

Get kids off the couch and outside with family activities

Summertime is the perfect time to get children off the couch, away from the television, and outdoors to explore the wonders in their own backyard.

Introducing children of all ages to a hobby such as birdwatching just got easier, thanks to the newly designed website www.backyardbirdcare.org.

This site includes easy to follow tips for setting up and maintaining feeding areas and answers to frequently asked questions, as well as a coloring book, puzzles and much more.

“You can easily enjoy quality time with your children with the information on this site,” according to Peter Stangel with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. “You can build a bird feeder, hang it outside, and see the variety of birds that come to feed.”

Parents can also help their children set up bird feeding and water stations following the 6 Steps on the website. These steps help ensure clean and healthy feeding areas, and make birdwatching even more enjoyable.

“When the family is new to birdwatching, they have a lot of questions,” stated Sue Hays, Executive Director of the Wild Bird Feeding Industry. “Where should I set up feeders? How do I keep them clean? And, when your three year old asks why the bird eats seeds it helps to have a website that answers those questions.”

Children will truly enjoy the discoveries made watching their native bird species in their own backyard. Many books are available to assist with bird identification, and parents may also provide each child with a journal. “This is a wonderful opportunity for children to document which birds have visited the feeder, as well as a record of which feeds are used and when the feeders were cleaned,” Stangel said.

This is an excellent summer adventure to share with friends, neighbors, and even classmates. “It takes the typical back to school essay titled ‘What I did this summer’ to a whole new level,” Hays added. “It shows great responsibility, even if your child documents just two weeks’ worth of information.”

Of course, the website isn’t just about education. Parents, summer youth organizations and daycare providers are encouraged to download the free coloring book, puzzles, bookmarks and feeder projects. “We wanted to make sure our website contained the education material of the 6 Steps Program, but most importantly, we wanted this to be a fun, family-oriented site.”

“Visit www.backyardbirdcare.org. Read the simple steps, download the free activities, and go outside with your children,” Stangel added. “It’s the beginning of a great summer adventure and a hobby the entire family can enjoy.”

Additional resources:

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - www.nfwf.org

The Wild Bird Feeding Industry - www.wbfi.org

American Bird Conservancy - www.abcbirds.org

American Birding Association - www.americanbirding.org

Bird Conservation Alliance - www.birdconservationalliance.org

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology - www.birds.cornell.edu

Massachusetts Audubon Society - www.massaudubon.org

National Audubon Society - www.audubon.org

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - www.nfwf.org

National Wildlife Federation - www.nwf.org

The Wildlife Society - www.wildlife.org

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - www.fws.gov