

Local Species Scavenger Hunt

Subject: Science, Language Arts, Indigenous Knowledge	Grade: 2-7	Duration: 1 hour
Lesson Overview	In this activity, students will explore their local environment through a photo-based scavenger hunt. Using technology and storytelling, they will identify local species and landmarks, connect with the land, and share stories about their community. The final product will be a scavenger hunt map or interactive route designed for others to explore and learn from.	

Curriculum Ties (in addition to satisfying multiple core competencies):

- **Science**
 - Grade 3: Biodiversity in the local environment
 - Grade 4: All living things sense and respond to their environment
- **Language Arts**
 - Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves, our families, and our communities
- **Indigenous Knowledge & Perspectives**
 - Connection to place, storytelling, and land-based learning
- **Core Competencies**
 - Communication, Critical Thinking, Personal and Social Awareness

Content Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and document local species and landmarks using observation and technology

- Demonstrate understanding of interactions between people, land, and environment
- Practice storytelling, empathy, and leadership through collaborative planning
- Develop a sense of place and appreciation for biodiversity in their community

Materials & Equipment Needed

<p>Consumables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional: printed photos of local species, landscapes, and landmarks 	<p>Non-Consumables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tablets, or phones with cameras • Seek by iNaturalist (for identifying plants and insects) • Merlin Bird ID (for identifying birds by sight or sound) • (Optional) ActionBound app or similar for designing digital scavenger hunts • Large paper, printed photos, markers, tape/glue (for analog version of the hunt)
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Lesson & Activity

Lesson Stages	Learning Activities
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the concept of a community-based scavenger hunt: Explain to students that they will explore their community through a scavenger hunt where they identify and collect information about local plants, animals, landmarks, and stories. The idea is to see the world around them not just as background, but as a place full of life, history, and meaning.

A community-based scavenger hunt is different from just “finding things”—it’s about looking closely, asking questions, and thinking about how people, land, and species are connected.

- Prompt discussion with guiding questions:
 - What are some places in our neighborhood that are special to you?
 - Have you ever heard a story about a park, building, or trail in our community?
 - What kinds of birds or plants do you see often? Do you know their names?
 - Are there places that feel different depending on the season or time of day?

- Introduce the apps for species identification (Optional):
 - Seek by iNaturalist: Free app for identifying plants, insects, fungi, and animals. Just open the camera in the app and point it at the species.
 - Merlin Bird ID: Free app by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It helps identify birds by either taking a photo or recording their sound.
 - To install: Open the App Store (iOS) or Google Play Store (Android), search “Seek by iNaturalist”, and tap install. No account required.

- You may choose to preload the apps on school devices, or show a brief demo if students will use personal phones. If not using devices, printed field guides or images work too.

- Hand out printed images (optional):

Provide students with printed pictures of common birds, plants, insects, or animals they may see in their area. You can include basic facts and names to help them recognize what they might encounter.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the types of locations they will visit: Students will walk around the school grounds, nearby parks, gardens, sidewalks, or community landmarks (as appropriate). Let them know it's okay to find both natural elements (like trees, bugs, moss, birds) and human-made features (like murals, benches, community centers, bus stops, etc.). • Introduce the idea of "storytelling through place": Explain that part of the scavenger hunt will include reflecting on what places mean to them. Encourage students to notice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Which places make them feel calm, excited, curious, or proud ○ Whether they know any stories from family or community members about a specific site ○ Places that might have names or meanings in different languages (including Indigenous languages) ○ How each location or species contributes to the life of the community • Set the tone for observation and respect: Emphasize that this is not a race, but an opportunity to observe carefully, listen, and appreciate what is around them. They are acting as explorers, photographers, and storytellers, all at once.
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go on a walk around the school or local area (such as a park, garden, trail, or neighborhood block). Encourage students to slow down, look closely, and be curious observers of their surroundings. • Ask students to document their experience by doing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take photos of local species (plants, birds, insects), natural features (trees, rocks, bodies of water), landmarks (murals, signs, buildings), and places that



	<p>seem meaningful or special.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Use the apps Seek and Merlin Bird ID to help identify unknown plants and birds. Prompt them to try the “live camera” feature or record bird songs if possible.○ Write down names, descriptions, or personal associations for each stop. Encourage them to be creative: they can invent names for unknown landmarks or describe how a place makes them feel.○ Reflect and share stories — does this place remind them of a memory? Do they know a story someone told them about that spot? Has the place changed over time? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regroup as a class at the end of the walk (or back in the classroom), and guide a reflective discussion:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Which places or features stood out to them the most, and why?○ What new species or natural elements did they discover?○ What emotions, stories, or cultural meanings are tied to the places they chose?○ How did the experience of observing, listening, and moving slowly change how they see their community?
Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select key locations and features as a class or in small groups. Review the photos, notes, and stories collected during the walk. Together, decide which places or species will be part of the final scavenger hunt route. Consider choosing a mix of natural elements, cultural landmarks, and personal or historical sites.• Design prompts or clues for each stop. For every selected location, have students brainstorm a short activity or prompt. These could include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A riddle or clue describing the place○ A fact about a local species they observed○ A story, memory, or traditional teaching related to the place

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A challenge (e.g., identify a nearby plant using Seek) • Decide on a format for the scavenger hunt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Digital Option: Use a platform like <i>ActionBound</i> to create an interactive scavenger hunt with locations, photos, and prompts. This can be used on iPads or smartphones. ○ Analog Option: Create a large visual map using printed photos, hand-drawn symbols, and written clues. Display it in the classroom or school hallway for others to follow. • Optional Extension – Share the scavenger hunt with others: Plan a day to host the scavenger hunt for another class or group. Students can take on leadership roles by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guiding peers through the route ○ Assisting with app navigation or map reading ○ Sharing their stories and findings at each stop
<p>Step Ups & Step Downs</p>	<p>Step Down – Simplified or indoor version: If going outside is not possible, organize an indoor scavenger hunt using printed images of local species, landscapes, and landmarks. Hide them around the classroom or display them gallery-style on the walls. Include clues or facts with each image, and encourage students to "collect" observations in a journal or worksheet.</p> <p>Step Up – Advanced or extended version: Incorporate GPS coordinates or QR codes placed at real-world locations around the school or community. These can link to student-created prompts, audio recordings, or videos. You can also turn the activity into an outdoor classroom experience, inviting local knowledge keepers or community members to share stories and deepen the learning at specific stops</p>

Background Knowledge

This activity is designed to engage multiple dimensions of student learning and connection to place:

- **Spiritual:** Students are invited to express their sense of belonging and personal connection to local places during the scouting expedition.
- **Emotional:** Sharing stories and memories fosters emotional ties to the environment and builds empathy toward others' experiences of place.
- **Physical:** Students explore the physical layout of their community by actively walking, observing, and selecting locations for the scavenger hunt.
- **Intellectual:** Through discussions, storytelling, and observation, students deepen their understanding of local geography, history, and biodiversity. They are encouraged to reflect on community knowledge (including family or cultural narratives) and to use their imagination to create new names or meanings for places. This layered knowledge will inform the scavenger hunt and contribute to a rich, student-authored story of place.

Additional Resources

- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/biodiversity>
- <https://bcecosystems.ca/>
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/biodiversity/bc-biodiversity>
- <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>
- <https://www.inaturalist.org/>