

Title

The Art of Field Guiding

Objective: Students will understand the purpose of using field guide and the basics of how to effectively implement this strategy.

Standards:

K-LS1-1, K-ESS3-1, K-ETS1-2, H.13.K.3, 1-ETS1-2, W.2.7, 2-PS1-1, 2-LS4-1, 2-ETS1-2, 3-LS3-2, 4-LS1-1, H.12.4.5, 5-ESS3-1, 6-ESS3-4

Introduction:

Field guides are popular today in many forms, from basic pocket guides, to dense textbooks, to cell phone apps. Choosing a field guide can be overwhelming, but this program seeks to ease that feeling by introducing participants to using art and their senses to aid them in field identification. As participants are asked to draw wildflowers, they will begin to take note of the important features to focus on when trying to identify plant life.

Audience:

This program is suitable for any age and any artistic level.

Duration:

30-40 Minutes

Materials:

Field guidebooks
Historic field guides or botanical/wildlife photos
Pencils
Field guide sheets
Clipboards

Warm up:

- Introduction: The Field Guide
 - Explain structure of program: We will discuss history of field guides, go find some plants to draw and then identify using field guides.
 - How many of you have used a field guide before? When/what for? What was your experience like? Positive/negative/overwhelming?
 - What is the purpose of a field guide? What types of things would you expect to find in a field guide?

Main lesson:

- Part 1: History of Field Guides
 - What do you think the first field guides might have been like? How did people make them?
 - 4th Century BCE – Aristotle describes over 170 birds in his work on mammals and described some plants.
 - Many other scholars begin to keep written records of various wildlife species; drawings did not become common until later.
 - 14th century – German scholar Megenberg writes first book (Book of Nature) that depicts flowers for botanical purposes rather than for decoration.
 - Bird drawings/paintings begin to become more common.
 - 1890 - “Birds Through an Opera-Glass” by Florence Merriam – considered the first of the modern illustrated guides (originally published in Audubon magazine).
 - Opera-glasses were originally used to view the stage better at the theater – she used them as “binoculars”
 - 1893 - “How to Know Wildflowers” by Frances Parsons – first popular field guide in the U.S. (someone else illustrated for her).
 - Into 1930s – Chester Reed started releasing more guides, many of them pocket-sized for the field.
 - 1934 – Roger Tory Peterson began using his artistic skill to illustrate his guides; he would draw similar birds on the same page with arrows pointing to the differences, making it easier to identify birds quickly in the field (show example of a Peterson guide).
 - This style has continued into present-day field guides.
 - Quote from Peterson’s wife, “A drawing can do much more than a photograph to emphasize the field marks. A photograph is a record of a fleeting instant; a drawing is a composite of the artist's experience. The artist can edit out, show field marks to best advantage, and delete unnecessary clutter. He can choose position and stress basic color and pattern unmodified by transitory light and shade. ... The artist has more options and far more control Whereas a photograph can have a living immediacy a good drawing is really more instructive.”
 - Why do you think authors continue to include a written description, even with drawings or photos?

Activity:

- Part 2: Drawing for Field Guides
 - Participants will be given a clipboard, pencil, leaf chart, ruler, and a blank field guide sheet.
 - Each person should spread out and find a different plant to draw.

- Be sure to pay attention to leaf shape and arrangement (go over sheet).
 - Try to draw as it is, including imperfections.
 - Only draw what you can see.
 - Try looking at it from different angles.
 - For flowers – draw big circle and inner circle, then fill in petals.
 - Start by just drawing shapes – then fill in details.
 - Encourage them to draw Peterson arrows, if helpful, to show unique features.
- Write a description of the plant – color, size, leaf shape, leaf arrangement, texture, environment it is growing in, and think of a common name that will help you (and others) remember the name of the flower.
- After everyone has finished, they will swap drawings and see if they can find each other's plants – have everyone give some constructive criticism (what was helpful/not helpful in finding the plant? What could they add?).
 - Alternatively, the group can go over each drawing /plant together, one by one.
- Part 3: Using a Field Guide
 - Show examples of different kinds of field guides.
 - Show variation in size, scientific vs. common name, regional vs. local, etc.
 - Go through basics together.
 - Send everyone back out to find the official common name and scientific name of the plants they drew (can work together).

Field Guide Worksheet

Official Common Name:

My Common Name:

Scientific Name:

Date:

Name:

Location: