

# SURPRISING JACKSON PARK

Nature in the City



Nature trail guide for visitors and  
explorers of all ages.

## **SURPRISING JACKSON PARK Nature in the City**

This booklet shows people how to use Jackson Park to discover the world of nature. Explorers of all ages can follow the steps describing the history, bridges, lagoons, wetlands, wildlife, and plants of this great Chicago park.

Visitors can learn about Jackson Park in many ways. It's always best to just look around. This booklet will show you how.

Nature Trail Committee  
Jackson Park Advisory Council

## April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you

Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops

Let the rain sing you a lullaby

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk

The rain makes running pools in the gutter

The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night

And I love the rain.

Langston Hughes

## **SURPRISING JACKSON PARK: NATURE IN THE CITY**

No one can do all of these activities. Do only what interests you or the group you are with.

Jackson Park, designed by famous landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, holds beauty and surprises for visitors of all ages. Almost all of Jackson Park was used for the construction of the great buildings of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, but Wooded Island was developed as a place of rest and quiet. Today, 1.26-mile long nature trail on Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow allows visitors see birds, trees, flowers, and wildlife in a peaceful setting never far from the hustle and bustle of the great city.

- Suggested tools for this trail are drawing paper, crayons, soft pencil, or charcoal, small plastic cup or tray, magnifying glass, forceps.
- Note: The Explorers' Log Sheets are available on line, and can be used by children of all ages as well as grown-ups.
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### **Getting started**

- The best place to start is the North Bridge that connects Wooded Island to land just south of the Museum of Science and Industry. How many bridges can you see from the North Bridge? If you complete the nature trail you will probably cross six bridges. On your Explorers' Log Sheet, draw a picture of your favorite bridge. Cross the North Bridge to the Island. Once you are on Wooded Island, close your eyes. Keep them closed while you count to ten. Listen very carefully. What sounds do you hear? Do you hear any animals?
- Open your eyes. What colors do you see? Frederick Law Olmsted, the park's major architect, believed that the three most important parts of parks are trees, grass, and water. Can you see all of these?
- What is an island? Do you know of any other famous islands in the world? Look for more islands as you walk through Wooded Island and Bobolink Meadow. How do these islands help animals survive in Chicago?

### **People in the Park**

- People visit the park every day. What are some things that people can do in a park? Why do people like to visit a park?
- Look across the lagoon from North Bridge to the fishing pier. Is anyone fishing now? Politely ask him or her what kinds of fish he or she can catch in the lagoon. Maybe he will show you a fish he or she has caught. What did he or she use for bait?

### **Animals in the Park**

- What critters can you see in trees?
- On branches on the ground? On tree trunks – look in the cracks of the bark or near the water or on branches over the water? Under leaves and

- List animals you see on your log sheet and tell where you found them. Draw a picture of one animal you see. Look for more critter clues: feathers, footprints, egg fragments, spider webs. You might even find an empty beaver lodge on the north bank of the lagoon near the South Bridge.

### Green Stuff

- What is a tree? Draw a picture of your favorite tree. If you have a field guide or the tree has a label on it, write down its name.
- What are some things that people use trees for?
- Trees have either broad, flat leaves or needles on their branches. Trees with needles are called “evergreen trees” because they keep their needles all year. Evergreen trees – pines, spruces, and fir trees are used for Christmas trees. Most of trees you see on Wooded Island shed their leaves every autumn and grow new leaves in the spring.
- What happens to leaves after they fall from trees?
- How many different flowers can you see? Can you name any of these flowers?
- Can you find insects near those flowers? Draw a picture of an insect you find near flowers.
- How do insects use flowers? How do insects HELP flowers?
- Do you see any gray-green or yellow-green patches on tree trunks and branches? These are lichens (LIKE-ENS), a special kind of plant/fungus combination that live on trees, rocks, and sometimes bare ground. Most are flat but some have leafy edges. On damp ground or rocks you might find moss that looks like green velvet and is soft to touch.

### Japan and Canada Bring Gifts

About 250 feet from the North Bridge of Wooded Island is the entrance to Osaka Garden. This lovely garden was given to Chicago by the Japanese government. Next to the entrance is a large rock, sometimes called an “ice rider, ” or “erratic boulder” that rode down to this area on a glacier – the huge sheet of ice -- that spread from northern Canada all the way to the middle of Illinois more than 15,000 years ago. This glacier scooped out the big grooves in the Earth that filled up with water from the melting glacier to form the Great Lakes, including Lake Michigan. As the glacier spread through the land, it picked up rocks and other materials and deposited them on the ground as it melted. When the last glacier melted, it left gifts of rocks and grains of sand that now make up the beaches of Lake Michigan.

- Lake Michigan is one of five Great Lakes. Can you name the other four?
- Go through the gate into the Osaka Garden. During the Columbian Exposition of 1893, a large Japanese temple, the Ho-O-Den, stood on the grassy part of Wooded Island just behind you. The Osaka Garden is smaller, but has many beautiful features including a waterfall and beautiful rocks collected from the far north. What part of the Osaka Garden do you like best? This garden is supported by Osaka, Chicago’s “sister city” in Japan.

- In the Osaka Garden is a beautiful bridge, the Moon Bridge. Why do you suppose it is called the Moon Bridge? Be careful when you step over it! Enjoy Osaka garden! It is a special gift from Japan to Chicago.
- When you leave the Osaka Garden, turn left and walk toward the small woods that covers about half of Wooded Island. Continue on the trail until you reach a fence that used to surround a garden where Fair visitors could see many different kinds of beautiful roses. Most of the rose plants are gone now, but many kinds of wild flowers take their place. Just to the north of the trail you might find a large patch of catnip, also called catmint. Rub your fingers over the leaves and squarish stem. Smell your fingers – cats just love these nice plants!
- Look for wildflowers, birds, and butterflies in this lovely place. Not far from the gate on the west side of the rose garden and a bit to the right is a huge bur oak tree with spreading branches. It is one of the oldest trees in Chicago. Give it a hug!
- Not far from the big bur oak tree near the west gate of the rose garden is a blue fire hydrant (most people in Chicago would call it a fireplug). Look for it and draw it. Some people think it was put there for fire protection during the 1893 fair.
- A bit south of the fireplug is the site where Daniel Burnham, the chief architect of the Columbian Exposition, built a small log cabin to use as his headquarters when he was supervising the construction of the more than 200 buildings built for the Fair.

### **Bobolink Meadow**

- Many people visiting Wooded Island want to visit Bobolink Meadow. Turn left at the end of the South Bridge and walk along the shoreline of the South Lagoon. You'll probably see geese on the grass or water, and maybe a cluster of goslings. You might see a great blue heron flying over the lagoon or stalking fish along the shoreline. Turtles sometimes sun themselves on partially submerged logs near the small eastern islands. Near the small footbridge at the southeast end of the lagoon is an emerging wetland with cattails, purple iris, and other aquatic plants. After passing through the parking lot of the golf driving range you will see the sign for Bobolink Meadow. This meadow is on the site of the largest building ever built for the Columbian Exposition or anywhere else at the time, the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. This gigantic structure would have held three buildings the size of the original Museum of Science and Industry!
- In the late 1950s, the United States Army installed a missile site in this location as defense against a possible threat from the Soviet Union, now known as Russia. The threat went away and the site was taken down. Although the topsoil is thin in some spots, much of Bobolink Meadow supports vigorous growth of deep-rooted prairie plants and shrubs, including little bluestem grass, black-eyed susans, and prairie rue. Many birds enjoy these flowers, including goldfinches, song sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, kingbirds, and once in a while, bobolinks!

- In the small woodland just north of the meadow, in the spring you can find woodland wildflowers including shooting stars and red trilliums.
- After you leave the trail, head north across the stone bridge, walk along the lagoon border to the Clarence Darrow Bridge, cross the bridge, turn left, and you'll be back where you started from!

### Island Art

By now you might have drawn or traced 5 or 6 objects on your log sheet. Other ways of enjoying art in the park is to place a piece of lightweight paper over the bark of a tree, then rub the paper with a soft pencil, charcoal, or crayon. You could also make rubbings of tree leaves, feathers, or rock surfaces.

### Thinking about Jackson Park.

- What part of the nature trail did you like the best?
- Did anything scare you in the park?
- Why are parks important?
- How can you help improve the park?

Write a poem about the park. Here is how you do it:

- Title of poem (1 word noun)
- 2 words describing what the title is about
- 3 words telling what this thing is doing
- 4 words telling how you feel about it
- 1 word that means the same as the title

Here is an example:

Cat  
Furry Pet  
Purring, playing, sleeping  
I love my cat.  
Fluffy

Now write a poem about something you saw on the nature trail. Remember, poems don't always have to rhyme!

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**Jackson Park Explorers' Log, ages 9 and older.**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

<p>There are six bridges that you might cross. Draw your favorite bridge in the right-hand column.</p>	
<p><b>SOUNDS and COLORS</b> What sounds do you hear with your eyes closed? What colors do you see when you open your eyes?</p>	
<p>Visit the Japanese Garden. Look for the waterfall, large rocks, stone lanterns, and special little tea house. Draw one of the special trees that you see there. What do you</p>	
<p>Name 3 things people do in parks.</p>	
<p>What animals do you see in the park? Where do they live? Draw a picture of an animal you see.</p>	
<p>Can you find clues for other animals?</p>	
<p>Draw a picture of your favorite tree. List 3 ways that people use trees.</p>	
<p>Draw a flower that you see in the park.</p>	
<p>How do plants and animals help each other in the park?</p>	
<p>What part of the nature trail did you like best? Why are parks important?</p>	

## LaRabida's Fossil Beach: An Introduction

Frederick Law Olmsted, famed landscape architect who designed Jackson Park, said that the most significant feature of the park is Lake Michigan. In this activity, you will explore why Lake Michigan is important to Chicago, and how sand, water, and bedrock have combined to produce this beach. Begin this activity on the stony Lake Michigan beach just south of LaRabida Hospital.

### Getting Started

1. Why is Lake Michigan important to Chicago?
2. What are some problems Lake Michigan has now?

### Materials

Plastic cups  
Dry sand from beach  
Lake Michigan water – collect in a bottle or other container  
Meter stick (yard stick will do) divided into 5 equal sections by colored tape or string.  
Large nail file  
Small hand lens (magnifying glass)  
Geologic time line showing living things

### Demonstrations

- a) Hold the meter stick vertically. Tell audience members that this meter stick represents the age of the Earth -- 4.5 billion years
  - b) The last 1/10 (approximately) of the meter stick stands for the age of the rock you are standing on.
2. Pour Lake Michigan water into a cup – hold it up, look at it. What is special about water? It's precious – if you don't think so, catch some in your hand and try to keep it!
- a) What happens to water in warm weather? It evaporates!
  - b) What happens to water in cold weather? It freezes. What happens to ice when it freezes – it gets hard and float – on top of the water! Why is that a good thing? The bottoms of lakes don't freeze – they provide homes for fish, turtles, frogs, and tiny organisms that hibernate there.

3. Pour dry sand into one cup. Slowly pour it into the other cup. Is sand a solid, liquid, or gas? You can pour it, like a liquid. But what is each grain – a tiny solid particle! In fact, sand is a FLUID.

4. Here, in this special place, you are standing on SOLID ROCK. It is NOT concrete. It is Chicago's 400 million years bedrock! It is the same stuff that makes up the original Stony Island, Thornton Quarry, and Stearns Quarry near 35<sup>th</sup> St. and Halsted Avenue. Most of Chicago's bedrock lies deep in the ground, but in a few places you can find it, like this lovely fossil beach. Rock from these quarries is ground up to make concrete for highways and buildings. This rock formed beneath ancient oceans long before there was complex life on Earth. It contains the remains of worms, bacteria, creature that evolved into corals, etc. You can see the fossils of these creatures through your hand lenses. Draw pictures of them.

# Jackson Park Treasure Hunt



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Check all the items you see, and describe or draw a picture of it if you have time. You don't have to do all of them – but enjoy what you do! Hints: You can find some of them by looking under leaves, on tree bark, or beneath stones on the ground.

1. \_\_\_ seed
2. \_\_\_ bud
3. \_\_\_ two kinds of flowers
4. \_\_\_ moss
5. \_\_\_ two kinds of trees
6. \_\_\_ a tree with needles instead of leaves
7. \_\_\_ bird's nest
8. \_\_\_ 2 different kinds of birds. Name them.
9. \_\_\_ squirrel
10. \_\_\_ pond of water
11. \_\_\_ trash (what kinds?)
12. \_\_\_ Has it rained recently? How do you know?
13. \_\_\_ spider web
14. \_\_\_ animal scat (poop)
15. \_\_\_ 2 kinds of insects (name or draw them)
16. \_\_\_ spider
17. \_\_\_ fish
18. \_\_\_ frog
19. \_\_\_ roly polly
20. \_\_\_ mushroom (or other fungus)
21. \_\_\_ lichen (greenish or grayish, crusty growth on tree trunks)
22. \_\_\_ rodent (trick question!)
23. \_\_\_ bone
24. \_\_\_ a smile (always a treasure!) Draw a smile.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR JACKSON PARK EXPLORERS

1. Tree identification. Some trees are labeled by scientific and common name. Find more trees of the kinds that are labeled.
2. Use your plastic cup or tray to collect water from the edge of the lagoon. Be sure that the water contains sediment – mud, decaying plants, twigs, etc. Look for tiny swimming organisms. Use a magnifying glass to see the world that exists in a drop of water.
3. Make rubbings by placing a sheet of paper over tree bark or a leaf and rubbing the paper with a soft pencil or charcoal.
4. See how different birds find food. Some birds dive, some dabble on top of the water, others look for worms and insects, some, like swallows, catch tiny insects as they fly. Others, such as cardinals and goldfinches, eat seeds.
5. Pretend to be a tree, a bird, or a squirrel. Tell a story about yourself.
6. Find out about some unusual animals that live in or visit Jackson Park. This includes raccoons, coyotes, owls, beavers and opossums. Look for these animals in the evening – if you are lucky you might see some of them!
7. Visit Wooded Island and Jackson Park in different seasons. How does Wooded Island look in the autumn? Winter? Early spring? Summer?
8. When you go home, walk around your back yard or block, or visit a small neighborhood park. Look for squirrels, birds, insects, and flowers. Try to recognize maple, poplar, oak and ash trees that you have learned about in Jackson Park.
7. Talk to your family and friends about why you like to visit Jackson Park. Ask your teacher to bring your classmates to Jackson Park.

## JACKSON PARK NATURE TRAIL VOCABULARY

Columbian Exposition of 1893: World's Columbian Exposition, held in Jackson Park on Chicago's south side, May-November, 1893, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

Daniel Burnham: (1846-1912) American architect, urban planner, named Chief of Construction the for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Erratic boulder: A large piece of **rock** carried by a glacier or ice sheet and deposited in an area far from its point of origin.

Frederick Law Olmsted: (1822 – 1903) American journalist, social critic, public administrator, and landscape designer. He designed Chicago's South Park System in 1870, and returned to Chicago in 1891 to help design the Columbian Exposition.

Glacier: A large persistent sheet of ice that originates on land, and flows or expands slowly depending on stress and climate.

Island: A piece of small to medium-sized land that is completely surrounded by water. Very small **islands** are sometimes called islets.

Lagoon: A body of comparatively shallow water is separated from a deeper lake (or ocean) by a shallow beach or sandbank.

Lake Michigan: The only Great Lake located entirely within the United States. It is 307 miles by 118 miles wide at maximum with a shoreline of 1,640 miles. Large cities on its shoreline are Chicago, Illinois; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Muskegon, Michigan.

Migratory birds: Birds that regularly fly between different areas for breeding purposes. During the spring, Millions of birds pass through Chicago from winter habitats in the south on their way to summer breeding grounds. In autumn they return to the south. Examples are herons, ducks, warblers, and goldfinches. Resident birds live and breed in the same area all year long, as determined by food and shelter availability. Examples are crows, house sparrows, chickadees, and cardinals.

Osaka (Japanese) Garden: This lovely garden was established for the Chicago World's Fair Columbian Exposition by the people of Japan. It is currently supported in part by Osaka, Japan, Chicago's sister city.