

# Get Outside!

Young Naturalist Club



Nature Activity Page

## *To Catch a Firefly*



Sometimes known as lightning bugs, fireflies, are actually neither flies nor bugs but a type of beetle that uses flashing lights as a means of attracting mates. Both sexes flash signals, although the females of most species are wingless and signal from the ground. Can you notice variations of color, ranging from yellows to greens? You can even detect differences in the timing of the signals. Different species hope to attract only their own kind with their particular flashing.

To catch a firefly, you can use a net, gently sweeping the air, or position yourself with an open jar, ready to clamp down (carefully) the lid when you've captured one of these elusive insects. Fireflies prefer tall grass to mowed lawns. They usually start signing at

dusk and continue until midnight, and can be witnessed from mid-summer until early autumn. You may be astonished by how very ordinary these insects look in the light. They are smaller than their bright lights and are a dull brown color.



firefly larva: glow-worms

## *Blind Walks and Night Hikes*



Ever take a trip in the woods...blindfolded? Now, we wouldn't recommend trying this without a friend! All you need is a trustworthy pal and a blindfold. Blind walks can be done just about anywhere:

woods, a field, backyard,

frontyard, local park, etc. Once you have the blindfold on and adjusted well, have your friend guide you to something interesting (a tree stump, a patch of posies, a down tree limb with lots of lichen or moss). Use your feelers (hands) to learn about the object in front of you since you can't use your eyes. Be sure to get to know your object well. Then have your friend guide you away from that spot, turn you around a couple times, take off your blindfold and see if you can find the same object with your eyes and hands!

We rely so much on our eyes, that our other senses are sometimes forgotten. It takes the human eye as long as 45 minutes to become fully receptive to the dark, but even then our eyes are not nearly as useful in low light as an owl's eyes are.

Take a moment to really listen in the dark, and to smell and feel your surroundings, even if you have to close your eyes or blindfold yourself. Do the little sounds of night come alive? Do you think you might be able to identify a tree by touch? Close your eyes during the day sometimes too. You will discover the fabulous variety of textures and sounds and smells that are a part of nature.



# Henry Knows!

## All About Caterpillars



Caterpillars aren't usually thought of as more than a feeding tube. But, in fact, caterpillars are pretty interesting creatures. During this stage, they are very active and need food and oxygen to grow and sustain themselves. They do not have lungs like mammals (you and I). They take in air through small holes in their abdomen called, spiracles. And its tiny little head is equipped with sense organs to tell the caterpillar what is going on in the world around it. They have short antennae and tiny little light sensitive eyes, or ocelli. They also have massive jaws for chewing plant food. Caterpillars are also able to make silk from special glands and force it out through a spinneret (located under their head). Silk spinning is not something the adult butterfly is able to do.



*Monarch caterpillar (larva) eating a leaf. Its bright stripes act as a warning to enemies.*

Little Traverse Conservancy  
3264 Powell Road  
Harbor Springs, MI. 49740

## Explore a Nature Preserve!

### Birge Preserve

#### **Oliver and Edna Birge Nature Preserve**

From the Mackinac Bridge follow I-75 North 15 3/4 miles to M-134.

Take M-134 east 11 1/4 miles to Point Brulee Road. Follow Point Brulee Road 1/4 mile. The preserve is on both sides of the road. Go to

[www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org) for a map of the trails and more preserve info.

#### MACKINAC COUNTY Oliver and Edna Birge Nature Preserve

