

February 2025

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Tapping Trees
(Not Just Maples!)
for Making Syrup

Nature Valentine Cards

28 Days of Outdoor Exercise

February Bird
ID Challenge

Sugar Maple & Boxelder
Coloring Pages

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages & more!



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Welcome February!

What are you hoping to do in nature this month?

February is the shortest month of the year, with 28 days most years and 29 on leap years, so it's a great month to set goals.

We have a bunch of goals you can take part in for this month's Wild Kids.

We have a challenge to get exercise a different way outside each day this month, with 69 ideas to help no matter what the weather is where you live.

We have a photography nature challenge, with a different prompt for each day of the month.

And we have a February bird ID challenge, to see if you can spot and ID a bird each day -- plus all the usual goodies like 10 ways to learn and play in nature this month and more.

Here in Minnesota, we're hoping to get some more snow so we can do things like build snow forts, play snowball tennis or baseball (toss snowballs at each other to smash with tennis rackets or plastic bats), build some snowmen and have other snow fun. Our son Alex is hoping for lots of lasting cold so he can ice skate on the lakes and creeks. Our daughter Fiona is hoping to do a lot of nature photography, and our oldest kids are hoping to do hiking, winter foraging and to have some backyard campfires.

I love that winter makes us slow down where we live, so we have to cozy up inside and rest for the busy seasons to come. I also love how pretty it looks when it snows and everything is all sparkly. I even love the exercise of shoveling the snow in the driveway -- as long as I don't have to do it too many days in a row!

What do you love about nature this time of year? What are you hoping to do in nature this month? I hope you are able to have lots of wild fun in whatever ways you love!

Alicia



Fiona a few winters ago in a snow fort Alex made

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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Contact: alicia.bayer@gmail.com

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

Go Wild in February

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

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

Send a postcard to your local representative about a nature issue that is important to you

Take part in the 2025 Great Backyard Bird Count February 14-17 *

Look for the full moon on February 12

Listen to sap running in a tree on a warm day with a stethoscope
**

Learn about or visit a wetland on World Wetland Day on February 2

Join our outdoor exercise challenge and try to do a different outdoor exercise every day this month (we have a list & tracker in this issue)

Take part in our February bird ID daily challenge

Look for something in nature to use as a paintbrush like a feather, dried grasses or evergreen needles

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

*Visit www.birdcount.org for more information

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

FEBRUARY BIRD ID CHALLENGE

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



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

NOTES:



28 Days of Outdoor Exercise!



Here's a fun way to get exercise this month. See if you can do a different outdoor activity each day of February. We have 69 ideas below for people with all kinds of weather.



Play hockey * Make a backyard obstacle course * Go backpacking* Build a snow maze
Go hiking * Ride a bike * Climb a tree * Go sledding * Pick up litter * Go for a walk
Jump rope * Do yoga * Skateboard * Jog * Play hopscotch * Ice skate * Play soccer
Play volleyball * Shoot hoops * Play with a dog * Hula hoop * Go surfing * Rollerblade



Play catch * Toss a frisbee * Go golfing * Have a race * Build a snow fort * Go swimming
Have a snowball fight * Play tag * Shovel snow * Pull weeds * Play badminton * Follow animal tracks
Fly a kite * Do jumping jacks * Ride a scooter * Chop wood * Walk backwards * Play snowball tennis
Dance * Chase bubbles * Go foraging * Go horseback riding * Go canoeing or kayaking



Go snowshoeing * Build a snowman * Play dodgeball * Play hide and seek

Pick up a neighbor's yard * Play lawn darts * Jump on a trampoline * Go tubing
Go skiing * Rock Climb * Do yard work * Go geocaching * Beach comb * Pull a sled



Play at a playground * Go golfing * Make snow angels * Do long jumps in the snow/dirt
Go snowboarding * Explore a park * Go on a night hike * Rock hunt * Build a shelter

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

Wild Valentine's Day Cards



Created by:

I'm so happy to BEE
your friend!



Happy Valentine's Day



Created by:

You rock!

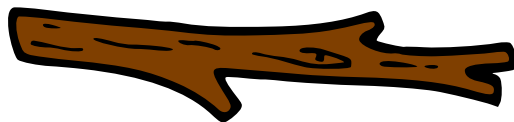


Happy Valentine's Day



Created by:

Let's stick
together!



Happy Valentine's Day

Wild Valentine's Day Cards



From:

You're my
BEST BUD!



Happy Valentine's Day



From:

You're such a
FUN-GI



Happy Valentine's Day



From:

You're a hoot!



Happy Valentine's Day

Wild Valentine's Day Cards



From:

You're such a
TWEET heart!



Happy Valentine's Day



From:

You're **TREEmendous!**



Happy Valentine's Day




From:



You're a friend like
no **OTTER!**





Happy Valentine's Day

Wild Valentine's Day Cards

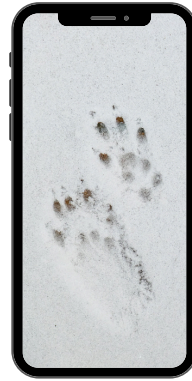
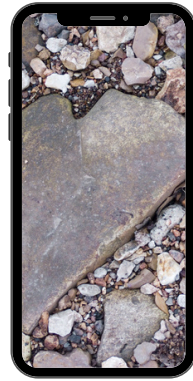
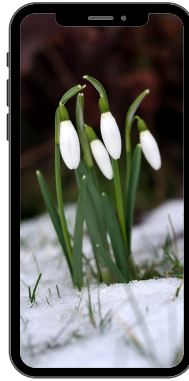
 <p>From:</p> <hr/>	<p>We're friends of a feather!</p>  <p>Happy Valentine's Day</p>
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 <p>From:</p> <hr/>	<p>I'm nuts about you!</p>  <p>Happy Valentine's Day</p>
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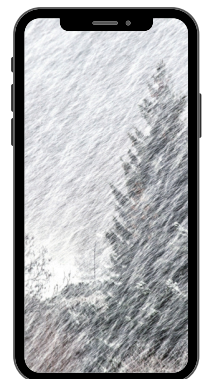
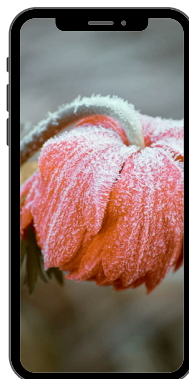
 <p>From:</p> <hr/>	<p>You're a BERRY good friend!</p>  <p>Happy Valentine's Day</p>
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February Nature Photo Challenge

Try to head outside and take a picture each day with that day's prompt as an inspiration!



- | | | | | | |
|----|---------|----|---------------|----|------------|
| 1 | Pink | 11 | Insect | 21 | Silhouette |
| 2 | Cold | 12 | Berry | 22 | Clouds |
| 3 | Seeds | 13 | Blue | 23 | Moon |
| 4 | Bird | 14 | Heart shaped | 24 | Smooth |
| 5 | Red | 15 | Rough | 25 | Sharp |
| 6 | Pattern | 16 | Soft | 26 | Many |
| 7 | Sunset | 17 | Green | 27 | Rock |
| 8 | Round | 18 | Shadow | 28 | Stormy |
| 9 | Tracks | 19 | Black & White | | |
| 10 | Yellow | 20 | Symmetrical | | |



Phenology Calendar

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

- Snow
- Icicles melting
- Sparrow spotted at feeder
- Chickadee call heard
- Strawberry leaves poking up under the snow
- Bald eagle soaring over Lake Talcot



- Snowdrops blooming
- 6 inches of rain in one day
- Thunderstorm
- Raspberry canes chewed down
- Rabbit tracks in back yard
- Record high temperature for this day

FEBRUARY 2025

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

TAPPING TREES FOR SYRUP

It's getting to be tree tapping time for those of us who live in places where it has been below freezing temperatures for a while and the weather is warming.

You can tap trees for their sap during this time of year because the freezing temperatures at night and the melting temperatures during the day cause trees' sap to trickle through the trees a lot. If a tree is big and healthy enough, it does not hurt it to drill a hole and put in a little spout to collect some of that sap.

The sap that you can get from trees like maples is very watery in its natural state. Our kids like to drink it and it tastes like fresh, barely sweet water. It is full of really healthy vitamins and minerals, and some companies even sell it as a drink in cans!



If you boil down that sap, you can concentrate it into syrup like maple syrup. It takes a LOT of sap to make a little bit of syrup! Different people say different amounts, but generally it takes between 21 gallons to 60 gallons of maple sap to make just one gallon of maple syrup. If you use trees that have sap that is less sweet, it can take more.

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. We also tap our back yard Norway maple tree and the walnut tree at our daughter Rhia's house. Then we cook the sap down in big pots inside to make our own maple and walnut syrups (and our kids like to drink the saps straight too!). Their saps are not as sweet, but they're still tasty and fun to use.



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.

How to tap a tree for sap

The best season to tap trees is late winter to early spring, when it's below freezing at night and above freezing during the day. The freezing and thawing helps build up pressure in the tree to help the sap flow a lot.

Make sure the tree is healthy and has a trunk that's at least 10–12 inches around.

Use a drill with a bit or auger that is 5/16-inch to 7/16-inch in diameter. Drill a hole about 2–3 feet above the ground on a south facing side of the tree, and make sure it's slightly upward, so the sap can flow out of the tap. Drill about 1.5–2 inches deep.

Insert the tap (spile), which is a metal or plastic tube that directs the sap out of the tree and into your collection container. We get our spiles for a few dollars at local farm stores, but you can also order them online.

Gently tap the spile into the hole using a hammer. Hang a clean collection bucket or bag under the spile to catch the sap (we use tubing and cleaned water jugs). Check your container at the end of each day. We like to pour the sap into a container that we keep in the fridge until we have enough sap to boil down, since we only tap a few trees. Note: When the days get warmer, the sap will start getting cloudy and bitter. You want to stop tapping then.

If you like, you can just drink the sap as it is now! It's full of vitamins and minerals and tastes like slightly sweet water. If you want to boil it down, though, you'll need to simmer it in a big pot on the stove (inside or out) for a long time. Bring it to a boil and then reduce it to a simmer, stirring occasionally. It can take many hours or even a whole day, depending on how much sap you have and how thick you want it. We leave it a little bit thinner because we are impatient and that way we get more syrup!

When it is done, it should have a golden color and be about 219°F (104°C). Strain it and keep it in a covered container in the fridge. Enjoy!

What trees can you tap?

You can tap lots of kinds of trees for syrup, but sugar maples have the most sugar so you need a lot less sap from those to make syrup. We don't have any sugar maple trees so we tap the Norway maple in our back yard and our daughter Rhia's walnut tree at her house. We also tap sugar maples at a nearby nature camp.

Other trees that you can tap are birch trees (I think yellow birch syrup tastes almost smoky and I use it in BBQ sauce), boxelders, oaks, willows, other types of maple trees and more. If you live in a warm place, you can even tap palm trees, and you can tap them for more of the year! Just make sure you know what kind of tree you have before you tap it, and that you've checked to be sure it's a safe tree to tap for sap and syrup.



How different saps & syrups taste

Walnut -- nutty, rich, caramely

Butternut -- nutty, earthy

White birch -- light, delicate

Yellow birch -- caramely, smoky

Sycamore -- woody, like mild molasses or butterscotch

Boxelder -- light, flowery

Alder -- unique, almost spicy

Heartnut (Japanese walnut) -- maple-like, nutty

River birch -- mild, grassy

Linden/basswood -- mild, light

Hickory -- rich, dark

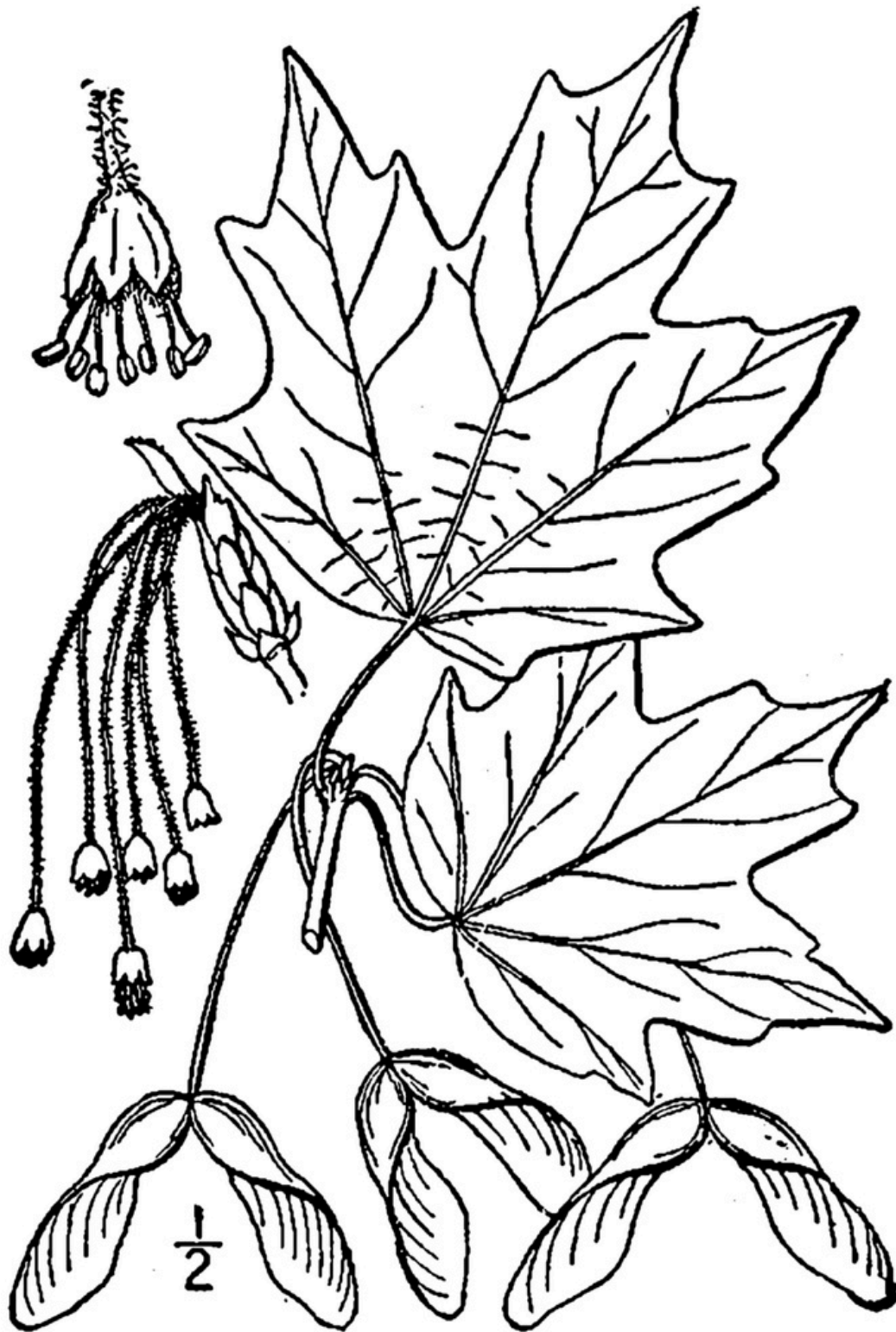
Pecan -- light, nutty

Oak -- earthy, woody

Aspen -- light, vanilla-like

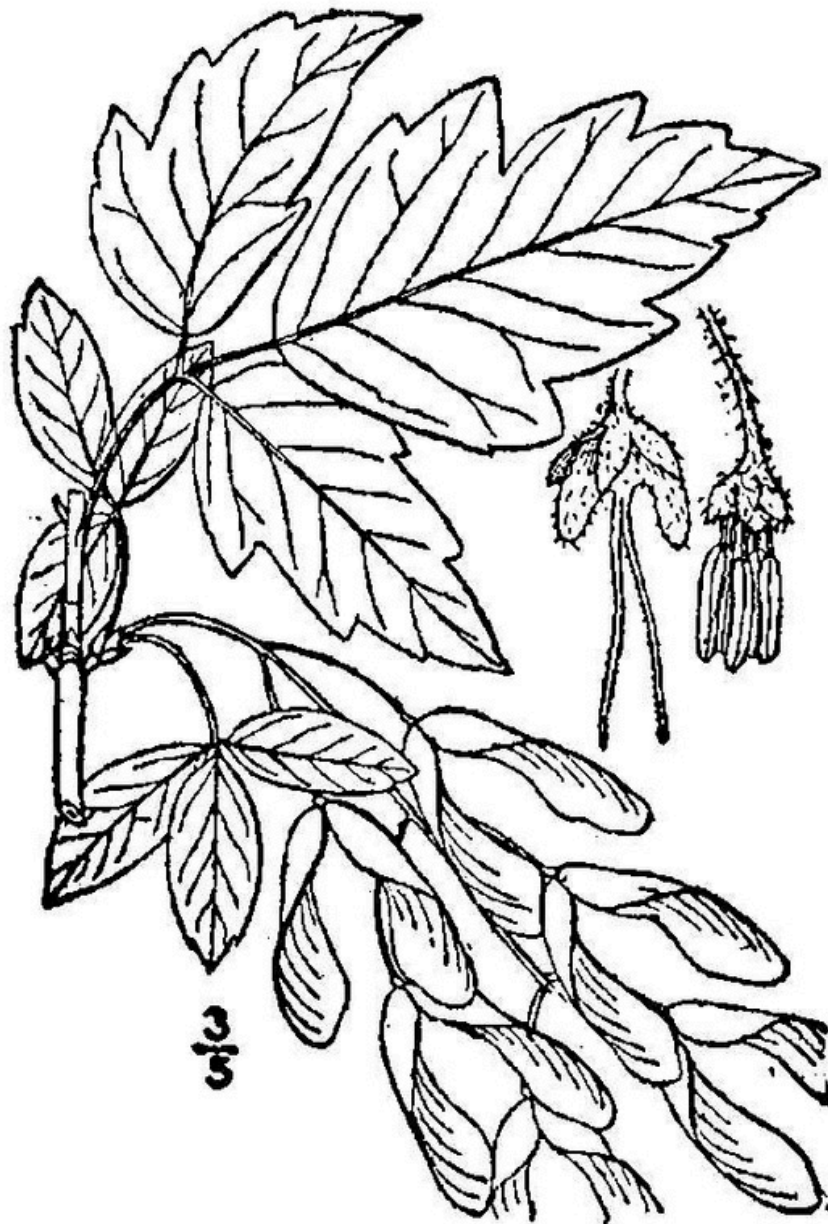
SUGAR MAPLE

(*Acer saccharum*)



BOXELDER

(*Acer negundo*)



Poetry Corner

Days of the Month
by Mother Goose



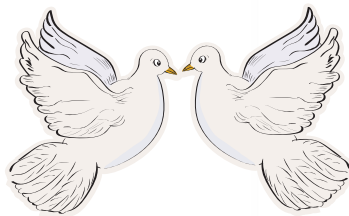
Thirty days has September,
April, June, and November,
All the rest have thirty-one,
Save February at twenty-eight,
But leap year, coming once in four,
February then has one day more.

The North Wind Doth Blow
by Mother Goose



The North wind doth blow
and we shall have snow,
And what will poor robin do then,
poor thing?

He'll sit in a barn
and keep himself warm
and hide his head under his wing,
poor thing.



The Pigeons
by Maud Burnham

Ten snowy white pigeons are standing in line.
On the roof of the barn in the warm sunshine.

Ten snowy white pigeons fly down to the ground.
To eat of the grain that is thrown all around.

Ten snowy white pigeons soon flutter aloof.
And sit in a line on the ridge of the roof.

Ten pigeons are saying politely, "Thank you"
If you listen, you hear their gentle "Coo-roo!"

From
GLADIOLA GARDEN
POEMS OF OUTDOORS AND INDOORS
FOR SECOND GRADE READERS
BY
EFFIE LEE NEWSOME



PIGEONS

The pigeons find so much to eat—
I see them pecking in the street.
What is it that they relish so
That they must nibble as they go?

PIGEONS AND PEOPLE

The pigeon's feet are grayish red.
Each time it steps, it jerks its head.
It jerks its head and jerks its feet,
And dodges people on the street.

And people dodge the pigeons too,
Some walking as the pigeons do,
Except nobody jerks his head.
The people swing their arms instead.



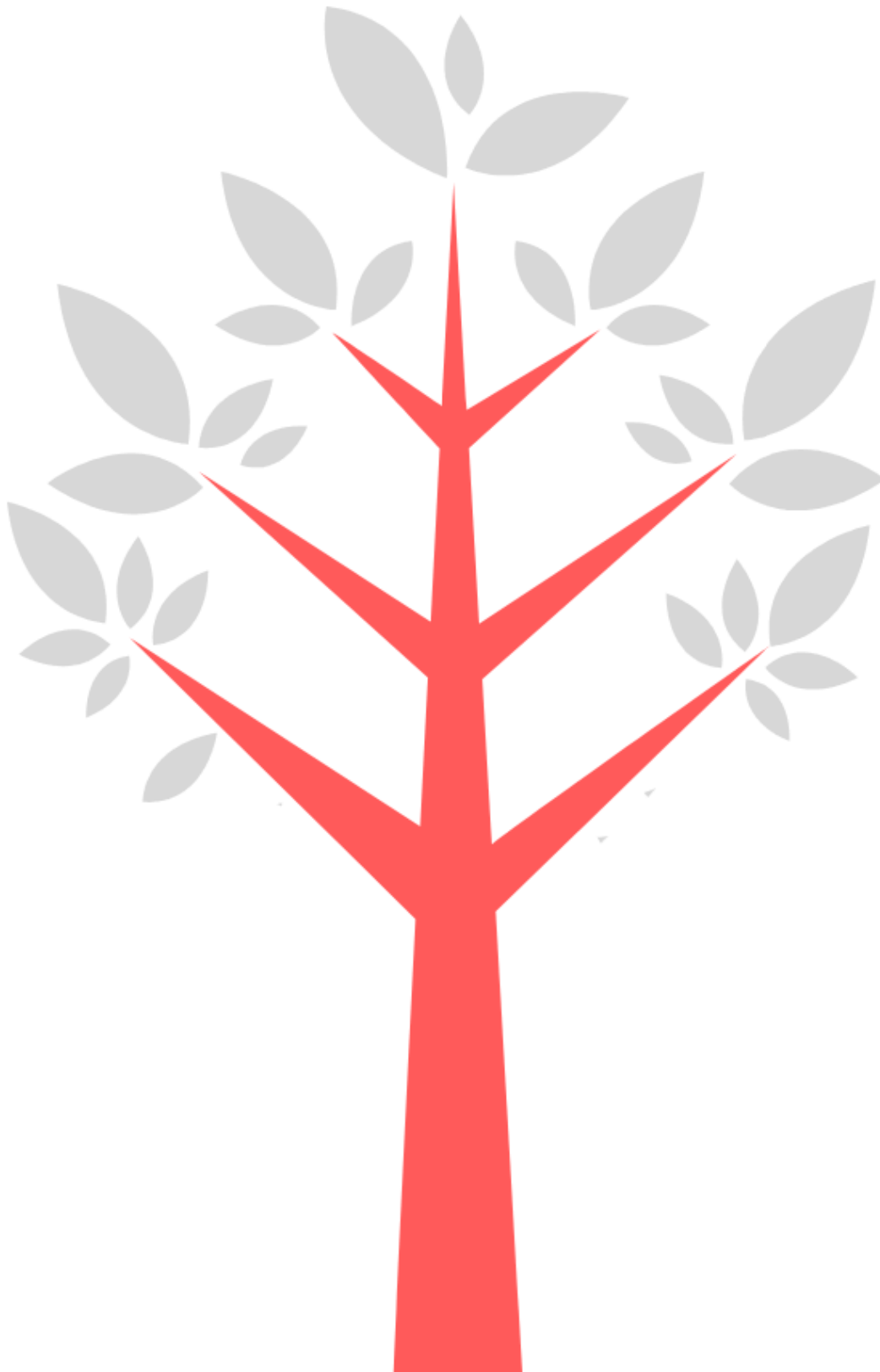
My Nature Journal

FEBRUARY



February 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

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.