

Get 'Em Outdoors!

BY JOHN NISBET

In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.

— John Muir

Since the beginning, Scouting has always emphasized the importance of getting youth outdoors and connected with nature. Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods - Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008), shows a very good understanding of this aspect of youth development.

If you want to know more about why it is important to get youth outside; if you want more than just your instinct to guide you in deciding what priority to give outdoor activities in your program; if you want more ammunition to help convince parents, educators, community leaders or even other Scouters of the importance in getting youth outside and connecting with nature; Louv's book will prove very helpful. With reference to American and European studies and trends, Louv identifies some of the causes

and extent of disconnection between today's youth and nature.

Although *Nature Deficit Disorder* is not a formal "condition" that any psychiatrist can diagnose, many of us know that youth in our society are suffering. Despite the wealth of anecdotal evidence (and most Scouters are rich sources of wonderful stories about the benefits of outdoor activities for youth), no formal scientific evidence exists to justify the hypothesis that deprivation of nature for children has led to the rise in A.D.H.D., diabetes, obesity, behaviour problems, inability to concentrate in school, stress related problems, etc.

Louv does point however, to good quantified evidence that children today spend much less time outdoors than most of us adults did as kids. "Never before in history have children been so plugged-in — and so out of touch with the natural world".

Louv explores some of the possible reasons for this, as well as offering 100 possible actions to take to increase children's contact with nature. One of my favourites, # 34, is "get involved with Scouting or similar programs..."!

Nature Time is Health Time

The idea that *NATURE TIME IS NOT SIMPLY LEISURE TIME* may be the single most important thought to take from the book. We parents often put nature time in a "leisure column". If we put nature time in a "health column", will we be more likely to help our daughters and sons do more camping, hiking, fishing, gardening, and just simple playing, in nature? Too often, do we consider time outdoors as a "frill" or "special treat", not seeing and treating it as the essential component of overall health that it is? We need to convince/remind ourselves, that time outdoors, especially for our youth, is vitally important!

Louv encourages us to, "Find a ravine, woods, a windbreak, row of trees, a swamp, a pond, a vacant and overgrown lot — and **go there regularly**." The health of our children depends on it!

Does the last statement seem overly dramatic, just to try and get you to take the kids for a walk in the woods? Considering Louv's excellent book, and all the fun I've seen kids have in nature, I don't think so. Scouting can make a difference! X
— Scouter John Nisbet, Halifax, Nova Scotia.



Notice of Annual Meeting Scouts Canada

Saturday,
November 22, 2008
4:45 p.m.

The Delta Meadowvale
Resort and
Conference Centre
6750 Mississauga Road
Mississauga, Ontario

Purpose:

- 1) Receipt and consideration of reports including the Corporation's annual report.
- 2) Receipt and consideration of the financial statement for the National operation and the auditor's report thereon for the preceding year.
- 3) Election of Honorary Officers and Honorary Members.
- 4) Recommendation to the Chief Scout of an individual to fill the position of Chief Commissioner.
- 5) Appointment of Officers and election of Members of the Board (except for the Executive Commissioner & Chief Executive Officer, who is appointed by the Board, and the Chief Commissioner, who is appointed by the Chief Scout).
- 6) Appointment of an auditor.
- 7) Consideration of any matter placed before it by the Chief Commissioner on behalf of the Board.
- 8) Selection of three (3) Voting Members to serve on the Nominating Committee for the ensuing year.
- 9) Consideration of any resolution(s) introduced by the Voting Members in accordance with Article III i., and the recommendation(s) of the Board relating thereto.
- 10) Such other business as may come before the meeting and which the Members under applicable law are authorized to transact.

More About the Book

Now available in Scout Shops across Canada, see page 2 of this issue of *Scouting Life* for more information.

For an earlier review of the first edition of *Last Child in the Woods - Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005, see: <http://www.halifaxscouts.ca/roundup/spring07.pdf> page 5.

For another point of view on this great book, written by Jacob Rondenburg for *Peterborough Kids*, go to Scouts Canada's web site, www.scouts.ca, For Scouters, Outdoors.

