



# Let's GO Read 2014

*A Project Get Outdoors Reading Program*



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*The outdoors has so many benefits for all ages. However, there are those times when it just doesn't work to do a full program outside. For these situations, try out the reading program and connect with nature through books!*

## Project Get Outdoors Reading Program

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### An Introduction

Project GO is dedicated to the kids it serves. Our primary goal is to connect children with nature, and we understand that all children have different learning preferences and interests. This reading program, Let's GO Read, allows the children who love reading and the artists who love crafts to connect with nature through their passions. Even if some children aren't bookworms or artsy types, experiencing other forms of learning are always beneficial!

This program is not only a great addition to explore diverse ways of connecting with nature, but it's a wonderful way to prepare for unexpected weather or for quieter, reflective days. Too cold to go outside? Have a reading program. Was there a big event that day for the kids? The reading program will help create a quieter more focused classroom. There is no limit to how to use this program – adapt it to what works for you!

### Recommendations for Use

This program is designed with the childcare facilitator in mind. It is meant as a complement to another program – it's up to you to choose how often you want to use it. Including nature into programming can take a little planning preparation, but it certainly does not have to be difficult. Whether it's including a reading topic in Project GO outings, a nature topic in library programs such as Storytime, or for daycare facilities wanting to expand on their own programming, nature books are great additions.

There are many opportunities to get many ages involved. Whether it's as a participant, a project assistant, a planning master, or a volunteer reader, there's something for everyone. While most of these books are aged for pre-school to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, older children can get involved by being your assistants.

This program is not an all-encompassing planning tool. This is more or less to give ideas on adapting your own reading program. Feel free to ask a local librarian for assistance in selecting books in your region. You can adapt the readings to account for older audiences, or maybe a type of youth book club might be the right format for you. The only limitation is your imagination!

## Program Outline By Season

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### Winter

Winter in Minnesota is long and cold, but it doesn't have to be the end of outdoor programming or incorporating nature! Winter is a wonderful time for reflection, on cold days, or to burn off energy on warmer ones.

#### Animal Adaptation

##### *List of Books*

Snow Rabbit, Spring Rabbit by Il Sung Na  
Over and Under the Snow by Kate Messner  
Animals in Winter by Martha E.H. Rustad

##### *Activity Ideas*

**Adaptation Bingo:** Create a bingo sheet using winter adaptations that local animals have – camouflage, growing thick fur, hibernating, hiding and gathering food. You could even pick one specific animal to feature and list the many ways they survive winter as the bingo spaces.

**Cold Water Test:** A fun science experiment to see what adaptations work better. You will need a bowl of ice water, shortening (Crisco works good), and rubber gloves. The children will find out what protects them best from cold – see how fast their hand gets cold bare, covered in shortening, and with a rubber glove on. Talk about how important an extra layer can be, and how fat (and eating) is important for winter animals. (See Appendix A for example activity sheet)

**Which is Warmer?:** A more advanced adaptation of the cold water test. Use a thermometer to see how different types of covering would best protect an animal. Use a bowl of ice water, roll of felt, large feathers, fur, plastic, and cotton. Cover the bowl in turn with each covering, and place the thermometer on top to take its temperature. Be creative and use other materials you might have around. Don't have a thermometer? See if you can tell by using your hand. (See Appendix A for example activity sheet)

#### Recreation

##### *List of Books*

Ten on the Sled by Kim Norman  
Red Sled by Patricia Thomas  
Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

##### *Activity Ideas*

**Boot Hockey:** Play boot hockey in a driveway, or yard. Be creative with sticks if you don't have real ones around (rulers, sticks, dowels), or ask a local school if they will lend theirs. If it's too cold, play indoors in an open room!

**Ice or boot skating:** Go to your local ice skating rink and have fun! Ask if parents have ice skates, or just use boots to slide around. Bring a couple sleds for slipping around in. Are there hockey fans? Use some sticks and a pinecone for a fun hockey imitation. (Caution: indoor rinks may not allow boot skating)

**Make a sled:** Use popsicle sticks or twigs to craft miniature sleds. Let the children decorate with paint or markers. Need: some type of glue, twigs or Popsicle sticks, coloring utensils. For an extra bonus, bring in a tub of snow and shape a hill out of it for the children to slide their mini sleds down. (See Appendix A for an example)

**Snowshoe Hike:** This takes a bit of outreach, and possible funding coordination, but is well worth it! Ask a local nature center, state park, outfitter, or even University if they have snowshoes they can lend or if they give snowshoe tours.

## Winter Adventures

### *List of Books*

The Mitten by Jan Brett

Stranger in the Woods by Carl R. Sams

Owl's Winter Rescue by Anita Loughrey

Someone Walks By: The Wonders of Winter Wildlife by Polly Carlson-Voiles

### *Activity Ideas*

**Paint the snow:** Fill spray bottles with colored water and bring the kids outside to spray the snow. Ask parents to donate a few spray bottles or use the cheap traveling kind in dollar sections. Need: spray bottles, food coloring or washable paints to color water, snow. (Hint: add vinegar to the water to prevent spray from freezing for extended periods outside. Adding baking soda to their creation will make it bubble too). For an indoor adaption, bring a couple large tubs of snow inside – this is a great way to skip the bottles and just use paint and brushes to paint the snow.

**Snowpeople creations:** A great activity to burn winter energy – bring the kids outside to make snowpeople! To add a level of difficulty, assign snow creations like specific animals or people. For an indoor adaption. Bring in a couple buckets of snow and have the kids create mini creations.

**Create a Story:** For older audiences, have them create a story about their favorite winter animal. If you have younger children, create your own story about an animal and have the children act it out – i.e. a squirrel gathering acorns, hiding them, making a warm den, snuggling in their den.

**Make an Igloo:** Another molding activity (great for motor skills!), have the kids build habitats. Explain many animals live under the snow and use it as insulation to keep warm (mice, voles, shrews). You can create small igloos outside when the snow is sticky. For unreliable snow, use square ice cube molds and have the children stack them indoors. Another fun adaption: use food coloring in the ice cube molds to have colored igloo cubes!

## Snowflakes

### *List of Books*

No Two Alike by Keith Baker

Mine, All Mine! by Claire Hawcock

Snowflakes by Martha E.H. Rustad

### *Activity Ideas*

**Make a Snowglobe:** Have the kids make their own snowglobe with jars, and glitter. Ask parents to collect jars (recycled food jars are always good! Baby food, salsa, and jelly jars are all great!). Need: small glass jar, water, fake snow or glitter. To make the glitter float better, add some liquid glycerin or light corn syrup. Spice it up with small plastic figurines to glue to the lids. You can either prepare the lids beforehand or for older audiences, help them glue it themselves (hot glue or superglue work well). (See Appendix A)

**Snowflake making:** Use Epsom salt and water to paint snowflakes onto dark colored paper. Need: Epsom Salts, boiling water, dark colored paper. Mix equal parts boiling water and Epsom Salts until salt dissolves completely, then let cool. Have the children paint snowflakes onto dark paper. You can have the children color a winter scene on the paper before with colored pencils or crayons and then paint over it with the Epsom Salts paint for a snowfall effect. For younger audiences, pre-print snowflakes onto paper.

**Snowflake Hanger:** Make beautiful snowflake hangers to suspend from windows! Need: paper snowflakes, cotton balls, string, plastic needle (or something safe to thread string through cotton balls). Thread the string through holes already in the snowflake and alternate with cotton balls to create a pattern. For younger audiences, pre-cut the snowflakes before the activity and have the children color them instead. (See Appendix A)

## Tracks

### *List of Books*

Who's Been Here? by Fran Hodgkins

Moose Tracks by Karma Wilson

How to Be a Nature Detective by Millicent Selsam

### *Activity Ideas*

**Animal Track Hunting Hike:** There are many ways to do this activity to fit your audience. Go all out and make an animal track trunk equipped with a track field guide, binoculars, and magnifying glasses. Create a game out of it and make a scavenger or bingo sheet with specific tracks to find! Make it easy and prepare the hunt beforehand – map out the route before the outing and flag the tracks you find with a bright bandana or by putting a square of sticks around the track for children to easily identify on the hike.

**Animal Tracks Twister:** This requires a bit of prep work, but is a fun game for learning tracks. Need: track patterns, 16 sheets of craft foam (9"x12") – 4 colors are needed and 4 pieces each, permanent marker, scissors, packaging tape, thick cardstock. Print stencils provided by <http://www.nwf.org/kids/family-fun/crafts/animal-tracks-twister-game.aspx>, onto thick cardstock, or make your own local animal track. Cutout shapes to outline onto the craft foam (4 of each track), color in with permanent marker, and then tape the backs together with packaging tape. For the spinner, print the spinner sheet from the website (or make your own) onto thick cardstock and label one color to each track in each hand/foot section. Cut a spinner out of thick cardstock and use a rounded fastener to attach to spinner sheet. A bit of a process, but absolutely adaptable and fun for all! (See Appendix A)

**Animal Tracks Stencil:** For younger audiences, cutout track shapes to use as stencils that children can trace onto paper. Prepare the stencils beforehand by cutting the tracks from thick material (foam, stencil paper, recycled plastic folders, thick cardstock or cardboard). Supply plenty of paper and coloring utensil for the kids to make their own tracks! (See Appendix A)

## All About Winter

### *List of Books*

Under My Hood I Have a Hat by Karla Kuskin

If It's Snowy and You Know It, Clap Your Paws! by Kim Norman

Winter by Ann Herriges

### *Activity Ideas*

**Paper Plate Crafts:** You can make so many fun crafts from paper plates. For this activity make a reindeer, snowperson, or Santa! (Hint: have precut shapes for younger audiences). *Reindeer:* one paper plate, paper, brown coloring utensil, red pom pom, glue, scissors. Color the paper plate brown – depending on the shape you want either bend two sides to make a triangle (with one rounded end), or leave as circle. For antlers you can trace hands and cut them out or you can use branched twigs. Cutout ears and color them brown (help children with precut ears if needed). Glue on pom pom for nose and the antlers and ears. You can either make the eyes out of the paper or googly eyes, or cut holes for the eyes and glue a dowel to the plate to make a mask! *Snowman:* You can leave the plate white or glue on cotton balls on the plate. If you leave it white use paint or a coloring utensil to draw on eyes, rosy cheeks, and the mouth. Cutout a carrot-looking nose and color it orange. Add a hat for fun! You can also cutout the eyes and glue on a dowel to make this a mask. *Santa:* leave a circle in the middle big enough for two eyes and a nose, color it a skin color. Cutout a Santa-hat shape and color it red with a white lining on the bottom. Use a red pom pom for a nose. Glue on the nose and hat first, and for the rest of the plate glue on cotton balls (use one cotton ball for the hat tip!). This can also be made into a mask by cutting out circles for eyes! (See Appendix A)

**Snowperson Ornament:** Create a cute ornaments for the parents! Need: popsicle or actual sticks, glue, markers, felt or ribbon. Optional: buttons or googly eyes. You can use actual sticks or popsicle sticks for the main body (just make sure the sticks are thick enough). There's lots of different ways to dress the snowperson up. Draw on buttons or use real buttons; for eyes use googly eyes or paint/markers; draw on a nose or cut from orange felt; make a hat out of felt or paper; use felt or ribbon for a scarf and to hang the snowperson from; add small trigs for arms; cutout little gloves. The possibilities are boundless! If you have younger audiences keep it simple with paint or markers, or you might want to precut some of the other adornments. (See Appendix A)

**Winter Sensory Bin:** This is a great activity for young ones. Fill a bin with cotton balls, bells, pom poms, rice, glass beads, plastic snowflakes, and any winter figurines, plenty of cups, scoops, and spoons for sorting. This activity can be adapted to whatever materials you have. For older audiences great a mystery bucket! Fill multiple bowls or buckets with things you would find outside in the winter, blindfold the children, and have them stick their hands in the bucket and guess what it is! Mystery bucket ideas: snow, sticks, pinecones or pine needles, a piece of animal fur, dried leaves, and seeds.



## Spring

Spring is a great time to learn about all the intricate details of the growth and rebirth of nature. When the weather is still unpredictable, and when kids' energies can be heightened, it's great to pair a book with a nature activity!

### Flowers & Gardening

#### *List of Books*

Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert

Fran's Flower by Lisa Bruce

Flowers by Rebecca Stromstad Glaser

Fletcher and the Springtime Blossoms by Julia Rawlinson

#### *Activity Ideas*

**Plant a plant:** This is a fun activity for kids to see how plants grow and what they need to survive. There are many ways to adapt this – as a group activity with one larger plant, each child gets there plant, using a seed versus a sprout, flower vs edible. It can be fun to plant herbs and use children's sensory to touch, smell, and taste. Seed libraries are a great way to get free seeds!

**Flower Hike:** Look for all the colors of a rainbow in a flower hike! Walk your local neighborhood natural area to and have the children find different colors. For older children, have them find different species of flowers!

**Nutritious Creations:** Make art out of healthy snacks! Make a butterfly out of apple slices, celery, and pretzel sticks. Make a worm out of bananas, carrots, and blueberries. Let the children be the art directors and have them make their own creations! (See Appendix B for examples)

**Flower Art:** Use flowers to make prints or to use as art pieces! You can have the children collect their own flowers to use or collect flowers beforehand. The kids can either use them to do rubbings on paper or to use the petals and stems to glue onto paper. Don't have time to collect flowers? Ask your local flower shop if they have any they will be throwing out. Spending time with the senses can be an added bonus – touching and smelling the different types of flowers!

### Birds & Nests

#### *List of Books*

Are You My Mother? by P.D. Eastman  
Flap Your Wings by P.D. Eastman  
Whose Nest is This? by Heidi Roemer

#### *Activity Ideas*

**Bird ID Game:** There are quite a few games you can play doing bird identification, both challenging and easy. This source from Audubon has great ideas: <http://www.houstonaudubon.org/html/FWbirdidgame.pdf>. One game is a sort of memory game. This requires some prep work, but is a fun game for learning birds. You will need to gather some pictures of local birds of your choice and have the ability to print them (you can do as many birds as you'd like). Each bird needs two sets of pictures, one picture will be a large detailed image of the bird, the other picture will have that same bird plus two similar looking birds on the page as well. The main large pictures should be hung at eye level and the other pictures should be on a table ready for them to choose the right bird. The children will need to look at the picture hanging up and identify which bird out of the 3 on the table is the same as the large image. It is easier to give children items to place on the correct bird (stones, seeds, paperclips). To make this an outside activity, tape the birds to trees or stakes and set the identification table a few feet away – have them use binoculars to identify the bird!

**Go on a Bird Hike:** Go on a walk around the neighborhood or your favorite park and look for birds! Bring blindfolds and have the children sit at a park and see how many bird songs they hear. Count the number of birds or the number of species!

**Make a Nest:** Collect natural materials outside, either beforehand or with the children. Things like small twigs, grass, leaves, paper strips. This is not an easy task even for older children, but it gives them a sense of how hard birds work to make theirs. To make it easier you can have them use modeling clay to shape the nest and then stick the materials in it. For younger audiences, use just use Play-doh or clay to make the whole nest and eggs. You can also provide an outline of a bird in a nest and have children glue in the nest materials and color in the birds (provide feathers for an added bonus). For an extra activity, provide real birds nest materials. Birds love soft materials like moss, pet fur, hair, yarn or string, pieces of cloth. You can put them in a basket outside and go out later in the year to look for “your bird nests” in the area.

### Baby Animals

#### *List of Books*

Lost in the Woods by Carl R. Sams  
Over in the Forest by Marianne Collins Berkes  
National Geographic Kids Looks & Learn: Baby Animals

#### *Activity Ideas*

**Animal Yoga:** Yoga has lots of benefits for children and alike. Either make up your own animals and moves or you can find some at this website: <http://www.kidsyogastories.com/kids-yoga-poses/> (hint: feel free to make up your own names to the poses).

**Color with Nature:** Have the children pick an animal to decorate with nature’s loose parts! You can provide animal outlines for them or for older children allow them to create their own. You can have the children collect their own materials outside, or have a few containers of option inside. Material ideas: dirt, sand, grass moss, flowers, leaves, bark, seeds, sticks. Use these materials to glue into animal shapes.

**Animal Taste Game:** Have children guess what animals might eat a certain food. For this game, the children should be blindfolded or the food in a opaque container so they cannot be seen (put a thin cloth over the opening to hide the food but still allow for smelling). The kids will smell the mystery food, guess what it is, and explain what animal might eat it. To make it easier have animal pictures laid out so they only have to match the smell with the animal picture. Examples: sunflower seeds to birds, carrot to rabbits, honey and bears, grass and deer (note: many foods have more than one animal that eats it – encourage kids to be creative with their guesses).

**Visit a Local Farm:** This fun field trip idea has many benefits for children including finding out where their food comes from. If you have a local farmer friend or a farmer active in the community, ask if you could take a field trip out to the farm to see the spring babies. Don’t have the resources for a field trip? Ask if the farmer can bring an animal or two out to you! If you are near a college that houses animals, ask a professor to make it part of a class!

## Springtime

### *List of Books*

Mouse's First Spring by Lauren Thompson  
Spring Is Here! by Will Hillenbrand  
Everything Spring by Jill Esbaum  
999 Frogs Wake Up by Ken Kimura  
Just a Kite by Mercer Mayer

### *Activity Ideas*

**Kite Making:** Make a kite on a windy day! Materials: one piece of paper per child, ruler, pencil, yard/string, stapler, and a hole punch (or make your own holes with scissors). Have the children decorate their piece of paper first. Fold the paper in half (hamburger-style), along the fold, mark off 2.5 inches (pt A) and 3.5 inches (pt B). Take the two nearest corners and bend (without creasing them) to pt A and staple. At pt B make a hole to loop the string through. Make sure the string is long enough for a child to fly the kite into the air. After the string is firmly tied, send the children out to run like the wind! Check out these instructions for picture guides: <http://betterinbulk.net/2010/03/kite-directions-for-preschool.html>. (See Appendix B)

**Butterfly Creation:** Turn the children into butterflies! For this activity you might want to save the reading until after the wings are made. Materials: large paper piece for each child (24"x36" works good), paint, pencil, scissors, string regular paper, 2 pipe cleaners per child. Fold the piece of paper in half (hamburger-style) and on one side draw one butterfly wing outline. Open the paper so the outline is facing the table, and have the children drop paint speckles on one half. After the decorating is finished, fold the paper so a mirror image is created from the speckled half. Let it dry. Start making the antennae! Cut a band sized to the child's head and staple the ends together. Tie a pipe cleaner to two sides to make antennae, and curl the ends. This would be a good time for a book while the wings dry. Poke 4 holes in the wings spaced out to make string loops to go around the child's shoulder. Tie string through the holes so the children can play dress up with the wings (if the wings do not dry, tell the children it's for at-home dress-up). (See Appendix C)

**Raise a Monarch:** This is a fun on-going classroom activity. Monarchs are becoming endangered due to many reasons. Many die before reaching adulthood. Rearing Monarchs from their egg stage can actually increase the chances of them surviving into adulthood than from growing in the wild. Here's an excellent guide to show you what you need and how to properly rear a butterfly: [www.mymonarchguide.com/2007/05/raising-caterpillars.html](http://www.mymonarchguide.com/2007/05/raising-caterpillars.html). Caution: do not order eggs online, find the egg outside on a milkweed plant. Buying from online sellers encourages bad behavior and some organizations are actually detrimental to Monarch health.

**Spring Scavenger Hunt:** There are so many magical things to look for in the spring. Make a list of fun spring nature finds and walk through a local natural space to track them down! To make it easier, identify a route beforehand and mark your cool finds with bandanas so the children can easily find them on the walk.



## Summer

What a wonderful time to enjoy the outdoors, with plenty of recreational opportunities and free time! However, on those dangerously hot days or those lazy summer evenings, a book can be great!

### Lakes & Ponds

#### *List of Books*

Carl's Summer Vacation by Alexandra Day  
One Dog Canoe by Mary Casanova  
Up the Creek by Nicholas Oldland  
The Pout-Pout Fish by Deborah Diesen

#### *Activity Ideas*

**Water Wall:** This project requires a DIY mind frame and some building skills; however, it is one of children's favorites and also an excellent learning tool. Materials: a long wooden or plastic board (size can range), nails, hammer, recycled plastic containers, scissors. To make a water wall you want to create trails of water from one container to the next, all the way down to be collected in a basin at the bottom. You will need to poke holes in the containers, cut the tops off of some, and hammer them in the water trail patten onto the board. Suggestions: for the board think about old tables, computer desks, dressers; for materials things like honey containers, egg cartons, yogurt cups, and juice containers are great. (See Appendix C)

**Mud Stew:** Easy, simple to do, and lots of fun! A messy activity, it might be better to do outdoors, but can easily be adapted to indoors. Offer lots of scoopers, ladles, strainers, pots, cupcake pans, and bowls for the cooking magic. Provide a bucket of dirt or sand, and lots of decorating materials like seeds and leaves. Mud sculpting is also a fun adaptation.

**Fishing:** Make a fishing game! Though this creates some initial prep-work, it's a quick set-up and can be reused many times! Materials: sticks, string, hole punch, superglue, magnets, paperclips, plastic paper (ie overhead paper, plastic folders, anything waterproof), and beads (or something to connect a magnet and string to). Cut fish shapes out of the plastic paper, poke a hole at the mouth, and attach a paperclip. Glue a magnet onto a square bead. Wind string around a branchless stick and tie firmly. Loop the string through the bead and tie firmly. Now just throw the fish into a tub of water and let the children fish! (See Appendix C)

**Sand Box:** Sand and water are a favorite of kids. Choose your own activity! Bring a few tubs of sand and a tub of water inside over a tarp and let the children mold the sand and create cities. Set up a few trays for children to have their own personal area. Go outside and dump a few buckets on a tarp with access to water and carrying utensils. This can be as big or small as you want!

## Frogs

### *List of Books*

Jump Frog Jump by Robert Kalan  
999 Tadpoles by Ken Kimura  
The Croaky Pokey! by Ethan Long  
From Tadpole to Frog by Shannon Zemlicka

### *Activity Ideas*

**Frog Paper Bag Puppet:** Grab some paper bags and put on a frog play! Either have the children color their bags green or glue on green circles. Add circular eyes to the top of the puppet, a red tongue, and some legs! (See Appendix C)

**Frog Search:** Go to your local pond and go frog hunting! Offer a few nets and tips to find frogs. If you find frog eggs, consider growing a tadpole in the classroom!

**Don't Touch the Water:** Cutout lily pad shapes out of green paper (big enough for a child to stand on). Create a path around the room or outside with the lily pads and play a frog themed version of "don't touch the ground". To add a cooperation theme, have the children cross the path holding hands. You can also add safe spots and a swamp monster to try to tag the frogs - the swamp monster cannot walk on the lily pads or touch frogs in safe spaces.

## Camping

### *List of Books*

Duck Tents by Lynne Berry  
Camping Out by Mercer Mayer  
Let's Go Camping by Suzanne Slade

### *Activity Ideas*

**Tipi Making:** Make tipis out of sticks and leaves. Collect lots of sticks and greenery to make tipis. Give the children hints on how to craft a good tipi. If some children would rather stack sticks and make buildings, that's ok too! You can have bigger sticks for older children, and smaller twigs for the younger children to make mini tipis.

**Royalty Camping Crowns:** Make camping crowns out of nature! Provide glue sticks, leaves, twigs, flowers, seeds, and other loose parts to glue to a paper headband. Grown the children royalty of camping.

**Make S'more Trail Mix:** Provide a fun snack to make the camp experience come to life! Materials: mini marshmallows, chocolate chips, graham crackers or cereal pieces. Have each trail mix ingredient in separate bowls with portion-sized spoons in each. Make a game out of it by having children count scoops or trail mix pieces! Caution: be aware of all children's allergies beforehand!

## Trees

### *List of Books*

We Planted a Tree by Diane Muldrow  
This Tree 1, 2, 3 by Alison Formento  
I Can Name 50 Trees Today by Bonnie Worth  
Tap the Magic Tree by Christie Matheson  
The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

### *Activity Ideas*

**Magical Wand:** Have children pick their magic sticks outdoors (preferably one without too many branches). Then decorate the sticks by tying colors of string to them, painting them, and gluing on glitter or gems. (See Appendix C)

**Tree Person:** Make a tree person out of tree parts! Things like bark, tree seeds, leaves, and tree fruit can all be used to glue onto a paper outline of a person. (See Appendix C for an example)

**Pine Cone Critter:** Dress up pinecones with googly eyes, ribbon, paper mouths, and any other materials you may have around! After the glue dries, children can use them to play with in Pinecone Land.

**Tree Planting:** Do you have room for a few more trees outdoors? Connect with a local arborist or tree specialist to do a group tree planting!

## Bugs & Crawlies

### *List of Books*

Hey, Little Ant by Phillip & Hannah Hoose  
The Very Busy Spider by Eric Carle  
Busy, Buzzy Bee by Karen Wallace  
Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin

### *Activity Ideas*

**Bug Hunt:** There's lots of ways to do a bug hunt! Get outside and look under logs and leaves for the many beneficial bugs. Hide fake bugs in a tub of sand or around the room and hear the squeals of excitement when they're found! Add counting, for a fun math game.

**Spider Making:** Make a spider out of a paper plate! Cutout a head-sized circle out of the middle (so they can be worn as hats, too!). Provide thin strips of paper for legs – encourage children to fold them to make crinkly legs or color them to beautify their spider. Glue on the eight legs and on one end without legs, draw on a face with eyes! Add a web game and pretend everyone's spiders! You need a long piece of string and lots of hands. Have one child sit in the middle of the circle of children. Then randomly wind the string around the circle and make a web having each child hold a corner of string. The child in the middle will navigate the web by crawling over or under and tag the next person to cross. (See Appendix C)

**Pipe Cleaner Insects:** Make insects out of pipe cleaners. Materials: pipe cleaners, fingers or pencils, and googly eyes. Have the children pick two pipe cleaner colors and wrap them around the pencil or finger (ie black and yellow for a bee). Next, take the insect body off the finger and add wings by threading another color pipe cleaner through the middle, tying it on, and shaping the right wing (ie butterfly wing or bee). Lastly are the googly eyes. (See Appendix C)

## Summertime

### *List of Books*

Mouse's Summer Muddle by Anita Loughery

It's Summer! by Linda Glaser

Summer by Emily C. Dawson

### *Activity Ideas*

**Solar Pong:** Learn about the sun and have fun playing a game. Materials: Velcro, felt, a board, ping pong balls, and paper. Glue the felt onto the board, it doesn't need to be a huge board, but big enough to add clouds and trees. The felt board and ping pong balls can be an example of sunrays reaching a solar panel. Cut cloud and tree shapes out of the paper and line them up to where you want them to stick on the felt. Put Velcro on the back of the paper and the match the other side of the Velcro to the felt (these should be removable pieces). Next stick the Velcro on the ping pong balls (one piece circling one part and another to cross it). Now the games ready! Start off with just throwing balls at the felt board to make them stick – this imitates a sunny, cloudless day where sunrays touch everything. Now add clouds to the board to imitate a cloudy day. It should be harder to make the ball stick, and this imitates sunrays not reaching as far out (worse for solar panels). Lastly, add the trees to the board to make it even harder. Underneath forests there might not be as much sunlight, and also imitates objects preventing sunrays from reaching solar panels. (See Appendix C)

**Chalk Art:** A fun activity for a leisurely day. Grab a box of chalk and bring the children out to a sidewalk or cement area. Encourage all sorts of pictures! Call out different animals to draw. Assist with making games like hopscotch or tic-tac-toe!

**Ring Toss:** Play a few rounds of ring toss! All you need are same-sized plastic bottles (recycled works good!) and rings large enough to fit around the bottles when tossed. As an art project, you can have the kids paint the recycled bottles. Make various difficulty levels by changing the distance of throwing or the size of the rings!



## Fall

Fall is a create time for crafts and playing with the idea of change. What a great season to explore different concepts and nature's loose parts.

### Leaves

#### *List of Books*

Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert  
Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf by Lois Ehlert  
Leaf Trouble by Jonathan Emmett  
Leaves in Fall by Mari C. Schuh

#### *Activity Ideas*

**Leaf Creations:** Leaves are so beautiful in the fall, they're the perfect medium for creating art! Make leaf-people and leaf-animals with different colors and different sizes of leaves. Have children create their pattern and carefully glue the pieces onto paper, or provide an outline of an animal or person for an easier task. Play with texture by making leaf rubbings! Supply plenty of paper, and plenty of different types of leaves! Have the kids place the leaves under the paper and color over it with crayons or colored pencil.

**Fall Color Hike:** Similar to the flower hike, find colors in leaves! Enjoy the beautiful autumn season on a walk through the park. Have children call out colors or choose a color to search for!

**Dry Leaf Tree:** A 3D tree craft! Materials: paper towel or toilet paper tubes, dried leaves, glue, scissors, paper, coloring utensil. Color the tube brown, paint works best, then cut slits at one end every half inch or so (these will be the branches. You can cut them uniformly or different lengths to make it more tree-like. At the other end cut 4 slits about an inch deep (these will be used to glue the tree to the paper). Now it's time to decorate the paper! The children can draw a forest floor scene, use a few leaves to make prints on the paper (paint required), or just make fall-colored dots to imitate leaves on the forest floor. Now glue 4 tabs of the tree to the middle of the paper. Add glue to the branch tips to glue on the dry leaves. (See Appendix D)

### Hibernation

#### *List of Books*

Time to Sleep by Denise Fleming  
Hibernation Station by Michelle Meadows and Kurt Cyrus  
A Bed for Winter by Karen Wallace

### *Activity Ideas*

**Create a Den:** Create a classroom bear den and play make-believe! Imaginary play is so important in development and great to encourage. If you have a large, den-sized box, use that to glue brown paper or brown tissue paper to the outside – the more bark-like, the better! No big box? Use furniture and make a bear fort – fun for kids to be involved in, too! Put bear house items in the den – be creative! Maybe bear likes tea, or his best friend, squirrel. Add make-believe activities that bear does in his den in the winter.

**Paper Bag Bear Den:** Create a take-home bear den! Materials: brown paper bags, printed sleeping bear image (see Appendix D for printable), cotton balls, loose parts (grass, straw, twigs). Inflate the paper bag so it's 3D, and color and cutout the sleeping bear. You can either paste the sleeping bear at the bottom of one side of the paper bag, or cut a half-oval out of the bottom of the bag to make a cave entrance and then glue the bear inside. Decorate the den with cotton balls, leaves, and sticks. Making sure the bag stays inflated, fold the top of the bag a couple times and tape down. (See Appendix D)

**Where Do I Sleep?:** Match the animals to their homes and learn about who sleeps where in the winter. Use the activity sheets provided on: <http://first-grade-garden.blogspot.com/2012/01/more-bears.html> (scroll down to about mid-page). Cutout the animals and labels, and have them match them to their sleeping location to the woodland picture. Help to make sure their locations are right before they glue them down. Add color to the pictures for added fun!

**Naturalist Speaker:** Get a local naturalist come in to talk about different hibernating animals. Another great topic is mammals in general – ask if they have animal furs they can bring in to talk about the different mammals in the area and what they do to prepare for winter.

### Migration

#### *List of Books*

Two Little Birds by Mary Newell DePalma  
Blue Bart and Wiggles by Derek Anderson  
George Flies South by Simon James  
Little Red Bat by Carole Gerber

### *Activity Ideas*

**Bird Feeder:** Great a bird feeder to help your local birds. There are many different ways, so find one that works with your children and their allergies – pinecones with honey and oatmeal, popcorn on string, shortening and birdseed with cookie cutters.

**Foraging for Food:** An easy activity for little ones, a food hide and seek! Hide baggies of snacks around the room or on the playground. Explain to the children that they are animals in search of winter food (you can even assign specific animal favorites to each child).

**Bird-Safety Window Clings:** Protect birds from flying into the windows! See Appendix D for a Hawk silhouette to print or visit this website: [www.birdsandblooms.com/blog/stop-birds-from-flying-into-windows](http://www.birdsandblooms.com/blog/stop-birds-from-flying-into-windows). Explain to the children why birds sometimes fly into windows and how dangerous it is, but that they can help by making window clings! One side must be black (or a very dark color), which will face out the window, but have the children decorate the other side. Then hang them on the windows in the room or have them bring the silhouettes home for their own home!

### Autumn

#### *List of Books*

Squirrel's Fall Search by Anita Loughery  
Countdown to Fall by Fran Hawk  
Pick a Circle, Gather Squares by Felicia Sanzari Charnesky  
Weather in Fall by Mari C. Schuh  
When Will It Snow? by Bruce Hiscock

#### *Activity Ideas*

**Fall Leaf Wreath:** Make a leaf wreath for mom and dad! Materials: leaves, paper plates, glue, string, poem. Print and cut the poem out prior to the activity in fun font (spaced out to fit the middle of the plate): Autumn leaves are falling down. Red, yellow, green, and brown. Either collect leaves and dry them out under heavy books before the activity or have the kids collect and glue the leaves on the same day. Have the children glue the poem in the middle of the plate (have an adult poke a hole at the top for the string). Then have the kids glue the leaves around the edge, and make a string loop for hanging! (See Appendix D)

**Fall Collage Placemat:** Make a fall placemat! Materials: roll of clear contact paper, leaves, grass, glitter, other decorating materials. This is another activity you can develop to fit your class. One way is to start with a piece of paper (colored paper is fun!) and have the children decorate both sides by gluing on leaves, petals, grass, and using glitter or glitter glue and then sandwiching the decorated paper with contact paper (make sure to leave a contact paper edge around the regular paper). Another way is to just put the nature pieces right onto a strip of contact paper. Cut a square of contact paper first and hold the edges down with something heavy like a rock. Then have the children put the items right onto the paper and put another piece of contact paper over the decorated piece. In both cases, smooth out the paper with your hands (there will be a few wrinkles but that adds character!). You can trim up the edges after the pieces or combined.

**Pumpkin Decorating:** A fun alternative to pumpkin carving and much less messy! Materials: pumpkins, loose nature parts, glue, small 1-2 oz plastic container for glue, paper bags, popsicle sticks. Explain to the children they will be decorating their pumpkins by gluing natural objects to them – give them examples like a leaf for a mouth, moss for hair, acorns and rocks for eyes. Then have them go outside with paper bags to collect their pumpkin pieces. Prepare the glue by putting it in the plastic containers to hand out to the kids with popsicle sticks as the glue applicator. Let them have fun and decorate!

**Fall Scavenger Hunt:** Get outside and enjoy the weather! Make a scavenger hunt that emphasizes the key elements of fall – crunchy leaves, many colors, migrating birds, scurrying squirrels, acorns, etc. Scavenger hunts are always a great way to connect children to the differences in seasons.



## Tips for a Successful Program

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- **Sing a song:** In the beginning of programs when you might be waiting for the stragglers to filter in, think about singing a few songs! The internet is full of easy children's song on every topic. Add some body movements to the song, and this is a great way to gather focus and expel some energy!
- **Use grand gestures:** Some children have short attentions spans, which is why grand gestures and funny voices when reading goes a long way! Have the kids participate in the story by acting out parts with you when you see attention wandering, or ask questions while reading to further their participation.
- **Read a few books:** If you have a longer program or are reading a shorter book, it might be a good idea to read two or three books. This fills time and also gives children different perspectives of the topic.
- **Give kids a choice:** Have a few children who dislike books? Have a few books at hand to get them involved in choosing which book you read. Getting them involved in the decision, can better engage them.
- **Kids are washable!:** Messy activities can be irritating for adults, but they are so beneficial to children! It is important to warn parents not to dress their children in their best clothes. Don't limit activity choices based on their messiness, a little water and soap will clean those kids right up!
  - **Be a role model:** Some children are conditioned to keep clean, and might be afraid of getting dirty. In these cases, prepare to get dirty yourself and show them how much fun it can be!
- **Reflection:** After the program, it's important to reinforce what everyone learned. Ask questions about what they did and who the topic was about. Parents are a great tool for reflection, too!

## Appendix A

### Cold Water Test

#### Recording sheet

Directions: Use the thermometer to determine which type of covering would best protect an animal in the winter. Using your materials fill in the chart below.

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Dish of Ice               | Temperature: |
| Dish of Ice with Cotton   | Temperature: |
| Dish of Ice with Fur      | Temperature: |
| Dish of Ice with Felt     | Temperature: |
| Dish of Ice with Feathers | Temperature: |
| Dish of Ice with Plastic  | Temperature: |

Which covering had the coldest temperature? \_\_\_\_\_

Which covering had the warmest temperature?

\_\_\_\_\_

If you were an animal would you want this covering? Why or Why not?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sketch a picture of the animal in its habitat that has the warmest covering in the box below.



## Which is Warmer?

## Recording sheet

Which of these items will keep your hand warmer in a bowl of ice water? Circle one: (Can of lard      Rubber Gloves)

Using your materials take the temperature of both of the buckets of water. Record the temperature below:

Bucket A: \_\_\_\_\_

Bucket B: \_\_\_\_\_

Predict how long it will take for your hand to change temperature in each of these situations.

| Situation            | Prediction of Time | Actual Time |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Bare hand            |                    |             |
| Hand with Glove      |                    |             |
| Hand covered in lard |                    |             |

Analyze your results. What did you discover? In which situation did it take the least time to change temperature? The most time? Explain your findings below.

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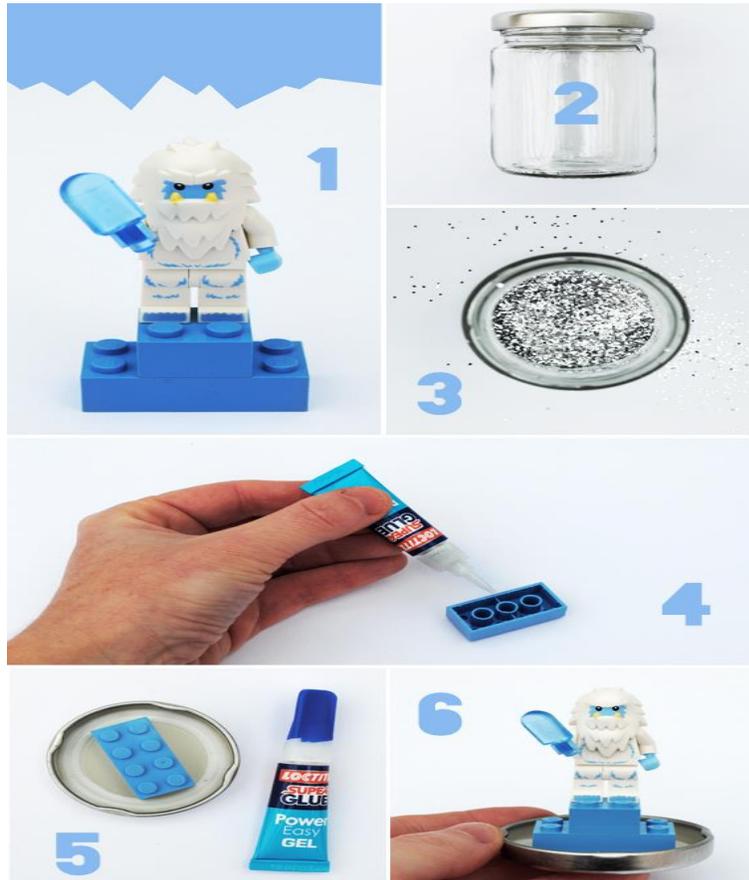
Make a Sled



Make an Igloo



## Snowglobe Making



(image from: [blogloving.com](http://blogloving.com))

## Snowflake Hanger



### Animal Tracks Twister



Jordan Timpy / NWF



Jordan Timpy / NWF

### Animal Tracks Stencil



Paper Plates Craft

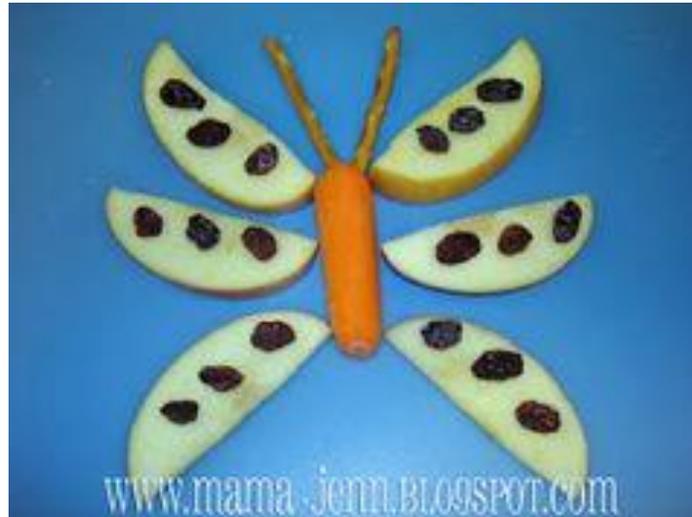


Snowperson Ornament



## Appendix B

### Nutritious Creations



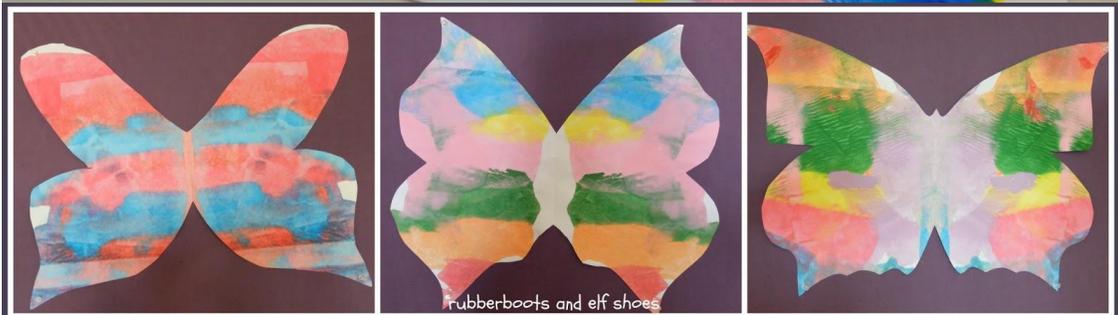
### Animal Taste Game



Kite Making



Butterfly Creations



Rubberboots and elf shoes

## Appendix C

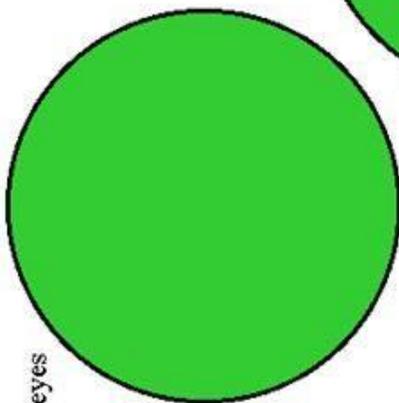
### Water Wall



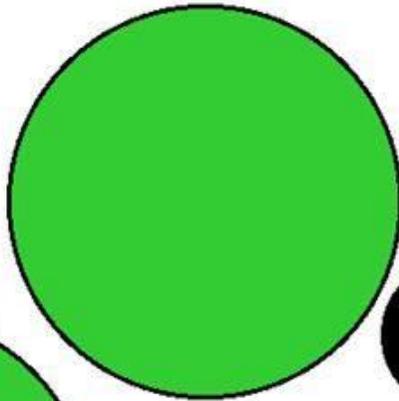
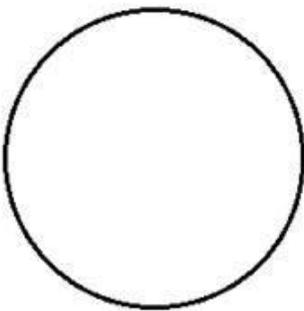
### Fishing



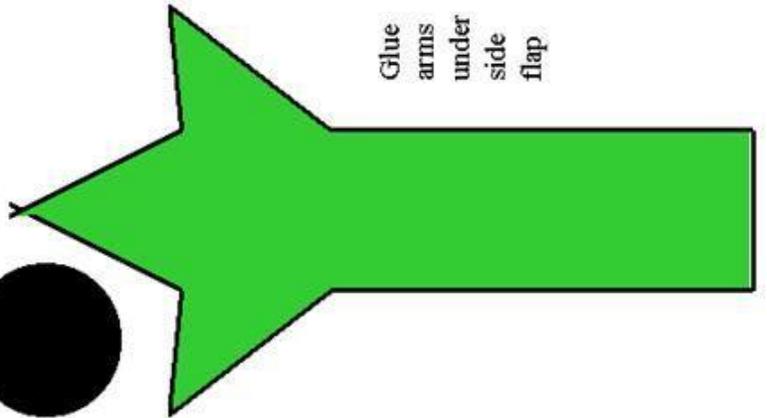
Frog Paper Bag Puppet



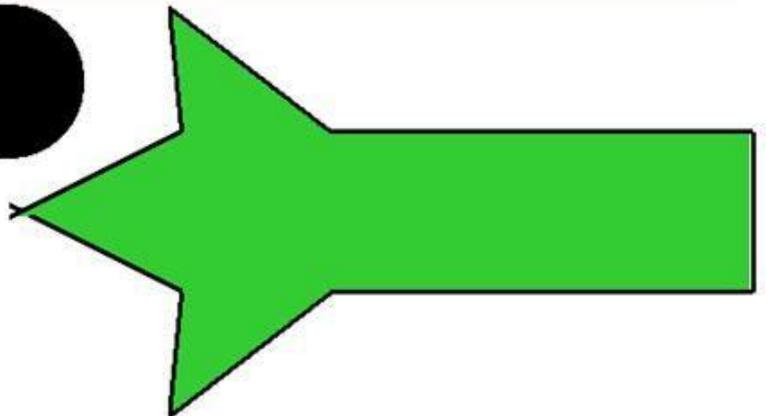
Glue circles together to form eyes



Roll tongue with pencil



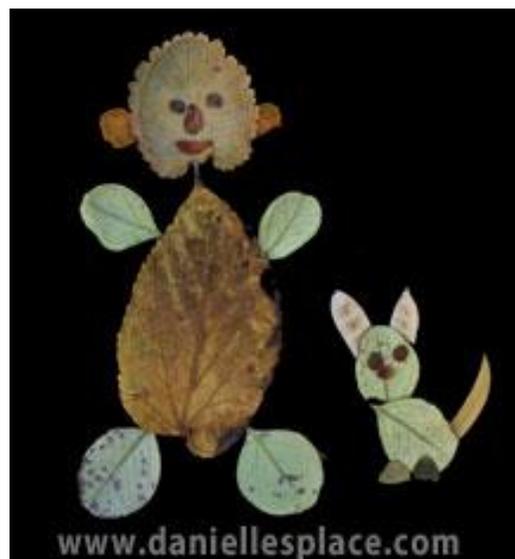
Glue arms under side flap



Magical Wand



Tree Person & Pinecone Critter



### Spider Making



### Pipe Cleaner Insects



Solar Pong

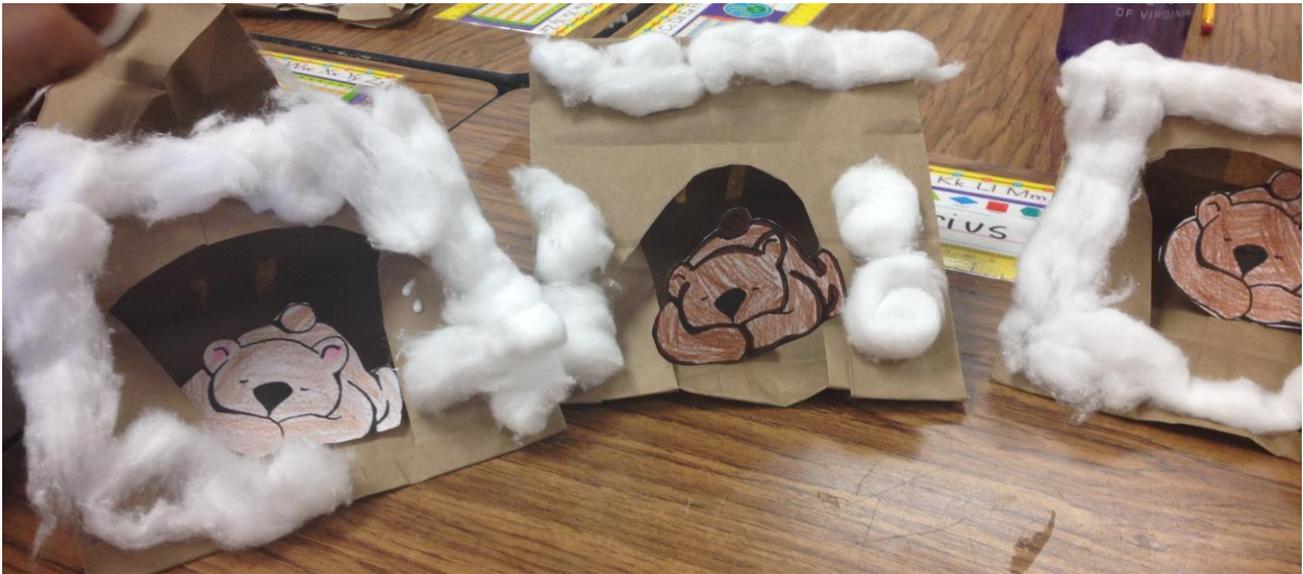


## Appendix D

### Dry Leaf Tree

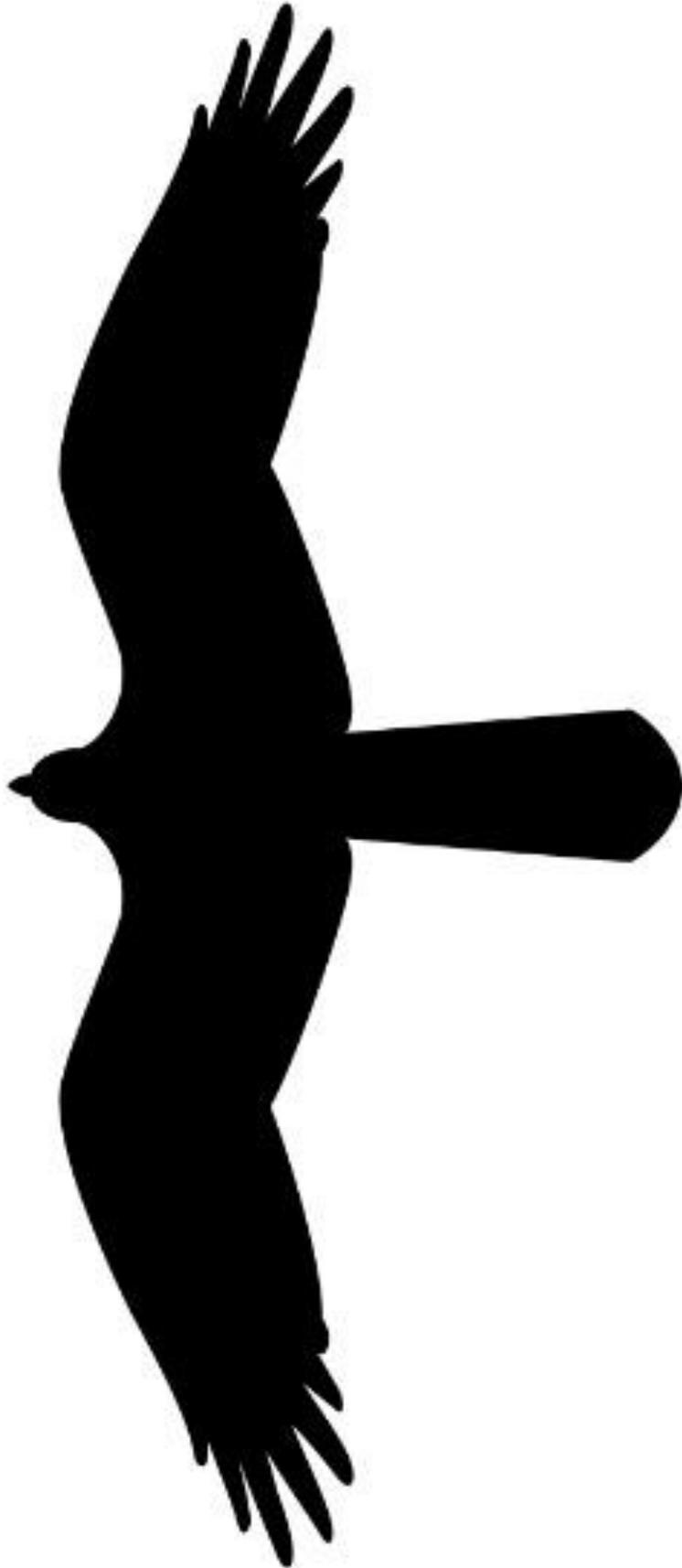


Paper Bag Bear Den



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www.dulemba.com

Bird-Safety Window Clings



Fall Leaf Wreath



Fall Leaf Placemat

