

A Study Unit For Outdoor Education And Conservation

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The author tells how conservation can be brought to junior high school pupils. He lists the factors to be stressed in this teaching.

Today we need to utilize the natural environment in developing attitudes and concepts that will encourage conservation of our natural resources. This problem is far reaching and global in scope. The effects of conservation practices touch the lives of all human beings.

Conservation of our natural resources needs to become a personal matter. It needs to enter the life experience of individuals through class work and emotional, spiritual, dramatic, and intimate associations with our natural environment. Concern for conservation should especially touch the lives of our young people, for in them lies the hope for intelligent use of our natural resources.

Information gained from academic sources needs to be supplemented and reinforced by understanding that comes from first hand, direct, and real experiences. Boys and girls need to go into the field, woods, stream, and pond areas to explore and discover for themselves, under the teacher's leadership, the wonderful world that is their natural environment.

Grade school and high school pupils need to see, hear, smell, and touch the problems of the land. They must learn to understand the need for man to work with natural laws and forces, using them for the best interest of the land, which in the long run, will also be his own best interest.

Some concepts of outdoor education and conservation that may well be taught in this manner are:

- (1) All living things—man, animals, plants, and the soil that supports them, are interdependent and interrelated with each other.
- (2) The relationships of all things that are

a part of the natural environment tend to work toward a balance. This balance in nature is disturbed by man as he uses the natural resources. He must plan to encourage new relationships that harmonize with his best interests.

(3) In order to use natural resources wisely and still promote desirable interrelationship, it is necessary that man understands about the nature of the resources and their role in the natural environment.

Some of the basic natural resources that are especially suitable for study in the outdoors are:

1. Air
Air is one of the natural resources that is often overlooked because we take it for granted. Many of our industrial areas are handicapped by polluted air. Air occupies space and contains oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, water vapor, and other gases that are essential to plant and animal life.
2. Soil
Soil conservation has a part in almost every study of mankind's natural and



Figure 1. A class group studying plant and animal life around ponds.



Figure 2. This is a group of boys taken to one of the ponds on a Saturday fishing trip. Outdoor supervised recreation.

social environment. Soil guards the means of sustaining life. Conservation of the soil is basic to the preservation of a people, their industries, their institutions, and their nation.

3. Water

Water is of the most importance to living things because they are made up largely of water. About three-fourths of the human body is water. Water is a combination of two gases, oxygen and hydrogen. Water dissolves more different kinds of materials than any other liquid. Water is able to transport dissolved materials in solution.

4. Plant life

Stress the environmental relationship of plants and animals. To develop an understanding of what uses can be made of hard wood and soft wood trees, impress upon the boys and girls of the community the realization that trees are of great need and benefit to all of us, not only as sources of such necessities as furniture, lumber, and plastics, but



Figure 3. A class studying bracket fungi on a stump.

in holding soil and water and thus preventing the loss of both.

Stress the beauty and esthetic value of our wild flowers and plants. Study the natural environment in which they grow as a place to be cherished and guarded.

5. Animal life

All animals' life depends directly or indirectly on plants for life. Animal identification may be taught by tracks, droppings, skins, and dens. An animal with a high reproductive rate also has a high mortality rate. Hunting and fishing laws must be obeyed and studied. Wild life feeding stations should be set up in appropriate areas and protected for future generations.

Available streams and ponds can be stocked with game fish giving more people an opportunity for outdoor education and recreation.

Students following this study plan feel that they are working conservationists, not talking conservationists. They have actually done something constructive, their hands have been in the soil, air and water, not for their own immediate benefit but for the benefit of future generations.



Figure 4. A Cut-over area that has been set out in Jack pines and Scotch pines. This area was covered when we studied our unit on conservation of our natural resources.

Coming Issues

Topics for remaining spring issues are:

February: The Natural History Approach

March: Laboratory Teaching Practices

April: The Classroom

May: Biology Teacher Preparation