

5TH ANNUAL

Nature Preschool Conference

FRIDAY – SUNDAY
JUNE 10-12, 2016



 Irvine

Explore • Respect • Protect Nature

ABOUT OUR CONFERENCE

Nature-based preschools are re-focusing the lens on early childhood education. Join us for the fifth annual conference to address the unique benefits and challenges of nature-based curriculum in early childhood programs.

QUICK CONFERENCE DETAILS

- Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 10-12, 2016.
- At Irvine Nature Center in Owings Mills, Maryland. (25 minutes outside of Baltimore).
- Prices range from \$50 - \$250.
- Rustic camping available on-site.
- Discount rates available at the Hyatt Place in Owings Mills.
- Professional development credits are available. Check online for details.

Attendees will participate in engaging workshops under the following strands:



Nature Immersion & Wild Nature Play



Nature-based Learning in Urban Settings



Best Practices and Curricula in Nature Preschools

ABOUT IRVINE NATURE CENTER

Irvine Nature Center is an environmental education organization. Our mission is to educate and inspire current and future generations to explore, respect and protect nature.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Helping Children Develop an Ecological Identity

Patti Ensel Bailie

Friday, 7 – 9 p.m.

In years past, nature play was a routine part of childhood. But today, activities such as exploring in the woods and catching frogs have become rare. Yet research shows that nature play has a positive effect on young children, especially in the development of their “ecological identity.” This presentation will review the research surrounding children’s connection to nature, particularly how nature experiences impact the developing brain and the importance of developing an ecological identity.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Biography Patti Ensel Bailie, PhD, is an assistant professor of early childhood education at the University of Maine at Farmington. She also served as assistant director of the Nature-Based Early Childhood certificate program at Antioch University New England. She has worked in the field of early childhood environmental education for nearly 25 years, as founding director of the Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and as co-director of the Early Childhood Outdoors Institute in Omaha, Nebraska.



WORKSHOPS

Presenters are invited from across the nation to share meaningful, inspirational workshops. We encourage participants to ask questions and share personal experiences with our community of conference-goers. We all learn from each other!

WORKSHOP STRANDS



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KEYNOTE WORKSHOP

Evaluating the “Natureness” of a Program: High-quality Practices at Nature Preschools

Patti Ensel Bailie: University of Maine at Farmington
Saturday, 9-11 a.m.

Nature preschools and forest kindergartens provide nature experiences for young children unlike those found at most traditional preschools. The variety of nature-based early childhood programs continues to expand. But what makes a program nature-based and how do we know if it is of high quality? Using the Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool and other similar programs as examples, this workshop introduces the development of a “natureness” scale that identifies high quality practices for nature-based early childhood programs. Workshop participants have the opportunity to try out the scale in order to rate their own programs. They also have the chance to provide feedback on the usefulness of this tool.



Q&A: Establishing Your Nature Preschool

Monica Wiedel-Lubinski: The Nature Preschool at Irvine

Saturday, 11-12:30 p.m.

Nature preschools are growing in popularity as research continues to prove that we thrive when we deepen our connection with nature. Discover practical approaches for your own journey. Our discussion touches on policies, licensing, budgets, curriculum, student behavior, scheduling, parent relationships, hiring, assessment, health and safety topics – bring your questions as discussion is encouraged!



Magic and Wonderment in the Heart of Education

Elements Preschool, N.Y., N.Y.

Saturday, 11-12:30 p.m.

Learning is rooted in everyday magic. Discover how children spend their days playing in a sensory, intuitive manner. We highlight how children learn to trust their experiences, build meaningful relationships with one another and teachers, and explore their surroundings with

curiosity. We share design and tools used to optimize interaction and engagement with nature and how we use this environment to help in the development of social, emotional and creative skills.

Creativity Runs Wild

The Nature Preschool at Irvine
Saturday, 1-2 p.m.

Tour our classrooms and check out dozens of art projects, games and activities that reinforce emergent approaches to nature-based learning.

For the Love of Nature: Outdoor Learning at The Nature Preschool

The Nature Preschool at Irvine
Saturday, 2-3:30 p.m.

Exploration of the grounds and Outdoor Classroom at Irvine engages participants and highlights how The Nature Preschool students connect with nature. Bring your camera and a sketchbook for activities during our hike. Frog-catching encouraged!

Reggio Approaches in Forest Preschool

The Raintree School, St. Louis, Mo.
Saturday, 2-3:30 p.m.
Saturday, 3:45-5:15 p.m.

Reggio and Forest School are complimentary practices in an early childhood education. These two philosophies benefit child-directed learning as well as experiential education. In this setting, children are able to seek answers to their deepest inquiries all while honoring nature.

Nature as a Platform for Dramatic Play

Takoma Park Cooperative Nursery School, Md.

Saturday, 3:45-5:15 p.m.

Please join us for session on bringing dramatic play into the forest. The children of Takoma Park Cooperative Nursery School created a world of their own imagination called, "The Blue House at the Edge of the Forest" which is built from found materials like logs, branches and abandoned wooden pallets. The dramatic play arc is scaffolded by the parents and teachers. Learn how to shape free-flowing play that used to be found on every street corner and wooded glade.

Experiential Outdoor Learning

Amy Beam: Metro Montessori Schools, Md., and Kids Love Nature!, Md.

Sunday, 9-11 a.m.

Follow Amy on the trail and go play on the landscape! She models techniques for outdoor learning like the art of questioning, the 50/50 principle and the importance of



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a 'sit spot.' She also shares nature songs and games, and offers practical management of groups during outdoor learning. Her workshop is rooted in the pedagogy of *The Coyote Guide to Connecting with Nature* by Jon Young.



Needs and Seeds of a Community

Tree of Life Nature Preschool, Md.
Sunday, 11-12:30 p.m.

We have embarked on a journey to establish a nature preschool as an extension of our Jewish congregation and the greater Annapolis, Md., community. Join us to learn more about our Nature Playspace and interdisciplinary curriculum which fosters connections to the natural world, to each other and a context for our religious beliefs.



Natural Playthings

The Nature Preschool at Irvine
Sunday, 11-12:30 p.m.

Handmade games and manipulatives spark creativity and learning in a whole new way! Children discover how to be resourceful and how to repurpose plentiful natural and recycled materials while refining foundational skills. Come and create playthings

for your little darlings during this hands-on workshop.



Inspirational Curriculum Comes Naturally

Magothy Cooperative Preschool, Md.
Sunday, 1-2:30 p.m.

Learn how to integrate nature-based activities throughout the curriculum from our cooperative, certified Green School. We share ideas for physical set-up, themes and practical planning that your program can take and run with! Learn how nature is easily connected through stories, the arts or by a journey outside. Finally, create a hands-on activity for use in your classroom.



From the Big City to the Sheltering Woods

The Ark Preschool, Md.
Sunday, 1-2:30 p.m.

The Ark Preschool at Madison Avenue is Maryland's only MSDE-accredited preschool program designed for three- and four-year-olds in homeless situations and families whose incomes are at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. The Ark has partnered with The Nature Preschool at Irvine for four years, making monthly visits to explore nature. This session examines the positive effects of this long-term partnership on students and staff. We also discuss the challenges of developing a nature component in an impoverished urban setting and ways to facilitate success.

PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

Dependent upon the dates of your attendance, there are also several opportunities for personal enrichment included in the conference fee.

- **Early Riser Yoga**

(Saturday or Sunday morning)

Start the day with yoga poses inspired by nature. Discover how to infuse mindful approaches in your curriculum too.

- **Bird Song Morning Hike**

(Saturday or Sunday morning)

Listen to the symphony of birds at Irvine. Feel free to bring your binoculars for a peaceful morning trek.

- **Lunch with the Animals**

(Saturday or Sunday afternoon)

Educators will informally share live animals and answer questions about how young children learn from them.

- **Sunset Hike**

(Saturday evening only)

As dusk settles, many animals wake up! Tip toe through the forest to uncover the falling night's magic.

- **Onsite Project: Tree Looms**

(Saturday evening only)

Lend a hand to create a tree loom along Irvine's trail. Gain skills so you can make a loom at your site!

- **Mother Nature's Spa**

(Saturday evening only)

You work hard and gosh darn it, you deserve to be pampered! Indulge in our version of a natural spa, complete with masks and other feel good potions you can make and enjoy. P.S. These are great recipes for parent workshops and thank you gifts as well.



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2016 SCHEDULE

Fri., June 10

Arrival & Registration	5:30 – 6 p.m.
Welcoming Happy Hour	6 – 7 p.m.
Keynote: Patti Ballie	7 – 9 p.m.
Campfire Networking	9 – 11 p.m.

**If you plan to camp at Irvine, earlier arrival is welcome. Please call 443-738-9220 to make your plans.*

Sat., June 11

Coffee Wake-up Call	7:30 a.m.
Arrival & Registration	8 – 9 a.m.
Early Riser Yoga or Bird Hike	8 – 8:30 a.m.
Breakfast	8:30 – 9 a.m.
Opening Exercise: Patti Ballie	9 – 11 a.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) Establishing Your Nature Preschool (B) Magic and Wonderment	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Lunch	12:30 – 1 p.m.
Creativity Runs Wild Open House	1 – 2 p.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) For the Love of Nature (B) Reggio Approaches at Raintree	2 – 3:30 p.m.
Break	3:30 – 3:45 p.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) Nature as a Platform for Imaginary Play (B) Reggio Approaches at Raintree	3:45 – 5:15 p.m.
Happy Hour & Dinner	5:30 – 7 p.m.
Onsite Project: Tree Looms	7 – 7:45 p.m.
Mother Nature's Spa	7 – 8:30 p.m.
Sunset Hike	7:45 – 8:30 p.m.
Campfire Networking	8:30 – 10 p.m.

Sun., June 12

Coffee Wake-up Call	7:30 a.m.
Arrival & Registration	8 – 9 a.m.
Early Riser Yoga or Bird Hike	8 – 8:30 a.m.
Breakfast	8:30 – 9 a.m.
Opening Exercise: Experiential Outdoor Learning	9 – 11 a.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) Natural Playthings (B) Growing a Preschool at Tree of Life	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Lunch	12:30 – 1 p.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) From the Big City to the Sheltering Woods (B) Inspirational Curriculum Comes Naturally	1 – 2:30 p.m.
Concluding Gathering Circle	2:30 – 3 p.m.



Who will you nominate for the *Margaret O'Neill Early Childhood Nature Educator Award?*

This award recognizes the contributions of an outstanding early childhood educator who facilitates nature-based learning to provide meaningful programming for children birth through eight years old. To nominate someone you admire, visit www.ExploreNature.org/ONeillAward.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We have blocked off discounted rooms at the Hyatt Place in Owings Mills. Rather stay outside? Let us pitch a tent for you! Rustic accommodations do not include shower facilities, but sunrise over the meadow and morning bird songs are pure bliss. (Port-o-potties are in walking distance; campground is a 10-minute walk from the nature center.)

Registration Form

Use one form per person. Register online or download registration forms at www.ExploreNature.org. Having trouble? Call 443-738-9220.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name _____ Job Title _____

Affiliate Organization or School _____

Address _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please indicate your preference below:

- Full 3-Day Conference Friday – Sunday, June 10-12 \$225
Includes all workshops, keynote with Patti Bailie, happy hour and five meals, yoga and morning hike, sunset hike or onsite project, Mother Nature's spa and campfire.
- Friday Only – Happy Hour & Keynote Friday, June 10 \$50
Includes keynote with Patti Bailie, happy hour and campfire.
- Saturday ONLY Saturday, June 11 \$135
Includes Saturday workshops, three meals, yoga or morning hike, sunset hike or onsite project, Mother Nature's spa and campfire.
- Sunday ONLY Sunday, June 12 \$90
Includes Sunday workshops, two meals and yoga or morning hike.

WORKSHOP CHOICES

Please circle one from each line, only on the day(s) you will attend.

Saturday

- From Establishing a Nature Preschool OR Magic and Wonderment at the Heart of Education
- For the Love of Nature OR Reggio Approaches in Forest Preschool
- Nature as a Platform for Dramatic Play OR Reggio Approaches in Forest Preschool

Sunday

- Natural Playthings OR Growing a Preschool at Tree of Life
- Inspirational Curriculum Comes Naturally OR From the Big City to the Sheltering Woods

FOOD

If meals are included in your registration, please select one below:

No diet restrictions Vegetarian Vegan Kosher

Other: _____

ACCOMMODATIONS

For your convenience, there is a block of rooms at the Hyatt Place of Owings Mills (410-998-3630). Or pitch a tent and camp out at Irvine!

I plan to camp out at Irvine (\$25 fee). Will you bring your own tent?

Yes

No, please pitch a tent for me!

I will make other arrangements.

PAYMENT

I've calculated my payment, including the conference fee and cost for camping, if applicable. My total due is \$_____.

Check enclosed (*check payable to Irvine Nature Center*)

Please charge my VISA/MasterCard/American Express/Discover

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please send complete registration form with payment to:

Irvine Nature Center
Attn: NPC Registration
11201 Garrison Forest Road
Owings Mills, MD 21117





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443-738-9200
www.ExploreNature.org



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