

nature's EDUCATION RESOURCES

Hands-on, Outdoor Learning

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Natural Resources Education Centre

Important Dates for your Calendar

October 3

World Habitat Day

October 3–11

Walk to School Week

October 14–23

National Science
and Technology Week

October 17–23

Waste Reduction Week

October 28

AST Science Teachers
Conference

November 21

World Fisheries Day

December 2-4

NREC Festival of Trees
and Crafts

Branching Out – Curriculum-Based Programming with Hands-on Activities

The Natural Resources Education Centre (NREC) is well known for our on-site programs that take classes outside and into the McCurdy Woodlot. Centrally located in the Musquodoboit Valley, our Centre serves a wide variety of participants to help educate and encourage an appreciation and interest in our natural resources.

In June we delivered “Nature Investigation – Scientist for a Day” at Five Islands Provincial Park. This program had students working with Department staff and guest scientists to explore aquatics, wildlife, plants, insects, marine life, and geology. Two classes from the local area rotated through six stations learning about the diversity of life, inventory tools, careers, the relationships and connections linking all of these natural communities. We hope to offer this program again.

This winter we are again pleased to present a Youth Hunting and Trapping Camp (see page 2).



Contact us:

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www.gov.ns.ca/natr/education/nrec
nrec@gov.ns.ca
902.384.3420



NREC OFFERS

- FREE On-Site Programming
- 2 On-site Classrooms
- 20 + Education programs
- 49 Hectare (120 acre) McCurdy woodlot with interpretive trails
- Outreach School Visit (fee)
- Chaswood Woodlot featuring the Acadian Trail—an inexpensive rustic experience for overnights



Creature Feature



The wood turtle is one of four native species of freshwater turtles found in Nova Scotia. Easily identified by their sculpted carapace (shell) and bright orange legs, wood turtles are widespread, though their numbers are declining in many areas. Federally listed as threatened, and provincially listed as vulnerable, many of the threats to wood turtles are directly related to human activities such as agriculture and collection for pets. One way we can help solve this problem is to educate youth about the importance of conservation. By ensuring youth know what a wood turtle is and what to do if they find a one, we can start securing the future for wood turtles. For more information or to arrange a program on wood turtles for your class, please contact Wendy at wendygholman@gmail.com.

Nature Notes

NAMES ARE NOT ENOUGH

By Dave Taylor, NREC Educator

During a recent outing with a group of children, a child frequently asked the names of each and every plant she encountered as we walked along a wooded trail. As each one was identified with a title she happily moved on to the next specimen, content with name but knowing little or nothing of the plant's habitat requirements, its contributions to the ecosystem or its methods of regeneration. For her, mysteries were resolved by giving names to things.

Knowledge of a label does not assure understanding and the penalties paid for confidence in words as a substitute for understanding are heavy. To be able to tell time based on the position of hands on a clock is useful, but the concept of the Earth's movement in relation to the sun and the effect it has on living things is much more profound.

When children explore, they are often able to discover the many relationships that exist between various forms of wildlife. Error or failure is not something they fear until adults make them something to fear. Nothing seems to incite a child towards discovery more than to hear an adult say "I don't know."

One activity that has paid dividends over the years is to have students give names to the flora and fauna that they discover. The only caveat is that the name must in some way describe the niche or place that the specimen lives or describes its appearance, smell or colour. This exercise not only encourages the imagination but will incite investigation. For the teacher, that's what it's all about.



YOUTH HUNTING AND TRAPPING CAMP – MARCH 2012

Department of Natural Resources staff and local experts will present our 2nd two-day overnight hunting and trapping camp this winter.

This hands-on camp will give participants the chance to learn skills and gain experience in hunting, snaring, and participating in outdoor



recreation safely. The camp will take place at the Chaswood Educational Woodlot where participants can make and set individual snares, construct survival kits, practice outdoor cooking and learn the basics of wilderness navigation and interpreting the environment. Day two will have students travelling to the local rifle range to fire long bows, cross bows and .22 rifles. Class size is small to permit hands-on experience. Boys and Girls between the ages of 12 and 15 are encouraged to signup; there is a limit of 12 participants so register soon!

Contact the Natural Resources Education Centre at 384-3420 / nrec@gov.ns.ca to request a registration package.

Amelia's Back Pocket Favourites

These two activities from the *Sharing Nature with Children* books are among my favourite and most used at the Centre. Both *Unnature Trail* and *Sound Map* provide wonderful opportunities to make participants feel more comfortable outside, focus attention, and spark a curiosity with nature. With easy ways to incorporate curriculum links, be sure to put these in your back pocket the next time your class goes outside.

UNNATURE TRAIL

This game challenges children to look closely at their surroundings.

- Group size: up to 30
- Ages: 5–13 years
- Props: Human-made objects
- Time: 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Look for a trail going through an area with trees of various sizes, leaf litter, rotting logs and other plants. Mark the beginning and end of a 20 to 30-metre (65 to 100-ft.) section of the trail (make sure it is wide enough for two people to pass). Ahead of time, secretly place 16 to 20 human-made objects along one side of the trail. Some of these should stand out (e.g., brightly colored balloons or fluorescent pink cockroaches). Others should blend with surroundings (e.g., rubber bands or clothespins). Keep the number of objects you have planted a secret.
2. Have the children walk the trail one at a time, trying to spot as many objects as they can. They are to remain quiet and not pick up the objects or point them out to others. Have them whisper in your ear how many objects they saw. Tell each child the total number of objects, and have them walk the trail again, trying to find more. Total “looking” time can range from 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the age and attention span.
3. After two rounds, go to one end of the trail and have the students tell you where the objects are, picking them up as you go. Discuss how camouflage and colouration helps animals hide in the woods. Then go on a search for small camouflaged animals (insects, spiders, etc.).

Unnature Trail is a Sharing Nature® Worldwide activity created by Joseph Cornell.

Sharing Nature with Children Volume 1, 1998, page 42–43, published by Dawn Publications

Free Project WILD Workshop at the Association of Science Teachers Conference – October 28, 2011

CALLING ALL SCIENCE TEACHERS!

Take home a free resource for your classroom that will enable you to engage your students in a variety of hands-on environmental lessons. By participating in a Project WILD workshop you will receive a manual containing over 100 diverse and instructionally sound educational activities. This popular conservation-education program has been delivered in Nova Scotia for over 20 years. Available in English and French, learning activities are cross-referenced with the Pan-Canadian Common Framework of Science Learning Outcomes and support other major school subject areas such as social studies, language arts, math, and music for Grade primary to 12. This lively and engaging session include a program overview, participation in Project WILD activities (outdoors), and plans for using Project WILD in your classroom. The Project Wild Activity Guide is not for sale and is only available through participation in a Project WILD Workshop. This workshop will take place during session 5 (full day) from 9 am–2:30 pm. Online registration will begin in September. For more information on Project WILD or to request a workshop near you, please contact Sandra Fraser at frasersx@gov.ns.ca or (902) 424-5481.



SOUND MAP

In this activity, children listen to and record the sounds of nature around them.

- **Group size:** 1 or more
- **Ages:** 5 years and up
- **Props:** Index card and pencil for each person
- **Time:** 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Select a site where your group is likely to hear a variety of nature sounds, such as a meadow, forest, or marsh. Have each child find a special listening spot and settle down with a pencil and index card.
2. Have the children mark an X in the center of their cards. Explain that this marks the spot where they are sitting. When they hear a sound, they should make a mark on the card to symbolize the sound (e.g., wavy lines for wind, a musical note for a bird). The placement of the mark should indicate roughly the direction and distance of the sound.
3. Have everyone listen for 5 to 10 minutes. Afterwards, have students share their sound maps.

Sound Map is Sharing Nature® Worldwide activity created by Joseph Cornell.

Sharing Nature with Children Volume 2, 1989, page 74–75, published by Dawn Publications.

Cut out and Save!
TURN OVER TO SEE 'UNNATURE TRAIL' ON THE REVERSE SIDE.

Extension Contacts in Local DNR Offices

Are you located too far away from the NREC to book a program? DNR Extension Staff are available to schools across Nova Scotia and offer presentations on many different resource stewardship topics.

- Programs available on first-come first-served basis. Staff schedules often more flexible in the winter.
- Programs available for all grade levels, including adult education.
- Program presentations arranged to fit your schedule, and can be linked to theme days/weeks.
- Program topics depend on interest and local support staff experience.
- Program presentations can support curriculum outcomes.
- Most program presentations are offered free of charge.

Contact the DNR extension staff in your area for more details:
www.gov.ns.ca/natr/Education/contact-list.asp