



September 25, 2019

## How to Lead the Best Field Trip Ever

### Field Trip Advertising:

- 1) Who is your audience, who are you trying to attract?
  - i. New members = what would interest them
  - ii. Current members – Diversity important
  - iii. Families with Children
- 2) Site description, easy/moderate/difficulty hiking, wet, sandy, etc. What expect to find.
- 3) Travel directions, carpooling, time, duration of trip
- 4) What to bring/wear, sunscreen, hat, shoes, snack, lunch

### Field trip Information on site:

- 1) **Introduce** the guide(s), and provide a little background on them. Are they the site manager?
- 2) Which **management agency** oversees the property, don't forget to thank them if they have led the trip. Ask if a written thank you is appropriate and provide it. Ask if FNPS can be of any assistance to the site.
- 3) **Site Description** – which ecosystem(s), what you are going to see. Are there any rare plants, animals, is the population stable, at risk, what problems encountered, invasive plants or animals. Indicate threats, i.e., lack of fire, adjacent land uses, climate change impacts, public access/carrying capacity.
- 4) **History** of the site, cite any FNPS involvement/contributions
- 5) Take FNPS memberships brochure and hand out.
- 6) Take site maps, vegetation maps, plant lists, bird lists, etc.
- 7) Be familiar with the site, where the plants are.
- 8) Assign one or more people as “**sweeps**” those bringing up the rear so no one left behind. Do not leave people behind.

### Interpretation:

Field trips leaders should be familiar with the concepts of Interpretation – that is the process of communicating information in a way that engages your audience through

more than just passive listening. Interpretation should stimulate interaction between you and your audience. Trips should nurture participation; participation indicates people are enjoying the learning experience. Maybe it's just a question or two, but encourage people to use all their senses, sight, sound, smell and touch. Hands on activities are particularly effective for engaging children and creating a memorable experience for them.

Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. It is enough to light a spark. A nature guide is a naturalist who can guide others to the secrets of nature.

I hear – I forget

I see and hear – I remember

I see, hear, and do, I understand (Old Chinese proverb)

Important rule of good interpretation is to attempt to know your audience. Understanding factors such as why audience members are there and the type of information they are likely to understand is key to making a connection.

There are visual learners – learn by seeing, look for cues in body language, facial expressions or visual displays to help them assimilate information.

Auditory learners – learn by listening and respond well to verbal and interactive discussions. They may not look at you directly but turn an ear to you.

Tactile/kinesthetic learners – learn by moving, doing, and touching

- Provoke interest/curiosity
- Relate to the lives of the audience – why is the visitor here and why do they want to know this information.
- Address the big picture – a theme might be what is important about this particular park, historic site, or species of conservation concern.
- Be prepared, organized, practice, be responsive, be confident.
- Be professional, patient and kind – it's not about who knows the most.

### **Dealing with difficult people:**

There will always be one in the group – it is your responsibility to respond in a professional manner. People have different life experiences that influence their attitudes and beliefs.

When you ask a question, be patient and wait for an answer. The longer you wait, more likely it is that you will receive a thoughtful response. You need to be a good listener.

Be kind – if you are sarcastic or demeaning, they will learn not to respond, and worse it can generate disdain for you and your message.

It's OK to say you don't know.

**Plan your trip** – arrive early, start on time.

Inform your audience of where you are going, how long it will take, what they will see. Inform them of any specific rules, plants to avoid (poison ivy), where the restrooms are located. Explain possible risks on the trip, i.e., nesting birds, poisonous plants, gopher tortoise burrows, etc.

Walk with purpose, use your voice effectively, interact with your audience.

Plan round trips – so you can return to same spot. If not possible, plan to escort individuals back to the starting point if necessary.

Plan your first stop near the starting point so late arrivals can catch up.

Be the Leader. If large group enlist help in the back to keep people together and explain what they may have missed. Stops should have a purpose, no more than 5 per hour.

Stops should be brief. Allow for individual self-discovery and reflection.

**Spontaneous education moments:**

Feel the rough edge of cogon grass or saw grass, smell the leaves of a Bay tree, feel the difference in organic content among soils, feel the layered bark of a tree, touch a palm frond and consider why these adaptations are important. Listen for sounds of a flock of birds in the canopy, or the absence of sound, cars, city noises. Be prepared to capitalize on these moments.

**Working with Children:**

- Children are self-oriented
- Fantasy and reality are the same
- Everything is alive
- Use play, fantasy and the senses
- Keep it simple
- Make your expectations clear, set specific limits on behavior (stay on the trail...
- Give problem children something to do (hold your papers), stand next the child, hold their hand, etc.
- Solicit help from other children, adults]
- Do not yell, yelling means you have lost control
- Model the behavior you want the children to exhibit.