



Activities for Children & Youth on the Trail

Hiker Challenge: Youth Distance Badge

Motivate the children and youth to hike more by challenging them to earn the Youth Distance Badge offered through Hike Nova Scotia's Hiker Challenge program. They keep track of the kilometres they hike over the course of one year:

- Ages 5 to 8: 15 km
- Ages 9 to 12: 30 km
- Ages 13 to 16: 45 km

Learn more and download the log book here: www.hikenovascotia.ca/projects-hiker-challenge.

Scavenger Hunt

Create a checklist of natural things for them to find along the hike and have a scavenger hunt. Be sure they simply find the items and don't collect them (remembering Leave No Trace Principles). Create a list and hand it out at the beginning of the hike. Find some good scavenger hunt ideas here:

www.lovetheoutdoors.com/camping/kids/scavengerhunt.htm.

Have a Theme

If introducing children and youth to nature is your aim, then consider having a theme for your hike like insects, flowers, trees, birds, rocks, animal tracks and signs, etc. Choose between five and 10 to identify along the way (more than that is just overwhelming). Really focus in on three things and give neat facts and ways of identifying them. If they don't remember all 10 things, they'll at least remember the three you really focused upon.

Magnifying Glasses

Buy some inexpensive hand-held magnifying glasses at a dollar store or toy store and use them on the hike. Encourage the kids to look for small stuff along the trail.

Nature Rubbings

Do Nature rubbings. Use a piece of paper to cover tree bark, a leaf, a rock or other things that have neat textures. Then use the side of a pencil or crayon and rub it over the paper until the pattern of the object emerges on the paper.

Sharing Nature Activities

Try some or all of the Sharing Nature activities found at Sharing Nature Worldwide:

www.sharingnature.com/nature-activities.html. These activities are based on those found in Joseph Cornell's popular Sharing Nature books. They are an excellent basis on which to build nature experiences for children. You can run these activities at different points along the trail.



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Nature Journal

Give the kids a nature journal to use while on the trail. Here's an idea for making a nature journal: www.sierraclub.org/education/nature_journal.asp. Kids of all ages can use the journal on the hike to make nature rubbings, sketch things they see, record the species they see, write their thoughts and create nature poetry.

Geocaching

Find out if there's a geocache along your trail, and if so, introduce the concept of geocaching to the kids and find the cache or caches on your trail together. Learn about geocaching in Nova Scotia here: nsgeocaching.com and here: www.geocaching.com.

Leave No Trace

Teach Leave No Trace Principles on your hike. Learn about them here: www.leavenotrace.ca. Stop periodically along the trail and talk for just a few minutes on each Principle.

Activities to Use with Children and Youth (books and online)

Earth Adventures online trail adventures for the Halifax Region and Kings County earthadventures.ca
Sharing Nature with Children and Sharing Nature with Children II books both by Joseph Cornell
Hikes with Tykes by Bob Bignell and the Hikes with Tykes blog hikeswithtykes.blogspot.com

Identifying Plants and Animals (books)

Animal Signatures by Edward Claridge and Betty Ann Milligan
Animal Tracks of Atlantic Canada by Ian Sheldon and Tamara Eder
Nova Scotia Birds: 80 Seashore & Water Birds by Jeffrey C. Domm
Shrubs of Nova Scotia by Raymond R. Fielding
Species at Risk in Nova Scotia: Identification & Information Guide (Mersey River Research Institute (MTRI))
(book or online at www.speciesatrisk.ca)
Trees of Knowledge: A Handbook of Maritime Trees by Geoffrey Ritchie
Wildlife of Nova Scotia by Julie Towers

Resources Online

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, naturalhistory.novascotia.ca
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Education Centre Online programs,
www.gov.ns.ca/natr/Education/NREC
Association of Nova Scotia Geocaching, nsgeocaching.com
Leave No Trace Canada, www.leavenotrace.ca
Hike Nova Scotia, www.hikenovascotia.ca