



✓ CHECKLIST FOR LEADING

A PUBLIC FIELD TRIP

- Plan your theme.** This may require one or more reconnaissance trips to the natural area. Keep in mind your area of expertise, the target audience and the time of year.
- Check out the area before the trip.** Rehearse the field trip. Notice any seasonal happenings, how long it takes to walk to your destination and back, where are good stopping points, etc.
- Be prepared.** Pick up supplies ahead of time. Don't forget to wear your identifier (t-shirt, hat and name badge).
- Arrive early.** Many people need confirmation that they're in the right spot and the right time.
- Start and end on time.** Latecomers can catch up, and if you go over the allotted time no one is listening anyway.
- Let your audience know what to expect.** Groups need *brief* introductory remarks about the walk (how far, how much time, where it will finish, etc).
- Don't linger in the parking lot.** Make your brief remarks and then start the walk. Everyone will be anxious to get going.
- Make the first stop a short distance from the starting point.** Latecomers can catch up, but on-timers feel that they have started the field trip.
- Safety is paramount!** Caution your audience about any hazards (loose rocks, swift water, steep cliffs or drop offs, rattlesnakes).
- Always stay in the lead.** Remind children and their accompanying adults of this, and ask the adults to help. Assign an adult to bring up the rear if it is a children's outing.

- ❑ **Go past the point you want to interpret, and then stop.** This way you can tell the first person behind you to wait, and then double back to the middle of the group and talk to all of them. Take advantage of corners and switchbacks in the trail for this. Don't hesitate to ask people to stand in certain places.
- ❑ **Take advantage of the unexpected.** This always seems to happen! Don't let it throw you. Make it a "teachable moment" and enjoy the surprises along the way. Build flexibility into your outing to take advantage of the unexpected.
- ❑ **Speak loudly.** Many voices don't carry well outdoors so make an effort to project your voice. Remember that when you are not facing your audience they probably can't hear you. Try to make your speaking stops away from traffic or running water is involved.
- ❑ **Practice verbal descriptions.** Your audience will really appreciate a specific description of something or where to look.
- ❑ **Involve the group.** Don't forget to address the entire group even when only one person asks a question. Ask your audience questions and discuss things with them. This is as important as dispensing information.
- ❑ **Model appropriate behavior.** Your actions speak louder than words.
- ❑ **Keep the pace appropriate.** Don't stop in one place too long or rush through a stop.
- ❑ **"I don't know" is an appropriate response.** Refer people to the Natural Areas Program if you can't answer their questions, or they would like to request another program.
- ❑ **Conclude the program.** Review the highlights, reiterate the theme, make sure they fill out evaluations and thank them for coming.
- ❑ **Have fun!** Your volunteer service to this program should be challenging, rewarding and fun. If it's not, *please* let us know.

