



Get Outdoors Florida! is a coalition promoting outdoor experiences to help Floridians have healthier lifestyles and develop an appreciation for our abundant natural resources.

For more Get Outdoors Florida! destinations and activities, visit www.getoutdoorsflorida.com

When School's Out: Get Outdoors!

By Frances Keiser

When school is out, the children are in. After hours of seeing them engaged with some form of electronic entertainment—TV, video games, computer, iPod, cell phones, etc.—you begin to worry about vitamin D deficiency and have visions of them melting into a lump like a long-forgotten piece of candy.

In desperation, you shout, “Get outdoors!” They answer, “And do what?”

Here is an interesting fact about nature and outdoor activities children can enjoy anywhere—including your own backyard.

Did You Know?

Alligators are watertight wonders! When diving, American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) have specialized coverings, valves, and muscles to keep water out. Third eyelids of semitransparent membranes work like built-in swimming goggles, small flaps of skin are secured over ear openings, and strong muscles close nostrils tight.

Most remarkable, a valve at the back of the tongue seals their throat and prevents water from entering their lungs and stomach.

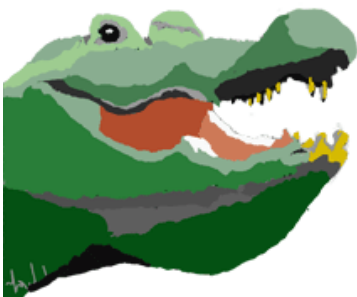


Get Outdoors!

How do the plants and animals in your yard or neighborhood interact with water? Can you find dew on spider webs? Leaves shaped to hold water? Birds taking baths? Insects swimming? How do animals shelter themselves from showers? How do you know? Note what you observe.

Make reptile rain refuges! Using leaves, twigs, stones, and bits of pottery, build shelters for toads and lizards.

Play Gator-Snap-Jumping-Jack! How many jumping jacks can you do while clapping your hands overhead like a snapping alligator?



For more Get Outdoors Florida! activities your children can enjoy in your own backyard and neighborhood—with or without you—go to: PelicanPete.com.

• Frances Keiser is the author of *Pelican Pete's Backyard Adventures*, 5 other books and a weekly column dedicated to connecting children with nature

“Interesting facts about nature and outdoor activities children can enjoy anywhere”

