Evening is a wonderful time to be outdoors. Many animals are active and easily seen. The day's last light gives everything a rich, golden color that some call "glory light," and the western sky fills with great beauty. Then, as our sun leaves us, we see other stars—just a few at first, then thousands.

The Sunset Watch activity helps you to notice and enjoy the exciting events that happen around sundown. Below is a list of things you might observe. What you see will depend on the area and time of year. Mark each event in the order it happens. For example, if you first notice that the day birds are quiet, you would write number "1" next to *day birds*. If you hear an owl or other night bird a little later, write number "2" for *owl calling*, and so on. If an event is continually changing, like the clouds turning color, you can note the changes by writing more than one number for the event—for example, "5" and "8" *clouds change color*.

Besides watching the sun set in the western sky, look in all the other directions. Don't worry about missing something or getting the order exactly as things happen. Just put a number by the things you see when you see them.

A. Direct Experience
B. Astronomy, wildlife biology, serenity
C. Sunset or sunrise
D. 1 or more
E. 9 years and up
F. Worksheets (see next page), pencils, flashlight

Because each location is unique, you'll probably see other events as well. You might see a flock of birds gathering in a tree, for example, or a mammal beginning its evening ramble, fish jumping for flying insects, or frogs singing. When you see anything special, write it down under *other events*. Write a number for each of these events so you have a record of when it occurred.

Sunset Watch

For the best viewing, try to arrive at your sunset viewpoint 15 minutes before actual sundown and plan to stay for about an hour after the sun sets. Arriving only 15 minutes beforehand is especially important if you are leading a group, because then they won't have to wait too long before the dramatic changes in lighting and animal activity begin. Remember to bring a flashlight with you so you can stay as long as you want.

Following, are some thought provoking facts you may want to read and share with others during a **Sunset Watch**:

Would you believe that most of us can see better than a bear at night, and almost as well as a cat? Our night vision seldom reaches full power, because we're usually surrounded by artificial light. It takes our eyes 45 minutes to recover their full night vision after looking into strong light.

On a clear, dark night you're likely to see about two thousand stars—out of the one billion billion stars that are known to exist.

Light travels at 186,000 miles a second. Yet some stars are so far away that it takes hundreds, thousands, or even millions of years for their light to reach us. When you look at a star, you may be seeing light that began its long journey hundreds of years ago.

S U N S E T W A T C H

Location: _____ **Date:** _____

__ First planet or star
__ Long shadows
__ Bats fly
__ Everything to the east is lit by glory light
__ Things far to the west lose their day color
__ Day birds become quiet
__ Hills turn color (describe) _____

_____

__ Sky is dark except to the west
__ Owl or other night bird calling or flying
__ Campfire or lights of car or building become visible
__ Clouds change color (describe) _____

_____

__ Sun falls below the horizon
__ Individual shadows blend together (where you are)
__ Night insects are active
__ Night shadows completely cover hills to the east

__ Sky turns a soft pink or violet color (after sundown)
__ Moon appears or brightens
__ Clouds no longer visible
__ North Star and Little Dipper or Southern Cross appear
__ Temperature cools
__ Wind speed or direction changes
__ First shooting star or meteor

Other Events: Record and number any other events you noticed—for example, perhaps you saw a satellite or heard a wolf or coyote.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____