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# MV Nature Clubs



"The book of nature . . . afforded an exhaustless source of instruction and delight."



## MV NATURE CLUBS

Christian youth are ever seeking for wholesome recreation, and will find real pleasure in becoming better acquainted with the natural world. What a wide range and diversity of appeal! God's created works are intriguing and fascinating, from the smallest insect to the giant redwoods. The nature and character of God are discerned through intimate knowledge of His created works. "While the Bible should hold first place in the education of children and youth, the book of nature is next in importance." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 185.

Purposeful exploration in the out-of-doors lifts man's mind above the level of everyday thoughts, puts new strength into his entire body, and gives him courage for carrying on his work. A half day spent out in the woods, under the stars, on the water, or in the desert will do more for the average person than costly medications. Here is relaxation that cannot be equaled, and the person who has never tried this form of rejuvenation cannot know its power. Nature study can so captivate the mind and body that people who have never been attracted to it in the past may become so changed by its influence that in reality they are new persons.

Church and youth leaders will discover that nature clubs contribute to the spiritual culture of the members. When one becomes sufficiently well acquainted with the various phases of nature to derive pleasure in out-of-door observations,

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Sabbath becomes a greater delight. When one reaches a degree of proficiency where he can share his enthusiasm with others, he becomes a valuable ally of the church leaders. Often friends and neighbors are attracted through this avenue to discover the beauty and love of the Creator of the wonderful world around them.

### Organize Your Own Club

A nature club should be organized in a church or Missionary Volunteer Society where there are even a few nature-minded people. Call on the conference Missionary Volunteer secretary to help. A convenient appointment should be made when all interested persons can meet together. The general objectives and plans for such a club should be explained. Officers should be chosen who have proved their leadership ability and who are interested in natural history. They do not need to be experts in nature study, but if there are any naturalists in the community, they certainly should be enlisted for service in carrying out the activities.

If you wish to have a constitution, and to follow the regular plan for organization, you may obtain a copy of the A.N.C.A. constitution (Associated Nature Clubs of America, Box 1326, Escondido, California). This constitution is a simple one, and allows room for the individual needs of all the clubs in the organization.

The A.N.C.A. was founded in 1947 by the biology teachers of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges, and is affiliated with the Missionary Volunteer Department of the General Conference. The A.N.C.A. tries to keep all its clubs



working steadily toward the goals set forth in the constitution; and in addition, club members receive the magazine, the *Naturalist*, as a regular part of their club activities. News notes from all the clubs are published in each issue of the *Naturalist*, along with helpful suggestions and practical articles for the nature student. Your club should be a member of the A.N.C.A.

Club meetings should be held at least once a month, and in some localities it might be desirable to have two or even four meetings each month. Large clubs should be subdivided into smaller working groups, which meet outside the regular club meetings, and thus persons interested in certain branches of nature may spend their time with their favorite activity. When the club is small it would usually be best for the entire group to work on one project at a time, and for everyone to participate in that particular study, rather than for everyone to pursue a different course.

#### Suggestions for Club Meetings

1. Study some particular phase of natural history, such as birds, mammals, insects, wild flowers, trees, mushrooms, fish. Spend several meetings with one such study, assigning topics to individuals for more detailed study, and for reports in club meetings. Reference books in libraries, specimens in museums, motion pictures, colored slides, magazine articles, and other sources of material may be used.

2. Ask naturalists in your area to give programs for your club. Ask biology teachers in high schools, academies, and colleges as well as

museum workers in natural history to contribute to your programs.

3. Write for help from national clubs like the National Audubon Society, New York City, and the American Nature Association, Washington, D.C. Such organizations often have traveling lecturers whose services may be secured for a small fee.

4. Order motion-picture films or 35 mm. slides from societies such as the two mentioned here, from film libraries in your State college or university, or from other libraries. Many fine natural history programs are available at either no charge or at most a very small fee.

5. Spend some club meetings out in a favorable natural area, such as a park, the seashore, a mountain canyon, a lake, or the forest. Club meetings in these places will be remembered as the most valuable of all.

#### Suggestions for Field Trips

Field trips are essential to the existence of every nature club. A club must plan for several each year, and even once a month is not too often. They should be carefully planned and organized so that they do not become ordinary picnics, although they may be social as well as educational. The secret of a good field trip is to plan for plenty to do, so that each person has a definite objective. Yet it is not wise to make the affair one of too much regimentation; a proper balance is best. It may take a little experimenting before your group can decide upon the right amount of work to do.



Plan frequent trips to such places as:

- The city, county, or university museum.
- City parks, zoos, or botanical gardens.
- State and national parks and monuments.
- Planetariums and observatories.
- Bird sanctuaries.
- Bird islands along the seacoast.
- Forests, wooded areas, deserts, lakes, rivers, and other natural areas, which may be found almost everywhere.
- Fossil beds and areas where interesting rocks and minerals occur.

Camping trips are of great value, and should be planned in every club as often as practical. They must be planned with great care, and should not involve a very large number of people at one time.

### Suggestions for Projects

The Missionary Volunteer Department offers many nature projects for which an award is given. The requirements are listed in the *Master Guide Manual*. Nature clubs will go beyond this area in their projects, but these items could be included in the plan, and the Honor Token earned.

Though it may not be best to have more than one project at a time in a small club, large clubs may want a number of special study groups. Each project group should meet once or twice a month independently from the rest of the club. Such meetings may be held in a special clubroom or in the home of some member. It is best to have a permanent meeting place, one in

which specimens, books, and other material may be left. Here are a few suggested projects for study:

- Birds in the field.
- Wild mammals (may or may not include learning to prepare specimens for the museum).
- Insects (usually includes collecting and mounting specimens).
- Butterflies and moths (as above).
- Shells, snails, and other animals (collecting specimens).
- Stars, including photography, making of maps, building a telescope, et cetera.
- Seashore animals.
- Photography of plants and animals.
- Wild flowers (including collecting of specimens).
- Trees, both cultivated and wild.
- Mushrooms.
- Seaweeds.
- Shrubs.
- Ferns.

In addition to these routine natural history projects, the club may wish to engage in others which will be of use to the entire club, such as the making of a club building for meetings, including a room for a museum, a library, and recreation rooms. This would take a great deal of effort and money, but one club has already built a club lodge in a forest in the mountains, a building large enough for more than one hundred people. The club may wish to form its own library, and such a project is very important.

Certainly, a club museum would help the club in its work a great deal. All these projects are important, and each club would do well to work on as many as possible. Many clubs publish a monthly bulletin to keep the members informed of news and announcements of importance.

Beginning with the first issue of 1950, the *Naturalist* has included in many issues one article of sixteen to twenty-four pages dealing with one of the nature projects listed here. This provides detailed material for carrying on these study projects. Each club member will want to have these copies for reference when he wishes to study that particular phase of natural history. Reprints of these articles are now available from the Missionary Volunteer Department of the General Conference, through ESDA Sales and Service.

For additional guidance and help in organizing a nature club consult your conference Missionary Volunteer secretary and write to the Associated Nature Clubs of America, Box 1326, Escondido, Calif.

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