Lesson 17: Exploring the manatees’ habitat!

This was designed as a field study at Blue Spring State Park. The activity could be modified for other sites where manatees can be seen. The trip should be conducted during the winter in order to maximize the chances of seeing manatees 😊

Our schedule for Blue Spring is below. Each bus had 2-3 classes of students. Over 4 days, we brought 18 classes of 3rd grade students from two schools to the park. We coordinated with the park to have one of their volunteers available to show students a video and talk to them about manatees. We also arranged for free admission to the park (each of the vehicles needed to have a copy of a letter on letterhead explaining about the education program that they would be doing in the park). We had our own volunteers assigned as leaders for each class. The leaders had a clipboard with data sheets on it, and they worked with the students to complete the data sheets as they explored the park. We made some laminated fliers with images of the different fish species on them, and attached these to railings at some of the observation points.

Timeline for Blue Spring State Park field trip—BUS # 1

11:15—buses arrive. Lead students to programs room. Students use bathrooms next to that building.
11:30—Students watch video, learn from park staff
12:10—Divide students by classes (teacher). One volunteer takes each class. One class goes to spring run, two down to dock. After a couple of minutes, a second class heads to the spring boil, then a couple of minutes later, the third class. After the spring boil, lead the classes (staggered) back towards the picnic area, making observations of manatees and fish along the way. (Fill out the data sheet). Stop briefly at each of the observation decks. Be back at the picnic area by about 12:45-12:50.
12:50-1:15—Students eat lunch, under supervision of their teachers.
1:15-1:30—Students use bathrooms and load up on buses.

Timeline for Blue Spring State Park field trip—BUS #2

11:15—buses arrive. Students can use bathrooms next to playground.
11:30—Divide students by classes (teacher). One volunteer takes each class. Stagger classes by a couple of minutes and lead them along the walkway, stopping briefly at each observation deck and making observations of manatees and fish along the way. (Fill out the data sheet). If time permits, go all the way to the spring boil. Line up classes outside the programs room.
12:10—Students watch video, learn from park staff. At conclusion of program, lead students back to picnic area.
12:50-1:15—Students eat lunch, under supervision of their teachers.
1:15-1:30—Students use bathrooms and load up on buses.

Standards addressed: SC.3.N.1.1; SC.3.N.1.3; SC.3.N.1.6; LA.3.4.2.2; LA.3.5.2.1; LA.3.6.1.1

This activity is available online at http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu/sea/manatees.html
Teacher’s name __________________________________________

BLUE SPRING STATE PARK
Observations data sheet

Date: __________________________

1. The water depth by the observation dock is _______________________________

2. The water that comes out of the spring is __________ °F

3. We saw (how many?) ______________________ manatees today.

| HOW MANY MANATEES WERE DOING EACH BEHAVIOR? |
|-------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Remaining                                  | Swimming | Breathing | Eating | Nursing | Rolling | Scratching | Other (specify) |
|                                           |          |           |        |         |         |            |                |

4. We saw (how many?) ______________________ manatees that had scars on their bodies.

5. We saw many different types of animals at the park today (in addition to fish and manatees). These animals included:

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

This activity is available online at http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu/sea/manatees.html
6. Fish Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of fish*</th>
<th>Did you see this fish?</th>
<th>How many did you see?</th>
<th>What were the fish doing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluegill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largemouth Bass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catfish/ Pleco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarpon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fish images from www.myfwc.com