

## DOCENT GUIDE

### FIELD TRIPS: OBSERVATION STATION

(Note: This station once was called the Art Station. It has been re-named the Observation Station because creating art on a field trip is not part of the mission of the Watsonville Wetlands Watch. By changing the focus of this station from "art" to "observation" we can continue to use drawing materials, but for a different purpose.)

#### GOALS:

- To provide an overview of the Watsonville Wetlands as a habitat for native wildlife.
- To use drawing as a means of paying closer attention to the environment.
- To create a visual record of the wetlands experience.

MATERIALS: Clipboards, white paper and colored pencils.

#### SET-UP:

1. Before the students arrive, take the bins of drawing materials from the truck or cart to the Observation Station,

which consists of a cluster of straw bales covered with blue tarps. Gently remove any "critters" (frogs & insects) from the tarps, to prevent them from distracting the students.

2. Place the materials at the base of the pile of straw bales, so that you face the students and they face the slough. If there is time, clip a piece of paper to each clipboard.

3. Return to the field trip meeting place to greet the students as they arrive. After your first group has been selected, lead it to the Observation Station along the flagged trail.

4. Ask the students to take places on the straw bales – about three feet apart and facing the slough.

### INTRODUCTION:

1. *Before passing out the drawing materials*, introduce yourself and explain that this is the Observation Station. Ask the students what it means "to observe". If someone says observation means "to look at", keep probing until the group gets the idea that observation is slow, careful looking. (In science, the term means to note and record something.)

2. Ask the students to sit quietly with their eyes closed for a minute and hold up a finger for each different sound they hear. Then ask them to spend a minute or two gazing intently

at the scene in front of them. Afterward, ask for volunteers to tell the group (raising their hands first!) each new thing they've observed - such as the slough, ducks swimming on the water, a bird flying overhead, grasses, bushes, birds on a telephone line, etc.

3. Ask the students the meaning of the word "habitat". You might also ask what their own habitat is - the places they have a *habit* of living in, such as their home, neighborhood and school. Explain that they are going to draw the wetlands habitat, so they can understand it better. Explain that this is not an art class. Rather, they'll be working the way a field scientist works; by making a visual record of the environment, they'll remember it better.

### ACTIVITY:

1. Ask 3 students to pass out the drawing materials (paper, clipboards, and colored pencils). Ask the students to write their names on the paper, then turn it over and clip it to the clipboard. (Names will be on the back.)

2. Show the students how to begin the drawings by turning a clipboard horizontally and making a sketchy outline of the

water area of the slough. After the students draw the water area, ask them to add to their drawing all the habitat features and wildlife they can see: grasses, bushes, ducks or coots on the water, birds flying overhead, etc. Allow about 8 minutes to do this, giving them a one-minute notice before the time is up.

3. Ask if anyone would like to share his/her drawing. Show these to the group.

4. When the 5-minute alert comes over the walkie-talkie, have 3 students help collect the pencils, clipboards and drawings. (The drawings are given to the classroom teacher at the closing circle at the end of the field trip.)

5. When the walkie-talkie signal comes to change stations, walk the students to the next station. (If you have time, attach a piece of paper to each clipboard before the next group arrives.)

*Have fun! This is a wonderful activity for kids - and docents!*