



# Be Out There™ This Holiday Season!



National Wildlife Federation's Be Out There campaign believes that outdoor traditions - and the fresh air, sunshine, and connection with nature that come with them - adds to the enchantment of the season.



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Let's face it: It might feel a bit claustrophobic in the house at this time of year -- with the kids underfoot, relatives hovering over you, and the strain of cooking, cleaning, shopping, and buying presents. Plus -- who couldn't use a brisk walk after eating several dozen Christmas cookies?

Even though the holidays are at times hectic and overwhelming, it's the family traditions that make the season special. Often, it's the children in our lives that keep us loyal to those rituals year after year.

Childhood experts know that family traditions provide a stable foundation to help children navigate their early years. Right now, these traditions could include a nightly lighting of the menorah, a tree-trimming party, or an annual feast with friends and family.

So, if your family's only current outdoor holiday tradition is watching Dad teeter atop a ladder while stringing lights on the house, the Be Out There campaign is here to help! Here are some great ideas to weave the "nature in your neighborhood" into the holidays.

Find more ideas for outdoor traditions and a how-to video at [BeOutThere.org](http://BeOutThere.org).



## 8 Easy Ways to Create Your Own Outdoor Holiday Tradition



- 1. Walk It Off:** A simple family walk - especially after a big meal - not only helps digestion, but can spark new ways to connect with your loved ones. If you want, bring a trash bag to clean up litter along the way!
- 2. Leaf Jumping:** No need to rake the yard. Ask the kids to do it, and then they can build the biggest leaf piles imaginable. Take pictures of the ensuing champion leaf-jumping.
- 3. Get The Heart Racing:** Organize yearly family touch football or soccer games, or an old-fashioned game of tag or hide-and-seek.
- 4. Outdoor Tree-Trimming:** "Adopt" a tree in your yard or neighborhood - find out what kind it is, and decide to visit it at least once every season. Then decorate it! Instead of ornaments, use things birds would like to eat. Find out how at [greenhour.org/birdcafe](http://greenhour.org/birdcafe)
- 5. Scavenger Hunt:** Give the kids a list of natural objects to find in the yard or neighborhood - pinecones, acorns, pretty leaves - and make it a contest who can find it all first.
- 6. Decorate With Mother Nature:** Have the children use some of the pinecones and leaves they found on the scavenger hunt to create pretty centerpieces, wreaths or other holiday décor.
- 7. Christmas Bird Count:** Get outside, learn about your feathered neighbors, and help scientists monitor the health and well-being of local bird populations. Find out more at [www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/)
- 8. Say Cheese:** Document your yearly outdoor traditions with photos. You can add them to a special photo album every year, and keep it on the coffee table for guests to enjoy. Or, load them onto web albums and send the link to distant friends and relatives.

Find all the trails, parks, and other green spaces in your neighborhood!

Visit [nwf.org/naturefind](http://nwf.org/naturefind)



## 5 Tips to Stay Warm During A Cold-Weather Outdoor Adventure



OK - in much of the country, it's not bathing-suit weather. But fall and winter are still great seasons for outdoor fun. Be prepared for cold weather!

- 1. Dress in Layers:** Wear several layers of clothing and peel them off if you get too warm. The heat captured in between the layers keeps you warm. (Hint: mittens are warmer than gloves, because fingers retain more heat when they touch each other.)
- 2. Stay Dry:** Nothing chills you like wet skin. Your base layer should be made of a material that wicks sweat away from your body. Popular fabrics include polypropylene and silk. Your outermost layer should be water- and wind-proof.
- 3. Keep Head, Neck, Hands and Feet Toasty:** Your extremities let off the most heat -- so keep them wrapped with warm scarves, hats, mittens or gloves, and thick socks!
- 4. Bring a Backpack:** As you and the kids get hot on a hike or while playing outside, make sure you have a backpack to store their clothes they'll want to peel off. Or, you can clip or tie damp clothing outside your pack to help them dry). When you get to your destination, have everybody put a layer back on to stay warm when they are not moving.
- 5. Feet First:** Especially for snowy or icy conditions, get good boots that the kids can take on and off easily.
- 6.** And when you get back inside, make some **hot chocolate** to warm you up at [greenhour.org/traditions!](http://greenhour.org/traditions!) You can even prepare it before your adventure and carry it in a thermos

### MYTH BUSTER

Has anyone ever told you that if you don't bundle up, you'll catch a cold? False! You don't catch a cold by going outside in cold weather or from going outside with wet hair. **Viruses and bacteria cause colds and flu -- spread by contact with infected people -- not cold air.** Health risks of cold weather include hypothermia, which can be easily avoided if you dress smartly and use common sense.

## MAKE AN ELF HOUSE



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Santa's elves need a place to stay while making visits to your home -- in preparation for Christmas. (They tend to check in on who's been naughty or nice on Santa's behalf.) Create an elf house using the nature in your neighborhood!

### What you need:

- One clean paper ½ gallon milk or juice carton (no plastic containers)
- One brown grocery bag
- Glue
- Paint brush
- Paper plate or bowl (used for holding glue.)
- Scissors
- Natural objects (Ideas: small or large pine cones, acorns, pine needles, moss.)

### What you do:

1. Wash out the carton and let it dry thoroughly, inside and out.
2. Cut open your brown grocery bag and, with the printed side facing up, place your carton on top.
3. Then like a gift, wrap your carton tightly, but instead of tape use glue to hold the paper onto the carton. Brush the glue over each section of the carton to make sure it is fully secured.
4. Once the paper has been glued on and dried, the planning begins. Sit down with the kids and let their creativity soar!
5. Make sure you make a door for the elves. Other than that, the design is up to you and the kids. A few ideas to get you started -- windows, a chimney to keep the elves warm, shingles, or window boxes.
6. Once everything is planned, head outdoors for all your construction needs. Collect pine cones (big and small), acorns, or pieces of fallen bark. You will be amazed what your kids come up with!
7. After the Elf House has been completed you can either secure it in a tree nearby or even keep it in your house on a shelf.
8. During the month of December, remember to check your Elf House for notes from Santa and to send notes back to Santa. You could even leave special treats inside for the elves -- they may leave something in return.
9. Happy Holidays and enjoy building your own Elf House!

Craft by Julie Schneider

Participate in Wildlife Watch and let us know about the wildlife and plants where you live!

Visit [nwf.org/wildlifewatch](http://nwf.org/wildlifewatch)

