

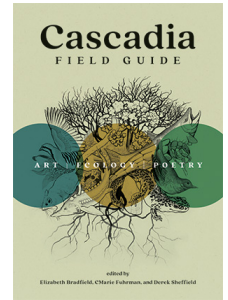
Cascadia Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry

Elizabeth Bradfield, CMarie Fuhrman, Derek Sheffield

ISBN: 978-1-68051-622-7

[Mountaineers Books](#), 2023

www.cascadiaguide.com



Who Goes There? Be a Bioregion Detective For Elementary (K-5) Students

Use all of your senses to hone observation skills and experience and make special connections to Cascadia/your place.

- Time required: 30 minutes or longer
- Optional materials: focusing tools such as magnifiers, picture frames/toilet paper tube “binoculars,” collection cups/plastic containers (raid the recycling bins), nature journals, sit-upons (small mat to sit on that can be made from cardboard wrapped in newspaper and plastic bags, duct-taped together)
- Setting: Outdoors

Background

Getting to know and to love a place starts with slowing down and noticing, using all of our senses to experience and build a sense of wonder and curiosity. The artists, poets, scientists, and naturalists who contributed to *Cascadia Field Guide* are like detectives who look, listen, feel and imagine the wonders of Cascadia.

Wildlife is not often seen, but they may be heard or smelled... or leave clues of their activities behind for us to discover—the rustle of undergrowth, a feather left, a track in mud, a munched leaf, trampled vegetation showing a trail or resting spot.

By honing observation skills, we can discover and experience more of Cascadia and make connections to the environment. Scientific discoveries and artistic creations all begin with observations!

Procedure

1. Go outdoors in the community, schoolyard, nearby park, or green space.
2. Find a safe and comfortable “sit spot” —a place you’re drawn to where you can sit quietly and observe. This may be next to a tree or shrub, along a riverbank, next to a tidepool, against a boulder, near a patch of wildflowers, or wherever “speaks” to you. Older children can spread out and find a solitary spot; younger children can stay closer together or be with a buddy.
3. Spend 5-10 minutes at your sit spot (shorter periods of time for younger children) where you will be a Bioregion Detective and consider “**Who Goes There?**” Emphasize that the quieter you are, the more likely you will be to notice sounds and avoid disturbing wildlife. Use your senses to explore your spot. (See suggested sensory activities and question prompts below.) After making observations, find a partner and share and compare your sit spots and one of two of your most interesting discoveries.

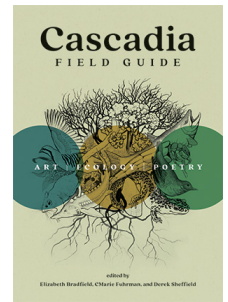
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Notes and Variations:

- You could focus on one sense each time you go to your sit spot, or all of them each time.
- Provide focusing tools, such as magnifiers and collection containers to temporarily observe objects or invertebrates.
- Record observations in nature journals with sketches and/or descriptions.
- Try going out to your sit spot regularly throughout the seasons to make comparisons.
- Remember that exploring, asking questions, and sparking curiosity is the key. No one needs to know the answers. Keep a group list of “What I wonder” or “Mysteries” that deserve further investigation.
- Create a group list of wildlife found at your site—from worms to whales, they are all part of the ecosystem!

Some sensory activities and question prompts could include the following:

- **Sight:** “Back and Belly” views. Imagine you are a worm and lie on your belly to look closely at the ground. Lie on your back and look up at the sky. Look for movement. Something tiny, something huge. What colours, shapes, motions, patterns do you see? What do you notice that you didn’t notice before?
- **Smell:** Smell the plants/soil/rocks at your sit spot. Make “Cascadia Cologne” by gathering small amounts of some natural materials from the ground at your sit spot (leaves, cones, petals, soil). Put it in a collection container and crush it up/mix it with a stick. How would you describe the smell?
- **Listen:** Everyone should explore this sense at the same time to minimize group noises. Close your eyes for 1 minute. Count how many different sounds you hear. What non-human sounds were heard and who made them? Older students can create a “sound map” with themselves located in the center of the map and sketches showing types of sounds (bird song, car traffic, dog barking, etc) and locations from where they were heard.
- **Touch:** Without moving from your sit spot, how many textures can you find and how would you describe them? Find something soft, hard, smooth, rough, bumpy, sticky, prickly. Find a leaf, tree bark, a large rock, or other textured surface to make a rubbing on a page of your nature journal. Put your paper on top of the object and use a peeled crayon, rubbing it length-wise to make the

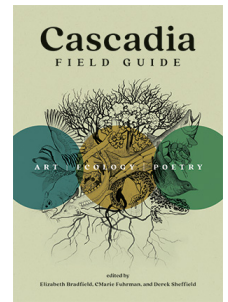
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rubbing. Share your rubbing with a partner and have them try to find the object that matches the rubbing.

- **Taste:** Only explore this sense with adult permission and expertise! If there aren't berries or other edibles nearby, be like a snake and 'taste' the air with your tongue or try catching a raindrop or snowflake in your mouth.
- **Love:** Connect with the heart. What is something that you observed that is very special to you today at your sit spot?

by Stephanie Weinstein, Environmental Educator based in Lkwungen territory in Victoria, BC, Canada