

OPTIONS FOR INQUIRY

Making a Local Field Guide

Field guides contain descriptions and pictures of plant, insect, and animal species. In this activity, you will observe specimens near your home or school to create your own local field guide.

PROBLEM

What plant and animal species can you identify in your region?

MATERIALS

- several field guides appropriate to the plants and animals in your area
- hand lens
- blank notebook
- pencil
- colored pencils
- camera (optional)

PROCESS SKILLS

Observing

PROCEDURE

1. Find an area near your home or school with as many different species as possible, such as an open field or a pond. Choose a category of species from your teacher's list, and find as many different species in that category as you can.
2. Draw pictures in your notebook or take photographs of each species.
3. Use field guides to identify each species. Write down both the common and scientific names, and note any interesting species information.
4. Make a field-guide page for each species you identified in your local ecosystem. Include the drawing or photograph of each species, along with its common and scientific names, when and where you collected it, and interesting information about it.
5. Compile your field guide in a binder or folder. Give your guide a title and a table of contents.

Making a Local Field Guide *continued*

ANALYZE AND CONCLUDE

- 1. Analyze** How diverse is the ecosystem you studied? Compare the species richness you observed with what your classmates discovered.

- 2. Conclude** Summarize what you learned about the ecosystem you surveyed. How did creating your own field guide affect your understanding of the ecosystem?
