

UNNATURAL TRAIL SCAVENGER HUNT

Parents: This activity is geared to upper elementary, middle and high school aged students. For a similar activity for younger students, try Adventure Hunt.

Considerations: Review all Leave No Trace Principles before beginning this activity/lesson. Dress appropriately with sturdy shoes or boots, clothing that is layered if necessary. Bug spray or treated clothing is always a good idea, even in February. Ticks can be active during the winter months.

We hike, camp, and recreate outdoors to connect and see things in a more natural way; beautiful views, wildlife, cool geology, unique and rare plants, quiet spaces and more. Humans knowingly and unknowingly impact natural areas during their visit. Unnatural things like overlooks, bridges, staircases, signage, fences or railings are found in many public parks, preserves, and forest lands. These unnatural structures are necessary to mitigate negative impacts and enhance the visitors experience. On the flipside, you may observe unnatural items that may diminish your experience; trampled vegetation from off trail hiking, litter, carvings and graffiti on rocks, trees and manmade structures, toilet paper or tissue, baby diapers, trees that have hatchet marks, fire rings with trash in them, etc...

LET'S BEGIN!

On your hike today, keep a list of the unnatural things you see. At the end of your hike, review the list you made and answer the following questions:

1. Which unnatural things aid in protecting our natural world? Which items enhanced your experience in the outdoors?
2. Which observations negatively impacted your time in the outdoors?
3. Which list is longer? The list of items that enhanced your experienced or diminished your experience?
4. How did you feel about what you saw?
5. What was your favorite unnatural item that you feel most enhanced your experience?
6. What observation was your least favorite?
7. What potential problems can occur from what you observed?
8. What can you do to help keep things more natural?
9. What can you do to encourage others to keep things more natural?

EXTENSIONS:

- Organize a cleanup
- Create a poem, story, news article, or essay about what you observed.
- Design a poster, flyer, social media post to bring awareness to problems & solutions.
- Write a letter to government or park officials about your observations. Include a brief overview of your experience; why it was good or why it was not good. What were the things you appreciated that the park offered or what did you like most about your experience? If your experience was not as good as you hoped, what was the problem(s) you observed and what solutions do you think could help protect our natural world?