

WATERDROPS

Nature

A Southwest Florida Water Management District Water Resources Newsletter for Grades 3–5

Hello Readers!

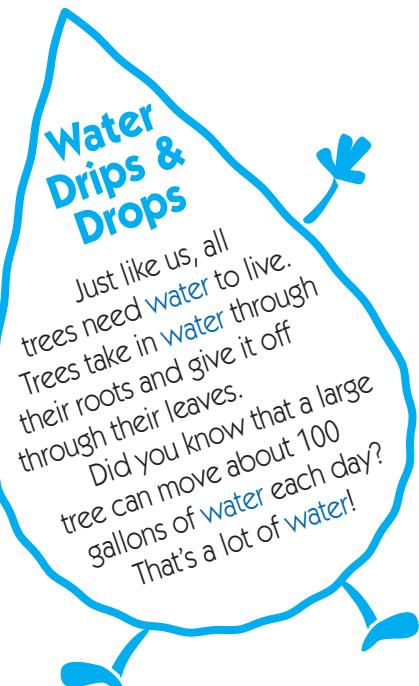
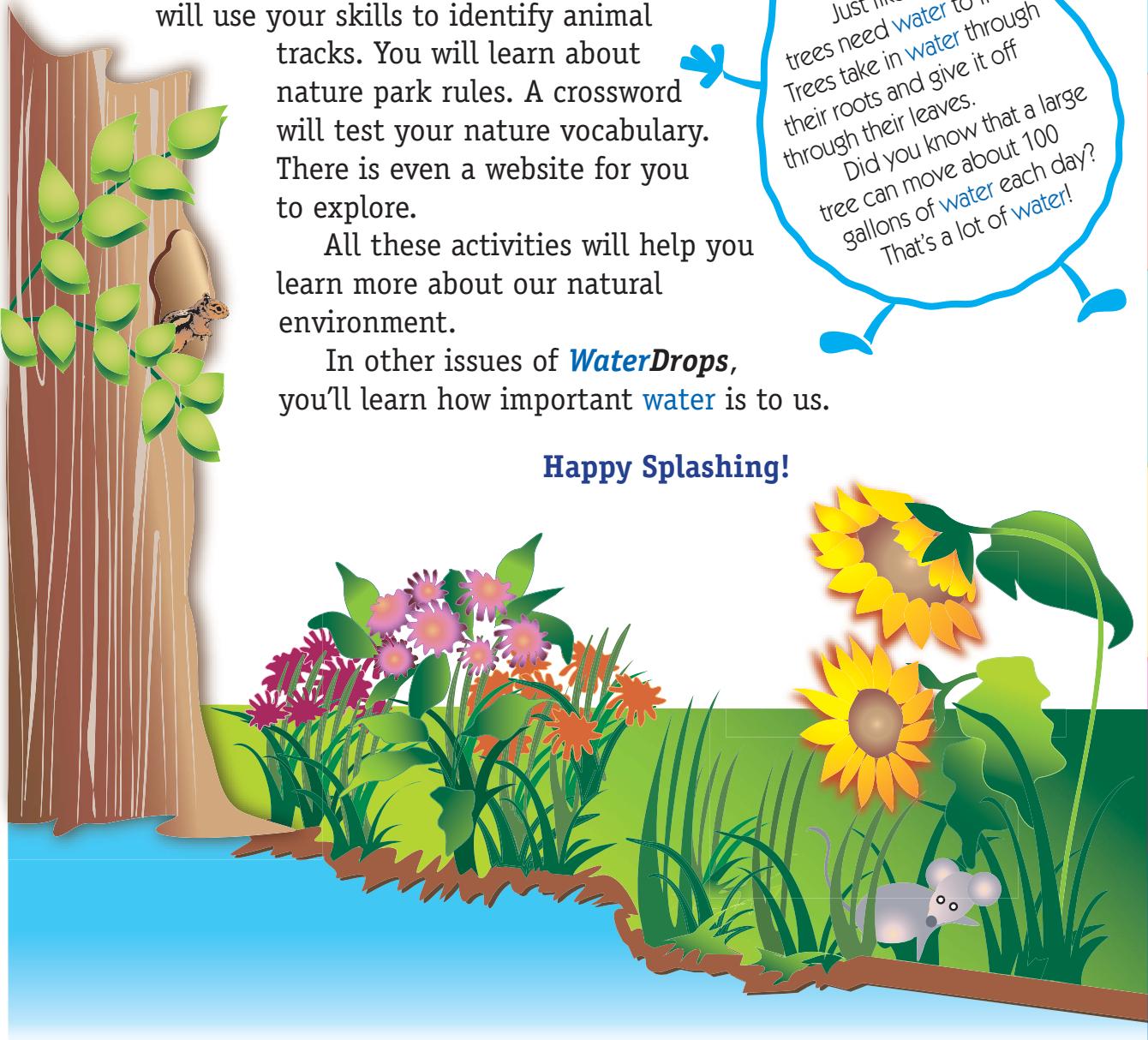
This issue of **WaterDrops** will help you learn more about nature. Within these pages, you will read about a family's visit to a nature center. You will learn how to become a nature observer near your home. There

is a **water** cycle experiment for you to try. You will use your skills to identify animal tracks. You will learn about nature park rules. A crossword will test your nature vocabulary. There is even a website for you to explore.

All these activities will help you learn more about our natural environment.

In other issues of **WaterDrops**, you'll learn how important **water** is to us.

Happy Splashing!



Water
Drips & Drops

Feature
Story

Take It
Home

Water Cycle
Wanda

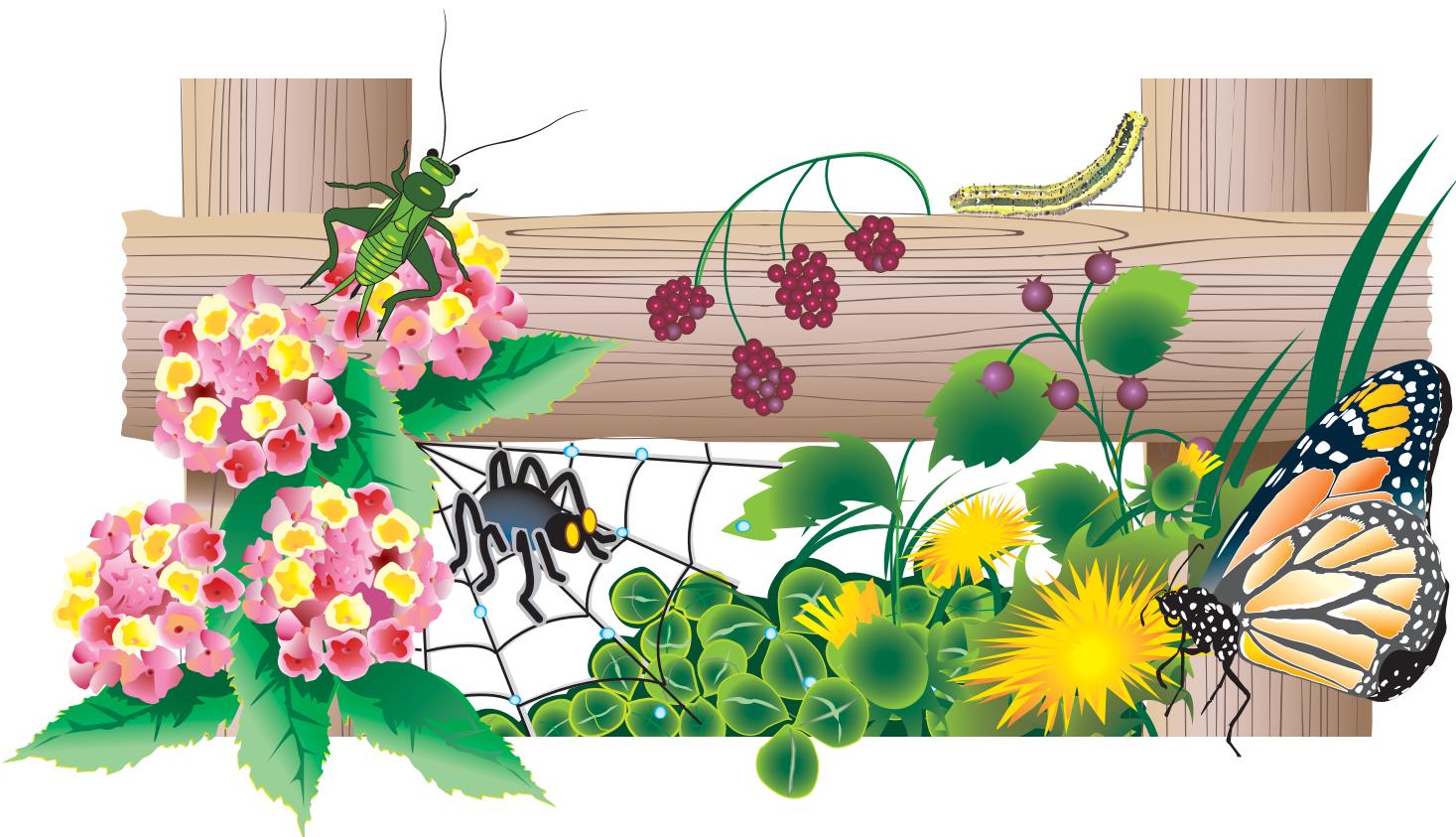
Water in Our
World

Games &
Puzzles

What's Wet
on the Web!

Feature Story

A VISIT TO THE NATURE CENTER



Jeremy and Todd waited anxiously for the rest of the family to reach the entrance to the boardwalk. "Hurry up, Lisa," exclaimed Todd, "or you will miss all the cool stuff!" Lisa ran to catch up with her twin brothers.

In a few minutes, the family was gathered at the entrance. "Remember what the guide told us about moving slowly and keeping quiet," Mother reminded them.

"We don't want to scare the animals away," said Father. "Remember, we are just visitors and this is their home."

As the family walked quietly along the boardwalk, they looked in all directions. The trees and plants were still covered with morning dew. The air felt thick and heavy as they walked deeper into the woods. "It feels like it's raining," whispered Lisa.

"That's just the leaves giving off moisture," said Todd. "It's part of the water cycle. I learned about it in school."

As they followed the boardwalk, they learned about different habitats by reading the signs along the trail. The family paid close attention, looking and listening for the special sights and sounds of nature. They passed by a spider weaving an enormous web in a bush. Just then a butterfly landed on the railing attached to the boardwalk. "Cool!" whispered the twins to each other.

Father noticed a few animal tracks next to the boardwalk. "What's that?" asked Lisa, pointing to a small pile near the tracks.

"That's scat," responded Father. "It's a term for animal droppings. It's a way to tell what kinds of animals have been here."

Suddenly two blue herons swooped above the trees. "Wow! Listen to those wings flap!" exclaimed Jeremy.

"It looks like they are headed toward the marsh," said Father.

"Maybe they are thirsty. Even I know that animals need water to live," said Lisa as she looked at her brothers.

"Do you think we'll see any bats or raccoons or opossums?" asked Jeremy.

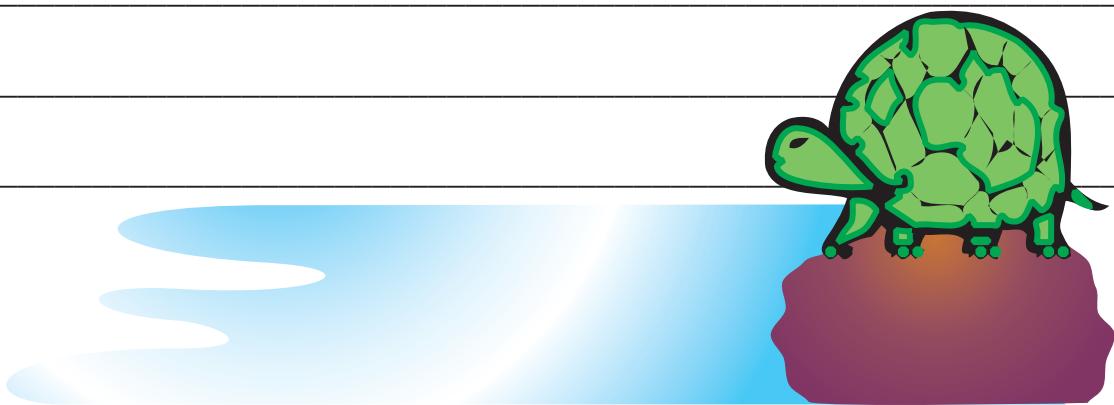
"I doubt it," replied Mother. "They are nocturnal animals. They sleep during the day." But as they approached the marsh, they saw several other creatures. "Look over there," said Todd as he pointed to a turtle resting on a rock near the water.

Lisa jumped when she saw a black snake slither under a fern nearby. "That snake is harmless," said Jeremy. "But watch out for poison ivy. It can give you a big rash. It's one experience in nature that you want to skip!"

After observing a variety of native plants and animals, they followed the winding trail back to the area near the entrance to the boardwalk. "This was like taking a journey," said Lisa.

"It was a journey," responded Father. "It was a journey through nature." The family had such a good time that they plan to take another journey into nature soon.

Pretend you are going to visit a nature center with your family. What would you hope to see on your journey into nature?



Take It Home

Be a nature observer near your home — it's fun!

All living things need **water** to stay alive and to be healthy. Plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and insects are examples of living things. Ask permission to take a walk around the outside of your home. Make observations of things living nearby. Do you like a few of these living things better than others? Do you have a favorite? Record your observations on the chart below. Try to identify one living thing for each group. Then compare your observations with those made by your family and classmates.



Group	Name	Like (+) or Dislike (-)	Why?
Plant			
Mammal			
Bird			
Reptile			
Insect			



Ask Water Cycle Wanda

Darrell asks: "How do I really know that the leaves of plants give off water?"

Water Cycle Wanda:

Try this easy experiment to prove that plants really do give off **water**. Locate a plant outdoors and place a plastic sandwich bag around one of the leaves. Using a piece of string, tie the bag firmly around the stem of the leaf. After a few hours, observe the results.

You should see tiny droplets of **water** inside the bag. As **water** passes from the leaf, it forms these droplets. This process is called *transpiration*.



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Water in Our World

TRACKING ANIMALS IN NATURE

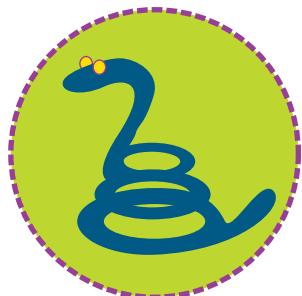
Pretend you are an experienced animal tracker. You observe the shapes and patterns of footprints, scat and other markings that animals leave behind as they move through nature. During a long dry spell, did you know it may be hard to find signs of animals? That's because animals are attracted to natural places where **water** exists. Their survival depends on having enough **water** in their environment. After a light rainfall, you may notice several fresh tracks still remain on the ground nearby.

Try to match each track with the correct animal.

1. opossum



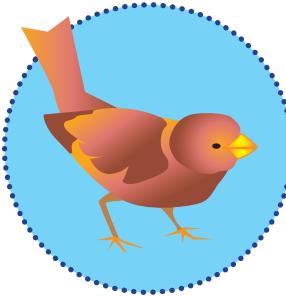
2. snake



3. bear



4. bird



Describe how you matched each animal with its track.

1. _____

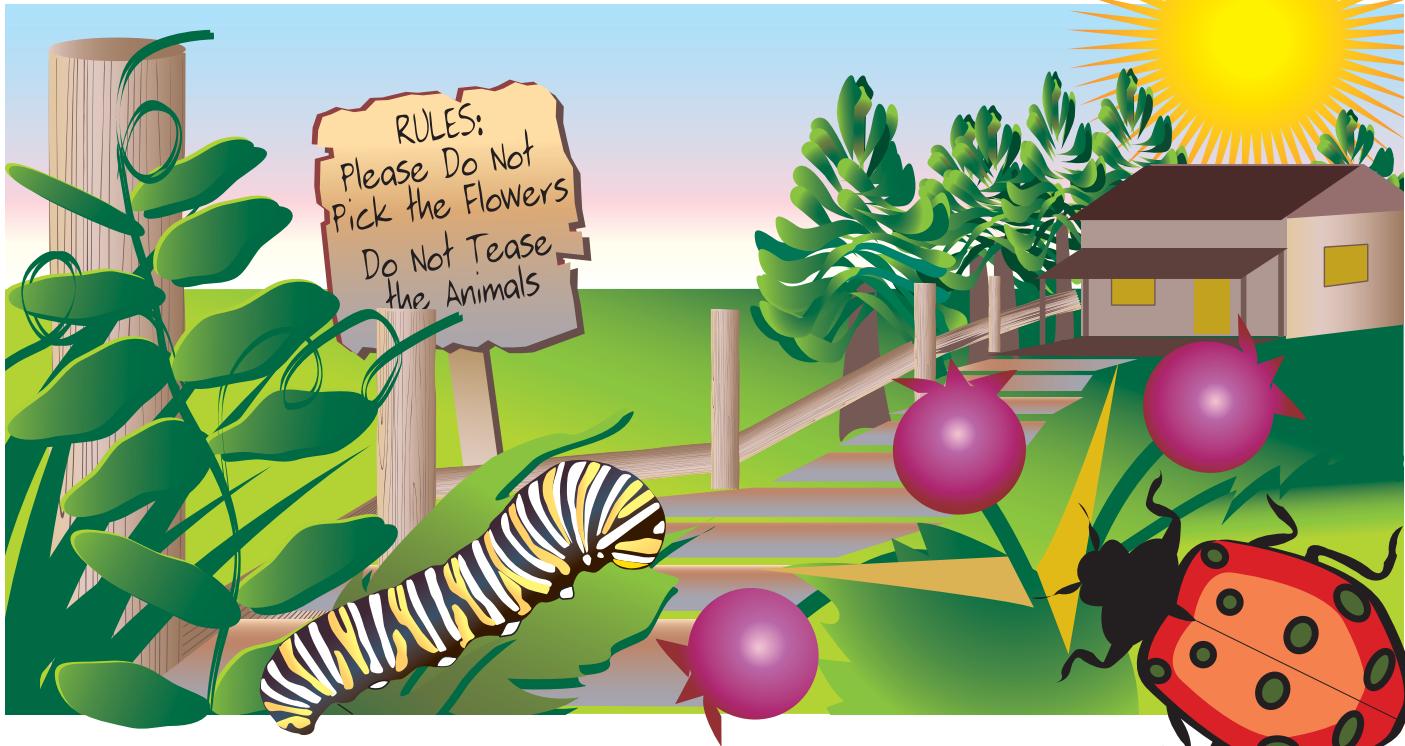
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Water in Our World

BE A WELCOME VISITOR!



You have learned how important water is for the health and survival of animals and plants. To make your visit to a nature center an enjoyable experience, try to follow a few simple rules. First, remain gentle and quiet so you can learn more about the natural environment. Next, be a friend to plants and animals. Avoid teasing or pestering the animals. Avoid picking the plants so that others may enjoy them too. Be sure to stay on the trails and leave the natural environment undisturbed. Let's make the nature center an enjoyable experience for everyone!

Fill in the blank

Complete each sentence by writing the correct word.

Plants need their leaves to make food and their flowers to make seeds. Don't _____ the plants. Leave them for others to enjoy.

It is important to leave the natural environment undisturbed. Always stay on the marked

_____.

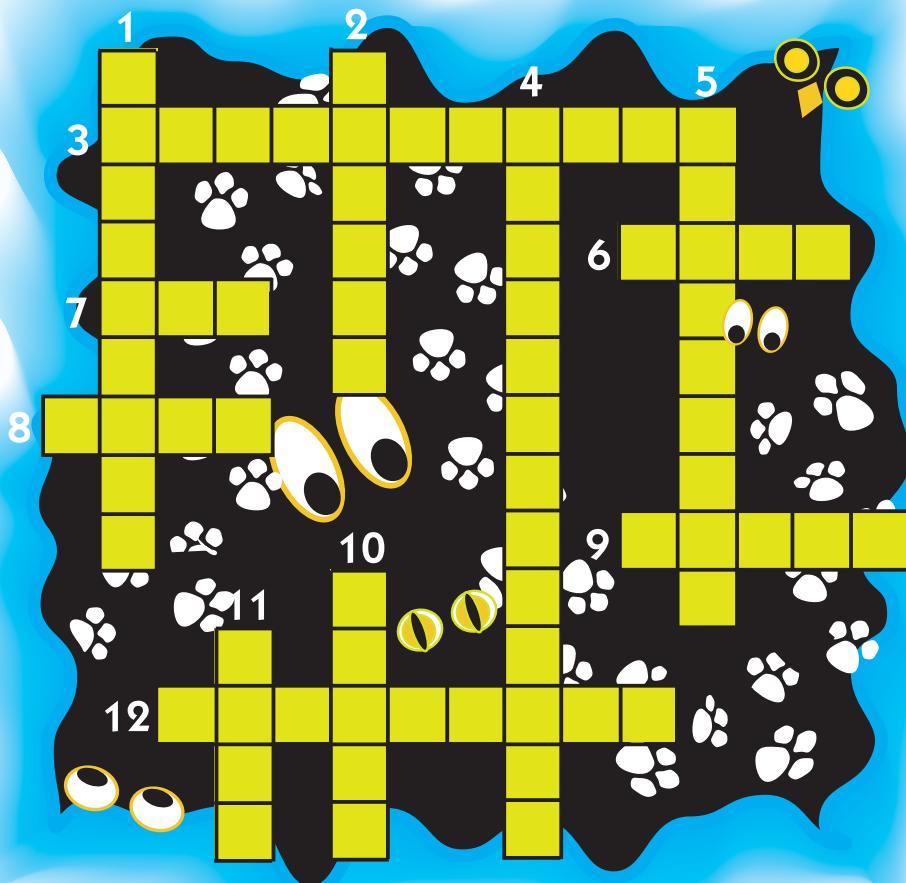
Remain _____ during your visit to a nature center to have a more enjoyable nature experience.

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Games & Puzzles

NATURE CENTER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Use the clues and the word bank to complete the puzzle.



Word Bank

footprint
pond
observation
transpiration
boardwalk
scat
nocturnal
rain
water
dew
marsh
trails

ACROSS

3. Making an _____ is when we notice the plants and animals in their natural environment.
6. We can learn a lot about an animal from its droppings called _____.
7. Morning _____ is the moisture that can be seen on trees and plants early in the day.
8. _____ is a form of precipitation that helps keep trees and plants healthy.
9. A wet, grassy area of land is called a _____.
12. Each kind of animal has its own animal track or _____.

DOWN

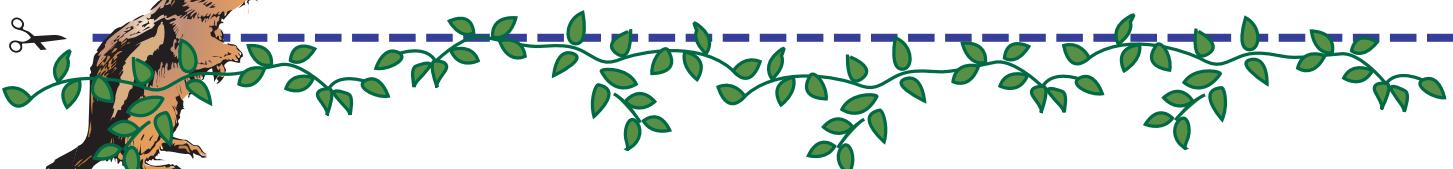
1. A _____ is a path made of thick boards.
2. A nature center usually has marked _____ for visitors to follow.
4. The process of plants and trees giving off moisture from their leaves is _____.
5. A _____ animal sleeps during the day and is active at night.
10. All people, plants and animals need _____ to live.
11. You can see many kinds of wildlife near a small body of **water** called a _____.

What's Wet on the Web!



Do you want to learn more about wildlife that might be found in your backyard? Visit the web site below developed by Ranger Rick and the National Wildlife Federation. The site includes links to fun facts about wildlife and a variety of interesting topics for habitat explorers. Check out this site and links for exciting new activities that take you on an outdoor adventure every month.

www.nwf.org



LET'S ALL ENJOY OUR NATURE PARKS!

You have learned how important **water** resources are to keeping nature healthy. Invite your parents or grandparents to a nature park to experience living things in a natural setting. Think of several reasons why nature parks are important for all of us. Write your three best reasons below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

**Southwest Florida
Water Management District**

WATERMATTERS.ORG · 1-800-423-1476

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