children & nature NETWORK

NATURE CLUBS *for* FAMILIES

TOOL KIT

PILOT EDITION

Do it yourself! Do it now!

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PHOTO: JON BEARD

INTRODUCTION

"What if parents, grandparents, and kids around the country were to band together to create nature clubs for families? What if this new form of social/nature networking were to spread as quickly as book clubs and Neighborhood Watches did in recent decades? We would be well on our way to true cultural change."

— Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, and Chairman, Children & Nature Network

Families are discovering that having fun outdoors doesn't require waiting for a special event or program. Instead, they are taking the initiative and creating their own local nature clubs for families. These clubs go by different names and take slightly different forms, but they all offer accessible, easy, low- (or no-) cost fun, family-oriented activities outdoors.

Why get families outdoors? Quite simply, nature is good for us. Evidence shows that it is important, healthy and fun for children to have frequent and varied opportunities for play outdoors—and especially outdoors with natural vegetation—as a part of their everyday lives. (C&NN's annotated bibliographies.) When they do, they are happier, healthier and smarter. They are more self-disciplined and focused. They are more self-confident, creative and cooperative. They are better problem-solvers, more optimistic and more physically fit. Family ties are strengthened, a sense of community is nourished, and a sense of place is cultivated. All in all, nature is good for children and their friends and family, too!

Nature Clubs for Families is a great way to get started, get involved, and get the benefits of time in nature. Nature is all around us. It abounds in rural settings and wilderness, but it's even available where we may least expect to find it—from backyards, city neighborhoods, and rooftop gardens to suburban parks and walking trails.

And the good news is that there are lots of ways to connect with nature—and to create lifestyles in which frequent experience in the natural world is a fundamental part of children's lives. The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) has drawn on the best available research, common sense, and parents' direct experiences to develop this *C&NN Nature Clubs for Families Tool Kit: Do It Yourself! Do It Now!* We hope it inspires you to get your own family and friends outdoors for many happy, healthy adventures together.

PHOTO: JON BEARD

PURPOSE OF THIS TOOL KIT

The purpose of this *C&NN Nature Clubs for Families Tool Kit: Do It Yourself! Do It Now!* is to provide inspiration, information, tips and resources for those who are—or who might be—interested in creating a Nature Club for Families. In creating the Tool Kit, we've drawn on what many other families have done and learned. We also encourage you to develop and use your own ideas.

WHAT IS A NATURE CLUB FOR FAMILIES?

A Nature Club for Families is a group of people with an interest in connecting children with nature. Each Nature Club for Families is unique. Some meet weekly at the same urban park—playing, building friendships, and singing with preschoolers and their parents. Some take homeschooling families on lengthy walks for focused nature study. Some take the form of boisterous family trail hikes that combine kid-driven play with spontaneous nature observation. Whatever their form, all share these basic goals: Get outside in nature on a frequent basis; gather children, friends and community members to share outdoor adventures; and experience the benefits of time spent together outside.

PHOTO: SUSAN SHAFER, NYSDEC

A FEW KEY BENEFITS

- Nature Clubs for Families can be created in any neighborhood — whether inner city, suburban, or rural — and in any economic setting.
- Nature Clubs for Families can be joined or created by any family—single parents, extended families, friends who feel like families.
- The Nature Clubs for Families approach can break down key barriers, including fear of strangers, since there is safety in numbers.
- There is the motivation factor—it's much more likely you and your family are going to show up at a park on Saturday morning if you know there's another family waiting for you.
- Shared knowledge: Many parents want to give their kids the gifts of nature, but they don't feel they know enough about nature to do so.
- And, importantly, there is no need to wait for funding. Families can do this themselves and do it now.

PHOTO: JON BEARD

HOW TO START

"You don't have to wait for a 'green play' prescription from your doctor. You can start today with family and friends by opening the door to go outside to explore the wealth of natural adventures right in your own backyard, neighborhood and community."

— Cheryl Charles, President and CEO, Children & Nature Network

If you're reading this document, you're probably already giving some serious thought to starting your own Nature Club for Families. Are you willing to give it a try? According to our experts, being organized, enthusiastic, and committed to sharing nature with families will take you very far in being a successful group leader. And don't worry if you're not an expert naturalist: many leaders say they think their own lack of expertise makes other parents feel more comfortable taking part in their outdoor excursions. On the other hand, you don't have to do it alone. One approach to starting a Nature Club for Families is to partner with another family member or friend. Consider enlisting grandparents—they are often a fount of knowledge about nature, and they have the time and resources that parents sometimes find in short supply.

Once you're ready, start with nearby nature—places and spaces that are in your neighborhood or nearby in the community. You will be surprised how interesting your local parks can be—whether you're exploring an urban center, a suburb, or a rural region. Schedule a variety of fun outdoor activities and invite others to join you. You might simply take your group on a series of one- or two-hour walks through familiar preserves (and you might be surprised at how few families have ever visited them before). Don't be afraid to make repeated trips to the same location: Your group will gain confidence and knowledge as they begin to see a place over many days and seasons. Finally, remember to move slowly and allow the young people to romp and make their own discoveries. You'll probably find that their learning and their appreciation come in ways you never anticipated.

If you're feeling more ambitious, consider longer hikes, nature photography expeditions, fishing trips, cookouts, camping trips and nature restoration projects. Learn to track animals, explore local fossil beds, go birding, or start a neighborhood garden. See the rest of this Tool Kit for more details. It is fun! "Do It Yourself! Do It Now!"

PHOTO: JON BEARD

1. Create a Plan

Where, when, what, how often and how long? Putting it all in writing can help you relax and enjoy the process.

2. Check it out

It's a good idea to visit each location you send out invitations. Note any for each destination including detail to meet and what to do once there.

3. Invite as Many People as You Like

Start small or invite them all. Invite just a couple of friends to join you for a family hike. Or reach out to neighborhood families, classmates, and community groups like the scouts, 4-H and boys and girls club.

4. Make it Easy

Informed and prepared parents are happy parents. You'll make it easy to say "Yes" when you minimize prep-time and maximize fun when giving parents a checklist for hassle-free outings.

5. Ready, Set, Go!

Start your adventure on time with a 15-minute grace period for latecomers. Record the number of participants at each event and collect contact information for new participants.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I wanted my daughters to be able to go outside and have the opportunity for free-play in nature. I did it as a child and I wanted the same for them. I also noticed how each time we'd go out, there was no one else on the trail or in the park…and we wanted to change that."

Kat Diamond, Nature Strollers

"There's no such thing as bad weather that keeps you indoors—just bad apparel and bad equipment . . ."

Jaimz Edwards, EANDC

"The hosting of the event has become a family affair. We feel honored to work together to encourage families to get outside together."

Chip and Ashley Donahue, KIVA

"I want to push people to do things they haven't done. I want to get past the barrier of parental fear…I view my role as a goodwill ambassador to the place and to nature."

Jodi Hiland, Happy Trails

We spoke to a number of organizers of nature clubs for families. Some of them are trained naturalists; most are simply parents and outdoor enthusiasts whose appreciation for the natural world has proved contagious. Some live in big cities, some in suburbs or smaller towns. However they have chosen to cultivate a nature club for families, all have thoughtful words to impart about their experiences and encouragement for others.

"I have built free-play time into every event. I incorporate a nature walk of a certain length, but build in plenty of time for off-trail exploration. Examples of this have included playing in prairie grasses, climbing downed trees (my personal favorite), scrambling over boulders, and climbing small hills. The mixed ages play so beautifully together that I am always holding back tears." *— Jodi Hiland, Happy Trails*

"In our group, a lot of the best fun happens when it's very bad weather."

Kari Svenneby, Active Kids Club

"Our first experience with Happy Trails was on a moonlit walk at Dodge Nature Center. My three-year-old daughter arrived with her boots, a flashlight and a bit of apprehension. This was, after all, her first hike in the woods at night along with a bunch of kids she didn't know. A half hour later, she was exploring the woods in darkness...listening, observing, climbing, playing, and just having fun. The older kids helped the younger ones find bugs, and branches to swing from. And when one child found something new—mushrooms growing on a rotting tree, an animal hole, or a log to climb on—it got my daughter excited to explore and discover these things, too. A few weeks later, we visited relatives in rural Wisconsin and I witnessed what was a direct result of our experiences with Happy Trails. As night fell, my daughter grabbed her flashlight and her apprehensive five-year-old cousin and headed out beyond the 'safety' of the manicured lawn surrounding the house to the undiscovered woods at the edge of the property. I watched in amazement as she introduced her cousin to this 'undiscovered' natural world. Soon they were both laughing, climbing, exploring, and discovering. My daughter's excitement and confidence to explore nature and to introduce her cousin to the natural world just a few feet from her front door was a direct result of her experiences with Happy Trails. I have seen how children's awe and wonder of the natural world is contagious and appreciate how our experiences with Happy Trails has affected how my daughter and her cousin (and all the kids they will now introduce to the natural world) will explore, discover, and interact with the natural world around them."

Kevin, NE Minneapolis, participant in Happy Trails

"I can't believe this group has grown so much; I initially thought we'd have 10 or 15 moms and that would be it. We now have 120 adult members and over 300 kids. If I could schedule something every single day, I'm sure people would come."

Wendy Sparks, Inland Empire Kids Outdoors

"The family nature club meetings help us to get connected with the people of our community, but mostly it is time that we set aside to enjoy the benefits of nature together as a family. A simple idea, with definite results."

Chip and Ashley Donahue, KIVA

"Instead of a line of people following the naturalist, we move as a disorganized herd. Big kids charge off ahead carrying sticks. Four-year-olds skip. Parents hold their toddlers' hands. Babies ride in slings or strollers."

Laurel Dodge, Nature Strollers

"We have found that our club serves to increase families' time outside by increasing single parents' comfort level in taking their children out and by encouraging families to actually schedule outdoor time 'on their calendars."

— Chris Kiewra, Nature Explore Families' Club

"The investment in surrounding my children with nature goes beyond my own appreciation of its magnificence. When I am showing my children the footprints in the snow and asking them who they belong to, I am teaching them awareness. Being still enough to witness a butterfly unfurl its proboscis is a lesson in patience. Traversing streams takes courage and good planning. Offering seeds to the birds when everything is covered in ice is an act of kindness. Observing a wasp fill underground cells with food for its young exemplifies devotion. Digging the deepest hole requires strategy and strength, and when you fill it with water and then cover yourself with mud you learn that getting dirty can be fun. Knowing how to start fires without matches is security, as is being able to safely identify wild edibles. As a parent I am overwhelmed by the responsibility of preparing my children for life. What I have found is that when I am trying to impart my wisdom directly, my children resist or misunderstand or forget, but when I create an opportunity to allow them a personal experience, they gain more than I could have planned. Often it is not what I had intended, but exactly what they needed."

Lorin Keel,
participant in Nature Strollers

"Each person in our family has a special job on the day of the meeting. Our eight-year-old daughter will read a story to a group, our six-year-old leads the hike with me or my wife. Even our two-year-old serves a position as a greeter and harmonica player. He does this from the backpack or by his papa's side! The hosting of the event has become a family affair. We feel honored to work together to encourage families to get outside together."

Chip and Ashley Donahue, KIVA

"I want to invite families to make memories together, to feel peace together, and to know it doesn't have to cost you a dime."

Jodi Hiland, Happy Trails

"I think the most important thing we can do is build community where we live. Use your backyard, use your park. Everybody can make the community better. And it's fun!"

Kari Svenneby, Active Kids Club

"A lot of what I do is introducing the idea that it's OK to stay near where you live—that there's plenty to do right where you live."

Wendy Sparks,
Inland Empire Kids Outdoors

"Work with your neighbors, ask them if they've been outside this week, tell them about great places where you've gone, share information."

Kay Meyer, Heed Nature Club

PHOTO: GEORGE WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BALTIMORE MD

"On our walks, Kat and I model wildlife search techniques, conspicuously scanning the trai binoculars, turning over leaves and logs, cocking an ear to listen. After a few walks, we've r pick up that these behaviors are normal operating procedure for nature study. They lose their mimicking our strategies." — *Laurel Dodge, Nature Strollers*

"You can challenge the winter or inclement weather with a spirit chant or marching song like 'Bad, Better, Best . . . We'll never let it rest, 'til the bad is better and the better is best!' Consider it an Xbox detox and don't let the winter or weather wire you in!"

Brother Yusuf Burgess, Boys Outdoor Leadership Team

"Families bond together as they play, talk, and learn in nature. They experience nature walks as an opportunity to grow together. When they discover a new bug or wildflower, they experience a sense of wonder and make memories together on the trail."

Laurel Dodge, Nature Strollers

"You can live in a big city and still be part of nature."

Kari Svenneby, Active Kids Club

"I was taking my daughter to an early childhood development centre and read all the growth and behavioral charts and figured she was 'on track.' So, when I first learned about the importance of being outdoors my first reaction was to dismiss the idea. I mean, if it wasn't in all my 'good parenting' books and research, it couldn't possibly be that important. I joined Active Kids Club with my daughter because she had befriended Kari's daughter and I wanted to encourage the friendship. So we went outdoors; I mean, it wasn't bad for us, so why not? So we went outside in all kinds of weather once a week. We enjoyed the outdoors and I noticed on those days my daughter slept better and had a better appetite. I noticed I slept better as well and was in a better mood. Especially in the winter months, stressful things seemed less important after a good play outside. Being outside is now a priority for us. My daughter has gained confidence in herself and her abilities. I only wish we had started earlier and I hadn't taken so long to convert."

Debra Scott, longtime member of the Active Kids Club and organizer of the new "Beach Club" outdoor playgroup, Toronto, Canada

"You don't have to be a trained naturalist. We learn about things as we go."

Kat Diamond, Nature Strollers

"One of our leaders—who shall remain nameless—has been known to shout Holy crap! when spotting something good. Enthusiasm is infectious."

Laurel Dodge, Nature Strollers

RESOURCES

PHOTO: MARK J. HUMPERT

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There are a variety of terrific resources available to help inspire, inform and support Nature Clubs for Families with ideas, activities, tips and tools. Link here for access to a sample of such resources —including links to existing Nature Clubs for Families, programs, and products. This list is useful but is not intended to be comprehensive. Send us your suggestions for additions!

http://www.childrenandnature.org/natureclubs/resources

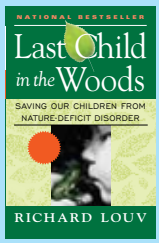
Use the Quick-Start Check Lists and Templates on the following pages to help you plan and organize your club. Visit the C&NN Web site to download examples of invitations, fliers, forms and other useful tools:

http://www.childrenandnature.org/natureclubs

"For eons, human beings spent most of their formative years in nature. But within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically.

Healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in everyone's self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demand it, but also because our mental, physical and spiritual health depend upon it."

Richard Louv
Author, Last Child in the Woods
Chairman, Children & Nature Network



For quantity book sales visit:
www.childrenandnature.org/books

Start planning today.
Take it one step at a time.
Join the Network.

DO IT YOURSELF! DO IT NOW!

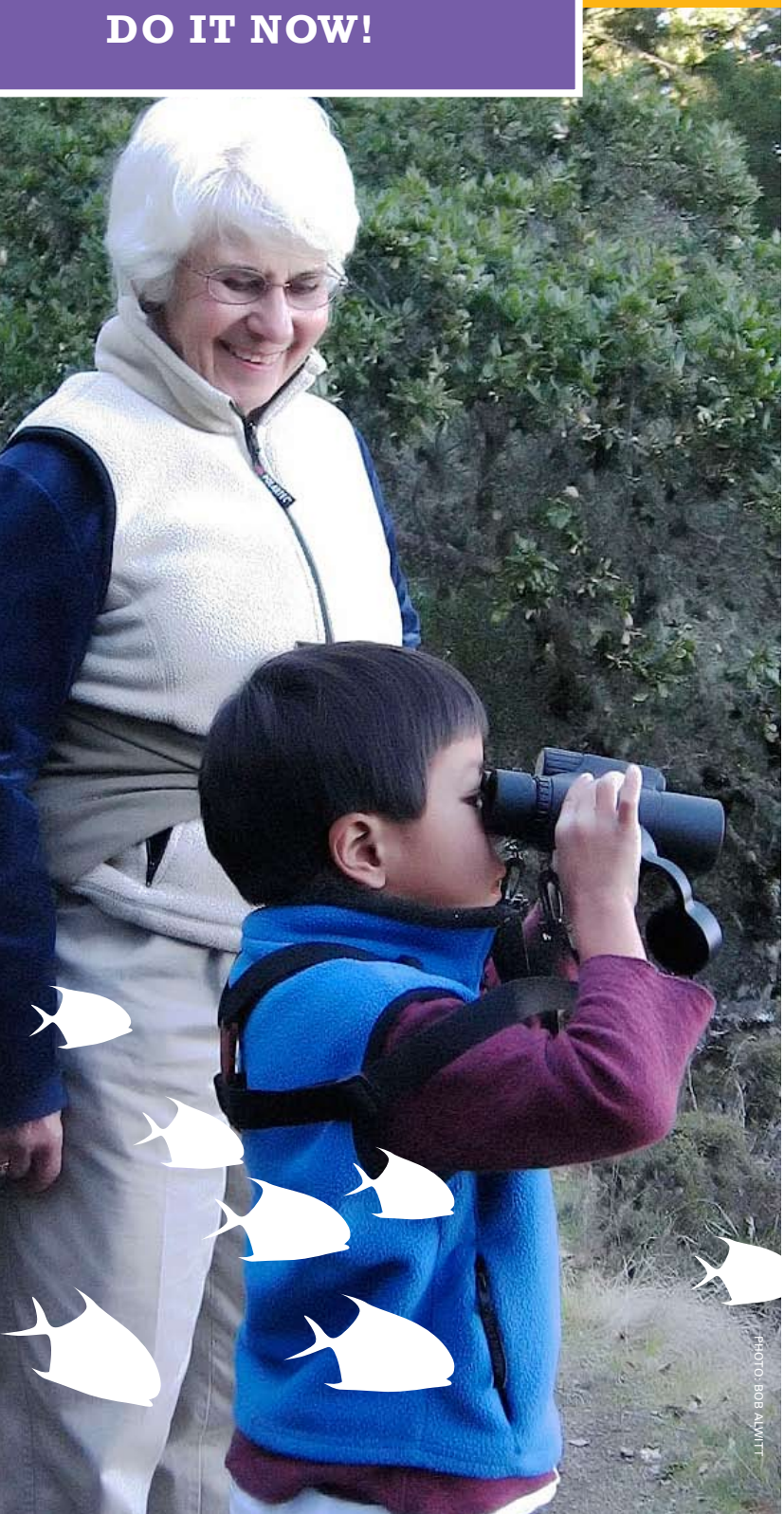


PHOTO: BOB ALWITT

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Getting your children and your community of friends and neighbors out into nature is a small but revolutionary step—one that can begin to reverse the current trend of disconnection from the natural world. We hope you have been inspired by the words of those who are already leading family nature clubs. And we hope that this *Children & Nature Network (C&NN) Tool Kit* has given you the basic information you need to get organized.

Once you've established your own nature club for families, we invite you to join the growing network of people who have added their clubs to the C&NN movement map. Register on C&NN to list your club and share information about it with all of our network members:
www.childrenandnature.org/natureclubs/map

You'll find many other valuable resources on the C&NN Web site:

- Use the C&NN movement map to find and connect to the grassroots campaign in your region:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/movement/

- Read the BLOG from chairman and author Richard Louv: **http://www.childrenandnature.org/blog/**

- Search the C&NN archive of news articles to help increase your knowledge and understanding of what's happening in other regions or in your own backyard:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/search/archive/

- Download C&NN's research publications and reports including C&NN research volumes one, two and three, Children and Nature 2008: A Report on the Movement to Reconnect Children to the Natural World, and C&NN Community Action Guide: Building the Children & Nature Movement from the Ground Up:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/research/ and
http://www.childrenandnature.org/publications/

- sign-up to receive C&NN's monthly newsletter:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/join/

1 Schedule and Calendar Decisions

Once inspired, set a schedule that works for (and is fun for) you and your family. Are you interested in one event or ongoing events each week, month or season? Plan each event and be aware of other local efforts. being organized can help you relax and enjoy this adventure. Have a time frame in mind. Is your event a half-day hike or two hours of exploration at dusk? decide what length of time and which date works best for each outing.

Here is one sample calendar of a year's events, from KIVA:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/forms/NCFF_calendar.pdf

determine your level of commitment and available time.

How Often:

- ◯ Once a week on _____
- ◯ The first _____ of each month
- ◯ The first _____ of each season
- ◯ Once a Year on _____

How Long:

- ◯ _____ hours, from _____ to _____
- ◯ Varies by location

Consider your local landscape and seasonal weather conditions. Find out what other outdoor or nature events take place in your region. Gather a list of local nature clubs and other resources and find out whether educators or other special guests might be available to speak to your club while you are outside. Create a list of possible locations. Consider places you've been and places you've always wanted to explore. Include your favorite activities to do in each particular park. Try to plan a full year of adventures.

Date:	Location:	Activity:	Time:

2 Destination Check List

PHOTO: SUSAN SHAFER, NYSDEC

- ◯ Travel time to location _____
- ◯ Convenient meeting location _____
- ◯ Adequate parking for a large group: Yes / No
- ◯ Family-friendly loop hike: Yes / No
- ◯ Other activity _____
- ◯ Seasonal features _____
- ◯ Educational opportunities _____
- ◯ Fees: Yes / No _____
- ◯ Water feature: lake, stream, pond or puddles
- ◯ Need permission for groups over 10: Yes / No
- ◯ Food, water, rest facilities: Yes / No _____

Plan "B" for inclement weather:

- ◯ Alternate meeting location _____
- ◯ Alternate activity _____
- ◯ Appropriate clothes for being outdoors

Safety issues for small children:

Other Considerations:

3 Opening Doors: Information Sheet for Site Managers

PHOTO: JON BEARD

You'll want to contact the park manager or agency that manages the locations you'll be visiting. Tell them your plans and request permission to hold your outing at their location. Provide information about the benefits they'll receive as a host site.

Here is a sample letter you can edit and use to contact the local person in charge of the outdoor area, such as your park manager. Mail, e-mail or phone the manager and use this document as a reference sheet.

Dear Park Manager:

I am writing to introduce myself and to tell you about our local Nature Club for Families.

I am a mother of two seven year olds. We have visited your park as a family many times and have participated in your excellent naturalist-led hikes. Over the past year I've become increasingly aware of the fact that our family is an exception. Children in our community are not going outside much anymore. Inspired by Richard Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods" and the Children & Nature Network's Nature Clubs for Families, I've decided to do something about this in our community.

In December of 2008, I started organizing a local club to explore the natural places in our region. I know that many of my neighbors and friends will be far more likely to get outside if I invite them to join us and others for an outside adventure. Nature Clubs for Families are a way for me to reach out to them and to others to help overcome the barriers that keep families and children inside and disconnected from nature.

We've selected your park as a perfect destination for our fall hike. I understand that we may be required to have a permit if our group exceeds 20 participants. Please let me know what steps I should take to secure permission for our group.

Group Name: _____
Contact: _____
Date of Visit: _____
Time of Visit: _____
Number of Participants: _____

It is my hope that this introduction to your park will lead to increased awareness of the rich and diverse natural resources that exist right here in our own backyard. To that end, I would welcome the opportunity to distribute information to participants about your programs and events.

For more information on Nature Clubs for Families, visit:
www.childrenandnature.org/familynatureclubs

Thank you,
Your Name

4 Invitations, Flyers and Notices

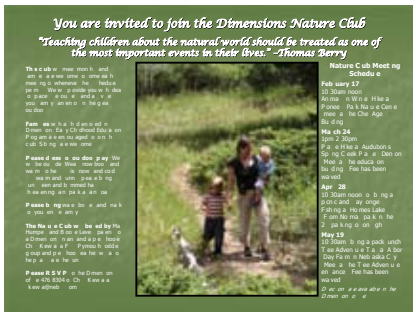
PHOTO: JON BEARD

Start with your existing networks of friends, family, neighbors and co-workers. Start small or invite them all. Print up a half-page flier and distribute it to the families you know with children. Place a short notice in your local newspaper. When you're ready to expand, go to parenting Web sites and blogs in your region and get on their calendars and in their newsletters. You can also contact a host of other groups, like your local REI or other outdoor recreation store, neighborhood association or homeowners' association, the local PTA, boys and girls clubs, 4-H clubs, and church groups. Post your flier at the grocery store, library, recreation center, or outdoor sports and camping supply stores. Reach out to special guests like government officials, school board members and nature program leaders. These guests might be willing to speak to your group and talk about what they are doing to help connect children and nature in your community.

To get the word out, you'll want to create a series of invitations, announcements and notices for each outing. Include your contact information so you can send interested individuals an invitation and a participant check list:

- ◯ E-mail invitation
- ◯ Half-page flier
- ◯ Short notice for newspapers and newsletters

Here are a few examples of invitations, fliers and announcements. For more ideas and further inspiration visit the Nature Clubs for Families Web sites that are listed in the resource section of this tool kit.
http://www.childrenandnature.org/natureclubs/resources



Click here to view full-size versions or go to:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/forms/NCFF_fliers.pdf

5 Safe, Fun and Hassle-Free

PHOTO: JON BEARD

Safety first! At the same time, recognize that appropriate risk-taking is good for children's healthy development. Be prepared. Bee-stings, poisonous plants, allergies don't have to hold you back. Make sure to bring a first-aid kit and let everyone know where it is. Remind participants that the natural world is full of surprises and paying attention is part of getting to know nature. Use the buddy system if it helps and be prepared to adjust activities for different age groups.

There are many good resources for safety tips in the outdoors. One good one is the Centers for Disease Control Web site. Review the tips in advance of your outing, and always bring along basic first-aid supplies. When you send out the invitations, make sure to mention any special supplies that you want people to bring beyond the basics of water, sunscreen, and hats. If your group will be near a creek, a change of clothes is a good idea. If you are hiking in the woods, you may need to encourage tick checks. These bits of information help parents be prepared. Prepared parents are happier parents.

Check List for Participants

Essentials:

- ◯ Water
- ◯ Layered clothes appropriate for weather
- ◯ Backpack
- ◯ Snacks or picnic lunch
- ◯ Sunscreen
- ◯ Hat

Safety

- ◯ Whistle
- ◯ Band-Aids
- ◯ A participant with CPR training
- ◯ First-aid kit

Extras:

- ◯ Change of clothes
- ◯ Pad and pencil
- ◯ Magnifying glass
- ◯ Bug box
- ◯ Butterfly nets
- ◯ Binoculars
- ◯ Field guides or ID cards
- ◯ Flashlight for night hikes

NOTE: The role of the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is to help build the children and nature movement, and to help parents and others learn about ways they can connect children to nature. Nature Clubs for Families is an approach we wish to encourage. However, such groups act independently and C&NN is not responsible for the actions of specific groups or individual members of such groups. At any time, when children are outside on their own, or with families and friends, everyone should take safety precautions and be mindful of risks.

6 Nature Clubs for Families Leader's Event Day Check List

PHOTO: BOB ALWITT

- ◯ Bring pens and pencils for sign-in sheet and forms
- ◯ Bring sign-in sheets and other participant forms
- ◯ Bring any special equipment needed for the day's activities (field guides, nets, hand lenses, etc.)
- ◯ Bring extra water and snacks "just in case"
- ◯ Bring a leader's first-aid kit

- ◯ Require that parents and guardians stay with their children.
- ◯ Be a team. A couple of people, working together, can make the event run more smoothly. Make it a family affair.
- ◯ Have fun!

Downloadable Forms:

Sign-In Sheet

If you plan to take pictures and use them on your Web site or in fliers or announcements, you'll need to get permission from participants who may appear in those photos. Here is a simple release form for them to sign.
Photo Release Form

Beyond bee-stings, scraped knees and poison ivy, accidents do happen. As the club leader you may want to ask participants to sign a liability waiver. This has become a common practice for outdoor events such as field trips, after-school programs and summer camps, especially those involving young children. Some organizations provide liability insurance to groups visiting their property or going on outings under their auspices. That kind of arrangement can be very helpful to your family nature club.
Liability Waiver Form

You may want to gather comments, suggestions and input after the event from participants to make your next event even more fun and hassle-free. Have them fill out a Comment and Suggestion Form at the end of the outing.
Comment and Suggestion Form

You can download all forms here:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/forms/NCFF_forms.doc

7 Nature Clubs for Families Web-Site Tips, Links and Resources

PHOTO: KATHLEEN DIAMOND

You'll want to spread the word about your upcoming events, share tips and stories about your adventures, and to keep everyone informed and inspired. The best way is to create a Web site or blog to share news, schedules, stories and ideas. Register on C&NN and post your club on the Movement Map:
http://www.childrenandnature.org/movement/submit/natureclub/

Don't be intimidated—the technology is not difficult and there are many examples from other club leaders to point you in the right direction.

You can start a blog for free by using Blogger or Wordpress. These work well if you don't want to pay a monthly hosting fee. Your blog will be hosted by these services, you'll see their logo at the top of your blog page, and the URL will be something like this:
http://naturestrollers.blogspot.com/
http://heednature.blogspot.com/
http://iekidsoutdoors.blogspot.com/

Another option is to create a Web site for your family nature club. Some clubs have both, a blog for updates and a Web site for information that changes infrequently. These clubs purchased their URL and pay a monthly hosting fee:
http://www.happytrailsclub.net
http://www.activekidsclub.com
http://www.naturestrollers.org

If you have your own URL, your blog address will look like this:
http://kidsadventuring.org/blog/

The Gig Harbor Nature Club used Meetup for their site. Meetup has built-in tools for scheduling events and notifying members. Meetup groups cost a little more than Web hosting (often about $12 per month) but they may offer the solution that's right for you.
http://www.meetup.com/FamilyNatureClubOfGigHarbor/

Many Web-hosting services offer Web site and blog templates as part of the hosting package. You'll want to do your own research to find the best hosting service for you. Here are a few links to get you started. The tools and services listed below have excellent documentation for first-time users.

Free blog hosting services

https://www.blogger.com
http://wordpress.com/
http://www.typepad.com/

Web site and blog hosting services

http://www.godaddy.com/
http://www.networksolutions.com
http://www.homestead.com

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SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

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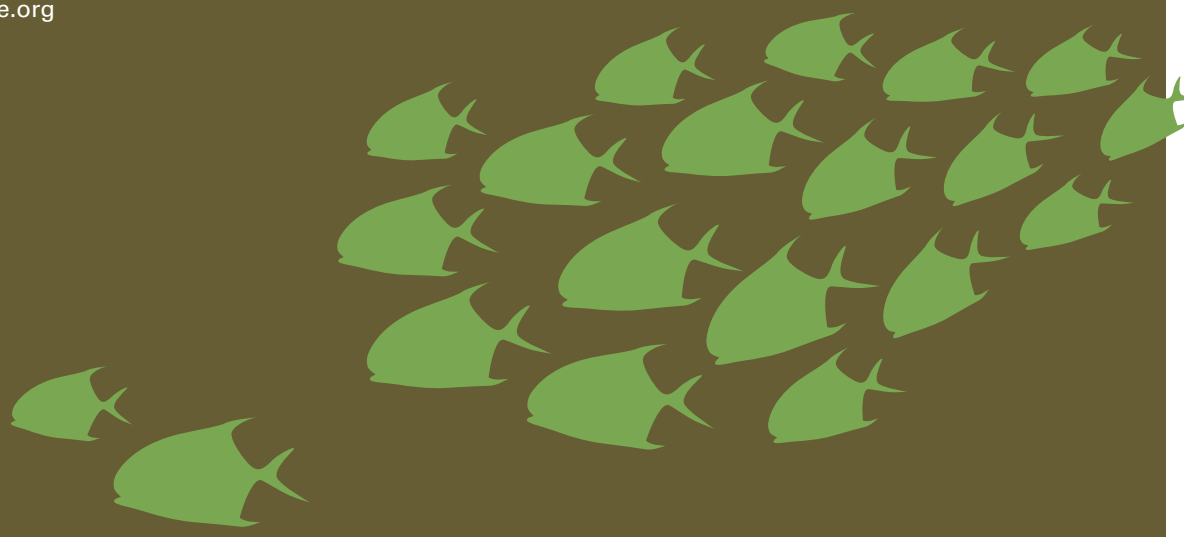
The mission of the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is to build a movement to reconnect children and nature. The primary goal of the C&NN is to achieve systemic change so every child, every year, every day, will have the opportunity to directly experience contact with nature. Research indicates that children who explore, learn, and play outside on a regular basis are healthier, happier, smarter, more coop erative, more creative and more fulfilled. Their well-being is enhanced while they develop a sense of place and bond with family, community and their environment. C&NN builds awareness, provides access to state-of-the art resources, supports the grassroots with tools and strategies, develops publications and educational materials, synthesizes the best available research, and encourages collaboration to heal the broken bond between children and nature. Since our founding in 2006, C&NN has fostered grassroots initiatives in more than 50 cities, states and nations. Our geographic reach is international, beginning predominantly in the United States and Canada. No other organization offers such a comprehensive, non-partisan, multi-sector approach to effecting social change to reconnect children and nature.



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