

Losing yourself in nature

by Mark Pavilons

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.

John Muir

Some of us walk in the rain and marvel at Mother Nature. Others just get wet!

But it seems most of us get it when it comes to the beauty of nature and the outdoors.

Bill Shakespeare once said that just a single touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

In a way, we're intruders, not unlike the noxious invasive weeds in our gardens. Mother Nature spent billions of years perfecting her creation and much of it remains untouched and unspoiled, as when the Earth was new.

Patience, she has it in spades!

I'm sure if we all closed our eyes and tuned in, we could hear Nature laughing in the sunshine at the dawn of each new day.

There's no question that our planet is a beautiful green-blue ball flying through space. All of the right ingredients came together in a cosmic stew to create one heck of a concoction.

Every mountain stream and every blade of grass is seemingly perfect. Nature is all powerful in its subtlety and design.

Humans have been enjoying the great outdoors long before we moved indoors.

Maybe that's when we lost touch.

But our connection with nature is buried deep within our ancestral DNA.

A recent survey by the Nature Conservancy of Canada found that 9 out of 10 Canadians are happier when they spend time in nature.

That may not sound earth-shattering, but it lends credence to all of our efforts in terms of conservation and preservation.

The NCC has launched its Landmark Campaign, intended to inspire Canadians to explore their own relationships with nature.

The Nature and Me survey, released by NCC, reveals a growing disconnect between Canadians and nature. Canadians feel happier, healthier and more productive when they are connected to nature and yet, 74 per cent say that it is simply easier to spend time indoors and 66 percent say they spend less time in nature today than in their youth.

The Landmark Campaign is the largest charitable campaign for conservation in Canadian history. This \$750-million campaign will double the land and water conserved by NCC to more than 6 million acres, including 500 new conservation projects. To inspire Canadians, NCC has also curated a pop-up art exhibit called Nature and Me. The exhibit features nature photography and reflections from notable Canadians.

We are at a turning point, said John Lounds, NCC's president and CEO. It's time to talk boldly about the tangible benefits nature provides, and the urgency and importance of protecting it. Nature is Canada's gift to the world and we have an opportunity, perhaps more than any other country, to make conservation count. It will take young and old alike, working together, to protect the land, water and wildlife so unique to Canada. That's what the Landmark Campaign is about.

NCC also takes care of Happy Valley Forest in King Township, one of the largest remaining intact forests on the Oak Ridges Moraine. It's a refuge for more than 110 breeding bird species, and critical to the survival of nationally significant species such as Acadian flycatcher and cerulean warbler.

NCC helps protect some 780 acres (315 hectares) of the forest, ensuring the survival of future old-growth forests and species that rely on this habitat on the Oak Ridges Moraine in the midst of surrounding development. It is the largest remaining intact forest of its kind on the moraine.

The Happy Valley Forest also protects the headwaters of streams that flow north to Lake Simcoe and south to Lake Ontario.

This gem, in the heart of King, beckons. It's a must-see and this time of year is perfect for a hike in this wonderland.

You can really get lost in the forest, surrounded by towering trees and animals of all descriptions. It's really like stepping back in time, thousands of years in fact. One of the most significant landforms in southern Ontario, the Oak

Ridge Moraine was formed 12,000 years ago by advancing and retreating glaciers.

Word has it that native artifacts, dating back 10,000 years, have been found in the area.

If you're looking to connect, or reconnect with Nature, this is the place.

Caledon also has some great trails to explore. The Nature and Me survey also revealed that more than 80 per cent worry that accessible natural areas will not be there for future generations to enjoy. And 94 per cent of Canadians are aware of the benefits that spending time in nature can bring to their physical and mental health.

It's no coincidence that we're soothed and healed by nature. We are part of it, inseparable at times, from the world that created us.

The fact we share elements and fragments of DNA with our planet is no accident.

We don't really have to explain it in scientific terms. It just feels good, and right.
Some may like the city skyline, but to me, there's nothing like listening to the leaves chatter among themselves, kissed by the wind.
Seeing a woodpecker search for food is simply amazing. Those babbling brooks are actually quite wise in their choice of words.
What Mother Nature created, dedicated men and women have preserved.
Lose yourself in nature today! Your body and mind with thank you for it!