



Wondering about Wilderness

In the United States, there are 677 wildernesses. The smallest is a 5-acre wilderness in Florida, and the largest is in Alaska, with 9 million acres. The largest combined area of wildernesses is also in Alaska. This includes Noatak Wilderness and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, which is introduced in this journal on page 6 ("It's Elemental, My Dear!"). In the lower

48 States, the largest combined area of wilderness is Gospel-Hump Wilderness and Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. You can read about a scientific study done in Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness on page 25 ("As the Frog Hops"). For more information about wilderness, read page 5 in this journal or visit <http://www.wilderness.net>.

FACTivity

One of the measures of naturalness used by the scientists is distance from roads. In this FACTivity, you will use your experience and imagination to explore whether you agree with the scientists' conclusion (To refresh your memory, reread the last sentence in "Discussion" on page 63). You will write a story about going home from the viewpoint of an animal who makes his or her home in the forest.

First, select an animal from this list or come up with your own animal. Your story will be told from this animal's point of view.

Frog



Skunk



Deer



Snake



Rabbit



Your story will be four paragraphs long. Each of the paragraphs will describe a part of the animal's journey home. Use the four photographs on page 65 as a guide, one for each paragraph. In each paragraph, consider the following:

1. Is there a difference between the number and size of trees your animal finds and its closeness to the road? What is the difference?
2. Is there a difference between the amount of traffic noise and closeness to the road? Do you think that the traffic and traffic noise is disruptive to your animal? Why or why not? Describe how your animal feels as he or she travels across the road and into the forest.
3. Is there a difference between the types of ground cover your animal crosses and closeness to the road? If so, what is the difference? Are areas away from the road more natural, less natural, or about the same? Describe your animal's journey across the

FACTivity

land, paying attention to the surface. How does the surface feel, sound, and smell?

4. Is there a difference between the number and type of other animals that your animal met as he or she traveled away from the road toward home? Did he or she find more or fewer animals or evidence of animals farther from the road? If there are differences, what are they?
5. Is there a difference in the number and types of plants that your animal found as she or he traveled home? What is the difference? Does the difference have anything to do with the distance from the road?

As a class, share your stories and pictures. Based on your stories, do you agree that the farther away from a road one travels, the more natural the area is? Based on your stories, do you agree with the scientists that wilderness has a greater ability to support human and nonhuman life? Why or why not?



If you are a Project Learning Tree-trained educator, you may use PLT Activity #88, "Life On the Edge," as an additional activity resource.

You may also draw pictures to help tell your animal's story.

