

Study of Nature – Level 1

Introduction

The study of Nature is the informal study of plants and animals, usually in their natural surroundings, and of other natural objects and events. The study of nature is a kind of scientific investigation that takes place in the outdoors rather than in the home or school.

Bird watching, for example, is a popular hobby of adults. Many persons make collections of butterflies, wildflowers, rocks, shells, or fossils. Others photograph natural objects, or make sketches of them.

Some of the most important scientific discoveries have been made by naturalists, persons who study nature in the field, often as a hobby. John James Audubon (1785?–1851) contributed much to the knowledge of American wildlife with his accurate, artistic paintings of birds and mammals in their natural settings. Amateur students of nature have been influential in conservation of wildlife and other resources, and of scenic beauties.

Most people enjoy nature and are curious about it. They find beauty in flowers, trees, and landscapes, and like to watch the activities of animals. They usually want to find out all they can about these things. They want to know what certain animals eat, how birds build their nests, which flowers grow in forests and which in meadows, and why clouds take the forms they do.

Studying Nature, where to get information

In schools and libraries one can find many helpful facts and ideas. There are nature study books for young people in bookstores and libraries.

Many museums, especially museums of natural history, have exhibits of natural objects. Some of the exhibits are habitat groups, lifelike specimens of animals and plants shown as they live together in nature. Planetariums and some museums have exhibits showing many interesting facts about the earth and other planets, and the stars. Botanic gardens, zoos, and aquariums contain living things from all over the world.

State and national parks often have small museums. In many parks there are nature trails and guides who conduct tours. City parks are often good places to observe small local animals and to study plant life.

Things You Will Need

You will need a notebook and pencils for writing down the facts you discover, and for sketching things you find. It is not necessary to have a camera, microscope, or binoculars but they are helpful. A hand magnifying glass is useful. Small field books that describe natural objects like birds, trees, plants and animals help you identify them.

Safety and Conservation

When exploring nature it is important to remember safety rules. The nature books you read will tell which living things may harm you. For example, it is hard to tell poisonous mushrooms from nonpoisonous ones, so it is wise not to handle any that you find in the field. Poisonous snakes and other dangerous animals should be handled only by experts.

Be careful not to destroy plants and wildlife unnecessarily. Some kinds of plants and animals are becoming scarce, and there are laws to protect them. It is against the law to destroy or collect natural objects in parks and forest preserves. Remember the Pioneer saying, "Take away experiences and leave only foot prints".