

What's
Outside
Your Door?



You can help a
child discover the
wonder and joy of
playing in nature.

California State Parks
invites you to take this
little book outdoors to
explore the treasures
that await you. Enjoy
these **SAFE** and **FUN**
activities while you create
memories together!



Activity 1:
Making “Sense”
of Nature

Listen!

- Frogs croak, insects chirp, and birds sing in nature’s chorus outside your door.
- What message do you think these animals are sending?
- Can you imitate any parts of the critter chorus?



LOOK!

- Find wildlife everywhere in California – in cities, roaming suburbs and across farmlands.
- Become a wildlife detective with “I Spy:” Start by eye-spying a wild critter that both you and your friend can see.
- Announce what you’re spying: “I spy a scrub jay,”



then challenge your friend to spot that creature with as few clues to its location as possible.

- Take turns eye-spying things flying in the sky, perched in a tree, or scurrying across the grass.

Smell!

- Use your nose to make “sense” of California’s nature. Different smells in the air can tickle your nose—blooming

flowers, strongly scented tree leaves, even soil.

- Ordinary-looking plants with extraordinary scents grow in your own neighborhood or schoolyard: wild sage (think roast chicken), wild fennel (think licorice) or bay (think pizza sauce).
- A variety of smells is all around us—just ask your nose!



Touch!

- Did you know that every tree species has a unique bark pattern and texture?
- Some are rough, some are smooth, and some bark actually protects trees during wildfires!
- Spot a tree nearby? Look closely at the bark as you run your fingers over it.

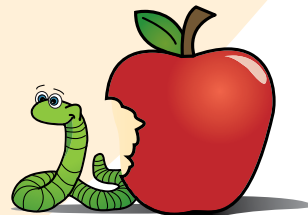


- What do your fingertips tell you about the tree?
- How many ways can you describe the tree by touching it?

Taste!

- Explore nature in a grocery store or farmers’ market! Looking at fruits and veggies, think of things you’ve tasted before, like crisp carrots or juicy apples.
- Do you see something that you’ve never tasted before,

like jicama or a tangelo? Guess how it would taste by comparing how it looks and feels to something you have tasted. Next time you help plan dinner in your house, add a new fruit or veggie to let your taste buds help you make “sense” of nature!



Activity 2:

Star Light, Star Bright!

Seeing a full moon is cool, but what can you do when the moon isn't full?

- On a clear night with no full moon, sit far away from all lights. Look up in the sky to find a wide band of stars running north to south—the Milky Way. The red supergiant star at the lower edge is Antares, 700 times larger than our sun!

- Look for the North Star. For centuries, people in the Northern Hemisphere have used the North Star to navigate. If you watch the North Star at night, the other stars seem to float in an arc around it. The cause is the Earth's rotation one

full circle each day beneath the North Star.

- Because it's such an interesting object in the night sky, the North Star is a part of legends in many cultures.



★ North
Star



Activity 3:

Going Buggy in Your Neighborhood!

What's going on below that rotting log or that pile of leaves? Try a mini-beast scavenger hunt to learn about the world beneath your feet.

- Get down to bug-eye level and gently peek under things. You might find that some bugs prefer cool, wet places while others lurk in the grass.

- How many kinds of bugs can you find on your bug safari?
- How are the bugs alike? Different?
- Check the same spot every season. Do the types of bug change over time? Why? Predict what you may find there next season.



Activity 4:

What Fine Feathers You Have!

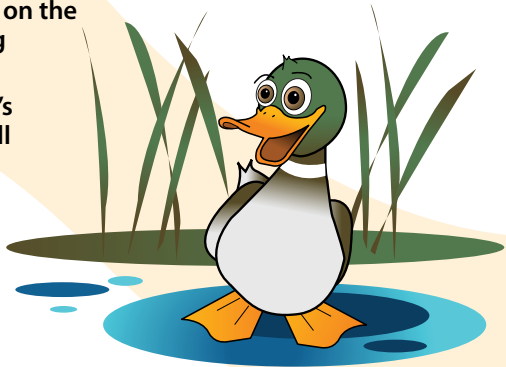
Let's spy on feathered friends living in our neighborhoods.

- When you see a bird, check out the color of the feathers on the bird's head, wings, and belly. Are they all the same?
- Using binoculars, check out the bird's beak. Is it narrow and pointy or long and round? Guess what the bird

eats by the shape of its beak.

- Now check out the bird's behavior. Does it spend most of its time on the ground or flying around?
- Watching a bird's behavior can tell you a lot about its species!
- Carefully compare the colors, traits and behaviors of many

different kinds of birds in your neighborhood, and make sure to tell them what fine feathers they have!



Activity 5: Who Eats What?

This activity is best with two or more people, so rustle up your friends and family!

- One person starts by naming a large animal, then asks a question about what it eats. "I am a mountain lion, and I eat ___?"
- The next player repeats the question, gives the answer, and adds a new question.

Bears
eat fish

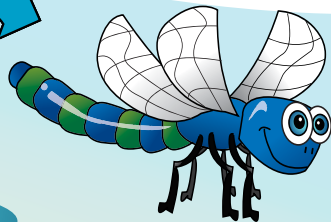


"I'm a mountain lion, and I eat rabbits. Rabbits eat ___?" Carry on the game as far as you can. This game lets you think about all things in nature that animals depend on to survive. For fun, play again and start with something that YOU eat. "I'm a human being, and I eat ___?"

Fish eat insects



Some large insects
eat smaller insects
and larvae



Some insects
eat plants



Activity 6: The Many Shades of Nature



Here's a game where the players try to name a variety of creatures or plants in nature that are the same color. (Green is a great way to start.)

- Each player takes a turn saying the phrase,

"I'm thinking of a green thing—grass!" Another player might say "Green like a hummingbird's wing."

- Encourage all players, especially the young ones, to think about colors during the four seasons and



The color blue like a blue jay



The color orange like a California poppy

different objects from the neighborhood, the schoolyard or the park that may not come to mind right away.

- When playing with older kids, you can make the

game a bit harder by asking for more detailed answers. For example, a player might say, "Green like grass in the springtime."

- Have fun choosing all the colors in the biggest box of crayons.



The color green like a leaf

The color yellow like a lemon

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