



Working with Kids in Nature Guidelines for Volunteers

You have an amazing experience ahead of you! Being a Salmon Watch Volunteer is a challenging and rewarding role. Jump in! Get involved! Above all, have fun!

You have much to give and enthusiasm is contagious. Here are a few suggestions to help you.

What is my role as a volunteer?

You will be working with students in the field, sharing your perspective and maximizing their learning experience. Please demonstrate exemplary behavior and attitude in the natural environment. Your curiosity will lead others to follow suit.

You are responsible for the health and safety of these people when they are engaged in activities led by you. Safety must be a top priority. It's better to be too conservative than to have an injury. Don't let kids climb on logs or boulders. If you have a student and/or adult along who is not surefooted, make sure they get assistance.

Student Management

- Introduce yourself
- Get the kids names; try to USE their names
- Clearly communicate expectations and potential hazards and establish any boundaries
- Be courteous, friendly, respectful and firm
- Keep an eye on your time
- Gear must be put away before anyone leaves (explain this early)
- Monitor the kids

How can I help students get the most out of their field trip?

Talk with the teacher about their goals for the trip. Be sure you understand the plan for the day. Review Salmon Watch Resources before your trip (available online at www.worldsalmoncouncil.org/salmon-watch-resources). Utilize the “learning moments” during the day; be alert to unique opportunities that may seem like tangents to the activity, yet offer a springboard for further discussion of the original topic.





Teach the Lesson

The most important thing to remember is to set clear expectations at the beginning of your session. If you anticipate the group may not be focused, mention the expectations set by the teacher.

- Explain the Big Picture: “Today we are going to...”
- Assess their knowledge of the topic. Ask a simple question: “What do you know about...?”
- Provide interactive activities to engage the students in learning – Avoid a lecture format
- Quickly & clearly explain the necessary details of the job at hand
- Explain the use of the equipment
- Break into small groups
- Ask students to describe their observations
- Choose a plant, animal, or other physical object they can touch and examine
- Offer positive comments for their answers; keep a positive attitude
- Wrap-up: have them tell you what they learned – open-ended questions are important

Principles of Teaching

- Remember that you represent a powerful role model for young people. Model awareness, respect for living things, and curiosity.
- Enthusiasm is contagious. Feel upbeat, love your topic, and you will help your group to enjoy the field trip experience.
- As much as possible, the children should be the ones doing the activity. Find ways to involve them even when you are talking and demonstrating.
- This is a multi-cultural world. Check your comments for bias in assumptions of experiences connected to economic class or ethnic background and for possible sexist behavior (e.g. calling on males more than females to answer questions.)
- It is not our job to convince kids of any one point of view (including environmentalism). It is OK to define the environmental ethic, say what you believe, express your point of view.
- Understand that developmental stages exist and what they are. Make sure the activity is age and developmentally appropriate for the group.
- We try to make sure each program has a theme. Students seem to learn best when the lesson fits together. For example, in the ancient forest, we keep coming back to diversity.
- Always take advantage of the “teachable moment”. It is perfectly okay to be upstaged by an earthworm, otter, or eagle during your presentation.



How do I involve everyone in the group?

Be sure to try to connect with all the students in the group. There will always be a few who have all the answers. Encourage the shy or quiet kids to share their ideas too. When an answer is given, ask the group to offer comments: agree? disagree? Elaborate and find relationships.

Dealing with a “special” child, one who really wants your full attention – get them to focus by assigning him or her small tasks and/or enlisting their support in other meaningful ways.

How do I deal with questions I don’t know the answer to?

Don’t be embarrassed to admit you don’t know the answer to every question. You are not expected to. Also, there often isn’t one simple explanation, or any correct answer. There are many ways to deal with this predicament. For example, you can:

- Reason aloud. Go through the process of how you would find out an answer.
- Show students the resources available. Have students look through field guides or other resources. Knowing where to find an answer is as important as knowing the answer.
- Turn the question back to the group as a whole. Encourage brainstorming.
- Turn the question over to the agency expert.

A Note on Lecturing

Many educators rely too much on lecturing. Most individuals, both youth and adults, find they learn better when using a hands-on, discovery approach. By breaking up the lecture with activity, one can appeal to as many senses as possible.

Research suggests that there are different types of learners. We find that a large percentage of the population does not learn easily from lecture. Most adults tolerate lecture better than children do.

Environmental education programs usually emphasize hands-on activities, and the learner is exposed to the subject over many sessions. Interpretive programs often rely more on lecture, because the entire program fits into a short time frame, thus we have included tips for effective public speaking.

Again, the best advice is to resist the urge to lecture and to use a variety of teaching methods. (Note, however, that lecturing and storytelling are different. Almost everyone enjoys a well-told story.)



Positive Comments to Give Young People

Try again. You can do it. Let me show you, then you can try. I know you can do it.

Let me explain it to you again. Your opinion counts. We are a team, together we can accomplish.

What are some things that you could have done? I respect your opinion. I'm glad you made an effort.

You're good, you have some special skills. This is how I feel when we succeed together.

Public Speaking Techniques

- Be sure to make your presentation age and knowledge level appropriate.
- Try to NEVER JUST TALK. Hands-on learning can and should be woven into every presentation.
- You make presentations with your body as well as with your words, and body frequently has greater impact. Be sure to make your body language consistent with your words.
- Get animated, be dynamic, move, gesture, use vocal variety. Don't stand in one place. Be aware of what your group can see and hear.
- ALWAYS speak to the whole group (beginners sometimes address only part of a group.) Yet try to have a one-on-one encounter with each person at the same time by using good eye contact.
- Use a few, gripping, "pungent" facts and use analogies the listener can relate to easily.
- Information should flow and be logically organized. Use repetition and internal summaries.
- Use impact words, simple sentences, personal statements and stories. Let them know WHY this information is important, or what it relates to.
- ENGAGE THEM WITH QUESTIONS. Size up your group, read their body language. Pacing is very important. Make sure you keep it varied and interesting. Get intense and focused with a scattered group. Adjust your pace to their responses.

Dealing with wet and cold

Accept the weather

YOUR ATTITUDE will make a difference

Be prepared, extra hats, sweaters and garbage bags

Get under trees if it is raining hard

Move around to keep warm

Frequently check in with students on their comfort level, intervene when necessary



Ages and Stages of Youth Development

Not all people develop in the same way at the same age, but there are certain patterns to youth development that are commonly experienced by most youth.

Grades 6-8	
Characteristics	Teaching Tips
Can take responsibility in planning and evaluating their own work.	Give youth responsibility for group activities, including planning, and implementing and evaluating.
Can plan their own social and recreational activity.	Provide opportunities for youth to work together. Form committees to plan recreational and social activities.
Can discuss current events, international affairs and social issues with some help.	Use discussion activities and games that encourage awareness of current events and issues.
Want to make decisions but still depend on adult guidelines.	Establish guidelines that give parameters for youth to follow.
Gain skills in social relations with peers and adults.	Provide activities that foster social interaction with peers and adults.
Peer pressure mounts, first from same sex, then from opposite sex.	Use peer pressure to influence positive behavior. Have group give encouragement to individuals.
Can be quite self-conscious.	Avoid asking youth to share their work individually until they feel more comfortable with the group.
Strong emotional attachment to older youth and adults.	Encourage youth to participate in activities with older youth and adults.
Choices are often unrealistic.	Assist youth in making realistic choices. Review their plans, discuss alternatives and help them weigh options before making decisions.

Grades 9-12	
Characteristics	Teaching Tips
Personal philosophy begins to emerge.	Use activities where youth search for experiences that will allow them to identify their own philosophies.
Enjoy discussing the world situations as well as personal activities.	Encourage discussion of events and feelings.
Abstract thinking and problem solving reach a higher level.	Put youth into real-life, problem-solving situations.
Strong desire for status in their peer group.	Develop a climate in which youth are encouraged and supported by peers.
High interest in social activity.	Encourage youth to plan and carry out their own social activities.
Need freedom from parental control to make decisions.	Help youth realize that their decisions have consequences.
Widespread feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.	Encourage and help youth see their positive worth.



Nature Awareness

Wildlife watching and setting the Tone on Field Trips

Teachers are in charge of their field trips but may not be experienced outdoor educators, and may not realize that human behavior influences what can be observed on a field trip. Many might be very grateful for extra support in helping their students learn appropriate outdoor behavior.

Setting the tone at the very beginning of the field trip is key. Having opening and closing circles can enhance the overall quality of the field trip. Also incorporating quiet listening moments at the end of each activity can increase the opportunity for wildlife viewing-

After students have been quietly absorbed in data collection a return to "baseline" can occur, which can be described as when wildlife becomes less aware or more comfortable with our presence, thus enabling their movement back into an area.

Teachers may cover the wildlife watching techniques with the students before they arrive at the site. Setting the tone can start with the transition from the bus to the field study site by encouraging students not to talk as they move from the bus to the opening circle location. Salmon Watch staff can suggest appropriate locations for opening circles for each site.

The teacher or volunteer can help to lead the nature awareness activities during the opening circle. The closing circle is usually led by the teacher and is where students share what they have discovered on the field trip. Also this is an opportunity to thank the volunteers and other adults who supported the field trip.

How can you tell if Wildlife Watching Techniques are working on your field trip?

Answer these questions to find out. (Note- any birds or animals that have been trained to beg for food do not count as animal encounters.)

1. How many mammals and birds did your group observe, collectively?
2. How close? From what distance?
3. Was your group able to observe mammals or birds in their with undisturbed behavior?
(singing, feeding, resting, etc.)
4. Did you see birds or mammals that others in the group did the others see them?
5. What is the best "animal experience" story you have to tell about today?

Advanced training for interested volunteers is available through the Metro Parks Greenspaces Program.



Wildlife Watching

- STOP** **Stop Talking** – become like a rock or an animal.
Stop – when there is an animal’s alarm call.
Stop – when an animal looks at you.
Stop – learn to freeze.
- LOOK** Look – **with splatter vision** to see movement.
Look – at edges of fields or near water.
Look – for tracks and signs.
Look – at dawn and dusk.
- LISTEN** Listen – what are the birds saying?
Listen – for alarms and concentric rings.
Listen – for a rustle, snuffle, swish, crunch.
Listen – **can you hear breathing?**
- MOVE** Move – with the **foxwalk**.
Move – in **slow motion**.
Move – when an animal looks away from you.
Move – with the wind.





The Freeze Game

Would you like to know how it feels to be invisible?

At the word freeze! - stay perfectly still. You can breathe and you can blink - but that is all.

Stay "frozen" for a moment Pretend that you have become a statue, a rock or a tree.

If a rabbit or a deer is scared, this is what they do. Their colors blend in with the forest and allow them to disappear (camouflage).

If you are looking at a deer who has "frozen", you should try to stay still as long as the deer can. You may have to stay still for a long time! Finally, the deer will forget that you are there. It will look away from you.

Now is your chance to move closer to it! Any time the deer looks at you - **freeze!**

Use the freeze game when you are watching wildlife and also when you hear an alarm call. This is short, choppy call given by a bird or squirrel to let the other animals know there is danger nearby. Even a hummingbird has an alarm call! Is the alarm call nearby? Wait for it to stop before you move. Is it far away?

Perhaps another animal or person is moving in the woods and birds have spotted them. Soon you can learn to understand the birds.

Invent a hand signal for freeze! to use on your walks. You don't want to shout, "**freeze!**" and scare everything away!

If you have an hour or two, try finding a nice spot in a park, forest or your backyard.

Then sit down, get comfortable and freeze! After a while, the birds begin to sing and come closer to you. Soon you will be in a new world full of surprises - animals walking, eating, playing or hunting. That's the way the forest is when there are no people around!

You have become invisible!



Splatter Vision

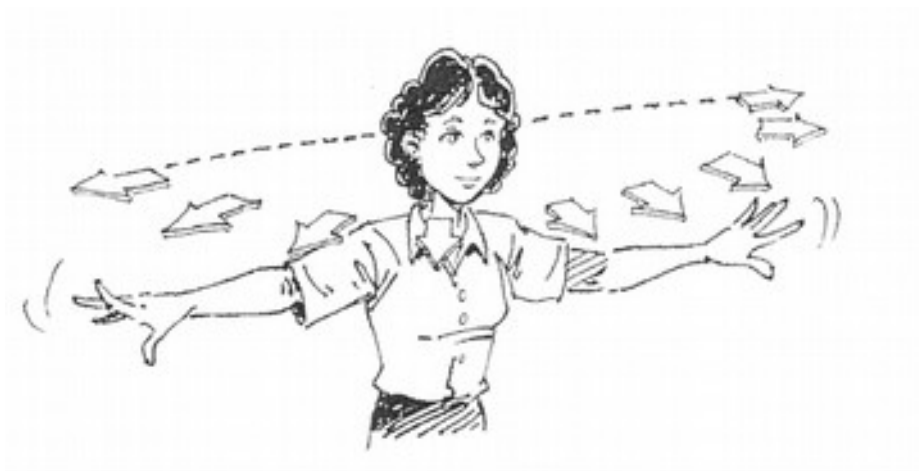
Would you like to see twice as much - even in your own back yard?

Most people have learned to focus on one small area at a time. We look at a person's face, a book or a television and blot out the surrounding areas. It is like looking through a little tube all the time.

Most animals see in a different way. They have to be aware of what is moving in the forest - is it food or will it eat me? They need to see and hear in all directions - not just in front of them. Their lives depend on this.

We can learn from our animal friends how to see much more - **try splatter vision.**

- First put your arms straight out to the sides at shoulder level.
- Then point your fingers forward and wiggle them.
- By looking straight ahead - get so that you can see both hands.



Think of seeing out of the corners of your eyes.

Everything may seem a little blurry - but you will now be able to catch the slightest movement around you --even at your sides. If a bird blinks, you'll see it. A blade of grass moving differently than the other - is there a mouse there? Every bug in the vicinity will be seen too? If you spot something you want to look at - then you can focus as you normally do.

After a few tries splatter vision becomes automatic and easy for anyone to do.

The next step is to sit down in your back yard, field or forest and **try splatter vision.**

Welcome to a new world!



Focused Hearing

How much can you hear? As much as a deer, a fox or an owl?

Close your eyes, take a deep breath, relax and listen.

Take your time and focus:

What is the most distant sound you hear?

What is the nearest sound you can pick out?

How about all the sounds in between the near and far?

Can you hear your own breathing? Can you hear your heart beating?

Listen closely to what the birds are saying.

Are they making long and musical sounds? If they are - singing and all is well with them.

Are they making a short, choppy and hard to locate sound? That is called an alarm call.

Birds use alarm calls to warn other birds and animals of approaching danger. Some alarm calls are loud and easy to hear - like a jay or a crow. But even very small birds have alarm calls - it may be tiny chirp that is hard to hear.

Even the smallest alarm call is the birds' way of shouting, "There is danger coming! Hide! Run away!" to all other animals in the forest.

If you hear an alarm call near you, chances are that the bird is warning other animals in the forest that you are approaching!

If you hear an alarm call not in your immediate area, it could mean that there is another animal moving. Or it could be that there is a disturbance being made even further away





Focused Hearing

You see, if a loud, scary, dangerous animal moves through the forest (like a human for example), the alarm calls will move outward from the source of the danger. It is like dropping a rock in a pond - the concentric rings of disturbance move out in larger and larger circles.

Can you detect any concentric rings?

Birds will make different types of alarm calls for different dangers - people, deer, fox, snake, etc. You can learn to understand them!

Another type of concentric ring is a bird flying rapidly. Or if the forest is very quiet it means that some danger is near, passed through recently, or that you are creating a disturbance

Try putting on deer ears. Just cup your ears with your elbows pointed forward. This will let you focus and amplify the slightest rustle, swish or sound in the forest.





The Fox Walk

We can learn from our four-legged friends how to walk silently and unseen. The fox is especially good at sneaking softly through the forest.

First - stop talking!

Then - try the Fox Walk:

1. Try taking a short slow step and place only the outside edge of your foot on the ground.
2. Gently roll your foot down flat.
3. Then slowly move your weight forward.
4. Repeat with the other foot

With this walk you can freeze easily (if an animal looks towards you or you hear an alarm call). If you feel a twig that might break - just pick up your foot and place it in a new spot. You don't need to look down - just feel the way.

It is best to use **slow motion**.

Try the **Rabbit Game**: Have your group form a circle with one person in the center pretending to be a rabbit. When the rabbit looks at you freeze! When the rabbit is not looking at you, Fox Walk toward it.

See who can reach the rabbit first. Try two rabbits. This is the same way to sneak up on a real animal.

Try the **Fox Walk at home**. See if you can sneak up on a cat or dog. Don't scare them.

Just try to get near them, and then let them know that you are there and just practicing.

Then go outside and try the Fox Walk on beetles, bugs, birds, frogs, chipmunks, squirrels, deer or anything else. With care you can get close to lots of different animals.

Remember just get near and enjoy watching them, don't touch them or startle them.

This is part of becoming invisible and enjoying the world of the four-legged and winged creatures!

Nature Awareness Resource List. For more information, see books and field guides by Tom Brown Jr., Metro 1994 - Regional Parks and Greenspaces.