

# Nature Scavenger Hunt

Everyone loves a scavenger hunt! A nature scavenger hunt is a great way to help children develop their powers of observation while they are enjoying the out-of-doors. Parents can share the excitement of learning with their children while collecting specimens, taking photos and doing fun activities with the treasures that children will find.

## Planning a Scavenger Hunt

Consider the location, participant's age and adult involvement when planning a nature scavenger hunt for children.

1. *Location.* Visit the scavenger hunt location ahead of time to make sure that all the items on the list can be found there.
2. *Participants.* If the children are young or get frustrated easily, make sure that the items on the list are in easy-to-find places within the larger area. Older children may enjoy the challenge of a more difficult hunt.
3. *Duration.* Have a manageable list for the amount of time available and the age of the participants. The younger the children and the shorter the time frame, the shorter the list should be.
4. *Type of Hunt.* Not all scavenger hunts are collector hunts. Experiment with photography, hand-drawn picture, checklist or journal-writing scavenger hunts.

## Scavenger Hunt Ideas

Here are some ideas for scavenger hunt lists. Mix and match them to suit the childrens' interests and abilities.

### *Things to See*

Pinecones, dandelions, seeds

Insects, such as a butterfly, dragonfly, grasshopper, and beetle

A spider web with an insect

Leaves from local trees

Frogs, toads, lizards, turtles, etc.

Wildflowers or native plants

Mushrooms (do not eat them!)

Wild berries (do not eat them!)

Butterflies, cocoon or chrysalis, ladybug, dragonfly, or other insects

Anything "camouflaged," that blends in with its surroundings

Animals eating  
Leaves falling to the ground  
Ant moving something  
Wind blowing the leaves  
Fish jumping  
Clouds going by  
Sunlight coming through trees  
Sunrise or sunset  
Stars in the sky  
Lightning bugs  
Reflections in the water  
Trail markers  
Animal homes or shelters

#### *Things to Collect*

Feathers or abandoned birds' nests. (Seal them in a plastic bag, and use hand sanitizer afterwards)

Leaves, flowers or grasses that are native to the local area (watch out for poisonous varieties, such as poison ivy!)

Ferns, moss, pinecones, seeds, thorns, and other botanical specimens

Fossils, colored rocks, quartz, or flat skipping stones

#### *Things to Photograph*

Birds at a bird bath, birdfeeder, or bird house

Squirrels or other small animals

Animal tracks (if time and materials are available, make a plaster cast)

Sunset or sunrise

Waterfall, stream, mountain, boulder, lake, beach, or swamp

A sibling or friend doing an outdoor activity

Unusual sights like a tree root curled around a rock.

Wild Flowers or grasses

Dead tree or branch  
Pine cone, acorn, berries or seed pods  
Vines growing around another plant  
Poison ivy (don't touch it!)  
A blade of grass, single leaf or bare twig  
Dark or light green leaf, leaf with insect holes, unusually shaped leaf  
Clover leaf (maybe a 4-leaf clover?)  
Moss, fungus on a tree, lichen on a rock, etc.  
Pine tree or pine needles  
Tree with blossoms or seeds on it  
Dew on a flower, leaf or spider web  
Evidence of the presence of animals  
Evidence of the presence of people  
A hole in a tree or animal hole in the ground  
Eroded soil, mud, grain of sand, Smooth/shiny rock, multicolored stones  
A twig or branch shaped like a letter or number  
Trash  
Anything that shows the next season is coming  
Worm, caterpillar, ant, insects on a tree

### *Things to Draw*

Interesting tree(s)  
Colorful flower(s)  
Butterfly, moth, insect or amphibian  
Bird, bird nest, bird feather, etc.  
Animal or animal tracks  
Local scenery  
A friend or sibling doing something fun  
Bird or insect migration  
Leaves, trees, flowers or plants with all the parts labeled

### *Things to Write About*

Sunrise or sunset

A fun activity with friends or family

A hike through a favorite or new location

Make up stories about what can be seen in the clouds or stars

A nature discovery (plant, animal, landscape) that amazed you

Something funny or unusual that happened

A description of local weather

Go back to the same location frequently and write about the changes

### *Things to Hear*

Leaves crunching underfoot

Wind in the trees

Sound of a bee or other insect

Birds singing or calling

Cricket or frog

Water running in a creek

Noises in the woods

Rain in the trees or grass

### *Things to Feel*

Tree bark

Prickly plant

Wet mud

Rotten wood

Wind blowing on face

Texture of various rocks

### *Things to Smell*

Pine tree (do all part of the tree smell the same?)

Flowers (do they all smell the same?)

Mud or dirt (does dirt smell different when it is wet?)

Green grass and dried grass (how are they different?)

Fresh air (is it different before and after it rains?)

Cedar, pine or other fragrant tree or bush

### *Alphabet Hike*

Find various items with names that begin with each letter of the alphabet.

Go in order from A to Z.