

SPRING EXPLORATIONS

Kindergarten – Rahr Memorial School Forest

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Using all of our senses helps us to better understand nature. White-tailed deer have many adaptations that help them survive.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding by describing a fawn, identifying deer tracks, carefully observing insects and other small animals, listing animals that live in Wisconsin, and using descriptive words to explain items in nature.

CLASS OUTLINE

- I. Set-up
 - II. Sample schedule
 - III. Introduction
 - IV. Deer study
 - V. Little critters
 - VI. Nature hike
 - VII. Conclusion
 - VIII. Clean-up
- Safety
Optional Activities
Resources
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MATERIALS

Deer Study

- deer photos
- antler
- antler vs. horn photos
- fawn drawings
- cotton balls
- glue
- crayons
- deer skull
- School Forest map

Little Critters

- collecting jars
- hula hoops
- string
- two-way magnifying viewers
- white sheet
- paper
- crayons
- clipboards (optional)
- School Forest map

Nature hike

- scavenger hunt sheets
 - monoculars
 - wet-erase markers
 - crayons
 - paper
 - clipboards (optional)
 - photos of Wisconsin animals
 - photos of non-Wisconsin animals
 - School Forest map
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CLASS PROCEDURES

I. Set-up

After setting up a date with the School Forest secretary, teachers are also responsible for filling out and turning in a field trip request form. Teachers can also schedule a time when the School Forest Coordinator can meet with them at school to discuss the visit. Teachers will be asked to teach or co-teach one of the activities while the student groups rotate through the activities during the day. The School Forest coordinator may also be available to teach at one of the stations during the day. Preparation time will be needed to review the activity.

All of the materials needed for this day will be set-up at the School Forest. Teachers will need to bring a few things from school: the School Forest keys, first aid kits, emergency contact information, extra clothing, and any additional activities they feel necessary for the class. Students will need to bring a bag lunch (with a drink and nothing that needs a microwave) and adequate clothing for the day.

II. Sample Schedule:

9:30	Depart from School
10:00	Arrive at School Forest
10:00- 10:15	Welcome and Introduction
10:15- 11:00	rotation 1
11:00	Switch stations
11:05- 11:50	rotation 2
11:50	Clean up for lunch
11:55- 12:30	Lunch
12:30- 1:00	Story time
1:00- 1:45	rotation 3
1:45	Gather and clean up
2:00	Depart from School Forest
2:30	Arrive at school

III. Introduction

In nature, there are many things to do, see, smell, touch, and hear. Today, students will explore the School Forest while learning about plants and animals that live here. Students will go on a hike, learn about deer, and explore the tiny things in nature.

IV. Deer study

A. What does a deer look like?

Introduce the students to what white-tailed deer look like. Use photographs to illustrate their brown colored fur, large ears, big eyes, and hooves. Discuss the differences between bucks, does, and fawns. Pass around a deer antler for the students to touch and examine.

B. Search for deer signs

Hike away from the buildings in search of signs left by deer. There are many deer trails that you can take your class on in search of signs. Look for tracks, rubbings, scat, and bones. Ask the student why deer use the same trail over and over? Deer use the same trail continuously because it is the easiest way to travel through the thick forest. Where do you think the deer trail goes? Where do deer sleep?

C. Fawns

A young deer or fawn has many characteristics that make it special. Ask students if they know how a wolf or coyote might find food. (They use their sense of smell.) One of the special things about fawns is that they are born with no smell. They also have white spots which help them blend into the forest floor. A doe teaches her fawn(s) to lay very still when she is away. This is another way that fawns can hide from predators.

Fawn art activity: Pass out the fawn coloring sheets and crayons. Students can color their fawn. Show students how to glue “spots” onto the fawn. Pass out cotton balls and glue. Assist the students in putting the “spots” on their fawns.

D. Thicket Game

If you have time, this game is a great way to introduce camouflage. The game should be played in any area that is not overgrown with brush but where students can still hide.

Review how the fawn is able to hide from predators. For this game, one predator (wolf) is needed at the beginning. The predator closes their eyes and everyone is given 15 seconds to hide. When hiding, the “deer” must be able to see the predator at all times

(they want to keep an eye on him/ her). Once everyone is hidden, the predator stands in the same spot and points to the “deer” that it can see. Any “deer” that are seen by the predator should come up to where the teacher and predator are standing (the caught students may not point out or say where other students are hiding). Once the predator does not think they can find any more deer, the teacher should have the predator turn around and close their eyes while the “deer” are given 10 seconds to find another hiding spot closer to the predator. The goal of the game is to be the closest remaining deer to the predator.

V. Little critters and their world

A. Little Lives of the Forest

Hike away from the buildings. Pick a spot to explore and set the hula-hoops on the ground. Ask students to explore the area within a hula-hoop. They can use the two-way magnifying viewers to look closely at different objects. Now pass out paper the crayons to let the students draw the life within the ring. Focus on how when we look closer at an area we can see many wonderful things.

B. Insect Study

Place a large white sheet under a bush or tree branch. Now have students stand back and shake the branch for about 10 seconds. Explore what has fallen on the sheet. Use the two-way magnifying viewers to look at different critters. Look at shapes and colors of the insects.

C. Forest Scientists

If there is time, take students on a deeper exploration of the School Forest by visiting the sand dunes or the swamp. Once there, give students time to explore, looking for clues of animal life. Other options include: go through the meadow and use sweep nets to gather more insects for study, lie on your backs and watch the clouds and trees move, plant seeds found on the forest floor, study a plant or animal by looking at the tiniest details.

VI. Nature Hike

A. Searching

This is a very relaxed hike but you may make it more structured if you like. As you hike with the group, take time to look closely at things. Split the groups into smaller groups with a chaperone. Give each group a list of things to find and a marker. The adult will work with the group to find the objects and then check them off as they are found.

B. Descriptive words

While on this nature hike, encourage students to use their five senses and to think of words to describe the forest. List possible words to describe the area on a sheet of paper. Provide experiences to encourage the use of the students’ senses. Crush plants to smell, touch different types of bark, taste pine needles, smell the soil.

C. Who Belongs Here?

Stop somewhere along the trail and ask the students to find a place to sit. Talk with the students about what lives at the School Forest. You can play charades of the local animals or show pictures of animals found in Wisconsin and animals that are not found in Wisconsin. Whichever approach you choose the goal to help students understand that animals have specific areas where they live and most cannot be found in every part of the world.

D. Monoculars

Pass out a monocular for each student. Ask them to put the strap around their neck. Show the students how to focus the monoculars by slowly turning the eyepiece. Explore the tree tops or watch the birds at the feeders. Return monoculars to the carrying cases when you are finished with this activity.

E. Sensory

If there is time during this class, practice using your senses with one or two of the optional activities found towards the back of this lesson plan.

VII. Conclusion

With all of the students or by class, reflect on the day. Give an overview of what students did. Ask students what they learned. What was their favorite thing? Tell me something new you saw? You touched? You smelled?

VIII. Clean-up

- Return supplies to building
- Take garbage out to dumpster
- Close windows, shut off all lights, lock doors, shut driveway gate
- Give the School Forest Coordinator feedback on how to make this trip better in the future.

Safety

While at the School Forest, teachers should carry first aid kits. You can bring these from your school or use the ones at the School Forest. The first aid stations can be found in the Ehlert Lodge office, ELC classroom, and the upstairs of the Krejcarek Building. Please report any safety issues to the School Forest Coordinator.

Students should be supervised at all times. If you decide to go off trail, go in a clear area where branches cannot swing back and hit someone. Be aware of the plants you are traveling around so as not to pass by thorn covered plants or poison ivy.

Optional / Rainy Day Activities

Egg Carton Texture Match – compare and collect different textured objects in nature

Forest Color Tile Match – Use a set of 3 to 5 color tiles and find things in nature to match

Build your own insect – students use pipe cleaners, tin foil, egg cartons, string, glue, and scissors to create their own insect. Discuss the parts of an insect.

What shapes can you find in nature? – Discuss what types of shapes can be found in nature. Look at photos of natural objects and look for shapes

Hike in search of shapes – go out on a hike and stop in various places to look for shapes.

Shape collages – gather natural objects and make a collage of different shapes found in nature.

Descriptive Hike – while on this nature hike, encourage students to use their five senses and to think of words to describe the forest. As a class or in smaller groups, list possible words to describe the area on a sheet of paper. Provide experiences to encourage the use of the students' senses. Crush plants to smell, touch different types of bark, taste pine needles, smell the soil.

Quiet Observations – find a quiet place along a straight trail to do this activity. Tell students that you will be asking them to sit quietly along the trail, to not move from their spot until an adult tells them to, and to observe nature. The teacher can walk down the trail and assign a spot for each student to sit. Make sure to space the students out so they do not distract one another. Extra adults should space out along the trail for supervision. Watch students carefully. After the five minutes are up, an adult should walk along the trail and gather the students. Ask students to sit down as a group and discuss what they experienced. Did anyone see anything interesting? What different colors could you see? What could you hear?

Where am I? – ask the students to find a partner. Give one blindfold to each group. One student in each group will now be blindfolded. The student that does not have a blindfold will lead the other

student to a tree. The blindfolded student should explore the tree with their hands, noses, and ears. Then both students should return to the starting point (with blindfolds still on). The blindfolds now can be taken off and the students that were blindfolded should try to find their tree again. Remind the students not to talk during this activity.

Resources

- Boring, Mel. Caterpillars, Bugs, and Butterflies. North Word Press, Minnetonka, MN. 1999.
Cornell, Joseph. Sharing Nature with Children. Ananda Publications. 1979
Herman, Marina, Joseph Passineau, Ann Schimpf, and Paul Treuer. Teaching Kids to Love the Earth. Pfeiffer-Hamilton, Duluth, MN. 1991.
Nursery Nature Walks. Trails, Tails, and Tidepools in Pails. Nursery Nature Walks SantaMonica, CA. 1995

Lesson plan compiled by Patty Brodeen Maher, School Forest Coordinator, Manitowoc Public School District. Updated: December 2007