



**What is a “Physical” site:** A physical site is the area where you will look for your chosen plant and animal species. It should be:

- ✓ Convenient – accessible so you may regularly visit it
- ✓ Representative of the environmental conditions in your area, as best as it can be
  - Flat, gently sloping
  - Avoid areas subject to drifting snow or funneled winds
  - Neither excessively dry or wet
  - Similar to surrounding area, especially if forested, reflecting the overall canopy composition
- ✓ Record site characteristics, and if unusual, make notes on the comment field in the online Nature’s Notebook program
- ✓ Display uniform habitat – you can observe two adjacent and distinct habitats (e.g. grass/shrubland vs. forested, just be sure to create two separate sites for them)

#### **How big should my site be?**

It should be no larger than 15 acres. Depending on your landscape and distance you can walk, and if you observing only plants or both plants and animals:

- ✓ Just plants – similar conditions throughout, can be just the area around the plants you are observing
- ✓ Both plants and animals – include the area you can see and hear well while standing still OR the area you can walk in a short amount of time. This way, if you choose to use a transect method of animal spotting, you can easily do so with the physical site you have created

#### **BE SURE YOU HAVE PROPER PERMISSION**

I can’t stress this enough. If you are interested in setting something up on public lands, be sure you have permission to do so.

**Mark your site** so you can find it again when you return. Mark the individuals of the plant species so you can find them again. Flagging tape from a forestry supply service works well.

You will be **making repeated, long-term observations on the same individuals** through time.

More information online in our Education and Outreach Series:

How to Observe Handbook and Phenology Trails Guide on the USA-NPN Reports Page:

[www.usanpn.org/pubs/reports#Education](http://www.usanpn.org/pubs/reports#Education)