

## Competitiveness and Perfectionism

The nature stewardship activities are meant to elicit a deeper connection to nature, but sometimes participants get competitive or obsessed about making their work "perfect." How many species can they observe; how many voices can they identify; how beautiful or rare are their observed species; how accurate is their drawing; how much time have they spent perfecting a journal entry? While a little bit of spirited competition can help generate excitement, here are some recommendations to keep the activities focused on what's important:

- Give positive feedback when children are making an effort, rather than praising the outcome of their work.
- When observing wildlife, encourage participants to observe the look and behavior of one thing at a time. This will help counter the desire to "bag" as many species as possible without actually seeing them in their environment.
- Encourage attention to common species and their details. Praising only the observation of rare or beautiful species can elicit a sense of competitiveness to observe "the best," causing participants to miss out on the diversity of nature around them.

"The Vision Quest" story in the Storytime section is a good resource. It tells the tale of a father who harms his son by insisting that he make his "vision trip" perfect.