

## School Walk Strategies

### Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

#### Objectives

This guide offers strategies and tools to use in interpreting natural environments for youth. With the tools in this guide, students will actively participate in their own learning as they investigate the natural environment of Point Lobos Reserve.

#### School Walk Logistics

1. **Plan your route.** Know what time the group is to return to the starting point (typically 1.5 hours). Plan a route with observation points and factor in time to linger.
2. **Interpretation Strategies and Thematic Focus.** If the walk has a theme consider where and how to develop the theme along your walk route.
3. **Flow of Learning Sequence.** See below for some suggested tips and talking points to use to interpret nature on your walk.
4. **Schedule.** Before the walk, confirm the number of students you will lead, share planned routes with other walk leaders, and collect your phone and any props.

#### Interpretation Strategies for a Successful School Walk

*School walks are sensory experiences.*

*Touch sandstone and granodiorite, smell wood mint, tickle monkey flower, touch a clustering anemone, smell and see and hear the sea lions, feel salt residue on a rock, try to budge a limpet, pet the wild California sage, the Sagewort.*

*Hands on experiences through the senses linger on in the memory chain. --C. Marquart*

*There is so much beauty to see.*

*It is fine with me if students interrupt and point out things they see or ask questions. I look for ways to draw out the shy students and direct questions to individuals rather than calling on the ones who always want to give an answer.*

*Ask questions like "What do you think...?" --D. Grace*

*Be flexible and let nature--what we see and hear--be our guide.*

*When I first started doing walks, I used the Cypress Grove trail walk handout as a guide...that got me over my nervousness. Now I focus on the different environments.*

*[The walk] will be different almost every time. --P. Johnson*

*My overriding goal is that children have fun.*

*When they run ahead, I bring them back. When they are not paying attention, I excitedly emphasize those things that I think are special or neat about being here. Anything they stop to look at, I ask what they see and make a fuss over it. Any animal we find, we stop and take time to enjoy. If they learn anything--great--but that isn't my goal. I just want them to enjoy being outdoors and develop a desire to repeat the experience. There is no right or wrong way (to lead a school walk). Just do what feels good and have fun. -- R. Johnson*

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### Select Some *Flow of Learning* Strategies

*Flow of Learning Sequence* from *sharingnature.com*. This 4-step suggested sequence has been developed for teaching outdoor nature classes. We have added a variety of tips shared by veteran leaders of school walks. Select a **FEW** to aid in the design of your walk.

#### Stage One: Awaken the Student's Enthusiasm.

*Create an atmosphere of enthusiasm in a structured, safe environment.*

- **Coyote:** Go out like a coyote- “ears up, eyes open and mouth silent.”
- **Set the tone:** Describe distance, time, scopes, pelts and more. *F. Elizondo*
- **Introductions:** I introduce myself and ask the kids to tell me their names. I ask them to give their group a name of an animal, bird or fish. This always starts a big conversation and then a vote. This is done to form a bond and I tell them that their group is special, just as Point Lobos is special. “*Well begun is halfway done*”.  
*S. Myers*
- **Rules and safety:** No collecting (*give an example—hold up a pinecone and ask if they can take it home to show their parents*), stay on trail only, walk in middle of trail, one chaperone at back, mobile phones in pockets (picture taking opportunities will be given). *D. Grace, C. Bertko, F. Elizondo*
- **Rules and safety:** Never turn their backs to the ocean. *R. Johnson*
- **Poison Oak:** Show them seasonal pictures of the plant and a picture of poison oak rash. *D. Grace.*
- **Leaves are us:** I start with showing a green leaf and noting plants make all the food we eat and all the air we breathe. I note how rare our natural forests of pine and cypress are. *R. Johnson*
- **1-3:** Choose 1-3 things you would like them to remember. (Mine is that Point Lobos belongs to them and their families, to all of us Californians and it is ours to enjoy and look after.) *R. Pettit*

#### Stage Two: Focus Attention.

*Deepen the student's awareness of their natural surroundings.*

- **Park versus Reserve:** *Who is the reserve for? F. Elizondo, R. Grace*
- **The Route:** I take the kids on the same way each time, allowing me to script my walk a bit. Questions: *What is the most dangerous thing here? What ocean is that? What animals live in the coastal scrub? What good are plants?* When talking about coastal scrub, I stand with my back to the plants where I know the brush rabbits are commonly feeding. When a student spots a rabbit, I praise their powers of observation and we talk about what other animals live in the scrub. *R. Grace*
- **Habitat Cards:** Have students be responsible for finding plants and animals on the walk. See Point Lobos **Habitat Cards** at the end of this guide for suggestions.

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- **Breathing Trees:** Trees and plants are living organisms. *They eat, rest, breathe, and circulate.*
- **Where are we?** Orientation in space-California, Pacific Ocean. *What is that large body of water? F. Elizondo*
- **Where are we?** We see how flat is the horizon and yet we know the earth is round. And who the heck is on the other side of the largest ocean in the world? *R. Johnson*
- **On a hunt:** I have them spread apart and walk as quietly as possible as if they were Native Americans on a hunt. *R. Grace*
- **Howling:** I howl at a coyote bush repeatedly and expect them to correctly identify them. *R. Johnson*
- **Geology:** I always note the difference in the rocks and how crazy I think it is that all of the land floats in large plates upon the molten interior. And that is why we have earthquakes and why the plate is moving right now an inch or so a year. *R. Johnson*
- **Los Lobos:** I point out the true Pt. Lobos, with the barking sea wolves. Spaniards had to sail around the point in the 1700s to get to Monterey, the capital of their county, California. I tell them that this place belongs to them and to all of us. *R. Johnson*

### Stage Three: Offer Direct Experience.

*Inspire awe and wonder and build a connection to Point Lobos.*

- **Stop and listen (in the pine forest):** One minute stop, eyes closed, *hold up your hands, fists closed, LISTEN.* Finger up for each bird sound you hear. After one minute, students share quietly the number of fingers raised. *C. Bertko*
- **Stop and listen (at Sea Lion Point):** When you get to the point where you can hear the sea lions ask the students to *Close your eyes and listen. Name the sounds you hear.* It is rare for them to just be in silence for a moment with eyes closed. *K. Richman*
- **Stop and look (on Sand Hill Trail before Sea Lion Point overlook):** Stop for one minute. *No talking, observe, think about all of the animals that live in, on, or around the ocean in front of you.* After one minute, students share their mental list. *C. Bertko*
- **Colors:** Looking south at Sand Hill Cove overlook, we stop for a few minutes and talk about the beauty of the ocean/shore/mountains. I ask them to describe in words what they are looking at. *How would you paint it? What colors would you use? Rog. Dolan*
- **Scientists:** Somewhere on the trail, talk about the sciences and their relationship to the geology, plants and wildlife at Point Lobos. *How many would like to become scientists? What kind of scientist would they like to be? Rog. Dolan*
- **Trees:** Use the tree stumps in Piney Woods for a discussion of tree rings, wood grain, pinecones and the way trees grow (cambium, wood, bark, leaves, needles). *Rog. Dolan*
- **Skulls (Information Station or Mint Van stop):** We examine the sea lion skull while we talk about its fishhook teeth, no molars, swallowing without chewing. *R. Grace*
- **The Language of Point Lobos:** I have the students repeat the newest words to me after I explain them and then “quiz” the children during the walk (especially names of

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plants and rocks). *Roc. Dolan* Introduce no more than three or four plant names. *Rog. Dolan*

- **Walk like a Native:** Walk like California Indians while hunting. Can you walk so silently that the person in front of you cannot hear you? What did you notice? *R. Pettit*
- **Stop for all Animals:** Stop for squirrels, rabbits, birds, pill bugs, spiders. Be silent, watch and listen. *R. Pettit*

### Stage Four: Share Inspiration (Closure).

*Build on their uplifted mood to encourage stewardship.*

- **Cypress Grove:** Before leaving the rarest natural forest in the world I give a tree a hug and invite them to do so also. *R. Johnson*
- **Homework:** Thank them for being such good observers, listeners, hikers. Assignment: return with their parents and siblings and share the knowledge they have gained. *R. Grace*
- **Family Dinner:** I ask the students *How will you describe today when you go home tonight?*
- **One Thing:** Have each student share with the group one thing they learned today that they didn't know before and what they liked best. *F. Elizondo and K. Richman*
- **Silent Walk:** I do a silent walk at the end of our time together so they can listen and think. Then they share their favorite thing they saw or something new they learned. *P. Johnson*
- **Remember:** Tell them that they will be asked at the end of the walk to remember one thing they enjoyed seeing, hearing, smelling, touching. Stand in a circle at closing and have them do this. Thank them for coming and express the hope that they enjoyed themselves and will come back with their friends and families. Only \$10 for a carload for the entire day! *R. Pettit*

### *Pt. Lobos HABITAT CARDS*

This set of cards can be used in connection with having students be “spotters” during the school walk. The goal is to give students a role to play on the walk that engages them more fully in the experience of being at Point Lobos.

There are 20 cards. They include plants and animals from all three habitats at Point Lobos. The card front includes photos and common names in English and Spanish and the habitat(s) in which the organism is found. The card back has simple facts and questions to develop observation skills and evoke a sense of wonder.

*(continued)*

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### *Pt. Lobos HABITAT CARDS (continued)*

The walk leader can select which cards to pass out to the students. Students can have one or more cards. We recommend keeping the *Poison Oak* card for yourself in order to model how students are to use the cards.

- Students take active roles on the walk as “spotters” – identifying the plant or animal on their card and sharing the information with the group. Walk leaders can help students with spotting by using “I Spy” prompts or other cues.
- Students use “paired sharing” by choosing a classmate to help them share information from the card. Walk leaders can choose whether or not to add additional information.
- Students learn from the card, and teach others through “show and tell” using the cards.



**Where are the cards?** On the Docent Web Site and at the Point Lobos Docent Center.  
*Please return them to the Docent Center after your school walk.*

**Many thanks to the many school walk leaders who contributed to this guide including:** Rochelle Dolan, Roger Dolan, Fernando Elizondo, Robert Grace, Paula Johnson, Roy Johnson, Carol Marquart, Spence Myers, Rick Pettit, Kathy Richman. *In some cases we have paraphrased your words because of space constraints.*

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