

NATURE FOR KIDS

By Heather Macnab, Camp Shagabec

We have the good fortune of having our camp in an amazing natural area, so it is our duty to find ways to appreciate the environment here. Nature for kids doesn't have to be complicated. They don't need to learn Latin names or even common names for things. They don't need to learn science from us—they learn that at school. What they can learn from camp is a sense of wonder, awe, and reverence for God's creativity, for the beauty of the earth.

- **Treasure hunt:** Let each group search for these things: something fuzzy, something pointy, something smelly, something smooth, something rough, something blue. Before you start, make sure everyone understands that you shouldn't kill anything—don't pick the flowers.
- **Treasure hunt (2):** Let each group search for...things living under rocks. Things living in a dead stump. Things living in the sky. In the treetops, in the water, underground. Give each group a notebook to note or sketch the things they find.
- **Four senses nature hunt:** Sit still for two minutes and count how many sounds you can hear. Sit in one place and point to how many different colours of things they can find. Walk and find the smelliest place there is—very often a slightly lower area will hold the smell of the flowers or the earth (I don't know why). Touch things—try to find different textures of things.
- **It looks the same but it isn't:** Use blindfolds (pillowcases work well). One partner wears the blindfold and the other partner takes the camper to a tree. The blindfolded person gets to know the tree as intimately as possible—feels it, smells it, hugs it, then is led back to home base. A few spins both ways would make sense. Camper one then loses the blindfold and has to guess which tree was hers/his.
- **It looks the same but it isn't (2):** Have a dish of pine cones. Each person picks one, gets to know it intimately, then throws it back in the dish. Mix 'em up. Have the kids choose their own.
- **Diversity:** Use hula hoops. Hike around the park, periodically throwing down the hula hoop and looking for how many species are within the circle. In places where there are very few species, ponder the reasons why. In places where there are very many species, ponder the reasons why.
- **Diversity (2):** For those of you who like contests. Gather round the hula hoop and have each person silently count how many different species they can see. Compare notes to see who got the most and which species some people missed.

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