

(20 songs), three AA batteries, an earphone and guidebook. Twelve (12) interchangeable song cards are available, as well as a carrying case. I can vouch from experience that kids are very attracted to this item. (Identiflyer \$34.95/Song cards 9.95/Carrying case \$14.95).

➤ “The Great North American Bird Watching Trivia Game” by Outset Media. A board game that has questions that fall into three levels of difficulty, although even at the beginner level some basic familiarity with bird species is necessary. Only a few retail stores carry this, but you can order it online at www.outsetmedia.com (\$34.99)

➤ There are a variety of CDs available that identify bird calls/songs. Each track identifies a specific bird, followed by the call/song. Some of the titles include Peterson Field Guides “Backyard Bird Song”, “Eastern/Central Bird Songs” and “Eastern/Central Birding by Ear.” Also available is the “Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs - East.” (These CDs range in price, but are generally \$20.00 to \$30.00 depending on whether they contain one or two CDs.)

➤ Videos are an excellent means by which to help a young birder to learn to identify common birds. A few of these include the National Wildlife Federation’s “Birding for Kids” (35 minutes, \$19.95), DK Publishing Eyewitness Video “Birds” (35 minutes, \$12.95), or BirdWatch Videos “How to Begin Birdwatching” (50 minutes, \$19.95).

National and local birding/wildlife/environmental organizations publish informative periodicals. Although the articles may be too complex for a child to read, you can share information with them and they can enjoy the pictures. (Some organizations provide publications strictly for the young reader.)

“Hands-On” Opportunities

Many local nature and birding organizations sponsor a number of family-oriented activities. Your local Audubon chapter may offer presentations about nature/wildlife at their monthly meetings or offer opportunities to get involved with voluntary activities such as prairie burns or conduct field trips. Other organizations such as IOS, the Chicago Ornithological Society and local birding clubs sponsor trips and programs specifically relating to birds and bird-related topics. These provide an ideal way for young birders to develop their skills, interest, and knowledge.

Nature centers may offer seasonal programs relating to a variety of nature-related topics. For example, the Spring Brook Nature Center in Itasca offers their “Raptors in the Skies” program once a month from

November through March, educating participants in raptor identification and conducting demonstrations of raptor behavior. Wildlife rehabilitation centers need volunteers to help out. There may be programs in place offered by state/county offices intended for use in a classroom setting. One of these is the Forest Preserve of Cook County’s program, “Getting in Touch with Nature”. For more information about this specific program, call 1-800-870-3666.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology sponsors a number of programs in which the whole family can be involved. “Citizen Science Projects” include Project PigeonWatch, Project FeederWatch and The Birdhouse Network, to name a few. They also offer a Classroom Feederwatch program, which allows hands-on learning about birds and bird biology in a classroom setting. For more information about Cornell’s programs, contact them at 1-800-2473 or visit their website at www.birds.cornell.edu/whatwedo_citizenscience.html.

The American Birding Association (ABA) sponsors a scholarship program, funded by contributions pledged by ABA members. The scholarships are awarded to help young birders attend birding camps and programs. For more information on this scholarship, contact the Conservation and Education Coordinator at 719-578-9703, or visit their website at www.americanbirding.org.

Other ways for a child to learn is by being directly involved in projects around the home. There are a number of books with diagrams for building birdhouses. Woodkrafter Kits makes chickadee and bluebird birdhouse kits for ages 8 and above (\$14.99). Also available is a nest box that adheres to a window with suction cups. It enables you to watch birds go through the nesting phase up close, and at the same time assures privacy for the birds. Children will be thrilled when they see birds setting up house in a nest box that they can call their very own. You and your child can monitor and record the progress from the hatching of the eggs to the fledging of the young.

Children should be encouraged to help in the garden. They can learn about various native plant species and other types of plants that will attract birds and other wildlife to your yard. Getting children actively involved in maintenance of feeders, birdhouses and water sources will also serve as an excellent learning experience. They can even have a feeder that they can call their own. “The Bird Book and Feeder” is a great starter feeder. It is an acrylic window feeder that includes a 64-page booklet that identifies 30 common backyard birds. There are a variety of other “starter” feeders that children can call their own, from an all-purpose feeder to a thistle feeder or hummingbird feeder.