

Garden of the Gods Park

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Meet the Park Program

Welcome! We look forward to sharing the Garden of the Gods with you and your students. Here are a few things to bear in mind as you prepare for the field trip:

- Your field trip begins at the Garden of the Gods Visitor & Nature Center.
1805 N. 30th St. Colorado Springs, CO 80904
- Check the weather forecast and dress appropriately! Docents may end a walk early if students are improperly dressed for the weather.
- When you arrive, we will work with you to divide your class into smaller groups for the adventure in the park. Group size is based on docent availability.
- Please, let us know in advance if you have any students with special needs (e.g. wheelchairs, crutches, medical conditions, etc.) that may limit their ability to traverse our trails.
- Parent chaperones are welcome, but not required.
- Please, **no pets** and **no children that are not students** (i.e. siblings) allowed.
- Students, chaperones, and teachers are asked to silence cell phones during the field trip. Students should refrain from using any electronic devices. Taking photos on the outdoor walk is allowed provided it is not distracting.
- Payment is due the day of your trip. Cash, credit card, and checks accepted. The cost is \$2 per student. No cost for adults, but donations are welcome. Please, make checks out to: *Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center*

Meet the Park Program Description

We align with the 2020 Colorado Academic Standards for Life Science.

Goals:

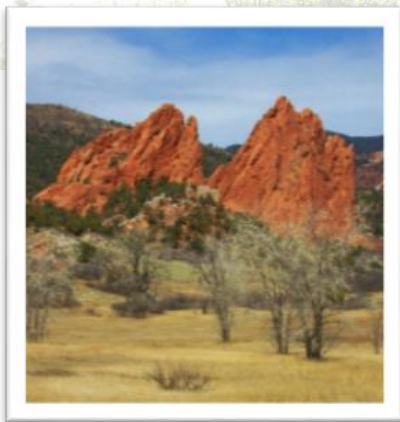
- Students recognize the exceptional natural wonder of the Garden of the Gods.
- Students will understand what makes up an ecosystem.
- Students recognize how different ecosystems coexist within the Park, making the Garden a crossroads of plant and animal life.
- Students identify plants and animals from the six ecosystems in the Park.
- Students identify how the Garden's ecology has supported human habitation for over 4,000 years.

Schedule:

- Field trips run Tuesday thru Thursday from 9:30-11:30 or 12:00-2:00.
- Programs are available October 1, 2019 through May 14, 2020.
- We follow Colorado Springs District 11 schedule for Holiday and Spring Break closures. There are no programs offered in January and February.

Daily Agenda:

- Staff members will greet you outside the Visitor & Nature Center. Depending on the number of students, your group will be divided in half (approximately).
 - One half is guided through our interactive gallery
 - The other half enters our Red Rocks Room for a hands-on program
- Groups rotate between these two sites after approximately 25 minutes in their first location.
- Following the indoor portion, students are led back to your transportation for the drive into the park. If you arrived by bus, a staff member accompanies you on the drive to the North Main Parking Lot inside the Garden. If you carpool, we provide a map and directions to the parking lot.
- Students are divided into small groups by our staff. The number is determined by docent availability.



- Each small group is led by a staff member or volunteer docent through the Central Garden. Walks last approximately 45 minutes.
- If you need to depart earlier than the scheduled time, please let us know upon arrival and we can adjust our program accordingly.

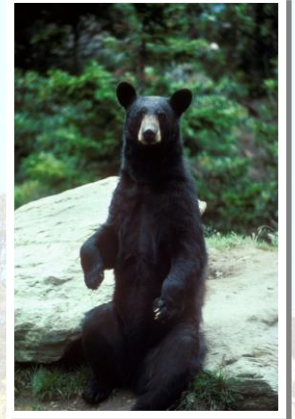
Meet the Park: Overview

- Ideal for elementary school students as either a kickoff or capstone event for a life sciences unit.
- Focus is on the Garden as a crossroads for the plants and animals of six ecosystems:
 - Prairie Grasslands
 - Wetlands
 - Mountain Shrublands
 - Piñon and Juniper Woodlands
 - Montane Forests
 - Cliff Islands
- The program will look at the interdependence of the Park's animal and plant life.
- Field trips begin indoors with hands-on activities including our Flora and Fauna gallery and a wildlife touch table. An optional 15-minute film *How Did Those Red Rocks Get There?* is available instead of the touch tables.
- The field trip concludes with a 45-minute guided walk in our Central Garden where students can experience the natural wonder of the Park first hand.

Teacher Reference Guide:

The Garden of the Gods is a crossroads of plants and animals from six different ecosystems. Many animals successfully live in multiple ecosystems. Below is a list of common species we discuss:

- Prairie Grasslands
 - Animals – Prairie Rattlesnake, Coyote, Striped Skunk, Mule Deer, Magpie, Red-Tailed Hawk, Honey Ants
 - Plants – Prickly-Pear Cactus, Yucca, Paintbrush
- Wetlands
 - Animals – Black Bear, Red Fox, Gray Fox, Magpie, Red-Winged Blackbird, Prairie Rattlesnake
 - Plants – Common Fireweed, Cottonwood Tree, Cattail
- Mountain Shrublands
 - Animals – Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Cottontail Rabbit, Bobcat, Wild Turkey, Eastern Fence Lizard, Honeybee
 - Plants – Wild Rose, Mountain Mahogany, Piñon Pine, Three-Leaf Sumac, One-Seed Juniper
- Piñon and Juniper Woodlands
 - Animals – Mountain Lion, Mule Deer, Least Chipmunk, Spotted Towhee, Scrub Jay, Honey Ant
 - Plants – Prairie Coneflower, Pasque Flower, One-Seed Juniper, Gambel Oak, Piñon Pine
- Cliff Islands
 - Animals – Least Chipmunk, Rock Pigeon, White-Throated Swift, Violet-Green Swallow, Prairie Falcon



- Plants – Yucca, Three-Leaf Sumac, One-Seed Juniper, Ponderosa Pine
- Montane Forests
 - Animals – Little Brown Bat, Pack Rat, Mule Deer, Mountain Lion, Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly
 - Plants – Rocky Mountain Penstemon, Butterfly Weed, Ponderosa Pine, Chokecherry, Mountain Mahogany

Animals and plants in the Garden depend on each other to maintain a healthy environment. Some of our plants and animals would disappear from the Park if this balance did not exist. For example:

The Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly (Colorado’s largest) lays its eggs on the chokecherry shrub. The chokecherry is a *host plant* for the butterfly. The eggs hatch, the larvae feeds on the leaves, and then they spin their chrysalis on this same plant. The adult butterfly pollinates the plant allowing it to reproduce. Loss of the chokecherry can result in a loss of the butterfly and vice versa.

Certain plants and animals in our Park serve as *keystone species*. That means that their presence is of primary importance to the Garden’s biodiversity. For example:

The Gambel’s Oak provides shelter and nesting sites for many of the Park’s birds. It provides forage for mule deer, black bear, and many rodent species. Since they grow in wide stands, they provide excellent erosion control. The loss of this species in the Park would drastically alter our landscape and many animals would no longer live here.

Not only is the Park a crossroads of plants and animals, it has long been a gathering place for many different peoples. Archaeologists have evidence of human habitation in the Garden for the last 3,800 years. The Tabeguache Ute proclaim that they have always lived here amongst the rocks of the Garden. Their name means “People of Sun Mountain.” Sun Mountain (*tava*) is their name for Pike’s Peak. We know they made great use of the Park’s natural resources and climate. They wintered here, sheltered by the rocks and hunted deer, turkey and bison. They utilized the yucca, three-leaf sumac and piñon pine for food and tools.

Supplementary activities could include:

- Collect pictures of people, plants and animals of the area
- Complete "Look What I Learned!" worksheet included in this packet
- Have students do artwork or creative writing based on their experience at the Park
- Have students write a thank-you letter or email to the docent who led their guided walk. Send them to gog1909@live.com or:

Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center
 ATTN: Bowen Gillings
 1805 North 30th Street
 Colorado Springs, CO 80904



Look What I Learned!

Name _____

Garden of the Gods Field Trip

Meet the Park

1. Name three of the six ecosystems that form a crossroads in Garden of the Gods Park?

2. What is an ecosystem?

3. What is a keystone species?



4. ← What is the Colorado state mammal?

5. How did some plants get way up high on the rocks?

6. What might happen to the Park's plant and animal life if the area predators disappeared?

7. Name some things the Ute people used the yucca plant for.

8. Why does the black-billed magpie build a nest with a roof and two entrances?

9. Name some animals you might see if you visited the Park at night?

10. What do we call animals that mainly come out at night?

11. Why have we built the trash cans so strong in the Park?



12. On the back of this paper draw your favorite rock, plant, or animal you saw at the Garden of the Gods today.

Look What I Learned! Answer Key

Garden of the Gods – Meet the Park

Meet the Park

1. Name three of the six ecosystems that form a crossroads in Garden of the Gods Park? **Prairie grasslands, wetlands, mountain shrublands, piñon and juniper woodlands, cliff islands, and montane forests**
2. What is an ecosystem? **All of the living things in a given area, interacting with each other, and with their environments (weather, earth, sun, soil, climate, atmosphere).**
3. What is a keystone species? **A species that has an unusually large effect on its neighbors. Without it the environment would dramatically change.**
4. What is the Colorado state mammal? **Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep**
5. How did some plants get way up high on the rocks? **Wind and birds**
6. Name some things the Ute Indians used the yucca plant for. **Soap, shampoo, medicine, rope, paint brush, toothbrush, salad, sewing needles, weaving rugs/sandals, etc., roast pods and seeds for snack**
7. What happens if people keep walking on the grass and plants growing in the Park? **The plants will die, leaving less habitat for wildlife; the park will wash (erode) away; the park will not be left natural.**
8. Why does the black-billed magpie build a nest with a roof and two entrances? **To protect the nest from the weather and to evade predators**
9. Name some animals you might see if you visited the park at night? **Little brown bat (in summer), raccoon, mountain lion, coyote, black bear, great horned owl**
10. What do we call animals that come out at night? **Nocturnal**
11. Why have we built the trash cans so strong in the Park? **So bears and other animals can't get into the trash**