Field Trip Planning Guide

The mission of Nahant Marsh Education Center is to preserve and enhance the ecological integrity of the Marsh and to foster wonder, appreciation, interaction, and stewardship of the natural world through education.
Nahant Marsh Education Center
Field Trip Planning Guide

The naturalists at Nahant Marsh Education Center know that learning about our earth’s natural resources is a vital component of a child’s education. Field trips to natural areas provide a hands-on learning experience that can enrich lessons taught in the classroom. Our goal is to provide educational and meaningful lessons about the natural world and to nurture a strong bond between students and their natural environment. This guide has been developed to help teachers and other youth group leaders plan a fun and effective educational trip. Please read carefully.

Pre-field Trip Info

1. Review the environmental education topics offered. If you would like a program that is not on the list, our staff can tailor a program to fit your curriculum needs.

2. Review the procedures in this guide.

3. Contact Amy Loving, Director of Education, at alovings@eicc.edu or (563) 336-3373 to select possible dates for your field trip.

4. The cost is $6 per child.* There is no charge for teachers and adult chaperones.

5. Let the Director of Education know prior to the field trip if there are any students with special needs in your group.

6. Make transportation arrangements. *

7. Consider scheduling an outreach visit to your classroom prior to the field trip. Post visits can also be arranged, and Nahant Marsh offers a variety of STEM lessons that can be taught in the classroom. The fee for an outreach presentation is $30 per hour.

*If you need assistance with admission fees and bussing costs, please contact the Director of Education.
Teachers are responsible for:

1. Knowing the number of students attending and the length of the field trip when scheduling your trip with the Director of Education. Environmental Education programs are typically 45 minutes each, and most outdoor activities work best with smaller groups of 10-15 students. We recommend no more than 75 students per visit.

2. Sending out permission slips to parents, if required.

3. Selecting adult chaperones for the field trip. We recommend one adult for every 10 students. Adult chaperones should understand that they are responsible for administering discipline and are encouraged to take part in the activity.

4. Dividing students into groups prior to arrival and assign adult chaperones to each group.

5. Reviewing all rules with leaders, adult chaperones, and students. (See Nahant Marsh Field Trip Rules and Rules for Outdoor Dress below).

6. Bring a first-aid kit. Nahant Marsh will also have first-aid kits on site. All Nahant Marsh staff are first aid certified.

7. For full day trips, students need to bring a sack lunch. Consider dividing students into groups to make lunchtime easier. Recycling bins and garbage cans will be provided.

8. On the day of the field trip, please have students seated on the benches for the field trip introduction.

Field Trip Schedule

The Director of Education will provide a schedule suitable for your class size and age group. Schedules can be tailored to include specific topics that fit into your curriculum. Prior to your field trip, you will receive a confirmation email with a schedule of the activities you have chosen. The schedule will have the time of each presentation and the number of groups needed. Please have your class divided into the appropriate number of groups prior to arriving at Nahant, and have at least one adult assigned to each group to supervise throughout the day. Below is an example of a program schedule:
Schedules will be customized based on grade, number of students, and timeframe. Lunchtime is intentionally 45 minutes as to allow time for restroom breaks and free play. Please consider bringing balls and other items for children to play with. There is also a natural playscape on-site.

*Teaching in an outdoor classroom often presents unexpected occurrences and discoveries. Naturalists may stray from the program for a moment to point out a soaring eagle overhead, or stop to catch a snake that crossed the trail.

**Field Trip Rules**

All participants, including teachers, adult chaperones, and students must be familiar with these rules prior to arriving at Nahant Marsh.

1. Our number one rule is RESPECT! Respect for naturalists, teachers, adult chaperones, other students, plants, animals, and the Education Center.
2. Nahant Marsh is a nature preserve. A nature preserve is an area of land that is protected and managed in order to protect a particular type of habitat and its flora and fauna which are often rare or endangered. Removal of plants or wildlife is prohibited.

⚠️ Remember to take only your memories and leave nothing but footprints.
Inclement Weather/Flooding & Cancellation Policy

- Teachers are responsible for checking the weather forecast the days prior to the field trip. The Director of Education will be in contact if the weather forecast looks poor.

- If there is a high chance of thunderstorms or other weather that prevents us from outdoor programming, the field trip may be cancelled.

- In the case of light rain with no lightning, we will continue all programs as scheduled. Remind students to bring rain/warm gear with them because they will be going outside, rain or shine.

- In the event of heavy rains and/or lightening during the field trip, the NMEC staff will adjust the groups and schedule to accommodate the group. Please keep in mind that space is limited in the Education Center. In this scenario, teachers should be prepared to rearrange groups.

- Due to the high demand for services, alternate inclement weather/rain dates may not be scheduled.

In the event of flooding, programming will be adjusted as needed. *If river levels reach 19.4ft, field trips will be canceled or changed to an alternative location.* You can check river levels at the Rock Island gauge: [https://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?gage=rcki2&wfo=dvn](https://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?gage=rcki2&wfo=dvn)

Outdoor Dress Guidelines

All field trip participants, including teachers, students, and adult helpers must be familiar with these guidelines before participating in the field trip. Please strongly stress these guidelines with parents in any permission slips that may be sent home.

- Students should dress in old clothes because outdoor activities usually require getting dirty. *Old shoes, rubber boots, or snow boots are a “must-have” for outdoor activities.*

- Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and shoes and socks are recommended for protection from poison ivy, prickly bushes, insects, and chilly weather. Participants are strongly cautioned against wearing shorts and sandals.

- Spring, fall, and even summer mornings can be cool, so be prepared. *Dressing in layers* is a good idea for any season. For late fall, winter, and early spring activities, students should have mittens or gloves, a hat, shoes, and boots insulated enough to keep their feet warm. Rain gear is also very important, as programs will only be moved inside in the event of thunder and lightning.

- Sunscreen and insect repellent will not be supplied by the naturalist and should be provided by parents or teachers if needed.
DIRECTIONS & PARKING

How to get to Nahant Marsh from Davenport:
From River Drive heading west, take Highway 22 South and turn left on Wapello Avenue (the last road on the left before going under the I-280 overpass). Follow Wapello Avenue and you will see Nahant Marsh to your left. Just before reaching the train tracks, you will see the Nahant Marsh Education Center entrance on the left.

How to get to Nahant Marsh from Illinois:
Take I-280 to Iowa and take the Highway 22/Rockingham Road Exit (the 1st Iowa exit). Take a right onto Highway 22 and then turn right onto Wapello Avenue (the 1st road on the right after the exit). Follow Wapello Avenue and you will see Nahant Marsh to your left. Just before reaching the railroad trestles, you will see the Nahant Marsh Education Center entrance on the left.

PARKING
Please park in the lot closest to the building. There is bus parking in that lot.
Environmental Education Programs
Please refer to the matrix on page 10 to see appropriate grade and season for each program.

**Animal Adaptations:** This is a general study on adaptations. Students will learn the definition of adaptations and how animals have different adaptations to help them survive in their respective environments.

**Animal Signs:** Animals leave many signs that they have been in an area, including tracks, scat, and food leftovers. Learn how to tell which animal leaves which sign. Tracking replicas, scat replicas, and a few other objects will show what to look for in the wild.

**Bird Beak Adaptations:** Bird beaks are adapted to the type of food a bird eats. Students will learn about different kinds of beaks and participate in an activity to show which kind of beaks help birds eat different kinds of food.

**Carmen the Carp:** Students will follow along as Carmen travels downstream to explore her world. Through this story, students will learn about different water pollutants and how they affect aquatic plants and animals.

**Cattails:** Cattails are known for their versatility. Students learn about the importance of cattails in a wetland and about historical uses of the plant. Students will be able to make toy ducks and/or mats out of cattails.

**Edible and Medicinal Plants:** Students will learn about edible and medicinal plants found in our local area. They will learn about historical uses of these plants (medicine, dyes, food, and shelter) and how they are still used today.

**GPS Scavenger Hunt:** Students will learn about the functions of a GPS and then participate in a scavenger hunt.

**Insects:** Students will learn about insects and the role that they play. They will learn about their habitats, food sources, and adaptations. Students will then use nets to catch insects found in Nahant’s prairie.

**Mammals of Iowa:** Mammals are one of the most popular groups of animals. Students will be introduced to the habitats, food sources, and adaptations of mammals found in Iowa. They will also learn about the history of the fur trade. Students will be able to see and touch some of the skins and skulls of these animals.

**Scavenger Hunt:** There is always something interesting to find at Nahant Marsh. Students will be given a scavenger hunt based on the season and see how many items they can find. This engaging program covers ecological diversity and habitats.
**Migration Bird Obstacle Course:** Students will know how birds survive long migrations by learning what migration is, the hazards that affect birds, and how to identify ways to reduce negative impacts on bird populations by navigating through an obstacle course.

**Monarch Butterflies:** Students will learn facts about these amazing insects, including their lifecycle, adaptations, migration pattern, and importance. In the fall, students may be able to use our nets to help catch and tag these butterflies. Live caterpillars and Monarch butterflies may be used if season allows.

**Native American Games:** Game playing was called “the little brother of war” by Native Americans because the games taught many skills the youngsters needed to master for their future adult roles. Students will play games that were common to Native American children.

**Native American Hunters:** Native Americans hunted many types of animals like buffalo, elk, and deer. Learn their hunting techniques and how they used all parts of the animal for shelter, tools, food, art, and more. Specimens of animal parts and furs will be shown. If time allows, the students will practice using an atlatl.

**Native Pollinators:** Pollinators play a very important role in the habitats in which they are found and in people’s lives. They are responsible for the flowers that grow and the food we eat. Students will learn about pollination and the pollinators found in Iowa and Illinois.

**Nature Games:** Students will play various games that teach about general nature concepts. Some common games include bat vs. moth and stream jump.

**Nature Hike:** Students will learn to explore the trails and learn about the importance of wetlands and discover the creatures that live at the marsh.

**Orienteering:** Students will learn how to use a compass and map to navigate a course around the Nahant Marsh.

**Pond Study:** Students will catch and identify macroinvertebrates from the Marsh. They will learn how these macroinvertebrates are indicators of water quality and what that means for Nahant Marsh.

**Predator vs. Prey:** Students will learn what a predator and prey are and how they affect each other. Students will also participate in a game to help them understand the relationship between predator and prey.

**Reptiles and Amphibians:** How can you tell the difference between a reptile and an amphibian? Students will be introduced to the cold-blooded creatures of Iowa and how they differ. They will learn about their characteristics, habitats and food sources, and will be able to touch or hold some live reptiles that we house at the education center.
**Rotten Log**: Students will investigate organisms found in a rotten log. They will learn about decomposition and microhabitats.

**Skull Study**: Students will examine animal skulls and investigate the structure and function of a variety of skull replicas. Students will learn to identify the part of a skull and make determinations about what animal the skull belongs to based on number and shape of teeth, skull size, and other features.

**Soil Science**: Students will learn about the many factors that contribute to the formation of soil. Students will use test soil for pH, nutrients, and light; and use soil sieves to separate out soils by size.

**Stream Table**: Students will learn about the geological history of Iowa and the history and changes that have been made to the Mississippi River. They will participate in a hands-on activity to show them how streams and levees work.

**Team Building**: This program includes various activities that promote teamwork, communication, creativity, and leadership.

**Trees and Leaves**: Students will learn the basics about trees and how to identify leaves. This program will also cover the many benefits of trees.

**Twig ID**: Twigs from different trees all have variations in buds, leaf scars, shape, and size. Students will learn how to identify a tree solely based on studying the anatomy of a twig. Based on observations, students will have to determine what tree species each twig belongs to.

**Water Quality Testing**: Students will use water testing kits to sample the water in the Marsh. They will learn what each test is and how it is used to determine the water quality for Nahant Marsh.

**Wetland Wonders**: Students will learn about the plants, animals, and functions of wetland ecosystems. They will also hear the story of how Nahant Marsh became a protected wetland.

**Wilderness Survival**: Students will learn important tips and skills to help them survive in the wild.

**Winter Birds**: Many bird species stay here in winter. Discover which species you can find at your bird feeders, how to attract them, and the sound of their calls. Participants will make a bird feeder to take home.
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