

Wild Wednesdays

Week 1: Introduction to Back Yard Birding

Even in the middle of the busiest cities, there is nature to be found if you know how to look for it. The Bruce Museum's new digital series, *Wild Wednesdays*, will introduce you and your learners to different ways of exploring the natural world that is all around us.

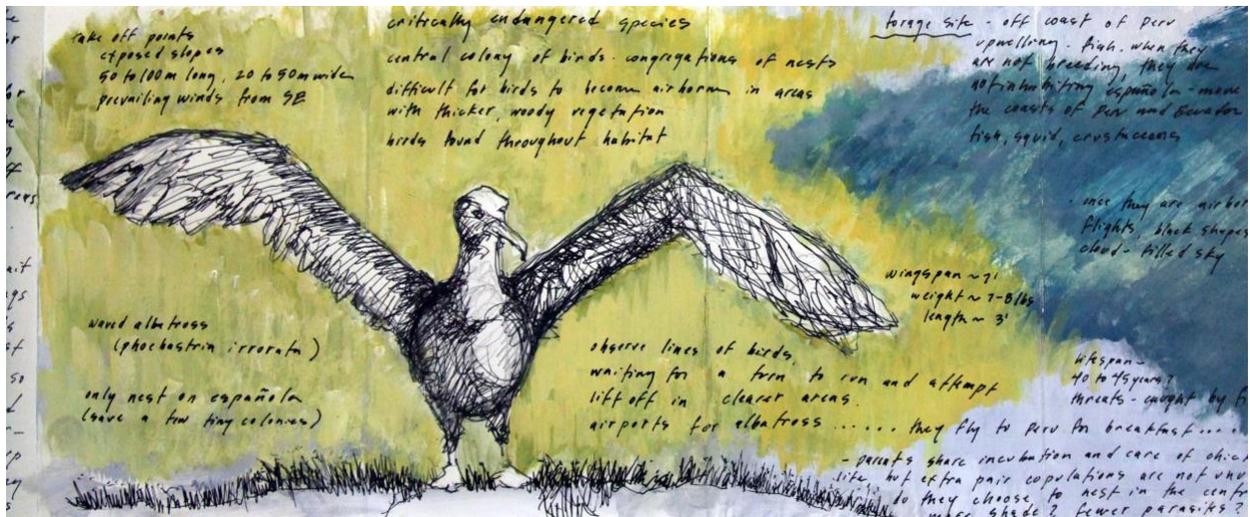
These lessons will connect directly to the "Big Back Yard" exhibition planned for the New Bruce Science Galleries, currently under construction. All *Wild Wednesdays* lessons are designed for groups or solo learners, are appropriate for learners from second grade through high school, and can be appreciated by adults as well.

Wild Wednesdays are created by Manager of School and Community Partnerships Corinne Flax, and artist and scientist Hara Woltz. The Bruce is thrilled to partner with Woltz, whose practice focuses on investigating the relationships between humans, the environment, and other living organisms.

Field observations are integral to Woltz's work; she uses different journals to record what she encounters in far off places and her own back yard. Throughout history, both scientists and artists have used field journals to note their observations of the natural world and develop their ideas. In upcoming weeks, Woltz will show you a variety of ways to notice, observe, and understand the world around you through different creative journaling techniques.



*Artist and scientist Hara Woltz,
co-creator of Wild Wednesdays.*



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Introduction: This guide will help prepare you to go into your back yard, a neighborhood natural space, or to a window with a view of natural spaces and identify the insects, animals, and plants that you see. This preparatory lesson will focus on birds, but the principles of naturalism can be applied to anything observed outdoors.

Have some questions about birding and back yard naturalism? Below are some of the most commonly asked questions.

- Do I need to have a bird feeder to see birds?
 - No, a bird feeder is not necessary.
 - If you do have a bird feeder, make sure it is clean and full of fresh seed.
 - Here are some [easy to make bird feeders](#).
 - It is also useful to identify natural sources of food for birds. Follow this [link](#) to learn more.
- Do I need to have a bird bath to see birds?
 - No, you don't need to have a bird bath.
 - If you do want to provide water for birds, but don't have a bird bath, a few aluminum pie tins of water or large open Tupperware containers of water will do the trick. Just make sure you change them daily to keep the water fresh.
- Will I scare the birds away?
 - No, but the longer you spend time watching without moving, the braver the birds will be; so, make sure wherever you are birdwatching is a comfortable spot.

- What are the best times of day to see birds?
 - Different birds have different habits, but overall the best times are from dawn to early morning and from late afternoon to dusk.

Materials you will need to go birdwatching: a journal or notebook, a pen or pencil.

Materials you may want to go birdwatching: binoculars, nature guides, water or another beverage, a snack, sunscreen, bug spray, a hat, a sweater.

Go Birdwatching

- Get your materials together. Consult the materials list to make sure you have everything you need.
 - If you're going outside, make sure you think about the weather first - you'll be staying still for at least 15 minutes and you want to be comfortable.
 - If you're staying inside, find a comfy spot, near a window.
- Now, you wait.
 - Birdwatching is not a fast sport. It takes a lot of time. Get comfortable and wait (and wait and wait.)
 - If you don't see a bird this time, don't give up! Try again later!
- What if you see a bird?
 - Take a moment to really think about what you are seeing.
 - What color is the bird?
 - How big is the bird?
 - What shape are its body parts?



Bruce the Moose is practicing looking and waiting.

Look through the list of bird behaviors below and see if one of them matches what you see. Do you notice anything that's not on the list?

- Fluffing its feathers.
 - Scratching for food.
 - Pecking at leaves and branches.
 - Looking around nervously for predators.
 - Using dirt or water to bath.
 - Grooming itself with its beak.
- You can use the printable **birding notes** page as a guide for your bird watching.

Next week, Hara Woltz is going to teach us a variety of ways to record our observations to deepen our experiences as naturalists. She is also going to teach us how to make our own science journals.

If you can't get enough birds until then, try the beautiful coloring pages created by Science Curatorial Associate Kate Dzikiewicz.

Share your experiences online with #brucemuseum or email Corinne Flax with any thoughts or questions at cflax@brucemuseum.org

Useful websites for identifying your back yard birds and plants:

[Audubon Bird Guide CT](#)

[Common CT Backyard Birds Wildlife CT](#)

[CT Botanical Society Native plants](#)

[National Zoo Bird Song Guide](#)