



Weaselhead Grade 3 At School Program Teacher's Guide Biodiversity and Ecosystems

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Thank you for your participation in our Grade 3 Weaselhead Education Program! This program is specifically designed to meet cross curricular learning outcomes focused on the new Alberta Science and Social Studies curriculums. Our program is led by a Weaselhead Naturalist who brings their own expertise and personal experiences to your program.

The following items have been enclosed in this Teacher's Guide package:

- Curriculum Connections
- Program Objectives
- Participant Guidelines
- Behavioural Expectations
- Program Outline
- Activities
- Background Information on the Weaselhead Area

Curriculum Connections

Science: Students analyze and describe how plants and animals interact with each other and within environments; Students relate investigation to building knowledge; Students investigate and analyze how materials have the potential to be changed.

Guiding Questions

Science

Matter

- What does water look like in different forms?
- How does the water cycle work in the Weaselhead?

Living Systems

- How do plants and animals interact?
- What can you discover with your senses?

Scientific Method

- How can investigation help to deepen understanding in science?

Program Objectives

Students investigate ecosystem interactions and explore the water cycle.

Before the Program

Pre program preparation

- Students should have a journal or clipboard with blank paper.

For any outdoor activities participants should:

- Dress for the weather; dress in layers and wear appropriate footwear.
- bring pencils or pens.
- bring a field journal OR blank paper on a clipboard.

Behavioural expectations for outdoor activities

- Remain with the group and keep in sight of supervisors at all times.
- There is always an adult leader at the front of the group and at the end of the group.
- Never remove natural items from the area. Vegetation, insects, mammals, birds, and amphibian life is to be respected and left in the natural habitat.
- Leave no trace of our visit. All litter must be brought back out.
- Unsafe behaviour such as tripping, wrestling, fighting, and teasing is unacceptable and may result in withdrawal from the activity.
- Cooperation by listening, participating in group discussions, observing, and recording is expected during the learning experience.
- Each adult is expected to participate in the activities and to provide due safety and care for each of the students.
- No headphones or earbuds are allowed. This is for the safety of the participants.
- **Parents and teachers: please keep cell phones away unless taking pictures or in case of emergency.**

Program Outline: 1 ½ hours

5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction, Land Acknowledgement
25 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation or walk introducing the water cycle• Activity: draw the water cycle as it looks either in the Weaselhead (based on a map) or near the school
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forest five - 5 minutes of quiet to see what they can observe using their senses. This is preferentially an outdoor activity but can be done in the classroom if needed. (10 minutes is used for this activity to settle first and discuss after!)
40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation or walk discussing producers, consumers and decomposers and how they interact with each other in the environment relating back to the water cycle where energy is constantly cycling in different forms.• Activity: Pond dip or game looking at interactions between different organisms including a look at producers, consumers and decomposers. Pond dip is weather and site dependent.
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrap up - discussion of what they learned and how observation and investigation can deepen our understanding of the world around us.

Activities

- Water cycle investigation and discussion: Students are provided with an overview of the water cycle through either a presentation or outdoor walk
- Pond dip: this is weather and site dependent. If there are no nearby wetlands or weather does not permit, a presentation and discussion will take place instead.
- Game: Producer, consumer, decomposer connections
- Forest Five & Soundscape: Naturalists may guide groups into 5 minutes of complete silence in nature. It is recommended that each participant is separated from other members. This activity is used to encourage participants to be more immersed in nature and to use auditory sense to identify natural occurrences. While preferably done outside, this can still be done in the classroom with a different focus on listening and observing the sounds and sights in the room when it's quiet.

Weaselhead History

The Weaselhead area has a name shrouded in mystery. Like so many Indigenous stories, how the Weaselhead got its name has been lost over time. What we do know is that, although there are weasels that call this area home, the name has nothing to do with actual weasels! Weaselhead is a traditional Blackfoot last name, so the name may be related to someone from the Blackfoot Confederacy. There is written history of a man with the name Weazel Head on the Tsuut'ina reserve as well, but little is known about where he originated. Early settler Sam Livingston, whose house is now part of Calgary's Heritage Park, was the first European to settle in the Elbow River valley, now known as the Weaselhead.

Between 1910 and 1990, Tsuut'ina reserve and parts of the Weaselhead were used for military training exercises. Foxholes and signs warning of ordinances possibly left behind remind us of this history, even today. The last time an exploded device was found was during the floods of 2013.

The City of Calgary bought what is now the Weaselhead from the Tsuut'ina Nation in 1929 to build the Glenmore Reservoir, which still provides roughly 40% of Calgary's drinking water.

Today, this protected area spans 404 hectares (989 acres) and is bursting with diverse habitats. Wander through dense White Spruce forests, leafy Balsam Poplar groves, and colourful wildflower meadows. The Elbow River winds through it all, with floodplains, beaver ponds, and wetlands teeming with life.

As you explore, you'll uncover clues to the area's rich history. Fossils in sandstone cliffs date back 35 million years, and traces of ancient river paths still shape the landscape. You can find evidence of Indigenous campsites and buffalo hunts, as well as remnants of a military training base that once operated here.

With over 480 plant species, including rare ones like the Western Wood Lily, the Weaselhead is a wildlife haven. Frogs, salamanders, and more than 200 bird species thrive here, while larger animals like moose, bears, and even cougars visit throughout the year.

The Weaselhead is a living tapestry of Calgary's natural and cultural history, offering a rich, engaging experience for all who visit.

REMEMBER: This is a natural area park. It is illegal to remove anything from the area. Fossils and certain plant species are protected in Alberta.