

Children and Nature



What does the empirical evidence tell us –
and how can we use it to make the case?



LAST CHILD
IN THE
WOODS

SAVING OUR
CHILDREN
FROM
NATURE-
DEFICIT
DISORDER

RICHARD LOUV

How childhood has changed

Daily Mail
24 HOURS A DAY

JANE CLARKE WEBCHAT
Put your diet dilemma to a leading nutritionist, Jane Clarke...[more](#)

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How children lost the right to generations

By DAVID DERBYSHIRE - [More by this author »](#)
Last updated at 01:03am on 15th June 2007

Comments (23)

When George Thomas was eight he walked everywhere

It was 1926 and his parents were unable to afford the fun of a bike and he regularly walked six miles to his favourite supervision.

Fast forward to 2007 and Mr Thomas's eight-year-old grandson has none of that freedom.

He is driven the few minutes to school, is taken by car to the swimming pool and can roam no more than 300 yards from home.

MOTHER: Vicky aged eight in 1979 was allowed to walk to the swimming pool alone half a mile away.

SON: Ed, now eight is only allowed to walk on his own to the end of his street (300 yards).

GRANDFATHER: Jack aged eight in 1950. Able to walk about one mile on his own to the woods.

GREAT-GRANDFATHER: George aged eight in 1919. Allowed to walk six miles to go fishing

Map labels: Chapeltown, Grenoside, Concord Park, SHEFFIELD, Moorgate, Treeton, Orgreave, Beighton, Rother Valley, ROTHERHAM, M1, A630

Over-protective parents keep
their kids indoors more



Kids are not outdoors so much these days

- More screens
- More gadgets
- More TV channels
- The Internet
- More comfortable bedrooms

↓
It's easier and more appealing than it used to be for kids to be indoors



Kids are not outdoors so much these days

- More traffic
- Fewer parks & green spaces
- Larger schools & catchments
so friends live further away
- Greater fear of crime
- More media scare mongering



It's harder and less appealing than it used to be for kids to be outdoors



- Parents work longer hours
- Longer commutes



Kids spend more time in school and child care



Kids are not outdoors so much these days

They call this spring, Mum,
and they have one down here
every year.

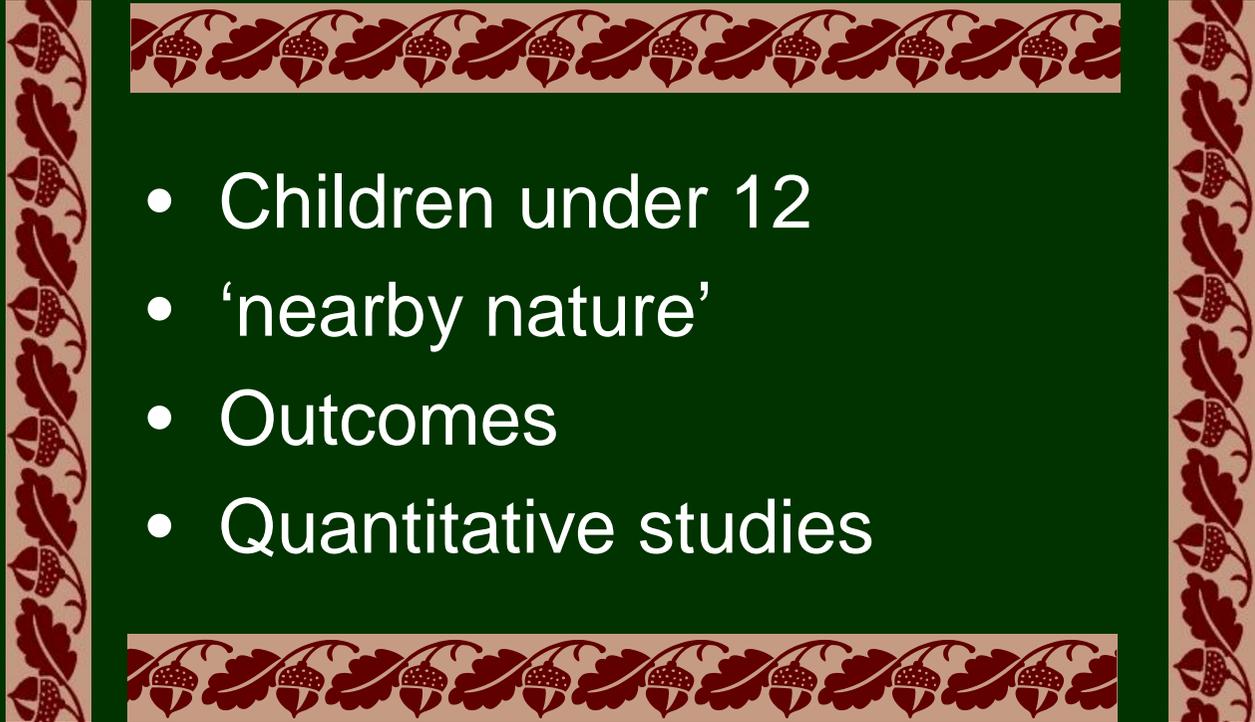
Letter from evacuated child, 1940

What I will cover

- My approach to the project
- Findings
- Some thoughts on evidence
- What is happening now?



Framing the project

- 
- Children under 12
 - 'nearby nature'
 - Outcomes
 - Quantitative studies

Values & understandings

- The competent child
- Our responsibility for the planet
- Learning for life

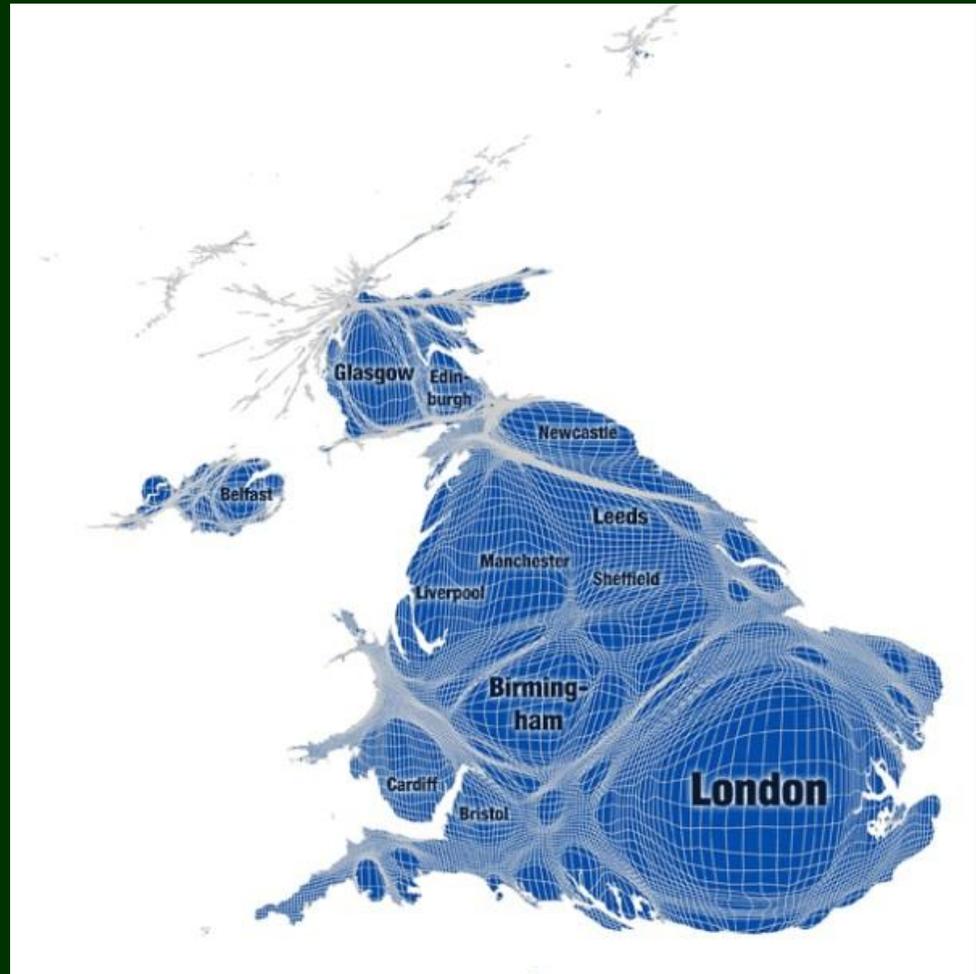


Dragon's Den



London context

- Population of children under 12:
1.1 million
- Child poverty:
30%
- Ethnic mix of children:
39% BAME
- Population density:
5,000/sq km
Edinburgh: 1844
Glasgow: 3330



What do we mean by 'nature'?



Places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate.

- Smaller sites may have untapped potential
- The importance of species diversity may be overemphasised



**SOWING
THE SEEDS**

RECONNECTING LONDON'S CHILDREN WITH NATURE
NOVEMBER 2011

LONDON
NATURE



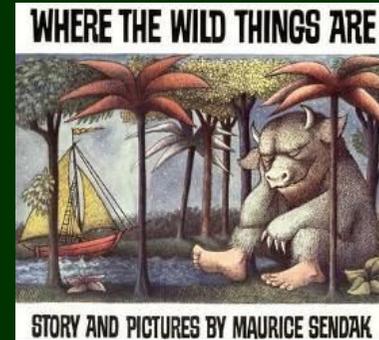
Literature review: my approach



- Systematically search for relevant studies
 - ~~Keyword search of bibliographic databases~~
- Analyse selected studies
- Evaluate evidence for each benefit



Claims with good support



SOWING THE SEEDS
RECONNECTING LONDON'S CHILDREN WITH NATURE
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LONDON PLAYERS

Claims with good support



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Parent of child
who attended
Forest School

Matilda attended Forest School last term and absolutely LOVED every minute of the experience. She is not naturally very bold or fearless and definitely someone who prefers indoor activities, but her experience really helped her love of the great outdoors.



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LONDON
Museum of Childhood



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LONDON
MINDS
MATTER



Head teacher of a
children's centre

Our outdoor space had fallen into disrepair, and was the site of a lot of challenging behaviour. After the refurbishment it became a calming environment. Having seen the changes, I'm now more convinced of the romantic idea of children having an innate affinity with nature.

Leon,
aged 9

Everyone's always following me if I'm angry and asks me about things. I can't say then. I feel like hitting someone. I want to be on my own until later. If I'm in the bit where the trees are, at the back and no-one comes, that's all I want. I'll talk to you after.

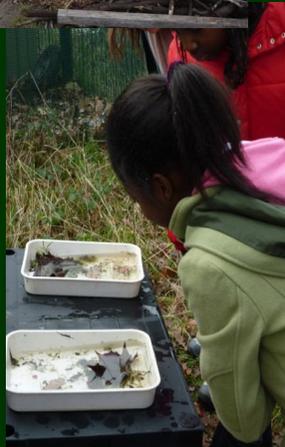


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LONDON
Museum of London

“Playful”



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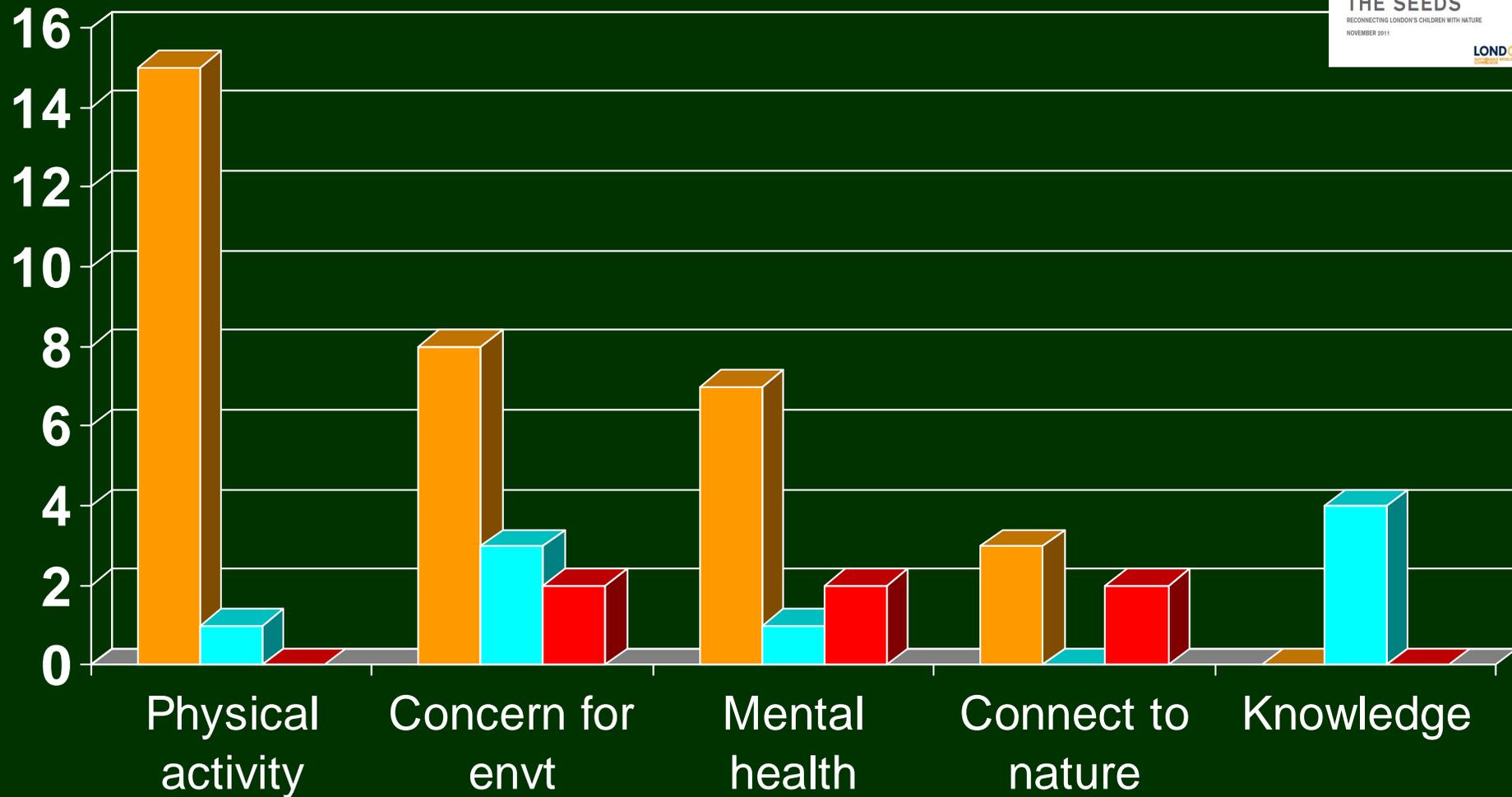
Engagement style & outcomes



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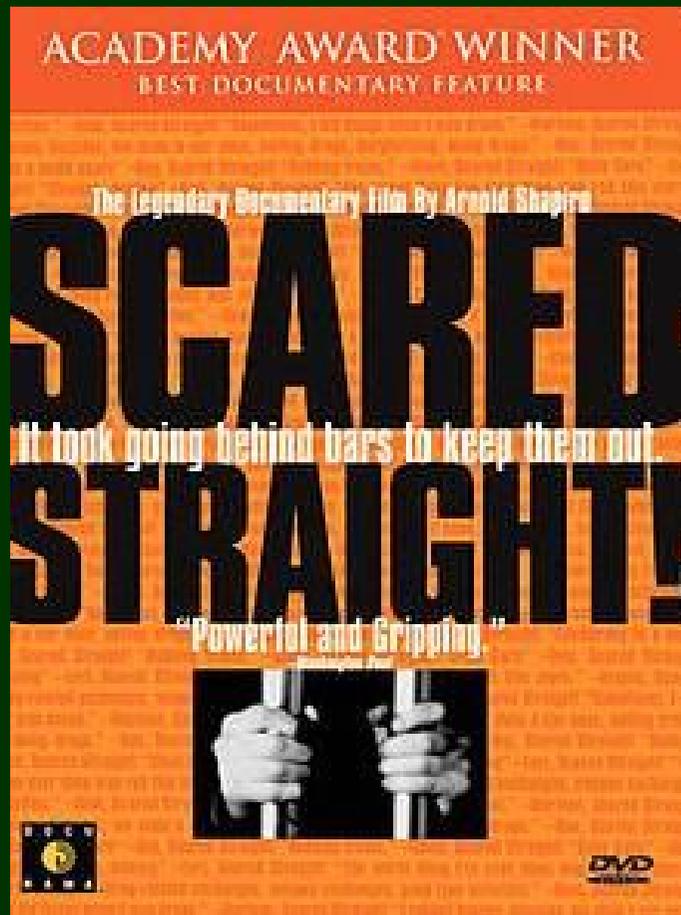
More playful Less playful Both/unclear

Why a systematic review?



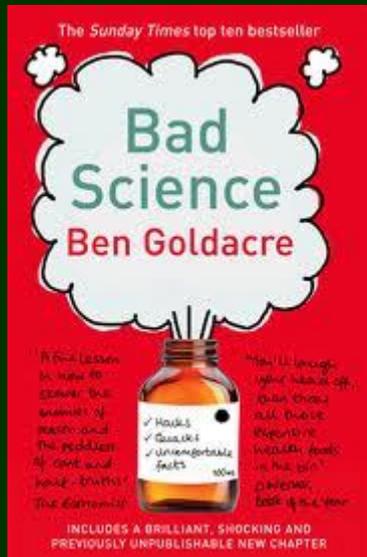
Prof Helen Roberts
(from Roberts and
Petticrew, 2006)

Systematic reviews are unlike “reviews of the studies I could find”, “reviews of the authors I admire”, “reviews which leave out inconveniently inconclusive findings or findings I don’t like”, and “reviews which support the policy or intervention I intend to introduce”.



We conclude that programs like 'Scared Straight' are likely to have a harmful effect and increase delinquency relative to doing nothing at all to the same youths.

Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino & Buehler (2003)



- Correlation is not causation (“the sandal-tofu hypothesis”)
 - “Things can only get better”
 - Placebo effect
 - Value of longitudinal & intervention studies & importance of controls
- ‘Evidence’ is not the plural of ‘anecdote’
 - Populations, sample size & statistical significance
- Biases are everywhere
 - Subject bias
 - Observer bias
 - Publication bias



Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.

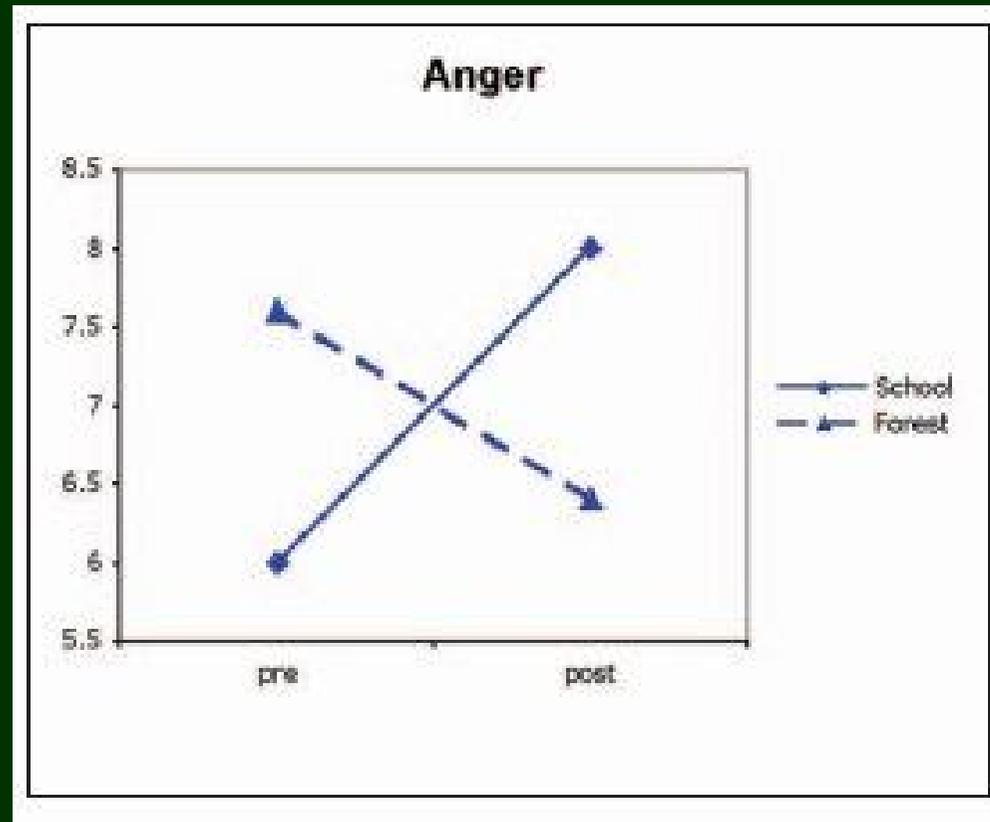
A robust study of forest school



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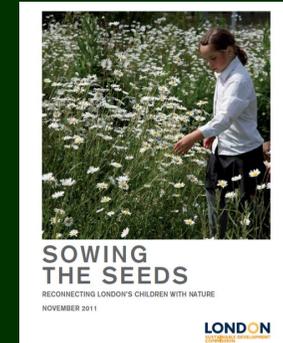
LONDON
NATURE TRUST



Forest School session, Bayonne Nursery School



Survey work

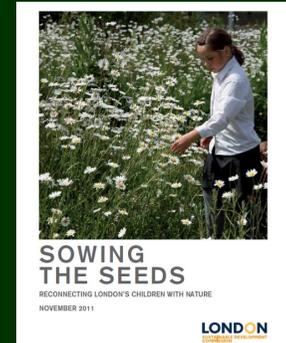


- Goal
 - Thumbnail sketches
 - Reach, cost, scalability
 - **propitiousness**

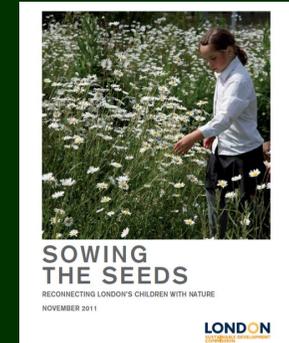


Recommendations

- Vision
- Strategy & policy
- Delivery



Vision



All children in London have **good access to sites** where they can experience nature as part of their everyday lives, AND

All children have **engaging everyday nature experiences** in such a site, beginning in their pre-school years.

Current proud supporters of this report include:

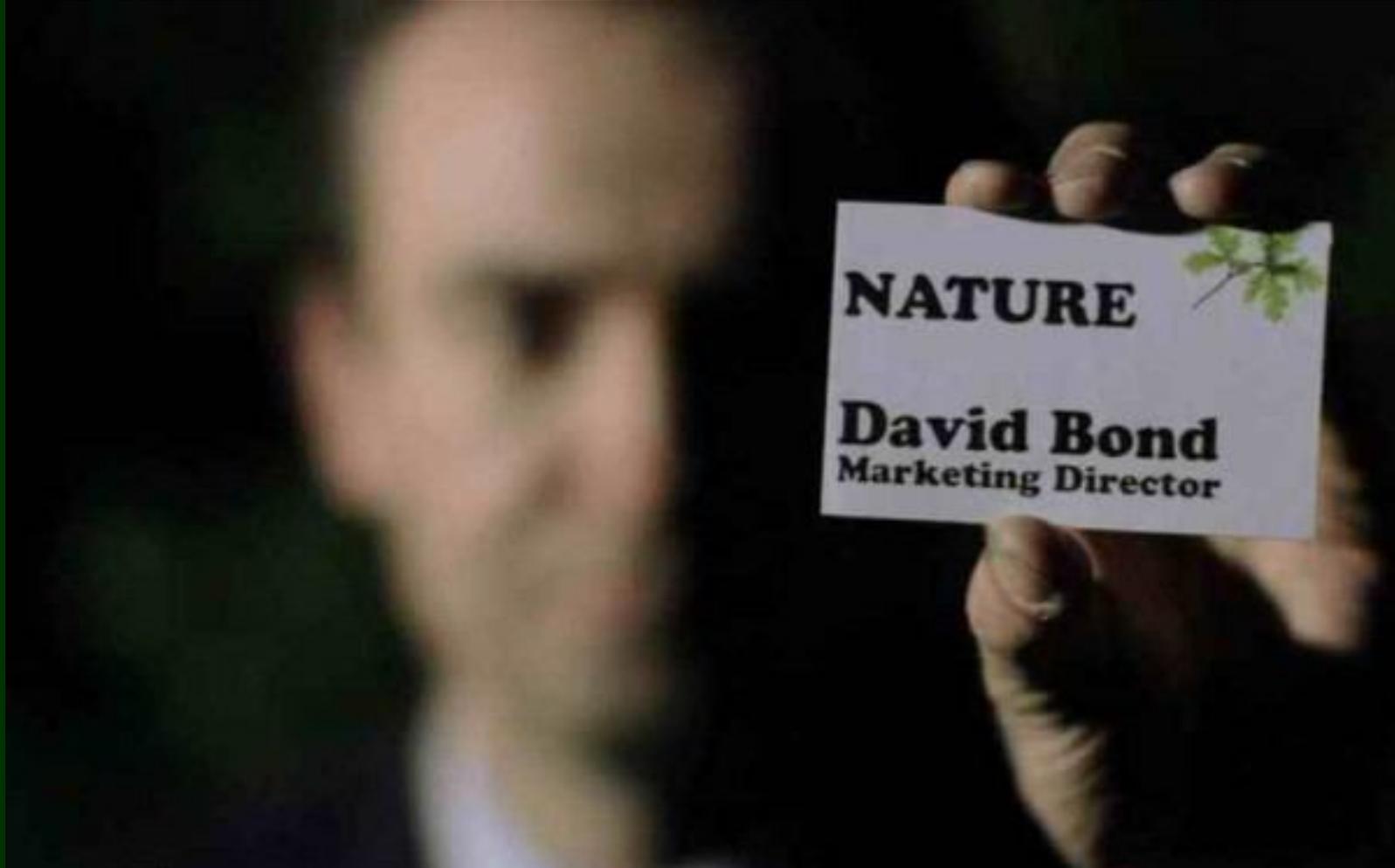


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NATURE

David Bond
Marketing Director

Why does nature need children?



Robert Pyle

... a ditch somewhere – or a creek, meadow, woodlot, or marsh... These are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin... Everybody has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches and the fields, the woods, the ravines – can teach us to care enough for all the land.

Why do children need nature?



Helle Nebelong

When the distance between all the rungs in a climbing net or a ladder is exactly the same, the child has no need to concentrate on where he puts his feet. This lesson cannot be carried over to all the knobbly and asymmetrical forms, with which one is confronted throughout life.