

Nature Picture Book Recommendations

Ages 0 and up

Galbraith, Kathryn O. *Summer Babies*. 2019.

Part of the board book series, *Babies in the Park*, this book gives a sweet overview of nature and activities in a park.

Robertson, Joanne. *Nibi Is Water. Nibi Aawon Nbiish*. 2020.

Simple, rhyming bilingual board book by an Anishinaabe water protector, this book introduces many ways water affects life on earth and ways we can show our care for water. Illustrations depict a diverse group of people interacting with water.

Stevenson, Robin. *Pride Colors*. 2019.

This simple and affirming board book explores the meaning behind the six colors in the rainbow Pride flag: Life, Healing, Sunlight, Nature, Peace & Harmony, Spirit. Could be used during a program on the rainbow or a program in Pride month.

Toolie-Walker, Yaari. *Let's Play Out: Summer in Alaska*. 2020.

Part of the board book series, *Seasons in Alaska*, created by Alaska Native authors and photographers, this gorgeous board book shows elements of Alaska culture, as well as various summer activities. Images and text highlight safe outdoor play as well, including life jackets and helmets. (*Bye-Bye Ice* by Carla Snow was featured in the presentation but was unavailable for the presenter to review.)

Ages 3 and up

Camper, Cathy. ***Ten Ways to Hear Snow***. 2020.

Lina walks through a snowfall to visit her grandfather, observing different sounds of snow on the way. The author incorporates her own Lebanese grandmother's method of stuffing grape leaves as Lina shares a meal with her grandfather and they experience the last sound of snow together.

Kato, Yukiko. ***In the Meadow***. 2011.

Translated from the Japanese, this sweet book follows a small girl exploring a meadow and all its sounds and activities. Geared toward younger children.

Colleen, Marcie. ***The Bear's Garden***. 2020.

A little girl plants a seed in a tin can on her windowsill. When the can falls off, the seedling begins to grow and propagate in a vacant lot. With her stuffed panda bear, she carefully tends her little plants. When she has to leave for a time, she leaves the bear as caretaker – and when she returns, she finds her panda (with help from the local community) has cultivated a beautiful garden.

Covell, David. ***Run Wild***. 2018.

The book invites the reader to leave their electronics and run wild through mud, forest, sea and storm. The large, rhyming text includes sound and touch, making this an exciting read for younger and older kids.

Dameg, Kaulana and Mahealani Kobashigawa. ***No ke Anilā / Our Hawai'i Weather***. 2010.

This bilingual book in Hawaiian and English describes Hawai'i weather and related phenomenon, like falling flowers as a sign of wind. Students can make their own observations about the effects of weather in their area. Available at besspress.com – look for other Hawaiian books for educators wanting to incorporate authentic culture into lessons or events like a lū'au.

Denos, Julia. ***Here and Now***. 2019.

Help kids be mindful and develop an interconnectedness to the world around them through this simple picture book meditation.

Doi, Kaya. ***Chirri & Chirra: On the Town***. 2019.

Two siblings travel through their Japanese town, visiting shops, biking through woods and ultimately, finding a lovely surprise hidden in a rose garden. Translated from the Japanese.

Farrell, Alison. ***The Hike***. 2019.

Three girls go on a hike, exploring, problem-solving and making observations throughout. The main text is simple, but pages are full of identification of flora and fauna, providing opportunity to take a read-aloud deeper.

Sarah Esala
esalasarahm@gmail.com

Grimes, Nikki. ***Southwest Sunrise***. 2020.

Jayden isn't happy about moving from New York City to New Mexico, but as he explores the desert, he begins to believe he can call this place home. Own Voices author, Nikki Grimes, won the Children's Literature Legacy Award in 2017.

Higgins, Carter. ***Everything You Need for a Treehouse***. 2018.

An imaginative story of a group of kids building a treehouse. At the end you discover that the kids are apartment dwellers that have planted a small tree in a pot and are daydreaming about future possibilities.

Ittusardjuat, Monica. ***Making a Qamutiik***. 2019.

Through this wordless picture book, we see an Inuit boy assist in the step-by-step process of making - and then enjoying - a qamutiik (wooden sled). Great choice for incorporating STEM and sequencing skills into programs for the littlest learners.

Jameson, Catherine. ***Zoe and the Fawn***. 2019.

A sweet book illustrated by the wonderful Julie Flett, Zoe finds a fawn in her backyard and recruits her father to look for its mother. Their hike reveals many other animals, and when the pair returns home, they find the doe reunited with the fawn. Animal names are in both English and Okanagan, making this an excellent Own Voices choice for the youngest readers and an educational talking point for our communities about how to treat a lone fawn.

Keller, Shana. ***Fly, Firefly!***. 2020.

A young girl scoops a wayward firefly from the ocean. With simple text, gorgeous illustrations and an afterward that discusses the inspiration for the book - a letter from Rachel Carson about a similar encounter with a firefly - as well as information on fireflies and bioluminescence, this Own Voices picture book provides great opportunity to introduce science and conservation to the youngest readers.

Lebeuf, Darren. ***My Ocean Is Blue***. 2020.

A science educator's dream, this book offers a full overview of the ocean, from beach to underwater to sky, with ample opportunity to discuss the relationship between humans and nature. While discussion topics are endless, the text is simple but engaging, still making it an excellent read for younger children.

Leslie, Lindsay. ***Dusk Explorers***. 2020.

As dusk turns to dark, we see a neighborhood of children running, creaking, catching bugs and pretending not to hear their parents call them home. Gorgeous illustrations and text highlight all the wildlife that surrounds the kids' play. Excellent choice for an evening program.

Lin, Grace. ***A Big Mooncake for Little Star***. 2018.

Learn about the moon phases through a mischievous little girl sneaking bites of cake! Own Voices author, Grace Lin, created this book as a response to an exhibit that portrayed “Americana” as all-white, providing her daughter with a book that shows an Asian-American mother and daughter relationship. This book can also be used in conjunction with the Moon Festival.

MacLachlan, Patricia. ***My Friend Earth***. 2020.

With beautiful cutout illustrations, this book personifies Earth as a young BIPOC girl interacting with nature.

McCabe, Katie. ***We Wait for the Sun***. 2021.

Civil Rights activist, Dovey Johnson Roundtree, would always remember the magical pre-dawn mornings of her childhood when she went berry picking with her grandmother during the Jim Crow era. Beautiful illustrations accompany the text.

McCanna, Tim. ***In a Garden***. 2020.

A garden may look peaceful at first, but when we look closer, we see it is always moving and changing. Shows all the vibrant life in an urban garden.

McQuinn, Anna. ***Lola Plants a Garden***. 2014.

Lola reads a book about gardens and decides to plant her own. Simple text describes each step Lola takes in cultivating and enjoying her garden as she researches at the library, plants, weeds and hosts a garden party. Perfect for the youngest readers.

Murphy, Mary. ***Only a Tree Knows How to be a Tree***. 2020.

Learn what makes a tree and other elements of nature completely unique – just like each person is unique! Science paired with diverse illustrations of children with a wide variety of races and abilities, this is a feel-good book for the youngest kids.

Pajama Press. ***A World of Mindfulness***. 2020.

Introducing the youngest children to the concept of mindfulness, a diverse selection of characters interact mindfully with their surroundings, acknowledging feelings and emotions and paying close attention to the sensations around them. While not strictly a nature book, it would offer a jumping off point for finding calm and awareness in nature.

Scanlon, Liz Garton. ***Thank You, Garden***. 2020.

Simple, rhyming text highlights the fun of gardening together on a rooftop garden.

Weston, Robert Paul. *Natsumi's Song of Summer*. 2020.

Natsumi loves everything about summer in her Japanese home, especially the insects - and especially the cicadas! But she is worried they will frighten her visiting American cousin who isn't familiar with these bugs. Written as a series of tanka poems, the text explores separation and friendship and provides an afterward on cicadas – including the Japanese onomatopoeia version of the different songs each species sings.

Yolen, Jane. *On Eagle Cove*. 2020.

A mother and daughter observe a pair of eagles in winter and hike back to see the nest in spring. Part of the *On Bird Hill and Beyond* series through Cornell Lab Publishing Group.

Zia, Farhana. *Lali's Feather*. 2020.

Lali finds a lost feather and tries find its owner but her feather doesn't match any of the birds. Instead, she keeps it for herself. This adorable story encourages discussion on identification and the many ways feathers can be useful to birds and people alike. Farhana includes her Indian culture by reflecting the birds of her childhood and peppering the text with Indian expressions. Perfect addition to a nature/science children's library.

Ages 4 and up

Ahmed, Roda. ***Mae Among the Stars***. 2018.

A simple picture book biography about Mae Jemison as a child, dreaming about space. We see her curiosity and imagination as well as see her overcome prejudice, fulfilling her goals of becoming an astronaut. Excellent nonfiction choice for younger learners.

Alexander, Kwame. ***Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie Starring Indigo Blume***. 2020.

Own Voices and award-winning author, Kwame Alexander teams up with Ohio illustrator Tim Bowers to present a musical masterpiece. Indigo Blume is invited to sing at the upcoming community festival but doesn't know if she is brave enough. Good choice for introducing kids to activism.

Arnold, Marsha Diane. ***Galápagos Girl: Galapagueña***. 2018.

Valentina Cruz learned to love the Galápagos as a local girl. She studied biology and came back to the islands as a naturalist. Bilingual in English and Spanish.

Banks, Kate. ***Noah Builds an Ark***. 2019.

A major storm is heading to Noah's city. While his parents board up the house and prepare indoors, Noah creates a shelter for wildlife in his backyard. Beautiful illustrations coupled with Noah's concern for protecting all the critters in his yard make this a good choice for introducing conservation to young readers.

Barnes, Derrick. ***I Am Every Good Thing***. 2020.

An Own Voices' upbeat affirmation of Black boys. While not strictly a nature book, much of the imagery is outdoors and future dreams include a child exploring the sciences.

Barretta, Gene. ***The Secret Garden of George Washington Carver***. 2020.

Gorgeously illustrated by Own Voices illustrator, Frank Morrison, we learn about the secret garden George Washington Carver cultivated as a child. We learn about his journey all the way to addressing Congress in 1921. The book ends with the words to "Regard Nature. Revere Nature. Respect Nature." Good choice for elementary students.

Boelts, Maribeth. ***Kaia and the Bees***. 2020.

Kaia's dad is concerned about the decrease in the honeybee population and keeps a beehive on the roof of their apartment building. Kaia, however, is terrified of bees. By the end of the story, Kaia overcomes her fears and develops empathy for the bees.

Essa, Huda. ***Common Threads: Adam's Day at the Market***. 2019.

In this nearly wordless picture book, Adam visits a farmer's market with his parents but is separated from them when he follows a blue jay. In his attempts to be reunited, he interacts with people from a variety of cultures, religions and ethnicities.

Farber, Katy. ***Salamander Sky***. 2018.

A girl wakes up on a rainy April day and spends the day in anticipation. Will tonight be the night she is asked to assist her scientist mother in helping salamanders cross a road? Full of information on salamanders.

Hillery, Tony. ***Harlem Grown: How One Big Idea Transformed a Neighborhood***. 2020.

Own Voices author, Tony Hillery, decided to create an urban farm in a vacant lot across from an elementary school. He tells the story in simple text and vibrant illustrations, including both successes and failures. Resources for starting a garden anywhere are available at the end of the book.

Holler, Sue Farrell. ***Raven, Rabbit, Deer***. 2020.

A boy invites his grandfather on a winter walk. The two observe tracks in snow, count and imitate animals and share Ojibwemowin words. Sweet illustrations by Chippewas of Rama First Nation artist, Jennifer Faria, show how much these two enjoy one another's company. Highly recommended for a winter Story Trail.

Karlins, Mark. ***Kiyoshio's Walk***. 2021.

Receiving a coveted Kirkus Starred Review, a grandson tries to identify where his grandfather's haiku poems come from as the two take a mindful walk around town, creating poetry along the way. Lovely, meditative choice, perhaps for a downtown story walk or during National Poetry Month/Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (April).

Mangal, Mélina. ***Jayden's Impossible Garden***. 2021.

Jayden sees nature all around his city and works with a neighbor to create a community garden. Winner of the 2019 African American Voices in Literature writing contest, cosponsored by Strive Publishing and Free Spirit Publishing.

Martinez-Neal, Juana. ***Zonia's Rain Forest***. 2021.

A young Asháninka girl greets all her friendly animal neighbors on a walk through the rain forest. At the end of her walk, she discovers an area ravaged by loggers. Zonia commits to helping protect the forest and calls for others to join as well. Afterward includes a translation of the book in Asháninka and more information on the Asháninka people and the Amazon.

Oswald, Pete. ***Hike***. 2020.

A father and son prepare for a day of hiking in this wordless picture book. Programmers can elicit audience participation in telling the story of the pair or ask questions to relate the illustrations to a real hike that follows reading the book. Ex. “Look what they are bringing on their hike; what do you think we should bring on ours?” or “They see mountains, what do you think we’ll see?”

Owens, John. ***One Summer Up North***. 2020.

A biracial family takes a camping the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness of northern Minnesota. Fishing, canoeing, foraging and stargazing are among the activities depicted in this wordless picture book.

Portis, Antoinette. ***A New Green Day***. 2020.

Each page provides a nature riddle with the answer found in the text and illustration on the next page. The riddles follow a girl from dawn to night. Beautiful illustrations and very interactive.

Scott, Jordon. ***I Talk Like A River***. 2020.

A boy and his father leave school early on a “bad speech day” to visit the river. Here the boy is able to view his stutter through the speech of the proud water – bubbling, churning, crashing and calm. This autobiographical book won the Schneider Family Book award, given to a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience. The beautiful drawings and simple text offer both an excellent model for kids to see themselves reflected in nature and to discuss struggles and self-acceptance. An Own Voices selection.

Tariq, Ambreen. ***Fatima’s Great Outdoors***. 2021.

Newly published, the reviewer was unable to read a copy. However, this book is getting positive attention for showcasing an immigrant family on a camping trip and is authored by the founder of the “Brown People Camping” movement. Addresses racism, resiliency and connection with nature.

Theule, Larissa. ***A Way with Wild Things***. 2020.

Poppy loves bugs, but is very shy around people. When a dragonfly makes an appearance at a party, Poppy is able to center herself and muster up the bravery to share the dragonfly’s scientific name with the group. Concepts like insects, camouflage, feelings and mindfulness can all be introduced with this beautifully illustrated text.

Thompson, Maya. ***Ruby’s Birds***. 2019.

Ruby is always singing and making noise, but once she is introduced to bird watching, she learns to be quiet – sort of. Relatable text for anyone hiking with youngsters. Published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this book includes additional information on various birds and bird watching.

Ages 5 and up

Bogan, Carmen. *Where's Rodney?*. 2017.

Based on Own Voices author, Carmen Bogan's experience in advancing public health for low-income kids through outdoor experiences, this book shares the experience of Rodney, an energetic boy who just wants to be outside. When his teacher takes him on a field trip to a park, Rodney expects a small patch of grass and a bench, but instead finds himself in a place that can only be described as "Majestic," a place where he can finally and truly be outside.

Chapin, Tom and John Forster. *This Pretty Planet*. 2020.

Based on the song, two siblings take a dreamlike ride throughout planet Earth over a millennium and learn about the importance of caring for it as a sacred place.

Harajili, Huda. *All About Weather: A First Weather Book for Kids*. 2020.

Interactive weather book for young kids. Provides extra facts and insights throughout.

Kirby, Loll. *Old Enough to Save the Planet*. 2020.

This nonfiction picture book tells 12 stories of children around the world addressing climate change. The end of the book provides simple suggestions on addressing climate change and ways to become an activist.

Kloepper, Madeline. *The Not-So Great Outdoors*. 2019.

Vacationing with her biracial family, a grumpy camper expresses a wide range of grievances about being outside, but eventually begins to see all the wonderful experiences it offers. A good option for reluctant day-campers and a reminder to educators that sometimes kids need to voice their frustrations before they can let them go.

Lindstrom, Carole. *We Are Water Protectors*. 2020.

A young girl rallies the planet's people together to fight against the black snake that threatens the water and all who depend upon it. Notes at the end of the book describe the Standing Rock Sioux's movement to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline and provide the reader with a Water Protector pledge. Supplemental material is also available on the publisher's website. Michaela Goade's gorgeous illustrations won the first Caldecott for an Indigenous author. This is a must-read book for inspiring activism.

Mann, Jennifer K. *The Camping Trip*. 2020.

Ernestine is thrilled to go on her first camping trip with her aunt and cousin. Things don't always go as planned as she deals with a heavy backpack, weird food and homesickness, but each challenge offers its own wonderful reward.

Matheson, Anne and Kay Widdowson. ***The Forest Man: The True Story of Jadav Payeng***. 2020.

Learn about a conservation hero in India! Bright illustrations bring Jadav's forest to life. Great read for kindergarten- second grade.

Raschka, Chris. ***In the City***. 2020.

Flocks of city birds, with all their similarities and differences, present a framework for friendship as two children see each other across their apartment building windows and wonder if they might be friends.

Richmond, Susan Edwards. ***Bird Count***. 2019.

Introduce early elementary students to citizen science through a Christmas Bird Count.

Wang, Andrea. ***Watercress***. 2021.

An autobiographical picture book about a Chinese-American girl growing up in rural Ohio, foraging with her family for watercress. Jason Chin's magnificent illustrations are on a watch-list for this year's Caldecott awards.

Weismann, Kay. ***If You Want to Visit a Sea Garden***. 2020.

Started by First Peoples generations ago, this book details an outing to a sea garden and the life found within one. Vetted by scientists and Kwaxistalla Wathl'thla Clan Chief, Adam Dick and illustrated by Roy Henry Vickers, of T'simshian, Haida, Heiltsuk and English heritage, this is a unique addition to any gardening or sea unit.

Winter, Jeanette. ***The World is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid***. 2017.

Inspired by nature, Iraqi architect, Zaha Hadid, created beautiful buildings on paper only to face multiple rejections. However, she persisted, and her buildings have been built all over the world. Simple, flowing text makes it relatable to young students.

Ages 6 and up

Derting, Kimberly and Shelli R. Johannes. ***Cece Loves Science and Adventure***. 2019.

Written with STEM elements in mind, Cece aptly confronts all the obstacles on her camping trip, earning her camping, STEM and teamwork pins. Vashti Harrison, an Own Voices illustrator and the author of the Little Leaders series, includes elements like diagrams, checklists and equations in her illustrations, as well as an expressive group of adventurous girls. Great option for elementary scouting programs.

Harrington, Janice N. ***Buzzing with Questions: The Inquisitive Mind of Charles Henry Turner***. 2019.

Charles' fascination with insects leads him to become America's first Black entomologist. Own Voices team, Harrington and illustrator Theodore Taylor III bring a well-researched and beautifully illustrated story of scientific exploration and overcoming racism.

Mullen, Diane C. ***One Little Lot: The 1-2-3s of an Urban Garden***. 2020.

Counting opportunities and simple text make this a great choice for early educators wanting to highlight the rewards of a community garden as well as the bees that contribute to the harvest.

Paul, Baptiste and Miranda Paul. ***I Am Farmer: Growing an Environmental Movement in Cameroon***. 2019.

Tantoh always wanted to be a farmer. But as a college student, he contracts typhoid from unclean water. Once he recovers, Tantoh brings his love of farming and a new passion for clean water to his community in Cameroon

Paul, Miranda. ***Water Is Water***. 2015.

Learn about the water cycle in this story designed for the youngest learners. Wonderfully illustrated by Caldecott honoree, Jason Chin.

Rusch, Elizabeth. ***Mario and the Hole in the Sky: How a Chemist Saved Our Planet***. 2019.

Mexican-American chemist, Mario Molina, loved asking questions and experimenting from a young age. When he grew up, he found a solution to fixing the ozone layer.