



## PROGRAM CURRICULUM UNITS



All curriculum units are correlated with the Illinois Learning Standards and will be delivered at an age-appropriate level for your students. Teacher input is encouraged in the planning for any of the field trip (field lab) experiences so that these experiential lessons will correlate well with the academic lessons being studied in your classroom. We will custom design curriculum units to meet your needs and those of your students. The following descriptions are general. Some are better suited to certain age levels, but most can be modified to the learning level of your students.

AMAZING ANIMALS – Animals come in all shapes and sizes and each has its own interesting characteristics and behaviors. Tracks, homes, droppings, feathers, and other tell-tale signs will help us discover the animals that live in central Illinois as we hike through the woods or prairie. Simulation games and activities add lots of fun and excitement to this unit.

BIRD BASICS – Learn the basics of bird identification through sight and sound while exploring prairie, forest, and pond. Binoculars, bird guides, and our bird feeding station are all “tools of the trade” while learning some of the unique features and behaviors of birds that live here in Illinois.

BEAKS & FEET – Silent flight, specialized beaks and feet, and keen eyesight are just a few of the amazing adaptations that students will discover during their visit. How do animals survive the dangers with which they are constantly confronted, such as predators, disease, habitat destruction, and more? Students will be actively involved.

WHO EATS WHO? - Food chains, food webs, special adaptations, limiting factors, and much more will be investigated and experienced through interactive activities. Role-playing helps students learn how difficult it is for critters to survive and that all things in nature really ARE connected.

TREES ARE TERRIFIC– Learn about trees and their importance to humans and wildlife, as well as the diversity that makes up a forest. We can make this unit as simple or complex as you wish, using a variety of learning experiences including sensory activities, concept games, how to use a tree identification guide, and investigation of forest types and layers.

ROCK ON! -GEOLOGY -- Basic rock types, fossils, soil erosion, weathering, and effects of glaciations could all be included in this geology unit. See examples of erosion and how it affects the land. Our camps have fun creek beds in which we find lots of fossils. Rock hammers and goggles are provided for you and your “rock hounds.”

SURVIVING OUTDOORS -- “Take only pictures and leave only footprints,” describes a gentler approach to outdoor living. This class reinforces the concept of minimum impact on the environment while at the same time teaching skills that can increase comfort level in an outdoor setting. Lots of interactive activities such as fire building, water purifying, signaling, first aid tips, knot tying and shelter-building help us accomplish this in a fun way.

HABITAT CONNECTIONS – Included on our camp property are several different types of wildlife habitats that host many different interesting plants and animals....hardwood forest, pond, creeks, open fields, and prairie. Whether you choose to explore one or more during your visit with our naturalist, you'll enjoy the exploration and first hand experience you have while you learn what makes a good habitat and how humans can affect them.

INCREDIBLE INSECTS– Have you ever gone on an insect “sweep,” played a “role” in an ant colony drama, or searched for all stages of insect life in a single morning? Hands-on investigations and participation in simulated activities teach students about the insect world and how it affects humans, and vice versa.

POND EXPLORERS – Dip nets and buckets are a must with this popular activity. The lakes at camp provide an excellent opportunity for learning about the aquatic life in this area. Proper methods of collecting, identifying, and exploring for ‘critters’ (organisms) gives students a wealth of experience no textbook could ever provide. While directed by our naturalists, this unit gives the natural curiosity of students a chance to discover and learn. Participants may build an “observation pond” in order to get a closer look at the living things we find. With older students, the physical and chemical properties of the lake can be studied with lake monitoring equipment and watershed protection issues can be addressed.

MAP AND COMPASS ADVENTURES -- Basic orienteering with map and compass is a practical skill that combines math knowledge with practical field use. Each student learns how to use a compass and develops knowledge by doing. These activities may include a combination of map work, warm-up games, setting a compass course, or running a course. Working together as a small group helps each student learn group dynamics and teamwork, as well as confidence in compass abilities.

MAPLE SYRUP SWEETNESS -- From sap to syrup, students learn the whole process of maple syrup production: tapping trees, gathering maple sap, and boiling it down to syrup. Students then get to taste test the finished product. (Available from late January through early March, approximately.)

EXCITING ECOLOGY – Food chains, interrelationships, and competition are experienced through interactive activities and discussion on this field trip. Students will learn that all things in nature are connected and that the “web of life” is affected by many things. The games, hikes, and activities make these concepts come to life, making this class a favorite.

PREDATOR PREY – Students will learn the interconnected relationship between predator and prey. Students become herbivores, omnivores, and carnivores in engaging role-playing activities. The dramas they experience teach them more than a thousand words and they walk away with an exhilarating feeling. Teachers marvel at how well it reinforces what they cover in the classroom.

SEASONAL CYCLES – We take a look at plants and animals and the changes that occur with each passing season. Consider visiting GSCI camps during two or more seasons to get a first-hand look at the changes in the visual landscape as well as the ‘clues’ left behind, indicating behavioral changes of the birds, mammals, amphibians and other animals.

SIMPLY SENSE-ATIONAL– We will help students explore the natural world with all their senses as we take you on a hike through one of the most beautiful areas at camp. Fun activities will also highlight wildlife’s keen senses of hearing, sight, smells, and touch.

THE GREEN SCENE- All About Plants -- Plant observation and investigation is a great way to take classroom knowledge to a new level. Learn ID techniques, interesting characteristics that help plants survive, water cycle and food chain connections, and more. Many seldom-found wildflowers and plants flourish at camp. Edible and medicinal plants could also be added to the scope of this investigation.

BIODIVERSITY 101 -- Illinois is so much more than just corn and soybeans! Learn about the vast variety of organisms and habitats here and how important this diversity is in enabling life to exist on the planet. Why is loss of biodiversity one of the most urgent environmental problems facing us today and how can we do our part to protect it?

EARTH IS OUR HOME -- Students become conscious of their roles as caretakers of this planet. A series of activities exhibit our impact on the earth and how we can make our home a better place for the people, plants, and animals that share it. Simple conservation work projects such as blue bird nest box improvements or monitoring, trail improvements, tree planting, or prairie restoration can be part of this unit, if you wish.

WAZZUP IN YOUR WATERSHED? -- Water is such an important element in our lives! Explore interactively the concepts of watersheds, the water cycle, rainfall, run-off, ground water, transpiration, evaporation...and how humans effect it all. Water testing (of our lake) can also be part of this unit. Monitoring equipment for both physical and chemical characteristics is available.

BLAST FROM THE PAST! - Have you ever wondered how earlier varieties of humans lived every day life before us? This is your chance to gain a sense of place in central Illinois. Learn about who lived on the land before us. Join us in role playing and characterization of the pioneers, voyageurs, Native Americans, and much more!

NOTE:

**Besides the obvious science-related focus, our environmental education programs can meet the curriculum needs of all areas, including but not exclusive to language arts, math, social studies, history and current events. These field trips also serve as great incentive trips, team building experiences and end of the year “special days.” They are positive rewarding experiences for the children, as well as fun and educational.**