

BUILD BACKYARD WONDER FOR KIDS



Jamie Weiss

Your backyard (no matter the size) is a great place to spark a child's curiosity about the natural world around us.

Together you can go on many adventurous explorations that are not only fun but will lead to great conversations and further discoveries.

Wondering how to get started? Here are some suggestions.

Gardening

Plant an edible garden full of vegetables and herbs, along with some native pollinator plants and watch as they grow. The learning opportunities are endless:

- What are the preferred growing conditions for a plant to grow?
- How much sun and water do they need?

- What are the different parts and functions of a plant?
- How do plants rely on pollinators to flower and reproduce?

Gardening teaches sustainable backyard gardening practices, and we get to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

Birding

Set up a good, old-fashioned peanut butter and birdseed crusted pinecone outside a window and watch as birds begin to flock to your makeshift bird feeder. Quietly observe the songbirds plucking away seeds or be a more active observer as you utilize field guides to determine the species and learn facts about them. Record your findings in a nature journal – do you notice different species during different times of the day, month, or year? Can you begin to identify species of birds based on just their calls?

Insect Safari

Any nutrient-rich soil is filled with an array of organisms feeding off the microbes and decaying organic matter. Roll over some rocks, look under logs, or dig in the dirt to see all the insects scamper. Grab a magnifying glass to see all of the intricate details and, with over a million insect species worldwide, you are guaranteed to find at least one to examine.

Art in Nature

Taking the time to observe and record in nature journals is a nice break from our modern, fast-paced world. Grab a sketchpad and colored pencils, crayons, chalk, or even paint, and capture what you see, feel, and hear. Don't worry if your work of art is not frame-worthy; just enjoy your experience connecting with nature and the beauty it inspires.



Audubon Rockies' Habitat Hero program educates community members to practice a form of landscape stewardship called "wildscaping" – landscaping designed to attract and benefit birds, pollinators, and other wildlife right in our backyards.

Explore together!

The backyard is the inspiration of Audubon Rockies' Junior Habitat Hero program. The goal is connecting young minds with nature and developing an appreciation for and enjoyment of the environment we share.

Activities are designed to spark curiosity and generate questions from explorations and discoveries in backyards, nearby parks, or at schools about the world we share with other creatures. Learn about tips and techniques for a healthy backyard for you, your family, and local wildlife – or

come up with a few strategies of your own to become an ultimate Junior Habitat Hero.

The great news is nature can be explored in many ways, whether attending one of our Junior Habitat Hero programs, trying one of the activities described in this article, or creating your own fun.

For other ideas, visit Audubon Adventures at <http://audubonadventures.org> where there is an array of kid and family friendly activities and resources.



Jamie Weiss leads the children emulating water particles in this active game of learning the water cycle.

*If interested in youth programs, please contact **Jamie Weiss**, Habitat Heroes coordinator of Audubon Rockies, at audubon.habitathero@gmail.com or call the Audubon Rockies office at (970) 416-6931. To reach other Audubon Rockies community naturalists – **Dusty and Jacelyn Downey** – contact the education office at (307) 756-3941.*