

# Nature Niche

*Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder*

## Winter, 2008

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 19-36 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.

Fri. 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. Programs held at Drexel Woods in Lawrenceville, NJ. \$12 per session, \$60 series. Advanced registration required. Call Nature By The Yard 609.610-6292.

## Nests

Despite having to rake the leaves after they fall, one benefit to all the mess is how easy it is to find the art work of birds. It is like these sneaky birds were busy making their sculptures, sitting quietly on their eggs and raising their family, hidden in plain view.

Nests are in most cases, the temporary nurseries of birds and some mammals. Most birds don't use their nests year after year, so this is a great

opportunity for nature exploration with your family. It bears mentioning, in most states, it is illegal to remove and obtain the nests of song birds. This law, which extends to collecting feathers, is intended to protect the birds. Since there really is no way for the wildlife service to determine where you got the artifacts, there is a blanket law stating possession of any part

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## Black Bears

Everyone likes bears. Teddy bears' claim to fame stems from Theodore Roosevelt's refusal to shoot a black bear cub. Christopher Robin Milne named his teddy Winnie the Pooh, after seeing a black bear cub at the London Zoo, and now, Winnie is beloved by millions of children worldwide.

Though often feared as a fierce predator, the black bear is actually quite docile, except in certain circumstances such as a sow protecting her cubs. Black bears are omnivorous, eating most anything they come across from berries, roots and carrion,

to insect larva, honey and occasionally a small mammal. In mid September-early October, black bears in the mid-Atlantic will search out a fallen tree, a cave or even thick pine boughs for a den site in which to spend the winter. Though they don't eat, drink, urinate or defecate in winter, black bears don't hibernate. To be considered a true hibernator, a mammal's heart and breathing rate has to drop and their body temperature hovers near freezing. Black bears are often alert and awake in winter and their core body

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Preserve. 215.862.2924. Fee

Fri. Jan. 30 **Nature Inside Out.** Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education Annual Conference. Parent and teacher workshop. Learn how to use fiction picture books as a spring board for nature exploration. <[www.anjee.net](http://www.anjee.net)> for details.

Sat. Jan. 31. 10-11:30am **Winter Explorations with your Child.** Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education Annual Conference. Parents and their children can join me for winter exploration and discovery. Visit <[www.anjee.net](http://www.anjee.net)> for details.

Preserve a winter discovery. If you find an animal track in the snow or mud, you can preserve it to bring indoors. Gently spray a clean track found in the snow with a plant mister. Mix plaster of paris with water in a cup to the consistency of a thick milk shake. Carefully pour the plaster over the track and let set. When it is hard, remove it and you'll have a perfect impression of the track. Look for deer, fox, squirrel or raccoon tracks.

"In the Snow, Who's been here?" by Lindsav Barrett  
**We're on the Web**  
[www.naturebytheyard.com](http://www.naturebytheyard.com)

## Nests (continued)

of the bird is unlawful. Having said that, it is generally accepted to examine them for educational purposes.

Each kind of bird makes a nest out of specific materials and is constructed in a similar habitat and in a similar way. For example, American Robins make their cereal bowl-shaped nest in the crotch of a shrub or they secured to a horizontal tree branch. It is always made out of mud and lined with grass. Cardinal and Bluejay nests are

often found in the bramble of raspberry and multiflora rose bushes. There, the thorns and thick switches offer great protection from predators. The large ball of brown leaves high in the branches of trees are the work of squirrels. They construct these nests called **drays**, by carrying leaves from the ground up in their mouth. Although a hole in a tree is preferable during the winter, a squirrel may have several drays in the summer.

## Bears (continued)

temperature isn't significantly lower than at other times.

**B**lack bears breed June through August, but exhibit a delayed implantation of the fertilized embryo, called embryonic diapause. The fetus doesn't implant in the uterus, so development is arrested. Though gestation can be 7-8 months, development is only 60 days. Depending on the age and health of the sow, 1-5 cubs are born in January or February.

**M**other and cubs emerge from

their den in early spring. The sow will search for carrion as well as new plant shoots on which to feed. Cubs are weaned by September, but remain with their mom through the following winter.

**P**eople should never feed bears. They are smart and can become a nuisance if feeding is stopped. This is often where conflicts between humans and bears begins and can be avoided if bears are admired from a distance.

## 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](http://www.naturebytheyard.com) or call Pam at (609) 610-6292.