

Explore

the **OUTDOORS**



Activity Guide Instructions

- From **April 1** through **September 1**, complete any of the outdoor activities listed in this guide at an Ohio park, forest or nature preserve (participating locations are listed in the back of this guide and at www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com).
 - Locate the Explore the Outdoors poster at location welcome centers and kiosks. The poster will contain a “secret code” that participants should record in this activity guide. Codes can also be obtained by taking part in an official Explore the Outdoors event (events across the state are listed at www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com).
 - Enter the codes online at www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com to receive a printable certificate signed by Governor Ted Strickland.
 - There are three types of certificates depending on how many activities are completed:
 - › Beginner Explorer (enter 2 to 4 activity codes)
 - › Intermediate Explorer (enter 5 to 7 activity codes)
 - › Advanced Explorer (enter 8 to 10 activity codes)
 - The first 100 children to become an Advanced Explorer will receive a GreenBird birdhouse. All participants will be entered to win a grand prize—visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com for details.
 - Those completing the *Get Caught Up in a Clean Up and Recycle Ohio* activities will also earn a recycling patch.
 - Should you have any questions or problems locating a poster or code, please call **614-784-PLAY** or e-mail explore@dnr.state.oh.us and we’ll send you the code for that activity.
 - Parents, teachers and youth leaders are encouraged to visit us on the web at www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com to download a resource guide, which provides additional instruction and suggested activities.
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Message for Ohio's Parents

Dear Parents:

How many of your favorite childhood memories are of times spent exploring the outdoors? You may remember running freely with neighborhood friends, splashing in a nearby stream or telling stories around a campfire.

Much has changed since then, and slowing down to enjoy the outdoors is not as easy in today's fast-paced world. However, spending time outdoors as a child is extremely important for overall health and well-being.

That's why we encourage you to spend time outside with your family and experience the many benefits associated with our state's natural resources. This fun, interactive publication was developed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to help Ohio families discover the excitement and diversity of our natural world.

Research has shown that children who are in touch with their natural environment have greater physical health, better social skills, better self-image, increased creativity and improved concentration.

Realizing these benefits, we hope you'll take the time this summer to "Explore the Outdoors" with your family.



Governor, Ted Strickland



First Lady, Frances Strickland

Children and Nature

Reuniting children with their natural world

According to Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, children are spending less time outdoors and losing their connection to the natural world. Louv attributes a wide range of developmental and behavioral problems in today's children to this phenomenon.

This has sparked a national movement to reunite children and families with nature—making kids happier, healthier and smarter. Many individuals and organizations are joining this exciting and important movement, and Ohioans are leading the way. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has partnered with the following organizations to help get children outdoors this summer:

- American Heart Association
- Audubon Ohio
- Leave No Child Inside—Central Ohio, Greater Cincinnati
- National Park Service
- Ohio Department of Education
- Ohio Department of Health
- Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
- Ohio Historical Society
- Ohio Parks and Recreation Association
- U.S. Forest Service

What you can do

- Join or start a new Leave No Child Inside initiative in your area. Visit www.childrenandnature.org for more information.
- Invite friends and neighbors to take part in a family nature club that meets once or twice a month to enjoy the great outdoors. Visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com for more information.
- Demonstrate to your child ways to observe nature—talk about how the seasons change, comment on the natural things that you observe.
- Make your family vacations outdoor oriented—consider planning your next vacation at one of Ohio's State Parks.
- Take the Parent's Promise on the following page.

Parent's Promise

Commit to take your child outdoors

Just as it's important to be involved in your child's education, it's equally important to be supportive of your child spending time outdoors. By signing the Parent's Promise you are committing to take your child outdoors this summer and encourage them to explore the wonders of natural Ohio.

- I promise to provide beneficial outdoor experiences for my child by completing the activities in this guide.
- I promise to encourage my child to take part in one hour of outdoor play each day.
- I promise to help improve the mental and physical health of my child through the Explore the Outdoors program.
- I promise to support outdoor recreation in Ohio.

Parent/Guardian

Date

Backyard Explorer

In addition to the 10 outdoor activities that may be completed at participating locations, you can choose to take part in one of the following activities in your own backyard. After completing one activity of your choice, go to www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com and answer a few questions in order to receive the code for that particular activity.



Plant a Garden

Gardening with kids teaches them an appreciation for nature. By including them in the process from start to finish—choosing, planting, tending the plants—you'll give them a sense of satisfaction and ownership.

- Choose plants that suit your environment. Visit your local nursery or garden center to find plants that will thrive in different conditions.
- Build a flower box or create a full outdoor gardening space.
- Plant a vegetable garden—not only will you reap the benefits of being outside while gardening, but your family will enjoy fresh vegetables.
- If space is limited, try a container garden. They're easy to plant and can be maintained indoors or out.





Recycle Ohio



Recycling is one of the best ways you can positively impact the world in which we live. Research shows that 75 percent of our waste is recyclable, which goes well beyond what you toss in your recycling bin at home or at school. The following activities will help you better understand why it's important to recycle.

- Research how many trees recycling paper could save.
- Keep a record of how much paper you throw away in a week and try to recycle more paper items.
- Look for items that carry the recycling logo and determine why we should use items with this logo.
- Help replace what you've used-plant a tree.
- Recycle grocery store bags or look for reusable bags at the grocery store.



Find a Fossil

Fossils are the remains of living things and can be found in rocks, such as limestone and sandstone. Collecting fossils in Ohio is a fun way to learn about plants and animals that lived long before dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Here are some tips for finding fossils around your home:

- If you do not live in an area where fossils are abundant, try looking for fossils in driveway gravel or in rocks along a nearby stream.
- Search your gravel driveway after it rains when dust is washed from the rocks.
- Fossils are usually shinier or duller than rocks and often have different colors, textures, and shapes.
- Closely examine rocks for fossils by getting near the ground or using a magnifying glass.



Camp Under the Stars

activity 1

CAMPING is a great way to enjoy nature, relax and have fun with your family and friends. Your outdoor adventure can include activities like gazing at the stars, horseback riding or making s'mores around the campfire. With something for everyone, it's easy to see why camping is one of America's favorite pastimes.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

There are more stars in the sky than all of the grains of sand on Earth.

checklist:

- tent/tarp
- sleeping bag
- bug spray
- first aid kit
- flashlight
- food & water



Campfire stories

Storytelling is a fun camping tradition. Start with one line that sets a scene, and then take turns adding to the story. The more you use your imagination the more fun it is!

Camping in comfort

For those who don't want to sleep in a tent, there are lots of options. Visit www.ohiostateparks.org to view camping options including getaway rentals, cottages and lodges.



Spot a Bird

activity 2

BIRDS are fascinating creatures and by taking a closer look we can learn something from every bird we see. Venture outside to hear different types of bird calls, track birds that travel all the way from Brazil to nest in Ohio, or identify species that live here year round.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

Owls are the only birds that can see the color blue.

checklist:

- binoculars
- camera
- field guide
- notebook
- pen/pencil
- patience
- water bottle

Life list

Track the birds you spot each time you venture out. Record the bird species, date and location in the Outdoor Notes section on page 27.



How to spot a bird

Stop, look and listen. Birds can be seen on the ground, in shrubs or high up in trees. The best time to see birds is early in the morning or late in the day. Knowing bird calls is also helpful because many species are more easily identified by ear than by eye. To learn about the birds you see and to hear their calls, visit www.ohiodnr.com/wildlife.

Hike or Bike a Trail

activity 3

EXCITING family outings can start by lacing up your shoes or hiking boots and heading to a nearby park, preserve or forest for a one-of-a-kind experience. Exploring a trail is also a great way to get outdoors and get active. To find a trail near you, visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

On average, it takes 2,000 steps to cover 1 mile.

checklist:

- backpack
- binoculars
- bug spray
- camera
- compass
- hiking stick
- snacks
- sunscreen
- water bottle

Trail mix recipe

In a bowl, combine 1/4 cup of any of the following items:

- dried fruit
- granola
- mini chocolate chips
- mini pretzels
- multigrain cereal
- raisins
- sunflower seeds
- unsalted nuts

Trail mix

Fun on the trail

The color challenge: Find 10 things along the trail that are red. The first person to find 10 red things wins the challenge and gets to pick the next color.

Paddle a Canoe

activity 4

PADDLING a canoe, kayak or raft will take you places you can't reach by any other means. You'll discover creatures you won't see on land, such as fish, turtles, frogs and more. Whether exploring a scenic river by kayak or canoeing across a sunny lake, you'll enjoy many new sights and experiences.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

The word "kayak" is a palindrome (PAL-in-drohM) or word that reads the same backward or forward.



Checklist:

- waterproof bag (for clothing)
- first aid kit
- life jacket
- sunscreen**
- water bottle**

Paddling tip

- Sit up straight for balance and paddling efficiency.
- Forward strokes run parallel to the centerline of the boat.
- To stop, paddle backwards.
- To move sideways, put the blade in the water parallel to your boat and pull yourself (and the boat) to the blade.
- Turning strokes are most effective close to the ends of your boat.



Catch a Fish

activity 5

THIS summer, get hooked on fishing. Catching fish for food or pleasure is a timeless activity. You may need to be patient, but the excitement of catching a fish will be well worth the wait.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

Fish don't have ears—they hear or feel vibrations along the lateral lines of their bodies.



Checklist:

- fishing pole
- tackle box (with towel & pliers)
- bait
- bug spray
- sunscreen
- first aid kit
- cooler with ice
- water bottle**

Tips for beginners:

- Children 15 and younger don't need a license to fish in Ohio.
- Beginners should try to catch pan fish—or fish that are usually no bigger than a frying pan—because these fish are plentiful and easy to catch.
- Use live bait, such as night crawlers, meal worms or minnows, to increase your chances of catching a fish.
- When you release a fish, hold it upright in the water long enough to let it regain its strength—this will improve its chance of survival.



Splash in a Stream

activity 6

WHAT better way to spend a hot summer afternoon than cooling off in a nearby stream? Just roll up your pant legs, put on some old sneakers and prepare to get wet! You can spend the day just splashing around or take the time to discover the creatures that live in the stream.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

Some snails can have more than 25,000 teeth.



checklist:

- old sneakers
- magnifying lens
- plastic container

Discover a stream's inhabitants

The water quality and health of a stream can be determined by what lives there. In a healthy stream, there will be a variety of organisms that cannot tolerate pollution.

In an unhealthy stream, only a few types of organisms can survive. Here are some inhabitants that determine water quality:

Good – *mayflies, stoneflies, gilled snails*

Fair – *dragonfly and damselfly*

Poor – *midges and leeches*

You'll be amazed at how many creatures you might find by simply turning over rocks in the stream. Once you find some of these inhabitants you can store them in a plastic container and examine them more closely with a magnifying lens.

Be sure to stay in shallow water and visit one of the participating areas which allow public access.

For complete instructions on how to find and identify stream inhabitants which determine water quality, visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com.



Learn From a Naturalist

activity 7

PARK naturalists offer many programs to help you learn and appreciate the outdoor world around you. Naturalist programs are fun for the entire family and help us learn about the wonders of nature.



CODE



Explorers Fact!

The silk spun in a spider's web is stronger than steel.



Popular naturalist programs

Cache In Trash Out

Find treasure and help keep the park beautiful all while using a GPS navigation unit.

Hummingbird Feeding

Hummingbird experts capture and feed hummingbirds and talk about ruby-throated hummingbirds.

Meteor Shower Campout

Bring your lawn chair and blanket and watch shooting stars brighten the summer skies.

Owl Prowl

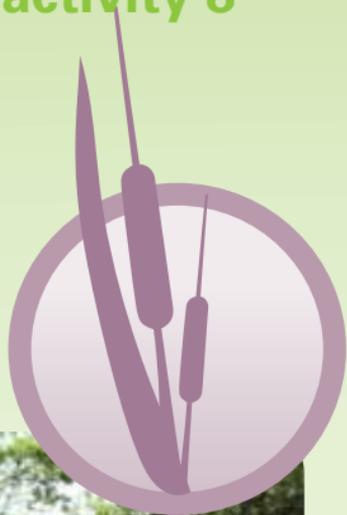
Take a hike to look and listen for Ohio's majestic owls.

For a complete list of naturalist programs, times and locations, visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com.

Explore a Wetland

activity 8

WHEN the first settlers came to Ohio, they found lots of areas of shallow water and soggy soil filled with plants, fish, waterfowl and other wildlife. Today, these areas are known as wetlands. Explore an Ohio wetland to learn all about its unique plants and animals.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

Dragonflies are excellent fliers: they can loop-the-loop, hover and fly backwards.

Ohio wetlands

Ohio wetlands vary by the amount of water, soil and plant life they contain and include marshes, swamps, bogs and fens.

Marsh: flooded grasslands

Swamp: flooded woodlands

Bog: spongy “floating carpet” of land (on top of water)

Fen: a wetland that receives its water from underground springs



Inhabitants of a wetland

During your visit to a wetland, try to spot some of the common animals and plants, such as frogs, ducks, dragonflies, water lilies and ferns.



Swim With a Buddy

activity 9

OHIO has many beaches across the state that you can splash around in on warm summer days. We're especially fortunate to have access to the scenic and sandy beaches along Lake Erie. When you go swimming, be sure to follow the beach safety tips.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

River otters can hold their breath underwater for up to 8 minutes.



checklist:

- beach towel
- sunscreen
- pail and shovel
- frisbee
- snacks
- water bottle



Beach safety tips:

- Only swim inside the buoys at state beaches or lakes.
- Use the **buddy system** and have one member of your group remain on the beach to watch those who are swimming.
- Exercise caution since lakes, unlike pools, may have murky water making it difficult to see drop offs.
- Bring a cell phone for emergency calls.
- Take regular breaks and relax on the beach.
- Use sunscreen and have drinking water available to protect yourself from the sun.

Get Caught Up in a Clean Up

activity 10

EVERYONE enjoys clean, litter-free parks and public places. It doesn't take much effort to improve an area by cleaning up pop cans, fast-food wrappers and other litter. Help keep Ohio clean by participating in an organized clean up. Visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com to find dates, times and locations.



CODE

Explorers Fact!

The items most often found during litter clean ups are fast-food wrappers.

Checklist:

- heavy-duty trash bags
- gloves
- comfortable shoes

Litter clean up

Litter is everywhere—on our streets, playgrounds and parks. Some litter lasts a few weeks and some can last for years. Here is the lifespan of some commonly littered items:

Item

Lifespan

Orange or banana peel	2-5 weeks
Cotton rag	1-5 months
Cigarette	1-5 years
Plastic bag	5 years
Plastic film container	10-20 years
Nylon	20-30 years
Leather	up to 50 years
Aluminum	200-500 years
Glass bottle	Approx. 1 million years



Trash Spoils Everything

LITTER can harm the environment in many ways and can even cause serious injury to wildlife. When discarded as litter, materials such as plastic, glass and aluminum cans cause injury to animals or, if ingested, cause starvation or suffocation.

Litter isn't just unsightly, unhealthy and wasteful, it's illegal. Littering is a serious offense, punishable by fines of up to \$500 and 60 days in jail. Help make Ohio a clean place for everyone to enjoy by reporting the act of littering to your local officials.

How you can pitch in

- Carry a bag with you on your next neighborhood walk to pickup litter—sort through and recycle any of your findings.
- Secure trash container lids to prevent wind or animals from spreading litter.
- When visiting parks and recreation areas, make sure to leave the area clean for the next person to enjoy.
- Encourage your local community to make more trash receptacles available in public places.



Outdoor Notes



Partner Locations

In addition to the state locations listed in this guide, the following local park districts are also participating in this program. Visit www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com for specific park locations and activities that can be completed through the Explore the Outdoors program.

Partner	Phone	Website
Anderson Township Park District	513-474-0003	www.andersonparks.com
Bellbrook–Sugarcreek Park District	937-848-3535	www.bellbrookscugarcreekparks.org
Boardman Park	330-726-8107	www.boardmanpark.com
Bowling Green Parks and Recreation	419-354-6223	www.bgohio.org
Centerville–Washington Park District	937-433-5155	www.cwpd.org
City of Gahanna, Parks and Recreation	614-342-4250	www.gahanna.gov
City of Middletown	513-425-7842	www.cityofmiddletown.org
Clermont County Park District	513-732-2977	www.parks.clermontcountyohio.gov
Cleveland Metroparks	216-635-3200	www.clemetparks.com
Cuyahoga Valley National Park	216-524-1497	www.nps.gov/cuva
Erie MetroParks	419-625-7783	www.eriemetroparks.org
Five Rivers MetroParks	937-275-7275	www.metroparks.org
Friendship Park District of Jefferson Co.	740-733-7941	www.jeffersoncountyoh.com
Geauga Park District	440-286-9516	www.geaugaparkdistrict.org
Greene County Parks	937-562-7440	www.co.greene.oh.us/parks
Grove City Parks and Rec Department	614-277-3050	www.grovecityohio.gov
Hamilton County Park District	513-521-7275	www.greatparks.org
Hancock Park District	419-425-7275	www.hancockparks.com
Hopewell Culture National Historical Park	740-724-1126	www.nps.gov/hocu
Knox County Park District	740-392-7275	www.knoxcountyparks.org
Lake Metroparks	440-639-7275	www.lakemetroparks.com
Macedonia Parks and Rec Department	330-468-8370	www.macrec.com

Partner Locations

Partner

Phone

Website

Marietta Recreation Department	740-373-1616	www.mariettaoh.net
MetroParks of Butler County	513-867-5835	www.butlercountymetroparks.org
Metroparks of the Toledo Area	419-407-9700	www.metroparkstoledo.com
Miami County Park District	937-335-6273	www.miamicountyparks.com
Miamisburg Parks and Rec Department	937-866-4532	www.ci.miamisburg.oh.us
Ohio Historical Society	800-686-6124	www.ohiohistory.org
Perry's Victory & Int'l Peace Memorial	419-285-2184	www.nps.gov/pevi
Portage Park District	330-297-7728	www.portageparkdistrict.org
Preservation Parks of Delaware County	740-524-8600	www.preservationparks.com
Sandusky County Park District	419-334-4495	www.sanduskycountyparks.com
Seneca County Park District	419-447-8091	www.senecacounty.com/parks
Stark County Park District	330-477-3552	www.starkparks.com
Trumbull County MetroParks	330-675-3072	www.metroparks.co.trumbull.oh.us
Village of Canal Winchester	614-834-5100	www.canalwinchesterohio.gov
Washington Township Parks and Rec	937-433-0130	www.washingtontwp.org
Wayne National Forest	740-753-0101	www.fs.fed.us/r9/wayne
Westerville Parks and Rec Department	614-901-6500	www.westerville.org
Wood County Park District	419-353-1897	www.woodcountyparkdistrict.org



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Learn and Live



www.exploretheoutdoorsohio.com