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## A Natural Sense of Wonder: Connecting Kids with Nature through the Seasons

**Rick Van Noy**
University of Georgia Press (June 2008)
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It's an accepted lament among parents and educators that children spend much less time outside than they used to. Instead of roaming the suburbs on bikes, exploring vacant lots, and getting very dirty by the time their parents call them in for dinner, children spend most of their time indoors, often in front of a screen.

Rick Van Noy, an associate professor at Radford University and author of *Surveying the Interior*, has answers for parents looking for ways to reverse this inward migration. In his book, *A Natural Sense of Wonder*, Van Noy describes his methods for getting his own two kids out of the house and into nature. His job, as he sees it, is not to diagnose or condemn the growing indoor trend, but to show his readers an alternative. How does a parent tempt their children out the door when so many beeps, whistles, and flashing lights beckon from within? First, adults must connect with their own sense of wonder. Van Noy has observed that children are more likely to splash in a creek, climb a tree, hike up a mountain, or dissect a fish if a grownup makes the first poke with an equal level of excitement.

Van Noy describes nighttime treks to a spot in town where vultures gather. He builds a tree house, takes his son on a five day fishing trip, spends a vacation discovering tidal pools along the Maine coast, and eats the dandelions and yucca that grow in his lawn. His children follow suit and often surpass him in the joy of catching salamanders, swimming in wild pools, and walking local creeks.

One benefit of such a close relationship with the natural world is that Van Noy's children notice the effects of global warming right in their own backyard. When they go looking for a skating pond, they can't find any ice, though old timers in their neighborhood well remember skating on the river.

Van Noy manages to avoid sounding pedantic when writing about his family's wholesome lifestyle. Instead, his prose is accessible and poetic, and his narrative is populated with references to Robert Frost, Rachel Carson, Shel Silverstein, and other writers and scientists. A thin book, *A Natural Sense of Wonder* is an easy read with a lasting message that may inspire even the most ardent video-gamers to take a walk in the woods.
(April 14, 2008)

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