Shapes and Colors and Textures, Oh My!

**Audience/Group Setting**
This activity was developed for visitors 3 years of age and up in any outdoor setting.

**Goal**
To encourage participants to Enjoy nature and appreciate natural beauty

**Objectives**
Through this activity participants will practice their observation skills in nature.

**Big Idea/Main Message**
Humans recognize nature’s beauty and diversity

**Environmentally Responsible Behavior Addressed**
Go outside! Enjoy nature and animals!

**Background Information**
Many products created by humans mimic nature. Paint colors such as sky blue, desert sand, and periwinkle illustrate the human desire to reproduce natural beauty. It is easy to miss beautiful shapes, colors and textures in nature unless you make a point of careful observation. By immersing people in nature and directing observational activities, individuals may be able to see familiar settings in a new, and perhaps more appreciative, light.

**Climate Change Connection:** Warming temperatures affect species diversity. Rising temperatures can change ecosystem composition. This change often leads to less diverse, less beautiful habitats. Research on the effects of global warming on biological diversity shares a common theme - species disappearances and disrupted ecosystems. Climate scenarios promise at the very least a different natural world. Accelerated climate change assures this different world will be biologically less rich and less stable than our present one. Familiar shapes, colors and textures comprising the tapestry of beauty in nature could be lost; replaced with highly adaptable monocultures of plants and animals.

**Materials Needed**
Paint chips, wallpaper samples, or pieces of color paper cut in various shapes. (You can also use the colors and textures in the clothes you and/or participants are wearing.)
Staff
One person can facilitate this activity, even with a large group, as it is participant driven.

Length of Activity
30-60 minutes

Set Up
Distribute materials and discuss the intended effect of various colors, shapes and textures. Prepare participants for an outdoor experience by providing tools, such as journals and pencils; appropriate clothing for your climate and location; insect repellent and sunscreen as needed.

Procedures
Challenge participants to walk outside and find colors or shapes or textures in nature that match their paint chips or other selected color/shape choices. They can record their findings in a journal with words or pictures. A digital camera can also be used to document the findings. You can be the recorder for younger children.

Extensions
Ask participants to create short essays speculating the benefit of the shape, color or texture if it was associated with a living organism. Have participants create art from their findings, using what they recorded as the basis for their piece. Have participants repeat the activity with a specific zoo or aquarium exhibit that includes species diversity.

National Science Education Standards
Nature of Science

Resources
Adapted from “Shapes and Colors and Textures, Oh My!” with permission from the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. http://www.takeachildoutside.org/activities/gettingstarted.html
Wallpaper sample books and paint color cards are often available free of charge from hardware and paint supply stores.