



National Park Service Rock Creek Park Environmental Education

Be A Junior Naturalist

Watch a squirrel looking for acorns. Listen to the calls of birds. Learn how to use binoculars. Find out what lives within a pond. Record your observations. All these experiences and more are available as students learn to be a junior naturalist.

TOPICS: Five senses, observation skills, habitats, conservation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The natural world is filled with small wonders, big changes, and many lessons. To learn the most, a naturalist masters a variety of tools, techniques and observation skills.

Where: Rock Creek Nature Center and Planetarium

Length: 1 hour

Who: 2nd and 3rd Grades

Students per group: Maximum of 30

Chaperone per group: 4- 5

CURRICULUM BASE: District of Columbia Science Education Standards

Grades- 2nd, 3rd: make careful observations using the five senses.

Grades- 2nd, 3rd: explore the diversity of and interactions between living things and non- living things.

Grades- 2nd, 3rd: identify the needs for conservation.

OBJECTIVES: At the end of the program the students will be able to:

- 1) Identify what a naturalist does.
- 2) Identify the correct methods for observing nature including safety rules, and uses of the senses and observation equipment.
- 3) Distinguish between what is natural and unnatural.
- 4) Explain one reason why natural areas must be protected.
- 5) Identify three plants and three animals commonly found in Rock Creek Park.

SAFETY MESSAGE: Stay behind the Park Ranger so nobody gets lost. Stay on the trail and be careful of poison ivy and stinging insects (when applicable).



BE A JUNIOR NATURALIST PRE AND POST- TRIP ACTIVITIES

Before your visit to Rock Creek Park, please take a moment to read the activity descriptions listed below. The pre- trip activity will introduce the students to the concepts of the natural and unnatural world. The post- trip activity will reinforce the role of a naturalist and how the students should observe nature.

Pre- trip Activity- Natural vs. Unnatural Collage

Explain the terms “nature”, “natural”, and “unnatural” to the students. Then from old magazines or pictures they have drawn, have the students create a collage with natural objects on the right side of the paper and unnatural (man-made) objects on the left side.

Post- trip Activity- A Naturalist Notebook

Have the students create a naturalist notebook by folding in half and stapling together four sheets of paper. They should decorate the cover with drawings of scenes from nature. On the first page have them draw or write five tools a naturalist might use and what they might observe with those tools. (eg. Binoculars- birds, magnifying lens- insects). Afterwards, take the students out to the schoolyard and observe a natural object for ten minutes. Allow them to write down what they observed in their notebook. Encourage the students to take their notebooks home and write about observations of their neighborhood.