

Nature Explore Week

We hope everyone had a fun-filled week on our Nature Explore Classroom! Children experienced wonderful hands-on materials created in collaboration with the Arbor Day Foundation. They played natural musical instruments and created their own nature-inspired movements. Building skills were used to create and construct with outdoor blocks, fabric and more. Everyone discovered how they could become a Nature Explorer as they went on many outdoor adventures this week.

In the Eyes of Children

Miss Sharp and Miss Ragland asked, "What is nature?" And the children replied: Nature is...

- a strawberry to eat at lunch – Audrey N.
- wild animals and deer – Sarah H.
- outside – Éti D.
- part of the Earth and rivers – Ava P.
- part of all cities, which means the Earth is under cement. When the stars are out of their energy, they turn into red balls. – Parker M.
- leaves – Maddie H.
- wind, when leaves go up in the sky – Poppy M.
- animals – Levi D.
- trees, bushes, leaves, wood, and bark – Henry G.
- wood chips – Savanna N.
- recycling – Connor N.
- what we live on – Ezra P.
- everything – Nicolas H.

Side Notes:

- We are closed July 21-25.
- POGO Cards: \$10 (exp. date 1-1-09). Call the office (476-8304) or pick one up (2045 E Street).
- Parents, PLEASE make sure children are wearing socks and closed toe shoes that fit properly. No flip flops or Crocs—these are dangerous when children are running and using the climbing equipment.
- Apply sunscreen to your child/ren before coming to summer sessions.

Summer Sessions Bookshelf

- Atlas of Animals*, a First Discovery Book
- Atlas of Countries*, a First Discovery Book
- Atlas of the Earth*, a First Discovery Book
- How Maps are Made* by Martyn Bramwell
- The Ladybug*, a First Discovery Book
- Mapping Our World* by Martyn Bramwell
- Mapping Pennys' World* by Loreen Leedy
- Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney
- Nothing to Do* by Douglas Wood
- Tell Me, Tree* by Gail Gibbons
- The River*, a First Discovery Book
- The Secret Birthday Message* by Erick Carle
- Summer* by Claire Warden
- USA from Space* by Anne-Catherine Fallen
- Where Do I Live* by Shirley Greenway

Toddlers treat local nature residents to fun snacks!

What do you get when you combine a handful of chopped carrots, stale goldfish crackers, bread crumbs, sunflower seeds, and twelve eager toddlers? A culinary experience for the neighborhood animals is what! Throughout the week, toddler friends interacted with nature by providing and preparing delicious snacks for the squirrels, birds, bugs, and rabbits outside.

The children enjoyed spreading soy "peanut" butter on pinecones and rolling them in birdseed and corn. They picked out names for squirrels that they thought would eat their snacks; Ba, Cocoa, Lincoln, and America sure enjoyed the pinecones! After setting the pinecones out in



Andrew B. carefully places his "squirrel snack."



Kiera S. loads her pine cone with peanut butter.



Sam H. tends his bird feeder.

the morning, the children were surprised to see them gone by the afternoon.

Toddler friends also took the leftover snacks and set them outside their window with hopes of watching a bird or squirrel steal a bite. They found out the ants really enjoyed the snack!

The children continued the sensational snacking for animals by taking a walk and leaving a trail of bread crumbs and carrots. As we were walking, friends were excited to observe an earthworm moving across the sidewalk on the way back to its home in the dirt. We also saw a squirrel hop out of the bushes and munch on many of the snacks we left.

The toddler friends really enjoyed their week as chefs for the animals!

By Kristine Luebbe and Joy Ritchie

Preschoolers share knowledge that "Nature is all around us"

Feeling the hot sun and gentle breeze, smelling the flowers, spying insects on plants and flowers. "Nature is all around us," said Sarah.



Haven P. uses a stick to sketch in the mulch on the Nature Explore Classroom. "I'm drawing a camel!"

These are some things the children like about nature...

Haven: I like to see ducks.

Avary: I'd say grasshoppers.

Lewis: I like mice and underground prairie dogs. I like foxes when they're babies, because

they have big ears, like Chihuahuas. I remember, I like meerkats, too.

Zachary: Birds, I like bald eagles and owls, because they eat rodents, and I like coyotes and wolves, they eat rodents, too.

Sophie: Nature is fun, because we find worms and leaves for worms to eat.

Harry: Nature, it's fun. I like to play outside. I like to play "duck, duck goose."

Daniel: We're driving to Nature Explore!

Charlie: I like playing with Atticus the whole time when we are outside. Do you know, mosquitos bite you?

Sam H. Well, I like worms, bugs and roly polys.

By Cindy Heinzman

2-5 Group deadheads in garden, learns about pollination

While preparing to deadhead garden plants in the Nature Explore Classroom, second through fifth grade students discussed likely encounters they would have with busy pollinators. We talked about bees often having golden sacs of pollen visible on their legs as they work. To avoid stings we agreed that our calm and respectful human presence would be best. Having been stung by a bee before Logan offered, "It feels like a pinch. Henry said "It doesn't hurt very long." Ms. Murdoch advised giving wasps plenty of room.

Later on while sitting in the shade of the Messy Materials Area, Brayden decided to make a drawing of a bee on a flower. Reflecting on her firsthand experience in the

garden and the new information she had learned Brayden explained, "I knew bees sting people. I didn't know they don't hurt you more than a pinch. I used to get freaked out, but I don't anymore. You told us they didn't just come up to sting us. Also, I didn't know they help us by collecting pollen."

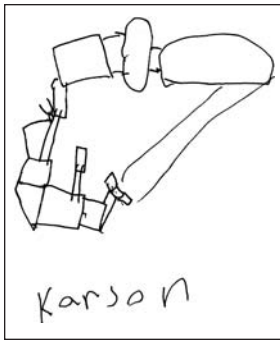
By Holly Murdoch

Brayden M. captures her vision of a bee on a flower with her drawing.

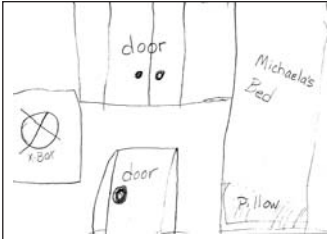


K-1 Group maps their nature experiences

The morning group began their "Nature Explore" week reading *The Secret Message* and *Me on the Map*. After reading and talking about the symbols and maps in these books, children created a map of their rooms (at home) in their Nature Explore journals. Children also mapped the travels of roly polys in wood block mazes. After walking the halls of First-Plymouth Church the children also mapped their routes in their journals by using nature and man-made landmarks to represent their journeys.

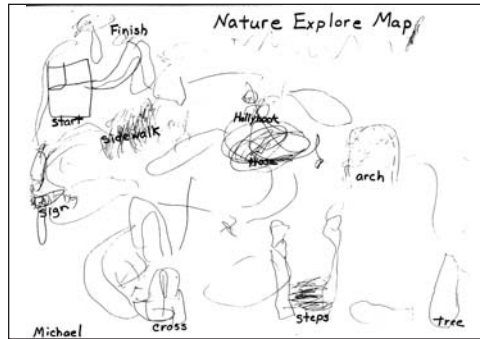


Karson H., roly poly structure



Yueran Z.'s map of cousin Michael's room.

would ask, "Where is the window ... where is the tree, arch, etc?" Michael would point to his map and say each word. He also recognized the word once it was written.



Michael's Nature Explore Map.



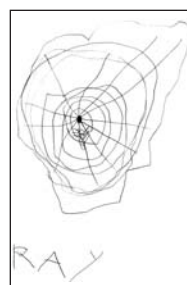
Above: Michael and Michaela were excited about the worms they found in the messy area. Below: The ground was softened up by rains the night before for prime worm hunting. Preschoolers found enough worms to relocate some to the garden area.



By Kathy Marshall, Katie Logan, & Kris Van Laningham



Ray uses the climbing structure to pretend to be a spider on a web.



His sketch of a spider web.

My Spider Web

Observations by Joyce White of 5-yr-old Ray R.

We saw a wolf spider. We built our own web with chairs and tables to crawl on. (We pretended to be spiders from egg to birth.) We read a book about spiders. We later wrapped outdoor objects with yarn to make our own spider webs. We made a large spider web by drawing on paper and taping yarn on it. Ray spent outdoor classroom time pretending to be a spider on a web (on the climbing structure). "Look, look at me" as he made like a spider frozen on its web.

Photographs contributed by Kristine Luebbe, Beth Pauley and Natalie Ragland.



Ms. Murdoch and her 2-5 group made sure their outside friends were well taken care of by filling the feeders and waterers by the South Room window. They

took some time to enjoy the views of the wildlife who came to sample the treats the children provided them.

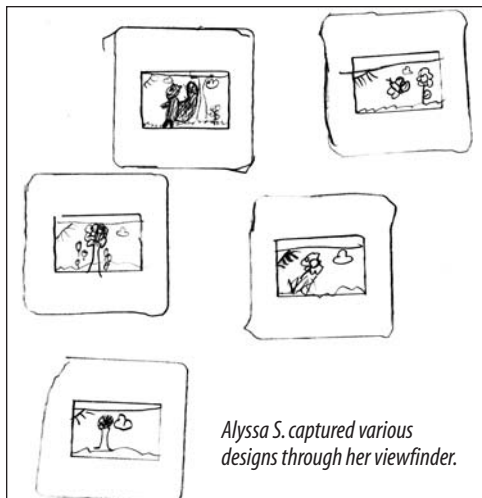
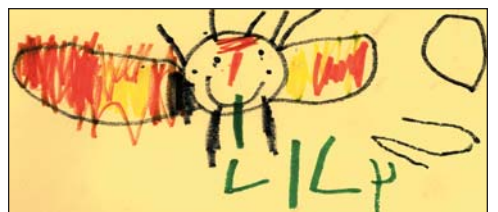


Preschoolers get a little buggy in their sketches

Ms. Ragland took her group of afternoon preschoolers out to sketch the smaller things in nature this week.



Left to right: Levi D. and Ava P. Top to bottom: Lily S., Gavin D. and Poppy M.



Alyssa S. captured various designs through her viewfinder.

Using viewfinders to frame their scenes, the afternoon group sketched leaves, squirrels, insects, trees, and other sights found in nature around First-Plymouth's landscape. They also made crayon rubbings of tree bark. Using magnifying glasses, they experienced another view of leaves, insects, grass, berries, and twigs outside the classroom. During quiet time the children read many books about various nature-related items, including trees, plants and rivers, as they listened to music which included the sounds of nature.

Michael and Michaela are visiting cousins in Lincoln. Neither knew English when they came but both have been learning the language while participating in the K-1 classroom. A final project for "Nature Explore" week was to complete a large map based on their Explorer's Journals. As Michael completed his, his teacher



Preschooler Gavin D. finds out what his world looks like as seen through a spider web.