



Nature Study

Each Friday morning, you will go through two of our nature cards. 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



Shark 1

- Sharks are a type of fish with teeth, fins, a tail, and gills.
- Sharks are typically carnivores (though some species feed on plankton instead), and eat meat such as other fish, squids, turtles, and seals.

- Sharks can range from very small to very large: the smallest species of shark, the dwarf lanternshark, can be as small as 6.7 inches in length, while the whale shark, the biggest fish in the world, gets to around 40 feet long!
- Sharks typically live 20-30 years, though some species, like the spiny dogfish and the whale shark, can live for over 100 years.
- The earliest known sharks originated in the Jurassic Period, over 2 million years ago!



Dolphin 1

- Dolphins are a type of aquatic mammal, meaning they live in the water but have mammalian traits, like being warm-blooded and breathing air through their lungs, not from gills.
- Most dolphins eat fish and squid, but the orca (a species of dolphin) also eats seals,

sharks, and sometimes other dolphins.

- Many species of dolphins are considered oceanic, meaning they live in the ocean, but there are some types of dolphins whose native habitats are in freshwater or brackish rivers, not the ocean.
- Dolphins are highly social creatures and communicate with each other through a variety of clicks and whistles.
- Bottlenose dolphins even have “names” for each other: unique whistles that help them call to each other and identify one another.



Whale 2

- Whales are a type of large aquatic mammal that lives in the ocean.
- Because they are mammals, they have a blowhole (a type of nostril on top of their heads) instead of gills, which means they must regularly swim to the surface for air and hold their breath when beneath the water.

- Whales have a layer of fat called blubber that keeps them insulated from the cold temperatures of the deep sea and also helps them to float.
- Whales can make several different sounds, like clicks, whistles, and even songs. One species, the humpback whale, is known for its hauntingly beautiful songs.
- There are many species of whales that all eat different things. Some, like the sperm whale, hunt fish and squid, while others, like the blue whale, filter water through their sieve-like mouths to catch and eat tiny creatures known as plankton.



Stingray 2

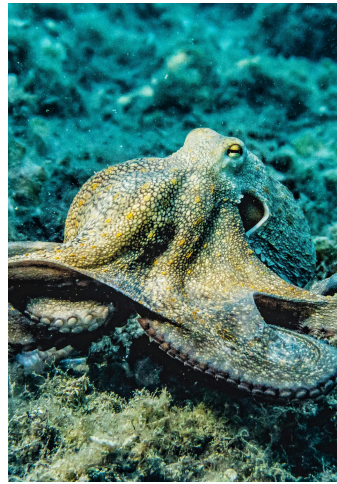
- Stingrays are a type of cartilaginous fish, which means their skeletons are made of a flexible material called cartilage, rather than bone.
- They have flat, disk-shaped bodies with a long tail, eyes on the top of their head, and a mouth on the underside.

- Stingrays propel themselves by using their pectoral fins to make a flapping motion that pushes them through the water, which makes them appear like they are “flying” underwater.
- Stingrays are named for the venomous barbs attached to their tails, which they use to defend themselves from predators.
- Stingrays primarily breathe using their mouth and gills like many other fish, but they can also breathe using spiracles- a small opening behind their eyes.



Jellyfish 3

- Jellyfish are soft, jelly-like creatures that live in the water. Contrary to their name, jellyfish are not truly fish, but rather a type of invertebrate (creatures without a bone structure).
- Jellyfish typically eat meat such as plankton, small fish, fish eggs, crustaceans, and sometimes other jellyfish.
- Jellyfish have an umbrella-shaped body called a bell with tentacles on their underside. The bell of a jellyfish helps to propel them through the water by expanding and contracting, which pushes them through the water.
- However, some types of jellyfish do not swim through the ocean; instead, they remain permanently anchored to stalks on the ocean floor.
- Jellyfish tentacles have stinging properties that are used to stun and capture food or to defend themselves against predators.



Octopus 3

- Octopuses are ocean-dwelling creatures with eight limbs that have suckers attached, two large eyes at the top of their heads, and a hard beak.
- Octopuses have three hearts: two to pump blood through their gills, and one that pumps blood through their entire body.
- They are very intelligent creatures and can recognize patterns and shapes. They have even been observed playing with toys and using tools.
- Octopuses have no skeleton, which makes it very easy for them to squeeze into small, tight spaces, where they hide from predators who might eat them.
- Octopuses can change color to blend in with the environment around them and hide themselves from predators. Some species even use the changing colors for more than camouflage, signaling their emotions by their color: red for anger, white for fear, and brown or orange for calm.



Seal 4

- Seals are a type of pinniped: a water-dwelling mammal that eats meat. Other pinnipeds include walruses and sea lions.
- Seals have a sleek, streamlined body, a rounded head, and a tail and flippers that help propel them through the water.
- The smallest species of seal, the baikal seal, grows to around 3 feet long and 100 lbs, while the largest species, the elephant seal, measures in at around 16 feet long and can weigh around 7,100 lbs.
- Seals live in the water primarily, but will swim ashore at times to rest, avoid predators, and warm themselves in the sun.
- From afar, seals sometimes seem hairless, but all seal species actually have coats of fur ranging from very fine to thick, depending on their habitat. This fur keeps them warm in cold water.



Crab 4

- Crabs are a type of crustacean: a group of hard-shelled creatures that also includes lobsters and shrimp.
- While many crabs live in fresh or salt water, some crabs, known as terrestrial crabs, live primarily on land, only occasionally venturing into the water.
- Crabs have jointed legs that bend out from their bodies, causing them to walk or run sideways.
- While most crabs are omnivorous and eat plants like algae and animals such as mollusks and worms, some species eat only plants or only meat.
- Some crabs, called hermit crabs, move into the empty shells of other sea creatures and make them their homes to protect themselves from predators.