



About Annie's BIG Nature Lesson

Annie's BIG Nature Lesson is an environmental education program that brings children, parents, and teachers into the natural world for learning. This five consecutive day study trip is conducted at community nature centers and invites participants to immerse themselves in exploration of different habitats, learn with experts on site, observe and write for an hour each day, and make a positive difference through stewardship projects.

The Mission

- To immerse children, teachers, and parents in the beauty and wonder of the natural world
- To engage in authentic scientific investigations by observing the local ecology, drawing, and writing
- To nurture citizens who value and protect natural resources
- To build school and community partnerships that inspire responsible environmental stewardship

Ann Mason

Annie's BIG Nature Lesson is named in honor of Ann Mason, environmentalist from Clinton County, Michigan, who devoted her life to taking care of the environment and educating the public about their responsibility for stewardship of the earth.

Dahlem offers nine Naturalist-led Lessons, plus stewardship service project ideas for teachers to select from for their ABNL week at Dahlem, Jackson's Nature Place. Teachers coordinate with the Naturalist to choose five subjects (one program per morning) and one stewardship service project appropriate to season and availability.

- **Aquatic Studies** (pond and stream) - use nets, macroinvertebrate guides, discuss what aquatic insects tell us about water quality. If available, a trained volunteer will teach Enviro-Scape surface water lesson in place of teacher lead lesson.
- **Bird Study** - Identification (size, color, beak and feet, call, flight pattern, diet, predator/prey, habitat, etc.). Bird Beak Activity; use various tools to represent different bird beaks to determine bird's diet (seeds, insects, meat/animals, aquatic, plants, etc.). Discuss and observe real bird nests (materials, structure, habitat, etc.), and then students will participate in nest building and forging for food simulation. Students will receive instructions and use binoculars on their teacher lead birding hike. Ideal program for fall and spring migration and winter seasons.
- **Debris Shelter Building** - why, when, where, how, and have students in teams of 5 or 6 to build debris shelter in the woodland habitat. Engineering
- **Discovery Hike** - to orient students, teachers and chaperones to Dahlem's many trails and grounds. Naturalist will lead teaching moments while on the trail walk, and suggest areas for weekly activities and observation spots. *Recommend Monday morning.*

- **Insects** (Fall lesson) - discuss insect parts and functions, go on an Insect Safari field study activity; use insect identification key, field nets, bug boxes and field guides. Beneficial and harmful insects. Migration, hibernation, adaptation.
- **Map and Compass Lesson** - students will receive basic instructions on how to use a compass and how to pace, then will practice these lessons. Basic mapping instructions will support teacher lead lesson; students make a map in their journals of a selected site on Dahlem property (woodland, grassland, wetland, Natural Playscape, garden area or some other location). Could also make a 'sound' map.
- **Michigan Mammal Skins & Skulls and Adaption Study** in Dahlem's Dutcher classroom - students participate in Michigan Mammal Exploration hands-on activity. Teacher lead skull study, writing and drawing at our Jackson Rotary Pavilion.
- **Plant Life & Soil** - native vs. non-native, hike to different habitats to take soil core samples and compare differences, what organic matter make up top- and sub-soils. What is erosion? Who and what are nature's recyclers?
- **Stewardship Service Project** - pulling garlic mustard reinforces the importance of removing non-native invasive plants, trail trimming to maintain trail width, enlarge Natural Playscape area, prepare trail route and skit areas for Goblin Walks event, and clear area around and wash trail signs and benches. Other projects may become available as needed.
- **Tree & Plant Study** - identification, coniferous and deciduous, exploring Monocotous and Dichotimous keys, native vs. non-native, importance of trees and plants (renewable resource, oxygen, supports wildlife habitats, ecosystem, food, medicinal, and so much more!). Trail walk to use mono-dicot keys to locate different tree species, observe characteristics, and share interesting facts (i.e. boiling cedar greens makes a tea high in vitamin C to cure scurvy).

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