

Be a Citizen Naturalist



from the **TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN**

Every day our relationship with nature, or the lack of it, influences our lives. This has always been true. But in the 21st century, our survival — or thrive — will require a transformative framework for that relationship, a reunion of humans with the rest of nature.”

Richard Louv,
The Nature Principle



All it takes to be a citizen naturalist is a love of nature and the desire to learn and engage with the natural world.

Author Richard Louv appeared on the national scene in 2005 like a latter-day prophet. His best-selling book, *Last Child in the Woods*, was a wake-up call that today's children are losing out on the personal experiences with nature that most of us adults knew in our formative years. At about the same time, the Arbor Day Foundation was responding to this phenomenon — this need — by joining with the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation to introduce the Nature Explore program, including its research-based Nature Explore Classrooms for young children.

But adults need nature experiences, too. Louv has recognized this need in his later book, *The Nature Principle*. He says the principle is “that a reconnection to the natural world is fundamental to human health, well-being, spirit, and survival.” Blogger Jill Glover observed in *This City Life*, “... my generation spends more time loving our iPhones and drinking craft beers at a hip new downtown pub than hugging trees.” Both Louv and Glover have illustrated that there is too often a disconnect between adults and nature. This is true not only

for the relatively young adults of the millennial generation, but also for more senior citizens who have fond memories of their connection with nature but have lost this connection as they've traveled through life.

Bulletin No. 85 shows why reconnecting with nature is important and how easy it can be to tap into the myriad opportunities to be what we call the “citizen naturalist.” Some call it “citizen scientist,” but by whatever name, it means engaging with nature and natural resources without this being one's profession. The point is, whether a loner nurturing a desire to learn and be outdoors or an outdoor-oriented extrovert looking for more social experiences, there are many ways to reconnect with nature, find outdoor enjoyment, and benefit both self and society.

READ ABOUT:

- The need for citizen naturalists
- The many opportunities available and how to become involved