

Nature Explorers Projects & Expeditions

This list of activity ideas to help children and families learn about the natural history and biodiversity of Vermont and New Hampshire is designed for children ages 6-12 years old. Teachers and families: here's a [planning sheet](#) for you to edit and use with your students/children as you see fit. Youngers may need more support and older may need more space to write.



Home Sweet Home

Learn about nature's original architects, carpenters, and interior designers.

Imagine	<p><i>Nesting Time</i> - What would it be like to build a nest like a bird? Check out this BEEC video of robins in their nest, and then build a model of a robin's nest.</p> <p><i>Busy as a Beaver</i> - Beavers are masterful architects and there are several local places where you might find them in action. They build dams to manage water flow and lodges to live in. Try building a model of a beaver lodge or dam in a puddle using sticks and mud.</p>
Explore	<p><i>Home for Whom?</i> - Animal homes come in many shapes and sizes. Learn about some local animal homes and then go for a walk and see how many nests, dreys, dens, and burrows you can find. Remember to give our wild neighbors space and respect, and as the saying goes "take only pictures and leave only footprints." Want to learn more? Check out this PBS mini-series called Animal Homes.</p>
Create	<p><i>Build a Fort</i> - One of the best ways to learn about structures is to build them! Try a snow fort or a debris shelter.</p> <p><i>Help a creature out!</i> - Build a bird house or a provide some nest material for your feathered friends. Build a bat house or a pollinator house.</p>
Map	<p><i>My Wild Neighbors</i> - What if you mapped all of the animal homes you found in your yard or a local park? Challenge: Map a chipmunk burrow! You'll have to do some research and find all the entrances and exits and then use your imagination to do the rest!</p> <p><i>Seasonal Favorites</i> - What are your family's favorite seasonal activities? Make a Summer Favorites Map and include all of the best swimming, biking, blueberry picking, and picnic spots. Or make a Winter Favorites Map and include all of the best sledding, hot cocoa, and skating spots. You decide what's important. Find the basics of mapping your neighborhood here.</p>
Read	<p>Check out your local library and learn more about animals and their homes. Titles we love:</p> <p>A Nest Is Noisy by Dianna Hutts Aston</p> <p>Animal Architects by National Geographic Society</p> <p>Animal Builders by Janet McDonnell</p> <p>Animal Homes by Mary Holland</p> <p>Birds at Home by Marguerite Henry</p> <p>It's Nesting Time by Roma Gans</p> <p>Home Sweet Home by Jean Marzollo</p> <p>Mama Built a Little Nest by Ward, Jennifer</p> <p>The Beavers' Busy Year by Mary Holland</p> <p>The Busy Tree by Jennifer Ward</p>

New England Animals A to Z

Explore the wonderful world of our local fauna.



<p>Imagine</p>	<p><i>Creature for a Day</i> - If you could be a New England animal for a day, who would you be? Choose an animal and research how they spend their time. Where do they live? What do they eat? Who are their predators? Pretend to be your animal for a day. Where will you go? What will you do? Vermont animals here & New Hampshire animals here</p>
<p>Explore</p>	<p><i>Animal Tracking</i> - While we might not see many animals in action, many of them leave evidence of their activities behind. Hone your tracking skills with these BEEC activities. Here's a special BEEC video.</p> <p><i>Biodiversity Survey</i> - Choose a survey site (starting with about a one foot by one foot square might be good) in your yard or somewhere with some nature. Inventory the living creatures. Plants? Animals? How many? What kind? The One Small Square book series is fantastic!</p> <p><i>Become a Backyard Birder</i> - There are some animals who are a little easier to observe: the birds! Once you start to look you'll notice them everywhere! Put up a bird feeder and make observation even easier. Then, join Project FeederWatch!</p>
<p>Create</p>	<p><i>Create Your Own Creature</i> - How about building an animal out of snow like in Snow Riders? No snow? Build an animal (real or imaginary) out of other materials: fabric, clay, playdough, wood and chicken wire, paper mache, etc.</p> <p><i>Animals A to Z</i> - Write and illustrate your own alphabet book about all of your favorite New England animals. The letters don't have to come first, they just need to exist. For example: "A - The white-tailed deer happily munch the fallen APPLES in the abandoned orchard."</p>
<p>Map</p>	<p><i>Life-size Track Story</i> - Make a real life track story outside using popcorn or birdseed (or footprints in fluffy fresh snow!) for someone else to follow.</p> <p><i>Tracking Mystery Map</i> - Use markers or stamps and paper to tell a story using tracks instead of words. 1. Choose your animal characters. 2. Find out what their tracks look like. 3. Find out what kind of pattern their feet make when they move. 4. Decide on what will happen. Will a fox visit a hen house? Will a squirrel dig up a cached acorn? Will a ruffed grouse burst out of a snowbank on a cold clear morning? 5. Draw/write your story! 6. Share with a friend. Can they figure out what happened in your story? Here's an example for inspiration!</p>
<p>Read</p>	<p>Check out your local library and learn more about local animals. Titles we love: Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard by Loree Griffin Burns In Season: A Natural History of the New England Year by Nona Bell Estrin In the Snow: Who's Been Here? by Lindsay Barrett George In the Woods: Who's Been Here? by Lindsay Barrett George Look Up!: Bird-Watching in Your Own Backyard by Annette LeBlanc Cate Naturally Curious by Mary Holland One Small Square series by Donald Silver Songbirds: how to attract them and identify their songs by Noble S. Proctor</p>

Water Water Everywhere

Rain, snow, and vernal pools oh my!



Imagine	<p><i>Raindrops on Roses and Snowflakes That Stay</i> - what if you were a drop of water or a tiny snowflake falling from the sky? Where would you land? What would happen next? Research the Water Cycle and then write or tell a story - or act out a play!</p>
Explore	<p><i>Walk With Water</i> - Here in SE Vermont and SW New Hampshire we have several trails that meander along waterways. Perhaps your family can explore a few and compare. How much water is there? How is it moving? What creatures and plants can you find close by? Lower Wantastiquet Trail, West River Trail, Kilburn Pond Loop Trail in Pisgah State Park, Sweet Pond Loop Trail</p> <p><i>So Many Snowflakes</i> - Did you know that no two snowflakes are alike? Grab a magnifying glass and a dark piece of fabric or dark piece of paper on a snowy day and then catch and examine a few flakes. How are they similar, how are they different? Have you heard of Snowflake Bentley?!</p> <p><i>Awesome Aquatic Habitat Alert</i> - Here in New England we have a unique kind of waterbody that only exists for a few months at a time, they're called vernal pools! A good way to find one of these elusive and special places is to listen for the wood frogs clucking and spring peepers peeping on a warm and wet early spring night.</p>
Create	<p><i>DIY Snowflakes</i> - After observing some snowflakes outside, can you draw or paint what you've seen with white paint on dark paper? Or recreate them with white paper and scissors? Or with toothpicks and glue?</p> <p><i>Nature Journal</i> - Make a nature journal in which to record your aquatic habitat adventures. If you draw and describe your aquatic habitat (ie: river, stream, pond, lake, vernal pool) every day you'll be well equipped to reflect on the way it changes over time.</p>
Map	<p><i>Where the Water Goes Map</i> - Where does the rain and snow from your yard go? Does it flow into a brook that flows into a river? Which ones? Find out and then map your very own watershed.</p>
Read	<p>Check out your local library and learn more about water and the water cycle. Titles we love:</p> <p>A River Ran Wild by Lynne Cherry Big Night for Salamanders by Sarah Marwil Lamstein One Well: The Story of Water on Earth by Rochelle Straus Over and Under the Pond by Kate Messner Over and Under the Snow by Kate Messner Salamander Sky by Katy Farber Snowflake Bentley by Jacqueline Briggs Martin Sometimes Rain by Meg Fleming The Raft by Jim LaMarch Under the Snow by Melissa Stewart When Rain Falls by Melissa Stewart Paddle to the Sea by Holling C. Holling Where the River Begins by Thomas Locker</p>