



Nature Days at King Street

by Teacher Jana

“Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature.”

~Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder

I love this quote because it really hits on how the concrete act of interacting with nature literally soaks into



our souls and minds. And boy, did we get our hands dirty at King Street this year! Between our mud pit and kitchen in the backyard, and our first year having school in area parks, we kept you parents busy with baths and laundry.

Outdoor time has always been a part of the King Street philosophy. Kids go outside for 45 minutes a day, no matter the weather. But inspired by the work of Richard Louv, we wanted to see what it would be like to have an entire school day in various local parks so that we could explore different environments than just our backyard. This year we left the walls of our classroom and launched our first ever “Nature Day” once a month. Here’s a summary of what Wednesday adventures we had and what we learned along the way.



We visited four different Seattle Parks (mostly determined by where there are open bathrooms...very important!): Seward Park, Madrona Woods and Beach, Volunteer Park, and Peppi’s Woods.

Children challenged their physical skills. On playgrounds, there was rock wall climbing, zip line zipping (sitting,



standing up, or with a friend!), swing leg-pumping, monkey bar hanging, balancing while bouncing, merry go round pushing, and monster tag imagining. On trees, there was climbing! We climbed on live trees (Western Red Cedars are the best!) and climbed on downed trees and root balls. Children hiked forest trails while carrying all

their own food, water and extra clothes, even up a water tower with more than 100 steps! Children who started with fear, trepidation and insecurity, learned to navigate their ability, push themselves to new limits and ask for help.



We explored, discovered and discussed the elements of the parks around us. How can you tell a Douglas Fir Tree by its unique cone? How did that car get in Madrona Woods? What is good to feed ducks? What things in nature can we pick up and what things do we need to protect? What colors do we see in nature and in different seasons? How do plants grow and what do they need? Where are we on the map? How do different trees feel? What sounds do you hear? Where do eagles live? Children are innately curious, and the natural environment is a rich launching point for any number of conversations or topics of learning. The key is to take time for the questions and follow up with them on the



answers we don't know. It's a great opportunity to learn together!

Children used nature's materials to imagine and play: digging canals and making ponds at the beach, piling up and jumping in leaves, finding and holding bugs and worms from under logs, rock-throwing and stick collecting. Trees were transformed into characters or props for stories and games about ships, an octopus, rockets, or various critters. The challenge here is to give children the time they need to do what they do best: explore!



As this was our first year, we were learning how to do this nature school alongside the kids. The first couple of nature days, we had lots of activities planned and couldn't get through them all. I think we were a little worried about what we would do for 4 whole hours with 15 kids!



So here's my advice for your own nature adventures, from what we learned:

- Nature is so resource rich and intriguing, that little "programming" needs to be done outside of finding a spot that allows for exploration and free-play, and giving them the ample time to do so. Pick parks and places that are kid-friendly, meaning there are places you can be "off-trail", or have multiple short trails to explore, or provide open spaces where they can climb or dig or turn things over or pick things up. We recommend any of the parks we visited, as well as many others (see list).
- Check bathroom availability before you go. Madrona, Volunteer and Seward have year-round bathrooms.
- If it's cold, bring pocket hand-warmers. They fix everything.
- It's not about distance or quantity, it's about realistic goals and quality. Many of you would laugh at how far we "hiked" but to the kids it was a HUGE accomplishment, and to their little feet it was hard work.



- They get hungry faster. Always have food and water.
- Bring layers. Even if it's sunny at your house, it may be freezing in the wind at Seward. Having the right clothes makes a big difference in the success of the adventure.
- You can usually always find a tree to shelter in and read a book, or tell a story, if it starts to pour. But in general, children like nature in the rain as much as nature in the sun.



We hope you have enjoyed Nature Days at King Street as much as we have. Thank you for enrolling your kids, showing up as parent-teachers, and learning alongside us about what works well and doesn't work well. Our biggest hope is that you will be inspired as families to engage with your kids on outdoor adventures of your own, so that it becomes a regular part of your family life and your child's upbringing. We are lucky to live in an urban environment that provides so many opportunities in nature without having to leave the city, or even your neighborhood. May you have a summer full of dirty hands, green knees, muddy boots, and wet pants!



"I say, if your knees aren't green by the end of the day, you ought to re-examine your life."

- Calvin from Calvin and Hobbes





Community Events

University District StreetFair

WHEN: Saturday, May 16, 2015, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

WHERE: University Way N.E.

LINK: www.udistrictstreetfair.org

Nature and Gardening Story Time

WHEN: Saturday, May 16, 2015, 10:30 – 11:15 p.m.

WHERE: Elisabeth C. Miller Library, Center for Urban Horticulture
3501 N.E. 41st St.

LINK: http://depts.washington.edu/hortlib/calendar/story_time.shtml

Madrona Mayfair

WHEN: Saturday, May 16, 2015, 9:30 am - 1:00 pm

WHERE: Madrona Playground

LINK: <http://madronaseattle.com/>

Exploring Tidepool Life

WHEN: Sunday, May 17, 2015, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

WHERE: Carkeek Park, 950 N.W. Carkeek Park Road

LINK: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/environment/files/Spring.pdf>

17th of May Festival: Syttende Mai

WHEN: Sunday, May 17, 2015, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

WHERE: Ballard Neighborhood

LINK: www.17thofmay.org

Northwest Folklife Festival

WHEN: Saturday, May 23, 2015, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.

WHERE: Seattle Center, 305 Harrison St.

LINK: <http://www.nwfolklife.org/festival2015/>

Spirit of Indigenous People Festival

WHEN: Saturday, May 30, 11:30 p.m. – Sunday, May 31, 2015, 5 a.m.

WHERE: Seattle Center Armory, 305 Harrison St.

LINK: <http://www.sihb.org/spirit-indigenous-people/>

Touch-a-Truck

WHEN: Sunday, May 31, 2015, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

WHERE: Magnuson Park, 7400 Sand Point Way N.E.

LINK: https://www.jrleagueseattle.org/?nd=2015_touch_a_truck

Tea and Crumpet Party

WHEN: Sunday, May 31, 2015, 2 – 4 p.m.

WHERE: Queen Bee Café, 2200 E. Madison St.

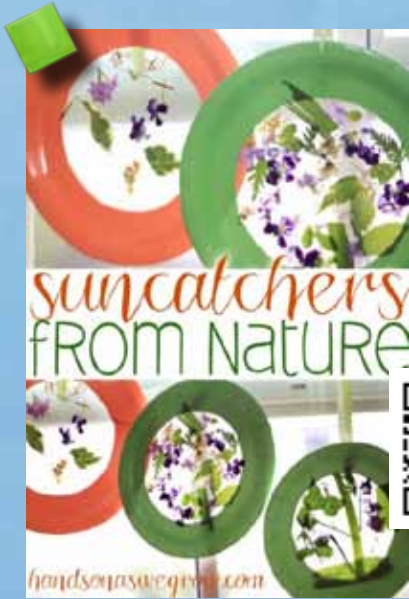
LINK: www.queenbeecafe.com

June 4 is the first Thursday of the month, and most museums are FREE!

Get ready for our summer playdates at local parks! Chat and play with your KSCP friends, and welcome our new families.



MAY ART INSPIRATION

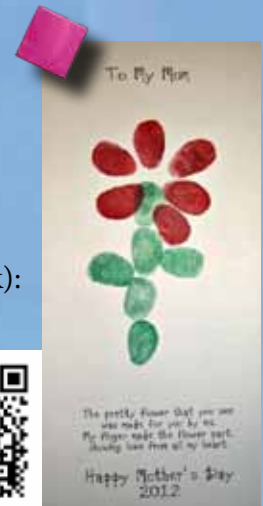


- Materials Needed:
- Paper plate
 - scissors
 - contact paper
 - ribbon
 - scavenged items from a nature walk



This link has lots of ideas for kid created gifts for mom, but they are easily adaptable for dads, grandparents, friends...

- Materials Needed (for the flowerprint bookmark):
- 2 colors of paint or ink pads
 - paper cut to size
 - contact paper (to laminate)
 - ribbon



This is more complex than I normally include, but it is so cute and would make a fun family activity.

- Materials Needed:
- 2 terra cotta pots & 1 saucer
 - spray paint (for the inside of the pot)
 - super strong craft glue (E600)
 - Porch & Patio paint (found at Michael's)
 - Clear UV protectant spray paint
 - Paint brushes and a steady hand

