Children in Nature:
Happier, Healthier, Smarter

Workshop Agenda

I. Reflection Exercise

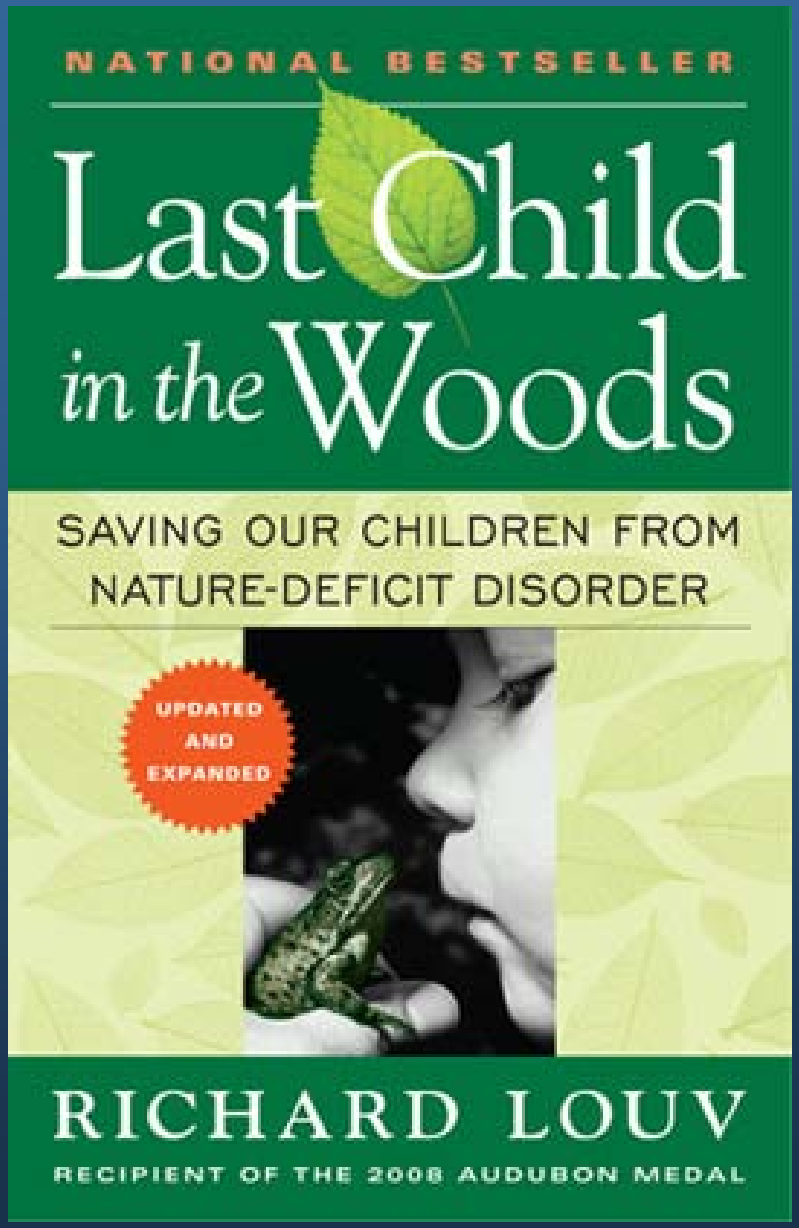
II. Presentation

- Nature Deficit Disorder defined
- Why our children don’t play outside anymore
- Happier, healthier, smarter
- A movement is born
- Case study: integrating nature into your program

III. Small Group Work: Building blocks for a nature program

Nature Deficit Disorder:

"The human costs of alienation from nature"


NATIONAL BESTSELLER
Last Child in the Woods
SAVING OUR CHILDREN FROM NATURE-DEFICIT DISORDER
UPDATED AND EXPANDED
RICHARD LOUV
RECIPIENT OF THE 2008 AUDUBON MEDAL

Why our children don’t play outside anymore

Screen time

"I like to play indoors better 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are."

4th Grader in San Diego

Screen time

Children 8-18 years old average 6.5 hours a day looking at TV or computer monitor.

Screen time

Nearly one-third of children from 6 months to 6 years old live in households where the TV was on all or most of the time.

The grinch who stole childhood?

- Overscheduled?
- College admissions, job stress at 4th grade
- Loss of discretionary time

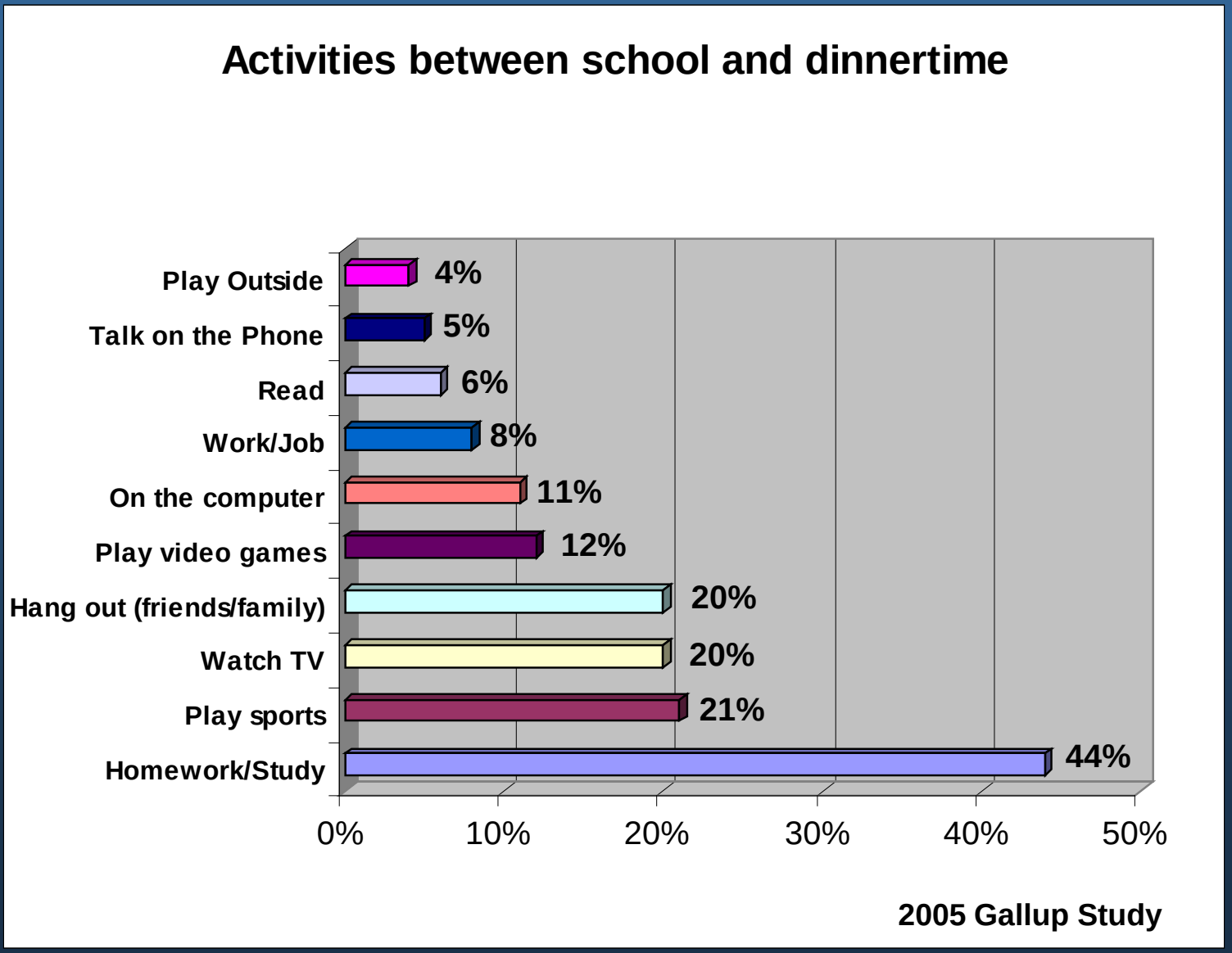
The grinch who stole childhood?

Homework given to children aged 6-9 almost tripled in 26 years.

1981: 44 min/week

2007: 120 min/week

The grinch?


Activities between school and dinnertime
Play Outside
4%
Talk on the Phone
5%
Read
6%
Work/Job
8%
On the computer
11%
Play video games
12%
Hang out (friends/family)
20%
Watch TV
20%
Play sports
21%
Homework/Study
44%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
2005 Gallup Study

Community design & priorities

Only 30% of Los Angeles residents live within walking distance of a park.

Community design & priorities

adult-directed activity spaces

Community design & priorities

free play activity spaces

Keeping our kids safe

traffic concerns

Keeping our kids safe

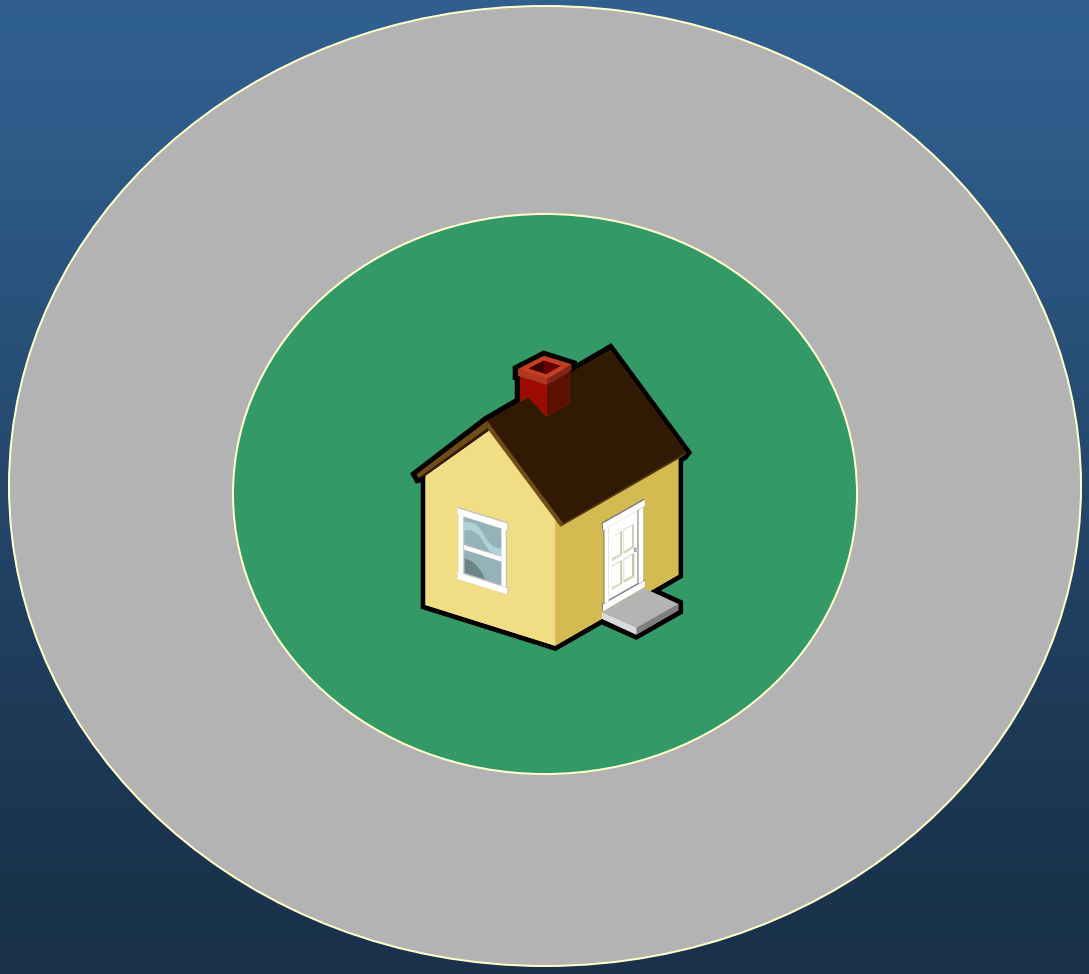
- crime
- fear of strangers
- GPS tracking

Keeping our kids safe

shrinking home range

Keeping our kids safe

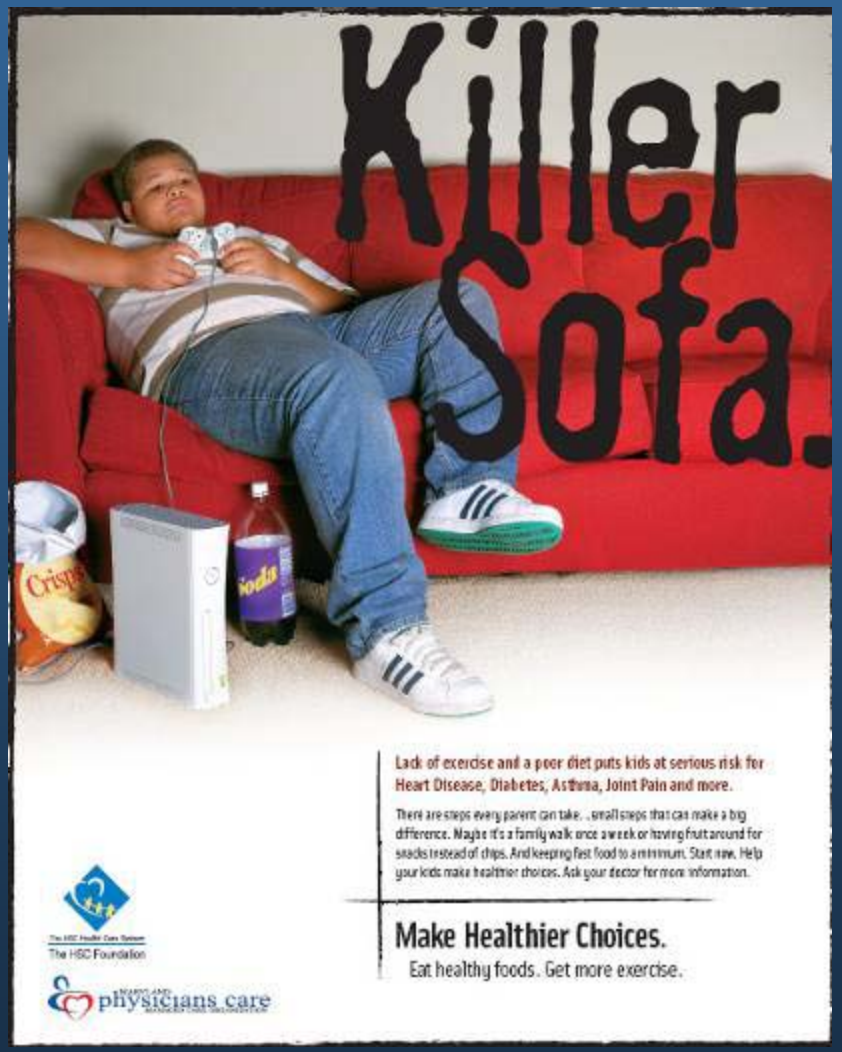
shrinking home range



Children in Nature: Happier, Healthier, Smarter

Health benefits

In the past 30 years, the occurrence of overweight children has doubled. An estimated one in five children are overweight.



Health benefits

How many pull-ups can he manage?

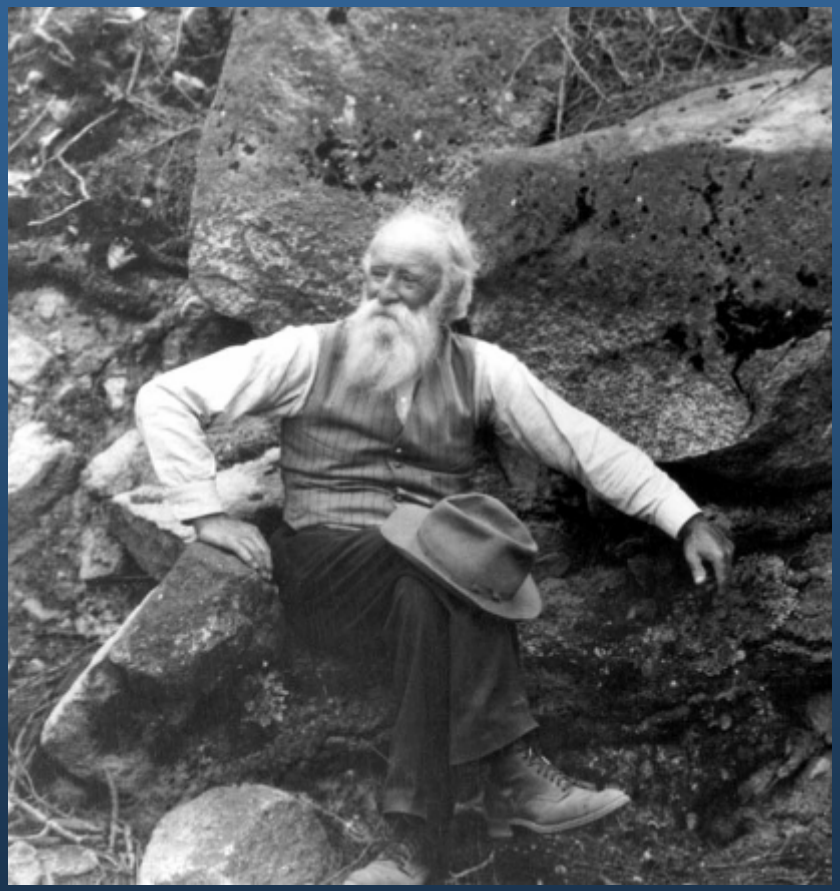
Health benefits

Free play in natural environments

Nature as stress reliever

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more."

– John Burroughs



Developmental benefits

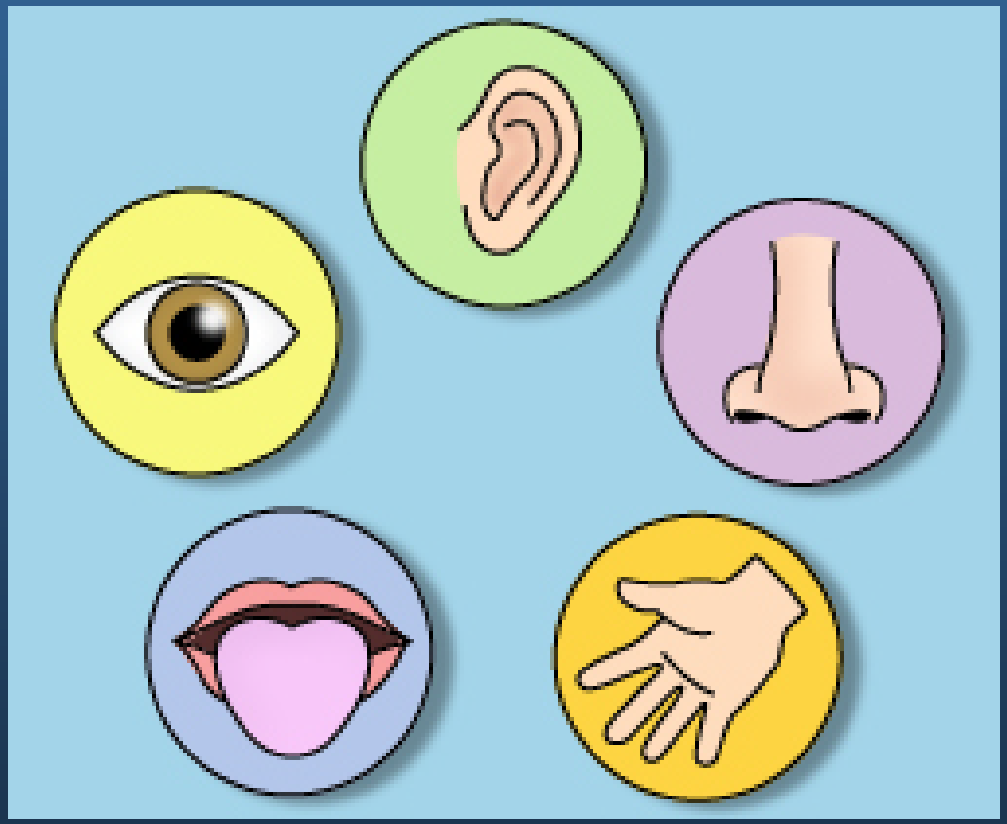
unstructured play

Developmental benefits

creativity and imagination

Developmental benefits

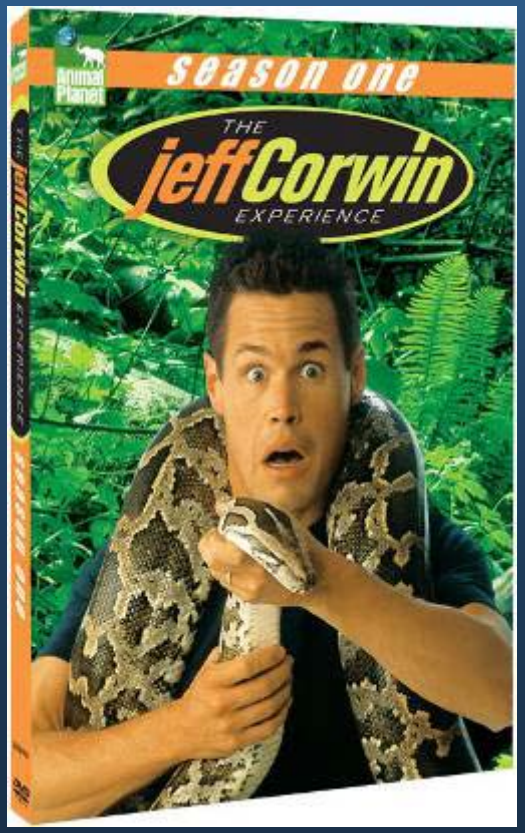
using all five senses (or maybe four!)



Happier

The endangered environmentalist

replacing real with virtual nature experiences



The endangered environmentalist

nature knowledge

The endangered environmentalist

aging of the environmental movement

A movement is born

A movement is born

"A back-to-nature movement to reconnect children with the outdoors is burgeoning nationwide."

"unstructured, imaginative play is increasingly lacking in an indoor, scheduled world—to children's great detriment…"

"…a national movement to 'leave no child inside" has been the focus of Capitol Hill meetings, state legislative action, grassroots projects…"

A movement is born
legislation

No Child Left Inside Act

- Environmental literacy
- Funding for outdoor learning

A movement is born

legislation

California No Child Left Inside Act

SB 207

Provides programs to increase the ability of underserved and at-risk populations to participate in outdoor recreation and educational experiences

A movement is born

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Children and Nature

Office of External Affairs

Search Children and Nature | Search

Learn More

Kids
Parents
Educators

Cover of Fish and Wildlife *News* Special Children & Nature Edition. Credit: USFWS

Let's Go Outside!

Helping Families Connect With Nature

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in." - Rachel Carson

Back To Nature

For years, Service employees have been connecting children with the land and with the agency's conservation mission. Today those efforts may be more important than ever.

Did you know?

Did you know that nature is good for your health? Emerging research shows that children who feel connected to nature have better physical, mental, and emotional health. Nature also improves student learning. And sharing the outdoors together can build strong family bonds and create life-long memories.

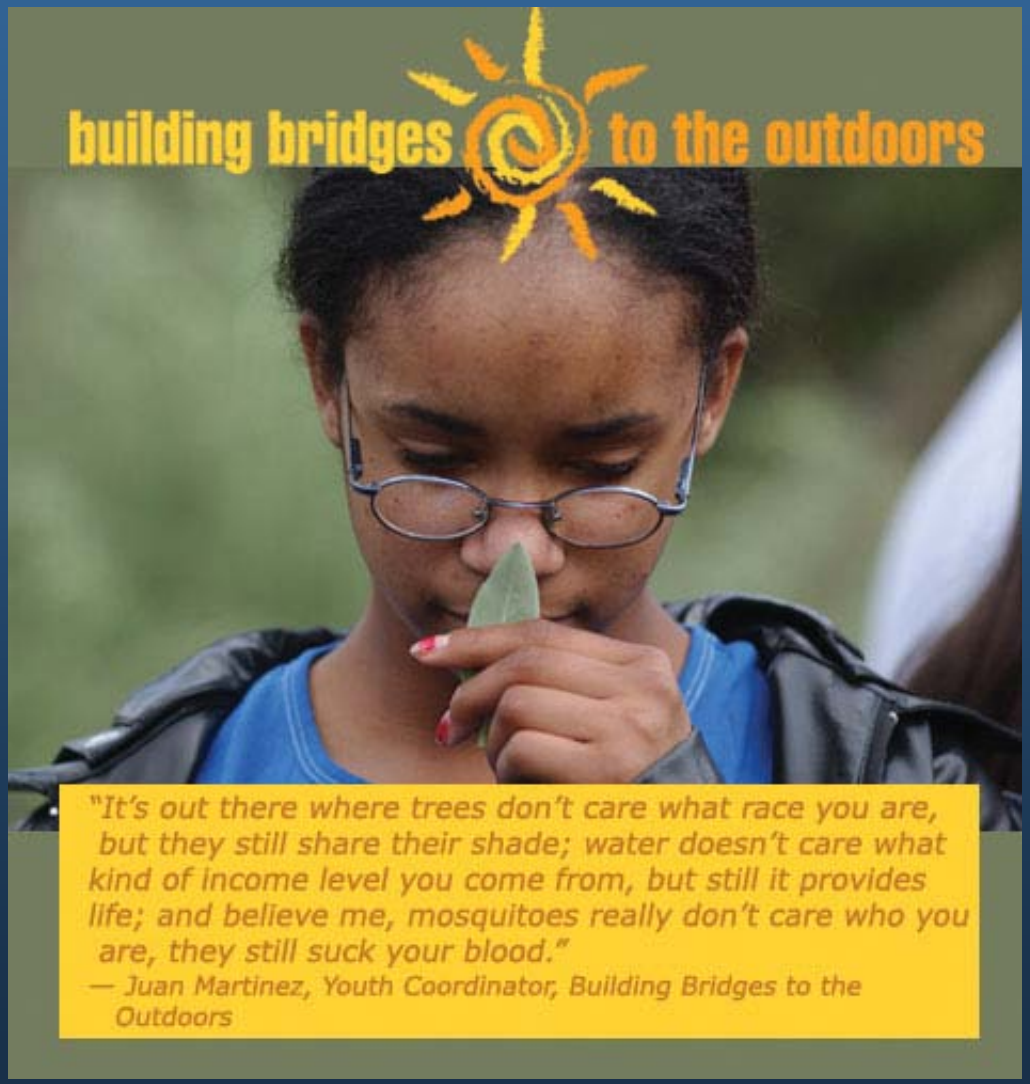
What Can You Do?

Go outside and connect a child to the wild!

Spending time outside is fun for the whole family. And it doesn't have to be somewhere far from home. It can be simple and safe:

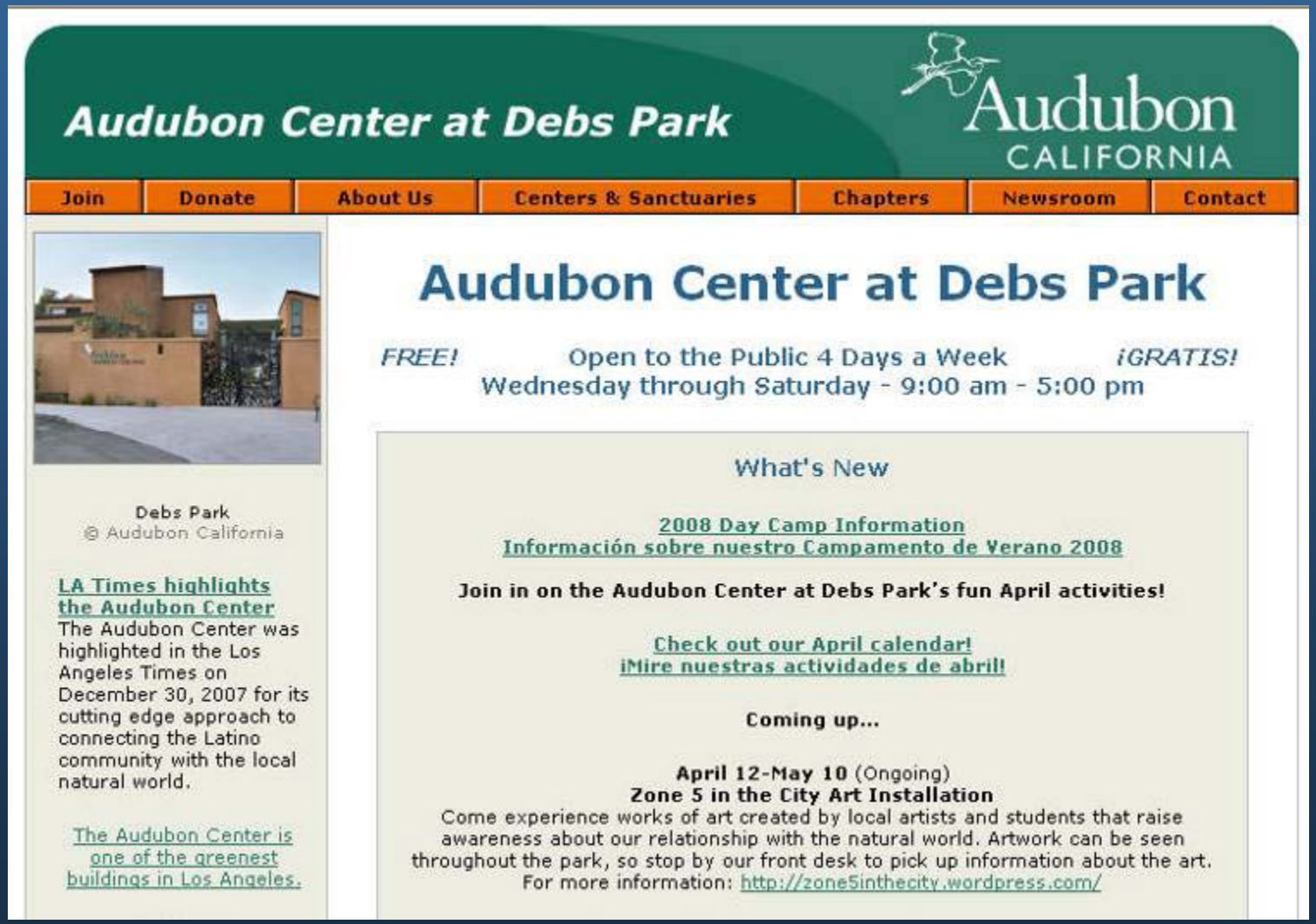
A movement is born

Sierra Club



A movement is born

A movement is born



A movement is born

Inspire communities to nurture, empower, and engage youth in cultivating their relationship with nature.

Integrating nature into after school programs: a case study

Building blocks for success

identify program partners

OutdoorExplore! Partners

harmonium

SAN DIEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

the YMCA

SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

SAY San Diego

Building blocks for success
alignment of program goals

- Fight obesity/promote fitness
- Hands on learning using all senses
- Learn about local ecosystems, animals
- Promote community stewardship and service

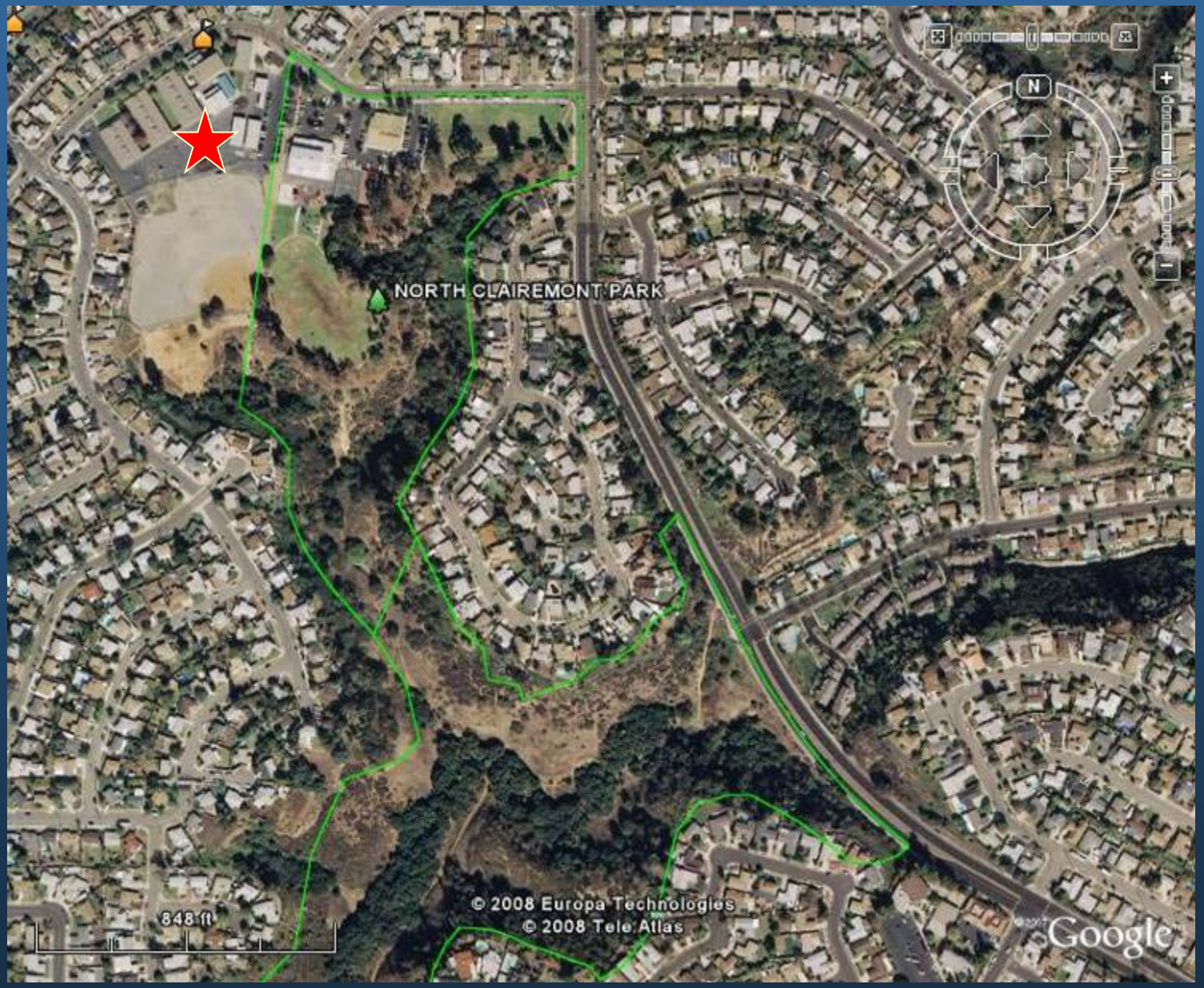
Building blocks for success
alignment of program goals

harmonium

SAN DIEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

- Obesity and fitness → Hiking, walking, running
- Hands on/senses → Experiential learning
- ecosystems, animals → Place-based learning
- stewardship and service → “Leave no trace” stewards

Map community open space



Focus on experiential learning vs. curriculum

Building blocks for success
program elements

- Use extended hours of minimum days
- 15-20 students per session
- 3 adults, 6-1 student/instructor ratio
- 60-90 minute sessions
- Mixed age groups (K-6)
- Division of agency/partner roles

Building blocks for success
typical program day

- At school: introduction of theme
- Walk to open space area
- Free exploration / hiking
- Active nature-based game
- Walk back to school
- Gather & share observations

Building blocks for success
evaluation outcomes

- Physical activity/exercise
- Connection to natural world
- Stewardship ethics
- Observation of nature
- Satisfaction with program

Your turn:
Building blocks for starting a nature program at your agency

Small group brainstorming questions

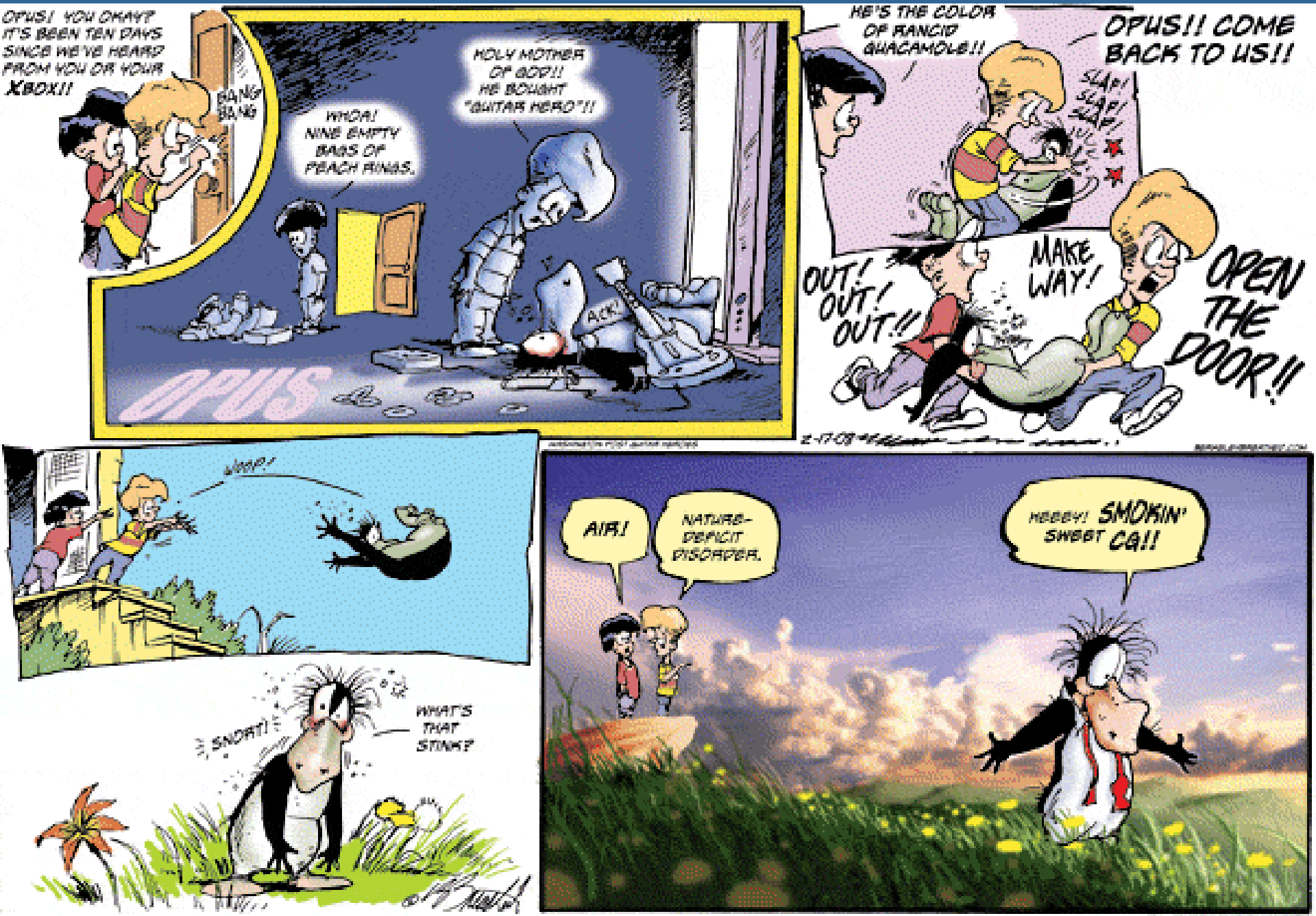
1. What partner organizations might want to supply or build a program for our agency?

2. What open space resources/habitats are available in my community?

3. What potential challenges or barriers exist for integrating a nature program into my after school setting?

4. Other issues or concerns?

SAN DIEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY


OPUS! YOU OKAY? IT'S BEEN TEN DAYS SINCE WE'VE HEARD FROM YOU OR YOUR XBOX!!
BANG BANG
WHOA! NINE EMPTY BAGS OF PEACH RINGS.
HOLY MOTHER OF GOD!! HE BOUGHT "GUITAR HERO"!!
ACK
OPUS
HE'S THE COLOR OF RANCID GUACAMOLE!!
OPUS!! COME BACK TO US!!
SLAP! SLAP! SLAP!
OUT! OUT! OUT!!
MAKE WAY!
OPEN THE DOOR!!
2-17-08
WHAP!
SNORT!
WHAT'S THAT STINK?
AIR!
NATURE-DEFICIT DISORDER.
HEEBY! SMOKIN' SWEET CQ!!