

WonderNotes

WonderWorks Project Partners

Creating Pathways to Nature Engagement



December 2022

Kishwaukee Valley Nature Journaling Club

Science + Art + Nature = Wonder

We are excited to announce our newest partnership and program. The Kishwaukee Valley Nature Journaling Club in collaboration with Boone County Conservation District.

If you are a new or experienced nature journaler we would love for you to join us.

We will begin meeting in person in January, but our online community is already blooming. You can find us at: www.kishwaukeevalleynaturejournalingclub.blogspot.com, on Instagram

@kishnaturejournalingclub and join our Facebook Group /

KishwaukeeValleyNatureJournalingClub



What is Nature Journaling...

Nature Journaling is the practice of spending time in the natural world and recording one's experiences, questions, observations and wonder in words and sketches. It is a practice that brings together science, art and creativity while promoting wonder, curiosity and connection. Journaling in nature invites us to awaken our observational skills, learn about our local environment and make lasting records and connections.

Nature journaling with a group offers the opportunity to grow in our connection to the natural world while building a community of like-minded creative naturalists who can support one another and learn together.

We are based in Belvidere, Illinois in the heart of the Kishwaukee River Valley. During the colder months, we will meet at the Boone County Conservation District Nature Center in Spencer Park in Belvidere. In warmer months and when weather permits, we will get out and explore our local nature and landscape.

In this group, we explore our connection to the natural world through experience, observation and record-making. We come together to support one another and to give ourselves the freedom to explore and create without judgment. You do not need to be a scientist or artist to nature journal. All you need is a sense of curiosity and an inclination to get outside.



WonderNotes

The Nature of Childhood

Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children
2022 conference, Springfield, Illinois

"For ourselves, and for our planet, we must be both strong and strongly connected — with each other, with the earth. As children, we need time to wander, to be outside, to nibble on icicles, watch ants, to build with dirt and sticks in the hollow of the earth, to lie back and contemplate clouds..."

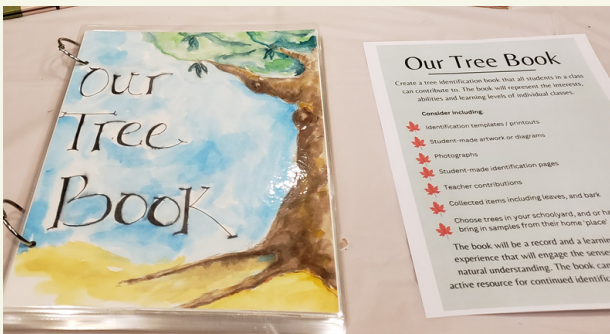
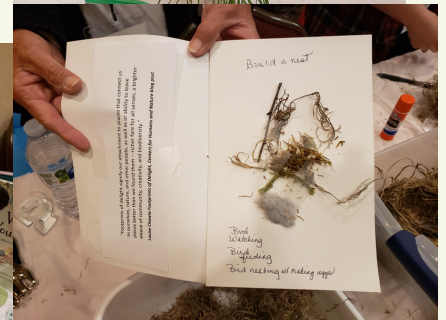
Gary Paul Nabhan & Stephen Trimble, *The Geography of Childhood*, 2004



We were delighted by the wonderful experience of facilitating a session at this year's conference of the Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children in October. We were joined by a group of inspired and inspiring early childhood teachers

Please find some of the delightful projects we shared at the conference and other fun downloadable resources, including templates for Our Tree Book, Nature in the School Yard Signage and ideas for making paper, in the new sharables section on our website!

<https://wonderworksprojectpartners.com/community-engagement>



WonderNotes

Engaging with Nature in Winter

Winter Activity: Frozen Suncatchers

Living in Northern Illinois means there are many wintery months and with that comes endless opportunities to appreciate the season as well as experience the beauty of winter. It's important to get outside during winter, breathe fresh air, feel the chill on your cheeks, and bask in cold but yet sunny, blue days. One of the most fascinating aspects of the outdoors in winter is snow and ice—kids gravitate to both! Creating beautiful icy suncatchers is a fun way to make time spent outdoors with children meaningful and engaging. It's important that children and their adults are prepared to spend time outside in the winter. That means proper footwear and clothing to stay warm. A cold and uncomfortable kiddo can't enjoy the experience. Start with a walk...around the yard, the neighborhood, park, or playground to look for natural items to collect—leaves, small cones, berry sprigs, seed pods, twigs as well as small cuttings from your yard including boxwood, holly, or evergreens to add. Look for a variety of colors and textures. Next, you'll need a round container like a paper or plastic plate or pie pan, add water, but not too deep, then place collected natural items in the water to create designs. A loop of twine or yarn can be added so the suncatcher can be hung when frozen. Leave the containers outside to freeze for a couple of hours or overnight. The results are truly magical. I really love Run Wild My Child - Frozen Suncatchers. Have a look! And don't be shy, send us pics of those beautiful suncatchers you create this winter. Find us at connect@wonderworksprojectpartners.com ~ Meghan



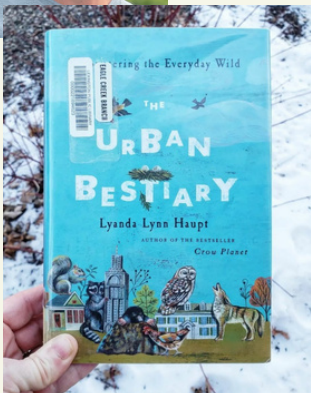
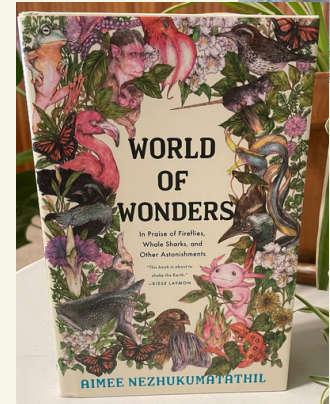
5 minutes (on the back porch)... – Starting on January 1st of this year I dedicated myself to a 100 days project. 100 DAYS OUTSIDE (in the dead of winter, what was I thinking?!). My intention was to force myself out of my house hibernation and learn how to be outside in the cold. My only rule was that I had to spend intentional time outside every day. On most days that looked like a short walk in the yard or choosing to walk to the mailbox instead of driving up, giving myself a few moments to pay attention, to listen, and to feel the outside world. I did find that I hiked more during the winter months than I ever had before. But on the coldest days and the busiest days, I would often neglect the intention until I found myself at the end of the day met with the impending loss of my 'streak'. That is when I started wrapping myself in a heavy blanket and stepping outside for 5 minutes on the back porch. Always after dark, and usually quite late in the evening, I soon found myself completely in love with this practice and began saving my outside time for the end of the day. There is something distinctly wonderful about being outside in the dark when most of my immediate world is sleeping. Almost a year later, as winter has begun to set in, I am practicing 5 minutes again. Even on days when I have already spent time outside, I look forward to these few moments of attunement, listening to rustling branches, or marveling at the stillness, feeling the sting of cold on my face, while my golden retriever extends his snout and sniffs into the world.

I invite you to join us. ~ Joanna

Wander Notes

Notes on Inspiration...

What's on my desk? A copy of *World of Wonders* by poet and writer Aimee Nezhukumatathil. It is a welcome distraction as I try my best to focus on the day's work that is waiting for me. I had the pleasure of listening to Aimee Nezhukumatathil's virtual keynote address during an online conference—I purchased her book immediately! It is a compilation of the most beautifully written essays about the natural world from Aimee's personal experiences and those of her family but all too relatable by anyone who has a deep appreciation for the natural world and their place in it. It inspires me to take a turn writing...putting words to thoughts and thoughts to paper. This practice will be instrumental come January when I embark on a new venture, the Kishwaukee Valley Nature Journaling Club. ~ Meghan



What's on my desk? This month I am re-reading the *Urban Bestiary* by Lynda Lynn Haupt, a naturalist, eco-philosopher and writer, based in Seattle, WA. Like most of my favorites, the pages of this book are dogeared and plastered with sticky notes, marking inspiring passages and information I want to return to. Haupt's works focus on the relationships between the human and natural world in urban or human developed settings. In the *Bestiary* she introduces us to the most common urban dwelling wildlife, dispelling longstanding myths about many of them – are Opossums really vicious – where are all of the baby crows?? – And she reminds us that urban dwelling wildlife are not by their nature nuisance animals as many of them have come to be labeled, but highly adaptable creatures who have learned to live and thrive alongside humans. I love the *Bestiary* because it invites me to see myself as a member of the natural world, and invites me to pay attention to that world wherever I am. As we enter the winter months, and inevitably spend most of our time indoors, I am inspired by remembering that I can still gain much from spending a few minutes walking my yard or watching through my windows. Tiny creatures such as birds and squirrels, survive all winter in our brutal Midwest climate...how is the world is that possible?! That question alone brings me wonder. ~ Joanna



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December Events:

Nature Ornaments Workshop

Monday, December 19, 10 am – 12 pm

Family Event, Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden, Rockford, Illinois

Join us in a playful family workshop to make holiday ornaments with natural materials

Contact, sburbach@klehm.org to register!

January Events:

Nature Journaling Club

Fridays January 13th and 27th , 11 am – 1 pm

Boone County Conservation District Nature Center, Spencer Park, Belvidere, Illinois

Information: [Facebook/Kishwaukeevalleynaturejournalingclub](https://www.facebook.com/Kishwaukeevalleynaturejournalingclub)



Teach the children... Show them daisies and the pale hepatica. Teach them the taste of sassafras and wintergreen. The lives of the blue sailors, mallow, sunbursts, the moccasin flowers. And the frisky ones—inkberry, lamb's-quarters, blueberries. And the aromatic ones—rosemary, oregano. Give them peppermint to put in their pockets as they go to school. Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit. Stand them in the stream, head them upstream, rejoice as they learn to love this green space they live in, its sticks and leaves and then the silent, beautiful blossoms.

Mary Oliver, Upstream

At WonderWorks we believe that each of us has a unique connection to the natural world. We are passionate about helping individuals foster that connection and to grow in wonder and curiosity. We are collaborative partners serving communities through the organizations we collaborate with. Through creative thinking, professional experience and unique skillsets we create new experiential and educational avenues to engaging with nature. Come Wonder with Us!

www.wonderworksprojectpartners.com



When it's over I want to say all my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was the bridegroom taking the world into my arms. I don't want to end up simply having visited the world.

- Mary Oliver

