



Kentucky's Outdoor Classroom Newsletter

Department of Forestry

February 2001

Spring Is About To Spring

The Vernal Equinox is fast approaching, March 21st, the first day of Spring is almost on our door step! This is a great time to get out and get active in your outdoor classroom! There are many different ways that you and your students can celebrate the coming of spring.

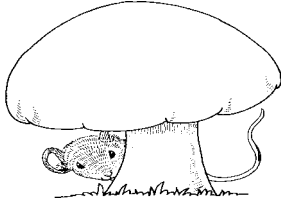


Schoolyard Habitat

Why not construct a **Schoolyard Habitat Site** within your outdoor classroom or around your school yard? A **habitat** is defined as the place where an animal or plant normally lives, the area that provides food, water and shelter for an organism. It is often characterized by a dominant plant form or physical characteristic. You can celebrate the coming of spring with your students by participating in different habitat activities. By doing this, your students will take an appreciation for the variety of living things that make your school yard or outdoor classroom their home, and for the variety of habitats found within these areas.

At the National Wildlife Federation address, <http://www.nwf.org/habitats/schoolyard/> there is a step-by-step guide on how to construct and maintain a site near your school.

***Did you know** - Kentucky has more than 3,000 different species of plants, 240 species of fish, 100 species of mussels, 100 species of amphibians and reptiles, 340 species of birds and 75 species of animals? And they all need habitat to survive and thrive in our state. See how many you can identify in your school yard! (Teacher's Guide to Kentucky's Environment, 1993)*



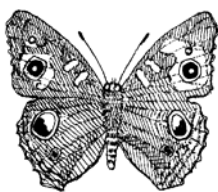
A Few Steps To Construct a Schoolyard Habitat Site

1. Divide students into groups to create “Habitat Teams”.
2. Survey, Inventory and Map the prospective Site—make a map of your plot, identifying everything that your students observe. Be sure to point out the human influences that occur within your site. The teams will also need to look at the physical elements of your site (soil: sandy or clay), location in the landscape (bottomland or ridge top)) and ecological components.
3. Set Goals! Define a clear and workable goal, and incorporate student leadership.
4. Acquire additional resources through community outreach (contact your County Cooperative Extension Agent, County Conservation District resource person or contact the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resource (1-800-858-1549)). In addition have the students investigate and research habitat links available on the National Wildlife Federation web site listed above.
5. Fund raising—an important part of this process, but can be very easily done! The National Wildlife Federation has many links to national and regional organizations that provide grants and free tools (i.e. free seeds) necessary to start a habitat.
6. Certify your Schoolyard Habitat — Become part of a network of **1,068 schools** who share their schoolyards with wildlife in their communities!

Classroom Activities to Help Establish Your Schoolyard Habitat and Utilize Throughout The Year.

Project Learning Tree Activities:

- Schoolyard Safari (grades PreK-5, outdoor)
- Are Vacant Lots Vacant? (grades 4-8, outdoor)
- Field, Forest, and Stream (grades 4-8, outdoor)
 - Trees as Habitats (grades 3-8, outdoor)
 - Dynamic Duos (grades 5-8, indoor)
 - Life on the Edge (grades 4-8, indoor)



Pollination

Along with spring comes the busy bees! Pollination is an important part of spring, so why not introduce your students to the

wonderful world of insects?

Have you ever tried a cantaloupe from your supermarket and found it totally tasteless? You could be experiencing the results of poor pollination. Many fruits cannot develop full flavor and filled out flesh, unless they are well pollinated. Some fruits, like peaches, are easy to pollinate, and one visit by a bee can do the job. *Pollination of the seeds is the key factor in the development and sweetening of the flesh of the fruit!*

A good seed set usually requires multiple insect visits. Pollination of the seeds creates the chemicals that cause the flesh of the fruit to form, and create the sugars that indicate ripeness.

Did you know? A half-pollinated watermelon will never fully ripen. Each *white* seed represents potential that was never realized, both in terms of size and shape and of sweetness.

- www.pollinator.com for more pollination information!

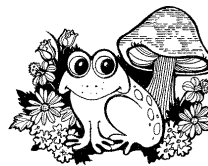
GREAT WEBSITES!

- **Watershed Info!** Do your students know where their water comes from? Our water quality and quantity has become an important issue in the past few years, so educate them about their water source! Surf your watershed at www.epa.gov/surf/
- **Gardening** will give your student knowledge about what it takes to care for different plant species. www.organicgardening.com
- **Composting and Mulching:** The Worm Bin: www.ctvalley.com offer great educational programs and information.
- **The Ultimate Science Fair Resource** www.scifair.org/ is designed for teachers and students. Includes discussion of the scientific method and an Idea Bank (a list of questions and experiment ideas) and Idea Board with posts from students sharing what worked and didn't work in their science fair

experiments.

GREAT KENTUCKY WEBSITE!

- **Kentucky's Backyard Wildlife Program** www.state.ky.us/agencies/fw/backyard.htm will provide you with information and contacts if you want a program done at your school.



Upcoming Events/Resources:

- PRIDE Environmental Education Grants mailed March 1, 2001(1-888-K-PRIDE-Y)
- Ky. Agriculture & Environment in the Classroom - Rayette.Boone@kyagr.com
- Ky. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources www.kdfwr.state.ky.us
- Ky. Division of Conservation www.nr.state.ky.us/nrepc/dnr/Conserve
- Ky. Division of Forestry www.nr.state.ky.us/nrepc/dnr/forestry/dnrdof.html
- U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service www.nrcs.usda.gov/
- U.K. Dept. of Entomology www.uky.edu/Agriculture/Entomology/
- Ky. Assoc. For Environmental Education www.kaee.org/
- Salato Wildlife Education Center
1-800-858-1549

Mailing List

Know someone who would like to be on the mailing list or we need to make an address correction? Please fill out and return to Laurie Taylor at address below or by email:

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