

Connecting With Nature This Summer

As summer approaches, most young Islanders are getting excited about their break and the many new and exciting opportunities this season provides. For many, summer is marked by trips to the beach, soccer league, and computer camp but in earlier times, summer was a much simpler event. It was a time to get out and explore the countryside, see wildflowers in bloom, go fishing, or simply enjoy the cool shade and quiet sounds of the forest.

In today's world, we have largely lost our direct connection with nature. Instead we surround ourselves with cell phones, email, TV, and other distractions; but there are many opportunities to make some new connections and strengthen our ties with the natural world.

For instance, July 4 - 12, 2009 is National Fishing Week in Canada. Island streams and rivers are among the most productive in Canada, supporting several different angling species. A day spent fishing in a pond or stream is a relaxing and exciting way to connect with nature as you anticipate the nibble of a hungry fish, or watch swallows swooping across the pond to catch flying insects. The province's new \$10 Family Fishing License allows you, your spouse and your family to enjoy up to five days of angling at a very affordable price.

A walk in the forest is another way to make the nature connection. June and early July are the peak periods for many forest flowers. Their range of colours and shapes combined with the smell of rich spring earth and the calls of nesting birds add a special aspect to any forest excursion. There are many different nature trails available to the public. The newly opened Dromore Wildness trail, the trails at the Macphail Ecological Woods Project (www.macphailwoods.org) property in Orwell or the six Demonstration Woodlots (www.gov.pe.ca/forestry/demo) make excellent day trips for young and old. Be sure to wear appropriate clothing and take along some water and insect spray.

The PEI Model Forest Network Partnership (www.peiforests.ca) is sponsoring a field day on July 18, 2009 in the Richmond area. This day will allow people to get out into the woods and learn more about Island forests, the range of products and services forests provide to our environment, economy and society, and how forest management techniques can help to create healthy vibrant forests that can meet any number of goals. The day is free of charge and goes rain or shine.

The Allisary Creek and Forest Hill Wildlife Management Areas have trails along the ponds and streams to allow visitors to see a wide range of waterfowl that nest in or migrate through the wetlands. Both areas offer eagle viewing and a chance to see muskrats and other aquatic animals. Forest Hills also has observation platforms recreated around Whitlocks Pond to provide a close up view of waterfowl, while the Mt Hope Observation Tower provides a panoramic view of the entire landscape.

There are many more places to reconnect with nature from the trails of the PEI National Parks in Greenwich to the Black Marsh Trail near North Cape. All of them are designed to share the joy of nature with you, and your friends and family in an easy and inexpensive way. So take some time

this summer and reconnect with the natural world that makes our Island such a beautiful place to live and work.