Children are born ready to discover their world; they have an innate curiosity and sense of wonder and awe for nature. So what is it that captures their interests or delights their senses? The only way to know for sure is by listening to children and joining their journey of discovery.

This research project conducted by Dr Ali Black and Dr Gail Crimmins focused on listening to children as they played and engaged with the natural world at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve. We wanted to find out how children connected with nature and we wanted to listen to what they told us about their experiences.

Here are some of the things we learned about how you and your child can connect in and with nature...
Children have a natural curiosity and an innate sense of wonder. They are born to play, get dirty and let their imaginations run wild. Their photographs show what fascinates and matters to them. They care about nature.

What creatures will fascinate and matter to you? What photographs will you take?
'There's a nest up there!'

'How many ferns can you see up in the trees?'

'It is very high so the dinosaurs can't reach it'

Children are intrigued by 'elements' in the forest: a clump of leaves in a branch, a hollow at the base of a tree, a shiny seed.

What is your child noticing? What is your child imagining?

Look up. Look down. Look closer.
Children notice the tiny details. Tools support their investigation into details.
Use binoculars, magnifying glasses, finders, and cameras to engage your child.

Be an ‘authentic novice’ and let your child be the expert.
Let your child lead and guide you.
Listen to their stories and explanations.

‘Should I get you more rocks to study?’

Children notice the tiny details. Tools support their investigation into details.
Use binoculars, magnifying glasses, finders, and cameras to engage your child.

‘That’s a skink, we have those at home.’

‘You can see where a caterpillar has been because he’s eaten some of this leaf.’

Children are scientists
Technology helps children to see and be with nature

'I'm going to make a mix of things'

'I Love This! I could do it for hours'

Children use technologies to experience the landscape and its features in new ways

Delight with your child. Give them tools to study the world around them.
If children are to keep alive their inborn sense of wonder they need the companionship of at least one adult who can share it.

Let your child be the teacher. Listen, share in the joy and join the discovery.
Children see the magic and extraordinary in the ordinary. They engage with the world with all their senses, bringing wonder and curiosity to it.

What does it mean to delight in nature and listen with all our senses? If I look through the eyes of a child, what will I see?
Children are enchanted by the play of light on the trees, the texture of bark, small nooks and crannies.

Let your child show you what’s magic and extraordinary. Learn to see the world through their eyes.

Children have an aesthetic awareness and caring for the environment.

‘This rock has mirrors and marble in it’
Give children the time and tools to share. Today, go slowly, take your time, look closely, engage your senses, listen to your child and share your stories about nature, plants and animals.

See the forest through the eyes of your child. You might even learn something new!