

## Family Programs

*Helping your family connect with your national parks*

Children across the United States average 6 hours per day on video games, television and the internet and only minutes a day of outdoor play time.

- Benefits of spending time in nature include increased creativity, problem-solving ability, focus and self-discipline.
- Social benefits include cooperation, flexibility, and self-awareness.
- Emotional benefits include stress reduction, reduced aggression and increased happiness.
- Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors.



*Burdette, Hillary L., M.D., M.S.; and Robert C. Whitaker, M.D, M.P.H. "Resurrecting Free Play in Young Children: Looking Beyond Fitness and Fatness to Attention, Affiliation and Affect." © 2005 American Medical Association.*

## Tips for Sharing Nature with Children

### Pack a nature kit

Keep a backpack stocked and ready to go for family friendly outdoor adventures. Include a magnify glass, binoculars, paper and pencil, local bird or tree guides, refillable water bottles, and a first-aid kit.

### Create a sound map

Helping kids tune into their surrounding helps improve observation skills. Find a spot outdoors and have your child draw a small picture of themselves in the center of a piece of paper, noting the direction they are facing. When a sound is heard, they should make a mark on the paper that describes the sound. The mark's location should indicate the direction and distance of the sound (in front, behind, to left or right). The marks should be interpretive (a few lines indicating wind, or a musical note indicating a songbird.) Try this activity in different locations and compare the different sounds.

### Rainbow in a bag

Encourage your child to take a closer look! Gather a collection of free paint chip samples in different colors from your local hardware store. Next time you are outdoors with your child, give them a paint chip and have them search for nature items that match the color. You can talk about the different shades of green found in leaves from different trees or the different shades of brown found in different bark. For added fun, ask your child to create a new name for the paint chip based on their findings!



### Nature art

The natural world is full of variety and beauty. One way to become aware of this and begin to understand and appreciate it is through art. When outdoors, make time for your child to use natural objects to create a picture or sculpture. Make sure kids respect the natural objects and do not harm any living creatures. They can use fallen leaves, branches, stones, soil, shells, etc. Take a photo in your mind for a lasting memory.

### Evidence of life

As nature detectives, children learn that tiny clues can lead to big ideas. Ask your child to look for the smallest evidence of life—fallen feathers, bites or holes in leaves, scat along a trail, or animal tracks in mud. Collecting nature clues outdoors will lead children to ask questions, make suggestions, and engage their curious minds.

## North Bay Family Friendly Outdoor Destinations

### Tennessee Valley, Golden Gate National Recreation Area

An amazing offshoot of the Marin Headlands, with hiking trails that suit the whole family. Keep on the lookout for mighty raptors, common swallows, deer, coyote, and an occasional bobcat. In the spring time you will find lupine, checker-bloom, blue-eyed grass, California buttercup, and California poppy. In summer, the grasses turn golden, and by late summer you can find fennel, lizard tail, sagebrush, sticky monkey flower, and blackberry bushes. In winter and early spring, rains turn the golden grasses back into green fields. At any time of the year Tennessee Valley is worth the visit.

**Getting there:** From US 101 in Marin County, take the Mill Valley / Stinson Beach / Hwy. 1 exit. Follow Shoreline Hwy. until you see the Tennessee Valley Road sign (the turn off will be on the left.)

### Ring Mountain Open Space Preserve

Nestled between Tiburon and Corte Madera, this preserve possesses an amazing variety of natural assets. The grassy slopes afford fantastic views of Mount Tamalpais, the bay, and San Francisco. Trails wind through rock formations, across tiny creeks, through wildflower dotted hillsides, and under old coast live oaks and California bays. Petroglyph Rock has rock carvings created by Native Americans and the unusual geology of the preserve supports plants that grow nowhere else

**Getting there:** From US 101 in Marin County, exit Paradise Drive/Tamalpais Drive. Drive east on Tamalpais, and turn right onto San Clemente (before The Village shopping center). After a few blocks, San Clemente dumps into Paradise Drive. Continue on Paradise, past Westward Drive, to the preserve gate on the right side of the road. It's about 1.5 miles from 101.

### Duxbury Reef, Bolinas

Duxbury Reef is North America's largest shale reef featuring one of the world's most diverse ecosystems: tidepools. Venture out on the reef during low tide to see sea anemones, sea stars, snails, sea urchins, hermit crabs, barnacles, nudibranchs, and much more!

**Getting there:** From US 101 in Marin County, take the Highway 1 exit, following it past Muir Beach to Stinson Beach. North of Stinson Beach, just past Bolinas Lagoon, turn left of Bolinas Road, right on Mesa Road, then left on Overlook road, following it almost to the end. About a block before the cliffs, turn right on Elm Street to Agate Beach parking lot.

### Deer Island Open Space Preserve, Novato

Deer Island's easy 2-mile loop trail is a terrific excursion for the whole family. The loop trail skirts this 134-acre preserve where you'll find oak grassland, California bay woods, and substantial wildlife.

**Getting there:** From US 101 in Marin County, exit San Marin Drive/Atherton Avenue. Drive east on Atherton Avenue for about 1.7 miles, then turn right on Olive. After about 0.6 mile, turn left on Deer Island Lane. After about 0.2 mile bear right and look for the small parking area by the Open Space sign.

## Resources for Parents

### Earth Child 2000: Earth Science for Young Children.

Kathryn Sheehan and Mary Waidner. ©1998, Council Oak Books

*Earth science for young children. Includes games, stories, activities, experiments for all seasons. Has great literature component to tie in stories with activities.*

**Games to Play with Two Year Olds.** Jackie Silberg. ©1993, Gryphon House, Inc.

*Short games to play with young, middle, and older twos. Sections include Running and Jumping Games and Nature Games*



**The Kids' Nature Book: 365 Indoor/Outdoor Activities and Experiences.** Susan Milord. ©1989, Williamson Publishing.

*365 seasonal activities for exploring nature with children of all ages.*

**Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder.** Richard Louv. 2008, Algonquin Books.

*Discusses the importance of nature and outdoor experiences for children's healthy development*

**Sea Searcher's Handbook: Activities from Monterey Bay Aquarium.** Monterey Bay Aquarium. ©1996, Roberts Reinhart Publishers.

*Activities for exploring and learning about rocky shores, wetlands, sandy shores, kelp forests, the open sea and deep sea.*

**Nature with Children of all Ages: Activities and Adventures for Exploring, Learning, and Enjoying the World Around Us.** Edith A. Sisson. ©1982, Phalarope Books

*Lots of short activities for children of varying ages. Activities grouped by themes (e.g. birds, mammals, invertebrates, by the sea)*

**Sights and Sounds of the Seasons.** Elizabeth Terwilliger. ©1979, Elizabeth Terwilliger Nature Education Foundation.

*Month-by-month guide to Marin's natural world by a local legend.*

**Sharing Nature With Children.** Joseph Cornell. ©1998, DAWN Publications

*Games and activities to play outdoors. Lots of activities to hone five senses and awareness when outdoors.*



## Books for Children

*Most of the books listed below are available from the Marin County Libraries.  
NF=Non fiction*

### Coastal/Marine

Humphrey, The Lost Whale: A true Story.  
Wendy Tokuda & Richard Hall (NF)

In One Tidepool. Anthony D. Fredericks

Water Beds: Sleeping in the Ocean. Gail Langer Karwoski

Into the Sea. Brenda Z. Guiberson

All about Sharks. Jim Aronsky (NF)

Sharkabet: A Sea of Sharks from A to Z.  
Ray Troll

Starfish. Lucienne Boch

Seashore. Steve Parker

Lets's Discover the Seaside. Maria Rius, J.M. Parramon

Turtle Bay. Savoiur Pirotta

Kermit the Hermit. Bill Peet

Is this a House for Hermit Crab? Megan McDonald

Why the Crab has No Head: An African Tale. Barbara Knutson

Sea Turtle Journey: The story of a Loggerhead Turtle. Lorraine A. Jay

Clams all Year. Maryann Cocca-Leffler

The Girl Who Danced with Dolphins. Frank De Saix

The Hidden Forest. Jeannie Baker

Orca Song. Michael C. Armour

I Wonder if Ill See a Whale. Frances Ward Weller

Winter Whale. Joanne Ryder

The Great White Man-Eating Shark: A cautionary Tale. Margaret Mahy

### Reptiles and Amphibians

Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle. *Deborah Dennard*

Frog. *Susan Cooper*

A Frog in the Bog. *Karma Wilson*

Mouse Count. *Ellen Stoll Walsh*

One, Two, Three Jump! *Penelope Lively*

Possum and the Peeper. *Anne Hunter*

The Wide-Mouthed Frog. *Rex Schneider*

Tale of a Tadpole. *Barbara Ann Porte*

Lizard's Song. *George Shannon*

Verdi. *Janell Cannon*

The Salamander Room. *Anne Mazer*

What Newt Could do for Turtle. *Jonathan London*

### Animals and their Babies

Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother Too? *Eric Carle*

Seashore Babies. *Kathy Darling (NF)*

Whose Baby Am I? *John Butler*

Wild Babies. *Seymour Simon (NF)*

Wild Babies. *Margriet Ruurs (NF)*

Animal Dads. *Sneed Be Collard III (NF)*

Animal Fathers. *Russell Freedman (NF)*

A Nest Full of Eggs. *Priscilla Belz Jenkins (NF)*

Gorgeous! *Caroline Castle*

Daisy and the Egg. *Jane Simmons*

Owl Babies. *Waddell*

Don't Laug, Joe! *Keiko Kasza*

### Birds

One Duck, Another Duck. *Charlotte Pomerantz*

Bird Talk. *Overheard by Ann Jonas*

Stellaluna. *Janell Cannon*

Dawdle Duckling. *Toni Buzeo*

Make Way for Ducklings. *Robert McCloskey*

Ducks Don't Get Wet. *Augusta Goldin*

If You Should Hear a Honey Guide. *April Pulley*

Say Are You My Mother? *P.D. Eastman*

Sandpipers. *Edith Thacher Hurd*

The Birdwatchers. *Simon James*

The Best Beak in Boonaroo Bay. *Narelle Oliver*

Dancers in the Garden. *Joanne Ryder*

Where did Bunny Go? *Nancy Tafuri*

Feathers for Lunch. *Lois Ehlert*

Two Blue Jays. *Anne Rockwell*

The Peregrine's Journey: A story of migration. *Madeline Dunphy (NF)*

### Insects/Invertebrates

Bugs! Bugs! Bugs! *Bob Barner*

The Icky Bug Counting Book. *Jerry Pallotta*

Insectlopedia. *Douglas Florian*

The Best Bug Parade. *Stuart J. Murphy*

Little Miss Spider series. *David Kirk*

Bug Girl. *Carol Sonenklar*

Bugs! *David T. Greenberg*

Crickwing. *Janell Cannon*

A frog in the Bog. *Karma Wilson*

The Little Squeegy Bug. *Bill Martin, Jr. and Michael Sampson*

Locust Pocus: A book to Bug You. *Douglas McKelvey*

Manuelo the Playing Mantis. *Don Freeman*

Ugh! A Bug! *Mary Bono*

The Seed. *Isabel Pin*

### Nocturnal/Nighttime

In the Snow: Who's Been Here? *Lindsay Barrett George*

The Very Lonely Firefly. *Eric Carle*

Don't Laugh, Joe! *Keiko Kasza*

Possum's Harvest Moon. *Anne Hunter*

Bat Loves the Night. *Nicola Davies*

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears: A West African Tale. *Verna Aardema*

Bats. *Gail Gibbons*

Bats! Strange and Wonderful. *Laurence Pringle*

Cougar. *Jalma Barrett*

Where are the Night Animals? *MaryAnn Fraser*

Whose Tracks Are these? *Jim Nail*

Dot to Dot in the Sky: Stories in the Stars. *Joan Hinz*

Magic School Bus Planets, Stars, Bats.

The Moon Seems to Change. *Franklyn M. Branley*

The Moon. *Paulette Bourgeois*

My Place in Space. *Robin and Sally Hirst*

Owl Moon. *Jane Yolen*

### More Great Books

In a Nutshell. *Joseph Anthony*

My Nature Journal. *Adrienne Olmstead*

Pass the Energy, Please! *Barbara Shaw McKinney*

Miss Rumphius. *Barbara Cooney*

I'm In Charge of Celebrations. *Byrd Baylor*