

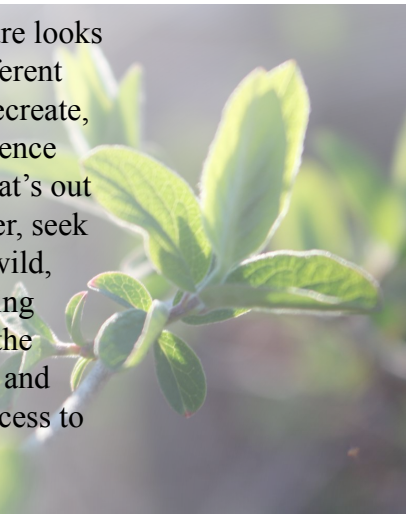
Deep connections with nature are important to our well-being. There is an increasing divide between humans and the outdoors, making our relationship with the natural world more important than ever before.

National Parks, National Forests, Wilderness Areas, and other public lands are an incredible resource, originally designated to allow the American people to experience our nation's natural grandeur for generations to come. They serve as a glimpse into the wild, and offer their visitors an opportunity to commune with nature in a way that is rare across the globe. Throughout the United States, there are thousands of public spaces where citizens can experience nature first-hand.



Some people find their connection to nature easily. Visiting the outdoors may be common for some people, but there are others who do not have such an easy time finding that connection. Sometimes it is up to others to help usher them toward that love and appreciation for the outdoors.

Connecting with nature looks very different for different people. Some go to recreate, to sight see, to experience solitude, or to see what's out there. Others, however, seek inspiration from the wild, searching for something which can help light the creative spark inside, and drive the creative process to new heights.



At the Wildlife Center, one of the most important things that we do is to help people all across the globe connect with the environment and wildlife through our patients. Through online content, social media, in-person programs and presentations, and our day-to-day operations, our work has brought nature to thousands over the years, and that number keeps growing.



Spending time in and connecting with nature has many benefits. Especially in today's hectic world, being outdoors can do wonders for your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. There are many ways to connect with nature, and the value of doing so cannot be overstated.



# Reconnecting With Nature

Season Three, Episode Eight

Writing Prompts

These writing prompts are designed to inspire critical thinking and promote connecting with nature and exploring the ways that these connections benefit us as individuals and societally. Questions may require additional research and can be answered individually in writing, or discussed out loud in a group setting.

Take a small notebook and pencil and take a walk in a natural area. Make notes about your observations and how you feel. When you return, write a nature journal entry. What plants and animals did you observe and what details did you notice about them? How did you feel before and after the walk? What was your favorite part of your walk? Did you see or learn anything surprising?

It is a widespread phenomenon that individuals feel refreshed and renewed after spending time in nature. Research shows that connecting with the natural world has positive effects on our physical, mental, and spiritual health. Why do you think humans have an innate connection with nature? How do you feel when you spend time in natural spaces?

Research a National Park that you have never visited. Describe the park you chose and what makes it special. Where is it located, and what type of habitats are present? What sights, activities, or experiences are advertised? If you had an opportunity to visit the park you selected, what would you do while you were there? What would you most hope to see and experience?

Poetry and art can serve as meaningful tools to help us connect with nature. Choose a wildlife species, natural place, or conservation topic and write a poem celebrating your connection with nature. Share your poems with your classmates and with us!

Think about the natural spaces close to your home that you spend time in. Can you walk or ride a bike there, or do you have to drive in a car? Are there benches and picnic tables, or is it undeveloped? Do you think everyone has the same access to nature that you might? What things about where a person lives would make it difficult for them to find natural spaces?



Wildlife Center of Virginia  
wildlifecenter.org  
edu@wildlifecenter.org



# Reconnecting With Nature

## Nature Scavenger Hunt

Spending time in the natural world has many benefits to our mental well-being, and practicing mindfulness (focusing your attention on the present moment and your surroundings) can be a very relaxing activity. Find a safe, quiet place outdoors and sit down. Use this scavenger hunt to practice being mindful of your environment. Can you find or see these things just by looking around??

- Something with more legs than you
- Something with fewer legs than you
- A seed transporter (an animal carrying acorns, a burr stuck to your pants, etc.)
- Scat (animal droppings)
- Animal tracks
- A spider web
- Lichen or moss
- Water
- Something humans share with wildlife
- Signs of human presence or activity
- Something dead (plant or animal)
- A decomposer (mushrooms, insects, etc.)
- A bird song
- A plant with leaves
- A place where an animal would find shelter
- Food for wildlife

