

Spring Has Sprung! Be a Nature Detective!

Parents:

This spring trail activity is designed to be used after viewing the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Pre K and Kindergarten online video field trip. This will give you and your child an opportunity to get outside and enjoy exploring nature with you.

The activity guide will help focus your child's attention on interesting sights, sounds and colors on the trail hike. Look, listen, touch, smell and experience! A child can gain a *sense of wonder* just by watching quite ordinary things with close attention. Don't worry about not knowing all the names of all the plants, birds, animals or wildflowers. If you want, take a photo and identify it later. It is more important to look, guess, play games, explore and have fun! Please remember your own enthusiasm about what you see and experience in nature is contagious and it is perhaps your greatest asset as your child's teacher.

Don't worry if you do not complete all the nature activities on your first outdoor trip to the Nature Center. Feel free to return again and again as spring and summer approaches and find something new in nature! Have fun being a "Nature Detective!"

Environmentalist, Rachel Carson, claimed in her book, *The Sense of Wonder*, that introducing a child to the excitement of the natural world, "It is not half as important to *know* as to *feel*" being in touch with the earth.



Spring has Sprung!

Get ready for your trail hike at the Nature Center!



Sensory hike warm up using your 5 senses

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Hearing | Pull on ears and shake head |
| Sight | Pretend to take out eyes, spray them off, wipe them and put them back in |
| Smell | Hold nose, talk like this, take a deep breath |
| Touch | Rub hands together |
| Taste | Stick tongue out like a snake (who has the biggest tongue!) |

Welcome Circle Critters

Blue Spotted Salamander
Carter Snake
Turkey
Chickadee
Chipmunk
Raccoon
Fox
Mouse-vole
Mink
Rabbit
Monarch
Woodchuck
Deer
Pheasant
Fawn
Pileated Woodpecker
Squirrel
Weasel
Red-Tailed Hawk
Weasel



Be a Nature Detective!

Start at the Welcome Circle and have your child find and count all of the critters that live at the Nature Center in this circle (20)! Look for the child in the tree. That little boy is Jay C. Hormel. His favorite place growing up was in the forest so when he bought this land to build his home he planted over 200,000 trees. Take a hike and see if you can find any of the critters found in the circle and enjoy Jay's trees!

Take a walk out to the pond.



As you walk down the trail out to the pond look in the prairie for these dried Bergamot flower heads. Pick one and crush the flower head in your hand, use your sense of smell and enjoy this minty aroma. It is used in teas and essential oils. It has this smell in all four seasons. Come back this summer and look for this purple flower in full bloom. It kind of looks like a mini fireworks display!



Explore the Pond!

Remember to enter the pond area quietly and look for the floating log on the pond to see the turtles that are “sunning” themselves. Count how many turtles you see. Why do they need to sunbathe?

These cold blooded turtles need to sunbathe or bask in the sun to warm up their bodies to maintain their body temperature, to aid with digestion of their food, keep their bones and organs healthy and help regulate their mood.

Look and listen for other critters who live in or near the pond. Look along the edge of the pond in the water and see if you can see any frogs or aquatic critters. Can you see any ducks, geese or goslings?

Sit on the bench and close your eyes for 1 minute and use your senses to hear and smell. Can you hear frogs or toads? Can you hear any bird songs?

Imitate the sounds you hear. Honk like a goose, snore like a leopard frog and quack like a duck.



Northern Leopard frogs make a low guttural snore that can be accompanied by croaks and chuckle sounds.



Western Chorus frogs make a sound like a fingernail dragged across a comb with a rising “creee” sound.



Painted Turtles



Goslings



Gray Tree frogs make a musical birdlike trill sound.



Hike along the trail and look for critters that call the nature center their home.

Pooh Sticks

Walk to the covered bridge or stop at one of the bridges. Ask your child who Winnie the Pooh is, and have them name some of his friends. Tell your child that you are going to play a game that Pooh and his friends call "Pooh Sticks". Have you, your child and or siblings find 3 small sticks. Enter the bridge and on the count of three, drop the sticks on the east side, then go to the other side and wait. The winner will be the one whose stick comes out first from under the bridge.

(These sticks may make it all the way to ocean!)



Please remember the quieter you are walking on the trails the more likely you will be able to see the animals that live here!



The mourning cloak butterfly is one of the first butterflies to see in the spring in Minnesota!



Squirrel babies are called "kits" and you can see them arriving in the spring to mid- August'



Does have their fawns in late May and early June.



Look for mink along Dobbins Creek.

Action and Games on the Trail

***Soar like an Eagle.** Some birds can fly without flapping their wings. Hold your hands straight out, and SOAR down the trail like an eagle! Check the sky above you we often have eagles flying above the trees.

***Hop like a Frog.** Hippity hop along the trail!

***Turkey Steps.** Turkeys are very talented flyers and are also powerful walkers. Walk like a turkey by taking big, highly determined steps. It is spring mating season and male turkeys are now looking for a girlfriend in the nature center.



Listen for the male “gobble, gobble” sounds.
Hens make a clucking sound. Gobble and cluck!

Look for spring wildflowers!



May Apples



Marsh Marigolds



Virginia Bluebells
smell these flowers!



Jack in the Pulpit

If the wildflowers are not blooming yet come
back later in the month to find them!



Look for the green moss! Moss usually grows on the north side of trees in shady areas so it can help us find direction. Touch and feel the soft damp moss. Thank the trees and moss for giving us clean air to breathe! Trees and moss absorb carbon dioxide and then release oxygen for us to breathe. HUG A TREE and thank them for helping keep the air clean for us! Most animals do not eat moss except for reindeer. The moss has a special chemical in it that helps reindeer keep their blood warm, kind of like antifreeze does for cars. In the past, moss has been used as diapers (because it absorbs water) treating wounds and it makes soft bedding!



BARK BEETLES

Look for a dead tree that has what looks like little roads have been cut into the bark.

The bark beetle makes these designs. They have strong chewing jaws, that move like scissors for cutting through the bark. They usually attack trees that are weakened by disease or have been damaged like blown over from strong winds during the storm. They make some amazing artistic designs!



FLASH FLOOD GAME

On your way out to the log cabin, play the game called FLASH FLOOD on the trails. In this game, the trail you are walking on is a stream and when you yell FLASH FLOOD, you will need to step off the trail and find a tree to hang on to. The tree will save you from being washed away. After you have found a tree, tell your child or children that the water is receding and it is all clear to step back on the trail. Play this game as many times as you want. Take turns being the leader who yells FLASH FLOOD with your child or children. This game works can work well with as few as 2 or 3 participants.

Game adapted from naturalists-Larry Buell and David Stokes



Last fall the Nature Center staff planted apple trees behind the log cabin. They planted Snow Sweet and Frost Bite apple trees. How many apple trees can you count in the fenced in area? (10) Keep visiting the log cabin as we will be adding raised gardens with tomatoes, peppers, beans, broccoli, peas and more. Why did we build a fence around the trees and the new garden? What critters could damage the trees and or eat the new plants if we did not have a fence?

Answer: deer, rabbits, voles, woodchucks, squirrels and chipmunks.

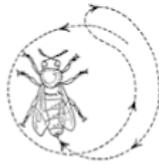


Figure 1.
Round dance

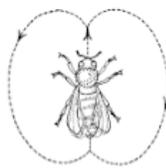


Figure 2.
Waggle dance

von Frauch, 1976



Waggle Dance



Finish your Trail Hike with a Bee Waggle Dance!

Dancing is a way that honey bees let other bees know where to find the flowers and nectar needed to make delicious honey! Bees do a round dance to show the direction and where the food is located if it is really close to the hive. If the food is further away they do a waggle dance, which consists of a figure eight circle and a waggle in the middle! Shake your behind and move forward. Stop shaking and turn to your left to circle back around to where you started. Shake your behind and waggle forward again. Stop at the same spot but now turn to your right and circle back around to where you started. That's the waggle dance! Bees do it all the time and now you can too. Remember to buzz like a bee! When you get home use sidewalk chalk to draw the circles of the waggle dance on your driveway or sidewalk and do the dance again. You also can learn more about bees this summer in our classes and programs and help make honey from our beehives in late August. Check out our spring summer newsletter for the upcoming classes and special events!

Bees are important! They help plants to grow and produce food for us like almonds, cucumbers, apples, strawberries and honey. They do so by transferring pollen between flowering plants thus keeping the cycle of life turning. Next time you come across a bee, don't be scared, say *thank you* and stay out of their way! They have a busy schedule as they work hard to help give us delicious food and beautiful colorful flowers!

**Thanks for being a Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Nature Detective today.
Please come and visit again to see and learn more about nature!**

Remember when?

When you drive home or get home, ask your child to close their eyes and ask them to think about something that they liked about their trail hike today. You can help review for them the major happenings of the trail hike while their eyes are still closed and then ask them to open their eyes and share their favorite thing with you and family members. Everyone's ideas are valuable!