



The Dragonfly

Creature Connections

Animals at Dodge Nature Preschool



2018 Edition



DODGE
NATURE CENTER

Down on the Farm

When families first visit Dodge Nature Preschool, many see the farm and ask about the opportunities their child will have at the farm and with the farm animals. The children at Dodge interact with animals every day in a variety of ways. Of course there are the farm animals, but there are also pets in the classroom; teaching birds like our big beautiful eagle, Bud; reptiles and amphibians in the lab filled with many Minnesota natives; fish that co-exist with plants in our green house; all of the wild animals that live in our woods, ponds and marsh and travel through the skies overhead; and the collection of taxidermy animals that are part of the natural history collection.

As I think about my own experiences with animals as a farm kid from Western South Dakota, I realize that the animals taught me much about responsibility. My memories go quickly to springtime and the fascination with the babies! I remembered how it felt to hold a baby chick, to run to see the new baby piglets and to wake on a cold spring morning and find a rescued newborn calf staying warm on the kitchen floor next to the open door of the warm oven.

My dad raised white-faced Hereford cattle and they had the most charming white-faced calves. There were always a few "bucket calves" I got to feed. If the calf wasn't getting enough milk from its mother, they were fed from a bucket with a nipple. I loved the job of being their mom!

Mom would order 200 baby chicks from a local hatchery every April. We prepared the brooder house for them. It



Marty on the farm at age 3.

was a great day when we picked those babies up and brought them home. We had to be sure they were warm enough. If they weren't, they might crowd too close together and a few in the middle would be smothered. My mother and I checked on the chicks every few hours when they were so new.

My Dad also raised hogs. One year all 12 sows had 10-12 babies. A very



Peeking at piglets at the Dodge farm.

exciting time on the farm! Dad made sure each mom and her babies had their own little pen. Those moms could be quite mean, so even though the babies were "oh so cute," I only looked in through the window at them. Dad cared and fed the mothers. I participated by helping to carry the buckets of corn and oats from the granary.

My parents depended on the animals for their annual income and the animals depended on us for their care and food. Responsibility for the animals was paramount. It was an every day job. They were more than pets. The animals were intertwined with who we were.

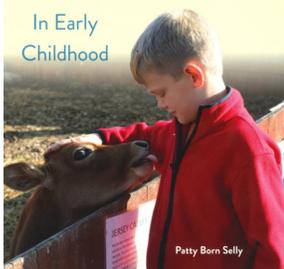
At Dodge, Farmer Don and Farmer Jorge care for our farm animals. Preschoolers visit the farm all year long. They feed the chickens fresh grass, gather eggs to use for cooking projects, and hold baby chicks in the springtime. The children aren't just visiting cute animals. They are getting acquainted and forming relationships. Sometimes they talk about being a farmer or veterinarian when they grow up so they can take care of the animals. Some children request to visit the barn over and over.

As staff prepared for this newsletter, they realized more than ever the role animals play in our day-to-day learning. Animals help us develop responsibility, empathy, scientific knowledge and resilience with tough emotional things like loss and survival. To know, care for, and respect all animals is a gift to everyone. Enjoy the read.

- Marty Watson

Dodge Nature Preschool Director

Connecting Animals and Children



Connecting Animals and Children In Early Childhood

This book helped inspire our investigation into animals at Dodge. From the back cover: *Patty Born Selly, author of Connecting Animals and Children in Early Childhood, currently teaches environmental studies at Hamline University with a focus on early childhood education. In her book she examines the reasons why children should interact and connect with real animals, and it identifies the rich learning that results. You'll find lots of*

practical ideas to create authentic experiences that bring children and animals together—even if live animals are not part of your setting.

Table of Contents

Animals at Dodge Nature Preschool

- 2: Down on the Farm
- 3: The Wonder of Birds
- 4: Seeing through Drawing
- 5: What if I was a Wood Duck?
- 6 & 7: Animal Detectives
- 8: Animal Detectives: Inside the Classroom
- 9: The Role of Animals in Pretend Play
- 10 & 11: Pets in the Classroom
- 12: Animals in your Neighborhood

The Dragonfly is produced & edited by Beki Cook

Birds Fly Over the **Rainbow**. Why Can't I?

The Wonder of Birds

by Judy Moran, Spruce Room Teacher

When I was a child my favorite movie was *The Wizard of Oz*. I remember watching it for the first time on my grandpa's black and white TV. I was enthralled with Dorothy's adventure, but what captivated my attention most was the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." I wondered, "When bluebirds fly over the rainbow, what do they see?" "How do they know where to go?" "Can I go too?"

Luckily for me, my grandpa fed birds out of an old tin pan, filling it with left over hamburger grease, bread and occasionally sunflower seeds. He lived in the woods, just north of Duluth, along with countless chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, crows, and blue jays. These were my feathered friends and I spent hours observing them from behind the frosted kitchen window.

After watching *The Wizard of Oz*, I recall seeing the blue jays, believing (mistakenly) these brilliant blue birds must be the "happy little bluebird" in Dorothy's song. Birds ignited a deep curiosity in me for the world outside my window.

I recognize the same wonder and



Children from the Spruce Classroom scan the skies from the prairie to look for birds.

curiosity about birds in the children I teach at Dodge Nature Preschool. We are fortunate to spend so much of our time together outside, in all kinds of weather. On a fall hike to the prairie, the children spotted a flock of geese flying overhead in a beautiful V formation. A few

of the children began running after them in the tall prairie grasses, waving and shouting, "Good-bye geese! We



love you! We will miss you!" The children knew the geese were flying far away, and they showed empathy by making sure the geese knew they would be missed and loved.

On many levels, these young hearts are making connections to animals much different from themselves. Those are important steps toward building social competence in perspective taking.

While out hiking on the snowy trails the last week of February, the same children stopped and listened to a familiar sound. It was the geese! "They are coming back!" one of the children exclaimed. Through the return of geese, this child is beginning to understand the seasons and Minnesota phenology. The seeds of further exploration into flight, migration and seasonal time have been planted. It is where inquiry-based



Geese returning from their winter migration.

learning takes place, connecting new information to what is already known.

Bird vocalizations also provide a connection to phenology. "Do you hear that? Listen!" a boy says as we hike on a mid-February day. His curiosity is piqued while listening to one of the first spring songs of the northern cardinal. Later he stops and begins to mimic the bird song and to his (and my) delight another boy further down the path answers with his own bird sounds. They begin to call to one another and flap their "wings."

A week later, and with a different group of children, I heard a boy make a chirping sound while swinging. When I asked him to tell me about the sound he was making he replied, "It's the spring bird I heard... 'Chirp, chirp, chirp' and when I heard it I thought spring was close. It was like this, 'chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp.'"

There are many other instances when I have observed children making connections to the world around them through birds: the time our hiking group saw a great-horned owl perched high in a tree (that led to an owl theme for our classroom gathering); hayloft play with the house sparrows who nest and spend the winter in the barn; the broken hay bale that became an imaginary eagle nest where eggs were laid; babies were fed and mommies taught babies how to fly; and hearing the territorial drumming of the woodpeckers. In all instances, I find myself biting my tongue (hard) so that I don't start spouting out scientifically accurate information that would have altered the wonder they were feeling.

Continued on next page

Seeing through drawing

"A pencil is one of the best eyes." - Louis Agassiz



"When they have big eyes. Owls see trees and people. They fly...looking for food."
- Owen, age 5

tree, we can spend time studying the taxidermy owl in the class room.

Through drawing, children are seeing. They are making observations and connections to their wild experience. The details emerge through their drawings: the talons, the shape of the beak, the arch of the wings. They begin to make comparisons as they observe the unique features that an animal has.

Through this closer look, children begin to understand how the animal moves, eats, and blends into its surroundings. Does this animal hibernate, migrate or stay? Are they carnivores, herbivores or omnivores? The children become aware of the inhabitants of the forest and ponds and are soon the ones to point them out as we move through the natural world.

by Kristenza Nelson, Spruce Room Teacher

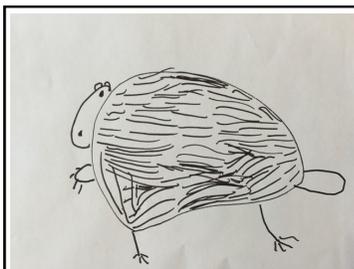
Hiking the trails at the Nature Center we have many opportunities to witness a variety of animals that live here. From the farm to the reptile lab to the raptor mews, animal observations occur daily.

However, to observe our wild neighbors, we have to be quiet. True observation for any length of time is just about impossible for a group of 3, 4 and 5 year-olds. The muskrat slips quickly into the cattails. The deer dart back into the cover of the trees. These magical chance encounters are often the spark of inquiry.

"What was that? What does it eat? Does it have a family? Where does it live?"

It is a gift to see the animals of the forest for those brief moments. They are often the beginning of a deeper study.

We are fortunate to have many taxidermy animals that offer us a closer look. When the owl has flown from the



-Katie, age 5

An up-close look at the muskrat reveals its thick fur that keeps it warm and dry.



Birds, continued

My favorite movie is still *The Wizard of Oz*. As an adult I understand its message differently. I can see how Dorothy needed to find her own way down the yellow brick road without Glenda telling her all the answers. I, too, followed my own wonder and curiosity that led to my work at The University of Minnesota Raptor Center and to Dodge Nature Preschool. If my grandpa had not nurtured my wonder and placed greater value on "accurate" answers for his young granddaughter (saying, "That's a bluejay, not a bluebird!") how would my path have been altered?

Dodge Nature Preschool is a special place where children are provided opportunities to follow their wonder and curiosities and to find the answers they seek so that they can take ownership of their knowledge. It's where children's curiosity is nurtured by providing opportunities for exploration, not extinguishing wonder by the telling of facts.

Last week, a boy was chopping up the spring ice and shouted out, "Look Teacher Judy, it's an eagle!"

I looked up expecting to see a soaring eagle and instead saw a beautiful cloud formation in the shape of a bird head. No, it didn't have a



hooked eagle beak, but it didn't matter. This boy has a sense of wonder and curiosity for the world around him. I wonder where this will lead him.

‘What if I was a Wood Duck?...’

Emotional Connection with Animals at Dodge

by Joey Schoen, Spruce Room Teacher

Experiences with animals support children’s developing emotional skills. Animal encounters often invoke a variety of feelings in children – from tenderness to concern. Oh! Look! That squirrel is making a new home in the snow.” “Tony (the horse) is looking for Terry. He misses him.” “Here you go, worm. Go home and find your family.”

Children may identify feelings and project them onto the animals, opening the door for discussion. Children have a chance to practice empathy in their animal interactions.

Teachers notice children’s emotional responses to animals when children care for classroom pets, nurture stuffed animals as part of their pretend play, and in children’s interactions with Dodge Nature Center’s educational animals.

One of the many animals who captures the hearts of many preschoolers is Skipper the wood duck. Skipper is one of the educational animals who lives at the Dodge Farm. He imprinted on humans and never learned how to migrate in the winter, which is why he cannot live in the wild.

Skipper has many appealing qualities - mainly extreme cuteness - that helps the children to fall in love with him. Perhaps the most salient detail of Skipper’s life for the children is that he lives alone. In the summer months, he has an enclosure overlooking the pond, and, in the winter, he has his own room in the warm chicken coop.

Because Skipper lives alone and is the only one of his kind, he strikes a chord with the children. It is a big worry for a young child to think of being



-Miriam, age 5



Children react to Skipper flapping his wings during a classroom visit.

and I knew how to fly, I could flap my wings, and then I’d fly up in the air, and I would be teaching Skipper.”

Child: “What if I was a wood duck and I was, like, flying, and he was on my back so I could teach him how it feels like.”

After talking to and watching Skipper for a while longer, I began to shut the door to his enclosure.

Teacher: “You guys ready to say goodbye to Skipper?”

Children: “Bye, Little

Skip-Skip”

“Skippy!”

“Bye, Skipper!”

Skipper: *Squeaks*

Children: “He’s making a little noise.”

“I think we should open it again.”

“He says, ‘Hi, teacher.’”

“Awww. He’s afraid.”

In expressing his concern for Skipper, the child was also able to communicate about his own fears of being left alone.

In this one brief encounter with Skipper, we can see how experiences with animals draw out emotional expression in children. It is one powerful reason why we value animal interactions as an important part of the educational experience at Dodge Nature Preschool.



- Lily, age 5

alone, without family. The emotional resonance of his plight compels them to want to spend time with Skipper and often leads to interesting discussions.

One winter’s day, a small group went into the chicken coop to say “hi” to Skipper. A child asked why Skipper lives at Dodge and all alone in his room. I explained that he was raised by people and never learned how to fly to somewhere warm in the winter like the other wood ducks do. The children quietly let this information soak in. Then their empathy came pouring out. They shared their ideas about how they could help him learn to fly to be with the other ducks.

Child: “Only if I was a wood duck

Animal Detectives: Tracking

Class notes: Following the clues from

by Jennifer Elsen, Oak Room

December

Snowy day. Hike through piney forest with Oak Room. Children find many tracks criss-crossing the path. They learned about tracks in the fall mud, and now see them clearly in the deep snow.

- ☑ deer tracks (We know what they are! We know what direction the deer was going.)
- ☑ rabbit tracks (2 large back feet, 2 small front feet)
- ☑ squirrel tracks are smaller circling the tree.

What's this new print?

Teacher circles it in the snow

- ☑ four toes
- ☑ heel pad
- ☑ mixed in with the tracks of the rabbit, deer and squirrels

S.B.: "It looks like a dog was here."
E.N.: "A coyote, they live here."

Which direction are the tracks going?

Who's following who?!

- ☑ bunny & squirrel: toward trees
- ☑ deer: come and go from open areas in the forest
- ☑ coyotes: next to the other tracks on the trail

Coyotes eat deer, rabbit, squirrel!
Was the coyote following them?!

Predator: eats other animals = coyote

Prey: eaten by other animals = deer, rabbits, squirrels



January

Groups from Oak and Willow hike together.

What's that?! A BONE!

- ☑ no meat or fur on it
- ☑ frozen into the snow

Children with sticks dig it out and brush the snow off of it.

A.R.: "Maybe one of the bones fell out before the animal died."

C.M.: "That's not possible."

Teacher: "Maybe one of the bones fell out? So, where do you think the rest of the bones are?"

A.R.: "Maybe we have to dig for them."

Teacher: "She thinks the other bones are still under the snow."

C.M.: "Or maybe it (blew away) when it was windy."

Teacher: "She thinks the other bones blew away."

E.K.: "Maybe they ate it and left it there."

Teacher: "He thinks someone ate the rest of the animal."



Big Predators and Their Prey

from three winter hikes of discovery

Room Assistant Teacher

January (continued)

...ing the bone back to the classroom for further observation.

...alking back towards school. What's that?!

M.: "I want to flip it over. Let's flip it over."

W.: "Ah, that's a duck."

E.: "Maybe the bone is from this duck."

No, the bone is too big to be from the duck!

Are there more bones??

Teachers know a deer had been hit by a car nearby. They suspect coyotes are feeding off of it & leaving remains in the woods. One teacher noticed **A DEER HIDE!** They checked it out for safety before inviting the children over. Children notice skin, blood & fur. Show curiosity, concern, and disgust

Teacher: "What is it everyone? What kind of fur is that?"

A DEER!!!

What else could be nearby?

We find:

- deer leg with fur
- hoof
- two piles of scat: one deer, one unknown

Evidence of living deer recently coming up to the remains to investigate them!



February:

Hike through piney forest with Oak Room. Rabbit scat in the snow! Next to the scat - animal tracks

S.B.: "It's a bunny rabbits."

Teacher: "How do you know?"

S.B.: "Because it has big feet."

Compare tracks in guide book

It's a match!

C.F.: "Let's follow the tracks."

Look! Different tracks! They look like a dog's foot with claws and toes in the tracks.

A coyote had been on the trail too!

It matches the coyote print in the guide.

Rabbit and coyote tracks next to one another. All going the same direction.

Teacher: "Who do you think came first? The rabbit or the coyote?"

C.F.: "A coyote was chasing the rabbit!"

R.T.: "I think a bunny rabbit came first, and then the coyote came after and ate it there."

Teacher: "One of you can be the bunny, another can be the coyote. Follow your animal's tracks."

Deer tracks criss-cross the rabbit tracks. They all lead to the same area in the piney forest where they first noticed the predator and prey tracks in December and the deer bone in January!!



Animal Detectives Continued...

Tracking Children's Learning after a Discovery

by Alex Schluender, Willow Room Teacher

The children's strong curiosity about their deer discoveries provided a wonderful launching point for extending their exploration inside the classroom. Teachers added materials to the science area for further study:

- Deer fur,
- Deer bones,
- Fiction books about deer
- Non-fiction books about deer



We also added tools that encourage observation:

- Magnifying glasses
- Microscopes

To further investigate the idea of "deer," children engaged with these materials in the same way as they did the bone outside: trying to situate these artifacts into their understanding of the world.



-Connery, Age 5

The Icicle "Bone"

In February, children from the Willow room were playing on the playground when a child from the Spruce Room gave a big icicle to a Willow child who had been on the deer bone hike.

Child: "This is just like that deer bone we found!"

Teacher: "How is it like that bone?" (Asking questions gives teachers an opportunity to see how children observe and learn.)

Child: "It is shaped like it, and it is clear. But the bone was white, that is like clear."

Teacher: "How else is it different?"

Child: "It doesn't hold up a leg."

The child was able to compare and contrast the observable properties of the bone and icicle as well as the nature of the objects.



Engaging with Nature Inside

After finding the icicle "bone" outside, the children wanted to study the real bone some more. We moved the deer bone that we had brought back to school in January to the art area. There, children look closely at the bone to draw their own pictures of it. A few of them created pictures of the bone. Some added written labels to their drawings. This is how domains of learning overlap in the classroom: science materials become art models that we integrate with literacy.

Children express their learning about deer in many different ways: discussing, making connections across time, drawing, and writing. The children find, see, and smell nature that they then bring back into the classroom to shape their learning, engaging academic domains through their authentic experience with the deer remains and tracks.



-Lily, Age 5

Puppies, Wolves and Unicorns

The Role of Animals in Pretend Play

by Julie Nelson, Oak Room Teacher

Pretending is an important part of young children's play. Taking on a role in dramatic play gives the child an opportunity to experiment with different social situations and different emotional states. Children learn to understand others' perspectives as they pretend. Through cooperative pretend play, preschoolers gain experience sharing their ideas; listening to others' ideas; negotiating; taking turns and solving problems. The process of pretending builds many important skills.

Animals play an important part in young children's pretend play. The child may take on the role of the adored family puppy; the scary wolf in the woods or the magical unicorn. When children play that they are baby animals, they are practicing nurturing skills, empathy, and caring for others as they play. Being small and vulnerable is balanced by being nurtured and adored.

Children often choose a powerful role when they pretend. Choosing to be a wild animal such as a cheetah or a wolf allows the preschooler to let go of feeling like a vulnerable, young child

and instead to embrace a sense of being strong, fast, and powerful in the world.

Magical thinking may be part of children's animal play as well. In the Oak Room this year, children first played horses as they raced down the trails in the woods, then changed the play to being unicorns. Unicorn play added the dimension of magical powers, and children explored new

ideas and possibilities, through their play. At the nature preschool, children combine their nature center experience with their magical unicorn play. They've become experts in identifying scat, knowing what animal has been on the trail by the shape, color, and size of the scat. So, it was not surprising that the children announced that unicorn scat is pink and sparkly.

Animal play may include danger, conflict and problem solving. One day the energy in the classroom suddenly



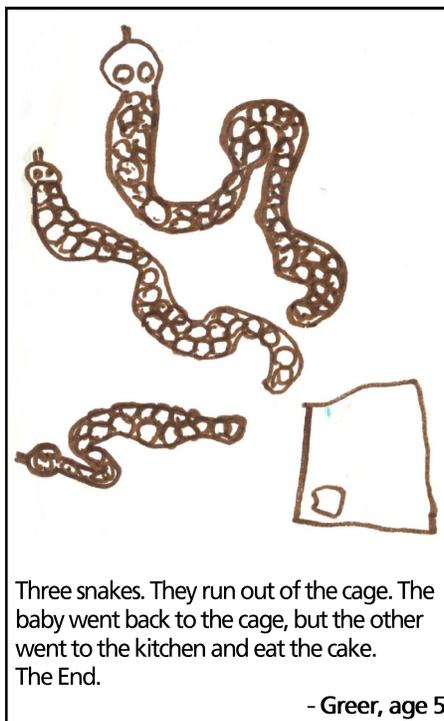
A child plays "raptor center" in the Oak classroom.

escalated, with a group of children becoming very noisy and active in their play. Children were moving quickly about the room, returning to their places with various materials given to them by other growling, snarling children. The teacher stepped in to find out details of the game. The children were playing wolves versus park rangers. The wolves were hungry and were going to eat the park rangers unless the park rangers found other food for the wolves. The children had sat down together, quietly sharing their play suggestions, until they agreed upon an idea that everyone wanted to play. They chose roles, and the action began.

While wolves versus park rangers was not necessarily the teacher's favorite play narrative, the children were delighted by their game. High arousal play offers new learning opportunities. Children practice managing their arousal. They practice following school safety rules even with high energy, excited play. Children differentiate between real and pretend, pretending to be aggressive to the park rangers while consistently exhibiting prosocial behavior and delighting in their shared experience. Being able to manage arousal is a very important skill for preschoolers. This kind of high-energy pretend play using animals as a theme provides an important opportunity to do just that.



- Graylyn, age 5



Three snakes. They run out of the cage. The baby went back to the cage, but the other went to the kitchen and eat the cake. The End.

- Greer, age 5

Pets in the Classroom

Offering the chance to connect with animals is a core component of the nature-based education experience at Dodge Nature Preschool. To this end, we have committed to the responsibility of conscientious care for classroom pets. Sustained relationships over time with classroom pets provide: a chance to connect with an animal for children with little exposure to animals at home; a chance to learn respect for life; an increased sensitivity to the different needs of others; a chance to learn what living things need for survival; and a calming presence for tension release.

Amphibian Ambassadors

Australian Tree Frogs Teach Us About Minnesota's Frogs and Toads

by April Greibrok, Oak Room Teacher

Even when there is snow on the ground and the frogs outside are hibernating, children learn about frogs inside of the classrooms by close observation of our pet Australian Tree Frogs, Big Sister and Little Brother. These amphibian ambassadors are not native to Minnesota, but they offer a rich opportunity for children to learn about frogs and kindle interest in animals that reside right outside of our door.

Reading books—*Frog and Toad, I'm a Frog*, non-fiction books on metamorphosis—and singing *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* adds to the children's interest in these class pets, but the real spark of knowledge comes from seeing these animals up close and the opportunity to touch and interact with them.

"Their toes stick to the glass."

"They feel sticky."

The frogs eat crickets (so it's like having two kinds of classroom pets!).



After helping to put the crickets in the frog tank for a feeding, a preschooler commented on Little Brother's camouflage.

Child: "He stays very still so he blends in. And they will get close so he can snatch them."

Teacher: "How does the frog eat?"

Child: "With his tongue like this." (She demonstrates sticking out her tongue quickly).

Our tree frogs also connect the children to experiences they have out on the Nature Center grounds. Dodge Nature Center is home to many native frogs and toads. In warmer months, children are able to interact with the frogs and toads that call the Nature Center home.

Children learn how to catch and hold them while being as gentle as they are with their beloved classroom pets. The children show concern for the animals' health and well-being. They learn about frog habitats in the classroom, and they often try to recreate one for the toads or frogs that they catch in order to observe the animals closely for a longer time. Children gather bugs to provide the

frog or toad with food. The native frogs and toads may visit with a class for part of the day, but they are always released back to their natural habitat.

Connecting children to the natural world is an important part of preschool development. Our pet tree frogs support children's connection to the world of amphibians both inside the classroom and out on the trail.

Jack the Corn Snake



Rocky & Shelly: Box Turtles



Responsibility, Empathy, Community

Caring for Hilda the Hen

by *Johannah Christensen, Willow Room Teacher*

"Hilda's here today. Hilda's here today. Hey, hey! Hooray, hooray! Hilda's here today."

These catchy welcome songs work to foster a classroom community as we greet one another at the start of each day. And every morning as we sing together, Hilda is right at our feet, cooing with us. The children have welcomed our sweet hen, Hilda into our classroom community and ensure that a day does not go by without greeting our feathered friend.

It doesn't take long for the children to bond with Hilda. She leaves a big impression on the hearts of our preschoolers. On our first day of school,

Hilda comforted the child who had a difficult separation from mom; brought a smile to a child who was nervous about his first day; and brought two children together when they worked to dig up worms for her morning snack. She was instantly a part of our community.

Since that first day, we have seen the connections grow even stronger. The children are now working together to care for Hilda and show her the love she shared with them.

On a cold, wintery day, the children were very aware of Hilda as we bundled ourselves up and headed out into the snow.

As we were observing Hilda outside, a child asked, "Why doesn't Hilda have to wear a coat in the winter?" The children pondered that question for a few moments and had some very insightful perspectives on it...

"Well, she doesn't need one because she has feathers, and those will keep her warm all the time."

"Yeah, I think she likes the snow."

"Hey, look she likes to eat snow like me!"

This curious question opened up a grand conversation about Hilda, and how we can help care for her, through these winter months.

"Look, her leg is starting to shake. Maybe she really is cold!"

"Yeah, I think we need to get her warmer."

"Let's put her back in her house. Then she doesn't have to walk in the snow. I think she'll like that better."

The group of four children then cooperatively called and sang to Hilda, trying to direct her over to her coop.



Children feed Hilda on the playground during the winter. They know that Hilda's favorite snack is meal worms.



The Spruce Room Fish Tank

Our fish tank is home to a small group of platys and zebra fish. The children draw pictures of the fish to decorate their tank.



Interacting with Animals in Your Neighborhood

by Britney Stark, Oak Room Assistant Teacher

Most of us live in an urban area not a nature center. Yet many of the animal experiences children have here at Dodge can be similar to those in your neighborhood. The interactions, experiences, and benefits happen in your yard, on a walk around the block, at your neighborhood park, at a local lake, during a visit with your neighbor's pet, or out on an adventure at a State or National park. All it requires is a keen eye and an inquisitive spirit.

When observing and/or interacting with an animal or pet:

- Get excited.
- Let your child lead the discovery.
- Encourage your child to use all of their senses to make observations.
- If there is a mystery, help them discover the clues to solve it.
- When your child asks a question ask them, "What do you think?"
- Withhold the answers, nudging your child towards making their own discovery; ask the question in a different way, revisit previous experiences to lead them to the answer.
- Study a critter safely and up-close in a safe container (a jar, fish bowl, small aquarium) for a short period of time.
- Discuss what the animal needs to survive. Where does it live? What does it eat? etc.
- Is it a bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian or insect?
- Use books, field guides, pamphlets, apps, and the Internet to go deeper into your child's discovery.
- Keep children engaged with tools: magnifying glass, binoculars, field guides, rulers, small bug catcher containers.
- For some children, technology may be the hook that gets their interest, leading to a deeper understanding and connection to the natural world around them.



If you find an injured animal...

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Roseville, MN is the place to call if you find an injured or abandoned baby animal. If you find a baby animal and it has fur or feathers, leave it where it is. It is most likely old enough to be on its own. You can always call to ask whether or not they will take the animal. <https://www.wrcmn.org/>

Books & Field Guides

- *Connecting Animals & Children in Early Childhood* by Patty Born Selly
- *Birds of Minnesota Field Guide* by Stan Tekiela
- *Mammals of Minnesota Field Guide* by Stan Tekiela
- *Reptiles & Amphibians (MN, WI, MI) Field Guide* by Stan Tekiela
- *Animal Tracks of the Midwest (Adventure Quick Guides)* by Jonathan Poppele
- *Tracks, Scats, & Signs (Take Along Guides)*
 - *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects & Spiders*

Pocket Guides

- *Minnesota Wildlife: An Introduction to Familiar Species* by James Kavanagh
- *Minnesota Birds* by James Kavanagh
- *Snakes & Lizards in Your Pocket: A Guide to Reptiles of the Upper Midwest* by Terry VanDeWalle

Apps for Handheld Devices

- **Merlin Bird ID** by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a very simple app that you and your child can use to identify a bird. It includes multiple photos of each bird, a few facts, and recordings of its songs.
- **iTrack Wildlife Basic** for \$4.99 includes the tracks & signs for 40 mammals. There is a "Lite" version for free, which has the information for 8 species.
- **Audubon Owls** has many features including owl identification, recordings, etc.
- **Monarch Migration** is a tool for tracking the migration of monarchs butterflies. It is a citizen science program supporting Monarch Watch and their research.
- **eBird** is an app for submitting you sightings of birds; this is part of a citizen science program.
- **NaturesNotebook** is an app from the USA National Phenology Network. This is another Citizen Science program where participants record seasonal occurrences at their location (arrival of migratory species, first snow, first budding, etc.).



Dodge Nature Preschool
1715 Charlton Street
West Saint Paul, MN 55118



Dodge Nature Center
365 Marie Ave. West
West Saint Paul, MN 55118

Contact Dodge Nature Center: Marty Watson, Preschool Director

mwatson@dodgenaturecenter.org

www.dodgenaturecenter.org

(651) 455-4555