Winter boredom busters for young people

Source: Ashley Osborne, 4-H youth development specialist

COVID-19 continues to force us to make changes to our everyday lives. Many young Kentuckians are going to school virtually and nearly all extracurricular activities and events, like 4-H, continue to be canceled, postponed, rescheduled or delivered online.

As we close in on a year since the virus first entered the state, chances are parents and caregivers are hearing or have heard a lot of “I’m bored”. And even though the weather is much cooler now, young people can bundle up and go outdoors. Here are some ideas to get young people active and engaged with nature during this time of much uncertainty and to help break up the monotony.

* Young people can continue to participate in 4-H by observing the world around them and reporting their findings through Kentucky 4-H Nature Notes. In the project, youth report on things like their location, any wildlife they see, sounds they hear and any other observations. Information about the program is available online at [https://4-h.ca.uky.edu/files/kynaturenotes2020.pdf](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2F4-h.ca.uky.edu%2Ffiles%2Fkynaturenotes2020.pdf&data=04%7C01%7Ckatie.pratt%40uky.edu%7Cc5e2e4f2eedd468a215408d8b24a9ed2%7C2b30530b69b64457b818481cb53d42ae%7C0%7C0%7C637455380985123893%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=%2BKYZjaKkUAXeyv0kItB4kkiRRNLDrClmPD5UWofNCj8%3D&reserved=0) or by contacting the local extension office.
* Go on an alphabet or color nature hike and try to find an item in nature that begins with each letter of the alphabet or certain colors.
* Make bird suet. Suet is an easy way to provide food for overwintering birds and attract them to your backyard. The National Audubon Society has directions online on how to make your own suet using common household items at [https://www.audubon.org/news/make-your-own-suet](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.audubon.org%2Fnews%2Fmake-your-own-suet&data=04%7C01%7Ckatie.pratt%40uky.edu%7Cc5e2e4f2eedd468a215408d8b24a9ed2%7C2b30530b69b64457b818481cb53d42ae%7C0%7C0%7C637455380985103899%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=gveV9qLjqe9L3HPkskn1mu12z7n2F1po2OcAAsgJprQ%3D&reserved=0). After you make the suet, you can try to identify the birds that come to your feeder. Project Feeder Watch has posters to help you identify backyard birds at [https://feederwatch.org/learn/identifying-birds/#download-feederwatch-posters](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffeederwatch.org%2Flearn%2Fidentifying-birds%2F%23download-feederwatch-posters&data=04%7C01%7Ckatie.pratt%40uky.edu%7Cc5e2e4f2eedd468a215408d8b24a9ed2%7C2b30530b69b64457b818481cb53d42ae%7C0%7C0%7C637455380985113900%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=%2Fol6AU5wLlLj%2B1xiaZBDbqcCOcbg6mx%2B7JzZLj64zYs%3D&reserved=0).
* With Valentine’s Day right around the corner, young people can get a jumpstart on the holiday by making cards for friends and family using natural items collected from their yard and craft supplies. They can also make and donate Valentine’s Day cards to local nursing homes.
* Take a virtual field trip to Kentucky farms at <https://www.teachkyag.org/kyfarmsfeedme>.
* If you live near evergreens, you can use them to do several activities to help young people connect with and better understand their environment. These include collecting pinecones and looking up through the evergreen branches to see how the trees provide shelter for animals.
* Conduct winter experiments. When it snows, have your young person use a magnifying glass to look at snowflakes they catch. Learn about snow and melting temperatures by collecting snow and watching what happens when you pour cold, room temperature or hot water on it. If you don’t have snow, you can make your own using baking soda and water. Young people can make tracks through the artificial snow using plastic animals.

For more information, contact the (COUNTY NAME) office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

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