Pathway
to Stewardship & Kinship

Ten Ideas for Family Holiday Fun Outdoors

From your friends at the Pathway Project!

1. Make a Snow Creature that Feeds the Animals

Make a snowman or snow animal and decorate it with things the birds will enjoy – garlands of popcorn, raisin eyes, a carrot nose, a birdseed sweater. If snow isn't packable, build something low to the ground, like a snow snake or a snow turtle, and load it up with food for the animals. Watch who comes to visit, and look for animal tracks in the snow!

2. Have a Sled Race

Grab a tarp, rope, cardboard boxes or whatever else you have around the house that might make a great sled. Costumes also make this even more fun! Create your own sleds and have races in the park. The sled needs to be able to carry one person or more and you can create an obstacle course or just slide along the flat as your team pulls you on your homemade sled.

3. Find Animal Tracks in the Snow

Go on an adventure to find animal tracks. Look at the base of trees, in the forest, across open fields. When you find a track, compare it to a track chart (https://www.almanac.com/content/animal-track-identification) to see which animals are using this area as their home. Tracks do tell a story, so see if you can tell which way the animal was going, was it running or walking? Do the tracks end at a tree, indicating that this animal may climb trees? Is there a hole at the end of the track indicating that this animal may live under the snow (the layer between ground and snow is well insulated for little critters like mice and is called the subnivean layer).

4. Make Holiday Cookies for the Birds and Decorate Outdoor Trees

With just a few ingredients, you can make birdseed decorations to hang on outdoor trees. With some festive cookie cutters, birdseed, gelatin, corn syrup and some string for hanging, make your neighbourhood festive and bird-friendly. Full instructions on this website: https://onelittleproject.com/birdseed-ornaments/

5. Paint in the Snow

Using a spray bottle, and food colour in water, decorate the snow banks with designs and drawings. This is also something you can bring along on a snowshoe or winter hike.

6. Play Winter Nature Bingo

You can create your own scavenger hunts by selecting items to look for outdoors, and see who can complete the list first. Or, make a bingo card from the items, and play outdoor bingo by looking for items and see who can get a complete line. To get you started, here are some great winter bingo cards from Massachusetts Audubon: https://www.massaudubon.org/content/download/45330/1139484/version/1/file/MassAudubon_winter-bingo-cards.pdf

7. Make an Ice Sun Catcher

You can make beautiful ornaments for outdoors (as long as it's below freezing) by arranging an assortment of outdoor treasures in a pie plate (pieces of evergreen, berries, dried leaves - anything that's colourful). Then pour water into the pie plate and set on a level surface outside. Tuck a piece of twine in one end, for later hanging the ornament. Then let it freeze overnight. Next day, gently remove your ice ornament from the pie plate (you may need to set it in a pan of warm water for a few moments to release it). Then find an outdoor spot to hang the ornament and watch the sun glisten and dance off the ice surface!

8. Play Snow Tag

After a fresh snowfall, make a tag circle by shuffling your feet to pack down a track in a large circle. Make a few pathways across the circle too. Then, play tag using your pathway's you've created. Players must stay on the tracks while they play. Tag, you're it!

9. Try a Summer Sport in Winter

Have a hilarious time playing snowsoccer, snowbaseball, ultimate frisbee, snowcricket, snowfootball or sno-croquet!

10. Go for a Nighttime Sleigh Ride with a Feast for Wildlife

On an evening that's special to your family (Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, a family birthday), assemble a feast for wildlife. That could include apples, birdseed, carrots, dried fruit, peanut butter pinecones or whatever you can think of. After dark, go for a walk in a nearby park or natural area, and bring a sled for the kids to ride in. When you find a spot you think the animals will like, spread out the feast and leave it behind. Visit in a day or two and see who has enjoyed your feast.