



**Baltimore Woods  
Nature Center**  
*Nature in your hands*

# Nature in the City News

March 2026



## Spring with *Nature in the City* Awaits



**Katie Robideau**  
School Programs Manager

Happy spring! We're hoping warmer days are right around the corner. Despite the recent swings in weather, our education team has been busy all month visiting 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms for *Nature in the City*.

Fourth graders are wrapping up their final lesson with us, exploring how environmental pollution can impact entire ecosystems as it moves up the food chain. Using the Cooper's Hawk, an urban top predator, students examine the historical effects of DDT on birds of prey.

Third graders are getting an up-close look at aquatic life by studying macroinvertebrates collected from our pond at Baltimore Woods. They are exploring how adaptations enable certain species to survive in aquatic environments and how the creatures they find in water bodies can help us determine the water quality.



We'll begin the third and final round of lessons for this school year across all grades in April. Stay tuned for more classroom highlights below!

Follow along with us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)!

*Katie Robideau*

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## March *Nature in the City* Lessons

### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade



Students act out the parts of a Sugar Maple tree and wave their leaves and sing "suga, suga"!

### Maple Magic

Sugar plus water equals sap! **In the second 1st grade lesson of the year, students are learning all about maple syrup, where it comes from, who discovered it, and how we make it.** First, *Nature in the City* educators explain the parts of a Sugar Maple tree, how each part helps the tree grow, and how sap helps the tree survive throughout the seasons. Then, we finish the lesson off with a delicious maple syrup taste test!

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade



Students smile next to their bin of pond creatures and hold up their macroinvertebrate ID guides!

### Creatures of the Deep

What's an adaptation? **In the second 3<sup>rd</sup> grade lesson *Nature in the City* educators answer that question through exploration of benthic aquatic macroinvertebrates,** a type of creature that lives at the bottom of freshwater ecosystems and lacks a backbone. Students discover the adaptations of different macroinvertebrates that help them to survive in their habitat. This lesson is an introduction for their very exciting final lesson coming up this spring!

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade



Two students race to finish the food chain relay race by placing "energy" in the Cooper's Hawk bin!

### From the Bottom Up

Energy isn't the only thing that flows through food chains! **In the third and final 4<sup>th</sup> grade lesson students are observing how energy flows up a food chain using a Cooper's Hawk as a local top predator example.** In addition to energy, harmful substances can also travel up food chains, impacting the health of top predators. *Nature in the City* educators explain the history of the pesticide DDT on birds of prey in this eye opening lesson.

## Stories from the Classroom



### Inspiring Young Naturalists

By Bailey Whiffen (she/her)  
Environmental Educator

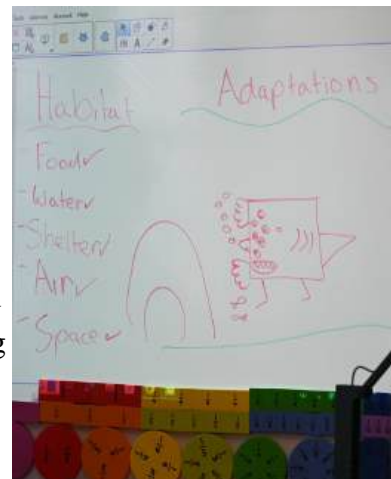
In the 4<sup>th</sup> grade lesson, From the Bottom Up, students identify characteristics that birds of prey like hawks, eagles, and falcons have that allow them to be at the top of the food chain. As I went around allowing students to feel a model skull and talon of a peregrine falcon, one student got visually more excited than all the other students. Afterwards she raised her hand and asked how old she had to be to work at Baltimore Woods. Once I told her, she fist pumped her hand and said “I cannot wait”!



### Discovering Benthic Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Adaptations

By Katie McLaughlin (she/they)  
Environmental Educator

In this 3<sup>rd</sup> grade lesson, after listing the things an aquatic macroinvertebrate needs to survive, we ask "How do they breathe? How do they eat? How do they move?" Students answer by drawing adaptations on the creature that will help them survive within their habitat. Then, students get to see real aquatic macroinvertebrates up close! I hear gasps of excitement and curiosity as the creatures start to move around the bins as students take a closer look at what is hiding among the sticks and leaves in the water. Even in their wildest imagination, they are shocked at the adaptations on each of the creatures!



## Welcome to the Team!

This spring, Baltimore Woods welcomes Emma Harvey to the  
*Nature in the City* team!



Emma graduated from SUNY New Paltz in 2019 with a degree in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Following graduation, they worked for Fulton City School District as a substitute teacher and then teacher aide.

Emma's experience in conservation and environmental work began in 2021 with Utah Conservation Corps, an Americorps program that focuses on trail maintenance, invasive species management and habitat restoration in Utah.

Having experienced what conservation looks like out west, Emma wanted to get more involved in the work in her home state of New York. Emma started volunteering with Baltimore Woods on stewardship work days in late 2023.

Fast forward to the fall of 2025, Emma achieved their pesticide applicator certification for a local tree service and began an internship with the stewardship team at Baltimore Woods Nature Center.

While working with the "A-Team," Emma fell in love with the community at Baltimore Woods, and later applied to be a part-time *Nature in the City* Educator. Emma started visiting classrooms this spring to teach the 4<sup>th</sup> grade lesson, *From the Bottom Up* and has been able to share her knowledge about pesticides and answer many curious students' questions about the topic along the way!





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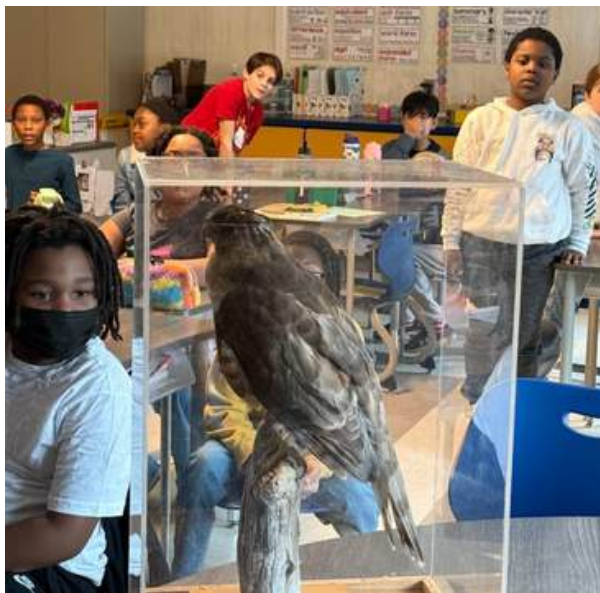


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The Baltimore Woods *Nature in the City* program is only possible with the support from the Syracuse City School District and local companies, foundations, and individuals who believe in the mission of connecting students to the natural world right here in Syracuse.

Special thanks to the **Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation** and the **Lockheed Martin Employees Federated Fund** for renewing your support this month and helping ensure every K-5th grade classroom gets three interactive lessons!

YOU can be part of helping every student explore science through nature and find the joy of discovery with *Nature in the City*!

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