

Nature Fun

OBJECTIVES:

To increase awareness of our natural surroundings.
To explore our valuable natural resources.

GROUP SIZE:

6 to 8 children per adult volunteer.

TIME FRAME:

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between 30 and 60 minutes.

BACKGROUND:

Help children become better acquainted with the great outdoors! Give them an opportunity to get involved in hands-on nature experiences, making things from natural items, and playing games outside. Roll up your sleeves up and plan on having fun!



LIFE SKILL AREAS

Children will develop social skills through the group games and being members of a team. Decision making and critical thinking skills will be developed by doing hands on investigations. Large motor skills will be developed through group games. Small motor skills and eye-hand coordination will be developed by using pencils and crayons and manipulating small natural items.

HELPS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

Try these suggestions:

- Choose one or two of the following activities from each section.
- Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props, using costumes related to the activity, pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members, thinking about special seating arrangements, and playing background music.

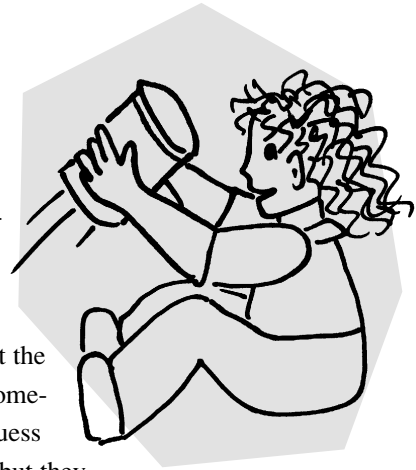
LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

I. GETTING STARTED

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "The Magic Can" (7 - 9 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: a coffee can with lid, and natural items such as a feather, pinecone, acorn, rock, leaf, stick, flower, seed, or other small natural object.



Before starting, "secretly" place one of the items in the can and put the lid on. Show the children the magic can. Tell them that there is something special from nature inside and that you would like them to guess what it is. Let them pass the can around. They can shake the can but they may not open it. Encourage the children to express their guesses in terms of their senses. For example, "It sounds like..." or "It feels heavy." Give hints to help the children discover what is in the can. After everyone has made a guess, open the can and remove the item. Praise all guesses (even if incorrect, respond with "I can see where you would think..."). Repeat with a different item. When all of the items have been identified, ask these questions:

- Were we right with all of our guesses?
- Why or why not?
- Did some of the items sound the same when we shook the can but were really very different?
- Can you think of other items from nature that would fit in the magic can?

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Nature Color Match" (5 - 7 minutes)

Grade Level: 1 - 3

Materials: paint color chips (available free at paint or hardware stores) in natural colors (greens, yellows, browns).

Note to Advisor: Since this activity takes place outdoors, do a safety check of the area before starting. Make sure there is no broken glass, poison ivy, or unsafe areas.

Talk about all the colors in nature. Point out natural items that are the same color, but different shades. Give each child a different color chip and ask them to find three natural items that match the colors on their chip. Caution them not to touch or pick any plants or flowers. After several minutes of exploring, gather the children together and have them share their discoveries. Then ask the following questions:

- Was it hard to find exact color matches?
- Did you find more than one kind of thing that was exactly the same color?
- Were you surprised at how many different shades of green and brown there are?

Application: Ask the children to look around their homes and at school. How many of nature's colors can they find? Look at clothing, books, and even paint on the walls.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Sounds of a Nature Hike" (10 - 12 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: none.

Explain that you are going on a special kind of hike, a listening hike, and that everyone must be very quiet. Ask the children to listen very carefully and see how many different sounds of nature they can hear. Walk for five or six minutes. As you walk, stop occasionally to stand quietly and listen. Stop and gather the children into a group to share what they have heard. Extend the discussion with these questions:

- Did you hear more than one kind of bird? Do you know what kind they were?
- Did you hear the wind? What different ways could you hear it?
- Did you hear any insects? Can you identify them?
- Did you hear anything that was not "nature" or natural? What was it?

Application: Encourage children to stop and listen to the sounds of nature in the coming week. How many different sounds can they identify?

II. DIGGING DEEPER

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Circle of Earth" (3 - 5 minutes)

Grade Level: 2 - 3

Materials: 36" of string, an index card and pencil for each child.

Divide the group into teams of two. Give each team a string, index card, and pencil. Show them how to place their string on the ground in the shape of a circle. Ask the teams to closely examine what is inside their circle of earth, and to record or draw what they see on the index card.



Encourage the children to work together as a team. After the teams have had an opportunity to examine their circle of earth for at least five minutes, ask them to stop and discuss the following:

- What kinds of things did you find in your circle of earth?
- Did you find natural things as well as man-made things?
- Did you find any living things?
- Do you think if you did this investigation during another season that you would find different things?

Application: Encourage the children to think about what they might find in a "circle of earth" the next time they go to the beach, help in the garden, or walk by a stream.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Leaf Rubbings" (5 - 7 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: a variety of leaves, paper, and crayons.

Show the children the different kinds of leaves and talk about the kind of tree that each leaf comes from. Point out the shapes and colors. Let the children examine the leaves and feel the veins. Explain that the veins help the leaves get water so that they can grow. Demonstrate how to do a leaf print. Place the leaf on the table vein side up. Put the paper over it and use the side of a crayon to color over the leaf. Encourage the children to use different leaves and colors, and to overlap the leaves for a special effect.



Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra rubbings to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

Application: Ask the children to look at the different kinds of trees and leaves found around their home.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Pond Sample" (8 - 10 minutes)

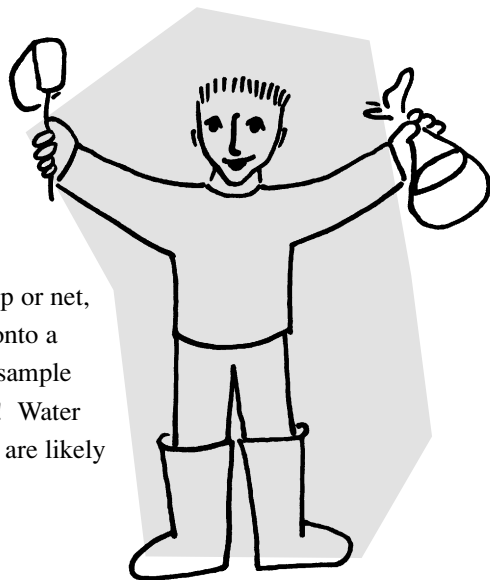
Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: a pond, newspaper and large scoop or fish net, a stick, and clear plastic containers to separate the sample.

Note to the Advisor: Invite extra adults to help with the supervision of the children around the water.

Gather the children close to the edge of the pond. Using the scoop or net, dig out a 4" x 6" sample of the pond bottom. Empty the sample onto a piece of newspaper. Ask the children to gently poke through the sample with a stick to see what they can find. Be prepared for surprises! Water beetles, bugs, frogs, small fish, and other examples of "pond life" are likely to be a part of your sample. Also look for:

- salamanders
- amphibian eggs or larva
- layers of leaves
- water plants, algae



Put interesting "finds" into the plastic containers to examine more closely. Emphasize to the children the importance of returning everything to the pond when your investigation is over. Reinforce the fact that wildlife needs to stay in the wild.

III. LOOKING WITHIN

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Nature Scavenger Hunt" (7 - 9 minutes)

Grade Level: 2 - 3

Materials: scavenger hunt checklist, pencil

Show the children the scavenger hunt checklist. Tell them that they are going on a special kind of scavenger hunt, a nature scavenger hunt. They will need to find many items, but they cannot collect the items. When they find them, they are to check them off on their lists. Have the children work in pairs. Give them the checklists and let the hunt begin! After they have searched for at least five minutes, gather them together and see how many things were discovered.

Application: Ask the children to look for natural items in their own backyard, or on a walk around the block or down the road with a friend. How many items can they find?

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Natural Images" (7 - 9 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: construction paper, liquid tempera, pump spraybottle (window cleaner bottle works well), leaves, sticks, flowers, feathers, or other small natural items.

Help the children collect natural items. Ask them to arrange the items on the paper any way they wish. Demonstrate how to spray the paper with paint; show them how the natural items leave their image. Let each child spray their own natural images!

Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra examples to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

Application: Encourage children to look for "natural images" around home or school. See if they can find outlines of leaves left on the sidewalk after a rain storm.

IV. BRINGING CLOSURE

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Spider Web Game" (5 - 7 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: ball of yarn.

Have the children sit in a circle. Tell them you are going to make a spider web. Start by unraveling several yards of yarn. Tell one thing you saw, liked, or did with nature today. Hold onto the end of the yarn and toss the ball to someone across the circle. Everyone in the circle gets a chance to tell something and toss the yarn to someone (make sure that they unravel enough yarn and that they hold on to the end of the yarn before tossing it across to the next person). Encourage a variety of responses by asking them to think of all the activities they did today. Let each child toss the yarn at least twice to make a really great web!



IV. GOING BEYOND

1. Play a game of "I Spy." Have the children take turns picking items "from nature." Instead of using color, give hints such as, "I spy something that has wings" or "I spy something that crawls."
2. Play an animal "Simon Says." In this game, all of the actions are animal actions. Try some of these: buzz like a bee, fly like a bird, hop like a bunny, chirp like a bird. (Remember that young children don't like to lose, so leave out the part of the game that eliminates poor listeners).

Reading Adventures

This listing of reading materials can be used by you as background, or for sharing before to set the stage for the lesson or for sharing afterwards to reinforce the lesson.

In the Pond, by Cristini Ermanno

Over in the Meadow, illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats

Nature's Hidden World, by Ingrid Selberg

Your Name: _____

NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> squirrel or chipmunk | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bird's nest | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spider web | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> water | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pinecone | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> acorn | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feather | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> worm | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crawling insect | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ant hill | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> flower | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> flying insect | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seeds | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> large bird | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> small bird | |

