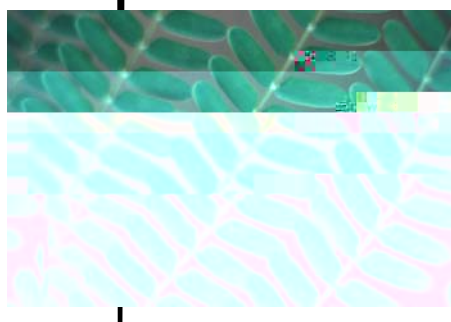
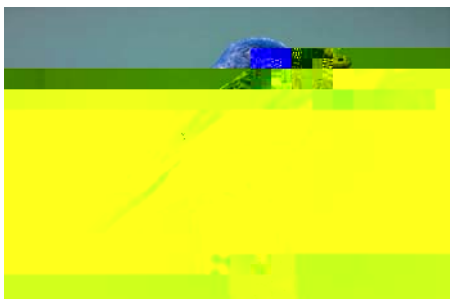


# Communication to diversity

☀️ learn 🌱 connect ☀️ contribute 🌸 inspire 🌟



## Section 1 – Understanding Chicago Wilderness and Biodiversity

- 2.....Biodiversity Defined
- 3.....Values Related to Supporting Biodiversity
- 4.....Chicago Wilderness and the Consortium
- 5.....**Writing Activity 1** – Your Site’s Connection to Chicago Wilderness
- 6.....**Writing Activity 2** – Explaining Biodiversity

## Section 2 – Communicating the Value of Biodiversity

- 7.....The Need for Strong Messages to Communicate About Biodiversity
- 8.....Key Biodiversity Messages
- 9.....**Writing Activity 3** – Communicating Messages at Your Site
- 10.....The Role of Volunteers as Ambassadors
- 11.....Connecting with People: Intellectual and Emotional Reasons for Preserving Biodiversity
- 12.....**Writing Activity 4** – Each Volunteer as an Interpreter

## Section 3 – Facilitating Meaningful Interactions

- 13.....Facilitating Meaningful Connections with Visitors
- 14.....The A.R.T. of Communication
- 15.....**Writing Activity 5** – Resource Survey
- 16.....Techniques for Successful Communication
- 17.....**Writing Activity 6** - Creating Questions to Convey Biodiversity Messages

## Section 4 – Overcoming Challenges

- 18.....Overcoming Challenges of Communicating Biodiversity
- 19.....Sample Difficult Question and Response
- 20.....**Writing Activity 7** – Responding to Difficult Questions
- 21.....Handling Difficult Visitors
- 22.....**Writing Activity 8** – Identifying and Addressing Difficult Visitors
- 23.....Conclusions
- 24.....Resources

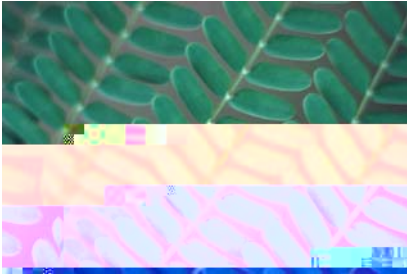
As a key public face of Chicago Wilderness and its member institutions, volunteers play a critical role in helping



Close examination of biodiversity—the relative diversity and abundance of different species—is often considered the measure of an ecosystem’s health. However, when communicating about biodiversity, our challenge is not only to understand how it is defined scientifically (as above), but also to consider how to explain it so that others understand it too and, in turn, value and support efforts to preserve it. Each individual visitor to Chicago Wilderness will vary in their ability to comprehend scientific terms, so as an interpreter of biodiversity, it is important to consider ways to change your language, or use specific examples to m



Section 1  
Understanding Chicago  
Wilderness and Biodiversity



Often, when people think of nature, they think of themselves as being separate from it, rather than connected to it. The fact that Chicago Wilderness exists suggests we are very much a part of the ecosystems and biodiversity we are trying to preserve.

When talking with the public, it is helpful to have a clear message and a clear call to action.

*To learn about the other organizations involved in the Chicago Wilderness consortium, visit [www.chicagowilderness.org](http://www.chicagowilderness.org)*



Writing Activity 2



*Use this writing activity to begin considering how you might explain biodiversity to a visitor.*

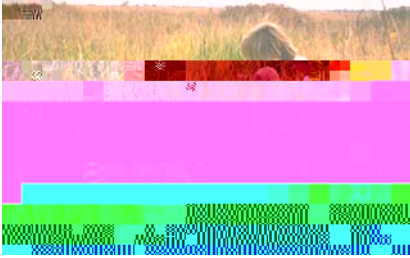
If you had to **explain** biodiversity to a visitor today, what would you say?

Why do **you care** about preserving biodiversity?

What are some reasons **visitors** should care about preserving biodiversity? How does it affect them?

What are some **actions** you think people can take to help preserve biodiversity?  
(If you need some ideas, suggestions are offered on page 8, under Message 3)





We live in a culture that is saturated with information and appeals to our sensitivities. Although we may recognize the value of biodiversity within our community, we cannot expect everyone to share that understanding. Subsequently, it is up to us to find ways for biodiversity to become as important and appealing as other life issues confronting the visiting public.

Americans are accustomed to the sophisticated messages of advertising and marketing, and have developed many informational “filters” through which they interpret these messages. In order to successfully penetrate these filters and help others to share our concern for biodiversity, we must anticipate their questions or concerns and develop responses that incorporate both concrete facts and commonly held values.

Strategic communication is essential in our efforts to preserve biodiversity. In the words of Baba Dioum, a Senegalese naturalist, “In the end, we protect only what we love; we love only what we understand; we understand only what we are taught.” If we expect people to embrace and support our efforts, we must make efforts to be effective communicators (or educators) about biodiversity.

(Materials adapted from Biodiversity Project, 2004)



Writing Activity 3



*How can you make specific connections to the messages on page 8? Review the messages below and consider possible **activities or opportunities** that exist at your site to discuss each message. Are there specific **facts or objects** (plants, animals, artifacts, etc.) that could illustrate or facilitate these connections? Brainstorm connections for each message below. [Activity 6, pg. 17 will provide additional opportunities to apply these messages to your site]*

As residents of and visitors to the Chicagoland area, we are all a part of Chicago Wilderness and have a stake in preserving its biodiversity

### Message 1

**Chicago Wilderness is a unique collection of urban and rural ecosystems** containing rare plants and animals **that provide a variety of benefits** to both residents and visitors. CW promotes biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, study and management of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity.

### MESSAGE 2

People are working to preserve threatened natural communities because **the loss of biodiversity can impact us on an emotional, social, and economic level.**

### MESSAGE 3

Our **everyday actions and decisions can have a positive impact** on preserving/protecting local biodiversity for future generations.



*INTERPRETATION is  
conversation, guided  
interaction, or any  
communication that*






essence, they become facilitators rather than disseminators of information, supporting learning rather than directing it.

(Dierking et al. 2001)



Regardless of your role at your site, you have an opportunity to influence the way visitors experience it. It is important to provide opportunities for visitors to gather facts and information (to make intellectual connections) as well as to have personal experiences (emotional connections). Even if you have a less public role, you are capable of facilitating these connections.

Often the people who are most effective at helping us learn or make connections to new ideas are those who offer their enthusiasm, clarity, patience, or simply their undivided attention to work with us. The qualities that made people effective in helping you learn or care about something new are the same qualities you can bring to your interactions with people about the issues of biodiversity.

 Use the space below to consider someone in your life who helped you understand or care about something new for the first time (e.g. teacher, grandparent, mentor, etc). What characteristics and qualities made them a good teacher?





Writing Activity 5



*Conducting some basic research about the **RESOURCES** at your site is a good start as you strive to create more meaningful conversations with visitors. Ideally this knowledge will encourage visitors to become more involved in your site and in activities that contribute to biodiversity preservation. Answer the questions below.*

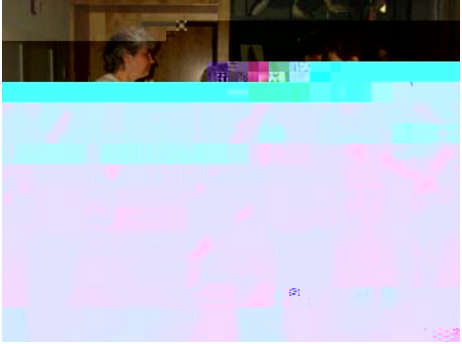
**Name of site:**

**Mission:**

Short Description/History:

1. What was your first impression of your site?
2. What interested you the most?
3. What interests visitors the most (most popular area, season, program, experience)?
4. What is the public perception of your site (expectations, misunderstandings, etc.)?
5. Who is connected to (or invested in) your site?
6. What stories (topical, anecdotal, historical) can be told at your site?
7. Based on your visual and aural observations, what are the challenges of telling those stories?
8. Are there other sites nearby or similar in nature, that have similar stories to tell?

Section 3  
Facilitating Meaningful  
Interactions



Writing Activity 6



Visitors who **recall** facts, **process** data and **apply** ideas are more likely to derive meaning from their experience than those who simply respond “yes” or “no” to the questions they are asked. Planning for successful message-based interaction includes creating thoughtful questions. The following exercise will help to plan questions that will initiate conversations about biodiversity at your site.

**Recall:** Counting, describing, identifying, listing, matching, observing

**Process:** Analyze, classify, compare, contrast, analogies (how is x like y), organizing

**Application:** Finding examples, hypothesizing, generalizing, imagining, applying a principle

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Create questions that will initiate conversation related to each message below.
2. Based on the descriptions above, indicate how your question asks the visitor to Recall (**R**), Process (**P**), or Apply (**A**) ideas in the shaded box.

**Theme:** As residents and visitors to Chicago, we are all a part of Chicago Wilderness and have a stake in preserving biodiversity.

**Message 1.** CW is a unique collection of urban and rural ecosystems that provides a variety of benefits by promoting biodiversity.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

R / P / A

**Message 2.** People are working to preserve threatened areas because the loss of biodiversity can impact us on an emotional, social, and economic level.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

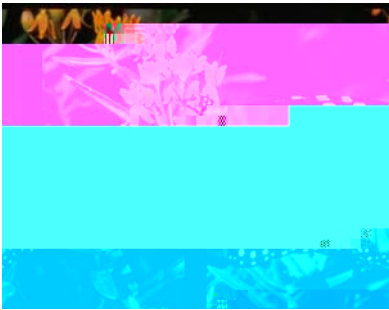
R / P / A

**Message 3.** Our every day actions and decisions can have a positive impact on preserving/protecting biodiversity in Chicagoland for future generations.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

R / P / A

While we all may agree that communicating about biodiversity is important, we also know that it is not always easy. In addition to creating good questions (section 3), each one of our sites or institutions must be prepared to deal with issues that may be difficult to grasp due to their scientific or complex explanations. Additionally, some of the activities related to the preservation of biodiversity may be considered

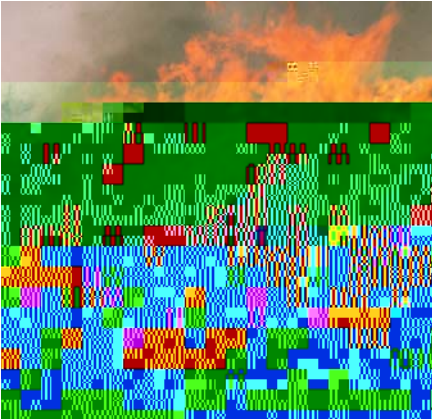


The following sample question was answered using the series of steps introduced on page 18.

*“Why do you burn this land?”*

If this topic affects your site, discuss how this response works or could be customized to better meet the needs of your site. Otherwise, a general process to follow could include:

- A. This is a hard thing for many people to understand,
- B. but controlled burning here is
- C. one of the ways we’re working to preserve this natural area for future generations to enjoy.
- D. Based on historical documents, the 10 acres here at ABC Prairie were historically tall grass prairie where fire was a regular occurrence due to lightning or native people.
- E. Research being conducted by our scientists on staff (or at X University – *insert appropriate information*) suggests that without burning, this area would be invaded by trees and shrubs that kill prairie plants with their shade.
- F. If you would like to learn more about the benefits and science behind controlled burning, you can get a copy of XYZ (*insert appropriate information*) in our gift shop or access the following information online (*insert appropriate information*).



*For more information on communicating about controlled burning, go to [www.chcagowilderness.org/](http://www.chcagowilderness.org/) members to download *Burn Communications Products (PDF)**

Writing Activity 7

*Using the steps outlined below, select one site-specific question you noted on page 18 and create an outline of a response to that question. Copy this page and repeat the activity with staff and volunteer leaders as often as necessary to ensure you have formulated responses for each question identified on page 18 or as questions arise.*

Not often, but every once in a while  
volunteers run into difficult visitors.



These people may not mean to be difficult, but that doesn't mean that they are not challenging to deal with. When visitors disrupt your communication, challenge your information, or simply disconnect from your interaction, how can you positively redirect them? On page 22, you'll find some playful labels for these visitors (e.g.; Derail-er, Disagree-er, Disengage-er, etc) that have been established as a part of an activity designed to help you anticipate these challenges and work with staff and other volunteers to develop strategies for overcoming them.







*Learning to communicate biodiversity is an ongoing process, but there are many wonderful resources to help you in your efforts. The following is a list of resources used in creating this workbook and can provide additional information for continued learning on the subject.*

### Print Material

Biodiversity Project. 2004. “Values-Based Communication; Telling Your story” Workshop presentation and materials, Chicago Wilderness Communication Workshop, Chicago, IL.

Biodiversity Project. 1999 *Life. Nature. The Public. Making the Connection: A Biodiversity Communications Handbook*. Madison: Biodiversity Project.