
Editor's Note: Dr. Carla Gull is our new Book and Resource Review Editor. She teaches beginning college classes online with the University of Phoenix, hosts the podcast *Loose Parts Nature Play*, leads nature programming in her local area, facilitates professional development in early childhood, and shares insights on *Loose Parts Play* on social media. Her passion for children's literature stems from searching for the perfect book to share with children. If you have ideas or would like to contribute book or resource reviews, please contact Dr. Gull at Carla.Gull@phoenix.edu.

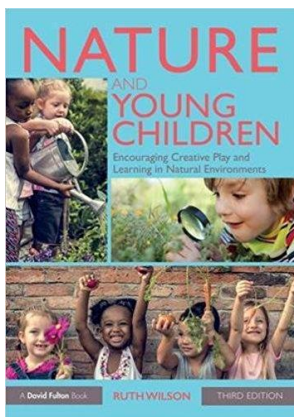
Connecting to Nature with Ruth Wilson

Carla Gull

Book and Resource Review Editor

Have you encountered Ruth Wilson or her work yet? With over 30 years in the education field and a PhD, she has a long trail of involvement in early childhood environmental education. Currently, she writes books, consults, and is the research library curator for the Children & Nature Network.

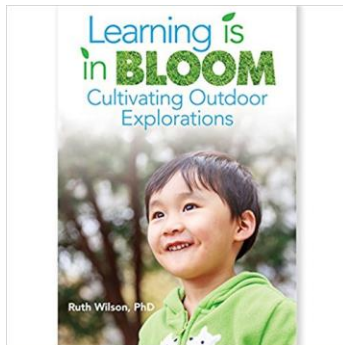
Nature and Young Children: Encouraging Creative Play and Learning Natural Environments (3rd Edition). (2018).



Wilson's updated book on *Nature and Young Children* takes the wonderful premise of her original work while also tackling additional topics relevant for today, such as sustainability, inclusion, and encouraging pro-environmental behaviors in developmentally appropriate ways. As the curator of Children & Nature Network's Research Library, she is on the forefront of recent academic research on children and nature and weaves it seamlessly into foundational principles connecting young children to the natural world. The book is full of current research, presented in a very readable manner. Wilson focuses on nature play, natural outdoor playspaces, bringing the outdoors in, the role of the adult, holistic child development, integrated teaching and learning and fostering pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. This

foundational work provides a research-backed framework for children developing a relationship with nature.

Learning is in Bloom: Cultivating Outdoor Explorations. (2016).



Learning is in Bloom concentrates on connecting children to the rhythm of nature, connecting through play, exploration and experimentation, indoor/outdoor connections, and connecting through language, literacy, and the arts. Embedded in the rich content of each section, find easy to implement activities to connect to nature, such as nature names, animal yoga, practical math ideas, animal homes, and so many more. Wilson explains the foundational aspects of children's connection to nature, their rights, guidelines and resources, current resources in this quest, and our own call to action in a very doable way. Curricular ties to math, science,

literacy, and movement, as well as ways of bringing nature inside, make this an applicable read. Practical and easy-to-implement activities, along with extension ideas, help the reader put these principles in action right now. Find a glossary, resources, and a children's book list at the end.

Fostering a Sense of Wonder during the Early Childhood Years. (1993).

**Fostering A Sense
of Wonder
During the
Early Childhood Years**



At just around 200 pages, this online booklet is full of information on connecting children and nature, focusing on the sense of wonder in ourselves as educators and in the children we work with. I have turned to this free online publication many times in preparing for presentations. I find myself highlighting so much because it is that good. Wilson embeds specific nature activities within the theoretical framework of connecting children to nature.

I especially like the evaluation, *Fostering a Love of Nature Index*, at the end. Taking time to reflect deeply on where we are in these principles and where we want to be can be powerful for our practice. Educator resources, book lists, and supply companies (though somewhat outdated now) give us information we need at our fingertips. Find it online at: <http://epa.ohio.gov/oeef/oeepublications#151808568-fostering-a-sense-of-wonder-during-the-early-childhood-years>

Selected articles and webinars:

Connecting Young Children and Nature: How to Educate and Enchant. (*Gryphon House* webinar, 2016).

It is delightful to listen to the author as she shares examples and ideas for enchantment when connecting children to nature. Wilson brings us into the wonder of nature. Nature in its simplicity offers basic materials to learn and grow while developing creativity. Wilson also presents a list of attention-focusing questions to use with children. Knowing and feeling are essential aspects of this critical time outside. Listen to Ruth Wilson's webinar at <https://www.gryphonhouse.com/our-authors/author-detail/ruth-wilson-phd>.

Becoming Whole: Developing an Ecological Sense of Identity. (*Wonder*, 2011)

Wilson focuses on factors that impact a child's ecological identity as a child, such as putting into context one's self within the natural environment. As part of this development, biophilia describes how our affinity for nature goes beyond basic physical needs to a need for the intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction nature brings. This article focuses on developmentally appropriate ways of shaping of natural connections and identity in early childhood. It also lists eight key points we can do as educators to encourage this connection to nature. This resource is available at

http://ccie-media.s3.amazonaws.com/nacc/wonder_may11.pdf

Aesthetics and a Sense of Wonder. (*Exchange*, 2010).

At two and a half pages, this short read focuses on wonder—wonder as an emotion, wonder as a way of knowing, and living with wonder. Children have a heightened sense of wonder. As educators, we can help cultivate this natural curiosity and delight. Access this article at

<https://www.ccie.com/library/5019324.pdf>

Why Children Play Under the Bushes. (Early Childhood News, 2004).

Children's nature play is explored, looking at loose parts, well-designed playgrounds, a 'playgarden' alternative (what we might call a natural playscape in today's terms), guidelines for choosing plants, outdoor learning centers, and a checklist for evaluating outdoor playspaces. Wilson also shares play zone guidelines with ideas of what might be in our outdoor spaces for optimal child development. Read this wonderful article at

http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=412