



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

Rick Van Noy

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The technology boom of recent years has given kids numerous reasons to stay inside and play, while parents' increasing safety concerns make it tempting to keep children close to home. But what is being lost as fewer kids spend their free time outdoors? Deprived of meaningful contact with nature, children often fail to develop a significant relationship with the natural world, much less a sense of reverence and respect for the world outside their doors.

A Natural Sense of Wonder is one father's attempt to seek alternatives to the "flickering waves of TV and the electrifying boing of video games" and get kids outside and into nature. In the spirit of Rachel Carson's *The Sense of Wonder*, Rick Van Noy journeys out of his suburban home with his children and describes the pleasures of walking in a creek, digging for salamanders, and learning to appreciate vultures. Through these and other "walks to school," the Van Noys discover what lives nearby, what nature has to teach, and why this matters.

From the backyard to the hiking trail, in a tide pool and a tree house, in the wild and in town, these narrative essays explore the terrain of childhood threatened by the lure of computers and television, by fear and the loss of play habitat, showing how kids thrive in their special places. In chronicling one parent's determination (and at times frustration) to get his kids outside, *A Natural Sense of Wonder* suggests ways kids both young and old can experience the wonder found only in the natural world.

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