

Sniff, Touch, Taste & Listen

Pre-Visit Activities



The activities included in your pre-visit packet have been designed to help you and your students prepare for your upcoming program at St. Joseph County Parks. The activities included in this packet have been designed to help your students focus on using their five senses to gain a more thorough understanding and appreciation of nature. By completing the enclosed activities prior to their visit, they will have a better understanding of the activities that they will participate in at the park. Of course, if you do not have time to do the activities prior to your park visit, they will also work as a review for what the students learned during the program.



Fox and Mouse Game

Adapted from: *The Kids Wildlife Book* by Warner Shedd



Overview: This activity demonstrates how a predator (animal that eats other animals) and prey (animal that is eaten by other animals) relationship exists. Both predator and prey need to rely on their hearing in order to survive.

Background: A fox is able to hear the rustle of a mouse in the grass. What great hearing! It sneaks along until it hears the mouse rustling in the grass. Then it turns its head from side to side, using its ears to figure out the exact location of its prey. The fox will stalk its prey and then pounce on it!

Materials Needed:

- blindfold

How to do the activity:

1. Choose one person to be the "fox."
2. The other players are mice and they form a circle around the fox that stands in the center blindfolded.
3. Choose one "mouse" to enter the circle, walk around the fox and return to the same spot in the circle.
4. All students call out "Fox, Fox where am I?"
5. The fox must point to the student who was the mouse.
6. If fox guesses correctly, then the mouse and fox trade places and the game continues with a new fox. If the fox guesses incorrectly, you can have the same student remain the fox or choose a new student to be the fox.

Let's use our sense of touch!



Bark and Leaf Rubbings



Overview: This activity will help students understand that not all tree bark and leaves are the same. By exploring the different textures of bark and leaves, students will begin to understand that you can use textures to learn how to tell trees and leaves apart, even if they are similar.

Background: The bark protects the tree from insects, diseases and injury. Feel the bark of a tree. Does it feel rough or smooth? Does the bark feel the same all over the tree? Feel the leaves. Do they feel rough on one side compared to the other? The bottom side of the leaf has veins. The veins help the leaves to get water so that they can grow.

Materials Needed:

- plain white notebook paper
- assorted colors of crayons with the paper peeled off
- any mature trees with healthy bark
- leaves collected from different kinds of trees

How to do Bark Rubbings:

1. Hold a piece of white notebook paper against the tree trunk at eye level.
2. Rub the flat length of the crayon across the paper.
3. Change the crayon color as often as you like.
4. As you rub, the pattern of the bark will appear on the paper.

How to do Leaf Rubbings:

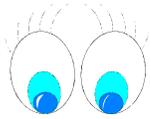
1. Place leaf on table with the vein side up.
2. Place the paper on top of the leaf.
3. Rub the flat length of the crayon over the leaf and paper.
4. Use different colors and different leaves.



Make a "Tree Rubbing Book"

Make 5-7 different bark and leaf rubbings.
Use a piece of construction paper for the front and back covers and staple together.
You now have a "tree rubbing book."
Put a title and your name on the front and decorate!

Let's use our sense of sight!



Sharp Eyes



Overview: The sense of sight helps us recognize each other and learn about color, motion and distance. This activity will help students understand how important sight is for us to see and enjoy nature and how certain bird species, like eagles and owls, depend upon it to hunt and catch their food.

Background: What are some things you can see in nature if you use sharp eyes to look very carefully? Using sharp eyes to look carefully can help us enjoy nature. Animals also need to use their eyes. Why do you think good eyesight is important for some animals? Birds of prey, such as hawks, owls, eagles and ospreys, have incredible eye sight. A hawk can spot a mouse a football field away!

Materials Needed:

- picture of a hawk



How to do the activity:

1. Have the students sit in a group on the floor.
2. Choose one student to stand in front of the group and tell them you will give them one minute to study and look at their classmate.
(A student doesn't have to be used for this part, a teacher's aid or you could do this part.)
 - Have them look at the student's clothing.
 - Look at how the student is standing.
 - Look at everything about how the student looks.
3. After a minute, take the student outside of the class and change 3 things about the way they look.
- For example: untie a shoelace, unbutton a shirt button, tell the student to stand differently.
4. Ask the students sitting in the group what has changed about the student standing in front of them.

Activity Extension:

If there is enough time after they have identified the three changes, have the students sit facing a partner. Have them study their partner for about a minute. Then ask the students to sit back-to-back with their partner and change one thing. Then have them sit facing their partner and observe what is different about each other. During this time, remind them that they need to look very carefully with their eyes to find the change that their partner has made. If time allows, repeat the activity with a new partner, encouraging careful observation.

Let's use our sense of taste!



Tastebud Treats



Overview: During this activity, students will explore different tastes that the tongue can sense. They will also learn that several animals in nature are responsible for providing many different kinds of food we like to eat.

Background: Children can learn to identify foods by taste with this activity and which animals assist in providing humans with delicious things to eat. For instance, bees pollinate more crops than any other insect. Without them, farmers would produce 1/3 less fruits and vegetables than they do today. Bees are responsible for pollinating apple, orange and pear trees and also cherries, blueberries and strawberries. Bees are also responsible for making honey. Fruit-eating bats can disperse thousands of seeds a night throughout the forest floor. There are more than 300 plant species that rely on the pollinating and seed dispersal services of bats. Some of these plants include bananas, mangoes, avocados and cashews.

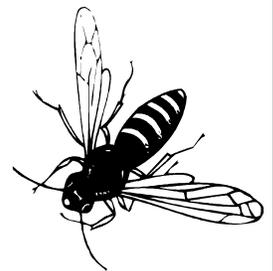
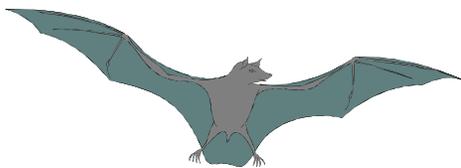
Materials Needed:

- pictures of bees and bats pollinating flowers
- samples of foods that bees and bats help to pollinate

Examples include: apples, blueberries, cashews, bananas, cherries, almonds

(You can also come up with your own kinds of foods that bees, bats and other animals help to produce.)

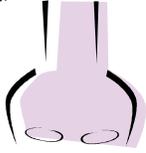
- plates and napkins
- glass of water for students to drink in between sampling foods



How to do the activity:

1. Show students the pictures of the bats and bees pollinating plants and talk about how some animals are useful to us for the kinds of foods they help produce.
2. Have them taste the foods these animals help provide us.
3. Record the words and phrases children use to describe the different tastes and use them to create an experience chart reflecting the tastes.

Let's use our sense of smell!



Flower Scented Craft



Overview: Students will learn that flowers smell differently and that some insects, like butterflies, are attracted to flowers because of their scent.

Background: A butterfly uses its antennae for smelling and it is highly attuned to odors. Butterflies can be very flower-specific, and will use their sense of smell to search out flowers that they will feed on or lay their eggs on.

Materials Needed:

- pictures of butterflies on flowers
- white construction paper for drawing garden on
- colored paper to trace flowers on
- scissors
- glue sticks
- crayons or markers
- pencils
- cotton balls
- aromatic oils or extracts

How to do the activity:

1. Using the flower patterns below, have the students trace and cut out one of the flowers on colored paper.
 2. Once the flower has been cut out, have the students, on white construction paper, draw a garden scene. Have them include the flower that they cut out in their garden picture.
 3. Once their garden has been completed, give them a cotton ball that has been misted with one of the aromatic oils or extracts and have them glue it to the center of the flower they cut out.
 4. Have the students draw a butterfly or cut out a picture of a butterfly from a magazine and glue it to the flower they cut out.
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