

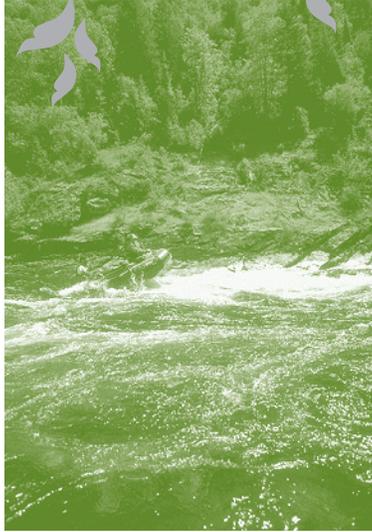
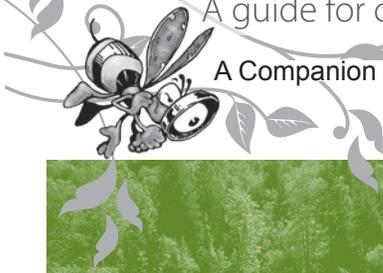


# NATURE-ORIENTED PARENTING®

A guide for caregivers to teach children about the natural world

A Companion to the *Natural Inquirer*

...Be natural



## Inspired by Water

I spent the first 25 years of my life in Florida playing in the gentle ocean, lazy rivers, clear lakes, and frigid springs. Few sensations compare to that sincere peace I get when I am around brilliant water. I can truly relax, be free, and release my fears and anxieties. It's the calming hand on my shoulder, telling me everything will be all right.

A few months ago, I moved from the land of palms and big sky to western North Carolina. The water is completely different here. While Florida water is friendly and welcoming as an old dog, western North Carolina water slinks around like a feral cat—unpredictable and secretive. Looking out at the busy, rocky rush of the French Broad River was like looking at an old friend who had grown up, changed, and forgotten me. At first, it was disconcerting and disheartening; but as I spent more time around the river, I became determined to learn the language of the water in this new place. While Florida water represented love and safety, I have realized North Carolina water is all about adventure and new experiences. Far from the old, changed friend, it's more like a new, strange one, beckoning me to grow, move on, and expand my horizons.

As the weather warms up and the outdoors become more inviting for you and your family, I encourage you to do the same. Seek out something unfamiliar in nature, be it your next-door neighbor's backyard or a national forest in another State. You and your family will be able to share in the exhilaration of discovering something new in nature for years to come.

– Ashleigh Boice – CFAIA Education Intern

The Nature-Oriented Newsletter is designed for cutting out of the journal and taking home to share with parents or other caregivers. Please encourage students to cut along the dotted line, then take the page home to share with family or caregivers.



## Wildlife Spotlight: Bobcat

As a child, I remember waking in the middle of a warm, summer night to the sounds of a woman wailing, as if she had lost someone special. I never fully knew what that strange sound was until much later in life. A co-worker played the call of a male bobcat on his mammal sounds CD. That experience prompted me to learn more about this elusive creature. The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is a member of the cat family *Felidae* and is one of the most resilient and widespread mammals in the United States. Bobcats are nocturnal (meaning they are most active in the evenings and nighttime), however, so they are seldom seen by the human eye. The bobcat inhabits almost any environment, from semideserts to deep woods to swamps, even crossing the border into neighborhoods and heavily populated areas. The bobcat's diet contributes to such a huge population (some say up to 1 million inhabit the United States). Their diet is mostly comprised of rabbits, large insects, rodents, and even small deer. These prey are readily available in most environments, making this beautiful carnivore extremely adaptable. Are you wondering where the name bobcat

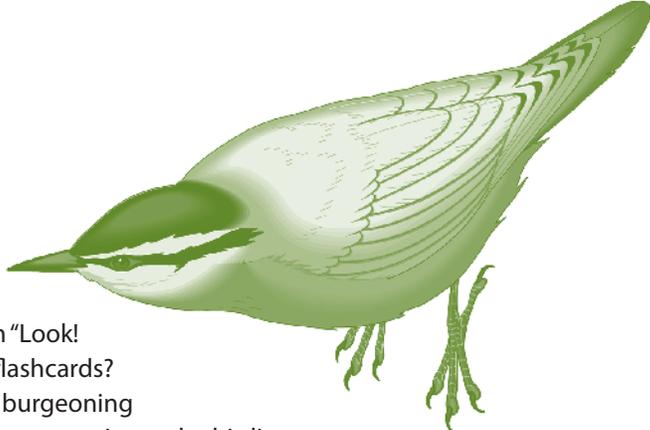
comes from? The unusual moniker refers to the cropped or "bobbed" tail that makes this feline so different from all other North American cats. Other characteristics include long legs, large paws for effective hunting, and tufted ears. Of all the wildlife I've encountered in my camping and hiking experiences, this is one creature that has continued to elude me. I hope to catch site of the bobcat one day. This animal is a majestic and formidable predator that successfully uses the forest shadows and foliage the way its cousin, the lion, might stalk and conceal its identity in tall grass prairies. Adam DeWitte – CFAIA Director of Education



# Did You Know?

The mixture of saltwater and freshwater is called "brackish" water and is usually found in coastal marshes. Many different types of plant and animal species exist only within this delicate balance. Too much saltwater or too much freshwater in this habitat can actually kill off these highly adapted species, changing the ecology of the marsh completely.

# Family Outdoor Activity: Bird Bingo



Every birder has to start somewhere. How can you get your child from "Look! A bird!" to "Look! A Northern Flicker!" without boring him or her with flashcards? Simple—*Bird Color Bingo!* This fun activity is highly adaptable to your burgeoning birder's learning ability and, more importantly, gets your child outside to experience the birding world in his or her own backyard. It also brings you together in an experience that the child will always remember, no matter what other hobbies or interests bubble up inside of your child as he or she grows. Also, the winner gets to pick dessert!

For the littlest bird enthusiast in your life, all you need is a sheet of paper, a clipboard, and a pencil. Simply create a bingo board on your paper by drawing blocks that are four rows by three. Within the squares write red, orange, green, purple, blue, yellow, black, white, gray, stripes, spots, and a free space in the middle (aside from the free space, make the arrangement of colors in squares different for each bingo board). Now all you have to do is visit your backyard or a local park and start the game. Every time you or your child spots a bird, ask the child what color it is, and if it had spots or stripes on it. Then, mark off the color on your bingo board. You can also use this opportunity to teach your child the names of the birds, birdsongs, or types of bird habitats.

For your junior birders, you can make it even more complex. Adding bird names, diet requirements (carnivore? herbivore? insectivore?), whether the bird is common or uncommon, and the species range means the possibilities for fun and learning are endless. Get outdoors and find those birds!

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.  
- Margaret Mead, anthropologist

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