



September 20-26, 2010

[www.takemeoutsideweek.ca](http://www.takemeoutsideweek.ca)

## List of Activities You Can Do: Families & Small Groups

### Just Head Outside

Go on an outing or a hike and:

- Use activities from the Sharing Nature Activities for Families and Youth Groups booklet: <http://www.recreationns.ns.ca/files/SharingNatureBooklet-EN.pdf>.
- Look for animal signs and observations.
- Try identifying common trees and plants in the woods, natural meadows, by a lake or stream or by the seashore.
- Find resources to help you identify plants and wildlife here: <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mnhnew/>.
- Go on a night walk. See the tips from the **Take Me Outside...To See the Night Sky** section below.
- Celebrate the beginning of Autumn on September 23!

### Use Your Senses

- Listen for animal sounds.
- Walk in the rain and feel and smell the moist freshness of the rainy woods (dress properly).
- Touch the wonderful textures and shapes in nature.
- Watch for neat shapes and colours in nature. Can you find every colour of the rainbow? Bring small paper samples of the colours of the rainbow (small enough to hold in the palm of your hand) and hand them out to the children/youth. Challenge them to bring back a sample of nature, being careful not to kill plants or disturb living creatures. On a white piece of cloth, arrange the paper samples in a rainbow, pairing the natural samples with each colour.

### Be Still

- Try sitting quietly in a natural setting and take it all in. Be very still and for five to 20 minutes (depending on ages). Watch and listen for what's going on around you. Come back together and talk about what you experienced.
- Lie under a tree and gaze up into the branches. Look for patterns and shapes, birds nests and signs of creatures living or using the tree.

### Nature Journal

- Make your own nature journal and bring it along on an outing. Use recycled materials to make your own or follow instructions here: <http://handbookofnaturestudy.blogspot.com/p/nature-journals.html>.
- Draw what you see.
- Make bark rubbings of the trees you encounter. Hold a piece of paper or page from your journal firmly against the bark of a tree. Use the flat side of a crayon or the long edge of a pencil lead to gently rub against the paper until you begin to see the pattern of the tree bark emerge.
- Write thoughts or poetry about what you discover in nature.
- Collect a few leaves from trees and other plants. Use an old phone book to press the leaves until they're dry. Glue them into your nature journal and/or place one on the cover.

### Take Me Outside...To See the Night Sky

This week (September 20-26, 2010) includes the Fall Equinox, when day and night are equal, on Thursday, September 23. The Sun sets around 7 pm and the sky will be dark by about 9 pm. Of course it will always be darker in the country than in the city, so try to get out of town if you can.

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Even during twilight, there will be interesting sights, including bright stars, the Moon and planets. The Moon will already be in the Southeast sky at sunset, and from one night to the next you may observe the Moon change phase and step more towards the East. The planet Jupiter will be closest and brightest this week low in the Southeastern sky. High overhead, you will see the bright stars Vega and Deneb; together with the bright star Altair lower in the South, they form The Summer Triangle.

On the night of Wednesday, September 22, the Moon is nearly Full, and will hang just North of the bright planet Jupiter in the sky. This will help you find Jupiter if you have not found it already!

With the help of simple binoculars, you can see much more detail. On the Moon there the dark lava plains and the pockmarks of the craters. With the same binoculars, Jupiter will reveal its disk and you may be able to spot up to four of the moons that revolve around Jupiter, changing their position from day to day.

As an extra challenge, you can try to spot the planet Uranus in the same binocular field as Jupiter, only two Moon diameters to the upper left. Uranus will appear as a star only slightly dimmer than Jupiter's moons.

For more details or the latest news and local event, visit Astronomy Nova Scotia at <http://www.astronomynovascotia.ca>. Other useful links include:

- <http://www.cleardarksky.com/c/Halifaxkey.html> The Halifax Clear Sky Chart will forecast observing conditions a day or so ahead.
- <http://star-finder.ca/print.html> Print and assemble your own StarFinder!
- <http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/realdata/sightings/index.html> Check here for upcoming sightings of the International Space Shuttle.

Courtesy of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada - Halifax Centre <http://www.astronomynovascotia.ca>

## Safety First

If going for a hike, there are several things you can do to ensure a safe hiking experience:

- Don't hike alone. There is safety in numbers.
- Make a hike plan. Decide where you're going and when you'll return. Leave this information with someone who will follow up if you don't return on time.
- Take a map and compass or GPS unit (with extra batteries) and know how to use them.
- Bring the right gear with you and be prepared. Hiking or trekking poles are a good idea to help with difficult terrain and can be tools for emergency situations, such as fending off aggressive animals.
- Never feed wild animals and don't leave garbage behind that might attract them to the trail.

Courtesy of Hike Nova Scotia [www.hikenovascotia.ca](http://www.hikenovascotia.ca).

Also:

- Be aware of poisonous plants in Nova Scotia. Learn about them at <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/poison>.
- Be aware of wildlife and how to deal with a wildlife encounter. Learn about this at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/living-with-wildlife>.
- Know about any allergies of those in your family or group and take necessary precautions.
- Carry a first aid kit and know how to use it.
- In NS, by law you are required to carry matches, a knife and a compass when traveling in the woods.

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