

## The "Getting Off and Getting Out" Movement

There's an exciting movement happening among youth today that involves trading screens for real-world experiences in nature. Where previous generations were drawn to TV, PlayStations, and the latest digital trends, today's young people increasingly seek outdoor adventures and personal growth through nature-based experiences. This shift, referred to by good friend, Mark Heystek as the "getting off and getting out" movement, reflects a cultural change that resonates with many young people today, especially within certain social circles.

Doing some investigative work on the matter, I found that statistics show that screen time remains a large part of youth culture; however, there are emerging signs of a growing interest in outdoor activities and nature. According to a recent NOR Survey, around 61% of Gen Z respondents reported a significant increase in outdoor activity over the last two years. Similarly, the OIA noted that during the pandemic, youth participation in outdoor activities increased by nearly 20% compared to previous years. While gaming and social media use still dominate for many, there is clearly an upward trend in prioritizing outdoor experiences.

### But why are youth seeking the outdoors?

1. *Mental Health Benefits:* With increasing awareness around mental health, many young people are recognizing the stress-relieving benefits of spending time in nature. Studies suggest that exposure to green spaces reduces anxiety and depression, prompting a lot of youth to seek the balance and peace that nature offers.
2. *Influence of Social Media and Outdoor Influencers:* Ironically, social media platforms have played a huge role in inspiring young people to get outside. Popular nature photographers, travel bloggers, and conservationists encourage others to experience the outdoors firsthand. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube now feature countless content creators showcasing the beauty of outdoor life, which is sparking curiosity and interest in nature-based activities.
3. *Adventure and Self-Discovery:* Youth today are often drawn to experiences that allow them to test their limits, explore new environments, and develop unique skills. Hiking, birdwatching, camping, and environmental volunteerism appeal to young people who see these activities as a way to grow personally while gaining memorable experiences.

For me, getting out into nature isn't a new trend—it has always been a part of my life. From my earliest memories, I can recall days spent outdoors, exploring the wilderness with family, marveling at birds, and appreciating the natural beauty around me. Growing up, nature wasn't just a backdrop; it was where I felt most alive, curious, and free.

Now, as a young adult, my connection to nature has deepened. Beyond enjoying its beauty and tranquility, I've come to understand the urgent need to conserve it. Nature isn't just a source of joy—it's a responsibility we all share. Through my founding of the Young Wildlife Photographers (YWP) community and initiative, I've found ways to channel my love for the outdoors into meaningful action.

YWP serves as a platform where youth can engage with nature in creative, impactful ways. Whether it's through bird photography, conservation workshops, or community outreach,

YWP provides young people with the tools and inspiration to reconnect with the environment and play a part in its protection. It's a way of encouraging the next generation to not just appreciate nature but to actively contribute to its preservation.

The trend to embrace outdoor life is not uniform but appears to be particularly strong among youth with social circles and communities where nature is valued. For example, those who grow up around people who hike, camp, or advocate for the environment are more likely to participate in these activities themselves. For others, gaming and social media still play a larger role in their daily lives, but even within digital spaces, there's a noticeable interest in nature-focused topics.

So, while gaming and screen time are still significant, the "getting off and getting out" movement has become a meaningful trend among today's youth, driven by mental health benefits, social media inspiration, and the desire for unique experiences. It's encouraging to see young people reconnecting with the outdoors, exploring their local environments, and creating memories that foster a lifelong love for nature. This movement may still be niche, but as we continue to recognize the importance of balance and wellness, its appeal is likely to grow. For those of us already embracing this way of life, it's exciting to see where it might take us and who we'll inspire along the way!

For me, this movement isn't just exciting—it feels personal. It reflects values I've held my entire life and offers hope for the future. Through YWP, I've witnessed how young people can transform their passion for nature into tangible actions, from conservation efforts to creative storytelling that inspires others.

This movement may still be niche, but as we continue to recognize the importance of balance and wellness, its appeal is likely to grow. For those of us already embracing this way of life, it's thrilling to see where it might take us and who we'll inspire along the way. Let's continue to step outside, reconnect with nature, and ensure its beauty remains for generations to come.