



In this time of climate change, the Environmental Action Committee wants to highlight ways for each of us to connect with the natural world, to reduce stress and enhance love and prayerful concern for our environment.

An astonishing statistic was recently referred to by **Sarah Warner, author of Rooted Faith, our Lenten Study book: young people can recognize, on sight, over 200 brand name logos but fewer than a dozen plants.** Time is spent on our devices, which can be particularly harmful for children, and we are losing connection to the natural world. It is important for us to get to know our bioregion, which includes the plants, trees, animals, birds, and insects that live around us, and the landscape in which they thrive. Understanding, enjoying, and appreciating the world around us, our bioregion, can enhance our concern for doing everything we can to preserve it.

Take a walk in the park or local woods, listen for the birds, look for animals such as deer, rabbits or even bears and observe the local plants and trees. There are useful free apps such as **Pl@ntNet** that gives basic facts about the plants you see and **iNaturalist** that allows identification of plants, animals, birds, and insects.

Alistair Humphreys, a world traveler, has narrowed his focus to **microadventures**, which are short, simple, local, cheap – yet still fun, exciting, challenging, refreshing and rewarding, bringing you into touch with nature. They can include taking a moonlight walk around your neighborhood, walking in a local park at dawn or sunset, hiking in a nearby forest or camping overnight in a state park.

**Forest bathing (Shinrun-roku)** is an activity that originated with the Japanese in the 1980's, as a way to reduce tech-boom burnout and to inspire individuals to reconnect with and protect the country's forests. Researchers in the 1990s provided scientific evidence of the physiological and psychological benefits of forest bathing. Forest bathing is not just for the wilderness lover. The practice can be as simple as walking in any natural environment, consciously connecting with what is around you and it can be a meditative experience.

Earthing (also known as grounding) is another activity that can bring physiological and psychological benefits. This refers to contact with the Earth's surface electrons by walking barefoot outdoors or even sitting, working or sleeping indoors connected to conductive systems (some of them patented) that transfer energy from the ground into the body. Emerging scientific research supports the concept that the Earth's surface electrons induce multiple physiological changes of clinical significance, including better sleep, reduced pain, lower blood pressure, more stable cortisol levels and decreased cardiovascular disease.

The goal of each of these approaches is to help us, as individuals, reconnect in a meaningful way with the natural world, to appreciate the power and beauty of God's creation of which we humans are but one part.

Your Environmental Action Committee