

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

Just getting outside or taking a walk is a great way to engage in nature. Activities below complement a walk outside to raise awareness of the outdoors, including birding and wildflower identification.

This lesson plan was modified by the Keep Austin Beautiful Education team for at-home learning.

UNIT: Naturalist

GRADES: Pre-K and up

(Optional) MATERIALS:

- Binoculars
- Notebook
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils etc.
- Various Phone Apps
- Field Guides
- A Penny
- A Blindfold

TIME REQUIRED: Varies

OBJECTIVES:

Youth will be able to:

- raise awareness of the outdoors using the senses.
- Describe and identify local flora and fauna.

TEKS Core Concepts:

Kindergarten: 1A-C, 2A-E, 3B-C, 4B, 5A, 6ACD, 7 A, 10 AB

1st Grade: 1B, 2A-E, 3BC, 4B, 5A, 6CD, 9C, 10AB

2nd Grade: 1BC, 2A-F, 3BC, 7A, 9AC, 10AB

3rd Grade: 1AB, 2ABF, 7D, 9A, 101

4th Grade: 1AB, 2A, 9A,10A

5th Grade: 1AB, 2D, 7D, 9AB, 10 A

6th Grade: 1AB, 2A

7th Grade: 1AB, 2A, 5AB, 10AB, 13A

8th Grade: 1AB, 2A,11A-C

At-Home Outdoor Learning

These activities are designed as small explorations that require minimal set-up, allowing you to encourage youth to slow down and appreciate what is around them.

If you are going on a hike, make sure to have a trail map of where you are going, bring plenty of water (consider bringing a reusable water bottle), and bring snacks for all involved. Take breaks as needed, follow safety guidelines of the space, and remember to stay on the trail to follow [Leave No Trace](#) guidelines. Happy Hiking!

Activity Outlines

For each of the following activities consider bringing a notebook and something to write with (a pencil, or box of crayons, colored pencils etc.) to record your findings!

Birding

1. First ask the youth if they can name any types of birds. Do they have a favorite?
2. Ask youth to identify signs of birds in the area.
 - Do they see any nests? Do they see seeds? Any scat? Do they hear any birds?
3. If you have binoculars get them out! If not use the naked eye.
 - Ask youth to find a bird and describe what they see. Consider:
 - Size of the bird
 - Color of the bird (wings, beak, legs, chest etc.)
 - Where they saw the bird (at a bird feeder, in a tree, swimming, flying, on a wire etc.)
4. Try and identify the bird based on what was observed
 - Use a field guide! Don't have one? Check out these free Bird ID apps:
 - [Merlin Bird ID](#)
 - Browse all birds on the app, listen to them sing, find out more information
 - Take the quiz by describing the bird and find out what it is likely to be
 - [Audubon Bird Guide](#)
 - Download this bird field guides to your phone!
 - a. Track your bird stats
 - Bird ID function
 - [iNaturalist](#)

- Get involved in citizen science and report your findings!

5. *Extension:* Record what you found by writing or drawing your findings. Consider recording the following:

- *Name of bird*
- *Location*
- *Time*
- *Observations*
- *Picture*

Wildflowers

1. What is a wildflower?
 - A **wildflower** is a broad term to describe a flower that grows wildly and naturally without human intervention.
2. Ask why are wildflowers important?
 - They create a habitat for pollinators, help with soil health, keep our air and water clean!
 - Pollinators help move pollen from one part of one plant to another part of a different plant. This is important because most of our food requires pollination!
 - They help keep our air clean! Flowers take in carbon dioxide and create oxygen for us to breathe.
 - They help the soil! Native wildflowers grow roots into the ground that help hold the soil in place.
3. Prompt your youth with the following questions:
 - How many different kinds of wildflowers do you see?
 - What colors are they?
 - What are the differences between the different types?
 - What do they smell like?
 - What do they feel like?
4. *Extension:* Record how many, and what wildflowers you see on your walk
 - Record them in your notebook!
 - Use pictures and descriptions to record them
 - Use this [guide](#) provided by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower center to identify the types of flowers in your area

A Landscape of Color

1. Bring a box of crayons, a pack of markers, color pencils, or some form of color palette with you
2. While walking, youth should try to match the colored items you brought to something in nature.
 - Does it match exactly with the colored item?
 - When you put nature next to your colored item, all of a sudden you realize just how many color shades there are.

A Penny for Your Find

1. Hand each youth a penny and ask them to find something in nature that fits on the penny.
2. The small size of the penny encourages youth to notice details in nature.

One of a Kind

1. Direct each youth to find a leaf or a rock on their walk and identify what is unique about it.
2. Put other rocks and leaves all together in a pile.

3. Ask the youth to identify which rock/leaf from the pile is theirs.

Sound Off

1. Have youth close their eyes and count how many sounds they hear.
 - Prompt them with the following questions after:
 - How many sounds did they hear?
 - What kinds of sounds were they?
 - Where do they think the sounds are coming from?

Meet a Tree

1. Have youth get into partners, you can be their partner! One youth will wear a blindfold.
2. The blindfolded youth must walk around until they find a tree, with their non-blindfolded partner helping ensure they don't trip or touch anything detrimental (ie, poison ivy, disturb a bug's nest).
3. Once the blindfolded youth has found a tree, they must use their other senses to "meet" the tree - learn its bark pattern, leaves if within reach, and smell if present. Give them a minute or two and then direct them back to a central spot.
4. Now have the youth that was just blindfolded go and try to find their tree again.
5. Switch roles!