

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:

Lauren Massey (Muncher), Park Naturalist

Lauren.Muncher@dcnr.alabama.gov or 205-620-2520

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.)

***\$150 minimum fee**

**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 Enviroscape! Pick through some collected creek leaf litter and identify macroinvertebrates to determine water quality.

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, macroinvertebrate, sampling, habitat

Art in Nature: Create a Critter and Habitats

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. This activity revolves around the importance of nature and animals and their habitats. Build your very own critter "fairy" house out of natural items on the ground 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, habitat, food, water, shelter, imagination, creativity, plants, animals, fine motor skills.

Forest Ecology: Mini Hike

Grades PreK-12

COS – ALEX SC15: *K.4* *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 the Treetop Nature Trail. (Not ADA Accessible)

Naturalists will guide students on a short walk on the Treetop Nature Trail where they will get to see various plants, rocks, soils, trees, animal signs and more. Learn about the connection between plants, animals, soils, and rocks and how the forest stays alive!

Principles:

- Learn to identify basic plants and trees
- Learn about decomposers
- Discuss the relationship between plants and animals
- Look for animal tracks and signs

Key Terms: habitats, adaptations, soil, moss, decomposers, ecosystem, habitat, nutrients, food chain, litter, earth, oxygen, water, tracks

Herp-Quest! (LIVE Reptiles and Amphibians)

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 (ADA Accessible)

Learn about reptiles and amphibians 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. 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 reptiles and amphibian species and their characteristics.
- Natural history of reptiles and amphibians
- 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, scales, ecosystems, community, adaptation, biodiversity, niche.

Talons and Tailfeathers (LIVE Birds of Prey)

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 (ADA Accessible)

Learn about various birds of prey from owls to falcons and more! In this program, we will discuss the importance and history of Alabama's diverse ecosystems, and how our amazing birds are an integral part of maintaining biodiversity in our state. Students meet live animals up close and learn about their natural history, personal stories, and how these animals fit into our ecosystems!

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.

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.