



Nature Hike—Use Your Senses

Grade: K, 1st & 2nd

Setting: Any Natural Area

Theme (Bottom Line): You can use your senses to discover nature.

Description: Students use their senses to explore a Natural Area on a Nature Hike.

Recommended Time: 60 minutes

Recommended Group Size: 10-12 students

BIAS: Awareness

	Kindergarten	1 st	2 nd
Foss Kit	Trees	New Plants	Insects

State Standards: Life Science 2.2 Analyze the relationship between structure and function in living systems at a variety of organizational levels, and recognize living systems' dependence on natural selection. An organism is a living thing that has physical characteristics to help it survive.

Materials List: Whichever lesson you choose, you can use as many or few of the materials as you think appropriate for the hike.

- Paper, pencils, crayons
- Hand lenses
- Chirping bird toy
- A signaling device such as a whistle or duck call. The VN can decide what works best for them.
- Pocket Guide to Insects, Birds, etc.
- Bug nets and bug boxes
- Dip nets, trays and guide to macroinvertebrates

Getting Ready:

- Walk your route ahead of time so that you know the most interesting places to stop or not stop if you notice hazards! Refer to the Interesting Points List below. Be sure to think about how you can let the students explore independently and use their senses.
- Discuss routes with the other VN who will be doing a similar hike with a different group.

ENGAGE

- Ask the students what the difference is between a Natural Area and a Park. Be sure to discuss Trail Etiquette and how you would act differently in each place.
- Ask the students how many senses they have. Explore ways to use the different senses on a hike.
- Ask the students if they know what it means to be a good observer. Could play an observation game here (show children 10 items for 20 seconds, cover the items and have them recite what they can remember they saw).

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd
Explore	Smell of Trees/Plants Leaf Shapes/Sizes Texture of Bark Seasonal Cycles Trees as Habitat Compare Trees	New Plants Cycles of Plants Parts of Plants Seed Dispersal Different Plant Ecosystems Plant Adaptations	Insects Life Cycles Predators Habitats Benefits of Insects Dip Netting

CONCLUDE

- Compliment the students on the great observing they did and ask what is one thing they remember from their hike (their favorite moment using a sense). Reinforce utilizing your senses in nature. Ask them, “what is one thing about this Natural Area that you would like to show a friend or family member”.

NATURE HIKE POINTS OF INTEREST

Gateway Natural Area

- Look for spider egg sacs on the inside of the shelter roof in the fall.
- Trees near the shelter have boxelder bugs even when it's cold.
- Spider webs on the bridge have sometimes caught prey.
- After crossing the bridges, on the road toward Seaman's Reservoir, when the road turns left, there are numerous rocks on the right with incredible lichen displays. We used this with 1st graders, and when they returned as 2nd graders, it was one of the things they were most interested in.
- On the left side, just before you reach the Viewpoint/Black Powder trail on the right, there is a social trail on the left that leads to a bench (usually a good insect spotting place) and then down to the river. At the river, you can see the beaver dam on the right. This is also a good place to pick up rocks and look for invertebrates underneath.
- When you reach the bench, if you continue down the trail parallel to the river, there are lots of ladybugs on the small bushes in the spring.

Magpie Meander and McMurray Natural Area

- Lenticel trees (near the shelter, on the right-hand side of the sidewalk or next to the bridge between Magpie Meander and McMurray). Have the kids feel the bumps on the trees and explain that the lenticels are an adaptation that allows them to live where their roots might be under water for a while. (They help the tree exchange Carbon Dioxide for Oxygen).
- Trees on south side of the sidewalk from the shelter have parts of roots above ground to use with kindergarteners to review parts of a tree.
- The platform on the north side of Wood Duck pond is a good place to ask for observations. Many students notice the big hole in the bank near the overlook and like to guess what kind of animal made it. One lucky group saw a muskrat in the pond! Towards the west end of the pond, where there is vegetation and downed logs, frogs and turtles are frequently seen.
- Bridge from Magpie Meander to McMurray: Trees next to the bridge and just past the bridge frequently have ladybugs or insect eggs during the spring. Spiders and webs can sometimes be seen in the holes in the bridge. Also, a good place to stop and look at the variety of plant life that is next to the water, compared to in the field or the park.

- On the little hill before you get to the path that circles the ponds at McMurray is a good place to get an overview of the beaver den. Also, to listen and watch for birds. We have seen hawks and flickers here.
- Path circling the pond: go to the right for the beaver lodge, left for dip netting.
- Boat launch area: dip netting is usually at the boat launch area. Encourage kids to go to the right or left of the beach because they usually find more things where there is vegetation. To the left of the beach is a good example of a pointy tree stump from beaver activity compared to a flat stump cut down by a person.
- Just past the boat launch area, on the far side of the stepping stones over the wetland area, is a good place to pick up rocks on the water's edge and look for insects and larvae.
- On the way to the beaver's den, there are trees that have been painted with clay to keep the beavers from cutting them down. (Would you want to eat something that had sand or clay in it?)
- If you are starting your hike through the field, the second and third social paths on the right take you to a good viewing area of the pond. (The first one dead ends in an overgrown spot.) Deer are occasionally seen at the far end of the farmer's field.

Rolland Moore/Ross Natural Area

- Along the paved path, the first bridge has many interesting talking points...
 - There is a tree with lenticels on the left side of the bridge. Be careful of the little branches next to the bridge as they have sharp points. Have the kids feel the bumps on the trees and explain that these are lenticels, an adaptation that allows them to live where their roots might be underwater for a while.
 - Notice the watercress in the stream.
 - Would animals like this area? Why?
- On the right side of the path, there are several pine trees where you can see cones that have been munched on by squirrels.
- The 2nd bridge that is right before Ross, crosses an agricultural canal. How does this differ from the path over the creek? Would this be a good place for deer to get a drink? Some kids will notice the man-made structure that controls the water.
- With 1st graders, we explore the different types of tall grasses at Ross (a difference between a park and a Natural Area).
- On the path to the left, notice that the trees form a line. We will find water there.
- As the path turns right, look for social trails on the left. The first one is a dead end that takes you to a spot on the creek that has a lot of watercress in the spring. The 2nd or 3rd one will take you to a path along the river. (You will need to scout this ahead during the spring, as this area is often flooded.) With well-behaved 1st

and 2nd graders, you can follow this path until you find a place to jump the creek and get to the great climbing tree. Have the kids use their senses to tell you something they observe about the tree.

- If you choose to follow the regular path, there is a nice cattail area. One lucky group saw a fox there!
- There is a bridge on the path to the left just before the main multipurpose trail. It is a good place to spot ducks and animal tracks. Time permitting, you can use this to make a loop back to Rolland Moore.

GENERAL IDEAS FOR SENSORY ENGAGEMENT

- Have the kids stop walking to sit in a quiet spot and teach them about deer ears. Deer have large ears for funneling in sound and use this sense to detect predators. Have everyone be still for 1 minute while cupping their hands like “deer ears” around their ears. After the minute is up, they can discuss both the natural and unnatural sounds they heard. Remind them to close their eyes to pay close attention to their sense of hearing.
- Smell is also an important sense to many animals. Have kids wet the tip of their nose to enhance their sense of smell (like their dog’s nose is!). Pick a flower or other natural object they come across to breathe in deeply and enjoy their surroundings through smell!
- Kids won’t be tasting things in the wild (only their lunch), but you can have them brainstorm natural items that might have a delicious taste (wild strawberries, raspberries, etc.). Remind students that they should never pick and eat anything in nature without knowing exactly what it is as some things are poisonous!



naturally yours