



Nature Study

Each Friday morning, you will go through two of our nature cards. They are labeled in the upper right corner with the corresponding week. These are short, factual cards with images to help your child become familiar with objects in the natural world.

As you progress through our sessions, you may find it handy to keep your past nature cards in a binder for easy reference when your children come across a familiar object. These seeds you are planting will grow into a wonderful garden of knowledge for your children in years to come.

As you explore nature outside your home, watch and listen for newly discovered delights. Most of all, remember...

"Point to some lovely flower or gracious tree, not only as a beautiful work, but as a beautiful thought of God."

~ Charlotte Mason

Nature Study



Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon

September 7, 1707 – April 16, 1788

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, was a French naturalist, mathematician, and writer who helped shape the way people understood the natural world during the Age of Enlightenment. Born in 1707, he had a deep curiosity about plants, animals, and the earth itself, and he spent much of his life studying and writing about these subjects.

He is best known for his enormous 36-volume series *Histoire Naturelle*, where he described animals, minerals, and the history of the earth in a way that was both scientific and easy to read.

Buffon was among the first of his era to realize how much animals and plants varied in different parts of the world, even when their habitats were similar. This idea later became known as “Buffon’s Law” and was considered revolutionary in his time.

Histoire Naturelle was a groundbreaking series and was read by nearly every well-educated person during his time. It was even translated into multiple languages, making him one of the most popular authors of his time, alongside other Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. Through his writing, he made science feel more approachable and sparked curiosity in others, helping to inspire future naturalists and scientists for generations to come.

On the following pages, you will find nature cards inspired by topics covered in the *Histoire Naturelle*, accompanied by the original illustrations from Buffon’s famous series, which we think your family will enjoy.

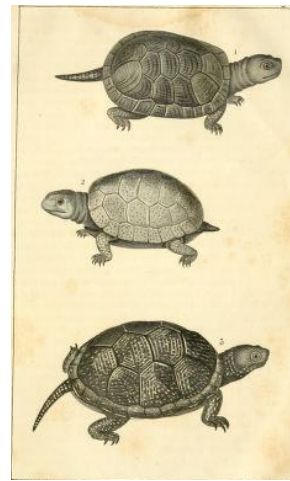


Owl 1

Strigiformes

- Owls are a type of nocturnal bird of prey that stand upright and have broad heads and sharp talons, as well as feathers that are designed to help them fly silently.
- A group of owls is known as a "parliament!"

- Owls have two distinct families: Strigidae, which includes most typical owls, and Tytonidae, which includes barn owls and bay owls.
- Owls typically eat small mammals, other birds, insects, and occasionally fish, depending on the species.
- Owls have forward-facing eyes that help them see better in low lighting. Because they are adapted for hunting in the dark, their eyes can see very far ahead, but this comes at a price: they cannot see anything very close to them clearly.



Turtle 1

Testudines

- Turtles are a type of reptile with a hard, bony outer shell that protects the softer, more vulnerable parts of their bodies.
- There are 360 different types of turtles, both land and sea-dwelling, though all species breathe air and must lay their eggs on land.

- Turtle shells have two main parts: the curved top part, which is called a carapace, and the flat underside that covers their bellies, which is called a plastron.
- The largest type of turtle is a leatherback, which can reach around 8 ft 10 inches in length and can weigh over 1,100 lb. The smallest is the speckled tortoise, which doesn't grow bigger than 3.9 inch long and 6.1 oz. in weight.
- Turtles are omnivores, with land species often eating more plants, and aquatic turtles often eating more meat from small creatures such as worms and mollusks.



Ostrich 2

Struthio

- Ostriches are large birds native to Africa with black and white feathers, long, scaly legs, and tall, white necks.
- Though ostriches have wings, they are flightless birds, as their wings are not large enough to support their heavy body during flight.

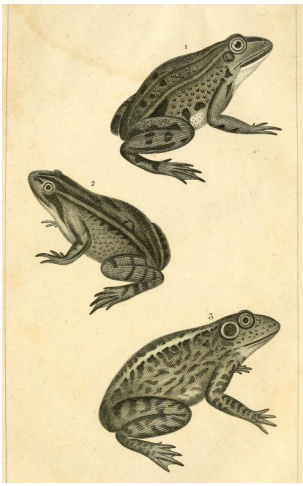
- Even though ostriches cannot fly, they can move at incredibly fast speeds, running up to 43 miles per hour!
- Ostriches are the largest birds in the world, and fully grown adults can weigh anywhere between 140 and 320 lb.
- Ostriches are omnivores and will eat plants like grass, roots, and fruit, as well as small insects and animals. They don't have teeth to chew with, so instead, they swallow pebbles to grind up the food in their stomachs.



Hyena 2

Hyaenidae

- Hyenas are carnivorous mammals with spotted or striped coats, blunt claws, pointed ears, and powerful jaws.
- There are four types of hyena: the striped hyena, the spotted hyena, the aardwolf, and the brown hyena.
- Certain species of hyena are known for their distinct vocalizations: spotted hyenas make a variety of noises such as growls, whoops, grunts, laughs, and whines, while the striped hyena emits howling sounds and a type of chattering laugh.
- Hyena diets vary depending on species: striped hyenas and brown hyenas mostly scavenge for food, while spotted hyenas hunt and kill most of their prey. Aardwolves, the smallest species, feed on insects using their long tongues (similar to an armadillo).



Frog 3

Anura

- Frogs are a type of amphibian that live partially in and partially out of the water. They have two big, bulbous eyes, four legs, and stout bodies.
- Though it is a commonly held belief that frogs and toads are different species, toads are actually just a type of frog with bumpy, rough skin.
- Frogs come in many different varieties, and their skin can range in color from muted browns and greens that blend in with their environment to bright colors such as blue, yellow, or red that warn predators to keep away.
- Some species of frog, like the poison dart frog, secrete toxic substances from their skin to ward off predators.
- Frogs have special skin that allows them to absorb air, making them capable of breathing through their skin as well as their lungs.



Lynx 3

Lynx

- The lynx is a type of wild cat with a medium size, furred coats, tufted, pointed ears, and long whiskers.
- There are four main varieties of the lynx: the bobcat, the Eurasian lynx, the Canadian lynx, and the Iberian lynx, all of which have different coloring and habitats.
- Lynxes eat a wide range of different meats, depending on species and habitat, including larger prey like deer, reindeer, and chamois, as well as smaller prey like fish, squirrels, turkey, snowshoe hares, and mice.
- Lynxes typically live in forests that have dense, thick underbrush they can hide in while stalking prey.
- Though they live on the ground, they can also climb trees and swim if the need arises.



Caracal 4

C. caracal

- Caracals are wild cats with tufted ears, long canines, tall legs, and a streamlined, muscular build.
- Their coats have a red or sand-colored tint with lighter markings around their bellies and mouths and darker markings around their face, ears, and eyes.
- Caracals are famously difficult to observe in the wild because they are both nocturnal and typically shy of humans.
- Caracals are very territorial and usually live alone or in pairs. Young caracals typically leave their mothers at nine or ten months old, though occasionally a grown female will stay behind to live with her mother.
- Caracals eat meat and mostly prey on rodents, birds, and small mammals. They can jump over 9.8 ft. to catch birds mid-flight!



Turkey 4

Meleagris

- Turkeys are large birds with heavy bodies native to North and South America.
- There are two species of turkeys: the wild turkey, which is common in North America, and the ocellated turkey, which has brighter colors and can be found primarily in Mexico.
- Wild turkey diets vary from season to season, eating food such as grains, worms, lizards, insects, acorns, fruit, and walnuts depending on what is available to them.
- Though wild turkeys can fly for up to a quarter mile if needed, they are not well-suited to long flights, and primarily live on the ground.
- Turkeys have a variety of grooming behaviors that help keep them clean, and can often be found sunning themselves, bathing in dust, or preening their feathers.



Falcon 5

Falco

- Falcons are a class of birds of prey with around 40 different species!
- There are 3 main types of falcons: kestrels, a smaller type of bird, hobbies and their relatives, which are larger, and the peregrine falcons and their relatives.

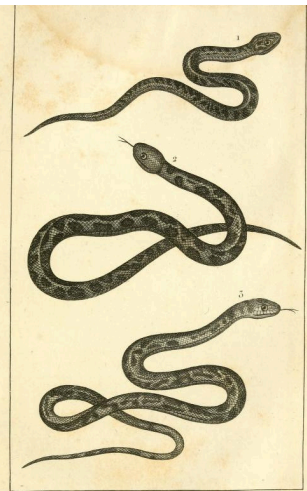
- Falcons have thin, pointed wings that allow them to quickly change direction mid-flight- a useful skill when hunting prey.
- Falcons are very fast fliers, and peregrine falcons have even been known to dive from the air at speeds of 200 mph or more, making them the fastest creatures alive!
- Falcons have incredible vision, which helps them spot prey from the air and swoop down to hunt them. One species of falcon was even measured as having eyesight 2.6 times greater than human vision!



Cougar 5

P. concolor

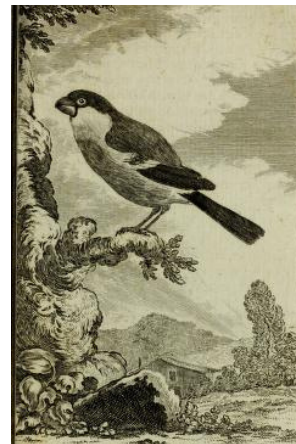
- Cougars are a type of large wild cat native to North, Central, and South America.
- They live in a variety of habitats such as mountains, forests, and even rainforests, though they prefer rocky areas with thick underbrush.
- Cougars have a sleek, muscular build with a round head and ears, a powerful jaw, and retractable claws.
- Cougars also have large paws and thick, muscular back legs, allowing them to run quickly over short distances and jump from the ground into trees that are around 18 feet tall!
- Cougars hold a Guinness World Record for the most number of names, with over 40 just in English (not even counting other languages), such as cougar, mountain lion, puma, panther, and catamount!



Snake 6

Serpentes

- Snakes are long reptiles covered in interlocking scales, and they have no arms or legs.
- Snakes can be found all over the world, and live on every continent except Antarctica. There are even many snake species, known as sea snakes, that live in the ocean!
- Because the body of a snake is so long, many of its organs are positioned one after another in a row, instead of side by side. Most snakes only have one functioning lung for this reason.
- Most snakes do not have any venom, and swallow their prey alive or kill it by constricting its body. Those with venom will bite their prey, releasing the venom through their fangs, and subdue or kill it.



Finch 6

Fringillidae

- Finches are small to medium-sized perching birds with colorful feathers and sturdy beaks, perfect for eating nuts and seeds.
- Unlike many other birds, finches do not migrate, typically living in the same habitats their entire lifespan.
- There are 235 varieties of finches; the smallest, the Andean siskin, grows to about 3.8 in., while the largest, the collared grosbeak, grows up to 9.4 in.
- Most finches have a "bouncing" flight, meaning when they fly, they alternate between flapping and gliding with their wings closed, making them appear to bounce midair.
- Though most finches eat nuts and seeds, some varieties also eat berries and insects, while the Hawaiian honeycreepers, a type of finch, have also adapted to be able to eat nectar, much like a hummingbird.