



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

Nature in the City News

May 2026



Moving through May with Nature in the City

What a busy and beautiful time of year it is! *Nature in the City* is taking advantage of all the emerging life this season has to offer!

We are taking 3rd graders to Elmwood Park for a memorable third lesson that is a stream exploration field trip! After learning the water cycle and signs of healthy aquatic habitats in their first two lessons, now students, teachers, and our educators are rolling up their pant legs and wading in the water to collect aquatic macroinvertebrates.

In Kindergarten classrooms, students are getting an exciting up-close experience with one of Baltimore Woods' Eastern Box Turtles while learning how to determine if something is living or non-living. We are finding so many examples of living things around their schools as well!



And 5th graders say farewell to *Nature in the City* (NITC) during their final lesson this spring that helps them visualize the balance of ecosystems through a game of "ecosystem jenga."



School Programs Manager

We've got one month left this school year for exploring, make sure to follow along with us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)!

Katie Prohaska

May & June *Nature in the City* Lessons

Kindergarten



It's Alive
Kindergarteners get a memorable experience during their final lesson of the year. NITC educators bring Baltimore Woods' Eastern Turtles into the classroom! As students learn what makes something living versus nonliving, they are able to observe the turtles up close and in totally new ways. Students ask tons of questions about what the turtles eat, how old they are, and where they live.

3rd Grade



Elmwood Park Field Trip
Third graders also receive a very exciting final lesson. Every class visits Elmwood Park, joining NITC educators in being stream scientists on a field trip! Students help determine the health of different stream sites along Furnace Brook by using collection nets and bins to collect benthic aquatic macroinvertebrates. Thank you to Onondaga County WEP and Syracuse City Parks for making these field trips possible!

5th Grade



Urban Ecosystem Exploration

In the third and final lesson for 5th grade, students visualize the importance of ecosystem balance through a game of "ecosystem jenga." NITC educators read stories that reveal which pieces students need to remove from or add back into their ecosystem. Each story presents different disturbances that can happen in the environment, allowing students to visualize changes to food chains and make meaningful observations about nearby ecosystems.

Stories from the Classroom



From Fear to Curiosity

By Amelia Gross (she/her)
Environmental Educator

As an environmental educator, and general animal lover, I'm reluctant to admit I was less than excited to lead lessons focusing on aquatic insects. I'm not afraid of bugs per se, but leeches or beetles have never been *my* particular environmental interest. It was clear that many of the third-grade students I have visited with buckets of creatures from our pond at Baltimore Woods felt the same way: they expressed shock and fear when we announced we had brought live insects to their classroom. But to my surprise, they were braver than me, and it only took a few minutes for fear to fade away to curiosity.



Although these insects were unfamiliar, once they looked closer it was easy for the students to see just how interesting macroinvertebrates are. Watching their excitement grow as they gazed upon speedy backswimmers, I realized I too could push away my unease and find a passion for these unique "creatures of the deep."

Now, when I meet these students at Elmwood Park for a stream investigation field trip, I am just as excited as they are as I help them gently move an insect to a bin to identify. Together we observe how the insects move and how well they camouflage with their surroundings. The excitement of identifying one tiny scud is contagious, and soon I hear a chorus of "Look what I found!" All around me students are independently scooping and identifying macroinvertebrates, only pausing to share their discoveries with their classmates. By the time we exit the stream, even the most hesitant of students have overcome their fear and unease of potentially unsettling creatures. They see stoneflies squirming or large wiggly craneflies, and instead of being afraid, they are excited to learn these are signs of a healthy stream.

Stories from the Classroom *Continued*



Helping Kindergarteners See the Beauty in Every Creature

By Anna Stunkel (she/her)
Environmental Educator

After the class enjoyed meeting Lucy, our Box Turtle, we ventured outside to explore the garden area around LeMoyne to look for living things. We spotted a pretty big wolf spider near some zinnias! I held the spider in my hand so the



students could get a closer look. Some of them were a little scared at first, but when they calmed down they were amazed to see the spider's long legs and beautiful stripey patterns.

Nature in the City Impacts

Teachers' Quotes

"I thought the activities were great! They were very hands on and engaged all learners in our classroom! We have a diverse group of learners and they were all very engaged and excited about the lesson!"

- 2nd grade teacher

"Nature in the City is a fantastic program. Their lessons are of high interest and connect directly with our curriculum. Their interactive hands-on approach to learning enhances what we do in the classroom."

- Kindergarten teacher

"Thank you Nature in the City!"

- Kindergarten teacher

"I think the way Nature in the City is taught is perfect. The students are engaged and eager to learn more. Thank you so much for all that you do."

- 5th grade teacher

"Thank you! Our students love when Nature and the City comes and teaches them something new they don't normally get to experience or learn about."

- 1st grade teacher

Thank You to Our Sponsors and Partners



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.

This month, we want to highlight the partnership between Nature in the City and the Onondaga County Water and Environment Protection (WEP), which supports the Water Quality Education Program for all third graders through Nature in the City, including a two-hour immersive field trip to Elmwood Park. YOU can be part of helping every student explore science through nature and find the joy of discovery with *Nature in the City*! **Email Executive Director Whitney Lash-Marshall** to learn more about becoming a program sponsor today, or for the 2026-2027 school year!

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