

## Connecting Students to Nature in Alabama State Parks

Introduce your class, club, troop, or group to the wild places of Alabama through a guided, safe, and fun state park fieldtrip. These are customized, place-based, and immersive experiences developed to support the Alabama Course of Study grades K-12.

*Alabama State Parks provide unique educational opportunities “from the deepest cavern to the highest mountain to the most pristine beaches” through a hands-on approach to learning about our natural world, heritage, and history.*

*By providing outdoor place-based education to park visitors of all ages, parks increase the public’s knowledge of conservation, build appreciation for nature and public lands, develop connections to natural resources, inspire sustainability, and encourage wellness.*

## ***Oak Mountain State Park*** **Field Trip and Program Topics:**

*Topics depend upon instructor availability*

### **Contact:**

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### **Field Trip Objectives**

- Connect people to public lands through a “sense of place”
- Develop a sense of responsibility toward the conservation and stewardship of natural resources.
- Cultivate an understanding of the association between spending time outdoors and personal well-being.
- Inspire a creative vision for connection, collaboration, community, and careers.
- Increase environmental awareness.
- Defeat Nature-Deficit Disorder (No Child Left Inside).
- Encourage environmental literacy through arts and science.

Instructors will teach key terms and principles. Topics are correlated to Alabama’s State Course of Study and the Environmental Education Association of Alabama (EEAA) Environmental Literacy Plan (Best Practices in EE).

### **Fees:**

**\$10 per student for ONE topic**

**\$12 per student for TWO topics**

**\$15 per student for THREE topics**

**Fee includes gate (park entrance) fee.**

**Field Trip Tickets for Parents/ Chaperones/Siblings \$5 per person (Must be pre-purchased before final invoice.)**

Groups of more than 36 participants may request a customized field trip; groups of more than 100 students may require multiple days

Outreach Programs: some topics are adaptable for classroom/auditorium presentations. One topic per visit.

Fee: \$5 per student; \$150 minimum program fee.

**Planning Your Visit:** Make reservations at least 2 weeks in advance. Rates and programs are subject to change, so ask questions and be specific about your group's needs. Ask if all amenities you plan to use will be available. Sites typically offer picnic areas, vending machines, gift shops, restrooms, and bus parking. Some activities may be seasonal.

## **Field Trip Topics & Descriptions:**

### **Know Your H2O (Water Cycle and Water Quality)**

Grades 1-12

COS-ALEX SC15      4.5    4.6    4.9    4.11    4.12    4.13    4.15    5.1    5.3    5.4    5.5    5.8  
                         5.9    5.10    5.11    5.14    5.15    5.16    5.17

Indoors or outdoors

This program is fun and interactive and can be done indoors or outside! Learn about the water cycle, pollution, and how to be better stewards of our waterways. Students get to participate in this lesson by watching and helping simulate real life scenarios on OMSP's Enviroscope.

Principles:

- Ponds, creeks, rivers, and oceans are part of the water cycle. They are important to all living things.
- Human actions can alter the health of water sources.

Key Terms: water cycle, food chain, adaptation, pollution, tolerance, tributary, erosion, sediment, species, indicator species, macro-invertebrate, sampling, habitat

### **Nature Art, Fairy Houses, Nature Play (Art in Nature)**

Grades K – 12

COS- ALEX SC15      K.3    K.4    K.5    K.10    1.2    1.5    2.8    2.9    2.11    3.4    3.11    3.11c  
                         3.15    4.5    4.17    5.1    5.11    5.12    5.16    6.14    6.16    7.6    7.7    BIO.15    ES1    ES.3  
                         ES.4    ES.6    ES.11    BIO.15    ES.5    ES.6

Indoor & Outdoor Programs

Activities: Nature Art will consist of one of various craft activities. All crafts revolve around the importance of nature and animals. Some of these activities include Create a Critter, Nature Weaving, or painting with natural items. Build your very own fairy house and learn how to build these at home to attract fairy spies such as butterflies, bees, lizards, ladybugs, and more! This gives students an opportunity to use their imagination and be little wild!

Principles:

- Conservation through art
- Conservation through Fairy Houses
- Nature play allowing for creativity and imagination

Key Terms: Conservation, art, natural, nature, natural resources, imagination, creativity, plants, animals, fine motor skills.

### **Birds on the Boardwalk (Birds of Prey)**

Grades PreK-12

COS – ALEX SC15: 3.5    3.6    4.5    4.9    5.8    5.9    5.10    5.11    7.6    7.10    7.11

Outdoors, easy stroll on a boardwalk (ADA Accessible access to the boardwalk available)

Activities: Naturalists will guide students on a short walk on the Treetop Nature Trail Boardwalk, where they will get to see various birds of prey. Vultures, hawks, and owls comprise the residents of the boardwalk. Students will get to see them in their enclosures, while learning what makes these birds so unique!

Principles:

- Learn to identify birds of prey and their adaptations
- Learn the natural history of these predatory birds
- Discuss predator/prey relationships
- Meet LIVE bird of prey species

Key Terms: habitats, adaptations, talons, beaks, feathers, flight, prey, predator, apex predator, food chain, pesticides, litter, camouflage, hearing, sight, bird rehabilitation, laws, migration, eggs.

## **Scales & Tails (Reptiles, Amphibians, and Birds)**

Grades PreK-12

COS – ALEX SC15: K.3 K.4 1.5 2.5 2.7 K.3 3.10 3.11 4.9 4.11 7.10 7.18  
8.7 BIO.7 BIO.8 BIO13 BIO14 BIO15 ES.4 ES.17

Indoors or outdoors

Learn about critters from across the world! In this program, we will discuss the importance and history of Alabama's diverse ecosystems, and how our amazing wildlife are an integral part of maintaining biodiversity in our state

Activities: Students meet live animals up close and learn about their natural history, personal stories, and how these animals fit into our ecosystems!

Principles:

- Learn how to identify different reptile, amphibian, and bird of prey species and their characteristics.
- Natural history of reptiles, amphibians, and birds of prey
- LIVE animal encounter with opportunity to ask questions and interact with animals

Key Terms: vertebrate, cold blooded, life cycle, venomous, non-venomous, Jacobson's organ, fangs, unhinged jaw, adaptation, camouflage, estivate, endangered species, indicator species, habitat, predator, prey, vernal pools, talons, beaks, feathers, ecosystems, community, adaptation, biodiversity, niche

## **Lessons on the Longleaf (Longleaf Pines and Gopher Tortoise Encounter)**

Grades 2-12

COS – ALEX SC15: K.3 K.4 1.5 2.5 2.7 3.5 3.6 4.5 4.9 5.8 5.9

Indoors or outdoors

Activities: What is Alabama's State Tree? The Long Leaf Pine of course! Learn about the importance of this amazing tree while standing beneath them. Students will get an immersive experience listening to the natural history of Long Leaf Pines, the importance of Rx Fire, and meet the endangered Gopher Tortoise that calls the Long Leaf habitats home.

Principles:

- Learn to identify Long Longleaf Pines and why they are so important to Alabama
- Learn about the habitats of Longleaf Pines and the species within the habitats
- Learn about prescribed fire
- Learn to identify Gopher Tortoises
- Learn Gopher Tortoise natural history

Key Terms: Longleaf Pines, trees, habitat, prescribed fire, wildfire, gopher tortoises, keystone species, species, Alabama, soil, threatened species, natural resources, deforestation

## **Oak Mountain Interpretive Center Tour**

Grades 2 – 12

COS – ALEX SC15: K.4 1.5 2.5 2.7 3.5 3.6 4.5 4.9 5.8 5.9

Indoor (ADA accessible throughout the center)

Activities: Our recently renovated Interpretive Center houses lots of information about the history of Alabama, Oak Mountain State Park, and our state's biodiversity. With interactive exhibits, and several animals on display, our naturalists will guide you through the center discussing what makes Alabama so unique biologically, geologically, and ecologically!

Principles:

- Explore the Interpretive Center for an overview of the state's biodiversity
- See LIVE animals

Key Terms: Biodiversity, wildlife, indicator species, threatened species, Appalachian Mountains, history, ecology

## Turtle Takeover

Grades K – 12

COS – ALEX SC15: K.3 K.4 1.5 2.5 2.7 3.10 3.11 4.9 4.11 7.10 7.18 8.7  
BIO.7 BIO.8 BIO13 BIO14 BIO15 ES.4 ES.17

Indoors or outdoors

Activities: Meet live box turtles and play a fun game that teaches students about conservation and species population. This is a hands-on experience that gives students a chance to problem solve, use their imagination, build teamwork skills, and learn how to be better stewards of our environment.

Principles:

- Students will gain an understanding of the effects humans have on species populations
- Hands-on activity that is great for understanding the lesson

Key Terms: Population, poaching, pollution, species, turtles, habitat, conservation, water quality, deforestation, habitat recovery, life cycles, food chain

## Leave No Trace: Outdoor Ethics (Bigfoot has been doing it for years!)

Grades K-12

COS – ALEX SC15 K.6 K.7 4.5 5.15 5.16 5.17 6.7 6.15 6.16 7.7 ES.1  
ES.3 ES.6 ES.10 HAP.9a

Activities: Students will learn the Seven Principles of Leave No Trace in a fun and interactive way.

Principles:

- Plan and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize campfire impacts.
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of others.

Key Terms: waste management, natural resources, sustainability, recycling, reduce/reuse

## Careers in State Parks (aka Working in the Wild aka Conservation Careers aka Public Lands Professions)

Grades 9-12

CTE20.AFN .OA.E.9 .OA.E.10a ABE.11a ABE.12 EM.14 FWM.3C FWM.6 F.1a  
F.8 F.14 FA.8 PA.11 PA.17 D.2 D.5 D.6  
D.6a D.6b D.9 D10 D11  
CTE21.BMA. HMM11 F.FS.1 F.FS.2 F.FS.3 F.FS.  
4 F.1a CTE22.AC. PS.22

Hike or non-hike options

Students gain the opportunity to interact with professionals from various conservation and public lands career fields and those who can advise and/or mentor them toward this field. This can be an exciting opportunity for students to learn how and why park naturalists, interpreters, historians, and others do what they do. This program increases the students' options as they decide about their own paths toward institutes of higher learning, types of degrees, salaries, and opportunities in a diverse field. Volunteer, internships, and seasonal jobs are discussed.

**Field Trip Assessment Methods of Measurement:** Verbal assessment; written evaluations; participant surveys; semantic web activities; teacher assessment and evaluation; social media; email discussions; Educational Advisory Committee meetings and input from the community

**Field Trip Partners and Allies:** Alabama State Parks, DCNR, Wild Alabama, Jacksonville State University, University of Alabama, Alabama Forestry Commission, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, Auburn University, Legacy Partners in EE, Environmental Education Association of Alabama (EEAA), Alabama Water Watch, Anniston Museums and Gardens, Alabama Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance, Alabama Clean Water Partnership, Alabama Scenic River Trails, ACES, Choccolocco Creek Watershed Alliance, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of the Talladega National Forest, Discovering Alabama, and many others.