How connected to nature are you?

Title

Jumping into big messy piles of yellow-orange leaves. Climbing trees with spongy moss-covered bark. Discovering insects under logs. Splashing in puddles. Listening to birds singing and swooping overhead. Camping under the stars. Digging your toes into sand.

These things may well bring a smile to your face, whether you are a child or adult. But as well as being fun, we know that playing outside is highly important for a child's development.

Many conservationists are worried that our connection with nature is being lost in our modern world, and the implications for future conservation efforts could be huge.

So for the first time, a ground-breaking report from the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) has measured children's connection to the natural world.

Working with the University of Essex for three years, the RSPB developed a clear description of children's connection to nature and a methodology to measure it. This included four descriptions of how children feel about nature: enjoyment of nature; empathy for creatures' having a sense of oneness with nature; and having a sense of responsibility for the environment.

Through a study survey of over 1000 children, the RSPB report found that only 1 in 5 children (8-12 years) in the UK have an acceptable measure of connectedness to nature.

> *"For the first time, we have created a baseline that we and others can use to measure just how connected to nature the UK's children really are. By adopting this new approach, we can all monitor children's connection and we are recommending that governments and local authorities take action to increase it through policy and practice decisions," said the RSPB's Chief Executive, Dr Mike Clarke.*

To kick start a campaign of engaging kids with nature, the RSPB have joined forces to form The Wild Network and support its film-led campaign Project Wild Thing: reconnecting kids and nature. The documentary film was released in the UK last week. Watch the trailer here:

PROJECT WILD THING - official trailer from Green Lions on Vimeo.

> *The film's director, David Bond, says: "We can reverse this situation, and now, thanks to the study, in the future we can measure the effect of all the work that is going on around the UK to reconnect children with nature."*

We hope this can be echoed around the world and that the BirdLife Partnership provides a network of resources to connect children with nature everywhere.

But it's not just about children. No matter how old you are, getting out into nature is really important for our health, well-being and more. Plus, people only tend to protect what they know and love, so get out there and lead by example!

You can check your own level of connection to nature here.