

As we adjust to life in changing times, where every day presents new ideas and new challenges, I wanted to share a piece I wrote for a monthly newsletter that 4-H professionals in the Tri-Cities have been developing. **Celebrate the start to Spring with Nebraska 4-H!**

4-H environmental and outdoor education teaches youth about science and ecology, interrelationships and impacts, health, and positive outdoor experiences. As a result, youth learn to appreciate and respect the connection between people and nature.

These programs and experiences:

- use the outdoors as a stimulus for the appreciation of previously acquired skills, including the areas of reading and language arts, science, mathematics, art, health, physical education, and social studies.
- teach an appreciation, understanding, and awareness of the natural world by studying and interacting with that world.
- separate kids from their everyday setting in order to give them an opportunity to express new aspects of their personalities, achieve increased self-esteem, and gain a new perspective on how to relate to their peers.

Looking for educational ways to get your child outdoors as Summer approaches? This exciting newsletter focused on environmental and outdoor education has plenty of ideas!

Nebraska Outdoor/History Bell Ringers

Question: Can you guess how many National Parks there are in Nebraska?

Answer: There are **5 National Parks** in Nebraska!

1. **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument**, one of the national parks in Nebraska, is a paleontological wonder. In the 1890s, scientists discovered the bones of ancient mammals preserved in the hills here. The park was preserved to protect these rich fossil deposits.
2. **Homestead National Historical Park**: The park commemorates the Homesteading Act of 1862, which allowed anyone to claim federal land in exchange for at least five years of residency, cultivation, and property improvement. Just outside of Beatrice (pronounced bee-at-triss) are some of the first properties successfully claimed under the Act.
3. One of the national parks in Nebraska, the **Missouri National Recreational River**, has sprawling boundaries, there are endless recreational opportunities in this national park.
4. **Niobrara National Scenic River**: Did you know that less than one percent of the rivers in the United States are federally designated as Wild and Scenic? Niobrara is one of them, so you know it must be special.
5. **Scotts Bluff National Monument**: Scotts Bluff may be the most famous national park in Nebraska. The site commemorates the migration of thousands of Americans during the Westward Expansion as they followed the Oregon Trail, California Trail, and Mormon Trail.

Question: Can you guess how many State Parks there are in Nebraska?

Answer: There are **8 State Parks** in Nebraska!

1. Chadron State Park

2. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park
3. Fort Robinson State Park
4. Indian Cave State Park
5. Niobrara State Park
6. Platte River State Park
7. Ponca State Park
8. Smith Fall State Park

Question: Why should we protect National and State Parks?

Answer: **National parks protect the best of our natural heritage:** stunning landscapes, extraordinary wildlife and majestic forests. Together with other protected areas they form the basis of our economic and social wellbeing, attract millions of visitors annually, and help to protect unique wildlife by acting as a refuge for threatened species. Although their primary purpose is the protection of biodiversity, Parks also deliver other invaluable economic, social, cultural and health benefits to its citizens. Future generations deserve the right to see these natural values intact and protected as we do today!

Lessons for your family

The following are downloadable Outdoor Skills lesson plans developed by **Nebraska Extension** in partnership with the **Nebraska Game & Parks Commission!** These Outdoor skills lessons aim to teach youth wildlife identification, birding, hiking, turkey hunting, outdoor safety, fishing, geocaching and much more. At the same time, participating youth develop problem solving techniques and discover the confidence to participate in outdoor activities. These lessons allow youth to challenge themselves, accomplish new goals, and gain a deeper appreciation of the great outdoors. This program puts life-long skills in the hands of Nebraska's youth.

Below are **three hands-on lessons** you can use with your family today! Access the lessons and curriculum by typing this link into an internet browser: **go.unl.edu/outdoored** OR by scanning this QR Code:



Build a bug lesson- Participants will:

1. Discuss insect body parts and how they help the insect to survive.
2. Create a unique insect and habitat.
3. Learn about insect body parts through discussion and pictures then create their own insects and habitats in small groups.

Using and Creating Maps- Participants will:

1. Read a map using: Direction, symbols, and standard map features
 - a. Explore how these features help with navigation
2. Accurately make measurements and use a measuring tape.
3. Develop a map with key features to include: Local buildings, vegetated areas, playgrounds, trees, and other key or unique features
 - a. Measure distances and areas

Planning a Hike- Participants will:

1. Discover the value of hiking
2. Identify a safety plan for hiking
3. Assemble a backpack with essential items

<http://outdoornebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/formidable/5/Insects.pdf>

<http://outdoornebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/formidable/5/Mapping.pdf>

<http://outdoornebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/formidable/5/Hiking.pdf>

STE(A)M connection to Outdoors Skills:

Create a reusable t-shirt bag- Participants will:

1. Explore what it means to “upcycle” something old into something new!
2. Utilize an old t-shirt to create a reusable tote bag

You can utilize this Nebraska 4-H YouTube video that will walk your child(ren) step by step through the process of making a t-shirt bag! The beginning of the video prefaces the importance of how upcycling can encourage sustainability practices in our everyday lives to improve the world around us.

Check out the video on the Nebraska 4-H YouTube channel by typing this link into an internet browser: **go.unl.edu/upcycle** OR by scanning this QR Code:



Do you work with children very often and are looking for enriching lessons and activities to engage with them? This article was written for the “**Sparks2share**” virtual newsletter, developed monthly by 4-H Professionals in the Tri-City counties. We present a new theme every month! For example: Ag Month, STEM Month, Entrepreneurship Month, and more! Check out our newsletters over the last year by typing this link into an internet browser: **go.unl.edu/sparks**

Continuing the conversation on encouraging our youth to identify healthy and safe ways to communicate and stay connected, Buffalo County 4-H encourages you to check out the Buffalo County 4-H social media channels.

Check out our Facebook to stay updated on local and statewide 4-H activities:

www.facebook.com/BufaloCountyNebraska4H/

As always, please reach out to your local Nebraska Extension office in Buffalo County with any youth development questions, comments or concerns.

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