

NATURE'S SUPERSTARS

LOOK WAY UP!

Photo: Sylvie Corriveau / shutterstock.com

Stargazing is a fun summer family activity whether you are camping in the outdoors or watching the night sky from a nearby park. The number of stars you can see on a clear night sparks wonder and delight in children and adults alike. Similar to cloud watching, you can gaze at the stars and let your imagination run wild—what do you see in the night sky? You can make up your own names for groups of stars or try this activity and learn some of the constellations!

Stargazing can be even more fun when you can recognize and name some of the constellations. Why not make some Tin Can Star Guides and practice identifying the constellations indoors? Then take it outside to find the constellations in the night sky!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Cardboard
- Empty, clean tin cans
- Nail
- Hammer
- Flashlight
- Permanent felt tip marker
- Star Constellation templates or cards (lots of printables available - search google or pinterest)

WHAT TO DO:

1. Fill tin cans with water and freeze. This helps the can keep its shape when you punch the star patterns through the bottom.
2. Download and print the templates, sizing them so you can fit one constellation per can bottom.
3. Get your parents to help you hammer a nail through the dots on the template, creating the star pattern on the bottom of the tin can.
4. Label the name of the constellation on the side of the can.
5. In a darkened room, shine a flashlight through the tin can and observe the star pattern created on the wall.
6. Gaze into the real night sky and see if you can recognize some of the constellations you learned.

ALTERNATIVE:

Use cardboard circles and a hole punch to create the guides. You can mount the circles on popsicle sticks and label the constellations on the stick.

Tip 1:

To see the most stars, go out on a clear night, away from city lights and give your eyes time to adjust to the dark—it takes about 15 minutes for human eyes to fully adjust. If you want to use a flashlight, use one with a red bulb (or cover the end of your flashlight in red cellophane), otherwise your eyes will take another 15 minutes to adjust each time you turn it on!

Tip 2:

You may want to refer to a star wheel for your latitude and the date to anticipate where certain constellations will be in the night sky before heading out.

TO THINK ABOUT AND WONDER:

Light travels just about 300,000 kilometers per second! If you could travel that fast you could circle the earth 7.5 times in a second. Why do stars appear in different parts of sky depending on the time of year?

The Exploration Club for Families... NatureKids BC helps children get outdoors to play, imagine and explore in nearby nature. Join a family nature club near you or become a free-range member. Find out more at: www.naturekidsbc.ca. If you are already a member you can use this activity as part of your Action Awards Quest!

