

February 2024

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Making Ink & Dye
With Invasive Plants

Feeding Wild Birds
By Hand

February Bird
ID Challenge

February Nature
Photo Challenge

Dyer's Woad &
Asiatic Daylily
Info & Coloring Pages

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages & more!



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Welcome February!

What are you hoping to do in nature this month?

This is the shortest month of the year, but this year is a leap year so we have one extra day to do something fun with!

We have had all sorts of interesting weather here in Minnesota this winter. It has mostly been much warmer than usual and we've had less snow than usual. We did have some very cold days, but then it got very warm again. Our 16 year old son, Alex, loves ice skating on the lakes this time of year and he has been very impatient for safe frozen areas to skate on.

Even with our warm weather, our lakes get so cold here in Minnesota that people can drive on them. We have "fish houses" out on our frozen lakes where folks sit inside and drill holes in the ice to fish down below.

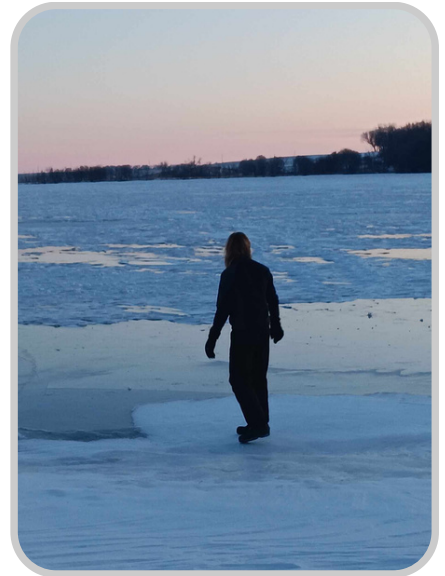
Do you live where the lakes freeze or is it warmer where you are? Which do you think you'd prefer?

We are starting some seeds this month for our gardens, and to grow herbs inside on our windowsills. Right now we have chives and basil that are growing inside and it's so nice to have tiny gardens and fresh grown herbs to snip for supper.

I also have lots of geraniums in pots on all of my window sills. They'll go back outside when the weather warms up but I love their cheerful leaves and flowers in the winter time. It's nice when it's dreary outside to still have nature of some sort inside!

I hope you're having good weather for lots of wild adventures wherever you are, and that you have a wonderful, wild month!

Alicia



Why is Wild Kids free?

Kids (and their grown ups) need nature, and nature needs us! Our family believes in the importance of sharing & helping each other, and of passing on skills to help our world and each other. As long as we are able, we plan to produce Wild Kids to help do this for families who find it useful.

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Find previous issues and more at the Wild Kids Magazine website at www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids.

Go Wild in February

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Color in the circles of the ones you do!

See if you can see your shadow on Groundhog Day (Feb. 2) -- legend (not science) says that if the groundhog does, there will be 6 more weeks of winter!

Take part in the 2024 Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19 *

Take part in our February nature photo challenge with a different theme each day

Practice building a safe campfire

Learn to feed birds by hand (we show you how in this issue!)

Start some herb seeds like basil for a windowsill garden

Do some art with watercolor paints or non-permanent markers and then put it in the rain to watch it change

Try to find 10 heart shaped nature items (rocks, leaves, clouds, etc.) to draw, collect or photograph

Look for dried seedheads of native wildflowers in your area and take a few home to scatter in your garden or neighborhood

Sprinkle some seeds (not leaves) from spice jars on the soil of a house plant, barely cover and keep moist, and watch to see if any sprout

*Visit www.birdcount.org for more information

Feeding Wild Birds... By Hand!

By Dawn Hanigan

Note from Alicia-- Dawn shared this with us a few years ago and I thought it would be fun to run it again. She and her son are still feeding wild birds by hand so I've added some more recent photos of their fun!

Feeding wild birds is a wonderful hobby, especially in the winter when our feathered friends can use a little extra help surviving the elements.

Our family maintains several feeding stations on our patio and observing the wide variety of birds (and other critters) who call our yard home has provided many interesting nature lessons over the years - but perhaps none so meaningful (and magical!) as the experience of feeding wild birds by hand!



Six year old Owen is shown here participating in a recent nature program at our local Audubon sanctuary.

The group of children kept as quiet as possible, offering a bit of seed in their steady hands - and within a very short time they were attracting lots of brave little birds!

Of course, sanctuary birds are tamer than the average backyard visitor, having grown comfortable with humans over time, but hand-feeding can be done at home, too! It just takes a little preparation and a lot of patience ...

Here are a few tips:



* You'll want to try hand-feeding in a spot where birds are already used to finding seed. If you don't have feeders in your yard, establish some now and give the birds a few weeks to get used to the set up.

* We've found a combination of a few kinds of feeders attracts the widest variety of birds: hanging "tube" feeders, a tray feeder (for birds who don't perch) and a suet feeder will appeal to many different species.

* Position your feeders close enough to the house that you can watch the birds go about their business, but make sure there is adequate foliage (shelter) nearby. Birds like to flit back to safety once they've snatched a bit of seed.

* We've had greatest success attracting birds with black-oil seed (instead of a mixed seed blend), and this appeals to the boldest bird species, the Chickadees and Tufted Titmice.



* When you're ready to hand-feed, begin with a small amount of seed in an open bare hand, held away from the body. Keep your palm as flat and still as possible. Find a comfortable spot - because it will take some time for the birds to trust you!

* If you're feeding birds together, don't stand too close to each other - set yourselves apart to encourage the birds to try each available hand offering seed.



* It will probably take a while for the birds to build trust, but don't give up too soon! If you practice a little bit every day, before too long you'll have a bird eating right out of your hand!

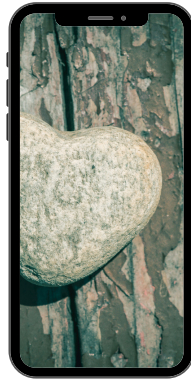
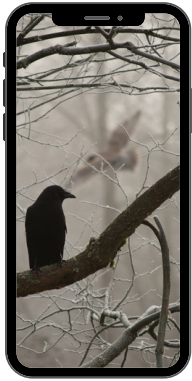
* And finally, make sure to wash your hands after feeding birds, and/or handling bird feeders!

Good luck, and have fun!

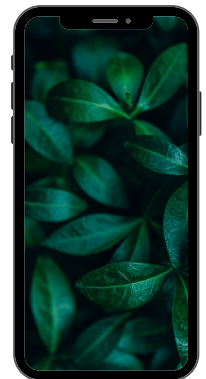
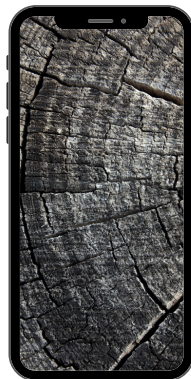
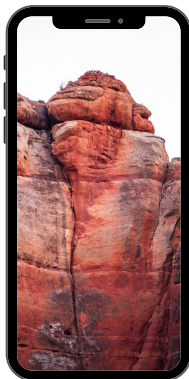


February

Nature Photo Challenge



- | | | | | | |
|----|----------|----|---------------|----|------------|
| 1 | Sky | 11 | Spotted | 21 | Silhouette |
| 2 | Leaves | 12 | Berry | 22 | Edible |
| 3 | Seeds | 13 | Blue | 23 | Hidden |
| 4 | Bird | 14 | Heart shaped | 24 | Smooth |
| 5 | Red | 15 | Rough | 25 | Sharp |
| 6 | Tracks | 16 | Soft | 26 | Many |
| 7 | Colorful | 17 | Green | 27 | Rock |
| 8 | Round | 18 | Shadow | 28 | Tangled |
| 9 | Wildlife | 19 | Black & White | 29 | Extra |
| 10 | Moon | 20 | Symmetrical | | |



20 INVASIVE PLANTS THAT CAN BE USED FOR DYE & INK



This year we're focusing on invasive plants in Wild Kids. **Remember that invasive plants are plants that are not native to where you live and act like bullies to other plants. A plant that's invasive one place will not necessarily be invasive someplace else.** We know that invasive plants can hurt nature in a lot of ways -- often by crowding out all the other plants that are needed in the area, especially plants that are needed by animals and insects who live there. But we also know that there are almost always ways to use these plants! Some of them make healthy, tasty food. Some have medicinal uses. Some can be used for building, or crafting, or so many other things. When we pull up, chop down and otherwise remove invasive plants, it's great to look at how we can use them so they don't go to waste.

Many invasive plants make great natural colorants. Here are 20 invasive plants that can be used for natural dyes and inks.

Pokeweed berries



Buckthorn berries



Dyer's woad



Bittersweet nightshade



Dandelion



Asiatic Dayflower



English ivy



Stinging nettles



Lambsquarters



Garlic mustard



Queen Anne's lace



Mullein



Lily of the valley



Plantain roots



Canada thistle



Mullberries



Mutliflora rose



Japanese privet



Eucalyptus



Dame's rocket



Later in the year, we'll cover ways to use some of these for making ink, dye & paint!

DYER'S WOAD

(*Isatis tinctoria*)



Woad, also called Dyer's woad, is a plant in the wild mustard family.

Wild mustard is responsible for lots of the vegetables we eat today, like broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, Brussels sprouts and more! All of those were hybridized (selectively grown by farmers over time to change them) from wild mustard.

Woad is considered a "noxious weed" in a lot of places because we don't use it anymore, but at one time it was a very important plant because it helped people dye fabric.



Starting in ancient times, it was used to make a beautiful blue dye. Because of that, people started growing it all over the world. It is now growing wild in many places, including some places where it is displacing native plants.

Remember, invasive plants are plants that originally come from someplace else and try to take over an area. Woad was originally from Asia.

In certain locations, woad is classified as a non-native and invasive weed, such as Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming in the U.S. The state of Montana had a long campaign to try to get rid of all of it, and they have mostly succeeded so it is now rare there.

Woad was also used for medicine. The term *Isatis* in its Latin name has to do with its use in treating wounds long ago, and the term *tinctoria* is from its use as a dye.

DYER'S WOAD

(*Isatis tinctoria*)



From: *A Curious Herbal: Containing Five Hundred Cuts Of The Most Useful Plants Which Are Now Used In The Practice Of Physick,*
Written, illustrated and engraved by Elizabeth Blackwell, 1737

ASIATIC DAYFLOWER

(*Commelina communis*)



Asiatic dayflower gets its name because it's originally from Asia and its flowers last only one day.

It is considered an invasive weed in a lot of places, but it's a pretty blue flower that has a lot of uses. It can be used to make dyes and inks, and in Japan it was used for coloring woodcut art.

Recently, scientists have also found out that it can bioaccumulate, meaning it can clean toxic metals out of the soil and make it safe to grow food and get water there again. Some researchers are looking into using it to clean up areas where there are used up copper mines for this reason.

In China, it has been used for medicine for a long time. It is also used in China and India as a vegetable and food for livestock.



ASIATIC DAYFLOWER

(*Commelina communis*)



Poetry Corner

BIG AND LITTLE THINGS
by Alfred H. Miles (1848-1929)

I cannot do the big things
That I should like to do,
To make the earth forever fair,
The sky forever blue.

But I can do the small things
That help to make it sweet;
Tho' clouds arise and fill the skies,
And tempests beat.

I cannot stay the rain-drops
That tumble from the skies;
But I can wipe the tears away
From baby's pretty eyes.

I cannot make the sun shine.
Or warm the winter bleak;
But I can make the summer come
On sister's rosy cheek.

I cannot stay the storm clouds.
Or drive them from their place;
But I can clear the clouds away
From brother's troubled face.

I cannot make the corn grow,
Or work upon the land
But I can put new strength and will
In father's busy hand.

I cannot stay the east wind,
Or thaw its icy smart;
But I can keep a corner warm
In mother's loving heart.

I cannot do the big things
That I should like to do.
To make the earth forever fair,
The sky forever blue.

But I can do the small things
That help to make it sweet
Tho' clouds arise and fill the skies
And tempests beat.



A BOY'S SONG
By James Hogg (1770-1835)

Where the pools are bright and deep,
Where the grey trout lies asleep,
Up the river and o'er the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the blackbird sings the latest,
Where the hawthorn blooms the sweetest.
Where the nestlings chirp and flee.
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the mowers mow the cleanest.
Where the hay lies thick and greenest.
There to trace the homeward bee.
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the hazel bank is steepest.
Where the shadow falls the deepest.
Where the clustering nuts fall free.
That's the way for Billy and me.

Why the boys should drive away
Little sweet maidens from the play.
Or love to banter or fight so well.
That's the thing I could never tell.

But this I know, I love to play.
Through the meadow, among the hay.
Up the water and o'er the lea.
That's the way for Billy and me.

My Nature Journal

FEBRUARY



Phenology Calendar

Keep track of things you observe in nature that you see this month!
Write in observances like these or draw a picture if you like.

- Icicles melting
- Waxwing spotted at feeder
- Chickadee call heard
- Strawberry leaves poking up under the snow
- Raspberry canes chewed down



- 6 inches of rain in one day
- Thunderstorm
- Snowy owl on telephone pole
- Rabbit tracks in back yard
- Record high temperature for this day



FEBRUARY 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

FEBRUARY BIRD ID CHALLENGE

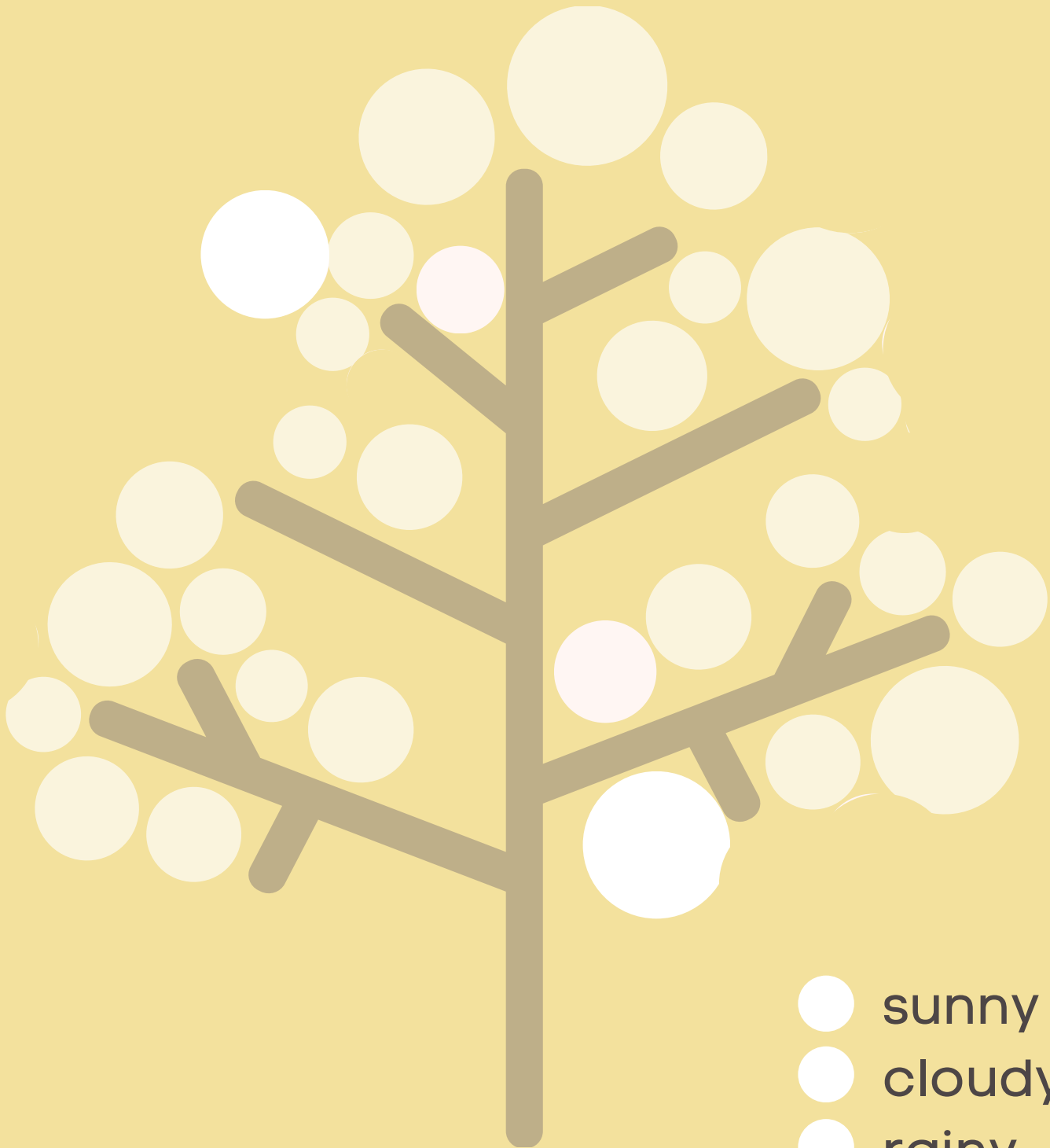
EACH DAY THIS MONTH, TRY TO FIND A BIRD OUTSIDE THAT YOU IDENTIFY. IT CAN BE A PIGEON, BLUE JAY, HAWK, CROW, YOU NAME IT. USE A BIRD ID BOOK, APP OR GROWNUP TO HELP IF YOU NEED IT. HOW MANY DIFFERENT BIRDS CAN YOU FIND AND ID?



1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28		

NOTES:

February Weather Tree



- sunny
- cloudy
- rainy
- snowy
- stormy

February Bird List

Birds spotted this month

February Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

February Nature Notes

Record any interesting discoveries here -- plants you identify, foods you forage, outdoor activities, cool nature projects, nature books read, or just notes about what it's like outside this week!

Week 1 Observations

Week 2 Observations

Week 3 Observations

Week 4 Observations

MY FORAGING GUIDE FOR:

GENERAL SKETCH OF THE PLANT

CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS

LATIN NAME _____

WHERE FOUND _____

PARTS USED _____

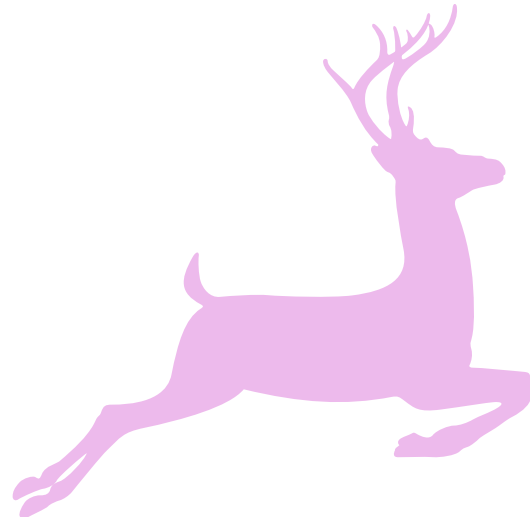
LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

WARNINGS: _____

FORAGING RECORD (DATES, WHERE FOUND, HOW IT WAS USED)

MY RATING FOR THIS PLANT





Want to see your stuff in Wild Kids?

We welcome articles, photos, artwork and other submissions from kids and their grown ups.

Visit magicalchildhood.com/wildkids to learn more.