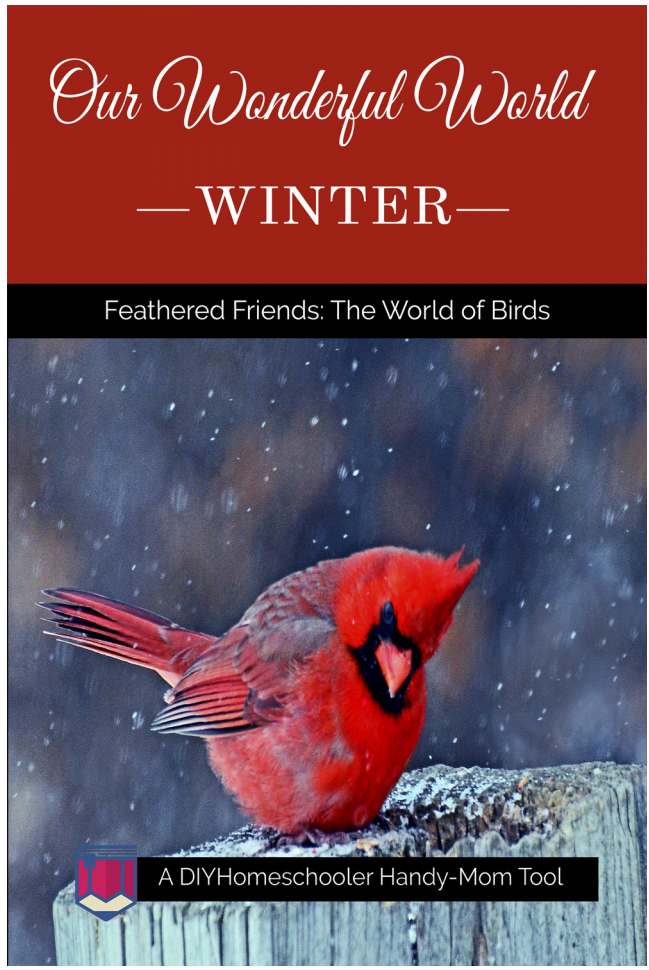


Please enjoy these sample pages from *Our Wonderful World Fall: Backyard Neighbors—The World of Insects* (ISBN 978-1-956655-05-6), © 2026 by DIYHomeschooler. All content in this sample is protected under United States and international copyright laws. Permission is granted to reproduce these pages for personal, noncommercial use. For purchasing options and more information on the book, please visit HomesteadOnTheRange.com.

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Introduction

Our Wonderful World by Emery Lewis Howe was originally published in the late 1920s. It covers pets, birds, plants, animals, and the earth and solar system.

Written for young children, this treasure explores God's creation through story. As mentioned in the "Greetings" in the front of the book, it encourages a child's curiosity by asking a question or two:

- How did the earthworms help the peach you ate?
- Do you think it possible that the birds had anything to do with your peach?
- Could beavers, dogs, or horses, have helped grow the peach?
- What did the skyland helpers do for it? How many of them may have helped?
- Did ants, or bees, or butterflies, have any share in the work?

Part of the appeal of the book is that that the parent or mentor or teacher is learning right along with the student (or at least facilitating that learning). Elements of the natural approach to learning will be:

- Observing.
- Exploring.
- Researching.
- Recording.

How to Use This Book

We have broken the book down into parts in order to make it easier for teachers, mentors, and moms to include nature study in their already busy schedule.

- **Part I: *Backyard Neighbors* (Fall)**
  Covers worms, ants, spiders, honey bees, and butterflies and moths.
- **Part II: *Feathered Friends* (Winter)**
  Covers various types of birds, their adaptations (beaks, nests, feet, etc.), bird guardians, and how to attract, feed, and care for birds.
- **Part III: *Garden Life* (Spring)**
  Covers plants and how they grow, wildflowers, pollination, trees, forests, seeds, seed dispersion, and wheat.

- **Part IV: *Four-footed Friends & The Earth and Its Neighbors* (Summer)**
  Covers dogs, horses, beavers, and sheep, and then switches to the physical earth topics of sky, clouds, planets, rocks, and water.

Each part, excepting Part II: Winter, is roughly 10 lessons. If you complete all four parts, you will have 32 lessons. By adding a weekly "lab" or outside explore, you will have enough material for a complete school year. (Older students can tag along by including an age-appropriate biology text.)

Generally, the series progresses from things near at hand to things more distant (ants through to the planets). You can really start in any section you wish depending on the season and what is accessible to you, without losing the flow. (Heads up: Part III: *Garden Life* refers back to the lessons about the insects of Part I and the birds of Part II.)

This particular volume has only three lessons; therefore you can spend two weeks on each lesson, should you choose to. During the winter we have holidays and (depending on your location) bad weather to deal with. The focus of these lessons will primarily be on setting up bird houses and feeders, and then observing the birds that visit.

There are also more readings for those indoor days. Use our narration tips in the appendix to extend the lessons.

The purpose of the lessons in this section is in line with that of other sections. Specifically, it may be stated as the desire to create in the minds of pupils a greater tenderness and care for birds as a part of God's world; a deeper sense of the interdependence of all created things; and the teaching of many lessons of love and trust in God. It is to be hoped that, as the pupils cooperate to provide for the protection and welfare of birds, they may feel that they are really helping God in the care of his creatures.

Jean Gertrude Hutton, Our Wonderful World Teacher's Manual *(The Abingdon Press, 1927), 48–9.*

Tips for Teachers

A most important factor in the success of any course of lessons is the teacher. A teacher of skill, insight, and sympathy may fill a poor and ill planned course so full of richness that the finest results are produced; a poor teacher may render the best course ever offered utterly barren and ineffective.

Hutton, Teacher's Manual*, 8.*

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- **Be prepared**.
  Nothing takes the wind out of a lesson more than not having what is needed to learn.
- **Be curious.**
  Maybe you don't know; but you can teach your children how to find out for themselves.
- **Be brief.**
  Try to avoid long lectures. The idea is that the child is learning on his own. Our role is to guide the process.
- **Stay in the background.**
  The person doing the work is the person who is learning. This means our children need to be the ones actively engaged.
- **Let the child lead where possible.**
  This is part of the natural learning lifestyle approach.
  - What questions does the child have?
  - How can they be answered?
- **Don't worry about "subjects."**
  If you cross over into science, history, or language arts—so much the better!

Suggested activities can be found at the end of each lesson. The goal of these activities is to encourage the student to interact with what he has learned.

> *No one would find much interest in learning to drive an automobile if there were no expectation of driving after the learning is accomplished.*
>
> *Hutton,* Teacher's Manual*, 11.*

Obviously, you don't need to complete all of the suggested activities. They really are "suggestions." And you may have a few ideas of your own. More resources can be found at DIYHomeschooler.com/handy-mom-tools/our-wonderful-world.

In addition, not all students will appreciate all activities. The idea is to encourage curiosity and investigation and that may look different depending on the child. Teach the child, not the book.

With that said, grab a copy of the *Handbook of Nature Study* by Anna Botsford Comstock. Originally written in 1911 by the head of the Department of Nature Study at Cornell University, this much-loved handbook shows us how to observe nature in 887 pages of detail. This is a great reference when it comes to getting outside and observing. We mention the corresponding pages for reference in our study. While the paperback is still in print, the original is also available online as a free download. (Visit DIYHomeschooler.com/handy-mom-tools/our-wonderful-world for this and other resources such as free Nature and Drawing & Writing notebooking sets.)

Inputs must have outputs. So we suggest having your student keep a notebook. Things that can be kept in the notebook include:

- Experiments and results.
- Copywork and narrations.
- Diagrams and illustrations.
- Bible verses and memory work.
- Summaries of the various insects, plants, birds, etc.

We'll provide specific notebooking ideas at the end of each section.

We used the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible for memorization and copywork for familiarity reasons. Feel free to substitute the Bible version your family normally uses.

———

> *The child who early comes to see God in all around him has a safeguard that nothing will break or remove. As he learns to look on all life as coming from the hand of the great Creator, and as he sees himself as a part of this vast stream, he enters into an appreciation that enriches his spirit and lifts him to a higher plane of thought and living. The child that in imagination watches the earth grow through long ages under the*

hand of the Almighty, as he prepares it to serve his great ends, experiences a stretching of mental and spiritual boundaries in a healthy and normal fashion. Imperceptibly he comes into his rightful heritage as a child of his heavenly Father.

Hutton, Teacher's Manual*, 7–8.*

A Thank You

A thank you to Michelle Lindsey at Homestead on the Range for the bird "stories."

His Feet and Legs

A bird always stands on his toes, not on his whole foot, as we do. The long slim part that we call the leg is really the foot, and the joint we see nearly up to the bird's body is the bird's heel. But in this book we will speak of it in the common way, calling the toes the foot, and the part up to the joint the leg.

People all over the world have the same kind of feet and the same number of toes; but with birds it is not so. Most of them have four toes but some have only three, and a few have no more than two.

In the use of the feet there is still more variety. There are, as Dr. Coues divides them, three kinds of feet among birds:—

First, a foot that can be used like a hand to clasp a perch, a "perching foot."

Second, one that is good to use as a foot, but not at all like a hand, called a "scratching foot."

Third, one that is like neither hand nor foot, but a paddle, called a "swimming foot."

The birds who have the first kind, the "perching foot," have usually three toes turned forward and one turned back. They can grasp a branch or a twig as tightly as if with a hand, as all our common little birds do. And the large birds of prey, such as

hawks and owls, hold in them live mice and squirrels and the other little animals they eat. Some birds with perching feet have the toes placed another way. Woodpeckers have two turned forward and two turned back, so that they can hold better to a tree trunk.

A strange thing about the perching toes is the way they are made to hold on, so that the birds can sleep on a perch, and not fall. Inside the toes are tendons, something like cords, which act like elastic rubber. When a bird bends his leg, the toes are drawn up and held so. When he is sitting on a perch, he could not fall off if he wanted to.

Birds who have the “scratching foot,” the second kind, mostly go about on the ground, or wade in the water. They do not usually sleep on perches, but sleep standing, or crouch on the ground. In the arctic regions, where there is a great deal of snow, some birds with scratching feet, who have to go about in it, have in winter what has been called “snowshoes,” because it enables them to walk on the snow with ease. It is a web-like growth on the side of each toe, which serves the same purpose with birds that snowshoes do with men, keeps them from sinking into the snow.

Birds who have the “swimming foot,” the third kind, have the toes made into a paddle by webs stretched between them. They are the water birds,—ducks, geese, gulls, and others.

The toes of all birds have long, sharp claws, not at all like our toe-nails. In the whippoorwill and the nighthawk, one edge of the middle claw has teeth like a comb.

The long slim part above the toes, what we call the leg, is named in the books the "tarsus." The tarsus is generally bare, with a leathery skin; but in some hawks and owls it is covered with feathers. Birds who live away up in the cold have feathers down on to the toes.

On looking carefully at one of these bare legs, it will be seen that it is not smooth like a lead pencil. It is marked in a sort of pattern. Different species of birds show different patterns. Some look like the shingles on a roof; others like little squares or plates; and some are finer, like scales on a tiny fish.

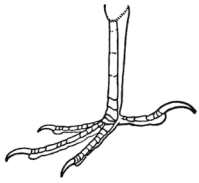
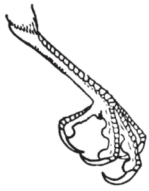
These marks help in arranging birds in the books. That is, all who have the same pattern are said to be related.

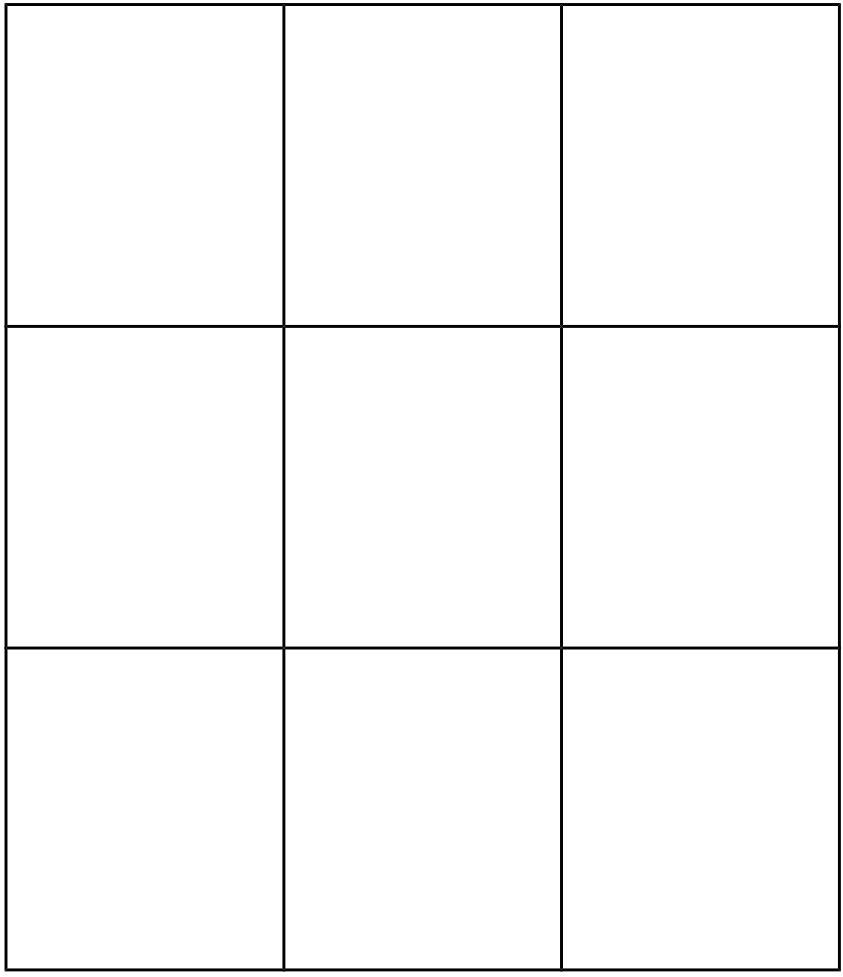
The legs of birds are not all of the same length for their size. Some who never go about on the ground, like hummingbirds, swallows, and swifts, have very short legs. Birds who walk and hop on the ground have them longer, and birds who wade in the water have the longest of all.

Miller, *First Book of Birds*.

Suggestions

- Make a chart and classify the birds by type of feet and legs. Add other birds that share that type of feet. Write a description of each type of foot and its use, consulting the text. You can also add the feet and legs of other birds mentioned in the text or others you see or know about. (More at DIYHomeschooler.com/handy-mom-tools/our-wonderful-world.)

Feet and Legs	Bird(s)	Description
	Blackbird	
	Hawk	
	Woodpecker	



DIYHomeschooler.com

What do birds have to do with the peach you ate for lunch today?

Feathered Friends: The World of Birds invites children to explore the wonders of God's creation by discovering the answers for themselves.

Three in-depth nature explorations for winter engage a child's curiosity with story and hands-on investigation while introducing children to our feathered friends:

- Bird adaptations.
- Bird guardians.
- Being a landlord to the birds.

In each chapter, children learn about the habits of birds through story before pulling out notebooks and guidebooks to make their own discoveries. These friendly introductions provide a glimpse into the surprises they will find all around them, such as the many variations on beaks and feet or the ways that birds help us every day.

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Along the way, children will encounter the wonders of nature close at hand while building observation and research skills—skills that will last them a lifetime no matter what their future may hold. More importantly, they will grow into their heritage as children of God.

"So set yourself to work; enjoy your book; but, better, enjoy the wonders of your own back yard."

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