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Written by M. Cavenaile

TEACH TABLET

Spring has been, how to say this politely. . . **fickle** this year. Winter was reluctant to release its grip on us, and in a blink, we are forecasted to have temperatures 25 degrees above average for this time of year. Although it may seem like we didn't have enough of those mild yet sunny days of spring, it is still "spring time" and that means lots of new life to enjoy.

In your own yard, you can enjoy the songs of robins, finches, and cardinals. Orioles have made their return and if you would like to entice some to visit your back yard, just slice an orange in half and set it on a rail or put out a dish of jelly and wait patiently. The daffodils have long passed and lilacs have faded, while the irises and peonies are in full and fragrant bloom. Fiddleheads are unfurled and most perennials are reaching for the knee caps. While the backyard is enjoyable to sip some coffee and enjoy the songs of birds and antics of those bushy tailed bird feeder raiding bandits, your local forest preserve offers some beautiful sights and sounds of springtime.

In the forest preserves, you'll see many wild flowers in bloom. Wooded trails offer wild violets, red trillium, columbine, bleeding hearts, bluebells and shrubs like honeysuckle that are coming into bloom. The wetlands preserves are about to explode with daisies, compass flowers, prairie cone flowers, rattlesnake weed, dames rocket, and more. The deer are active in the morning and this is the perfect time of year to spot a fawn out feeding with mom or curled up and patiently waiting for her to return. Turtles will sun themselves on logs and rocks. Great blue herons and snowy white egrets will be fishing for a meal in the wetlands. Waterfowl are busy taking care of their hatchlings all in a row. I hope you make time to go for a walk or sit in the shade of a tree and let the sights and sounds of nature delight you.

If you are interested in watching the birds and listening to their melodious songs, go to a local forest preserve and find a spot where you see some bird activity and won't be in the way of walkers, joggers or bicyclists. After five minutes or so, the birds will forget you arrived and go back to their routine. Then you can look and listen for bird activity. At the Will County Forest Preserve Black Road Access, I love to watch for Cedar Waxwings. When they are feeding together, they sound like crickets chirping. When the wild berries are on shrubs, the Indigo Buntings and bluebirds show up. The expression, "The early bird catches the worm," is very true in that the best bird watching happens in the morning, however, if you aren't an early riser, you can still enjoy watching the birds. The local libraries have a good selection of bird identification books and an inexpensive pair of binoculars will get you started. For more information on bird watching or for guided bird watching hikes, just visit www.forestpreserves.org and look for the event calendar tab.

TAKE A HIKE! *SERIOUSLY!*

At TEACH Outdoors, we want to get kids out into nature. There are lots of places to hike in Northern Illinois, so how do you make sure that what you are about to do will be fun for everyone? I have some tips and guidelines that I have learned over the years to help make sure that your adventure is memorable for all the right reasons. *Continued on page 2.*



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THIS EDITION IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY HELPIN HANDS AUTO- MOTIVE!

We thank Helping Hands Automotive Repair for supporting our mission of getting kids outdoors. Our goal is to make outdoor education available to all kids and we are able to do that because of your generous support. When you are in need of a trustworthy and dependable mechanic, visit Helping Hands Automotive Repair in Morris.

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GRAND PRAIRIE FAMILY FISHING EVENT

On May 12, Grand Prairie PTO hosted a FREE Family Fishing Event at a Will County Forest Preserve location. Although weather threatened, we were able to fish and have a hot dog picnic between rain showers. It ended up being a perfect morning for fishing!

The event is a cooperative effort. PTO pays for the picnic and bait, and the PE teachers support the effort by supplying extra hooks, lures & loaner fishing poles for first timers. TEACH Outdoors supports the event by wading the lake to help kids who have gotten snagged or tangled up with a nearby friend or tree.

After a short orientation and safety talk, the kids bound off to their spots around the lake to start fishing. Three families came out fished for the very first time. That really is the goal for the event, to be able to introduce an outdoor sport to the

kids who otherwise wouldn't learn how to fish. PE used to have Outdoor Education as part of their curriculum. With budget cuts and curriculum demands, Outdoor Education has been eliminated from most schools. After our fishing event, the families are able to go fishing on their own because they have the knowledge and a few hours of practice under their belts.

TEACH Outdoors has perfected the art of making hot dog lunches, and we served 100+ lunches. The biggest fish was caught by a darling kindergartener on her Frozen Elsa fishing pole. The most fish caught went to an experienced boy who knew that if he ate lunch *while* fishing, he could catch the most. We recognized the family who came out and fished for the first time and TEACH Outdoors was able to send them home with tackle boxes and fishing gear to help them enjoy the sport for the rest of the summer.

Favorite Fishing Derby Moment: Hearing the laughter of a kindergarten student fishing with her grandpa for the first time carry on the wind.

BOREDOM BUSTERS

You can also raid the recycling bin to find ways to make bird feeders for your backyard. For more ideas, Google 23 DIY Bird Feeders for ideas and step by steps.



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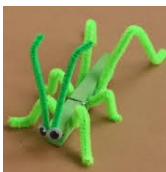
SIMPLE RAINY DAY CRAFT IDEAS

You already know it's going to happen. You plan on going to the zoo or taking a hike only to find out that there's a 70% chance of thunder storms. To combat the default alternative of video games and television watching, have some basic materials on hand for some fun, simple (and budget friendly) craft projects.

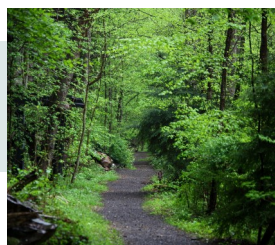
You'll need spring loaded clothes pins, craft paint, googly eyes, craft glue, Sharpie markers, pipe cleaners and small magnets (optional). Follow these steps:

1. Choose the insect you want to make and paint the clothespin.
2. When the paint dries, glue on googly eyes.
3. Add details with a Sharpie marker.
4. Attach pipe cleaner or wire legs and the magnet, if desired.
5. Use as an artwork holder or a chip clip. Then when the rainy day is over, look for your insect in your backyard or on your next hike.

For more ideas, Google "simple clothespin bugs."



TAKE A HIKE! CONTINUED



Consider the “nature level” of your hikers. If your kids are still adjusting to the idea of spending more time outdoors, you will want to choose a crushed limestone or paved trail. Consider this the beginner level because you can avoid contact with plants. If your kiddos aren’t scared by leaves brushing their legs, then you can choose a trail that is more rustic and less groomed. **Pilcher Park & Hidden Oaks Nature Centers** are both fantastic places to take little kids. They can see animals in exhibits at Pilcher Park and play with interactive centers at Hidden Oaks. Both Nature Centers have flush toilets and might be the right amount of “rustic” for the beginners. As an adult, you can grow your confidence and knowledge of nature and get trail maps from the welcome desks to find out what trail would suit the needs of your crew. I needed trails that could accommodate a baby stroller until my daughter was old enough for a hiking frame pack. Nature Center staff may also invite the kids to help with feeding chores if you are there during a slow time.

What is the attention span of your crew? If you have a preschooler in your group, you might want to limit your hike to under an hour. You can estimate that it would take an adult 15 minutes to hike 1 mile. Children can slow that down considerably. You should want to stop and look at things and see what’s crossing the trail. You might not see a deer, but it is lots of fun to look at the tracks or find droppings. If you do see a turtle or frog, catch it and take pictures with it. Let the kids examine its features and make sure to use that hand sanitizer you packed (keep reading) right away. You can use the pictures to identify what type of frog or turtle you saw.

Choose the time of day wisely. If you have littles who need their naps or turn into bears, make sure your hike is planned for the morning. In the cooler part of the day, you are more likely to see birds, insects, and amphibians. ALWAYS pack snacks in case a wrong turn takes you on a longer journey than you expect and you find yourself closer to lunch time than you expected. Make sure to choose healthy snacks like trail mix that provide energy, but be careful of sugary or salty snacks that just make you thirsty. ALWAYS bring water to drink. You should have water for everyone in your group. The longer the hike, the more water you need to bring. If the day you wanted to go hiking is forecasted to be a scorching day with high humidity, don’t take the hike. Choose another day.

Be prepared with some basic supplies. Whenever I go out for a hike, I bring my camera. I bought a camera bag that is a backpack, so I always have the basics with me. When I’m hiking with the whole family, I have my camera and a day pack. A daypack is a backpack that contains the things needed for a daytime trip. It looks more like a regular school backpack than a frame pack that overnight hikers might use. We take longer hikes now, but I still bring almost the same list that I did when the kids were younger—minus the diapers! I always bring snacks, water, bandages, Neosporin, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, baby wipes, OFF!, sunscreen, a few plastic bags, pocket knife or fingernail clippers, and a trail map. When you have the confidence to travel deeper into the woods, you hopefully won’t need anything more than snacks and drinks. When my daughter was little, she would trip on tree roots. I always needed water to wash the dirt off her hands, wipe the scrapes and then put on a bandage. When she got older, she would use fallen trees as balance beams. She slipped and fell once right into poison ivy! I was able to wash her down on the trail that the rash disappeared before we made it back to the car. Like the Boy Scouts motto: Be Prepared.

TEACH Outdoors wants to help your family get into hiking. Introductory education series are in the works. Check our calendar or contact us to help you start hiking and adventuring. Guided hikes available by request, if schedules align. :)



OPEN INVITATION

Bob Wilkins, Co-Vice President, is serious about his love of the outdoors and passion for shooting sports.

He says, “if you want to learn more about shooting sports, contact me. I’d love to teach anybody.” He really means it! For more information about the TEACH Outdoors Youth Trap Shooting Team, visit our Facebook page.

You can reach Bob in person at a TEACH sponsored event. You can email him at

RWilkins29@yahoo.com or find him on Facebook.

FAVORITE LOCAL PLACES TO HIKE WITH KIDS:

1. Pilcher Park in New Lenox
2. Hidden Oaks in Bolingbrook
3. Four Rivers Enviro. Education Center in Channahon
4. Isle ala Cache in Romeoville
5. Hammel Woods Rt. 59 access in Shorewood
6. Rock Run Preserve Black Road Access Joliet
7. Mathiessen State Park, Utica
8. Morton Arboretum (fee area)
9. Starved Rock in Utica
10. Kankakee State Park

(7, 9 & parts of 10 are when you are using a hiking pack or are stroller free)

Here's what you need to know if you are going to take kids fishing:

- Keep it short. They have short attention spans. 2 hours tops.
- Leave your pole at home. Adult will be in a cycle of explaining, baiting, and unhooking. There will be time to fish together when the kids have more experience.
- Make it fun if the fishing is slow. Play "I Spy," look for bugs or shapes in the clouds. Catch a frog.
- Use rubber worms if you hate to touch bait. Lures will get snagged.
- Get that little Shakespeare pole with their favorite character on it. I promise you they can haul in more than you think. You'll be happy with the closed reel and you won't be too sad if it ends up full of sand.
- If in doubt, end the fishing trip with a treat! They'll be sure to want to go again.

TEACHABLE MOMENTS: WILD PARSNIP— AN ALIEN INVADER

For those of you who are fans of native wild flowers (which some scoffers call weeds), you might have noticed a particular unwelcomed flower along roadsides and in our local forest preserve meadows, even in the Prairie Restoration section at Midewin National Tall-grass Prairie. It's called WILD PARSNIP. Like the name implies, it is in the parsnip family. It's famous cultivated cousins are carrots, parsnips, and dill. It's wild growing cousins is Queen Anne's Lace or wild carrot (see picture below).

Wild Parsnip is a biennial plant. That means it doesn't flower in it's first year. The following year, when it does flower, the Wild Parsnip will produce a tall, thick stem that contains hundreds of yellow umbellate flowers. Depending on the habitat and growing conditions, individual flowering plants range to over four feet in height and choke out native species of plants and cause grief for those whose skin comes in contact with it.

Wild Parsnip is unique in that it's sap or plant juices are harmful with the help of UV rays from the sun. "There are chemicals in wild parsnip called psoralens (precisely, furocoumarins) that cause what dermatologists call "phyto-photo-dermatitis." That means an inflammation (itis) of the skin (derm) induced by a plant (phyto) with the help of sunlight (photo). When absorbed by skin, furocoumarins are energized by ultraviolet light (present during sunny and cloudy days)." Once the UV rays interact with the wild parsnip juices, blisters form that look like burns from a kitchen mishap. It feels like a burn too.

So now that you've been warned, you won't let your exposed skin come in contact with this plant...but in case someone in your group take a tumble off their bike or brushes the plant in pursuit of a ball or frisbee, here is how to **treat it**. Carefully wash the area. Keep the blisters covered, with clean and dry bandages. Use first aid burn cream as needed. Steroid cream might help with the discoloration of the skin after the blisters have gone away, but it can take up to 3 weeks or longer to heal completely. Most severe cases occur from people using a weed trimmer while not wearing long pants. The picture below is most likely what a hiker who made accidental contact would look like. It's not like poison ivy, so when the blisters eventually open as a part of the healing process, it will not spread to another area. Most dermatologists are not familiar with this plant or the damage it does.

I looked through many online articles to prepare for writing this one. To learn more and read one of the best resources I found, go to <https://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/stories/1999/jun99/parsnip.htm>

Wild Parsnip in bloom.



Before it blooms.



Gone to seed.



Queen Anne's lace is harmless.



This is what wild parsnip burns look like.

UPCOMING EVENTS—SUMMER 2018

June 16th 10 am—1 pm— Woodsmoke Fishing Derby in Seneca, IL. This is a free pre-registration event.

June 23rd 8 am—3 pm- “No Child Left Behind” event & TEACH Outdoors Shooting Sports Competition at X-line Shotgun Club, Kankakee, IL

June 23-24 8 am—3pm- IDNR Hunters Safety Class at the Chicago Heights Moose Lodge. Free. Registration required.

July 6th 5:30—10pm TEACH Night at the Races, Grundy County Speedway in Morris, IL

July 22nd Learning to Hunt Your Intended Target 8am-5pm Aurora Sportsman’s Club in Waterman, IL. Fee event. Registration required.

July 21 & 22 9am—6pm Braidwood Summerfest Hospitality Tent, Braidwood IL

July 28th 9:30am—2pm Fishing Derby & Archery Day at Woodsmoke Ranch in Seneca, IL. This is a free pre-registration event. [For the most up to date event list, visit us online!](http://www.TEACHOutdoors.org)

www.TEACHOutdoors.org

COME JOIN THE TEACH FUN!

BONUS: NO OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Are you willing to set up some tables?

Would you like to grill hot dogs?

Can you take pictures?

Is your smile welcoming and friendly?

Volunteers make TEACH Outdoors work! We need people who can fish, hunt, blow calls, shoot bows and guns BUT we also need people to help with set up, clean up, registration and photography at each and every TEACH Outdoors event.

If you are able to come out for a few hours just one time a year or once a month, we’d love for you to join us.

Visit us on Facebook and comment on the event or email us with your best contact information and how you interested in helping. THE KIDS APPRECIATE IT & SO DO WE!



T.E.A.C.H. SNAPSHOTS...more pictures online at www.TeachOutdoors.org, Facebook page & Instagram.

