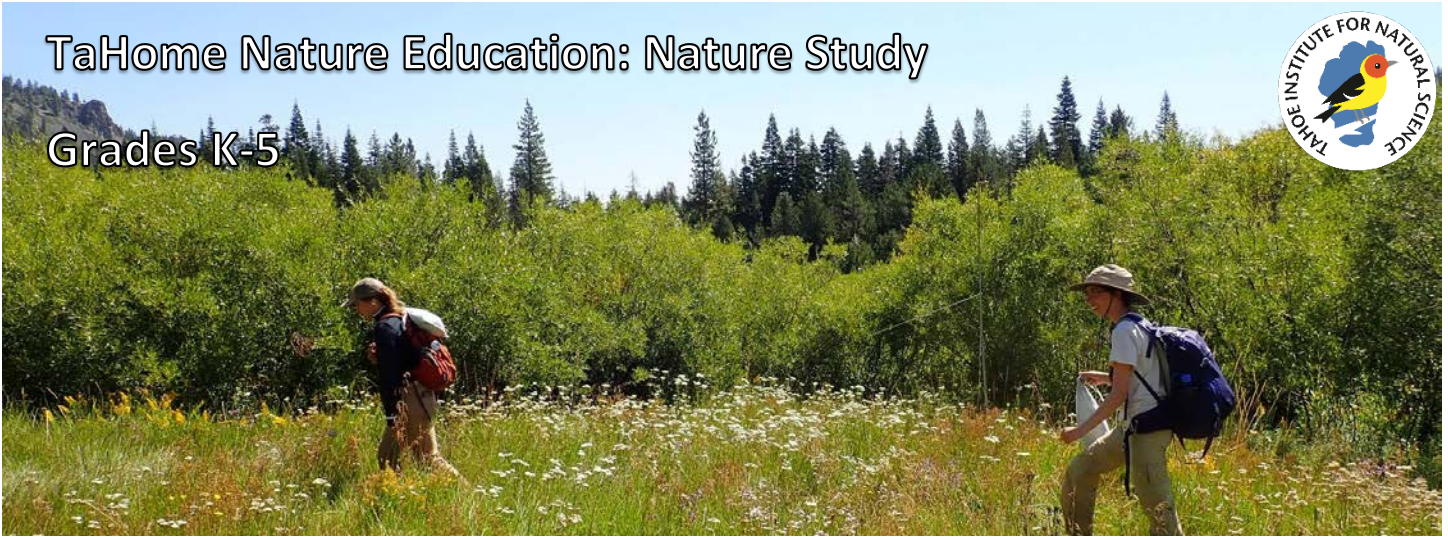


TaHome Nature Education: Nature Study

Grades K-5



What are you curious about?

There are more species of plants, animals, and fungi right here in Tahoe than anyone could learn the names of, much less all the details about, in one lifetime. To learn the details, one must focus. After years of learning and studying many different things about nature and biology, many scientists decide to do just that, to focus more closely on one species or group of species that they are especially curious to know more about.

This week, you will decide on an **organism** that you are most interested in getting to know more about. This could be a bird, insect, tree, wildflower, or mushroom - anything, really! Think back to what you have learned about Tahoe's nature and ask yourself these questions:

What have I studied that I want to know more about?

What have I not been able to study yet that I want to learn more about?

What questions do I have about what I have observed in nature?

In the activities below, consider these questions as you choose one Tahoe organism to study further. Use these activities to help you focus on studying that one species in greater depth, just like a scientist would. You can also repeat these activities for weeks to come on all the things in nature you see and wonder about.

As you study nature, TINS wants to help. If you have any questions about what you find, photos of wildlife you would like help identifying, or if you want to share what you have found, please send an email to education@tinsweb.org to contact a naturalist.



Lazuli Bunting



Emerald Moth

Activities for Grades K-5

Sit Spot

When starting out, it is best to choose an organism that you can find regularly and therefore study more thoroughly. Complete this activity to help you find an organism to study.

Choose a spot in nature that you have seen wildlife before, or a spot you are interested in. For at least three days in a week (more days are better if you have the time!), return to this chosen spot to make observations. Find a comfortable place, away from other people if possible, that you can easily find again. Sit down and for 10-20 minutes (you decide how long you want to sit; the longer you sit, the more opportunity you have to notice nature) sit still and quiet and make observations about what is around you. Try these techniques to make the most of your sit spot:

- Day 1: Look all the way around you, turning your body just a little bit every minute until you make a full rotation. In each position, name ten different things you can observe.
- Day 2: For half of your sit spot time, close your eyes and instead use your other senses to observe. What can you hear? What smells are in the air? What can you touch immediately around you?
- Day 3: While you do your sit spot, put yourself in the place of an animal, plant or another organism that you have seen this week. Look around and think about what in this environment could help you. Is there a source of food? Where would you get your water? What could you use as shelter? Are there predators you would need to avoid?



Sierran Chorus Frog



Bolander's Tarweed

After three or more days of doing Sit Spot, discuss these questions with a friend or family member:

1. What was the most surprising observation you made while in your sit spot?
2. What animals did you see? What were they doing?
3. What plants did you see? Did they look the same each day?
4. Do you have any new questions?

Based on the observations you made during Sit Spot, decide what organism you want to study further. If you need help identifying your organism, send a clear photo and description to education@tinsweb.org. Next, spend some time researching the following facts about your organism:

- What kind of an organism is it? Is it a mammal or bird? Is it a tree or wildflower?
- Where does it live? Why does it live there?
- What does it eat and what eats it?
- Where in the world is it found? Where in Tahoe is it found?



Close Study

In this activity you will observe one plant daily for five days. If you have chosen to study an animal, this plant should be important to your animal, such as a food source or a part of that animal's habitat. Research your animal to find a plant that is important to them. If you have chosen to study a plant or fungi, simply study that organism in this activity. Monitor this plant or fungi every day for five days in a row. Do a drawing of your plant each day. Each time you visit this plant, write or discuss the answers to these questions:

1. What is the weather like today? Is that affecting the plant at all? How?
2. Does this plant look similar or different from yesterday?
3. Are there any insects or other animals on this plant? Where are they and what are they doing?
4. Are there any parts of the plant that have been damaged, chewed on, or otherwise changed? How do you think this change might have happened?
5. What is the most interesting observation of this plant today?

Next, write or tell a story about what happened to the plant over the course of the week. Look back at the questions you answered, think about the observations you made, and think about what evidence you have of things that happened to the plant while you weren't around to watch. Share your story with your friends and family.



Nature Art

Many famous naturalists, like [Ynés Mexía](#), [John James Audubon](#), and [John Muir](#), have used art, whether drawings, paintings, or photographs, as part of their study of nature. Create a piece of art about your chosen plant or animal. You choose what kind of art you want to make, whether it is a painting, drawing, sculpture, diorama, collage, or digital drawing. Think about what you want this piece of art to tell people about your plant or animal. You could include things like their habitat, their babies and how they are born or hatched, their name, or their importance to other species, including yourself.

Teach Others

One of the best ways to know that you have learned something is to teach it to other people. Find someone in your family or a friend to whom you can teach about your chosen organism. Pick one (or more) of the following ways to teach this person what you have learned from your study and observation:

- Create and perform a skit or play about your chosen animal or plant.
- Write a song or poem about all you have learned about your chosen plant or animal. Pick a tune you already know, like Old McDonald, and rewrite the words to be about your topic.
- Perform a puppet show about a day in the life of your chosen plant or animal.



- Make a slideshow presentation or video about all of the cool facts you have learned, art and photos you have collected, and the observations you have made about your chosen plant or animal.
- Take your family on a hike to observe your chosen plant or animal. Along the way, explain all that you have learned and observed about your topic.
- Invite others to do all of the activities that you did this week with you another week.



Words to Know

Organism: An individual life form, such as an animal, plant, fungi, or single-cell life form.

Palabras para conocer

Organismo: Un ser vivo como un animal, una planta, o un hongo.

Further Learning

Get yourself or your family a field guide. TINS recommends, the [John Muir Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada](#) for a variety of local plants, insects, and other animals.

Attend an upcoming [TINS event](#).

Reach out to [TINS](#) to schedule your own nature walk for an engaging look at Tahoe's natural history.

Learn [the birds that live in your area with the TINS Seasonal Bird Checklist](#), and identify your bird observations using the [Merlin App](#).

Learn to draw birds in this [webinar series](#).

Get a parent to help you record and find interesting wildlife in your neighborhood using [iNaturalist](#) or [Seek](#).

[Learn](#) botanical drawing.

Participate in [TINS June Nature Chase](#) with your family!

