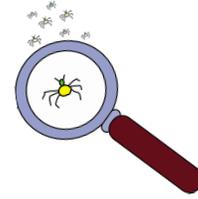




BUG HUNTS!



Spring is here, which means our mighty pollinators are out in full force! Now is a great time to talk to your kids about the importance of these amazing creatures we are traditionally taught to fear. Going on a “Bug Hunt” is a great way to get started!

You can do a Bug Hunt everywhere- From natural environments to urban areas. Bugs (and evidence of bugs) are everywhere- You just have to take a closer look!

Tell your kids they are about to become Nature Detectives, and the suspects they are investigating are bugs. If you have the supplies, have them create their own detective badges. If you have the clothing, have them fashion their own detective outfits (perhaps one of dad’s tweed jackets, or one of mom’s fashionable hats?). Once everyone is outfitted properly, pack your detective case! Things to include: Notebooks or paper, pencils, rulers or tape measures, magnifying glasses, cameras, cell phones or ipads, and if you have field journals to help you identify what you find, throw those in too!

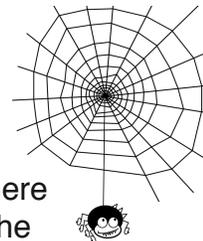
Next: Set your mission! Tell your kids they are being tasked with finding as many bugs as possible. Explain that nature provides us with clues that will lead us to those bugs. For example- Where there are flowers, there are bugs! Where there is soil, there are bugs! Where there are rocks, leaves, wood, grass, trees.... there are bugs! Even something as simple as a crack in the sidewalk of a densely-concrete area is an effective place to find your suspects. If they don’t find any physical bugs, they may be able to find “evidence” of bugs- Tiny tracks in dirt, a slug’s shimmering trail on pavement, chew holes in a leaf, or even tiny bug eggs laid on the underside of that leaf! Simply lying down on the grass and looking deep into its forest of blades, or flipping over and gazing up can yield amazing discoveries.



A Bug Hunt can be a fun, physical activity or a peaceful exercise in mindfulness. For the latter, consider having your children spend some time really studying what they see, and journaling their observations with notes, drawings, etc. You can take photos with your camera, or take a time-lapsed video of a bug at work, then head home and do a google search about the bugs you found, and journal about your data. You can also use your photos to zoom in and take a much closer look at your bugs!



A Bug Hunt can be taken in so many fun directions- You can see how many winged bugs you can find, how many different colors of bugs you can find, who can find the smallest bug, who can find the largest..... And you can take some time to observe what they are doing, and hypothesize why! There are so many connections to be made. Why is that bee drawn to that flower? Are there any commonalities between the plants the different butterflies are attracted to, such as their colors or their shapes? Is the ant you see alone, or in a group? Are they working together or independently? What are they doing? For each bug that you find, your children can scribble down details about it,



including what it looks like, how many legs or wings (or maybe even eyes!) it has, where it's found, what it's doing, and what they think it eats. (Simply drawing a picture of the bugs they see can yield charming and hilarious results!)

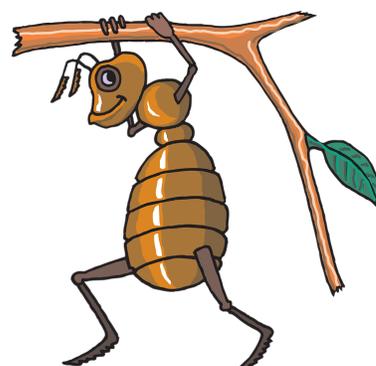
Many children develop irrational fears of bugs at a young age, or are taught that bugs are gross. A Bug Hunt helps children to not only deprogram those feelings, but also to gain an understanding of and appreciation for our pollinating friends in a fun, competitive way that gets them outdoors and engaging in physical activity. It aims to instill curiosity and fascination by showing them that a wide variety of insects are harmless, can be found almost anywhere- from parks and schoolyards to their own backyard and city neighborhood -and are necessary for life to thrive.

As with any outdoor activity, remember a few safety tips- Remind your little Nature Detectives that they are looking at bugs, not touching or collecting them. This is a great time to talk about empathy for other living creatures, and respecting their lifestyles. Make sure they know to keep a safe distance, and to be mindful of plants they may touch, rocks they may turn over, leaves they may dig through, and the life they are living. Remind them to be gentle of all living things on their adventure, so as to not disturb the evidence!

When you have completed your mission, take some time to discuss the experience, and reflect on the many lessons learned.

Fun Bonus: Taking kids on a Bug Hunt is a fun way to practice Next Generation Science Standards! It gets them asking questions, making observations, carrying out investigations, taking notes, analyzing data, and trying to understand a tiny piece of the world- Just like a scientist! And hopefully, in the process, those empathy skills get some exercising as well.

Have fun!



**See the following resources for help kicking off this activity:*

Fun Facts About Bugs: <http://destinationnature.com/cool-bug-facts/>

All About Pollination: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AuVm1jpKEA>

Bug Identifying Apps: <https://www.fatherly.com/gear/7-apps-that-will-convince-your-kid-you-know-everything-about-the-natural-world/>

Bug Scavenger Hunt Printables:

https://www.google.com/search?q=bug+scavenger+hunt&client=safari&rls=en&sxsrf=ALeKk03naur8sgw5Eu7P5vbJ1iOo4rCA9g:1584996291839&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjD1senu7HoAhVOma0KHRT9CzoQ_AUoAXoECA0QAw&biw=1373&bih=739