



Natural Literacy Program Making Friends with Nature July 2023

Reflections of Another Good Year Making Friends with Nature 2022-2023



Many elements synthesize to produce the iconic Miss Jenni. By the nature of her work bringing students and teachers outside beneath sky and forest canopy, she reaps the affections of people moved by subtle energies produced by the environment altogether not her own. Had the Natural Literacy position not been created, she would not have the same impact as she does each day when she is greeted by enthusiastic and curious children and adults. Identified with her overalls, hat, glasses, and white braid down her back, she represents more than herself. She represents the Moon, Lobster, Spider, Snake, Lichen, Vernal Pool - Nature in all her wonders.

This Winter as the days grew longer and the cold and snows deeper, Miss Jenni continued lessons in the phylum Arthropoda highlighting Crustaceans. First Barnacle, next Crab and Shrimp, then Lobster and finally as the weather warmed and the ground thawed, out crawled the only terrestrial crustacean, Isopod, aka Roly Poly with her remarkable 14 feet and marsupium to nurture her young. Sitting in circle on the snow passing around a 5 pound Maine Lobster doesn't happen every day. These animals inspired wonder, games of tag and songs. What a wonderful winter to remember!

We spun into Arachnids around the Equinox with Spiders before returning again to Insects. The Vernal Pools overflowed with Spring's rain, and we had to be careful when dipping for larvae. Most students and all teachers remembered their muck boots on 'Miss Jenni days'!

As the school year came to an end, we celebrated with a Forest Tea. The first cup of mint and honey tea was given in appreciation to the Forest that fostered our growth

through the year. In gratitude we reflected how each school's unique outside space naturally lends itself to learning and Making Friends with Nature.

Excerpts from Letters to Ms. Jenni Judkins at the end of the year: June 2023

From teacher Mr. Jacques:

Ms. Jenni is amazing! Every lesson was filled with experiential learning. Every lesson (warm, cold, snowy, muddy) was hands on. Every lesson was engaging and fun. Students moved their bodies to help them make sense of difficult concepts. Students played games (disguised learning) to help them further their understanding. Arthropods, live lobsters, classifying animals, visiting the vernal pool, moon cycles... We are always in for a treat when it comes to learning with Ms. Jenni.

From students:

Dear Ms. Jenni,

Thank you for teaching us about so many cool things like the vernal pool. There were so many fun things to do like trying to catch frogs. I saw snails, frogs, and even eggs! My favorite activity of the year was going to the vernal pool. Joe

I learned so much! Ms. Jenni took us down to the vernal pool. That's when the learning took over! We learned that the leaves and pine needles are called detritus. Only frogs and salamanders live here. No fish. We learned about bullfrogs, treefrogs, and wood frogs. Gigi



I had a lot of fun with Ms. Jenni. And she is my favorite. Skyler

I learned that vernal pools are not a pond or a lake. Frogs that live there are Green frog, Tree frog, Wood frog, American Bullfrog, Leopard frog, and Spring peeper. I love science with Ms. Jenni! Spencer

Something I learned is the phases of the moon. If the moon is getting smaller it is waning and if it is getting bigger it is waxing. Also if it is more than fifty percent full it is a gibbous moon.

Something else we did with Ms. Jenni was we played a game called Barnacle tag which showed us how barnacles go from one rock to stick on another. Ms. Jenni has a way of making learning Stick. Elias

I have lots of awesome experiences with Ms. Jenni! The phases of the moon are the new moon, first quarter, full moon, third quarter, and then new moon again. At the bottom of the vernal pool is detritus. Detritus is food to plants, tadpoles, and baby mosquitoes. Detritus can be a good home to a baby mosquito. I have had a very awesome time with you, Ms. Jenni! Savannah

Ms. Jenni makes science fun and special. She brought a lobster to school in the middle of winter. She let us hold the lobster for 10 seconds if we wanted to. A lobster has antennas, tail, claws, a pincer and a crusher, a body, and head. Ms. Jenni taught us that in 1 hour. Mia

Ms. Jenni taught me a lot about spiders! I know that spiders have 3 types of hairs and one type paralyzes their prey. Spiders can see a lot of things because they have up to 8 eyes! They make webs with their abdomen and catch flies in their web. Over-all, I learned a lot about spiders! Sawyer

One thing I learned in Ms. Jenni's class is Barnacle tag. Barnacle tag is a fun tag game a lot like Elbow tag you make a circle and everybody pairs up except for two people one is the tagger and one is the runner the runner has to pair up with somebody and the other person is bumped off and is the runner. It is so much fun Barnacles stick to things and they are arthropods they're white and you can find them on the beach. Caleb



My favorite activity was the vernal pool. Ms. Jenni taught us about detritus which is the floor of the vernal pool. Frogs live there but fish don't because the vernal pool sometimes dries up and fish would die. She taught us about detritivores which eat detritus. Vernal pools are amazing! Natalie

My favorite activity with Ms. Jenni was Lobsters because we got to hold a real live Lobster! It was so interesting that the whole class, even me, had lots of questions about Lobster.

I also loved another class about Barnacle tag. We learned teamwork because you have to be with different people every time. It was a Polish or European game, I think. I loved the variety of things we did with Ms. Jenni! Willa

Ms. Jenni makes science special-- when she put the lobster in the cooler in the winter for us. I remember when she said you'd have to put seaweed down. I haven't seen a lobster that big (it was a Girl!) It was fun holding the lobster.

Lobster haiku

Cooler in winter

Give the lobster some seaweed

Beautiful female!

Lyndsey

Dear Ms. Jenni,

Thank you so much for letting us join you for a lot of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES!

I really enjoyed when we learned about cockroaches, it was really funny when one of the cockroaches was stuck on its backside like a turtle. When you first showed us the cockroaches I was creeped out but after I held a dead one I learned it wasn't so bad.

I also really enjoyed when we split up into teams and did a relay race dressed up as beetles! We were wearing an elytra and goggles. We could even wear antenna and mandibles! Sadly, the other team won but I still had fun!

Thank you, Ms. Jenni. I had a lot of fun doing science this year. It was AWESOME! Landon



Dear Ms. Jenni,

Thank you for science adventures! I really enjoyed identifying trees It was fun learning about the hackmatack. It's the only coniferous tree that drops its needles. Is that the one that keeps its cones? You've made my year so great! Thank you for teaching us science! Kordel

Dear Miss Jenni, you have given us a wonderful adventure! My all time favorite activity was "Lascucaracha." My partner was Olivia that day! I loved when you would say "La cucaracha, La cucaracha!" because you would always have the right rhythm and beat!

A thing I really enjoyed was finding inchworms. Once we all found one scrunched up, and it was green with a white tummy. It was underneath a pile of wet leaves. Another topic I enjoyed was looking for mosquito larvae. I noticed how it was black with a head sort of thing that was yellowish. It was so tiny I could barely see it. I loved looking for mosquito larvae! Your friend, Ella



Thank you for our year-long science adventures! Barnacle tag was so fun because we were in the snow and when I'm in the snow its challenging because its hard to run. Sometimes it can be awkward who your paired with but if its your buddy, not a problem.

Another activity we did that was fun was when we looked at a Black Widow. It was the size of my hand! It was so scary when I held the glass, it looked like it was alive inside the glass!

It was fun when we did the beetle relay race in the snow. It was so funny when people were in the outfits with antennas, wings, and glasses. It was challenging in the snow.

Thank you, Ms. Jenni, for being with us this year. Your friend, Chase!

.....I really enjoyed when you scooped up detritus and said hold it. I was a little grossed out at first but then I got used to it. Madeline

Dear Ms. Jenni,

Wow! I had so much fun with you this year with you!

One of my favorite activities was when we played metamorphosis croquet.Every time you go through a wicket you go up a stage in the life cycle. I was partners with Ari and we each took turns hitting the ball into the wicket.

I loved the time when we acted like woodcocks. A woodcock flies in circles to go up and down. We went in circles to act like woodcocks flying.

A third topic I was excited about was the posters you gave us of so many interesting things like frogs, snakes, amphibians, and insects. The posters have the names of animals that live in vernal pools and facts about them. Tyson

My favorite thing was when we identified trees, like Rock Maple, Red Oak, and Tamarack. It was amazing how you can tell trees apart by the color and pattern of their bark. I was baffled when you told us that the Tamarack, Hackmatack, and Eastern Larch are all the same tree just from different regions of the world!

The second thing is when you talked to us about Plant, Animal, and Fungi kingdoms. It was SO interesting when you told us about the different types of fungi, from fungus that is over 2000 years old and covers more than 2,384 acres, to fungus that's so tiny that they can spread through the air in a cough or sneeze.

When Eli found the bullfrog it was so large! I've seen Bull frogs in ponds that were big before, but in such a small vernal pool how did they get that big. I'm sad that we are done having classes this year with you but you have made my year, Ms. Jenni. Leif

Dear Ms. Jenni,

Thank you for the amazing adventure of science.

When you first said “detritus” I had no idea what it meant but it sparked so many ideas. I never would’ve known pine needles and leaves could be so interesting if you did not teach science.

I loved learning about spiders like the Orb-Weaver, Golden-Silk, and the Goliath bird-eater. I was so thrilled that one spider can eat a whole bird!

Thank you so much for all the time you spent with us, Elias

Dear Ms. Jenni,

This year was super fun exploring and doing science with you!

One thing I enjoyed was the butterflies. One butterfly I really enjoyed was the Owl Butterfly because of the unique image on their wings.

The second thing I enjoyed was the Goliath Birdeater Tarantula. It was the size of my hand or bigger. You have made my year delightful by being able to do science! Most appreciated, Cohen

Dear Ms. Jenni,

Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about amphibians, newts, isopods, and other legged-bugs!

One of my favorite activities we did was learning about the atmosphere. The atmosphere is only the first level. The stratosphere is second. The troposphere is the third! The stratosphere is about 10 miles, and the troposphere is even more! I didn’t know that there was more than just the atmosphere! These three got me excited to learn more.

Another exciting time was when we learned about crustaceans! Crustaceans are exquisite to think about. They have many body parts to learn about including a telson. Telsons are what crustaceans use to hold eggs. Telsons have little hairs to make their eggs stick on without falling off.

A third topic I really had fun with was cockroaches! With Hissing Cockroaches I saw right in front of me, I was going to scream! I heard that these cockroaches were from Mexico. So I was really excited to learn about them and touch them. They were big and weird feeling but I didn’t care and still had fun.Ari

..... One of my favorite activities was isopod tag because you got to curl up into a ball and you got to be a tagger in the game. Isopods are little bugs that live in dirt or dead wood.

I really liked the Beetle Relay Race. You had to run to the other side and give the glasses and cape to someone else. Then they had to get to the other side. There is a type of beetle called a Hercules Beetle and pincers on the top of its head. It can lift big things like an apple. It’s strong like ants.



Ms. Jenni, thank you for letting us learn with you. This has been a fun time together, Ms. Jenni. Sam

..... One of the last things I would like to talk about is how we found the pollen cones on the tips of the pine tree branches. I thought it was pretty interesting how they dump their pollen everywhere. It's pretty much a pollen bomb how it dumps the pollen everywhere in one spot.

It is a shame that we won't have you for 5th grade. This was an amazing year with you! Elijah

Thank you for the phenomenal science adventure.3 paragraphs.....

I'm sad that we are done having classes this year with you, but you have made my year, Ms Jenni. Leif, 4th grade, Ames School



Grand Total Winter and Spring 2023

	Number of Students	Program Hours	Student Contact Hours
The Bottom Line	360	150	3,067

	Unique Students	Hours in the Forest and Wetlands	Student Contact Hours
Ames Elementary	30	18	261
CASS Elementary	124	107	1,676
Searsport Elementary and Middle	150	61	948
Nickerson Elementary	56	14	192