

COMPANION ACTIVITY IDEAS

for *What I Saw in Grand Teton: A Kid's Guide to the National Park*

SAFE SPACE (outdoor activity)

Keeping a safe distance from wildlife helps protect both people and animals. Wild animals can be dangerous when they feel like they or their babies are threatened. If they aren't given enough space, animals may be so disturbed they don't have a chance to take care of their young or eat. This activity helps students estimate safe distances from different kinds of animals.

Materials/needs: Football field with 10-yard lines marked off; or a measuring tape, chalk, and a playground space at least 100 yards long.

Activity: Take students to football field (or have students mark off 10-yard segments on playground up to at least 100 yards). Ask for a volunteer to play the role of an elk (or bison, moose, bear, wolf, coyote, squirrel, or bird). Ask other students to walk down the football field until they feel they are at a safe distance from the animal. (If students run, this would be a good time to talk about not running from large predators!) Have students use the 10-yard lines to estimate their distance from the animal role-player. Gather group back together and discuss results, then reveal distance recommendations for that animal and repeat with a different one.

If there's time, ask small groups to role-play bad decisions that involve getting too close to wildlife: taking bison selfies, feeding chipmunks, etc.

Recommendation for large animals (from NPS): Stay at least 100 yards away from bears and wolves, and 25 yards away from other large animals.

Recommendations for small animals: A good guideline is that if an animal changes its behavior because of you, you are too close. Ask kids for examples of possible behavior changes (like looking at you, stopping feeding, moving away, flying off the nest) that show people are not giving animals enough room.

(This idea courtesy of third-grade teacher Suzy Miller.)

THE MISSING PAGE (research and writing)

What I Saw in Grand Teton contains a sampler of plants and animals people are likely to see on a visit to the park. But with limited space, the book doesn't contain everything. This activity requires students to think like an author and decide what should be included in a book.

If students could add one plant or animal topic to the book, what would it be? The plants or animals students choose should live in the park and be commonly seen. (Hint: If anyone is stumped, consider wildflowers, birds, or fish. Check field guides or the Grand Teton National Park website, at www.nps.gov/grte.)

Students should create a page similar to those in the book, including the following items:

1. Common name of animal or plant.
2. Scientific name.
3. Where to see it, or type of habitat.
4. Picture of animal or plant.
5. Description of animal or plant.
6. An especially surprising or interesting fact.
7. A record of their own observations, if any.
8. Main source of information.

WHAT I SAW IN MY BACKYARD/PLAYGROUND/PARK

This activity is similar to "The Missing Page," but students choose an animal or plant in their immediate environment and complete 1-8 above. Remember, common animals and plants can surprise you!

WHAT I WISH I HAD SEEN

This activity involves creating a page for something students are interested in, even if it is not commonly seen. It could be a place (like the top of the Mount Moran), a rare plant, a nocturnal or secretive animal, or even an extinct animal that lived in the area thousands of years ago. Follow the general format of pages in *What I Saw in Grand Teton: A Kid's Guide to the National Park*, or for plants or animals, 1-8 above.

(To find less common species, older students can call up detailed species lists for Grand Teton National Park at <https://irma.nps.gov/NPSpecies/>)