Days are getting longer and the weather is getting warmer, which means it’s time for spring nature play and we have 10 activities to get you started! Now, since it is spring, many or our ideas include mud. Don’t fear getting dirty – but embrace it! Research shows that playing in mud benefits our physical, psychological, and emotional health.

Keep an eye on massaudubon.org/natureplay or Mass Audubon’s social media channels for videos that will showcase these ideas. And if you do any of these activities share photos with us by tagging us on social media or emailing education@massaudubon.org.
**Dive into a Mud Pit**

Go ahead, get a little dirty! Find a space in your yard where you can dig a shallow hole using simple garden tools. Rather not dig? A kiddie pool filled with some dirt also works great! Grab a hose or bucket of water and fill the hole or pool with just enough water to create your preferred mud consistency. Then jump in and roll around. Pretend to visit a spa for a mud facial or try to blend into nature with mud camouflage with mud face paint.

**Build a Beaver Dam**

Try making a beaver dam in a small, calm stream or brook (steer clear of fast-moving streams). Using sticks, stones, leaves, and mud, see if you can block the flow of water to make a pool build up behind it. Watch what happens as you build. Then, have fun smashing down your dam and restoring the flow of water. Wildlife further downstream may depend upon the water and what it brings. This can also be done at home, by building your dam inside the middle a large plastic storage bin! Pour water into one side of the bin and see if your dam holds!

**Be a Cloud Watcher**

Let your imagination run wild while spending time just being in the outdoors. Best days for cloud watching are sunny days with blue skies and large fluffy cumulus clouds. Find a spot to lay down and look for as many real-world objects you can see.

**Look for Birds**

Spring is a great time to look for birds as many are returning from their winter homes. And while binoculars help, they aren’t necessary. Close your eyes and listen – how many different bird sounds do you hear? Can you make similar sounds? Look around and notice how different birds fly. Some soar like vultures and hawks. Others, like hummingbirds, flap their wings very fast. Using your arms, can you “fly” like the birds you see?

**Plant Wildflowers**

Planting a native wildflower or pollinator garden has so many benefits. It’s not only pretty to look at, but it provides birds, bees, and butterflies important nutrients. And, since you planted them, they are safe to pick for future nature play ideas or crafts. You can plant directly in the ground or in a pot with some drainage holes. Ask your local garden center for a native wildflower such as Winterberry and Wild Columbine and check out our list at massaudubon.org/pollinators.
Make a Color Scavenger Hunt

Scavenger hunts are such a fun way to explore the outdoors. And since spring is abound with colors, you can challenge yourself to find as many as the crayons in your crayon box. One idea is to pick 5-10 different color crayons or markers and scribble each one on a piece of paper. Then head outside with your paper and see if you can kind find something in nature that matches each shade. There are so many ways you can explore colors outside, how would you make your scavenger hunt?

Stare at the Stars

Take advantage of the still early night sky and warming temps by looking up at the stars. Grab an outdoor blanket and some other comfy fort-building materials to lay on and use your imagination to make up your own constellations or create stories of grand space adventures.

Make Mud Pies

Find some dirt and water and mix them together in a bowl. Play around with your dirt-to-water ratios until you get your perfect thickness. Find a log or section of ground to make your pie. Collect items to add “ingredients” to your mud pie like fallen leaves, flowers, sticks, or small rocks. Have a mud pie showcase with a group of friends where each person has a time limit to build their desired mud pie.

Build a Water Wall

Have some fun with water by creating your own outdoor water feature using recycled materials like old pallets discarded from a hardware store (nails removed), milk containers, plastic water bottles, buckets, old trays, etc. Using string or rope attach the containers to the pallet. Stand the pallet up against a tree or wall and fill a 5-gallon bucket up with some water. Scoop water from the bucket and watch it flow down your creation. Rearrange materials to further explore your creation and the laws of physics, gravity, and potential energy.

Go Ponding

Not only are the birds migrating, but so are the amphibians like frogs, toads, and salamanders as they make their way to the wetlands to lay their eggs. If you have a pond or vernal pool nearby, you can take a closer look at what is just below the surface. Use little strainers or make a little net out of house materials to dip into the leaves at the edge of a pond or vernal pool. Can you find any little critters moving around in the mud? Make sure to be careful and respectful of what you find and see, let them stay in their home to grow and have babies of their own. When you’re done, jump like a frog or hop like a toad all the way home.