

Ranger Rick's

# Family Fun



EASY OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR HAPPY, HEALTHY FAMILIES

## 4 Common Nature Myths

# DEBUNKED!

Head outside with kids and you'll probably find yourself tempted to share advice bestowed on you when you were little. But have you ever wondered if the "wisdom" passed down by your elders is actually correct?

**Myth 1: Never put a baby bird back in its nest. The parents will pick up your scent and abandon the chick.**

Nope, they won't! While it's usually best not to disturb wildlife, most birds have a very poor sense of smell. If a nestling has fallen and you can reach the nest easily, it's fine to put the baby back in. However, check to see if the chick has its feathers. If so, it's a young bird that has already left the nest (a fledgling). Fledglings often hang out on the ground before they can fly well. Their parents stay nearby, keeping an eye out and bringing food.

**Myth 2: Don't touch a toad—you'll get warts!**

Totally false. A toad can't give you warts. Though its skin may look warty, it has nothing to do with the virus that



causes warts in humans. So it's perfectly safe to gently touch a toad.

**Myth 3: Moss always grows on the north side of tree trunks. It's a good way to find your way through the woods.**

Moss grows on all sides of tree trunks and rocks! It tends to grow where conditions are cool and moist. This is often the case on the north side, which tends to be more protected from direct sunlight. But in the woods all sides are likely to be shaded, so this clue isn't reliable.

**Myth 4: Porcupines will shoot their quills at you if you get too close.**

Porcupines do indeed use their sharp quills for defense. But the quills only

release from the porcupine's skin when contact is made with another animal. The porcupine can't launch them through the air like missiles. So don't be afraid to observe one from a short distance away.

BE OUT THERE™

## Moment



Worried you're not "outdoorsy" enough to get your kids interested in nature? Don't be! Become co-explorers and discover new things together. Spark conversation by asking open-ended questions such as, "Why do you think that bird has grass in its beak?"

[www.beoutthere.org](http://www.beoutthere.org)