



Get Outside: Environmental Education is Easier Than You Think!

Presented by Ben Baird

March 31, 2022



Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Spokane Tribe on which I reside today. I think it's important to acknowledge the land because growing up in this area, I never heard the traditional names of the territories. Indigenous people were talked about in the past tense and all the struggles they faced were in the past tense as well. It is easier to deny Indigenous people their rights if we historicize their struggles and simply pretend they don't exist today.

I would like to take this opportunity to commit our time together to the struggle against the systems of oppression that have dispossessed Indigenous people of their lands and denied their rights to self-determination, work that is essential to human rights work across the world.

Learn more at Native-land.ca

Spokanetribe.com



About Me

- Worked in the youth development field since 2004.
- Licensed Childcare, drop-in programming, outdoor ed.
- White-Riley-Peterson Policy Fellow (Go 21CCLC!)
- Lived in the PNW for around 35 years.
- I have a 4-month-old puppy named Cedar.
- 4 kids
- Favorite color is orange and I have a lot of orange things. (clothes, Crocs, water bottles, backpacks, my car)
- I would rather be fly fishing than doing anything else.
- Bucket list includes hiking the entire Appalachian Trail (Georgia to Maine) and catching a native fish in every state.



A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen trees in the middle ground, and a range of mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The text is centered over the image.

**What is your favorite thing to do outside?
Why?**



Agenda

- Welcome
- Opening question
- Review Agenda, Objectives, and “housekeeping”
- What. Why. Where.
- Opening Activity
- Risk Management, Considerations, & Planning
- Sample Activities & Practice
- Curriculum & Resources
- Closing



Objectives

Participants Will

- Understand why outdoor and environmental education is important.
- Learn guiding principals and best practices.
- Gain resources to aid in implantation of OEE into existing programming.



“Housekeeping”

- Selfcare
- Yuck/Yum
- Q&A
- Resources
- Have fun!

The What.

Outdoor & Environmental Education is:

- A way to learn about the environment
- A space to develop skills
- A pathway to understand global challenges
- A shelter for making healthier choices
- A lot of fun



The Why.

- Our environment sustains all life on earth.
- Our economy thrives on a healthy environment.
- Research tells us that time in nature provides physical and psychological benefits.
- Personal and cultural identities are often tied to the environment around us.
- *For young people OEE:
 - Improves academic achievement
 - Encourages environmental stewardship
 - Deepens personal development and wellbeing
 - Strengthens communities
- **<https://www.neefusa.org/education/benefits>*



The Where.

- City Parks
- Greenbelts
- State Parks/National Parks
- Natural Areas
- Backyards & Neighborhoods
- Almost Everywhere

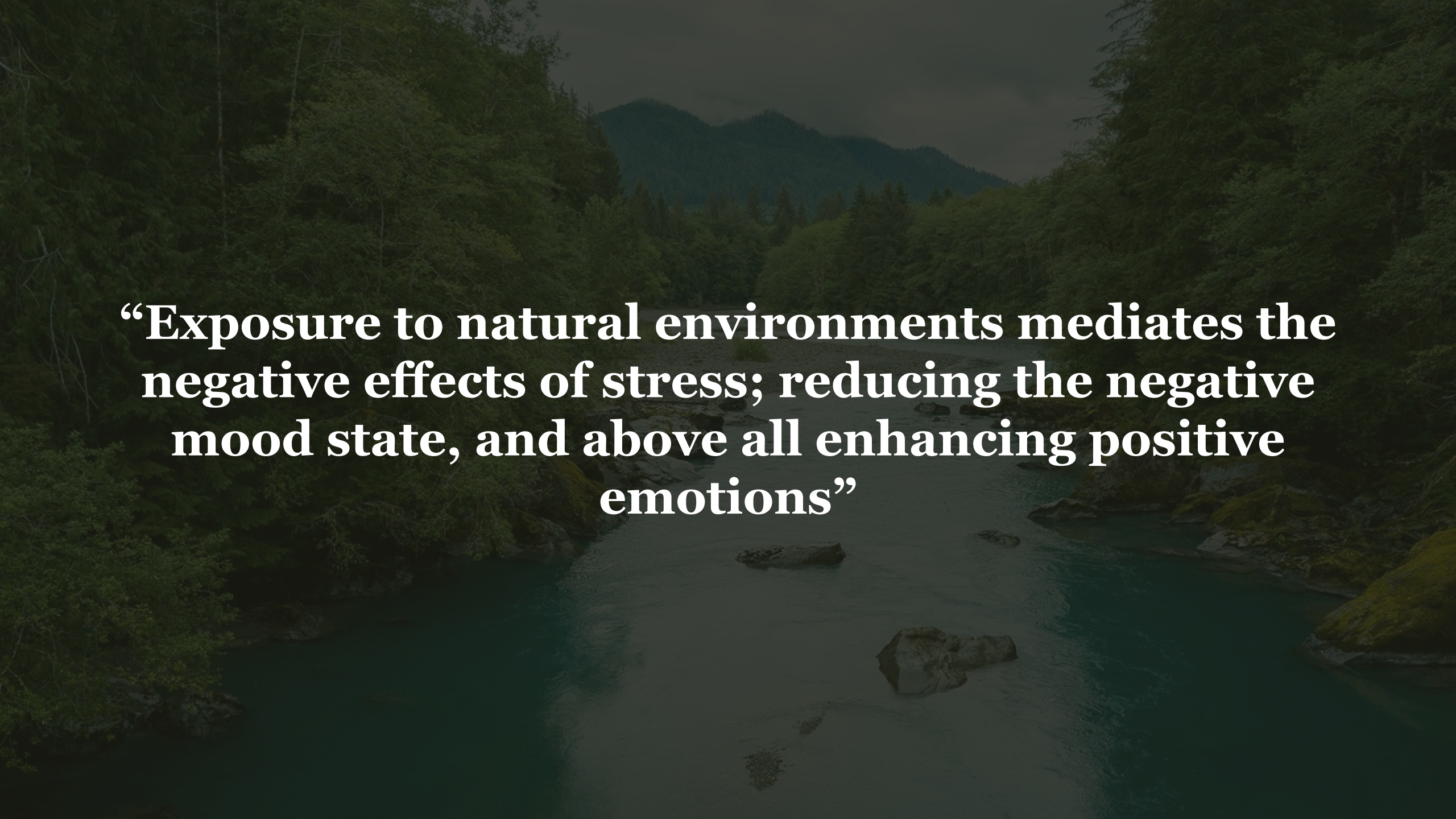


Opening Activity

Group Sharing – Answer these questions in your group:

- **Think of a time when you learned something about the natural world, what were some feelings that arose when you were learning it?**
- **Think of a time when you were in nature, how did it feel? What emotions popped up? What did you experience (5 senses)?**
- **What fears and hopes do you have when it comes to incorporating outdoor & environmental learning into your programming?**





“Exposure to natural environments mediates the negative effects of stress; reducing the negative mood state, and above all enhancing positive emotions”

What Dangers Lie Ahead?

Risks can take many forms:

Environmental

Creatures

Sun/Weather

Hazardous Plants

Natural Landscape

Social

Other People

Perceived Safety

Pollution/Human

Emotional Landscape

Industrial

Automobiles

Runoff

Pollution/Chemicals

Built Landscape



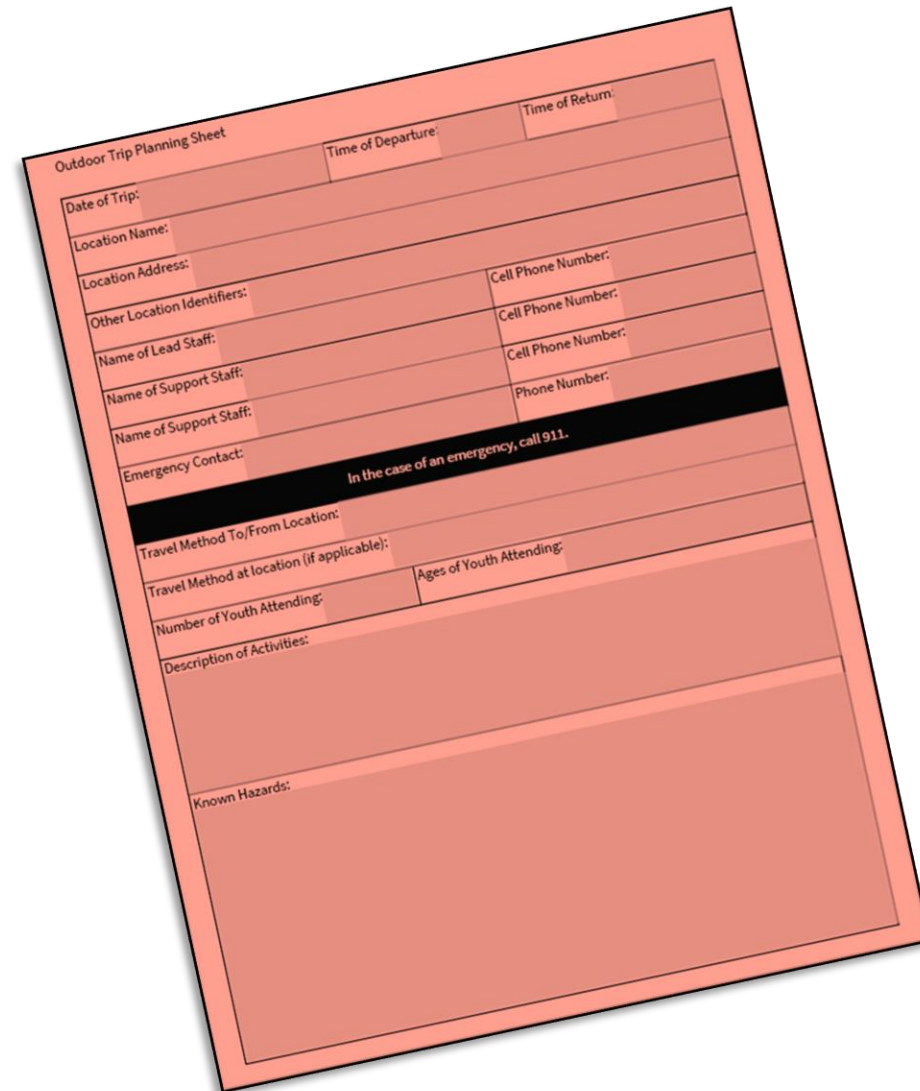
Mitigating Risk

- Check with your insurance provider
- Make a plan, leave a plan!
- Do your homework. GOOGLE!
- Set up safety nets.
- Reduce ratios.
- Plan for communication.
- Cancel.



Making a Plan

- Dates and times of outing
- Location name, address, and other descriptive identifiers.
- Names and contacts of staff.
- Emergency contacts.
- Travel methods (to/from & during).
- Number and ages of youth.
- Description of activities.
- Known hazards.
- Risk management plan.
- Hazards unknown until arrival
- Actions taken to mitigate new hazards.



Outdoor Trip Planning Sheet

Date of Trip: _____ Time of Departure: _____ Time of Return: _____

Location Name: _____

Location Address: _____

Other Location Identifiers: _____ Cell Phone Number: _____

Name of Lead Staff: _____ Cell Phone Number: _____

Name of Support Staff: _____ Cell Phone Number: _____

Name of Support Staff: _____ Phone Number: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

In the case of an emergency, call 911.

Travel Method To/From Location: _____

Travel Method at location (if applicable): _____

Number of Youth Attending: _____ Ages of Youth Attending: _____

Description of Activities: _____

Known Hazards: _____

Making a Plan

Work in teams and use the provided “Outdoor Trip Planning Sheet” to plan a trip based on one of the scenarios below.

You are taking a group of young people to Discovery Park (Seattle) to count birds.

You are taking a group of young people to Riverside State Park (Spokane) to learn about watersheds.





Activities & Curriculum

Trash Timeline

up to 2 years

1-5 years

1-5 years

5 years

5 years

10-20 years

30-40 years

50 years

80-100 years

1,000,000 years





WWW.LNT.ORG

The 7 Principles

Plan Ahead & Prepare

Minimize Campfire Impacts

Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces

Respect Wildlife

Dispose of Waste Properly

Be Considerate of Others

Leave What You Find

Silent Spots

- **In your activity space, share that the group will be spending some time observing the nature around them.**
- **Ask them to focus on four of the five senses, touch, sight, smell, and hearing. ***
- **Ask young people to find a special spot away from the group where they can sit comfortably and be completely silent.**
- **Give them a few minutes to find a spot and sit silently to observe the nature around them.**
- **Once time is up, bring the group back together and ask everyone to share something from their experience.**



WWW.WTA.ORG

Washington Trails Association mobilizes hikers and everyone who loves the outdoors to explore, steward and champion trails and public lands.

- Great source for information on trails, ranger stations, hiking with kids, youth programs, passes & permits, and more.
- Hike Finder Map allows you to search by “Kid Friendly” filter.

Potholes Wildlife Area

 CENTRAL WASHINGTON

LOCATION

Central Washington --
Potholes Region
[View map below](#) ▾


LENGTH

4.0 miles, roundtrip

ELEVATION

Gain: 0 ft.
Highest Point: 1050 ft.

RATING


(6 votes)
[Log in to rate](#)



Parking Pass/Entry Fee: Discover Pass

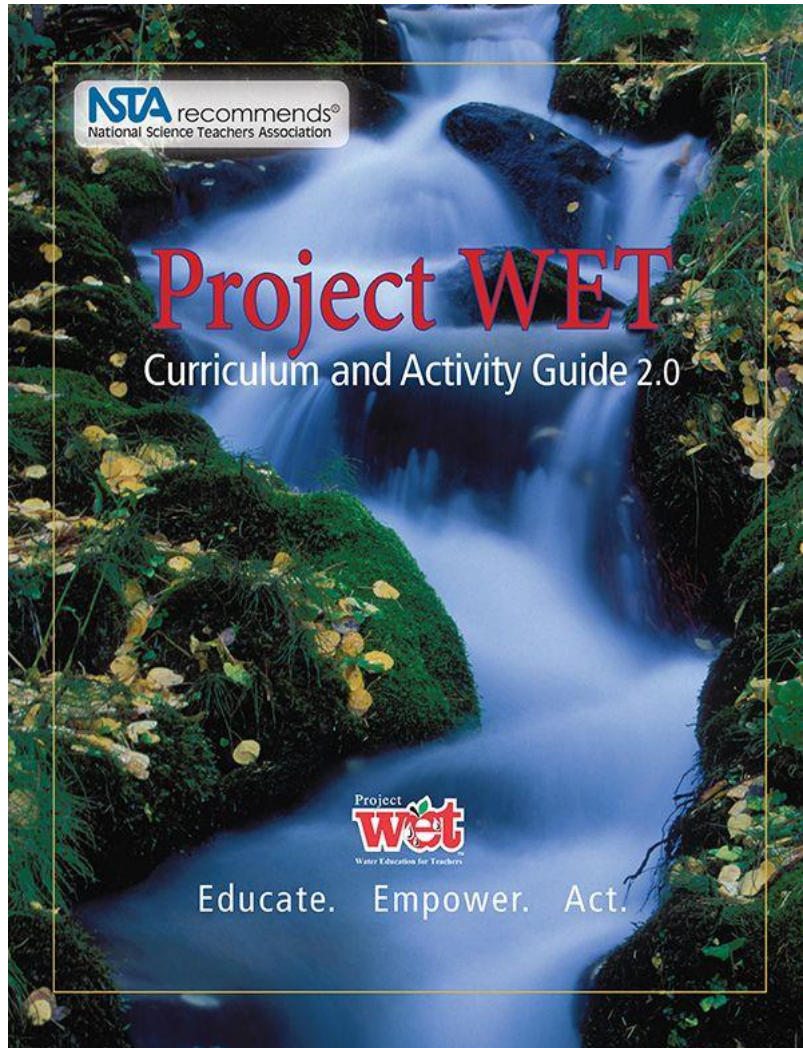
The **Cornell** Lab of Ornithology

A stylized black and white bird logo with a yellow patch on its back and a red stripe on its head, positioned to the right of the main title.

www.birds.cornell.edu

Celebrate Urban Birds
Connect Kids to Nature
Great Backyard Bird Count
Global Big Days
eBird
Project Feeder Watch
Merlin





project WET

WATER EDUCATION TODAY

www.projectwet.org

Western Region

Denise Buck

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Eastern Region

Diahne Gill

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Project **WILD**[®]

www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild

Western Region

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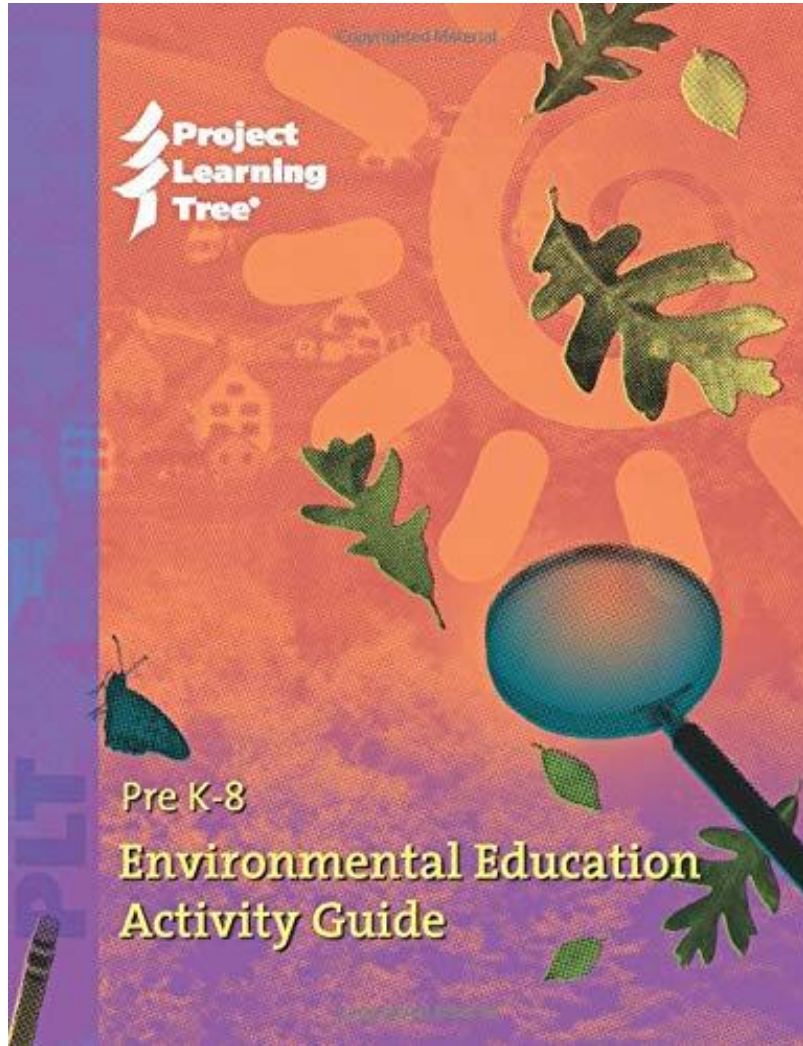
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The image features a dark, moody background with two birds in flight. On the left, a brown bird is captured mid-flight, its wings spread wide. On the right, a smaller bird with a black and white head and a yellow breast is also in flight, wings outstretched. The top of the frame is filled with the dark, needle-like branches of a tree, possibly a cedar or juniper. The overall atmosphere is quiet and naturalistic.

Resources

Folks You Should Know

- Local WSU Extension Office – extension.wsu.edu
- Regional WDFW (Fish & Wildlife) Office – wdfw.wa.gov
- Washington State Parks – parks.wa.gov
- Local State Parks Friends Groups or Foundations – waparks.org
- Local Conservation District – scc.wa.gov
- Local clubs & Organizations (Audubon, RiverKeeper, Unlimited, Master Gardeners, etc)



Grant Providers

- NEEF (National Environmental Education Foundation) - neefusa.org
 - Also hosts a [Nonprofit Learning Center](#) with free or low-cost resources.
- NAAEE (North American Association for Environmental Education) - naaee.org
- RCO (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office) - rco.wa.gov
- EPA (US Environmental Protection Agency) - epa.gov
- Washington Conservation Society - waconservationsociety.org
- The Russell Family Foundation – trff.org





**Find something you're excited
about and run with it!**





Thank You!

For more information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

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Number of Youth Attending:	Ages of Youth Attending:
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Description of Activities:

Known Hazards:

Outdoor Trip Planning Sheet

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Location Address:

Other Location Identifiers:

Risk Mitigation Plan:

Hazards Realized Upon Arrival:

Actions Taken: