

Pointers For Parents

Encouraging Kids To Explore Outdoors

(NAPSA)—Interacting with the natural world can help children develop a healthy respect for the marvels of nature. The great outdoors is one big exciting science lesson waiting to be discovered, and it is a world that kids are naturally fascinated by.

There are great ways to get kids to interact with nature. The new season of the PBS KIDS' hit series "Dinosaur Train" features a nature club theme that the kids name "The Nature Trackers," which encourages kids to get outside, get into nature and make their own discoveries. (Check local listings.) Here are a few activities from the series' new "Nature Trackers" initiative to get kids started:

- **Nature treasure hunt:** Take your child on an outdoor excursion to a natural area nearby, such as a park or backyard. Explain that the two of you are going to go on a hunt to find some items, and to make your own pictures of plants and animals—just like a real scientist. Have your child collect one item (e.g., a rock, a leaf) to help him remember the journey.

- **Collect a critter:** Before you go outside, discuss what kinds of creatures are okay to collect and observe for a few hours and then return to their habitats—and which ones should be left alone. Safe critters to collect include ants, ladybugs, beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars, earthworms and small frogs or toads.

- **Camouflage:** Ask your child to think of some ways that animals avoid being seen by other



It's easy to get kids excited about nature.

animals in the wild. Explain that some animals use a survival trick called "camouflage." Camouflage means having skin, feathers or fur that matches the color of a creature's natural surroundings (or "habitat"). Show photographs of some animals that blend into their surroundings, such as the walking stick insect, cryptic frog and leaf-mimic katydid.

- **Join the "Nature Trackers Club":** Another great way to get your kids excited about nature is to have them join Dinosaur Train's "Nature Trackers Club"! The Jim Henson Company's Nature Tracker initiative offers a downloadable guidebook, activity challenges, newsletters and more. By going to the parent's page on PBS KIDS at www.PBSKIDS.org/dinosaurtrain, grown-ups can print out the guidebook, which includes activities and membership instructions. Kids can be real Nature Trackers with Buddy, Shiny, Tiny and Don, who are all looking for new ways to explore the world around them. They'll learn to respect nature, observe creatures and plants, and collect natural objects.