

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Winter, 2011

Volume 8, Issue 4

Calendar of Events

Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Trim A Tree for

Wildlife Sat. Dec. 10. 3:30-4:30. Families. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, New Hope, Pa. 215.862.2924. Reservations/fee.

Toddler Walk.

December 14 10-11am Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Reservations/Fee.

Twinleaf Award #1

Nature Detectives

Sat. Jan. 14. 3:30-5. Series of 8 workshops through 2012. Adults and kids over 10 or under 10 and adult can work as a team. BHWP. 215.862.2924. Reservation/Fee

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Snow Birds

Early winter bird feeding makes me a little melancholy. I love to watch the chickadees and titmice vie for a spot on the feeder, but when I see certain birds arriving at the filling station, I can't help but feel some trepidation knowing there is a long winter ahead.

Some birds spend the summer north of here, and migrate to the Mid-Atlantic to spend the winter. It is hard to believe that our area would be a desirable destination to spend

the cold months, but compared to New England and Canada, it is a step up, I suppose.

White-throated sparrows and dark-eyed junco's are two common feeder birds we see in winter. They are often found searching the snow and under the feeders for morsels and seeds.

White-throated sparrows have a yellow patch next to their eye and a white...well, throat. Often called "Whistlers of the

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Keeping Warm in Winter

(Reprinted from Winter 04)

Take it from the animals, layers are in. Actually, they never went out. Though it may not be on the runways this winter season, layering your clothes similar to the fur and feathers of animals is a great way to stay warm this winter.

Mammal fur and bird feathers are designed to help maintain body temperature, while keeping wind and rain away from the skin. This is done by layering different kinds of fur or feathers in a very specific order.

Mammals have soft fluffy fur next to the skin and tough, course hair on the outside. The fluffy hair traps warm air, acting like an insulator. The outer hairs, called guard hairs, prevent moisture from coming in contact with the skin. In between the two is a layer of fur that acts as a buffer for more insulation.

Birds' feathers act in a similar fashion. Fluffy down feathers trap warm air in, while stiff contour feathers, repel water and break the wind.

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Twinleaf Award #2 Buds and Bark Sat. Feb. 11. 3:30-5. Adults and kids over 10 or under 10 and adult can work as a team B H W P . 215.862.2924 Fee.

School for Scoundrels Sat. Feb. 18. 1-4pm. Cotsen Children's Library. Princeton, NJ 609.258.2697 Free.

Winter Reading Suggestions:

Curl up in front of the fire with a blanket and hot cup of tea with your kids and read together. "Winter Harvest" by Jane Chelsea Aragon "The Mitten" by Jan Brett

Or, curl up in front of the fire with a blanket and a hot cup of tea by yourself and read "Winter World" by Bernd Heinrich.

Of course, these would be much more satisfying after a brisk winter walk in the woods.

We're on the Web

<http://naturebytheyard.com>

Snow Birds (continued)

North", these inquisitive little birds sing from bushes and woods' edge "Oh Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada".

The dark-eyed junco is also called the slate-colored junco. They are easily recognized by their two tone body; light below and dark gray or brownish above. A local name for the junco's is "snow bird", presumably because they are often seen flitting around the snow searching for seeds.

There are many other birds

that only visit the mid-Atlantic in winter, but you'll have to work harder to find them.

Evening grosbeaks, redpolls, and pine siskins can sometimes be seen at backyard feeders. Saw-whet owls can occasionally be found roosting in cedar trees and yellow-bellied sapsuckers are busy drilling their signature horizontal holes in forest trees.

Keep an eye out for these winter visitors. They are a warm sight for the heart and body.

Warmth (continued)

Both mammals and birds will also puff themselves up, raising the guard hairs and contour feathers in an effort to put even more space between their skin and the elements. The more layers there are, the warmer the animal will be.

Humans could take a lesson from our avian and mammalian friends. Wear a tight t-shirt next to the skin. This will keep your body's warmth where it is needed. On the very coldest

days, wear a turtleneck to keep the warm air from escaping and a wool sweater. Last should be a wind and water repellent coat.

Top any outfit off with a hat. Warm air rises and about 20% of it comes off your head. Not wearing a hat is like baking cookies with the oven door open. Possible, but impractical.

This winter, stay warm and dry with layers and you will be able to laugh at whatever weather mother nature throws your way.

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 <http://naturebytheyard.com> or call Pam at (609) 610-6292.