

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

This Free E-Book is brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

By Susan Dunn

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity? by Susan Dunn, MA, The EQ Coach

When the holidays are over, and winter sets in, sometimes we're looking for things to do. The same can be said of retirement, or if you're just ready for a change-of-pace in your life, and a new interest.

Well, if you start planning now, by this time next year you could be watching a lot of interesting things in your own back yard by turning it into a Backyard Wildlife Habitat. An official wildlife habitat provides wildlife with food, water, cover and places to raise their young. It has all the requirements for a fascinating, meaningful, beautiful and pleasurable hobby that also can be economical.

Leisa Royce's yard was certified in 2002. "Here in Kentucky," she writes, "our land is paved over and disappearing at the rate of 100 acres a day and with that so does the wildlife as they have no food or nesting sources to raise their young." The benefit is not all to the wildlife, though. "Using native plants and reducing your lawn area helps to protect natural resources and requires less watering," she writes, "and cuts down on chemical pesticide use and fertilizers."

Since starting her habitat, Lisa has identified 65 species of birds and 48 species of butterflies. Think of the beauty! Think of the learning opportunities! Visit Lisa's beautiful website and take a look around: <http://www.angelfire.com/ky2/mamabird/backyard1.html> .

If you want to learn how to attract birds, butterflies and other creatures to your backyard, the National Wildlife Federation has lots of guides – http://www.enature.com/backyardwildlife/nwf_bwh_home.asp . On their site, they'll help you create an online habitat and a species list complete with photos. They offer advice and will even certify your yard.

You can also create a habitat area at your workplace, or encourage your employer to, letting areas go "natural." Steelcase, Inc., in Kentwood and Grand Rapids, Michigan is one example of a company which has done this.

They were certified (<https://secure.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/certify/page1.cfm>) in February 2002. On their property of 640 acres in a rural Kentwood, and 287 acres in urban Grand Rapids, they provide the four habitat elements: food, water, cover and places to raise young. The benefits?

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

Besides feeling good and doing good, they say they save \$1000 an acre each year in lawn maintenance.

A work or family project such as this is a great way to build community. As the NWF says, "Habitat work days can be used for staff development or as volunteer opportunities."

It's also a bonding activity for your family, and a great thing to do with the grandchildren, as well as a wonderful source of joy and beauty. If you live alone, you'll definitely increase your level of "companionship".

GUIDES FOR YOUR AREA

You'll need to know some things about your own region of the country. "Mammal Tracks" will tell you how to identify the tracks you're seeing, by zip code –

http://www.enature.com/localguide/localguide_tracks.asp and here you will find a guide to plants and animals in your area that are best avoided (though they play a role in the ecology, dangerous or poisonous as they are) – http://www.enature.com/localguide/localguide_dangerous.asp .

BIRDS

Regardless of where you live or the size of your property, you can get wild birds to come to your backyard easily. Go here to learn how: http://www.enature.com/birding/garden_birds.asp , with advice specific to your region of the country.

WITH NATURE COMES ... NATURE

Perhaps you're wondering what might come along with this, like snakes, insects and the like, and what to do, if anything, about cats.

Here <http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/onwildlife.cfm#4> you will find answers to common questions like what to do when there's a baby bird hopping around in your yard, or ladybugs infesting your house, or a snake crawling around.

Can you pick up a baby bird and put it back? This can happen, because baby birds do leave the nest a few days before they're ready to soar.

The NWF says, "The parents will keep feeding it on the ground and in the bushes. Leave it alone and keep children, cats and dogs away from it. You can pick it up and put it in a bush if it is out in the open. Birds have very little sense of smell and touching it will not make the parents abandon it. After several hours, you probably will not be able to find the bird."

INSECT REPELLANT

Concerned about the environment? According to researchers from Iowa State University, catnip and some spices work well. "The aromatic oil in [catnip] is ten times better at warding off mosquitoes than

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

DEET, the chemical used in most bug sprays," they say. "It might simply be acting as an irritant or they don't like the smell," says Chris Peterson, who led the study. "Nobody really knows why insect repellents work."

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Start planning now and thinking ahead. What critters need in the cold months, says NWF, is "high energy food, reliable water sources for drinking and bathing, and safe shelter from the weather and predators." Here are some things you can do:

- Plant vegetation that produces berries, nuts or seeds, such as native hollies, like possumhaw, Joe Pyle weed and black-eyed Susans (if you leave seed heads on), and native evergreens that provide cover and food for migratory birds
- Provide bird feeders.
- Leave dead trees if you can for habitat – pileated woodpeckers and flying squirrels, for example
- Install winter roosting boxes. If you put out the birdhouse in the winter, it will be seasoned and ready for spring nesting time. Won't that be fun to watch?
- Create a brush pile with yard debris as shelter for birds and small mammals and also hibernation places for turtles, salamanders and insects.
- Butterflies too! They lay their eggs in bush piles.
- Use other debris as mulch to protect plant roots from freezing for more habitat
- Put out birdbaths. Did you know birds need to bath in order to stay warm? According to the NWF, "it keeps their insulation feathers in tip-top condition." Keep it free from ice, however, or you can buy a heated one.

DECORATE A TREE FOR WILDLIFE

The NWF has some wonderful "recipes" here <http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/decorating2.cfm> for food you can hang on trees to invite birds and small critters. With such enticing names as Ga Ga Over Garland, Wildlife Wonder Bread, Birdy Bagels, Groovey Grapefruit Feeders and Muffin Madness, there are many to choose from, with great illustrative photographs.

PLAN FOR SPRING

Here you can get wildflower and native grass seeds online, with recommendations for your area: <http://www.wildflowerfarm.com/> .

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

Here

http://www.wildflowerfarm.com/Merchant2/merchant.mv?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=1&Category_Code=PI you will find tips for planning an ecological garden.

Wildseed Farms (<http://www.wildseedfarms.com>), just up the road from me near Fredericksburg, TX, is the nation's largest working wildflower seed farm, and you can purchase seeds directly from them.

When to plant? Planting dates depend upon seasonal precipitation in your area rather than temperature, and can be planted in the fall or early spring. Go here for a schedule:
http://www.wildseedfarms.com/faq_main_page.htm .

Start planning now. With your yard bare as it is now, take a walk around, then use some of these resources to plan your habitat.

©Susan Dunn, MA, The EQ Coach™, <http://www.susandunn.cc> . Coaching around Emotional Intelligence for relationships, parenting, career, resilience, and personal and professional development. [Mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc](mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc) for free ezine. For daily EQ tips send blank email to EQ4U-subscribe@yahoo.com . Susan is the author of "How to Live Your Life with Emotional Intelligence," - <http://www.webstrategies.cc/aemotionalintelligence/html> .

Winter Blahs Become Family Fun

By Sarah Zanger

After spending another dreary winter Sunday with not much to do I decided our family needed an exciting activity. I thought I needed a break from planning dinner so I'd give myself a break and give them an activity.

I told my children that they were in charge of dinner tonight. They'd each need to prepare one part of the meal— their choice. Three of my four children were home and quite excited about the prospect of dinner plans. Even my sixteen year old son, who only gets excited about playing hockey was in to it. My husband wasn't as keen on the idea.

Each of my children started their dinner plans. They ran to the computer to locate good recipes. I sent them to Simply Delicious (

) where they found some good recipes.

They pulled out cookbooks and ran to find their supplies. Of course, what I thought would be a treat for me turned into a bit of extra work but watching everyone scurrying around the kitchen was fun.

My husband didn't realize I meant business and when he returned to the kitchen I told him if he wanted dinner he too needed to bring something to the meal. He's not much of a cook so he took out our dusty juice maker and went to work. He used up a good amount of old fruit and resurrected the use of the juice maker.

Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

What started out as a boring Sunday became a wonderful way for our family to spend quality time together. The kids learned some new recipes and we're back to using our juice maker!!

Sarah Zanger is a freelance writer and mother of four. She is an editor at Dateable.com. Dateable.com is an exciting online community for singles, couples and romance lovers. Dateable.com has romantic resources, advice, poetry, message boards, event postings, greeting cards, contests, personals, opinion polls and more. You can visit Dateable.com at

Winter Blahs Become Family Fun

Attention All Skiers: Try Snowboarding!

Indoor Winter Fun

Winter Tire Myths Revealed

Winter Looks on a Budget

The Antioxidant Benefits Of Coffee

Recipes from the Heartland

Beat that Fat

Success Secrets

The Truth About Diabetes



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.



Need a great Family or On-Your_Own Winter Activity?

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!