

1. Learning from children

Froebelian research shows how young children can draw adults into experiencing nature through their play. This highlights the potential reciprocity of interactions between children, adults and natural environments.

“Adult nature connection is currently understood as influential on children, but perhaps within current conditions there can be an appreciation of the equal significance of children’s influence on adults.”

(Watts, 2022, p.97)



Look at the photo. What can we learn from this child’s nature interaction?



Learning from children

What the research tells us

Observing children's embodied engagement with nature can change the way adults engage with and perceive nature themselves ^(1,2,3).

- Spending time outdoors with their young children can enable parents to reconnect with nature in a wondrous "childlike" manner. Reflecting on an outdoor experience with her child, one parent noted: *"You just get all kiddy out there"* ⁽¹⁾.
- Young children can 'teach' adults; parents were observed spontaneously building on their child's engrossment in nature. Following their child's lead 'taught' parents to look beyond the superficial and spend time observing the natural world themselves ⁽²⁾.

- Findings from an Australian project demonstrate the potential for children to become 'teachers for each other and to their parents' ⁽³⁾. In this project the aboriginal children's understanding of and deep connections with nature supported reciprocal, experience based learning.

Find out more:

1. [Watts \(2021b\)](#)
2. [Watts \(2022\)](#)
3. [Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond \(2018\)](#)



Recognising and valuing young children's individuality and their connections to the natural world can support a process of mutual learning.

