



Nature-Oriented Parenting

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

A Love Of Nature Can Inspire...

Taking that very first step into appreciating the natural world may be rather daunting at first glance. Now imagine you're a child filled with question, doubt, wonder and possibility. The excitement that an adult expresses in showing



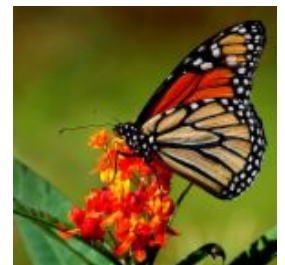
CFIA Naturalist Adam and his
"companion in nature" Karen
DeWitte share a hike in Vermont.

a child a praying mantis, garter snake or cloud formation may just be the elemental reason that the "student of nature" begins their quest to become a naturalist in the first place. Don't know the scientific name for a box turtle? Can't quite remember which native trees are in your area? *No problem!* If you're outside, enjoying the fresh air and showing the child how much you love the outdoors, *they will remember that moment!* It's your enjoyment of nature that really can inspire others, especially children, to follow in your footsteps. For me, there is no greater joy than to experience a new songbird or find a blooming wildflower with my wife, who shares in my excitement and love for nature. Discover what it is about nature and the outdoors that **you** love first, then share that excitement with a child. It's one of the most important gifts you can give them and they will eventually share it with someone *they* care about!

Wildlife Spotlight: Monarch Butterfly

Theories abound with reasons why monarch butterflies were informally classified as the "rulers of the skies" by Samuel Scudder in 1874. Quite possibly it was their very large, orange and black appearance, which signifies their *aposematism*, or foul-tasting bodies. Or could it have been that wintering masses on Central America fig trees can reach such staggering numbers as one hundred thousand? In the world of the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), no other sight is quite as pleasing as a banquet of milkweed covering a local garden or wildflower glen. As one of the very few insects to make a trans-Atlantic migration from Eastern U.S. to Central and South America every fall, this oh-so-important plant forms the basis of the beginning stages of all monarch life.

Not only does milkweed provide food, but a place for female monarchs to lay their eggs and continue the inter-generational migration period. Essentially, one monarch will not see the entire migration pattern, as a bird would. When monarchs leave their wintering grounds, their 2-month lifespan is spent in the desperate pursuit of a location in which to lay eggs. An early patch of milkweed in lower Texas will usually do the trick. Generation 2 will pick up the migration where the first left off by continuing the trek northward to summer grounds. Eggs are once again laid, a generation disappears and another is born. While generation 3 is very eager to get their offspring off and running, sometimes there may be time to get an extra generation born before the position of the sun triggers the migration response. It is the added responsibility of generation 4 (or 5) to make the long trip back across the Atlantic to the unfamiliar wintering grounds and enter *diapause*, or non-reproductive phase. But through it all, the one thing that has always had scientists baffled is **how**, after 4 generations of monarch butterflies, the great-great grandchildren can find their way back to the exact spot in which their family began having never been there. Just one more reason to love these amazing "rulers of the skies"!



Family Nature Quiz: What's That Caterpillar?

Thorny, hairy, menacing, or just plain weird. They crawl at a snail's pace and we see them all summer long on our tomato plants, milkweed, butterfly weed and fruit trees. But how much do you really know about local caterpillar species? And the big question remains: will that little critter become a butterfly or a moth? Test your knowledge below by matching the picture with the correct butterfly or moth name. Go to page 4 to check your answers and to learn more about these creatures! Consider yourself a true lover of creepy crawlies if you can guess which one is the only true "stinging caterpillar" in the bunch...



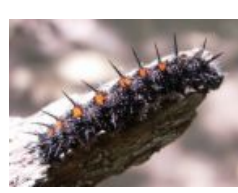
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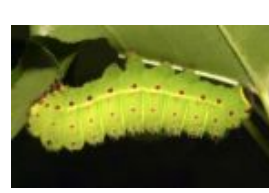
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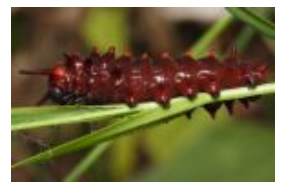
3.



4.



5.



6.



A.

Luna Moth



B.

Pipevine Swallowtail Butterfly



C.

Regal Moth



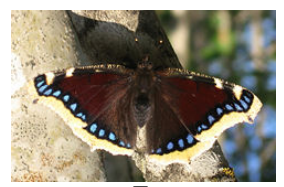
D.

Question Mark Butterfly



E.

Puss Moth



F.

Mourning Cloak Butterfly

Outdoor Family Activity: Adopt-A-Tree!

You've planted your tree, you keep it watered and pest-free through the summer. Now it's time to make that sapling a permanent addition to the family! What better way to teach kids about the balance between humans and nature than to have them "adopt" the newly planted tree? Just like a child, trees, along with all living things, are interdependent.

They depend on the environment around them for nourishment, shelter and growth in order to ensure that they survive until maturity. Children who can appreciate this relationship and take responsibility with nature early in life will grow to protect it in their adult years. Begin the activity by starting a nature journal with your child to record their information as the tree (and child) grows. All it takes is 30 minutes, once a week for your child to witness everything that a tree goes through in its struggle for survival. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Find out what kind of tree it is. Use the shape of the leaves and fruits to identify species.
2. Make a sketch of the tree. Draw the shape of its trunk, branches and canopy (treetop).
3. Make a rubbing of the tree's bark by using a piece of white paper and the edge of a crayon.
4. Outline the leaf for your journal, or attach a leaf to a page using glue.
5. Write down any animals that you see around your tree. Are birds perched in the branches? Are there spiders making webs on the tree? Are caterpillars feeding on the leaves? Is your dog using it for shade?
6. Take photographs of the tree during the different stages of the season. How is the tree changing?
7. Fill in this sentence: "One especially cool thing about my tree is..."
8. Record exactly when the leaves begin to fall, when new buds are formed and when fruits begin to drop.
9. Are there any animals in your yard that are eating or using the fruits that are produced?



Outdoor Family Activity: Write A Nature



So often, children have a story or opinion about nature that they are excited to share. Writing poetry is a perfect way for kids to use their creativity while teaching others what they know about the natural world. An easy poetic style to begin with is the **windspark** poem. Before starting, have the children sit outside and write down 15-20 words that they relate to nature. This could be anything from “muddy” or “beautiful” to specific things such as “clouds”, “trees”, “wildflowers” or “stream”. The idea is to make it easier for the child to put the words together when they begin the poem. When this stage is completed, you’re ready to help the kids get their thoughts together and form the **windspark** poem following the example given below.

Windspark poetry has five lines in this pattern:

“I dreamed”
 “I was...” (something or someone)
 Where
 An action
 How

Windspark poem example:

*I Dreamed
 I Was A Hemlock
 Shading A Trout Stream
 Fighting For My Life
 Heroically*

Hey Kids - here’s your chance to show off your poetry!

The CFIA wants you to write a piece of poetry to put into our next newsletter! Find out what inspires you about nature, put it into the Windspark form shown above, and we’ll feature two poems per newsletter for as long as we keep receiving them! Just follow a few simple rules: **All ages up to 18 are eligible. Please include name, age and hometown. You must use the Windspark pattern. Mail entries to Adam DeWitte under “contact information” listed on page 4 of this newsletter.** Our hope is that your children and grandchildren will use this unique creative outlet to inspire others about the many wonders of the natural world!



From the Farm to the Plate



It’s always been easy to take a ride to the local supermarket, pick out what you need and plunk down your money at the register. But do you know where your food choices truly come from? As farmlands become more and more scarce in the U.S., many families are becoming dependent on food that may travel thousands of miles away before it reaches your plate. Very often this includes food from countries with less strict environmental and safety regulations. In order to travel that distance, the food must be preserved and processed in chemicals and sodium (salt) in order to keep longer on the store aisles. But what if there was a better way to shop? Community farms, tailgate markets and smaller grocers are springing up all over the country, providing fresh, local produce, dairy, eggs and meats that may have traveled a whopping 15 miles to reach your dinner plate. Food that is free of hormones, preservatives, unneeded sodium and most importantly, grown in your hometown. Eating food that is produced locally has so many benefits for the individual, family and the community. Not only does it help to save a piece of farmland and open space, it provides **your** family with alternatives to processed and chemical-packed foods while conserving energy and cutting down on damaging pollution. For more information on how to buy local and where to shop, or if you’d like to know more about what you can do to help save America’s farmlands, please visit: www.farmland.org

Here are a few important facts concerning the connection between farms and food:

1,500: The average distance in miles that food will travel before being eaten

340 / 4,385: Number of farmer’s markets in the U.S. in 1970 and 2006.

1 Million: Amount of barrels of oil that could be conserved per week if each U.S. citizen ate one meal made from local and organically grown produce and meats.

Answers to What's That Caterpillar: 1-C, 2-D, 3-E, 4-F, 5-A, 6-B

How did you do? These little caterpillar critters can look funny, scary, and downright alien, all to make sure that they survive their larval stage and enter adulthood. If you think you've spotted a butterfly, here's a clue: they'll be the ones with the thin, club-shaped antennae on their heads. In contrast, local moth species will usually be active at night and wear antennae that are fan-shaped and appear hairy. The **Hickory-Horned Devil (1)** is an especially nasty-looking, but harmless caterpillar that can be found on hickory, walnut and sweet gum. They will pupate in the ground without a cocoon, and turn into the beautiful **Regal Moth**. The spiny caterpillar of the **Question Mark Butterfly (2)** feeds on the foliage of elm, nettle and hops. The adult is named so for the silvery marks on the hind wings that resemble a question mark. If you guessed the furry caterpillar of the **Puss Moth (3)** was the stinging variety, then you're right!

These little critters pack more whollop in their small furry bodies than all other stinging caterpillars - nothing like the cartoonish Puss Moth that it will eventually turn into. The spiny but harmless caterpillar of the **Mourning Cloak Butterfly (4)** prefers to dine in groups, eventually defoliating willow, elm and poplar trees. Possibly one of the most well-known and beautiful moths around is the **Luna Moth (5)**. The brightly colored caterpillar spends its day dining on walnut, sweet gum, persimmon and birch trees. Unfortunately, pesticide use and other pollutants have forced this amazing creature to be added to the endangered species list. And finally, the spiked and unfriendly appearance of the **Pipevine Swallowtail Caterpillar (6)** suggests a hint of what the little critter may taste like. The larva and adults are both toxic - a quality that they obtain from the massive amounts of pipevine that they use for food.

Do you like the information that you've been reading in our newsletter? By becoming a member of the **Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association**, you can receive Nature-Oriented Parenting **four** times a year! Please see the contact information below to make your tax-deductible membership donation of either \$25 for individual or \$50 for family. Donations help our organization to better educate the public about the natural world!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Or please visit our website at:
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