



## Spring Lake Regional Park Quest

Start at the entrance to the Environmental Discovery Center, and follow the clues in

**italics to each stop along your adventure.**

*1. Adventures, here we go! Spring Lake has many wonders to show. Pass the rocky cavern on your right, and up the curved path until the building's back deck is in sight. Then look ahead to a deck with green railing, the view may hold a nice sight for some sailing!*

Spring Lake Regional Park was created as a flood control reservoir for Santa Rosa. Imagine what a bucket's purpose is, to hold water. Spring Lake Park is like a bucket; it holds water so nearby creeks don't flood Santa Rosa during the rainy season. All the buildings you see at the lagoon are built to withstand flooding. In 2019 during winter storms, the water was so high, just a small square of the bathhouse roof was showing.

*2. About face, travelers, let's turn around. Walk a few paces and notice a big boulder on the ground. Down the rocky trail we go, maybe with a picnic basket in tow. On the path is where we stay. Stop at the display case before continuing on your way.*

Look at the display case. This park is a great natural habitat for animals. Keep your eye out for animals as you walk down the trail.

**Imitate your favorite animal, and ask people to guess who you are.**



*3. Shady Oaks Nature Trail is next in store. A perfect place to identify plants, animals and more. Pass the post marked with the number "2". Look in tree trunk holes and see if anything is staring back at you. Stop at two trees which look like three, sharpen your eyes, what do you see?*

Do you see any covering on the tree? This is moss. Moss has no roots and they root themselves to rocks, logs, and trees with anchor like hairs. Moss prefers dark, moist places. Notice where the moss is growing. Is it in the shade or the sun?



**Observe the moss. Look at it closely, then from far away. Does it look different? Now put your hand on it. How does it feel? In your own words, describe how this moss feels to you.**

*4. Move down the path to the top of the steps. Stop for a minute and take a deep breath. Face the lagoon and plant your feet on the ground. Now stand very still and listen for all types of sounds.*

Do animals need to rely on sound? Think about it for a moment. Animals do need to rely on sound, because they need to know if another animal is sneaking up on them. Animals vocally communicate with each other just like humans. If animals don't listen, it could be a matter of life or death.

**Make a sound map in the space on the next page. Be absolutely quiet and still for one minute. Record the sounds you hear and mark where they are coming from on the map.**

*5. Continue up the trail here, around the bend, you're fairly near. Aha! Two logs lying on their side. Look left and up-it's rhyolite! Forced up from the earth below, proof of a old volcano.*

Did you know we have volcanos around Sonoma County? Volcanos help to form landforms and mountains. Do you think this rhyolite will be in this spot forever? Rocks crumble mountains erode, people dig up rock for many uses. Rhyolite is used as a decorative rock in landscaping and to make jewelry.

**Brainstorm some things you could do with rock. Please make sure to not take any rocks from the park.**

6. Walk up the path to the bendy tree forest and look for the leaves which look like swords. Pick one up from where it fell, crush it up and take a smell. A little spicy, a little sweet, this leaf helps make food taste good to eat!

The California bay tree is called by many names; two of which are pepperwood and bay laurel. What do the leaves smell like to you? Does it smell good enough to eat? Many cultures across the world use this leaf for spices in food.

**Sketch a bay leaf.**

7. Tippy toe down the trail together, pretending you are as light as a feather. You are there when you hit the place where the fence and the trail split.

Depending on the season, these plants could be green, red, brown, or sticks with no leaves. Look for three leaves growing on one stem. This is poison oak. Have you heard to stay away from it and observe this plant from afar? It has oil on it (leaves, stem, roots, berries), which can get onto our skin and cause an itchy rash. This plant provides food and habitat for animals. What animals will eat it? Here is a rhyme to help you recognize it:



**“Leaves of three leave me be,  
If it’s hairy it’s a berry!”**

8. Turn left at the T in the path. You’re going to be doing some math. Look out for the redwood grove. Find the compass in this natural treasure trove!

Have you ever wondered what makes Sonoma County so special? It’s in part due to majestic coast redwood trees. These trees can live to over 2,000 years old and grow to heights over 350 feet! Redwoods grow with foggy, moist and damp conditions. After the 1906 earthquake, redwoods were cut down to use for housing, decking, and cigar boxes.



**Stand in the middle of the redwood grove. Close your eyes. Feel the sun on your skin. If you can’t, keep turning until you feel the sun. With your finger, point to where the sun is. Open your eyes and see if you are correct!**

9. Go back out the way you came, back up the path-it looks the same! Veer left-take the lower trail lined with berries, notice how their leaf type varies.

Blackberries! Who doesn’t like blackberries in the summer? Many people confuse blackberry plants to another plant which you were introduced to earlier, can you think of the other plant? If you guessed poison oak, nice job! Look closer to the leaves, and observe little hairs growing. What else does blackberry have, which poison oak does not have?

**Sketch a blackberry leaf.**

10. For those who are brave, let’s go find a secret cave! Tucked up the trail and over the bridge, find it you will, it’s hiding there still, set into the rocky ridge.

The water you find in this area is called McCrae Hot Springs. The water coming from this hot spring is heated by geothermal heat (heat being generated from the earth’s mantle underneath our feet.) McCrae Hot Springs is more of a warm spring but, the water’s temperature can get up to 80 degrees F.

**What is the clarity of the water?**

**Clear                      Green                      Brown**

**Describe it. Do you see signs of life? What are they?**

**Sketch anything living.**

**Take a deep breath in and describe what you smell. (Ex: sweet, sour, rotten, foul, etc.) ?**

**Thank you for completing your quest! You did a great job! How do you feel? Did you learn anything new?**



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