

Field Notes Station: A Sense of Place

Directions Your adult chaperone will instruct you on whether your teacher would like you to complete this exercise individually or in consultation with your team members (the small groups you have been assigned to for the day.) If time permits and art materials are provided, add a sketch to illustrate your descriptions of the time periods.

Background for Reflection

All scientists rely on their senses to make field observations. At this station, you are asked to use your observation skills to record information about what you are experiencing today. The landscape you see today is the result of natural events and human activities spread over a long period of time. For the purposes of this exercise, we will think of the Meadow as having three main historical periods or eras: 1. wilderness – before European settlement, 2. farm (recent past) and 3. its future as a special event venue.

Being located, between Richmond and Washington D.C., this region has been a transportation corridor since colonial days. The town of Doswell has served as a rail station for over 150 years, playing a role in the transportation of people, agricultural and forest products. In 1864, both the Confederate and Union armies moved in and out of this area in their effort to take and defend Richmond. The Battle of North Anna was fought just a few miles away. For nearly 50 years, Interstate 95 has contributed to the sights and sounds of this landscape.

From colonial days through the 1970s, Caroline County was known for its horse farms. Triple Crown winner, Secretariat, perhaps the most famous of race horses, was born and started his training here at Meadow Farm. Today, the Meadow is the home of the State Fair of Virginia and several other special events held throughout the year. Reflect on what you think has changed and what has remained the same, during these time periods, as you complete the following observations:

The main plant communities I can see on this property are:

Do you think these communities were present when the Meadows was a working farm, yes or no, and why or why not?

When it was a wilderness?

Can you tell you are near a river, yes or no, and why or why not?

Please list 3 changes you think were made to this property while converting it to a fairgrounds?

1.

2.

3.

What sounds do you hear today?

How do you think the sounds may differ if you were sitting here ...

In 1600?

In 1864?

In 1971?

When the State Fair is going on?

Reflect on the activities of nocturnal animals. What impact do you think the State Fair has on them?

Name two other environmental impacts the Fair may have on this natural site?

List two design elements you think were used to help lessen those impacts?

What other suggestions do you have for conserving natural resources?

How does this place make you feel?

Name(s) _____

Field Notes Station: Is There Still Room for Wildlife?

This activity should be conducted at the schoolyard either before or after the field trip to the fairgrounds, so the two sites can be compared.

Directions

Your adult chaperone will instruct you on whether your teacher would like you to complete this exercise individually or in consultation with your team members (the small groups you have been assigned to for the day.)

Both social and natural scientists rely on their senses to make field observations. At this station, you are asked to use your observation skills to record information and evaluate this site's ability to provide wildlife habitat. Habitat is the arrangement of food, water, shelter and space suitable for animals' needs. Different wildlife species have different habitat requirements. The eastern cottontail gets most of the water it needs from its food source, but a whitetail deer needs to drink where water is on the surface of the ground. While completing this habitat evaluation process, assume that the goal is to have a wide variety of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish and insects present on the property.

To complete the habitat evaluation, rate each component on a scale of 1 (lowest or not present) to 5 (highest – abundant). Circle your responses. You will need to imagine the site during each season of the year. At the end of each section, calculate the average score for that section and list any suggestions for improvement you can make. For example, if you think the area lacks food for birds and other wildlife, a suggestion would be to plant shrubs that provide berries and nut trees.

Food Sources	Nuts	1	2	3	4	5
	Seeds	1	2	3	4	5
	Berries	1	2	3	4	5
	Nectar	1	2	3	4	5
	Insects	1	2	3	4	5

A. Average Food Score: _____

Ways to Improve:

Water	Green leafy plants with high water content	1	2	3	4	5
	A wet area present all year	1	2	3	4	5
	A wet area present part of the year	1	2	3	4	5

B. Average Water Score: _____

Ways to Improve:

Shelter	Thick brush and brambles	1	2	3	4	5
	Tall grassy fields	1	2	3	4	5
	Woodlands with many layers of plants	1	2	3	4	5
	Streams with forested buffers	1	2	3	4	5
	Dead standing trees	1	2	3	4	5
	Rotting logs on the ground	1	2	3	4	5
	Brush piles	1	2	3	4	5

C. Average Shelter Score: _____

Ways to Improve:

Space (natural habitats of adequate size)	Meadows	1	2	3	4	5
	Forests	1	2	3	4	5
	Shrubs	1	2	3	4	5
	Wetlands	1	2	3	4	5
	Streams	1	2	3	4	5

D. Average Space Score: _____

Ways to Improve:

Overall Score: (A+B+C+D divided by 4) _____