



More Ideas for Families Exploring Nearby Nature Together Late Spring/Early Summer

Out in Your Yard or Nearby:

- Do you have a “sit spot”? Find a nice place, and take a jacket or old pillow or something to sit on if it’s wet out. Stay there for as long as you can (five minutes, or twenty). What do you notice? What do you wonder? Take a sketchbook and draw things -- draw a page of the small things you see around you. Go back another day, and another, and watch how things change. Visit at different times of day if you can.
- Collect tree leaves with different shades of green, and line them up from yellowest to bluest green. Can you recreate those colors in a drawing using colored pencils? Can you identify the different trees? <http://cortland.cce.cornell.edu/resources/know-your-trees>
- Go on a sound safari in your neighborhood. Make a map or keep a list of natural sounds you hear, and where. How about man-made sounds? Try again at a different time of day, or in different weather, and compare your maps/lists. What do you notice?
- Create a garden fortress. Choose a few lean saplings to use as the rafters of a green bean teepee. <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/childrens-bean-teepee.htm>
- Or grow a sunflower fort: <https://rootsnursery.com/sunflower-fort/>
- Start a rock collection using stones you can find around your house. How many ways can you sort them--size, color, other features?
- Listen for birdsong around your house. How many different calls can you hear? Can you whistle or vocalize any of the calls? Try to create a set of words that help you remember how each call sounds, e.g. chickadees singing “Hi sweetie” or “chickadee-dee-dee”? <https://www.thespruce.com/birding-by-ear-basics-387331>
- Pull out the picnic blanket and do some cloudspotting. Bring out your watercolors and paint the sky every day for a week! <https://cloudatlas.wmo.int/cloud-identification-guide.html>

On a Rainy Day:

- Put on your raincoats and rainboots and sit quietly watching the raindrops slide off the new leaves and flowers, cause ripples in puddles, soak into the soil. Do you see any insects or birds out in the rain?
- Drop pebbles in your puddle and watch the ripples. What happens to the ripples if you drop in two pebbles at the same time?
- After the rain ends, trace the outline of puddles with sidewalk chalk. Return later in the day or another day to see how much the puddle shrinks.
- See how many earthworms you can find on the road or sidewalk after a good rain. Follow them! <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-earthworms-surface-after-rain/>
- Stay inside or find shelter if you see lightning! Count the time between the time you see lightning and when you hear thunder. <https://eo.ucar.edu/kids/dangerwx/tstorm6.htm>

Out on a Hike:

- Look for numbers in nature. How many petals on different kinds of flowers? Birds in a flock? Toes on tracks?
- Take a box of crayons outside and go on a scavenger hunt to try and find something natural that matches each color. Use the crayon to draw it.
- Count things: One crow flying over, two bluejays calling, three bees in a patch of flowers. Tally up your census using hash marks – four marks and a fifth to cross it.
- Look for the letters of the alphabet in nature. Ys are easy, but can you find a B?!
- Search for wildflowers. See how many different kinds you can see.

Explore the Night:

- Take a night time walk and listen for owls, spring peepers, wood frogs and more. Can you hoot like an owl?
- Pitch a tent in your backyard and go camping. Turn on your flashlight and make different animal shadows against the tent wall?
- After dinner is the perfect time to look and listen for the courtship displays of woodcocks. Head out to an open field to see if you can find them. The males make funny, buzzy 'peent' calls on the ground (have the kids try to imitate them) then take to the air in a sky dance complete with musical chirps and twittering. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Woodcock/overview
- Pull out the picnic blanket and do some stargazing. What constellations do you find? <https://www.solarsystemquick.com/universe/star-constellations.htm>

Just for Fun:

- Play a game of Human Camera with a friend in your yard: <http://www.mindfulteachers.org/2014/03/human-camera.html>
- Use recycled or natural materials to decorate your bike spokes (flowers, leaves, leftover tissue paper, fabric scraps, yarn). Then parade around town on your fancied up wheels!
- Collect a variety of ferns. Lay them on a piece of newspaper and paint them with watercolors. Then carefully press a blank piece of paper on top to create beautiful prints.
- Gather some rocks and sticks and make sundials. <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Sundial>
- Challenge your family to a birdwatching contest! Can you find 20 different species in your neighborhood? <https://nearbynature908475479.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/cybirds-common-winter-birds.pdf>
- Collect natural materials around your yard, and use them to invent a game. Teach it to your family members!

Remember to take photos of your kids in nature and tag Four Winds (<https://fwni.org/>) in your social media: #fwni, #nearbynature, #thenatureprogram, #fourwinds, #fourwindsvolunteer