WITH GRATITUDE

During the 2014-2015 academic year, all our educational programming will be financially assisted by The Bea Aldrink Idema Foundation. We are truly grateful for their generous support of our elementary school visits, Critters & Company, First Saturdays, adult education, and spring break programs. This grant will allow thousands of adults, families, and children to experience nature first hand during our various educational programs. It will also give more than a dozen Calvin students work experience, preparing them for future careers in science and education.

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NEW! PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There has been a lot of discussion about the profound shift taking place in America, in which today’s generation of children is the first to grow up indoors. Their plugged-in lives are often devoid of exploring the natural world. If children are detached from nature, how will they learn about, understand, and value nature? How will the next generation care about the land and be stewards of its resources? Many studies have shown the health benefits of learning about the environment outdoors: better reasoning skills, improved focus, academic achievement in core subjects, greater interest in learning overall, more physical activity.

In light of this shift, we are pleased to offer Project Learning Tree and Project WILD professional development workshops. These are two of the most widely taught environmental education and conservation programs, by formal and non-formal kindergarten through high school teachers. The programs have been used by over one million educators, in all 50 states, for more than 30 years.

Both programs have created quality curriculum materials, representing the work of peers in the fields of education and natural resource management from across the country. Project Learning Tree and Project WILD provide educators with award
winning resources to engage their students. Their interdisciplinary curriculum has been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness and meeting state educational standards. Educators see these programs positively impacting student knowledge about, and attitudes toward, the natural world.

At these lively and inspiring professional workshops, participants are introduced to Project Learning Tree or Project WILD materials, activities, and strategies. Through hands-on demonstrations of interactive activities, educators gain the experience and confidence needed to work with their students and integrate the programs into their teaching. With a large number of outdoor activities, the workshops will give you the tools and resources you need to make outdoor learning part of your lesson plan. These programs are easy to implement, easy to adapt to various ages, and promote active participation and cooperative learning.

Workshops available at the Ecosystem Preserve, or at your location, are:

- Project Learning Tree
- Growing Up WILD
- Aquatic WILD
- Flying WILD

For more information about the workshops, [click here](#).
REGISTER TODAY FOR FALL PROGRAMS

Fall program topics for Pre-K to 6th grade include: Sensory Adventures, Amazing Animals, Terrific Trees, and Beech Maple Forest Exploration. These programs provide information about our local ecosystem and the flora and fauna of West Michigan, encourage stewardship, and help students develop a sense of place.

Fall programs run from October 1–November 14. Programs are 90 minutes in length, and cost $3 per student. Currently, National Heritage Academy schools are eligible to attend our programs free of charge, thanks to a funding grant.

For more information visit our website, or contact Julie Wilbourn to register your class. To register, we will need your name and school, desired program topic, grade level, number of students and adults, preferred dates/times, and the best way to contact you.
**INSPIRING IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM**

Each newsletter, we will share with you some of our favorite ways to get students outside learning about the natural environment. You do not need to have forests or fields surrounding your school; school yards can work just as well for experiential learning. Our school yard activities are hands-on, require few supplies, and are easily adaptable to meet your students’ needs. We will also share with you some of our favorite storybooks, art projects, and other resources to enhance learning in the classroom. Additional ideas and photos of art projects and storybooks can be found on our [Pinterest page](#).

**WILD TURKEYS**

Many of us remember making hand print turkeys in elementary school. Turkeys are synonymous with the Thanksgiving holiday, and always seem to show up in the classroom during the fall season. Not only are they showing up in the classroom, but wild turkeys are being spotted all throughout the city of Grand Rapids. Huge flocks live right in the middle of our city, and can be seen roosting in trees in our backyards, or strutting up and down city sidewalks. You might even discover signs of them on your school playground. Looking back, you would never know that at one time the wild turkey was almost extinct due to over hunting and habitat loss. By 1900, wild turkeys were extirpated from Michigan. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and other conservation and hunting organizations worked together to reintroduce the wild turkey to Michigan. Today, they have adapted to living in both rural and urban areas, and their population has soared. Their return is considered one of the greatest wildlife conservation stories in America’s history. Turkeys are fascinating, and I invite you and your students to learn more about these familiar birds.

**Did you know?**

- The wild turkey we
usually see in photos is not the same as the domestic turkey that we serve at Thanksgiving. Domesticated turkeys took a circuitous route to America’s dinner tables. Wild turkeys were first domesticated in Mexico and then exported to Europe, only to come back here later.

- Adult male turkeys are called toms or gobblers, and females are called hens. Baby turkeys are called poults; adolescents are called jakes.

- If you find Turkey scat, you can tell if the turkey is a gobbler or a hen. Gobbler droppings are shaped like a “J”, while hen droppings look like a spiral shaped pile. If droppings are old, they’ll crumble when you touch them with a stick. Fresh droppings are soft, which means a wild turkey was recently in the area.

- The wild turkey’s bald head can change color in seconds with excitement or emotion. The birds’ heads can be red-pink, white, or blue.

- Wild turkeys sleep in trees. The birds are usually seen walking, so many people are surprised to discover they can fly. Though they only fly for short distances, they are speedy, reaching up to 55 miles per hour.

- Tom turkeys show courting behaviors with displays of their tails, much like a peacock. Males also use other attributes to attract hens, including the bright snood on top of their beaks, and the wiggling wattle under their beaks.

- Wild turkeys include Eastern, Osceola, Rio Grande, Merriam’s, and Gould’s subspecies. Subtle plumage variations and different geographic ranges distinguish the birds.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES & KITS

All About Birds: Wild Turkey - The Cornell Lab of Ornithology website has lots of interesting information on the life history of the turkey, including cool facts, habitat, diet, nests, and behavior.

Gobble, Gobble: Turkey Talk - As a class, listen to a variety of real wild turkey gobbles, and clucks, and other sounds. Then have your students try to imitate what they hear on this website.

National Wild Turkey Federation’s Wild About Turkeys Education Box - This is designed to teach students about the comeback of the wild turkey, and the importance of managing wildlife resources properly. It is full of activities, posters, and educational tools correlated to national education standards for K-12th grade students, and can be purchased for about $55.
NWTF also offers a **Wild Turkey Anatomy Education Kit** for about $25. The kit includes realistic replicas of hen and gobbler scat, gobbler head, wild turkey egg and two gobbler legs (with foot and spur). This kit complements the book *All About Turkeys*, by Jim Arnosky. You can enrich the story with a tangible experience for your students, by passing the props around as you read the book.

**Moscow Hide & Furs** - This is Jeanette's favorite supplier from which you can purchase wild turkey feathers, and even beards, for students to feel and study.

**FAVORITE STORYBOOKS**

Storybooks are wonderful tools to introduce students to science topics. Information about these books can be found on our [Pinterest page](#). Many of them have accompanying teacher’s guides on the publisher’s homepage.

Below are some of our favorite storybooks and non-fiction books about turkeys.

- *All About Turkeys* by Jim Arnosky
- *I'm a Turkey!* by Jim Arnosky
- *Gobble, Gobble* by Catheryn Falwell. This book also has a free [activity kit](#) online for teachers. The Gobble Animal Trail game can easily be adapted for a school yard or inside the classroom.

**ART PROJECT: Wild Turkey Camouflage Puppet**

Materials needed: One copy of a turkey outline printed on cardstock for each student, crayons, natural items in browns, oranges, reds & blacks (leaves, acorn tops, feathers, seeds, sticks, grasses, bark pieces, feathers, etc.), glue, scissors, popsicle sticks.

Have the students color and cut out a copy of the wild turkey (for template ideas, refer to our [Pinterest page](#)). Then have them glue natural items on it to represent the feathers and help camouflage the turkey. Add a popsicle stick to make a puppet. Then head outside for the students to hide their turkeys.
Can others find their turkeys?