



WELCOME SPRING!

YOUTH AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES

April 3, 2020

Woodland Park Zoo's Youth and Adult Engagement team focuses on programs that develop connections to nature and animals, scientific understanding, and promote connections to self and community.

Spring is arriving and the signs of the changing seasons are all around us. Take some time to pause, observe nature, and witness the start of spring. We hope the activities below help you and your family connect to nature, wherever you may be.

START A NATURE JOURNAL

From bugs to birds, plants to clouds, nature journals are a place to record your observations of the natural world and practice your observation skills.

What you need: Paper or notebook, pencil; *Optional – stapler, crayons or markers, photos of nature or nature items, glue, scissors, leaf*

Time: 20-30 minutes

1. Gather materials for your notebook – either multiple sheets of paper folded and stapled together, or a notebook. Feel free to reuse an older notebook and start your nature journal on the first blank page.
2. Prepare the cover of your notebook (either the top page or the outside cover). Include your name and give your journal a title.
3. Decorate the cover of your notebook to personalize it. You may choose to make designs with pencil, crayons, or markers or cut out and glue pictures of nature or nature items to make a collage cover.
4. Open to the first page of your notebook to start with your first entry. Here are some possible ideas:
 - Find a leaf (observe it while attached to a plant, or pick one up from the ground). Make a life-size drawing of the leaf in your journal. Add in details to your drawing and make notes about what you notice about the leaf. You may trace the outside of the leaf to get started.
 - Do a Sit Spot and record your observations (see activity below).
5. Have your nature journal ready to use for recording nature observations in the future. Make a plan for when you will do your next journal entry.



Ryan Hawk, WPZ

SIT SPOT

Take time to sit quietly and use your senses to closely observe nature around you.

What you need: No supplies required; *Optional – Nature Journal (see activity above), pencil*

Time: 15 minutes

1. Find a place where you can safely and comfortably sit to observe nature. You might sit inside and look out a window or find a place outside. If possible, choose a place that you will be able to visit over the coming weeks.

2. Take a few deep breaths – in through your nose, and out through your mouth – to help you relax and prepare for your observations.
3. Spend a few minutes in quiet observation, using your senses (other than taste) to observe what you notice around you. The length of time is flexible. Try to sit quietly for at least three minutes, and you might do as long as ten minutes. Here are some things you might try as you sit and observe:
 - Start by closing your eyes.
 - Gently touch the ground beside you. What do you notice about the texture of how it feels?
 - Listen closely. What do you hear?
 - Keeping your eyes closed, take a deep breath in through your nose. What do you smell?
 - Open your eyes and look around, allowing your eyes to adjust to the light and taking in what you see.
 - Pick one thing you can see and look at it closely. What do you notice that you may not have seen if you just glanced at it quickly?
 - Pick one color, such as green or brown. How many different shades of that color do you see from where you are seated?
4. You can repeat this sit spot activity in the same place on a regular basis. Each time, you will notice new and different things, such as signs of seasonal change and start to notice patterns.



Consider this!

Use your nature journal to record what you observe. Start by making a heading at the top of your page with the **date, time, location, and weather**. Your notes can be short and simple, no need for complete sentences, and may include what you see, hear, smell, and feel. You may also wish to make quick sketches of something that you see or write down questions that you have about what you observe.

POINT, CLICK, IDENTIFY!

Using the Seek app by iNaturalist, you can turn a stroll through your neighborhood, a park, or any place outdoors into a lesson in species identification.

What you need: Device with app capabilities, reusable bag or basket to gather natural materials; *Optional – Nature Journal*

Time: This activity can take as much, or as little, time as you would like.

1. Download the Seek app by iNaturalist at https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app or in your app store.
2. Go on a walk in your back yard or in your neighborhood. As you walk, point the seek camera at plant species that you would like to identify.
3. After identifying a plant, gather a leaf or two by picking them up off the ground and storing them in your bag or basket.
 - a. Gather a variety of different leaves from various species of plants.
 - b. Pay attention to gathering different sizes and shapes. This will be important for our next activity (Leaf Animal).
4. As you identify plant species, learn about them. The Seek app is full of interesting information about the species in your area!
5. Keep a log of the plants you identified either on your app or in your nature journal.

LEAF ANIMAL

Get creative! Use the items you collected on your nature walk to create a Leaf Animal of your choosing.

What you need: Paper, glue; *Optional – pens, pencils, markers, paint*

Time: 15-20 minutes

1. Take a minute to look at your leaves. Ask yourself, “What do they remind me of? Is the leaf long and round like the body of an owl, or pointed like a porcupine? Do I have two leaves that would make perfect wings or small pointy leaves for ears?” Consider what animal you might make using the leaves you’ve gathered.
2. Lay the leaves out on the paper in your animal design. As you do this, keep track of the leaves that you used.
3. When you are happy with your creation, glue the leaves on the paper.
4. Gently lay a heavy book on your design and leave overnight.
5. Add any special features with paint or a pen.
6. Share your animal with your family and teach them about the different species of plants used in your creation.