



Grabbing to get it

Do you remember..?

The camera is not always the best way to preserve what you experience. There are moments when the camera and the flashlight should be tucked away far down in your backpack, during the cozy moments, the best of experiences. These moments become nicer the longer they go on, the feeling grows stronger even though the image inside you is weakened more and more. It is often these moments that evoke the words "do you remember...".

Being a partner in discovery

It is not the outdoor leader's responsibility to be all-knowing. Instead, it is to be a fellow discoverer, create enthusiasm and arouse curiosity. It can be done through sharing certain skills and experiences, or it can also be through sharing information about where to find knowledge. Make it a habit to bring for example a factual book about various species of birds, insects or plants in your backpack. Then, the curious can find answers to his or her questions. But it is not always that easy to find what you are looking for. The alternative to finding the right name could be looking at the different characteristics of what you have seen and make up a new name together ("tall-flower", "itchy-bush"). The main point is to take the child seriously. The child is living in the moment and wants his or her answers right when they have asked the question.

Take notes in the factual book when and where you discovered the flower or insect for the first time. Then you will remember what you saw more easily. The next time you flip through the pages, you might not just remember the name, but other events that took place at that moment as well. Knowing the correct name is not always the most important thing when approaching nature. To discover what is there, we need to train our senses to perceive shapes, colours, smells, similarities and differences. Then, we experience nature without demands of previous knowledge of species. But soon, curiosity is aroused and we want to know what it is. Becoming experts of nature with the help of fantasy can be a way to arouse curiosity for further studies.

Conveying knowledge without giving away all the answers

A leader who does not know anything him- or herself, or lacks the ambition to learn, cannot ask anyone else to develop their interest in nature and outdoor life. You quickly tire if you always get the answer: "I don't know – look it up yourself!" But it is not just the ignorance of a leader that could "kill" the interest in nature. A leader could also be a "walking, talking dictionary" keeping a lecture about everything. This is often an obstacle to discovering the environment yourself and finding explanations with the help of fantasy. Instead, as a leader you have to find the answer proceeding from their own questions and asking the "right ones" yourself:

- Look – a lot of feathers!
- What do you think happened here?
- A fox has been here.
- Look at the feathers, what do they look like?
- They seem to have been bitten off.
- That's right. If a predator bird had done this, the feathers would have been whole since the predator bird plucks the feathers.
- So this *has* been done by a fox!
- Yes – or some other carnivore.

Search in the environments for more clues or tracks. After a while you might confirm that it was a fox that had a hearty meal.

A walk in nature without any demands on achievement can generate many adventures, if you just explore what you see. Sadly, we seldom give ourselves the time to do so. Our ambition is often to have a full schedule: ball play, tracks in nature, organized games, cooking, competitions... Where is the time for individual exploration? One way to explore an area could be to decide only to look at some aspects of it, instead of everything.

A sense of nature through artistic expression

It is not only our knowledge about what surrounds us that can help us interest others. The path to interest in nature also goes through emotion and artistic expression. Many musicians, poets and artists have taken inspiration from nature. But it is not only driven artists that can express what they experience. Bring water colours and a brush on your next excursion to describe and remember through what you are creating!

You can also use the juice from plants and "paint" with crushed leaves, petals or other parts of plants. The colours you can extract are often surprising. For instance, the yellow petals from the St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), creates a violet colour.

Musical instruments and singing by the fire often evoke nice atmospheres. Try to describe the day's events through melodies and choice of songs. Simple instruments can be made of materials in nature. This can give everyone a new experience of the day. Even prose can create the right atmosphere once you have gotten up on top of a hill. Perhaps that is the right time to take out a suitable book and read what someone else wrote about the forest and the mountains.

Outdoor life is seeking answers to the questions of life

Nature occasionally offers a special way to approach the big questions of life. It is through having managed a rough day, or when you experience the night sky together that you feel safety and comfort. The safety you have when you form a group of friends, closely welded together. That is when the big questions of life can emerge. Where am I in the universe? Who needs me? Why am I alive? Why is there not peace on Earth?

The questions are big and the answers are far away, but sometimes you have to say them out loud. The best place could be around the camp fire, when the last pieces of glowing coal create an

imaginary landscape or in an intimate conversation with a friend when you are watching the fire together during the night. Just sitting on a rock while the sun sets also makes the mind wander. Outdoor life presents many opportunities for reflection. Maybe many people go outdoors to find themselves?

“To stop for a moment and wait for your soul” is what it is all about in a story of a stressed out American who goes to Africa on a dangerous mission. On the fifth day, the Africans carrying his gear refuse to walk any further. When they finally reveal why they are not walking, the answer is that they are waiting for their souls. Is that not it, what we have outdoor life for, to wait for our souls!

But it also comes down to daring to wait. Outdoor life presents many opportunities for this, but not everyone dare to seize these moments. Why does someone always make a joke when the mood “tightens”? Do we not have the courage to listen to the silence and feel that you are not alone? That the greatness we see comes from someone or something!

Could it be that the safety in life does not only exist in the family or group of friends. The safety you seek might be here and now, right in the meadow where you are lying down looking at the summer clouds, or waiting for the coffee to boil or when the wind is caught in the sails and you feel the boat moving and its will to cut through the waves. This might be the moment when you discover the spiritual dimension of outdoor life. Here you are allowed to seek the answers to the big questions in life. You might already have the answer today, others must search longer – maybe all their life! But it is not when or where you find the answer that matters. The most important thing is that you dare to look for them!

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Reference

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