

ECOSYSTEM EXPLORATION

TIME: 2.5 HRS

Teachers: Please copy the enclosed booklet for each of your students. Students will need to bring a pencil, the booklet and a clipboard (if available) on the day of the program.

DESCRIPTION: Students are introduced to and given the opportunity to become familiar with three of Ojibway's unique habitats: pond, tallgrass prairie, and pin oak forest. Through an ecosystem presentation, a guided hike, and a hands-on activity, students will explore and compare ways in which communities of plants and animals satisfy their needs in specific habitats. Students will examine the biodiversity of Ojibway's living things and investigate their unique interactions. As well, students will be encouraged to identify and discuss factors that affect various habitats.

ECOSYSTEM PRESENTATION

The students are led in an interactive discussion about Ojibway's prairie, pond and forest habitats. The naturalist explains the concept of endangered, vulnerable and extinct species and illustrates this concept through examples of species at risk found at Ojibway. They also are introduced to the plants and animals that exist in each of these ecosystems. Through visual aids the students help to build a food web using examples of species found at Ojibway.

BREAK – A short break is scheduled for the students to use the washrooms and have a small snack and drink.

INTERPRETIVE HIKE

Led by the naturalist and with the aid of their booklets (see copy enclosed) students explore and become familiar with each of the prairie, pond and forest ecosystems. This interpretive hike explores portions of Ojibway Park and Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve (time permitting).

Students are encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open for any interesting natural features as they explore forest, pond and prairie habitats. They should use as much detail as possible when filling out the "Prairie", "Pond" and "Forest" pages of their booklets. Opportunities to see deer, chipmunks, raccoons, squirrels, birds, turtles, snakes, fish, dragonflies, caterpillars, spiders, and many more insects, are part of this hike

VISITING BAT HOUSES

The naturalist brings the group to the man-made bat houses located next to the Nature Centre. Students will learn why we have erected bat houses and why we like to have bats living nearby.

BIRD FEEDER WATCH

While inspecting the life in the wildlife feeding area, the naturalist helps the students discover the needs of animals and how they are met in this particular area.

VIEWING NATURE CENTRE EXHIBITS

A naturalist roams amongst the students, answering their questions as they view the Nature Centre's live animal displays and natural history exhibits. Students are encouraged to view and touch a variety of natural objects in the discovery centre.

Please note that the Nature Centre has a Nature Shop with bird seed, feeders, books and children's items for sale.

Teachers may choose one of the following to complete their Ojibway field study:

A. ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS AND FOOD CHAINS

Students are led in an interactive discussion about food chains using visual aids. The students are then divided into groups. Each group is assigned a specific ecosystem to complete the "Ecosystem Components" page of the booklet. They then provide a short presentation on their results.

B. STUMP STUDY

Students look under a stump or log to discover the wide variety of creatures living there. The role of decomposers is explained and students draw some of the insects they find. This activity will allow students to realize the importance of decomposers as an integral part of an ecosystem in the breakdown of biomass into new soil.

C. WILDFLOWER STUDY

The naturalist discusses with the students the importance of pollinators such as bees, butterflies and other insects in the lives of plants and therefore in the lives of animals that rely on plants for food. The students are brought to a wildflower area and draw at least four different species of prairie wildflowers and any pollinators they might find. The naturalist helps the students to identify the flowers and pollinators.

D. BUILD-A-BIRD ADAPTATION ACTIVITY

Students discuss how a species survives in a habitat. Then, in groups, students are given a make-believe habitat and are asked to create a bird that could live in the habitat that they are given. Students draw a picture, and write information about what the bird eats, where it builds its nest, what it builds its nest out of and how it survives. Students in their groups will present their creation to the rest of the class.

E. HANDS-ON SNAKE TALK

The students are introduced to one of the centre's resident snakes. The naturalist discusses characteristics, senses and habits of snakes and explains the concept of endangered, vulnerable and extinct species. Each child is given the opportunity to pet one of the Nature Centre's resident snakes.