

Teacher Tip Sheet – A Note on Conservation

Model a reverence for nature

The living things that inhabit this planet are uniquely adapted to particular habitats. As we explore the natural world, we should show reverence and respect for other living things. Effective environmental learning requires direct experience with the natural world, but we must take care not to jeopardize the very life forms and environments we are studying. The following guidelines form the basis of a Conservation Ethic that should be an essential part of all outdoor programs. We have found that instead of “preaching” these guidelines, it’s much more effective to have your class or group generate their own list through a brainstorming activity.

1. Stay on the trail

This minimizes your impact on plant life and allows animals to adapt to human use of an area.

2. Patting prevents picking

Explore natural objects such as leaves, shells, tree branches and feathers, but do not pick any live plant material or remove things from their location: this is their home.

3. Turn the rocks or logs back over

When exploring under a rock or log, do so gently. Try not to crush plants and animals that may be living on, beside or under it, and put the rock or log back the way it was before you investigated.

4. Fill in any holes

Whether digging on a beach for burrowing animals or exploring the soil layers of a forest floor, fill in any holes you create. Plants, insects and animals living in the area will be disturbed by piles of dirt covering their burrows and trails.

5. Wildlife viewing etiquette

Observe wildlife as quietly as possible. Never chase animals, touch or feed them. Stress is harmful, so respect their space and habitat. Remember that birds and animals need to rest during the day. Use binoculars and keep a respectable distance away.

6. Leave all specimens, alive or dead, in their natural habitat

Do all of your discovering on-site – observe living things in their home place. Do not move plants or animals from one location to another, and do not take any organisms away. Dead leaves, fungi, shells of animals, stones, and seeds all have a role to play in the ecosystem. Don’t choose activities that require collecting, pressing and drying of specimens: teaching potential is limited, and students can demonstrate the same skills of observation, identification and categorization with live specimens in their natural habitat.

7. Leave no trace

In every way, try to leave the environment and its inhabitants unchanged by your visit. Pack out all garbage, even though you may not have brought it in. Bring along some garbage bags, and protect hands with small plastic bags or gloves.

