

# Inspiring Nature Play: Innovations



## Agenda and Session Descriptions May 2, 2018



Additional support generously provided by BackYard Nature Center, Greeley Elementary School (Winnetka Public Schools), Forest Preserves of Cook County, Lincoln Park Zoo, Natural Start Alliance (a project of the North American Association for Environmental Education), and Northfield Community Nursery School.

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## Event Agenda

8:30 – 9 am

### CHECK IN & REGISTRATION

9 – 9:20 am

### WELCOME & OVERVIEW OF THE DAY

**Megan Florkowski**, first grade teacher, Greeley School

**Katarina Jaksic**, kindergarten teacher, Greeley School

**Eileen Prendergast**, director of education, Chicago Botanic Garden

**Liza Sullivan**, executive director, The Alliance for Early Childhood

**Sarah Sheldon**, preschool teacher, Chicago Botanic Garden

9:20 – 10:30 am

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

#### Innovations in Nature Play: Early Childhood and Elementary

**David Sobel**, senior faculty, education department, Antioch University New England

The original kindergarten — the children’s garden — conceived by German educator Friedrich Froebel in the 19th century, was a place where children learned through play, often in nature. That idea is fast eroding. Children aren’t playing in the garden anymore, both in and out of school; instead they’re filling in bubbles on worksheets. The new movement of nature-based early childhood education can reverse that trend. There are thousands of forest kindergartens throughout Europe and new programs opening every month in North America. Let’s examine the promise of this healthy approach towards living and learning outdoors with young children, across a variety of settings and the span of childhood.

David Sobel consults and speaks widely on child development and place-based education. He has authored eight books and more than 70 articles focused on children and nature for educators, parents, environmentalists and school administrators in the last 30 years. His most recent book is *Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning* published by Redleaf Press.

10:40 – 11:25 am

### CONCURRENT SESSIONS

#### Caterpillars and Ladybugs: Nature Around Us Design Studio

Colleen McVeigh, Field Museum

Today, school systems increasingly limit the scope of early childhood programs to focus on the “basics.” Many early childhood educators and parents worry that kindergarten has become the “new first grade.” Yet, research tells us that young children need nature. This session explores ways to integrate outdoor activities with science, literacy and math to create nature based units of study for our youngest students. The session embraces the holistic concept that knowledge of the natural world includes emotional connection, and provides ideas and resources to support early childhood educators in developing enriched nature-based curricula.

### **Playing Care/Caring Play: How a Chicago Urban Community-led Nature Play Site Stewards Nature Play** Alsdorf Auditorium

Robin Cline, NeighborSpace

Jessica Fong, Spry Community Elementary School, Chicago Public Schools

Three years ago, the Jardincito nature play garden in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago opened to the public. This presentation explores the unique ways this urban play site unites multiple partners and provides opportunities for viewing and expanding the “public at play.” As this site is a community managed site, and is embedded in a residential neighborhood, it is a powerful example of how multiple entities (Head Starts, public schools, arts organizations, and community members) can share in a successful public play project. Robin Cline, Assistant Director of the organization NeighborSpace will talk about how this project came into being, and will be joined by Jessica Fong, Spry Community School early childhood education teacher. Fong, who brings her pre-k students to the site regularly, will discuss how access to the nature play site has changed the way her students play. Currently, Fong is engaged in a study comparing the play and language that occurs on traditional playground equipment with the play and language that occurs during playtime in Jardincito. This presentation is a powerful example of how urban children can stay connected to the natural world and their playful selves.

### **Safe Tools and Techniques to Empower Kids** Linnaeus Room

Sean Shaffer, North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Park District

Sarah Sheldon, Chicago Botanic Garden and Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

With simple tools from the kitchen and hardware store your kids can safely work wood into a variety of tools, toys and creations. What they are really creating is confidence, fine motor mastery and the rewards of taking risks. We will use these tools and learn these safety protocols to assure success. We will practice these techniques on European Buckthorn, turning this invasive bully into fun!

### **Writers in the Woods** Pullman Room

Liza Fischel, North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Park District

Rosa Younan, North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Park District

In this session, we will explore how nature play and creative writing promotes healthy, beneficial outlets for young students ages 8 -12. At the North Park Village Nature Center, we are learning about ways that nature play and writing go hand in hand. Join us as we share our creative process with you. Find out you can share this fun and easy technique with any group. Feedback and ideas are encouraged.

*11:40 am – 12:25 pm*

### **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

#### **Art, Music, and Nature: Finding Inspiration in the Forest Preserves** Pullman Room

Adam Kessel, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Rob Klamczynski, Forest Preserves of Cook County

The Forest Preserves of Cook County provides the public with over 70,000 acres of learning landscapes. This session aims to provide ideas to the audience about ways they can utilize the arts as an anchoring practice to root students in the sights, sounds, and wonder of nature. Naturalists Rob Klamczynski and Adam Kessel will explore the use of invasive plant species to create art and music with children. The talk will culminate in a mini jam where participants can use their instruments in a circle jam format or create an art piece inspired by nature.

### **Best New Nature Books for Your Classroom Alsdorf Auditorium**

Martha Meyer, Evanston Public Library

Come see what great new books were published in the last year to support or invite nature play or nature study in your classroom! A librarian who reviews new books and tests them on live eager kids will share the best of what she's found this year. Which new nature books are best for reading aloud with a group of kids? Which books work best to invite nature play or support learning about the natural world for toddlers, preschoolers and early elementary school kids? Everyone leaves with a packet of information detailing what the great new books are, what other new or existing books might support a whole storytime or unit of learning and various simple crafts, stem activities and projects match well with the books. Everyone gets a chance to work on a team to create programming with 2017/2018 new books! Don't miss this chance to get a leg up on a year's worth of nature learning for your students.

### **Experiential, Environmental Education Design Studio**

Ed Caplan, Keeler Gardens

Gina Iliopolous, Keeler Gardens

Biophilia is our inherent desire to connect with all living things. What better way to connect to nature than by play and learning about the environment. Come ready to move, play, and learn. We will be exploring a few experiential games that can be used to educate youth (and adults) on different environmental concepts to raise appreciation and understanding of nature and our environment. We will also explore modifying traditional games to make them nature learning opportunities. And of course, you will have the opportunity to be crowned the 2018 Nature Play Rock, Paper, Scissors Champion!

### **Squish, Roll, Build, and Explore: Ideas for Hands-On Nature Play Linnaeus Room**

Becky Lyons, Lincoln Park Zoo

Emily Van Laan, Lincoln Park Zoo

Want to walk away with ideas that you can put to use right away? In this session we'll be exploring four types of nature play through hands-on stations that allow you to actually do the activities we'll be discussing. We'll walk through some benefits of various types of play and provide you with a packet of information that will help you implement these types of play in your classroom, library, nature center, at home or on the go! The focus will be on creating natural experiences with items you already have, can acquire easily, or can collect outside. Join us to get ideas on using sensory play, loose parts, process art and nature walks with the little ones in your life.

*12:35 – 1:35 pm*

### **LUNCH & NETWORKING AND HANDS-ON NATURE PLAY EXPERIENCES**

#### **Chicks in the Classroom**

Tracy Aiden, Baker Demonstration School

Jessy Zich, Baker Demonstration School

Explore the many ways of raising chicks in the classroom. Gather ideas on how you can create an integrated hands-on study of the life cycle of chickens in your classroom. Through science, storytelling, math, and play, children with care for and learn all about chicks!

Learning Outcomes:

1. Observe the current state of an embryo (possibly chick if we are lucky and they hatch).
2. Using the observations taken, make an observational drawing of the egg and the state of the embryo.

3. Look through the documentation of previous chick studies. Ask questions related to the study, and how it was incorporated into the classroom.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.chickenwhisperermagazine.com/articles/incubation-classroom-hatching-chicks-your-students>

[https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/76053.Chicken\\_Books\\_for\\_Kids](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/76053.Chicken_Books_for_Kids)

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: paper, colored pencils, incubators, chicken eggs

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: cognitive, emotional, intellectual

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: language, scientific terms, mathematics, art

### **How to Make Natural Dyes**

Lorin Ottlinger, The Grove National Historic Landmark

Judy Picicco, The Grove National Historic Landmark

Use everyday food items to make natural dyes-then apply the knowledge to try making dyes out of things you can find on a nature walk.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will learn to make dyes using different household items.
2. Children will experiment with different items to assess what can be used to create the most effective dyes.
3. Children will be able to predict what other items might be used to make effective dyes.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.allnaturaldyeing.com/wool-dyes> - All Natural Dyeing

<http://pioneerthinking.com/crafts/natural-dyes> - Making Natural Dyes from Plants

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 4–6

Materials: Pioneer Dyeing box, yarn hanks, vinegar water (4 parts cool water, 1 part vinegar), strong coffee dye, strong tea dye, turmeric dye, teachers' instruction sheets

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: physical (children will have to collect samples of items in nature, and mix these with water and vinegar), cognitive/intellectual: (Children will analyze the results of their experiments with different items in nature to evaluate what will create the strongest dye)

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: science

## **Life Above Us**

Daniel Kielson, BackYard Nature Center

Gary Morrissey, BackYard Nature Center

Come to the BackYard Nature Center display to visit a simulated avian scene showing what teachers or parents can do with children while walking in nature. We will have materials from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources "IL Birds" resource trunk on display and model how to teach children about what birds can be found at their nearest park or forest preserve. Learn to recognize various bird species of NE Illinois so that you will be more knowledgeable on your next walk in nature.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students who demonstrate understanding can: K-LS1-1. Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.
2. Students who demonstrate understanding can: K-ESS2-2. Construct an argument supported by evidence for how plants and animals (including humans) can change the environment to meet their needs.
3. Students who demonstrate understanding can: 1-LS1-1. Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.

Recommended Resources:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Educational Trunk--IL Birds (reserve on line/pick up at CBG)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Field Trip Pack (reserve on line/pick up at CBG)

Peterson's First Guides--assorted titles Peterson's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America

A Pocket Naturalist Guide--assorted titles Birds of Illinois: Field Guide

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 4–6

Materials: IDNR Resource trunk: "IL Birds" which can be reserved on line and picked up at Chicago Botanic Garden, camera (optional if age appropriate), binoculars (optional if age appropriate)

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: social, emotional, cognitive/intellectual, physical

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: language/literacy, science, mathematics, art

## **Looking Out the Classroom Window**

Mila Love, Chicago Botanic Garden

Explore several activities that connect the natural world, play and literature. Gather creative ideas or a few quick tips to implement in your classroom using simple everyday materials. Discover new books or revisit some old favorites and their applications beyond story time.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Science process skills including examining and discussing parts of trees and plants, communication, observation, sorting and classifying
2. Early literacy skills include book awareness, language development and vocabulary
3. Sensory play, imaginative play and problem solving skills

### **Mighty Miniature Nature Scenes**

George Klut, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Julie Vandervort, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Participants will be invited to express themselves and their ideas by creating their own miniature nature scene using loose parts, clay/mud, and tree cookies. These versatile and light weight activity ingredients make travel easy; they can be transported just about anywhere - park, nature center, school classrooms, or indoors/outdoors. Creations from this activity can stand alone or become an interesting element of a nature play area, flower pot, planter box, or fairy garden.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will be able to explore the physical properties of natural loose parts, tree cookies and clay/mud.
2. Children will be engaged in play using fine motor skills.
3. Children will use art as a means to express their ideas, thoughts and imagination.

Recommended Resources:

National Association for the Education of Young Children and Illinois Early Learning Project websites

*National Guidelines Nature Play and Learning Spaces* by Robin Moore

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3-6

Materials: mud/clay, loose parts (leaves, pebbles, flower petals, grasses, twigs, pine cones, feathers, acorns, etc), tree cookies, water, glue

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: Exploring natural materials and using language to describe these materials will address the development of cognitive/intellectual skills. Play using smaller loose parts will address physical development of fine motor skills.

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: Encouraging the use of diverse words to describe the sensory experience of exploring natural materials will address language development. Exploration of natural loose parts and their properties will address science. Creating an art piece in this activity will address self expression (art) and involve problem solving (science).

### **Observational Drawing: Learning to Draw What You See**

Cori Paulsrud, Kohl Children's Museum

Amelia Troutman, Kohl Children's Museum

The Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago Adventures in Art exhibition encourages children to explore their artistic creativity through self-guided activities and has been providing exceptional hands on learning since 1985. This session will focus on inspiring nature play by providing new ways to engage young minds using art and the natural materials. Participants will create an observational drawing while making choices of self-expression and creativity using new drawing mediums.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to observe a still life and create an observational drawing.
2. Students will be able to make creative choices with multi-media drawing mediums.
3. Students will have ample time for reflecting about drawing in small groups.

Recommended Resources:

- Harris Helm, J. (2015). *Becoming Young Thinkers: Deep project work in the classroom.* (pp. 86-97). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Harris Helm, J. (2016). *Young Investigators: The project approach in the early years.* (pp. 40-48). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Pelo, Ann. (2007). *The Language of Art: Inquiry-based studio practices in early childhood settings.* (pp. 85-96). St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
- Golomb, Claire. (2004). *The Child's Creation of a Pictorial World.* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: Birth—6

Materials: different colors, sizes, transparency values and shapes of vases; different kinds of flowers: real or unreal; colorful unique feathers; bird nest

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity:

The Arts

- 25.A Investigate, begin to appreciate, and participate in the arts.
- 25.B Display an awareness of some distinct characterizes of the arts.
- 26.A Understand the processes, traditional tools, and modern technologies used in the arts.
- 26.B Understand ways to express meaning through the arts.

Language Arts

- 1.A Demonstrate understanding through age appropriate responses.
- 1.B Communicate effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.

Mathematics

- 7.B Begin to make estimates of measurements.
- 9.B Demonstrate understanding of location and ordinal position, using appropriate vocabulary.

Science

- 11.A Develop beginning skills in the use of science and engineering practices, such as observation, asking questions, solving problems, and drawing concluding.

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: art, language arts, mathematics, science

**Pop-up Adventure Playground**

**Yulia Borisova, Purple Line Adventure Play**

Explore a small pop-up adventure playground. Get information and practical advice on how to make these playgrounds happen in any community. A pop-up adventure playground is a place where a variety of “loose parts” are available to provide opportunities for a wide range of self-directed play.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1. Kids will have an opportunity to try out their own ideas in manipulating available loose parts.
- 2. Kids will have an opportunity to interact with others through play.
- 3. Kids will invent their own ways to interacting with the world with the help of loose parts.

Recommended Resources:

<https://www.purplelineadventureplay.org/>

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: Birth to 6

Materials: cardboard, tape, fabric, tires, chalk, rope....

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: social, emotional, cognitive/intellectual, physical

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: language, science, art, movement

### **Upcycled: DIY Nature Play Ideas**

Laura Hall, Jurica-Suchy Nature Museum, Benedictine University

Karly Tumminello, Jurica-Suchy Nature Museum, Benedictine University

This station will offer do-it-yourself projects that explore nature by utilizing everyday materials, such as play dough, toy animals, and string, and natural objects, such as sticks, sand, and stones. Activities include tree-trunk animal track identification, nature threading, and permanent sandcastles.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Animal Tracks in Snow: Children will learn to identify animals and their unique tracks. Identifying tracks involves multiple skills, including understanding anatomy (paws, hooves, claws, etc.), gait (pattern and placement), and food chains (who is following who).
2. Nature Threading: Children will make use of natural objects with drilled holes to create artistic and tactile chains. Objects may include, but are not limited to, wood cuts, seed pods, thick twigs, and leaves. These string chains will help children create and discover patterns, as well as offer an opportunity to work on counting and grouping.
3. Sandcastle You Can Keep: Children will create unique individual sandcastles that will eventually harden. This activity will involve the development of fine motor skills and experimentation with design, shapes, and scale. Sandcastles will also require imaginative play/construction, utilizing natural objects, such as sticks, shells, and stones in the design.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.montessorifromtheheart.com/my-blog/2016/12/animal-tracks.html>

<http://www.howwemontessori.com/how-we-montessori/2015/08/creating-with-nature.html>

[https://www.education.com/activity/article/Make\\_sandcastle\\_you\\_can\\_keep/](https://www.education.com/activity/article/Make_sandcastle_you_can_keep/)

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: See supplementary websites

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: cognitive/intellectual, physical

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: science, movement, art

### **Wee Wigglers**

Charlotte Brown, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Lisa Schwarz, Forest Preserves of Cook County

The Forest Preserves of Cook County offer numerous free and low cost learning opportunities for teachers, families and children year-round. Please visit our website to plan your next adventure: [fpdcc.com](http://fpdcc.com). Children will develop their observation skills and test predictions using basic scientific equipment while investigating earthworms. They will engage in imaginative play by mimicking the

movements of their specimens and hone fine motor skills as they pretend to be hungry birds foraging for worms.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will actively observe demonstrations, listen to or participate in discussion related to the activity and/ or use tools to conduct their own investigations.
2. Participants will observe proper handling of live specimens and learn how to use instruments.
3. Participants will engage in the process of scientific inquiry.

Recommended Resources to Supplement Session:

Books: W. Pferrer, *Wiggling Worms at Work*/ L. Lionni, *Inch by Inch* (available in Spanish).

Field Guides: J. Kirkland, *Take a City Nature Walk* Kavanagh & Leung, *Bugs & Slugs: A Folding Pocket Guide to Familiar North American Invertebrates*.

Web: Vermicomposting Guide for Teachers:

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Publications/Documents/Schools/56001007.pdf>

Earthworm Lifecycle: <https://teara.govt.nz/files/di15491enz.jpg>

Parts of an Earthworm:

[http://payload355.cargocollective.com/1/18/590239/9417600/worm\\_body\\_parts\\_RGB\\_1000.png](http://payload355.cargocollective.com/1/18/590239/9417600/worm_body_parts_RGB_1000.png)

Forest Preserves of Cook County: <http://fpdcc.com/education/>

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: earthworms and replicas, clock/ digital timer, flashlights, rulers, magnifying lenses, clear bins with substrate, photos of worms- lifecycle, anatomy, access to running water and soap to thoroughly clean hands following activity

Key Skill Strengthened/Subject Areas Addressed Through Activity: Creative Arts- Dramatic Play: Children demonstrate creativity assuming different roles. Physical Health/ Development- Fine Motor: Dexterity for use of various tools and instruments. Science- Skills, Methods: Use senses and simple tools to gather information, develop observation skills, make and test predictions. Scientific Knowledge: Gain knowledge of the natural world through observation of living organisms and processes. Math- Number and Operations: Determine quantity, use language to compare amounts (more/ fewer, greater, less than). Geometry, Spatial Sense: Compare shapes, parts, attributes of objects. Describe position in space (in front, behind, under, inside, outside, etc.). Patterns and Measurement: Use standard and non-standard measures to determine length and area of objects.

### **Zoom In, Zoom Out**

Liz Hilt, Kohl Children's Museum

This activity encourages children to use a variety of ring-like objects to create a perimeter on the ground or hold outward at arms-length. When ring is on ground the goal is look closely within the circle, zooming in the focus. This part of the activity is similar to quadrat sampling, which is a tool scientists use for the study of ecology and biodiversity by placing squares in set areas of interest in a habitat and recording all species found. In this activity, the ring can also be held at arms-length to look at a natural area with a wider view, or to zoom the focus outward. This can include birdwatching, cloud watching, or overall viewing the natural setting from a different perspective.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will be able to name or describe items found in observations.

2. Children will be able to count or sort items found in observations.
3. Children will be able to compare and contrast zooming in and zooming out through discussion of spatial relationships.

Recommended Resources to Supplement Session:

Websites: University of Idaho's "Plot-based or Quadrat Techniques"

Adult Books: Last Child in the Woods – Richard Louv, Vitamin N – Richard Louv

Children's Books: In My Backyard – Valerie Glogas, One Small Place in a Tree – Barbara Brenner

In My Backyard – Margriet Ruurs, Under One Rock: Bugs, Slugs, and Other Ughs! – Anthony D.

Fredericks

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: anything to make a border, ex. hula hoop, milk rings, string, etc.; magnifying lens or binoculars for further exploration; paper and pencil to write observations/data

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: verbal expression, concentration, number awareness/sorting, spatial relationships

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: science, math, language

*1:45 – 2:30 pm*

### **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

#### **Avoiding Ecophobia: How to Help Children Love Nature Before Asking Them to Save It** Pullman Room

Katie Slivovsky, Chicago Children's Museum

Through audience participation and lively discussion, we'll explore the research and philosophy of author/educator David Sobel and Dr. Louise Chawla—among others—as we dig into how bad news about the environment impacts children. Participants will have opportunities to reflect on the value of their own nature play experiences and examine how they relate to children today—especially when it comes to the value of risk. Participants will also explore which nature activities and conservation actions are best-suited to children of different ages.

#### **Bringing Nature to Your Neighborhood Preschool** Alsdorf Auditorium

Allison Ashley, Covenant Nursery School

Karen Dinelli, Covenant Nursery School

Elizabeth Goodbody, Covenant Nursery School

Tina Vanderwarker, Covenant Nursery School

Kim Stanton, Covenant Nursery School

One small, part day preschool's journey from a traditional play-based program to one that has incorporated nature play and learning into the mix, Covenant Nursery School is located in a suburban neighborhood without easy access to a forest, nature preserve, or other large natural area nearby. Administrators and teaching staff will detail our on-going journey (with a PowerPoint presentation) over the last 5 years as we designed and built a nature playscape on site, learned more about using natural materials in the classrooms, and also helped families to embrace the value in nature play for their children.

## **Integrating Museum Resources to Support Nature Play Design Studio**

Kyla Cook, Field Museum

Jennifer Flowers, Field Museum

Sarah Wehlage, Chicago Academy of Sciences/Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

With the realization that outdoor nature play benefits early learners cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically, enabling access to nature play for all students has become essential. However, with the reality of modern school-based education in urban settings, it can be challenging to provide enough opportunities and time for children to participate in unstructured play outdoors with access to a variety of ecology. How do we support the discoveries and connections children make out of doors and connect them to their local flora and fauna? Attendees will experience first-hand how museum resources support student learning of nature and life science in the early-childhood and elementary classroom. Participants will experience how classroom learning and activities can be centered around and inspired by local nature phenomena, plus how to delve deeper into that learning using museum resources and specimens. The presenters will also feature examples from the Early Elementary Science Partnership program where Chicago-area teachers use museum resources in their early elementary classrooms to support understandings of life science concepts and build student use of science practices. Session participants will be able to engage in different instructional strategies as learners using museum resources to deepen their connections to nature and their local environment.

## **Yoga and Mindfulness Techniques to Integrate Nature in the Classroom Linnaeus Room**

Lani Gerszonovicz, Banner Day Camp

Paying attention to the body, breath and mind is a powerful tool that can be used to cultivate heightened awareness and build connection to the natural world when integrated into an early education curriculum. Living in the Chicagoland area, we are not always able to get outside to play. Educators will learn tested techniques for students ages 3+ for how to visualize being in nature and notice how it makes them feel. They will learn how to use the bee buzzing breath and ocean breath to connect to nature and become more calm, peaceful and available to learn. We will learn poses such as mountain, tree and pigeon, and pretend to fly like a bird and soar through the sky, feeling graceful and balanced. We will learn to make yoga sunshine and rain and pretend with our bodies to plant a seed so that it grows big and strong. We will build a forest of trees and notice the movement in all living things and how trees sway in the wind. These techniques bridge the gap between child and nature by encouraging curiosity and making a difference in how we relate to the natural world. Join us for a fun, playful yoga and nature experience which will provide beneficial tools for students and teachers!

*2:45 – 3:30 pm*

### **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

#### **Embracing Nature Design Studio**

Molly Babu, early childhood consultant

This workshop provides planned time for children to explore and experiment in the nature and allows outdoor materials to be moved to an indoor setting for further observation. It shows a positive attitude to the outdoors and nature including insects, animals, and plant life. I will show you lots of hands-on activities that are open-ended to stimulate curiosity, creativity, initiative, and problem solving with little or no cost to you.

### **Knives, Fires, and Civilizations: Outdoor Play with Youth Ages 6 to 12** Pullman Room

Kathleen Soler, playworker

Sol Hinami, playworker

Alex Enarson, playworker

In this session, participants will be encouraged to deconstruct the experience of child-directed play in a preordained space and discuss the next step: community development and skill building alongside adults in nature. We will share what we have learned about high risk activities such as whittling and cooking with children, some of the projects accomplished by children during Fraternal Forest classes taking place in Walking Stick Woods, an experimental learning site graciously provided by the North Park Village Nature Center.

### **Nature Buddies: An Inclusive Nature Education Pilot Program** Linnaeus Room

Ann Halley, Chicago Botanic Garden

Kay Knight, Chicago Botanic Garden

The lack of diversity in nature education includes students with special needs. Yet research shows that nature-based education is an “educational equalizer” and that inclusive classrooms are better academically and socially for students of all abilities. While there are wonderful programs dedicated to serving specific populations, inclusive nature-based education is still undeveloped. The session will begin by discussing potential barriers our attendees may face in creating an inclusive program. We will then review Chicago Botanic Garden’s collaboration with a local special education preschool program in creating a pilot inclusive nature program: its resources, successes, and lessons learned. Attendees will then collaborate in small groups on activity development for various populations. By sharing their practices and creativity, we hope that at the end of the session our attendees will feel confident in welcoming students with special needs into their programs.

### **When Plundering Pirates Take Over Your Class: How to Effectively Foster and Document Emergent Curriculum in a Nature-based Program** Alsdorf Auditorium

Megan Gessler, Natural Beginnings Early Learning Program and Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

Sarah Sheldon, Chicago Botanic Garden and Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

Nature provides children ample space to create their own authentic learning adventures. How do we follow their natural curiosity to scaffold for optimal learning potential? How do we make that learning visible to the child, the parents, and the community? Come discuss effective tools and strategies utilized in emergent curriculum and documentation.

*3:30 pm*

### **EVALUATION AND CPDU FORM COMPLETION**

## **Books for Inspiring Nature Play**

Compiled by Martha Meyer, Evanston Public Library

Complementary activities available on the Alliance for Early Childhood's [Resources webpage](#).

### ***A Stick Until . . .* by Constance Anderson (2017)**

This book uses simple text and clear illustrations to show how various animals -- and children -- use sticks as anything from a flyswatter to a courtship gift. A brilliant invitation to nature play! A great launch for imaginative activities. The two pages of text at the end provide more details about the animals' characteristics and habits. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

### ***Winter Dance* by Marion Dane Bauer and illustrated by Richard Jones (2017)**

Various animal friends tell a fox what they do to prepare for winter, but none of their plans is right for him. Ms. Bauer wrote this book when she learned that foxes really dance in the snow. Excellent for the Animals in Winter unit. (Preschool - 1st grade)

### ***Grand Canyon*, by Jason Chin (2017)**

Beautiful, brilliant and deeply informational book for older kids to learn about the Grand Canyon. A father and daughter travel through the Grand Canyon to learn about its past and present. A 2018 Sibert Honor Book and a Caldecott Honor Book (Sibert is for informational writing; Caldecott for illustration). (2nd - 7th grade)

### ***8 - An Animal Alphabet* by Elisha Cooper and book design by Elisha Cooper, David Saylor, and Charles Kreloff (2015)**

A terrific counting and alphabet book with realistic pictures of animals on each page. A fun book for preschoolers, who will love figuring out WHICH animals are pictured 8 times on each page -- and matching the pictures with the right names. Several pages at the end provide additional information about each animal. Winner of the 2016 Mathical Prize. (for books about math for kids). (Preschool and up)

### ***Wolf in the Snow* by Matthew Cordell (2017)**

A wordless book in which a girl rescues a wolf pup in a snowstorm and then needs rescuing herself. Perhaps a parable of interdependence, but few unrealistic moments. When the girl and the wolf mother brave facing each other for the sake of the pup, it is a stunning moment. Winner of the 2018 Caldecott Medal (illustration). (Preschool)

### ***Plankton Is Pushy* by Jonathan Fenske and book design by Steve Ponzio (2017)**

A plankter (singular of plankton, though, Fenske just calls it a plankton) gets frustrated as he repeatedly tries and fails to get a mussel to reply to his greeting. Funny lines and pictures and some children might be taken aback when the mussel finally opens his mouth only to swallow the plankter! Hilarious introduction to ocean food webs! (preschool - 2nd grade)

### ***A Hundred Billion Trillion Stars* by Seth Fishman (2017)**

“Did you know that the earth is covered in three trillion trees? And that seven billion people weigh about the same as ten quadrillion ants? Our world is full of constantly changing numbers, from a hundred billion trillion stars in space to thirty-seven billion rabbits on Earth. Can you imagine that many of anything?” from the publisher's write up. 2018 Mathical Prize Winner. (K - 5)

***This Is the Nest That Robin Built* by Denise Fleming (2018)**

A preschool classic-to-be! Kids will enjoy the way the text uses repetition to build on itself to tell the story of how a robin builds her nest out of bits and pieces of materials processed by the other animals around her. The large, realistic illustrations are a plus. A wonderful demonstration of animal interdependence; don't miss this one! (Preschool through 1st grade)

***All Around Us* by Xelena Gonzalez and illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia (2017)**

A little girl and her grandpa find circles all around them in nature. Grandpa also makes the connection that in returning garden waste to the earth and in burying ancestors in the earth we are closing a circle. The love between the girl and her grandpa shines throughout the book. 2018 Pura Belpre Illustrator Honor Book. This book reclaims environmental stewardship as a traditional value of Latino and Native culture in a way that is clear to young children. Rare and essential. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***The African Orchestra* by Wendy Hartmann and illustrated by Joan Rankin (2017)**

This picture book has a gentle rhyming text about the “music” made by African insects, rain, birds, leaves, and other noisemakers. The South African author and illustrator have created many award-winning South African children's books. Will inspire listening to nature and musical responses to the environment. (Preschool +)

***Go, Green Gecko!* by Gay Hay and illustrated by Margaret Tolland (2017)**

This New Zealand picture book tells how a lizard gets food and avoids predators; an introduction to the New Zealand bush ecosystem. Older kids will enjoy the fact-filled notes at the end (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***I Can Run* by Murray Head. Photographs by Murray Head (2017)**

This easy reader has great squirrel pictures, each showing a different natural activity (running, eating, hiding from a predator). Perfect for preschoolers -- and beginning readers (K - 2nd grade)

***In the Middle of the Fall* by Kevin Henkes, Illustrated by Laura Dronzek (2017)**

A good strong description of the weather as the season changes from mid-fall to the beginning of winter. A worthy successor to *When Spring Comes* also by Henkes and Dronzek. Preschool gold from a former Caldecott Medal winner. (Preschool)

***Yodel the Yearling* written and photographed by Mary Holland (2018)**

Engaging, accessible text and photos paint an informative picture of a one-year-old bear after he awakens from his long winter nap. He plays, finds food, stays safe -- and learns how to survive on his own. Additional information about bears' activities and habits are in the 4 supplemental pages. Written by a naturalist who has also taught in libraries and schools. A great choice (despite the bad title)! (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Every Color Soup* by Jorey Hurley (2018)**

Each page has a simple, bright picture of a vegetable, each a different color in this fun book that is perfect for the very youngest kids. Budding cooks will find a recipe for Every Color Soup on the last page. (Toddlers - 2nd grade)

***Ribbit* by Jorey Hurley (2017)**

A simple one-word-per-page science book with great art. Ribbit is gorgeous, perfect, and full of robust amphibian information. (Toddler - 2nd Grade)

***All Ears, All Eyes* by Richard Jackson (2017)**

A beautiful poem about an owl observing evening in the forest, beautifully illustrated in ways that support the poetry, this book also gently invites sleep. All the creatures named and drawn are natural to a northern US forest. (Late preschool - 8th grade but adults will love the story too.) Shh....

***Shark Lady – The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean’s Most Fearless Scientist* by Jess Keating and illustrated by Marta Alvarez Miguens (2017) .**

Attractive illustrations enhance the story of this exceptional girl as she learns all she can about sharks, becomes a scholar and then a scientist who goes on daring deep-sea dives, defying conventional expectations for women. She shows the world that sharks are not the mindless killers they’re believed to be. End pages provide more details and a timeline of Clark’s life. (Preschool - 5th grade)

***It Starts with a Seed* by Laura Knowles and illustrated by Jennie Webber (2017 in the US; 2016 in the UK)**

Gorgeous pictures by Jennie Webber illustrate a clear, beautiful yet very accessible poem by Laura Knowles about the life cycle of the tree. Destined to be *a preschool classic*; don’t miss this one! Four fold-out pages at the end tell us that the tree is a sycamore and provide accompanying facts, including “a sycamore tree can live for 400 years.” (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Once Upon a Jungle* by Laura Knowles and illustrated by James Boast (2017)**

Simple stunning introduction to one food chain in a rainforest. Short, clear text shares sophisticated concepts. A couple of big fold-out pages provide surprises. Food chains for 3+ year olds! Would inspire science classes, rainforest art projects and even a nature poetry class. (3 years - 3rd grade)

***Fur, Feather, Fin – All of Us Are Kin* by Diane Lang and illustrated by Stephanie Laberis (2018)**

A rhyming introduction to animal classifications -- including Arthropods and Detritivores! When introducing humans as mammals, the illustrator include single parents, gay couples, and parents and kids from various countries. An inclusion message frames the rhymes. (K - 5)

***Green Green: A Community Gardening Story* by Maria and Baldev Lamba (2017)**

A poetic celebration of community gardening, with sweet inclusive pictures. (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***I Wish I Was an Orca* by Sandra Markle (2017)**

A better easy reader about wildlife! Sandra Markle, one of the best nature writers for children, invites early readers to pretend they are an orca and learn what life would be like for them and their families. Terrific for ocean-loving kids! (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Creekfinding: A True Story* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin (2017)**

Mike Osterholm bought a farm in the Driftless region of Iowa to restore a prairie, but found out from a neighbor that a creek had once flowed through the property. Mike painstakingly researched where the creek had been. Using diggers to dig out the creek and cement trucks to deliver BIG rocks

in the right place, Mike brought the creek back to life, with all its creatures. Terrific introduction to wetland restoration. Beautiful art by Claudia McGahee. (K – 5)

***Wild World* by Angela McAllister and illustrated by Hvass & Hannibal (2018)**

Beautiful and accurate illustrations of rainforests, prairies, coral reefs, and other wild areas frame simple poetry describing each wild place. Unfortunately the opening sentences give a dire (true) warning that these environments are endangered today but then only in the endnotes do we finally learn how human activity poses a threat to each area and what we can do about it. Avoid the opening statement and the end papers to make this work for K - 3. (4rd - 8th grade)

***Wolf Island* by Ian McAllister and Nicholas Read (2017)**

Beautiful photographs illustrate the story of a sea wolf starting a family on a new island in the Great Bear Rainforest. (Vancouver to Alaska) A good read aloud. (K- 5)

***Watersong* by Tim McCana (2017)**

This book's text is a poem composed of the sounds water makes as it rains; the illustrations follow the rainy day adventures of a young fox. Have fun performing this one! (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***Prickly Hedgehogs* written and illustrated by Jane McGuinness (2018)**

Everything you always wanted to know about hedgehogs! The pictures are cute and the text is clear, with additional information added in an extra note on each page plus an end page with extra facts. Great for the nocturnal animals unit -- or one dealing with Europe, Asia or Africa. (Preschool - 5th grade)

***The Fox and the Wild* by Clive McFarland (2017 in U.S., 2016 in U.K.)**

This is the story of an urban fox who, unlike his cousin foxes, feels overwhelmed by the city. He looks for the wild and finally arrives in the countryside through a wildlife crossing. (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***It's Springtime, Mr. Squirrel!* by Sebastian Meschenmoser (2018)**

Totally hilarious story line combined with beautiful sophisticated pencil illustrations make this book a delight to share. The animals and their setting are realistic but the story is not. Part of a series; catch all of Mr. Squirrel's adventures; your kids will thank you! (Older Preschool -7th)

***Over and Under the Pond* by Kate Messner illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal (2017)**

A mother and son of color row a boat across a pond. Paragraphs alternate between what they can see above the pond and what's happening below. Lovely art by Mr. Neal displays creatures native to a northern pond. (Heron, Moose, Beaver) Endpages describe each animal in detail, as well as providing more books and websites about pond life. This book continues the terrific series which also includes *Over and Under the Snow* and *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt*.

***Colors, an Early Birds Book* by Patricia Mitter (2017)**

Board Book. Simple, bright pictures of birds, each a different color, with the name of the color on the facing page. Use it for introducing babies to nature and also learning about birds or colors with preschoolers. Published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this book has lots of resources in the

back: a link to their website with more information and QR codes so your cell phone can sing each bird's call. (Toddlers - Preschool)

***Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators that Saved an Ecosystem* by Patricia Newman (2017)**

“Marine biologist Brent Hughes discovered a surprising connection between sea otters and sea grass at an estuary in northern California. Follow science in action as Hughes conducts the research that led to this major discovery.” A 2018 Sibert Honor Book. (Sibert is informational writing). Grades 3 - 7 (ages 8 - 12)

***What Is Baby Gorilla Doing?* by Christena Nippert-Eng, John Dominski, and Miguel Martinez (2017)**

Board Book. Lively photographs, each illustrating a single action word. Learn about gorillas or letters. This is a much younger version of the authors' amazing *Gorillas Up Close* (2016) that documents for Elementary and Middle School audiences what researchers are learning about the gorillas of Lincoln Park Zoo. Christena Nippert-Eng Ph.D. is a sociologist and Professor of Informatics at Indiana University Bloomington. (Toddlers - preschoolers)

***Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter* by Kenard Pak (2017)**

Beautifully illustrated picture book describing the beginning of winter, like its predecessor, *Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn*. The children in the story talk to the elements of the seasonal change and they reply. “Hello Evergreens!” and “Hello. Our pine needle branches shiver in the wind while you sleep.” (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***I Am the Rain* by John Paterson (2018)**

Lovely rhyming book that makes the water cycle understandable to preschoolers! For Rain storytimes, too. John Paterson is a Northbrook IL based author who has worked for the Field Museum and the Garfield Park Conservatory in Chicago. Would pair well with *All Around Us* by Gonzalez. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Mrs. Peanuckle's Vegetable Alphabet* by Mrs. Peanuckle and illustrated by Jessie Ford (2017)**

Board Book. This alphabet book shows different brightly colored vegetables and is a vegetable only update of Lois Ehlert's classic *Eating the Alphabet*. Perfect and compelling; makes you want to eat them all! I love how it introduces dandelion leaves as edible. (Preschool - 2nd grade, but since it is a board book, could also be entertaining for babies.)

***Sadie Braves the Wilderness* by Yvonne Pearson (2017)**

The story of one girl's summer trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Sadie works hard to reassure her younger brother who may not be as frightened as she imagines. Good realistic pictures make you feel that you are there. (Preschool – 2nd Grade)

***Me and You and the Red Canoe* by Jean E. Pendziwol and illustrated by Phil (2017)**

A parent and child steal out of their campsite at dawn and catch a fish at the Canadian lake, marveling at the plants and animals they see. Poetic, but you feel a part of that amazing morning hush at the campsite. The art is all drawn on wood and is gorgeous. Share this as a special treasure. (Preschool - 5th grade)

***A Different Pond* by Bao Phi (2017)**

A Vietnamese refugee shares his memories of ponds in Vietnam with his son as they fish in the U.S. “...for refugees everywhere.” Winner of the 2018 Charlotte Zolotow Award (text) and a Caldecott Honor Book (pictures). (K- 8)

***Anywhere Farm* by Phyllis Root (2017)**

Rollicking, rhyming book about growing plants almost anywhere! A great opening to a gardening unit. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Otis and Will Discover the Deep: The Record-setting Dive of the Bathosphere* by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Katherine Roy (This book is coming June 2018!)**

The suspenseful, little-known true story of the first dive into the deep ocean in 1930. Stunning, sure to win a 2019 award. I saw this one as an ARC (advance reader copy). WOW! Perfect for an ocean unit or any child curious about the deep sea. (Older preschool - 3rd grade)

***Safe and Sound* by Jean Roussen, illustrated by Loris Lora (2017)**

A sweet poem about how most baby animals need their parents for safety and support that ends with a mixed race boy being tucked in by his parents. The pictures are exceptional, all showing animals being cared for by their parents. Whales, Swans, Anteaters, Wolves, Bluebirds, Kangaroos, Crocodiles, Seahorses... beautiful. (Preschool)

***How to Be an Elephant; Growing Up in the African Wild* by Katherine Roy (2017)**

Gorgeous artwork in a book giving detailed information about the birth of a baby elephant through the kind of training they receive from the herd. Not a read aloud; lots of detailed information explained well. Roy is a previous winner of the Sibert Award (informational books) (K- 5)

***Koala* by Claire Saxby (2017 in the US with simultaneous publication in Australia)**

A wonderful, easily understood science book that documents a young koala's experiences after his mother gets pregnant and pushes him out of her tree. The pictures by Julie Vivas are luminous, realistic and clear. There is even an index! Works surprisingly well as a read aloud. Pair with *Wombat Walkabout* by Carol Diggory Shields (2009) and *Two Little Monkeys* by Mem Fox (2012) for a celebration of Australian wildlife. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Thank You, Earth – A Love Letter to Our Planet* written and photographed by April Pulley Sayre. (2018)**

Simple but lovely rhyming text and luminous photos of animals, plants, the ground, and the sky make a heartfelt thank-you to the earth for all the wonders it brings us. The end pages suggest ways we can translate our appreciation into action. Perfect Earth Day book! (Preschool and *all ages*)

***Warbler Wave* written and photographed by April Pulley Sayre, with Jeff Sayre. (2018)**

This book is about the marvelous but perilous journey made by many species of warblers during their spring and fall migrations. Its rhyming text and its close-up photos of gorgeous, brightly colored warblers flying, perching, and catching food will grab the reader's' attention. Four pages of text at the end are packed with additional information about warblers' migration patterns. (Preschool and all ages)

***Seek and Find 13 of the World's Deadliest Animals* by Lola M. Schaefer. Illustrated by Tynn Armstrong. (2017)**

A riveting, useful somewhat sensational guide book on how to protect yourself if you are going to be near Porcupines. Mountain Goats, a Hippopotamus. Golden Poison Dart Frogs or Deathstalker Scorpions! The numerous deadly animals *camouflaged* on each page show areas that look safe may harbor danger. Ideal for kids who are hikers and who *love* to be scared; terrible for anyone you're attempting to lure out of doors. The end pages present more facts and safety tips for hikers, explorers, or canoeists. (3rd - 7th grade)

***The Blue Hour* by Isabelle Simler. (2017)**

The blue hour is the time between when "the day ends" and "the night falls." Large, bright drawings in this preschool-friendly book illustrate the blue birds, animals, sea creatures, and flora that flourish during the hour when day ends and night begins. The inside cover shows 32 different shades of blue. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Plume* by Isabelle Simler (2017 in the U.; 2012 in France.)**

A beautifully illustrated book of bird feathers with a black cat lurking in the background for preschool interest. A great way to open kids' eyes to bird feathers and EXACTLY what they look like. (Preschool)

***A Perfect Day* by Lane Smith (2017)**

The book describes why it was a perfect Spring day for each of the animals, (dog, cat, chickadee, squirrel) until Bear shows up and disrupts them all. In the end, only Bear is having a perfect day. The economy of language and the brilliant use of white space in the story make it a perfect read-aloud! All the events in the story are realistic; none of the animals "talk". (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***The Forever Garden* by Laurel Snyder (2017)**

Beautiful story about a girl whose beloved gardening neighbor moves away; she learns to be the beloved gardener herself to the new neighbors. (5 years old and up.)

***A Seed is the Start* by Melissa Stewart (2018)**

Nice introduction to the various ways that seeds move to new sites. The photographs are wonderful. (Covers the same ground as the fabulous *Plants Can't Sit Still* by Rebecca Hirsch illustrated by Mia Posada published in 2016. With 2 good books on the same subject using some of the same examples you've no excuse for not teaching about seeds!) *A Seed is the Start* uses that great device: big text to share with younger listeners and smaller text to share with older students, so this book can work for early preschool as well as being a resource for elementary school. (Preschool - 3rd grade)

***There's a Pest in the Garden* by Jan Thomas (2017)**

Funny easy reader about animals who plant a garden invaded by a voracious pest; all Jan Thomas's favorite characters are here -- cow and duck plus goat and the pest of course! Jan Thomas is THE BEST. For the Gardening unit or anytime you want to laugh. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Hidden City: Poems of Urban Wildlife* by Sarah Grace Tuttle. Illustrated by Amy Schimler-Safford. (2018)**

The poems in this book describe birds, animals, insects, and plants that thrive in the city, some of them right under our noses, though we may not notice them. The subject matter is much needed and the illustrations are bright and luscious. A supplement presents some fun facts about the wildlife. (K - 5)

***Jump, Leap, Count Sheep!* by Geraldo Valerio (2017)**

Counting book with lively pictures of Canadian animals (1 Bighorn Sheep jumping, 2 Grebes dancing, 3 Mantids hunting...). At the end of the book are two pages that provide a few details about each animal's characteristics or activities. (Preschool)

***An African Alphabet* by Eric Walters. Illustrated by Sue Todd. (2017)**

Board Book. Brightly illustrated, elegant alphabet book with startling pictures of exotic African animals (Okapi, Pangolin, the Servall). The linoleum carving art is dramatic enough for infants and all the animals are consistently from one continent. Starred review by Kirkus, a library journal. (Toddlers - Preschool)

***The Hidden Life of a Toad* written and photographed by Doug Wechsler. (2017)**

This information-packed book, enhanced with amazing close-up photos, uses simple language to show how, in less than two months, a tadpole with gills and a tail changes into a pea-sized toadlet with lungs and legs, and then, in its third year, becomes a full-fledged female toad who goes on to produce tadpoles of her own. Supplemental pages provide more facts and suggest ways to help keep toads safe. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Hello Hello* by Brendan Wenzel. (2018)**

These bright, fanciful illustrations of endangered animals big and small are accompanied by simple, rhyming text urging the reader to make a connection with nature. A note at the end suggests ways that readers can help vulnerable species. Another Earth Day natural! *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel (2016) won the Caldecott Honor in 2017; the book describes how many different creatures SEE, using the cat as a model. Brilliant. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Who Eats Orange?* by Dianne White. Illustrated by Robin Page. (forthcoming August 2018)**

Bright, engaging illustrations show different animals enjoying foods of all colors of the rainbow. Two supplementary pages provide detailed information about the eating habits of animals in various habitats. Wonderful to pair with books about humans eating the rainbow. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***On Duck Pond* by Jane Yolen (2017)**

Sweet, wistful poem about how ducks flying onto a pond suddenly disturb the rest of the creatures, including the author. (Older preschool - 5th grade)

**Storytime Theme: BATS!**

**New Book - *Brown Bats* by Christina Leaf (2017)**

An easy reader ideal for sharing bat fact with 3 - 5 year olds – and for lower elementary kids to read themselves

**New Book - *Superbat!* By Matt Carr (2017)**

A superhero-wannabe story that nicely covers what bats' "super" powers are – echolocation, night vision and more.

**New Book - *I am Bat* by Morag Hood (2017).**

A fruit bat tells readers to stay away from his favorite fruit.

**Newer Book - *Chow Down, Biggety!* by Ann Ingalls (2015).**

This easy reader accurately depicts the diets of various members of the Florida mangrove swamp (though the pictures aren't great). Fun to read aloud – there's lots of repetition!

**New Book- *Nightsong* by Ari Berk, illus by Loren Long (2012)**

This is the lyrical story about a young bat using echolocation to make his own way to the pond for the first time without his mother.

**Older Book - *The Bat Scientists* by Mary Kay Carson (2010)**

Detailed information about scientists that study bats for older kids (2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Older Book - *Hello Bumblebee Bat* by Darrin Lunde (2007)**

Simple story about the smallest bats known to science appropriate for young children, though adults will learn something too!

**Older Book -*Outside and Inside Bats* by Sandra Markle (1997)**

Very clear, useful and interesting book about bats (K- 8)

**Old Book: *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon (1993)**

The classic story that compares bats and birds.

#### Storytime Theme: Bees (Summer Pollinators)

**New Book—*Thank You, Bees!* By Toni Yuly (2017)**

This is a very simple book thanking animals and plants for the things they give us. It reduces the bees' contribution to honey which is of course not as important as pollination. However, a perfect Thanksgiving book, Earth Day Book and a sweet read aloud anytime we're in need of a return to gratitude. (Preschool)

**New Book – *Bee, A Peek Through Picture Book* by Britta Teckentrup (2017)**

A gorgeously illustrated rhyming book about what a bee does. The text gets a bit long for preschool – skip or summarize. This book features a waggle dance right on the page which is a great set up for the activity.

**New Book – *Please, Please the Bees* by Gerald Kelley (2017)**

A funny story with a meaning: the bees go on strike because the bear doesn't provide them with the "working conditions" they need. Teaches with humor.

**New Book – *Buzz, Bee!* By Jennifer Szymanski 2017 (National Geographic Kids PRE-Reader (Nonfiction))**

Very simple words explain the basic vocabulary of bees with large wonderful close up photographs.

**New(er) Book –*The Flowers are Calling* by Rita Gray (2015)**

Kenard Pak creates gorgeous illustrations to match with fun-to-read text about who the flowers are calling. Each page features an animal the bees aren't calling, plus a pollinator the bees need. Great science writing for young children

**New(er) BOARD Book – *Little Honeybee* by Jane Ormes (2015)**

Very detailed, very beautiful, rhyming set of questions answered by a triple fold reveal of the bee's hive. Ideal for reading to one on your lap, but can be adapted to group use with careful use of the 25 flaps to lift.

### Storytime Theme: Bugs!

**New Book— *There's a Bug on my Book!* by John Himmelman (2017)**

Children will learn about all the creatures that might jump, slither or climb on the book if it were left on the grass...fun and interactive!

**New Book – *Bugs from Head to Tail* by Stacey Roderick (2017)**

Nonfiction, but incredibly fun to read – a guessing game: “*What bug has a head like this? (next page) A rhinoceros beetle!*”

**New Book – *Ants Rule: The long and short of it* by Bob Barner (2017)**

Nonfiction about math featuring bugs who measure each other and graph the results. This one will lead to all sorts of great classroom activities.

**New BOARD Book: *Hello Bugs What Do You Do?* By Loes Botman (2017)**

Great vocabulary and gorgeous realistic pictures.

**New BOARD Book: *Bug Hunt: Lift the Flap Adventures* by Salina Yoon (2017)**

Perfect book for accurately introducing bugs to kids.

**New Book - *Du Iz Tak?* By Carson Ellis (2016)**

A Caldecott Honor book, *Du Iz Tak?*, recreates a season's worth of bug conversation about a flower. Bug Language looks daunting, but practice; the kids will adore listening to you. They can guess what the bugs mean, a terrific exercise. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

**Newer Book – *A Beetle is Shy* by Dianna Hutts Aston (2016)**

This is a good child-friendly reference book rather than a great storytime book.

**Older Book - *Can You Make A Scary Face?* by Jan Thomas (2009).**

Can't miss read aloud! Have the kids act it all out.

**Older Book - *Beetle Bop!* By Denise Fleming (2007)**

Beautiful art.

**Older Book - *I love bugs!* By Philemon Sturges (2005)**

Clear and direct.

### Storytime Theme: Nocturnal World!

**New Book – *All Ears, All Eyes* by Richard Jackson (2017)**

A gorgeous poem about evening in the forest as observed by an owl.

**New Book – *The Blue Hour* by Isabelle Simler (2017)**

The blue hour is the time between when “the day ends” and “the night falls.” This book is a beautiful catalog of all the creatures that are blue across the world as they settle down for the night.

**Newer Book—*When the World is Dreaming* by Rita Gray (2016)**

Quiet, beautifully illustrated book about animals going to bed. Perfect to read before nap!

**Newer Book - *Brown Bats* by Christina Leaf (2016)**

North American Animals series – An easy reader nonfiction book with good photos.

**Newer Book – *Night Animals* by Gianna Marino (2015)**

Funny story that also teaches about nocturnal behavior.

**Newer Book – *Flashlight* by Lizi Boyd (2014)**

A child goes on a hike in the dark with a flashlight; gorgeous, imaginative pictures in which everything is dark except what is revealed in the beam of a flashlight.

**Older Book – *Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night* by Joyce Sidman illustrated by Rick Allen**

Caldecott Honor Book of 2011. Beautiful poems, gorgeous illustrations – and a naturalist’s explanation right next to each picture.

#### Storytime Theme: Ponds & Pond Animals!

**New Book— *Ribbit* by Jorey Hurley (2017)**

A simple one-word-per-page science book with great pictures for kids 2+, Ribbit is gorgeous, perfect, and full of robust amphibian information.

**New Book – *Over and Under the Pond* by Kate Messner (2017)**

A lovely science book about a mother and son canoeing on a pond; the readers sees both above and below the water line. Cool! (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.)

**New Book: *The Hidden Life of a Toad* written and photographed by Doug Wechsler. (2017)**

This information-packed book, enhanced with amazing close-up photos, uses simple language to show how, in less than two months, a tadpole with gills and a tail changes into a pea-sized toadlet with lungs and legs. In its third year, she becomes a full-fledged female toad who goes on to produce tadpoles of her own. (Preschool – 3rd grade)

**New Book – *On Duck Pond* by Jane Yolen (2017)**

Sweet poem about how ducks flying onto a pond suddenly disturb the rest of the creatures.

**New Book – *A Different Pond* by Bao Phi (2017)**

A Vietnamese refugee shares his memories of ponds in Vietnam with his son as they fish in the US. “...for refugees everywhere.” Winner of the 2018 Charlotte Zolotow Award (text) and a Caldecott Honor Book (pictures) (K- 8)

**New Book – *Pond* by Jim LaMarche (2016)**

Lovely, more lengthy story about a boy and his friends who bring back a pond; we watch the creatures and the native plants return. Quiet book for older kids: K – 5.

**Older book: *Growing Frogs* by Vivian French (2000)**

A classic about tadpoles and their growth told as a story by the young narrator.

### Storytime Theme: Rain

**New Book - *I am the Rain* by John Patterson (2018)**

Lovely rhyming book that makes the water cycle understandable to preschoolers. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

**New Book - *The Big Umbrella* by Amy June Bates with Juniper Bates (2018)**

There is always more room under the big umbrella! A book about sharing in the rain. (Preschool – 2nd grade)

**New Book - *Watersong* by Tim McCanna (2017)**

Rhyming rain sounds accompany pictures showing a young fox trying to follow some ducks until he's reunited with his family.

**New Book - *Singing in the Rain* Illustrated by Tim Hopgood (2017) based on the lyrics to the 1929 song by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown**

Fabulous, joyous pictures support the text of the classic song.

**Newer Book— *Float* by Daniel Miyares (2016)**

A wordless book about a boy whose father makes him a boat out of paper. Beautiful.

**Newer Book—*Rain fish* by Lois Ehlert (2016)**

Ehlert plays with the idea of garbage and litter in the gutters, pushed along by the rain, clumping together and creating “fish.” She uses all kinds of objects that might end up in the gutter during a rain storm. Evocative and surprising!

**Newer Book— *Grumpy Pants* by Claire Messer (2016)**

Penguin's in a bad mood in the rain but he feels better once he has all his grumpy clothes off and has had a bath. The washing machine washes all his grumpy away!

**Newer Book - *Home in the Rain* by Bob Graham (2016)**

In the rain at a gas station.

**Newer Book - *Toad Weather* by Sandra Markle (2015)**

About a mother who urges her own mother and her daughter out into the rain so that they assist the community in carrying toads across the road.

**Newer Book - *Raindrops Roll* by April Pulley Sayre (2015)**

Poetic descriptions of rain using incredible nature photography.

**Newer Book – *Water is Water* by Miranda Paul, illustrations by Jason Chin (2015)**

Lovely illustrations support rhyming text describing the different forms water takes, as children interact with it.

## Storytime Theme: Robins

### **New Book – *This is the Nest that Robin Built* by Denise Fleming (2018)**

A preschool classic-to-be! Kids will enjoy the way the text uses repetition to build on itself to tell the story of how a robin builds her nest out of bits and pieces of materials processed by the other animals around her. The collage-like illustrations are a plus. A wonderful demonstration of animal interdependence; don't miss this one! (Preschool through 1st grade)

### **New Book – *Robins! How They Grow Up* by Eileen Christelow (2017)**

A real science book from the creator of *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*, this book has detailed information about what happens to robins from mating to nest building to raising babies. Two of the baby robins at the bottom of each page comment hilariously on the action. Too detailed for preschool, but a good reference (K-4)

### **New Book - *Apples and Robins* by Lucie Felix (2016 in USA; 2013 in France)**

Gorgeous cut paper book about a robin who takes up residence in the author's apple tree. She explains how to create her cut paper art as she goes. Perfect for preschool shapes discussions, as well as a unit on caring for backyard birds. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.)

### **Newer Book - *Robins* by Julie Murray (2016)**

One sentence per page explanation of robins with great photographs. Makes learning about robins accessible for 2 and 3 year olds. (*An ABDO Everyday Animals book*)

### **Newer Book - *Nest* by Jorey Hurley (2014)**

One word per page science book for little ones about a robin building a nest, laying eggs and -- then they hatch!

### **Newer Book - *Tap the Magic Tree* by Christie Matheson (2013)**

An interactive introduction to the seasons using an apple tree's changes: (Clap! And that makes snow.) Robins end the book as spring begins!

### **Older Book – *There is a Bird on your Head* by Mo Willems (2007)**

A funny and award winning easy reader that launched the whole Elephant and Piggy series! Gerald the Elephant discovers that he had a bird building a nest on his head. Hilarity ensues. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

## Storytime Theme: Salad (Carrot) Storytime!

### **New Book—*Escargot* by Dashka Slater (2017)**

A delightful story about a French snail who loves his salad with a nice vinaigrette, but no carrots! By the end of the story there is a new French carrot fan! Read it in a French accent!

### **New Book – *Carrot & Pea, an unlikely friendship* by Morag Hood (2017)**

Really a story about accepting everyone in preschool, but the peas and the carrot are adorable.

### **New Book – *1 Big Salad* by Juana Medina (2016)**

Great Counting Book about putting together creating a great salad. Each ingredient is personified in a charming way: Lion Radicchio!

**Older Book – Vegetable in Underwear (2015)**

Laugh out loud funny pictures of vegetables in underwear. Can't miss for the Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade crowd.

**Older Book – *Creepy Carrots* by Aaron Reynolds (2012)**

So fun in a Halloween sort of way! A bunny is haunted by carrots.

**Older Book – *Rah, Rah, Radishes* by April Pulley Sayre (2011)**

A vegetable chant with great pictures from area farmer's markets.

**Older Book - *How are you Peeling? Or Fast Food* by Saxton Freyman**

Both books show either creatures or vehicles made out of food. Ingenious. Have them guess which vegetable makes the ....!

**Storytime Theme: Soup!**

**New Book - *Every Color Soup* by Jorey Hurley (2018)**

Brilliant and beautiful one word per page book sharing the color of the various vegetables that go in soup, including, at the end, a recipe.

**New Book—*Is that Wise, Pig?* By Jan Thomas (2016)**

A hilarious counting book, adding vegetables to soup – except Pig keeps suggesting things that don't fit! Jan Thomas is funny, deft at handling timing, and full of joy; she's a master!

**Older Book— *Soup for One* by Ethan Long (2012)**

Another funny counting book; this time we're counting bugs in the soup, but the ending has two twists.

**Older Book –*Soup Day* by Melissa Iwai (2010)**

This book is a simple procedural telling of a young girls' shopping for soup ingredients with her mother. She helps her mother prepare the soup, waits for it – then eats it. Sweet and easily understood by younger children.

**Old Book – *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert (1987)**

A great classic about first planting, then growing, then harvesting the vegetables for soup; includes a recipe. Her art is the best.

**Books for Older Children:**

Brown, Marcia

*Stone Soup An Old Tale* (1947)

Kimmel, Eric A.

*Cactus Soup* (2004)

Lin, Grace

*Ugly Vegetables* (1999)

Muth, Jon J.

*Stone Soup* (2003)

Rodman, Mary Ann

*Surprise Soup* (2009)

## Storytime Theme: Sticks and Stones (nature play)

**New Book – *A Stick Until...* by Constance Anderson (2017) from Star Bright Books**

Wonderful exploration of the way animals and kids use sticks; simple, yet shares profound scientific insight. Destined to be the classic introduction to Nature Play!

**New Book –*Bob's Rock* by Ann and John Hassett (2017).**

A deceptively simple yet *hilarious* story about a boy with a dog & a boy with a rock; see how the dog stacks up against the rock!

**New Book –*Stepping Stones A Refugee Family's Journey* by Margriet Ruurs, Artwork by Nizar Ali Badr. (2016).**

While this book's content isn't appropriate for preschool, the pictures alone are evocative for the children in terms of the art, illustrations made solely of river stones. (K – 8)

**New Book— *Bring me a Rock!* By Daniel Miyares (2016)**

A nasty king grasshopper orders his buggy minions to build him a huge throne, but learns an important lesson from his smallest subject.

**Newer Book – *Stick and Stone* by Beth Ferry, illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld (2015).**

A lonely stick and a solitary stone find each other and learn about friendship. A book about caring for each other. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

**Newer Book – *Inuksuk Means Welcome* by Mary Wallace (2015)**

An alphabet book using only the letters in the word *inuksuk*, the Inuit word for pile of stones.

**Old Book – *Not a Stick* by Antoinette Portis (2007)**

A stick allows a child to become a great knight, a painter, a weightlifter and more!

**Old Book – *If You Find a Rock* by Peggy Christian (2000).**

A celebration and "classification" of found rocks.

## Best Books for Nature Play Resource List

### Backyard Nature Center

<http://www.backyardnaturecenter.org/>

BackYard Nature Center is a not-for-profit organization that advances and enables the process of connecting children and adults with the wonders of nature in the New Trier Township. These "wonders" include local parks, the Skokie Lagoons, and even your own backyard.

### The Jenny Evolution-Earth Day Picture Book List

<http://www.thejennyevolution.com/best-earth-day-picture-books-for-kids/>

Great list of books to check out-some newer titles, but mostly great older books. And, potentially, lots of other book lists/kids activity ideas that may be interesting to educators.

### Iowa City Public Library Book List for Earth Da

<http://blog.icpl.org/2016/04/20/great-picture-books-to-celebrate-earth-day/>

Nature Preschool Blog

<http://www.explorenature.org/preschool-blog/>

Great blog, with some innovative ideas for nature play and an overall solid glimpse into what “nature preschools” are all about!

NAEYC Nature Picture Book List

<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200801/BTJRecommendedNatureBooks.pdf>

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## Event Photos

<https://chicagobotanicgarden.smugmug.com/Education/Inspiring-Nature-Play-2018/n-sBLjQM/i-JfbQmbH>





# Inspiring Nature Play: Innovations



## Agenda and Session Descriptions May 2, 2018



Additional support generously provided by BackYard Nature Center, Greeley Elementary School (Winnetka Public Schools), Forest Preserves of Cook County, Lincoln Park Zoo, Natural Start Alliance (a project of the North American Association for Environmental Education), and Northfield Community Nursery School.

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## Event Agenda

8:30 – 9 am

### CHECK IN & REGISTRATION

9 – 9:20 am

### WELCOME & OVERVIEW OF THE DAY

**Megan Florkowski**, first grade teacher, Greeley School

**Katarina Jaksic**, kindergarten teacher, Greeley School

**Eileen Prendergast**, director of education, Chicago Botanic Garden

**Liza Sullivan**, executive director, The Alliance for Early Childhood

**Sarah Sheldon**, preschool teacher, Chicago Botanic Garden

9:20 – 10:30 am

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

#### Innovations in Nature Play: Early Childhood and Elementary

**David Sobel**, senior faculty, education department, Antioch University New England

The original kindergarten — the children’s garden — conceived by German educator Friedrich Froebel in the 19th century, was a place where children learned through play, often in nature. That idea is fast eroding. Children aren’t playing in the garden anymore, both in and out of school; instead they’re filling in bubbles on worksheets. The new movement of nature-based early childhood education can reverse that trend. There are thousands of forest kindergartens throughout Europe and new programs opening every month in North America. Let’s examine the promise of this healthy approach towards living and learning outdoors with young children, across a variety of settings and the span of childhood.

David Sobel consults and speaks widely on child development and place-based education. He has authored eight books and more than 70 articles focused on children and nature for educators, parents, environmentalists and school administrators in the last 30 years. His most recent book is *Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning* published by Redleaf Press.

10:40 – 11:25 am

### CONCURRENT SESSIONS

#### Caterpillars and Ladybugs: Nature Around Us Design Studio

Colleen McVeigh, Field Museum

Today, school systems increasingly limit the scope of early childhood programs to focus on the “basics.” Many early childhood educators and parents worry that kindergarten has become the “new first grade.” Yet, research tells us that young children need nature. This session explores ways to integrate outdoor activities with science, literacy and math to create nature based units of study for our youngest students. The session embraces the holistic concept that knowledge of the natural world includes emotional connection, and provides ideas and resources to support early childhood educators in developing enriched nature-based curricula.

### **Playing Care/Caring Play: How a Chicago Urban Community-led Nature Play Site Stewards Nature Play** Alsdorf Auditorium

Robin Cline, NeighborSpace

Jessica Fong, Spry Community Elementary School, Chicago Public Schools

Three years ago, the Jardincito nature play garden in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago opened to the public. This presentation explores the unique ways this urban play site unites multiple partners and provides opportunities for viewing and expanding the “public at play.” As this site is a community managed site, and is embedded in a residential neighborhood, it is a powerful example of how multiple entities (Head Starts, public schools, arts organizations, and community members) can share in a successful public play project. Robin Cline, Assistant Director of the organization NeighborSpace will talk about how this project came into being, and will be joined by Jessica Fong, Spry Community School early childhood education teacher. Fong, who brings her pre-k students to the site regularly, will discuss how access to the nature play site has changed the way her students play. Currently, Fong is engaged in a study comparing the play and language that occurs on traditional playground equipment with the play and language that occurs during playtime in Jardincito. This presentation is a powerful example of how urban children can stay connected to the natural world and their playful selves.

### **Safe Tools and Techniques to Empower Kids** Linnaeus Room

Sean Shaffer, North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Park District

Sarah Sheldon, Chicago Botanic Garden and Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

With simple tools from the kitchen and hardware store your kids can safely work wood into a variety of tools, toys and creations. What they are really creating is confidence, fine motor mastery and the rewards of taking risks. We will use these tools and learn these safety protocols to assure success. We will practice these techniques on European Buckthorn, turning this invasive bully into fun!

### **Writers in the Woods** Pullman Room

Liza Fischel, North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Park District

Rosa Younan, North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Park District

In this session, we will explore how nature play and creative writing promotes healthy, beneficial outlets for young students ages 8 -12. At the North Park Village Nature Center, we are learning about ways that nature play and writing go hand in hand. Join us as we share our creative process with you. Find out you can share this fun and easy technique with any group. Feedback and ideas are encouraged.

*11:40 am – 12:25 pm*

### **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

#### **Art, Music, and Nature: Finding Inspiration in the Forest Preserves** Pullman Room

Adam Kessel, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Rob Klamczynski, Forest Preserves of Cook County

The Forest Preserves of Cook County provides the public with over 70,000 acres of learning landscapes. This session aims to provide ideas to the audience about ways they can utilize the arts as an anchoring practice to root students in the sights, sounds, and wonder of nature. Naturalists Rob Klamczynski and Adam Kessel will explore the use of invasive plant species to create art and music with children. The talk will culminate in a mini jam where participants can use their instruments in a circle jam format or create an art piece inspired by nature.

### **Best New Nature Books for Your Classroom Alsdorf Auditorium**

Martha Meyer, Evanston Public Library

Come see what great new books were published in the last year to support or invite nature play or nature study in your classroom! A librarian who reviews new books and tests them on live eager kids will share the best of what she's found this year. Which new nature books are best for reading aloud with a group of kids? Which books work best to invite nature play or support learning about the natural world for toddlers, preschoolers and early elementary school kids? Everyone leaves with a packet of information detailing what the great new books are, what other new or existing books might support a whole storytime or unit of learning and various simple crafts, stem activities and projects match well with the books. Everyone gets a chance to work on a team to create programming with 2017/2018 new books! Don't miss this chance to get a leg up on a year's worth of nature learning for your students.

### **Experiential, Environmental Education Design Studio**

Ed Caplan, Keeler Gardens

Gina Iliopolous, Keeler Gardens

Biophilia is our inherent desire to connect with all living things. What better way to connect to nature than by play and learning about the environment. Come ready to move, play, and learn. We will be exploring a few experiential games that can be used to educate youth (and adults) on different environmental concepts to raise appreciation and understanding of nature and our environment. We will also explore modifying traditional games to make them nature learning opportunities. And of course, you will have the opportunity to be crowned the 2018 Nature Play Rock, Paper, Scissors Champion!

### **Squish, Roll, Build, and Explore: Ideas for Hands-On Nature Play Linnaeus Room**

Becky Lyons, Lincoln Park Zoo

Emily Van Laan, Lincoln Park Zoo

Want to walk away with ideas that you can put to use right away? In this session we'll be exploring four types of nature play through hands-on stations that allow you to actually do the activities we'll be discussing. We'll walk through some benefits of various types of play and provide you with a packet of information that will help you implement these types of play in your classroom, library, nature center, at home or on the go! The focus will be on creating natural experiences with items you already have, can acquire easily, or can collect outside. Join us to get ideas on using sensory play, loose parts, process art and nature walks with the little ones in your life.

*12:35 – 1:35 pm*

### **LUNCH & NETWORKING AND HANDS-ON NATURE PLAY EXPERIENCES**

#### **Chicks in the Classroom**

Tracy Aiden, Baker Demonstration School

Jessy Zich, Baker Demonstration School

Explore the many ways of raising chicks in the classroom. Gather ideas on how you can create an integrated hands-on study of the life cycle of chickens in your classroom. Through science, storytelling, math, and play, children with care for and learn all about chicks!

Learning Outcomes:

1. Observe the current state of an embryo (possibly chick if we are lucky and they hatch).
2. Using the observations taken, make an observational drawing of the egg and the state of the embryo.

3. Look through the documentation of previous chick studies. Ask questions related to the study, and how it was incorporated into the classroom.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.chickenwhisperermagazine.com/articles/incubation-classroom-hatching-chicks-your-students>

[https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/76053.Chicken\\_Books\\_for\\_Kids](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/76053.Chicken_Books_for_Kids)

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: paper, colored pencils, incubators, chicken eggs

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: cognitive, emotional, intellectual

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: language, scientific terms, mathematics, art

### **How to Make Natural Dyes**

Lorin Ottlinger, The Grove National Historic Landmark

Judy Picicco, The Grove National Historic Landmark

Use everyday food items to make natural dyes-then apply the knowledge to try making dyes out of things you can find on a nature walk.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will learn to make dyes using different household items.
2. Children will experiment with different items to assess what can be used to create the most effective dyes.
3. Children will be able to predict what other items might be used to make effective dyes.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.allnaturaldyeing.com/wool-dyes> - All Natural Dyeing

<http://pioneerthinking.com/crafts/natural-dyes> - Making Natural Dyes from Plants

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 4–6

Materials: Pioneer Dyeing box, yarn hanks, vinegar water (4 parts cool water, 1 part vinegar), strong coffee dye, strong tea dye, turmeric dye, teachers' instruction sheets

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: physical (children will have to collect samples of items in nature, and mix these with water and vinegar), cognitive/intellectual: (Children will analyze the results of their experiments with different items in nature to evaluate what will create the strongest dye)

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: science

## **Life Above Us**

Daniel Kielson, BackYard Nature Center

Gary Morrissey, BackYard Nature Center

Come to the BackYard Nature Center display to visit a simulated avian scene showing what teachers or parents can do with children while walking in nature. We will have materials from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources "IL Birds" resource trunk on display and model how to teach children about what birds can be found at their nearest park or forest preserve. Learn to recognize various bird species of NE Illinois so that you will be more knowledgeable on your next walk in nature.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students who demonstrate understanding can: K-LS1-1. Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.
2. Students who demonstrate understanding can: K-ESS2-2. Construct an argument supported by evidence for how plants and animals (including humans) can change the environment to meet their needs.
3. Students who demonstrate understanding can: 1-LS1-1. Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.

Recommended Resources:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Educational Trunk--IL Birds (reserve on line/pick up at CBG)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Field Trip Pack (reserve on line/pick up at CBG)

Peterson's First Guides--assorted titles Peterson's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America

A Pocket Naturalist Guide--assorted titles Birds of Illinois: Field Guide

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 4–6

Materials: IDNR Resource trunk: "IL Birds" which can be reserved on line and picked up at Chicago Botanic Garden, camera (optional if age appropriate), binoculars (optional if age appropriate)

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: social, emotional, cognitive/intellectual, physical

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: language/literacy, science, mathematics, art

## **Looking Out the Classroom Window**

Mila Love, Chicago Botanic Garden

Explore several activities that connect the natural world, play and literature. Gather creative ideas or a few quick tips to implement in your classroom using simple everyday materials. Discover new books or revisit some old favorites and their applications beyond story time.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Science process skills including examining and discussing parts of trees and plants, communication, observation, sorting and classifying
2. Early literacy skills include book awareness, language development and vocabulary
3. Sensory play, imaginative play and problem solving skills

### Tree Sculptures

Recommended Resources: Bella's Seasons of Stories compiled by Botanical Research Institute of Texas, [www.brit.org](http://www.brit.org)

Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: paper towel tubes, cardboard, sticks & twigs, Phillips head screw driver (used to punch holes in tubes), hot glue gun

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity:

Physical: hands on practice with small natural materials and loose parts helps children work on the development of fine motor skills

Cognitive/intellectual: Exploring natural materials and using language to describe parts of a tree

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity:

Art: Children participate in creating art and the creative process

STEM: This activity uses early math and engineering skills as well as problem solving to construct a stable sculpture.

### Favorites Necklaces

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 2–6

Materials Needed to Replicate Activity: contact paper, hole punch, yarn, natural materials found and/or consider “special” by children on walk, playground etc., miscellaneous art supplies—glitter, gems, etc. (optional)

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity:

Physical: hands on practice with small natural materials and loose parts helps children work on the development of fine motor skills.

Cognitive: Exploring natural materials and using language to describe the materials

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity:

Art: children participate in creating art and the creative process

Visual/Spatial: Children noticing patterns, details, textures, colors, shapes, sizes of natural materials and discriminate between objects/types/sizes

### Mud Cupcakes

Recommended Resources: *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Education* by David Sobel, [www.davidsobelauthor.com](http://www.davidsobelauthor.com)

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 18 mo – 6 years

Materials Needed to Replicate Activity: mud, ladle, tinfoil cupcake liners, natural materials- dried or fresh herbs, flowers, grasses, acorns, shells, sand, etc., miscellaneous art supplies—glitter, gems, etc. (optional)

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity:

Physical: hands on practice with small natural materials and loose parts helps children work on the development of fine motor skills

Cognitive: Exploring natural materials and using language to describe the materials

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity:

Art: children participate in creating art and the creative process

Visual/Spatial: Children noticing patterns, details, textures, colors, shapes, sizes of natural materials and discriminate between objects/types/sizes

Math: number awareness/sorting

### **Mighty Miniature Nature Scenes**

George Klut, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Julie Vandervort, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Participants will be invited to express themselves and their ideas by creating their own miniature nature scene using loose parts, clay/mud, and tree cookies. These versatile and light weight activity ingredients make travel easy; they can be transported just about anywhere - park, nature center, school classrooms, or indoors/outdoors. Creations from this activity can stand alone or become an interesting element of a nature play area, flower pot, planter box, or fairy garden.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will be able to explore the physical properties of natural loose parts, tree cookies and clay/mud.
2. Children will be engaged in play using fine motor skills.
3. Children will use art as a means to express their ideas, thoughts and imagination.

Recommended Resources:

National Association for the Education of Young Children and Illinois Early Learning Project websites

*National Guidelines Nature Play and Learning Spaces* by Robin Moore

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3-6

Materials: mud/clay, loose parts (leaves, pebbles, flower petals, grasses, twigs, pine cones, feathers, acorns, etc), tree cookies, water, glue

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: Exploring natural materials and using language to describe these materials will address the development of cognitive/intellectual skills. Play using smaller loose parts will address physical development of fine motor skills.

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: Encouraging the use of diverse words to describe the sensory experience of exploring natural materials will address language development. Exploration of natural loose parts and their properties will address science. Creating an art piece in this activity will address self expression (art) and involve problem solving (science).

## **Observational Drawing: Learning to Draw What You See**

Cori Paulsrud, Kohl Children's Museum

Amelia Troutman, Kohl Children's Museum

The Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago Adventures in Art exhibition encourages children to explore their artistic creativity through self-guided activities and has been providing exceptional hands on learning since 1985. This session will focus on inspiring nature play by providing new ways to engage young minds using art and the natural materials. Participants will create an observational drawing while making choices of self-expression and creativity using new drawing mediums.

### Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to observe a still life and create an observational drawing.
2. Students will be able to make creative choices with multi-media drawing mediums.
3. Students will have ample time for reflecting about drawing in small groups.

### Recommended Resources:

Harris Helm, J. (2015). *Becoming Young Thinkers: Deep project work in the classroom.* (pp. 86-97). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harris Helm, J. (2016). *Young Investigators: The project approach in the early years.* (pp. 40-48). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: Birth—6

Materials: different colors, sizes, transparency values and shapes of vases; different kinds of flowers: real or unreal; colorful unique feathers; bird nest

### Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity:

#### The Arts

- 25.A Investigate, begin to appreciate, and participate in the arts.
- 25.B Display an awareness of some distinct characterizes of the arts.
- 26.A Understand the processes, traditional tools, and modern technologies used in the arts.
- 26.B Understand ways to express meaning through the arts.

#### Language Arts

- 1.A Demonstrate understanding through age appropriate responses.
- 1.B Communicate effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.

#### Mathematics

- 7.B Begin to make estimates of measurements.
- 9.B Demonstrate understanding of location and ordinal position, using appropriate vocabulary.

#### Science

- 11.A Develop beginning skills in the use of science and engineering practices, such as observation, asking questions, solving problems, and drawing concluding.

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: art, language arts, mathematics, science

## **Pop-up Adventure Playground**

Yulia Borisova, Purple Line Adventure Play

Explore a small pop-up adventure playground. Get information and practical advice on how to make these playgrounds happen in any community. A pop-up adventure playground is a place where a variety of “loose parts” are available to provide opportunities for a wide range of self-directed play.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Kids will have an opportunity to try out their own ideas in manipulating available loose parts.
2. Kids will have an opportunity to interact with others through play.
3. Kids will invent their own ways to interacting with the world with the help of loose parts.

Recommended Resources:

<https://www.purplelineadventureplay.org/>

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: Birth to 6

Materials: cardboard, tape, fabric, tires, chalk, rope....

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: social, emotional, cognitive/intellectual, physical

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: language, science, art, movement

## **Upcycled: DIY Nature Play Ideas**

Laura Hall, Jurica-Suchy Nature Museum, Benedictine University

Karly Tumminello, Jurica-Suchy Nature Museum, Benedictine University

This station will offer do-it-yourself projects that explore nature by utilizing everyday materials, such as play dough, toy animals, and string, and natural objects, such as sticks, sand, and stones. Activities include tree-trunk animal track identification, nature threading, and permanent sandcastles.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Animal Tracks in Snow: Children will learn to identify animals and their unique tracks. Identifying tracks involves multiple skills, including understanding anatomy (paws, hooves, claws, etc.), gait (pattern and placement), and food chains (who is following who).
2. Nature Threading: Children will make use of natural objects with drilled holes to create artistic and tactile chains. Objects may include, but are not limited to, wood cuts, seed pods, thick twigs, and leaves. These string chains will help children create and discover patterns, as well as offer an opportunity to work on counting and grouping.
3. Sandcastle You Can Keep: Children will create unique individual sandcastles that will eventually harden. This activity will involve the development of fine motor skills and experimentation with design, shapes, and scale. Sandcastles will also require imaginative play/construction, utilizing natural objects, such as sticks, shells, and stones in the design.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.montessorifromtheheart.com/my-blog/2016/12/animal-tracks.html>

<http://www.howwemontessori.com/how-we-montessori/2015/08/creating-with-nature.html>

[https://www.education.com/activity/article/Make sandcastle you can keep/](https://www.education.com/activity/article/Make-sandcastle-you-can-keep/)

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: See supplementary websites

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: cognitive/intellectual, physical

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: science, movement, art

### **Wee Wigglers**

Charlotte Brown, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Lisa Schwarz, Forest Preserves of Cook County

The Forest Preserves of Cook County offer numerous free and low cost learning opportunities for teachers, families and children year-round. Please visit our website to plan your next adventure: [fpdcc.com](http://fpdcc.com). Children will develop their observation skills and test predictions using basic scientific equipment while investigating earthworms. They will engage in imaginative play by mimicking the movements of their specimens and hone fine motor skills as they pretend to be hungry birds foraging for worms.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will actively observe demonstrations, listen to or participate in discussion related to the activity and/ or use tools to conduct their own investigations.
2. Participants will observe proper handling of live specimens and learn how to use instruments.
3. Participants will engage in the process of scientific inquiry.

Recommended Resources to Supplement Session:

Books: W. Pferrer, *Wiggling Worms at Work*/ L. Lionni, *Inch by Inch* (available in Spanish).

Field Guides: J. Kirkland, *Take a City Nature Walk* Kavanagh & Leung, *Bugs & Slugs: A Folding Pocket Guide to Familiar North American Invertebrates*.

Web: Vermicomposting Guide for Teachers:

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Publications/Documents/Schools/56001007.pdf>

Earthworm Lifecycle: <https://teara.govt.nz/files/di15491enz.jpg>

Parts of an Earthworm:

[http://payload355.cargocollective.com/1/18/590239/9417600/worm\\_body\\_parts\\_RGB\\_1000.png](http://payload355.cargocollective.com/1/18/590239/9417600/worm_body_parts_RGB_1000.png)

Forest Preserves of Cook County: <http://fpdcc.com/education/>

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: earthworms and replicas, clock/ digital timer, flashlights, rulers, magnifying lenses, clear bins with substrate, photos of worms- lifecycle, anatomy, access to running water and soap to thoroughly clean hands following activity

Key Skill Strengthened/Subject Areas Addressed Through Activity: Creative Arts- Dramatic Play: Children demonstrate creativity assuming different roles. Physical Health/ Development- Fine Motor: Dexterity for use of various tools and instruments. Science- Skills, Methods: Use senses and simple tools to gather information, develop observation skills, make and test predictions. Scientific Knowledge: Gain knowledge of the natural world through observation of living organisms and processes. Math- Number and Operations: Determine quantity, use language to compare amounts (more/ fewer, greater, less than). Geometry, Spatial Sense: Compare shapes, parts, attributes of

objects. Describe position in space (in front, behind, under, inside, outside, etc.). Patterns and Measurement: Use standard and non-standard measures to determine length and area of objects.

### **Zoom In, Zoom Out**

Liz Hilt, Kohl Children's Museum

This activity encourages children to use a variety of ring-like objects to create a perimeter on the ground or hold outward at arms-length. When ring is on ground the goal is look closely within the circle, zooming in the focus. This part of the activity is similar to quadrat sampling, which is a tool scientists use for the study of ecology and biodiversity by placing squares in set areas of interest in a habitat and recording all species found. In this activity, the ring can also be held at arms-length to look at a natural area with a wider view, or to zoom the focus outward. This can include birdwatching, cloud watching, or overall viewing the natural setting from a different perspective.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Children will be able to name or describe items found in observations.
2. Children will be able to count or sort items found in observations.
3. Children will be able to compare and contrast zooming in and zooming out through discussion of spatial relationships.

Recommended Resources to Supplement Session:

Websites: University of Idaho's "Plot-based or Quadrat Techniques"

Adult Books: Last Child in the Woods – Richard Louv, Vitamin N – Richard Louv

Children's Books: In My Backyard – Valerie Glogas, One Small Place in a Tree – Barbara Brenner In My Backyard – Margriet Ruurs, Under One Rock: Bugs, Slugs, and Other Ughs! – Anthony D. Fredericks

Activity Most Appropriate for Children Ages: 3–6

Materials: anything to make a border, ex. hula hoop, milk rings, string, etc.; magnifying lens or binoculars for further exploration; paper and pencil to write observations/data

Key Skills Strengthened Through Activity: verbal expression, concentration, number awareness/sorting, spatial relationships

Subject Areas Addressed in Activity: science, math, language

*1:45 – 2:30 pm*

### **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

#### **Avoiding Ecophobia: How to Help Children Love Nature Before Asking Them to Save It** Pullman Room

Katie Slivovsky, Chicago Children's Museum

Through audience participation and lively discussion, we'll explore the research and philosophy of author/educator David Sobel and Dr. Louise Chawla—among others—as we dig into how bad news about the environment impacts children. Participants will have opportunities to reflect on the value of their own nature play experiences and examine how they relate to children today—especially when it comes to the value of risk. Participants will also explore which nature activities and conservation actions are best-suited to children of different ages.

### **Bringing Nature to Your Neighborhood Preschool** Alsdorf Auditorium

Allison Ashley, Covenant Nursery School

Karen Dinelli, Covenant Nursery School

Elizabeth Goodbody, Covenant Nursery School

Tina Vanderwarker, Covenant Nursery School

Kim Stanton, Covenant Nursery School

One small, part day preschool's journey from a traditional play-based program to one that has incorporated nature play and learning into the mix, Covenant Nursery School is located in a suburban neighborhood without easy access to a forest, nature preserve, or other large natural area nearby. Administrators and teaching staff will detail our on-going journey (with a PowerPoint presentation) over the last 5 years as we designed and built a nature playscape on site, learned more about using natural materials in the classrooms, and also helped families to embrace the value in nature play for their children.

### **Integrating Museum Resources to Support Nature Play Design Studio**

Kyla Cook, Field Museum

Jennifer Flowers, Field Museum

Sarah Wehlage, Chicago Academy of Sciences/Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

With the realization that outdoor nature play benefits early learners cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically, enabling access to nature play for all students has become essential. However, with the reality of modern school-based education in urban settings, it can be challenging to provide enough opportunities and time for children to participate in unstructured play outdoors with access to a variety of ecology. How do we support the discoveries and connections children make out of doors and connect them to their local flora and fauna? Attendees will experience first-hand how museum resources support student learning of nature and life science in the early-childhood and elementary classroom. Participants will experience how classroom learning and activities can be centered around and inspired by local nature phenomena, plus how to delve deeper into that learning using museum resources and specimens. The presenters will also feature examples from the Early Elementary Science Partnership program where Chicago-area teachers use museum resources in their early elementary classrooms to support understandings of life science concepts and build student use of science practices. Session participants will be able to engage in different instructional strategies as learners using museum resources to deepen their connections to nature and their local environment.

### **Yoga and Mindfulness Techniques to Integrate Nature in the Classroom** Linnaeus Room

Lani Gerszonovicz, Banner Day Camp

Paying attention to the body, breath and mind is a powerful tool that can be used to cultivate heightened awareness and build connection to the natural world when integrated into an early education curriculum. Living in the Chicagoland area, we are not always able to get outside to play. Educators will learn tested techniques for students ages 3+ for how to visualize being in nature and notice how it makes them feel. They will learn how to use the bee buzzing breath and ocean breath to connect to nature and become more calm, peaceful and available to learn. We will learn poses such as mountain, tree and pigeon, and pretend to fly like a bird and soar through the sky, feeling graceful and balanced. We will learn to make yoga sunshine and rain and pretend with our bodies to plant a seed so that it grows big and strong. We will build a forest of trees and notice the movement in all living things and how trees sway in the wind. These techniques bridge the gap between child and nature by encouraging curiosity and making a difference in how we relate to the natural world. Join us for a fun, playful yoga and nature experience which will provide beneficial tools for students and teachers!

2:45 – 3:30 pm

## **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

### **Embracing Nature Design Studio**

Molly Babu, early childhood consultant

This workshop provides planned time for children to explore and experiment in the nature and allows outdoor materials to be moved to an indoor setting for further observation. It shows a positive attitude to the outdoors and nature including insects, animals, and plant life. I will show you lots of hands-on activities that are open-ended to stimulate curiosity, creativity, initiative, and problem solving with little or no cost to you.

### **Knives, Fires, and Civilizations: Outdoor Play with Youth Ages 6 to 12** Pullman Room

Kathleen Soler, playworker

Sol Hinami, playworker

Alex Enarson, playworker

In this session, participants will be encouraged to deconstruct the experience of child-directed play in a preordained space and discuss the next step: community development and skill building alongside adults in nature. We will share what we have learned about high risk activities such as whittling and cooking with children, some of the projects accomplished by children during Fraternal Forest classes taking place in Walking Stick Woods, an experimental learning site graciously provided by the North Park Village Nature Center.

### **Nature Buddies: An Inclusive Nature Education Pilot Program** Linnaeus Room

Ann Halley, Chicago Botanic Garden

Kay Knight, Chicago Botanic Garden

The lack of diversity in nature education includes students with special needs. Yet research shows that nature-based education is an “educational equalizer” and that inclusive classrooms are better academically and socially for students of all abilities. While there are wonderful programs dedicated to serving specific populations, inclusive nature-based education is still undeveloped. The session will begin by discussing potential barriers our attendees may face in creating an inclusive program. We will then review Chicago Botanic Garden’s collaboration with a local special education preschool program in creating a pilot inclusive nature program: its resources, successes, and lessons learned. Attendees will then collaborate in small groups on activity development for various populations. By sharing their practices and creativity, we hope that at the end of the session our attendees will feel confident in welcoming students with special needs into their programs.

### **When Plundering Pirates Take Over Your Class: How to Effectively Foster and Document Emergent Curriculum in a Nature-based Program** Alsdorf Auditorium

Megan Gessler, Natural Beginnings Early Learning Program and Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

Sarah Sheldon, Chicago Botanic Garden and Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

Nature provides children ample space to create their own authentic learning adventures. How do we follow their natural curiosity to scaffold for optimal learning potential? How do we make that learning visible to the child, the parents, and the community? Come discuss effective tools and strategies utilized in emergent curriculum and documentation.

3:30 pm

## **EVALUATION AND CPDU FORM COMPLETION**

## **Books for Inspiring Nature Play**

Compiled by Martha Meyer, Evanston Public Library

Complementary activities available on the Alliance for Early Childhood's [Resources webpage](#).

### ***A Stick Until . . .* by Constance Anderson (2017)**

This book uses simple text and clear illustrations to show how various animals -- and children -- use sticks as anything from a flyswatter to a courtship gift. A brilliant invitation to nature play! A great launch for imaginative activities. The two pages of text at the end provide more details about the animals' characteristics and habits. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

### ***Winter Dance* by Marion Dane Bauer and illustrated by Richard Jones (2017)**

Various animal friends tell a fox what they do to prepare for winter, but none of their plans is right for him. Ms. Bauer wrote this book when she learned that foxes really dance in the snow. Excellent for the Animals in Winter unit. (Preschool - 1st grade)

### ***Grand Canyon*, by Jason Chin (2017)**

Beautiful, brilliant and deeply informational book for older kids to learn about the Grand Canyon. A father and daughter travel through the Grand Canyon to learn about its past and present. A 2018 Sibert Honor Book and a Caldecott Honor Book (Sibert is for informational writing; Caldecott for illustration). (2nd - 7th grade)

### ***8 - An Animal Alphabet* by Elisha Cooper and book design by Elisha Cooper, David Saylor, and Charles Kreloff (2015)**

A terrific counting and alphabet book with realistic pictures of animals on each page. A fun book for preschoolers, who will love figuring out WHICH animals are pictured 8 times on each page -- and matching the pictures with the right names. Several pages at the end provide additional information about each animal. Winner of the 2016 Mathical Prize. (for books about math for kids). (Preschool and up)

### ***Wolf in the Snow* by Matthew Cordell (2017)**

A wordless book in which a girl rescues a wolf pup in a snowstorm and then needs rescuing herself. Perhaps a parable of interdependence, but few unrealistic moments. When the girl and the wolf mother brave facing each other for the sake of the pup, it is a stunning moment. Winner of the 2018 Caldecott Medal (illustration). (Preschool)

### ***Plankton Is Pushy* by Jonathan Fenske and book design by Steve Ponzio (2017)**

A plankter (singular of plankton, though, Fenske just calls it a plankton) gets frustrated as he repeatedly tries and fails to get a mussel to reply to his greeting. Funny lines and pictures and some children might be taken aback when the mussel finally opens his mouth only to swallow the plankter! Hilarious introduction to ocean food webs! (preschool - 2nd grade)

### ***A Hundred Billion Trillion Stars* by Seth Fishman (2017)**

“Did you know that the earth is covered in three trillion trees? And that seven billion people weigh about the same as ten quadrillion ants? Our world is full of constantly changing numbers, from a hundred billion trillion stars in space to thirty-seven billion rabbits on Earth. Can you imagine that many of anything?” from the publisher's write up. 2018 Mathical Prize Winner. (K - 5)

***This Is the Nest That Robin Built* by Denise Fleming (2018)**

A preschool classic-to-be! Kids will enjoy the way the text uses repetition to build on itself to tell the story of how a robin builds her nest out of bits and pieces of materials processed by the other animals around her. The large, realistic illustrations are a plus. A wonderful demonstration of animal interdependence; don't miss this one! (Preschool through 1st grade)

***All Around Us* by Xelena Gonzalez and illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia (2017)**

A little girl and her grandpa find circles all around them in nature. Grandpa also makes the connection that in returning garden waste to the earth and in burying ancestors in the earth we are closing a circle. The love between the girl and her grandpa shines throughout the book. 2018 Pura Belpre Illustrator Honor Book. This book reclaims environmental stewardship as a traditional value of Latino and Native culture in a way that is clear to young children. Rare and essential. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***The African Orchestra* by Wendy Hartmann and illustrated by Joan Rankin (2017)**

This picture book has a gentle rhyming text about the "music" made by African insects, rain, birds, leaves, and other noisemakers. The South African author and illustrator have created many award-winning South African children's books. Will inspire listening to nature and musical responses to the environment. (Preschool +)

***Go, Green Gecko!* by Gay Hay and illustrated by Margaret Tolland (2017)**

This New Zealand picture book tells how a lizard gets food and avoids predators; an introduction to the New Zealand bush ecosystem. Older kids will enjoy the fact-filled notes at the end (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***I Can Run* by Murray Head. Photographs by Murray Head (2017)**

This easy reader has great squirrel pictures, each showing a different natural activity (running, eating, hiding from a predator). Perfect for preschoolers -- and beginning readers (K - 2nd grade)

***In the Middle of the Fall* by Kevin Henkes, Illustrated by Laura Dronzek (2017)**

A good strong description of the weather as the season changes from mid-fall to the beginning of winter. A worthy successor to *When Spring Comes* also by Henkes and Dronzek. Preschool gold from a former Caldecott Medal winner. (Preschool)

***Yodel the Yearling* written and photographed by Mary Holland (2018)**

Engaging, accessible text and photos paint an informative picture of a one-year-old bear after he awakens from his long winter nap. He plays, finds food, stays safe -- and learns how to survive on his own. Additional information about bears' activities and habits are in the 4 supplemental pages. Written by a naturalist who has also taught in libraries and schools. A great choice (despite the bad title)! (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Every Color Soup* by Jorey Hurley (2018)**

Each page has a simple, bright picture of a vegetable, each a different color in this fun book that is perfect for the very youngest kids. Budding cooks will find a recipe for Every Color Soup on the last page. (Toddlers - 2nd grade)

***Ribbit* by Jorey Hurley (2017)**

A simple one-word-per-page science book with great art. Ribbit is gorgeous, perfect, and full of robust amphibian information. (Toddler - 2nd Grade)

***All Ears, All Eyes* by Richard Jackson (2017)**

A beautiful poem about an owl observing evening in the forest, beautifully illustrated in ways that support the poetry, this book also gently invites sleep. All the creatures named and drawn are natural to a northern US forest. (Late preschool - 8th grade but adults will love the story too.) Shh....

***Shark Lady – The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean’s Most Fearless Scientist* by Jess Keating and illustrated by Marta Alvarez Miguens (2017) .**

Attractive illustrations enhance the story of this exceptional girl as she learns all she can about sharks, becomes a scholar and then a scientist who goes on daring deep-sea dives, defying conventional expectations for women. She shows the world that sharks are not the mindless killers they’re believed to be. End pages provide more details and a timeline of Clark’s life. (Preschool - 5th grade)

***It Starts with a Seed* by Laura Knowles and illustrated by Jennie Webber (2017 in the US; 2016 in the UK)**

Gorgeous pictures by Jennie Webber illustrate a clear, beautiful yet very accessible poem by Laura Knowles about the life cycle of the tree. Destined to be *a preschool classic*; don’t miss this one! Four fold-out pages at the end tell us that the tree is a sycamore and provide accompanying facts, including “a sycamore tree can live for 400 years.” (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Once Upon a Jungle* by Laura Knowles and illustrated by James Boast (2017)**

Simple stunning introduction to one food chain in a rainforest. Short, clear text shares sophisticated concepts. A couple of big fold-out pages provide surprises. Food chains for 3+ year olds! Would inspire science classes, rainforest art projects and even a nature poetry class. (3 years - 3rd grade)

***Fur, Feather, Fin – All of Us Are Kin* by Diane Lang and illustrated by Stephanie Laberis (2018)**

A rhyming introduction to animal classifications -- including Arthropods and Detritivores! When introducing humans as mammals, the illustrator include single parents, gay couples, and parents and kids from various countries. An inclusion message frames the rhymes. (K - 5)

***Green Green: A Community Gardening Story* by Maria and Baldev Lamba (2017)**

A poetic celebration of community gardening, with sweet inclusive pictures. (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***I Wish I Was an Orca* by Sandra Markle (2017)**

A better easy reader about wildlife! Sandra Markle, one of the best nature writers for children, invites early readers to pretend they are an orca and learn what life would be like for them and their families. Terrific for ocean-loving kids! (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Creekfinding: A True Story* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin (2017)**

Mike Osterholm bought a farm in the Driftless region of Iowa to restore a prairie, but found out from a neighbor that a creek had once flowed through the property. Mike painstakingly researched where the creek had been. Using diggers to dig out the creek and cement trucks to deliver BIG rocks

in the right place, Mike brought the creek back to life, with all its creatures. Terrific introduction to wetland restoration. Beautiful art by Claudia McGahee. (K – 5)

***Wild World* by Angela McAllister and illustrated by Hvass & Hannibal (2018)**

Beautiful and accurate illustrations of rainforests, prairies, coral reefs, and other wild areas frame simple poetry describing each wild place. Unfortunately the opening sentences give a dire (true) warning that these environments are endangered today but then only in the endnotes do we finally learn how human activity poses a threat to each area and what we can do about it. Avoid the opening statement and the end papers to make this work for K - 3. (4rd - 8th grade)

***Wolf Island* by Ian McAllister and Nicholas Read (2017)**

Beautiful photographs illustrate the story of a sea wolf starting a family on a new island in the Great Bear Rainforest. (Vancouver to Alaska) A good read aloud. (K- 5)

***Watersong* by Tim McCana (2017)**

This book's text is a poem composed of the sounds water makes as it rains; the illustrations follow the rainy day adventures of a young fox. Have fun performing this one! (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***Prickly Hedgehogs* written and illustrated by Jane McGuinness (2018)**

Everything you always wanted to know about hedgehogs! The pictures are cute and the text is clear, with additional information added in an extra note on each page plus an end page with extra facts. Great for the nocturnal animals unit -- or one dealing with Europe, Asia or Africa. (Preschool - 5th grade)

***The Fox and the Wild* by Clive McFarland (2017 in U.S., 2016 in U.K.)**

This is the story of an urban fox who, unlike his cousin foxes, feels overwhelmed by the city. He looks for the wild and finally arrives in the countryside through a wildlife crossing. (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***It's Springtime, Mr. Squirrel!* by Sebastian Meschenmoser (2018)**

Totally hilarious story line combined with beautiful sophisticated pencil illustrations make this book a delight to share. The animals and their setting are realistic but the story is not. Part of a series; catch all of Mr. Squirrel's adventures; your kids will thank you! (Older Preschool -7th)

***Over and Under the Pond* by Kate Messner illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal (2017)**

A mother and son of color row a boat across a pond. Paragraphs alternate between what they can see above the pond and what's happening below. Lovely art by Mr. Neal displays creatures native to a northern pond. (Heron, Moose, Beaver) Endpages describe each animal in detail, as well as providing more books and websites about pond life. This book continues the terrific series which also includes *Over and Under the Snow* and *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt*.

***Colors, an Early Birds Book* by Patricia Mitter (2017)**

Board Book. Simple, bright pictures of birds, each a different color, with the name of the color on the facing page. Use it for introducing babies to nature and also learning about birds or colors with preschoolers. Published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this book has lots of resources in the

back: a link to their website with more information and QR codes so your cell phone can sing each bird's call. (Toddlers - Preschool)

***Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators that Saved an Ecosystem* by Patricia Newman (2017)**

“Marine biologist Brent Hughes discovered a surprising connection between sea otters and sea grass at an estuary in northern California. Follow science in action as Hughes conducts the research that led to this major discovery.” A 2018 Sibert Honor Book. (Sibert is informational writing). Grades 3 - 7 (ages 8 - 12)

***What Is Baby Gorilla Doing?* by Christena Nippert-Eng, John Dominski, and Miguel Martinez (2017)**

Board Book. Lively photographs, each illustrating a single action word. Learn about gorillas or letters. This is a much younger version of the authors' amazing *Gorillas Up Close* (2016) that documents for Elementary and Middle School audiences what researchers are learning about the gorillas of Lincoln Park Zoo. Christena Nippert-Eng Ph.D. is a sociologist and Professor of Informatics at Indiana University Bloomington. (Toddlers - preschoolers)

***Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter* by Kenard Pak (2017)**

Beautifully illustrated picture book describing the beginning of winter, like its predecessor, *Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn*. The children in the story talk to the elements of the seasonal change and they reply. “Hello Evergreens!” and “Hello. Our pine needle branches shiver in the wind while you sleep.” (Preschool through 2nd grade)

***I Am the Rain* by John Paterson (2018)**

Lovely rhyming book that makes the water cycle understandable to preschoolers! For Rain storytimes, too. John Paterson is a Northbrook IL based author who has worked for the Field Museum and the Garfield Park Conservatory in Chicago. Would pair well with *All Around Us* by Gonzalez. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Mrs. Peanuckle's Vegetable Alphabet* by Mrs. Peanuckle and illustrated by Jessie Ford (2017)**

Board Book. This alphabet book shows different brightly colored vegetables and is a vegetable only update of Lois Ehlert's classic *Eating the Alphabet*. Perfect and compelling; makes you want to eat them all! I love how it introduces dandelion leaves as edible. (Preschool - 2nd grade, but since it is a board book, could also be entertaining for babies.)

***Sadie Braves the Wilderness* by Yvonne Pearson (2017)**

The story of one girl's summer trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Sadie works hard to reassure her younger brother who may not be as frightened as she imagines. Good realistic pictures make you feel that you are there. (Preschool – 2nd Grade)

***Me and You and the Red Canoe* by Jean E. Pendziwol and illustrated by Phil (2017)**

A parent and child steal out of their campsite at dawn and catch a fish at the Canadian lake, marveling at the plants and animals they see. Poetic, but you feel a part of that amazing morning hush at the campsite. The art is all drawn on wood and is gorgeous. Share this as a special treasure. (Preschool - 5th grade)

***A Different Pond* by Bao Phi (2017)**

A Vietnamese refugee shares his memories of ponds in Vietnam with his son as they fish in the U.S. “...for refugees everywhere.” Winner of the 2018 Charlotte Zolotow Award (text) and a Caldecott Honor Book (pictures). (K- 8)

***Anywhere Farm* by Phyllis Root (2017)**

Rollicking, rhyming book about growing plants almost anywhere! A great opening to a gardening unit. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Otis and Will Discover the Deep: The Record-setting Dive of the Bathosphere* by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Katherine Roy (This book is coming June 2018!)**

The suspenseful, little-known true story of the first dive into the deep ocean in 1930. Stunning, sure to win a 2019 award. I saw this one as an ARC (advance reader copy). WOW! Perfect for an ocean unit or any child curious about the deep sea. (Older preschool - 3rd grade)

***Safe and Sound* by Jean Roussen, illustrated by Loris Lora (2017)**

A sweet poem about how most baby animals need their parents for safety and support that ends with a mixed race boy being tucked in by his parents. The pictures are exceptional, all showing animals being cared for by their parents. Whales, Swans, Anteaters, Wolves, Bluebirds, Kangaroos, Crocodiles, Seahorses... beautiful. (Preschool)

***How to Be an Elephant; Growing Up in the African Wild* by Katherine Roy (2017)**

Gorgeous artwork in a book giving detailed information about the birth of a baby elephant through the kind of training they receive from the herd. Not a read aloud; lots of detailed information explained well. Roy is a previous winner of the Sibert Award (informational books) (K- 5)

***Koala* by Claire Saxby (2017 in the US with simultaneous publication in Australia)**

A wonderful, easily understood science book that documents a young koala's experiences after his mother gets pregnant and pushes him out of her tree. The pictures by Julie Vivas are luminous, realistic and clear. There is even an index! Works surprisingly well as a read aloud. Pair with *Wombat Walkabout* by Carol Diggory Shields (2009) and *Two Little Monkeys* by Mem Fox (2012) for a celebration of Australian wildlife. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Thank You, Earth – A Love Letter to Our Planet* written and photographed by April Pulley Sayre. (2018)**

Simple but lovely rhyming text and luminous photos of animals, plants, the ground, and the sky make a heartfelt thank-you to the earth for all the wonders it brings us. The end pages suggest ways we can translate our appreciation into action. Perfect Earth Day book! (Preschool and *all ages*)

***Warbler Wave* written and photographed by April Pulley Sayre, with Jeff Sayre. (2018)**

This book is about the marvelous but perilous journey made by many species of warblers during their spring and fall migrations. Its rhyming text and its close-up photos of gorgeous, brightly colored warblers flying, perching, and catching food will grab the reader's' attention. Four pages of text at the end are packed with additional information about warblers' migration patterns. (Preschool and all ages)

***Seek and Find 13 of the World's Deadliest Animals* by Lola M. Schaefer. Illustrated by Tynn Armstrong. (2017)**

A riveting, useful somewhat sensational guide book on how to protect yourself if you are going to be near Porcupines, Mountain Goats, a Hippopotamus, Golden Poison Dart Frogs or Deathstalker Scorpions! The numerous deadly animals *camouflaged* on each page show areas that look safe may harbor danger. Ideal for kids who are hikers and who *love* to be scared; terrible for anyone you're attempting to lure out of doors. The end pages present more facts and safety tips for hikers, explorers, or canoeists. (3rd - 7th grade)

***The Blue Hour* by Isabelle Simler. (2017)**

The blue hour is the time between when "the day ends" and "the night falls." Large, bright drawings in this preschool-friendly book illustrate the blue birds, animals, sea creatures, and flora that flourish during the hour when day ends and night begins. The inside cover shows 32 different shades of blue. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Plume* by Isabelle Simler (2017 in the U.; 2012 in France.)**

A beautifully illustrated book of bird feathers with a black cat lurking in the background for preschool interest. A great way to open kids' eyes to bird feathers and EXACTLY what they look like. (Preschool)

***A Perfect Day* by Lane Smith (2017)**

The book describes why it was a perfect Spring day for each of the animals, (dog, cat, chickadee, squirrel) until Bear shows up and disrupts them all. In the end, only Bear is having a perfect day. The economy of language and the brilliant use of white space in the story make it a perfect read-aloud! All the events in the story are realistic; none of the animals "talk". (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***The Forever Garden* by Laurel Snyder (2017)**

Beautiful story about a girl whose beloved gardening neighbor moves away; she learns to be the beloved gardener herself to the new neighbors. (5 years old and up.)

***A Seed is the Start* by Melissa Stewart (2018)**

Nice introduction to the various ways that seeds move to new sites. The photographs are wonderful. (Covers the same ground as the fabulous *Plants Can't Sit Still* by Rebecca Hirsch illustrated by Mia Posada published in 2016. With 2 good books on the same subject using some of the same examples you've no excuse for not teaching about seeds!) *A Seed is the Start* uses that great device: big text to share with younger listeners and smaller text to share with older students, so this book can work for early preschool as well as being a resource for elementary school. (Preschool - 3rd grade)

***There's a Pest in the Garden* by Jan Thomas (2017)**

Funny easy reader about animals who plant a garden invaded by a voracious pest; all Jan Thomas's favorite characters are here -- cow and duck plus goat and the pest of course! Jan Thomas is THE BEST. For the Gardening unit or anytime you want to laugh. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Hidden City: Poems of Urban Wildlife* by Sarah Grace Tuttle. Illustrated by Amy Schimler-Safford. (2018)**

The poems in this book describe birds, animals, insects, and plants that thrive in the city, some of them right under our noses, though we may not notice them. The subject matter is much needed and the illustrations are bright and luscious. A supplement presents some fun facts about the wildlife. (K - 5)

***Jump, Leap, Count Sheep!* by Geraldo Valerio (2017)**

Counting book with lively pictures of Canadian animals (1 Bighorn Sheep jumping, 2 Grebes dancing, 3 Mantids hunting...). At the end of the book are two pages that provide a few details about each animal's characteristics or activities. (Preschool)

***An African Alphabet* by Eric Walters. Illustrated by Sue Todd. (2017)**

Board Book. Brightly illustrated, elegant alphabet book with startling pictures of exotic African animals (Okapi, Pangolin, the Servall). The linoleum carving art is dramatic enough for infants and all the animals are consistently from one continent. Starred review by Kirkus, a library journal. (Toddlers - Preschool)

***The Hidden Life of a Toad* written and photographed by Doug Wechsler. (2017)**

This information-packed book, enhanced with amazing close-up photos, uses simple language to show how, in less than two months, a tadpole with gills and a tail changes into a pea-sized toadlet with lungs and legs, and then, in its third year, becomes a full-fledged female toad who goes on to produce tadpoles of her own. Supplemental pages provide more facts and suggest ways to help keep toads safe. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Hello Hello* by Brendan Wenzel. (2018)**

These bright, fanciful illustrations of endangered animals big and small are accompanied by simple, rhyming text urging the reader to make a connection with nature. A note at the end suggests ways that readers can help vulnerable species. Another Earth Day natural! *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel (2016) won the Caldecott Honor in 2017; the book describes how many different creatures SEE, using the cat as a model. Brilliant. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***Who Eats Orange?* by Dianne White. Illustrated by Robin Page. (forthcoming August 2018)**

Bright, engaging illustrations show different animals enjoying foods of all colors of the rainbow. Two supplementary pages provide detailed information about the eating habits of animals in various habitats. Wonderful to pair with books about humans eating the rainbow. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

***On Duck Pond* by Jane Yolen (2017)**

Sweet, wistful poem about how ducks flying onto a pond suddenly disturb the rest of the creatures, including the author. (Older preschool - 5th grade)

**Storytime Theme: BATS!**

**New Book - *Brown Bats* by Christina Leaf (2017)**

An easy reader ideal for sharing bat fact with 3 - 5 year olds – and for lower elementary kids to read themselves

**New Book - *Superbat!* By Matt Carr (2017)**

A superhero-wannabe story that nicely covers what bats' "super" powers are – echolocation, night vision and more.

**New Book - *I am Bat* by Morag Hood (2017).**

A fruit bat tells readers to stay away from his favorite fruit.

**Newer Book - *Chow Down, Biggety!* by Ann Ingalls (2015).**

This easy reader accurately depicts the diets of various members of the Florida mangrove swamp (though the pictures aren't great). Fun to read aloud – there's lots of repetition!

**New Book- *Nightsong* by Ari Berk, illus by Loren Long (2012)**

This is the lyrical story about a young bat using echolocation to make his own way to the pond for the first time without his mother.

**Older Book - *The Bat Scientists* by Mary Kay Carson (2010)**

Detailed information about scientists that study bats for older kids (2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Older Book - *Hello Bumblebee Bat* by Darrin Lunde (2007)**

Simple story about the smallest bats known to science appropriate for young children, though adults will learn something too!

**Older Book -*Outside and Inside Bats* by Sandra Markle (1997)**

Very clear, useful and interesting book about bats (K- 8)

**Old Book: *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon (1993)**

The classic story that compares bats and birds.

#### Storytime Theme: Bees (Summer Pollinators)

**New Book—*Thank You, Bees!* By Toni Yuly (2017)**

This is a very simple book thanking animals and plants for the things they give us. It reduces the bees' contribution to honey which is of course not as important as pollination. However, a perfect Thanksgiving book, Earth Day Book and a sweet read aloud anytime we're in need of a return to gratitude. (Preschool)

**New Book – *Bee, A Peek Through Picture Book* by Britta Teckentrup (2017)**

A gorgeously illustrated rhyming book about what a bee does. The text gets a bit long for preschool – skip or summarize. This book features a waggle dance right on the page which is a great set up for the activity.

**New Book – *Please, Please the Bees* by Gerald Kelley (2017)**

A funny story with a meaning: the bees go on strike because the bear doesn't provide them with the "working conditions" they need. Teaches with humor.

**New Book – *Buzz, Bee!* By Jennifer Szymanski 2017 (National Geographic Kids PRE-Reader (Nonfiction))**

Very simple words explain the basic vocabulary of bees with large wonderful close up photographs.

**New(er) Book –*The Flowers are Calling* by Rita Gray (2015)**

Kenard Pak creates gorgeous illustrations to match with fun-to-read text about who the flowers are calling. Each page features an animal the bees aren't calling, plus a pollinator the bees need. Great science writing for young children

**New(er) BOARD Book – *Little Honeybee* by Jane Ormes (2015)**

Very detailed, very beautiful, rhyming set of questions answered by a triple fold reveal of the bee's hive. Ideal for reading to one on your lap, but can be adapted to group use with careful use of the 25 flaps to lift.

### Storytime Theme: Bugs!

**New Book— *There's a Bug on my Book!* by John Himmelman (2017)**

Children will learn about all the creatures that might jump, slither or climb on the book if it were left on the grass...fun and interactive!

**New Book – *Bugs from Head to Tail* by Stacey Roderick (2017)**

Nonfiction, but incredibly fun to read – a guessing game: “*What bug has a head like this? (next page) A rhinoceros beetle!*”

**New Book – *Ants Rule: The long and short of it* by Bob Barner (2017)**

Nonfiction about math featuring bugs who measure each other and graph the results. This one will lead to all sorts of great classroom activities.

**New BOARD Book: *Hello Bugs What Do You Do?* By Loes Botman (2017)**

Great vocabulary and gorgeous realistic pictures.

**New BOARD Book: *Bug Hunt: Lift the Flap Adventures* by Salina Yoon (2017)**

Perfect book for accurately introducing bugs to kids.

**New Book - *Du Iz Tak?* By Carson Ellis (2016)**

A Caldecott Honor book, *Du Iz Tak?*, recreates a season's worth of bug conversation about a flower. Bug Language looks daunting, but practice; the kids will adore listening to you. They can guess what the bugs mean, a terrific exercise. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

**Newer Book – *A Beetle is Shy* by Dianna Hutts Aston (2016)**

This is a good child-friendly reference book rather than a great storytime book.

**Older Book - *Can You Make A Scary Face?* by Jan Thomas (2009).**

Can't miss read aloud! Have the kids act it all out.

**Older Book - *Beetle Bop!* By Denise Fleming (2007)**

Beautiful art.

**Older Book - *I love bugs!* By Philemon Sturges (2005)**

Clear and direct.

### Storytime Theme: Nocturnal World!

**New Book – *All Ears, All Eyes* by Richard Jackson (2017)**

A gorgeous poem about evening in the forest as observed by an owl.

**New Book – *The Blue Hour* by Isabelle Simler (2017)**

The blue hour is the time between when “the day ends” and “the night falls.” This book is a beautiful catalog of all the creatures that are blue across the world as they settle down for the night.

**Newer Book—*When the World is Dreaming* by Rita Gray (2016)**

Quiet, beautifully illustrated book about animals going to bed. Perfect to read before nap!

**Newer Book - *Brown Bats* by Christina Leaf (2016)**

North American Animals series – An easy reader nonfiction book with good photos.

**Newer Book – *Night Animals* by Gianna Marino (2015)**

Funny story that also teaches about nocturnal behavior.

**Newer Book – *Flashlight* by Lizi Boyd (2014)**

A child goes on a hike in the dark with a flashlight; gorgeous, imaginative pictures in which everything is dark except what is revealed in the beam of a flashlight.

**Older Book – *Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night* by Joyce Sidman illustrated by Rick Allen**

Caldecott Honor Book of 2011. Beautiful poems, gorgeous illustrations – and a naturalist’s explanation right next to each picture.

**Storytime Theme: Ponds & Pond Animals!**

**New Book— *Ribbit* by Jorey Hurley (2017)**

A simple one-word-per-page science book with great pictures for kids 2+, Ribbit is gorgeous, perfect, and full of robust amphibian information.

**New Book – *Over and Under the Pond* by Kate Messner (2017)**

A lovely science book about a mother and son canoeing on a pond; the readers sees both above and below the water line. Cool! (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.)

**New Book: *The Hidden Life of a Toad* written and photographed by Doug Wechsler. (2017)**

This information-packed book, enhanced with amazing close-up photos, uses simple language to show how, in less than two months, a tadpole with gills and a tail changes into a pea-sized toadlet with lungs and legs. In its third year, she becomes a full-fledged female toad who goes on to produce tadpoles of her own. (Preschool – 3rd grade)

**New Book – *On Duck Pond* by Jane Yolen (2017)**

Sweet poem about how ducks flying onto a pond suddenly disturb the rest of the creatures.

**New Book – *A Different Pond* by Bao Phi (2017)**

A Vietnamese refugee shares his memories of ponds in Vietnam with his son as they fish in the US. “...for refugees everywhere.” Winner of the 2018 Charlotte Zolotow Award (text) and a Caldecott Honor Book (pictures) (K- 8)

**New Book – *Pond* by Jim LaMarche (2016)**

Lovely, more lengthy story about a boy and his friends who bring back a pond; we watch the creatures and the native plants return. Quiet book for older kids: K – 5.

**Older book: *Growing Frogs* by Vivian French (2000)**

A classic about tadpoles and their growth told as a story by the young narrator.

### Storytime Theme: Rain

**New Book - *I am the Rain* by John Patterson (2018)**

Lovely rhyming book that makes the water cycle understandable to preschoolers. (Preschool - 2nd grade)

**New Book - *The Big Umbrella* by Amy June Bates with Juniper Bates (2018)**

There is always more room under the big umbrella! A book about sharing in the rain. (Preschool – 2nd grade)

**New Book - *Watersong* by Tim McCanna (2017)**

Rhyming rain sounds accompany pictures showing a young fox trying to follow some ducks until he's reunited with his family.

**New Book - *Singing in the Rain* Illustrated by Tim Hopgood (2017) based on the lyrics to the 1929 song by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown**

Fabulous, joyous pictures support the text of the classic song.

**Newer Book— *Float* by Daniel Miyares (2016)**

A wordless book about a boy whose father makes him a boat out of paper. Beautiful.

**Newer Book—*Rain fish* by Lois Ehlert (2016)**

Ehlert plays with the idea of garbage and litter in the gutters, pushed along by the rain, clumping together and creating “fish.” She uses all kinds of objects that might end up in the gutter during a rain storm. Evocative and surprising!

**Newer Book— *Grumpy Pants* by Claire Messer (2016)**

Penguin's in a bad mood in the rain but he feels better once he has all his grumpy clothes off and has had a bath. The washing machine washes all his grumpy away!

**Newer Book - *Home in the Rain* by Bob Graham (2016)**

In the rain at a gas station.

**Newer Book - *Toad Weather* by Sandra Markle (2015)**

About a mother who urges her own mother and her daughter out into the rain so that they assist the community in carrying toads across the road.

**Newer Book - *Raindrops Roll* by April Pulley Sayre (2015)**

Poetic descriptions of rain using incredible nature photography.

**Newer Book – *Water is Water* by Miranda Paul, illustrations by Jason Chin (2015)**

Lovely illustrations support rhyming text describing the different forms water takes, as children interact with it.

## Storytime Theme: Robins

### **New Book – *This is the Nest that Robin Built* by Denise Fleming (2018)**

A preschool classic-to-be! Kids will enjoy the way the text uses repetition to build on itself to tell the story of how a robin builds her nest out of bits and pieces of materials processed by the other animals around her. The collage-like illustrations are a plus. A wonderful demonstration of animal interdependence; don't miss this one! (Preschool through 1st grade)

### **New Book – *Robins! How They Grow Up* by Eileen Christelow (2017)**

A real science book from the creator of *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*, this book has detailed information about what happens to robins from mating to nest building to raising babies. Two of the baby robins at the bottom of each page comment hilariously on the action. Too detailed for preschool, but a good reference (K-4)

### **New Book - *Apples and Robins* by Lucie Felix (2016 in USA; 2013 in France)**

Gorgeous cut paper book about a robin who takes up residence in the author's apple tree. She explains how to create her cut paper art as she goes. Perfect for preschool shapes discussions, as well as a unit on caring for backyard birds. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.)

### **Newer Book - *Robins* by Julie Murray (2016)**

One sentence per page explanation of robins with great photographs. Makes learning about robins accessible for 2 and 3 year olds. (*An ABDO Everyday Animals book*)

### **Newer Book - *Nest* by Jorey Hurley (2014)**

One word per page science book for little ones about a robin building a nest, laying eggs and -- then they hatch!

### **Newer Book - *Tap the Magic Tree* by Christie Matheson (2013)**

An interactive introduction to the seasons using an apple tree's changes: (Clap! And that makes snow.) Robins end the book as spring begins!

### **Older Book – *There is a Bird on your Head* by Mo Willems (2007)**

A funny and award winning easy reader that launched the whole Elephant and Piggy series! Gerald the Elephant discovers that he had a bird building a nest on his head. Hilarity ensues. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

## Storytime Theme: Salad (Carrot) Storytime!

### **New Book—*Escargot* by Dashka Slater (2017)**

A delightful story about a French snail who loves his salad with a nice vinaigrette, but no carrots! By the end of the story there is a new French carrot fan! Read it in a French accent!

### **New Book – *Carrot & Pea, an unlikely friendship* by Morag Hood (2017)**

Really a story about accepting everyone in preschool, but the peas and the carrot are adorable.

### **New Book – *1 Big Salad* by Juana Medina (2016)**

Great Counting Book about putting together creating a great salad. Each ingredient is personified in a charming way: Lion Radicchio!

**Older Book – Vegetable in Underwear (2015)**

Laugh out loud funny pictures of vegetables in underwear. Can't miss for the Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade crowd.

**Older Book – *Creepy Carrots* by Aaron Reynolds (2012)**

So fun in a Halloween sort of way! A bunny is haunted by carrots.

**Older Book – *Rah, Rah, Radishes* by April Pulley Sayre (2011)**

A vegetable chant with great pictures from area farmer's markets.

**Older Book - *How are you Peeling? Or Fast Food* by Saxton Freyman**

Both books show either creatures or vehicles made out of food. Ingenious. Have them guess which vegetable makes the ....!

**Storytime Theme: Soup!**

**New Book - *Every Color Soup* by Jorey Hurley (2018)**

Brilliant and beautiful one word per page book sharing the color of the various vegetables that go in soup, including, at the end, a recipe.

**New Book—*Is that Wise, Pig?* By Jan Thomas (2016)**

A hilarious counting book, adding vegetables to soup – except Pig keeps suggesting things that don't fit! Jan Thomas is funny, deft at handling timing, and full of joy; she's a master!

**Older Book— *Soup for One* by Ethan Long (2012)**

Another funny counting book; this time we're counting bugs in the soup, but the ending has two twists.

**Older Book –*Soup Day* by Melissa Iwai (2010)**

This book is a simple procedural telling of a young girls' shopping for soup ingredients with her mother. She helps her mother prepare the soup, waits for it – then eats it. Sweet and easily understood by younger children.

**Old Book – *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert (1987)**

A great classic about first planting, then growing, then harvesting the vegetables for soup; includes a recipe. Her art is the best.

**Books for Older Children:**

Brown, Marcia

Kimmel, Eric A.

Lin, Grace

Muth, Jon J.

Rodman, Mary Ann

*Stone Soup An Old Tale* (1947)

*Cactus Soup* (2004)

*Ugly Vegetables* (1999)

*Stone Soup* (2003)

*Surprise Soup* (2009)

## Storytime Theme: Sticks and Stones (nature play)

**New Book – *A Stick Until...* by Constance Anderson (2017) from Star Bright Books**

Wonderful exploration of the way animals and kids use sticks; simple, yet shares profound scientific insight. Destined to be the classic introduction to Nature Play!

**New Book –*Bob's Rock* by Ann and John Hassett (2017).**

A deceptively simple yet *hilarious* story about a boy with a dog & a boy with a rock; see how the dog stacks up against the rock!

**New Book –*Stepping Stones A Refugee Family's Journey* by Margriet Ruurs, Artwork by Nizar Ali Badr. (2016).**

While this book's content isn't appropriate for preschool, the pictures alone are evocative for the children in terms of the art, illustrations made solely of river stones. (K – 8)

**New Book— *Bring me a Rock!* By Daniel Miyares (2016)**

A nasty king grasshopper orders his buggy minions to build him a huge throne, but learns an important lesson from his smallest subject.

**Newer Book – *Stick and Stone* by Beth Ferry, illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld (2015).**

A lonely stick and a solitary stone find each other and learn about friendship. A book about caring for each other. (Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

**Newer Book – *Inuksuk Means Welcome* by Mary Wallace (2015)**

An alphabet book using only the letters in the word *inuksuk*, the Inuit word for pile of stones.

**Old Book – *Not a Stick* by Antoinette Portis (2007)**

A stick allows a child to become a great knight, a painter, a weightlifter and more!

**Old Book – *If You Find a Rock* by Peggy Christian (2000).**

A celebration and "classification" of found rocks.

## Best Books for Nature Play Resource List

### Backyard Nature Center

<http://www.backyardnaturecenter.org/>

BackYard Nature Center is a not-for-profit organization that advances and enables the process of connecting children and adults with the wonders of nature in the New Trier Township. These "wonders" include local parks, the Skokie Lagoons, and even your own backyard.

### The Jenny Evolution-Earth Day Picture Book List

<http://www.thejennyevolution.com/best-earth-day-picture-books-for-kids/>

Great list of books to check out-some newer titles, but mostly great older books. And, potentially, lots of other book lists/kids activity ideas that may be interesting to educators.

### Iowa City Public Library Book List for Earth Da

<http://blog.icpl.org/2016/04/20/great-picture-books-to-celebrate-earth-day/>

Nature Preschool Blog

<http://www.explorenature.org/preschool-blog/>

Great blog, with some innovative ideas for nature play and an overall solid glimpse into what “nature preschools” are all about!

NAEYC Nature Picture Book List

<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200801/BTJRecommendedNatureBooks.pdf>

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## Event Photos

<https://chicagobotanicgarden.smugmug.com/Education/Inspiring-Nature-Play-2018/n-sBLjQM/i-JfbQmbH>



