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Okemos Nursery School kids want nature in their lives.

Earth 'Daily'

Among other schools, I am a specialist teacher on Michigan nature/wildlife topics at Go Like the Wind Montessori in Whitmore Lake. I visit the school one Wednesday each month through the school year, often with live specimens in tow. Much of the content revolves around observable natural phenomena that occur through the season at hand. The information gained can then be implemented immediately by the students, helping them to become more natural diversity-aware when they step outdoors.

For the April appointment I visited three primary classrooms and one lower elementary classroom before finishing with the upper elementary students. Upon the final lesson's conclusion, the kids prepared to head to the cafeteria for lunch while I packed my things to leave.

It was then that one of the students passed me and said, "Happy Earth Day, Mr. Jim!"

I looked up, surprised. "Is it Earth Day?" I asked.

The student laughed, rolled her eyes, and replied, "Yes! Of all people how can *you* not know that?" Then she was out the door.

The lapse wasn't surprising given a couple of realities.

First of all, our schedule is busier in April than in any other month of the school year. Be it weekday or weekend, one or both of us has a nature/wildlife educational program on the docket. Many require our driving to venues in the very furthest reaches of the Lower Peninsula. The intensity demands that we focus on each day's commitment before addressing anything in the future; sometimes, yes, even what's happening the following day. Then, of course, when home at the nature center, zookeeping, grounds maintenance and invasive plant removal require still more time and attention. The days tend to blur together around here.

Secondly, in step with the very guidelines that Earth Day happens to promote, Carol and I built a life together in which we are ever-conscious of the environmental impact of our actions, personally and

professionally. Indeed, the whole concept of an Earth ‘Day’ is rendered moot when you strive to live *every* day like it’s Earth Day.

Consideration is given to minimize our environmental impact in nearly everything that we undertake around our household, our property, our neighborhood, and beyond. What foods we eat, what cars we drive, how thoroughly we recycle, and how consciously we curtail our electricity usage covers just a portion of it. To do what’s right for the environment has become so ingrained we never view these decisions as ‘onerous,’ even when they require more time/effort than so many more expedient but less environmentally-sound alternatives. And still, there is room for improvement.

We can’t help but look around and notice that very few in our consumption-oriented society share the same motivation, even when they have the time. Scientists show us the numbers, the physical results, and imminent projections, but the guidelines they recommend to mitigate planetary illnesses of our making are brushed aside amid a torrent of largely corporate-driven distractions.



The spiral of degradation seems to be dismissed as ‘inevitable’ by a growing legion of defeatists; as if you are powerless, as if your decisions have no bearing on the trends. If citizens fail to acknowledge that their personal daily choices and actions contribute to these environmental crises, how can they be expected to muster the energy to rise from their states of apathy and engage in the counter-actions necessary to heal them?

For better or worse, people generally resist changing their ways when merely told by someone else that they should. However, in this instance, when presented the opportunity to personally experience life in all its wondrous diversity, an epiphany is likely pending: the realization that they live *among* the diversity, not apart from it. They are thus apt to develop their own impetus to conscientiously live, so as to maintain this rare planet’s systems that make diversity-of-life on it possible.

Native American and environmental ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer authored the bestseller, *Braiding Sweetgrass* in 2013. With over two million copies sold, the book and its message - the imperative to live sustainably - is still widely-read today. In a 2024 interview upon the release of her latest book, *The Serviceberry*, she states that she “wants to help people fall in love with the world again.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/nov/16/weve-become-distrustful-of-each-other-braiding-sweetgrass-author-robin-wall-kimmerer-on-trump-rural-america-and-resistance>

By ‘the world’ she is referring to the world of nature. The addition of ‘again’ implies that each of us once harbored a love for the Earth, yet, it had somehow been subverted, lost, or taken from us relatively early in the timeline of our lives.

Please consider adding both publications to your reading list.

Renowned architect, Frank Lloyd Wright is arguably (<https://keiranmurphy.com/wright-and-nature/>) credited with the quote:

Study nature. Love nature. Stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

Authentic to Wright or not, it is an adage worth heeding regardless of origin. When I read the concise sentences I am prompted to reflect on how each of them is manifest in my own life and circumstances:

first, as a young boy in a big city who harbored a personal thrill in discovering and observing wild creatures, great and small; then ultimately, as an adult who works to inculcate a similar sense of connectedness in others. Exposure presents a pathway with the potential - if followed - to instill or perhaps 'reclaim' positive attitudes toward nature; more broadly, then, toward a sense of responsibility for the health of the environment. Carol and I have been implementing this mission on our own terms for thirty-nine years under the professional moniker, Nature Discovery.

We believe that every child, born of this Earth, harbors an innate affinity to their fellow Earthlings - to life forms beyond the human ones; and further, that a child's curiosity toward the natural world of which they find themselves a part, is purely inherent.

What if, through a child's journey to maturity, opportunities are regularly - even systematically - provided by parents and educators which aim to break the child free from our sheltering, isolating walls and invite them out among the immediate world of local natural diversity. What if lessons and activities supported a child's inherent curiosity about other life forms rather than invalidate it through omission? Unfortunately, for the students and for the planet the latter is the broad status quo.



I expounded on the contents of such a natural science 'educational utopia' in a column that opens the May 2025 newsletter entitled *Mainstreamed Michigan Wildlife Education*:
<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20May25.pdf>

Wright's quote could well be the curriculum's mantra; words by which to live while letting live; words by which to sustain qualities of life on multiple levels – yours, future generations', Earth's.

–Jim McGrath

Nature Discovery at Williamston Farm & Artisan Market

Nature Discovery interactive Michigan Wildlife Exhibits are back at Williamston Farm & Artisan Market in 2026, one Sunday each month, 10am to 2pm, between May and September.



The docket...

- Sunday, May 17: Guided McCormick Park Birding Walk (9:40am), Michigan Frogs
- Sunday, June 7: Michigan Salamanders, Giant Silk Moths
- Sunday, July 5: Michigan Reptiles & Amphibians Sampler
- Sunday, August 9: Michigan Snakes
- Sunday, September 6: Michigan Turtles

Consider a donation to the market by sponsoring our exhibit on one of these dates. Details at...
<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/nature-discover-at-the-market>

Nature Discovery

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Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment

*Suggested Minimum
Donation: \$5/person/hr*

The sky's the limit for natural science learning here – with a Michigan twist! Adults, couples and individual families are welcome to schedule an intimate indoor or outdoor visit to what we call “The Biggest Little Nature Center in Michigan,” and “Home to the Largest Zoo of Michigan-native Reptiles and Amphibians.” The unique, in-person, hands-on experiences here are unrivaled at any other nature center or zoo! We will bring snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders out of tanks to interact with adults or students of any age or grade-level.

Identify and feed “the grand slam of Michigan turtles” - all ten species native to our state! Meet, pet and feed “Milberta”, our always hungry Red-footed tortoise.

Handle any or all of Michigan’s three species of garter snakes while learning how to tell them apart, then watch them gobble up worms and frogs. Hold or “wear” a gentle 6-foot Black Ratsnake – the largest in the state!

Many more snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders to identify and feed. Identify birds at the feeders. Take a guided walk on our trails to identify spring birds by their songs.

Make a special evening appointment to check out our ponds, loud with breeding tree frogs, then search for glowworms (firefly larvae) on the trail sides after dark. Contact us for additional information or to schedule a day and time.



Spotlight Tree Frogs vocalizing on our vernal ponds.

Ask about special guided birding outings and nature walks at a natural area of your or our choosing!

Around the State in May

- ❖ Sunday, May 3: 11am-1pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Edgewood Church, East Lansing.
- ❖ Sunday, May 17: 10am-2pm. MI Frogs Exhibit; Williamston Farm & Artisan Market, Williamston.
- ❖ Saturday, May 23: 1-3pm. MI Turtles Exhibit; Turtlefest, Elberta.



We wish to express our gratitude the many supporters of our mission over the years, in particular our most recent donors. Thank you!

*Maria DeWitt
Will Gold
Grand River Bait & Tackle
Jan Heminger
Olivia Killips
Gregg & Tiller-Landick
Lauren Leaman
Nora Nanzer*

A Cowbird nestling and egg occupy the Cardinal nest outside our kitchen window.



Join Our Volunteer Invasives Control Team

High school thru adult volunteers are welcome and appreciated now through summer to assist in pulling/cutting a number of alien invasive species that are overtaking our woodlands. Just contact us to set up an initial appointment for orientation.

Links for Our Readers' Perusal

https://open.substack.com/pub/heathercoxrichardson/p/may-14-2026?r=dpj5a&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/15052026/trump-administration-bans-federal-land-bison-grazing/>

https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/14/climate/trump-coal-plants-cost.html?campaign_id=54&emc=edit_clim_20260514&instance_id=175604&nl=climate-forward®i_id=97652655&segment_id=219858&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/ridwell-trashie-review/>

–JM

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This newsletter thoughtfully and laboriously composed, written, and edited with no artificial input.

The next generation would be justified in looking back at us and asking, “What were you thinking? Couldn’t you hear what the scientists were saying? Couldn’t you hear what Mother Nature was screaming at you?” – Al Gore

I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act like you would in a crisis. I want you to act like your house is on fire, because it is. – Greta Thunberg

The personal actions that cut climate pollution fast are to go flight-, car-, and meat-free. Start with the one that feels most feasible for you; if you can’t totally go without, aim to cut your consumption today at least in half. – Kimberly Nicholas, Under the Sky We Make

What if we had storytelling mechanisms that said it is important that you know about the well-being of wildlife in your neighborhood? – Robin Wall Kimmerer

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you. – Frank Lloyd Wright



Statewideindivisiblemi.com



Earth911.com



insideclimatenews.org

Become a fan of *Nature Discovery* on Facebook!

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