



Tips for Teaching Outdoors: Conservation Ethics

To ensure a successful field trip, students should learn and follow the 3 R's: **respect yourself, respect others, and respect your space and your surroundings.** To learn how to respect your space and your surroundings, create an environmental ethic among the students early in the school year, well before the field trip. See the section Learning Before the Field Trip: Social Responsibility and Ethics for ideas and activities that build respect and responsible behaviours when outdoors.

Ethics for all Field Locations

- **Respect nature.** When outdoors we need to recognize that we are guests in the home of the creatures that live there. Have the students come up with their own rules for respectful behaviour when in someone else's home, and what respect looks like at the field trip location. Some rules may be let the plants be or pick up any trash or litter that you find.
- **Stay on the trails.** Keep to designated trails and avoid stepping on or disturbing plants and animals. It is important to protect high use areas from trail braiding, erosion and damage to vegetation.
 - This is particularly important in arid regions where soils are covered in a fragile, living crust composed of lichens, mosses, bacteria, and algae. This "cryptobiotic crust" protects the soil from erosion, increases water absorption and aids in nutrient cycling. Soil crusts can take decades to form but minutes to damage.
- **Wildlife watching etiquette.** Look for signs that wildlife may be nearby. Are there any tracks, snapped twigs, or fresh scat? What sounds are around you and what might they be? Get in tune with your surroundings and build an awareness of what animals or natural hazards might be nearby for the safety of your group and respect for wildlife. If you see wildlife stay as quiet as possible. Don't approach wildlife to avoid disturbing their natural behaviours. Loud noises or actions may stress wildlife or cause animals to waste energy by fleeing. Bring binoculars and learn how to use them in advance. Never chase, touch or feed wildlife. See BC Parks Wildlife Code of Ethics: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/wild_gen.html

Some ideas for establishing observation mode:

- Have a cue (a word or gesture) that indicates when students should go into "stealth mode". When in stealth mode students should be still and silent, and use their senses to experience their surroundings.



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Leave no Trace!

Pack it in, pack it out. Bring some garbage bags and small plastic bags or gloves to collect trash, even if it isn't yours.



- Practice the “fox walk”, a technique to walk silently outdoors. A stalking fox takes slow, totally silent, deliberate steps with precise foot placement. Their tracks line up in a straight line.
- If you want to show someone something of interest, point to it- don't yell anything out. Remember that the quieter you are, the more likely you will see wildlife and won't disturb their natural behaviours.
- **“Patting prevents picking”.** Explore natural objects such as leaves, branches, and feathers but as a general rule, do not pick or remove things from where they are found. Natural objects are full of microscopic life using it for food or shelter. They could become part of a bird's nest or decompose and provide valuable nutrients to the soil. Try sketching or photographing it instead of picking it up. In many parks and protected areas, collecting and removing natural items are not permitted. Be sure to know the regulations at the field trip location.
- **Collecting.** Don't collect if taking a photo will do. In locations where collecting is permitted, make sure to:
 - Take only small samples and follow guidelines on how to collect.
 - Work in groups to minimize impact and only collect if the population of the organism in that location is abundant and healthy and if something very important can be learned by collecting.
 - If looking at and temporarily collecting life from the water, pour water gently into a container from a low height. No waterfalls! Monitor the temperature of the water, provide shade and keep specimens for only short periods of time. Small containers can heat up quickly and be deadly to small animals.
 - If temporarily collecting small animals for observation, teach students not to tap or shake containers.
- **Clean your hands and equipment.** In order to minimize damage to species or ecosystems it is important to:
 - Wash your hands after your exploration and before eating. If you apply insect repellent or sunscreen be sure to thoroughly wash your hands with hand sanitizer and do not touch any animals, or water containing animals. Insect repellent, sunscreen, and other chemicals can be very harmful to some animals, especially amphibians.
 - Prevent the spread of invasive species, such as knapweed, by removing plant seeds and parts from personal gear and equipment before leaving infested sites. Have students check their shoes and clothing for seeds that may have hitched a ride.
- **Leave no Trace!** Pack it in, pack it out. Bring some garbage bags and small plastic bags or gloves to collect trash, even if it isn't yours.