

Night Hike

Grade Levels: 3-12

Nutshell

Students experience the night world by hiking in small groups and performing various sensory activities. They learn about nocturnal animals, experience their own night vision, and, hopefully, begin to feel comfortable about being out at night.

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

- list three different nocturnal animals and describe how each is adapted to the night
- describe three natural objects using their senses of hearing, feeling, and smelling
- explain what night vision is and how it works
- give two reasons why some people may be afraid of the dark

Night Hike Pre-visit Activities

The following materials are aids to help prepare your students for their visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The vocabulary list contains terms and concepts your students will encounter in their visit. Please modify the definitions as needed. The activities listed below are merely options—it is not necessary to do them all or to follow any particular order. Keep in mind that your students' learning experiences at CWES will be enhanced if they are familiar with these concepts and terms prior to the on-site activities.

Vocabulary

- Crepuscular: active during dawn and dusk hours
Diurnal: active during daytime
Niche: the “job” or “role” a living thing has in its community or habitat
Nocturnal: active during nighttime

Activity #1

Turn the lights in your classroom off and darken the windows. Try to conduct a mini-lesson as you would normally do. Then, discuss how the level of light affected the class. What are some ways you and your class could adapt to the darkness and achieve your learning goals?

Activity #2

Ask your students to write and share a story about a personal experience that has happened to them at nighttime. Perhaps someone once scared them, they went star-gazing, discovered a “new” critter in their backyard, or remember a special evening campfire with their family. Do they think that they could have had this experience during the day? Why or why not? What makes the night the right time for certain activities? Why are other activities best for daytime?

Activity #3

Discuss the word “imagination.” At night, humans’ eyes are not able to distinguish colors as well as during the daytime. Discuss what happens to our imagination at night. Read together a night theme story such as *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen or *North Country Night* by Daniel San Souci. (See Resources for full citations.)

Night Hike Post-visit Activities

A visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station can be a school-year highlight for both students and their educators. We feel the knowledge and concepts gained during a Station visit apply outside the Station as well. The following activities will allow students to expand their knowledge and help them incorporate those lessons into their everyday lives. Feel free to pick from and modify the activities as best suits your group.

Activity #1

Ask each student to select and research a nocturnal animal. Make and share a poster advertising the advantages of each animal's lifestyle. Have them include information or pictures about where the animal lives, what it eats, where it "hides" during the day, etc. Encourage them to be creative and use words, poems, phrases, and/or pictures to describe their animal.

Activity #2

Some scientists are studying fireflies to gather clues about how people might be able to develop more energy efficient sources to produce light. (The light in fireflies' abdomens produces virtually no heat, unlike our light bulbs.) Find out about other ways that humans may learn lessons or have already learned lessons from nocturnal creatures. Some examples may include 1) bat echo-location, 2) fringed, silent wings and streamlined bodies of owls, 3) night vision goggles mimicking the ability of rod-improved eyes, and 4) pheromones of moths.

Night Hike Resources

Teacher Resources

Caduto, Michael J. and Joseph Bruchac. *Keepers of the Night*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing Co., 1994.

Youth Resources

Cannon, Janell. *Stellaluna*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Company, 1993. (Grades K-9)

Gans, Roma. *Birds at Night*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968. (Grades K-4)

Hamerstron, Frances. *Walk When the Moon is Full*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1975. (Grades K-4)

London, Jonathon. *Let the Lynx Come In*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1996.

Rinard, Judith E. *Creatures of the Night*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1977.

San Souci, Daniel. *North Country Night*. New York: Doubleday Press, 1990. (Grades PK-4)

Whalley, Paul. *Butterfly and Moth*. New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1988. (Grades 4-6)

Yolen, Jane. *Owl Moon*. New York: Philomel, 1987.