

SONGS, SPARKS AND STORIES

OVERVIEW: An exciting evening of songs, skits, stories and games, with our instructors and the students working together to entertain the group. Good-spirited fun is the idea without TV or electricity! The class takes place around a campfire and is ideal for large or small groups.

PRINCIPLE:

- You can have fun without using electricity!

NIGHT HIKE

OVERVIEW: During a walk through the night-time forest, students learn to explore their senses in a nocturnal setting. Topics such as night-vision, sensory awareness, nocturnal wildlife and comfort with the darkness are discussed and explored during this very popular activity.

Please have an alternate (indoor) Evening Program in mind in case of inclement weather conditions.

We recommend that Night Hikes not be chosen in May, due to long daylight hours!

PRINCIPLES:

- Humans can rely on night vision and other senses in nocturnal settings.
- Nocturnal creatures have special adaptations such as excellent night vision, other heightened senses, unique coloring and echo-location which allow them to be successful in the absence of light.
- The forest at night “blooms and sings, and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings”.

KEY TERMS: Nocturnal, night vision, echo-location, senses, adaptations, diurnal, crepuscular, arrhythmic, safety

INVENTION CONVENTION

OVERVIEW: During this indoor activity, students build camaraderie, cooperation skills and group spirit. Working in small groups, students use imagination, creativity, ingenuity and teamwork to create sculptures, short skits, silly word definitions, or functioning machines. This class has a large arsenal of possible activities so each program is unique.

PRINCIPLES:

- One can have fun incorporating creativity and minimal resources.
- Working cooperatively can generate many ideas and designs.
- The process of inventing often requires collaboration, brainstorming, planning, and problem-solving.

KEY TERMS: teamwork, cooperation, create, communicate, invent, convention

RADICAL RAPTORS

OVERVIEW: There’s nothing like the real thing! Students get an up-close view of live birds of prey (such as a hawk or owl). These amazing creatures teach about their habitats, specialized traits and ecological significance.

PRINCIPLES:

- Raptors have specialized behaviors and body structures to survive.
- Raptors fill an important role in the ecosystem
- Raptors of the southeast need our protection.

KEY TERMS: raptor, adaptation, talon, apex predator, food chain, nocturnal, diurnal, nictitating membrane, community, ecosystem

HOP, SLITHER & SLIDE

OVERVIEW: Touching a snake, meeting an amphibian, and busting myths lead students to overcome their fears. Live animals, data interpretation, and discussion add personal meaning to biodiversity and conservation topics.

PRINCIPLES:

- Reptiles and amphibians are largely misunderstood.
- Reptiles and amphibians of the region are uniquely diverse.
- Loss of reptilian and amphibian biodiversity is a cause for concern.

KEY TERMS: reptile, amphibian, introduce/invasive species, biodiversity, traits, herpetology, adaptations, ecosystem

BIG SCREEN

OVERVIEW: Students explore how cultures have understood the night sky through stories and through science. The evening includes guided stargazing, highlighted seasonal constellations/asterisms and other celestial bodies, moon phase and eclipse simulations and orations of celestial myths. The evening also includes a camp fire—accommodations can be made in case of inclement weather.

PRINCIPLES:

- The universe is an immense, dynamic system.
- Many resources are available for basic astronomy and sky-gazing.
- Constellations are groupings of pictures, stars, black holes, nebulae, galaxies and other assorted objects.
- Asterisms are a picture or grouping of stars that form a shape in the sky.
- For centuries, myths and stories were created by people to explain the natural world.

KEY TERMS: star, astronomy, constellation, moon phases, solar system, myths, planets, orbit, asterism, waxing, waning, eclipse

McDOWELL WOODS

OVERVIEW: Participating in a town-hall role play, students experience a scenario in which a parcel of land has been donated to Camp McDowell and they must help to propose how it will be used. Students act as farmers, scientists, environmentalists, developers, teachers, etc. and must represent and defend their view point. This is a powerful way for students to connect the lessons learned at McDowell to real life! ***Recommended for 6th grade and up**

PRINCIPLES:

- Making decisions about land use can be challenging.
- When making a decision, it is important to weigh all of the evidence.
- All viewpoints should be listened to and considered with respect.
- Groups that seem to be in opposition can often find ways to work together.

KEY TERMS: Town hall meeting, perspective, view point, scenario, acre, development, environmentalist, preservation, archaeologist, real estate agent, stake holders