

B.L.E.S.S Summer Nature Centre Report

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2017



A detailed summary of the activities held for nine weeks at the B.L.E.S.S Summer Nature Centre

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Location .....	3
Objective .....	3
Design .....	3
Materials .....	3
Canada Day.....	3
Weekly Overviews .....	4
Week 1: Welcome Week – July 3-7 <sup>th</sup> .....	4
Week 2: Feathered Friends -- July 10 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> .....	6
Week 3: Magnificent Mammals -- July 17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> .....	8
Week 4: Creepy Crawlies – July 24 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> .....	10
Week 5: Fantastic Flora -- July 31 <sup>st</sup> – August 4 <sup>th</sup> .....	12
Week 6: Go Green -- August 7 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> .....	13
Week 7: Wild Weather -- August 14 <sup>th</sup> - 18 <sup>th</sup> .....	14
Week 8: Wacky Wetlands -- August 21 <sup>st</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> .....	16
Week 9: Great Grasslands -- August 28 <sup>th</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup> .....	18
Statistics .....	20
Attendance Overview .....	20
Conclusion.....	23

## Introduction

### Location

The BLESS Nature Centre takes place in the log cabin located on the corner of St. Albert Trail and Sturgeon Road. The Nature Centre backs onto the Sturgeon River and the Red Willow Trail System.

### Objective

The objective of the Nature Centre is to provide a free experience for children and adults to explore different aspects of nature, and engage with nature in a fun-filled environment.

### Design

The Nature Centre was open Monday to Friday from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, with the exception of Wednesday when it was open from 12:30 pm to 7 pm. The opening date of the Nature Centre was July 3<sup>rd</sup> and it ran until August 31<sup>st</sup>. There was a different theme every week with corresponding crafts and both indoor and outdoor activities.

### Materials

The budget to run the Nature Centre for the summer was \$200. I spent around 95% of it. The Nature Centre had supplies that could be used for crafts, such as toilet paper rolls, paper, jar lids, magnets and cups. The craft supplies, glue sticks, markers, sidewalk chalk and bubbles had to be refilled a few times. As well, money was spent on rice (for rain stick craft), poster boards and printing costs. Additionally, I utilized the BLESS Nature Centre Facebook Page and the St. Albert Gazette "What's On!" column for free advertising.

### Canada Day

This year, BLESS had a booth at the Canada Day Festivities held at Rotary Park in St. Albert. The booth was set up close to the road, right in front of the "Bike Racks" booth. There was quite a lot of bike traffic so bikers normally drove by. However, the individuals (bikers and non-bikers) that did stop by when the bicycle traffic slowed were very interested in the craft and display.

I brought the felt fold-up BLESS sign, the plastic BLESS sign, a fortune teller craft, various mammal furs, and stickers and fruit snacks as "prizes".

Setting up a booth at Canada Day was beneficial to the Nature Centre. Various families came in to the Nature Centre and let me know that the Canada Day booth informed them of the Nature Centre.

## Weekly Overviews

### Week 1: Welcome Week – July 3-7<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** The objectives of this week were to introduce visitors to the Nature Centre and sign kids up for the Young Naturalist Program. Additionally, the theme of the week involved camping safety, local wildlife and bear safety. Activities were based around this theme.

#### **Attendance:**

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	9	4	1	0	15	5
Tuesday	26	18	7	3	54	1
Wednesday	16	11	7	3	37	2
Thursday	9	4	4	4	21	4
Friday	16	5	3	4	28	3
<b>Total/week</b>	76	42	22	14	155	

#### **Crafts:**

##### A) Popsicle Stick Tent

Three popsicle sticks were coloured/ decorated with markers and were then glued together in a triangle shape. Construction paper on the back & decorated the front with a “door” and “firepit”.

##### B) Pinwheel

A square piece of paper was decorated then, cut from the corner toward the middle. A pin was placed through each corner of the paper, through the middle of the paper and through a straw.

This craft was fun for kids but the pins didn’t stay in which caused kids some trouble when trying to spin them.

#### **Activities:**

## A) Indoor

- a. **Camping Safety True/False**  
Educational game from previous years describing camping safety practices.
- b. **Canadian Match- Up**  
Using an enlarged map of Canada, visitors had to match provincial animals or trees to the Province or Territory
- c. **Bear Smart Worksheet**  
A worksheet that depicted both safe and unsafe camping/bear practices. Visitors could use the page as a colouring sheet and a game
- d. **Animal/Bird Puzzles**  
Handmade puzzles using pictures of local birds and wildlife.
- e. **What Am I?**  
An envelope with a small hole had an image of an animal inside it. Visitors were to guess the animal based on what they see through the small hole.
- f. **BLESS Fortune Teller**  
This game was also used on Canada Day. Square piece of paper folded up into Fortune Teller had trivia questions about Big Lake.
- g. **Order Tent Steps**  
Order steps on to set up a tent.
- h. **Colouring Contest**

## B) Outdoor

- a. **Fire Cup Knockdown**  
Red Plastic Cups were stacked in pyramid shape. Children then tried to knock the most cups down in the fewest amount of throws.
- b. **BLESS Scavenger Hunt**  
Orange laminated questions were placed around the exterior of the Nature Centre, children then had to answer the questions to the best of their ability.
- c. **Side Walk Chalk**
- d. **Bubbles**

Note: Monday July 3<sup>rd</sup> was stat holiday in lieu of Canada Day. May be why attendance was so low. Additionally, advertising on "Community of St. Albert Facebook Page" was a great idea. The Facebook Page got a lot more activity and "Likes".

## Week 2: Feathered Friends -- July 10<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this week was to introduce the various species of birds that are habitants of Big Lake and Alberta.

### **Attendance:**

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	17	22	7	0	46	1
Tuesday	8	3	4	0	15	4
Wednesday	6	9	5	2	22	3
Thursday	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Friday	15	8	9	0	32	2
Total/week	46	69	25	2	142	

### **Crafts:**

#### A) Binoculars

Kids decorated two toilet paper rolls, stapled them together and attached a string to hang the binoculars from their neck.

#### B) Toilet Roll Turkeys

Kids took a piece of construction and traced their hands on them. After cutting out their traced hands they decorated them and glued the two thumbs together. A toilet roll was glued into the middle and was decorated to look like a turkey.

### **Activities:**

#### A) Indoor

##### a. Owl Maze

A maze on paper that kids could try with an owl theme.

##### b. Marble Migration

A game made on a large plastic container cover. The marble must be guided through the short maze from "Winter Nest" to "Summer Nest" while avoiding holes in the cover. Kids found a lot of enjoyment in this game.

##### c. Owl ID

Matching owl names to the pictures on a poster

##### d. Matching Bills to Feet

##### e. Matching Silhouettes

- f. Provincial Bird Match up  
Matching the provincial bird to its province or territory.
- g. Colouring contest

## B) Outdoor

- a. Birding Bingo
- b. Bird ID Course  
Pictures of birds were taped onto hangers after which they were hung up around the area outside of the Nature Centre. Visitors would have to identify the bird using the bird guide.
- c. Side Walk Chalk
- d. Bubbles

Notes: I was sick on Thursday so the Nature Centre was closed for the day.

## Week 3: Magnificent Mammals -- July 17<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>

**Objective:** Introduce the term mammals to children and introduce them to the different types of mammals that live in Alberta.

### Attendance:

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	7	8	10	1	26	3
Tuesday	12	10	3	1	26	3
Wednesday	11	10	4	0	25	4
Thursday	14	7	4	2	27	2
Friday	17	4	15	0	36	1
Total/week	61	39	36	4	140	

### Crafts:

#### A) Beaver Paper Plate

Pages of Beaver Facial Features were printed out. Kids could colour them however they liked, then they would cut them and glue them to a paper plate. Some kids decided to poke holes through the plate for eyes. Parents or I helped with the eye holes. Some children also chose to tie string around it as a mask or a chopstick to hold it up

#### B) Mammal Masks

Stencils of a fox, racoon and deer were available for children to trace. Chose a few colours of construction paper and cut out the features and glued them together. Again, some children used string to tie it around there heads as and other children used a chopstick.

### Activities:

#### A) Indoor

##### a. Cross word Puzzles

"Wild Things" and "Food Chain Crossword"

##### b. Guess the Spots Game

Individuals were to identify the big cat based on its fur.

##### c. Footprint Matching

Pictures of various mammals were placed on a table and visitors had to attempt to match pictures of footprints to the mammal pictures.

##### d. Mammals of Alberta Poster



A poster with various mammals was made in previous years. I posted it on the wall above the colouring station. Myself or parents would ask kids to identify the animals they thought lived in Alberta.

e. Colouring Contest

B) Outdoor

a. Rabbit Race

A potato sack race; I adjusted the finish line based on the age of the children participating. A lot of fun for kids and parents also enjoyed seeing the kids jump!

b. Follow the Heard

Three hula hoops and four bean bags were used. Kids had to try to throw the bean bag into the hula hoop. Once they did they could walk to that hula hoop and try to throw the bean bag into the next hula hoop from there.

c. Bubbles

d. Sidewalk Chalk

## Week 4: Creepy Crawlies – July 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this week was to introduce different kinds of lesser known insects and arachnids. Additionally, the exploration and understanding of metamorphosis was an important focus

### Attendance:

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	2	1	2	0	5	5
Tuesday	11	11	7	1	30	4
Wednesday	18	9	7	5	39	1
Thursday	15	14	4	0	33	2
Friday	15	12	4	0	31	3
Total/week	61	47	24	6	138	

### Crafts:

#### A) Name Bug

Kids fold a paper in half, cursive write their name on one side and then cut the folded piece of paper around the writing. They then unfold it and decorate the opposite side to make a bug!

#### B) Egg Carton Bumble Bees/Caterpillar

Kids could cut out 2-3 egg holders from an egg carton and decorate it using markers, pipecleaners, googly eyes etc. to make a bug of their choice.

### Activities

#### A) Indoor

##### a. Memory

Various plastic bugs were hidden under cups, each had a matching pair. Visitors were to pick up two cups at a time and try to find the two matching bugs.

##### b. Connect the Dots Worksheet

##### c. Word Search Worksheet

##### d. Metamorphosis Match- Up Poster

Match the Larva to the Adult

##### e. Bug ID

Match Pictures of Bugs on a poster to their names.

##### f. Go Fish – Insect Edition

## B) Outdoor

a. Insect Nature Hunt

b. Pollen Game

Hide Ping pong balls around the area outside and have kids try to collect them all. Once they got to their "nest" (hula hoop) they had to perform a "Bee Dance". Kids really loved this game!

c. Bug Hunt

d. Sidewalk Chalk

e. Bubbles

Note: Hours on Wednesday July 26 were changed from 12:30-7pm to 10 am - 4:30pm for the day.

## Week 5: Fantastic Flora -- July 31<sup>st</sup> - August 4<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** Introduce various plant species in Alberta and around Big Lake

**Attendance:**

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	11	11	8	0	30	3
Tuesday	6	6	6	0	18	4
Wednesday	12	12	5	3	32	2
Thursday	24	14	12	2	52	1
Friday	7	2	0	0	9	5
Total/week	60	45	31	5	141	

### Crafts

A) Plant Grass

Grass was planted in cups

B) Coffee Filter Flowers

Kids could draw on coffee filters with markers and then they "painted" with water.

C) Leaf Rubbings

Kids could collect leaves outside and then place them in a formation under a sheet of paper and rub a crayon over top.

### Activities

A) Indoor

a. Forest Facts

b. Match Provincial Wildflowers

c. Happy Birthday Tree

Count the rings of a tree to determine its birthday

d. Tree Crossword

B) Outdoor

a. Butterfly to flower bean bag toss

b. Bug Hunt

c. Hulla Hoop

d. Sidewalk Chalk and Bubbles

## Week 6: Go Green -- August 7<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** Bring Awareness to human impact on earth and to show the benefits of making environmentally friendly choices.

### **Attendance:**

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tuesday	11	16	6	0	33	3
Wednesday	12	15	1	4	32	2
Thursday	17	13	5	0	35	1
Friday	18	8	2	0	28	4
Total/week	58	52	14	4	128	

### **Crafts**

#### A) Litter bugs

Kids could decorate a single egg holder with various craft supplies to make a litter bug

#### B) Recycled Magnets

Old Magnets were re-decorated.

### **Activities**

#### A) Indoor

- a. Go Green Quiz
- b. Endangered Species Match Up
- c. Coral Reef Go Fish
- d. Go Green Word Search
- e. Environmental Phrase to Picture Match Up (Poster with pins)
- f. Reusable Maze
  - i. I took a plastic paper cover and put the maze inside so that the same sheet of paper can be reused.

#### B) Outdoor

- a. Green Bingo
- b. Sidewalk Chalk and Bubbles
- c. Pollutant Knockout

Note: Summer Nature Centre was closed on August 7<sup>th</sup> due to the Civic Holiday

## Week 7: Wild Weather -- August 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** Introduce different types of weather, difference between weather and climate and describe how wildlife adapts to changes in weather/climate.

### **Attendance:**

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	8	2	4	0	14	5
Tuesday	12	19	4	4	39	1
Wednesday	9	3	2	3	17	4
Thursday	8	5	4	2	19	3
Friday	11	7	6	2	26	2
Total/week	48	36	20	11	115	

### **Crafts**

#### A) Rainbow Wand

2 clouds were traced and cut out. One was taped onto a chopstick and 5 coloured streamers were taped on to the cloud. The second cloud was taped on top to sandwich the streamers in the middle.

#### B) Rain Stick

A paper towel roll was decorated. One end was closed off with a piece of parchment paper and a rubber band. Rice was poured in through the open end. Afterwards the open end was sealed with parchment and a rubber band.

### **Activities**

#### A) Indoor

- a. Matching baby to adult names
- b. Weather Quiz
- c. Will the wind blow it
  - i. Various items were laid out to be separated into two categories; yes, the wind will blow it or no, the wind will not blow it.
- d. Artic True/False
- e. Guess the Season

## B) Outdoor

- a. Rainbow Chip Hunt
  - i. Cards were made to have various different colours on them. Children would take one and go outside to try to find the colours in nature.
- b. Butterfly Bean Bag toss
- c. Sidewalk Chalk and Bubbles

## Week 8: Wacky Wetlands -- August 21<sup>st</sup> -25<sup>th</sup>

**Objective:** Introducing the wetlands and the species that rely on the wetlands.

**Attendance:**

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	13	4	1	2	20	3
Tuesday	20	19	6	3	48	1
Wednesday	10	3	1	5	19	4
Thursday	8	5	4	2	19	4
Friday	13	7	2	3	25	2
Total/week	64	38	14	15	131	

### Crafts

A) Egg carton Turtle

An egg carton "shell" could be painted or coloured, after which a body would be traced and taped onto the "shell"

B) Accordion-Folded Caterpillar

Two long strips of paper in different colours were cut out. They were glued together in an L-shape and then folded over to make an accordion.

C) Paper Hopping Frog

Origami Hopping Frogs

### Activities

A) Indoor

a. Food Chain

- i. Ordering the food chain from producer to top consumer

b. Go Fish

c. Wetland Eye Spy

- i. An "Eye Spy" list was provided and kids could find the listed items on the Wetland Poster

d. Pin the Fish on the Heron

e. Metamorphosis Word Search

f. Fish Puzzles

g. Pond Life Crossword



h. Frog Maze

B) Outdoor

- a. Bean Bag Toss
- b. Insect Nature Hunt
- c. Pond Bean Bag Toss
- d. Side Walk Chalk
- e. Bubbles

## Week 9: Great Grasslands -- August 28<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this week was to introduce both nocturnal and diurnal animals that live in the grasslands. Additionally, different types of rock that are present in the Grasslands and elsewhere were introduced.

### Attendance:

Day	Adults	Elementary	5 & under	Jr High	Total/Day	Rank
Monday	12	9	10	3	34	1
Tuesday	10	6	4	2	22	3
Wednesday	11	11	1	0	23	2
Thursday	10	2	4	0	16	4
Total/week	43	28	19	5	95	

### Crafts

#### A) Handy Bats

Two hands were traced close together. After cutting them out, kids could decorate their bats.

#### B) Pet Rock

Rocks and paint were provided. Kids could paint their rocks to resemble their favourite pet.

### Activities

#### A) Indoor

- a. Animal charades
- b. Prairie animal ID
  - i. Identify the animal that matches the name
- c. Nocturnal True False
- d. Borrow the Burrow Bingo
- e. Grassland Trivia (MC)
- f. Become a rock star (match facts with type of rock)
- g. Bat Maze

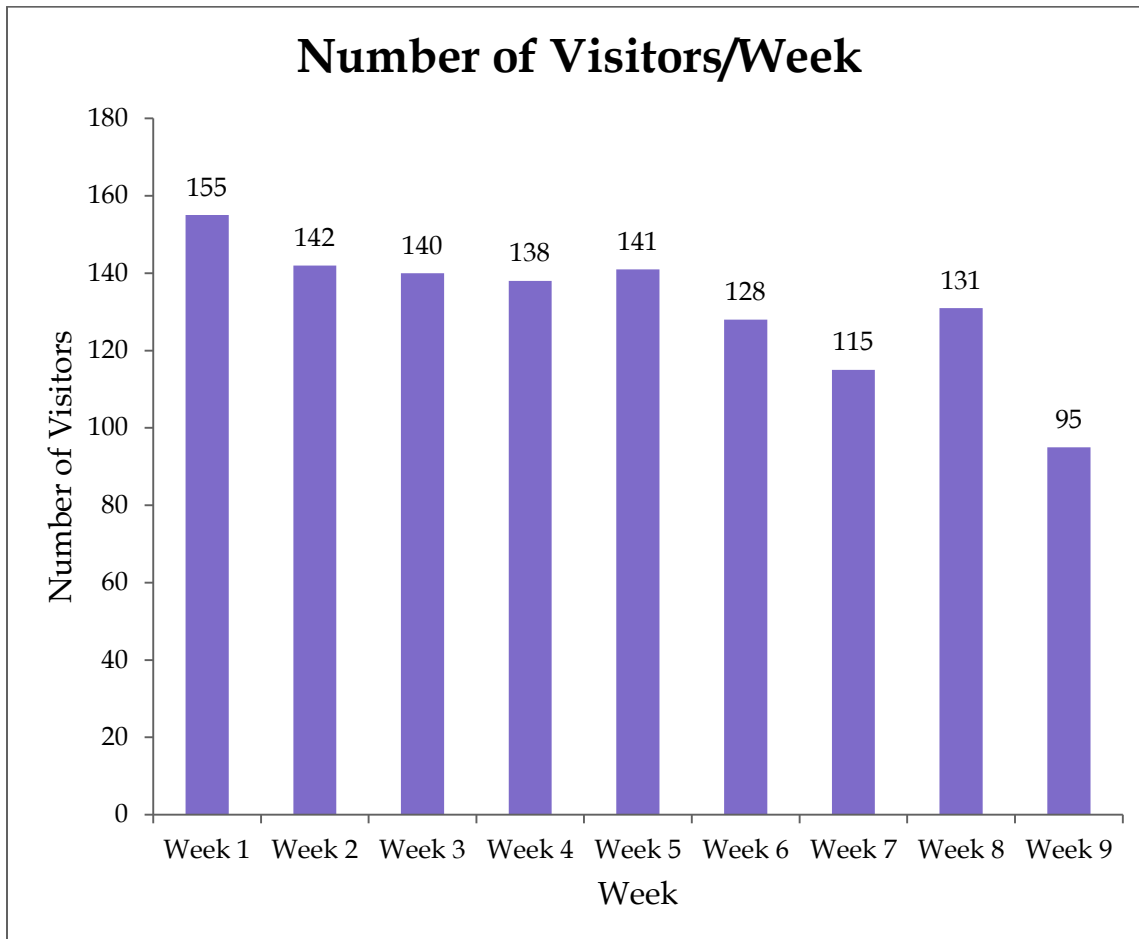
#### B) Outdoor

- a. Bowling for Gophers
  - i. Black-Painted containers were arranged in a triangle fashion on the ground and kids could roll softballs to knock over the containers.
- b. Bean Bag Toss

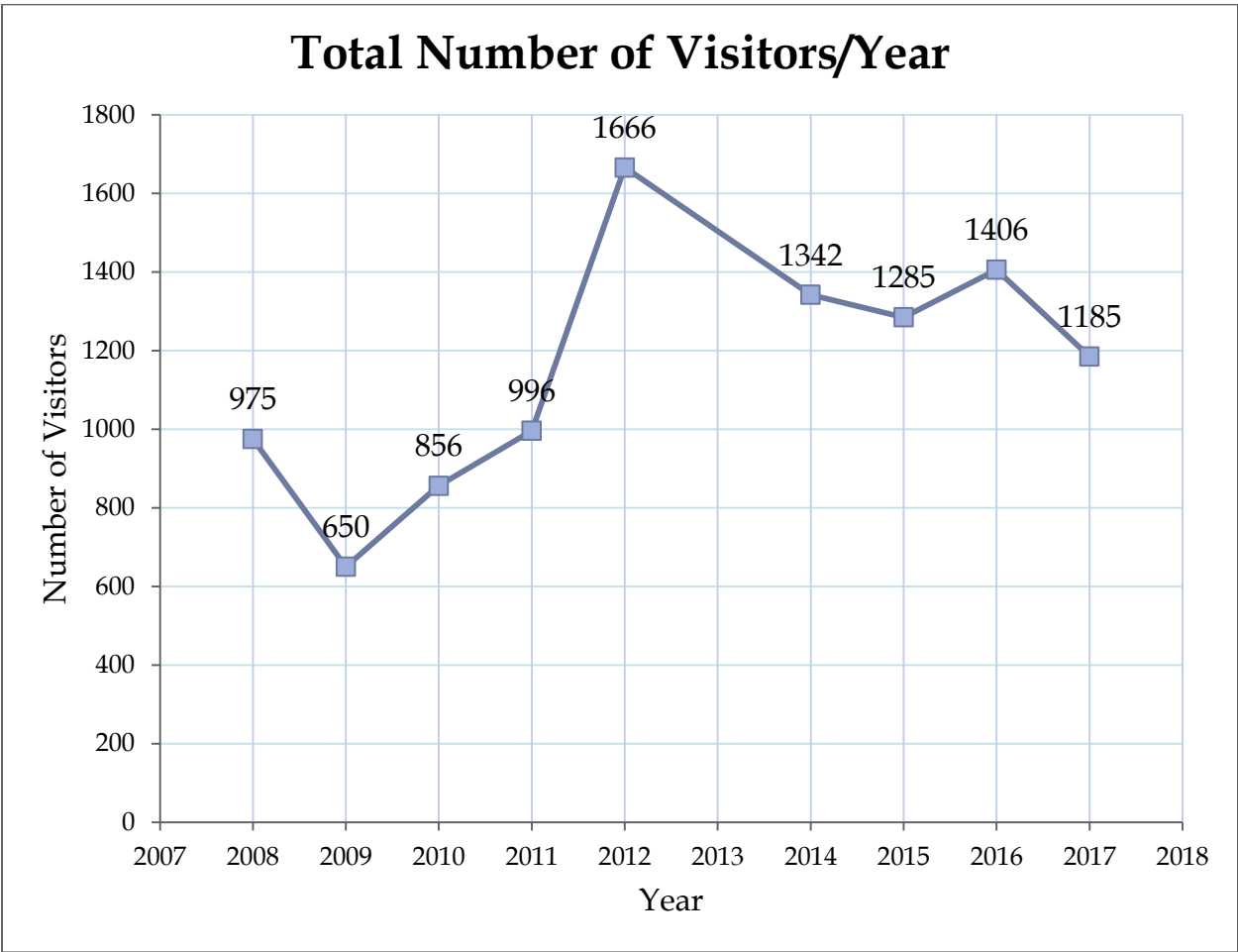
- c. Sidewalk Chalk
- d. Bubbles
- e. BLESS Bingo

## Statistics

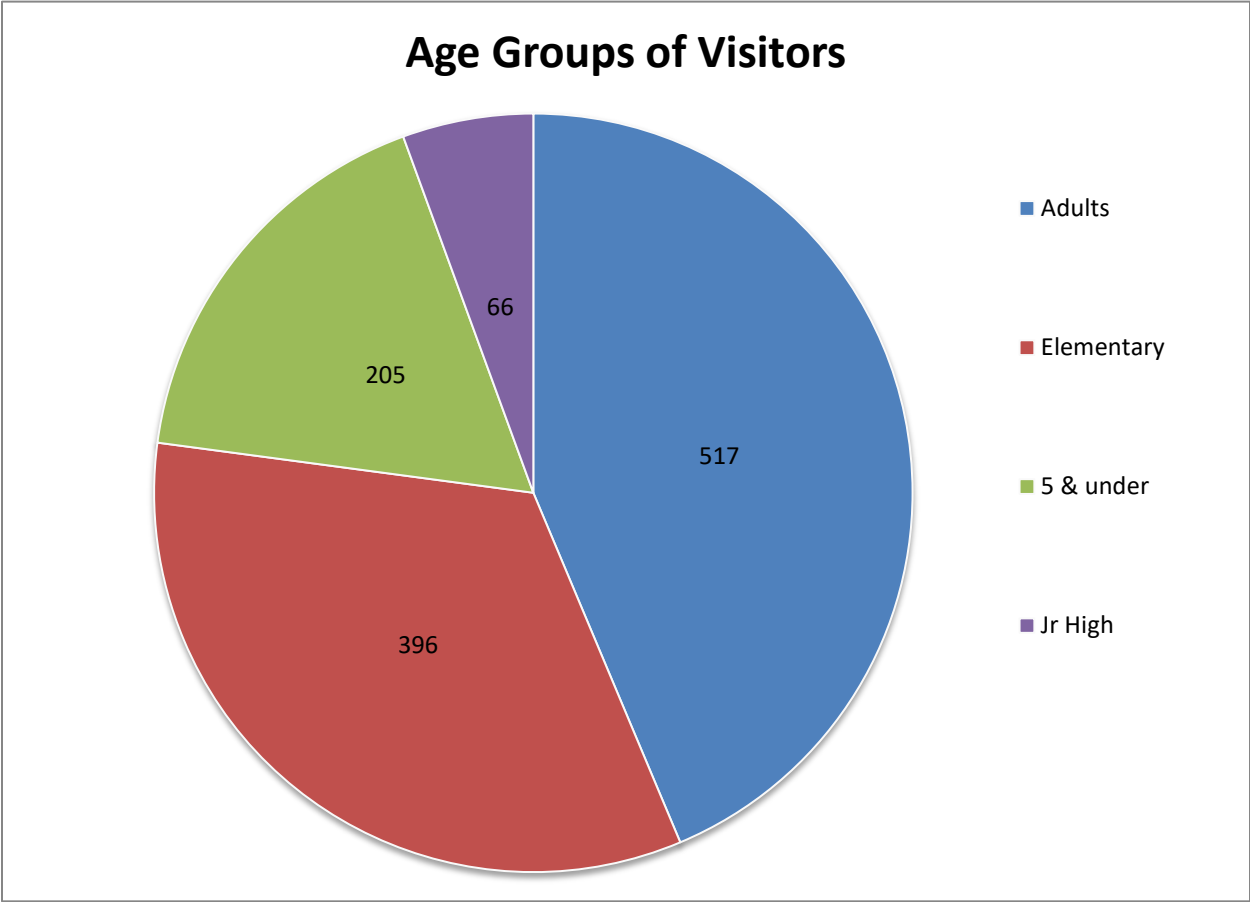
### Attendance Overview



The total number of guests at the Nature Centre this year was 1185. Unfortunately, this was lower than the last 3 years. The first week from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to July 7<sup>th</sup>, Welcome Week, had the highest number of visitors at 155. Through July the number of visitors maintained around 140. In August, numbers started to decline. A lot of regular visitors and Young Naturalists were away on vacation during August.



Unfortunately, total number of visitors decreased from last year. Numbers may have decreased due to a colder and rainier summer and/or air quality advisories due to the wildfires in British Columbia. Perhaps advertising was not adequate in bringing in people, although I tried to be quite active on the Facebook Page. Hopefully, next year numbers will increase again.



Based on the children, elementary-aged visitors were the most frequent visitors followed by Ages 5 and under, and Junior High, respectively. Overall, adult visitors were the most frequent. Most adults would accompany children as they explored the Nature Centre, however, a significant number of adults came in for a drink of water and to see what the Nature Centre has to offer.

## Conclusion

The summer at the BLESS Nature Centre was a lot of fun for children, parents and myself as the Nature Centre Coordinator. Although total number of visitors decreased, the Nature Centre was still enjoyed by many people as an introduction to various nature themes and a fun place to do crafts and activities. The Facebook Page received wonderful reviews and an overall 5-star rating. As well, comments left in the comments book were all very positive. Some comments included:

“I like the simplicity and down-to-earth feel of the centre!”

“[Kids] loved making magnets and doing the bean bag toss [during Go Green! Week]”

Overall, the Nature Centre is a great program that enriches children’s knowledge of nature as well as builds on fundamental skills, such as using scissors, colouring inside the lines and putting puzzles together. Kids were eager to learn and play in an environment that was technology-free, make friends with each other and play together.