

Slowing Down to Make Discoveries

Often we cruise along the trails intent on reaching our destination, logging miles, or catching a glimpse of some large mammal. In doing so, we often miss some of nature's most amazing treasures. Try these trail tricks to slow down and enjoy the natural beauty around you.

One way to become more aware of your surroundings is to search for the colors of the rainbow. Most of us notice the green trees, gray bark, black earth and blue sky, but so many more colors are hidden right in front of our noses. Look for bright orange and yellow lichens on aging fence posts or purple-hued fungi and decaying leaves. Find insects and flowers to round out your rainbow collection. If you want to go all out, pick up some paint chips from the hardware store and challenge yourself to find exact matches for those colors in nature.



As humans, we rely heavily on our sense of sight. If we close our eyes, we are better able to focus on our other senses. Try pausing on the trail for 2 minutes, closing your eyes and just listening. If you need a more active approach, you can sit down with a paper and pencil (eyes open) and draw a 'sound map' or an illustration of the sounds you hear around you.

Often when we explore the trails, we don't actually come into contact with nature. Consider looking for different textures on your next hike. Reach out with your hand and touch the plants, soil, rocks, and water around you. Be sure that you know how to identify poison ivy and pay attention to the location of thorns, but you might be surprised at the variety of textures present in just a short section of trail. If you are walking with a young person, help them find opposite textures such as rough vs. smooth or soft vs. hard.



There are many treasures waiting to be discovered along our trails. Hopefully some of these 'tricks' will help you enjoy them more fully.

Nature Notes

Another way to engage our sense of sight in a unique way is to look for shapes during a hike. Perhaps you can find a triangle outlined by branches as you look up toward the sky or a spiral in a grapevine tendril.



Next time you're looking for a different perspective, slip a mirror in your

pocket for your hike. You can use it to peer under leaves without disturbing hiding insects or spiders. You can get a unique perspective on the sky above you as well.

If you find yourself seeing the same things over and over again, try changing the time of day that you hike. Early mornings or evenings are great times to see wildlife. Or make new discoveries by hitting the trails during a gentle rain or just after a fall storm.



Visit the Visitor Center Office for program information.

This inSTALLation is available online at www.chippewanaturecenter.org under the Naturalist Section.