

February 2020

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

**Shell & Stone
Sundials**

**Collectible
Bird Cards**

**Learning
Mallow &
Aloe**

**Feeding
Wild Birds
by Hand!**

**Plus seasonal
poems, activities,
nature journal
pages & more!**



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Welcome February!

I hope you've been having all kinds of wonderful wild adventures in whatever part of the world you're in.

Here in Minnesota, it's been very cold. We are pretty far north, which means we usually have cold winters. We've had lots of snow and some days the temperature never gets above zero. This time of year, we like to plan our spring and summer gardens with the seed catalogs that come in the mail. That helps when it's too cold to go outside. Most days, we go outside even though it's cold, though. We just bundle up well.

We are still enjoying some of the foods we grew or foraged last year, like chicken of the woods mushrooms and wild asparagus from the freezer, dried mint and nettle leaves from the pantry, and wild grape juice and jelly from the canning shelves. It always feels special to eat foods in the wintertime that you can remember growing or gathering yourself!

Even though it's cold, we've been enjoying daily (or nightly!) walks around the neighborhood. At night the snow sparkles in the moonlight and looks quite magical. Our dog, Moose, loves to run in the snow and he gives us an excuse to get outside even when we think it's too cold. Dogs almost never think it's too cold to play outside.

Our family lost a friend last month who passed away and we had some other bad news. Going out in nature has helped me when I've felt sad lately. Scientists have found out that time in nature really does make us feel better when we're sad.

What are you hoping to do outdoors this month? Are you looking forward to doing anything out in nature soon? I hope you find lots of ways to enjoy whatever weather February brings you.

Have a wild month!

Alicia

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Cover image by Dawn Hanigan
of the lovely blog
By Sun and Candlelight

Dawn has shared her tutorial for hand feeding wild birds in this issue. I highly encourage you to visit her blog at dawnathome.typepad.com/by_sun_and_candlelight (we also have a link on the website for this month's issue)

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.

Find lots more links, information and fun to accompany this month's themes at
www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids.

Go Wild in February

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Color in the circles of the ones you do!

Make pine needle tea (check the January 2019 issue to learn how or look at a reliable site online)

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

Use a stethoscope on a tree* and listen for sap running on a warm day

Use the sun or stars to practice telling direction

Take a photo each day of something cool, interesting or pretty outside

Go ice skating! (or roller blading if you live where it's warm)

Look for animal tracks in the snow or mud (the Feb 2019 issue has a printable guide)

Practice building a campfire with a favorite grown-up

Plan a new garden for this year, even in pots on a balcony or roof

Make snow ice cream (or make regular ice cream and then go enjoy it outside)

*This works best on larger hardwood trees with smooth bark like birch and cherry.

Feeding Wild Birds... By Hand!

By Dawn Hanigan

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

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



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

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

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

Here are a few tips:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Good luck, and have fun!



THIS MONTH'S NATURE CARDS

BIRDS OF AMERICA

This year, we're offering collectible vintage nature cards in each month's issue. These cards were made by companies about a hundred years ago to get people to buy their products.

Sometimes they had information on the back to teach you about the subjects and sometimes it was just advertising.

We featured butterfly fairies in the January issue and we'll have some more of those later in the year. This month, we have 24 cards from the series "Birds of America." See how many you can recognize and see if you can find some of the birds this year.

Since these cards didn't have any information on the back, we haven't included the backs. If you want to use these cards for games or collecting, you can print them out with the backs blank.

What can you do with your nature cards?

- Use the backs to write information like what the birds eat and how to attract them
- Use the backs to make notes of which ones you've seen, along with when and where
- Print out two sets and make a matching game.
- Put them on a ring or in a small pouch and bring them with you to ID birds in nature

What else can you think of to do with your cards?



Snowy Owl.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Robin.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Chickadee.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Raven.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Barn Swallow.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Sea Gull.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Wren.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Eagle.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Whip-poor-Will.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Bob-o-link.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Blue Bunting.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Catbird.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Baltimore Oriole.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Wood Thrush.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Wood Warbler.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Crow.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Scarlet Tanager.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Crossbill.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Swallow-tailed Flycatcher



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Cuckoo.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Starling.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Snow Bunting.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Blue Bird.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Yellow-breasted Chat.



ALLEN & GINTER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

GETTING TO KNOW ALOE

Do you know aloe? You should!

Aloe is a very helpful plant that is originally from Africa but can now be found growing wild in places like Australia, Central America, South America, the Middle East, and even warmer parts of Russia and the United States.



If it doesn't grow outside where you live, it's an easy plant to keep as a houseplant and it will help you lots of ways. NASA scientists say it is one of the best houseplants for cleaning the air of pollutants like formaldehyde (a harmful chemical that's present in things like particle board, carpets and flame retardants).

Aloe has lots of other uses but it's most famous for helping to heal burns. A lot of people buy aloe vera gel to treat sunburns. You can just break off the end of a leaf and split it open to get the gel. We always reach for aloe if we get small burns at home.



We have a lot of aloe plants inside and they grow so fast that we divide them and get more and more. If you'd like to grow an aloe plant, see if you have a friend or relative who has one they can divide to share with you. You can also buy a small one at the store.

Aloe is a great example of a plant that you can use inside or outside. If you keep your eyes out, I bet you'll notice it all over the place!



ALOE

Plate 229.



The Common Aloes. { 1. Flower.
 { 2. Seed Vessel open.
 { 3. Seed. *Aloe vulgaris.*
Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Fina.

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

Getting to Know Mallow

Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) is one of those plants that grows just about everywhere in the world but most people just ignore it.

Some people like it either to eat or to use as medicine.

Mallow is in the same family as okra and hollyhocks, and every part of it is edible. It doesn't have any poisonous lookalikes, but it does look a little bit like ground ivy, which we featured last month (ground ivy is edible and medicinal too). You can tell the difference by looking closely at the leaves, by checking the stem (ground ivy is in the mint family so it has a square stem) and because mallow is a little bit fuzzy.

We have links at the Wild Kids website this month to some web pages to help you ID mallow leaves.



All in the family

It can be helpful to know what other plants are in the same family as a plant you're getting to know for lots of reasons.

For one thing, if you know how to recognize a related plant, it can help you spot the one you're learning about. It can also help you learn a little more about it, if you already know some things about related plants.

Also, if you are allergic to any of the plants that the new plant is related to, there's a good chance you could be allergic to that one, too.



**Hollyhock
flower**



**Okra
flower**



**Okra
leaves**

MALLOW



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

Make a Stone or Shell Sundial

In older times, many people used sundials to keep track of time. The earliest sundials we've found evidence of are known as shadow clocks, which were used by Egyptian and Babylonian people about 3,500 years ago. People probably made devices similar to sundials long before that, though.

Here's how to make your own simple sundial in your yard, on the beach, or anywhere outside.

Find a long, straight stick and an assortment of smooth rocks or shells, plus a piece of chalk or a paint pen to write on your stones or shells. The number of stones or shells you'll need depends on what season it is and how many hours of sunlight there is in your part of the world right now.

You can look online to find out about what time the sun rises and sets where you live right now and get an idea of how many stones or shells you'll need and what time to start your sundial. You can go to www.timeanddate.com/sun to find out for your location. When we made our sundial in Minnesota in January, the sun rose at 7:46 a.m. and set at 4:56 so we only needed stones for the hours between 8 and 4. In the summer we would need lots more!

In the morning when the sun first comes up, wait until the next hour on the clock (such as 7:00 a.m.) and then push your stick straight into the ground or into a bucket of sand. Mark a stone with 7 and put it where the shadow of your stick falls. Come back at 8 a.m. and put the number 8 stone there. Each hour, put another stone in until sunset.



The best laid plans... When we set out to make our sundial one day in January, there was only one hour the whole day when the sun shone enough to cast a shadow! Then it snowed 6 inches and buried all of our shells. 😊 The news said this January was one of the grayest and gloomiest on record. We'll be trying again this month and hoping for sun!

Poems for February

"Why, what's the matter, that you have such a February face, so full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?"
- William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*

February Twilight

**I stood beside a hill
Smooth with new-laid snow,
A single star looked out
From the cold evening glow.**

**There was no other creature
That saw what I could see--
I stood and watched the evening star
As long as it watched me.**

~ Sara Teasdale

Paiute Late Winter Song

Loud are the thunder drums
in the tents of the mountains.
Oh, long, long
Have we eaten chia seeds
and dried deer's flesh of the summer killing.
We are tired of our huts
and the smoky smell of our clothing.

We are sick with the desire for the sun
And the grass on the mountain.

Afternoon in February

**The day is ending,
The night is descending;
The marsh is frozen,
The river dead.**

**Through clouds like ashes
The red sun flashes
On village windows
That glimmer red.**

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

February

Gay lucidity,
Not yet sunshine, in the air;
Tingling secrets hidden everywhere,
Each at watch for each;
Sap within the hillside beech,
Not a leaf to see.

~ Michael Field (*a pseudonym used by Katharine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Emma Cooper in the 1800's*)

White as an Indian Pipe

White as an Indian Pipe
Red as a Cardinal Flower
Fabulous as a Moon at Noon
February Hour

~ Emily Dickinson

Indian pipe, (*Monotropa uniflora*) is also called ghost plant, corpse plant and ghost pipe. It is a nonphotosynthetic (it cannot make its own energy from the sun) herb. It is also mycoheterotrophic, meaning it lives with a fungus that gives it most of its nutrition.



February

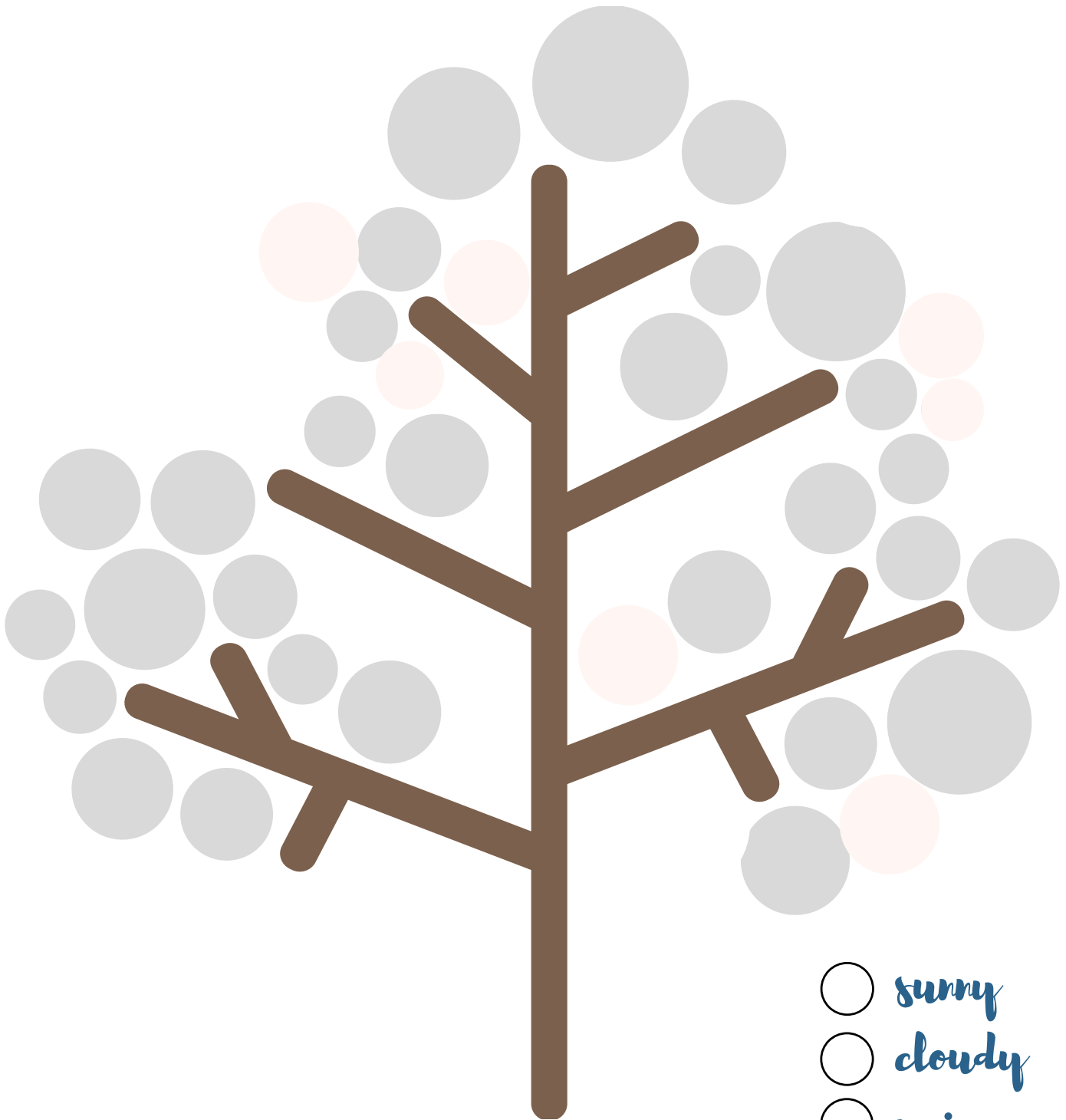
He who would, in this Month, be warm within,
And when abroad, from Wet defend his Skin,
His Morning's draught should be of Sack or Sherry,
And his Great Coat be made of Drab-de-berry.

~ Satirical writer 'Ned' Ward (1667-1731)

My Nature Journal

February

February Weather Tree



There are 29 days this month since February in 2020 is a leap year. We get one extra day to spend outside this year!

- ☐ sunny
- ☐ cloudy
- ☐ rainy
- ☐ snowy
- ☐ stormy

February Bird List

Birds spotted this month

February Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

FEBRUARY NATURE NOTES

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

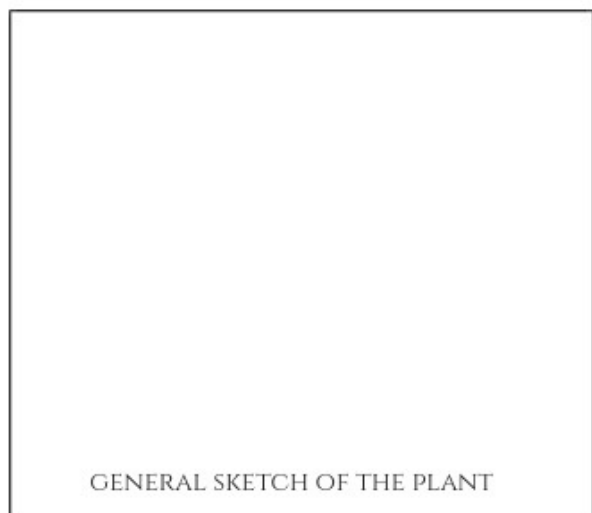
Week 1 Observations

Week 2 Observations

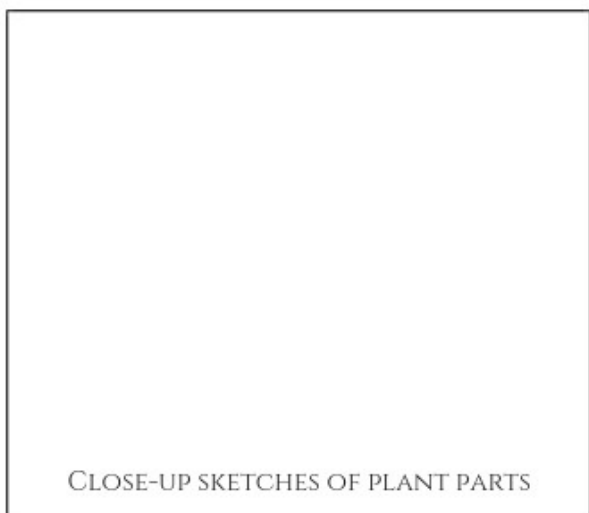
Week 3 Observations

Week 4 Observations

MY FORAGING GUIDE FOR:



GENERAL SKETCH OF THE PLANT



CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS

LATIN NAME _____

WHERE FOUND _____

PARTS USED _____

LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

WARNINGS: _____

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

MY RATING FOR THIS PLANT





Want to see your stuff in Wild Kids?

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

Visit magicalchildhood.com/wildkids to learn more.