



Making Sense of Sustainability

Cope Environmental Center is a 501 (c) 3 public charity. We operate on grants, donations, memberships, and program fees. Your support is important and allows CEC to offer educational opportunities in seven counties, other public programs and free public hiking trails throughout the year. To learn more about membership or sponsorship, visit our website at www.copeenvironmental.org or contact Stephanie or Alison at 765-855-3188.

Staff

Stephanie Hays-Mussoni, Executive Director
Aubrey Blue, Program Director
Jeremy Mussoni, Facilities and Grounds Director
Alison Zajdel, Development Director
Mary Freeland, Program Educator & Facilities Assistant
Janet Trachtenburg, Office Assistant (National ABLE Network)

Office Hours: Monday - Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Due to the nature of our business, there may not always be someone in the office to greet you. If you would like to talk to someone when you visit, please call ahead to make sure a staff member is available to tend to your needs.

Trails open dawn to dusk, seven days a week.

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Fostering an Environmental Ethic in Children

OR

*How to Get Your Kids
Outside More Often!*

Involving Our Children in Conservation and Environmental Appreciation

Children are full of energy and curiosity. A natural love of the outdoor environment begins at an early age. The trick is to foster that love and curiosity and to keep it with them as they grow up. Raising a child to love being outside and all things natural is as simple as giving them the opportunity to explore outside areas. These areas do not have to be pristine wooded areas. They may be backyards, playgrounds, grassy open lots, fields, or any area that will expose them to an outdoor setting will inadvertently bring them in contact with nature. Something will catch a child's eye and keep them mesmerized. Granted, these experiences have to begin at a very early age for them to carry on throughout older childhood. But older children are not lost. They just need a reintroduction to the natural world.

They thrive on knowing that they have the power to make a difference – be that a decision of what book to read or helping around the house. Children have the ability to care for their planet at a young age. All ages can be involved in household activities that help conserve our natural resources. By modeling and involving your children in your beliefs at home, you will provide a foundation for developing an environmental ethic as they mature.

It is up to the adults in a child's life to make sure that the opportunity to explore the natural world and even our own backyard is provided on a regular basis. It is no longer the natural inclination of a child to run outside upon waking. They instead run to the television for cartoons and breakfast. They need to be guided back to a childhood outdoors, exploring, daydreaming, creating, building, and experiencing. Too much of a child's life is spent "happening to that child" whether than the child "living and experiencing life."

The natural world also creates another benefit of physical and mental health that is more recently being researched. Children are known to learn better when offered regular time in an outdoor setting. They are less likely to develop childhood obesity or Type II diabetes. They have an all around happier mindset and they get to experience the wonders of childhood through their own eyes and not the perspective of a TV or computer screen.

Cope Environmental Center

4910 Shoemaker Rd
Centerville, IN 47330
765-855-3188

www.CopeEnvironmental.org
s.hays@copeenvironmental.org

Cope Environmental Center is a not-for-profit environmental education organization dedicated to promoting the sustainable use of the earth's resources through education, demonstration, and research.

Trails open dawn to dusk seven days a week and are free to the public.

We are available to create programs to fit your needs. Contact Aubrey for more information.

- We offer a wide variety of environmental education programs for school groups, community groups, children, adults, and families throughout the year.
- Sustainable Living Demonstration Home Tours are offered on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00 PM. They are \$5.00 per person. Please pre-register by calling by the morning of the tour.
- Toddler Time programs are offered monthly. Please check our website for updated schedules.
- Personal Energy Plan energy audits are offered through the Center. Our Sustainability Educator will visit your home and conduct an extensive audit with you present. You will receive an analysis of a variety of ways you may improve the efficiency of your home. Cost is \$125 for each full audit. Contact Stephanie to schedule.
- Green Office Audits will be offered soon to improve efficiency in your daily office activities. Contact Stephanie for details.
- CEC has several spaces that are available for rental for small gatherings and weddings. Please contact Stephanie for more information.

Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden by George Levenson

Whose Tracks Are These: A Clue Book of Familiar Forest Animals by Jim Nail.

The Night Tree by Eve Bunting.

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein.

Adult Book and Resource List

Last Child in the Woods – Saving Our Children from Nature- Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv.

Sharing Nature with Children by Joseph Cornell.

Tom Brown's Field Guide – Nature and Survival for Children by Tom Brown Jr.

Go Outside – Over 130 Activities for Outdoor Adventures by Nancy Blakey.

Keeper's of the Earth – Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children by Michael J. Caduto.

Kid's Camp – Activities for the Backyard or Wilderness by Laurie Carlson.

Earth Book for Kids – Activities to Help Heal the Environment by Linda Schwartz.

The Kid's Nature Book – 365 Indoor/Outdoor Activities and Experiences by Susan Milord.

Teaching Kids to Love the Earth by Marina Lachecki Herman, Joseph Passineau, Ann Schimf, and Paul Treuer.

Nature Watch Catalog – nature-watch.com or 800-228-5816

Insect Lore Catalog – insectlore.com or 800-LIVE - BUG

Getting Children Outside!

The great thing about playing outside is that it is easy and inexpensive! You do not need a lot of gadgets and toys to make a day of being outside! None of these ideas are new or ground-breaking - they are some of the fun games you probably played as a kid that we forget about as adults!

Scavenger Hunts – Create a list of several colors, shapes, or natural items and have your children search for them. To encourage your children to appreciate nature and to take only memories and leave only footprints, have them draw what they find or take a photo of the item. For younger children have them take you on the journey with them. When you find the object on the list, ask questions about it. How does it feel? Where did it come from? What will happen to it if it stays in this place? Is there an animal that might eat it? Asking your child questions leads their mind on a whole series of possibilities. You will most likely end up with a few great stories being created from scavenger hunt lists.

Critter Hunts – This is great for really young children and also works for the older ones as well. Find objects around the house such as cotton balls, baby food jars filled with various items, clothespins, or purchase some fun insect or critters at the discount store. Hide them all over the backyard or park and have the children search for them. Hiding them with varying degrees of difficulty will keep even older children on the trail. Then let the children hide them for you to find.

I Spy – The old game of "I Spy" is another easy one for children of many ages. You begin by finding an object and having the child gather information about the object you have chosen through asking yes and no questions. Once the child guesses the object, let them choose the next object and answer your questions.

Cloud Spotting – Get a blanket. Lay on your backs. Watch the clouds pass. Point out shapes and similarities to everyday objects. Let your imaginations run wild!

Investigating the Night Sky – You do not need to be an astronomer to appreciate the stars. Go out and make up your own constellations. H.A. Rey (the author of Curious George) wrote a fantastic book to easily locate constellations called Find the Constellations. Search for shooting stars and satellites zipping through the sky. You may also visit www.earthsky.org/skywatching/ to learn what is happening in the night sky in our area each week.

Active Games

Relay Races – Put varying twists on these games by having children move like various animals, or by skipping, hopping, or crawling.

Tag – There are a million ways to play tag! You remember the oldies but goodies – Freeze Tag, Blob Tag, etc.

Follow the Leader – Again, use animal movements to keep children interested.

Red Light, Green Light – Classic game that may be played with 2 or more players. Put a twist on it by requiring players to move like animals.

Build a shelter - This can be done in the backyard or a nearby woods where you have permission to play. Using only natural materials build a shelter for a fun hideaway. For a challenge, work to make it waterproof and test it in the rain. Research how animals build their homes to learn how to incorporate their methods of staying warm and dry.

Cook a snack with the sun - Make a solar cooker from a pizza box and foil and a plastic bag (or design your own). Lay black paper in the bottom of the box and wrap the top in foil to reflect the sun into the box. A simple recipe is to toss shredded cheese and salsa on tortilla chips on a plate. Place in plastic bag and seal. Then set in the bag on top of the black paper. Position it so that it receives as much sunlight as possible. Depending on how long it takes, you may need to move it to follow the sun. Stick a thermometer in the bag to gauge the temperature and see how hot your oven gets. Keep in the sun until the cheese is melted. You can make brownies and several other concoctions using the sun. For more recipes, visit www.solarcooking.wikia.com/wiki/Recipes.

Children's Books List - Use books to generate ideas of activities and projects you can do with your child.

Finding the Constellations by H.A. Rey.

The Raft by Jim LaMarchie.

A child's exploration down a river on a raft and all the wildlife he encounters on the way.

Up, Down, and Around by Katherine Ayre and Nadine Benard Wekort.
A simple fun book about vegetable gardens.

Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert.

Bob and Otto by Robert O. Bruel and Nick Bruel.

A story about a caterpillar and worm and their similarities and differences.

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen.

In the Woods: Who's Been Here? by Lindsay Barrett George.

Around the Pond: Who's Been Here? by Lindsay Barrett George.

The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle.

In a Nutshell by Joseph Anthony.

Under One Rock by Anthony Fredericks.

The Wartville Wizard by Don Madden.

A funny book about a man who gets tired of seeing so much trash in his community.

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss.

Little Golden Field Guides

Fun with Nature Take – Along Guide A collection of several take along guides with multiple authors from Northwood Press.

Give Them a Job

“Bag Reminder” – Make your child’s job be reminding you to bring your reusable bags when you go shopping. Explain that by reusing a bag, you do not need to use a new one that will eventually be thrown away.

“Compost Patrol”– This is a great way to involve them in learning about decomposition and reducing waste.

“Litter Patrol” – Put them on litter patrol duty in your yard or on your neighborhood block.

“Head Gardner” – No matter the size of your flower bed or garden, caring for a living thing is a great way to teach children lifecycles, responsibility, and compassion.

“Recycling Sorter” – Enlist your children in helping you get the recycling to the correct place and making sure that only recycling goes into the recycling container and only trash in the trash container.

“Energy Miser” – Put older children in charge of flipping the power strips off each day on all your computer and electronic equipment. This equipment pulls energy even when it is turned off. By plugging it into a power strip and turning the strip off each night, you can eliminate that unnecessary energy from being wasted. Also, have these children be responsible for politely bringing it to the attention of other family members when they leave lights or other electrical appliances on when not in use.

Taking a walk in the neighborhood – Try to count how many trees, or rabbits, or worms, etc. you see on your walk. This is also a great time to just stroll and chat with your child. Teach children to pick up litter (with your supervision) on your walks. This will help instill appreciation for the outdoors and teach them that litter has its place.

Take a hike on one of the many trails in the area. Cope Environmental Center trails are open dawn to dusk, seven days a week and are free to the public. Check Waynet.org for a full list of recreational trails in our area.

Activities while on hikes –

- * Scavenger Hunts
- * I Spy
- * Tree identification and leaf collection
- * Look under logs
- * Stop, look, and explore streams and puddles
- * Take a simple field guide and learn to identify a new plant, insect, or tree together
- * Blindfold your child and have him/her feel and smell different items – bark, leaves, soil, water, moss, etc.
- * Stop in several spots and close your eyes and count the sounds you hear – discuss what made the sounds
- * Take a book on the trail and find a nice place to read together
- * Or simply take a nice stroll and enjoy nature!

Supplies to take on hikes - Preparing for your hike may consist of putting on your shoes and walking out the door or packing a light backpack with items you may need along the way. Have your child help you brainstorm what you may need. No need to go overboard - remember you will have to carry it. Even better, have your child help you carry a few smaller items in their very own backpack.

- * Light, portable, healthy trail snack (granola bar, trail mix, fruit)
- * Field guides (trees, plants, insects, flowers)
- * Water bottles
- * Map (even if you know the area, using a map with your child is a good way to practice skills)
- * Simple first aid kit (band aids, alcohol swabs, etc.)
- * Magnifying glasses or binoculars for older children or make your own from toilet paper rolls for younger children.

Activities and Projects to Teach Conservation

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – Begin by teaching children where trash goes. This is very important as they learn how things in and around the home work. The trash simply goes “away” in their eyes. Take children on a trip to the landfill so they can see where the trash truck takes the trash. Explain that the trash is put into a giant hole and it never really goes away. It will remain there for many thousands of years. The landfill itself will never go away. Discuss how long they think it will take before that hole is full. What will happen when it is full? What happens if we keep making so much trash that there is no where left for it to go? What can we do to make the landfill last longer?

Next, introduce recycling. Explain that recycling keeps trash from the landfill, and it gets made into a new product. When appropriate, explain the concept of not making trash at all and learning to reduce what we purchase. Work together to find new ways to reduce trash through reducing what you consume and new uses for items that would otherwise be trash or recycling.

Recycling is a great way to involve the whole family. If you do not already recycle, get older children involved in figuring out the recycling system in your area. Then figure out the best way for your household to collect recycling. Try a variety of different collection possibilities to see what works for you. This also lets children know that if you don't get it right the first time you, keep trying until it works. This instills great problem solving skills! .

It is good to get children involved in sorting and identifying what can be recycled at a young age. Help them learn to identify the numbers on the bottom of plastic containers. Get them involved in taking the recycling to the special container and wheeling it to the corner for recycling day.

Call the Richmond Sanitary District at 983-7450 or the Wayne County Solid Waste Management District at 966-0191 ext. 3 or waste-not.org for recycling information in Wayne and Union counties

You will need to work with your child at their level. You never want to overwhelm or make your child feel helplessness or despair from these experiences. Always work to remain positive when explaining environmental issues to your child. They are not emotionally equipped to take in all the “gloom and doom” nor should they be expected to shoulder those thoughts as children. They need to have the mindset that they are able to make the world a better place no matter how young they may be.

Plant a garden – Anytime you plant something with your child, you are teaching them about the lifecycle of a plant and how to care for a living thing. Even if you just plant a tomato in a bucket, this is a great way for them to actively participate in producing food for the family. Eating that first red tomato generates a great sense of pride. Even the smallest of children can help plant and maintain a garden of any size.

As they get older, get them involved in choosing the vegetables and fruits to be planted in the garden. Try to start something from a seed each year and try a new vegetable or fruit in your garden each year. This also opens the door for learning to cook, nutrition, and appreciation of plant and insect life in the garden. Be sure to leave harsh chemicals out of your garden if you plan to have your children helping you. Involve your children in watering, weeding, observing, and appreciating the garden throughout the season. Work together to make a scarecrow from old clothing to keep large critters away. Journal your observations and compare results each year.

Create a Fairy Garden - This is basically a small garden utilizing miniature type plants. There are several mosses and small herbs that are ideal to make a hide-away for fairies and garden gnomes. Google “Fairy Gardens” to find ideas of what plants to use and even fairy houses and fences and other supplies should you choose to elaborate. This is a great way to create your child's very own natural land of “make-believe.”

Grow a butterfly – Observe and learn the lifecycle of butterflies by purchasing caterpillars from a reputable source. They will come with the food needed to nourish them as they each form a chrysalis. Once they have hatched, you can release them and watch where they go. This is a great activity for observation and daily journaling. Visit Insectlore.com for supplies.