Wild in the Woods: Implementing Nature Play

Danette Rushboldt, Interpretive Artist  •  Becca Zak, Interpretive Naturalist
How it begins.....or rather WHY it began.

Only 1 in 3 children are physically active every day.

*Children now spend more than seven and a half hours a day in front of some type of electronic screen.*

Since the 1970’s prevalence obesity for children ages 2 to 5 years

**DOUBLED**

**QUADRUPLED**
Richard Louv

“Last Child in the Woods
Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder
Richard Louv

“This book is an absolute must-read for parents.” — The Boston Globe
Nature-deficit disorder...

...is not a formal diagnosis, but a way to describe the psychological, physical and cognitive costs of human alienation from nature, particularly for children in their vulnerable developing years.
Bucket list for kids: 50 things to do before the age of 12

1. Climb a tree
2. Roll down a really big hill
3. Camp out in the wild
4. Build a fort
5. Skip a stone
6. Run around in the rain
7. Fly a kite
8. Catch a fish with a net
9. Eat an apple straight from a tree
10. Play conkers
11. Throw a snowball
12. Hunt for treasure on a beach
13. Make a mud pie
14. Dam a stream
15. Go sledding
16. Bury someone in the sand
17. Set up a snail race
18. Balance on a fallen tree
19. Swing on a rope
20. Make a mud slide
21. Eat blackberries in the wild
22. Take a look inside a tree
23. Visit an island
24. Pretend your flying in the wind
25. Make a whistle with some grass
26. Hunt for fossils and bones
27. Watch the sun wake up
28. Climb a huge hill
29. Get behind a waterfall
30. Feed a bird from your hand.
31. Hunt for bugs
32. Find some frog eggs
33. Catch a butterfly in a net
34. Track wild animals
35. Discover what’s in a pond
36. Call an owl
37. Check out the creatures in a stream
38. Bring up a butterfly
39. Catch a crab
40. Go on a nature walk at night
41. Plant it, grow it, eat it
42. Go wild swimming
43. Go rafting
44. Light a fire without matches
45. Find your way with a map and compass
46. Go Rock climbing
47. Cook on a campfire
48. Try repelling
49. Find a geocache
50. Go canoeing
Conkers!

Conkers is a game played between two people at a time.

1. Prepare two conkers by tying a thread through the middle of each. Then hang them from separate branches outside the door. Each person should attach their threads to a branch securely.

2. Your opponent should now have four conkers, which are placed in order, the conker nearest to you being the bottom conker.

3. When the start signal is given, both people should move their conkers from their branch to your branch, at the same time. The winner is the person who stays until the other has fallen from his branch. The conker must remain upright on its own. The conker nearest to you is the bottom conker. The conker nearest to you is the bottom conker.

4. Who is faster?

Conker

Helmet to protect eyes and face

Padded suit to protect body from flying shreds of conker

Ties to ensure correct posture

Knee pads to protect knees when picking up conker snails

Heavy boots to stamp on opponent's conker
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Ohioans participating in wildlife activities favored wildlife **VIEWING**; nature photography and bird **WATCHING**; with 47 percent stating they did so

Ohioans prioritized which outdoor recreation facilities they would like to have more of in Ohio. The top ranked facilities **FOCUSED ON TRAILS** (natural surface, paved and water); wildlife viewing and birding areas

Experience nature, quiet time and serenity
Sticker Survey
Sharing nature with family
listening and smelling
running exploring
climbing trees fishing
watching
catching frogs & bugs
playing in leaves and snow
hiking
Assemble the dream team and let the brainstorming begin.
Include Everyone

Planning Department
Maintenance/Ops
Resource Management
Rangers
Marketing
Interpretive Staff
Get Organized

• Send out emails
• Form a CORE team
• Assign homework
fun for all ages

getting dirty creates a sense of freedom

hands-on exploration

challenging and engaging

encourages creativity

learning from nature building

fosters a connection with nature

imagination running and climbing
Plan Site Visits
Create Inspiration Boards
Establish a Mission/Goal
Mission:
“Our nature play areas provide the whole family with an engaging, hands-on, outdoor experience with nature...dirt included.”

Goal:
Install 2 off-trail nature play areas.
Rules and Regulations

National Wildlife Federation

Nature Play and Learning Places
Stay True To Your Vision
Installation
Hands-on:
What are all the things you can do with tree cookies and sticks?
Park Locations
3,000 acres
Twinsburg
OH
Pop Den
1,324/sq mi
Rural/
Suburban
Liberty Park
410 acres

Akron, OH
(GYH nbhd)

Pop Den
3,964/sq mi

Urban/
Suburban

Goodyear Heights
# Meetings, deliberation, prep and work orders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Program date</th>
<th>Install date</th>
<th>Prep area</th>
<th>Staff present</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Signs</th>
<th>Barrier markers</th>
<th>Total days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberty Park</td>
<td><em>April 9</em></td>
<td><em>March 27</em></td>
<td>55’ x 90’</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodyear Heights</td>
<td><em>April 27</em></td>
<td><em>April 10</em></td>
<td>110’ x 250’</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cost Estimate for Our Nature Play Areas

13 staff members, varying wage and hours

25 Carsonite markers @ $15.10/each  $377.50

50 Stickers @ $1.20/each       $60

5 entrance signs @ $26/each     $130

Miscellaneous hardware @ $76    $76

Estimated Total:               $643.50
Get to work boys
The finished products: *Signage*
The finished products: *Elements common in both areas*

A-Frame fort structure.

Tic-tac-toe stump.

Stump hoppers.
Liberty Park Nature Play Area

Pallet bench with tree cookies, stones and programming tools.

Weaving station with materials.
Liberty Park Nature Play Area, continued.

Dueling A-Frame structures separated by fallen tree.

At grade (5 lengths) and raised (2 lengths) balance beams.
Goodyear Heights Nature Play Area

Log ladder climber.

Entrance looking out to field.
Programming in Nature Play Areas:

*Build it and they will come...but may not know what to do*

**WILD IN THE WOODS**

All ages can stop by our Nature Play area to engage in fun, hands-on experiences with nature. A naturalist will be on hand to help guide your experience. Getting dirty is encouraged, so dress appropriately.

2017: 3 staff, 2x month at both locations

**NATURE PLAY: AMPHIBIANS**

All ages can come to our Nature Play area along Alder Trail to hop, croak, slide and crawl like amphibians. Come prepared to get dirty!

2018: 6 staff, 1x month at both locations
Dirt on My Shirt

There’s dirt on my shirt
And leaves in my hair
There’s mud on my boots
But I don’t really care

Playing outside is so much fun
To breathe the clean air
And feel the warm sun

To stomp in a puddle
Or climb a big tree
Makes me quite happy
Just look and you’ll see
Programming
Keeping It Fresh

Yearly evaluation

Keep, replace or install elements

Regular walk-throughs

Materials stocking

Man hours
Sensory Trail cut in at Liberty Park Nature Play Area.

Signage edited at both areas.
Further Updates for 2018

1. For us, nature play areas fall under the ‘playground’ category. For example, stepping forms must be within 18” of one another.

2. To begin regular written inspections by park managers or crew leaders. 1x per month Nov-Mar, 1x per week April-Oct.

3. Develop new elements that will make our areas more inviting, interactive and accessible to park users.
Keeping It Fresh

New Element Ideas For 2018

Summit Metro Parks
Assemble your team of passionate people.

Set a timeline and stick to it.

Stay true to your vision.

Let the area do the work during programs, you’re just a facilitator.

Nature play is worthwhile because at the end of the process, an off-trail area simply exists and can be used by the public.
Questions?