

## General Ecology Hike

For Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade



### Possible Theme Statements:

- The wild ones thrive here, in your back yard, because we care enough to protect their homes as Open Space and Mountain Parks.
- Our green space is a great place for wild animals to live.
- Without Open Space and Mountain Parks there'd be no bears in your back yard.  
*[For a program more focused on bears, a great fall topic.]*

**Universal themes inherent in program or explicitly written in theme statements:**  
survival, connection, care, protection

Topics:

1. **You** own OSMP
2. OSMP is home to lots of different plants and animals
3. Habitats
4. Food chains
5. Simple "Leave No Trace" for young children

### Greeting/Intro:

Greet them with the bear skin from the Ranger Cottage– "There are bears in your back yard!"

Yes, right here! What brings them here? – food (show scat with seeds)  
Have you ever seen a bear?

Who else do you think lives here?

"Well, lets go see if we can find any of these animals!"

Up to trailhead where review: staying on trail, LNT and being quiet

"OK, lets see what we can find, look and listen carefully."

### Hit the trail:

#### Stop 1

"Can you imagine what it would be like to live here as a wild animal? Would you want to?"

"Here's your chance!"

Play the "Who am I?" game up to the next stop.

#### Stop2 "Who are you?"

– "I'm (student's name) and I'm a (animal pinned to his/her back)."

"What do you need to survive as a human?"

- food, water, shelter, space, air

"What do you think you need to survive here?"

Same things.

– lead into discussion about habitats = food, water, shelter, space, air

“Where do you (as your wild animal self) live?”

- answers = forest, meadow, pond, rock cliffs

All of these places, homes, are preserved here in OSMP so that these wild animals can survive. Right in your back yard.

“Let’s look for some of our forest animals. Keep your eyes out for an Abert squirrel, this is where she lives.” (continue hiking into the woods)

### **Stop 3**

Interpret an Abert squirrel if you see one (or carry the photo with you) or stop at chewed twig ends.

### **Stop 4**

With a view of the Flatirons and a picture of a peregrine falcon, or the eagle’s skull and ceramic egg, interpret the rocky crags as a place where rare birds can nest without people bothering them.

**Final stop:** (before they see the parking lot or a school bus and you lose their attention)

“Who can tell me what your wild animal eats? And who eats you?”

- food web/chain discussion

- play G/E/W game (demonstrating food webs)

### **Conclusion:**

Did you have any idea all this was going on right here in your back yard?

And who owns this? You own it!

How can you help take care of it? “Leave No Trace” discussion appropriate for youngsters

- “Is it okay to pick a flower or take a pretty rock home?” No, because that flower may be someone’s food and the rock may provide someone else with shelter.
- “What would happen if your dog chased a wild animal?” That causes an animal to burn precious calories and may even kill it or a baby it is carrying.
- “What happens if everyone walked off trail?”
- “Might a bear eat the plastic bag that held your sandwich if you left it behind? Would that be good for the bear?”
- “Would it be okay to bring a pretty rock home?” No, that might be an insect’s shelter from the rain.

Everything you find here builds the home these animals and plants live in. It’s our responsibility to leave it all here for them.