**PARK EXPLORERS**

The Park Explorers program supports Year 3/4 students to learn in and about Victoria’s protected places. Park Explorers is a curriculum-aligned program which fosters strong environmental values and a love of nature by encouraging students to learn outdoors and give back to their local environment.

The inquiry-based program is flexible and can fit in with a unit of work based on Science, Geography, the Capabilities and the cross-curriculum priority, Sustainability. Resources such as maps, videos and Teaching and Learning packs are provided to support the implementation of the program.

Reflect

Apply

**Learning for Nature**

Stewardship

The program and its accompanying resources are based on Parks Victoria’s Learning for Nature Education philosophy; Connect, Explore, Protect. This structure is designed to:

* Develop stronger connections between students and nature
* Establish and build upon students’ knowledge of their unique local environment through inquiry learning and exploration of nature
* Empower students to protect and help safeguard Victoria’s protected places

Teachers can use the Park Explorers resources as a full unit of work but are encouraged to adapt and use the activity ideas to suit their students’ needs, inquiries and interests.

If you would like for your students to be Park Explorers please email education@parks.vic.gov.au to register your interest.

**Year 3/4 Park Explorers Science and Geography Unit Overview**

**Overarching Inquiry Question: Why does Victoria have protected places?**

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| Unit focus: What makes Victoria’s protected places special? |
| Connect & Explore* What is a Victorian protected place?
* How do Victoria’s protected places support the life cycles of living things?
* Why is it important that Victoria’s protected places contain different ecosystems?
* Why is it important to protect the health of protected places?
* How have Victorian landscapes changed over time?
* How do we learn about the uniqueness of Victoria’s protected places?

The Teaching and Learning Resources contain curriculum linked activities that help students unpack these questions. Visual thinking tools are used to enable students to explore, organise or reflect on their learning. Biodiversity audits are encouraged through the use of apps such as ClimateWatch, iNaturalist, or OzAtlas. A Parks Victoria ranger or expert may be available to support student outdoor inquiry. Contact education@parks.vic.gov.au for more information. ProtectStudents may wish to contribute to the ongoing protection and care of their local natural space or protected place. Below is a list of potential ideas, depending on student interest, that may suit your school:* ParkConnect: join local Parks Victoria activities such as working bees or tree planting days.
* Help friends of groups connected to Victoria’s protected places.
* Promote the importance of your local park to your community. Use digital technology to create a campaign for the importance of natural spaces and the wildlife they contain and positive behaviours to engage in when visiting them.
* Regularly contribute to citizen science projects such as ClimateWatch, SeaSearch, Tangaroa Blue.
* Organise clean up events, wildlife monitoring activities, or nest box/insect hotel building to support local habitats.
* Sustainability Victoria: Become a Resource Smart Schools and complete activities to gain accreditation.
* Become a Fighting Extinction school through Zoos Victoria.
* Monitor your local bird life through Birdlife’s Birds in School program.
* Link with Landcare and make improvements in your community.
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| Year 3/4 Victorian Curriculum links |
| Microscope**Science** * Science knowledge helps people to understand the effects of their actions (VCSSU056)
* Different living things have different life cycles and depend on each other and the environment to survive (VCSSU058)
* Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things (VCSSU057)
* Earth’s surface changes over time as a result of natural processes and human activity (VCSSU062)
* With guidance, identify questions in familiar contexts that can be investigated scientifically and predict what might happen based on prior knowledge (VCSIS065)
* Suggest ways to plan and conduct investigations to find answers to questions including consideration of the elements of fair tests (VCSIS066)
* Compare results with predictions, suggesting possible reasons for findings (VCSIS070)
* Reflect on an investigation, including whether a test was fair or not (VCSIS071)
* Represent and communicate observations, ideas and findings to show patterns and relationships using formal and informal scientific language (VCSIS072)

**Earth Globe Asia-Australia****Geography** * Identify and describe the characteristics of places in different locations at a range of scales (VCGGC071)
* Identify and describe locations and spatial distributions and patterns (VCGGC072)
* Identify and explain the interconnections within places and between places (VCGGC073)
* The many Countries/Places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia, and the custodial responsibility they have for Country/Place, and how this influences views about sustainability (VCGGK080)
* Types of natural vegetation and the significance of vegetation to the environment, the importance of environments to animals and people, and different views on how they can be protected; the use and management of natural resources and waste, and different views on how to do this sustainably (VCGGK082)

**Lightbulb****Critical and Creative thinking** * Investigate a range of problem-solving strategies, including brainstorming, identifying, comparing and selecting options, and developing and testing hypotheses (VCCCTM020)
* Investigate different techniques to sort facts and extend known ideas to generate novel and imaginative ideas (VCCCTQ012)
* Identify and use ‘If, then…’ and ‘what if…’ reasoning (VCCCTR016)
* Explore distinctions when organising and sorting information and ideas from a range of sources (VCCCTR017)
* Consider concrete and pictorial models to facilitate thinking, including a range of visualisation strategies (VCCCTM018)
* Examine an increased range of learning strategies, including visualisation, note-taking, peer instruction and incubation, and reflect on how these can be applied to different tasks to reach a goal (VCCCTM019)

Chat**Ethical Capabilities** * Explore the extent to which particular acts might be regarded by different people as good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse, and explain why (VCECU005)
* Explore how apparently wrong actions can sometimes lead to good outcomes and the reverse (VCECD007)
* Discuss the role of personal values and dispositions in ethical decision-making and actions (VCECD008)
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