

# AWA Kids' Camp Preview



By Brittany Verbeek, *AWA Conservation Specialist*

I'm sure many of you have heard of "nature-deficit disorder," a phrase coined by Richard Louv in his 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods*. Over the years, AWA has hosted talks on the subject as well as written about it in *Wild Lands Advocate*. The term refers to people, especially children, spending less time outdoors. This disconnect from nature has resulted in many behavioural and health problems. Richard Louv provides evidence of the relationship between this disconnect and the rise of child obesity, increases in attention-deficit disorder, and increases in logged hours on household computers and televisions. To me, the good news about this kind of growing epidemic is there's a fairly simple solution that does not require medication or doctor visits.

## Get kids outdoors and in nature!

Come hang out at AWA's Wilderness Defenders Kids Day Camp. The camp's vision is to foster the campers' appreciation for nature and to inspire youth into action towards helping protect our wild water, wild lands, and wildlife. Our goal is to ensure a safe, fun atmosphere while instilling a love of being active and outdoors. The learning comes naturally - as if through osmosis - in a fun, interactive, hands-on setting. It is also meant to encourage independent thought and intellectual curiosity while at the same time cultivating relationships and team cooperation.

We are about to launch our second annual kids camp this July and August. Last year's week-long pilot program was a tremendous success with eight wonderful campers. Every camper made amazingly knowl-

edgeable presentations to their parents and AWA staff at the end of the week on a theme chosen and researched by them. The campers were one impressive group; they have continued to take their conservation messages to their schools and an occasional visit to the AWA office!

A large focus of this year's program will be on grassland ecosystem education through activities and hands on experiences. AWA campers will become little 'prairie fairies'

learning about wildlife, wetlands, grasses, and how humans and grazers impact native grasslands. Camp activities will include craft making, special guests, outdoor activities, field trips, and wilderness projects. We have several returning campers as well as some brand new to the program. I'm excited to spend time and get to know them all, and will be sure to report back in a fall *Wildlands Advocate* issue with more photos and a summary of the two awesome weeks! ▲

