**RESOURCE GUIDE**

We've compiled helpful resources for parents, teachers, and community leaders to help them encourage children's enjoyment of the great outdoors. These resources include [Nature Activities for Kids and Families](http://richardlou.com/children-nature-resources), [Good Books for Kids and Families](http://richardlou.com/children-nature-resources), and [Helpful Links](http://richardlou.com/children-nature-resources).

**NATURE ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES**

Parents, grandparents, and other relatives are the first responders, but they cannot resolve society's nature-deficit disorder by themselves. Educators, health care professionals, policymakers, business people, urban designers—all must lend a hand. Many of the activities presented here and in the book are adult-supervised, but it's important to remember that one of the most important goals is for our children to experience joy and wonder everyday, and for them to be encouraged to create their own nature experiences. As they grow older they will expand the boundaries of their exploration.

No list of nature activities and community actions can be complete, but here are a few suggestions that may stimulate your own creativity. (For a more complete list see the Field Guide to *Last Child in the Woods*, in the **2008 edition** of the book.)

1. Invite native flora and fauna into your life. Maintain a birdbath. Replace part of your lawn with native plants. Build a bat house. For backyard suggestions, plus links to information about attracting wildlife to apartments and townhouses, see the National Audubon Society's [Invitation to a Healthy Yard](http://nationalaudubon.org/). Make your yard a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) [Certified Wildlife Habitat](http://nwf.org/CertifiedWHS).  

2. View nature as an antidote to stress. All the health benefits that come to a child come to the adult who takes that child into nature. Children and parents feel better after spending time in the natural world—even if it's in their own backyard.

3. Help your child discover a hidden universe. Find a scrap board and place it on bare dirt. Come back in a day or two, lift the board, and see how many species have found shelter there. Identify these creatures with the help of a field guide. Return to this universe once a month, lift the board and discover who's new.

4. Revive old traditions. Collect lightning bugs at dusk, release them at dawn. Make a leaf collection. Keep a terrarium or aquarium. Go crawdadding—tie a piece of liver or bacon to a string, drop it into a creek or pond, wait until a crawdad tugs.

5. Encourage your kids to go camping in the backyard. Buy them a tent or help them make a canvas tepee, and leave it up all summer. Join the NWF's [Great American Backyard Campout](http://nwf.org/Camping).
6. Be a cloudspotter; build a backyard weather station. No special shoes or drive to the soccer field is required for "clouding." A young person just needs a view of the sky (even if it's from a bedroom window) and a guidebook. Cirrostratus, cumulonimbus, or lenticularis, shaped like flying saucers, "come to remind us that the clouds are Nature's poetry, spoken in a whisper in the rarefied air between crest and crag," writes Gavin Pretor-Pinney in his wonderful book The Cloudspotter's Guide. To build a backyard weather station, read The Kid's Book of Weather Forecasting, by Mark Breen, Kathleen Friestad, and Michael Kline.

7. Make the "green hour" a new family tradition. NWF recommends that parents give their kids a daily green hour, a time for unstructured play and interaction with the natural world. Even fifteen minutes is a good start. "Imagine a map with your home in the center. Draw ever-widening circles around it, each representing a successively older child's realm of experience," NWF suggests. "Whenever possible, encourage some independent exploration as your child develops new skills and greater confidence."

8. Take a hike. With younger children, choose easier, shorter routes and prepare to stop often. Or be a stroller explorer. "If you have an infant or toddler, consider organizing a neighborhood stroller group that meets for weekly nature walks," suggests the National Audubon Society. The American Hiking Society offers good tips on how to hike with teenagers. Involve your teen in planning hikes; prepare yourselves physically for hikes, and stay within your limits (start with short day hikes); keep pack weight down. For more information, consult the American Hiking Society or a good hiking guide, such as John McKinney's Joy of Hiking.

9. Invent your own nature game. One mother's suggestion: "We help our kids pay attention during longer hikes by playing 'find ten critters'—mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, snails, other creatures. Finding a critter can also mean discovering footprints, mole holes, and other signs that an animal has passed by or lives there."

10. Encourage your kids to build a tree house, fort, or hut. You can provide the raw materials, including sticks, boards, blankets, boxes, ropes, and nails, but it's best if kids are the architects and builders. The older the kids, the more complex the construction can be. For understanding and inspiration, read Children's Special Places, by David Sobel, Treehouses and Playhouses You Can Build, by David and Jeanie Stiles describes how to erect sturdy structures, from simple platforms to multistory or multitree houses connected by rope bridges.

11. Plant a garden. If your children are little, choose seeds large enough for them to handle and that mature quickly, including vegetables. Whether teenagers or toddlers, young gardeners can help feed the family, and if your community has a farmers' market, encourage them to sell their extra produce. Alternatively, share it with the neighbors or donate it to a food bank. If you live in an urban neighborhood, create a high-rise garden. A landing, deck, terrace, or flat roof typically can accommodate several large pots, and even trees can thrive in containers if given proper care.

12. Raise butterflies—from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to emerging monarch. The
website for Chicago Wilderness's Leave No Child Inside initiative tells how to do it.


For more information, see solutions presented throughout Last Child in the Woods. Also, visit the nonprofit Children & Nature Network for more ideas for your family and community, including an action guide for change as well as to read state and national news and the latest research. Connect with the efforts of others around the world. And please let us know how your own family, school, organization, or community connects young people to nature. Email your ideas and suggestions to the Children & Nature Network.

GOOD BOOKS FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife, David Mizejewski (Creative Homeowner, 2004)

Backyard Bird Watching for Kids: How to Attract, Feed, and Provide Homes for Birds, George H. Harrison (Willow Creek Press, 1997)

Best Hikes with Children series, guides by geographic region (The Mountaineers)

Camp Out!: The Ultimate Kids' Guide, Lynn Brunelle (Workman, 2007)

Children's Special Places, David Sobel (Wayne State University Press, 2001)


Creating a Family Garden: Magical Outdoor Spaces for All Ages, Bunny Guinness (Abbeville Press, 1996)

Fandex Family Field Guides series (Workman, 1999)

Father Nature: Fathers as Guides to the Natural World, ed. Paul S. Piper and Stan Tag (University of Iowa Press, 2003)

Go Outside: Over 130 Activities for Outdoor Adventures, Nancy Blakey (Tricycle Press, 2002)

Golden Field Guides series (St. Martins)

How to Build an Igloo: And Other Snow Shelters, Norbert E. Yankielun (Norton, 2007)

I Love Dirt!, Jennifer Ward (Trumpeter, 2008)


The Kid's Book of Weather Forecasting: Build a Weather Station, 'Read the Sky' and Make Predictions!, Mark Breen and Kathleen Friestad (Williamson, 2000)

My Nature Journal, Adrienne Olmstead (Pajaro, 1999)

National Audubon Society Field Guides series (Knopf)

Peterson Field Guides and Peterson First Guides series (Houghton Mifflin)

Rock and Fossil Hunter, Ben Morgan (DK Publishing, 2005)

Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots: Gardening Together with Children, Sharon Lovejoy (Workman, 1999)

The Sense of Wonder, Rachel Carson (HarperCollins, 1998)


Sibley Field Guides series (Knopf)


Sunflower Houses: Inspiration from the Garden, Sharon Lovejoy (Workman, 2001)

Take a Backyard Bird Walk, Jane Kirkland (Stillwater, 2001)


Tracking and the Art of Seeing: How to Read Animal Tracks and Signs, Paul Rezendes (Collins, 1999)

Treehouses and Playhouses You Can Build, David and Jeanie Stiles (Gibbs Smith, 2006)

Unplugged Play, Bobbi Conner (Workman, 2007)


HELPFUL LINKS

- The American Camp Association
- American Hiking Society
- Boy Scouts of America
- Camp Fire USA
- Children & Nature Network
- Connecticut's Great Park Pursuit
- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- Girl Scouts of the USA
- Junior Anglers and Hunters of America

http://richardlouv.com/children-nature-resources
- National Audubon Society's "Invitation to a Healthy Yard"
- National Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count
- Project FeederWatch
- The National Military Family Association
- National Wildlife Federation (NWF)
- NWF's Certified Wildlife Habitat
- NWF's Great American Backyard Campout
- Sierra Club's Building Bridges to the Outdoors
- The Take a Child Outside campaign
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department