

SELF-GUIDED NATURE HIKE
Pleasant Grove Park - A Natural Experience

START AT THE KIOSK TO THE LEFT OF THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

*This hike will take you through several different types of habitats; see the back of the Pleasant Grove trail map for an explanation of habitats. Please use the **green numbered placarded stations** and this handout to guide you at each spot. If you want to know more or don't know what the 'thing' is, try to take a picture and ask at the museum after the hike.*

STATION 1

We are now at the edge of the forest next to a field that is mowed.

- a) Would you expect different animals to live here than in the forest?
- b) Would having this field here help forest animals? How might the forest animals use the field and the unmowed area between the 2 habitats? (yes, food for some of them)
- c) How might the field animals use the forest? (As a place to hide or run away to for shelter.)

STATION 2

- a) Look at the hairy vine growing up the tree. Even in the winter, you should know what kind of vine this is!
- b) The leaves that are starting to grow out of it have 'leaves of three'. Does that give you a clue what kind of vine this?
- c) Think "Hairy Scary"!!! This vine is poison ivy. . .don't touch it!!

STATION 3 (Next to Station 2)

- a) Look at the fence here. What is happening with the trees next to it?
- b) Are fences usually built near the ground like this one?
- c) Has the fence moved up from the ground as the tree grew around it?
- d) Do trees grow up or sideways? (both! As they grow, they add another layer all around the tree, including at the top of the tree.)

Make a right at the intersection onto the Cross Hill Trail

STATION 4 (Deadfalls)

- a) Look at the many trees lying on the ground here. What do you think may have happened here?
- b) What is your evidence of that? (There aren't any saw or chopping marks on them, and some came out by the roots.)
- c) Can we know for sure what happened here? How would we know? (We would have to be here at the time that it happened to know for sure.)
- d) Is our guess a good one? Is there lots of evidence to support it? (Would looking up the weather help?)
- e) Do you think it happened a long time ago or fairly recently? Why? (Use your observations to make inferences/guesses)

STATION 5

- a) Why do you think this stream started out of 'nowhere'?
- b) Does everything happen above ground where we can see it?
- c) What is probably underground? (A layer of rock that rain water can't soak through and water comes out of the ground where the rock layer ends.)

STATION 6

- a) Look at the tree making a scar around the dead branch. Why might the tree try to do that? (Think about protecting the living parts from the bugs and fungus that will grow in the dead part.)
- b) Is the healing similar to what happens when you hurt yourself?
- c) Look downhill. What is at the bottom of the hill? (Stream)
- d) Why do you think that is? (water goes downhill when it rains)
- e) Why might that be important to the animals in the forest? (get water to drink or wash themselves)

STATION 7 (Three dead trees here)

- a) What do you think made the holes in it?
- b) How does one hole lead to another? (The first hole might be made by a bug, but how will a bird get to the bug to eat it?)
- c) How might the bigger holes be used by other animals? (Some birds make their nests in the holes in a dead tree.)
- d) How is the dead tree helpful to the forest and other animals after it falls over? (It rots to make better soil. Other animals can live under it. Other animals can get to the bugs that live in it.)

STATION 8

- a) Are there any evergreen trees here?
- b) Are there any deciduous trees here? If trees are either evergreen or deciduous, what do you think deciduous means? Guess what the official name is for baby teeth! (deciduous teeth)
- c) Which do you think will die first...the evergreen trees in a forest or the deciduous trees? Why? (Evergreens disappear as a deciduous forest grows because the deciduous trees get taller faster and block the light for the evergreen trees.)

Take the North Hill trail to the right

STATION 9 (Old fence)

- a) Why do you think it was put here?
- b) Does that give more evidence that this used to be a farm?
- c) Is there any evidence that it is older than some of the plants around it?

STATION 10 (Bluebird house)

- a) Why would a bluebird like this spot? (Think: food, cover, water and living space; the 4 things all wildlife need.)

If you have any questions left from the hike, you may wish to ask at the Museum.

This hiking guide developed with the assistance of the Rivanna Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists (www.vmn-rivanna.org). Please leave nature in the Park as you found it so others may also enjoy the natural experience. Please let the Park Staff know your comments, suggestions or observations. Thank you and enjoy "Pleasant Grove Park – A Natural Experience".