



# SWEP

Sierra Watershed  
Education Partnerships



## Action Fosters Hope

AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY BOOKLET

PROMOTING STEWARDSHIP BY CONNECTING STUDENTS  
TO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT SINCE 1994.



Connecting students to nature today, promotes environmental stewardship and advocacy for the future.

## We are **SWEP**

SWEP designs its programs with a clear focus on students and their learning needs. Recognizing that students thrive when actively engaged, SWEP incorporates hands-on, place-based, and outdoor project-based learning into every program. This approach not only makes learning more interactive, but also allows students to connect with their local environment and communities.



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**MISSION:** SWEP promotes environmental stewardship by connecting students to their local community and environment.

**VISION:** SWEP envisions a future in which all students in the Tahoe-Truckee region understand the environment in which they live and are empowered to take action to sustain and protect it in partnership with their community.

## Promoting **Stewardship**, One Student at a Time.

SWEP understands the critical importance of fostering environmental stewardship. Through its 20 hands-on and outdoor field programs, students are not only educated about the natural world, but also inspired to take

meaningful action in protecting and preserving the environment for future generations. SWEP serves over 4,000 students in the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District and makes more than 15,000 student contacts annually.

## Nature Journaling Is...

The practice of using words, drawings and numbers to capture and record your observations, questions, connections and explanations about nature in a notebook.

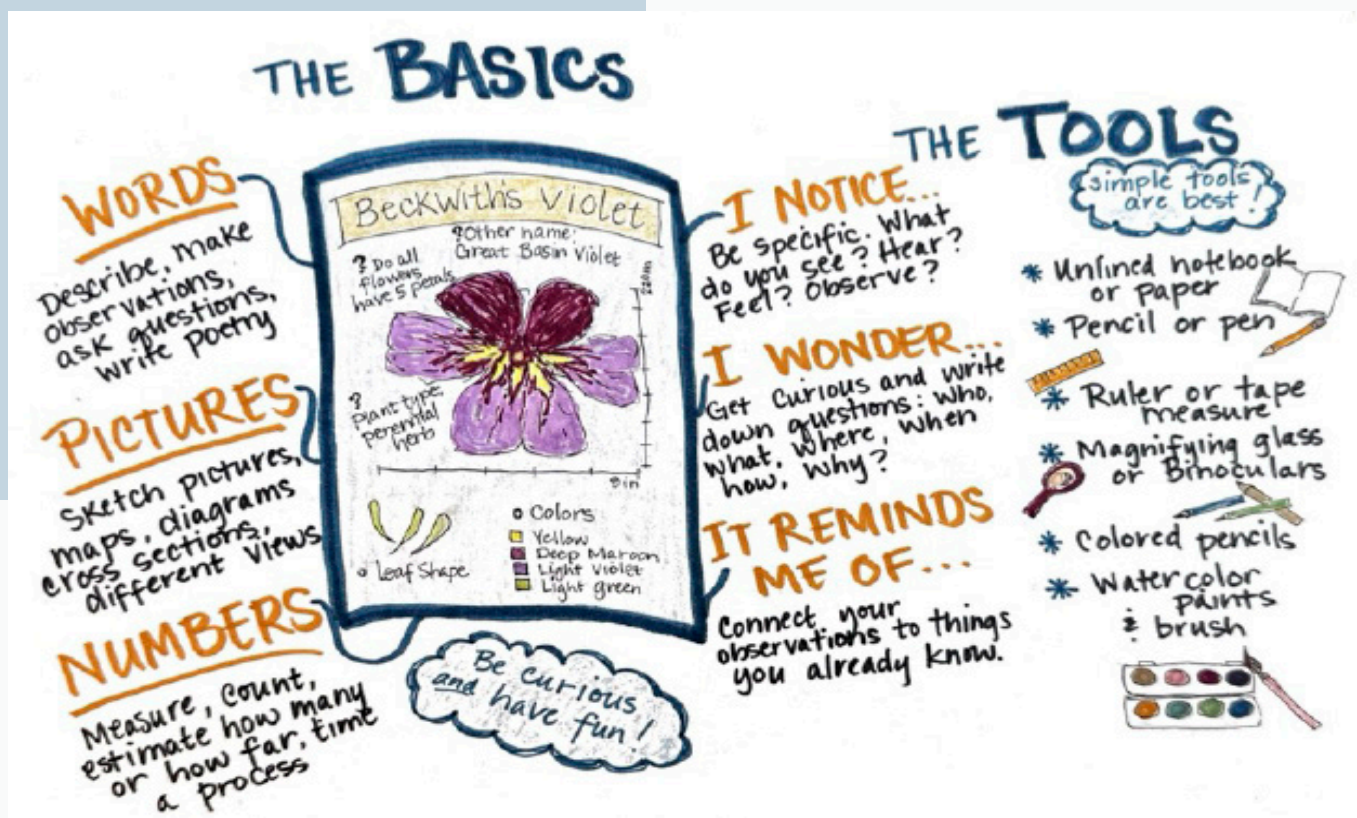
This powerful habit encourages you slow down, pay attention, notice more, and cultivate curiosity about the wonder and beauty around you.

### PLACES TO JOURNAL

- Outside in nature
- Out a window, in your yard or garden
- At home with a houseplant or fruits and veggies
- Along a street, creek or river
- In a forest or wilderness area

### DRAWING HELPS YOU TO...

**SEE • WONDER • REMEMBER**



### Here is a challenge for you:

Go outside and find something that catches your interest. Can you record your observations, questions and connections to it in the blank space provided?



# What Do You Notice?

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Journaling is about more than creating beautiful pictures. Drawing is a powerful tool for understanding—it helps you pay closer attention. The more you draw, the better you'll get at it. Practice is key... But most importantly: **BE CURIOUS & HAVE FUN!**



SCAN ME FOR MORE  
**INTERACTIVE, EDUCATIONAL  
RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES!**



# Earth Art



## CONNECT WITH NATURE

Earth art enhances creativity and well-being by fostering a deeper connection with the environment through hands-on, mindful expression. It also promotes environmental awareness and sustainability by incorporating natural



materials, while inspiring individuals to engage in outdoor, project-based learning. It is a powerful way to reconnect with the world around us.





# What Can You Create?

## WHAT IS EARTH ART?

Earth Art is created exclusively from materials found in nature and is often integrated into the landscape. This art is inherently temporary, evolving over time as nature itself changes—pieces may blow away, decay, transform, or be absorbed by the Earth. These natural processes are an essential part of Earth Art.

## Why create Earth Art?

- It is a way to honor and connect with the Earth.
- It offers a wonderful opportunity to spend time outdoors.
- It is a unique form of creative expression.
- It's accessible to everyone—free of charge.
- It shows how nature and art can transform over time.
- Please be respectful of Nature. Avoid picking flowers or leaves unnecessarily—instead, look for natural treasures that have already fallen to the ground.

## **Here's a challenge for you:**

Step outside, explore the beauty around you, and use natural materials like leaves, rocks and sticks to create your very own nature art. Once you've created your masterpiece, snap a photo and share it with the world!

Send your picture to [info@4swep.org](mailto:info@4swep.org) — we can't wait to see what you create!

## Lahontan Cutthroat Trout

The Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii henshawi*) is a remarkable and historically significant fish species that is native to the Lake Tahoe region. It is the largest subspecies of cutthroat trout and was once abundant in the lakes, rivers, and streams throughout the Sierra Nevada, especially in the Lahontan Basin.

These trout are typically characterized by their greenish-brown bodies with a pale underside, and their distinctive red or orange slash marks on their lower jaw (a characteristic feature of all cutthroat trout).

They are carnivorous and feed on smaller fish, insects, and other aquatic creatures. Historically, they were apex predators in the ecosystems they inhabited.



### **Here is a challenge for you:**

Can you research the two native species shown here and color them? **Remember:** All our actions impact our watershed and the health of the animals and plants living in it.



# Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog

The mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana mucosa*) is a species native to the Lake Tahoe Basin. These frogs are a critical part of the region's ecosystem, but they are currently listed as endangered due to habitat loss and the introduction of non-native species.

Adult mountain yellow-legged frogs can grow up to 3-4 inches in length. They are found in high-elevation aquatic environments, such as mountain streams, ponds, and lakes.

They primarily eat small invertebrates, such as insects, worms, and other aquatic organisms.



# How Can You Make Your Community Safer?

## DEFENSIBLE SPACE

In the face of climate change and surging wildfires in California, the topic of wildfire—though scary—is crucial and vital to our community. SWEP believes that by engaging students in action projects—like creating defensible space—the experience not only deepens their understanding and involvement, but also fosters a sense of hope around what might otherwise feel like a daunting or overwhelming topic. That is why our motto is: Action Fosters Hope!

### **Here's a challenge for you:**

Step outside and evaluate your home's defensible space to enhance its fire safety! Look for opportunities to clear dead plants, trim trees (with the help of an adult), and create a fire-resistant zone around your home. Take action with your family to protect your home and community from wildfires.

SCAN ME FOR  
**DEFENSIBLE  
SPACE  
INFO!**

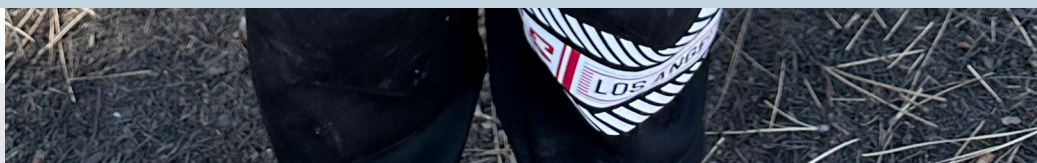




# Action Fosters Hope



"I am working with SWEP and the Truckee Fire District today. **It makes me feel more safe**, like I am responsible; like I am making an act on fire and helping people that can't do this themselves. **It just makes me feel happy!**" - Local 3rd-grade Student



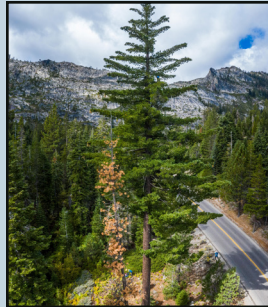


# Plant Identification

Whether you're hiking through the beautiful Tahoe National Forest, or simply exploring your backyard, knowing the plants around you is a rewarding experience.

1

**Sugar Pine**



2

**Lodgepole Pine**



3

**Quaking Aspen**



4

**Jeffrey Pine**



## Native Trees

Draw arrows to connect the different types of trees with their correct characteristics. These are some of the most common trees in the Truckee-Tahoe region.



A

- Needles in bundles of 3
- Beehive-shaped pinecones with prickles that turn inward



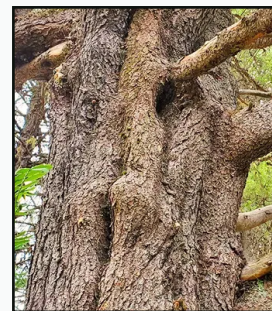
B

- Colorful leaves that fall during autumn
- White bark



C

- Big pinecones
- Short needles in bundles of 5



D

- Distinct burnt cornflake-like bark
- Tiny pinecones

### Bonus Question:

Do you know which of these trees is deciduous?



# Botany Bingo

## WHY NATIVE PLANTS?

### Here's a challenge for you:

Grab your Botany Bingo card and head outside to explore your backyard! Cross off all the native plants you can find to see if you can get **BINGO!**

Native plants are naturally suited to the local environment and don't need human intervention to thrive. They require less water, no fertilizer, and are more resilient. Native plants provide food and shelter to local wildlife and play a crucial role in promoting biodiversity.

		
Cedar Tree	Mule's Ear	Pinemat
		
Pinedrop	Manzanita	Bitterbrush
		
Jeffrey Pine	Wax Currant	White Fir
		
Lodgepole Pine	Sagebrush	Lichen

Draw Your **Favorite** Native Plant!

# Become a Friend of SWEPE

## SUPPORT SWEPE & STEWARDSHIP

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At SWEPE, our mission is simple: to foster a deep connection between students, the local community, and the environment through hands-on stewardship and service learning. But we need your support to keep our programs thriving. Your generous donation makes it possible for us to continue offering transformative experiences that shape future leaders dedicated to environmental conservation, advocacy and sustainable practices.

There are several ways you can support SWEPE & Stewardship:

- Make a Donation: Scan the QR Code below to make an online donation, or mail a check to: PO Box 1602, Tahoe City, CA 96145.
- Become a Board Member: SWEPE is recruiting individuals to join our dedicated Board of Directors and help guide our growing organization.
- Volunteer: Reach out to us at [info@4swep.org](mailto:info@4swep.org), and we will find a way for you to contribute your time and energy in a way that is meaningful to you.



SCAN ME TO  
**MAKE A GIFT!**





# Make an Impact



There are many ways to give back to the environment. Your support of SWEP helps **foster environmental stewardship** and **empower future generations to be advocates** for our planet. Together we can create meaningful, lasting change. Thank you for making a difference!

\*This booklet was printed on recycled paper.  
Please help us protect the environment by recycling it when you are finished.



# Acknowledgments

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We recognize that the land we gather on is the traditional and unceded territory of the **Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California**. Since time immemorial, the Washoe People have been the stewards of the Tahoe Basin, living in harmony with this beautiful land. We honor their deep connection to the environment and express our gratitude for their ongoing care and preservation of this sacred place. As we move forward, we must learn from their wisdom and practices to better care for and protect the land for future generations.



All of us at SWEP would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the

**Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation** for their generous support of this publication.

Their partnership, along with that of our broader network of supporters, enables us to continue our mission to educate and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.

