

WATERDROPS

Special Nature Issue

A Southwest Florida Water Management District Water Resources Newsletter

Water
Drips & Drops

Feature
Story

Take It Home

Water Cycle
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Games &
Puzzles

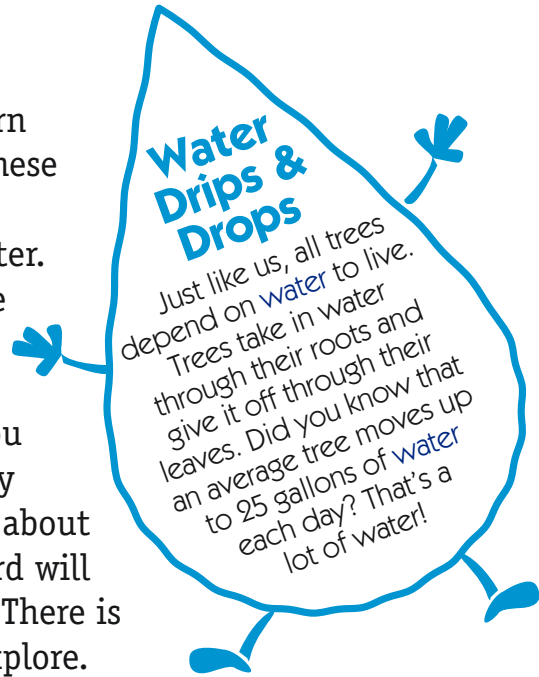
What's Wet
on the Web!



Hello Readers!

This **special issue** of **WaterDrops** will help you learn more about nature. Within these pages, you will read about a family's visit to a nature center. You will learn how to become a nature observer near your home. There is a **water cycle** experiment for you to try. You will use your skills to identify animal tracks. You will learn about nature park rules. A crossword will test your nature vocabulary. There is even a Web site for you to explore. All of these activities will help you learn more about the natural environment.

In other issues of **WaterDrops**, you'll learn about how important **water** is to us. Don't forget to send in the activity on the back page for a free bookmark!



Water Drips & Drops

Just like us, all trees depend on water to live. Trees take in water through their roots and give it off through their leaves. Did you know that an average tree moves up to 25 gallons of water each day? That's a lot of water!

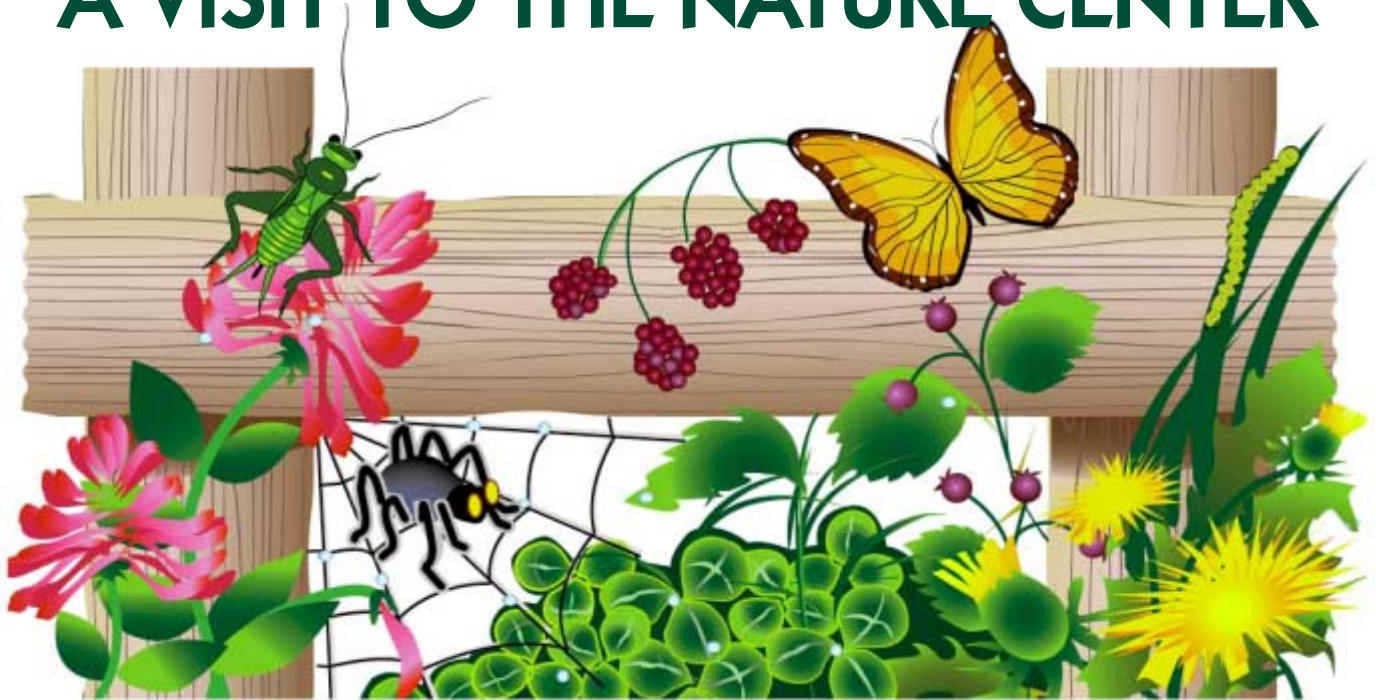
Happy
Splashing!



Splash! is a program available from the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Splash! helps us learn about our water resources. Let's help protect our water supply now and in the future.

Feature Story

A VISIT TO THE NATURE CENTER



Jeremy and Todd waited anxiously for the rest of the family to reach the entrance to the boardwalk. "Hurry up, Lisa," exclaimed Todd, "or you will miss all the cool stuff!" Lisa ran to catch up to her twin brothers.

In a few minutes, the family was gathered at the entrance. "Remember what the guide told us about moving slowly and keeping quiet," Mother reminded them.

"We don't want to scare the animals away," said Father. "Remember, we are just visitors and this is their home."

As the family walked quietly along the boardwalk, they looked in all directions. The trees and plants were still covered with morning dew. The air felt thick and heavy as they walked deeper into the woods. "It feels like it's raining," whispered Lisa.

"That's just the leaves giving off moisture," said Todd. "It's part of the hydrologic cycle. I learned about it in school."

As they followed the boardwalk, they learned about the different habitats by reading the signs along the trail. The family paid close attention, looking and listening for the special sights and sounds of nature. They passed by a spider weaving an enormous web in a bush. Just then a butterfly landed on the railing attached to the boardwalk. "Cool!" whispered the twins to each other in unison.

Father noticed a few animal tracks next to the boardwalk. "What's that?" asked Lisa, pointing to a small pile near the tracks.

"That's scat," responded Father. "It's a term for animal droppings. It's a way to tell what kinds of animals have been here."

Suddenly two blue herons swooped above the trees. "Wow! Listen to those wings flap!" exclaimed Jeremy.

"It looks like they are headed towards the marsh," said Father.

"Maybe they are thirsty. Even I know that animals need **water** to live," said Lisa as she looked at her brothers.

"Do you think we'll see any bats or raccoons or opossums?" asked Jeremy.

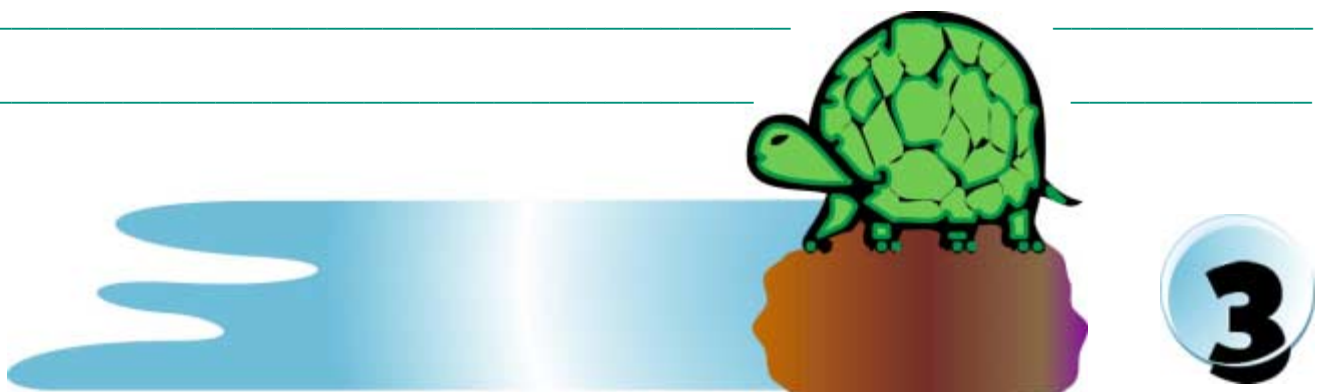
"I doubt it," replied Mother. "They are nocturnal animals. They sleep during the day." But as they approached the marsh, they observed several other creatures. "Look over there," said Todd as he pointed to a turtle resting on a rock near the **water**.

Lisa jumped when she saw a black snake slither under a fern nearby. "That snake is harmless," said Jeremy. "But watch out for poison ivy. It can give you a big rash. It's one experience in nature that you want to skip!"

After observing a variety of native plants and animals, they followed the winding trail back to the area near the entrance to the boardwalk. "This was like taking a journey," said Lisa.

"It *was* a journey," responded Father. "It was a journey through nature." The family had such a good time that they plan to take another journey into nature soon.

Pretend that you are going to visit a nature center with your family. What would you hope to see on your journey into nature?



Take It Home



Be a nature observer near your home — it's fun!

All living things need **water** to stay alive and to be healthy. Plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and insects are examples of living things. Ask permission to take a walk around the outside of your home. Make observations of things living nearby. Do you like a few of these living things better than others? Do you have a favorite? Record your observations on the chart below. Try to identify one living thing for each group. Then compare your observations with your family and classmates.

Group	Name	Like (+) or Dislike (-)	Why?
Plant	_____	_____	_____
Mammal	_____	_____	_____
Bird	_____	_____	_____
Reptile	_____	_____	_____
Insect	_____	_____	_____



Ask Water Cycle Wanda

Darrell asks: "How do I really know that the leaves of plants give off water?"

Water Cycle Wanda:

Try this easy experiment to prove that plants really do give off **water**. Locate a plant outdoors and place a plastic sandwich bag around one of the leaves. Using a piece of string, tie the bag firmly around the stem of the leaf. After a few hours, observe the results. You should see tiny droplets of **water** inside the bag. As **water** passes from the leaf, it forms these droplets. This process is called *transpiration*.



TRACKING ANIMALS IN NATURE

Pretend that you are an experienced animal tracker. You observe the shapes and patterns of footprints, scat and other markings that animals leave behind as they move through nature. During a long dry spell, did you know that it may be hard to find signs of animals? That's because animals are attracted to natural places where water exists. Their survival depends on having enough water in their environment. After a light rainfall, you may notice that several fresh tracks still remain on the ground nearby. Try to match each track with the correct animal.

1. opossum



2. snake



3. bear



4. bird



Describe how you matched each animal with its track.

1. _____

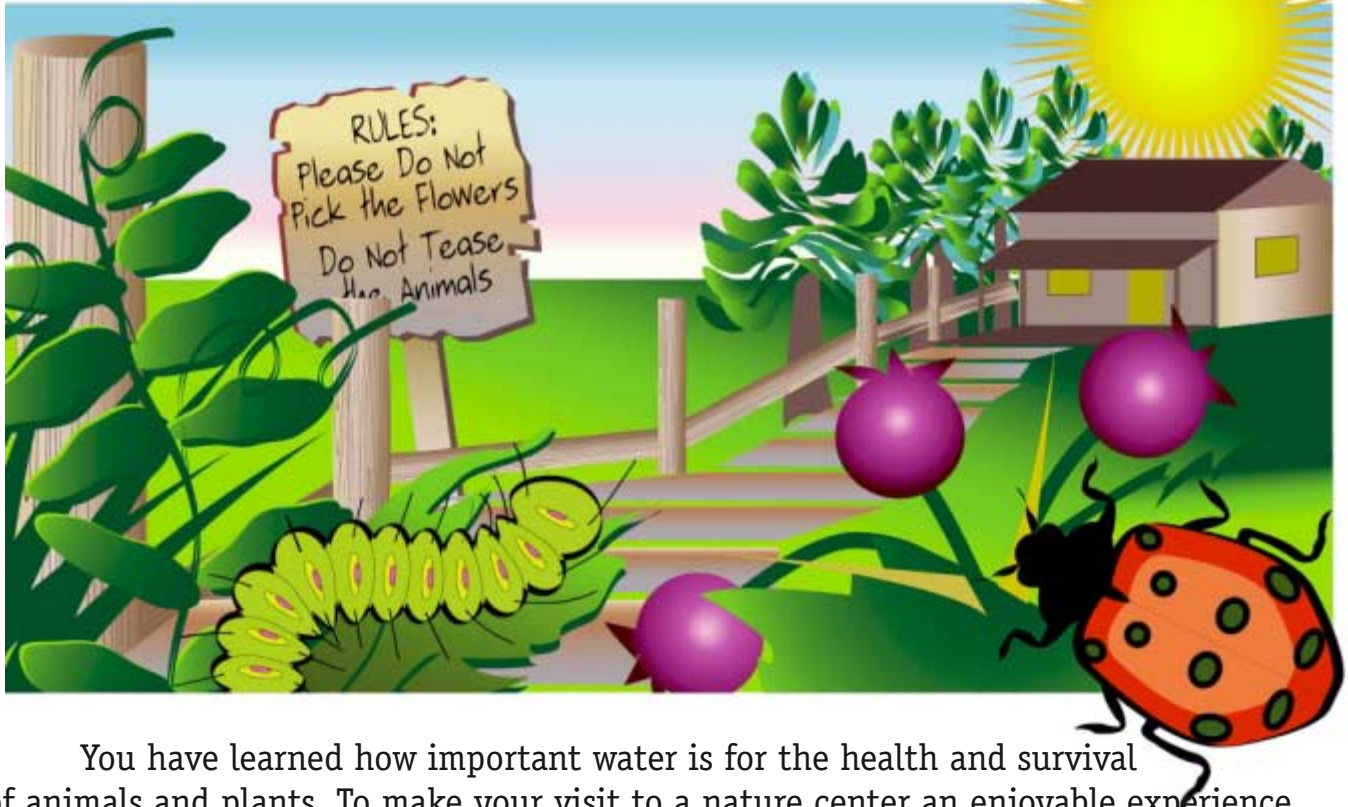
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Water in Our World

BE A WELCOME VISITOR!



You have learned how important water is for the health and survival of animals and plants. To make your visit to a nature center an enjoyable experience, try to follow a few simple rules. First, remain gentle and quiet so you can learn more about the natural environment. Next, be a friend to plants and animals. Avoid teasing or pestering the animals. Avoid picking the plants so that others may enjoy them, too. Be sure to stay on the trails and leave the natural environment undisturbed. Let's make the nature center an enjoyable experience for everyone!

Fill-in-the-blank

Complete each sentence by writing the correct word.

Plants need their leaves to make food and their flowers to make seeds. Don't _____ the plants. Leave them for others to enjoy.

It is important to leave the natural environment undisturbed. Always stay on the marked _____.

Try not to be _____ during your visit to a nature center. By remaining calm and quiet, you have a more enjoyable nature experience.



NATURE CENTER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Use the clues and the word bank to complete the puzzle.



Word Bank

footprint
 pond
 observations
 transpiration
 boardwalk
 scat
 nocturnal
 rain
 water
 boardwalk
 dew
 marsh
 trails

ACROSS

3. Making _____ is when we notice the plants and animals in their natural environment.
6. We can learn a lot about an animal from its droppings called _____.
7. Morning _____ is the moisture that can be seen on trees and plants early in the day.
8. _____ is a form of precipitation that helps keep trees and plants healthy.
9. A soft, wet swampy area of land is called a _____.
12. Each kind of animal has its own animal track or _____.

DOWN

1. A _____ is a path made of thick boards.
2. A nature center usually has marked _____ for visitors to follow.
4. The vapor created when plants and trees give off moisture is called _____.
5. A _____ animal sleeps during the day and is active at night.
10. All people, plants and animals need _____ to live.
11. You can see many kinds of wildlife near a small body of water called a _____.

What's Wet on the Web!



Do you want to learn what a chipmunk thinks about living in a park that becomes polluted? You can find out by going to <http://www.epa.gov/kids/plants.htm>. Click on Charlie Chipmunk. Then click on the story, "*Charlie Was Just A Chipmunk.*"

After you read the story, try a few of the other activities about protecting the environment. You'll be glad you did!



Let's All Enjoy Our Nature Parks!

Now that you have visited a nature center, you have learned how important water resources are to keeping nature healthy. Invite your parents to a nature park to experience living things in a natural setting. Think of several reasons why nature parks are important for all of us. Write your three best reasons below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mail your list to us and we will send you a WaterDrops bookmark!



Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Phone _____ County _____
School _____ Teacher _____ Grade _____

Send to: **In-School Education
Communications Department**
Southwest Florida Water Management District
2379 Broad Street
Brooksville, FL 34609-6899



If a disabled individual wishes to obtain the information contained in this document in another form, please contact the Communications Department at (352) 796-7211, extension 4757; TDD only 1-800-231-6103 (FL); fax (352) 754-6883; Suncom 628-4150 or view our Web site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us>



Southwest Florida
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