

The lazy, hazy days of summer are the perfect time to immerse your family in nature. The weather's fine, school's out and the great outdoors is the optimal playground.

Formal lessons may be finished for now, but that doesn't mean your child has stopped learning. Summer holidays can be the perfect opportunity to teach children about conservation. There are countless ways to do so, all involving a high degree of fun, which, as every parent knows, eases the learning process.

Below is a comprehensive list of what you can do for and with your kids during the hot season. Be it bugs, plants, archaeology, critters or stunning vistas you seek, Ontario has it all. Teaching your kids to love and conserve their world means it will all still be here for their children to experience.

★ means highly recommended

PETERBOROUGH

Learn about all creatures great and small at the Riverview Park and Zoo (www.puc.org/files/zoo/zoo.html, 705-748-9301, ext. 2304), just north of downtown Peterborough. Meet the keeper at 1 p.m. throughout July and August. The zoo also houses the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (www.kawarthaturtle.org, 705-748-9301, ext. 2303), a unique facility that tends to injured turtles and is involved in fighting their decline.

★ **CAMP KAWARTHA** (www.campkawartha.ca, 705-652-3860 or 1-866-532-4597) operates as an environmental education centre for 10 months of the year and, since 1921, has fostered environmental awareness in young campers during the other two months. The camp is on Clear Lake, 26 kilometres north of Peterborough.

Camp Kawartha offers numerous co-ed camping programs, all of which involve nature-based and outdoor education, including on-site teaching of sustainable living practices. A straw-bale solar-powered greenhouse, wind turbines and solar panels are part of the facilities. Sessions range from one-week day camps for children age 5 to 8, to two-week wilderness canoe trips for campers age 14 to 16. Four-day nature camps for kids age 7 to 14 are run in conjunction with Ontario Nature.

TORONTO

★ **THE TORONTO ZOO** (www.torontozoo.com, 416-392-5900) is a great place to start your wildlife observations. The zoo's Adopt-A-Pond Wetland Conservation Programme (www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond) provides teachers, students and community groups with information, resources and educational opportunities to conserve, restore and even create wetland habi-

tats. You and your children can also take part in the Ontario Turtle Tally by noting turtle sightings and reporting them by entering your observations into the on-line database, the purpose of which is to record information on Ontario turtles, including species at risk. Adopt-A-Pond is also the provincial coordinator of Environment Canada's Frogwatch program, which strives to help save amphibians in Ontario. The program will teach you to identify frogs visually and by their calls. To receive a Frogwatch-Ontario package, e-mail aap@TorontoZoo.ca, call 416-392-5999 or visit the Frogwatch-Ontario website (www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/FrogwatchOntario.asp).

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don (www.toronto.ca/don/index.htm) is a citizens' group sponsored by the City of Toronto that is working to create a clean, green and accessible Don River watershed. You and your kids can participate in a wide variety of related volunteer activities, including the community stewardship program, which divides volunteers into teams that remove invasive non-native plant species, collect litter, maintain bird boxes, build habitat brush bundles and monitor site conditions. The city also has family tree planting days, for which it provides everything you need, including gloves and shovels.

THE TORONTO BAY INITIATIVE (www.torontobay.net, 416-598-2277), a nonprofit organization dedicated to a cleaner,

greener Toronto, organizes boat tours, family fishing days and other events. Restoration work, tree planting and weeding are just a few of the volunteer activities available. The website includes an on-line volunteer form.

THE CITY OF TORONTO (www.toronto.ca/parks/index.htm, 416-338-0338) has a website well worth exploring. It has links to summer camps and camping facilities in the GTA, environmental programs for children, cycling maps and discovery walks, information about the tree advocacy planting program and a guide to Riverdale Farm, found in the heart of the city and open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visitors can talk to the farmer during daily feedings and kids can become junior farmers. Call 416-961-8787 for information or to volunteer with The Friends of Riverdale Farm.

★ **THE TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (TRCA)** (www.trca.on.ca/learning_education/youth_community, 416-661-6600) runs the Boyd Archaeological Field School for Ontario high school students — pricey at \$895, but fascinating. Now in its 30th year, the program takes place from August 7 to 26 at the Claremont Conservation Field Centre. The course includes an introduction to archaeological theory, archaeological excavation, fieldwork, analysis of artifacts, the study of pre-



Photo: John Reaume

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historic Aboriginal cultures, experience in Aboriginal uses of the environment, flintknapping and other lost skills. Students excavate an archaeological site in the east end of the Greater Toronto Area.

The TRCA also runs an exhaustive program of educational activities and learning opportunities for students during the school year, and provides a green list of places to visit in the GTA, along with summer activities relating to the outdoors and the environment.

OTTAWA

THE CITY OF OTTAWA (www.ottawa.ca/residents/parks_recreation/index_en.html, 613-580-2782) runs a family-oriented Adopt-a-Park program that focuses on park and roadway conservation. The minimum commitment is road and parkway cleaning twice a year, but volunteers are encouraged to do as much as they wish and can participate in tree plantings, the restoration of park

furniture, and inspection and reporting of park vandalism.

THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE (www.nature.ca, 613-566-4700 or 1-800-263-4433) includes on its website a calendar of activities and visitor information, and lists details of fun, hands-on programs for tots to learn about nature. As well, the scientists at the museum and their partners have completed the Rideau River Biodiversity Project. Its website (www.nature.ca/rideau/index-e.html) has detailed descriptions of conservation activities that you can undertake, either on your own or as part of a community group, all in the name of helping the river.

SUDBURY

SCIENCE NORTH (www.sciencenorth.on.ca, 705-523-4629 or 1-800-461-4898) — offering everything from tours deep underground to a walk in the lush tropical butterfly gallery — is a great place to learn about our planet. Kids get to visit and learn about ▶

