



# A Guide to Violet Park

Created by the 4 and 5 Year Old Children  
of Room 11 at Boulder Journey School



## Discovering Violet Park

Our adventures in Violet Park began with a question: how can we use technology to complement or enhance our exploration of nature? We walked around our neighborhood carrying digital cameras. We wanted to know more about how the children saw the world around them and understand how they were constructing and attaching meaning to places. The pictures gave us a glimpse into what they were seeing.

After our walks, we returned to our classroom to revisit the photos. The children were curious about where we had gone, so we tracked our walks on a large laminated map. At the same time, a strong interest in pirates, treasure and treasure maps emerged in our classroom. Based on these interests, we decided to try Geocaching on our walks. Geocaching is a 21st-century version of the classic treasure hunt. In the Geocaching app you use a digital map and GPS coordinates to track down hidden treasures or "caches" in your neighborhood.

One of our many geocaching treks led us to a stretch of undeveloped land just a few blocks from our school. We quickly found the cache but decided to take the long way home, pausing to play and explore this new area. Named "Violet Park" on google maps, it is less like a traditional park and more like a small stretch of rugged woodland and a dry creekbed -- the perfect place for exploring, building forts, climbing trees and scaling boulders. The children immediately saw the potential in this place that most adults had missed for years. After returning to this park again and again, we decided to make a map and a guide so we could share our knowledge and discoveries with others who might also want to enjoy Violet Park.

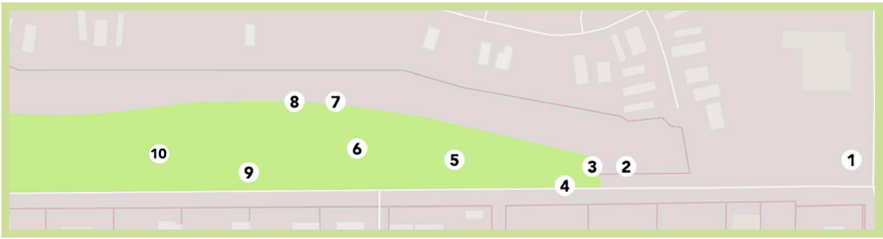
Mapping and writing a guide with young children is an insightful and even somewhat revolutionary process. Historically, cartography has been the domain of only the rich and the powerful. The privilege of naming and claiming spaces was something only afforded to the elite. But how do children see and understand the world? What names would they choose if given the chance? What kinds of maps would they make? What might we gain from their insights? Hopefully this guide can give us an idea.

We are not sure yet about the future of Violet Park. Over the months we've been writing this guide, we watched the "river of rocks" turn into an actual river, as winter turned to spring and water made its way into the creekbed. We realize that many of the other landmarks we have identified may not be there in the coming months or years. Boulder Parks & Recreation has confirmed they have plans to develop this land into an actual park at some point in the future. We hope the children can be involved in this process. Even as the landscape changes, the spirit and creativity of the children's ideas captured in this guide hold true and can be applied to almost any small beloved corner of the world.

So our invitation to you is to slow down and see all of those otherwise "unremarkable" places with new eyes. Make a dandelion necklace, pretend a log is a speed racer taking you to far-off places (or maybe just to grandma's house), come home with your pockets full of sticks and rocks and second-guess all your assumptions about what is trash and what is treasure. Maybe you'll find a little bit of magic where you were least expecting it.

*Brooke Parker*

Pre-K Teacher at Boulder Journey School  
2017-18



- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Little Hideout Made of Trees               | 6. The Barn Log                  |
| 2. The Forest of Gloom and Darkness           | 7. Walk-In Wall                  |
| 3. The Mountain That is Steep                 | 8. The Flippy Swinging Tree Rope |
| 4. Bridge Widge or The Bridge Bed<br>or Larry | 9. Painted Rock                  |
| 5. The River of Rocks                         | 10. Climbing Tree                |

The map above shows ten of the primary landmarks identified by the children throughout the time we have been exploring Violet Park. The locations on the map are approximate. Beyond the ten main landmarks, the content of this guide is divided into four main categories:

### LANDMARKS



Several larger landmarks have been identified above, but there are plenty of smaller landmarks and points of interest along the way. Follow along with the green boxes and try to find them all!

### THINGS TO DO



Feeling bored? Uninspired? Blue boxes will suggest some projects, activities and physical challenges you might like to try to keep things feeling fresh and interesting, as you explore the woods.

### THINGS TO FIND



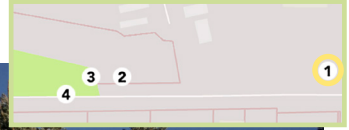
Keep your eyes peeled -- brown boxes will give you a heads up about the types of plants, animals, rocks and other things you might encounter on your way through the park. See how many you can spot!

### THINGS TO PRETEND



Let your imagination run wild! The yellow boxes will give you ideas for things to pretend or games to play at different places in the woods. Whether it's digging for gold, or pretending to be lions, these woods can inspire all kinds of playing and dreaming.

# 1. Little Hideout Made of Trees



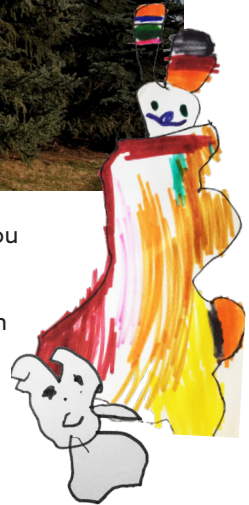
**Stone:** You need to duck down to get inside, so you don't get spiked.

**Adam:** If you go there, maybe bring a lantern because it is very dark.

**Cayetano:** Or a flashlight.

**Hanna:** Or a headlamp.

**Penelope:** Or if you didn't bring any of that stuff your eyes could adjust.



**Piper:** If you see a bunny there, don't touch them.

**Cayetano:** They are scared of bigger people.

DO NOT TOUCH!



## The Square With No Grass

**Piper:** You can look at the things growing in it. There are flowers!

**Harper:** And weeds.

**Sydney:** Maybe it doesn't get enough water so the green grass won't grow.

**Elliot O:** Or maybe someone started digging there.

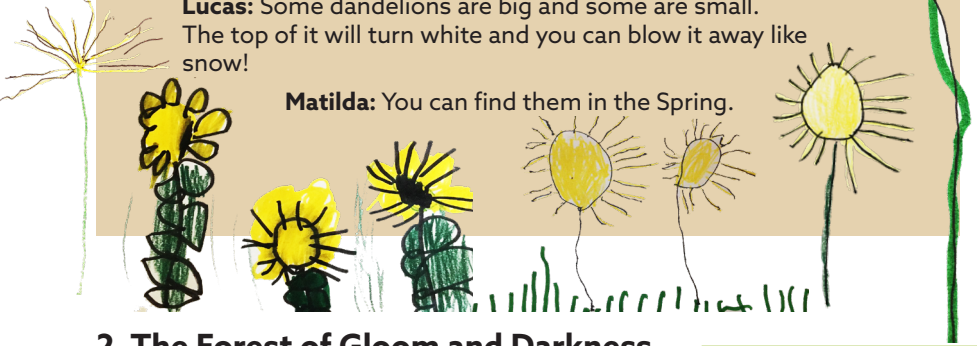




## Dandelions

**Lucas:** Some dandelions are big and some are small. The top of it will turn white and you can blow it away like snow!

**Matilda:** You can find them in the Spring.



## 2. The Forest of Gloom and Darkness



**Adam:** It is called that because it is full of darkness.

**Cayetano:** And it's gloomy.

**Adam:** And gloomy means it is like a special kind of fog that you can shoot from your hands.

**Clementine:** It's a place with lots of animals, like bunny rabbits.

**Georgia:** We also saw a family of deer just relaxing there, and taking a nap.





## Animal Forest

**Georgia:** It's called Animal Forest and you pretend to be deer and also pretend to be lions, and you play together and be friends.



## A Cutted Tree

**Boden:** A piece of this tree fell off.

**Harper:** I know! Maybe a bark beetle ate it.

**Georgia:** Now there's spiderwebs in there.

**Piper:** I think somebody cut it with a saw.

**Lucas:** I think maybe they didn't want it to live.

**Piper:** Or maybe somebody wanted to make a home for the spiders in the tree!

## 3. The Mountain That Is Steep



## Flowerful Moss Grass

**Elliot S:** It's a moss that is kind of green and feels soft.

**Ethan:** It's soft like a carpet.

**Elliot S:** But when you feel it, careful of the pine needles because they poke into your pants.



**Elliot S:** You have to squat down and slide to get down it.

**Penelope:** The rocks catch you.

**Cayetano:** When you slide watch out for glass but sometimes you can find corn.



## Lamb's Ear

**Cayetano:** It's called lamb's ear because it's soft as a lamb's ear. Don't pick it because that's mean and it could kill it. But you can feel it.



FEEL HOW  
SOFT!



## 4. Bridge Widge or The Bridge Bed or Larry



**Paige:** Maybe we could call it Bridge Widge! Or the Bridge Bed because once we saw a person and a dog sleeping there.

**Natalie:** And because it's really straight like a big bed.

**Lucas:** And if he comes back one day, we could call it the Bridge Home!

**Penelope:** Or maybe we can name it Larry. That's my ski instructor's name.

**Ethan:** It's a bridge that goes across the water, but when it gets cold the water doesn't go, but when a storm comes then the water goes through.



## Sticky Shoes

**Boden:** Just pretend you have sticky shoes and then you could walk all over that bridge, even upside down.



**Boden:** It's a bridge but it's a road too.

## 5. The River of Rocks



April 24-

**Adam:** It used to be a real river but all the people scooped it up and it went into the ground.

**Hanna:** I think it dried up. It froze and then it melted into the ground again.

**Harper:** Or, maybe the sun dried it up.



May 17-

**Boden:** Sometimes it makes a real river!

**Piper:** Maybe somebody turned on their hose too long.

**Ethan:** I think the rain was starting to fall over there and it filled it up.



### Digging Fossils

**Logan:** Just find a stick and dig in the dirt.

**Matilda:** And you also have to use rocks to hit the dirt.

**Logan:** You have to dig deep deep deep to find the fossils. It could take 100 years.





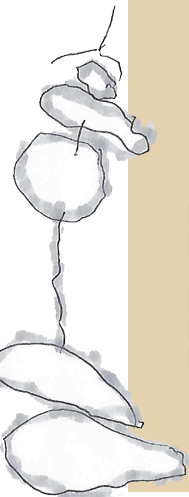
## Rocks! Rocks! Rocks!

**Adam:** We like to find treasures like golden rocks. To find them you have to look carefully at the ground or you can dig deep with a sharp shovel.

**Harper:** Or if you didn't bring one you can use a stick.

There are so many different kinds of rocks to discover! See if you can find one to match every rock on our list:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ] A very very smooth rock   | <input type="checkbox"/> ] A rock that is stuck in the ground          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ] A rock that looks like a piece of pizza or a piece of cake        | <input type="checkbox"/> ] A silver crystal rock                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ] A pink rock   | <input type="checkbox"/> ] A small sharp rock that is good for digging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ] A rock with a green part  | <input type="checkbox"/> ] A warm rock                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ] A square rock that looks like the smokehouse where you smoke pigs | <input type="checkbox"/> ] A round rock that is like a marble          |



## Make a Dandelion Necklace

By Cayetano

1. Find a tall dandelion instead of a small one.
2. Go from the bottom and you peel it down into two parts, but you have to stop at the fluffy part.
3. Put it around your neck.
4. Be careful for the sap. Sap is a bad kind of white stuff that comes out sometimes.





## The Slide You Can't Slide Down

**Piper:** You can't slide down because it is too far up and it might hurt you because some of the sticks might be poking out of it.

**Stone:** And also maybe the person sliding is too heavy and then the branch is too light and it cracks and they could fall down.

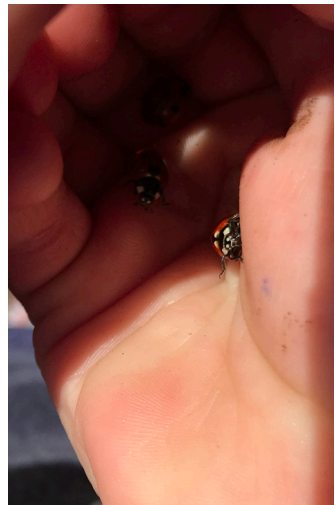
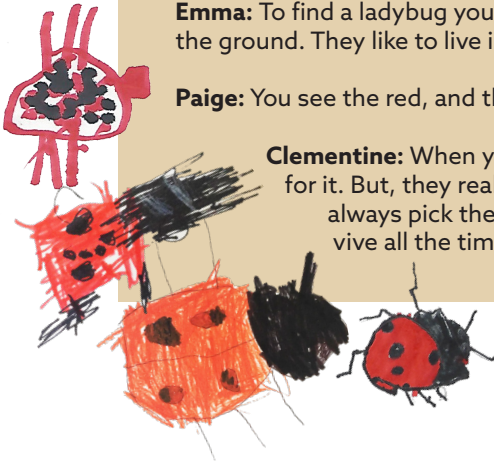


## Ladybugs

**Emma:** To find a ladybug you look at nature -- you look on the ground. They like to live in little holes.

**Paige:** You see the red, and they just show up!

**Clementine:** When you hold it, you keep a little hole for it. But, they really need a habitat. We shouldn't always pick them up because they can't survive all the time and they pee on your hand.



## 6. The Barn Log

**Clementine:** Some of the trees, I'm noticing, are falling down.

**Boden:** You can climb on them and try using your best balance.



### Climb The Log Challenge

**Elliot:** You have to hold the tree and move your legs and arms and see how high up you can get. You can use a branch to grab to help you.



SOOM ZOOM & OOM



### Speeder

**Thatcher:** To play you just hop on a branch and you just pretend the branch is a speeder and you can pretend you're going somewhere.

**Lucas:** But sometimes that branch is really weird and bouncy!

**Thatcher:** You can pretend to go to Oregon to visit your Mimi and G-Pop or to California to go to the beach or to Mexico.





## Sticks

No two sticks are exactly alike! See if you can find a stick to match each one on our list:

- A stick shaped like a C
- A broken stick that looks like a Y
- A medium yellow-grayish stick with bumps
- A tiny gun stick
- A fishing stick
- A firework stick with lots of little branches
- A wood bark stick
- A stick that looks like a whole tree
- A thin white stick with weird flowers on it



## 7. Walk-in Wall

**Matilda:** It's a gap you can walk through and people's houses are on the other side.





## Make a Ladybug House

**Penelope:** First find rocks, leaves and dandelions and flowers. Then use a rock to make a pillow for the ladybug and a leaf for a blanket.

**Emma:** Put green for them to nibble on.

**Piper:** This house can be for every bug, not just ladybugs, it can even be stink bugs.

**Ethan:** Find some shiny rocks and other kinds of rocks and you start by putting them in a circle on the bottom. Then you keep going around and around until you get to the top!



## Making a Fire

**Logan:** First, get sticks and put them together in whatever shape you want. You can put some newspapers in it too. Then you pretend it's on fire and do pretend smores.

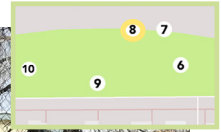


## 8. The Flippy Swinging Tree Rope

**Lucas:** It's so good to swing on. I feel like I'm a birdie flying!

**Paige:** You can take turns where each person gets five turns and the other person counts. You know who goes next because you make a line.

**Natalie:** It makes me feel happy because I feel the cool air!



### Ways of Swinging

[ ] Backwards Swing

**Stone:** You can go backwards and close your eyes.

[ ] Fast Swing

**Logan:** You can go really fast! Just run and pick up your feet.

[ ] Twirl Swing

**Natalie:** Start spinning and put your feet up.





## Prickly Tree

**Lucas:** It is called that because there are just pointy things coming out like thorns. You have to be careful when you're swinging.



## Thorn Bushes

**Stone:** Don't touch it with your skin but you can touch it with your cast if you have one.

**Sydney:** But with your skin you can only do it soft or on the side of the thorn.



## 9. Painted Rock



**Adam:** It is a pink-tan color with black and green and yellow.

**Harper:** You can sit down on it and see moss.

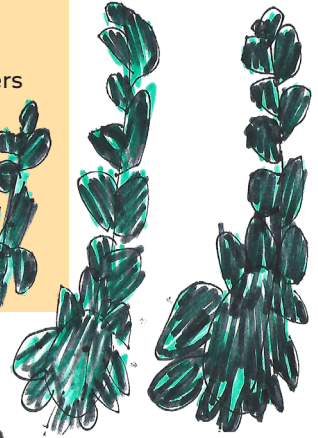
**Trevor:** You can jump off of it.



## Wild Kids

**Penelope:** Pretend you are all sisters or brothers and you live in the jungle and you don't have any shoes on and you climb trees or other big things or tall things or little things.

**Sydney:** And then you gather food like corn.



## A Real Bone

**Harrison:** I think it is a deer bone and maybe another animal killed it.

**Sydney:** Or maybe it just got too old and died.



## 10. Climbing Tree



**Harrison:** It fell down and has sticks and flowers at the bottom.

**Clementine:** That's cause there is a hole and when it fell down it got the flowers and grass.





## Trash or Treasure?

**Boden:** Broken things are trash and together things are treasure. Treasure doesn't get thrown away, it gets found. Trash isn't really a treasure, it is litter.

**Cayetano:** Trash gets outside because people just drop it there and that's mean!

**Ethan:** They probably couldn't find a trash thing and then they just dumped it on the ground.



**Cayetano:** It's a treasure because you can *pick up* trash with it!

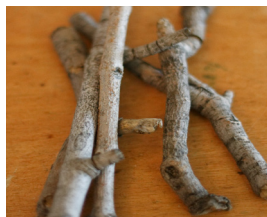
**Boden:** Oh yeah! It's a trash-picking glove!



**Matilda:** I thought it was trash but then I played with it and it was like a toy! I pretended it was an ice cream scooper. And toys like ice cream scoopers are not trash.



**Ethan:** It's treasure because they have these poky things on them and you can make them into a house for a creature or a fairy. But fairies usually live in castles.



**Elliot O:** You can play with sticks. You can move them around and throw them in the air.



**Ethan:** It's a treasure because it has a smooth part and it came from something bigger like a log and then it turned into a wood chip. It turned into something new!



**Boden:** It's treasure because it looks beautiful.



**Hanna:** It's treasure because it's very clean.

**Piper:** And it's not wet and it's not covered in dog slobber.



**Matilda:** It's pretty! It's a treasure for our class!





Guide created by the 2017-2018 prekindergarten class of Room 11 in collaboration with Brooke Parker, graduate student in the Boulder Journey School Teacher Education Program.

To learn more about the Advanced Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Course, out of which this work was developed, and the Boulder Journey School Teacher Education Program, visit this blog post: <https://goo.gl/5HuS3P>

Thank you to the children, families, and educators of the Boulder Journey School community. We recognize that our work and thinking is directly supported by each and every member of the community.

