

It's no longer just a walk in the park

“[Interconnection within nature] reaches beyond the simple knowledge transmission of social-ecological interactions traditionally offered at educational institutions... It is not just contact with nature but the nature of the contact that matters most.”

Planetary Health Alliance Education Framework (2021)

Harvard School of Public Health



Go Slow for a Mo' Trail Watsons Bay

What is the link between nature connection and increases in sustainability and conservation behaviours?

Increasing urbanisation, busy lifestyles, screen-based technologies and reduced access to natural environments are just some of the explanations for our growing disconnection with the natural world and decline in outdoor living. Human disconnection from nature is now a key driver of ongoing planetary health concerns (Faerren Guzman et al. 2021).

There are increasing calls for a greater emphasis on (re)connecting people with nature to leverage and foster improved sustainability outcomes and conservation behaviours. The correlation between increases in nature connection with increased engagement in pro-environmental behaviours is now overwhelmingly supported with a range of evidence too compelling to ignore.

Recent research (Martin et al. 2020) concluded that psychological measures of how connected we are to nature, commonly known (or termed) as nature connectedness, provides an excellent indicator of:

- Household pro-environmental behaviours (e.g. recycling, buying locally sourced food, eco-friendly products, walking or cycling); and
- Pro-nature conservation behaviours (e.g. restoration, habitat conservation and volunteering).

Published meta-studies in a range of health and environmental scientific journals reiterate these positive associations between nature connectedness and increased pro-environmental behaviours.* Although much of the research to date is focused on adults, a recent study of 300 children aged 9-12 revealed significant associations between nature connectedness and the determinants of sustainable behaviour such as altruism, equity, frugality, and pro-ecological actions (Barrera-Hernández et al. 2020). Stark results examining the effectiveness of environmental education working with 250 children aged between 9-11, concluded that the level of children's environmental knowledge accounted for only 2% of the variance in their ecological behaviour, whereas nature connectedness accounted for 69% (Otto and Pensini 2017).

* e.g. Barbett et al. 2020; Whitburn, Linklater, and Abrahamse 2020; Mackay and Schmitt 2019

Why does it need to be more than a walk in the park?

Creating connection is more than being outside or increasing 'knowledge about nature'. It is about creating meaningful moments, where the types of activities we do in nature matter more than the amount of time spent. The more meaningful the engagement, the more profound the benefits (Frumkin et al. 2017).

Researchers in both the UK and Australia have found that **a) time in nature, and b) knowledge about nature do not necessarily have a relationship with pro-conservation behaviour (Richardson et al. 2020). It is what you do there that matters most.** Researchers conclude that is about "moments not minutes" (Richardson et al. 2021), and more precisely how closely those actions in nature influence the individual's emotional connection with nature (Hatty et al. 2020).

"engaging in simple nature-activities emerged as the largest significant contributor to pro-nature conservation behaviour."

Richardson et al. 2020

Go Slow for a Mo' Program

The **Go Slow for a Mo'** Nature Wellness Trails provide a practical and tangible solution to **increase nature connectedness** by enabling individuals from all walks of life to have more meaningful moments in nature. These trails draw on the latest scientific knowledge, creating short slow moments for big lasting impacts; supercharging the health benefits and conservation outcomes of any type of greenspace - whether it be a national park, local park, pocket park, backyard, learning space or workplace.

Backed by Research

The Living Lab **Go Slow for a Mo'** trail research program at Macquarie University continues to design, test and evaluate trail exercises working with students and staff across all faculties. Additionally, the research team is conducting a national survey and interview program to better understand how Australians use and value their outdoor places while exploring the application of medical green scripts within an Australian setting.

Go Slow for a Mo' Delivery [#goslowforamo]

Go Slow for a Mo' is a community movement driven by Councils, Botanic Gardens, Universities, Hospitals, Health and Community Services and more, that are committed to helping **Transform Green Spaces into Wellness Places**. Together delivering preventative nature-based health and wellbeing solutions to serve people and the planet.

Life moving too fast?

go slow for a mo'

with a rejuvenating nature experience that will refresh your mood, energy and focus.

You are on the trail of the **Living Lab** which connects people, the traditional and contemporary, of city and nature.

Scan here to learn more about the trail.

This trail has several short nature moments that can be done in 10-15 minutes or the whole trail, it's completely up to you.

Scan the QR code at each station to receive links to follow audio instructions. Have fun on your trail!

3 Sensory Switch
Using sensory experiences to create moments to pause, stop and notice nature in different ways.
Time required: 2-3 mins

2 Meaningful Moment
Lending nature a moment of a pocket moment supports our wellbeing.
Time required: 2-4 mins

1 Breathe Slowly
Breathing into the abdomen is a simple way to take more effective breaths, increasing relaxation and decreasing stress.
Time required: 2-4 mins

4 Relax the Eyes
A simple nature task to actively engage nature connectedness and reduce stress and anxiety.
Time required: 2-5 mins

7 Feathered Friends
Breathing nature produces a new sense of connection. Try this with children or embrace your inner child.
Time required: 3-5 mins

5 Little Things
Auditory nature sounds have been shown to increase the satisfaction and wellbeing.
Time required: 3-10 mins

6 Smell the Roses
Finding scents in nature clears the mind and shows us as little as you feel!
Time required: 10 mins or as little as you feel!

The Benefits
Meaningful moments in nature help make you healthier and happier. It's proven, it's easy and it's free!

- Improve sleep, happiness, wellbeing and life satisfaction
- Improve learning, mobility, sustained attention and child development
- Reduce stress, depression and anxiety and increase resilience
- Relax and appreciate our natural places
- Enhance feelings of gratitude and care for ourselves and our community

Improve blood pressure, pain control, improve function, diabetes and allergies

Share your experience with others at **#goslowforamo**

Botanic Gardens Wollongong

The **Go Slow for a Mo'** trails include a series of exercise stations designed to create meaningful moments in nature that lead to increases in nature connectedness (Wollongong Botanic Garden Trail sign)

References

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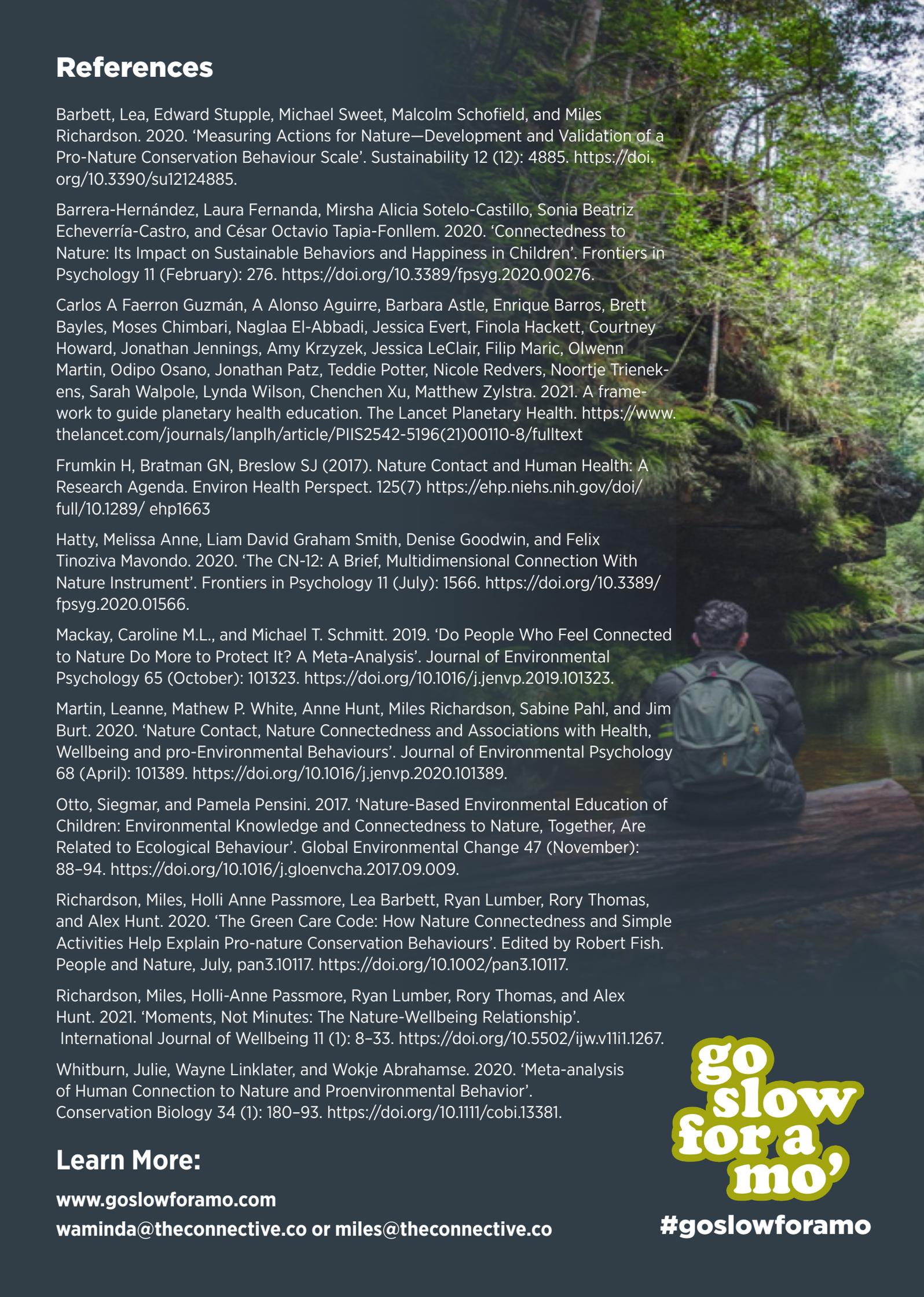
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Learn More:

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A photograph of a person with a backpack sitting on a log in a forest stream, surrounded by lush greenery. The person is seen from behind, looking towards the water. The scene is peaceful and natural.

**go
slow
for a
mo'**

#goslowforamo