

Walking in a Winter Wonderland!

Nature-al Discoveries

Here we are in the last full month of winter. We have one more month to enjoy walking in a winter wonderland. The best time for me to walk outside during the winter season is while the snow is still falling. I enjoy the beautiful silence that falls across the landscape as it is covered in nature's fluffy white blanket. It makes me want to snuggle down in a cozy "sitspot" and watch as the critters fuss about preparing their homes for little ones this Spring and gathering food for the cold nights that still lay ahead. This is a great time to observe owls and hawks in the trees. I see the two owls that live in the woods behind my house pretty regularly, usually during late afternoon hours. I see red-tailed hawks perched atop the telephone poles at all times of day. A few weeks ago, a red-tailed hawk dove downward in front of my truck and swiped a mouse off the side of an embankment. It was something my kids will not forget. The up-close view of such an awesome predator swooping in for its afternoon meal... it doesn't get any better than that (unless you can catch it on film). Speaking of awesome predators, check out this photo published by National Geographic in September 2009. This mantis is unbelievable!



Photo by Sharon Fullingim, published on National Geographic Your Shot

They apparently eat mice, too! Yikes! Keep your eyes peeled. There is a lot to see out there!

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK THE NATURE-AL DISCOVERIES BULLETIN BOARD FOR YOUR CHILD'S DISCOVERY WALK DATE!

Please feel free to join us!

This month, our focus will be on the winter wonders along our nature trails. We will be walking in our winter wonderland! Here are a few books you might enjoy reading to your child this month:

Walking in a Winter Wonderland by On the Mountain (A Touch-and-Feel Nature Trail Book) by Maurice Pledger
White Bear, Ice Bear by Joanne Ryder
Snowballs by Lois Ehlert
When It Starts to Snow by Phillis Gershator
Snow Crazy by Tracy Gallup
A Little Bit of Winter by Paul Stuart

FAMILY FUN

Snow Cones

Ingredients:

Freshly Fallen, Clean Snow
 Equal parts water and sugar
 Different flavored packets of Kool-Aid.

Activity: Make a simple syrup heating equal parts water and sugar until sugar is completely dissolved. Pour into several small containers (one container per flavor). Add small amounts of Kool-Aid to each cup of simple syrup to taste. Scoop snow into cone or cup, pour simple syrups over it, and enjoy!

If you prefer a more nature-al approach, try incorporating strawberries or blueberries to the simple syrups as you heat them rather than using Kool-Aid. Don't forget to scoop out the berries before pouring onto snow (unless you want the wholesomeness & texture of the berries, that is!)

IN THE CLASSROOM

Snowy Puff Paint



Mix equal parts water, flour, and salt in a small bowl. Allow children to paint snowy pictures onto black or blue paper plates using the flour/salt mixture. Sprinkle wet pictures with white glitter. Microwave the paintings on HIGH for 20-40 seconds (until all paint is puffed up). You should have a 3-dimensional snowy picture!
(Be sure to keep an eye on it. It can burn easily and stinks like burnt popcorn!)

KIDDIE COVE

February 12-15, 2010

is the

13th Annual

Great Backyard Bird Count

Attached to this newsletter is a flyer describing this annual event. It can be done in your own backyard, no matter where you live, and only requires 15 minutes of your time. Help your young naturalist identify and count birds and submit your data to BirdCount.org. Or just have fun spotting birds!

TRY FINDING SOME OF THESE COMMON BIRD SPECIES!



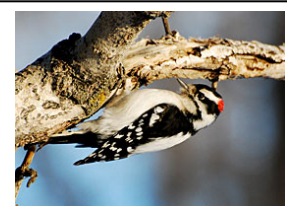
Northern Cardinal



Mourning Dove



Dark-Eyed Junco



Downy Woodpecker



Blue Jay



Tufted Titmouse



American Crow



Black-Capped Chickadee



House Finch

All bird photos taken from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Check out their All About Birds website for more information! <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide>