

Night Programs

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Lesson Overview: Students will discover the fascinating traits of Alabama's local raptors. This program will provide an overview of the 8 raptor families in Alabama, with a deeper dive into a few of those families, and learn why they need our help and what we can do! Students will internalize their learning through observation, discussion, and live animal encounters with at least one education raptor.

Total Time: 1.5 hours

Activity Level: Universally accessible

Learning Goals: By the end of this session, students will be able to consider birds of prey in the following ways:

1. Raptors have specialized behaviors and body structures to survive
2. Raptors fill an important role in the ecosystem
3. Raptors of the Southeast need our protection

INVENTION CONVENTION

Lesson Overview: During this indoor activity, students build camaraderie, cooperation skills and group spirit. Working in small groups, students attend a 'convention,' sharing ideas and using their imagination, creativity, ingenuity and teamwork to engineer solutions to problems, create sculptures or short skits, or build functioning machines. This class has a large selection of possible activities so each program is unique and based on the choice of the MEC instructors.

Total Time: 1.5 hours

Hiking Distance: N/A

Activity Level: Universally accessible

Learning Goals: By the end of this session, students will be better equipped to do the following:

1. Work in small groups cooperatively, sharing ideas and designs in pursuit of a common goal
2. Engineer and test a solution to a problem offered by MEC staff with minimal resources and maximum creativity
3. Find inspiration from natural objects, unfamiliar words, sketches, and in other surprising places, and use that to consider the design of current or future technologies

McDOWELL WOODS

Lesson Overview: Students participate in a town hall-style role play to determine how best to use land acquired by Camp McDowell. Students take on different stakeholder roles, such as Camp McDowell employees, coal miners, restaurateurs, scientists, and farmers, to come to a consensus on how best to use the land. Each stakeholder group will present their ideas for land use to the group, support their ideas with evidence, and will listen to other stakeholder groups with thoughtful respect to come to a solution that works best for everyone.

Total Time: 1.5 hours

Hiking Distance: N/A

Activity Level: Universally accessible

Learning Goals: By the end of this session, students will be better equipped to do the following:

1. Understand that making decisions about land use can be challenging
2. The importance of weighing all the evidence in making a decision
3. Listen and consider others viewpoints, even when in opposition, and be able to work together

NIGHT HIKE

Lesson Overview: Students explore the forest of Camp McDowell at night, using all of their senses to enhance the experience and compare it to their hikes during the day. As they explore their senses, they discuss adaptations unique to nocturnal animals that help them be successful in their environment. ***We recommend that this class not be taken in early September or May as sunset time does not correspond well with our evening class time.***

Total Time: 1.5 hours

Hiking Distance: .5 - 1 mile

Activity Level: Universally accessible

Learning Goals: At the end of this session, students will relate their night experience in the woods to daylight sessions in the following ways:

1. Compare and contrast the animal adaptations needed for nocturnal success
2. Discuss how sensory awareness plays a role in experiencing natural environments and compare their adaptations to those of the nocturnal animals they hear and see

OUR GALAXY

Lesson Overview: Students explore the night sky with help from science and past cultural observers. They will participate in guided stargazing highlighting seasonal celestial bodies, and guided activities on lunar phases and planet size and scale, and learn about celestial myths.

Total Time: 1.5 hours

Hiking Distance: Universally accessible

Activity Level: Can be modified for universal accessibility with notification

Learning Goals: At the end of this session, students will look up at the night sky and have a better understanding of:

1. The relationship among the Earth, moon, stars, and the patterns produced by their movements
2. The composition and scale of our solar system
3. The role of the night sky in human cultures

SONGS, SPARKS AND STORIES

Lesson Overview: Students experience an exciting evening of songs, skits, stories and games with our instructors. Connections to cultural entertainment before television and electricity are highlighted, as well as a sense of community and cultural preservation. The class takes place around a campfire and is ideal for all sized groups.

Total Time: 1.5 hours

Hiking Distance: Negligible to up to 1/8 mile based on which fire location is chosen

Activity Level: Universally accessible

Learning Goals: By the end of this session, students will feel connected to one another in the following ways:

1. Socially connected through experiences shared and activity objectives accomplished
2. Historically connected to their cultural past by participating in activities that have entertained humans globally for centuries