

greenthumbsup

By Brittney Henderson



Create a Field Guide to Your Backyard

Grab a notebook and a nature guide, and head into your backyard for a fun activity where research, observation, writing and drawing skills collide. You and your children can tune into the world around you by creating a field guide that documents nature. Begin by observing a species in its natural environment. Note in your field guide its characteristics and behavior, the time and date you saw it, and then add a photo or a sketch for added detail. Don't just stop in your own backyard; expand your field guide with flora and fauna from the park or at Grandma's house.

Paper or Plastic?

Do you know what your child's toys are made of? Although you may have checked to make sure that your kid's toys possess no choking hazards, chances are you were unaware that the plastic in many toys contains harmful toxins. Production of these toys puts a huge strain on our environment and natural resources. You can lessen your contribution to the manufacturing cycle by finding alternative methods of play. Visit www.funplaydates.com for 10 tips that will surely bolster your child's creativity and connection with nature.

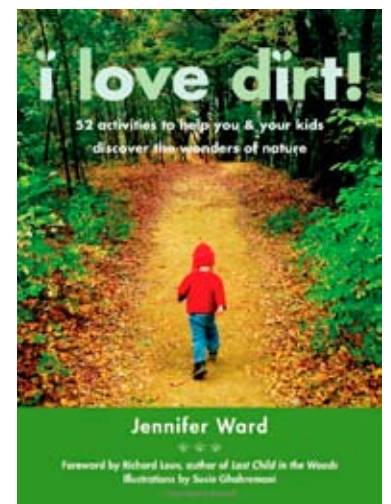


Your Nature Quest—Should You Choose to Accept It

You and your children can do your part to help monitor wildlife. Help Wildlife Watch track the health and behavior of flora and fauna by observing species near where you live. Nature QuestSM Wildlife Watch is a national, nature-watching program created for people of all ages. Just record your observations and submit them for review to the National Wildlife Federation website (<http://www.nwf.org/wildlifewatch/>). You and your children will gain firsthand experience with plants and animals in their natural environments.

I Love Dirt! Do You?

For fun and imaginative outdoor activities you and your 4- to 9-year-old will enjoy, check out *I Love Dirt!* by Jennifer Ward. This compact and portable size guide is perfect to pack with you on your trip outdoors. Filled with 52 activities, you and your kids will find yourself discovering the wonders of nature together. Best of all — each tip has a question and answer section to satisfy the questions of young curious minds.



Enjoy the Great Outdoors Right Out Back

The wildest spot in town may be closer than you think; it's in your backyard. On June 28, you can join families across the nation in the Great American Backyard Campout, sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation. Trade your big screen TV for a view of a starry sky and ditch those iPods

in exchange for the sounds of nocturnal wildlife. Research shows that kids now spend an average

Great American Backyard Campout!

of 44 hours per week plugged into electronic media. Check out www.backyardcampout.org for ideas that break free from using everyday technology, including wildlife guides, activities, recipes and more. Then, unplug yourself from your computer screen and plug yourself into nature!