



Ideas for Families : Exploring Nearby Nature Together

- Pull out the picnic blanket and do some cloudspotting. <https://cloudatlas.wmo.int/cloud-identification-guide.html>
Bring out your watercolors and paint the sky.
- Bring out the shovels and trowels and challenge the kids to change the direction of the snowmelt away from the house!
- Tag a tree and photograph a branch daily as the buds burst. Hold a white piece of cardboard behind the twig to get a close-up photograph.
Use a key to identify your tree:
<https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/leaf/Documents/LEAFWinterTreeIDKey.pdf>
- Write haiku on slips of paper and hang on a favorite tree in celebration of the Spring Equinox!
Some help: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haiku_in_English
- Fingerprint with mud! Hang the artwork up outside using clothesline and clothes pins.
- Create a musical sound station in your yard with sap buckets, metal spoons, varying lengths and diameters of sticks, and more!.
- Build a stick fort big enough for the whole family to fit in! (Or maybe just for a teddy bear.)
- Put on your mud boots and follow a nearby riverbank upstream as far as you can. Watch your footing as the water is cold!
- Bring out the measuring tape, compass, clipboards and pencils and create a map of your yard.
- Go fishing or crayfish catching -- and releasing!
<https://whiteriverpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Field-Guide-to-the-Crayfish-of-the-White-River-Watershed.pdf>
https://www.vtfishfinder.com/view_all_fish_types.php
- Pick a sunny day to draw your shadows in chalk on the sidewalk every hour and watch them move.
- Put on your puddle boots and wade into a nearby stream to see what critters are living under the rocks!
http://academics.smcvt.edu/Vermont_rivers/River%20sites/usual%20suspects.htm
- Gather some rocks and sticks and make sundials.
<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Sundial>
- On April 1st, bring in some freshly cut twigs, put them in water and watch which ones open first.

- Stir up some craft dough and collect winter weeds to make miniature bouquets. (You can find a craft dough recipe here: <https://nearbynature.fwni.org/2018/10/24/staying-warm-activities/#more-97>)
- Go on a walk in the coniferous woods specifically to collect a variety of cones. Later you can use these to create cone critters with glue and googly eyes and funny little felt hats.
- Shape walnut-sized pieces of bees wax into miniature woodland critters. Find a mossy rock home for them.
- Take a night time walk and listen for owls, spring peepers, wood frogs and more.
- Build a bee hotel: <https://www.foxleas.com/make-a-bee-hotel.asp>
- Raining outside? Put on your raincoats and rainboots and sit quietly watching the raindrops hit the puddles and the soil.
- Look for the moon each night and create your own moon chart out of white paper circles cut to shape and glued onto a background of black roll paper. <https://stardate.org/nightsky/moon>
- Peel some crayons and do some tree bark rubbings. <https://extension.unh.edu/blog/bark-great-way-identify-trees-winter>
- Start some sunflower seeds for a sunflower fort this summer.
- Get your headlamps out. Be ready on the next warm rainy night to witness salamanders and frogs migrating to vernal pools!
- Create big and small stick stars to hang in your yard! <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Twig-Star-Decorations>
- Pretend you are a wild animal! Have each member of your family choose a different New England wild animal to be for an outing in your nearby woods. What would a deer be doing? A bobcat? A white-footed mouse?
- 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>
- Visit a nearby pond. How good is your aim? Toss a piece of driftwood into a nearby pond and then the game is to hit the stick with a rock.
- Play tag in a nearby woods. Make up your own rules to the game!
- Lie on your bellies on the newly emerging grass and imagine life as an earthworm. <https://journeynorth.org/tm/worm/WormLife.html>
- Go on a muddy hike to look for animal tracks! <https://blog.nwf.org/2014/12/who-goes-there-identifying-animal-tracks-in-your-backyard/>
- Create a nice long whole family list of Signs of Spring!
- Take photos of your family in nature and tag Four Winds (<https://fwni.org/>) in your social media: #fwni, #nearbynature, #thenatureprogram, #fourwinds, #fourwindsvolunteer