



A-Hiking We Will Go!

Introduction

In the book *Jo MacDonald Hiked in the Woods*, author Mary Quattlebaum introduces children to the trees, plants, and creatures of a forest and models safe, courteous behavior in the wild. In this activity, children learn how to prepare for and take a short nature or woodland walk.

Materials Needed

- ◆ Small backpack or tote bag for a adult with compass, flashlight, whistle, rain poncho, first-aid kit, sunscreen, plastic knife rather than pocket knife (when used at school)
- ◆ Nutritious snack (example, granola bar) and box of water for each child
- ◆ Comfortable, closed-toe shoes and socks

Key Concepts

- ◆ Students answering questions using scientific resources combined with observations.
- ◆ Plan and conduct a simple systematic observation or investigation.
- ◆ Use knowledge and evidence (data) to formulate explanation.
- ◆ Communicate investigations that might be drawn or spoken as well as written.

Procedure

1. Read the book and point out, through *Be a Safe, Courteous Hiker*, the proper way to behave on a nature walk. How is Jo behaving on her hike? Does she try to touch or catch the animals? Pick or eat any wild plants? All little hikers are guests in the home of wild creatures!
2. Ask children to guess what Jo's grandfather is carrying in his bag. Show them the objects in your adult hiking bag and explain the importance of each. (See Note to Parents in *Be a Safe Courteous Hiker* and explanation on American Hiking Society <http://www.americanhiking.org/10essentials/>)
3. Have children wear comfortable shoes and socks. Take a practice nature walk in neighborhood. Ask children to look carefully for insects, birds, animals, and trees.
4. Discuss what they saw and enjoyed most. Record observations either as a class or as individuals.
5. If possible, take a longer "hike" or nature walk in nearby wooded area or a park with trees. If possible, have children carry their own snack and water in tote bags from home. Guide them to notice things from the book as well as additional creatures and plants. Let children know that their presence may affect the animals' behavior. Creatures may hide when humans are near. Stop, rest, and eat snack, making sure to carry out all trash.
6. Repeat step 4. As a class, talk about differences and similarities between what they observed on neighborhood walk (Step 3) and nature walk (Step 5). Discuss possible reasons for them.
7. Try to do neighborhood and/or nature hike again, at another time of year, to experience the same area at different seasons. Discuss differences and possible reasons for them.

Nature Connections

- ◆ As a class, share your observations, as citizen scientists, with the National Wildlife Federation's Wildlife Watch program. <http://www.nwf.org/WildlifeWatch/obs.aspx>
- ◆ Look at photos of a rain forest in book or on Internet. What kinds of plants and animals do the children notice? Are they different from those seen on their nature walk? What might be possible reasons?

Additional Resources

- ◆ **American Hiking Society** <http://americanhiking.org>
- ◆ **Discover the Forest**, www.discovertheforest.org, sponsored by U.S. Forest Service.
- ◆ **USDA Kids Page**, includes information on Smoky the Bear <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/ids/index.html>

