

Ideas for Sharing Nature with Scouts

By Marty Brazeau

1. Encourage self-taught naturalist skills

Pull out a field guide from your backpack to identify a bird or flower while on a hike. Encourage scouts to observe wildlife as they are hiking down the trail. Attitude is very important. Les Hathaway, a mountain guide, once said, 'The problem with people is they're so busy coverin' ground, they ain't got time to notice what is on the ground they're coverin'.'

A few tips for nature observation

A. Practice stalking skills, as outlined in the scout handbook, by having scouts stalk each other and then wildlife. By making a "Pssh..Pssh" sound with your mouth, you can call in small birds. The scout shock from your behavior will be offset when a colorful warbler lands on a close branch. For best results, wait until you see or hear birds nearby. Remain still. Pause between pssing to listen and observe.



B. "What is it?" box This is a great after-dinner activity. Every morning at summer camp, place a strange natural object, such as an insect gall, rock, or bird nest in an open box. Challenge scouts to find out more about the mystery item by using field guides. Solve riddle after dinner.



C. Make a "Touch Box" Make a wooden box with a hinged door. Cut a round hole on one side. Each day, put a natural object, such as a pine cone, turtle shell or bracket fungus in the box. Scouts reach in and try to use their sense of touch to guess the object.

D. Make a Nature Equipment Box: Have nature equipment available to scouts for use during campouts. Stock the box with the following materials:

1. hand lenses for close observation
2. several pairs of durable binoculars
3. aquatic and insect nets
4. containers for holding animals temporarily.

Always return critters to their haunts.

5. Field guides- *Golden Nature Study Guides*, edited by Herbert S. Zim are simplified, inexpensive, and ideal for young scouts. The *Peterson Field Guide Series*, over 50 guides covering such subjects as stars, birds, and animal tracks, are more technical for older scouts.

E. Hike a Self-Guided Nature Trail:

Broad Creek has a posted 19 stop trail around the Saffran Nature Pond. Scouts from the 2024 Seton Scout Naturalist Program appear in the video nature trail guide that you can download on an iPad. Find the video on YouTube with the keywords: **Saffran Nature Trail**. Lead your Scouts on the nature trail with an interactive PowerPoint to be downloaded to your iPad or Android device is also in the BALOO/IOLS shared folder.



Play Frisbee Golf!



Set up a frisbee golf course in a field to have fun reviewing what was learned on the nature hike.



Spread ten numbered question boxes with hula hoops to serve as frisbee targets. Scouts throw their frisbee into the hula hoop and count the number of throws. One point is scored for each correct answer to questions at each hole.



Numbered Question Box: Upside down plastic box from a dollar store. I put plastic paper protectors to hold each question.

Disk Golf Hole# 1: Which of these facts is not true about the Tulip Poplar Tree?

A. Native Americans carved the trunk into a canoe.

B. The flower looks like a tulip. However, the tree is a member of the magnolia family.

C. Tulip trees are very shade tolerant.

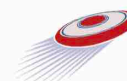
D. Seeds are light and wind dispersed.



Sample question derived from the nature trail guide.



Post Nature Hike Frisbee Golf Competition



Name: _____ Unit #: _____
Scorer: _____ First Hole: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hole	Circle Answer	Throws	Nature Long Answer
1	A B C D E		
2	A B C D E		
3	A B C D E		
4	A B C D E		
5	A B C D E		
6	A B C D E		
7	A B C D E		
8	A B C D E		
9	A B C D E		
10	A B C D E		

TOTAL NUMBER OF THROWS: _____

For courses with just multiple choice questions:
Number correct: _____ out of 10

For courses with both multiple choice and long answer questions:
Number correct: _____ out of 20

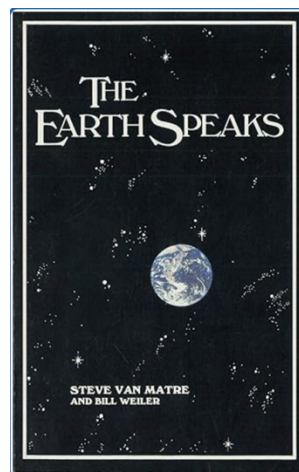
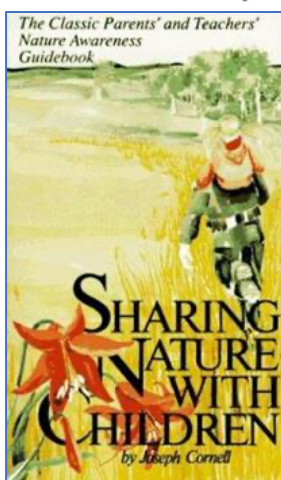
A frisbee golf score sheet, clipboard, and pencil are given to each Scout or pairs of Scouts taking turns throwing the frisbee. Scouts write answers to multiple choice questions and count the number of throws to each hole. Leaders need to make an answer sheet for scoring. Copies of this score sheet and questions to print can be obtained from emailing Marty at scoutnaturalist@gmail.com

2. Encourage an Environmental Ethic - Make sure your scouts treat wildlife with respect and refrain from picking plants. Remind them about the *Outdoor Code*. Actions speak louder than words. To fulfill service requirements, encourage scouts to conduct conservation projects.

A few suggestions:

- A. Scouts can set-up ten or more nest boxes along a trail to attract bluebirds. Make sure boxes are emptied yearly.
- B. Reroute steep trails into switchbacks to prevent erosion. Place water bars and wood chips on existing trails.
- C. Scouts can collect newspaper, glass, and aluminum cans to raise funds for the troop while reducing solid waste.
- D. Scouts can help beautify a local park and reduce erosion on a hill through well-planned planting programs.
- E. With the help of a local expert, have scouts construct a permanent self-guiding nature trail in a nearby natural area.
- F. Clean up a local stream. Examine its water quality and life. Participate in Maryland's *Save Our Streams* ADOPT A STREAM project.

3. Become a nature sage - Tell or read nature stories, sing outdoor songs, and share quotations at fitting occasions such as before meals or during the Scoutmaster's Minute. Your next campfire can have a nature focus as you tell animal stories and lead environmentally themed songs.



4. Lead Scouts on a nature-themed weekend! that includes Serpentine Quarry Hike, stream study, bird watching, nature-themed campfire. This can be a yearly Scout unit program. Extrinsic reward: oriole patch. Intrinsic reward: fun interfacing with nature. Best done Spring or Fall. PowerPoint of book shown above for your iPad in the BALOO/IOLS folder. Book may be sold at the Scout Service Center or camp trading post for each Scout to use. For logistics, connection to a website for printouts, etc. contact Marty at scoutnaturalist@gmail.com

Other resources for the weekend:

B. The book, **Sharing Nature with Children** by **Joseph Cornell** has some fun ideas for having fun with nature in the out of doors. Book available on Amazon.

C. Read quotations, poems, and other nature inspiration during campouts and Scoutmaster's minutes from the book **The Earth Speaks**. Book available on Amazon.

5. Visit a local nature center: Attend a program or call the nature center to arrange for a program tailored to you Scout unit, patrol, or a group of Scouts with a passion for nature. The *Maryland Natural History Society* does offer ecology related merit badge classes.