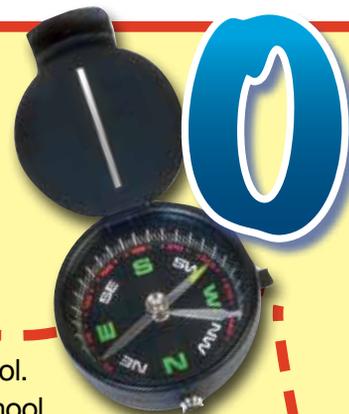


LET'S



You can explore the outdoors every day when going to and from school.

As a class, pick a date to start recording the natural things everyone sees along their school routes. Whether you walk, travel by car or bus, or take the subway, keep your eyes open for plants and animals like birds, mammals, and even insects. After a week, make two maps of your community on large sheets of paper. On one map, record what everyone saw on their way to school, such as insects on flowers, birds on wires or squirrels in trees. On the other map, do the same thing for the way home. Compare the two maps and list which things are the same and which are different. You can also do this with your friends, your family, or even by yourself when going other places.

Put together a backpack

or tote bag of items to use while exploring outdoors. Include things to help you observe and record your findings and other items to keep you comfortable and safe. Always bring a buddy, and tell an adult where you're going.

1. **Notebook and pencil**
(including colored pencils)
2. **Binoculars**
3. **Camera**
4. **Sunscreen and hat**
5. **Water and snacks**
6. **Compass**
(know how to use it)
7. **Whistle**
(only for an emergency)
8. **Map**
(know how to read one)
9. **First aid kit**
10. **Insect repellent**



What else could you include?



Observing wildlife is fascinating.

Use natural materials found outside to build a shelter you can hide in. While hiding, watch the animals around you without them seeing you. Keep a journal describing what you see and hear. Invite friends or family to join you and share with them what you've observed.

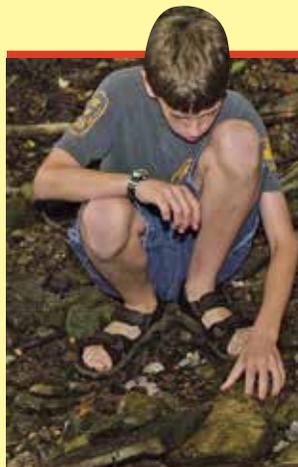


wood tick

deer tick

poison ivy

Watch out for ticks and poison ivy so you can avoid them. Some ticks carry diseases, and poison ivy can leave you with an itchy rash.



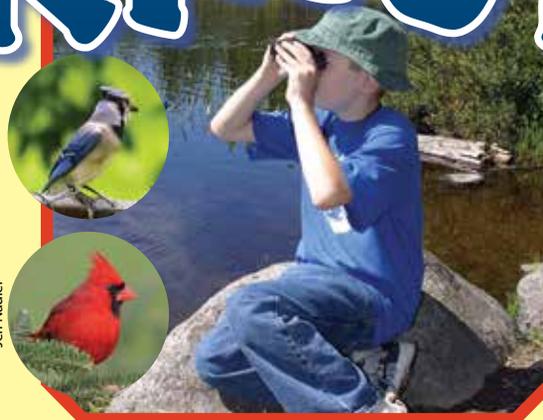
Take an over/under hike. Look up at tree tops. Flip rocks and logs over to see what lives under them. (Be sure to return rocks and logs to the way you found them.) Record the findings in your journal.



EXPLORING!

Birdwatching is a great outdoor activity.

Start by learning about the most common birds in your neighborhood. Eventually, you can learn about more birds and go beyond your neighborhood in search of favorite species. Sometimes parks and nature centers have lists of the birds you might see during different times of the year. Many birdwatchers keep “life lists” of all the species they’ve seen. To start your own list, get a journal and write down each different type of bird you see, with the date and location. Share the information with your classmates, and chart the number of different species and locations everyone has listed. Which bird is most common? Compare notes with your friends and look together for your favorite birds. Share the information you collect online at such websites as <http://ebird.org>, where you can keep track of your lists and view other data, and scientists can use the information to learn more about different birds.



Jeff Nadler



There's an app for that!
Several apps for birders exist to make birding easier.

Exploring wet worlds is fun to do on a hot day.

Shallow streams are home to all kinds of critters, from crayfish to aquatic insects. Ponds and wetlands contain fish, tadpoles and more. Wear water shoes or rubber boots and wade in! Turn over rocks and look around plants. Be careful to stay in shallow water, and always take a buddy. As you're exploring, be gentle with all of the animals you handle. Put everything back in the water where you found it.



Thomas Lindsay



Have a scavenger hunt

with a list of natural objects to find. Start a collection such as leaves, rocks, flowers for pressing, and more. If you don't want to do a physical collection, take photos and use them to create a scrapbook of your adventures! You can make a scrapbook online at such places as www.shutterfly.com, www.snapfish.com, and www.mixbook.com. There are many more websites to choose from!



There are lots of other ways to explore outdoors.

Pretend you're a great nature explorer. Where would you go? How would you share what you've found with others? Draw a map showing where you discovered interesting things in your neighborhood. Many websites allow you to create your own maps; two examples are www.google.com/mapmaker and www.zeemaps.com.

Make sure you follow nature ethics when out exploring. Ask permission before going on private property, respect the rights of other wildlife viewers (be quiet), don't feed or disturb wildlife, and leave baby animals where you found them. Report all environmental violations to **1-800-TIPP DEC** (1-800-847-7332). Pick up litter, but don't disturb habitats, and try to leave no trace of yourself.

