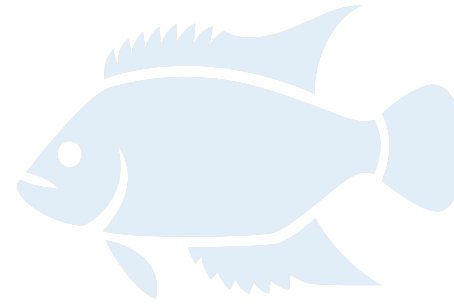




CONSERVATION
NATION 

Nature Learning Ideas & Resources

CONSERVATION NATION



April 2024

Dear Educators,

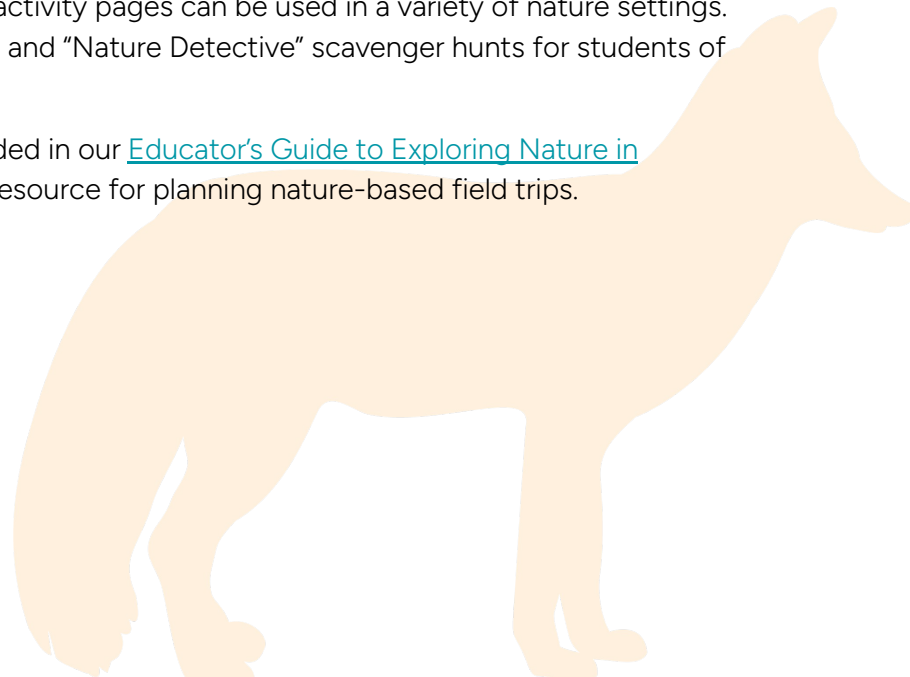
At Conservation Nation, we are working to save wild animals, their habitats, and our planet by building a more inclusive conservation movement. Traditionally, the path to a wildlife conservation career has been one of privilege and exclusion, and we want to change that. By investing in future leaders through education, career development, and funding, we are creating opportunities to bring more voices and more solutions to the urgent biodiversity challenges facing our planet.

This guide includes outdoor activity ideas and links to nature learning websites and online apps to help you and your students get the most out of your nature learning experiences. Our printable nature journal & activity pages can be used in a variety of nature settings. These include reflection pages and “Nature Detective” scavenger hunts for students of all ages.

These resources are also included in our [Educator's Guide to Exploring Nature in Washington, DC](#), a wonderful resource for planning nature-based field trips.

Enjoy!

Diane Lill
Director of Education



The Conservation Nation Academy inspires teachers and their students to cultivate a sense of belonging in nature, explore a conservation mindset, and see themselves as conservation champions. We provide teachers with fun and hands-on lessons that feature interactions with counter-stereotypical role models from our network of Conservation Nation grantees, fellows, and partners. Our curriculum challenges stereotypes by highlighting relatable and authentic conservation champions from around the world who come from diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and communities that have long been underrepresented in conservation. You can [sign up here](#) or use the QR code to join our Conservation Nation Academy mailing list, receive information on how to access our lesson materials, and indicate your willingness to test new lessons as they are available and give us feedback.

Learn more about Conservation Nation at
www.conservationnation.org



Nature Learning Ideas & Resources

These pages include ideas for outdoor activities, recommendations for classroom learning resources and online Nature Apps.

Nature-Based Outdoor Activity Ideas for All Seasons and All Locations



Nature Discovery Activities

1. **Explore** with a Nature Detective scavenger hunt. See p47-50 to choose and print age-appropriate activity pages.
2. **Collect** different leaf shapes & sort them into piles.
3. **Count** how many different types of trees you can find.
4. **Look for animal clues** (homes, tracks & scat.)
5. **Look for different colors** in nature. List them.
6. **Look for different textures** in nature: rough, smooth, wet, dry, cool, warm, sticky, soft, prickly.
7. **Look for signs of humans.** How many different clues of humans in the landscape can you find?
8. **Find something in nature** you can make something useful with: Describe it! Draw it! Make it!



Nature Observation Activities

1. **Feel the Earth!** Breathe the air! Run in a field. Climb trees. Dig in the soil. Feel the wind. Smell the flowers. Dip your feet in the river. Splash in the rain or a puddle.
2. **Experience the seasons:**
 - Fall Experience: jump in the leaves
 - Winter Experience: feel the cold, play in the snow
 - Spring Experience: feel the rain, smell the flowers
 - Summer Experience: feel the sun and the heat
3. **Listen for nature sounds:** birds, woodpeckers, crickets, grasshoppers, frogs, animals foraging, flowing water, or raindrops. How many different sounds can you hear?
4. **Sniff it!** A flower, green grass, a clump of soil, pine needles, tree sap, wet leaves, fungus or moss. How many different smells can you find?
5. **Look Up!** What color is the sky? Is the sun shining? (But don't look directly at it.) Are there clouds in the sky? Are they white or grey? Can you see the moon, even in the day?
6. **Watch an animal closely:** how do they eat, drink, move, sleep, play, communicate?



Nature Art Ideas

1. **Leaf rubbings:** place a sheet of paper on top of a leaf and use the side of a crayon to rub all over the paper
2. **Draw different tree shapes** (especially good to do in winter when the leaves have fallen)
3. **Draw the same tree** in each of the four seasons.
4. **Pick up & make a collage of different nature objects** like leaves, pinecones, stones, or rocks. Arrange them into an animal shape with a head, body and legs (or another pattern) on the ground.
5. **Make your own paintbrush!** Use twigs, evergreen leaves, or flowers and some string to tie them together.



Nature Games

1. **Move!** Jump like a frog. Dig like a mole. Flutter like a butterfly. Flap like a bird. Slither like a snake. Swim like a fish.
2. **Animal Hide & Seek:** Select one person to be the predator and choose which animal they are (owl, fox, spider, toad, snake, bear, robin, hawk). The rest of the group chooses which prey they want to be (mosquito, mice, rabbit, moth, worm, fish, fly, squirrel). The predator counts to 10 while the prey find hiding spots. When the predator starts its hunt, the prey can run away. First prey caught becomes the next predator!

Adapted from *Backyard Explorer: On The Nature Trail*. 2018. Storey Publishing.

Nature Learning Resources & References

HOW TO PREPARE FOR OUTDOOR LESSONS

(adapted from [Outdoor Learning Training Manual](#) by Urban Adventure Squad)

WHAT TO BRING

1. Wear sturdy shoes, dress in layers, and anticipate cold, wet, and hot weather.
2. Bring a map or guide, first aid kit, bug spray, and sunscreen.
3. Bring snacks and water for longer hikes. Stay hydrated.

TIPS ON THE NATURE TRAIL

1. Stay on the trail to avoid poison ivy, snakes, and ticks.
2. Walk & talk quietly so you see more animals. But don't try to pet or feed them.
3. Take your time so you don't miss anything.
4. Use your senses to see, hear, smell, and touch.
5. Take only pictures and leave only footprints!

Classroom Resources

[Project Wild Professional Development Training Program](#): Teacher training workshops by DOEE on how to organize and lead outdoor nature experiences.

[NGSS-Aligned PreK-5 Environmental Literacy Guide](#): Outdoor activity ideas at school, in the neighborhood, or on off-site field trips by OSSE (Office of State Superintendent of Education). Suitable for PreK-Grade 5.

[Find Your Park](#): National Park Service website finds your closest national park based on your location and preferred activity type.

[National Junior Ranger Booklets](#): Downloadable National Park Service booklets on various topics including park exploration, stargazing, caving, fishing, archaeology, and paleontology. Students can earn Junior Park Ranger badges by completing and mailing booklet to NPS or showing them to a park ranger.

[City Nature Challenge](#): Annual 4-day challenge in April inspires people around the world to find and document wildlife in their cities using the iNaturalist App. This is a wonderful opportunity to engage students in a global nature event! Organized by the California Academy of Sciences.

Check link to [Washington DC Metro Area City Nature Challenge](#) event.

Useful Nature Apps



[Seek](#) by iNaturalist: Easy to use phone app which identifies animals, plants, and fungi based on photo uploads. Provides information on each species and how many other observations of that species have been made nearby. Users can earn virtual badges for observations. Cost: FREE. Suitable for ages 8+.



[iNaturalist](#): Widely used community-based app helps identify plant, animal, bird, and insect species through photo uploads. Project initiated by California Academy of Sciences & National Geographic Society. Cost: FREE. Recommended for age 13+.



[Merlin Bird ID](#) by Cornell Lab of Ornithology: This user-friendly phone app identifies birds around the world by answering simple questions or through photo uploads. Cost: FREE with email signup. Suitable for ages 8+.



[Creek Critters](#) by Nature Forward and the Izaak Walton League of America: This user-friendly phone app guides users on how to find and identify small organisms in freshwater streams through simple instructions and questions. Cost: FREE. Suitable for ages 4+.



[Picture This](#): User-friendly phone app identifies plants, trees & flowers based on photo uploads. Provides detailed descriptions, facts and related-stories. Related apps (Picture Birds, Insects & Fish) offer similar features. Cost: FREE one week trial, then \$29.99 annual. Suitable for ages 13+.



Nature Journal & Activity Pages

Teachers can use these printable activity pages to lead field trips at ANY nature destination.

Nature Journal Pages include a Nature Log for students to record general observations and Plant Exploration, Animal Exploration, and Forest & River Exploration pages to help students make detailed observations of specific plants, animals, forests, and water bodies.

Nature Detective Activity Pages include four scavenger hunts designed for different age groups.

Nature Log

DATE	LOCATION	WEATHER
What activities did you do?		
Describe the plants you saw.		
Describe the animals or signs of animals (like tracks, scat) you saw.		
If you've been here before, is anything different than last time?		
How did you feel at this nature place?		
What words would you use to describe this place to others?		
Name one thing you can do to keep this place healthy and beautiful.		

NOTES + DOODLES

Share something in nature
that you wondered about today:
write a poem, draw
a picture, tell a story!



See, Think, Wonder: Plant Exploration

Draw and label one plant you saw today. Be sure to show the plant's best feature!

I SEE (What do you see?)	I THINK (What important job does this plant do in nature?)	I WONDER (What questions do you have about this plant?)

Why did you pick this plant to draw? _____

Name one feature about this plant you think is interesting. _____

Does this plant look happy/sad, healthy/unhealthy? _____

Are any animals using this plant? What are they using it for? _____

If you can't see any animals using the plant, do you see any clues animals were there? _____



See, Think, Wonder: Animal Exploration

Watch an animal closely for 5-10 minutes. It can be any animal, from a tiny insect to an elephant!

Write your observations in the table below. These questions will help get you thinking:

1. What is this animal doing?
2. Is this animal alone or in a group?
3. How does this animal eat and drink?
4. How does this animal move?
5. How and where does this animal sleep? What position does it sleep in?
6. How does this animal play?
7. How does this animal communicate?

	I SEE	I THINK	I WONDER
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

DRAW THIS ANIMAL.

Include all its main parts
and be sure to
show its best feature!



Forest or River Exploration

NATURE NOTES:

What did you EXPECT to see in this nature experience? _____

What did you ACTUALLY see in this nature experience? _____

What sounds did you hear? _____

What smells did you smell? _____

What colors did you observe? _____

What special things you did you see? (plants, animals, something else?) _____

If you explored a river or creek, what did the water look like? _____

Did you see any fish in the water (Y/N)? ____ Would you like to swim in this water? ____ Bathe in this water? ____ Drink this water? ____ Why or why not? _____

Did you see signs of humans in this landscape? _____

Did you see any litter (Y/N)? ____ If yes, how do you think it got there? _____

What was your favorite part of this nature experience? _____



NATURE MAP

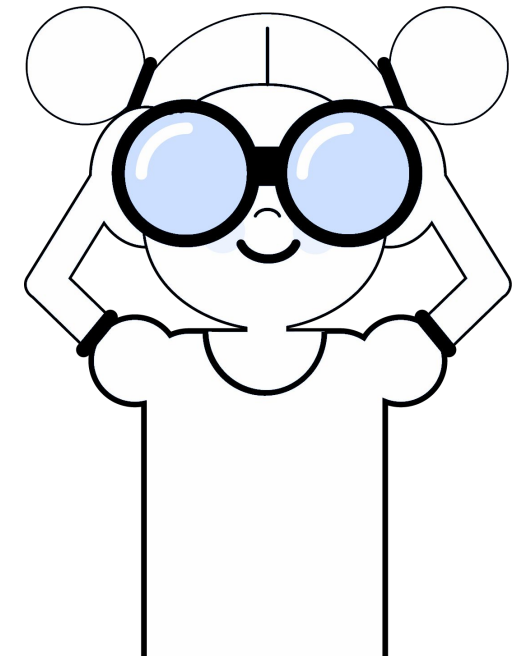
Draw a word or picture map of your forest walk or river experience. Show the important features you saw on the way: At the beginning? At the end? What you saw in between?



Sensory Scavenger Hunt (All Ages)*

Use your senses to discover nature outdoors. Draw or write what you find in each box.

something round	something smooth
something that flies	something prickly
something red	something that makes noise
something cold	something slimy
something warm	something that crawls

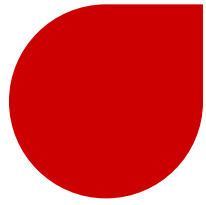


*Adapted from [Hike It Baby](#), 2023.

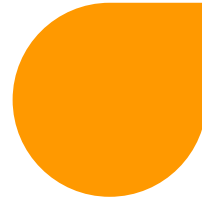


Rainbow Scavenger Hunt (PreK-Grade 1)

Find the colors of the rainbow in nature. Draw what you find in each box.



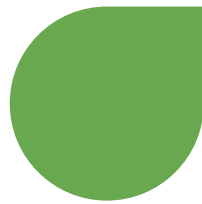
RED



ORANGE



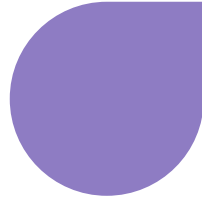
YELLOW



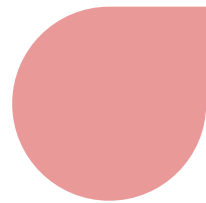
GREEN



BLUE



PURPLE



PINK


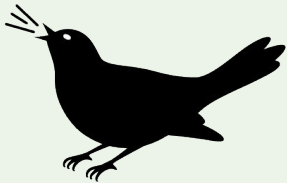


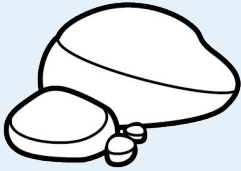
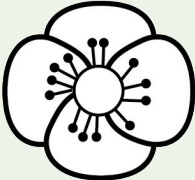
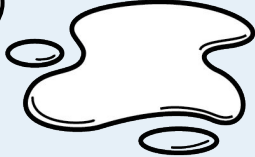







MULTI



Nature Detectives Scavenger Hunt (Grades 2-4)

Look for these animals, plants, and other parts of nature on your nature walk.

 <p>LEAF</p>	 <p>BIRD (OR BIRD SOUND)</p>	 <p>ANIMAL TRACKS (OR HOME)</p>
 <p>SLUG, SNAIL (OR WORM)</p>	 <p>SMOOTH ROCK</p>	 <p>FLOWER</p>
 <p>PUDDLE (OR FLOWING WATER)</p>	 <p>TALL TREE (OR TREE STUMP)</p>	 <p>BERRIES (OR SEEDS)</p>
 <p>MOTH (OR BUTTERFLY)</p>	 <p>CLOUDS</p>	 <p>PIECE OF LITTER (PUT IT IN THE TRASH OR RECYCLE BIN!)</p>



Nature Detectives Scavenger Hunt (Grades 5+)

Look for these animals, plants, and nature objects on your nature walk. Find as many nature objects as you can.

BONUS: If you get five in a row, you have a Bingo!

<input type="checkbox"/> <p>BIRD (OR BIRD CALL)</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>A BUG (OR SIGNS OF BUGS LIKE LEAF HOLES)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>PUDDLE (OR FLOWING WATER)</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>WIND THROUGH THE TREES</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>FALLEN TREE (OR TREE STUMP)</p> 
<input type="checkbox"/> <p>FLUFFY CLOUD</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>FLOWER</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>WOODPECKER HOLES</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>SOMETHING MADE OF WOOD</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>SOMETHING TO CLIMB</p> 
<input type="checkbox"/> <p>BRIDGE</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>TALL TREE</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>SUN THROUGH THE LEAVES</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>ANIMAL TRACKS</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>WILD CARD! (WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU FIND)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <p>PIECE OF LITTER (PUT IN THE TRASH OR RECYCLE BIN!)</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>A BIG LEAF</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>A SMOOTH ROCK</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>BERRIES</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>BUTTERFLY (OR MOTH)</p> 
<input type="checkbox"/> <p>SOFT FEATHER</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>MUSHROOM (OR LICHEN)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>SPIDER WEB</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>  <p>ACORN (OR NUT)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <p>ANIMAL HOME</p> 