

# NATURE

*A 30-week nature curriculum for families and co-ops*



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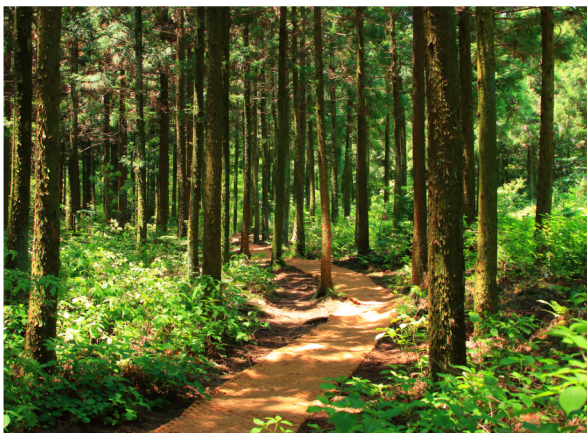
# WELCOME

Dear friends,

I am thrilled that you have decided to join us for 30 weeks of exploring God's beautiful world!

The Nature guide by Brighter Day Press is a literature- and nature-based curriculum designed for families with children ages 5-12. Throughout this study, you'll learn more about the wondrous world that God created by exploring scientific ideas, doing hands-on activities in nature, and reading rich literature to accompany your learning. Each week, you'll find easy-to-follow guided lessons, a book recommendation, nature journaling instructions, a Creator connection, and more.

Each weekly lesson requires minimal preparation, but I do encourage you to read through it ahead of time and make sure you have the needed books and supplies so that your time together will run smoothly.



You can use this curriculum as a family *or* in a larger group setting like a co-op or a nature club. You'll find instructions on how to gather and sustain a nature club on the following pages.

Either way, being out in nature to explore and observe is an integral part of this curriculum. Whether you're working through this guide as a family or in a larger group, I encourage you to make an effort to go on the recommended nature walks. They will greatly enhance your learning experience!

I pray that this curriculum brings your family joy and new insight as you learn, explore, and delight in God's incredible creation!

With joy,  
*Whitney Newby*





# SUPPLIES

## for each nature walk

- **Nature journal for each child:** Make sure each child has a nature journal. I encourage parents to start one too! We have nature journals available on [brighterdaypress.com](http://brighterdaypress.com) that work with this curriculum, or you can purchase a simple journal on your own.
- **Writing/drawing supplies:** A pencil with a good eraser and a set of colored pencils is helpful for the nature journaling portion of this study.
- **Water:** Everyone needs their own water bottle.
- **Simple first aid kit:** Band-aids are a tangible sign of compassion and fix most bumps, bruises, and scratches. Make sure you have plenty with you on your nature walks!
- **Small white board and dry erase marker:** If working with a group of young children, a small white board is helpful for kids to copy down information.
- **Various field guides for your area** to help identify different things that you will study. I recommend looking for Peterson Field Guides. *Peterson First Guide to Urban Wildlife* by Sarah B. Landry is a great place to start!
- **An identification app downloaded to your phone** is a helpful way to identify many of the things you're seeing. The Seek app by iNaturalist is a great one!

## Optional but helpful:

- Binoculars
- A pocket microscope
- A magnifying glass
- A wooden book stand, to hold a book open while children reference illustrations for their own nature journaling
- Watercolor supplies (paints and brushes), for finishing nature journal sketches during the week

Some lessons include additional supplies needed for various activities. Skim over the lesson a few days before you plan to teach to make sure you have what is needed.



WEEK

2

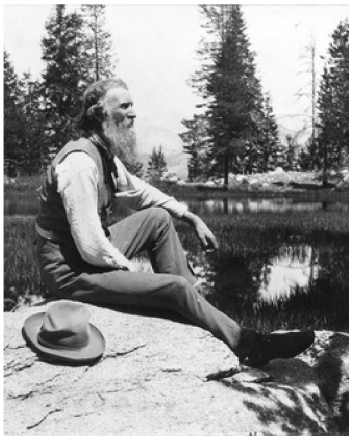
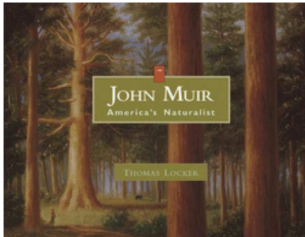
# FOUNDATIONS FOR NATURE STUDY

## ITEMS NEEDED

- Scissors
- Tape or glue to attach pictures of flora and fauna to the group T-chart (see page 13)
- Optional:* Magnifying glass

## TO READ

*John Muir: America's Naturalist*  
by Thomas Locker



*John Muir in 1902*

## Week 2: What Is a Naturalist?

**Note to teacher:** A naturalist is simply someone who studies the natural world in nature. Naturalist scientists are not in a laboratory but out in the field, observing and learning. We want to help children see themselves as naturalists, learning about the world by observing nature around them.

John Muir is the naturalist we will study today. He was one of the first conservationists and is considered the father of the national parks. He helped to make Yosemite designated as a national park.

**Today's lesson:** Today, I want you to see yourself through a new lens (*hold up a magnifying glass*). When we are outside learning about the natural world, there is actually a name for that. It's called being a **naturalist**! We are all naturalists and will become better and better at observing and learning from the world around us as we practice.

I want to share with you the story of a very important naturalist in our country. His name was John Muir.

Read *John Muir: America's Naturalist* aloud.

### Discussion questions:

- What stuck out to you in this book?
- What contribution did John Muir make to our country?
- What was the legacy that he left behind?

One way that naturalists can think about a certain environment is by observing the flora and fauna in that place. The word *flora* means "flower" in Latin, and *flora* refers to the plants, trees, fungi, and bacteria in a certain area. The word *fauna* is of Roman mythological origin and refers to all of the animals in a region.

*Pass out pictures of flora and fauna, found on the next page. Have children bring them up one at a time and tape or glue them to the group T-chart (see page 13).*

**Instructions for today's walk:** Today as we walk, take notice of the flora and fauna of this environment. We will share our observations when we get to our learning and journaling spot.

WEEK

2

## Week 2: Flora or Fauna?

*Cut out various images below of flora and fauna and have children tape or glue them to the group T-chart on the next page. The next page is intentionally blank so you can cut these out!*



WEEK

2

## Week 2: Flora and Fauna T-chart

Flora

Fauna

Flora	Fauna



WEEK

2

## Week 2: Nature journal + learning spot

Once arriving at your learning spot, begin by opening your nature journal and writing down basic data for today: date, time, weather, and location.

*Have students draw a small T-chart on the left side of the journal under the data and label one side "flora" and the other side "fauna." Have them write down or sketch a few examples of flora and fauna in your area. Share together.*

Naturalists observe, consider, and ask great questions. Let's try writing and answering one of these prompts in your journals:

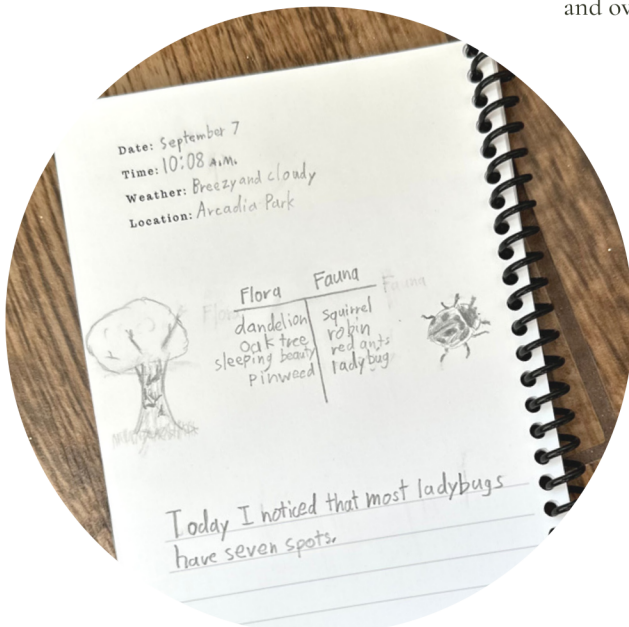
- I wonder...
- I notice...
- This reminds me of...

**Journal extension:** Try out one of these journal prompts this week as you sketch something you notice in nature!

**Creator connection:** When observing flora and fauna, let's remember that God made us not only to be observers of His creation, but to be stewards of it as well. In other words, we are given the incredible honor to care for this wonderful world He's placed us in!

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

- Genesis 1:26



Nature journal by Liam, age 10

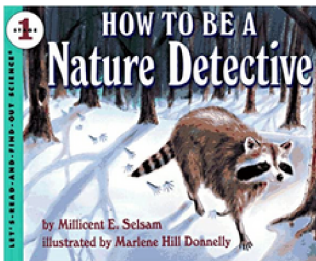
# HOW TO BE A NATURE DETECTIVE

## ITEMS NEEDED

- Field guide of animal tracks in your area to help with identification
- Measuring tape or paper ruler (see appendix on page 91 for a paper ruler you can cut out)

## TO READ

*How to Be a Nature Detective*  
by Millicent E. Selsam



## Week 3: Animal Tracks

**Note to teacher:** This lesson works especially well within a day or two after it rains as the animal tracks will be more easily seen in the mud. A pond, lake, or river is also a great location for this lesson as the tracks show up well in the sand or mud surrounding a body of water. A snowy day also brings a different dynamic to this lesson!

**Today's lesson:** When we have gone on nature walks so far, have we seen a lot of wild animals? We may see birds and squirrels frequently, but most animals are nocturnal and sleep during the day, or they hide when they hear us coming. So without actually seeing the wild animals in an area, how do we know what lives there?

Just as a detective uses clues and evidence to piece together a story and solve a crime, as naturalists, we pay attention to clues around us that tell a story and show us what has happened or what has been present in the area.

Read *How to Be a Nature Detective* aloud.

### Discussion questions:

- What does it mean to be a nature detective?
- What kinds of things could be clues for a nature detective?
- When we find tracks, how do we identify the animal that made them?

**Instructions for today's walk:** On our walk today, pay attention to any animal tracks you see. Pause and sketch the track in your nature journal. Measure the length and width of the track with your paper ruler or measuring tape to help identify which animal it could be. Have field guides handy to identify the tracks!



Deer tracks



Dog tracks



Fox tracks

## Week 3: Nature journal + learning spot

Begin by opening your nature journals and writing down basic data: date, time, weather, and location. *Let children share what tracks they discovered on the walk, and discuss what we can learn from the clues of animal tracks.*

Here are some questions to consider:

- Does it have claws?
- Does it have hooves? Is it a split hoof (called a cloven hoof)?
- How many toes does it have?
- How does the animal move: by sliding on the ground, hopping, or walking?
- Do you think the animal was moving quickly or slowly?
- When it walks, what parts of its feet touch the ground?
- Which way was it going?

By studying these tracks, you can learn a lot about the activities of the animals in the area without actually seeing them. After thinking through these questions, use a field guide or an app to make an educated guess as to what animal(s) the tracks belong to. Write it down in your nature journal.

**Journal extension:** This week, look for more tracks near your home and see if you can identify them!

**Optional activity:** If you discover a set of tracks you want to remember, create Plaster of Paris animal track casts by mixing up small amounts of plaster at a time and pouring it into the animal tracks. Let set and dry completely. You can paint these to make them more visible and collect tracks from different animals over time!

**Creator connection:** Animal tracks point us to what animal made the track, just like a signature points us to who wrote a letter. But what is God's signature? Does He have one? Yes—it's *you!* You were made in His image, in His likeness. That means that out of all creation, you point most clearly to who God is!

"So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them."

- Genesis 1:27



Bird tracks



Black bear track



Coyote tracks



