



Micro Parks or Trails

This lesson plan was produced by the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning in 2016 as part of the Nature Discover Project.

Funding was provided by:



Activity Name: Micro Parks or Micro Trails

Ages: 6-12 (also works for older students as well)

Activity Level: Low

Length of time: 30 to 40 min

Number of Participants: 10-15

Concept: This activity is great for increasing observational skills by allowing the participants to see the subtleties of an area, its smaller inhabitants and signs of different processes underway.

Materials Required: Magnifying glasses, mini flags (use bamboo skewers with felt flags attached), string, paper and pencil (optional).

Introduction: This is best after doing a walk through a natural area, beach or any area with vegetation. The participants are asked to pretend that they are ants or small faeries (if that works for your group) and that they are to create a park or nature trail for others to see, but from the perspective of tiny creatures. This can be done in small groups or at a minimum in pairs. Once the groups have been identified have them decide whether they wish to do a micro park or trail. Each grouping will be given a magnifying glass, a set of flags (6-8 is good). For groups doing the micro parks provide them with about a 1.5 m length of string to use to mark their park boundary first. For the groups doing micro trails provide them with a .5 length of string to be used to define their trail. All groups also can be given a piece of paper and pencil, but this is optional.

Methods: Have the groups distribute themselves and choose an area where they want to build their park or trail. Encourage them to find different areas for this purpose. They now use their string to create a park boundary or the route of the trail. They now get to explore their chosen areas but on their hands and knees and with use of the magnifying glass. As they explore the fascinating features in their areas, they place the flags beside ones that they agree are the most fascinating or best. When they have placed all their flags they can choose to name their park or trail by writing the name on the paper and placing it at the entrance.

Once all have finished have them gather and then each group will take the rest on a tour of the sights of their park or trail. Encourage all members of the group to describe the point of interest represented by the flags.

Tips for Teachers:

- The parks or trails can be related to themes such as interrelationships of flagged features to one another or a food web interaction. This activity could be run as an applied companion to the Energy Pyramids or the Nature's Gifts Web activities.
- If the children wish to do parks or trails next to one another that would be fine as there will likely be different points of interest discovered.
- Magnifying glasses are fascinating tools for any age and sometimes you will find that they will be used for other purposes than intended (burning) or there is a bit of competition as to who gets to use them. It is best develop a rule about their proper use in this activity and perhaps have a no tolerance rule for using magnifying glasses for burning objects and remove them from the activity.
- This activity can run for longer than the estimated time particularly during the sharing portion. As this debriefing is so important to the activity, it is possible to reduce the number of points of interest being described at each site.

Literature Cited:

Adapted from Sunship Earth, Steve Van Matre, 1979. Institute for Earth Education.