Activity # 1
Level: High School

Objective:
Students will be able to describe the boundaries of their own and adjoining forest regions, and to describe the vegetation of their community.

Materials:
Forest regions poster; atlas; a guide to local trees

Time:
30-50 minutes

1. With the aid of the forest regions poster, discuss the idea of a forest region. Different parts of the country support various types of forest communities, which are combinations of tree species and associated plants and animals. It will be important to stress that boundaries between regions are not sharp lines; for example, the boreal forest merges into the tundra over many hundred kilometers as the coniferous trees gradually get smaller and sparser until they finally occur only in the hollows that can shelter them from the fierce arctic climate. There can also be a great deal of variation within a given forest region. For instance, the northern part of the Great Lakes - St Lawrence Forest Region is dominated by boreal species like jack pine, spruce, and birch, while its southern areas are dominated by hardwoods like sugar maple and beech. It is important to note that most species are not restricted to a single region.

2. Using a map, students can draw or trace an outline of the portion of Canada where they live. Working from the poster, they can mark the boundary of the local forest region on their map. Have individual students or teams research the natural history of their forest regions. What has been the influence of natural phenomenon such as: natural succession, forest wildfires, insect epidemics and disease? How has human activity altered the nature of the forest? For example, human-caused forest fires, forest fire suppression, agricultural abandonment, mining, urbanization, reforestation, pesticide spraying, tourism and recreation, oil exploration, trapping, hunting, forest harvesting practices, damming for energy and irrigation, private wood lot practices, shelter belt and wind break planting, parks development, management of maple stands for syrup production, Christmas tree cultivation, etc. Have these influences been short term or long term? Have these impacts been positive, negative, or both?