



Nature-Oriented Parenting

A guide for parents and grandparents to teach their children about the natural world

Take The Children Outside...

If you were to look up the word *naturalism* in the dictionary, it would say “a conformity to nature”. But it is this same conformity to nature that is being challenged by the advancement of the computer and television. Parents and grandparents can begin to build a child’s sense of wonder with the natural world through outside activity. They will develop a deeper appreciation for natural things: a tree, the changing color of leaves, the smell of the earth after a rainfall, a tree frog singing a sweet chorus, or the sight of a rainbow trout clinging to the current of a local fishing hole. Here are a few easy steps to get your family started down the path of the *Naturalist Family*. **Turn off the TV, computer and cell phone! Encourage your children to explore the outdoors.** Have faith in your children! They will notice something on a hike that we may miss simply because they are closer to the ground. **Show them one “natural” thing at least once a day.** Remember, kids are sponges waiting to absorb these new experiences. **Choose a hike over a movie:** you can still talk and learn about their day during a hike in the woods. Begin by **checking out nature programs or nature camps offered in your area. Check into your local nature center** and find out what public programs are being offered this weekend. Chances are there is something available that your family has never done before!



Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds get frisky with CFIA Naturalist Adam DeWitte. Photo by Lana DeWitte

Wildlife Spotlight: Southern Flying Squirrel

It’s a nice, warm spring evening and the family has gathered in the backyard to watch the sunset through the trees. A strange pitter-patter of small feet, a scraping of tree bark, and your local Southern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*) decides to make an appearance to see what all the fuss is about. These cute, captivating creatures of the night are strictly nocturnal, using their large eyes to take in as much light as possible and ample ears to listen for stalking predators. Any mixed hardwood forest that has fruit and nut-producing trees will provide a perfect habitat for the Southern Flying Squirrel. Acorns, hickory nuts, berries, mushrooms and the occasional grub or insect are the perfect foods for this rodent of the sky. But do they actually fly? The answer is yes and no. Although it appears as if they are flying, what they’re doing is considered gliding. A flap of skin between their front and hind legs, called a *patagium*, helps scoop air under their incredibly light bodies, while their bushy tail is used to steer around trees and other objects that may get in the way. A quick flick of its tail and the Flying Squirrel can make a quick 90-degree turn with remarkable agility. Moving from tree to tree by climbing and gliding, these cavity-nesters search out any hardwood or pine trees that have been hollowed out by age or other forest critters such as woodpeckers, but on occasion have been known to nest in regular bird houses! In order to keep warm in the coldest winter months, these little flying rodents will huddle together in a nest made of grasses, chewed bark, lichens, moss and even stolen bird feathers. So the next time you notice a nest or hole in a hollowed-out tree, wait until sundown, keep watching and you may spot one of the most common mammals very rarely seen by humans!



Outdoor Family Activity: Predator and Prey

Animals in the wild rely on their camouflage, or ability to blend in, to elude predators or even to hunt for prey items. It is this unique ability that allows a snake to sneak up on a tasty cotton rat or an arctic hare to hide from a soaring bald eagle. The game "Predator and Prey" is designed to get children thinking about behaviors and adaptations of their local wildlife. Find a wooded spot (backyard, a park or campground) and choose an area that has plenty of cover such as trees, shrubs and grasses. Take a few minutes to check the spot for Poison Ivy and thorny bushes. Explain to the kids that they'll be playing a game based on how real wildlife survives in the forest. It helps to have some different clothing colors to make the game more interesting.

1. One person will be the predator. A snake, hawk or coyote are great examples. This person will stand at a good distance, maybe 50 feet away from the wooded area, and turn their back. The predator will then count to 20. It sometimes helps to have a blindfold on the predator to ensure that they don't peek.
2. The rest of the group will hide in the selected area as the prey. Make sure to give the kids boundaries, such as a yard line or a certain tree. After finding a hiding spot, the prey will remain very still. They must be able to have one eye on the predator at all times! Mice, cotton rats and rabbits make great prey animals.
3. After counting, the predator will turn around and begin to "hunt" for the prey, but remaining in one spot at all times. They will search with their eyes, listen for sounds and try to find their camouflaged teammates. When a prey animal is spotted, the predator will yell out what color they see and where the prey is located. For example: "I see a red shirt behind that dead log". That prey animal would then be "out" and sit outside of the game boundaries.
4. If the predator has a hard time finding the prey, they will be allowed to take 2-4 steps in any direction and continue looking until all prey animals are found.
5. When all prey is found, switch the predators and try it again! Make sure to talk to the students about why certain prey animals were found quickly. Were they well hidden? Did clothes give them away?



Conservation Corner: What YOUR Family Can Do!

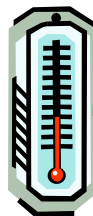
You've heard the tale a million times before: the Earth needs saving and it needs it NOW! In an age of ever-growing climate change, it is crucial that we take action and help to preserve wildlife species and hold on to the very precious resources that our planet provides for us. How do we do this? Is all hope lost? Never. As long as your family does all it can to help conserve and cut back whenever possible. But this is only the beginning in a battle that needs as many participants as possible. Below are four of the most valuable ways that your family can take part in the most important struggle that your children and grandchildren will face: the healing of our home. Spread the word! Here's a little something to consider while you're at home this evening:

Electricity use ➡ *Energy from power plants* ➡ *Burning more coal/oil* ➡ *Greenhouse Gas*



Turn out the lights!

Burning lights in a room with no occupants makes as much sense as a submarine with screen doors! This is one of the easiest and most important things we can do for the health of our planet. Turn it off!



Adjust your comfort levels!

Sure, we all love to be comfortable. But by lowering the heat and raising the A/C by a mere 2 degrees, we can save millions of tons of fossil fuels. When you leave the house, adjust the thermostat so the pump is not forced to run while you're gone. Simple!



Choose the road less traveled!

We rely on cars, it's true. But how many times have you driven when you could have walked or biked? Not only is it Earth-friendly, but it's great exercise! Shape up!



Change 'em out!

As your old bulbs burn out, consider replacing them with compact fluorescent bulbs. They're available everywhere. If everyone had just one, we'd prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 automobiles!

For more information, visit www.epa.gov for more tips on saving our mother!

"A gift I would give to every child would be a sense of wonder about the natural world." - Rachel Carson

Outdoor Family Activity: Bird Nest Knowledge!

During the warming months of April and May and high above our heads, millions of species of migratory songbirds make their yearly flight into the United States. It is a difficult, harrowing adventure - all in order to find the perfect spot in which to raise a family. The problem is that they must compete with our native species of birds for nesting sites, so they use any means necessary to complete their mission. These sites may vary from old barns and tree cavities to bird houses or a simple tree branch. Take the quiz below to see how easily you can identify native and migratory songbird nests, then follow the instructions to find a nest in your own yard!



Match the bird nest with the species. Answers on page 4!



1



2



3



4



5



6



A.

Wood Duck



B.

Killdeer



C.

Great Crested
Flycatcher



D.

Scarlet
Tanager



E.

American
Robin



F.

Carolina
Chickadee

So you want to find a bird's nest? Follow these easy steps:

1. Get your family to where the birds are! There may or may not be a nest in your backyard, but chances are you'll find more nests if you head to a wooded area or field with natural vegetation.
2. Follow the sounds of upset birds. All birds have a "pip" sound that they make when a human or predator comes too close to a nest. When you hear this sound, you're close.
3. Use your binoculars to scan the branches, tree cavities and lower shrubs. Birds nest in almost any habitat or area, so don't give up just because you can't see an obvious nest.
4. Watch out for "pairs" of birds that may be feeding nestlings. If you're far enough away, you'll be able to watch as the parents take turns entering and exiting the nest feeding the babies. Remember to give the parents plenty of room to work!
5. Don't let your children get disappointed. Keep trying every time you go outside. Most people see nests because they just happen to look in the right spot at the right time.
6. Use identification books to learn what bird species are in your area and how to find them. The more you know, the more you can teach your children.
7. Finally, let the children know that they should **never** disturb the nest once the chicks have hatched. Use the binoculars to view the family and keep your distance!

Become a member of the “Cradle of Forestry I.A.”

The Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association is dedicated to helping preserve the value in getting the public involved in the natural world. But we can't do it alone! As a member of the **Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association**, your contribution will help to fund: New exhibits at the Cradle of Forestry Historical Site, educational activities and yearly events such as the Songcatcher's Series, outreach programming at local schools, educational programming at CFIA campgrounds and publications such as the Natural Inquirer and Nature-Oriented Parenting newsletter. Our goal is to reach every family we possibly can, and with your generosity we can achieve it! Please call the number listed below for more information, or mail your tax-deductible contribution to the address listed below. Thank you for supporting the future of “Natural Education”!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Or please visit our website at:
www.cradleofforestry.com
Donations can be mailed to:
CFIA Donations
66 South Broad Street Brevard, NC 28712

IN APPRECIATION

Answers to Bird Nest Knowledge: A-4, B-6, C-5, D-3, E-2, F-1

How did you do? Not all birds have simple, easy-to-find nests made of grass and twigs. Some bird species take great care in lining the inside with lichen, feathers, and even human hair! For instance, the **Great Crested Flycatcher**, a migratory songbird, will usually nest in a tree cavity or bird box and line the inside with bits of trash, string or snakeskin. **Wood Ducks**, a common species of waterfowl, will turn a tree cavity into a soft, warm “bed” made solely of down feathers. The migratory **Scarlet Tanager** doesn't go to such extremes, and prefers a very simple, exposed nest made of grass and plant stems, which is then lined with grass. Another nest that might be exposed belongs to the **American Robin**, a common backyard bird that builds a strong nest made of twigs, grass and mud. Not so for the **Carolina Chickadee**, a common songbird that prefers a cavity-style nest made of lichen, old feathers and grasses. And one of the strangest nests of all belongs to the **Killdeer**, a relative of certain species of shorebirds. This common species will scratch out a small depression on bare, rocky soil and line the nest only with a few blades of grass. The eggs are camouflaged to give the appearance of a cluster of rocks, but if this ruse is ineffective, the parents will feign an injury and hobble off in the opposite direction. The ploy is an effective way to lure predators and the overly curious away from the nestlings!

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