

# Scavenger Hunts & Nature Baskets



These lessons are just a small sample of what will be available in **Forces of Nature**, the Madison Audubon Environmental Education Handbook.

We're all Safer at Home right now, so it's lucky there's plenty of nature to explore there!

Whether you're looking out a window, crawling around in your backyard, or taking a walk around your neighborhood, wildlife is everywhere. Right now (early April) it's still safe to visit state and county parks - just make sure you're staying 6 feet away from other people.

## **SCAVENGER HUNTS & NATURE BASKETS**

A scavenger hunt or a nature basket can turn any walk around the block into an adventure!

Scavenger hunts can be as involved or as easy as you like. You can write or draw your own, print of one of ours, or just think of a new thing to look for every few minutes. A few of our favorites are listed below. If you come up with a new amazing hunt, please share it with us!

Remember, don't collect living things, and be sure to return natural objects to where you found them.

## **PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT**

This is great for backyards! Take photos of small details or objects at the natural area you're exploring. Arrange the photos in a grid on a piece of paper, and print it out (you could also just leave it on your phone and let kids scroll through while hunting).

Kids can then hunt for the items or textures pictured and mark them off when they have found them. For older kids, take more detailed and abstract pictures to make the scavenger hunt more interesting or difficult.

## **EGG CARTON SCAVENGER HUNT**

Give each kid or team an egg carton and a list of twelve items to find. Some examples of things that could be on your list are: Find one natural item that is red, fragile, soft, spikey, wet, etc. They can share their findings at the end; you can read the list aloud and the kids can compare what they collected for each category.

*Created by James Neill with adaptations from Madison Audubon*

## **THESE THREE THINGS SCAVENGER HUNT**

This one is great for when you didn't plan to need a scavenger hunt - you don't need any supplies! We love it for helping tired hikers get back to the car too.

Give kids three items to find, and once they find those items you can move on to the next list of three. Use your imagination when thinking of what they'll be hunting for! Remember to change the things you ask them to find based on the location you're at and the season you're in.

Some suggestions to get you started:

1. A bird flying, walking, and standing still.
2. A bird with yellow on it, a bird with red on it, a bird with black on it.
3. A bird making noise, a bird preening (cleaning feathers), and a bird foraging (looking for food).
4. An animal's home, sign of humans, sign of an animal.
5. An animal track, a human footprint, a sign of an animal that is NOT a footprint.
6. A living insect, a dead insect, sign of an insect.
7. A mammal, a reptile/amphibian, a bird
8. A green leaf, a fall-colored leaf, a leaf skeleton
9. A leaf eaten by an insect, a leaf with insect eggs on/in it, a leaf with a spider's nest in it.
10. A bird nest, a squirrel nest, a hole in a tree that an animal might live in.

## **ABC SCAVENGER HUNT**

Write the alphabet vertically down a sheet of paper. Find something in nature starting with every letter in the alphabet (you can bend this rule for the harder letters!)

## **NATURE BASKETS**

Nature baskets go great with scavenger hunts. You can use a bucket, basket, or bag to collect the things you find on your nature walk. Grab something you already have, or make a new one. Small nature baskets are nice, because you can have a rule that kids may only carry things that fit inside it (that HUGE stick needs to stay where they found it!)

Just remember: nothing living goes in the nature basket, and everything needs to get returned to nature at the end of the trip. Also know that many plants contain seeds. It's best if seeds stay in the place you found them to help keep our natural areas healthy.