



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition
Supported By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



September 9, 2009 – Make Some Time for Nature

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Have you stopped to notice the caterpillars on the bushes lately? If you said no, you are not alone!

I found a funny guy with long yellow hairs and black spikes (think teased 80's rock band hair) the other day on a bush... he was so fascinating that I had to stop and look closer, even take a few pictures with my cell phone so I could look him up later (it will become a Spotted Apatelodes Moth). People do look at me a little strange when I do this kind of thing, but really – spending time in nature and marveling at its wonders is great for your health and well-being!

Did you see the great shower of “shooting stars” recently? Have you noticed the goldenrod is blooming in beautiful yellow clusters in fields and roadsides?

If not, I encourage you to pull out your calendar right now and block off some time for yourself and your family to get out in nature!

Kids need “free play” – unstructured, imaginative play to develop emotionally and cognitively. Spending time outdoors can provide this! And I am going a step farther here – adults need it too!

Exploring a natural area helps kids and adults feel more connected to the world they live in and promotes relaxation. Connecting with living creatures leads to a deeper appreciation and understanding for wild places.

Centre County residents have many options to visit wild places and connect with the natural world, without going very far! Here are some ideas to try:

- **Visit a state park:** Enjoy kayaking, geo-caching, and recreational walking trails. Visit www.visitPAparks.com for information on local parks.
- **Borrow a field guide:** Head to a nearby regional park to see what plants and critters you can find and recognize. Local places like Spring Creek Park or Stan Yoder Preserve are great for this!
- **Grab a patch of grass:** Even if you don't have a backyard, make your own fun! Find an ant and follow it. Find a patch of grass and study a 1 foot square – what lives there?
- **Visit Tudek Park Butterfly Garden:** Enjoy the beautiful plants and flowers and watch for insects as you explore. Take a camera and then visit www.bugguide.net to identify what you see.
- **Visit Millbrook Marsh Nature Center:** Walk on the boardwalk, look at the beaver dam, or watch for the great blue heron! Visit www.crpr.org for information on great Family Fun Hikes and Adult Walk programs too!

- **Visit the Raptors at Shavers Creek:** Walk through the Raptor Center and see these amazing birds up close! Visit www.shaverscreek.org for information. When you get home, learn more about helping wild animals at www.wildaboutanimals.net
- **Visit a local farm:** Learn where your food comes from and the importance of buying local. Visit www.pasafarming.org for more information.
- **Keep a Nature Journal:** Writing down the things you see, sketching them, or doing rubbings of leaves and grasses is a great way to record your nature explorations.

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