



Create A Discovery Center and Go on a Nature Wonder Hour Adventure



Welcome to your Nature Wonder Hour Adventure! Now is the perfect time to explore the things you wonder about the natural world around you.

Create a Discovery Center You may wish to create your own Discovery Center to display items from nature. To create a Discovery Center, gather items from nature that interest you, are safe to touch and are not endangered. Make sure that you have permission from the landowner. Display the items in your Discovery Center. Your Discovery Center does not have to be anything fancy. You can use whatever you have on hand. Some ideas include a shadow box, a bowl, a plate, a jar, or a shoebox. As you continue to explore your natural world, you can add more things to your Discovery Center. What questions do you have about your items? Write them down and use your Nature Wonder Hour to find out the answers.

Go on a Nature Wonder Hour Adventure and Become a Nature Detective.

Your Nature Wonder Hour can be as long or as short as you would like. The key is to let curiosity be your guide. As you go through your day, write down any questions you have about the natural world. For example, you may wonder what type of trees you see outside your window, why moss grows in certain spots but not others, what animals are making the sounds that you hear outside your window, why some plants have thorns, why a spider weaves its webs in a particular pattern, or why some birds migrate and some don't. Examining items from your Discovery Center also can help you to create your own Nature Wonder Hour Adventure. You can write down what you discover and add to it as you learn more. Below are some sample questions you can ask about items from your Discovery Center. You can use them as a jumping off point to explore and learn about the things that interest you.

Items from Plants.

- ❖ Identify the plant from which the item came.
- ❖ How does it provide food or shelter for animals or humans?
- ❖ Does it have any companion plants that usually grow near it? Where does it grow in the wild? Is it native to your area? If not, where did it originate and how did it come to grow in your area?

- ❖ What type of ecosystem is the plant usually found in? Does it live on other plants? Do any other plants live on it?
- ❖ What is its life cycle? How does the plant change throughout the year?
- ❖ If your item is a leaf, is it a simple or compound leaf?
- ❖ What role has your plant played in human or animal history?
- ❖ Is your plant an annual or perennial?
- ❖ How are its seeds spread?
- ❖ How tall and wide does your plant usually grow?
- ❖ Does your plant prefer shade, sun, or a combination?
- ❖ In what type of soil does your plant grow best?
- ❖ How has the plant evolved over time? Has it been cultivated by humans?
- ❖ Does the plant have any protective physical or chemical defenses to protect it from predators?
- ❖ Are there any legends or traditions associated with the plant (for example, mistletoe)?

Items from Animals:

- ❖ Can you identify the animal from which the item came?
- ❖ Where does the animal usually live? Is the animal native to your area? If not, where did it originate and how did it come to live in your area?
- ❖ Can you tell if the item is from a male or female? Do males and females within the species you selected have different colorations?
- ❖ What does the animal usually eat? What animals or plants are its predators?
- ❖ Does the animal use camouflage? What areas does it prefer to hide in? What strategies does the animal use to protect itself from predators?
- ❖ How does the item you found help the animal in its survival—for example, how do feathers help protect a bird from changes in temperature?
- ❖ If the animal leaves tracks on the ground, what do the tracks look like? Can you identify the animal by its tracks?
- ❖ What sounds does the animal make? How does it use sounds to communicate with other animals?
- ❖ Does the animal migrate? If so, what is its migration pattern? When does it migrate?

- ❖ Does the animal have a territory? If so, how large is the territory? Does it mark its territory? If so, how? How does it protect its territory?
- ❖ How fast can the animal move? How far does the animal usually travel in one day?
- ❖ Does the animal live alone or in groups? Are there any other species of animals that are usually found near the animal that you selected?
- ❖ Is the animal usually active during the day or night?
- ❖ Are there any legends or folktales associated with the animal (for example, foxes)?

Other items from nature:

- ❖ You will have different questions for different types of items. For example, if your item is a growth, you might be curious about the following things:
 - What plant is your growth usually found on?
 - Is it a parasitic or helpful companion to its host?
 - In what seasons does your item appear?
- ❖ If your item is a rock you might be curious about the following things:
 - What types of minerals does your rock contain?
 - Does the mineral play any important part in human history (for example, gold)?
 - How was your rock formed?
 - How has it been shaped by its environment?
- ❖ What other things from nature do you wonder about or would like to learn more about? Here are some ideas to get you started:
 - What type of bird do you hear every morning singing outside your window? The website www.audobon.org has great resources to help you identify birds. How do the bird's calls change throughout the day?
 - Have you ever wanted to grow something from seed? Your Nature Wonder Hour is a perfect time to learn how and to try it out.
 - Have you ever wondered if you could use cricket chirps to figure out the approximate outside temperature? You can count the number of cricket chirps in 14 seconds and add 40. This will tell you the approximate temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

- Have you ever wondered how people who lived before you in your area lived off the land before modern inventions such as electricity? Your Nature Wonder Hour is a great time to answer your questions.
- Have you ever wanted to go on a nature scavenger hunt? If it is safe to go outside, your Nature Wonder Hour is a great time to see if you can find an object from nature that starts with each letter of the alphabet. Challenge your friends to see what they find.
- Have you ever wondered how burs stick to your clothes? Research how they do it and how that helped inspire human inventions. What other human inventions were inspired by nature?

Taking it to the Next Level What else do you want to learn? Your Nature Wonder Hour is a great opportunity to learn new skills. Here are some ideas for things you might want to learn:

- How to use a compass and a map
- How to make a sundial
- How to make a birdfeeder
- How to find water that's safe to drink in the wilderness
- How to make a shelter in the wilderness
- How to predict the weather from things in nature such as clouds and animal behavior

For more information about outdoor adventures, you can visit the website www.Outdoorosity.org. I'm wishing you many fun nature adventures --Jo Watson Hackl, Author of *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*