

PONDering Stuart Park Gilcrease Museum Gardens Activity

Subjects: Science, Language Arts and Social Studies

Grades: elementary and middle school

This activity correlates with **PASS objectives** in the following areas: Science, Language Arts and Social Studies.

Objective: Students will demonstrate the ability to locate and identify attributes of a wetland.

Materials: pencils and scavenger hunts sheets for each student

Background:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers define wetlands as:

“Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar activities.”

There are other types of wetlands besides swamps, marshes and bogs. These include coastal (saltwater) wetlands and inland (freshwater) wetlands. See below for different types of wetlands in Oklahoma. Wetlands are home to many different types of animals, birds, fish, amphibians, insects and plants.

Wetlands are important to us because they provide balance to ecosystems; habitats for animals, fish and birds; recreation for humans to watch the animals, fish and birds; jobs for people who are interested in preserving and protecting this important resource; and protection from other elements of nature such as erosion, flooding and droughts.

Wetlands—Did you know that. . .

- Oklahoma has lost 67 percent of its wetlands since the late 1700s. That’s about 1.7 million acres.
 - The State of Oklahoma has 44.7 million acres of land of which 2 percent (950,000 acres) is wetlands.
 - Private landowners own more than 87 percent of Oklahoma wetlands.
 - Half of the threatened or endangered animals in the U. S. depend on wetlands.
 - More than 300 Oklahoma cities and towns depend on wells and lakes for drinking water.
 - Oklahoma, with its 4,500 lakes, has more man-made lakes than any other state.
- Source: Oklahoma Conservation Commission

Instructions:

Use the [map of the Gardens](#) or the small map included in this lesson to help your students locate the small pond in Stuart Park. (Additional maps are available at the Greeter’s Desk or on the museum’s grounds.) Travel together to this place (Stuart Park is located by the bus parking down the rock staircase.) Once you are there, explain to students (or, in some cases, remind

students) what wetlands are and give them the Oklahoma-specific background information. Encourage them to explore the pond using MOST of their five senses.

LISTEN for: bird calls, insects buzzing, fish jumping

LOOK for: birds, animals, fish, insects, plants

FEEL: the cool breeze, the hot air, the sun shining, the rain falling (please do not let kids disrupt the natural habitat of the pond by picking flowers, catching animals/insects, etc.)

SMELL: water, algae, plants, animals, soil, rain

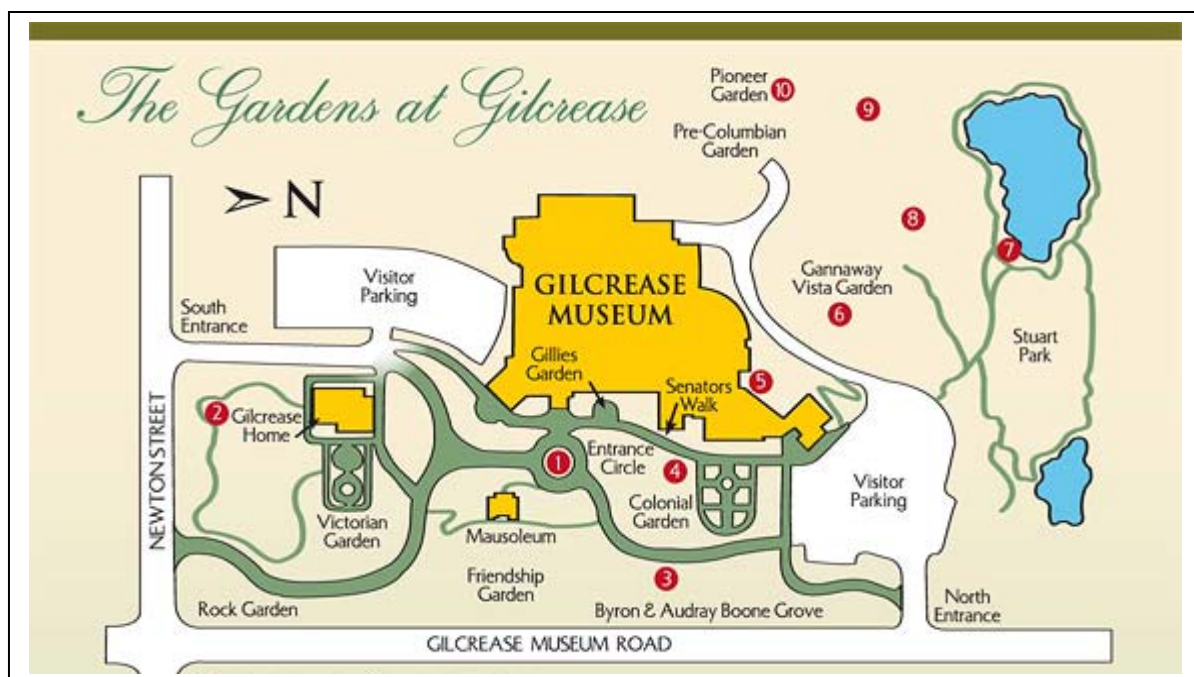
TASTE: your lunch! Please don't let students eat or put anything in their mouths that they didn't bring specifically for lunch.

Have students record their findings on the Scavenger Hunt pages following this lesson. Not all items on the Scavenger list will be available at all times since wetlands are ever-changing. Encourage students to work together and share their findings with the group.

Other wetland activities:

At School: Divide students into groups and ask each group to research a particular type of wetland in Oklahoma. These include: Riparian Corridors, Oxbow Lakes, Closed Depressions, Playa Lakes and Forested Wetlands. Have them describe what animals, plants, fish and trees are present there. How are these wetlands similar or different? What makes each unique? Why are we fortunate to have these types of wetlands in Oklahoma?

At Home: Conserve water when showering, doing the dishes, doing laundry and watering the plants.





Stuart Park Scavenger Hunt (for younger visitors)

Directions: See if you can find something near or around the pond that is:

___ Blue

___ Green

___ Red

___ Brown

___ Yellow

___ Black

___ Soft

___ Good Smelling

___ Bad Smelling

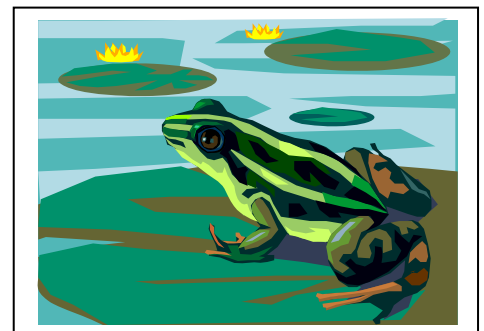
___ Makes a Loud Sound

___ Smooth

___ Makes a Quiet Sound

___ Hairy

List what you find under the word that describes it. Compare your list with other students to see if they found the same things.



Stuart Park Scavenger Hunt (for older visitors)

Directions: See if you can locate examples of the items listed below near the pond in Stuart Park. Record and describe what you find on this sheet. Share your findings with other students to see if they found similar or different items.

_____ Animal tracks

What do the tracks look like? What kind of animal do you think made these tracks?

_____ A water bird

What kind of bird is it?

_____ An insect that floats

How does the insect float on water?

_____ A flying insect

What kinds of fish/birds/animals eat these insects? Is it flying quickly or slowly?

_____ An amphibian

Describe the amphibian. What makes it an amphibian and not a fish or mammal?

_____ A wetland plant

How does this plant help with this wetland's ecosystem?

_____ Something rough

What is this object? Why do you think it is rough?

_____ Something smooth

What is this object? Why do you think it is smooth?

_____ Signs of people

How do you know this is a sign of a person? Is this a good sign or a bad sign? Why?

_____ Something changing

What is changing? How is it changing? Is this a good change or a bad change?