



THE
**ARKANSAS
 EARLY CHILDHOOD
 LETTER**



Arkansas Department of
 Health & Human Services

March/April 2007

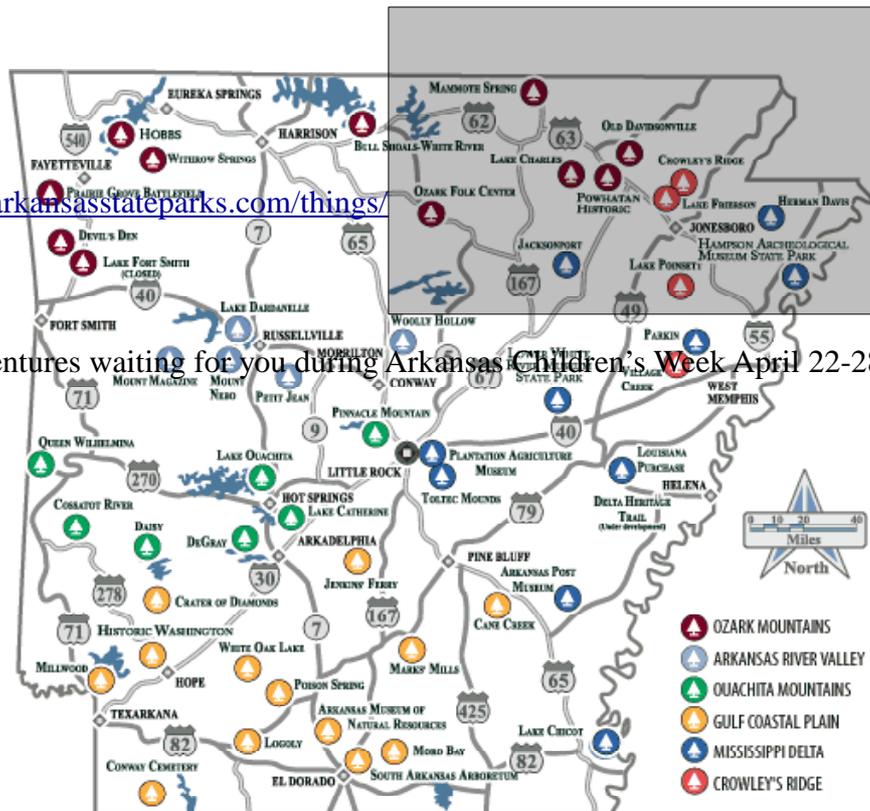
**CELEBRATE ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S WEEK
 THE GREAT OUTDOOR ADVENTURE
 Is best spent in our Arkansas State Parks!**

Arkansas' natural beauty and its history are showcased and preserved in the 51 Arkansas parks and museums of the Arkansas State Parks system. Arkansas parks are spread across the state from the highest peaks to the shores of rivers and streams.

Go to: www.arkansasstateparks.com/things/

for details

on all the adventures waiting for you during Arkansas Children's Week April 22-28, 2007.



**THE ARKANSAS
EARLY CHILDHOOD LETTER**



**The Arkansas Early Childhood
Commission**

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The Arkansas Early Childhood Letter
is an information service of the
Division of Child Care and Early
Childhood Education,
Department of Health & Human
Services.



Parent/Child Outdoor Adventure Activity Cards

Available online

Print them off for the families in your program
by visiting our website at [www.arkansas.gov/childcare/
acw07.html](http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/acw07.html). To place an order, fill out the information below
and return to: DCCECE/AR Children's Week, Box 1437 Slot
S160, Little Rock, AR 72203 or Fax: 501-682-4897.



✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂

Name of Program: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

Number of Children Enrolled: _____

Please send me _____ sets of the Parent/Child
Activity Cards.

Make CDA Scholarship Plans NOW!

Attention Directors and caregivers/teachers! Here is what you
need to know about eligibility for scholarships for CDA course
work. Requirements to be met by persons applying for a
scholarship for CDA course work:

- Be currently employed at a licensed or registered child
care program and be recommended by the Director/
Owner
- Have been employed for at least 90 days in the child care
program that recommends that person
- Have completed one of the following five (5) trainings:
 - 1) Child Care Orientation Training (CCOT)
 - 2) Arkansas Children's Program Administration
Orientation (Orientation for Directors)
 - 3) Early Care and Education Direct
 - 4) Family Child Care Providers Orientation
 - 5) Secondary Child Guidance, Management/Services

Plan ahead to make sure you meet the eligibility requirements
for receiving a scholarship for CDA coursework. To find out
more about the five training programs go to the registry
website: <http://professionalregistry.astate.edu>

Your Family's Great Outdoor Adventure



When you were a child, what was your favorite thing to play? Was it building a play house with pine straw? Roaming the neighborhood on your bicycle?

For many adults, their childhood memories include lots of time spent outdoors. It might have been reading a book in the shade of a tree or playing somewhat disorganized baseball games with assorted siblings and neighbors. Or maybe you spent time exploring forests, streams, and fields. Most of these activities were "kids only", with limited participation by adults.

The world has changed in the past 25 years. Children spend more time in child care and organized after-school activities. When many families get home from work and school, there's dinner to prepare, homework to complete, laundry to do. The tasks of daily life leave little time for outdoor play.

Safety concerns make parents hesitant to allow children to spend time outside without close supervision. The radius that today's children are allowed to roam outside their homes is almost 90% less than 20 years ago. Parents are also concerned about sun exposure and allergies.

With computers, video games, DVDs and CD players, attractive indoor activities compete with nature for children's time. In fact, the average American spends 95% of his/her time indoors.

We know that playing outside can help children understand themselves better, as well as discover the world around them. Nature play reduces stress, sharpens concentration, and promotes problem solving.

The more time children spend outdoors, the more they will learn about their environment. As children gain knowledge of the natural world, they grow to appreciate and respect our environment.

The most important thing that young children can learn about the Earth is that it is full of beauty and wonder. The best way for children to learn about the environment is by interacting with it. Children need lots of time outside.

How much time does your family spend outdoors? If your answer is, "not enough," the suggestions in this brochure can help. Use the ideas on the following pages to explore the natural world with your child. Have fun and enjoy your Great Outdoor Adventure!

THINGS TO DO OUTDOORS

- Have a picnic! Eat lunch or dinner or a snack in your backyard or in the park.
- Collect leaves, acorns, pecans, or pine cones. Compare the items in your collection. Do they all look alike? What differences do you see?
- Look for different types of trees near your home. Find out the name of each tree.
- Blow dandelion "puffs".
- Plant some seeds and watch them grow.
- Take a flower walk. Look for different colors and shapes.
- Lie on your back in the grass and watch the clouds. Use a pencil and paper to sketch the cloud shapes that you see. What do these shapes remind you of?
- On a rainy day, press your nose to the window and watch the rain. Take a walk during a gentle rain. Splash in puddles.
- Hang wind chimes or a wind sock where you can hear and see it from a window.
- Listen to the sounds the wind makes. Try to re-create the sounds using household items.
- Fly a kite.
- Wiggle your toes in the sand, dirt, or mud.
- Draw in the sand or dirt with sticks.
- Collect rocks. Make up a game to play with pebbles and rocks.
- Sit quietly on the ground and watch ants. (Be sure these are not fire ants!) Sprinkle bread crumbs on the ground and watch what happens.
- Watch the birds. How many different birds do you see in your yard?
- Hang a bird feeder or put out a bird bath. Keep a list of the birds that visit.
- Run barefoot through the grass.
- Closely observe a small area of grass (about one square foot) Describe what you see.



Want to do more?

Cut apart the cards on the following pages. One side of each card contains information about a plant or animal. On the reverse side, you will find a family activity that will help you extend your Great Outdoor Adventure.



RABBITS

Rabbits may be our most popular wild animals. They are famous for their fluffy tails and big ears. Their tails are about 2 inches long and look like puff-balls. Their ears can swing in any direction to pick up the slightest sounds.

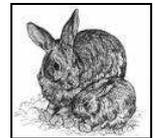
Rabbit noses help them sniff out danger. A rabbit's whiskers are long but usually light colored, so they are not very easy to see. A rabbit's back legs are longer and stronger than the front legs. Many rabbits thump their hind feet on the ground as a danger alarm.

Most rabbits do not dig burrows for homes. They scratch a shallow "bowl" out of the ground, called a form. Forms are usually hidden under bushes and trees. Rabbits spend the daytime there, going out to eat from evening to morning.



WHAT IT EATS

Rabbits eat a lot of different things. They eat weeds and almost every kind of berry and fruit. When they can get into a garden they will eat the lettuce, cabbage, beans and carrots they find. But they do not dig them up.



SQUIRRELS

Not all squirrels are tree squirrels. Some are ground squirrels that do not climb trees. They have shorter, skinnier tails, and "talk" a lot more than tree squirrels.

Squirrels are famous for their bushy tails, and those tails come in handy. In the rain it is a squirrel's "umbrella." When it is cold, their tails are used like blankets.

If they fall from a tree, their tails parachute them to a soft landing.

Most squirrels are active during the day. So you might see more squirrels than any other wild animal. Wherever squirrels eat, they leave behind "crumbs" from their nutty feasts. So watch for them hopping, skipping, leaping and even flying!

WHAT IT EATS

Hickory nuts, beech-nuts, walnuts and acorns are on the gray squirrel's menu. So are seeds, corn, fruits, berries, flowers, mushrooms and caterpillars.

Its favorite spring treat is sweet icicles of sap from frozen maple trees.



Interesting Fact

You can tell which nuts have been eaten by a gray squirrel.



They gnaw a hole in one or both ends of the shell to get the nut out.

WHERE TO FIND IT

The gray squirrel's den is usually in a hollow part of a tree about 40 feet off the ground. They also build twiggy leaf nests. They prefer shadier wooded areas.

You will find lots of little holes in the ground around his home because they bury every nut they find in a separate hole.



BUILD a RABBIT REFUGE



- Rabbit munchies:
Clover
dandelions
Carrots
celery
lettuce
grass clippings

WHAT YOU NEED

- Small branches and twigs (that are less than 2 inches thick and 10 feet long). Tree and hedge clippings

WHAT TO DO

1. Put the longest branches in the middle of the spot, tangling them up as much as you can. Rabbits do not like neat, tidy places, so make the branches all jumbled in a pile that fills up your space. The pile should be at least 3 feet high.
2. Pick a place where rabbits will feel safe, where there is not too much activity or noise.
3. Poke the smaller branches and twigs into the jumbled jungle. Push enough of them in so that you cannot see the ground below the refuge. Do not be worried that rabbits will not be able to get in. They can squeeze through tiny openings, and they will want all the privacy they can get.
4. Place a few small piles of the munchies around the edges of the Rabbit Refuge. It is better not to over load them, or try to put them inside the refuge.
5. Now stay away from the Rabbit Refuge, and look out through your window from time to time. If there are rabbits in your neighborhood, they will come. The best times to see them are early in the morning and near dusk.



HANG a SQUIRREL NUT-BALL

Squirrels love all kinds of nuts. If you hang up a squirrel nut-ball, you will have fun watching them try to catch it-and maybe even swing from it! Don't worry if they pull it down-that's fun too!

WHAT YOU NEED

- All the nuts you can find. It is better if they are in the shell. But shelled peanuts-and even kernels of corn-will also work.
- Peanut butter
- Wax paper
- A piece of thin wire about 12 inches long
- A piece of string or cord 5 feet long



WHAT TO DO

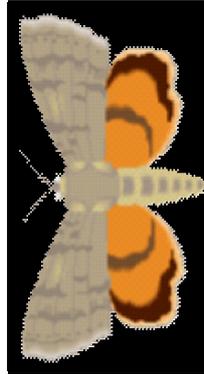
1. Roll the nuts in a thin coat of peanut butter. Place each nut on the wax paper.
2. Make little balls of nuts by sticking smaller nuts together.
3. When you have about ten big nut clusters, stick them all together in one big ball. The nut-ball should be about 6 inches across.
4. Set the ball aside on wax paper for a couple of days to dry.
5. Push the wire through the center of the nut-ball, so half is sticking out on each side. Twist the ends of the wire together.
6. Tie one end of the string to the wire loop. Tie other end of string to a tree branch so ball swings freely.



BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

When a butterfly or moth breaks out of its chrysalis or cocoon, it is wrinkled and wet. It pumps body fluids into its wings until they unfold and dry. Then it can fly.

BUTTERFLY



MOTH

An easy way to tell a butterfly from a moth is to watch it land; If its wings are folded together pointing up, it's probably a butterfly. If its wings are folded against its body or pointing out flat from its sides, it's probably a moth.



Butterflies and moths drink nectar with their proboscis-their tongue. It is long and curled up



inside like a spring. They unroll this hollow tongue to sip the nectar-like you sip a cola through a straw.

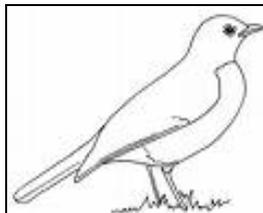
Butterflies fly in the daytime, but most moths fly at night. Butterflies' bodies are slender. Moths have chubby bodies. Butterfly antennae are thin and smooth, with small knobs at the end. Moths have thick, feathery antennae. Antennae are their feelers and smellers. They use them to find food and mates.



WATCH OUT FOR THAT BIRD

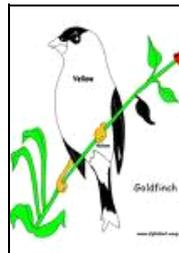
What makes birds different from other animals is their **WINGS**. With those powerful wings, they escape enemies, find new supplies of food, and migrate to warmer places so they can survive winter.

ROBIN



You will see the robin on the lawn tugging up earthworms. They also eat caterpillars, beetles, crickets and spiders—and fruits like apples, cherries and raspberries.

Robin's nest is a woven circle of grasses, twigs, scraps of rags and string. Inside the nest, she molds a cup of mud to fit her body. Look in pine, cedar or spruce trees.



GOLDFINCH



Goldfinches love thistle seeds. She likes to build in in apple trees, elm, maple, cottonwood or willow trees. The nest is made of grasses, bark and moss. It is lined with thistledown.

The best time to watch birds is when they are most active: between 6 and 10 o'clock in the morning. One good way to find most bird nests is to watch for birds carrying nest-building materials in their beaks. You will see this most often in spring or early summer. Then follow the bird quietly to its nest. It's okay to take a close look at a bird's nest. But **DON'T TOUCH** the nest or eggs or babies. And, of course, if the birds put up a fuss, leave the nest right away.

MAKE "MOTH SUGAR"



Moths have antennae that look like miniature feathers. They work like radio aerials, picking up far-away signals. So they can scent "moth sugar" from miles away. Wait until late afternoon to spread "moth sugar," so the sun will cook but not evaporate it.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 3 tablespoons sugar
- Water
- 1 quart plastic jug
- Old paintbrush
- sponge



WHAT TO DO

1. Fill the jug with water.
2. Mix sugar into the jug of water.
3. Use the paint brush to brush the "moth sugar" on a stump, a rock, or a fence post. Or soak the sponge in the mixture and hang it on a tree.
4. Just after dark, go see your new visitors.
5. If no moths have come to the place, next time add a little apple juice to the "moth sugar."

There are more than 100,000 kinds of moths in the world—many will be attracted to this tasty treat!!

GIVE THE BIRDS a SHOWER-BATH

Birds need water to drink and to play in! Some birds love to run through a lawn sprinkler, or even a drippy water faucet. Here's a way to give them some water fun, and you a lot of bird watching fun.

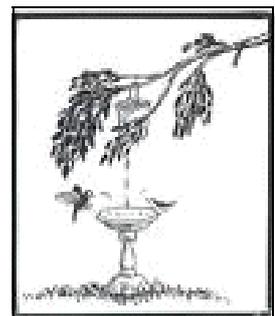
WHAT YOU NEED

- An old pail with a small leak, or punch a small hole in the bottom.
- An old pie pan or plastic pail lid that is shallow, no deeper than 1 or 2 inches. Or use an old garbage-can lid.



WHAT TO DO

1. Hang the pail from a tree limb that is low enough for your reach.
2. Underneath it, place the pan or lid.
3. Fill the hanging pail with water so that it drips water in the pool underneath.



Now stand back and bird watch. You may be surprised to see how many different kinds of birds will come running—and flying—for a shower-bath. After all, birds like to keep cool on a hot day too!



WHITE CLOVER



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

White clover stems may be up to 3 feet long, but they grow along the ground. Runners send down roots at each joint. The stems on which leaves and flowers grow are only about 5 inches tall.

Small and green, clover leaves always grow in groups of three or sometime four. Each as a pale triangle across it. The leaves grow on stems separate from the flowers.

White clovers flowers are small white to pink-white globes that bloom from May to December. They have a sweet smell.

WHERE TO FIND IT

Some type of white clover is found growing nearly everywhere in the United States, in lawns and fields and along roadsides.

WHAT EATS IT

Sulphur butterflies especially like clover flowers. Deer, squirrels, marmots, rabbits and grouse eat white clover leaves.



INTERESTING FACT

Many people think four-leaf clovers are lucky. This idea started long ago when people believed that whoever found one would be lucky the rest of the year.



IDENTIFYING TREE LEAVES and NEEDLES



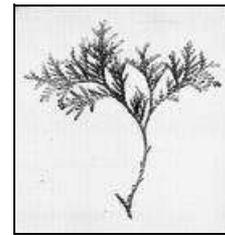
OAK



MAPLE



PINE



CEDAR

There are many kinds of trees all around us. They come in many sizes and shapes.

THE CROWN is the top of the tree where the branches, leaves, seeds and flowers are found.

THE TRUNK is the stem of the tree covered with bark to protect it. It holds the branches toward the sunlight. And it helps food travel between the roots and the branches.

THE ROOTS are the "underground branches" that pull up water and food for the tree from the soil. Roots hold the tree in place.

Trees can be divided into two groups.

BROADLEAF trees have leaves that turn color and drop off for the winter. Their seeds grow inside fruits, nuts, pods or berries.

EVERGREEN or conifer trees have needles that stay green all year long. The seeds grow inside cones.

Make a Container Rainbow



Butterflies love plants such as milkweed, wild rose and Queen Anne's Lace. You will be amazed how quickly they come when the flowers begin to bloom!!



What To Do

1. Fill the ice cream bucket with the garden soil.
2. Lightly press the wildflower seeds into the soil. Remember that in the wild, seeds often lay near the top of the ground.

What You Need

- A clean, empty ice cream bucket with a few holes punched in the bottom.
- Good garden soil to fill it.
- Seeds of any of the short, easy-to-grow

3. Water the top of the soil to moisten it. **Do not** make it soggy.
4. Set the bucket in a warm, sunny place. Water the soil as needed to keep it moist.



MAKE a BARK RUBBING

To make a "bark art" collection, use rubbings from several different trees.



THINGS YOU WILL NEED

- Thin drawing paper, such as onion skin or tracing paper
- 4 thumbtacks
- Assorted Crayon stubs with the paper peeled off
- Any mature trees with healthy bark

Bark can be hurt, so thumbtack your paper just deep enough to hold it in place.

HERE'S HOW

1. Use thumbtacks to pin a piece of paper against the tree trunk at eye level.
2. Rub the flat length of the crayon across the paper.
3. Change the crayon color as often as you like.
4. As you rub, the pattern of the bark will appear.
5. Match your bark rubbing to one of the tree leaves or needles. Hang your rubbing and attach the leaf or needle to it with tape or a stapler.

Grant Writing for Child Care Facilities 2007 Spring/Summer Training Schedule

Staff of White River Planning and Development District (WRPDD) and CHILDREN of Northcentral Arkansas

Module 1—Beginning : Writing successful Grant Requests and Basic Grant Writing Tips (includes the Enhancement Grant and other Division Grants). *Module 1 is appropriate for Family Child Care providers and any Center staff member who may be involved in grant writing.*

Modules 2 & 3—Intermediate and Advanced Grant Writing: These sessions (combined) will include ABC proposals, other State Grant Options, Foundations that Fund Various Child Care Program Needs (such as equipment, learning environments and subsidizing slots), and Federal Grant Applications. *Modules 2 & 3 are appropriate for any child care facility staff member who may be interested in advanced grant writing techniques .*

To register for one or more of these workshops, call WRPDD or CHILDREN of Northcentral Arkansas staff at 800-737-2237 or 870-793-5233. Seating is limited in some locations: please call early to register as workshops will be offered on a first-come-first-served basis.

| City | Location | Date | Time |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Mountain Home Module 1 | First Baptist Church Lower Fireside Room 400 Club Blvd., Mountain Home | Thursday March 15, 2007 | 6:00—8:00 p.m. |
| Mountain Home Modules 2 & 3 | First Baptist Church Lower Fireside Room 400 Club Blvd., Mountain Home | Friday March 16, 2007 | 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. |
| Russellville Module 1 | 1st United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall 301 S. Commerce Russellville | Thursday March 22, 2007 | 6:00—8:00 p.m. |
| Russellville Modules 2 & 3 | 1st United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall 301 S. Commerce Russellville | Friday March 23, 2007 | 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. |
| Ft. Smith Module 1 | Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council 4831 Armour Ft. Smith | Monday April 9, 2007 | 6:00—8:00 p.m. |
| Ft. Smith Modules 2 & 3 | Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council 4831 Armour Ft. Smith | Tuesday April 10, 2007 | 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. |
| El Dorado Module 1 | 1st United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall 201 S. Hill, El Dorado | Thursday May 17, 2007 | 6:00—8:00 p.m. |
| El Dorado Modules 2 & 3 | 1st United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall 201 S. Hill, El Dorado | Friday May 18, 2007 | 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. |
| Paragould Module 1 | Eastside Baptist Church Fellowship Hall 529 E. Court Street Paragould | Monday May 21, 2007 | 6:00—8:00 p.m. |
| Paragould Modules 2 & 3 | Eastside Baptist Church Fellowship Hall 529 E. Court Street Paragould | Tuesday May 22, 2007 | 8:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. |



Department of Health & Human Services
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
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North Little Rock

School of
the 21st Century
July 23-25, 2007
Little Rock