

Companion (6th Grade) Parents

As we begin a new Pathfinder experience with your Pathfinder we don't want to overwhelm you with information, but we do want you to be informed about what we will be doing throughout the year, as well as make you aware of what your young person will need to do "at home". As you get the items done, please send a note saying they have finished it, or you can email us at englishman62@gmail.com or gjakovljevic3@gmail.com.

Here is a list of items. You will find a more detailed account on some of the items below the list:

- Read The Book of Genesis
- Plan ways and find opportunities to spend at least two hours helping an elderly person.
- Spend at least four hours participating in projects that benefit the church or school.
- Keep a 7-day outdoor log of your personal observations from nature in which each day focuses on those things that were created on that day.
- Animal Tracking Honor for those that attended the Cohutta Campout:
 - Maintain a tracking station for at least three days
 - observe tracks
- Shrub Honor: Observe some shrubs

The Book of Genesis

While reading, ask these questions:

- "What did I learn about God?"
- "What did I learn about myself?"
- "How can I apply this to my life today?"

A Friend to Someone in Need

Do you have a neighbor or relative that needs help around the house? Do you know an elderly person that would enjoy being read to?

Project benefiting the church or school

If your child participates in SonRise, that could count.

Animal Tracking Honor

1. Maintain a tracking station for at least three days by doing the following:

- a. Select a flat open space in some quiet place near your camp or home.

Do not select a space *too* close to your campsite, because you do not want to attract them into your camp. Animals need water, so a really good place to select is around a source of fresh water. River banks, stream banks, near ponds, and the shores of lakes are all good places to find animal tracks. However, the place you select must be quiet. Avoid places that are frequented by people.

b. Smooth out ground, mud, sand, etc.

There may already be some tracks in the area, but you are interested in fresh tracks. Smoothing the ground erases them and allows for fresh prints. A mason's trowel works very well for this in mud. You can also use a trowel on sand, but be careful not to pack it down. The smoother you can make the surface, the finer tracks you will be able to see.

For dirt, it helps if you can sift it onto a flat surface and then lightly wet it. If your garden hose has a "mist" setting, use that after sifting the dirt onto a flat surface.

c. Place food out for wildlife.

Another option is to use a salt or mineral block. The type of food you place will affect the type of animals you attract, as will the season. If there is plenty of food available without your "bait," the animals will be suspicious and stay away. However, if they are hungry (as in winter) or if the food you select is irresistible, they will be more likely to come. Sliced apples out of season will attract many types of animals.

The type of food you set out will have some effect on the type of animals you attract. Popcorn kernels or sunflower seeds are likely to attract squirrels. Cold cuts may attract predators such as raccoons or coyotes. Fresh dirt will attract worm-seeking birds. Fresh fruit will attract many types of animals.

d. Check each day for tracks and replenish food when necessary.

When camping, remember to store your food in a place where the animals cannot get to it. Seal it tightly and place it out of the reach of raccoons and bears (both of which are very clever at getting food). Under no circumstances should you store food in a tent - especially in one that people will be sleeping in. A tent poses no barrier to a hungry skunk.

The morning is the best time to check for tracks. Most forest creatures are nocturnal, so in the morning the tracks will be freshest. Also, human visitors are less likely to trample the tracks before you get a chance to observe and if necessary, cast them.

If you wish to photograph your tracks, it's best to do that in the early morning when the sunlight comes in at an angle. If you wait until the sun is high overhead, the track will not cast a shadow and it will be difficult to see. Turn off your camera's flash or it will completely wash out the shadows and the track will not show up in the photo. If you want to experiment with artificial light, use a flashlight to illuminate the track from the side. Place a coin or a ruler (for scale) next to the track before taking the picture. Take lots of photos (digital cameras are *great* for this) and hope that at least one of them turns out. It takes a lot of practice!

2. In your area, observe tracks or trail of one or more of the following:

a. Mollusk/Snail: When most people think of mollusks, they think of clams and mussels. For this honor, it is beneficial to remember that snails and slugs are also members of the mollusk family, especially since they leave easily followed trails.

The best time to find snail or slug tracks is in the early morning. Look on the sidewalk near flower beds for the tell-tale slimy trails these creatures leave as they slip along. As these slime trails dry, they turn white and flaky, often curling at the edges.

That said, it is also possible to find the tracks of clams and mussels. The photo on the right shows the tracks left by a mussel in shallow water at the edge of a fresh water pond.

b. Earthworm: Find a place where you have seen earthworms in the past, preferably where the dirt is bare (i.e., no grass). Soak the area with water to drive the worms out of the ground. Worms need air, so when it rains (or when a Pathfinder soaks the ground with a hose), they will come to the surface. They might not come out immediately, so you should plan to return a day later to look for tracks in the mud you've made.

c. Mole: Moles are burrowing rodents, and if you have them in your yard, it is not difficult to see where they have been. As they tunnel along, they raise the earth above their tunnels. At the end of the tunnel you may find a hole surrounded by a "mole hill".

Shrubs

Observe some shrub which is in bloom and list as many kinds of insects as you can (at least three) which come to its blossoms for pollen or nectar.

We look forward to spending an enjoyable year with your young person!

Alan & Gordana Simonds
& The Companion Staff