

"DON'T TEAR ME APART OR CRUSH MY HOME"

GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATING AN ENVIRONMENT



"Yikes! Watch Out! You almost stepped on my home! **Ouch!** You just crunched me with your big foot!"

If plants and animals could talk, this is what they might say to someone who is carelessly tromping through their home. It is important to be aware of your actions when going out to explore wildlife habitat. Here are several guidelines to follow so that minimal damage will be done to the environment as a result of your visit.

1. When visiting private property or public lands, it is your responsibility to know the rules and to follow them. Be sure to get permission from the owner before you visit private land.
2. Stay on the trail whenever possible. If it is necessary to go off the trail, try to avoid stepping on plants and well-camouflaged ground nests.
3. Do not eat any plants or fruits (berries) before asking your teacher or an adult who can positively identify that it is edible.
4. When collecting samples for the classroom, take as few samples as possible and share them.
5. When taking a sample, take from the ground before taking from the plant. If you do take from the plant, take only a leaf or a small branch from the side of the plant, not from the top. Some plants have compound leaves, so get a whole leaf and not just a leaflet for identification.
6. Carefully remove the branch or leaf to avoid tearing the bark or damaging the remaining plant.
7. Take bark from dead trees only.
8. Do not take any live eggs for classroom samples unless your teacher has a permit!

9. When collecting samples, carry the samples carefully so they will be good specimens when you return to the classroom.
10. If collecting a whole plant, loosen the soil around the plant and roots with a digging tool, so roots can be easily removed. Try to collect the entire root or at least a representative portion. Fill in the hole with loose soil to protect plants nearby.
11. If you are interested in viewing wildlife, you must be very quiet and move slowly so you won't frighten the wildlife away before you get a chance to see it!
12. A safe distance should always be kept from any animal for your protection and theirs.