



EVERY CHILD



wild

Making nature
part of growing up

A special report by The Wildlife Trusts

for the past

200,000 years children have
grown up with a largely
outdoor life. We are hard-
wired to be part of the
natural world.

Children with
easy access to
nature are **more
able to cope** with
stressful
situations.¹

Being
outdoors in
nature
**encourages
exercise**

Wild
places teach
children about
taking risks and
making **rational
decisions**.¹

Playing and
learning in **wild
places** can help
children to develop
**meaningful
relationships** with
family and friends.¹

Wild places
can **improve our
mood**, and
increase our sense
of **self-worth**.²

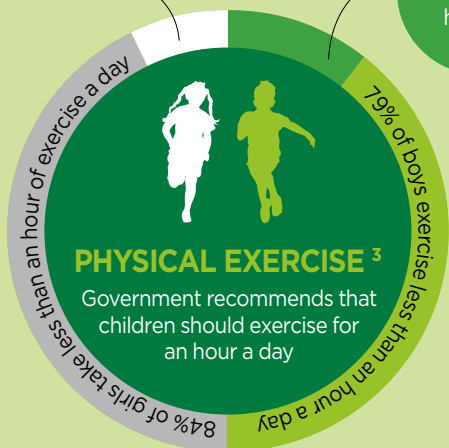
Children
are **happier,
healthier and more
creative** when
they're connected
to the natural
world.¹

over the last

40 years, children have become increasingly separated from nature. It's a natural disaster in the making.

16% of girls exercise an hour or more

21% of boys exercise an hour or more



ACCESS TO NATURE⁴

Fewer than 10% of children play in natural areas. When today's adults were children the figure was 40%

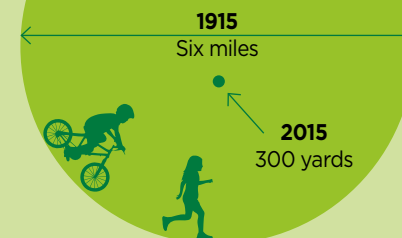


WALKING TO SCHOOL⁵

7 and 8 year-olds



CHILDREN'S ROAMING RANGE, 1915-2015⁶



Nature, we miss you

October 2015 YouGov poll of parents and children, commissioned by The Wildlife Trusts

37% OF CHILDREN

have not played outside by themselves in the past six months

60% have never seen a peacock butterfly

71% have never seen a lizard in the wild

Over 50% have never found frogspawn in a pond in the wild

37% have never seen a hedgehog

Only 50% of children say their school has an outdoor nature area

Less than 50% have been to a wild place with school to learn about wildlife in the past year

78% OF PARENTS are concerned that children don't spend enough time interacting with nature and wildlife

Only 10% think their child spends more time outside than they did

92% think access to nature and wildlife is important for children in general

Figures from YouGov Plc. Online survey, 16-20th Oct 2015. Sample size 1,082 children and 4,224 adults, of which 1,070 were parents of children aged 18 or less. Figures are weighted and representative of all GB children aged 8-15, and all GB adults aged 18+.



MENTAL HEALTH⁸

£713 million

Estimated Primary Care Trust expenditure on child and adolescent mental health disorders in 2011/12

No amount of
technology can
alter the fact that
we depend
entirely on nature
for our survival

a world
without nature

...is a world without joy and
discovery – and a threat to us all

Along with the overwhelming majority of parents,⁹ we believe that a childhood separated from nature is a diminished experience.

Not only is the unwild child deprived of the wonder of a butterfly's wing, or the smell of a forest after rain; there are also grave risks to physical and mental health. A study of 345,143 medical

■ **60%** of UK species
have declined over the last
50 years

■ **Around 80%** of the UK's
lowland heathland has
been lost since 1800

■ **Lowland meadow**
declined by **97%** between
the 1930s and 1984

From the 2013 State of Nature
report, which is the biggest
survey of UK wildlife ever
undertaken

records showed that living within a kilometre of a green space reduces the risk of 15 major illnesses, particularly anxiety and depression, and even more so for children.¹⁰

There is also compelling evidence that children who grow up with nature are more likely to protect it when they are older.¹¹

what we are
doing about it

More than 1500 staff and volunteers
inspiring and educating children

The Wildlife Trusts are one of the UK's leading providers of outdoor learning for children. Through schools we work with more than **300,000** children and thousands

more attend our regular nature clubs. But we could, and need, to do more.

"Contact with nature should not be the preserve of the privileged," says Sir David Attenborough. "It is

critical to children's personal development. We will be physically, mentally and spiritually impoverished if they are deprived of contact with the natural world."

There are
150,000
junior members of
The Wildlife
Trusts

Expert outdoor
educator:
Suffolk Wildlife
Trust's Sam Gay



young children

The Wildlife Trusts offer all kinds of activities for children aged 2-7

“Nature tots has provided both my daughters with so much. They have more confidence – I can now go on dog walks with them without any fuss at all. They’ve learned to chop, saw, drill, build and even light a fire. There is plenty of running around and being imaginative with play, like designing their own bridges over ditches and creating see-saws out of a log and plank. They’re learning to explore and gain independence, and also respecting the woodlands and understanding how to stay safe. It is by far the highlight of the week for them, meeting new friends and with lots of fun and laughter.”

**Georgie, mum to two daughters, aged two and four
Attending Nature Tots
Sussex Wildlife Trust**

4,400
schools and education
establishments
working with The
Wildlife Trusts

eight to twelve

178,000

people visit a Wildlife
Trust nature reserve as
part of a school,
college or society

We reach over 300,000 school children a year

"We put sand down across a gap in the fence and got some fox tracks. We saw birds, and I saw a squirrel. It ran up one tree and jumped right across to another one."

Bailey, Forest School pupil
Moston Fairway reserve
Lancashire Wildlife Trust

"I never knew puffins were so small. They came right up to us – they weren't scared of us at all."

Sam, on a school trip to Skomer Island
Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

young adults

Volunteering provides support, improves employability and teaches new skills

"I try and promote awareness of wildlife at school. We do things like make bird feeders or sell cakes to raise money for the Wildlife Trust. I also help out at the Wildlife Watch Group, working with young children in my area. We go to the woods or a park and show them the wildlife that is there.

"The general decline of many species is very worrying but it's also that there is a disconnect between people and nature."

Sorrel Lyall, 16
Volunteer,
Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

11,000
events a year are run by
The Wildlife Trusts,
many of them
family focused



and more

There are many ways we're helping to put the wild into childhood

Wildlife Watch

We have 150,000 members aged 5-16. They receive a welcome pack, regular magazines and emails, and can take part in awards, local groups and family-friendly events.

"I enjoy doing things like tool work, games we play, seeing my friends, exploring, awards, important people coming to see us, trips to new places and raising money for wildlife. I really like

when we get to chop branches. We thin out the trees so light can come through to the ground to help new flowers grow."
**Jake, 10
Newcastleton Watch
Scottish Borders**



Nature Clubs

We have 250+ groups that meet regularly, run by our brilliant volunteer leaders. Find your nearest one at wildlifetrusts.org/natureclubs

"I enjoy the Saturday Club because it is different every month. I like the activities and making things like mini bug hotel, music instruments made from natural things and the butterfly collage we made last spring. I like learning about nature and animals and our group activities are good fun."

**Luke, 8
Saturday Club
Belfast**



Wild Play



Wildplay gives young children the chance to play safely outdoors with time to explore, get messy and make discoveries.

"I have had a lot of great experiences and I enjoy the activities. I have made lots of new friends during the times I have been. My favourite was when we were at Weobley and everyone stuffed their faces with blackberries. It was so fun."

**Polly, 8
Herefordshire**



Pre school

We create opportunities for young children to explore the outdoors safely. Several Wildlife Trusts run groups such as 'Nature Tots' for under fives. At Brockholes the Lancashire Wildlife Trust runs weekly pram walks so parents can spend time in nature with very young children.

Find out about your nearest Wildlife Watch, Nature Club, WildPlay or Nature Tots at wildlifetrusts.org/schools or visit your Wildlife Trust's website.





Beach Schools



These take the outdoor learning ethos to the coast with exploring, den building, scavenger hunts and natural art.

"I think it's really good to encourage kids to get outdoors and see what's on their doorsteps. Kids need to be shown what's there, and then if they get to experience it properly, hopefully they'll be able to take care of it more as they get older."

**Ann, mum of two,
Milton, Portsmouth**

Many Wildlife Trusts offer Forest or Beach Schools. Find your local Trust via wildlifetrusts.org



Young People

Young adults need nature too, especially when they have faced hardship. Our work helps boost confidence and prospects.

Michael Gosling, 21 took part in the project and helped to reinforce his love for the natural world. While sitting in the sun on the bench he made Michael reflects: "Taking part in this project has opened up chances for me to go to new places I wouldn't normally have been able to get to living in the city centre."

**Michael, 21
Coventry**



Work in Schools



The Wildlife Trusts reach huge numbers of children via primary and secondary schools, in classrooms and in wild places.

"In most schools a visit to Skomer Island would just be a slide show. The pupils are very lucky to get the chance to have real life experiences like this."

**Mr Evans
Coastlands School**

*get
involved*

Find out what your local Trust offers for schools at wildlifetrusts.org/schools

At a Suffolk
Wildlife Trust
Forest School



Forest Schools

Our Forest Schools provide regular opportunities for children to achieve, and to develop confidence.

"It's great, Bailey has loved the activities. Now we know it's here and it's a nice quiet spot, we'll come down as a family so he can explore"

**Bailey's Dad
Broadhurst Primary
School, North
Manchester**



thanks

to the many people and organisations who support The Wildlife Trusts' work with children and young people.



Players help support a number of our Forest Schools around the UK. They have also helped the production of this report



We're part of The Wild Network - thousands of people and organisations dedicated to giving children #wildtime outdoors

tell us what you think

Your opinion counts. How can we
reconnect our kids with nature?



Children at Gamlingay in
Bedfordshire, where the
woods are being re-linked
by the local Wildlife Trust

The causes of our separation from the rest of the natural world are many and complex. But nevertheless future generations need to love wildlife – for its own sake and for theirs.

Turning this problem around will involve a lot of people working together, so we're keen to hear what actions you think we (and society) should be taking.

The Wildlife Trusts have been campaigning for nature and sustainability as a core principle of schooling, as part of our call for a Nature and Wellbeing Act.

But we need to hear your voice. What do you think should happen to reconnect children – and adults – with the plants, animals and habitats we live alongside?

Share your views with us

at [wildlifetrusts.org/
everychildwild](http://wildlifetrusts.org/everychildwild)

■ Take our online survey at
[wildlifetrusts.org/
everychildwild](http://wildlifetrusts.org/everychildwild)

■ Join in the conversation:
#EveryChildWild
#WildTime

■ Read how nature helps
children, share your own
stories: mywildlife.org.uk

REFERENCES

1, 12 Wells, 2000; Wells and Evans, 2003, in Bragg, et al., 2014. MacKerron et al., mappiness.org, 2013. 2 DCSF, 2010; Bird, 2007. 3 Department of Health, 2011. 3, 7 Health and social care information centre, 2013. In Bragg, et al. 4 Louv, 2005. 5 Moss, 2012. 6 Derbyshire, 2007. 8 Nice, 2013. 9 YouGov, 2015. 10 Bird, 2007. 11 Maas, 2009.

Pics: Matthew Roberts (1, 2, 7, 14), James Beck (8), John Ferguson (15, 18), David Shapiro (10, 15), Eleanor Church (12).

what you can do

NATURE MATTERS

A study of 20,000 people showed they felt happier in green areas than in urban ones¹²

Help bring nature back to childhood

■ Join in the conversation

Share your ideas for how we can create future generations that love wildlife.

#everychildwild
[wildlifetrusts.org/
everychildwild](http://wildlifetrusts.org/everychildwild)

■ Support your Wildlife

Trust's work Becoming a member helps to support

our work with schools and children in your local area:
wildlifetrusts.org/joinus

■ Find your local children's nature club

Our long established Wildlife Watch network has more than 250 local groups

[wildlifetrusts.org/
natureclubs](http://wildlifetrusts.org/natureclubs)

■ Take a child you care for somewhere wild to

Play and explore – try one of our family-friendly nature reserves:
[wildlifetrusts.org/
familyfun](http://wildlifetrusts.org/familyfun)

Taking the classroom
outside can help
children learn in
different ways



*we believe
every child
has the right to:*

Explore the natural world
near where they live

Develop a personal connection with
nature from an early age

Live within safe walking distance
of a local green space

Learn about our total reliance
on nature at school.

