Top 15 Icebreakers

1) What's Wild? – pg. 7
   Distribute pictures of animals to each participant, but do not let them see their animal. Clothespin or tape to their back. Play a game of twenty questions, where participants must mingle about the room asking only yes or no question to figure out their animal.

2) Interview a Spider – pg. 12
   One participant will be the reporter, the other their favorite animal. The reporter should ask questions in order to guess what the other person’s favorite animal is. The person answering questions should try to be clever and not give away too much information. For example, if their favorite animal is a spider, they could answer a question as follows, “I just love to create symmetrical artwork all by myself.”

3) Habitat Lap Sit – pg. 61
   Have the group form a circle as if you are going to do a fun group activity, now have them about face and squeeze in. Number off the components of a habitat (water, shelter, food, space). Have the participants sit on each other forming a circle OR use a sturdy rope. Take away a component, say water, due to a drought. What happens to the circle or rope – discuss. Say what better way to start off a workshop icebreaker than to sit on some strangers lap!

4) What Did Your Lunch Cost Wildlife? – pg. 68
   If serving breakfast, this is a great icebreaker to do while munching on breakfast and doing introductions. Have each group/table select one food item at their table. In discussion, can they trace the items ingredients all the way back to their originals? Don’t forget packaging! With so many people having smartphones, they can generally pull out their phone to do a little research but having a couple tablets handy works too!
5) Microtrek Treasure Hunt - pg. 82
   - Group of participants into pairs or teams. Have them explore their indoor surroundings and belongings with a scavenger hunt. It doesn't have to be things participants collect, rather just a checklist. Develop a list for participants to find/gather. Mix it up with nature items and things participants may have brought with them. Here is an example list: restrooms, water fountain, something green, sign of a living thing, driver's license, a picture of nature, make up or health item with natural ingredient, and coupon. Say what better way to start off a workshop than to discover where important things are located like restrooms and to share your personal belongings in your purse with complete strangers.

6) Good Buddies – pg. 91
   - Distribute a good buddy card to each participant. Have each participant mingle about the room and locate their good buddy.

7) Move Over Rover – pg. 145
   - Distribute an Animal Card to each participant. Around the room should be posters of the following ecosystems: forest, woodland, shrub land, grassland, aquatic/riparian, desert, tundra, and subalpine. Assign participants to an ecosystem, not necessarily the correct one. One by one, have participants read their animal card along with an introduction of themselves. Can others guess what animal they are and pick their correct ecosystem by saying “move over rover” until they reach the correct ecosystem.

8) Time Lapse – pg. 158
   - Distribute a piece of construction paper to each participant. Have participants draw their favorite place in the world, but leave the nature out of it. Now, on a piece of transparency paper the same size of the construction paper have participants draw in their nature. Have each participant share their favorite place in the world as we try to imagine it without nature. Now flip over the transparency so we can see their favorite place with nature included.

9) First Impressions – pg. 178
   - Have participants share how they really feel about certain animals that may elicit fear. Have them move to one side of the room for happy face (like) or other side for frowny face (dislike). Or thumbs up/thumbs down instead of moving around. They can share their opinions and maybe help them discuss the animal. Some popular animals to use are: spiders, bats, snakes, wolves, frogs, etc.
10) Saturday Morning Wildlife Watching – pg. 184
     Each participant can share their favorite Saturday Morning cartoon. Did the cartoon portray an iconic animal? For example, Mickey Mouse.

     Distribute a magazine to each participant. Have them find an advertisement for a product that involves nature (picture of an animal, landscape scenery, weather, etc.). Participants should introduce themselves, who they are, and try to sell us the product in 2 minutes.

12) Learning to Look, Looking to See – pg. 278
     Have a table covered with objects. Lift off the sheet and let participants look at the objects for 30 seconds. Cover the table back up – how many objects can they list? Maybe ask trick questions like, what color was the...what part of the table was the...what was next to the...

13) Animal Charades – pg. 280
     Ask each participant to write their favorite animal, most interesting, etc. favorite on a piece of paper. Pair of participants; have them draw a slip of paper with the animal on it. They must act out their animal for the group.

14) Drawing on Nature – pg. 285
     Distribute a piece of paper and writing utensil to each participant. Give them a picture of an animal; let them look it over for a few seconds. Now have them close their eyes and draw the animal OR have them put the paper on their forehead and draw the animal. Collect papers and pass around. As a group try to guess what animal was drawn while having a good laugh.

15) Ethi-Thinking – pg. 303
     It is confession time! Using this activity, participants can introduce themselves, tell a little about themselves and share a dirty little secret with the group. The dirty little secret they should share is have they disrupted nature before? For example, “rescued a baby animal, carved initials into a tree, ran over a plant, collected a bird nest, etc.” Another way to play is to have participants write their dirty little secret on a piece of paper without their name. Distribute the papers to each participant. Participants should go around in a circle and introduce themselves; afterwards, can they match up their dirty little secret with the correct person.
Icebreakers are an important part of workshops because it serves as warming up exercise to sharing and brainstorming and sets the tone for the rest of the day. Ice breaker exercises can be used to:

1) Encourage outside the box thinking
2) Help people get to know each other
3) Prepare themselves mentally to brainstorm about the topic at hand.

If such a session is well-designed and well-facilitated, it can really help get things off to a great start. By getting to know each other, getting to know the facilitator and learning about the objectives of the workshop, people can become more engaged in the proceedings and so contribute more effectively towards a successful outcome.

Enjoy the top 15 list of Project WILD icebreakers but feel free to create and share your own!