

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard — Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Spring, 2009

Volume 6, Issue 1
Calendar of Events
Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Tuesdays Mar. 10, April 14 and May 12 11-12 noon
Toddler Walk Kids 18-36 months with an adult. Plainsboro Township Municipal Building. Reservations: 609.799.0909 ext. 332 Fee.

Sundays: Mar. 15, Apr. 19, May 17 3:30-5pm. **Fun Walk in Five Mile Woods.** Families. Reservation can be made by calling Nature By The Yard 609.610-6292. Fee.

Mar. 19 Apr. 13, May 17 10-11am **Toddler Walk.** Kids 18-36 months with an adult. Buttinger Nature Center Pennington, NJ 609.737.7592 Fee.

Saturdays: Mar. 21, Apr. 4, Apr. 18, May 2, May 16 and June 6 3:30-5p **Nature In Your Neighborhood** Kids ages 7-11. Drexel Woods Lawrenceville, NJ. \$12 per session, \$60 series. Advanced registration required. Call Nature By The Yard 609.610-6292.

Jack In The Pulpit

Of all the spring wildflowers, Jack in the Pulpit, has got to be coolest.

When you see Jacks in April, you'll immediately notice they are unlike any other. The curved vase-like part, complete with a sweeping lid is actually not the flower, but a protective structure called a spathe. The club that sits in the center of the spathe is called a spadix. At the base of the spadix are the flowers— yellow hair-like

structures are male, green balls are female, each found on separate plants.

Female Jacks produce the seed containing fruits. Jack fruits don't ripen until September, so the female plants need enough energy to stay above ground for several months, as opposed to a male plant, which need only be visible for a few weeks. What this means is the amount of energy stored in the roots

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Baby Birds

STOP, Don't do anything rash. That is the mantra of most wildlife rehabilitators. When we find a baby bird, our first instinct is to rescue it, but in most cases, the birds don't need our help.

Many factors should be assessed first to determine if the bird does need assistance. Does it have feathers yet? Is it injured? Can you put it back in the nest? (No, a mother bird won't reject a baby because it "smells" you. Most birds don't have a good sense of smell.)

If the bird is unfeathered and you can reach the nest, put it

back. If you can't reach the nest, keep an eye on it to see if the parent bird comes to get it. If not, don't try to feed it yourself. Call a professional to make arrangements to bring it to them.

When many baby birds hatch, they are naked and helpless. But after a few weeks, they have feathers and are testing out their wings. It is at this time, that many people think the birds have fallen from the nest, when in fact they are just novice flyers. On the ground, their parents will still feed them, but they are more

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Fri. Mar. 27 10-11am. Kids 3-6 years old **Animals from Eggs** Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. New Hope, Pa. 215.862.2924 Fee.

Sun. Apr. 5 3-4pm. All Ages. **Natural Egg Dyeing** Bring 6-12 hard boiled eggs and learn how to make beautiful, subtle colors from nature. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve 215.862.2924 Fee.

Sat. Apr. 18 7-8:30pm and Sat. June 20 8-9:30. Families **Moonlight Walk** Bring a flashlight and join us for a walk in the moonlight to learn about creatures that party after dark. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. New Hope, Pa. Fee 215 862.2924.

Sat. May 23 10-11am All ages. **Turtle, tortoise or terrapin?** Meet live turtles and join us as we celebrate International Turtle Day. We'll learn about these fascinating and ancient creature through hands-on activities, books and crafts. Yardley-Makefield Library 215.493.9290 Free.

Sat. June 13 1-2:30pm. All ages **Insect Safari.** Meet live insects, catch them in the meadow and learn about these diverse, interesting creatures. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve 215.862.2924 Fee

We're on the Web
www.naturebytheyard.com

Jack (continued)

through the season, will determine if the plant comes up male or female the following spring.

But there's more. The spathe is made up of a curled leaf-like structure. At the base of where the two edges meet, you will find a small hole on male plants, but not on female plants. A-ha, the plot thickens!

Jacks are pollinated by flies. A fly enters the spathe, falls to the bottom and crawls around searching for a way out. If it

entered a male Jack, it gets covered with pollen and eventually find that small hole.

Once out, the fly may enter another Jack. The same thing happens, but if the second Jack is a female plant, there is no hole. It is trapped. Why? From the plant's view, the fly is just a vehicle for pollen. Once the fly pollinates the female flowers, it doesn't matter if it gets out or not. If you open some female Jacks, you may see a few dead flies. Gross, but really cool.

Baby birds (continued)

vulnerable to predators.

If you find a baby bird that has feathers, but can't seem to fly, leave it alone, but watch it so the neighborhood cat doesn't get an easy meal.

I know it is hard to sit on our hands and let nature take care of itself, but sometimes the best help we can offer her is to do nothing at all.

If you live in Mercer County, NJ, the Mercer Wildlife Center is a great resource for either

advice or when necessary, to bring an injured or orphaned animal (609) 883-6606. In Pennsylvania, AARK Wildlife Rehabilitators (215) 249-1938 offer similar services.

NOTE: If you find a mammal (animal with fur) you think is in distress, orphaned or sick, call one of the organizations above or your local animal control office for advice. **PLEASE DO NOT HANDLE A WILD MAMMAL.**

About Our Organization...

Nature By The Yard was started in January, 2001. We offer fun, hands-on nature education programs for schools, scouts, camps, libraries, birthday parties, garden clubs, nature centers, wildflower preserves and other organized groups. We also provide

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.