

Spending time in nature can improve children's confidence

11 November 2019, by Rowan Walker



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Four out of five children say they feel more confident in themselves after spending time participating in outdoor activities, according to new UCL research.

The study, commissioned by The Wildlife Trusts, examined 451 [children](#) across 12 areas of England who took part in outdoor activities such as identifying plants and trees. The participants completed surveys before and after the activities.

The research found that following the [outdoor activities](#), 79% of the participants found that the experience could help their schoolwork. The majority of children also believe that it could help their relationships in class, with 81% agreeing that they had better relationships with their teachers and 79% reporting better relationships with their classmates.

After their activities, 84% of children said that they were capable of doing new things when they tried.

The [quantitative analysis](#) by researchers accounted for children having different characteristics (such as gender and age), undertaking different Wildlife Trust events, having different initial levels of engagement with nature-related aspects of life (such as spending time outdoors in nature or reading books about nature), and having different initial levels of wellbeing,

nature connection, and pro-environmental values.

In addition to the survey, teachers, Wildlife Trust educators and 199 of the children were also observed by the IOE research team and interviewed about their experiences.

The report suggested that there should be further opportunities for all children to engage with nature.

The authors wrote: "Children's accessibility to nature can be limited by their location and by various other barriers. For some children, visiting nature through their school may provide opportunities that they would not otherwise be able to gain. For children at school, learning about nature while learning within nature can help cover aspects of the national curriculum while providing enjoyable and beneficial experiences."

They suggested that "recognizing the diverse ways in which people can engage with nature, and the diverse people who do so, may help ensure that more children can see that nature is accessible for 'people like me.'"

Professor Michael Reiss (UCL Institute of Education) said: "Each generation seems to have less contact with the outdoors than the preceding one. We owe it to all young people to reverse this trend—for their sakes, for our sakes and for nature's sake."

Nigel Doar, The Wildlife Trusts' director of strategy, said: "This research shows that children experience profound and diverse benefits through regular contact with nature. Contact with the wild improves children's wellbeing, motivation and confidence. The data also highlights how children's experiences in and around the [natural world](#) led to better relationships with their teachers and classmates.

"The Wildlife Trusts believe everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of [wildlife](#) in

[daily life](#) and we're calling on government to recognize the multiple benefits of nature for children—and ensure that at least one hour per school day is spent outdoors learning and playing in wild places."

More information: Children and Nature: A research evaluation for The Wildlife Trusts.

www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Children

[%20and%20Nature%20-%20UCL%20and%20The%20Wildlife%20Trusts%20Full%20Report.pdf](#)

Provided by University College London

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