

Benefits from Nature

By Bob Barnett

Willisville Mountain is within grasping distance. Just a bit more money and Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) will own and protect a piece of Ontario's 3.5 billion-year-old heritage.

Florence Williams' book, *The Nature Fix*, attempts to set out why such protection is important in terms people understand. For me it was an emotional experience hiking to the top and seeing that vast expanse from mountain to mountain, the lakes and the North Channel. But why was it emotional? Williams explains that nature helps our brain to cope with life. It takes us away from life's interruptions and allows the more primitive parts of our brain to see the big picture, to get creative, to feel calmness, to see patterns and sense resonances like Beethoven did when he created his greatest works while walking in nature. Darwin's daily walks in the countryside allowed him to sort through masses of data and come up with a simple concept.

I'm not one easily persuaded to the mystical or supernatural. Williams has presented chapter after chapter of completed scientific studies. These studies take us from Japan to Korea through the USA and to Toronto where these studies have been performed, questioned, tested again and confirmed. In Japan and Korea nature visits are part of the cure and prescribed by doctors. The smell of pine trees lowers blood pressure. The sound of birds makes one healthier. The image of nature has been demonstrated to be soothing. It seems to follow our genetic roots and somehow reassures us.

Compelling Evidence

Some simple studies are now a half-century old. Patients recover faster if they can see a tree. Kids learn better if nature is in view. Convicts are less violent if they can see green things and there is less vandalism in housing projects with green space. Now we are moving on to more and more complex studies and more and more compelling evidence that nature makes a big difference.

protect the plants and animals. But I know that if people don't experience the same feelings I felt, they won't help us share nature with others.

Help Us

We now have reserves in many communities. Come and visit them, then help us get your community involved. Outdoor Adventures, an Owen Sound service club, built a trail on EBC land near Springmount, right

Your community can benefit from each oasis of nature. We need help building trails, checking on the properties while you and your kids or friends get a day in nature. The more you get to know the properties the more you'll appreciate them. Many have rare species in residence. Let us know what you've seen. Take a good photo and we'll consider publishing it in our newsletter. I dare you to visit



New trail near Rockford built by Outdoor Adventures of Owen Sound. PHOTO PROVIDED.

Creativity is improved in natural environments. This preventative medicine isn't just something that's good for society at large.

I can personally attest that it brought our family together when our kids were between six and 10. We hiked the whole Bruce Trail, sat on the cliffs, climbed a few trees, watched skunks and raccoons, looked at plants up close, slogged through mud and got wet and cold a few times. That experience changed not only my life and my outlook on life, but those of my family and many around us.

I'm asked, "Should we open our nature reserves for visits by people?" I'd prefer to

beside Springer Creek. You or your club or group can build trail or monitor an EBC reserve. Get the kids out into nature, walk beside a stream, watch the birds, study the flowers. Your anxiety will melt away, your kids will talk to you about important things. Help us build trails and your community. Help us protect nature.

We own 114 reserves in communities from the Escarpment right over to Lake Huron. If you live in Rockwood, Caledon East, Orangeville, Creemore, Hanover, Paisley, Port Elgin, Wiarton, Tobermory, South Baymouth, Gore Bay or communities in between we offer you a walk in the woods.

all 114 reserves. Send us a list of those you've walked on.

Nature reserves are "preventative" medicine. Our society pours money into trauma care and despite the math, leaves low-cost care of our communities underfunded.

Conservation of land and time spent in nature is part of that solution – but we need your help. As a charity, we rely on you, not government, to protect nature.

To help buy Willisville Mountain, contact **Bob Barnett** of Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy at 888.815.9575 or through www.escarpment.ca.