

Trail Talk Calendar: March 2024

Topic: Leave No Trace Principle 6 - Respect Wildlife

This month the conservation committee would like to promote the importance of respecting our wildlife while recreating in the outdoors. We are asking Worcester Chapter activity leaders to promote this topic and to incorporate it into your pre-activity trail talk.

This is the sixth of the seven principles of "Leave No Trace," and is valuable in reminding us to respect the natural landscapes as crucial habitats home to an abundance of wild creatures.

Here is some information to discuss with your group:




1.) Keeping Distance



- It's important to only observe wildlife from a distance. The general rule is to extend out your arm and give a thumbs up. The wild animal would be smaller than your thumb!
- Keep your hands to yourself. **Do not** touch injured, juvenile, or resting wildlife. Touching or handling wildlife may cause the animal to attack and to catch an illness.
- If an animal is sick or injured it is often best to "let nature take its course". That way the least disturbance would be inflicted on the animal.
- Do **not** see wildlife as your friend. Wild creatures deserve to be left alone without human interaction.
- Remember we are visitors into their home! Just as you would be considerate at a stranger's home, be considerate while outdoors. 🌲🏠
- Getting too close, making excessive noise, and littering can cause wildlife to feel stressed and scared causing them to get hurt or sick.
- Wildlife can be unpredictable and if you are approached slowly back away and maintain eye contact. 👁️
- If you see other people disturbing wildlife you should **lead** by example, **educate** others about proper behavior, and **report** violations to authorities.
- We humans are often seen as predators in the animal kingdom! So, keep your distance and let wild animals continue to be wild. 🐾🦉🦋🐸🐢🐨🐿️

2.) Food Storage

- Storing food properly while in the outdoors will protect both people and wildlife.
- Animals use the sense of smell to explore their surroundings as a means to find food and to determine threats to their territories.
- All exposed food gives a scent, and it will therefore attract wildlife for an easy meal. 🍏
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- Keep all food items sealed and airtight. Do not allow the scent of food to travel.
- Keep all items out of reach from wildlife. In other words, having items out of reach is the same as out of mind.

- Storing food prevents animals from having improper nutrients in their diet and to avoid becoming food habituated.
- Once an animal is accustomed to human food it will therefore come closer to people and get more aggressive.
- Devices to store food are lockers, plastic totes, canisters, cables, and kevlar sacks. 
- All food items should be stored at least **200 feet away** from your campsite to establish a protective barrier between you and wildlife.

3.) How to conduct a bear hang?

- Bears are among the largest and most dangerous animals you may encounter. 
- If hard sided storage containers aren't available use a bear hang as a secondary option.
- Simple hang materials include a sturdy bag, 100 feet of cord, a carabiner, and a stick.
- In the bag make sure to pack away all smellable items including toiletries, food, trash, cookware and utensils, clothes you cooked in, and scented feminine hygiene products.
- When searching for a bear hang spot it's important to look for a sturdy tree limb at least 18 feet high. 
- Your bag will hang at least 6 feet from the trunk, 6 feet below the limb, and 12 feet above the ground.
- Throw a rock or stick attached to cord over the branch, attach a carabiner to the cord, use the carabiner to clip the bag, and hoist the bag as high as it will go!
- Use reflective materials for the bear hang to make it easy for you to locate the bag.
- Make sure to store all food downwind of your campsite and kitchen area.

4.) Taking our pets outdoors

- While it can be fun to bring your pets along on outdoor adventures, they are often viewed as predators by wildlife.
- To keep both your pets and wildlife safe, keep your pets on a leash or under voice control and within your sight at all times.
- Be sure to keep pets at a distance from all wildlife, and do not let them follow or chase animals.
- Wildlife may attack pets in self-defense or to protect their young, and can injure your pet or spread disease. Wildlife may also be injured by pets.

5.) Do not feed wildlife

- Never feed wildlife, even if they look hungry. Human food is not healthy for wildlife.
- When animals have regular access to human food, they may stop seeking out their own food sources, and start to rely on humans for their meals.
- Feeding animals can also cause wildlife to lose their fear of humans. This can cause them to get too close to roads or areas where people live.

References

<https://Int.org/why/7-principles/respect-wildlife/>

<https://www.respect-wildlife.org/how-to-respect-wildlife>

<https://www.nps.gov/redw/planyourvisit/respectwildlife.htm>