

**HELP!!! Do you have other simple activities that work for you when you have a group of young children? Please let Mike or Greg know so that your ideas can be included in future versions of this resource.**

**Suggestions:**

- Ask the teacher what signal they use to get the kids' attention.
- Give a student a gallon size Ziplock bag for any litter that may be found. They are the litter getter!
- Often students will want to tell "stories," which is great, but can eat up a lot of time, and other students, who may have heard the story already, can get bored/antsy. If it becomes a problem, tell the students that we need questions rather than stories.

It all begins with enthusiasm. When these little ones arrive, their first experiences are through their senses. The newness of the forest, the shadows in the forest, the stillness of the forest, the stories they may have heard that include a forest setting all play into their heightened imagination and curiosity. They will be excited, curious, and, maybe, apprehensive.

Our purpose with young children is to cultivate that sense of wonder, curiosity, and interest and to help develop a sense of caring. Like all of us, young children need to care about the environment before they are ready to hear about environmental problems such as climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, or overpopulation. One will only work to protect something if they know and care about it. Environmental problems aren't really an appropriate topic for kids under grade four or so. We hope that the ideas below will help you to help the children come to appreciate the forest environment as well as learn about it. Some of the activities (in *italics*) are written as scripts for you to adapt to your own speaking style.

**Meeting the children:**

- Introduce yourself and welcome them to Armstrong Redwoods.
- Ask whether any of them have been here before.
- Invite them to ask questions as you walk.
- Explain that we will be walking on trails through the redwood forest.
- Review the signal for getting their attention...If the teacher hasn't told you, ask the kids!

We can begin with developing the understanding that we are visitors to a community of living things. We are entering their neighborhood. We are visiting their homes. Every living thing in the forest is waiting to see, hear, smell and feel us. Some are too fearful and will hide. Some will call out to us, but we might not see them. Others will creep and crawl, going about their daily lives, looking for food, hiding from hungry predators.

(F.Y.I.: Social Studies in Kindergarten focuses on the home, first grade on school, second grade on the community, third grade on the county, and fourth grade on the state.)

The community of living things isn't just animals, though. There are plants, including these wonderful redwood trees. Quietly standing in their place, roots deep in the ground, stretching their branches towards the sun. Saying, "Good morning" to their little ones, their neighbors, and all the animal friends that make their homes in the tree, hiding and feeding among its leaves, branches, and roots.

**Activity/script:** *Ask the children how we are like trees.* Elicit that:

- *Trees are alive! We are alive!*
- *Trees need water! We need water!*
- *Trees need air! We need air!*
- *Trees need food! We need food! Trees make their own food. We grow our food.*

**Activity/script:** *Trees make their own food? How do they do that?*

*Let's see... If we wanted to make a PB&J sandwich. What ingredients (stuff) would we need?*

*Elicit: Bread...right! Peanut butter...right! And Jelly... right. What flavor would the jelly be?*

*If a tree wants to make food it also needs ingredients (stuff). What do you think it needs?*

*It needs WATER. It needs SUNSHINE. It needs AIR. It needs SOIL.*

*A tree uses these ingredients and makes sugar to feed all parts of its body. What?! Do trees have bodies?*

*What are the **parts of a tree**? (Do this near a tree that has leaves, having the students point out the parts.)*

*Elicit: Trees have roots, a trunk or stem, branches and leaves.*

*They also have seeds that can grow into new trees. (At some point on the trail, ask students to point out trunks/stems, branches, and leaves again, and review their functions. Also have some redwood cones, a jar of redwood seeds, and some "bug boxes" with redwood seeds glued to white card stock stuck to the bottom with clear nail polish. Bring these redwood seeds out at some point on the trail.)*

*Do redwood trees have leaves? YES/NO? I once didn't think they had leaves either. I thought they had needles. Like pine needles. But plant scientists call the needles, leaves. Needles are the leaves of redwood trees! (Show a sample of redwood needles.)*

*Did you know that the leaves act as sponges? YEP! They soak up water, air and sunlight.*

*So the food is made in their leaves and then passed along to every part of the tree.*

*Trees make food all day long, every day.*

### **Some Parking Lot Activities:**

#### **Purposes:**

- These activities can serve as icebreakers to help the kids feel more comfortable with the docent and also more comfortable in a new place.
- These activities can help stagger different groups' start times so the trail doesn't get "clogged up".
- These activities might be done during the walk if groups catch up and need to separate.

#### **Activity: Meet the Maple Tree**

**Materials:** Check to see if there are Big Leaf Maple seeds on the ground, or if clusters on the trees can be reached. If so, gather some.

Take the group to one of the Big Leaf Maple trees around the parking lot. Have them identify the parts (stem, branches, leaves). *Where are the roots? Where are the seeds?*

*Ask the children if they like pancakes or waffles. What do we put on pancakes? (syrup). Explain that maple syrup is actually the sweet sap of the sugar maple tree. We don't have sugar maple trees here, but we do have a relative. It is the Big Leaf Maple. Show them a Big Leaf Maple Tree and have them identify the parts.*

If there are seed clusters on the ground or on the tree, point them out. Have each child pick up a seed that has a wing and toss it into the air. Ask:

*Does spinning in the air make the seed take longer to reach the ground?*

*Could wind blow it away from the tree from which it came?*

*How will getting away from the tree help the seed survive and grow into a new tree (less competition for sun and water)*

Have them take their seeds to the porch in front of the Visitor Center and toss them off the porch. Explain that *we have to leave the seeds here for animals to eat when we aren't around...in the night.*

### **A call and response activity:**

*To get the wiggles out, listen to what I say and do what I do.*

- *“Clap your hands and hold them tight. Shake them to the left and shake to the right.”*
- *“Put one hand high and one hand low. Clap three times and roll that dough.”*
- *“Point your left elbow and then your then your right.”*
- *“Slap your knees and hold them tight.”*
- *“Reach up high and then down low. Scatter all the dust and then off we go.”*

(You can play this call and respond game a couple of times going faster and faster. They love the challenge.)

### **Too much? Then play a game of Twenty Questions.**

**Materials:** Pictures of redwood forest animals (see “Information for Docents” in the Stewards Volunteer Resources, or clip from calendars or magazines, or use postcards from the Visitor Center, or use the pictures provided below (pg 7-8). Attach the picture(s) to card stock. We recommend that you laminate the picture(s). )

Explain how the game is played:

- Students gather in front of the teacher. Docent or parent holds the picture above the teacher’s head so that the students can see it but the teacher can’t.
- The teacher tries to identify the animal by asking “yes/no” questions.
- If the students don’t know the answer, the docent or a parent can nod “yes” or “no” to help them.

### **Predator/Prey game:**

**Materials:** 8-10 cards with “predator” printed on them; 8-10 cards with “prey printed on them (See pg 9);  
2 bells;  
4 blindfolds (strips of cloth or bandanas)

*Ask the students if they know what a predator is? and what prey is. Ask for examples as well as definitions. If they don’t know, tell them and give some examples.*

*Ask students to name a predator. As students name predators, give them a card with the word “predator” on it. Give about half of the students predator cards.*

*Do the same with prey cards*

Have the students form a circle.

Choose 4 students to be the predators and blindfold them. (Maybe have the teacher choose ... There may be students who should or should not be the predators or prey for various reasons.) Blindfold the 4 predators. Tell them that you are going to give bells to a couple of prey animals, and the predators’ job is to find the prey just by listening for the bells... **Walking fast only!**

Choose 2 other students to be the prey and give them bells.

*Start the game by telling the prey to ring the bell and the predators to try to find the prey. **Walking fast only.***

*Ask the students: **Would predators make a lot of noise? Why not? (would warn the prey) What about prey animals? So...we need to be silent while playing this game...so that the predators can hear the bell.***

*Game ends when one or both prey is captured. If too difficult, make the circle smaller.*

*Well that’s enough talking for now. Are you ready to explore the redwood forest community?! Then we need to be polite and we need to be respectful. Would you like it if some stranger came running and screaming through your house? Let’s use quiet voices and walking as we introduce ourselves to the animal and plant families and individuals living in the forest.*

*ALL RIGHT! Let’s begin our hike! Remember...We’re guests in the forest! Walking and quiet voices! And please don’t walk or sit on the fence along the trail. Who is our litter getter?*

## Activities for the trail:

### Spotter Cards:

#### **Materials: sets of Spotter Cards\***

These are laminated cards with pictures of things that students will see while on the walk. Give one to each student, or each pair of students, and tell them to let you know when they see (spot) the thing in the picture. Tell them that they **do not have to find the exact tree**, but should be looking for trees with that **type** of leaf. (Be sure to collect the cards as they kids spot their things, or at the end.)

\*(If the Volunteer Center is open, you can check out a set of Spotter Cards. But it may not be open, so it would be a good idea to have your own set. You can download and print from the Stewards Volunteer tab, under Tools for Docents.)

### at the fallen stump with exposed roots:

*Ask the kids what part of the tree that is. Ask students what roots do for the tree.*

### at the stump with lots of carving in it:

Ask the students why people carved their names in the stump. *Do people come to Armstrong Redwoods to see other peoples' names carved into logs or tables? Would you ever do that? Let's keep the forest natural!*

### at the PARSON JONES TREE

If old enough to read, *ask students to read the sign and tell how tall the Parson Jones Tree is.*

*How tall is 300ft.? What if the tree fell down? How far would the top be from the roots?*

(The Keep Right sign on the paved road is approximately 300 ft.) Have parent stay at the root base sign.

Walk fast with the students and question., *"Is this far enough?"* at various distances. At the Keep Right sign, tell the students that the Parson Jones Tree is taller than the distance from here back to the tree.

Jog back if capable.

### at the JOHNSON BEACH STUMP:

Kids may want to climb on the roots. This is also a good place for a group photo. **Talk with the teacher. IF** the teacher allows it, young kids might climb on the low roots...maybe limit to waist high or lower?

### at the Luther Burbank Circle:

Depending on the age of the group, how crowded it is, group activity level, and other factors, this may be a good place to:

- Read a book such as *Raven* by Gerald McDermott or *The Treat Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry
- Have the students sit quietly and just listen, possibly with their eyes closed. Ask what they noticed
- Ask what they have learned so far and whether they have any questions.

**Before starting down the Discovery Trail towards the Armstrong Tree**, select a couple of parents and give them a bag of 10-12 items that they will place along the side of the trail...on or below the fence rails. Tell them to place the items about 10' apart, on both sides of the trail, either starting at the fungus sign or at the tree with a ramp. One parent will stay by the first placed item and the other will stay by the last one placed to assure that nobody else takes the items. As the last students go by, the parent at the first item will pick up the items and return them to the bag, using the card to be sure not to miss any items.

The items represent both "natural" things like bones, plastic animals, rocks, shells, etc., or "unnatural/man-made" things like water bottles, aluminum cans, face masks, snack packaging.

**before starting down the DISCOVERY TRAIL (While at the Johnson Beach stump or Burbank Circle)**

**While you are giving the parents time to place the items...**

Gather the kids and *ask if they have any questions so far. What have they noticed?*

Play a simple game called **ANIMAL FAMILIES**

The object of the game is to have students find and gather together with other students that make the same animal sound...their animal families.

**Materials:** 18 3x5 cards with the names of 6 different animals and the sounds they make, in a Ziplock bag.

One animal and sound per card (4 per animal family) 6x3 =18 For example (See page 10 below):

3 cat cards with meow-meow

3 cow cards with moo-moo

3 duck cards with quack-quack

3 owl cards with whoo-who

3 dog cards with woof-woof

3 sheep cards with baa-baa

Have the students form a small circle.

*Discuss what a family is and why animals gather together in a family or herd. (So that they can help each other and for protection.)*

*Tell them that you are going to put them into families by giving them a card with the name of an animal and the sound that it makes. NO PEEKING!! And NO SCREAMING!*

*Let's practice: What noise does a mouse make? Let's all squeak...but no screaming!*

Give each student a card with an animal and its sound.

*When you say, GO!, each student will turn over their card and make the sound. (Remind them...NO SCREAMING! Now go and find and gather with your Animal Family! (For very young kids, adults may need to read the animal name and sound. For older kids, have them close their eyes while searching.)*

Takes about 2-3 minutes max. When complete call out the animal families and collect cards.

By now the **UNNATURAL TRAIL** should be ready.

Before you start, tell the group that you are going to have *them look for items on the trail that were placed by the parents. Tell them to try to remember the items. Tell them that some things will be unnatural (manmade) things. Others will be "natural" ... either real things such as a shell or bone, or maybe a plastic thing that looks like a natural thing such as an animal or plant.*

**"NO TALKING"** and **"PLEASE DO NOT PICK UP ANY ITEM"** Demonstrate how to look and point (with exaggerated motions by looking back and forth while walking and pointing at random objects)

Assign a parent or two to stay with the group and send the kids in pairs down the trail. Stagger the groups, starting them 15-30 seconds apart. (The parent(s) will go with the last group. )

You go with the first pair of students. Once you finish the trail, stand and receive the pairs *asking them if they can remember/name what they saw.*

*What have the seen or observed today so far? Any questions?*

at the **TREE WITH A RAMP ... the Hug-a-Tree**

*Ask the students why the ramp might be there.* Explain that redwood tree roots are very near the surface, and that if too many people walk on them, they can hurt the roots. The trail that we've been working on has a protective layer of thick plastic under the dirt and gravel.

But trees do so much for us that people like to hug trees. So the ramp was built so that people can get close to the tree and give it a hug without walking on its roots. *What do trees do for us?* (provide wood, oxygen, shade,

food (fruit trees), beauty, homes for animals, and many other things. *You can go up the ramp and give the tree a great big hug and thank it!* (photo op for parents!)

### **at the ARMSTRONG TREE: demonstrating CIRCUMFERENCE**

**Materials:** Prepare a string that is 46' long. Wrap it around a cardboard cylinder, piece of wood, or short length of pvc pipe. A tissue tube works great. (If you buy a spool of cord at the hardware store, remove all except 46' from the spool and use the spool itself. Maybe drill a hole in the spool or pvc pipe and attach the string to it.)

When you have finished discussing the Armstrong Tree, have the group form a circle, adults included. Now hand one piece of the string to a student and walk slowly around the outside of the circle unrolling the string. Adjust the circle so that the string and their bodies show the size. When finished marvel at the size of your circle and then look up towards the top of the Armstrong tree. *WOW!! This is one huge tree. It is a giant.*

### **The Slithery Dee Song**

Some groups want to go to the Forest Theater. If they do, this is a good place to sing a simple song with the kids. Here's Mike's Slithery Dee song, but it can be used anywhere to keep groups spread out.

First, get agreement from the group (including adults!) that they will sing it with you after you sing it once for them. Have the kids and adults on the stage while you lead them from the orchestra pit.

For young kids, substitute "silly" for "stupid." (Some classes have a rule against the "s word" 😊 )

This song can also be sung at the oceanside, substituting "sea" for "tree." In fact, I got it from an old Smothers Brothers album, and they used "sea." Here's a link to a YouTube video for the tune:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7bYI9-SoxI>

Oh, the slithery dee.  
he crawled out of the tree. (at the coast, ...out of the sea)  
You may catch all the others,  
but you won't catch me!  
No you won't catch me,  
you stupid old slithery dee. (or **silly** old slithery dee)  
You may catch all the others,  
but you won't catch sluuurrrpp!

Accompany the song with exaggerated motions, pointing up into the trees, to your elf, wagging finger "no" etc.. Sing it once, then sing it one line at a time with the group singing the line after you do. If they start off singing unenthusiastically, start over, encouraging them to sing loud and clear.

**Some resources:** The following resources are available for docent check-out in the Stewards Library:

- *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* (from Project Learning Tree)
- *Growing Up WILD – Exploring Nature With Young Children* (from Project WILD)
- *Sharing Nature With Children* by Joseph Cornell (classic collection of activities)
- *Beyond Ecophobia – Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education*, by David Sobel (From the cover: "What's important is that children have an opportunity to bond with the natural world, to learn to love it, before being asked to heal its wounds.")

20 Questions Animals: Attach to 5" x 8" cards, back to back. Laminate?



Mule Deer from iNaturalist, by kathlinsimkins



Spotted Owl from iNaturalist, by Matt D'Agrosa



Raccoon from iNaturalist, by henrya



Raven (or Crow) from iNaturalist, by Dario



Predator/Prey cards...Make 8-10 of each term, cut, and glue to 5"x8" cards...lamine?

**PREDATOR**

**PREDATOR**

**PREDATOR**

**PREDATOR**

**PREY      PREY**

**PREY      PREY**

**Animal Families**

Make 4 copies on card stock, or cut and paste onto 3"x5" cards...lamine?

<b>Sheep</b> <b>say</b> <b>baa - baa</b>	<b>COWS</b> <b>say</b> <b>moo - moo</b>	<b>CATS</b> <b>say</b> <b>meow - meow</b>
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<b>OWLS</b> <b>say</b> <b>hoo - hoo</b>	<b>DUCKS</b> <b>say</b> <b>quack - quack</b>	<b>DOGS</b> <b>say</b> <b>woof - woof</b>
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