

Nature trek challenge!

To celebrate **Canada's 150th birthday**, your family can explore Canada's national parks for **FREE!** But you can also explore local parks to discover nature's wonders.

Having a theme for your hike can make a walk in the woods an adventure. See if you can squeeze in **four nature missions** this summer!

1 Frog find

From massive bullfrogs to endangered leopard frogs, B.C. is home to 13 species of frogs and toads. You often find frogs sunning themselves on pond shorelines, on logs or peeking from amongst lily pads.

Ponds, ditches and bogs are great places to find frogs. Sneak up quietly or you'll send them diving deep into the water to hide. Google "**B.C. frogs**" to find frog images and the different croak sounds they make.

2 Insect investigation

You can find all kinds of insect "wildlife" in your backyard or nearby park. How many insects do you know?

As a start, see if you can find these 10 common bugs: earwig, grasshopper, honeybee, cricket, centipede, dragonfly, sowbug, aphid, ladybug and spittlebug. Google "**native B.C. insects**" to find photos.

Nature hike tips!

The early morning hiker gets the picture. By mid-day, when it is hot, many birds and mammals are resting in their hiding places.

Be a jungle ninja! Be patient and quiet as you move through the forest. Forest residents dart away from noisy people.

Safety first! Have fun but keep clear of cliffs and fast-moving water. Also, keep out of bear and cougar country.

Hike with a buddy. Tell parents exactly where you are going and when you plan to be home. In case you get lost, rescuers need to know where to search.

Leave only footprints. Don't remove flowers, berries and things like abandoned bees' nests from the forest. They are part of the ecosystem. Plus, other visitors after you can also "discover" them.

Trek gear checklist:

- Backpack with water, snacks, hat, sunscreen and sunglasses
- Sturdy, comfortable shoes
- Magnifying glass and small notebook
- Camera and binoculars
- Whistle (in case you get lost), compass and flashlight
- Cell phone (fully charged)
- Small first-aid kit and bug repellent

3 Shoreline search

At low tide, sea water traps in pools on rocky shores. These tidal pools teem with sea creatures. You can peer into the pools and see shore crabs, limpets, anemones [a-nem-on-ees], sea stars, urchins, sea palms, barnacles, chitons [kyte-ons] and sometimes even octopuses.

Tread cautiously, being careful not to crush mussels or barnacles clinging to tidal pool edges – everything is alive. You might even see an oyster catcher – a crow-sized black bird with a long orange beak – looking for little crabs or prying open limpets.

4 Bird trek

How many species of birds can you name? Most people know only a few, yet there are hundreds of different species in B.C. On this trek, try to find at least 20 different species.

One of the best ways to spot birds is to listen first. Then slowly turn to the sound. Search with your eyes before using your binoculars. To help identify each bird, take note of the size and shape. Look for special feather colours, the shape of the beak and markings on the chest and back.

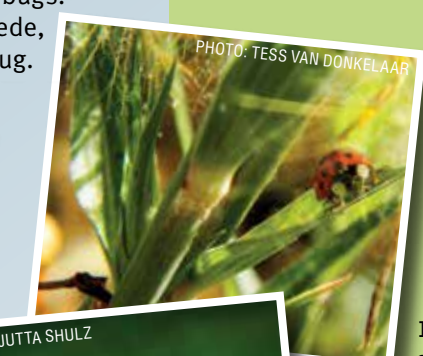
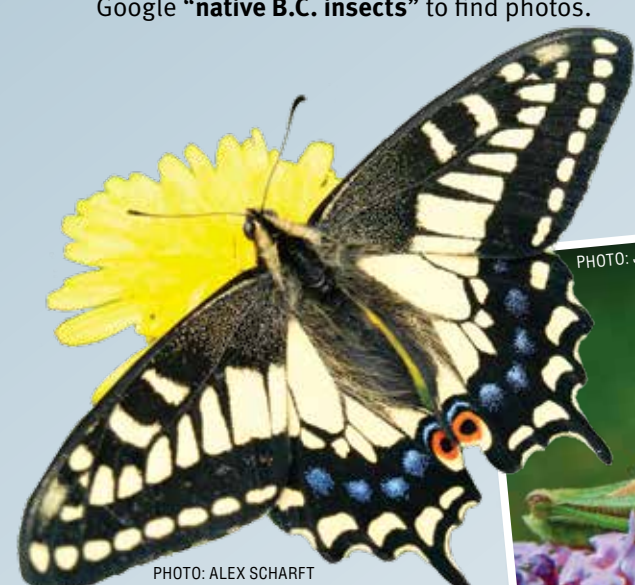


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Hopscotch Habitats: Backyard Beacons for Wildlife

Do you know who your neighbours are?

Not only do we share our neighbourhoods with people, we also share them with wild animals and plants. If you live in the middle of a big city like Vancouver or Victoria, you might not think so, but it's true. Raccoons, skunks, squirrels, coyotes, eagles, hawks and many other bird species, as well as insects, all share space with people. The presence of a variety of trees, plants, birds, insects and other wildlife is a good sign that the environment is healthy, and it also makes our neighbourhoods more interesting and enjoyable.

In cities, the "concrete jungle" – buildings, roads and parking lots – often keeps plants and animals apart, making it difficult for wildlife to find food, shelter and breeding opportunities. Travel from one natural area to another can even be difficult for animals and plants in rural areas if their natural habitat has been replaced by farm and grazing land that offers limited choices for food and shelter.

Creating "hopscotch habitats" is a way we can help wildlife in our neighbourhoods.

If there are enough small natural green spots where wildlife can find food, water and safe shelter, they can "hop" from spot to spot. We can do our part by making our own yards and schools part of the hopscotch habitat for animals.

Bees and Butterflies - Our Best Friends!

Besides making honey, bees are the reason we have blueberries, strawberries, peaches, apples – almost all our fruits and vegetables. Both bees and butterflies are pollinators. They help plants reproduce by transferring pollen from one plant to another, fertilizing the flowers so fruit or vegetables can grow. Mysteriously, honeybees are disappearing at an alarming rate.

Scientists suspect the bees may be getting a virus, but they don't know why. The loss of bees has the world's farmers worried because bees pollinate a third of all the fruits and vegetables.

Your action! Never harm a honeybee or bumblebee, and protect their hives.

Creating Your Own Hopscotch Habitat

A "hopscotch habitat" is a safe place where wildlife can stop for food, water and shelter. Here are some tips for making your backyard (or even your balcony) wildlife-friendly:

- ✓ Plant native trees, shrubs and flowers – they're better for animals. Trees such as mountain ash, hawthorn and crabapple, for example, have berries and fruit well into the winter.
- ✓ Provide several types of year-round shelter to attract a variety of animals. Dense shrubs will provide homes for small birds. Stone walls or rock piles may attract snakes. Evergreen trees welcome squirrels, woodpeckers, crows and other high-nesters. Flowering plants such as phlox, clover, thistle, nettle, milkweed, goldenrod, vetch and sorrel will provide nectar for butterflies and a place for them to lay their eggs.
- ✓ Put out water. Even just a pie pan with an inch or two of water in it will attract a variety of wildlife.
- ✓ Use natural alternatives to pesticides and herbicides or pull out weeds and pick off bugs by hand. Remember, spiders, ladybugs, snakes and dragonflies are your friends – they eat unwanted bugs.
- ✓ Keep your cat indoors – especially in the early morning and just before dark when birds and other wildlife are most likely to come out and feed (cats are natural predators and won't hesitate to attack feeding and nesting birds).

Resources: The Naturescape BC website has great info on how to create a wildlife garden: <http://www.hctf.ca/nature.htm>

Night Flyers Migrate Through Your Yard and School

Did you know that every spring and fall, millions of song birds migrate half way around the world? Hummingbirds, swallows, sparrows and warblers are examples of song birds that hopscotch across the globe moving south to warmer climates in the winter and back north in the summer. Most often they travel at night so you don't see them. Along the way they need to eat, drink and rest. That's why creating and preserving green areas is so important.

Honeybees are why we have most fruits and vegetables



bee wasp

Know Your Bees!

Many people needlessly fear honeybees and bumblebees, thinking they will sting. Yet, bees are gentle creatures who rarely sting, preferring to just mind their own "bees-ness" and go from flower to flower. It is more common for people to be stung by wasps (or yellow jackets) and hornets, who tend to be more aggressive and hang around at picnics and barbecues trying to fly off with your food!



A great neighbourhood green street.



Mountain ash provides berries for food well into fall



Your action... plant a tree to help wildlife!





Recipe For a Fantastic Wildlife Photo

Taking a picture of a wild animal is a completely different experience than photographing a pet. You can follow your companion animal around with a camera, taking shot after shot until you get one you love. But wildlife just doesn't pose! It takes skill, patience and practice to get a great picture. Here's our recipe for taking great wildlife pics:

You'll need...



1. A pinch of patience

Most wild animals are active at dawn and dusk, when they come out to forage for food. Plan your schedule around them, and be prepared to go out on more than one excursion. Wait for the birds and mammals to come by – don't bring food with you to attract them.



2. A sprinkle of silence

Wild animals are very sensitive to movement and sound, so find a comfortable spot and stay as still and quiet as possible! When you have to move, go slowly to avoid startling the animal. Try to sit with the wind blowing in your face and away from the animal ("downwind") so that your scent can't be picked up as easily.



3. A dash of creativity

Focus outside the box! Getting a picture of a deer or an eagle would be wonderful, but animals like bees and grasshoppers are neat subjects too. Just stay clear of predatory animals like bears, coyotes and cougars. Remember that "nature" doesn't necessarily mean traveling far away. Parks, beaches, meadows, forests and backyards are all great places to find wildlife.

... and a camera, of course!



Breanna Richards, Victoria



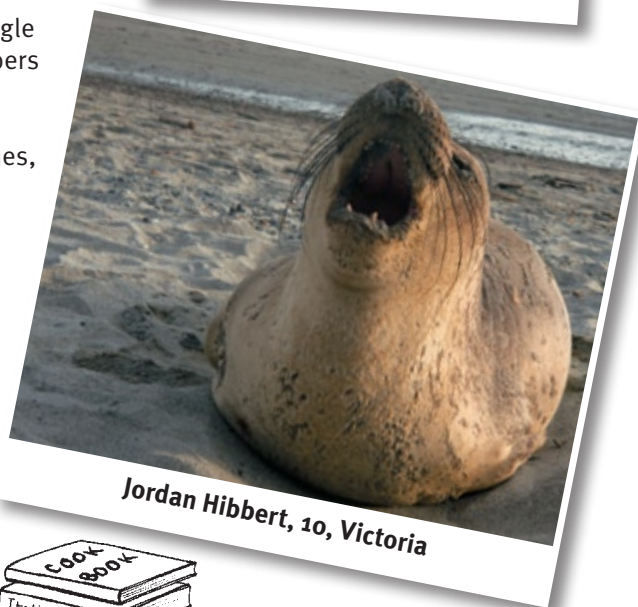
Photos can motivate

Now that you've got your picture, what are you going to do with it?

You'll probably want to show your friends and family how all your hard work paid off. But think about taking it to school to present to your class or animal club, too. Wildlife photos are a great way to inspire people to protect wild animals and their habitat.



Breanna Richards, Victoria



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Kristen Kwong, 12, Richmond



Cassidy Walter, 13, Surrey

HOLIDAY



Amy Huncar, 11, Cranbrook



Snap to it again!

Send us your best photos of animals you've seen in the wild – the "wild" could be a park, a beach or even your backyard. We'll pick five winners to win an SPCA prize pack with some fabulous SPCA swag items. Look for the best photos in future issues of Bark!

Send your entries to BC SPCA Wild About Wildlife Contest, 1245 East 7th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1R1 or email them to kids@spca.bc.ca. Be sure to include your name, age, address and email (if you have one) along with your photos. The contest closes June 30, 2010.

(Note: Please send us copies only of your pictures, as we cannot return photos. Also, by entering the contest you allow the BC SPCA full rights to use and display the photos (with your name credited) in our publications.)