
Marine Trailing

Level

1-8+

Key question

How do I feel about the marine environment?

Key outcomes

Develop positive attitudes about the marine environment.

Develop serial thinking and continuous application – that is, to apply what one sees/hears/smells/feels to enable evaluation or assessment of an area.

Adapted from Jan Oliver,
Field Notes for Seaweek 1996
on Lamb Island.

A trail, according to the Macquarie Dictionary, is a path or track across a wild region, along which one follows as if drawn along. Trails should provide such experiences that the other meanings of the word 'trail' should not apply – that is, to go wearily, lazily or straggle or fall behind the leaders! Trails can be used in any subject area, and at any level of schooling.

What you need

Pencil

Note pad

Blindfolds, magnifying glasses, tags and labels

What you do

Various spots in the landscape can be tagged or marked with numbers on plastic or card sheets and the trail then becomes a self-guided one. Equipment such as blindfolds, magnifying glasses, and extra information can be provided at certain spots. If the whole group is trailing together, and the area is unknown or cannot be pre-marked, the leader can indicate where various activities should occur. Or students may wander along doing the activities at what they consider appropriate sites. Dominant features in a landscape may be useful meeting spots, but at the same time, care should be taken to ensure that the little things, the non-dominant, unknown features also receive attention.

It is advisable to warn trailers about handling dangerous marine organisms or marine debris, and in tidal zones, to watch for tide changes.

Any site can be used for most of the activities. Selection of activity and site may depend on the age of the participants. Activities can be on notices at each site, or provided on field sheets, or read out by a leader at each site.

Suggested Activities at Sites

1. List/think about ways in which this area is beautiful, safe, healthy. Compare it with another area with which you are familiar.

2. List the valuable things provided at this spot – these are nature's assets. Could some of them cause people problems?

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3. What sounds can you hear at this spot – what do you like or dislike? Can you identify the sources?

4. Look around at the various features of this landscape, including the shore line, rocks etc. Consider the dominant shapes. Are these shapes rectangles, globes, shelves, or slopes? Contrast the sizes and proportions of pieces; what are the dominant lines? — vertical, horizontal, round, oblique, curving, straight, soft, thin, flat.

5. How do these shapes and lines in the sea and along it differ from people-made objects in city and suburban landscapes?

6. Contrast what IS with what WAS or MIGHT BE at this spot.

For example:

- what happens here if the sea level rises
- if the temperature rises
- if human use of this area increases
- if human use of this area decreases
- if human use of adjacent areas changes.

7. Carefully examine a mangrove tree. Mangroves play a very important role in sheltering animals, providing nutrients, holding sand and mud, and in stabilising the wetlands. What you see is the mangrove's 'public face', the outside. What would the view be like if you were inside the mangrove looking out? How would the view differ?

8. How would you explain the design of mangrove trees and their roots if you are a member of a tribe with very strong beliefs and myths in a supreme Creator? Can you create a mythical story about how mangroves got to look like they do?

9. At this site, observe and possibly draw, the spaces here, for example gutters, alleys, burrows holes. Are these spaces enclosed, divided, pierced, defined, joined or separate? What is using those spaces?

10. Select a large or dominant object in or out of the water but far away. 'Home in' on it from a distance; that is, start concentrating on it excluding all other objects. Record the changes you see as you get closer. You can also 'steeple chase', that is, observe a landmark from different points and at different directions. How does it look at different places? Why?

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11. Write a cinquain (five line) poem about the scene at this point.

- write one word to name something
- write two words to describe it
- write three words of action about the subject
- write four words in a phrase about the subject
- write one word to sum it all up.

12. Imagine you are a ship-wrecked sailor at this point. You could decide to be a modern day sailor, or perhaps one in the 1700s or earlier. It is blowing a gale, pouring rain, and getting dark. There are no other people around.

- How would you feel?
- What would you do?
- Where would you go?

13. Sit down at this point. Feel the ground. Let the mud, water, sand trickle through your fingers. Pick some up.

- Is it wet, cold, warm, gritty, smooth, smelly, full of bits and pieces, or all of the one thing?
- When you drop it, what happens?
- Is there anything living in it? When you put it back, what will happen?

Extension

Students can be asked to write up their experiences, or do a collage or group wall painting, or compare notes in an open discussion. However, a lot of the value of doing a trail is in keeping the feelings and experiences to oneself – but knowing the experiences can be called upon when discussing the conservation and management issues of the marine environment.