

Have you ever wondered what would happen

- if children were given day-long, year-long opportunities to be in nature and explore wildness?
- if educators recognised how daring and imaginative children become in the wild outdoors?
- if educators and children, working together, used their classroom as a studio for the exploration and exchange of fascinating ideas and questions?

In this book you will find some answers to these questions – and to many more.

It has been written by educators who participated in the *Early Learning in Nature* project, working with children from three to nine years old.

This 312-page book brings the outcomes of their work, over the four years of the project, to a wider audience, making their learning, and their children's learning, visible for others to learn from. It is for everyone who cares for the natural world and wants children to do the same; for educators and leaders in education willing to adventure beyond their classroom walls, for parents, for guardians of wild places, for policymakers and politicians.

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## Learning to Learn in Nature

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*Learning to Learn in Nature* is about young children learning in wild places, and educators learning with them. It is about being in connection with nature and bringing that connection back to the classroom. But it is also about something more, something that is seen very clearly when children are given the freedom to explore the wild outdoors on their own terms, with daring and imagination. It is about learning as a process of continuous enquiry: an expression of insatiable fascination with the world, in which children learn together and individually, and educators and children work together to discover and make meaning. School life is part of human life, connected to its cycles, desires, dreams, wonderings. Educators best meet the interests of children when fundamental human values inform and shape their pedagogical practice. This book shows educators reaffirming their values, and discovering what they can do with them. It shows how, in the wild outdoors, it is possible to see children and their learning more clearly, more humanely, and how educators can put this clear-sightedness to good use.

This book narrates a particular four year project in the northeast of England, in which young children and their educators discovered the woods together, and found ways of working with the fascinations that began there. We hope you will enjoy the adventures, meeting its big ideas and discoveries through the voices of those who worked with the project, through the experiences and expressions of the children, and other contributors who've followed the work.

But we hope you will also work with this book as part of a wider endeavour, in whatever your sphere of influence: the work of articulating and realising a vision of education as a place of creative and collaborative practice, where children's capacity to learn is honoured and cherished, alongside the vital freedoms and responsibilities of educators.

### Part One: Discovering the Forest

**All-Year Adventuring in Geneva Woods; The Old Forest**

### Part Two: Meeting the Unknown

**Pirates! Motorbikes and Bears; The Dinosaurs; Encountering Creatures; Hearing Children's Theories**

### Part Three: Competence and Autonomy

**Music and Butterfly Dancing; Languages of Power; Caitlin and the Witch; Jordan's Puppet Show; Eight Year Olds and Witches; Climbing Trees; No Fear! Feed the Appetite for Adventure**

### Part Four: Building a Culture Together

**Storying the Woods; Looking after the Woods; Adventure, Encounter and Storying; Ritual, Reconciliation and Connection; Alive to Beauty; Ecological Identity: Values, Principles and Practice**

### Part Five: Journeys of Change

**Nearly Dead or Really Dead? On the Road; A Journey into Listening**

