

February 2018

Volume 1, Issue 1

Nature Study Australia

Summer

Nature Science for Aussie Families

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Items for a Nature Basket

- ☺ Observation jars.
- ☺ Magnifying glass.
- ☺ Butterfly net.
- ☺ Binoculars.
- ☺ Journals.
- ☺ Pencils.
- ☺ Nature books.
- ☺ Field Guides.
- ☺ Place near the door to encourage outdoor exploration.



Image: Jo

Nature Study in the Backyard

Most of us like the idea of implementing nature study into our curriculums but don't know where to start. There is so much to observe and learn it's no wonder we're overwhelmed, but if we focus on one topic and area at a time, we may begin to realize it's not so difficult after all.

There are so many topics we can cover from our backyards like:

- Backyard birds and nest watching.
- Plants and trees.
- Soil science and rocks.
- Nocturnal insects, birds and animals.
- Spiders.
- Weather.
- Summer constellations and astronomy events.
- Minibeasts.



[Nature Study Australia](#) kicked off the term with a [5 Day Backyard Minibeast Challenge](#). I absolutely loved exploring the participants backyards each day. There were so many interesting sightings and observations like insect eggs hatching, wasps hunting spiders, bees rehoming and frogs enjoying precious rainfall after a long drought.

So, if you're feeling a little overwhelmed, turn your focus to the backyard or park and begin exploring while concentrating on one topic. I'm sure you'll find it's not only manageable but a whole lot of fun too.

Be inspired by the [Nature Science for Aussie Families Facebook Group](#) by keeping in touch with families who are on the same mission. We have a picture of the Week Challenge and encourage you to post your sightings or nature activities. You can also #naturestudyaustralia on Instagram.

by *Marie*

"One of the secrets of the educator is to present nothing as stale knowledge, but to put himself in the position of the child, and wonder and admire with him."

~ *Charlotte Mason*



MINIBEAST CHALLENGE

I was inspired by the sightings and activities during the Minibeast Challenge and wanted to share a few images with you.



Observing Ants
Image: Mairi Girgis



Pearly White Eggs
Image: Kathleen Lawler



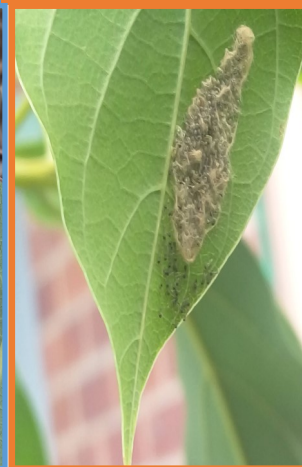
Pearly Eggs Hatched
Image: Kathleen Lawler



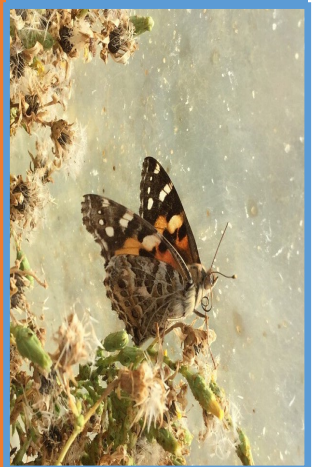
Spiderlings
Image: Jen Muir



Insect Egg Sack
Image: Cindy Tarlton



Insects Hatching
Image: Cindy Tarlton



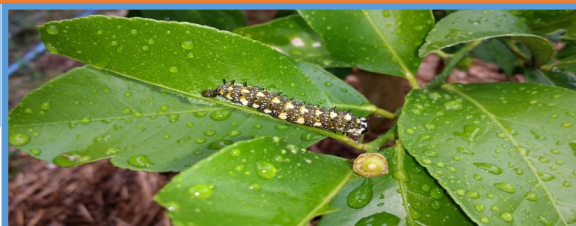
Painted Lady Butterfly
Image: Jo



Spider Web Craft made by Mr 7
Image: Sally Farrelly



Garden Snail
Image: Carol Na



Caterpillar
Image: Tamra Wilson

Keep an eye open for:

- Beetles at night lights.
- Moths and caterpillars
 - Butterflies
 - Mantids
 - Wasps
 - Spiders
- Tree frogs
 - Ants
- Flowering Mistletoes
 - Lizards
 - Geckos

"It is infinitely well worth the mother's while to take some pains every day to secure, in the first case, that her children spend hours daily amongst rural and natural objects; and in the second place, to infuse into them, or rather, to cherish in them, the love of investigation." ~ Charlotte Mason.

NATURE TABLE IDEAS

Another way to observe nature is to collect natural items which remind you of summer and start a seasonal nature table, shelf or tray. A few things you could collect are:

- Seeds and cones like gum nuts, banksias and pine cones.
- Seeding grasses to make an arrangement in a vase.
- Seashells and place them in a glass bottle or jar.
- Bird feathers can be placed in a little vase/bottle too.
- Bugs which can be kept in a fishing tackle tray.



Gum Nut, Cones and Seed Tray



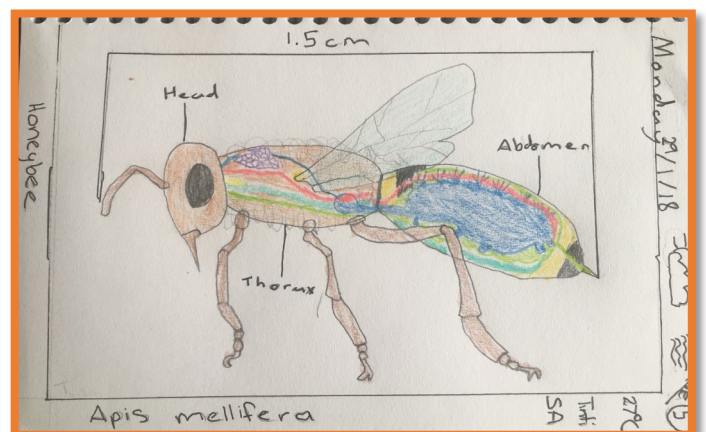
Feather Collection in a Jar



Summer Nature Tray

Nature Study on Hot Days

Some summer days are so hot they're uncomfortable and the children are not interested in exploring outdoors, but this gives you the opportunity to catch up on nature journaling and activities in the cool of your home. Choose something to sketch or paint from the nature table or print photographs you've taken and paste them in diaries. You could also create 3D images of a favorite insect by using fruit. Research Insects online or read a nature related books.



NATURE STUDY IN THE HOME OF TRACEY

“I love to be really present in our walks.”

My husband and I have always loved being out in nature. As often as we could (before children), we'd pack up the 4wd Ute and set off on a nature expedition. We'd spend days, sometimes weeks exploring our homeland's coast, forests and caves, marveling at the diverse flora and fauna. One time we ended up across the border at The Great Australian Bight! What an adventure!



It wasn't until our first born child was a toddler that I started to recognize the benefits of nature play. If he was in a cranky mood, I'd take him into the garden and his energy would shift completely. I saw how curious he was about the natural world and how it enlivened his senses. The sensation of sand through his fingers, the sound of leaves crunching between his chubby little fingers (or teeth!), the smell of roses, the way the petals could be plucked, squished and then thrown into the air with sheer delight, the sweet taste of fresh fruit picked from the tree. It was in these moments of simplistic joy that I realized that nature would be an essential ingredient in his development.

As my boy grew, his love of nature deepened and we went on many more adventures. He's a real wild, outdoorsy, adventurous boy and his need for freedom instigated our homeschooling journey. I love that homeschooling allows us to both spend more time studying nature. We enjoy recording our experiences and discoveries in a nature journal and I've found that in keeping my own journal, my son is inspired to record his findings too.



Our days typically include time in the garden, connecting with our animals and plants – I like to involve my children in all aspects of gardening. We usually go on a bush walks too. I love to be really present on our walks. Stopping to look deeply at flowers, seeing what's underneath the bark of a tree, listening to the bird calls.

Once we're home, we add our favourite findings to our nature table. Some of our favourite pieces include red and black cockatoo feathers, pine cones, pressed flowers, purple gum leaves, cicada shells, snake skin, sea sponges, abalone shells and a paper wasp nest. Our dead insect and spider collection is growing too! I quite like having a collection of curiosities as they spark interest, questions and a respect for the diversity of nature.



Underlying all of our schooling is a deep respect for the natural world – we are all connected – and I believe that connecting children with nature is the first step in helping them understand how precious our living world really is. In the words of Roald Dahl, “Somewhere within all of us is the power to change the world,” and this is one of the ways that I know how.

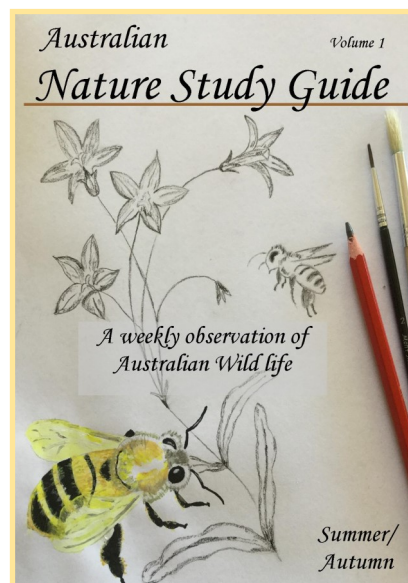


Hi! I’m Tracey, mama to two little wild hearts. I’ve been homeschooling my eldest for the past year, and as a family, we are completely inspired by the natural world!

You can follow Tracey’s journey at [Wild Heart Homeschool](#) and Instagram [@runwildheart](#).



Picture of the Week: Tracey Godwin

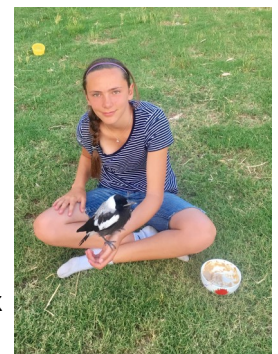


Do you own the [Australian Nature Study Guide](#) yet? Not sure if it’s for your family? [Give it a trial by downloading the first lesson on Honeybees](#). You’ve nothing to lose, and who knows, you may find you have more time on your hands .

Nature Study in the Home of Marie

The study of nature within our home is not predictable. We seize opportunities as they arise like when my daughter found a magpie which had fallen out of a nest on a windy day. It was still too young to fly so she brought it home. She researched how to take care of it and what food she needed to feed it. The magpie even had a menu by the end of the week for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bird was ready to fly two weeks later and still visits with her today by squawking at the backdoor.

We schedule nature walks but we’re also known to spontaneously pack the bookwork away for the day and go fishing or bushwalking. This often happens when I notice the children are restless. It’s amazing how exploring nature relaxes their temperaments and cheers them up. We’ll journal our sightings occasionally, but mostly I want to foster a love for nature within my children as I believe the evidence of a Designer is all around us. When they notice the similarities in plants, insects



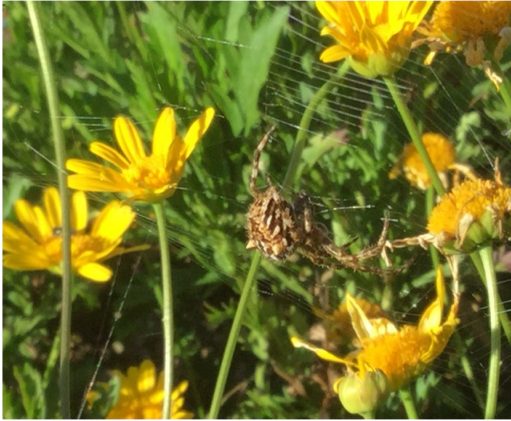
and reptiles and make those connections they know without doubt our creation was planned by a Creator, and it’s there for us to marvel at and enjoy. When we delight in the things which were made for us by the Master Artist we glorify Him and He takes pleasure in it.

We plan to dig a littler further into the sightings we’ve encountered in the past and learn more by following the [Nature Study Guide](#) I wrote last year. We hope you’ll [join our discoveries](#) and we’d love to share your explorations with you too.

Nature Study in the Home of Jo

“I organize to allow for opportunity.”

The older children are fishing. The younger girls are splashing in the water, and I'm busy searching the trees for beetles. My daughter (24), laughs, "is this how you do nature study *with* the children?"



Really, a lot of the nature study we do is unplanned. It's sharing what we discover or what amazing things we come across, not really an organized activity.

It's me, creeping out the back door for a snatch of solitude before the morning breakfast rush, finding a beautiful spider and watching it awhile. One or more of the children come to ask what I'm doing and stand there with me watching the spider. Or, later in the day, one of the children running inside, "Mum, there's an eagle circling, come look!"

I encourage the children to bring me their finds or go out with them to see what they have discovered. I allow for opportunities to get outside and explore our amazing world and take the time to slow down and enjoy what is all around us.

I don't label our nature study as 'school' work. It's more a case of putting the books aside and going for a walk, searching for some bugs or sitting by the dam. Some times we will pull out our journals and draw and paint what we love, not as an assignment but just for fun.



But, not all of our nature study is unplanned. I organize to allow for opportunity.

Our butterfly nets, specimen containers, magnifying glasses, nature guides and camera are within easy reach. Also, journals, pencils and watercolour are on hand for when we feel like drawing.

I glean ideas from the Handbook of Nature Study and now from Marie's guide. I use these resources to help direct and encourage the children as we head outdoors.

Spending a concentrated time in one area is really inspiring and encourages us to dig deeper. Last year, we spent time learning about insects, this year the plan is a rock and mineral study.


















My desire is to encourage a love of nature in my children. What I discovered was that my children were already interested and amazed with God's beautifully world, and that through their eyes I was reminded what an incredible world we live in!

And by the way, I found an exquisite fiddler beetle... and the children all came to have a look!

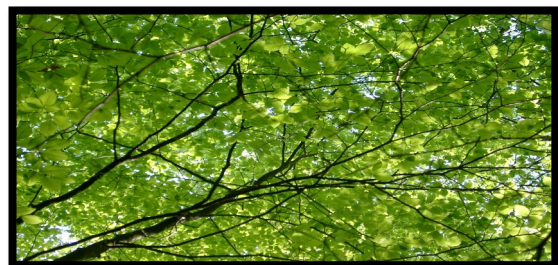
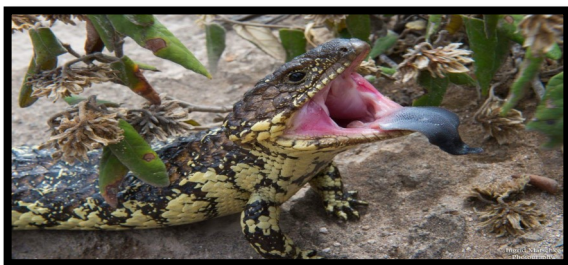
By Jo: Wife, Home-school Mum and Homemaker.

Nature Study in the Backyard Grid

Use the simple ideas in this grid to encourage outdoor exploration this summer.

<p>What birds are visiting your backyard?</p> 	 <p>Search for butterflies.</p>	<p>Could there be a lizard hiding somewhere?</p> 	<p>Step outside. What can you hear?</p> 
<p>Do you have a nocturnal animal in your yard?</p> 	<p>What is the weather like? How hot is it? What clouds are in the sky? What time will the sun be setting? Were your predictions correct?</p>	<p>Smell flowers. Can you see the pollen? What else can you see?</p> 	<p>Look up at the sky at night. What do you see?</p> 
<p>What kind of trees are in your yard? Are they flowering or seeding?</p> 	<p>How many different spiders can you find?</p> 	<p>Watch ants work? What can you tell about their attitude toward work?</p> 	<p>What kind of soil do you have? Is it sandy or like clay?</p> 
<p>Collect seeds, cones and gum nuts to start a collection.</p> 	<p>Collect seeding grass and make an indoor arrangement.</p> 	<p>Journal your sightings or collections.</p> 	<p>Start a feather collection.</p> 

In the Nature Study Guide this month we're investigating:



Summer in my Backyard



Draw summer in your backyard.

Date:

Time:

Temperature:

Describe summer in your backyard.

Summer in my Backyard

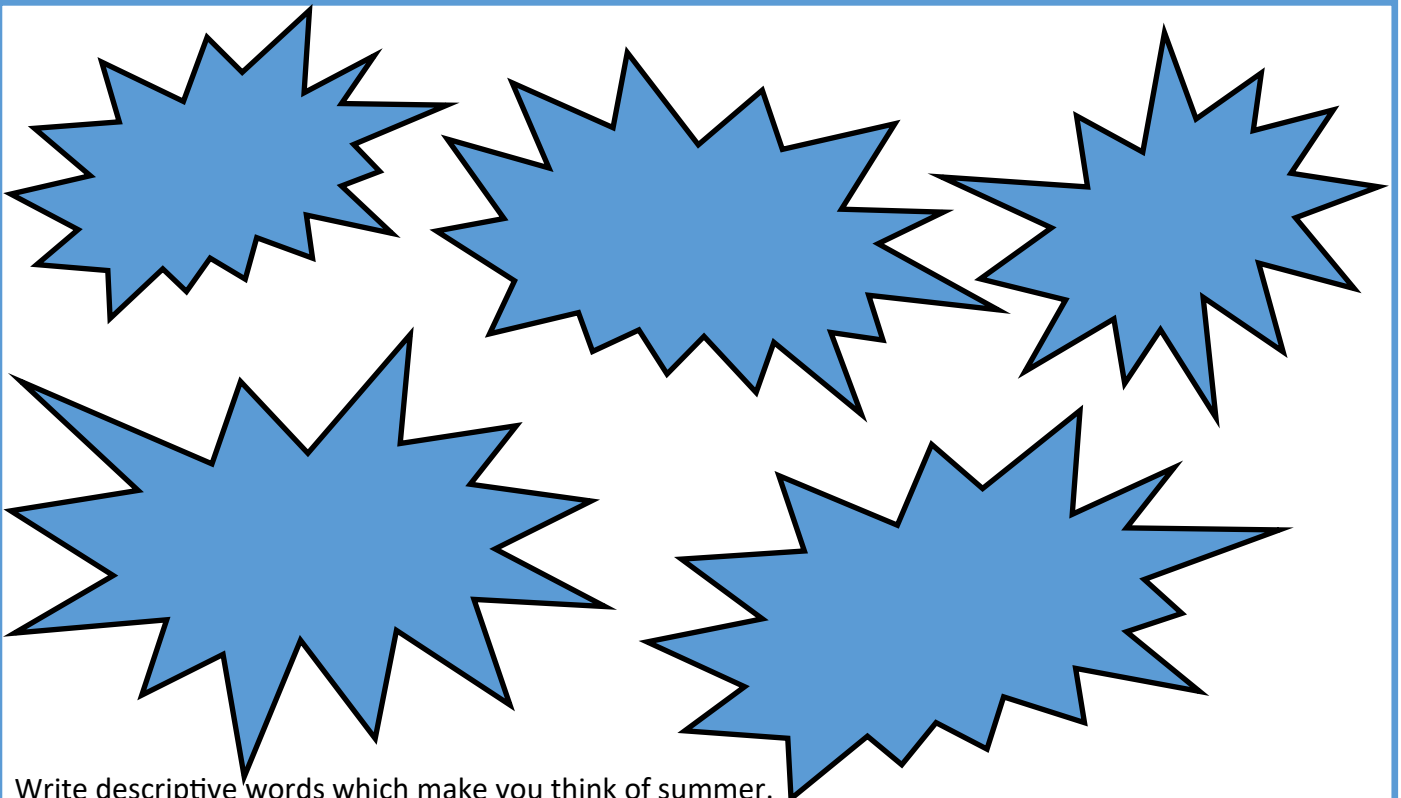


Draw summer in your backyard.

Date:

Time:

Temperature:



Write descriptive words which make you think of summer.

Nature Study Planner



Month:

"Nature is the art of God Eternal." ~ Dante Allighieri

Topics to study:

I need to research:

Places to go:

Things I need:

Library List:

Notes:
