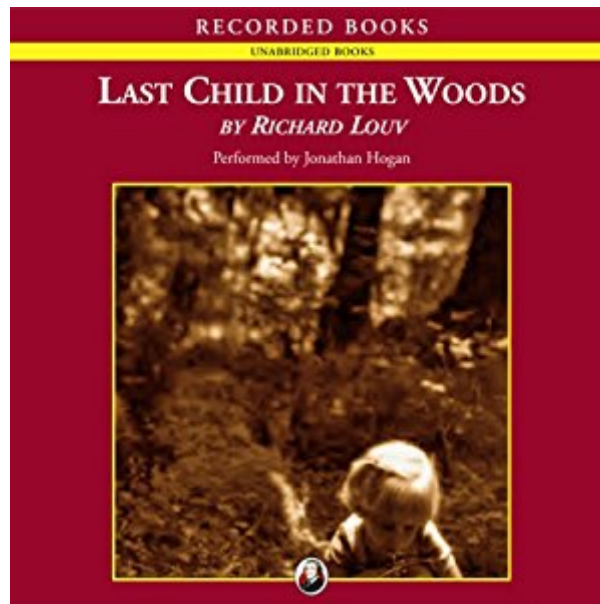


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Last Child In The Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder



Synopsis

"I like to play indoors better 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are," reports a fourth-grader. Never before in history have children been so plugged in-and so out of touch with the natural world. In this groundbreaking new work, child advocacy expert Richard Louv directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today's wired generation-he calls it nature deficit-to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as rises in obesity, Attention Deficit Disorder (Add), and depression. Some startling facts: By the 1990s the radius around the home where children were allowed to roam on their own had shrunk to a ninth of what it had been in 1970. Today, average eight-year-olds are better able to identify cartoon characters than native species, such as beetles and oak trees, in their own community. The rate at which doctors prescribe antidepressants to children has doubled in the last five years, and recent studies show that too much computer use spells trouble for the developing mind. Nature-deficit disorder is not a medical condition; it is a description of the human costs of alienation from nature. This alienation damages children and shapes adults, families, and communities. There are solutions, though, and they're right in our own backyards. Last Child in the Woods is the first book to bring together cutting-edge research showing that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development-physical, emotional, and spiritual. What's more, nature is a potent therapy for depression, obesity, and Add. Environment-based education dramatically improves standardized test scores and grade point averages and develops skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making. Even creativity is stimulated by childhood experiences in nature. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I was growing up in Boise Idaho, I thought nothing of spending an afternoon away from my parents fishing ponds along the Boise River. As I graduated to fly fishing, I spent time on the river itself. Closer to home, the canal which ran below South Federal Way offered a miniature green belt where my friends and I built forts and rode bikes. Urban as Boise was, even then, this tiny greenbelt was still sufficiently wild that I would occasionally find a porcupine in our front yard. Our cats were fairly adept at finding quail (and bringing their still quivering bodies to us) and in general I found it easy to retreat to a relatively tame and yet exciting outdoors. Children today have no such privileges. Indeed, as Richard Louv points out, they are literally suffering from nature deficit disorder and its effects are far more pervasive than most of us would be willing to acknowledge. Increasing urbanization is part of the problem, but only a small part. A larger portion of the blame lies with the unintentional effects of our best intentions: legislation and regulations to protect and educate children. Louv's hypothesis, in brief, is that we have entered a third frontier. Following the argument of America's first great historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, Louv suggests that America's frontier did indeed close in the 1890s, but it was replaced almost immediately by a second great frontier: life on farms, institutions such as scouting, and outdoor activities were, he argues, commonplace until the 1980s. But, just as Turner's thesis begins with the 1890 census, Louv finds the 1990 census an equally useful demarcation point, for beginning with this census, separate farm records are no longer kept, due to the decline in the rural population.

Thank God for Richard Louv who has written what should be required reading in all high school and college level classes. *Last Child in the Woods, Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, is a superb study of an essential yet fading resource, one that we can't afford to lose. Part science, part self-help and part spiritual advisory, *Last Child in the Woods* takes a hard look at what separation from the natural world is doing not only to the human psyche, but to our natural intelligence. There are things learned in nature, Louv posits, that cannot be learned anywhere else, not from books, or stories, or even the finest universities. Schools themselves may be partially responsible for our disenfranchisement from nature since the naturalist curriculum has been all but dropped from today's scholastic regimen. Gone are the terrariums, the aquariums and the mini biospheres. Math and sciences such as microbiology and chemical engineering have taken center stage while naturalists have become the poor second cousins. And yet, where would the world be without naturalists like John Muir or Teddy Roosevelt? Without state and national parks is where had Muir and Roosevelt not had the contact with the natural world they'd both experienced as

children. According to Louv, in today's world we're "continually on the alert." • As more of the natural world is lost to pavement, the incessant images pouring from our televisions and computers and iPhones have become our constant companions. Louv doesn't point a single finger, but a dozen. He considers various factors such as suburban sprawl which takes away the number of places a child can find solitude in nature, as well as a hyper-vigilant society that is always worried about where our children are and whether any harm may befall them.

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