A Teacher’s Guide to Outdoor Education Sites & Programs in the Flathead Region

Prepared by: Flathead CORE
Community of Resource Educators
FlatheadCORE.org
Fourth Edition

Learning About Where We Live
Introduction

Much has been written about the need for more outside time for children. *Last Child in the Woods* and *No Child Left Inside* make the case for more outdoor education, for more time playing and learning in the woods, trees, mountains and streams.

As an educator, you know the benefits. You see the spark of interest that lights up children’s faces when they discover a tadpole, learn wilderness survival skills, understand their world a little more. Yet, you may also face competing pressures. The challenge of meeting content standards mixed with the challenge of stretching limited funding for field trips.

It is for you that we have compiled this guide. In this fourth edition, you will find:

- Educational sites scattered across the Flathead region, enabling you to plan field trips based on the optimal distance to the program from your school.
- A quick guide, found below, allowing you to browse the sites that will most likely meet your criteria for a successful trip.
- Descriptions that list the Montana Curriculum Content Standards for Science, along with a lesson cornerstone, a program contact, and additional links, assisting you in creating a fun and productive lesson plan for the field trip.

We have a list of educational trunks available at http://flatheadcore.org/?page_id=205 for your use as well. Also, please take a moment to view the numerous contributors to this project on the last page of this guide.

We thank the Sustainability Fund of the Flathead Community Foundation for funding this project.

We welcome your feedback for this guide, and wish you a successful school year.

Quick Guide

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Barber Creek Pit Restoration Site
South of Condon

Lesson Cornerstone:
Environmental restoration; plant and tree identification

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
Barber Creek Pit, more commonly called Barber Pit, a ten acre piece of United States Forest Service (USFS) land in Section 32, has served the Swan Valley in many capacities over the years. Besides the obvious use as wildlife habitat, it has been a Montana Department of Transportation gravel pit; a dumping area for deer carcasses; and a Saturday night party site. As the gravel pit filled with water and deer carcass disposal became less frequent, the idea of restoring the area for wildlife became increasing popular.

The first restorative events began in 1998 with the removal of highway debris and large tree stumps by the USFS. Since that year, as funding and time have permitted, weeds have been removed; tree saplings and native grasses have been planted; a goose nesting stand and a bat house have been constructed; and much more debris has been removed. In 2006, this area became a restoration/outdoor education project for Swan Valley School's seventh and eighth graders. Since then, students are the caretakers and users of these ten acres. With few exceptions, students have been on the land once a month for several years.

Trails and Terrain:
Students are maintaining the trail as an interpretive trail. They open it every spring and prepare interpretive signs. The trail is signed from May to October. There is a three-quarter of a mile foot trail two-thirds of the way around the pond on the site. The terrain is mostly flat with some uneven ground, vegetation and gravel.

Wildlife Present:
Students track signs of wildlife in their monthly visits. These include: elk and deer; geese and ducks; turtles; coyotes; great blue herons; and more. Elk and skunk tracks have been seen. A great blue heron has been seen taking off from the pond in the spring. A pair of geese has nested every April for the last six years.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Swan Ecosystem has created 20+ lessons associated with visits to the Barber Pit aligned with state educational standards.

Seasons:
Open all year.
Access:
Access to the pit is located a few yards from the well-maintained county road.

There is no official ADA access.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Turn off of Montana Highway 83 onto county road, Barber Creek. Travel east until the cattle guard and turn right. Within a hundred yards, the pit area is located on your left.

There is no designated parking area. Park on the side of the road near the gate. There is no through traffic.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
Group sizes of less than 30 would be best. Small groups are usually preferable.

Fees:
None.

Other Suggestions:
Bring bear spray.

Site services:
No facilities.

Contact Information:
Education Coordinator, Swan Ecosystem Center, 754-3137

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Swan Ecosystem Center
http://www.swanecosystemcenter.org/
Lesson Cornerstone:
Ecosystems

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
The Big Creek Outdoor Education Center began in 1927 as a Forest Service Ranger Station and home base for fire crews. In 1988, the Glacier Institute established its current outdoor education program at Big Creek. This is a truly peaceful location on the North Fork of the Flathead River and opportunities abound for hiking, biking, bird or wildlife watching and enjoying the outdoors. The Glacier Institute’s Big Creek Outdoor Education Center is operated under special use permit with the Flathead National Forest. Staff lives on-site and is available to assist students.

Trails and Terrain:
There is trail access from Big Creek.

Wildlife Present:
Visitors may observe the presence of various wildlife.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Glacier Institute publishes an annual catalog of educational programs available for school groups. The catalog is also posted on the website.

Seasons:
Spring, summer and fall.
**Access:**
Access is from the parking lot. There is some disabled access.

**Parking and Entrance to Site:**
Big Creek is approximately 23 miles north of Columbia Falls up the North Fork Road. Portions of the North Fork Road are unpaved.

There is ample parking.

**Google Earth Driving Directions Link:**


**Group size limits:**
Group sizes are limited to 40 people.

**Fees:**
Fees are specific to the educational program and arrangements.

**Restrictions:**
All U.S. Forest Service regulations apply. Please call for specific details.

**Other Suggestions:**
A gear list is located on the website.

**Site services:**
Services are provided with programs arranged in advance. No drop-ins.

**Contact Information:**
Glacier Institute Main Office, 755-1211

**For additional site and lesson plan information:**

Glacier Institute
http://www.glacierinstitute.org/
Lesson Cornerstone:
Aquatic habitat; fish identification; fishery management

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
Established in 1939, Creston National Fish Hatchery originally provided fingerling trout for stocking waters in Glacier National Park. Today, the hatchery provides trout for the seven tribal reservations in Montana; stocks fish for the Hungry Horse dam mitigation program; and produces native fish for restoration programs.

Trails and Terrain:
A nature trail with interpretive signs - and described in a descriptive brochure - makes a short quarter-mile loop through the woods and along Mill Creek. An amphitheater sits along Mill Creek and is accessible via a spur trail off the main trail. Some parts of this trail are steep and are not handicapped accessible. Teachers may use this outdoor area for class instruction. The terrain around the hatchery offices is mostly flat, with some hills along the Mill Creek bank on the nature trail.

Wildlife Present:
Rainbow trout, westslope cutthroat trout, various songbirds, eagles, osprey, herons, water fowl, turkeys, deer, fox and mink are abundant. It is rare, but still possible to see a black bear, mountain lion or coyote creeping through the woods.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Tours of the hatchery grounds and viewing of live fish are available, though limited. Arrangements with the hatchery must be made in advance. Self-guided tours of the nature trail are available. A Nature Explore outdoor classroom and play area is a new addition for the fall of 2012.

Seasons:
Open all year, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm daily.
Access:
Access to the hatchery is off of a paved county road.

There is ADA access to the hatchery office and upper nature trail. Portions of the nature trail are not accessible.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Travel Montana Highway 35 East to Creston, then continue east on Highway 35 for approximately one mile. Turn north on Creston Hatchery Road and follow the road approximately one mile to the hatchery entrance.

There is ample parking.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
None established.

Fees:
None.

Restrictions:
Fishing is not allowed in Mill Creek below the dam.

Site services:
Restrooms are available on site. The multi-use pavilion may be reserved for picnics and gatherings. No drinking water is available.

Contact Information:
Administrative Assistant, Creston National Fish Hatchery, 758-6869

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Creston National Fish Hatchery
http://www.fws.gov/creston/

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Educators - Let’s Go Outside
http://www.fws.gov/letsgooutside/educators.html

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
http://fwp.mt.gov/education/teachers/
Lesson Cornerstone:
Fisheries

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
A popular family fishing area, Dry Bridge Pond is located in Dry Bridge City Park. The three-acre pond is stocked with rainbow trout with assistance from Hedges School each year. The pond is tree-lined, with benches and a hiking path around the shoreline.

Trails and Terrain:
A trail surrounds the pond. The terrain slopes moderately from the parking area and road to the pond.

Wildlife Present:
Turtles, rainbow trout, muskrats, ducks, osprey and bald eagles may be observed.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Hooked on Fishing and other educational programs are available through the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Seasons:
Open all year. The best fishing occurs in April, May and June.
Access:
Access is from the parking area.

There is no official ADA access.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Dry Bridge City Park is located at the corner of Eleventh Street East and Woodland Avenue in Kalispell.

There is a paved parking area.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
A special use permit may be required.

Fees:
Kalispell City Parks are free. A special use permit may be required.

Site services:
A porta-potty may be available from late April through June.

Contact Information:
City of Kalispell Parks and Recreation, 758-7849
Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 752-5501

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide/familyFishingWaters/region1.html

Field Camp of Glacier Institute
West Glacier

Lesson Cornerstone:
Ecosystems

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
Field Camp is located on a secluded bluff overlooking the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, one mile north of West Glacier in Glacier National Park. During the past 60 years, this site has been home to the Civilian Conservation Corps, fire teams, the Youth Conservation Corps, and since 1983, the Glacier Institute. Staff lives on-site and is available to assist students.

Trails and Terrain:
There is trail access from Field Camp.

Wildlife Present:
Visitors may observe the presence of various wildlife.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Glacier Institute publishes an annual catalog of educational programs available for school groups. The catalog is also posted on the website.

Seasons:
Late spring, summer, fall and limited winter.
Access:
Access is from the parking lot.

There is some disabled access.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Take Montana Highway 2 to West Glacier, turn north and proceed to the Glacier National Park entrance station. Field Camp is the next left to the west.

Parking is limited. Please carpool whenever possible.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
Group sizes are limited to 22 students for lodging and 13 students on the trail.

Fees:
Fees are specific to the educational program and arrangements.

Restrictions:
All National Park Service regulations apply. Please call for specific details.

Other Suggestions:
A gear list is located on the website.

Site services:
Services are provided with programs arranged in advance. Occasional drop-ins may be accommodated.

Contact Information:
Glacier Institute Main Office, 755-1211

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Glacier Institute
http://www.glacierinstitute.org/
Lesson Cornerstone:
Ecology; earth science

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(2) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of properties, forms, changes and interactions of physical and chemical systems.
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.
(4) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of the composition, structures, processes and interactions of Earth’s systems and other objects in space.

Site Description:
The Forest Service Summit Nature Center is located in the lower level of the Summit House on top of Big Mountain at the Whitefish Mountain Resort. The center first opened in 1990, and today visitors enjoy center displays and hands-on activities. During the summer there are daily wildflower and nature walks. During the winter, school groups strap on snowshoes to explore the winter environment.

Trails and Terrain:
The well-traveled 3.8 mile Danny On Trail takes hikers to the summit. There is an elevation gain of about 2,000 feet and the hiking difficulty is moderate to strenuous. At the top of the mountain, there is the half mile East Rim loop. At the summit there is easy walking along uneven ground from the chairlift to the Summit House.

Wildlife Present:
Visitors may view or at least spot signs of many different wildlife species, including mule deer, several different bird species (hawks, songbirds and more), hoary marmot, mountain lion, black bear, weasel, snowshoe hare and pine squirrel.

On-Site Educational Programs:
During the winter, classes can schedule a Winter Discovery field trip: a day-long program that involves a snowshoe walk (snowshoes provided) and outdoor exploration. There are two available programs: “Animals in Winter” for grades K-4 and “Winter Safety and Snow Science” for grades 5-8. Field trip reservations take place in the fall and book quickly.

During the summer, the center displays and programs are available for self-guided discovery. During the months of July and August, daily nature discovery walks are lead by a Forest Service naturalist. The short walks are about 20-30 minutes in length. Kids ages 8-12 are invited to take part in the Junior Forest Ranger Program. After completing the activities in the Junior Ranger book, youth receive a special patch and card. Youth groups can schedule a Summer Discovery Program with a center naturalist: a hands-on, interactive, day-long program that involves a short hike and exploration in the nature center. Call well in advance to schedule.

Seasons:
Mid-June through Labor Day; end of December through mid-March.
Access:
Access is by walking and taking the chairlift.

The lower level of the Summit House is not ADA accessible. The resort makes accommodations to access the chair lift.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Whitefish Mountain Resort is located about 7 miles north of Whitefish. Take US-93 to downtown Whitefish. Turn north onto Baker Avenue. Baker turns into Wisconsin Ave. Turn right on Big Mountain Road and travel for about 5 miles. Look for signs for either the Base Lodge or upper parking lots.

There are numerous parking lots.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
Group sizes are limited by season for field trips: summer (30-40 kids) and winter (30 kids).

Fees:
Fee for riding the chairlift. Visit the Whitefish Mountain Resort web site for current prices. Youth groups and classes participating in nature center programs may receive a discounted ticket arranged through the Forest Service.

Other Suggestions:
Dress appropriately for sudden changes in mountain weather.

Site services:
Indoor restrooms; food service at both the Base Lodge and Summit House; and drinking fountain in both the Base Lodge and Summit House are available.

Contact Information:
Conservation Education Specialist, US Forest Service, 758-5218

For additional site and lesson plan information:

Flathead National Forest
http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/flathead/learning/?cid=STELPRDB5300981&width=full

Whitefish Mountain Resort
http://skiwhitefish.com/summit_nature_center.php
Lesson Cornerstone:
Ecosystems; watersheds; habitats; fire and winter ecology; earth science

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(1) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate the ability to design, conduct, evaluate, and communicate the results and form reasonable conclusions of scientific investigations.
(2) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of properties, forms, changes and interactions of physical and chemical systems.
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.
(4) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of the composition, structures, processes and interactions of Earth’s systems and other objects in space.
(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.

Site Description:
Glacier National Park is the center of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem and is over a million acres in size. It became our nation’s tenth national park in 1910. The park has evidence of thousands of years of human presence. It is named for the prominent glacier-carved terrain. During the school year, the central Going-to-the-Sun Road, which runs east to west through the park and over the Continental Divide, is not plowed of snow. Many of the alpine sections of the park are difficult to access in the winter. Education groups can find many opportunities to visit the lower valleys of the park at St. Mary’s (east of the divide) and West Glacier (west of the divide).

Trails and Terrain:
There are over 700 miles of trail that vary in length from one mile to multi-day hikes. Information about trails and their status can be found at: nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit/index.htm. All trails are signed. However, during the winter when the Going-to-the-Sun Road is not plowed, trail access is by snowshoe or skis and all visitors must be self-sufficient. The terrain also varies from flat to very steep.

Wildlife Present:
Glacier is home to nearly 70 species of mammals, including the grizzly bear, wolverine, gray wolf and lynx. Over 270 species of birds visit or reside in the park, including such varied species as harlequin ducks, dippers and golden eagles. This is grizzly and mountain lion country.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Ranger-led, curriculum-based educational programs are available, Monday through Friday from September to October, January to March and in May. Descriptions and objectives for the educational programs may be viewed on the website, nps.gov/glac/forteachers/planafieldtrip.htm and can discussed with the Glacier Education Specialist. There is also information about bringing a group on your own, obtaining fee waivers and safety considerations.

Seasons:
Ranger-led programs are available from September to October, January to March and in May.
Access:
There is a vehicle size limit for some stretches of the Going-to-the-Sun Road due to its narrow and winding nature. School buses are restricted to lower elevations. Education groups may plan their visits in the summer, using the park shuttle system. At various times during the school year, buses can access: Apgar Visitor Center; Fish Creek Picnic Area; Avalanche Picnic Area; St. Mary’s Visitor Center; the 1913 Ranger Station Parking Area and trails; and Rising Sun Parking Area. Winter conditions limit access to Apgar and St. Mary’s. Road conditions are updated at nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit/goingtothesunroad.htm.

A full description of ADA accessibility can be found at nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit/accessibility.htm.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
To travel to Apgar, take Montana Highway 2 to West Glacier, turn north and proceed to the park entrance station. Apgar Village is through the entrance station, then left at the “T” intersection, and take the second right. The visitor center is just down the road on the left before reaching Lake McDonald. There is a parking area at Apgar.

To travel to St. Mary’s from the Flathead Valley, take Montana Highway 2 east and turn left on Montana Highway 49 north. Take Montana Highway 89 and turn west into the park at St. Mary’s. The 1913 Ranger station is over the bridge and the first left, then right. The road ends in the parking area. There is a trail from the parking area up to the cabin.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
Ranger-led programs have group size limits. Please contact the education specialist for more information.

Fees:
Park entrance fee. An educational fee waiver may be requested in advance.

Other Suggestions:
Dress appropriately for sudden changes in winter weather. Bring bear spray.

Site services:
Restrooms are limited.

Contact Information:
Education Specialist, Glacier National Park, 888-5837

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Glacier National Park
http://www.nps.gov/glac/forteachers/index.htm
Lesson Cornerstone:
Forest ecosystems; water as matter; insects; outdoor survival

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(1) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate the ability to design, conduct, evaluate, and communicate the results and form reasonable conclusions of scientific investigations.
(2) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of properties, forms, changes and interactions of physical and chemical systems.
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.
(4) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of the composition, structures, processes and interactions of Earth’s systems and other objects in space.
(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.
(6) Students understand historical developments in science and technology.

Site Description:
Located minutes from Kalispell, Lone Pine State Park offers a visitor center filled with interactive interpretive displays, educational programs, hiking and scenic overlooks viewing Flathead Valley.

Trails and Terrain:
There are a total of 7.5 miles of trails in the park. The longest trail is 1.5 miles long; however you can make your hike as long or short as you like. All primary named trails have directional signage at most trail intersections. A detailed map of the park, including park entrances, roads, trails, and trail signage can be downloaded from their website.

Wildlife Present:
There are frequent sightings of white-tailed deer, many bird species, rabbits, and squirrels. There have been annual sightings of black bear and mountain lion; however, these species typically do not stay in the park for an extended period of time.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Lone Pine offers children’s nature programs; adult workshops; special events, including National Trails Day, National Public Lands Day, National Winter Trails Day, Star Gazing, and Raptor Day; guided interpretive hikes; and children’s day camps. In addition, Lone Pine presents the following age-targeted topics for school field trips: Trees and Forest Ecology 1 & 2; Forest Habitat; Insects; Skins, Skulls and Bones; Water Ecology; Survival Skills; and Consumerism.

There is a self-guided interpretive trail that guides you around to the three scenic overlooks. The hike may be teacher-led; however, a guide may sometimes be provided. The visitor center also provides displays that are self-guided. An interpreter is on site to provide additional interpretation and information.

Seasons:
Open all year with school programs available in the spring and fall.
Access:
Lone Pine Visitor Center is accessed by paved road. Trailheads are located directly off of both parking areas and the walk-in entrance.

The visitor center provides disabled access. In addition, there is one ADA approved trail leading to the first scenic overlook.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Lone Pine State Park is located four miles southwest of Kalispell. Travel on Highway 93 Alternate to the Foy's Lake Road Roundabout. Travel west on Foy's Lake Road for approximately 2.7 miles. Turn left on Lone Pine Road and follow to the park entrance at the end of the road.

There are two developed parking areas and one walk-in entrance. The walk-in entrance is located off of Valley View Drive and can be used to drop students off for hiking up Lone Pine. The lower parking lot is located further down Valley View Drive, although there may not be space for bus parking. The main parking lot is located inside the main park entrance at the visitor center with ample space.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
A typical group size is less than 30 students, or one class. Accommodations may be made for groups over 30; however, the group will be split in two.

Fees:
State parks are free for Montana residents. School field trip programs are free, unless held outside the school year.

Site services:
Flush restrooms and a vault toilet are available. The picnic shelter and community room may be available upon request.

Contact Information:
Lone Pine State Park, 755-2706

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Lone Pine State Park
http://stateparks.mt.gov/lone-pine/
Lesson Cornerstone:
Plant identification

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
A native plant garden partially surrounds the Museum at Central School. The gardens are seeded with native plants, some of which were used by the Kootenai Indians.

Trails and Terrain:
There is easy access to the gardens. The terrain is flat.

Wildlife Present:
Songbirds and insects may be spotted.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Tours may be arranged in advance. Many native plants are labeled for easy identification.

Seasons:
The garden blossoms in late spring and summer.
Access:
Access is from the museum parking lot.

There is no official ADA access to the gardens.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
The Museum at Central School is located in Kalispell at the corner of Second Street and Second Avenue East, 124 Second Avenue East.

There is ample parking for buses.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
Groups are limited to 15 students per tour leader, 2 to 3 groups at a time.

Fees:
None.

Site services:
Lawn and picnic tables are available. Restrooms are available in the museum.

Contact Information:
Director, The Museum at Central School, 756-8381

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Montana Native Plant Society
http://www.mtnativeplants.org/Flathead_Chapter

The Museum at Central School
http://www.yourmuseum.org/index.htm
Lesson Cornerstone:
Model nesting and foraging habitat for riparian dependent birds

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
The Owen Sowerwine Natural Area encompasses 442 acres of land, wetland and water in the braided section of the Flathead and Stillwater rivers within the 100-year floodplain. The most striking feature of the area is the dense forest and brush vegetation that provides shelter and browse for numerous wildlife species. In addition to wildlife, the aquatic habitat of OSNA provides excellent foraging and cover habitat for significant numbers of migratory and resident fish. Much of the area is not easily accessible: islands can only be reached by water, and a portion of Leisure Island is behind a barrier of private land. The remaining roughly 70 acres lie on the mainland, along the west shore of the Stillwater, and can be reached by roads that turn east off of Willow Glen Drive. On this mainland portion, a series of game trails have been cleared and marked by the Flathead Audubon Society, which provide opportunity for quiet recreation and nature education.

Trails and Terrain:
All trails are signed. There is a large map on the kiosk, located at the Treasure Lane entrance, and a small version of the map on trifold brochures available at the kiosk.

(A) Mainland Trail (from Treasure Lane to SW entrance): Over half a mile; a narrow, rough trail, with moderately steep to quite steep parts, with some footbridges over wet areas. The initial 600 feet is ADA accessible, with a viewing area at the end of the trail: in one direction, a viewing area overlooks water and into a stand of cottonwoods on the other side; in the other direction, it looks across a meadow.
(B) Green Ridge Trail (from Green Ridge to intersection with Mainland Trail): about 800 feet; narrow, rough trail, with moderately steep parts.
(C) Green Ridge By-pass Trail: about 600 feet; narrow, rough, with some moderately steep parts; some footbridges over wet areas.

Wildlife Present:
More than 100 species of birds have been recorded at Owen Sowerwine and are detailed on the bird list on the trifold brochure available at the kiosk. White-tailed deer, mountain cottontail, beaver, muskrat, red fox, coyote, river otter, striped skunk, mink and other weasels frequently visit. Black bear and moose occasionally visit. Amphibian and reptile species present include western toad, painted turtle, two species of garter snake and rubber boa. A variety of fish species, including the native species westslope cutthroat and bull trout, are present in the river sections.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Nature education events can be arranged through the Flathead Audubon Conservation Education Coordinator.

Seasons:
Open all year.
Access:
There are 4 entry points:
(1) at the end of Treasure Lane,
(2) at the end of Green Ridge Drive,
(3) at the southwest corner of the Natural Area
(4) and, unofficially, the Kalispell Montessori School parking area.

The first three access points require entering through a walk-in-only gate. The Treasure Lane entrance has an ADA accessible gate.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
(1) Treasure Lane: Parking area has room for about 2-3 cars. Best to drop people at the entrance, then park in the Kalispell Montessori school parking lot. Arrangements must be made with the school by calling 755-3826. Entrance is about 20 feet away at the end of Treasure Lane.
(2) Green Ridge: Parking area has room for 2 or 3 cars along the end of Green Ridge Drive. Best to drop people off and park elsewhere. Entrance is about 20 feet away from the end of Green Ridge Drive.
(3) SW entrance: Parking area has room for 5 or more cars in county right-of-way west of the entrance. Entrance is about 200 feet away.
(4) Montessori School parking area: Arrangements must be made in advance; however, this parking area may be used to enter OSNA. The trail is about 50 yards away, and leads directly to the shore of the Stillwater River. This trail is on private land. Please contact the school at 755-3826 for permission.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
No maximum number set; prefers groups less than about 20.

Fees:
A State Land Recreational Use permit is required for anyone 12 years or older. However, for events co-sponsored by Audubon, no permits are needed.

Restrictions:
Only walk-in use is allowed; pets, fires, over-night use, and gathering of natural materials are not allowed.

Site services:
No services available.

Contact Information:
Education Coordinator, Flathead Audubon, 755-2773

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Flathead Audubon
http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/content/conservation/owna.htm

Conserve Montana:
http://www.conservemontana.org/content/owen-sowerwine-natural-area-and-state-important-bird-area/cnm5C1F13DB3BB71BFCD
Pine Grove Pond
Kalispell

Lesson Cornerstone:
Underground aquifers; insects

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
Located off of Whitefish River in northeast Kalispell, Pine Grove Pond was part of a property homesteaded in 1883. Thirteen acres were donated to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to become a fishing pond in 2011. The pond is 5 acres in size, and is stocked with rainbow and westslope cutthroat trout. This is an excellent fishing pond.

Trails and Terrain:
A gravel road surrounds the pond. The terrain slopes moderately from the gravel road to the pond.

Wildlife Present:
Waterfowl, including Canada geese, mallards and goldeye; white-tailed deer; turkeys; osprey; bald eagles; blue heron; raptors; and songbirds may be sighted.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Hooked on Fishing and other educational programs are available through the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

 Seasons:
Spring to fall.
Access:
Access is by gravel road off of Rose Crossing.

There is a disabled accessible pier, located approximately 500 feet down the road. Vehicle access to the pier may be arranged if needed. The latrine and picnic shelter are ADA accessible.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Take Montana Highway 93 to Reserve Drive in Kalispell. Turn east on Reserve Drive and travel one mile to Whitefish Stage Road. Turn north on Whitefish Stage Road and travel one mile to Rose Crossing. Turn east on Rose Crossing and travel a half mile to the signed Pine Grove access road.

There is a graveled parking area suitable for 20+ vehicles and buses.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
A special use permit may be required.

Fees:
State fishing access is free for Montana residents. A special use permit may be required.

Site services:
Latrine and covered picnic area are available.

Contact Information:
Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 752-5501

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing-guide/familyFishingWaters/region1.html

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Hooked on Fishing
Lesson Cornerstone:
Three basic forest types in Swan Valley

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
Swan Ecosystem Center developed a mile-long, self-guiding trail near the U.S. Forest Service Condon Work Center. The trail loops into the Ponderosa Pine Site and to a riparian area near the Swan River. Interpretive signs and exhibits help people understand the forces of change at work in the forest. Exhibits in the Everchanging Forest Visitor Center at the U.S. Forest Service Condon Work Center provide information about the local ecosystem.

The Ponderosa Pine Site is a 30-acre plot thinned in 1996 to reduce fire danger and promote a stand of 200-year-old ponderosa pine. These large ponderosa pines are remnants of historic conditions when the valley floor featured scattered, open stands of ponderosa pine and western larch. Several of the trees at the Ponderosa Pine Site are “culturally scarred.” Kootenai, Salish and Pend d’Oreille people, who historically camped in the area, removed strips of bark for the cambium, which is sweet. The scars remain to tell the story.

Trails and Terrain:
All trails are signed. Distance varies depending on the trail. Distances vary up to a one-and-a-half-mile loop. The site is almost entirely flat.

Wildlife Present:
Yes, a variety of animals are present.

On-Site Educational Programs:
There are interpretive trails and an exhibit room of the natural resources of the three basic forest types of the Swan Valley.

Seasons:
Open all year.
Access:
The Swan Ecosystem Center and U. S. Forest Service Condon Work Center are located right off of Montana Highway 83.

There is ADA access to the visitor’s center.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Take Montana Highway 83 to a distance halfway between mile marker 42 and 43, across from the Condon airstrip.

There is an ample, paved parking lot.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
The exhibit room can hold about 10 students at a time. The conference room holds 35. Outdoors, the group size limit is up to 50 students.

Fees:
Donations appreciated.

Other Suggestions:
Good walking shoes. No open-toes shoes.

Site services:
Restrooms and picnic tables are available.

Contact Information:
Education Coordinator, Swan Ecosystem Center, 754-3137

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Swan Ecosystem Center
http://www.swanecosystemcenter.org/
Lesson Cornerstone:
Riparian ecology, including rare plants; old-growth forests

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
The Swan River Oxbow Preserve derives its name from a long, curving oxbow in which the Swan River used to flow. The variety of wetland communities create a haven for birds and harbor five rare plant populations and two rare lichens. Spruce forest predominates along the southern boundary. A complex of sedge fen and birch carr communities lie adjacent to the spring system. To the west, cottonwood forest dominates the area around the aquatic oxbow.

The water howellia is federally listed as threatened. On the preserve, howellia grows in the marshy areas next to the oxbow. An annual plant with white flowers, howellia requires a delicate balance of conditions for its survival. The plant must be submerged in water to grow and reproduce. Its seed won’t germinate under water, so howellia must grow in ponds that are flooded in spring, and dry by late summer or fall. If conditions are too wet, the seeds will not germinate. In drought conditions, the plant won’t grow.

Trails and Terrain:
All trails are signed. The trail is 1.5 miles to the overlook at the Oxbow, one-way. The terrain is flat.

Wildlife Present:
Grizzly bears use the preserve as a corridor between mountain ranges and feed on native fruits, such as huckleberries and herbaceous plants in the area. Bald eagles and osprey roost in the trees and feed along the river. Elk, moose and white-tailed deer may also be found on the preserve.

Various riparian birds are drawn to the water systems of the preserve, including the common loon, mallard, cinnamon teal, ring-necked duck, common goldeneye and spotted sandpiper.

On-Site Educational Programs:
There is a large kiosk at the trailhead with interpretative material and plant identification tags along the trail.

Seasons:
Spring, summer and fall.
Access:
Swan River Oxbow Preserve is accessed from the parking area.

There is no official ADA access.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
North of mile post 68 on the Swan Highway, Montana Highway 83, is Porcupine Creek Road. Turn west. Travel about .5 mile to first gravel road to the north. This leads to the parking area.

There is a parking area.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
None.

Fees:
None.

Restrictions:
Only foot travel is allowed. Hunting and camping are not permitted.

Other Suggestions:
Rubber boots in the spring (May and June) and mosquito repellant are suggested.

Site services:
No facilities. Swan Lake is located about 3 miles away.

Contact Information:
The Nature Conservancy, 443-0303.

For additional site and lesson plan information:
The Nature Conservancy
http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/montana/placesweprotect/swan-river-oxbow-preserve.xml
Lesson Cornerstone:
Stream and lake ecology; tree and plant identification

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Site Description:
The Tally Lake Campground and Day Use Area is nestled in the highlands of northwestern Montana, adjacent to Tally Lake, which is the deepest natural lake in Montana. It sits in a mature forest of Western Larch and Douglas fir trees.

Trails and Terrain:
The trailhead for the 3-mile Tally Lake Overlook Trail is located within the campground, about a half mile north of the day use site. There isn’t room for bus parking at the trailhead, though students could be dropped off and the bus could park in the day use lot. The trail offers great views of the lake. There is a short trail that connects the day use site to the group pavilion. A bridge crosses over Logan Creek, which runs through the campground and day use site. The day use site terrain is a flat, open, mowed grassy area about 200 feet from lakeshore.

Wildlife Present:
A variety of different bird species (songbirds, waterfowl, bald eagles, woodpeckers, loons); different fish species in the lake (kokanee salmon, northern pike, lake and brook trout); deer, snowshoe hare, and an occasional moose can be seen.

On-Site Educational Programs:
There are three wildlife interpretive panels and a spotting scope near the beach site. The Forest Service can provide simple tree and wildflower identification handouts, wildlife viewing guides and species lists. Teachers can make arrangements for a Forest Service conservation education specialist to assist a group with outdoor education activities. Call well in advance to schedule.

Seasons:
May to September.
**Access:**
Access from the day use site to the lakeshore is 200 feet.
The boat dock, packed gravel road/paths, and vault toilet are ADA accessible.

**Parking and Entrance to Site:**
From Whitefish, take US Highway 93 North ten miles, turn left onto Farm to Market Road. Travel 1.5 miles, turn left on the Star Meadows Road and travel nine miles. Turn left onto Forest Road #913 and travel about 3.25 miles. Look for the Tally Lake Campground sign. From Kalispell, take Farm to Market Road north to Forest Road #913. Turn left and travel about seven miles north to the campground. There is ample parking.

**Google Earth Driving Directions Link:**

**Group size limits:**
Group sizes limited up to 100.

**Fees:**
The campground and day use site are operated by a private concessionaire and there is a fee for using the day use site and for reserving the group pavilion. Contact the Tally Lake Ranger District for more information at 758-5204.

**Site services:**
Places to picnic, potable water, and vault toilets are available.

**Contact Information:**
Conservation Education Specialist, US Forest Service, 758-5218.

**For additional site and lesson plan information:**
Flathead National Forest

Flathead National Forest: Educational Trunks
http://prdp2fs.ess.usda.gov/detail/flathead/learning/parents-teacher/?cid=STELPRDB5301327
Trumbull Creek Educational Forest
Columbia Falls

Lesson Cornerstone:
Ecology; stewardship forestry

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.

Site Description:
The Trumbull Creek Educational Forest is a 40-acre area owned by Stoltze Land and Lumber Co., established over 20 years ago to display the benefits of stewardship forestry.

Trails and Terrain:
The low-elevation forested site features flat areas and short inclines along a wood-chipped path through the woods. The wide, half-mile trail winds through the center of the 40-acre property. There is a north and south trail entrance. During the Family Forestry Expo event in May, trail entrances are signed. Two wood bridges with rails cross Trumbull Creek. Simple tree identification and area information signs are located along the trail. In addition, there are several larger, more detailed informational signs about the forest environment and forest management.

Wildlife Present:
Visitors may spot or see signs of several different animal and bird species within this typical Montana ecosystem.

On-Site Educational Programs:
The annual Family Forestry Expo is held the first full week of May. During the week, area fifth grade classes are invited to participate in a tour of a local mill and visit different educational stations at the expo site. Station topics include archeology, fisheries, plant identification, forest management, wildlife, riparian areas, low impact camping, fire and a Tread Lightly demonstration.

The site is open for self-guided use and exploration with informational signs located along the walking trail; groups have used the site for different outdoor education activities, including plant and tree identification, stream ecology, making use of the site for Project Learning Tree, Project Wild and other environmental education materials/activities.

Seasons:
Open all year.
Access:
Access to the site is a short walk.

The wood-chipped trail could accommodate some wheelchairs.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Travel to the junction of Montana Highway 2 and Highway 40. Travel north on Halfmoon Drive for 2 miles. Turn right on Tamarack Lane. Just past Trumbull Canyon Road (gravel road on your left) will be the parking lot for the expo site.

There is a large gravel parking area.

**Google Earth Driving Directions Link:**

Group size limits:
Check with Site Coordinator.

Fees:
None.

Site services:
No facilities available, except during the Family Forestry Expo.

Contact Information:
Site Coordinator, Stotlze Land and Lumber Co., 892-7005

For additional site and lesson plan information:

Family Forestry Expo
http://familyforestryexpo.org/

Flathead National Forest: Educational Trunks
http://prd2fs.ess.usda.gov/detail/flathead/learning/parents-teacher/?cid=STELPRDB3301327

Project Wild
http://www.projectwild.org/

Project Learning Tree
http://www.plt.org
Lesson Cornerstone:
Riparian buffer of native plants

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.

Site Description:
The Walstad Fishing Access hosts a demonstration riparian buffer. Riparian buffers are areas near water with diverse native plants that help filter polluted runoff from lawns and pavement. This site compares a mature natural buffer to the north and a landscaped buffer to the south, planted to replace lawn in 2000 and 2001.

Trails and Terrain:
A short trail leads through the mature natural buffer to the north. A flat parking lot leads to an island of native plants and paved walkway to an interpretive sign, boat ramp and dock. From the dock, one can view the difference between the natural and landscaped riparian buffers along the shoreline.

Wildlife Present:
Frogs often found in the water to the north of the sign. An osprey nest has been at the site.

On-Site Educational Programs:
Self-guided interpretive sign.

Seasons:
Open all year.
Access:
Access to the site is 100 feet.
There is ADA access.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
Walstad Fishing Access is located 10 miles north of Polson on Montana Highway 93 at milepost 72.

There is a parking area.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
None.

Fees:
State parks are free for Montana residents.

Restrictions:
No pets.

Other Suggestions:
Content is best understood by middle and high school students.

Site services:
Lunch spot and restrooms are available.

Contact Information:
Education and Outreach Coordinator, Flathead Lakers, 883-1341

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/siteDetail.html?id=280172

Lesson Cornerstone:
Wetlands

Curriculum Content Standards: Science
(3) Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

(5) Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies.

Site Description:
Partially completed in 2012, the Whitefish Lake Institute Interpretive Nature Trail explores an upland/wetland created when ancient Whitefish Lake inundated the area, depositing lacustrine sediments. The lacustrine sediments serve to form a shallow perched water table. Water cannot infiltrate through the clay sediment. As a result, an upland/wetland mosaic has formed on top with regionally unique flora (including skunk cabbage) and fauna. Viking Creek, one of the tributaries to Whitefish Lake, runs through the wetland. The trail crosses the creek over three small wooden bridges. This is an excellent area to learn about this wetland and its importance to Whitefish Lake.

The project also provides an important lesson in how, through an open dialogue amongst diverse constituencies, a solution can be developed to allow economic expansion while protecting natural resources.

Trails and Terrain:
The trail is less than 2,000 feet and is signed. The terrain is flat, slightly rough. Small bridges have been built over the stream crossings.

Wildlife Present:
Deer, elk, moose, black bears, foxes, mountain lions, grouse, turkeys and raptors have been sighted.

On-Site Educational Programs:
The trail offers interpretive signage, and a brochure is available for self-guided walks. Educational field trips are available through Whitefish Lake Institute.

Seasons:
May 1 through March 14 annually.
Access:
Access to the trailhead is from the parking lot.
The trail is wheelchair accessible.

Parking and Entrance to Site:
The trailhead and parking lot is located across from the Lodge at Whitefish Lake on Wisconsin Avenue, between Crestwood and Reservoir Drives on Nature Trail Road in Whitefish.

Google Earth Driving Directions Link:

Group size limits:
None.

Fees:
None.

Restrictions:
No motorized vehicles, bicycles, pets, hunting, fishing or smoking.

Site services:
No restrooms. Benches and bear-resistant trash receptacles are available.

Contact Information:
Science and Education Director, Whitefish Lake Institute, 862-4327

For additional site and lesson plan information:
Whitefish Lake Institute

Project WET: Wetlands
http://projectwet.org/water-resources-education/wetland-education/
Flathead Community of Resource Educators (CORE) is a network of individuals and organizations working together to increase awareness and understanding about the natural, historical and cultural resources of the Flathead Region. The group seeks to:

- Serve as a communication network between resource educators and the community.
- Provide practical tools, training and materials for educators in the Flathead Region.
- Be open to all resource educators and professionals to promote the diversity of ideas and cooperation.
- Promote knowing more about the place we live.

A Teacher’s Guide to Outdoor Education Sites and Programs in the Flathead Region is a project of the Watershed Education committee of Flathead CORE. Those directing the project were Lex Blood of the Sustainability Fund, Patti Mason of Flathead Conservation District, Ashley Mason of Flathead Audubon and Jill Seigmund.

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Big Creek Outdoor Education Center of Glacier Institute, pages 6 - 7, Glacier Institute
Creston National Fish Hatchery, pages 8 - 9, United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Dry Bridge Pond, pages 10 - 11, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Field Camp of Glacier Institute, pages 12 - 13, Glacier Institute
Forest Service Summit Nature Center at Whitefish Mountain Resort, pages 14 - 15, Flathead National Forest
Glacier National Park, pages 16 - 17, National Park Service
Lone Pine State Park, pages 18 - 19, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Native Plant Garden at the Museum at Central School, pages 20 - 21, Kristin Bay
Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, pages 22 - 23, Flathead Audubon
Pine Grove Pond, pages 24 - 25, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Swan Ecosystem Center and Condon Work Center, pages 26 - 27, Swan Ecosystem Center
Swan River Oxbow Preserve, pages 28 - 29, The Nature Conservancy
Tally Lake Campground and Day Use Area, pages 30 - 31, Flathead National Forest
Trumbull Creek Educational Forest, pages 32 - 33, Family Forestry Expo
Walstad Fishing Access, pages 34 - 35, Christi Buffington
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