



Hike and Learn

Silence is Golden

TroutAdventureTrail.org

A proud partnership of Trout Unlimited, the US Forest Service, and Boy Scouts of America



SILENCE IS GOLDEN ...

One way to act on a hike includes rough-housing along the trail, using your cell phone to tell others about where you are and what you're doing, and even shouting out along the trail at your friends and leaders. But is that the best way to experience the outdoors?

Certainly it can be fun to enjoy friends on a hike together! But there is another way to hike.

Another approach is to quietly move through the woods, using your "library voice" (talking softly so as to not disturb others) to talk about what you see and hear. This method has some advantages:

- You can still talk with your friends, just not as loud;
- Everyone will have a much better chance to see wildlife; and
- Everyone will be able to enjoy the sounds (or silence) of the outdoors, including hikers that are not in your group.

Your group can even make a game out of listening to the woods around you:

1. Pick a period of time for no talking and silent travel through the woods.
2. Try to walk like the Indians used to when hunting: Do not make loud steps and do not step on sticks or jump off rocks and logs making noise.
3. See how long the group can remain quiet and undetected. See if this gives the opportunity to see or hear wildlife, rushing water or wind in the trees.
4. Try to use your senses of sight, hearing and even smell to experience the outdoors.
5. Once the exercise is over, discuss what you experienced on the trail during the period of silence:
 - Was it hard for you to not talk?
 - Was it hard to move silently through the woods?
 - Was it easier for some of the group to remain silent than others?



Walk like the Indians used to when hunting: Don't make loud footsteps and try not to step on sticks or make noise by jumping off rocks and logs.

TAKE ONLY PICTURES – LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS



Wild turkeys in the north Georgia mountains.

Indeed, researchers believe that our voices tend to scare off the wildlife we're looking for while out hiking and enjoying nature. It's not known for sure how and why animals respond to human voices, but researchers have observed that noise reduction can reduce the impact hikers have on the wildlife around them and increase their opportunities to see animals, such as deer, in the woods.

Even your "library voice" can scare off many animals. It's simple, really: Animals often relate noise to predators, and as a result of the noise we make while hiking – whether it's from walking or talking –

many animals hide from the potential danger and spend less time foraging, defending territory and attracting a mate, all of which are negative to the overall health of the animals, as well as your opportunities to see and/or hear them.

And the more animals we see along the Trout Adventure Trail, the more fun the next group of hikers will have when they share a sighting of a deer, an owl, a snake -- maybe even a bear -- thanks to other hikers keeping their noise level down or, perhaps, even hiking in silence.