

January 2025

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

2025 Sky in Pixels

Let's Paint Some Birch Trees!

125 Ways to Have Fun
in Nature in 2025

All About Birch and
Fir Trees

Plus seasonal
poems, activities,
nature journal
pages and more!



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy 2025! What are you hoping to do in the wild this year? If you need some ideas on fun ways to play and learn outside this year, we have lots of ideas in this issue.

This year, we are hoping to travelre and do more camping. Our son Alex is planning to do another internship with Minnesota's Conservation Corps, and he might choose the remote island location this time. I'm looking forward to taking our kayak and paddle boat (which was rescued from a trash pile!) to the lake even more this year, and helping two of our grown kids put pollinator gardens in their yards.

I have a personal goal of being really knowledgeable about 100 different herbs and I'm looking forward to working on that goal some more. I also have a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board to write a children's book and do community events with kids to teach how to make art materials from wild plants & natural items, and I'm looking forward to doing lots more of that. I am having such fun with it!

Wherever you are, I hope you have a wonderful month and a wonderful year, full of wild adventures!

~ 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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Contact: alicia.bayer@gmail.com

www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids.

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

Go Wild in January

10 WAYS TO LEARN AND PLAY WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Color in the ones you do!

Head out into nature & pretend you're a survivalist -- what can you find that you could forage or use for shelter?

Color in our sky tracker with the color of the sky each day

Read a book about a kid who goes on a wild adventure like *My Side of the Mountain*

Stay up late on January 3rd or 4th to look for the Quadrantid meteor shower

Start a nature jar for the new year of pretty & cool nature items

Trace your shadow at noon each day & see how it changes

Go on a sunrise or sunset walk

Start tracking your wild hours & color in a circle on our tracker for each hour

Check out Nature's Best Hope (Young Readers' Edition): How You Can Save the World in Your Own Yard from the library & see what ideas you can adopt

Write a poem about nature and send it in to Wild Kids!

125 in 2025



This year, see how many different ways you can play, learn and work in nature! Here are 125 ideas, but there are so many more. Some might not work where you live but you'll have opportunities that other people won't have. These are just examples.

We have a chart for you to keep track of all the ways you have fun in nature this year.

How many different ways can you have fun in nature this year?

- Foraging a new wild plant
- Playing in the mud
- Sketching outside
- Making leaf mandalas
- Painting with berry ink
- Reading under a tree
- Playing horseshoes
- Going on a moonlight walk
- Feeding the birds
- Foraging
- Playing at a playground
- Taking a nap outside
- Playing frisbee golf
- Windsurfing
- Meditating outside
- Rafting
- Paddle boarding
- Rolling down a hill
- Ziplining
- Making a toad house
- IDing animal scat
- Making plant prints
- Looking for petrified wood
- Watching a sunrise
- Doing a "mud run"
- Doing a nature scavenger hunt
- Making cordage (natural rope)
- Doing cartwheels
- Doing bark & leaf rubbings
- Making sun tea
- Collecting wildflower seeds
- Doing back yard yoga
- Looking for four leaf clovers
- Carving artist conk mushrooms
- Grounding (walking barefoot)
- Making dandelion wishes
- Looking for owl pellets
- Doing weed experiments
- Lying in a hammock
- Propagating cuttings
- Cooking dinner on a campfire
- Catching (and releasing) frogs
- Visiting a nature preserve
- Doing an outdoor painting
- Making a nature sundial
- Doing a weather tree
- Making a natural wreath
- Scattering wildflower seeds
- Watching a meteor shower
- Whistling with an acorn cap
- Spelunking (cave exploring)
- Making back yard obstacle courses

- Watching the Northern Lights
- Going on a walk
- Bike riding
- Mowing the lawn
- Building a sand castle
- Swimming
- Skate boarding
- Sledding
- Building a snowman
- Planting a garden
- Visiting a state park
- Picking up litter
- Hiking
- Having a snowball fight
- Boating
- Having a picnic
- Bird watching
- Fishing
- Building a snow fort
- Planting a tree
- Rock hunting
- Blowing bubbles
- Camping
- Chopping wood
- Surfing
- Digging a pond
- Watching a sunset
- Feeding the ducks
- Raking leaves
- Rock climbing
- Pulling weeds
- Picking apples
- Building a fire
- Flying a kite
- IDing animal tracks
- Doing math with natural materials
- Gathering nature items

- Cloud watching
- Collecting seashells
- Tree climbing
- Strawberry picking
- Stomping in puddles
- Building a shelter
- IDing animal tracks
- Looking for constellations
- Watching wildlife
- Painting with mushroom ink
- Making mud pies
- Taking photos
- Walking the dog
- Tossing seed bombs
- Chasing fireflies
- Wading in a creek
- Walking in the rain
- Skiing
- Floating bark boats
- Snow shoeing
- Maple syrup tapping
- Mushroom hunting
- Exploring tide pools
- Visiting a nature site
- Shoveling snow
- Horseback riding
- Making a butterfly puddler
- Watching "heat lightning"
- Skipping rocks
- Pressing flowers
- Weaving grapevines
- Trimming trees & bushes
- Making snow angels
- Raising & releasing butterflies
- Making mushroom spore prints
- Doing Citizen Science projects like squirrel counts
- Dyeing with plants or lichens



MY WILD TIMES 2025



1	
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7	
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11	
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13	
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16	
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19	
20	

MAKE AS MANY COPIES OF THIS PAGE AS YOU NEED THIS YEAR!

2025 Wild Hours

How many hours can you spend outside this year?

How many would you like to?

Some people like to set a challenge for the year, like 1000 hours outside over the year.

Other people feel like that takes the fun out of it and they just want to count it up and keep track.

If you want to track your wild hours this year, color in one circle for each hour you spend outside.

Make as many copies of these pages as you need.

Have a wonderful wild year!



Wild Hours



start: _____

end: _____

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	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

THIS YEAR'S THEME

HELPFUL TREES

Every year in Wild Kids Magazine, we include botanical coloring pages and have a theme for a different type of wild plant or fungus.

The first year, we featured wild edible plants like wild asparagus and elderberries.

The second year, we featured herbs like horsetail and yarrow.

The third year, we featured flowers like peonies and roses.

The fourth year was wild mushrooms like oyster mushrooms and lion's mane.

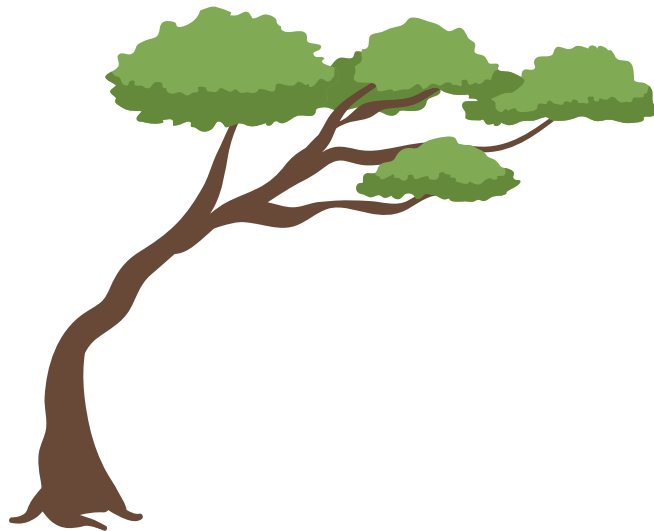
The fifth year was invasive plants like kudzu and garlic mustard.

This year, our focus will be on helpful trees.

We have featured some trees in Wild Kids before, like mulberries, apples, pine, oak and Bradford pears. We'll feature new ones each month in 2025.

Some trees have edible fruits and lots of them have edible flowers. Some have edible nuts and some are useful in their own wonderful ways. We'll learn all kinds of cool things about trees and ways we can use them this year.

What's your favorite tree? If you were a tree, which one would you be? What do you love most about trees?



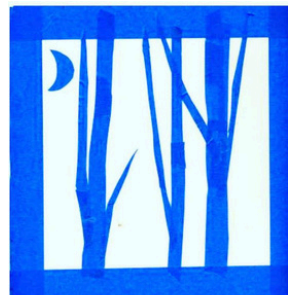
LET'S PAINT SOME BIRCH TREES!

This is such a fun, easy, beautiful art project! It's one of our daughter Fiona's favorite winter art projects.



Just tape a piece of watercolor paper to a board or table with painter's tape to make a border all around. Then tear strips of tape to make birch trees and tape them to your page. Paint the page with dark blue watercolor paint, and then peel off the tape. Use a paintbrush and more blue paint to make the bark, and then use a white paint pen or a correction pen to make the snow.

Go to artprojectsforkids.org for a free printable instruction page you can print out.



1. Tape a sheet of watercolor paper to a board with blue painter's tape. Cut strips for the trunks and branches and apply inside to make a balanced composition. Smooth the edges down.



2. Paint over all the artwork with a midnight blue watercolor. Sprinkle the paint with salt while still wet to make extra texture.



BIRCH

(*Betula*)



Birch trees are beautiful trees, known for their smooth, white bark that often peels off in thin layers. These trees can grow tall and are found in many parts of the world. There are over 50 species of birch trees, with 19 species native to the United States.

People have used birch bark for centuries to make things like baskets, canoes and crafts. The wood of the birch tree is strong and can be used for furniture, flooring and even for paper.

Most people know that you can tap maple trees for their sap and boil it down into maple syrup, but you can do the same thing with birch trees! Birch syrup has a unique flavor, a little less sweet than maple syrup. Our family likes to use it in things like barbecue sauce because it has a sweet but almost smoky flavor. (We'll have information on how to tap trees for syrup in next month's issue of Wild Kids.)

Most of the birch tree is edible, and some people use the twigs and leaves for a slightly spicy, minty tea that is high in vitamin C. If you want to try birch tea, look for twigs in the winter or early spring that are fresh (not dried and brittle) and smell a little bit like wintergreen gum. Don't take too many to harm the tree. In the spring, you can gather some fresh leaves for tea. You can also use the bark for tea, but look for fallen branches so you don't harm the tree.

Some people also make birch bark flour, from the inside of the bark.

People also use birch to make a topical (applied to the skin) infused oil, since it contains a compound similar to aspirin that can help with pain relief.

If you want to gather birch bark for crafts or projects, it's important to do it in a way that doesn't hurt the tree. The best way to remove birch bark is to carefully peel off sections from fallen branches or trees that have recently been cut down. Our family has also gathered birch branches from our city's yard waste drop-off site, where people bring trees and branches after storms and after doing yard clean up.



BIRCH

(Betula)



FIR

(*Abies*)



Fir trees are exactly the type of tree you probably think about when you think about Christmas trees! They are a type of evergreen tree that can be found in forests all over the world, known for their tall, straight trunks and long, green needles that stay on the tree all year long.

Fir trees have unique needle-like leaves, which attach to the branches with a base like a suction cup, unlike other evergreens that usually have needles growing directly from the branches.



They also have upright cones that disintegrate while still on the tree, which is unusual in other types of evergreens.



Fir trees are in the pine family Pinaceae (though they are in their own genus, *Abies*) and they are very important to the environment. They help clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, which we need to breathe. Fir trees also provide shelter and food for many animals, such as squirrels, birds, and insects, who live in their branches or eat their seeds.

There are about 50 different species of fir trees, including Douglas Fir, Balsam Fir, Red Fir, Silver Fir, Spanish Fir and White Fir.

Like other pines, fir needles can be used to make tea that's high in vitamin C. Simply chop up the needles and steep them in hot water for a few minutes. Some people have also used them to make syrups, broths and even medicine.

People have used fir trees for lots of other things throughout history. They are often used to make furniture, paper, and even Christmas decorations because of their sturdy wood and beautiful shape. Their wood smells fresh and clean, making it perfect for building homes or creating fun projects.

Fir trees can live for hundreds of years, and some individual trees have lived for over a thousand years!

FIR (Abies)

Plate 203.



The male Fir, or Silver Fir.

Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Pinx.

- 1. taken.
- 2. cone.
- 3. a ripe Scale.
- 4. Seed.
- 5. the pith of the cone.

Abies mas.

Poems for January



Trees
By Walter De La Mare

Of all the trees in England,
Her sweet three corners in,
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash
Burns fierce while it is green.

Of all the trees in England,
From sea to sea again,
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs
Beneath the driving rain.

Of all the trees in England,
Past frankincense and myrrh,
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,
Like Lime and Juniper.

Of all the trees in England,
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace
For them that lie forlorn.

Places [III. Winter Sun]
by Sara Teasdale

There was a bush with scarlet berries,
And there were hemlocks heaped with snow,
With a sound like surf on long sea-beaches
They took the wind and let it go.

The hills were shining in their samite,
Fold after fold they flowed away;
"Let come what may," your eyes were saying,
"At least we two have had to-day."

The Trees At Night
By William Kerr

Under vague silver moonlight
The trees are lovely and ghostly,
In the pale blue of the night
There are few stars to see.

The leaves are green still, but brown-blent:
They stir not, only known
By a poignant delicate scent
To the lonely moon blown.

The lonely lovely trees sigh
For summer spent and gone:
A few homing leaves drift by,
Poor souls bewildered and wan.

JANUARY

NATURE JOURNAL



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.

Examples....

- Owl heard at night
- Lady beetle crawling on inside window
- 6 inches of snowfall
- Rabbit droppings spotted in back yard
- Bald eagles seen flying over open waters
- Green ferns peeking out of the snow
- Woodpeckers eating bugs on trees
- Deer tracks in snow at state park
- Wild turkeys in the field
- Record high temperature for this day



JANUARY

2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	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	29	30	31			

January 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

January Bird List

Birds spotted this month

January Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

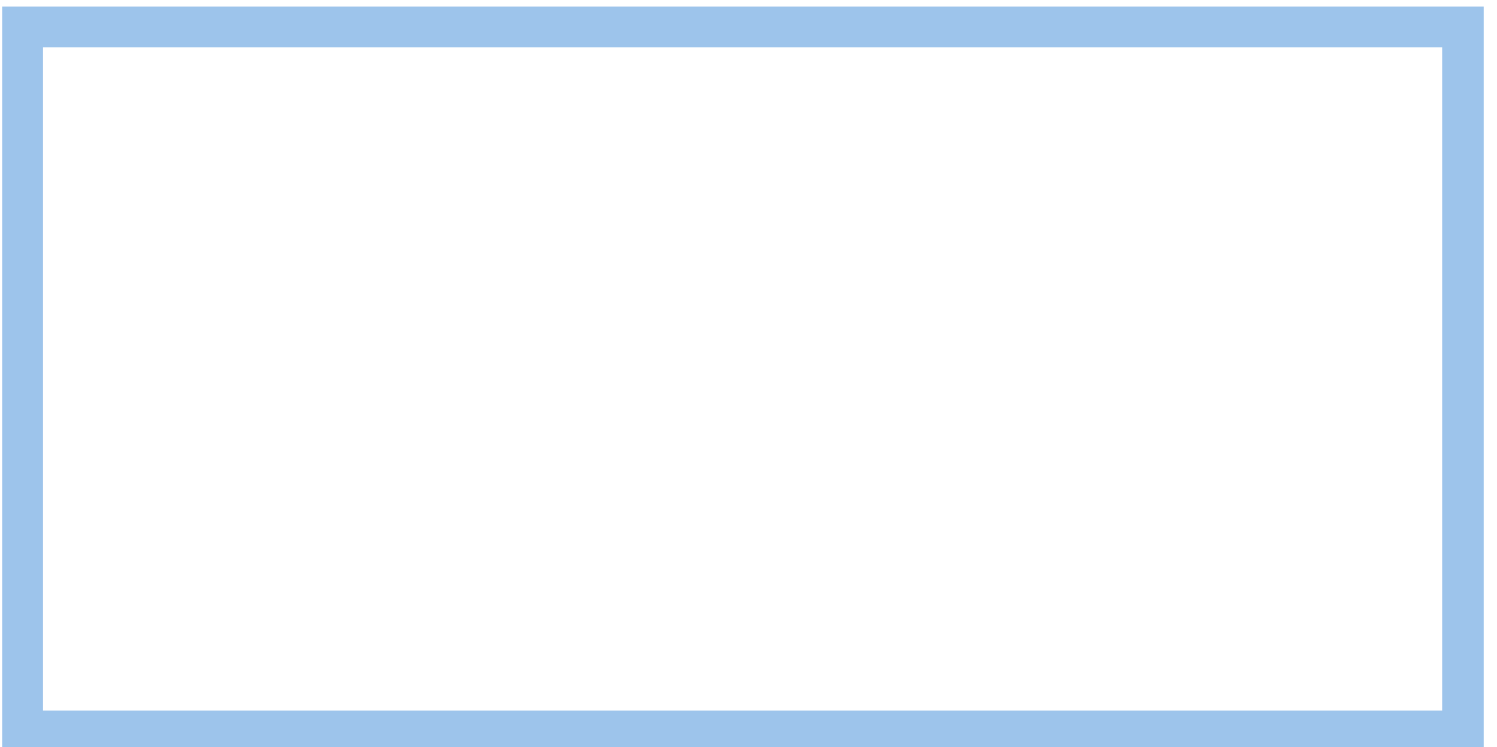
January Nature Notes

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



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.

Send your submissions, letters or to alicia.bayer@gmail.com