enough area for freedom of movement. Scout the area out so you know some of the neat smells that are there to share ahead of time.

Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. Introduce Challenge of Smell Sense: Note that you have the hardest sense challenge of them all... but you think they can handle it. It's a skill that most humans do not use much anymore— the sense of smell. There are incredible smells out here, and some are easy... try this (let them smell a sprig of spruce). But most smells are tough to find, so I will share a couple of my tricks of the trade.



2. Introduce the Scratch: "Most natural scents are hidden just below the surface of whatever it is that has them - they're just waiting to burst forth and be released to the world outside. We're going to try to find some of these scents, and I know a special way to help us find them. It's called *scratch and sniff*. Simply scratch the surface of a natural object with your fingernail, and let the scent burst out! Then you must be sure to sniff before the scent goes away.

3. Introduce the Potion: "Now, some of these scents even though they burst out, are difficult to capture long enough for us to sniff. And some of them are just too faint to detect. To help overcome these problems, we'll use the aid of this special potion and a 'scent catcher'. This bottle contains a very old and special potion that comes from hidden stream. This stream flows from a spring deep in the earth, and it is the special waters of this stream that are perfectly suited for capturing scents (adjust the story and fill in details as you see fit)."

4. Demonstrate Use of Scent Catchers: pour some potion out of the bottle into the bowl..."These scent catchers can soak up the special solution and all you need to do is drip a bit on the object each time you go to scratch and sniff something. It will hold the scent long enough for you to get a whiff of it." Demonstrate by scratching and sniffing several things and share the sniff.

5. Prove Potion's Effectiveness: I can see you don't believe this really works. I can prove it. Here, smell this sprig of fir [quickly put it under someone's nose]. It has some smell, right? Now I will scratch it [crinkle it up] and drop potion on it. Now smell it. It is much stronger right? [Let others try it.] You see it really works.

6. Define Area for Scratch and Sniff: "Now see what you can discover, scratch and sniff your way over to there, where you'll meet me. You can scratch and sniff anything - plants, roots, soil, and even rocks. Along the way, remember your favorite scratch and sniff. Lots of great scratch and

sniffs are along the ground too, so don't be afraid to get down to look for them. If you find a good sniff, share it with someone else. Oh, one more thing before you get started. This is 'scratch and sniff' not 'squash and sniff'. Be gentle with what you're sniffing!"

7. Encourage and Model Scratching and Sniffing: Scratch and sniff yourself and point out things to the group members that give good sniffs. Encourage them to get down on their knees as there are a lot of neat sniffs near the ground.

8. Pair Up for Sharing Sniffs: When they all arrive at the defined ending spot, have them pair up with whomever has the same color scent catcher. They then retrace their routes with their new partners and share their favorite scratch and sniff.

Whiffs

Synopsis: Participants have a party and make whiff sundaes with natural scents crushed on top. They name their whiffs and share the scents of the season by smelling, not tasting

Set-up & Props: Choose a place with good materials for scents—fir, wintergreen, dead ferns, etc.— and know what you can use for a neat example. You need a small cup for each person.

Source: Adapted from *Earthwalks* by Kirk Hoessle & Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, 1980.

Activity

1. Invitation to Party: "How about a break for a party? Maybe some of you have heard of an ice cream party where you make your own ice cream sundaes? Well this is sort of like that only you make your own earth scoop flavours instead of using regular ice cream. Let me show you."

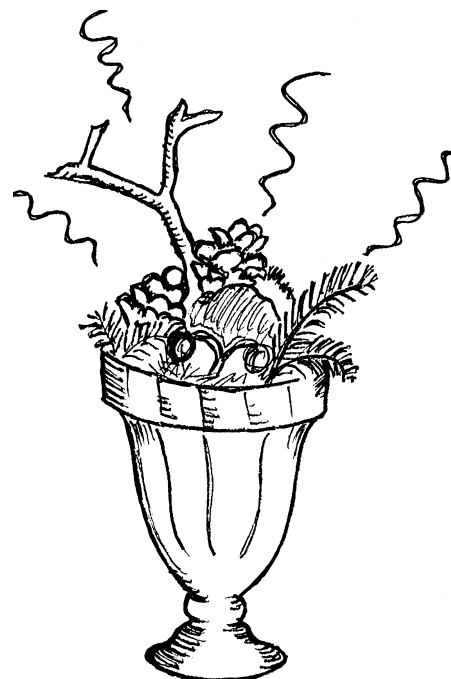
2. Explain Whiffs: "We call these flavours whiffs because they are different than regular ice cream. You don't eat these flavours, instead you smell them, and you can come up with some great sniffs. Let me show you."

3. Demonstrate Making of Whiff Sundae: Pull out scooper and a cup. Scoop up ingredients into cup and then add some crushed natural materials that make for an interesting smell—leaves, evergreen needles, mint leaves, etc. (pick nice and strong smells). Smell your sundae, "wow, that's good, I think I will call it "earthy ripple" (make up your own name). Does anyone want a great whiff"—share it around.

4. Create with Care: See if everyone can come up with a neat and different flavour. Call it something new. "Let's be careful not to destroy living things in the process, you only need a little flavouring if you crush it up and let the scents out."

5. Distribute Props/Make Sundaes: Distribute cups. "Once you have your whiffs put together, come on back here for the party."

6. Initiate Party: Start the sharing and the party as most people are finishing up their whiffs. Share your whiff sundae with others and encourage sharing all around the group, including the names of the flavours.



7. Propose a Toast: Comment "What a lovely party and great sundaes, they bring out the best smells of the season! I would like to offer a toast—to the beauty and wonder of spring."

Owwoo Beasts

1. Become Owwoo Beasts: "So first let me show you an Owwoo Beast. They have..."

- 3 front arms, four legs & 2 heads
- Two heads with four ears, two eyes, one nose and two mouths.
- One smelling nose and frizzy hair

It is quite a creature... Here's an example... (Pair up 2 kids) they have 4 legs and two heads... that's good... 3 arms.... Oops (lock two arms to make one), four ears (good), 2 eyes, oops we have too many (blindfold one head), Now the smelling nose is on the non-seeing head because you smell better when you can't see. That head also has frizzy hair (fluff it up)."



2. Explain and Demonstrate Smelling Challenge: "You see the smelling head can't see or speak and the seeing head can't smell. Here's how it works... Seeing head, look at me, Take your smelling head over here to smell this (leader points to something with a strong smell like a needle tree and the beast moves to the thing). Now get your smelling head carefully in a position where the smelling head can really smell it. Smelling head, when you smell the thing, you have to do an owwooo beast howl. What's the howl?... owwooo... Go ahead as an example."

3. Pair Up and Make Beasts: If group has odd number, one leader joins in. If there is odd number and only one leader, create a 3-person monster with two sighted heads.

4. Smelling and Safety Guidelines for Beasts:

- The seeing head is the guide and makes sure both parts move carefully and stay safe. The two parts of the creature must lock arms when moving.
- It helps the smelling head a lot if the seeing head scratches the smelling stuff just before the smelling head sniffs.
- The seeing head cannot tell the smelling head what the thing is to smell.

5. Point to First Thing for All the Beasts to Smell: Get the seeing heads attention and point to first item to be smelled by smelling head without saying the name (pick something with a good smell... moss on the ground, ferns, needles, etc.). Make it something involving crouching down.)

6. Let Seeing Head Choose the New Smells. Help those having trouble. Have them do at least 3 smells for each smelling head.

7. Change Roles in Beast for Seeing Head and Smelling Head. Do at least 3 more smells.

8. Share Favourite Scents in a circle

Listening

Sound Map

Synopsis: Participants listen to and record the sounds of nature around them. Select a site where your group is likely to hear a variety of nature sounds, such as a meadow, forest or marsh.

Set Up & Props: Index card and pencil for each person

Source: Adapted from *Sharing Nature®: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages* by Joseph Cornell .

Activity

1. **Explain Listening Place:** Explain that each person is to find a special listening spot and settle down with a pencil and index card. Define boundaries for how far they can go (stay within sight).

2. **Explain Making Sound Marks:** Explain that the participants are to mark an X in the center of their cards to reflect where they are sitting. When they hear a sound, they should make a mark on the card to symbolize the sound (e.g., wavy lines for wind, a musical note or picture for a bird). The placement of the mark should indicate roughly the direction and distance of the sound. Demonstrate this while you are explaining in relation to the sounds heard at that moment.



3. **Go to Listening Posts:** Participants find their spots within site and nearby. Have everyone listen for 5 minutes.

3. **Share Sound Maps:** Afterwards, have everyone gather to share their sound maps

Nature's Symphony

Synopsis: Everyone sneaks into the back row of a natural concert hall and listens in silence for several minutes to the symphony of sounds.

Set-up (there are no props!): The only trick is to find the right place to do it. It is nicest to pick the side of a hill so that it feels a bit like the upper rows of a concert hall with the stage down below. When you are scouting, listen for the types of sounds—you want to pick a spot that minimizes human sounds and maximizes nature sounds. It is great to be near water.

Activity

1. **Lead in...** Just a touch before the previous activity is winding down, interrupt and wonder about the time, and ask someone who has a watch for it. Be shocked how late it is, point out that you had arranged a concert for ten minutes before whatever the time is at this incredible concert hall. Explain that the concert will give you the opportunity to meet a number of the inhabitants around here that you do not usually get to see, but everyone has to work on their listening skills to take

advantage of this chance. Quickly explain that the group will obviously be late, but that if they are quick and quiet, you think they can still sneak in the back rows.

2. Move to Concert Hall: Adopt a hushed urgent tone (this is critical to the magic) and lead the way single file to your pre-selected concert hall. You want the distance from the end of the last activity into the concert hall to be short but significant, maybe 10-15 metres, but it depends on the lay of the land. You want it long enough to give people the chance to make a transition to the new activity in hushed tones, but you don't want to give them time to think or talk.

3. Seat Group in Hall: Stand at the entrance to the hall and point/usher the participants to the seats. Make sure they are all huddled together in a group, just about touching each other, all facing the stage. After they are seated, sit yourself on the end of the first row.

4. Focus Group on Listening: Point out that you all seem to be just in time, thank them for being quick and quiet. Ask them to hit their ears to get the "cow webs" out. Point out that this is very subtle but beautiful music and they will have to listen intently. They could picture their ears growing like elephant ears. Ask them to try to avoid naming the sounds, but rather ask them to listen to the pure sound and represent it as a tone in their minds if they need to.

5. Dim Lights, Start Concert: Point out that when the concert starts, the lights will be dimmed—they need to shut their eyes. Point out the concert will be several minutes long. Then start the silence (if you can talk and also listen to the woods at the same time, it is neat if you can listen for a proper time to start (maybe the wind is picking up)).

6. Create Ending: Listen for around 4-5 minutes though the length depends on the group. It is helpful to quit a bit after you get your first inclination to quit but it is up to you. End the silence by commenting on how beautiful the concert was and start a round of applause.

7. Sharing of What Was Heard: Ask people what sounds they heard and what was neat. Share some of what you heard. Discuss.





Connection Activities

These activities are used to re-connect young people to nature in an informal and playful way. An earthwalk is about bringing nature to life. Kids (and youth and adults) have come to the point these days where many are unfamiliar and uncomfortable in the forests. They do not know how to explore and discover and they “stay on the trail”, which becomes “boring.” Earthwalk activities introduce the natural world with props, but one can shift over time from introductory leader based activities to more unstructured play and connection opportunities. Kids are quick to use their senses to discover without the props once their senses are reawakened.

Even though these connection activities are more informal and exploratory, there still is a need to deliberately plan and know what one hopes to accomplish and how to present it.

Nature Scavenger Hunt

Have participants work in pairs to find the items. Make sure there are clear boundaries. Make it a challenge. Point out that the caterpillar challenge is the first level and if they can do that they can try for the Butterfly Challenge.

Can you do the...	
	
...the Caterpillar Challenge?	...the Butterfly Challenge?
<input type="checkbox"/> green spots on a rock	<input type="checkbox"/> neat mushroom
<input type="checkbox"/> mossy stump	<input type="checkbox"/> beautiful flower
<input type="checkbox"/> a huge leaf	<input type="checkbox"/> white bark on a tree
<input type="checkbox"/> a spring bud	<input type="checkbox"/> worm
<input type="checkbox"/> something that feels slimy	<input type="checkbox"/> a funny seed
<input type="checkbox"/> spider	<input type="checkbox"/> white fungus
<input type="checkbox"/> a bird singing	<input type="checkbox"/> a little Y stick
<input type="checkbox"/> a swamp smell	<input type="checkbox"/> tree sap
<input type="checkbox"/> ant	<input type="checkbox"/> a neat animal hole
<input type="checkbox"/> something soft to touch	<input type="checkbox"/> giant bump on a tree
<input type="checkbox"/> a smooth round rock	<input type="checkbox"/> animal poop
<input type="checkbox"/> something with prickles	<input type="checkbox"/> woodpecker holes

Something Special (Collections)

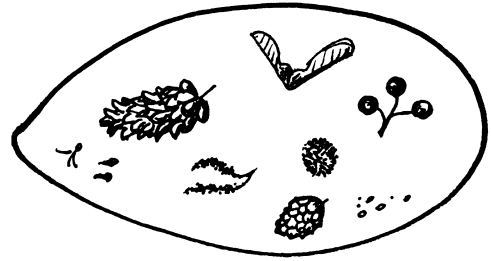
Synopsis: Everybody loves to find neat things in nature. This activity simply takes this idea to the next level. Specific steps are outlined below but of course this can also be done very informally with a couple of kids on a walk.

Props: Bring a plain coloured sheet or tarp for the trading.

Activity

1. Challenge of a “Something Special” Collection:

Circle up group and ask them if anyone collects things (i.e., coins, bottle caps, marbles etc.). So I am challenging each of you to create a “Something Special” collection of ten natural objects and then we will have a trading party over here to share what we discovered and trade things if we choose.



2. Decide on Type of Collection and Provide Demo:

Some folks choose to collect only one type of thing, like a leaf collection, or a seed collection, or maybe a rock collection. Others simply go for a range of cool objects. So I might start with leaves [demo finding several cool ones], then I could decide to stick with leaves, or maybe I would add various kinds of pebbles into the collection. Whatever you do, never hurt living things in making a collection. If you find something neat that is alive, show it to someone else where it is rather than ripping it out.

4. Participants Gather Collections: Have individuals gather a collection. They can either hold the things in their pockets or hands, or bring things back to a personal spot.

5. Conduct the Trading Party: Open up a white table cloth on the ground and have everyone bring their collections over and share them, and trade as they see fit.

6. Return Collections: At the end of the trading party, encourage them to return most things to the forest and only take home one or two things. Otherwise other people do not get to discover them in the forest and everyone ends up with these enormous collections of things at home that lose their specialness. So return most all of your items to places where others might notice them and keep the most special item if you want.

Gnome Shelters

Synopsis: This is a natural play activity (building forts or shelters) pitched in a more formal way involving gnomes and with a strong emphasis on not destroying living things. It can be done with 20 kids or 2 on their own. Make sure the activity is no trace at the end unless this is your private backyard. For props, you could bring a saw for dead wood but it is not necessary.

Activity

1. Introduction: So gnomes love art, and they love wondering about the forests on long explorations checking out everything around them and watching over the gardens. They can go for days if they get the time, they collect roots and nuts, and sleep wherever they can find a good spot. But finding and building a warm and snug natural shelter is not easy. Let’s see how well you can do. Let’s walk up the trail a bit and see if I can find a good spot to create a gnome shelter that would suit you if you are out wandering like a gnome.

2. Find Locale and Explain & Demonstrate Shelter

Building: Here is a big rock that would work. So the trick here to give us a bit of protection would be to gather some dead sticks and brace them against the rock (or log or tree) in a line. Make it big enough so you all can fit in and then cover the side of sticks with leaves.



3. Do Oath— Be Creative, Not Destructive: Of course you can do your own design as you see fit. But the critical rule is that you can not use any live plants for your shelter. Gnomes do not hurt other living things. I need you to pledge together by repeating after me... “I will not use any living plants or branches in my shelter.” You can pick a partner and work together to build your gnome shelter in this area (set boundaries)

4. Shelter Building: Monitor, encourage and support the shelter building as the pairs need it.

5. Shelter Tour: When pairs are done, due a tour of the shelters and have each pair explain what they did and why briefly.

6. Make Them No Trace Shelters: Explain that gnomes use a shelter for a night but move on and that when they leave, they return the area to exactly as it was so that no one can see where the shelter was. If each gnome made shelters and left them, the forest would be cluttered with them and it would be an eyesore. The reason you never knew about gnome shelters is because they are so good at leaving no trace of them. So... everyone carefully return everything to where it was so there is no evidence of there having been a shelter in your spot.

7. No Trace Inspection Tour: Have the group walk past each shelter site when it has been removed and inspect it to see that it is really not trace.

Treasure Find Game

Synopsis: A simple scavenger hunt pitched as a game with no props.

Activity

1. Explain Rules in a Circle:

- Take 5 steps back and create a new circle with me in the middle.
- Put you're an object at your feet to mark a spot.
- The person in the middle has to come up with a Treasure Challenge for everyone such as “Can you find... a cool leaf. Then everyone must find a cool leaf on the ground before they can move into someone else’s spot. The person in the middle does the same thing. The last person to find a leaf will end up in the middle because there will not be any spots left.
- Then the person in the middle must come up with another “Can you find a... something else and we start a new round
- You cannot pick things that are alive.



2. Review Key Rules:

- Person in the middle can challenge someone and take their place if they don’t have the thing in their hand, or if the thing in their hand was alive and picked.
- Keep your elbows down and watch out not to bump into others.
- You can not move into the spot right next to you. You must move across the circle.
- You can do things like a soft touch, or something bumpy, not just naming things like a pebble or cone.

3. Start Game & Play Rounds: Start the game with a sense challenge such as “a soft touch.”

- 4. Leader Ends Up in the Centre for the Last Round** and Does “Can You Find...” Make your “Can you find... something that does not belong in nature and then pack it out as a way to pick up litter.

Unnature Trail

Synopsis: This game challenges participants to look closely at their surroundings, distinguishing human-made objects from a natural setting. Again, this is the formal version but it can be done much more informally.

Set Up and Props: Look for a trail going through an area with trees of various sizes, leaf litter, rotting logs and other plants. Mark the beginning and end of a 20- to 30-meter section of the trail (make sure it is wide enough for two people to pass). Ahead of time, secretly place 16 to 20 human-made objects along one side of the trail. Some of these should stand out (e.g., brightly colored balloons or fluorescent pink cockroaches). Others should blend with surroundings (e.g., rubber bands or clothespins). Keep the number of objects you have planted a secret.

Props: Human-made objects

Source: Adapted from *Sharing Nature®: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages* by Joseph Cornell .

Activity

1. Trail Walk: Have the kids walk the trail one at a time, trying to spot as many objects as they can. They are to remain quiet and not pick up the objects or point them out to others. Have them whisper in your ear how many objects they saw.

2. Repeat Trail Walk: Tell each child the total number of objects, and have each walk the trail again, trying to find more. Total “looking” time can range from 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the age and attention span.

3. Group Object Collection: After two rounds, go to one end of the trail and have the participants tell you where the objects are, picking them all up as you go. Discuss how camouflage and coloration helps animals hide in the woods. They can then go on a search for small camouflaged animals (insects, spiders, etc.) if they choose.

Solitude & Reflection

Magic Spots

Synopsis: Participants sit alone in nature and take in what is around them with all of their senses. This provides time for peacefulness and reflection. Of all the activities in nature, this is most frequently the most powerful. Few people ever do it and yet the rewards are enormous. However, to be successful, it needs to be introduced very carefully and very well in a way that suits the age and inclinations of the participants. For example, they can be called “vision spots” or “solo spots” with youth.

Set Up and Props: The area must be pre-scouted (see below). There are options to include journals, drawing materials, bird seed, a drink and/or a snack.



Activity

1. Define Magic Spots: “A magic spot is your own special spot right near here in the forest. Each of you has one, it is your spot where you can quietly enjoy all of the plants and animals around you.”

2. Tell a couple "what can happen stories" (use your own if you want):

- I was sitting under a tree on a tiny island in the middle of a lake and a warbler sat next to my shoulder. [Embellish details.]
- One time I was so quiet in my magic spot that a deer came into the clearing right near me!
- This all isn't quite as amazing as it seems and in many ways it makes a lot of sense. Usually we make a lot of noise when we move through the forest, what do you think the animals do [they hide, get scared]? When we stop in the woods for several minutes they continue along their normal paths. It's amazing what you can see.

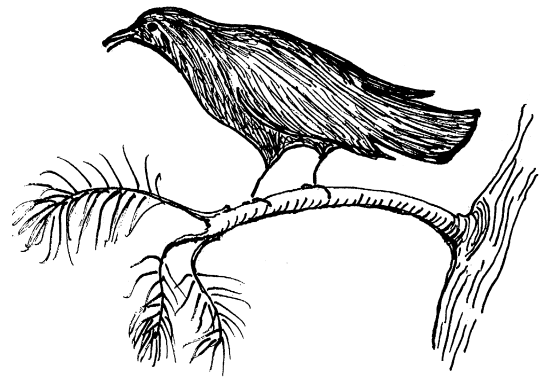
3. Setting neat expectations: “Of course you shouldn't expect to see something so exotic, but if you use all of your awareness skills using your senses and exploring your spot you will surely see some neat things, a tiny mushroom garden, a squirrel in the trees, the symphony of the wind sounds. All kinds of things can happen if you are alert.”

4. Picking your spot: “After we put down the veil of silence [I'll explain that in a minute] we will walk in single file to our Magic Spot area, which is just ahead. One by one I will motion you to move off the trail and find your spot in that place, while the rest of us move on.

How do you pick your special spot? Don't just sit down anywhere. Look around the place where I leave you and find the specific spot which is special, the spot which calls out to you and says, ‘Hey, you, come over here, I'm a neat spot.’ Maybe it is a neat big tree with a carpet of moss below it. Maybe it is a giant old stump with all kinds of things growing on it, etc. Pick your spot carefully because once you pick it, it will be your spot here. Remember, your spot is a place for you, so if you can see someone else from your spot, you are too close together.”

5. Things to do/expectations for spending time in your spots: “Once you pick your spot you should sit down comfortably [that doesn't mean lie down and fall asleep]. Be alert, use all of your skills to get to know your spot— look, listen, touch, and smell. There are two very important rules:

1. You are never to leave your spot, Magic Spots is your own personal time to be in nature on your own, there are lots of other times to be with people.
2. Whatever you do in your spot, you are to be quiet. If you talk or make noise you will scare the animals away who might otherwise come up to you. Also you will disturb other people who are enjoying their spots."



6. Hand out Drawing Materials (optional): "Another thing that you can do in your spot is draw or write [pull out writing materials/journals and markers]. Each of you gets your own special journal that you put your name in. This is like your own special journal, you can write things in it— a letter or a poem. You will spending about 15 minutes in your spots today so you should have a good time to get to know your spot and draw or write. Are there any questions?"

7. Explain Drinks, Snack & Birdseed (optional): "One other thing that helps you focus in magic spots is a special drink and a treat. Today I have small cup of ____ and an oatcake. I will pour a cup for you as I drop you off at your spot. Take it with you to your spot and sip it very slowly as you enjoy your spot. Try to see how long it will last. Remind yourself to look around you every time you take a sip."

"In addition, since we are feeding ourselves, I also will hand you a bit of birdseed as a way to feed the chickadees and show your respect for other creatures. You can place the seed near your spot and something will find it. If you go pssh, pssh, pssh and are real quiet and perfectly still, you may be able to call chickadees over to you."

8. Veil of Silence Ritual: "Now there is a special ritual that we use before Magic Spots which communicates how special this time is. We call it the *Veil of Silence*. Does anyone know what a veil is? It is a cover, a veil of silence is a cover for all the everyday talking and noise, it tells us it is a special time. Here is how it works [form a standing circle]. The invisible veil is on the ground covering the inner part of our circle. [As you demonstrate putting the veil over your head, go silent but mouth words, and then speak out loud when you remove it from over your head.] In a minute we will all reach down, pick it up over our heads (demonstrate) and then all together we will bring down the veil over all of our noise. From that moment on we will be perfectly quiet until after I pick you up and we return here and raise the veil of silence. That is the magic of magic spots."



9. Review guidelines: "Walk in single file after veil ritual, I will designate each area, you carefully pick spot as rest of the group moves on. The group will come back in about 20 minutes to pick you up. We go back in single file in silence until we raise the veil. Remember, always stay at your spot and get to know it real well. It is a special time. Any final questions?"

10. Do veil, place people in spots: Know your Magic Spot area before hand and roughly where you are going to drop kids off. Its good to have your spot be somewhat central so that you are somewhat close to all kids (put kids in a circular array with you in middle, or if you are using a linear trail, leave a middle spot open, drop the kids, and then return to this spot). Put the kid(s) with short attention spans near you. Use your discretion about how far a kid can go to get a special spot from the point you drop them off, in general keep them within about 10 meters of drop off. Adjacent kids should be dropped off far enough apart so they can not see each other but not too far apart. You want to be able to reach all of them easily if need be.

11. Pick Your spot/Monitor for problems.

12. Do pick up, walk single file, and raise veil in the original spot in a circle. You may want to leave them in their spots a little shorter on a first day depending on the age and group (10 minutes). It is nice by the end of a few days to have them up to 20-25 minutes. Use discretion.

13. Close with a sharing circle: Give participants an opportunity to share their experiences. Share your own discoveries. Often this results in wonderful sharing and discussion.

Magic Spot Leadership Logistics and Alternative Formats

- *Importance of Pre-Scouting Area:* You need to know where you can place people to maximize the power and beauty of the experience.
- *Drop Offs:* An alternative spot selection process is to have everyone move off a certain distance from the centre of the circle. For smaller kids it can be a distinct number of steps and they need to be in sight by their own tree. For adults it can be free form as long as they can be in hearing distance of a crow call.
- *Repeated Visits:* There is immense value and power in repeated visits to the same spot. It is amazing to revisit the same spot at different times of day or over weeks as the season changes.
- *Troubleshooting Kids:* Expect to have kids who are fearful or cannot sit still and be quiet. Be prepared for who may struggle before you start, be near them, and make specific arrangements with them. Some benefit from building small stick forts on the ground.
- *Helping a Group Settle:* It sometimes helps to play a quiet concentration game as a group in the forest first to get into the right frame of mind for magic spots. Try playing camouflage (see games in the manual) or some other quiet group game.
- *Assessing Expectations for Group:* If you feel a group will be unable to respect the veil of silence then you may not use it— but don't underestimate what they will do if you lead it well.

No Trace Fire

Synopsis: This is a special fun way to gather and share in the forest that brings a sense of magic to the sharing. Make sure it is no trace.

Set Up and Props: aluminum pan, matches, fire started, small bunch of wood, small marshmallow sticks and marshmallows (or other fire snack).



Activity

1. No Trace Fire: Set the fire and then when the time is right during the discussion, bring out small marshmallow sticks and have them roast a marshmallow.

Intro Games

There are lots of possibilities but here are some simple ones with no props.

Everyone is It: Set clear small boundaries for group. Everyone can tag everyone else. If you are tagged you must couch down and count to 3 before getting up and tagging someone again.

Turtle Tag: Everyone is a turtle except for a few dogs (who are the hunters). The dogs are hunting turtles and when they tag one, they turn it over. In other words the turtle must get down on the ground on its back with its legs in the air. It stays like that until another moving turtle comes by and tags it (sets it upright). Then the turtle on the ground can get up and run around until he or she is tagged again.



Squirrel in a Tree: A tree consists of two kids with their arms hooked together. There is a squirrel and one fox (at least to start). The fox must tag the squirrel. The squirrel can either out run the fox or join a tree (hook their arms into one of the two kids forming a tree). If the squirrel joins a tree, since only two kids can make up a tree, the third kid in the tree becomes the squirrel and is now chased by the fox. Start with one or two squirrels and a fox. You can add more foxes and squirrels later but it gets more confusing.

Animals: Everyone forms in a circle and the leader points to one kid and calls out an animal (elephant, monkey, or lobster, or other variation). The two kids on each side of the designated kid must then work with that kid to create the motions for the proper animal. These motions are explained and demonstrated before you start the game.

Elephant= The child on each side makes an imaginary elephant ear on each side of the child in the middle who does the trunk with his/her arms hanging.

Lobster= The child on each side makes an imaginary claw with two arms on each side of the child in the middle who does the antennae with both arms up and wiggling.

Monkey= The child on each side picks imaginary fleas out the child in the middle who crouches with his/her arms hanging and hops around.

Nature Games

Camouflage: One person is the mouse and it is the job of all the other coyotes to hide and camouflage themselves as close as possible to the mouse without being seen— so they can pounce on the mouse. The winner at the end is the coyote who is closest to the mouse without being seen.



- Choose the mouse and designate the mouse's spot. The mouse must stay in exactly the same spot throughout the game.
- The mouse shuts his or her eyes and counts to 20 so the coyotes can hide. The mouse then opens his or her eyes and tries to spot as many coyotes as possible in a brief period. If you are spotted, you are out of the round.
- If more than one person is not spotted, the mouse shuts his or her eyes again and everyone can move closer. The mouse opens his or her eyes again and this process is repeated until

there is a winner or everyone is found. The last coyote becomes the next mouse. The leader may want to be the mouse in the first round to demonstrate.

Bat & Bugs: The group forms a circle holding hands. There is one bat and one or two bugs (start small and add bugs in later rounds) selected to be inside the circle. The bat is blindfolded because they do not see. They use sonar. So whenever the bat "beeps", the bugs have to "beep" back. The bat then uses this sound information to try and tag the bug. The small circle of people holding hands forms the boundaries for the activity.

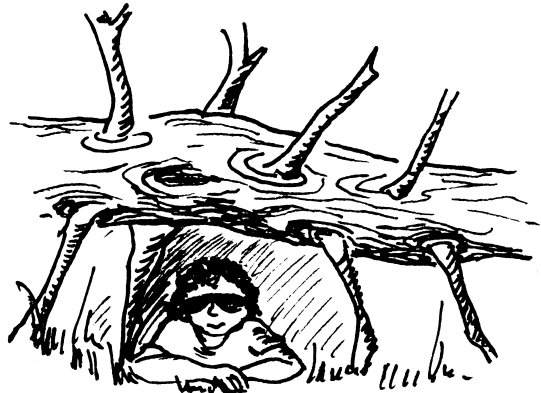
Predator Tag

Synopsis: This is an active and fun tag game involving predators in a food chain.

Set Up & Props: There may be risk issues with kids going to far and getting lost. Make sure there are clear boundaries and they understand the importance of staying within them. Second, make sure they are playing in an area without lots of things to trip over. A grassy area with just a few places to hide is fine. Use adults to play while they are supervising safety. For props, you need lots of tails for the rabbits and the foxes (pieces of the same color cloth work well).

Activity

1. Explain clover & rabbit roles: "Here's how it works, in this game we have sun-munchers (the clover), plant munchers (the rabbits), and animal munchers (the foxes). The clover go out first while the rabbits and foxes hide their eyes. The idea for the clover is to hide so they don't get found and munched by the rabbits. The rabbits are then sent out and have to tag the clover to munch them. Remember plants can't move! If the rabbit finds and tags a clover, what happens to the sunlight energy in the clover... Yes it goes to the rabbit and the clover turns into a rabbit. Now I will give the rabbits extra tails so when they find a clover they give the clover a rabbit tail and then you have 2 rabbits. And they both then go off looking for more clover to munch."



2. Explain fox role: "A couple of minutes later I will send out the foxes. They have to tag a rabbit to munch it but of course the rabbits can run. If the fox tags a rabbit, what happens to the sunlight energy in the rabbit?... Yes, it goes to the fox and the rabbit becomes a fox. So the fox gives the rabbit a fox tail. Now you have two foxes looking for more rabbits."

3. Clarify game objective: "Now the object of the game is for your type of plant or animal to have the largest number of creatures left at the end of the round. So we will start out with more clovers and if they hide real well, they will win. But if the rabbits find a lot of clover and don't get caught by the foxes, they will win. The foxes have to catch a lot of rabbits to win. Now if you are a rabbit or a fox and you go through a whole round without eating, you starve to death. If you die you come back in the next round as a clover. We will start with 9 clover, 4 rabbits, and 2 foxes (adjust the numbers for your group but this is roughly the proper proportion)."

4. Explain boundaries and return signal: Be firm and directive in setting boundaries and noting that clover can't ever move. The return signal can be "round over" which everyone shouts when they hear it, returning to the start immediately.

5. Assign Creature Roles: Do this last so the participants don't run away.

6. Play 1 round and review results: Keep the round short. Call them back in and group them by type of creature. Rebalance roles if need be.

7. Play round #2 and review results: Call them back in and group them by type of creature.

8. Intro human role and play round 3: Explain that at the end of round #3 that you will send out a human (choose a person with a loud voice) and they have a gun so that they can eat any animal, or pick a clover. They only have to see the creature, point to it, and call out the name to kill the creature. Then the creature becomes a human and they can go after anyone. End the round when most participants are humans. An alternative to using the pointing motion is to give the human some bullets (soft foam balls) that they throw at the animals as an alternative way to “shoot” them. This means there are not more humans created and those shot return to the centre and are out of the round.

9. Debrief Activity: Make the point that higher level predators would not be able to survive unless the creatures below them to survive.



Valuable Resources

- *Earth Adventures: 24 Trails for Fun and Discovery, 3rd Edition*, by Alan Warner, Janet Barlow & George Taylor, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010. Purchase on line at: www.earthed.ns.ca or at Woozles Bookstore in Halifax. This book is loaded with a wide range of simple activities and ideas for introducing children to nature. It is presented in relation to specific programs in specific places in the Halifax Region, but it is easy to borrow and utilize the activities anywhere. It also provides 24 storyline program ideas, many of which can be used elsewhere.
- *Hike Nova Scotia*: The Hike NS website offers news, events and resources including activities on the trail for children and youth (www.hikenovascotia.ca/projects/hiking-youth-families/).
- *Earth Education...A New Beginning*, by Steve Van Matre, Institute for Earth Education, Greenville, West Virginia, 1990. Purchase on-line. This book describes the theory and concepts of “earth education”. This approach serves as a foundation to the material in the Re-Connecting with Nature workshop and the book thoroughly describes the rationale in depth.
- *Sharing Nature: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages* by Joseph Cornell, Sharing Nature, 2015. Purchase on-line at www.sharingnature.com. This book defines the Sharing Nature framework and combines the previous classic Sharing Nature with Children and Sharing the Joy of Nature to make a treasury of Joseph Cornell’s best-loved nature games for children and adults.
- *Green Teacher Magazine & books*, greenteacher.com. This is the oldest and best hands-on periodical for environmental education—and its even published in Canada! It is available electronically or in print. It comes out four times a year and is filled with ideas and resources. Most of all, its a great lift to see all the neat things that are happening now across the country and the world. It reviews new resources coming out each year. Green Teacher also has a number of books that are compilations of the best articles and activities over the years for specific topics or age groups.
- *Wanderstream*, www.recreationns.ns.ca. This website, with a planned launch in the summer of 2015 (visit the Recreation Nova Scotia website for further details) is a compendium of outdoor activity locales, trail locales and leadership training opportunities in Nova Scotia. It is open sourced and will be a place where organizations and individuals can post locales and knowledge.
- *Child and Nature Alliance (Canadian)*, <http://www.childnature.ca> and the *Child and Nature Network (American)*, www.childrenandnature.org are excellent resources with lots of links to related material.
- *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, by Richard Louv, Algonquin Books, 2008. Available on-line and in most thoughtful bookstores. This book is foundational in laying out the case for the importance of re-connecting children with nature.
- *EECOM—The Canadian Environmental Education Network*, eecom.org. This is Canada’s network of environmental educators which has a newsletter, hosts annual conferences, leadership clinics and learning opportunities. It is a place to connect with others.

Magnifying Lenses: Tri-Magnifiers, or Triple Lens magnifying lenses are the best by far for using with kids in nature. They have always been findable with sophisticated googling on-line through science education companies, but these companies tend to come and go. They are typically under \$5 a piece but it varies. As of summer 2015, they are available at American Scientific: http://american-scientific.com/MAGNIFIER_TRIPLE_LENS_2X_6X_8X_CLEAR_PLASTIC

Activities to Use with Children and Youth

Hiking with Children by Kendrith Bentley

Sharing Nature with Children and *Sharing Nature with Children II* books both by Joseph Cornell

Teaching Green: the Elementary Years (as well as the Middle Years and the High School Years) by Green Teacher Magazine

Woods Walk by Henry W. Art and Michael W. Robbins

Nature Education Approaches

Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education by David Sobel

Earth Education... A New Beginning by Steve Van Matre

Medicine Walk: Reconnecting to Mother Earth by Laurie Lacey

Place-based Education by David Sobel

The Sense of Wonder by Rachel Carson (with Photographs by Nick Kelsh)

Identifying Plants and Animals

Animal Signatures by Edward Claridge and Betty Ann Milligan

Animal Tracks of Atlantic Canada by Ian Sheldon and Tamara Eder

Species at Risk in Nova Scotia: Identification & Information Guide (Mersey River Research Institute (MTRI), book or online at www.speciesatrisk.ca)

Trees of Knowledge: A Handbook of Maritime Trees by Geoffrey Ritchie
Wildlife of Nova Scotia by Julie Towers

Hiking: Where to Go

Hiking Trails of Nova Scotia (several editions) by Michael Haynes

Trails of Halifax Regional Municipality by Michael Haynes

Trails Nova Scotia, www.trails.gov.ns.ca

Other Relevant Web sites

Earth Education in Nova Scotia, www.earthed.ns.ca

Ecology Action Centre, www.ecologyaction.ca

Leave No Trace Canada, www.leavenotrace.ca

Nova Scotia Department of Environment, Protected Areas, www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Education Centre Online programs, www.gov.ns.ca/natr/Education/NREC/

Nova Scotia Environmental Network, www.nsen.ca

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, museum.novascotia.ca

Recreation Nova Scotia, www.recreationns.ns.ca

Sense of Wonder Environmental Education, www.senseofwonderee.ca

Atlantic Canada Geocaching Association, www.atlanticgeocaching.com

Orienteering Society of Nova Scotia, orienteeringns.ca