

Junior Rangers 2021

Plants: Flora Safari

Objective:

Junior Rangers will get out and explore the *flora that is around their homes. They will observe and identify *host plants and trees for insects and other animals. They will identify natural sources that assist in keeping animals and the flora around in the areas they are observing, whether it is an urban area or a park.

Materials:

- Pencil
- Flora Safari worksheet
- Nature Journal
- Clipboard or something to write on

Bonus Materials:

- Magnifying glass
- Guide books

Background information:

What is flora? Flora is a plant/tree found in your local area!

What is a host plant/tree? A host plant/tree is a plant that organisms live on or feed on.

We, as people, have favorite foods. It may be a donut, slice of pizza or a crisp salad.

Can you imagine only being able to eat your favorite food for your entire life? Now what would happen if that food was taken away from you? That is life for animals that live on or live off of host plants. When we remove those host plants from the environment, animals may struggle to survive.

How do we know if the plants we are looking at are host plants? We should be exploring the critters or evidence of critters that may be on the plant/tree you are looking at.

What else do animals need to survive? Food, water, shelter and space. Let's look for evidence of all of these to make sure our flora is hosting well.

Activity:

Let's begin your safari! Do you have the tools needed to begin your exploration? Is the weather good? Will you be able to safely explore the plants and trees you need to? If you answered yes to these questions, outside we go!

While on a safari, it is most important to keep our eyes and ears open and at the ready. We need to make sure that we don't miss any signs of life! Head towards a tree or plant of your choosing. I would encourage you to look at more than one, if you have some available. While approaching the plant/tree look closely for signs of life. We are on the

hunt for visible life, like an insect or squirrel on or near the plant, as well as signs of life. Signs may be a chew mark on a leaf or a pile of nuts beside the tree. Note any life signs approaching the tree/plant and signs on the plant itself in your nature journal or worksheet. Take some time to explore closely, use a magnifying lens if you have it! Fill out your worksheet based upon your observations.

Once you have explored the plants you have available around you, take the time to get a good picture of them. Make sure to do leaf or bark rubbings on your worksheet that show the full leaf! If you have any guidebooks on your adventure today, try to identify the plant while it is in front of you. Now that we have spent some time getting to know our local flora, let's go home and do some homework!

Analyzing the Data Collected:

Using your Nature Journal answer the following questions below after you completed your safari.

- What plants or trees were you able to find?
- Are they native, meaning are they from the areas you live in and are they supposed to be there?
- Are they a host plant?
- What animals are the plants you found a host plant for?

Conclusion:

Now that we have analyzed our data, we can come up with a conclusion about our exploration and an action plan to move forward with. Answer the following questions in your Nature Journal.

- Were you able to successfully find a host plant or tree?
- What does this mean for the environment around your house?
- If you found host plants that were not native, what action plan can you come up with to right this situation?