

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Winter, 2006

Volume 4 Issue 4 Calendar of Events

Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Toddler Walk 10-11am
Wed. Dec. 13.
For kids 18-36 months with parent. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee
Toddler walks will resume in March

Nature Inside Out
Thursday Dec. 14 11-12
"Evergreens" Kids age 3-6 years Cotsen Children's Library Princeton NJ (609) 258-2697 Free, no reservations needed.

Nature Inside Out
Thurs. Jan. 11 11-12.
"Nature Detectives"
Kids age 3-6. Cotsen Children's Library. Princeton, NJ. No reservations needed. Free. 609 258-2697

Animals of the Night
Sat. Jan. 20 3:30-5:30.
Families. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. Fee. Reservations

(continued)

Who's Knocking on the Door?

I love woodpeckers. Frequent visitors to both suet and sunflower seed feeders, woodpeckers are easy to attract and identify both in the backyard and in the forest.

There are 7 woodpeckers here in the Mid-Atlantic, some being more common than others. The Red-headed Woodpecker is so rare, I'll only mention it.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers, often mistakenly called Red-headed, is a common visitor to

backyard suet feeders. Though males have a red hood (female's only having red along the back of the neck), they lack the entirely red head of their cousins.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers are also common visitors to feeders. They look almost exactly alike, having a black and white pattern and a red dash on the back of the head on the males. Hairy woodpeckers are

(Continued on back page)

Nature In Winter

The subtle beauty of nature never ceases to amaze me. I bought myself a camera a few years ago with a macro lens. I went to one of my favorite places, Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve on a cold January morning, laid down on my belly and photographed frost on leaves, the pond's edge and along rocks. Yes, I could have gone into my own yard and probably gotten the same or similar photographs, but being in this special place, with winter's calming silence made the experience more magical, more meaningful. Stepping

outside in the middle of winter is something everyone should do, often. There is a totally new world to explore and discover in winter and with the right clothes, you need not be cold. (See Nature Niche Winter 2004).

When there is snow on the ground, look for animal tracks or wing prints (imprint of a bird that landed in the snow on the ground). These tell the story of animals' nighttime activities. On tree stumps and benches, look for broken nuts and cracked shells from a squirrels' recent meal.

(Continued on back page)

needed. 215-862-2924.

Nature Inside Out: Birds
Thurs. Feb. 15 11-12 noon
Kids 3-6 years. Cotsen
Children's Library
Princeton, NJ Free, no
reservations 609 258-2697

Would you like your child to have a curriculum-supporting program in their class? Nature By The Yard can come to your child's class and provide a curriculum-supporting program on a variety of exciting topics. Check out our website and click on the programs button on the left, then click on "school" for a list of ideas.

Coming Spring 2007
My hope is by March, copies of my book "Nature Inside Out- A guide to using the schoolyard as a teaching tool" will be available for purchase. The perfect end of the year thank you gift for any teacher.

We're on the Web

See us at:

www.naturebytheyard.com

Woodpeckers (continued)

larger and have a much heavier bill than that of a Downy.

Northern Flickers are one of the most vocal woodpeckers here. With a characteristic "wicka, wicka, wicka" call, they are commonly seen feeding on the ground eating ants. As they fly away, look for an obvious white rump patch.

The largest woodpecker in the area is the Pileated Woodpecker. Almost crow size, Pileated's are less commonly seen at feeders, but are

nonetheless present in large woodland tracks. For those of you who remember him, Woody Woodpecker was fashioned after a Pileated. (look for a red crest not a blue one though.)

By far, the most interesting woodpecker here is the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Though you may never see the bird, you've no doubt noticed evidence of its feeding habit. Sapsuckers drill lines of shallow holes in trees then return to feed on the bleeding sap and insects.

Winter (continued)

Notice the trees in winter too. Many people only look at trees when there are flowers or brilliantly color leaves, but buds are a subtle reminder of Spring's promise and the bark is a work of art nature creates.

Trees can often be identified simply by looking at the texture of the bark. Beech tree bark is smooth and silver gray, Sycamore bark peels off in large patches leaving a green, tan and brown jigsaw puzzle pattern. Red Oaks resemble

miniature ski resorts with its furrowed bark and American Hornbeam looks and feels like the striated muscles of an athlete.

There are so many features of nature in winter, all one has to do is get out and notice.

To read with your children try

"Winter Harvest" by Jane Chelsea Aragon and

"In the Snow: Who's been There?" By Lindsay Barrett George

About Our Organization...

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

workshops for teachers on using the schoolyard as a classroom tool as well as offer advice and expertise on designing school yard habitats. For details on our services visit www.naturebytheyard.com or call Pam at (609) 610-6292