

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Spring, 2005

Volume 2, Issue 1 Calendar of Events

Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Nature Storytime Fri.
Mar. 11 10-11am. Kids 4-6 years. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve (215) 862-2924 Fee

Nature Inside Out: Spring Signs. Tues.
Mar. 15 11am-12. Kids 3-6 years. Cotsen Children's Library (609) 258-2697 Free.

Tiny Tot Walk Tues.
Mar. 22 10-11am. Kids 18-36 months. Buttinger Nature Center (609) 737-7592 Fee

Nature Inside Out: Spring Signs. Thurs.
Mar. 24 3:30-4:30pm. See Mar. 15

Nature Storytime Fri.
Apr. 8 10-11am. See Mar. 11

Nature Inside Out: "Weather Or Not"
Tues. Apr. 12 11-12.
Thurs., April 14 3:30pm
Kids 3-6 years. Cotsen Children's Library 258-2697. Free

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Sounds of Spring

There is a certain feeling I get when I wake up on the first warm spring day. I can't really explain it, but something is different. Maybe it is a smell, maybe the light, but more likely, it is the sound. Spring is a noisy time of year. During most of the year, birds are calling to each other for various reasons: alarm calls, food calls, gather around calls etc. But in spring, birds stop calling and start singing. Male birds sing to

advertise their presence, defend a territory and to attract a mate. Each kind of bird usually has a specific song it sings and a trained birder can identify a bird by just its song.

Another common sound of spring is frogs calling for a mate. The first frogs in this area to sing are usually the Spring Peepers. These tiny tree frogs perch on plants near a pond's edge and bellow out a
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Gardening For Butterflies

Butterflies are one of the most beloved insects. So much so, many people don't consider them insects, but something more akin to hummingbirds. They visit our gardens, almost dancing around flowers before settling on one. They walk around the flower head tasting with their feet and only then deciding to unfurl their long tongue for a sip of sweet nectar. Inviting butterflies to visit the garden is as easy as offering the right kinds of plants.

Plants for butterflies fall into two categories. **Nectar**

plants provide food for the adult butterflies and **host** plants on which adult butterflies lay eggs for their caterpillars to eat. I'm always so excited when I find my milkweed plants (*Asclepias incarnata*) feeding monarch caterpillars or my Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) has rolled up leaves sheltering Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillars.

Each type of butterfly, from the magnificent Pipevine Swallowtail to the demure Eastern Tailed Blue lays its eggs on a specific host plant. By offering some of these

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(Calendar continued)

Tiny Tot Walk Wed., April 20 10-11am. Kids 18-36 months. Buttinger Nature Center (609) 737-7592. Fee.

Nature Storytime Fri., May 13 10-11am. Kids age 4-6. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. (215) 862-2924 Fee.

Gardening For Butterflies Sat., May 14 11am. Adults. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve (215) 862-2924 Free with admission

Tiny Tot Walk Thurs., May 19 10-11am. Kids 18-36 months Buttinger Nature Center (609) 737-7592.

Nature Camp July 18-22 or July 25-29. Kids grade 2-4. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve (215) 862-2924. Fee

It's not too late to schedule a visit to your child's class. Call now to schedule a spring program. We'll custom design a curriculum complementing program that is aligned with the NJ or Pa. Core Curriculum Standards for Science. (609) 610-6292

We're on the Web

See us at:

www.naturebytheyard.com

Sounds of Spring (continued)

high pitched whistle that can be heard up to a mile away. Spring Peepers are about the size of an adult man's thumbnail. Often there are hundreds of males singing at the same time. When a group of them draw a breath and expand a pouch under their chin, the sound is deafening.

If you are lucky to live near a vernal pond (one that dries up during some part of the year), you may be treated to another singing frog, the

Woodfrog. Like the Peepers, male Woodfrogs sing to attract females to mate. Their song reminds me of a quacking duck.

One of my favorite sounds of spring though, is the rain. The next time it rains, sit on your porch or simply open the windows and just listen. Listen to the drops striking the ground. You can almost hear the thirsty roots suck up the water and say Ahhhhhh!

Butterfly Gardening (continued)

plants, you will not only encourage a variety of butterflies, but you will also be witness to a part of their life cycle many gardeners never see.

Some good host plants are: Milkweeds *Asclepias species* for Monarch Butterflies, asters for Pearl Crescents and other Checkerspots, native grasses for large variety of skippers, Turtlehead *Chelone glabra* for Baltimores, Golden Alexanders *Zizia aurea* or parsley for Black Swallowtails, Spicebush *Lindera*

benzoin for Spicebush Swallowtails, and Dutchman's Pipevine *Aristolochia durior* for the Pipevine Swallowtail. Good sources for nectar are: Joe-Pye Weed *Eupatorium fistulosum*, Butterfly Bush *Buddlei davidii*, Blazing Star *Liatris spicata*, Purple Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea*, Milkweed *Asclepias incarnata* or *A. tuberosa*, Oregano *Oreganum sp.* as well as a variety of phlox *Phlox sp.* Just like in the movie Field of Dreams "If you plant it, they will come."

About Our Organization...

Nature By The Yard was started in January, 2001. We deliver fun, hands-on, educational programs to schools, scouts, camps, libraries, birthday parties, garden clubs, nature centers, wildflower preserves or any organized group. We also

provided in-service trainings for teachers on using the outdoors as a classroom as well as offer advice and expertise on designing school yard habitats. For details on our services visit www.naturebytheyard.com