Climbing trees, digging in the dirt, playing in a creek…these are fond childhood memories for many. Children today often don’t have the free time or the freedom to explore the outdoors as we did when we were growing up. How can you help your child/children develop a love of nature and to create outdoor memories of his or her own? You could begin by enticing them out of the house/classroom with a Nature Scavenger Hunt! Nature Scavenger Hunts is an activity to spark children’s interest while encouraging them to slow down and notice the natural wonders.

Scavenger Hunts for Preschool Children

Before heading out to do your Nature Scavenger Hunt, make up a list of things for your child to find. By drawing pictures of the items rather than writing them, you’ll enable your young child to identify and check off the items on his or her own. For preschool children, the items on your list should be easy to identify:

- pinecone
- bird
- red leaf
- bug
- yellow flower
- round stone
- stick that looks like a “Y”
- berries
- squirrel

Many of these items can be found on a walk around the block or at your neighborhood park. It’s even better if you are able to take your child to the woods or another natural area.

Scavenger Hunts for Elementary School Children

You can challenge your older elementary school child with a Nature Scavenger Hunt like the one we use at the Wildlife Center of Virginia. The Wildlife Center’s Scavenger Hunt encourages children to see the forest as a habitat, or home, for animals. It helps children become aware of the things animals need in their habitats, to notice evidence of animals, and to think about how human actions affect animals.

Items include:

- A source of water for an animal such as a stream, a puddle, or drops on leaves.
- Food for an animal such as plant material, insects, other animals, or fungi.
- Shelter for an animal like a hole in the ground, a nest in a tree, under a rock, or under a fallen tree.
NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT
Beverly Hall - Tennessee

- An easy-to-climb tree and a difficult-to-climb tree. Consider who would find it easy or difficult to climb: squirrel? A snake? A bear?
- A seed transporter such as a pine cone, acorn, maple “helicopters”, or dandelion fluff.
- Signs of animals could be scat (your child will enjoy having a fancy new word for poop!), tracks, or partially eaten vegetation.
- Something dead. This doesn’t need to be an animal; notice that fallen leaves, sticks, and some of the trees and plants are also dead. Do these dead things just “mess up” the forest, or do they have an important role to play? Dead vegetation provides homes for animals, adds nutrients to the soil, and is food for animals such as worms and termites which in turn are food for larger animals.
- Something with multiple leg like an insect, spider, or centipede. No squishing!
- Animal sounds such as birdsong, cicadas or the rustling of squirrels.
- Signs of humans might include power lines, litter, human footprints, trail markers, or the trail itself. Do any of these human influences pose risks to wildlife? Do you hear evidence of humans? Even in natural areas we are rarely out of earshot of the sounds of airplanes, cars, or other humans. Could human sounds affect an animal’s ability to communicate or to detect predators or prey?
- Hidden treasures could be a salamander, a bone, an interesting rock, a beautiful flower; or anything else that is exceptional in your child’s eyes.

Be Open to Exploration

Finally, remember that the ultimate goal of a scavenger hunt is to get your child to explore the outdoors. If he or she becomes engrossed in a creek 100 yards down the trail or captivated by an anthill in your front yard, resist the urge to hurry on to the end of the trail or to complete your list. Your child may have already reached the most important destination: a hands-on and memorable encounter with nature!
The activity that participant will be engaged in will be a scavenger hunt on the grounds of the Resort. We will be looking at the plants that are planted on the property.

Each participant will receive a brown bag book. (directions to follow) Inside the Brown Bag Book each page will have on the left side of the book plant facts (this can be any fact that you want your students to learn) and the right side of each page will be the clue to look for that particular plant. Once the student has found the plant/plants or what they think is the correct plant to match that description, there will be a picture on a piece of paper that the student is to take and then place in the pocket of the book.

Brown Bag Book
Take as many brown lunch bags as you want fold each one in half. Then glue them back to back until you have a book. I choose to do 3 brown lunch bags. I placed a name tag sticker on the front for the student to create a title for their book. Open the book, on the left side of the 1st page is paper glued onto it with a plant fact, the right side of the page is a clue for the scavenger hunt. Then the next thing you will have is a like a pocket from the brown bag as the opening. Turn the page and you will be on page 3 which is the next brown bag. You continue having plant facts on the left side of each page and the plant clue on the right side of the page. When you find the treasure whether it be a leaf or a picture (which you provide for them) you can place it in the pocket which will be right behind the clue of that picture or treasure.
Just another suggestion for a Wildlife Scavenger Hunt

In this scavenger hunt keep your eyes open for wildlife and evidence of wildlife! Search for each of the items. When found, check the box next to the item and describe it in the space provided.

Observation:

☐ a feather ________________________________________________

☐ a bone ________________________________________________

☐ an animal’s behavior ____________________________________

☐ an egg ________________________________________________

☐ scat ___________________________________________________
NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT
Beverly Hall - Tennessee

☐ something sharp (from wildlife) ________________________________

☐ something soft (from wildlife) ________________________________

☐ a feather ____________________________________________

☐ something round (from wildlife) ________________________________

☐ something camouflaged __________________________________

☐ other __________________________________________________

Evidence:
☐ of a large animal browsing _________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ of an insect eating ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ of an animal’s home ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ of an animal making something _____________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ of a plant adaptation that keeps wildlife from eating it ____________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ that this area is home to wildlife that ranges in size from tiny to big __
________________________________________________________________________
that this area is home to both humans and wildlife

that animals must be aware of their surroundings

** that people and wildlife at the sand dunes can experience the same difficulties

other

** if you are near sand dunes if not make this one fit your area.