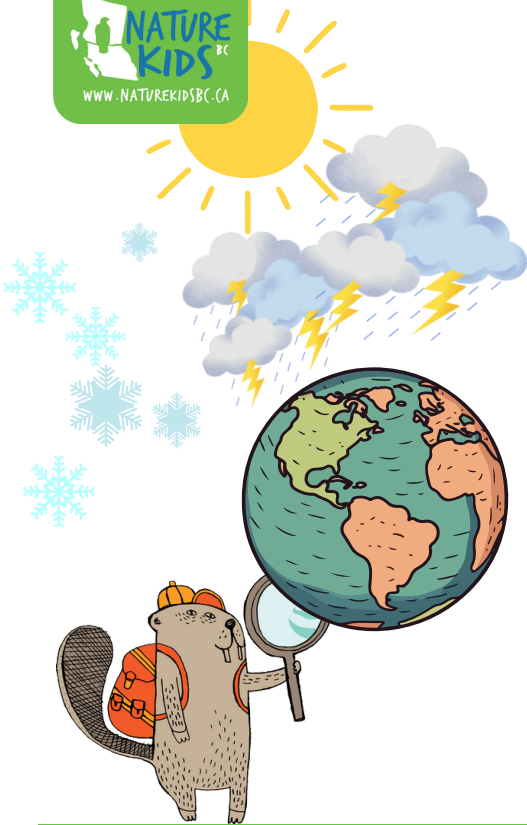


OUR (HANGING) WORLD



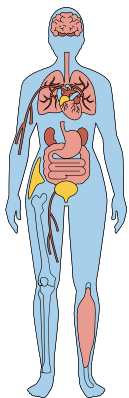
Freshwater is more precious and scarce than we might think. With our changing climate, *how much* rain or snow we get and *how often* it rains or snows is getting harder to predict. This means in some places we have longer periods with very little rain (called a drought), and in other places we have periods where there is a lot more rain than we usually get, which can cause flooding. Both of these are a real problem for all the plants and animals that live in our rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands. Now more than ever we have to take care of our freshwater ecosystems and do what we can to keep them healthy.

WHERE TO START?

Accuracy in science is important, however that takes practice, practice that starts with developing a more in depth view of nature, to notice details and patterns, to handle wildlife with care and to be curious!

WHAT IS FRESHWATER?

Our world is a water planet and our bodies are the same! Our skin, hair, bones and more are solids but in total our body weight is around 60% water! The Earth's surface is even more liquid. 70% of the surface is covered with water! Most of that water is saltwater. The water that is found in our oceans has lots of salts dissolved in it. About 97% of the water on our planet is saltwater.



Only 3% of the water on the Earth's surface is freshwater! Freshwater is water that does not have salts dissolved in it. It comes from rain and snow and can be found as glaciers and ice caps, under the ground, or in rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands. Freshwater is a precious resource, needed not just for humans to survive, but also for most plants and animals as well.



IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS



It is always important to make sure that you have safe access to your freshwater source, whether it is a stream, river, lake or wetland.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Water access points may have undercut or eroding banks. Make sure to check your entry points for your safety and to avoid damaging the stream edges.
- Depending on how quickly water is flowing, even ankle deep water might knock you off your feet. We do not recommend doing this activity near rivers that have significant depth and flow to cause anyone who might fall in to be carried by the current.
- Always work with a partner or group. Do not work in or near water alone.
- Even in clear water, rocks might have an algal layer that can make them slippery!
- Where does your stream originate? If your stream is fed by mountains/ snow melt be careful during spring melt, as water levels might change very suddenly.
- Wetlands and some lake shores often have soft bottoms. You need to find out how soft the bottom is before you wade in. Use a large stick and check how deeply you can press it into the mud.

FOR NATURE AND FOR US

- Where does your stream go? Check online resources and reach out to local mentors, stewards, stream keepers and parks offices for up to date and seasonal information in your area.

Local resources can also help you decide if there is a place or time you should NOT go into a certain stream because you would be disturbing local wildlife during a critical time.



Example: if your stream is salmon bearing, you should not go into the water or disturb the banks during spawning season.

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU INCLUDE IN YOUR PRE-EVENT SAFETY CHECK?

- WEATHER, AND POTENTIAL CHANGES IN WEATHER
- SEASON
- TRANSPORT
- INDIVIDUAL NEEDS: MEDICATION, FEAR OF WATER, GETTING WET...
- BACK UP: DO YOU HAVE IT? NATURE MENTORS?
- ?
- ?

