



Why 21st Century Children
Need Nature

The Peace of Wild Things

by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron
feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

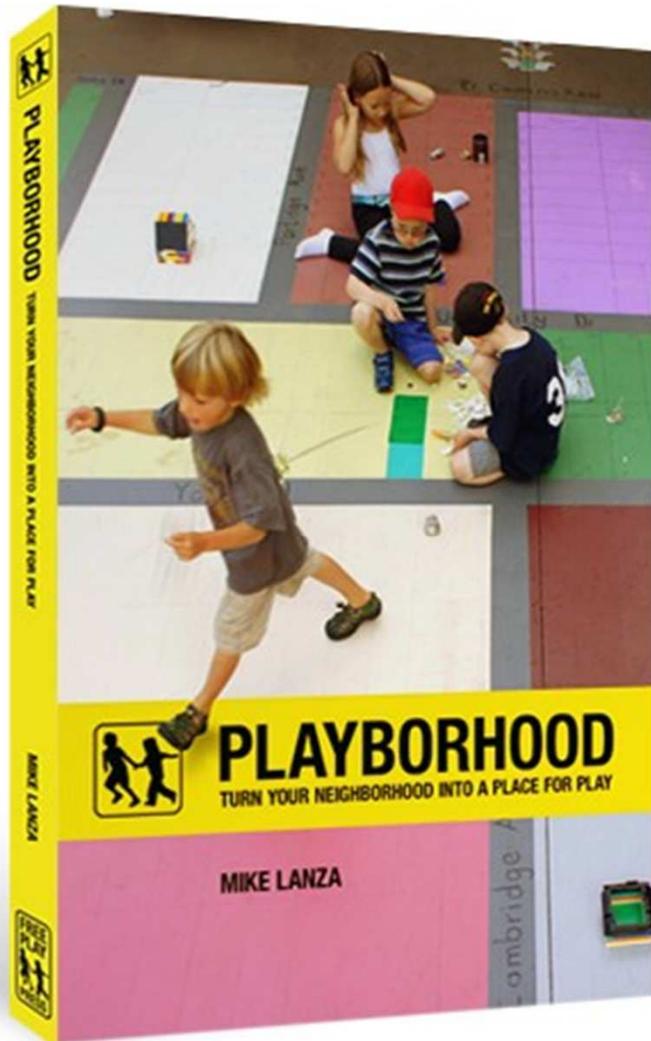
“In *Childhood Lost*,” Melissa Fay Greene says,

“I want to stand in the front yard and sing out their lovely names at dusk and have them suddenly appear in the damp yard around me like little fireflies. But I can’t. I can’t let them roam. I don’t have my mother’s confidence that the world is a safe place.....”

Something irreplaceable has been lost. A certain sense of freedom, of fun, has gone out of the world. The golden age of childhood is gone.”



Reasons for Diminishing Outdoor Play



✧ Screen Time

✧ Structured Activities

✧ Two Working Parents

✧ School and Homework

✧ Fear of Injuries

(More children injured falling out of bed than falling out of trees)

✧ Stranger Danger

(1600 times more likely a child will be injured in a car accident than abducted by a stranger)

Which means
we're seeing
less of this...



and more of this.

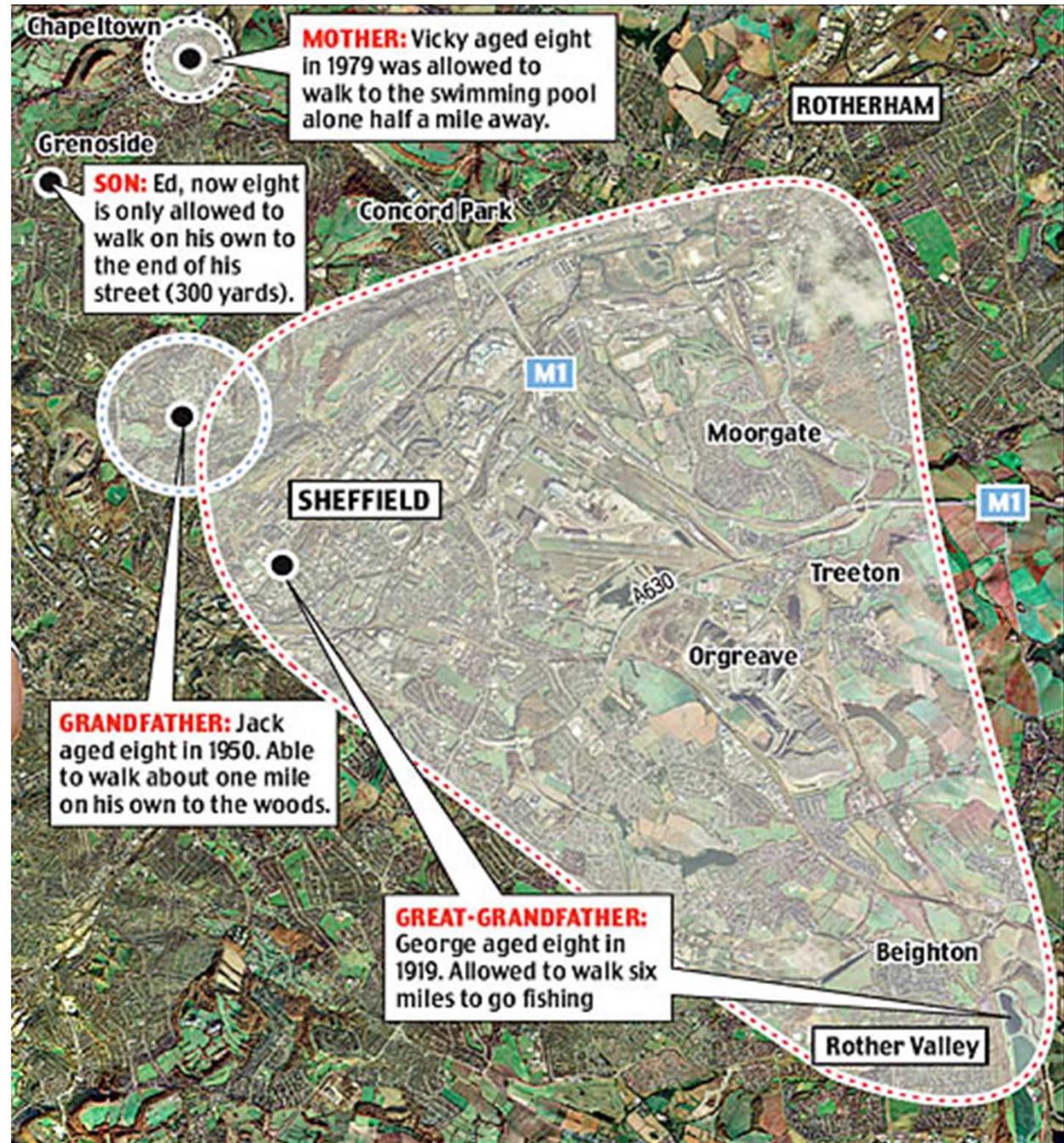
and yet.....

“94% of children want to spend more time outside of the house and 86% of parents say that on a nice day, children would prefer to go to the park than watch TV.” (Worpole, 2003)



As a result
of parental
and societal
fears.....

The child's
natural
world
shrinks
across four
generations





Which has resulted in less free exploration and more electronic tracking devices



Research on Children, Nature and Play

from Play, Naturally. Lester and Maudsley, 2006

Planet Earth Playscapes, Leon Smith, 2006

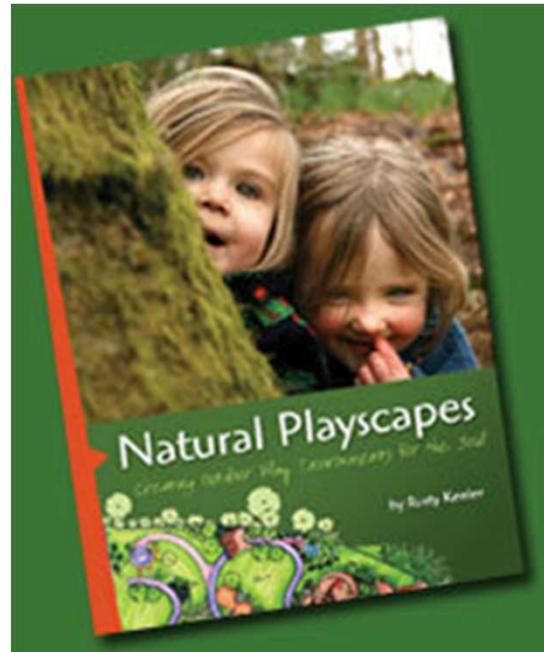
Children in the Outdoors, Munoz, 2009

Play, naturally

A review of children's natural play

Stuart Lester and Martin Maudsley
Playwork Partnerships, August 2006

Commission for Playday 2006 by the Children's Play Council



Children in the Outdoors

A literature review



Dr. Sarah-Anne Muñoz
Sustainable Development Research Centre

Increased Physical Activity Leads to Better Health

Physical activity research has highlighted the links between children's time spent outdoors and their levels of physical activity (Fjortoft, 2004).

Frost (2006) also links activity within outdoor playgrounds to the development of “strength, flexibility and coordination” due to the types of activities facilitated by play equipment, such as “climbing,” “balancing” and “swinging.”



Contact with Nature Increases Mental Well-Being



“Children with nature nearby their homes are more resistant to stress; have lower incidence of behavioral disorders, anxiety, and depression; and have a higher measure of self-worth.”
(Wells & Evans 2003)

Symptoms of Children with Attention Deficit Disorder are Relieved After Contact with Nature.
(Taylor et al. 2001).



Being Outdoors Decreases Illness



Children who play regularly in natural environments show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility, and they are sick less often. (Grahn, et al.1997, Fjortoft & Sageie 2001)

Nature Play Supports Language Development

When children play in natural environments, their play is more diverse.

There is a higher prevalence of imaginative and creative play that fosters language and collaborative skills.

(Moore & Wong 1997, Taylor, et al. 1998, Fjortoft 2000).



Outdoor Play Encourages Collaboration



Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other. (Moore 1996)

and yet.....

Why playing in the dirt makes kids smart

The Daily Telegraph, NSW, Australia November 24, 2010

PARENTS, step away from the baby wipes and put that hand sanitiser away - eating dirt could actually make your child smarter.

Research published in the current issue of Kidsafe, NSW's playgrounds newsletter shows the positive side of a soil-borne bacteria that is likely to be inhaled when children are playing outside.

Academics discovered that mice that were fed the dirt bacteria *Mycobacterium vaccae* navigated complex mazes twice as fast as those which were not.



And Paul Shepard contends that when infants put things in their mouths, they may be immunizing themselves against local bacterial fauna.

The Relationship between Nature Play and Adult Environmental Behavior

- *Wild nature play correlates with environmental attitudes and behaviors.
- *Domesticated nature play correlates with environmental attitudes and only slightly with behaviors.
- *Environmental education correlates with neither.

(*Nature and the Life Course*, Wells and Leckies, 2006)



Childhood and Nature Design Principles

Recurrent play motifs in childhood that can shape design of facilities and activities

- * Special Place
- * Hunting & Gathering
- * Small Worlds
- * Animal Allies
- * Adventure
- * Fantasy
- * Maps and Paths

