IDEAS for park nature related activities and learning

Find paper birch bark and draw on it [never peel it off the tree !]

Find cones, feathers,maple wing seeds, catkins, nuts

Observe and identify frogs, salamandars, squirrels, snakes, butterflies and birds

Build a 'stick' house

Trace leaves of different trees or press them between layers of newsprint e.g. oak, elm, buckeye, ash

Make a grass ' whistle'

Notice and count the different shades of green in the park.

Draw a map in the pea gravel – 'Dora' is looking for the pear tree. How does she get there ? Build a bridge in the pea gravel.

In winter, spot and identify animals and birds that use the park ; bird, squirrel, mice and deer tracks in the snow.

How many more birds nests can be spotted that aren't protected and hiding in the tree leaves ?

Which trees look the same all year round and which ones look different from summer to winter [loose their leaves] ?

Draw bark patterns and learn how bark differs in trees.

How old is this tree ? use the work sheet to learn how to estimate tree age.

How tall is this tree ? consult the information attached to learn how to estimate heighth.

Identify the 14 types of trees in the park that are Native to Manitoba.

How many provinces and states are represented in the park with their national tree ?

There are 9 different cone producing trees in the park. Can you find the cones ? pine [Scots, Jack, eastern white], spruce [white, black, Colorado], tamarack, cedar[eastern white, eastern red].

Are there edible fruits and nuts in the park and which animals [or humans] eat them ?

GPS- there is one geocache on line and these are coordinates for 12 others: use your GPS and mark other trees that have signage.

Scabiosa N49 33 25.0 W 101 05 20.0

Manitoba maple N49 33 23.0 W 101 05 23.4

Amure maple N49 33 21.2 W 101 05 23.0

Maple sugar N49 33 23.1 W101 05 19.9

Bur oak N49 33 21.9 W 101 05 16.8

Chokecherry N49 33 23.1 W 101 05 22.8

Black walnut N49 33 22.8 W 101 05 19.8

American elm N49 33 23.3 W 101 05 19.4

Ure pear N49 33 22.0 W 101 05 22.4

Plum N49 33 22.4 W 101 05 17.3

Silver maple N49 33 20.9 W 101 05 20.9

Linden N49 33 20.7 W 101 05 17.7

Preserve the beautiful fall leaf colours with Glycerin solution

[one part glycerin,purchased at a craft store, mixed with 2 parts water]. Boil the water and add the glycerin, stir and cool till just cool enough to touch. If preserving a small branch of leaves , crush the stem end with a hammer so that the liquid will be absorbed . Place the branch into the warm liquid and out of direct sunlight. It may take 2 weeks or more for the leaves to glisten as the glycerin moves up the stem into the leaves. Maintain the level of water / glycerin in the jar. When the leaves appear to have absorbed the solution wipe them dry and hang them upside down to dry completely and then enjoy using them in vases or a wreath. Single leaves absorb the liquid much more quickly than branches.

Look for birds nests - in shrubs or cedars – waxwings, robins, sparrows

- in large spruce trees – crows, grackles, merlins
- in nest holes in natural cavities of large trees- woodpeckers. Nuthatches, tree sparrows, flycatchers, chickadees.

In winter look for woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees foraging for dormant insects, grubs or eggs; pine or evening grosbeaks feasting on maple or ash seeds; waxwings plundering mountain ash or crabapple trees; crossbills seeking small seeds from spruce, pine, tamarack, maple or birch trees.

Find the holes drilled in the conifers by the sapsuckers. They provide access to a tasty treat for the ruby throated hummingbirds, yellow rumped warblers and many butterflies. Hummingbirds often nest near these holes.

Can you see insect eating birds ? nuthatches eat insects under the bark of a tree; orioles hunt throughout the tree eating hundreds of insects a day including caterpillars; hummingbirds eat spiders and insects giving them protein in their diets.

Can you find beetles , snails and centipedes on the ground as they make their home in rotting logs or underneath leaf litter ? These small creatures are food for many other animals such as salamandars, frogs and thrushes.

In late spring or early summer look under elm or birch trees for piles of

frass [faecal pellets produced by larvae]. Look up into the trees for caterpillars of mourning cloak butterflies [black with large red dots on top and long black branching spines]. Mourning cloak butterflies are seen first and are a sign of spring !

Moths are mostly nocturnal. Keep your eye open to see the sphinx or hawk moth whose caterpillar feeds on elm predominately. We usually see the green caterpillar crawling along the ground in late fall seeking a place to pupate i.e. burrow into the ground and live there 4 months of winter to emerge in spring as the sphinx moth ..that flutters like a hummingbird !