

Summer 2010

Nature Rocks SUMMER ACTIVITY GUIDE

Your planning guide 
For summertime family fun



This summer, enjoy the full benefits of nature – especially health and more smiles! Playing and exploring in nature helps kids and their families be happier and smarter, it's also fantastic for health overall, particularly physical fitness!

You don't have to go on a two week-long summer trip to keep your clan healthy and entertained. It's all about creativity, a little planning, and a lot of fun! Here's how.

Nature Rocks makes it easy!

With this guide you can find and plan tons of fun, inexpensive, and healthy family activities for the summer days that are upon us. On **NatureRocks.org** you'll find useful tools, tips, and information to help you get into nature without getting over your head. Create unforgettable summertime memories that your family can enjoy every year!

Using our guide is simple. You can shut down your computer, grab the sunscreen, water and snacks, and get out the door in as little as 5 minutes.

Your Summertime family fun awaits! 



Brought to you by REI, The Nature Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, American Heart Association, American Camp Association, ecoAmerica, and Children & Nature Network

WHY

1. Summer is time to explore fun and easy activities to bring health to families.
2. Warmer weather provides great opportunities to enjoy family time in nature.
3. Getting into nature will make you and yours happier, healthier, and smarter!

HOW

1. With this guide, go to **NatureRocks.org** to find activities, destinations, and invite friends.
2. Choose the summer time activity that the whole family will enjoy.
3. Have fun! Share pictures and blog about your adventures at the **Nature Rocks Facebook or Twitter** pages (addresses on last page).

NatureRocks.org

GO!

SUMMER ACTIVITY GUIDE

PLANNING YOUR ADVENTURES

Select your Activities

We've got bushels of them. Enter the age(s) of your kid(s), your preferred location, and how much time you have in the **Activity Finder** on **NatureRocks.org** and we'll give you plenty of rockin' ideas to choose from. Or, you can check out our **healthy summer ideas on the next pages!**

Find Nature

Nature is closer than you think! All you have to do is enter your ZIP code or city and state in the **Find Nature** tool on **NatureRocks.org** then press Go! and we'll show you great places to get your nature on, plus other information such as tour guide services and where you can get gear if you need it.

Invite Others

Turn your summer outings into nature parties. Invite other families using the **Nature Rocks invitation**, by connecting on the **Nature Rocks Facebook page**, or by creating your own **Nature Rocks Flock!** Check out the **Connect** page on **NatureRocks.org** to find out how.


COMING SOON!

And, coming soon to NatureRocks.org are **EVENTS!** Not only will you be able to **search for great nature events in your neighborhood**, you'll also be able to **add your own events** for others to join!



KEY TO FINDING YOUR PERFECT SUMMER ACTIVITY

No matter where you live or how fit you are, you can find your perfect healthy summer activity. On the next few pages, you will see the following critters that help you to determine whether the activity is right for a range of ability levels from active to breaking a sweat!

| Active | Very Active | Breaking a Sweat! |
|---|---|--|
|  |  |  |



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SUMMER ACTIVITY GUIDE

30-Minute Fun

You don't have to have a whole week – or even a whole weekend to get your families outside and create your own unforgettable summertime fun. Here are some GREAT ways to get outside when you're strapped for time!

Cheerio Picnic

Start the day off right by having a breakfast picnic! Spread a blanket on the grass in your yard or a nearby park, then plunk down for a feast of cereals, juice, toast, fruit, and other healthy treats. While you're at it, check out the clouds, the ants, and the birds.

Tips

1. Try some experiments to see which foods attract ants. Drop a few pieces of fruit on the ground. How long does it take for an ant to find it?
2. Be breakfast bird biologists. As you eat, talk about every activity you see a bird doing, such as flying, walking, preening, or singing.

Sprinkles on Top

Take the kids outside and let them help you water the plants. Have them sprinkle each other, too! It's a perfect way to cool off on a hot day.

Tips

1. Encourage your kids to notice signs (in the soil, on their leaves) that the plants could use more water? What are some clues that they've had enough water for the night?
2. In the summer, it's best to water very early in the morning, or in the early evening after the sun has started to go down. Otherwise, you're likely to lose most of the water to the hot sun!

Starry Night

Choose a warm summer night to escape the house and prowl outdoors. Look at the moon and stars. See if you can spot bats, fireflies, and owls.

Tips

1. Why go inside just because it's bedtime? If the night is clear, haul out some mats and sleeping bags and sleep under the stars!

Happy Feet

Give your toddlers a chance to spread their toes in all sorts of natural surfaces. Find some cool sand, soft grass, fresh water, or even sloppy mud and let those bare feet plunge right in!



American Heart Association 
Learn and Live®

on:

Preparing for Summer Snack Attacks

*If you plan ahead and make time for grocery shopping, you can easily pack some **simple and tasty meals and snacks** to take along on an outdoor excursion with family.*

Here are some healthy snacks that are good for you and the kids (and tasty too)!

- Box of raisins
- Handful of nuts
- Fruits such as bananas, grapes, apples
- Granola bars
- Carrot sticks
- Light yogurt
- Wheat crackers
- Dried fruit
- Animal crackers
- Fig bars

Here are some quick options if you're near a kitchen:

- Instant oatmeal
- Cereal and milk
- Frozen fruit bars
- Pita (or vegetables) with hummus
- Apple sauce
- Tomato/vegetable/bean soup
- Chocolate milk (low fat)
- Baked tortilla chips with salsa
- Low fat cottage cheese with fruit

Get more healthy tips at
<http://www.startwalkingnow.org>



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1-Hour Summer Fun

It's amazing what you can do in an hour. Help make your kids happier, healthier and smarter with these creative activities!



Joy to the Fishes

Head to your nearest stream, river, or lake, and try your hand at fishing! Your kids will love the excitement of baiting a hook and seeing who comes by for a nibble...even if they don't catch a thing!

Tips

1. Be sure to get a fishing license and follow local rules about catch limits, etc.
2. Not so sure you know enough about fishing to help your child? Check out The US Fish and Wildlife's tips on the right!



Social Butterflies

Invite some friends to join you on a summer butterfly hunt. Butterflies tend to be especially active throughout the morning and early afternoon. Visit some varied places---forests, fields, gardens, mud puddles, and other places butterflies may gather!

Tips

1. Bring along binoculars or butterfly nets to help see butterflies close up.
2. Try making sketches of all the butterflies you see.



Little Miss or Mister Sunshine

Have your kids capture the joy or beauty of nature through a photograph, video, sketch, poem, or collection of natural items. Then use their creations to brighten the day of someone who can't get outdoors much—a hospital patient, a nursing home resident, or even just a busy office worker!

Tips

1. You can find shadow boxes at local crafts stores and assemble a combination of nature sketches and objects inside.
2. A vase of fresh flowers is a great way to brighten the day of someone stuck indoors.



on:

Fishing is Fun For Everyone!

Fishing is fun—just ask any of the 50 million children and adults in America who now enjoy the sport!

Better yet, try it yourself—you can quickly learn to fish at any age.

Fishing is not just about fish—during a fishing trip, families and friends relax together as they enjoy being outdoors and learning new skills.

Here are some tips on selecting the right location:

- Look for a weedy or rocky area where the water is several feet deep. Avoid shallow water that doesn't offer fish a hiding place.
- Stay quiet and avoid disturbing the water or you may scare fish away.
- If you have no action after 15 minutes, move to another likely spot and try again.
- For many types of fish, the best time to fish is either early in the morning or late afternoon, when they are the hungriest!

*For more tips on fishing, like how to bait a hook, download a **free copy of Fishing is Fun for Everyone** at*

http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/fish_fun.pdf



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Half- or Whole-Day Healthy Summer Fun

The more time you spend outdoors with your kids, the healthier they will be! Be grateful for those weekends when you can spend a half or a whole day outdoors! Here are some ways to make the most of them.



Pie Party

Go berry picking! Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries—filling a bucket of any of these fruits is a great way to connect with nature on a summer day. When you get home, make a couple of berry pies and invite friends and neighbors to enjoy the bounty.

Tips

1. Bring along a storybook, such as *Blueberries for Sal* or *Jamberry* to read in the shade while you take a snack break.
2. Encourage your kids to think about—and look for signs of—other creatures that may love summer berries, too.



Fine and Sandy

Take a walk along the beach collecting shells and a small bucket of sand. Then use your supplies to make a sand painting of a beautiful summer scene. Hang the pictures someplace where they'll keep you smiling even on the gloomiest winter day!

Tips

1. You'll need a shoe box top, black construction paper, scissors, glue, sand, and shells.
2. Cut out the paper to fit it in the box top. Draw your landscape (grass, pond, beach, ocean, mountains) with glue. Then sprinkle sand on top. The sand will stick to the glue. Once the glue has dried, shake off any excess sand.
3. Now glue on shells to make flowers, animals, people, and other decorations.



Merrily Merrily Merrily

Have you ever canoed down a local river? A river ride can be a thrilling nature adventure and a great way to see your home from a new angle. Sing silly songs as you paddle along. Or try to be silent for long stretches and see what animals you spy along the shore.

Tips

1. Many communities have local outfitters who can equip you with a canoe, paddles, and life jackets, and who can even drive you upstream from your car so you can paddle right back to where you started.
2. Don't forget to bring water, snacks, and plenty of sunscreen!
3. Keep your eyes out for turtles on logs, wading birds in the tall grasses, and damselflies cruising above the water.



tips on:

Fabulous photography

Ever wonder how photographers get those great nature shots? Or what photographic masters see in their favorite images?

Now you can find out with Mark Godfrey Selects, an audio slideshow from The Nature Conservancy's award-winning director of photography that guides you through some of the most stunning images in the Conservancy's archive...and the stories behind the pictures.

Join Mark and learn more about the craft and technique that go into great nature photography, and become a better photographer yourself!

A few starter tips:

- Capture broad shots while focusing on the most interesting elements up-close
- Adapt to your surroundings – lighting and weather can change
- For the best possible clarity, get as close as possible to the object you are photographing

Learn more tips at:

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/photo/mgs.html>



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SUMMER GAME – Geocaching with Kids!



Brought to you by REI!

If you love the outdoors, it is only natural to teach your children about its wonders. Geocaching offers you a great way to do just that. It's a high-tech treasure hunt that can help engage your kids in the natural world.



What is Geocaching?

Geocaching uses handheld GPS units to find hidden "caches" in your neighborhood or out on the trails. These are containers of all sizes that may be camouflaged to blend into their surroundings. Inside there will be a logbook to sign, with larger caches also containing an assortment of inexpensive trinkets for trade.

How Do I Start Geocaching?

Start by looking up caches in your area. Geocaching.com lists more than 1 million active caches around the world, so chances are excellent there will be several near you. Check the difficulty and terrain ratings on the web page before you go. A "1 star" difficulty and terrain rating are just about right for a young child. If your child is looking forward to finding and exchanging "treasure," be sure to select a cache that is "regular" size or larger.

What Do I Bring Geocaching?

Treat a geocaching-hunt as you would any hike by dressing your kids comfortably for the outdoors and carrying essential supplies such as water and snacks.

To find a cache, you will need to enter its coordinates in a handheld GPS receiver. A GPS unit can cost hundreds of dollars, but there are also geocaching-specific units available for around \$70. Pick one that is simple to use so the kids can lead the way.

Caches often contain small trade items or trinkets. The rule of geocaching is that if you take something from the cache, you must replace it with something of equal or greater value. So, have the kids pack an assortment of trinkets for trading. For poking into dark cache-hiding places, bring a trekking pole or hiking stick and a flashlight. Lastly, you will want to sign the logbook in the cache to prove you found it, so don't forget to bring a pen.



Once You Find a Cache

You found it! Congratulations! Now what? Take something from the cache. Leave something in the cache. Write about it in the logbook.

Make sure to reseal the cache carefully and place it back exactly where you found it. Hide it as well as you found it. Once you get home, go to geocaching.com and write a log to let the cache "owner" know you found it. Let them know the condition of the cache, your experiences on the trail and any trades you made. This can be a fun creative-writing experience for the kids.

Now off to the next cache... and the next one... and the next one. Hmm, kind of addicting, isn't it? After finding a variety of geocaches in your area, you may be ready to hide one of your own!

Get the full REI Expert Advice on Geocaching at <http://www.rei.com/expertadvice/articles/geocaching+kids.html>



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NATURE ROCKS SAFETY TIPS

- Wear light-weight, breathable clothes - these active kids will be getting warm.
- Keep those bottles and children full of water.
- Take along snacks for those always-hungry nature rockers.
- Summon your super-parent power - bring along maps, a compass, GPS, sunscreen, flashlight, first aid kit, and other safety items. Minimize your load to maximize the fun.

While it's important to learn to maximize the health benefits of nature experiences, it's also important to minimize health risks. Inform yourself of and alert children to any unsafe areas or conditions, presented by nature or humans, that may be present in the areas you intend to visit. You should also be aware of your party's physical limitations. Consult your doctor and online sources, including a good Web site on healthful camping and hiking offered by the Centers for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/OutdoorSafety/>.

NATURE ROCKS GEAR FOR ROCKIN' NATURE IN STYLE

T-Shirts for everybody! Hats, water bottles, journals, and more!

At Zazzle.com/NatureRocks



At CafePress.com/NatureRocksShop



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*Happier
Healthier
Smarter*

Nature Rocks Resources



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- Flickr: flickr.com/nature_rocks
- Get Nature Rocks T-shirts: zazzle.com/naturerocks
- Get stickers, onesies, journals, Sigg bottles, Flip cameras, hats, and bags: cafepress.com/naturerocksshop
- Get the book that re-started nature fun, “Last Child in the Woods, Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder” at richardlouv.com

NATURE ROCKS PARTNERS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Nature Rocks thanks all of our fabulous partners and ambassadors for contributing to this guide and for helping us to get families outside to rock nature!

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