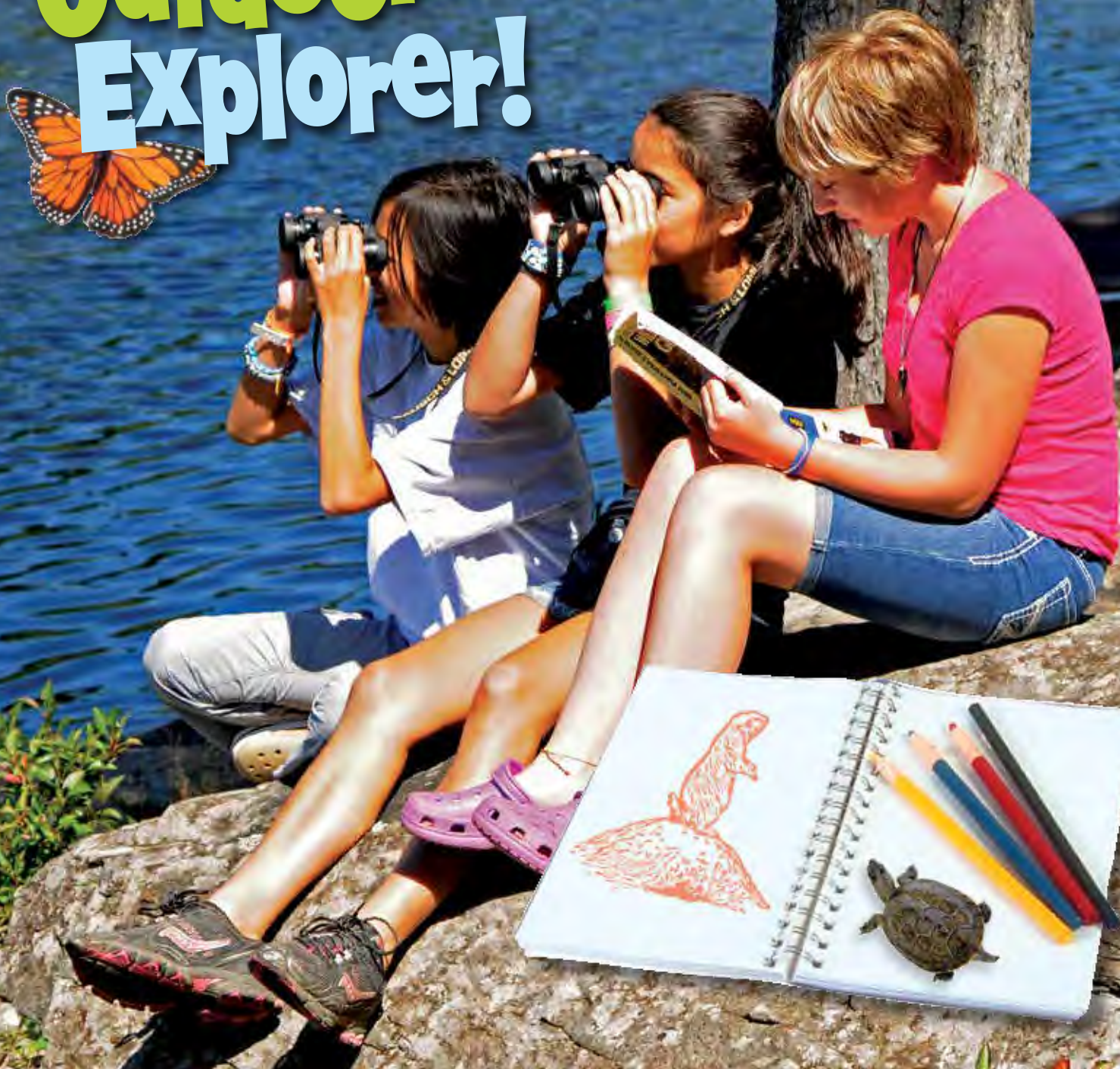


NEW YORK STATE Conservationist

for
Kids!

Become an
Outdoor
Explorer!



Welcome
to

NEW YORK STATE Conservationist



In This Issue

Spending time outside exploring the natural world is fun, and you'll discover lots of interesting things while you're there.



Susan Shafer

DID YOU KNOW



In New York, Arbor Day is celebrated each year on the last Friday in April. Get out there and celebrate our trees! For more information, please visit the National Arbor Day website at www.arborday.org/.



GET OUTSIDE ON EARTH DAY!

Celebrated every April 22nd since it was first established in 1970, Earth Day is a great reason to Get Outside! Begun as a way of bringing more attention to environmental issues, Earth Day has transformed into a day to celebrate the planet and take steps to improve it. Many activities take place around the world, from trail cleanups to planting trees to educational programs. Check to see what events are taking place in your school or neighborhood, or work with your teachers or parents to plan an event. For more information about Earth Day, check out the following websites: www.dec.ny.gov/public/8804.html, www.earthday.org, www.epa.gov/earthday/, and www.epa.gov/superfund/kids/earthday.htm.



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You'll get six issues of the award-winning *Conservationist* magazine each year, plus *Conservationist for Kids* in the October, February and April issues. Call 1-800-678-6399 for information about how to subscribe.



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cforkids@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Be a Scientist

Are you curious about nature?
Many scientists are, too!

Scientists explore and examine different things in the world to better understand how they work. They observe and record their findings. They also share what they discover so that others learn from their experience and help conserve nature.



You can practice your investigation skills as a **Citizen Scientist**.

Go outside with a pencil and journal, find a quiet place to sit, and observe what's around you. Use your senses to discover what's nearby—what do you see, feel, smell or hear? Record your findings in your journal, and include the time, date and weather. Keep track of what's around your special place each time you visit. You may find different animals, sounds or smells at different times of the day or in different weather. After making a few entries, read your notes and see what's similar from day to day and what's different.

For some wildlife, you can join lots of other people in collecting information and posting it on a website. The data you gather will help you and others better understand our world. Using this data, scientists have discovered many interesting things: many birds return north earlier than they used to, flowering trees bloom earlier than they used to, and many animals go into hibernation later than they used to. Here are some different citizen science projects you can participate in.



Discover what makes fireflies special by spending your summer evenings observing them for "Firefly Watch." Go to <https://legacy.mos.org/fireflywatch/> to learn what to watch for and how to record your findings. You'll keep a notebook of your observations and share your discoveries with others.

Squirrels are found almost everywhere in New York State, and they're fun and easy to watch. Take photos or draw pictures of those you see; send photos to "Project Squirrel" at www.projectsquirrel.org/, along with your observations. The more Project Squirrel receives, the more they (and we) will learn about squirrels.



Do you like insects and plants? The "Great Sunflower Project" connects both by looking at pollinators, such as bees and other insects in our communities. Count the pollinators on plants in your yard, favorite park or wild area each time you go out. Use field guides to identify the pollinator and the flower. Find more information at www.greatsunflower.org/





LET'S GO



You can explore the outdoors every day when going to and from school.

As a class, pick a date to start recording the natural things everyone sees along their school routes. Whether you walk, travel by car or bus, or take the subway, keep your eyes open for plants and animals like birds, mammals, and even insects. After a week, make two maps of your community on large sheets of paper. On one map, record what everyone saw on their way to school, such as insects on flowers, birds on wires or squirrels in trees. On the other map, do the same thing for the way home. Compare the two maps and list which things are the same and which are different. You can also do this with your friends, your family, or even by yourself when going other places.

Put together a backpack

or tote bag of items to use while exploring outdoors. Include things to help you observe and record your findings and other items to keep you comfortable and safe. Always bring a buddy, and tell an adult where you're going.

1. **Notebook and pencil**
(including colored pencils)
2. **Binoculars**
3. **Camera**
4. **Sunscreen and hat**
5. **Water and snacks**
6. **Compass**
(know how to use it)
7. **Whistle**
(only for an emergency)
8. **Map**
(know how to read one)
9. **First aid kit**
10. **Insect repellent**



What else could you include?



Observing wildlife is fascinating.

Use natural materials found outside to build a shelter you can hide in. While hiding, watch the animals around you without them seeing you. Keep a journal describing what you see and hear. Invite friends or family to join you and share with them what you've observed.



wood tick



deer tick



poison ivy

Watch out for ticks and poison ivy so you can avoid them. Some ticks carry diseases, and poison ivy can leave you with an itchy rash.



Take an over/under hike. Look up at tree tops. Flip rocks and logs over to see what lives under them. (Be sure to return rocks and logs to the way you found them.) Record the findings in your journal.



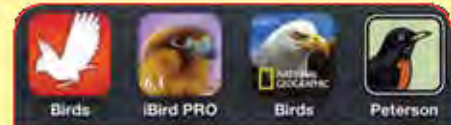
EXPLORING!

Birdwatching is a great outdoor activity.

Start by learning about the most common birds in your neighborhood. Eventually, you can learn about more birds and go beyond your neighborhood in search of favorite species. Sometimes parks and nature centers have lists of the birds you might see during different times of the year. Many birdwatchers keep “life lists” of all the species they’ve seen. To start your own list, get a journal and write down each different type of bird you see, with the date and location. Share the information with your classmates, and chart the number of different species and locations everyone has listed. Which bird is most common? Compare notes with your friends and look together for your favorite birds. Share the information you collect online at such websites as <http://ebird.org>, where you can keep track of your lists and view other data, and scientists can use the information to learn more about different birds.



Jeff Nadler



There's an app for that!
Several apps for birders exist to make birding easier.

Exploring wet worlds is fun to do on a hot day.

Shallow streams are home to all kinds of critters, from crayfish to aquatic insects. Ponds and wetlands contain fish, tadpoles and more. Wear water shoes or rubber boots and wade in! Turn over rocks and look around plants. Be careful to stay in shallow water, and always take a buddy. As you're exploring, be gentle with all of the animals you handle. Put everything back in the water where you found it.



Thomas Lindsay



Have a scavenger hunt

with a list of natural objects to find. Start a collection such as leaves, rocks, flowers for pressing, and more. If you don't want to do a physical collection, take photos and use them to create a scrapbook of your adventures! You can make a scrapbook online at such places as www.shutterfly.com, www.snapfish.com, and www.mixbook.com. There are many more websites to choose from!



There are lots of other ways to explore outdoors.

Pretend you're a great nature explorer. Where would you go? How would you share what you've found with others? Draw a map showing where you discovered interesting things in your neighborhood. Many websites allow you to create your own maps; two examples are www.google.com/mapmaker and www.zeemaps.com.

Make sure you follow nature ethics when out exploring. Ask permission before going on private property, respect the rights of other wildlife viewers (be quiet), don't feed or disturb wildlife, and leave baby animals where you found them. Report all environmental violations to **1-800-TIPP DEC** (1-800-847-7332). Pick up litter, but don't disturb habitats, and try to leave no trace of yourself.



LET'S GO Get Outside!

Take a Family Hike

Take a walk or hike with your family. Explore a range of habitats by visiting a different place each month—an urban park, forest, field, wilderness park, wetland, lake or ocean. How about someplace known for its scenery? Its wildlife? Its history? While you're out, take photos or draw pictures. You can also have fun by selecting a theme like colors or shapes and try to find things that match what you've chosen, like a blue jay for the color blue.

When you return home, you and your family can use your photos and drawings to make a journal. Each of you can write down what you liked best about your hike. At the end of the year, sit down together to read your journal and decide where to go the next year. Keep a map of all the places you've been and where you still want to go.



Try Geocaching

Imagine a worldwide game of hiding and seeking treasure. Geocachers hide objects in places that can be found using GPS (global positioning system) coordinates. They pinpoint the GPS location and put it online. There are many different geocaching information websites. The "official" GPS cache hunt site is located at www.geocaching.com.

Anyone with a GPS unit can look for geocaches. They are hidden around the planet and can be found in all kinds of places, including nature centers, hiking trails, and even cemeteries (check the rules). As you look for different geocaches, you're sure to find lots of interesting things outdoors. Hide your own geocache for others to find. Include a natural object from nearby and a note explaining what it is and why you chose it.



Go Fishing!



Fishing is a great way to have fun, be outdoors, and learn a new skill. Check with a local sporting club about future fishing outings, and learn lots more about fishing from DEC's website www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/44804.html. Also, there's a whole *Conservationist for Kids* issue all about fishing. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/education/63922.html to read it. Some libraries even have programs where you can borrow a fishing pole!



New York State offers many opportunities for families to observe nature together. **The New York Wildlife Viewing Guide** lists many locations across the state where wildlife can be observed. Learn more about the guide and where to view wildlife in New York at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/55423.html.



Urban Adventures Await

Explore City Spaces

You don't have to live in the country to explore nature. Cities have wonderful outdoor spaces, too. There are large city parks, small neighborhood parks and green spaces, school grounds, museums, arboretums and zoos. More than 280 species of birds have been recorded in New York City's Central Park. Even cemeteries are great places to explore for birds and other wildlife!



James Clayton



Eric Dresser

great blue heron

Barbara Nuffer

bluejay

mallard ducks

Watch birds in the city

and help researchers who study birds. Go to <http://celebrateurbanbirds.org/> and sign up for "Celebrate Urban Birds." It's a Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen science project. You can register as a family or as an organization, such as your class at school or your scout or 4-H group. You'll receive an information kit to help you start looking for birds in your neighborhood and reporting your findings.

Sue Shaffer



Neil Saterly

Brooklyn Botanical Garden

An arboretum is a place where trees, shrubs and other plants are grown for scientific study and educational purposes.



There are great places to fish in many of New York's cities. Go to www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/68108.html for information about locations in major cities across the state.

Do you have a green thumb?

Community gardens often look for volunteer help. You'll spend time outdoors and improve your community at the same time. And the fresh vegetables you help grow will taste great!!



Capital District Community Gardens media

The **OUTSIDE** Page

Ideas for Exploring Your Environment



For a real outdoor adventure

you don't have to go far. Camping overnight in your own yard is a great way to get started, whether you're sleeping in a tent or out in the open under the stars. Once you're comfortable camping, try going to a campground or even on an overnight backpack or canoe trip. Learn more about DEC's campgrounds at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/camping.html.

National Wildlife Federation's **Great American Backyard Campout**

is always on the last Saturday in June.

Go to www.nwf.org/great-american-backyard-campout.aspx to learn more.



Make a meal over an open fire. Hot dogs on a stick and s'mores for dessert are easy and fun.

Summer Camps

Both overnight and day camps are great places for kids to spend time in nature and explore their world. Scouts, 4H groups and municipal recreation departments offer choices for campers of all ages. Many summer camps have special weekends for family camping.

DEC summer camps offer kids between 11 and 17 years old a unique week-long residential outdoor environmental education experience at four different summer camps across the state.

Find DEC summer camps on-line (with permission)
www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html
www.facebook.com/NYSDECsummercamps



Daniel Avila

If you live in New York City,

check out the Urban Park Rangers' family camping program. It's so popular there's a lottery to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.
www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers

For more information:

- www.dec.ny.gov/23.html DEC's Animals, Plants, Aquatic Life webpage
 - www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/78429.html *Discover... Citizen Science* (from the December 2011 *Conservationist*)
 - www.biokids.umich.edu University of Michigan – BioKIDS – Kids' Inquiry of Diverse Species
 - www.natureexplore.org Nature Explore – Connecting Children with Nature
 - www.naturerocks.org The Nature Conservancy – Nature Rocks – Let's Go Explore
 - Bateman's Backyard Birds* by Robert Bateman (Barrons Educational Series, Inc., Hauppauge, NY, 2005)
 - Field Trips: Bug Hunting, Animal Tracking, Bird-watching, Shore Walking* by Jim Arnosky (Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2002)
 - Nature in Your Backyard: Simple Activities for Children* by Susan Lang (Millbrook Press, Brookfield, CT, 1995)
 - My Nature Book: A Journal and Activity Book for Kids, 2nd Edition* by Linda Kranz (Taylor Trade Publishing, Boulder, CO, 2013)
 - Pond Life* by George Reid (Golden Guides from St. Martin's Press, New York, 2001)
 - Watching Nature: A Beginner's Field Guide* by Monica Russo (Sterling Pub. Co., New York, 1998)
- Clair Walker Leslie has written several books about nature exploration and nature journaling. Check your local library or search online for them.

Special thanks to the NYS DEC Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources.

New York State **CONSERVATIONIST FOR KIDS** Volume 7, Number 3, Spring 2014

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Joe Martens, Commissioner

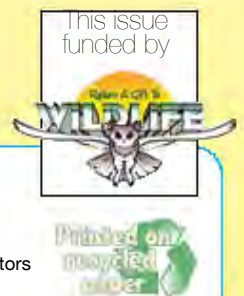
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Conservationist for Kids

Supplement for Classroom Teachers – Becoming an Outdoor Explorer

Exploring the Great Outdoors

Spending time outside exploring the natural world is fun, and lots of interesting things can be discovered out there. There has been a big push recently to get kids away from their televisions and computers and to encourage them to spend more time recreating outdoors. Many studies have shown that spending time outdoors helps kids to be healthier, reduces childhood obesity, and leads to more active lives. More information about this topic can be found on the Children & Nature Network website at www.childrenandnature.org.

Exploring the outdoors can take many different formats, ranging from classes held outdoors to hiking and camping, to planting a garden. This issue of *Conservationist for Kids* looks at some ways that you and your students can explore the outdoors, incorporate it into your classroom lessons, and get kids and their families to become outdoor explorers. Classroom discussions on this topic can include citizen science, journaling, enhancing observational skills, and even lessons on first aid and safety.

This Issue's "Outside Page"

A variety of activities can be done while becoming an outdoor explorer. Just a few of them are described on the Outside Page (page 8) of this issue of *Conservationist for Kids*. While the focus of the Outside Page is family camping adventures and summer camp programs, you can use this information in your classroom lessons and perhaps even incorporate ideas for summer "homework" assignments, such as having students keep a nature journal or scrapbook documenting their adventures.

Teacher Workshops

For teachers who have participated in a Project WILD or Project Learning Tree workshop, the activities listed below complement the spring 2014 issue of *Conservationist for Kids*. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/education/1913.html for information about workshops and how to obtain curriculum and activity guides.

Project WILD: Playing Lightly on the Earth
Urban Nature Search
Microtrek Treasure Hunt

Project Learning Tree: Are Vacant Lots Vacant?
People, Places, Things
Schoolyard Safari

***Conservationist for Kids* and an accompanying teacher supplement are distributed to public school fourth-grade classes three times each school year (fall, winter and spring).** If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list, if your contact information should be changed, or if you have questions or comments, please e-mail the editor at cforkids@gw.dec.state.ny.us or call 518-402-8047.

Limited quantities of back issues of *Conservationist for Kids* magazine are available upon request. Go to www.dec.ny.gov/education/40248.html to preview back issues online before requesting printed copies. From each issue's lead page, click on the "read the entire issue, cover to cover" link to access an eight-page PDF of the print version. To request printed copies (individual or bulk), e-mail the editor at cforkids@gw.dec.state.ny.us or call 518-402-8047.

Supplemental Activities for the Classroom

Citizen Science

Many different citizen science projects can be incorporated into your classroom. By doing this, you can help students enhance their observational skills, as well as focus on topics like math, writing, art, and science. In addition, data collected from projects help scientists learn more about the plants and animals being observed. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has numerous bird-related citizen science projects available, which can be found at www.birds.cornell.edu/citsci/projects. Geared toward classroom use, Journey North enables students to track the arrival of spring through such things as bird migration, budding of trees, and more. Information can be found at www.learner.org/jnorth/. For additional ideas, see the “Online Resources and Books” section below.

Earth Day

Earth Day has been celebrated every April 22nd since its founding in 1970. Established as a way to bring more attention to environmental issues, Earth Day is a great opportunity to celebrate the Earth and take steps to protect and improve the environment. For ideas on how to incorporate Earth Day into your curriculum, visit http://edhelper.com/caring_for_earth.htm.

Project WET

The mission of Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) is to teach children, parents, educators, and community members about the importance of water. Through Project WET materials, you can help your students learn more about such topics as water conservation, watersheds, and wetlands. Many curriculum materials can be used in the classroom itself, and some activities include opportunities for exploring the great outdoors. For more information regarding the Project WET curriculum, visit <http://projectwet.org/>. For information regarding Project WET in New York, visit DEC’s website at www.dec.ny.gov/education/1902.html.

Do you have an interactive white board in your classroom?

If you use a SMART Board or similar interactive white board or projection system in your classroom, consider downloading a PDF of *Conservationist for Kids* and using it in your classroom, along with the printed copies enclosed in this mailing. This issue and all of our back issues are available at www.dec.ny.gov/education/40248.html.

Online Resources and Books

www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5274.html DEC’s Arbor Day webpage

www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/78429.html Discover...Citizen Science (from December 2011 *Conservationist*)

www.biokids.umich.edu University of Michigan – BioKIDS - Kids' Inquiry of Diverse Species

<http://budburst.org/> Project BudBurst

www.cnps.org/cnps/education/curriculum/index.php California Native Plant Society – Nature Journaling Curriculum

www.earthday.org/ Earth Day Network

<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/> Cornell Lab of Ornithology, eBird

<http://ebird.org/content/ybn/> Cornell Lab of Ornithology, eBird Young Birders Network

www.natureexplore.org Nature Explore – Connecting Children with Nature

www.naturerocks.org The Nature Conservancy - Nature Rocks – Let’s Go Explore

www.nwf.org/Be-Out-There.aspx National Wildlife Federation - Be Out There

<http://nysoea.org/> New York State Outdoor Education Association

www.nysyoungbirders.org/ New York State Young Birders Club

www.sierraclub.org/education/nature_journal.asp The Sierra Club - Keeping a Nature Journal

www.fws.gov/letsgooutside/educators.html U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Let’s Go Outside!

Bateman's Backyard Birds by Robert Bateman (Barrons Educational Series, Inc., Hauppauge, NY, 2005)

Field Trips: Bug Hunting, Animal Tracking, Bird-watching, Shore Walking by Jim Arnosky (Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2002)

Nature in Your Backyard: Simple Activities for Children by Susan Lang (Millbrook Press, Brookfield, CT, 1995)

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Watching Nature: A Beginner's Field Guide by Monica Russo (Sterling Pub. Co., New York, 1998)