

Head outdoors and find health in NATURE!

Kristine Hayward, in motion Coordinator

Interacting with nature, being physically active and improving our health – Winnipeg has lots to offer. Summers are a great time to head outside and explore all the nature-rich outdoor opportunities in our city!

Evidence suggests that people who spend more time outdoors and are connected to nature tend to be healthier and better able to handle all of life's ups and downs. This is especially true for children. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, understands the significance of this issue and has coined the phrase "Nature Deficit Disorder" as a way to bring attention to the lack of connection between children and nature. Louv points out that the lack of time spent in nature by many children may result in a number of health and learning issues. The Manitoba Nature Action Collaborative for Children, a group of early childhood education professionals, naturalists, landscape architects, and parents, also believe strongly in the connection of children and nature. They have adopted the motto "Leave no child inside" to raise awareness and encourage more outdoor play for children.

The Outside Advantage

Give your children the "outside advantage" and the opportunities to improve their physical, mental, emotional and social development.

- Nature provides a healing environment to explore and play outdoors.
- Nature can enhance children's emotional and social development. Regular opportunities for unstructured play results in a greater chance of getting along with others and being happier.
- Nature can help children be more focused. This means less distraction, less interrupting, better listening and increased cognitive ability. Children with attention-deficit disorder show great improvements after spending time outdoors.
- Nature can reduce obesity in children and improve their fitness levels.
- Nature can be a stress reducer. The more natural the surroundings, the better children feel.

Source: adapted from the Manitoba Nature Action Collaborative for Children

Fortunately, there are many ways to reconnect with nature and make the most of summer in Winnipeg.

Build your Nature Backpack

Create a backpack to take with you on your family outings and you will be ready to explore what Mother Nature has to offer!

Here are a few ideas to include in your backpack:

- Magnifying glass
- Bug box
- Small pail and net
- Binoculars
- Printout of plants and animals to look for
- A recycled container with a few small holes poked in the lid
- Water
- Compass
- Pencil crayons and paper for drawing

Tailor your backpack to your outing – bird watching, flower/plant exploration, rock collecting or bug catching!



Looking for information and ideas on connecting your children to nature – visit:
[Children and Nature Network - childrenandnature.org](http://childrenandnature.org) • [Nature Action Collaborative for Children - worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc](http://worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc)

Parks, Playgrounds and Natural Spaces



Winnipeg has many hidden and well known parks, playgrounds and natural spaces to explore and connect with plants and animals.

Assiniboine Park – is home to forested areas, the duck pond, conservatory and zoo.

Living Prairie Museum – located in St. James, this 30 acres of tall prairie grass preserve was set aside in 1968 and is now home to over 160 species of prairie plants and a great array of prairie wildlife. Stop by the Museum Interpretive Centre, pick up a self-guided trail booklet and sign out a "naturalist backpack".

Fort Whyte Alive – this 600 acres of prairie, lakes, forest and wetlands habitat is a great place to view bison, deer, waterfowl and many song birds.

Ron Blatz, Director of the Discovery Children's Centre in St. James, shared a few favourite spots that he and his staff like to visit with their children.

Kings Park – located south of the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry campus. This is especially a great place to visit during a wet spring when the frogs are coming alive.

Bruce Park – located in St. James, a trip to the park during the spring and summer months is a "must" to observe the seasonal changes in water flow of Truro creek.

Westview Park – near Polo Park, is a perfect place to observe Richardson ground squirrels.

This summer unplug your children from the computer and reconnect them to nature.

Winnipeg Trails

Our city is rich with trail infrastructure. There are many great trails that wind their way along creeks and rivers, through urban forests and along greenways. Here are a few great trails to try out this summer:

Transcona Trail – The Transcona Trail connects the Transcona Community Bioreserve to the trails in the Rotary Tall Grass Prairie Nature Park.


Bishop Grandin Greenway Trail – A walk, run or cycle along this trail will take you to Winnipeg's first public fruit orchard with a wonderful variety of fruit trees and shrubs including Norland apples and Naking cherries. Further down the trail you will also find the Bishop Grandin Greenway Eco-Education Site, which is a great place to explore nature in an urban setting.

Preston Trail – Named after the Preston family that once resided where Assiniboine Forest is now, the trail has been designed to minimize ecological impacts, while providing an interesting and scenic route through this natural heritage area.

Visit WinnipegTrails.ca for maps and information on the trails in Winnipeg.

Invite nature into your backyard



- Plant a new tree or more shrubs.
 - Plant a vegetable garden.
 - Put out bird feeders.
 - Plant flowers that attract birds or butterflies.
 - Add a fallen log, rocks and stones.
 - Include a bat box, nest or roosting box.
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"When one tugs on a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the universe."

John Muir



Physical Activity. It's Good for Your Health. Do it for Life!

For more ideas on how you and your family can get "in motion" visit www.winnipeginmotion.ca or call 940.3648

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