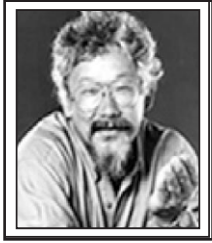


*Science Matters*

# Get outside, it's good for you

When your mom told you to go outside and play – she really did know what was best for you. Just being outdoors or having access to the natural world has been proven to have physical and mental health benefits. And new research has now found that the more diverse and vibrant an ecosystem is, the healthier it is for us.

by  
David  
Suzuki  
with Faisal  
Moola



One of my personal favourite places in the world is Haida Gwaii – the Queen Charlotte Islands – off the coast of British Columbia. The diversity of life there in the cold nutrient-rich waters, on the shorelines and in the old-growth forests, is simply astonishing. I'm hardly alone. Lodges and retreats are popping up all along B.C.'s pristine mid and north coast as people search for places to get away from the stress of their everyday lives.

People gravitate to these kinds of places, they usually say, because they are beautiful, peaceful, or relaxing. Sometimes they will venture as far as calling experiences with these ecosystems uplifting, moving – even spiritual. For others, it's a feeling that's difficult to describe in words, but being in nature just somehow makes them feel better.

Although many people may not realize it, there's actual *biological value* in having experiences with nature, value that is measurable and quantifiable. It's long been established that general health, mental fatigue and physical injury all recover faster when patients have access to natural areas.

Studies have shown, that surgery patients recover more quickly when they have views of natural landscapes outside their windows, rather than bricks and concrete.

Some people attribute this connection with nature to the perceived benefits of having access to fresh air and fewer distractions. But it actually goes much deeper. Famed Harvard ecologist E. O. Wilson calls this connection to the natural world *biophilia*. It's a term he coined and it simply means that he believes humans have an innate kinship with other living things.

So I'm sure Dr. Wilson wasn't the least bit surprised by a recent

study published in the science journal *Biology Letters*. The study found that the psychological benefits of urban greenspaces increase with the diversity of life found in them. Researchers interviewed more than 300 park-goers in the medium-sized city of Sheffield, England, and compared their answers to an analysis of the species richness, or biodiversity, of their parks.

They found that while the overall size of a park influenced the visitor's perception of how it made them feel, even more important was the diversity of life. Bigger parks made people feel better, yes. But species-rich parks were even more beneficial. In fact, the researchers report that visitors to the greenspaces were actually able to consciously perceive differences in species diversity – especially with plants.

As it turns out, when it comes to our health and well-being not all parks are created equal. Simply providing a grass field, for example, is likely to be far less beneficial than a natural area with a greater diversity of plant and animal life. We now know that humans are able to, consciously or otherwise, judge the overall diversity and vibrancy of greenspaces. What's more, the more diverse and vibrant those ecosystems are, the greater their value to humanity in terms of our own personal health and well being.

With three quarters of Canadians now living in urban areas, we must hope that our city planners and municipal politicians are paying attention to this kind of research. It underscores the need to both protect our most diverse ecosystems, and to design our cities to have larger and more green spaces. Ultimately, our health depends on it.

good citizens to help those who are not able to beat their addiction. No one close to me lives in the crack user world, and I can't claim to understand it, but I would like to do anything I can to help. That is why I am a supporter of POSSE. As a Mom, as a business leader and someone who values helping others, it is the least I can do.

Sincerely,  
Lois Fraser



**PARENTAL GUIDANCE:** Parents guide a young student to the first day of classes at Robert Little on Tuesday. - *Matthew Reid photo*

## Much law, little justice

The big news story last week was the Ontario Court of Appeal's decision to acquit Steven Truscott of the murder of schoolmate Lynne Harper. He was not declared "innocent" probably because of the time factor since the murder.

I think I remember the original trial. I recall my mother and father discussing the case. It interested me because I was about the same age as Truscott. His death sentence came as quite a shock to me because of that. I couldn't believe that someone that young could be sentenced to hang. But that was the law of those times.

Once his sentence had been reduced (?) to life in prison, Truscott faded from my thoughts. I was free to enjoy my high school and college years, then embark on a career. Recently, though, I've been thinking about how terrible those years must have been for him.

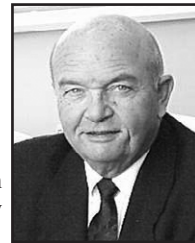
In the intervening years I've read quite a bit about the Truscott case. I remember when he was paroled to an unidentified location in Southwest Ontario. Years later that city was identified as Guelph. By then I was fairly positive Truscott was not the killer he had originally been made out to be.

I admit that most of my information came from books on the Truscott case and from what I read in the newspapers. Superficial, perhaps, but the evidence quoted by informed sources convinced me that Truscott had been rushed through a court process that was frantic to close the case. And yes, I have heard the saying: "If you don't read newspapers you are uninformed, if you do you're misinformed. But public opinion was a factor in the final disposition.

The recent court decision indicated that Goderich OPP overlooked or ignored other suspects in the area. Pedophilia was not a word that was used much in the late 60s. I certainly had never heard it and was later on surprised to learn there were so many bona fide suspects in a small town like

### The Way I See It

with  
Mike O'Leary



Clinton.

Residents of Clinton wanted action so the pressure on the police must have been overpowering. This is not to say that the police should not have done a more thorough investigation because they should have. OPP commissioner Fantino recently defended the officers who conducted the initial investigation.

I smiled when I read that. Backing your subordinates publicly is one of the first lessons taught in business courses. I'm equally sure that should Fantino discover there was shoddy police work, and be able to prove it, you will hear more about the subject.

In order to understand the emotions of the day you have to understand those times. Violent crimes were rare and only the most horrendous were given much press coverage. Crime happened, of course, but it was equally confined to the rougher areas of cities.

Crimes like child abuse and rape were seldom reported. It's hard to believe but there was a sense of shame associated with anything of a sexual nature. Often times they would be handled within the family.

Perhaps the thing I most admired about Truscott was his dogged determination to clear his name. The easiest thing for him to do would have to lived his life out in relative obscurity. Instead, he chose to fight the injustice done to him in the glare of public opinion.

I was surprised, and disappointed, when the Supreme Court turned down his appeal 40 years ago. Even at that time there seemed to be solid indications that cast doubt on the legitimacy of the conviction. In fact it is reported

that one man, accused by his adult daughters of sexual assault,

had a copy of that Supreme Court transcript in his possession. Nothing especially damning in that but certainly an indication that more investigation was warranted.

And so for the next 40 years Truscott battled on. In the depths of this soul there must have been times when he would totter on the edge of the abyss of despair and frustration. To know you are innocent and not be able to prove it must have been excruciating. Somehow he got through it and ultimately was victorious although I imagine relief that his nightmare was over was probably a more realistic emotion.

So now the question is who really murdered Lynne Harper? Was it one of the many pedophiles who were living in and around Clinton during those days? We may never know. The case is now almost 60 years old. Some suspects have died, others moved on, even the officers involved in the original investigation have long since retired or passed away.

The Harpers thought they knew who had killed their daughter. I think it's important for the police to try and re-open this case. Not that I believe there's much of a chance of solving it after all these years. Certainly not to re-open old wounds for the family or the community.

I think the Harpers deserve a maximum effort on the police's part to solve this case. This little girl was murdered by someone and society has an obligation to her. An obligation to show she mattered.

Lynne Harper would have been around 60 years old today. All of the joys and sorrows of her life were snuffed out that tragic summer's day a lifetime ago. Someone has to be held responsible.

The law has cleared Steven Truscott. Lynne Harper deserves justice.

## POSSE supporter says...

*Continued from page 6*

for safer drug information kits to prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, to assist users in being safer (and perhaps be alive to quit using one day). Others may disagree. Either way, please note that POSSE has never received taxpayers' money for their safer crack use information kits. The materials are donated

I believe that it is our duty as