

March 2019

# WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS



Make Your Own  
Natural Shelter!

Those Aren't Clovers 🍀  
Foraging Wood Sorrel

Tapping Trees for Syrup

10 Fun ways to play in nature this  
month --No matter where you live

Seasonal poems, activities,  
nature journal pages and more!



# From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

*What's it like outside where you live in March?*

For some people, March is the end of winter and the start of spring. For others, it's just the opposite.

Where we live in Minnesota, there is still lots of snow on the ground, but the plants will start to break dormancy (or wake up) this month. We'll be tapping maple and walnut trees for sap to drink fresh or turn to syrup. Our strawberry leaves will be green even with snow still on the ground. Buds will form on our trees where leaves will grow soon.

Last year we went foraging with friends in Nebraska in late March. The landscape was still brown but we found fresh fuzzy mullein leaves we gathered to make "earache oil" and we cut sections of elder shrubs to root into new shrubs to plant in our friends' back yard. They were barely budding when we cut them but they quickly produced lots of bright green leaves in water and a warm house, and slowly started growing roots. It was fun to have their bright green and to watch them change.



What is March like where you live? What birds and animals do you see? What are the plants like? What is the weather like? Make notes in your nature journal or a notebook.

Have a wild month!

*Alicia*



Why is Wild Kids free?

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

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Find lots more links, information and fun to accompany this month's themes at  
[www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids](http://www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids).



# Get Wild in March

## 10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Color in the circles of the ones you do

Go fly a kite.  
To make it extra  
fun, try to make  
it yourself

Put out bits of  
wool, short pieces  
of yarn & other  
materials for birds  
to use for their  
nests

Go beach combing  
or rock hunting

Northerners:  
Use a  
stethoscope  
to listen for  
sap running in  
trees

Watch a  
Sunrise

Make a list of 5  
wild plants you'd like  
to try to forage

Start a rock  
collection

Southerners:  
Find some  
wildflowers to  
press

Build your own  
natural shelter  
(we show you  
how in this issue)

Go outside and  
write a poem  
about what you  
see, hear and feel



# IT'S MAPLE SYRUP TIME!

It's getting to be that time of year for those of us who live in some climates — maple syrup time!

Our family has been tapping trees for many years now and it's something we really look forward to. We don't have sugar maple trees on our own property, but we help out at the Sugarbush Boil-Off at a local camp.

The past few years, we've been tapping our back yard Norway maple tree and cooking down the sap into our own homemade syrup. Norway maples don't have as much natural sugar as sugar maples, but they also make good syrup. Our kids also just like to drink the maple water.



If you're lucky enough to have your own trees to tap, there are some great tutorials online. We have links for some at the Wild Kids Magazine web page.

If you don't have your own trees to tap, see if any friends will let you tap theirs (offer to share the bounty). You can also take part in events in your area. Call around to local nature centers to see if any are offering maple syrup tapping programs.

You can also tap other trees like birch, walnut and box elder trees! Birch sap is thinner, so it takes more sap to make the syrup, but the taste is less sweet but delicious. We like using it in smoky-sweet sauces like barbecue sauce. You can also order some online if you'd just like a taste. Box elder sap syrup is said to have a fruity flavor. We haven't tried it -- yet!



## DID YOU KNOW?

You can only tap trees in weather when it's below freezing at night and warmer in the day. That's when the sap "runs" in the tree, which people tap into with spiles, or hollow metal pegs they insert into the tree. We usually use a drill to make the hole first. Tapping trees does not hurt the trees as long as they are big enough.



# Drinking Maple Water

Did you know you can get more from maple trees than just maple syrup? Companies are now selling "maple water" as the next health drink, but some folks just tap their own for free.

Maple water is just the sap from tapping maple trees, but instead of boiling it down until it's thick and sweet you just drink it straight from the tree. It tastes like very clean water with just a touch of sweetness, and it's full of health benefits.

Here's what some maple water companies say:

*"One ingredient. 35 simple calories with the perfect hint of sweetness. It not only tastes better than those other sugary drinks but is better for you too. Every sip is infused with micronutrients, antioxidants and organic minerals delivered straight to you from some very happy, healthy trees." ~ Bettersweet*

*"2x the amount of manganese as a cup of kale" ~Sap on Tap*

*"B Vitamins convert the tree's stored carbs into energy, manganese strengthens it, while zinc and anti-oxidants protect it through its springtime revival. Maple water revives the tree in the spring and is also healthy and refreshing for us." ~Happy Tree*

*"It seems that years ago, Amish farmers noticed that they had more energy and felt healthier when drinking the natural distillate that's collected during the boiling process of reducing maple tree sap into maple syrup... It contains naturally occurring sucrose, calcium, potassium and other trace elements like silicon." ~Amish Maple Tree Water*

Our kids love drinking maple water, at sugar bush festivals & fresh from our back yard maple tree during tapping season. See if you can try some for yourself some day!



Maple Syrup is healthy in so many ways!

Everyone knows that real maple syrup is delicious and nutritious, but now it turns out it may help fight antibiotic-resistant bacteria as well.

It's been known for a while that maple syrup is good for your health in many ways, including nutrients like riboflavin, zinc, magnesium, calcium and potassium and 54 different antioxidants. It's much healthier than sugar, and best of all can be made in your own backyard.

But researchers at McGill University in Montreal, Canada have discovered another benefit: a compound in maple syrup reduces bacteria's ability to resist antibiotics.

It works by affecting the bacteria's own genes, "snuffing out those linked with resistance and virulence." Basically, the bacteria loses the ability to spread and adapt.

What a sweet way to stay healthy!



# How to Make a Natural Shelter

USE NATURAL MATERIALS TO MAKE YOUR OWN HIDE-OUT!



*Our kids took part in a nature camp a few years ago and made these fun shelters*

**Did you know you can make your own shelter in the woods with just some fallen branches? It's great fun to make one and it just might come in handy someday!**

**There are lots of designs for natural shelters. Some of the most popular ones are:**

**The tipi or teepee style where the branches are all stacked in a triangle shape. You can lean them all around a big tree to serve as the support, if you like.**

**The A-frame style, where a long branch is the "spine" that's wedged up in the air between two trees and then shorter branches are stacked along either side of it to make the walls.**

**The lean-to style where a long branch is wedged between two rocks or trees and then sticks or boards are leaned against one side.**

**It's helpful to find a big forked branch to start that will serve as your base, and then put smaller branches all along the sides of it. You can cover your shelter with leaves to make it rainproof, and dried leaves inside can help make it warm and comfy.**

**There are lots of other styles that you can make, and we've got some links to great sites with photos and plans on the Wild Kids Magazine web site.**

*Have fun!*



# THOSE AREN'T CLOVERS!

## GETTING TO KNOW WOOD SORREL



Clover



Sorrel

People celebrate St. Patrick's Day in March & clovers are a universal symbol of the holiday. But did you know that the plant that many people call clover isn't clover at all?

Clover has oval leaves, which usually occur in threes. Sometimes people find four-leafed clovers & consider them good luck. It's fun to look for four-leaf clovers and we manage to find a lot when we take the time to look carefully.

Wood Sorrel looks like clover but it has heart-shaped leaves, also in clusters of three. Can you see the difference in the pictures above?

Both clover & wood sorrel like to grow in lawns, parks & disturbed areas. Wood sorrel also likes to grow in the woods, which is where it got its name.

What's especially cool is that both clover & sorrel are edible & nutritious. They taste very different though! They also taste different depending on how big they are, what variety they are & what time of year it is.

Some people like the taste of clover leaves & some people consider them "survival food" (clover flowers are really popular for tea). Most people love the taste of wood sorrel though! Sorrel leaves taste kind of sour & like lemon. People eat sorrel leaves in salads, pestos, teas, sandwiches & even just as a nibble outside. Some people use the lemony flavor of sorrel to make a lemonade kind of drink or in desserts.

We have links to some great pages to help you ID and learn more about sorrel on the Wild Kids website this month. See if you can find some sorrel yourself this year!

Cautions: Sorrel and clover are both very healthy, but sorrel is high in oxalic acid, the same as other plants like spinach & broccoli. People with some health conditions should avoid eating a lot of these plants. Always be 100% sure you know what a plant is before you eat it & make sure it hasn't been sprayed with pesticides. Remember not to gather edible plants where there are lots of dogs, cars or contaminants (things that make them polluted).

# WOOD SORREL

Plate 308.



Wood-Sorrel. } 1. Flower.  
2. Flower separate  
3. Calix.  
4. Seed. Luzula.  
 Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Pinx.

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



# STINGING NETTLE

Plate 12



*Stinging Nettle* } 1 Flower {  
*Urtica* } 2 Seed {  
*Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Pinx.*

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



# Poems for March

*"March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb."*

Dear March - Come in  
by Emily Dickinson

Dear March, come in!  
How glad I am!  
I looked for you before.  
Put down your hat-  
You must have walked-  
How out of breath you are!  
Dear March, how are you?  
And the rest?  
Did you leave Nature well?  
Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,  
I have so much to tell!

I got your letter, and the bird's;  
The maples never knew  
That you were coming-I declare,  
How red their faces grew!  
But, March, forgive me-  
And all those hills  
You left for me to hue;  
There was no purple suitable,  
You took it all with you.

Who knocks? That April!  
Lock the door!  
I will not be pursued!  
He stayed away a year, to call  
When I am occupied.  
But trifles look so trivial  
As soon as you have come,  
That blame is just as dear as praise  
And praise as mere as blame.

March

The March wind blows winter away  
And sweeps the streets from day to day  
March brings surprises, first the day's hot  
Then it starts snowing, likely as not  
Hurry, March wind, hurry along  
We like to hear you sing your song.

~ Author unknown

March Wind

March wind is a jolly fellow;  
He likes to joke and play.  
He turns umbrellas inside out  
And blows men's hats away.

He calls the pussy willows  
And whispers in each ear,  
"Wake up you lazy little seeds;  
Don't you know that spring is here?"

~Author unknown

March

Now when it's March  
It's really spring  
There's a bright new look  
On everything.

~ Author unknown



# MY NATURE JOURNAL

March

# March Bird List

Birds spotted this month

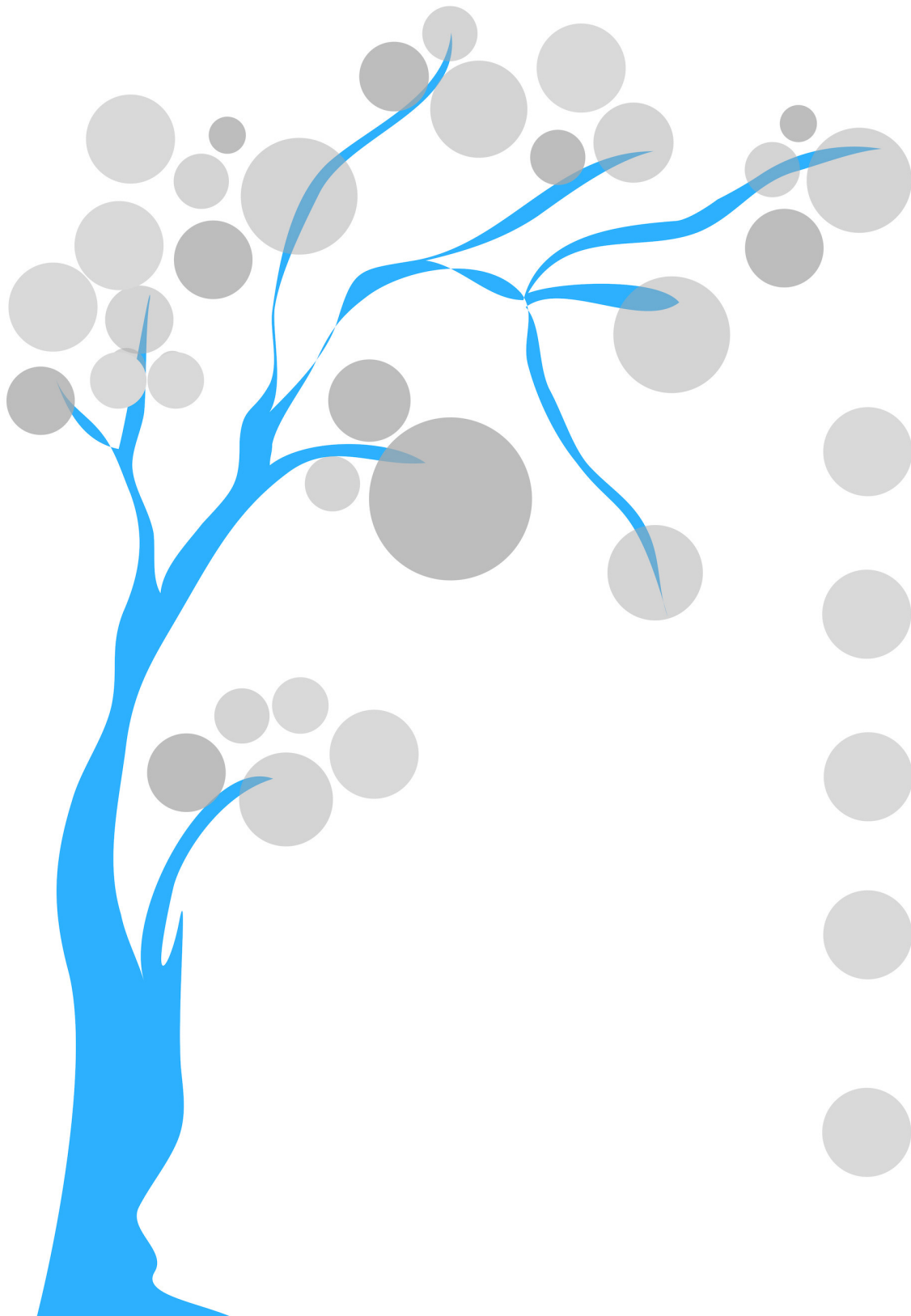
# March Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month



# March Weather

Directions: Designate one color for each type of weather.  
Color a leaf with one or two colors each day to show that day's weather.



## Key

-  sunny
-  cloudy
-  rainy
-  snowy
-  windy/  
stormy

# March Nature Notes

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

Week 1 Sketches & Observations

Week 2 Sketches & Observations

Week 3 Sketches & Observations

Week 4 Sketches & Observations



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CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS



Want to see your stuff in Wild Kids?

We welcome articles, photos, artwork and other submissions from kids and their grown ups.  
Visit [magicalchildhood.com/wildkids](https://magicalchildhood.com/wildkids) to learn more.