

Nature Hunts & Games

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We treat this world of ours as though we've had a spare in the trunk. (Al Bernstein)

You can have a lot of fun helping Beavers and Cubs increase their awareness of the natural world so that they will want to protect it. Now that it's May, take them outdoors for some scavenger hunts and energetic games.

Picture Scavenger Hunt

Ranger Rick's Activities Guide offers an excellent hunt for Beavers, many of whom are still just learning to read. Prepare a picture scavenger sheet for each boy by ruling a piece of paper into a dozen squares and either drawing or glueing down a picture of a different natural item in each square. Include one picture of litter. Glue each sheet to a sturdy piece of cardboard and cover the front with clear contact paper

Give each Beaver a hunt sheet and a grease pencil for marking an X on pictures of things he sees along the way. Talk briefly about the items in the squares, then set out on your hunt. Carry a plastic bag for litter, the only item you will bring back. When the hunt is over, talk about the things you saw. How many birds, flowers, bees, etc. ?

This hunt is also good for Beaver leaders because, when it is over, you can collect the scavenger hunt sheets, wipe off the grease pencil marks, and store away the cards to use another year.

Nature Hunt

The Canadian Camping Association (CCA) gave us permission to reprint a nature hunt idea that encourages exploration. Developed by Jean Funk, chairman of the CCA's environmental concerns committee, it's best suited to Cubs working in sixes, but Beavers can try some of it, too, with a leader guiding a small group. Send off each six with a bag, a pad of paper, pen or pencil, and a box of wax crayons.

Please do not pick, harm or remove any piece of anything that is still alive.

- Bring back something you can see light through.
- Bring back something to make music with.
- Bring back a soft rock.
- Bring back something gooey.
- Find three things that have changed: since this morning...since last winter...since you were

born... Tell us about them.

- Find and draw a picture of something that is ending its life and something that is beginning its life.
- Bring back the sound of the rain, even if it isn't raining.
- Find something natural to mark with. Bring back a picture you drew with it.
- Find three signs that animals are living here. What animals do you think they are?
- Describe something that changes so slowly you don't notice.
- Draw the wind.
- Bring back a piece of litter. Tell or write a story about its life. What would happen to it if you left it where you found it?
- Measure and record the length of the shadow of the tallest person in your group, using a finger, toe, hand, foot, arm or leg as a ruler.
- Find something you would like to make better. Tell how you would improve it.
- Using everyone in your group, make a human sculpture to show the other groups something that you see on your hike.
- Bring back rubbings of three different textures. Tell where you got each rubbing from.
- Draw a picture using five different colours you see.
- Find something you don't understand and make up a question about it to ask the others.
- List 10 words to describe a natural object 10 paces to your left.
- Find and draw or describe a sign of the season.

As a follow-up activity, Jean suggests the boys sort the non-living objects they bring back from the hunt into groups: e.g. interesting shapes or patterns, interesting smells, interesting colours, interesting to touch, seeds, insect homes or food, food for mammals, etc. Later, they can use the objects to make a display in the meeting place or to create a nature craft.

Colour-As-You-Go Turtle

Manitoba Council's Beaver Tales passed along this hunt idea. Make a big turtle as illustrated and after checking the route of your next nature walk, put into each section of shell an item the Beavers will see, hear, or smell along the way. On your walk, either give each lodge or tail group a turtle and a packet of crayons or let each Beaver carry a turtle and a few crayons. As they discover something, they colour in a part of the turtle.

You can adapt the turtle to a nature walk in any season. For spring, Manitoba Beavers try to find a spring leaf; an animal home; a bird flying; a hollow log; shaggy bark; a spider web; a seed pod; anything under a rock; a gurgling brook; a bird in a tree; new shoots of a plant; the smell of an evergreen tree; the sound of the wind in the trees; something soft as Santa's beard; a maple leaf; a bud on a tree; a bird in a bush; dead leaves; a place where woodpeckers have been; a new plant; an insect; clouds in the sky; air bubbles at the edge of water; and a bird's song.

Poet's Hunt

From Scouting (UK) magazine, we borrowed an idea Cubs will enjoy. Give each six a copy of the poem and a collecting bag, set a time limit, and send them on their hunt. Caution them to bring back only fallen materials or nonliving things. Tell them to note the locations of the other

items in the poem so that they can lead the pack to them after time is up.

- Find something hard,
- Find something soft,
- A plant in the ground.
- A twig from aloft.
- Find something hairy.
- Find something dead,
- And a place where an animal
- Might make a bed.
- Find food for a bird
- And some for a rabbit
- And a kind of plant
- With a stinging habit.
- Find a twig from a tree
- That has a white bloom,
- And something that could be
- An insect's home;
- A plant that climbs,
- And one that creeps.
- And one that grows
- On rubbish heaps.
- Let's Play

Silly Symphony: Clouds on the Clothesline, by Jack Pearse.

Jane McCutcheon & Barry Laughton, combines a limited kind of hunt with a whole lot of fun for groups of six or more. Give the players 10 to 15 minutes to find natural objects that make a noise when you bang them together, rub them together, or blow on or through them. When they come back, organize them into a semicircle and ask each to "tune" his instrument so that the others hear what it sounds like. Then, ask the orchestra for a simple, favourite song and conduct them as they sing and play along with it. After a few of their own songs, introduce them to this one from Scouting (U.K.) magazine. The tune is Baa, Baa, Black Sheep.

Paper, plastic, scattered on the ground,
Litter, litter, everywhere around.
Why do we leave it?
Why not take it home?
No more litter wherever we may roam.

Broken glass and bottles on the land,
If you leave them, you may cut a hand,
Do your duty,
Take away the glass,
Leave the animals to enjoy the grass.

Discarded fish hooks by the riverside,
Discarded litter scattered far and wide.

Do the ducks a favour,
Have a bit of care,
Let's leave a countryside that we all can share.

Listen carefully to this little tune,
Litter bugs aren't welcome, even on the moon.
Pick up your litter, Put it in the bin.
Then we'll all enjoy the world we live in.

Creature Symphony:

This noisy idea comes from the binder Science Is..., by Susan V. Bosak.

Sit players in a circle and move around it whispering the name of a different animal in everyone's ear (mouse, duck, owl, frog, cow, bear, etc.). Give them a few seconds to think about their animal sounds and practise them quietly. On signal, everyone makes his animal sound at the same time. Guided only by these sounds, players try to line up in order of biggest to smallest animal.

The Endangered Hoppit:

Also from Science Is... Here's a great game for Beavers or Cubs with a whole lot of energy to burn. Hoppits are imaginary creatures that hop around gathering materials from the ground (rocks, twigs, leaves). Hoppits need a home where they can store the things they gather and stop hopping when they need to rest. Mark out a large circle as home.

When the game begins, the Hoppits hop around on two legs gathering materials from the ground and taking them to the home area, where each builds his own pile. Every Hoppit needs to keep his pile at least as high as the other piles, so he must keep hopping and gathering. When he's tired, however, he can stop in the home area to rest.

After about five minutes, tell the Hoppits that bad weather has limited their food supply. Because life is now harder for Hoppits, they can only hop on one leg. The Hoppits continue hopping and gathering materials, resting when necessary in the home area. If a Hoppit accidentally hops on two legs, he dies and takes to the sidelines.

After about 5 minutes of one-legged hopping, tell the Hoppits that humans have built a shopping mall on their home. Although they may leave their piles there and continue adding to them, they no longer have a place to stop and rest. To stay alive, however, they must continue hopping on one leg and adding to their piles. How many are left after two minutes? Five minutes? How long can the Hoppits survive?

Amoeba Race:

This game from Science Is...takes a lot of cooperation. Explain that an amoeba is one of the tiniest, simplest animals on earth - a microscopic one-celled animal that lives in water. It

consists of jelly-like protoplasm that changes shape as the creature moves and feeds, and a control centre called the nucleus.

Have the pack form an amoeba. You need lots of boys who don't mind being close to each other as the protoplasm. Other boys form the cell wall by making a circle around the protoplasm, facing outwards and linking elbows. One small Cub with good eyesight becomes the nucleus by piggy-backing on one of the protoplasm's shoulders so that he can overlook the whole cell.

Now, see if the amoeba can move down the field. To make progress without accidents, the Cubs have to work together without pushing or pulling. Perhaps they can imagine a rhythmic kind of amoeba sound to help them coordinate their movements. How fast can the amoeba move?

After the boys are good at being one amoeba, try some cell division. Can opposite sides of the cell wall squeeze together to make two amoebas from one? Don't forget to hoist up another nucleus to control the new cell, then set the amoebas on a race to a finish line.

Switch:

This final game from Clouds on the Clothesline is fun to play with groups of 12 or more in an area with several different kinds of trees. It's also a good way for Cubs to reinforce their tree identification skills.

Organize the players into three or four groups, depending on the kinds of trees in the area (maple, beech, birch, etc.), and choose one player IT. Each player moves off to stand touching his kind of tree (one player per tree), and IT takes a centre position. When IT calls out the name of a group (e.g. "Maples"), all players in the group race to change places with each other. As they do, IT tries to claim one of the maple trees for himself. If he's successful, the player he replaces becomes IT. When IT calls out, "Forest", all players must change places, again making sure they end up touching a tree of their group's name.

Over time, we have come to the frightening realization that there is no "spare in the trunk". As they have fun playing in and exploring the outdoors, children also can begin to appreciate that God's world is "one of a kind" - something very, very special that needs all the respect and care we can give it.

Beavers are youth 'typically' 5 to 7 years old. Cubs are youth 'typically' 8 to 10 years old.... most of the ideas could be adapted to other age groups, however.

Last edited: *November 19, 1998*
The NetWoods Virtual Campsite, Steve Tobin, Campmaster
