

Oxbow Regional Park – Spring

We're excited that you will be joining us for a field trip to Oxbow Regional Park this spring! In this packet you will find the following documents:

- **Teacher letter**
- **Teacher/group leader checklist**
- **Chaperone letter**
- **Chaperone letter (Spanish)**
- **Directions to park**
- **Notes to parents**
- **Wildlife watching handouts**



Metro | *Teacher letter*

Spring 2011

We look forward to your upcoming spring field trip to Oxbow Regional Park. This letter describes what a **typical field trip day** is like. Teachers, feel free to copy and share this information with parents and other chaperones. A spring school field trip at Oxbow features an in-depth experience in the park's beautiful ancient (old growth) forest, with its rich diversity of trees, plants, birds, deer and other wildlife. The field trip includes lots of time to explore and discover with our trained naturalist guides. We weave together learning about ancient forest ecology with a playful game of adventure.

BE PREPARED: It has gotten extremely wet and cold during field trips in the past and students are usually unprepared for this. Enclosed you will find notes that can be photocopied, cut up and sent home to **advise parents** on how to prepare their students for the day. You will need to pool all the students' **lunches and drinks into a big plastic tub** that can be carried down the trail; bring a plastic bag for lunch garbage and a second for recyclables. Also bring **waterless hand sanitizer** (such as Purell) for students to use before lunch. We get dirty on the trail!

WELCOME: When your class arrives at the park, the naturalist will meet your bus or carpool at the entrance. **Please stop in front of the park office, located just past the park gate.** The Naturalist will board the bus, welcome the students and ask them to get out of the bus or car silently when we reach our final destination, which is 1.5 miles further into the park. This sets a tone of hushed anticipation for our day in this special place.

ANCIENT FOREST ADVENTURE: The students spend the entire morning exploring in the ancient forest. Upon our arrival at the Alder Shelter (group picnic area A), we'll gather quietly in our opening circle, and begin:

"The people who lived here long ago knew many things about the plants and animals, things that most people today have forgotten about. They could survive here without the conveniences we have now, like grocery stores and cars. Do you think if you and your class had to live out here at Oxbow you could do it? Today we're going to pretend we do live here, and our goal is to discover plants, animals, and other things in nature that will help us."

The students will form small groups (previously determined by the teacher prior to arriving at the park). Each small group will be assigned a trained Metro volunteer naturalist. As we walk along the trail we try to find items on our wild treasure hunt list, such as medicinal and edible plants. Wild animals leave tracks and other clues for students to discover. We will see 700-year-old trees, nurse logs, and snags with woodpecker holes, and learn of their important jobs in the ancient forest. Just as everything in the forest has a role, everyone in our group does too. Students may take turns acting as the map-keeper, or the scout whose job is to watch for danger. We are quiet and stealthy to avoid being seen by other people (and to see more wildlife).

LUNCH: We all meet back at the shelter around noon and celebrate our "survival" with lunch and the excitement of sharing stories of what we did and saw. After lunch, we will walk along the Sandy River to look for wildlife and animal tracks.

CLOSING CIRCLE: To end our day, we gather in a closing circle to share the day's highlights, thank our volunteers and board the bus. Children return to school relaxed and tired from the fresh air, with memories of an exciting day.

We look forward to exploring Oxbow with you soon!

Dan Daly, Naturalist

Metro | *Teacher/group leader checklist*

Thank you for making your reservation for a field trip to one of our outstanding natural areas. We look forward to a fun and educational experience for you and your students/group. The following checklist will help make your field trip a success.

- Confirm the bus schedule** with your transportation provider. We have had a number of recent incidences where bus drivers have needed to leave the park earlier than the established time. For the best field trip possible, **please ensure your group will be able to stay for the entire time scheduled.**

- Communicate **proper field trip attire** to ALL participants and send home reminder notes to parents. Field trips take place **rain or shine** and our natural areas can be chilly at any time of year. Proper field trip attire includes:
 - a **hat and gloves**
 - a warm **water-resistant coat**
 - **sturdy walking shoes**, no sandals
 - **layers of clothes** for added warmth, no shorts
 - clothes and shoes that can **get wet and dirty**

- Prior to your arrival, divide field trip participants into **two equal groups for Smith and Bybee Wetlands**. The field trip leader will contact you prior to the field trip to determine the number of groups for **Oxbow Regional Park**. Please ensure students know which group they are in.

- Make sure **each participant wears a nametag on their outer clothing**. Please print their first name in bold letters (do not use construction paper, as it melts in the rain).

- Review the **Wildlife Watching** handouts with all participants.

- Make sure all chaperones have read the **“Dear Chaperone”** letter. Assign one chaperone for each group of students.

- Remind participants there is **no eating or drinking** (except for lunch, if scheduled) during the field trip. Daypacks and electronic devices should be left on the bus or in cars and cell phone use is strongly discouraged. In addition, all **garbage and recycling must be removed** at the end of the field trip.

You are now ready for your field trip! When you arrive, **wait for the naturalist to board the bus** to introduce themselves and give directions.

Thanks! We look forward to a great field experience with you!

Metro Education Staff

Restroom access is limited. So go before you go!

Metro | *Chaperone letter*

Thank you for accompanying your school or youth group on their field trip to one of Metro's outstanding natural areas. Please **dress appropriately for the weather** and remember that there is **no eating or drinking** during the field trip (unless there is a scheduled lunch). Daypacks and electronic devices should be left on the bus and **cell phone use is strongly discouraged**.

It is our hope that participants will leave with the following:

- Respect and appreciation for the natural world
- Awareness of their impact on the park and its wildlife
- Some basic skills for seeing wild animals in nature

The students will learn the above by copying your behavior. Modeling appropriate behavior and attitude is the most powerful type of teaching.

As a chaperone, your responsibilities include the following:

- **Emphasize quiet and awareness as you walk along the trails.** We have fun, but we conduct field trips quietly. The park or wildlife area you will be visiting is a naturally quiet place, and the animals that live there are accustomed to quiet. Your group will be visitors in the homes of owls, herons, osprey, deer, otter, beaver and other animals. These animals have excellent senses and are very well camouflaged. Moving quietly and being observant will greatly increase our chances of seeing wildlife. We will also be walking past animal sign such as deer, elk and fox tracks; droppings or scat; and plants that have been chewed on by beaver. Many pairs of observant eyes help detect these signs.
- **Demonstrate appropriate behavior.** Stay on the trails, move quietly and be respectful of the natural world around you.
- **Keep the group together.** Chaperones should make sure that their entire group is together and able to see and hear the leader's presentation.
- **Keep students focused.** Make sure that students are participating in activities, and gently redirect them if they are having trouble focusing.
- **Give students the chance to answer questions** asked by the naturalist before you give your enthusiastic response. We always try to draw on the children's knowledge and experiences when solving "nature mysteries," without adults giving answers and prompting students.

Thanks for helping your students have a great field trip experience!

Metro Education Staff



Metro | *Carta al acompañante*

Gracias por acompañar su grupo escolar o juvenil en su excursión a las áreas naturales excepcionales de Metro. Esperamos que los participantes se lleven lo siguiente:

- Respeto y apreciación por la naturaleza
- Crear conciencia de su impacto en el parque y la vida silvestre
- Algunas destrezas básicas para observar animales salvajes en la naturaleza

Los estudiantes aprenderán lo mencionado anteriormente copiando su comportamiento. El tipo de enseñanza más poderosa es aquella basada en modelaje del comportamiento y actitud apropiada.

Como acompañante, sus responsabilidades incluyen lo siguiente:

- **Enfatizar silencio y crear conciencia a través que camina en los senderos.** Durante las excursiones gozamos mucho, pero también nos conducimos silenciosamente. El parque o área silvestre que visitarán es un lugar naturalmente silencioso, y los animales que viven ahí están acostumbrados al silencio. Su grupo será un visitante en los hogares de buhos, garzas, águilas osífraga, venados, nutrias, castores, y otros animales. Estos animales tienen sentidos excelentes y están muy bien camuflageados. El caminar en silencio y ser observador aumentará la probabilidad de poder ver alguno de ellos. A medida que caminamos vamos a ver señas de la presencia de animales tales como huellas y excrementos de venado, alce, y zorra; y plantas que han sido mascadas por castores. Muchos pares de ojos observadores ayudaran a detectar estas señas.
- **Demostrar comportamiento apropiado.** Mantengase en los senderos, muevase en silencio, y respete la naturaleza a su alrededor.
- **Mantenga el grupo junto.** Los acompañantes deben asegurarse de que el grupo entero está junto y que pueden oír y ver la presentación del líder del grupo.
- **Mantenga los estudiantes enfocados.** Asegurese de que los estudiantes están participando en las actividades y ayúdelos si tienen problemas.
- **Dele la oportunidad a los estudiantes de contestar preguntas** hechas por el naturalista antes de ofrecer su respuesta. Siempre tratamos de extraer el conocimiento del niño y sus experiencias en resolver los “misterios naturales,” sin que los adultos ofrescan las respuestas o ayuda para recordar.

Por favor **use ropa apropiada** para las condiciones del tiempo y recuerde que no se permite comer o beber durante la excursión. Además, mochilas y aparatos electrónicos deben ser dejados en el autobús.

Gracias por ayudar a que sus estudiantes tengan una gran excursión!

Metro Education Staff

Metro | *Directions to parks*

Oxbow Regional Park

From I-84 eastbound, take the Troutdale exit (17). Go past the truck stop to the 2nd light and turn right on 257th Avenue. Go 3 miles to Division Street and turn left. Continue east for 5 miles, following the signs. Turn left on Oxbow Parkway and drive 1.6 miles to the park entrance. **The naturalist will greet you at the park office just inside the gate; please wait there for him/her to board the bus.**



Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

Take I-5 north to exit 307 (Delta Park/Marine Drive). Take the left fork of the off ramp, following the signs to Marine Drive West (don't go east to the airport!) At the light, turn right onto Marine Drive westbound and drive for 2.2 miles. Slow down as you come down from the railroad overpass and turn left at the large brown and white park sign. **The naturalist will greet you; please wait for him/her to board the bus.**



Dear Parent or Guardian:

Tomorrow your child will go on an all day outdoor field trip. The weather is often wet and cold and we will be outside the entire time. Please dress your child in warm clothing that can get dirty. They will need:

- a **hat and gloves**
- a warm **water-resistant coat**
- **sturdy walking shoes**, no sandals
- **layers of clothes** for added warmth, no shorts
- clothes and shoes that can **get wet and dirty** (we will be sitting, kneeling and even lying on the ground)

Thank you. We look forward to having a fun and educational day!

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Tomorrow your child will go on an all day outdoor field trip. The weather is often wet and cold and we will be outside the entire time. Please dress your child in warm clothing that can get dirty. They will need:

- a **hat and gloves**
- a warm **water-resistant coat**
- **sturdy walking shoes**, no sandals
- **layers of clothes** for added warmth, no shorts
- clothes and shoes that can **get wet and dirty** (we will be sitting, kneeling and even lying on the ground)

Thank you. We look forward to having a fun and educational day!

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Tomorrow your child will go on an all day outdoor field trip. The weather is often wet and cold and we will be outside the entire time. Please dress your child in warm clothing that can get dirty. They will need:

- a **hat and gloves**
- a warm **water-resistant coat**
- **sturdy walking shoes**, no sandals
- **layers of clothes** for added warmth, no shorts
- clothes and shoes that can **get wet and dirty** (we will be sitting, kneeling and even lying on the ground)

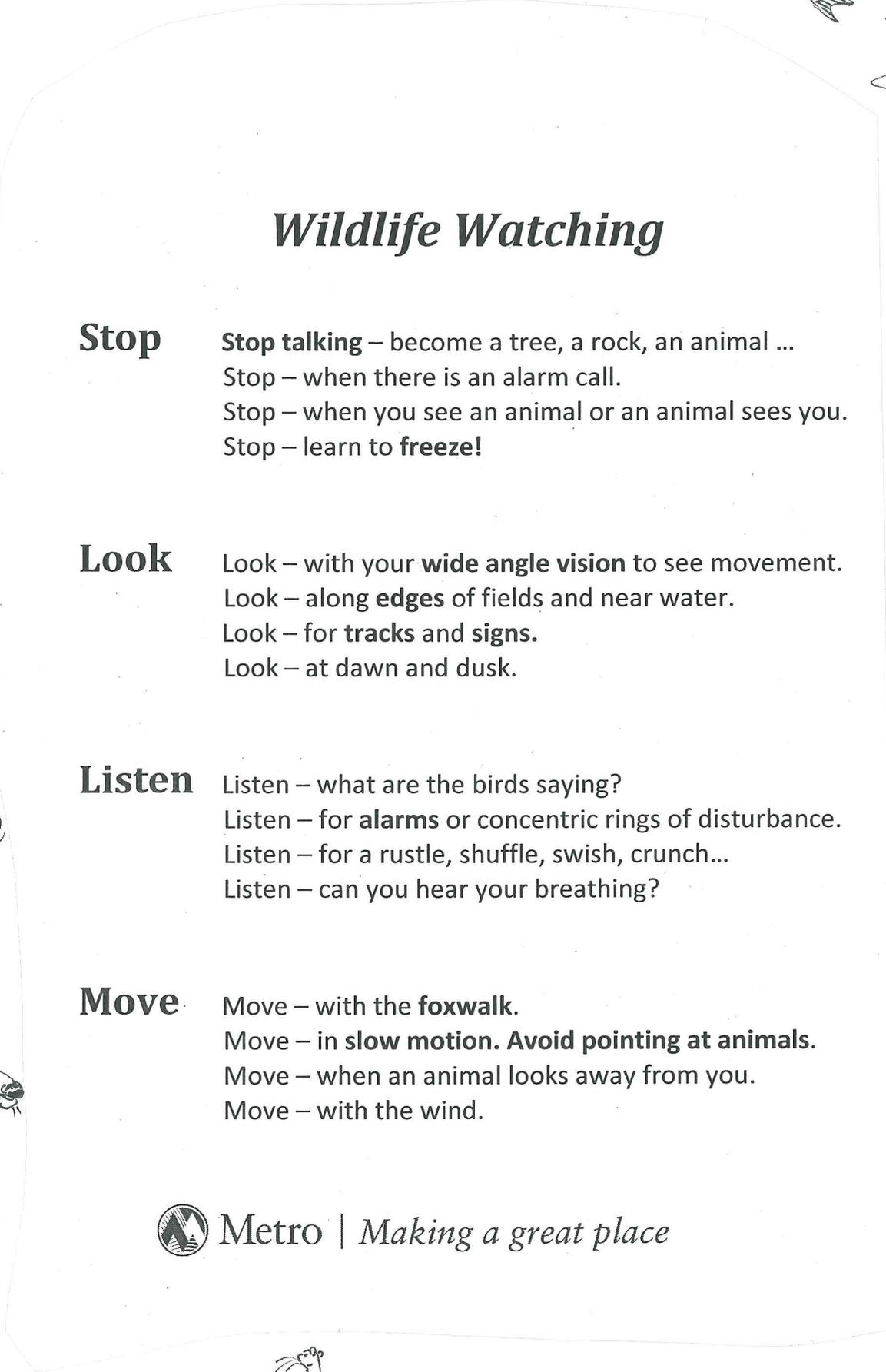
Thank you. We look forward to having a fun and educational day!

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Tomorrow your child will go on an all day outdoor field trip. The weather is often wet and cold and we will be outside the entire time. Please dress your child in warm clothing that can get dirty. They will need:

- a **hat and gloves**
- a warm **water-resistant coat**
- **sturdy walking shoes**, no sandals
- **layers of clothes** for added warmth, no shorts
- clothes and shoes that can **get wet and dirty** (we will be sitting, kneeling and even lying on the ground)

Thank you. We look forward to having a fun and educational day!



Wildlife Watching

Stop

Stop talking – become a tree, a rock, an animal ...

Stop – when there is an alarm call.

Stop – when you see an animal or an animal sees you.

Stop – learn to freeze!

Look

Look – with your **wide angle vision** to see movement.

Look – along **edges** of fields and near water.

Look – for **tracks** and **signs**.

Look – at dawn and dusk.

Listen

Listen – what are the birds saying?

Listen – for **alarms** or concentric rings of disturbance.

Listen – for a rustle, shuffle, swish, crunch...

Listen – can you hear your breathing?

Move

Move – with the **foxwalk**.

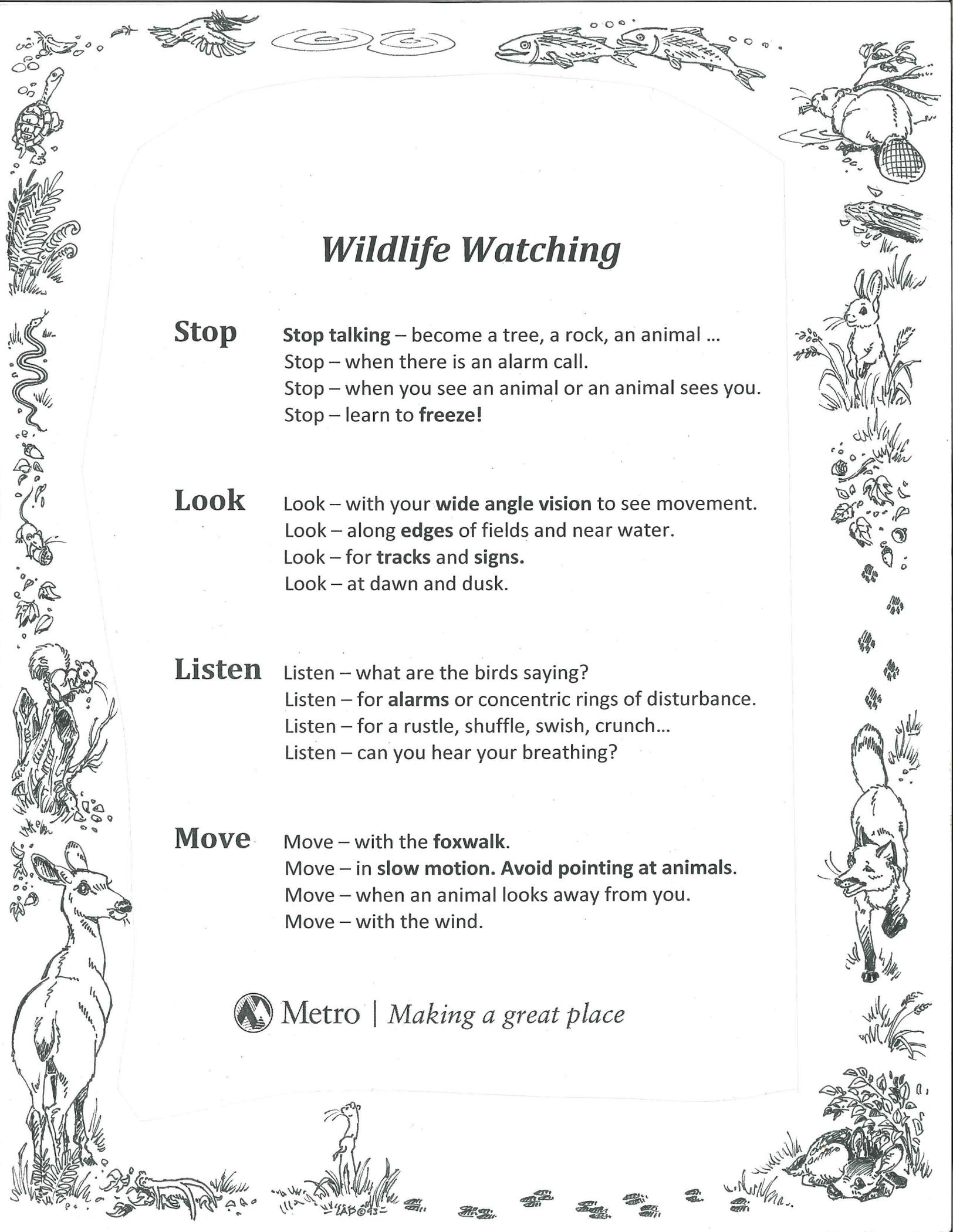
Move – in **slow motion**. **Avoid pointing at animals**.

Move – when an animal looks away from you.

Move – with the wind.



Metro | *Making a great place*



Wildlife Watching – The Freeze Game

Would you like to know how it feels to **be invisible**?

At the word **freeze!** stay perfectly still. You can breathe and you can blink – but that is all.

Stay “frozen” for a moment. Pretend that you have become a statue, a rock or a tree.

If a rabbit or a deer gets frightened, this is what they do. Then their colors blend in with the forest and allow them to disappear (camouflage).

You will probably only see them if they move.

If you are looking at a deer who has “frozen,” you should try to stay still as long as the deer can. You may have to stay still for a long time! Finally, the deer will forget that you are there. It will look away from you. Now is your chance to move closer to it! Any time the deer looks at you – **freeze!**

Use the freeze game when you are watching wildlife and when you hear an **alarm call**. An **alarm call** is a short, choppy call given by a bird or squirrel to let other animals know there is danger nearby. Even hummingbirds have alarm calls!

If you hear an alarm call – **freeze!** Is the alarm call nearby? Is it far away? Wait for it to stop before you move. Perhaps another animal or person is moving in the woods and the birds have spotted them. Soon you can learn to understand the birds.

Use a hand signal for “**freeze!**” on your walks. You don’t want to shout “**freeze!**” and scare everything away!

Try not to point at an animal to show it to other people. This is very hard to, but the animal may think you are trying to catch it or throw something at it when you point and it will leave. Keep your arms down, make yourself as small as you can, and say “I am just part of the surroundings” with your body.

If you have an hour or two, try finding a nice spot in a park, forest or your backyard. Then sit down, get comfortable and **freeze!** After a while the birds begin to sing and come closer to you. Soon you will be in a new world full of surprises – animals talking, eating, playing or hunting. That’s the way the forest is when there are no people around!

You have become invisible!



Wildlife Watching – Wide Angle Vision

Would you like to see twice as much wildlife – even in your own backyard?

Most people have learned to focus on one small area at a time. We look at a person's face, a book, or a television and blot out the surrounding areas. It is like looking through a little tube all the time.

Most animals see in a different way. They have to be aware of what is moving all around them – is it food or will it eat me? They need to see and hear in all directions – not just in front of them. Their lives depend on this.

We can learn from our animal friends how to see much more – use **wide angle vision**.

First, put your arms straight out to your sides at shoulder level. Then point your fingers up and wiggle them. While you are looking straight ahead, get so that you can see both hands:



Think of seeing out of the corners of your eyes. This is your peripheral vision.

Everything may seem a little blurry, but you will now be able to catch the slightest movement around you, even at your sides. If a bird hops, you'll see it! A blade of grass moves differently than the others! Is there a mouse there? Every bug in the vicinity will be seen too! If you spot something you want to look at, then you can focus as you normally do.

After a few tries, **wide angle vision** becomes automatic and easy for anyone to do.

The next step is to sit down in your backyard, a field or a forest and practice your **wide angle vision**.

Welcome to a new world!

Wildlife Watching – The Fox Walk

We can learn from our four-legged friends how to walk silently and unseen. The fox is especially good at sneaking softly through the forest.

First – **stop talking!**

Then – try the **fox walk**:

1. Try taking a short, slow step and place only the outside edge of your foot on the ground.
2. Gently roll your foot down flat.
3. Then slowly move your weight forward.
4. Repeat with the other foot...



With this walk you can **freeze** easily (if an animal looks towards you or you can hear an alarm call). If you feel a twig that might break, just pick up your foot and place it in a new spot. You don't need to look down – just feel the way.

It is best to use **slow motion**.

Try the **rabbit game**. Have your group form a circle with one person in the center pretending to be a rabbit. When the rabbit looks at you, **freeze!** When the rabbit is not looking at you, **fox walk** toward it. See who can reach the rabbit first. Try two rabbits. This is the same way to sneak up on a real animal.

Try the **fox walk** at home. See if you can sneak up on a cat or dog. Don't scare them. Just try to get near them, and then let them know that you are there and just practicing.

Then go outside and try the **fox walk** on beetles, bugs, birds, frogs, chipmunks, squirrels, deer or anything else. With care you can get close to lots of different animals. Remember, just get near and enjoy watching them, don't touch them or startle them.

Fox walking is part of **becoming invisible** and sneaking into the world of wildlife that most people never see.



Wildlife Watching – Focused Hearing

How much can you hear? As much as a deer, a fox or an owl?

Close your eyes, take a deep breath, relax and listen...

Take your time and focus.

What is the most distant sound you hear?

What is the nearest sound you can pick out?

How about all the sounds in between the near and far?

Can you hear your own breathing?

Can you hear your heart beating?

Listen closely to what the birds are saying.

Are they making long and musical sounds? If they are, they are **singing** and all is well with them.

Are they making a short, choppy and hard to locate sound? That is called an **alarm call**. Birds use **alarm calls** to warn other birds and animals of approaching danger. Some alarm calls are loud and easy to hear, like a jay's or a crow's. But even very small birds have alarm calls – it may be a tiny chirp that is hard to hear. Even the smallest alarm call is the birds' way of shouting, "There is danger coming! Hide! Run away!" to all other animals in the forest.

If you hear an **alarm call** near you, chances are that the bird is warning other animals in the forest that you are approaching! If you hear an **alarm call** not in your immediate area, it could mean that there is another animal moving. Or it could be that there is a disturbance being made even further away...

You see, if a loud, scary, dangerous animal moves through the forest (like a human, for example), the **alarm calls** will move outward from the source of the danger. It is like dropping a rock in a pond – the **concentric rings of disturbance** move out in larger and larger circles.

Can you detect any concentric rings of disturbance?

Birds will make different types of **alarm calls** for different dangers – people, deer, fox, snake, etc.

You can even learn to understand them!



Another type of **concentric ring** is a bird flying rapidly through the forest.

If the forest is very quiet, it means that some danger is near, or has passed through recently, or that you are creating a disturbance.

Try putting on **deer ears**. Just cup your ears with your elbows pointed forward. This will let you focus and amplify the slightest rustle, swish or sound in the forest.

