

# Nature Scavenger Hunt Guide:

## Exploring Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow

Welcome, educators, to the Nature Scavenger Hunt at Jackson Park's Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow! This guide will help you facilitate an engaging and educational experience for your students as they immerse themselves in the wonders of nature, searching for native plant species, observing wildlife, and discovering the importance of biodiversity. Let's embark on this adventure together!

### Objective:

- To foster an appreciation for the natural world by exploring Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow.
- To enhance students' understanding of biodiversity and the interconnectedness of ecosystems.

### Materials Needed:

- Map of Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow with designated search areas (provided by the instructor).
- Nature scavenger hunt checklist or booklet for recording observations.
- Field guides or reference materials on local plant and wildlife species.
- Binoculars, magnifying glasses, and other observation tools (optional).

### Instructions:

1. **Introduction (10 minutes):** Gather the students and introduce the objectives of the nature scavenger hunt. Emphasize the importance of observing, respecting, and preserving the natural environment.
2. **Scavenger Hunt Preparation (10 minutes):** Provide each student or group with a nature scavenger hunt checklist or booklet. Briefly review the checklist and explain how to use it to document their findings.
3. **Exploration Phase (40 minutes):** Divide students into small groups and assign each group a designated area to explore within Wooded Island or Bobolink Meadow. Encourage students to search for the following native plant species and wildlife:
4. **Native Plant Species:**
  - **Cattails:** Look for these tall, reed-like plants growing along the edges of ponds or marshy areas.
  - **Wildflowers:** Search for native wildflowers such as purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, and goldenrod. These flowers attract pollinators and contribute to the local ecosystem.
  - **Oak Trees:** Identify different species of oak trees, such as white oak or bur oak, and observe their distinctive leaves and acorns.
  - **Prairie Grasses:** Spot various types of prairie grasses, including big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indian grass. These grasses provide habitat and food for wildlife.
  - **Wildlife Observation:**
  - **Birds:** Use binoculars to observe birds such as red-winged blackbirds, great blue herons, and mallards. Listen for their calls and watch their behavior.

- **Butterflies:** Look for butterflies fluttering among the flowers, such as monarchs, swallowtails, and painted ladies.
  - **Insects:** Examine the diversity of insects, from beetles and ants to grasshoppers and dragonflies. Discuss their roles in the ecosystem as pollinators, decomposers, and prey.
1. **Data Collection (20 minutes):** As students explore, encourage them to record their observations on the scavenger hunt checklist or booklet. They should note the species they encounter, their characteristics, and any interesting behaviors observed.
  2. **Group Discussion (10 minutes):** Reconvene the groups and facilitate a discussion where students share their findings and observations. Encourage them to discuss the importance of biodiversity and how each species contributes to the ecosystem.
  3. **Conclusion (10 minutes):** Wrap up the scavenger hunt by reflecting on the diversity of plant and wildlife species found in Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow. Discuss ways students can continue to explore and appreciate nature in their everyday lives.

### **Extension Activities:**

- **Field Journaling:** Encourage students to create field journals to document their nature observations and reflections.
- **Habitat Restoration:** Organize a habitat restoration project where students can help plant native species or remove invasive plants in the area.
- **Community Engagement:** Invite local naturalists or park rangers to lead guided nature walks or give presentations on biodiversity and conservation.

### **Conclusion:**

The Nature Scavenger Hunt at Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow offers students a unique opportunity to connect with nature and deepen their understanding of biodiversity. By exploring native plant species, observing wildlife, and reflecting on the interconnectedness of ecosystems, students will gain a greater appreciation for the natural world and their role in preserving it for future generations. Happy exploring!