

PROJECT WILD THING

SCREENINGS

Introduction to the Film

Project Wild Thing is a feature length documentary film, it is also the start of a movement to reconnect kids with nature. Only 1 in 10 children regularly play in wild places. Children's roaming area has shrunk by 90% in a generation. 9 in 10 children can identify a Dalek – a third more than can identify a magpie.

The campaign aims to reconnect all children in the UK with nature. If we don't, the results could be disastrous for 2 big reasons:

- Spending time outdoors makes for healthier, happier children.
- If children don't connect with the natural world, they're unlikely to care enough about the environment to fight to look after it.
- Project Wild Thing is supported by The WILD NETWORK, a collaborative movement of over 1000 organisations and thousands of individuals committed to getting kids outdoors. The Network's membership is diverse: from conservation charities and schools, to healthcare providers, local government, children's charities and individuals (please at this point say you and your organisation have signed up and are members!).

Quote from the Film

'It's not the kids that don't want to put their hands in the mud or jump in the pond or pick up the worm, or even eat the worm, you know? It's the adults that have said no.'

Chris Packham, naturalist

'A lot of people I know won't go to the woods, because you don't want to mess up your clothes'.

Girl (15), London

'The raw material of the product that you have called nature is so astonishing, and so interesting. All you have to say is look, it's as simple as that.'

Michael Wolff, advertising guru

Discussion Questions

What do you think the central message of the film was?

Chris Rose says in the film Project Wild Thing, 'If people can't understand something they can't care for it. If they can't identify it they don't know if it's going to go or if it's gone'

RSPB report in their State of Nature 2013 report: one in ten native wildlife species are under threat of disappearance from our shores.

Chris Packham says in the film Project Wild Thing, 'It's not the children who don't want to pick up or even eat the worm; it's the adults who have said now.'

Last scene of the film is the kids taking their dad outside.

Is it enough to simply take children outside?

Chris Rose says in the film that 'Just taking someone outside doesn't mean that you've opened their eyes, their minds or their hearts in a different way.' You can take a child round a nature reserve, but they might be bored until they reach the shop and can buy a plastic rubber. How do we get them to care about the natural environment?

What was your own childhood like?

Talk about your own experiences growing up. A recent poll for the JCB Fresh Air campaign found that children today spend half the amount of time playing outdoors as their parents' generation did. Is that borne out by your own experiences? Did you spend more time playing out in nature than your own children, nieces or nephews do now? Why – and does it matter that children today are spending less time out?

Why should we care that children are becoming disconnected from nature?

In the film, 10 year old Mason peers through a grille onto a building site. 'There was quite a bit of greenery around here', he says, 'but they've put buildings onto it. They've taken a lot of space from us and it's not really fair'. What would you say to boys like Mason? 90% of the population live in cities. How are the challenges to getting outdoors different for city kids and their parents, to those who live in the countryside? Or do both face similar barriers to getting outdoors?

Who has the greatest power to reconnect children with nature and the outdoors?

Children's lives are becoming more screen-based. On average, young people watch around 150 minutes of television per day and spend two hours surfing the internet. Should we be concerned about 'screen time' or is it an essential part of a modern childhood. Consider why children choose to spend much of their time on screens.

What effect do you see traffic and busy streets having on children's ability to get outdoors?

Some have suggested a 20mph speed limit in built up areas or closing off streets for children's play as a way to tackle this problem. What other solutions can you think of?

What part to schools play in reconnecting children and nature?

Some have cited a loss of community as a reason for children's retreating indoors to play. When David meets the young cyclists on the suburban road in Canterbury, they complain of the nosy neighbours who tell them to go and play somewhere else. But, they say, there is nowhere else. Do you think that the community – in other words, you! – have a part to play

As the film makes clear, nature boasts some fantastic health benefits. Should more doctors take note – should we be getting prescribed 'wild time' on the NHS?

Natural England guidelines state that people should be able to access good quality greenspace of at least two hectares in size no more than a five minute walk away from where they live. Does the guidance reflect the reality in your local community? If not, would having a two hectares of green space 5 minutes from your front door improve the quality of life in your area?

What do you think of when you hear the word 'nature'?

Are we scared of nature? Is nature something that you get in a car and drive to a reserve to see or is it also the patch of long grass in the park? Think about this quote from GP and 'green gym' pioneer Dr William Bird: 'What we've done is we've put nature over there – we've put a fence around it and said "That's Nature" – this is why we're now strangers to each other.' What one thing could you do – starting today – that would help reconnect more children with nature?

Five things you can do today after watching the film

1

Join the movement

We're only as strong as the number of people who support us. If you support our aim of reconnecting children and nature, then go to www.projectwildthing.com and sign up to join the movement. We'll send you updates on the progress of the campaign, let you know about exciting opportunities to get involved with projects locally, and tell you about other screenings of Project Wild Thing that are happening near you.

2

Share it

Tell everyone you know about Project Wild Thing – email, get on social media, or chat to other parents at the school gates. The more people who hear about the campaign and watch the film, the better chance we have of reconnecting a generation of children with nature.

3

Arrange another screening

If you enjoyed watching Project Wild Thing, why not try and arrange another screening of the film and spread the word about our campaign to reconnect kids with nature. Screenings can happen at your school, work, community centre, pub and outside!

Email wildscreening@greenlions.com

4

Get your kids out!

The big changes begin at home. Turn off the telly and take your kids outdoors. If every child in the UK under 16 spent an extra hour outdoors, that would be the equivalent of 4 billion more hours outdoors a year. Download the WildTime app for your smartphone if you need ideas. We don't need to imagine. We need to make it happen.

5

Volunteer

Inspired to do more to reconnect children with nature? Get involved with one of the amazing projects near you – like getting together with your neighbours to close off the streets for children's play, or helping out at a local nature group. Find something near you at www.projectwildthing.com