

Research Matters – February 2019

Title: *Home to Us All – How Connecting with Nature Helps Us to Care for ourselves and the earth 2018*

Background

Home to Us All presents the growing body of evidence that people's relationship with nature profoundly influences their behaviours toward the Earth.

This report was initiated as a part of the (IUCN) International Union for the Conservation of Nature's #NatureForAll initiative. Its overall purpose is to advance and inform contact with nature and policy development for biodiversity conservation and other sectors by synthesizing and making available the evidence that links experiences in nature with positive conservation attitudes and behaviours and the nurturing of sustainable development.

The report is not a formal literature review, and while it includes academic research there is also anecdotal information, as well as Indigenous and local knowledge. Rather it is a compilation and synthesis of evidence to assist in advocating for the importance of connecting people with nature.

Key matters raised in research - a summary

The report states that the importance of meaningful personal connections with nature should be considered and integrated, along with scientific knowledge, into public policies related to the environment and sustainable development.

The current body of evidence is generally consistent that 'we know enough to say that connectedness to nature predicts pro-environment and positive ecological behaviours—that is, care for the Earth'. (P37) A table is included summarising the main areas of research and authors.

The report calls for additional, well- designed and rigorous research to further inform both policy and practice. So too is conscious attention to the wisdom still available today from Indigenous knowledge systems, especially about how to connect with and learn from nature over time.

Important findings include:

- ✓ "Positive, direct experiences in nature during childhood and role models of care for nature by someone close to the child are the two factors that contribute most to individuals choosing to take action to benefit the environment as adults.
- ✓ People of all ages who participate in nature-based activities tend to be happier and healthier than those who do not.
- ✓ Social experiences in nature foster connectedness to each other and to nature.
- ✓ People who develop a sense of place are more likely to want to protect it and to oppose the degradation of the environment.

- ✓ Knowledge is very important but is not enough on its own to cause people to take action to benefit nature.
- ✓ Meaningful, positive experience in nature is a powerful way of developing a connection with, or love of, nature that can in turn guide people toward care for the Earth.
- ✓ Connectedness to nature is a strong predictor of positive conservation behaviour.” (p35)

Guidelines for practice are included such as ‘using a variety of tools, including social media and community-based social marketing, to encourage those with high levels of connectedness to communicate and share their values and experiences with others, including children and youth, and to engage those not yet connected with nature’.

Allow for immersion and frequent experiences of caring for nature to encourage the growth of perceived efficacy, knowledge, connection and commitment over time.

Recognise that people hold a variety of values related to nature, so design and implement policies and practices that will resonate with those values.

Make it easy, make it social, and make it fun for people to connect with nature.

The report concludes with appendices that show examples of policy and practice including from Australia

Who is it useful for?

Educators at all levels who want to document the case for nature based programs.

Policy makers to understand the importance of contact with nature for people of all ages. Particular reference is to policies recommended in Education and child care; Health and elder care; Community planning and urban development; Parks, outdoor recreation, and tourism; Arts and culture. As well policies that encourage private sector investment in environmentally sustainable programming, infrastructure, and innovative solutions, such as technology, for connecting people with nature; and biodiversity conservation organisations to work across sectors so that all people, equitably and inclusively, experience the diverse benefits of connectedness with nature.

Where can you find it?

Home to Us All – How Connecting with Nature Helps Us to Care for ourselves and the earth
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/597b547aebbd1a681f3883f2/t/5bf561f12b6a2890e1a04b37/1542808051665/HometoUsAll.pdf>

In addition to this full publication, there are other resources, including a summary titled *Connecting with Nature to Care for Ourselves and the Earth: Recommendations for Decision Makers* available from www.childrenandnature.org and www.natureforall.global

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