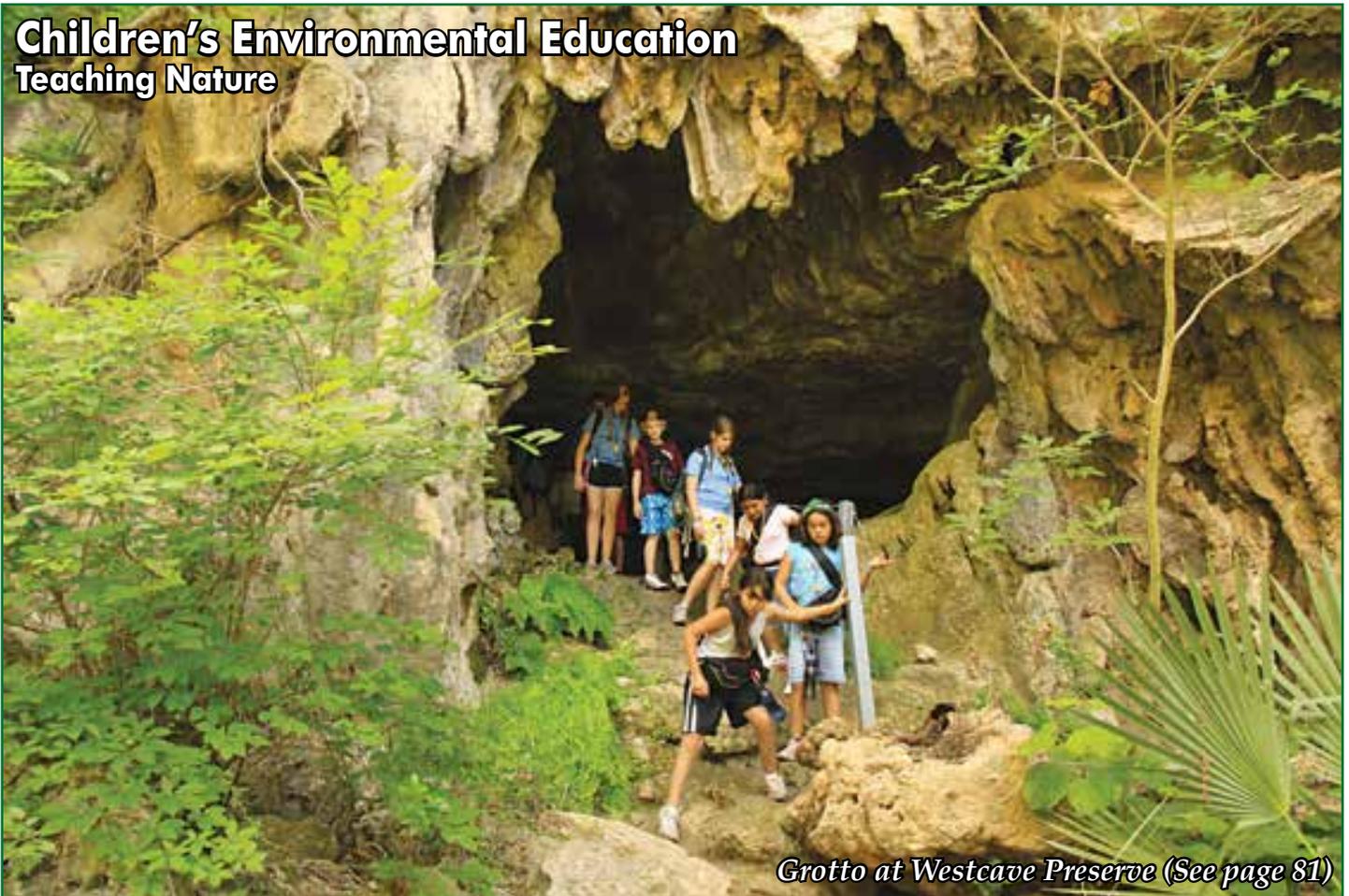


Children's Environmental Education Teaching Nature



Grotto at Westcave Preserve (See page 81)

Over the past four generations, lifestyles and urban growing patterns in the U.S. and other developed countries have collided to undermine what was once a staple of most childhood experience: playing in nature and the outdoors.

Many children that live in cities have limited access to the natural world – only one in five U.S. households, for example, is located within half a mile of a park. And many parks located near school grounds are largely void of trees and natural areas.

Many children experience safety barriers to outdoor play due to traffic – new suburbs are usually designed to be drivable rather than walkable, while new schools can sometimes be difficult to safely approach without cars. In 1969, 48% of young people 5 to 14 years old walked or biked to school. By 2009, it had plummeted to 13%. Crime in some neighborhoods can also discourage outdoor play.

The ubiquitous growth of electronic devices, from iPods to cell phones to video game stations, cuts into time that used to be spent outside. One study showed that media use consumed 7.4 hours a day for U.S. children and teens 8 to 18 years of age; 11- to 14-year olds spent 9 hours a day. One study in Britain found more 8-year olds could identify Pokeman characters than wildlife species.

Lack of nature experience contributes to a host of physical and mental conditions that Richard Louv, author of *Last*

Child in the Woods, poetically describes as “nature deficit disorder.” It seems intuitive that children function better when exposed to and experiencing natural environments. But it is also documented in numerous scientific studies.

Nature exposure and activities: increase attention span and test scores; reduce stress, anger, fear, and depression; reduce behavioral problems and juvenile delinquency; promote healthier social behavior; assist in recovery from physical trauma; and improve cognitive skills, critical thinking, and decision-making. In a word, children are *happier* when playing in nature.

They are also healthier.

- Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder rates in the U.S. have skyrocketed from 5.5% in 1997 to 9.8% in 2018 for youth 3 to 17 years of age. This problem can be reduced or mitigated by outdoor experiences.

- Obesity rates in the U.S., linked to diabetes, cardiorespiratory fitness, and low self-esteem, soared from 5% in 1966-70 to 21% in 2015-16 for youth 12 to 19 years of age. Severe weight problems are reduced by physical exercise.

- Natural Vitamin D levels required for healthy bones and teeth, and that regulate metabolism, are increased through outdoor play. (“Vitamin D” is actually a hormone produced when sunlight comes in contact with skin.)

Teaching Place

I was fortunate to have interviewed some of Austin's most talented environmental educators for this article. While I asked about their techniques, subjects, and courses, I also asked about their philosophy. Many said that care for the environment starts with place.

Heather Kuhlken, Director of the organization Families in Nature, infers that nature exposure is often a prerequisite to an environmental worldview. "Love of nature is the absolute foundation of conservation... I have never spoken to a conservationist who does not share a story of playing outside as their connection to nature."

Dave Scott, Director of the Earth Native Wilderness School near Bastrop, believes that "By changing environmental protection of theoretical creeks into real creeks, you are creating a foundation for people to care."

LaJuan Tucker, a Supervisor at the Austin Nature and Science Center was even more succinct: "People don't love what they can't see."

Teaching Hope

I also asked these educators how they balanced optimism to positively teach children in the face of the world's

tormenting environmental problems.

Lauren Zappone Maples, Director of Partners for Education, Agriculture, and Sustainability, believes "If I allow myself to stay in a dark space, it is not for too long. I am not willing to give up." So she places her constructive energy educating the next generation.

Amelia DeVivo at Austin Youth River Watch observes that she sees a lot of the high school students the organization teaches become dejected because of climate science, but tries to keep a positive attitude by telling them: "You are a powerful person. Your activities *account* for something."

Emily Cuellar-Perlaky of the Austin Nature and Science Center takes solace in how children she teaches become so inspired by nature that they keep showing up year after year for courses and ultimately get jobs in environmental fields as adults. "Success is measured in how many come back."

This edition of the Directory has created a resource section of organizations in Central Texas that expose young people to nature, train them to live and play there, teach natural systems and history, and instruct and coach them in outdoor activities, skills, and safety. While some deserving organizations have probably been omitted, this article can be used by school teachers, teens, parents, and grandparents as a beginner's guide for young people to find ways to experience the natural beauty of our region.



For more information on BSU day and other year round BSU programs please go to BartonSpringsUniversity.org

Austin Nature and Science Center

301 Nature Center Drive
Public Parking: 2389 Stratford Drive
(Near MoPac bridge)
Austin, TX 78746
(512) 974-3888

Net: austintexas.gov/department/austin-nature-and-science-center

Facebook: facebook.com/ATXnaturecenter/



Since 1961, the Austin Nature and Science Center has provided a focal point for nature-based education and experiences for children and teenagers. It is sited on 18 acres at the edge of Zilker Park featuring natural spaces, museum exhibits, and live animals.

Audiences: Ages 3 – 17 (Camps and activities); Families (Exhibits); Schools / Home Schools (field trips and classes).

Exhibits: Free exhibits open to the general public include: 1) the *Dino Pit*, a life-size model of a paleontology dig; 2) indoor exhibits of fossils, preserved plants, mammals, birds, insects, plants, furs, bones and geological specimens; 3) live animals and birds (that cannot survive in the wild); 4) the *Monarch Waystation* butterfly gardens; and 5) the *Nano* exhibit, interactive displays to explore nanotechnology.

School Programs: Grades Pre-K – 5. Classes held at interested schools, the Center, the Splash Exhibit at Barton Springs Pool, or Pease Park. Classes include terrestrial and aquatic wildlife; dinosaurs and fossils; astronomy; and geology. 2019 costs ranged by number of students and location, but highest cost is generally \$375-450. Title 1 schools receive 50% discount for grades Pre-K – 3.

Home School Programs: Ages 4 – 12. October – February, M – W, either from 10 to 11:30 AM or 12:30 to 2 PM. Once per month sessions in Zilker Park area on arthropods, water, weather, science jobs, and math. 2019 cost of \$54 for Austin residents.

Physical activities (for 4 hours on 3 consecutive Thursdays) for ages 8 – 11. There are 3 separate themes: caving, climbing, and general outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and archery. 2019 cost of \$75 for Austin residents.

Nature's Way Pre-School: Ages 3 – 5. September – May. This is a nature-based enrichment program, not day care, offered up to 4 days a week, Monday – Friday, 9 AM to 1 PM, and Tuesday and Thursday, 2 to 5 PM.

Summer Camps: June – August, weekdays. All camps except Tadpoles run from 8 AM to 5 PM. Many include field trips and overnight camping, and include swimming or wading. *Apply early – registrants are taken in order.*

• **Tadpole Camps:** Ages 4 – 5. Half-days from 8 AM to 12 PM and 1 to 5 PM. Rotating themes include: animals; science; prehistoric life; and water. 2019 cost of \$162 for Austin residents.

• **Pollywog Camps:** Ages 5 – 6. Rotating themes include: nocturnal animals; gravity and tree climbing; water ecosystems; and wildlife (both prehistoric and existing). 2019 cost of \$188-232 for Austin residents.

• **Frog Camps:** Ages 7 – 8. Rotating themes include: natural and human history; water habitats; and wildlife. 2019 cost of \$188-232 for Austin residents.

• **Adventure Camps:** Ages 9 – 10. Rotating themes include: team building; outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and climbing; and observing water life, often while snorkeling and canoeing. 2019 cost of \$262-306 for Austin residents.

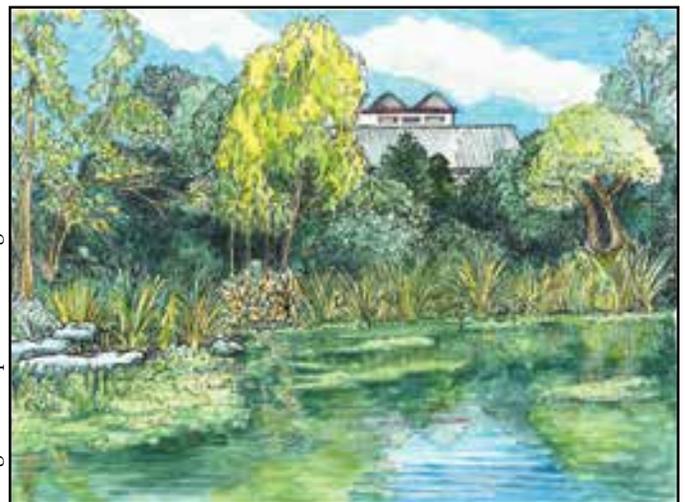
• **Explorer Camps:** Ages 11 – 12. Rotating themes include: observing animals; nature photography; outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and climbing; and observing water life. 2019 cost of \$212-342 for Austin residents.

• **Specialty Camps:** Ages 13 – 14. Rotating themes include: advanced climbing; bicycle riding and maintenance; orientation to outdoor jobs; and rock climbing. 2019 cost of \$238-282 for Austin residents.

• **Counselor in Training:** Ages 15 – 17. A one-day training course for teens who want to assist the Center's teachers in conducting camps. 2019 cost of \$40 for Austin residents.

Spring Break Camps: Ages 5 – 11. Five-day camp in March from 8 AM – 5 PM. Themes, depending on age, include hiking and wilderness skills. 2019 cost of \$250 for Austin residents.

School Holiday Camps: Ages 5 – 8. Three-day camp about Earth and Space during Thanksgiving holiday. 2019 cost of \$150 for Austin residents. Two-day Tinker Time camp during winter break. 2019 cost of \$150 for Austin residents.



Margaret Campbell Bamberger

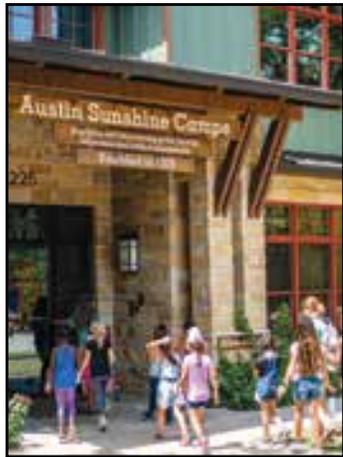
Austin Sunshine Camps

2225 Andrew Zilker Road (Zilker Park)
Austin, TX 78746
(512) 505-0902

Net: sunshinecamps.org

E-mail: info@sunshinecamps.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/sunshinecamps](https://www.facebook.com/sunshinecamps)



Since 1928, Austin Sunshine Camps have been providing outdoor nature experiences to disadvantaged youth. A few weeks of typical summer camp can cost thousands of dollars. We believe camp is a right and not a privilege. We typically host about 1,200 children and teens each summer at our 2 locations: Zilker Park and Lake Travis. Activities include: hiking; swimming; fishing; canoeing; low and high rope courses; archery; cooperative games; arts and crafts, and

a Carnival Night. We also teach conflict resolution and self regulation.

Audiences: Low-income children and teens 8 – 17.

Zilker Camp: Five-day/four-night summer camp for ages 8 – 11.

Austin Youth River Watch

P.O. Box 40351

Austin, TX 78704

Melinda Chow (512) 708-9115

E-Mail: info@riverwatchers.org

Net: riverwatchers.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/AustinYouthRiverWatch](https://www.facebook.com/AustinYouthRiverWatch)



Austin Youth River Watch trains high school students to monitor the quality of 28 sites along Austin area creeks, streams, and rivers, and to perform stream improvement projects throughout the area. We are empowering primarily underserved youth through our hands-on environmental science program.



Audiences: Approximately 140 students, most from 10 Title 1 high schools, apply each year.

School-Year Program: In partnership with the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Austin Water Utility, we engage underserved youth in real-world projects that facilitate learning about science and our community. The program not only provides free specialized instruction, but provides experience for resumés and college applications.

Lake Travis Camp: Five-day / four-night summer camp on Lake Travis between Lago Vista and Marble Falls for ages 12 – 15. Experienced counselors at both locations.

Counselors in Training Program: Teens ages 15 – 18 who have finished their final camp and are nominated by counselors to train to be a counselor themselves. Paid compensation for training and eventual work.

Camper Ambassador Program: About 200 children and teens ages 10 – 15 are nominated by counselors, and campers learn leadership skills. Ambassadors and Counselors in Training also participate in service projects once a month.

Family Weekend Camps: A spring and fall weekend camp offers many of the same activities to Ambassadors.



Teaching, which occurs one day a week throughout the school year, includes: water-quality testing; macroinvertebrate testing; trash clean-up; riparian restoration projects; rain garden construction; nature ID hikes (I-naturalist); and urban agriculture. Meals and transportation are provided.

Austin Environmental Heroes (summer program): High-school enrollees work from 7 AM to 3 PM on 3 days a week. Tasks include tree watering, tree mapping, collecting water quality data, and learning environmental techniques such as datasonde measurement. A 4th day each week is for outdoor adventures including camping, swimming, canoeing, tree climbing, or visits to local universities and natural areas. Meals, transportation, and stipend provided.



Camp Fire

P.O. Box 303040

Austin, TX 78703

Barbara Dunnam (512) 349-2111

E-mail: BDunnam@camp-fire.org

Net: camp-fire.org

Facebook: facebook.com/CampFireCentralTexas



Camp Fire works to build caring, confident, responsible youth through active learning, outdoor experiences, and community service. Traditional and outdoor family nature programs, after-school programs, community service activities, and weekend outdoor adventures provide kids and adults with an opportunity to develop a deeper knowledge of STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Math) concepts, as well as appreciation of the environment. In 2018, over 2,750 Central Texas youth participated.

Audiences: Children ages 5 – 18; Schools; adults can join Backpacking Club.

Backpacking Club: 1- to 14-day instructed camping at state and national parks and state natural areas. Children 10 – 18 as well as adults learn camping, hiking, canoeing, and team building. Camping gear can be provided.

Summer Camp: Day camp at Camp Balcones in Emma Long Park. Elementary and Middle School camps are both 8 weeks. Lessons on geology, native plants and animals, climate, astronomy, water, and camping basics. Activities include swimming, canoeing, fishing, hiking, archery, and art, as well as community service like litter clean-up. Drop-offs at main camp; with shuttles from Bowie High, Maplewood Elementary, and Northwest Recreation Center. *Scholarships for reduced/free lunch recipients if funding allows.*

Winter Camp: Day camp for 5 days during winter break. Shuttles from Northwest Recreation Center.

Traditional Clubs: Each club is designed by Camp Fire members (dues \$30/yr.) and held at members' homes; for ages 5 – 18. Nature-based programs for each club's interest and instructed by Camp Fire, including field work and community service. Children receive achievement patches.

After-School Programs: Elementary and Middle schools that secure funding can start their own program for outdoor education, which meet once or twice a week. In 2019, 11 Austin schools participated.

Colorado River Alliance

3625 Lake Austin Blvd.

Austin, TX 78703

Contact: Scott Sticker (512) 498-1587

E-Mail: contact@coloradoriver.org

Net: coloradoriver.org

Facebook: facebook.com/coloradoriveralliance

Twitter: twitter.com/txcoloradoriver



The Colorado is the lifeline of Central Texas. With massive population growth in Central Texas, and unpredictable climate changes, it is imperative that children learn to be responsible water stewards to maintain the River's quality and quantity to provide for the region's future.

Audiences: Schools – Grades 3 thru Middle School; Home schools; Boy and Girl Scouts in summer.

Redbud Field Trip Program: 3rd – 5th grade students. Children always enjoy field trips and water is really exciting. About 50-60 kids at a time learn the basics: the hydrological cycle; pollution; flooding; hydroelectricity; and water management. There is a scale model of the Highland Lakes. Program is available to about 3,500 AISD children annually at Central Austin location.

Mobile River Program: 7th grade and up. A 42-foot mobile traveling trailer offers an interactive exhibit to every middle school in AISD, as well as other local districts up and down stream. The exhibit challenges students to consider how and why to protect and preserve the Texas Colorado River.

Both programs free and integrated into school curriculum.

Volunteer Opportunities: *Lake Travis Cleanup* – As many as 1,200 children and adults work on a massive annual clean-up effort of Lake Travis in mid-September. Smaller clean-up events held throughout the year.



Earth Native Wilderness School

137 Woodview Lane
Bastrop, TX 78602
Dave Scott (512) 299-8870
Net: earthnativeschool.com
E-mail: info@earthnativeschool.com



Centered at a 55-acre location in rural Bastrop County, we conduct numerous classes and camps to create a nature connection supercharged with education. We employ “coyote mentoring” to inspire rather than instruct. We are teaching children how to do things while we are teaching them to experience nature.

Subjects include: edible & medicinal plants; wildlife tracking; bird language; ecology; wilderness survival; natural navigation; primitive arts & crafts; fire; outdoor cooking; and knife safety.

Expedition School

Kimery Duda (512) 626-6282
34 Robert T. Martinez Jr. Street
Austin, TX 78702
E-mail: info@expeditionsschool.com
Net: expeditionsschool.com



The Expedition School works with all communities and prides itself on teaching practical skills while providing transformational adventures led by professional guides and educators. We utilize the field as our classroom to encourage and empower students as environmental stewards and safety-conscious adventurers.

Safety is paramount. We plan around inclement weather, and animal, water and air safety protocols. We teach the “leave no trace” principle. Scholarships available to low-income students.

Audiences: Ages 3 – adult. Programs below for ages 3 – 16.

Summer Day Camp: Ages 3.5 – 12. Held at McKinney Falls State Park 9 AM – 2 PM (Ages 3.5 – 5) and 9 AM – 3 PM otherwise, June thru August. 2020 cost is \$275-295/wk.

Summer Overnight Camp: Ages 9 – 16. One-week long; held at Bastrop location beginning Monday at 10 AM and ending Friday at 12 PM, June thru August. 2020 cost is \$595.

Pre-School: Ages 3 – 5. Options of 1- or 2-days/week, Monday – Friday, September – May, 9 AM – 3 PM at Bastrop location. 2020 cost is \$1,440 for one day/week and \$2,835 for 2 days/week. Once-per-month option on Saturdays, October – April, from 9 AM – 2 PM. 2020 cost is \$315.

Home School: Ages 5 – 12. There are 32 sessions held Tuesday, Wednesday, or Friday, September – May, 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, usually held at McKinney Falls Park. 2020 cost is \$1,695. Once-per-month session held Mondays, October – April, from 9 AM – 3 PM, at Guerrero Park. 2020 cost is \$395.

Ages 12 – 16. There are 32 sessions held Wednesday or Friday, September – May, 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, usually held at McKinney Falls State Park. 2020 cost is \$1,695.

Weekend Classes: Ages 3.5 – 16. Individual subjects held September – May, usually 4.5 hours at our Bastrop location. 2020 cost is \$30-50. Once-per-month sessions held September – May, usually 6 hours at Bastrop, and McKinney Falls and Dripping Springs State Parks. 2020 cost is \$385-495.

Audiences: Age 6 – adult; Schools and Universities; Businesses; Non-profit organizations; Individuals; Families.

Paddling Adventures: Ages 7 – adult. Organized lessons and guided excursions for canoeing, kayaking, and stand up paddle boarding. Locations include Lady Bird Lake (34 Robert Martinez) and the Pedernales River Nature Park in Johnson City. Birthday parties and private excursions in wilderness areas also options. 2019 cost was generally \$25-45 per student.

Expedition Field Camp: Ages 6 – 10. Five consecutive days of hiking, biking, swimming, paddling, rock climbing, and water rescue certification. Held once per season in Austin area. Cost in 2019 was \$575.

Big Bend Expedition: Ages 10 – 14. Fives days of camping, hiking, swimming, natural history lessons, and sightseeing in West Texas. Cost in 2019 was \$1,800.

Custom Guides: Ages 7 – adult. Tours and outdoor activities for your specific needs, from 2 hours to 8 days.

Professional Custom Adventure Teambuilding: 1- to 8-hour classes. Teambuilding can incorporate high ropes, zip lines, adventure races, paddling, and environmental stewardship. Safety certifications can be included.

Emergency Medical Training: Courses and certification in mountain-bike first aid, heart attack revival (CPR/AED), and lifeguarding. To date, people trained by our courses have saved over 106 lives. 2019 costs ranged from \$99-265.

Families in Nature

4610 Shoalwood
Austin, TX 78756
Heather Kuhlken (512) 710-7346
E-Mail: info@familiesinnature.org
Net: familiesinnature.org
Facebook: facebook.com/familiesinnature.org



Families need time to connect without screens and overscheduling and the million other things that fool us. Children do not have the time and space and experience to fall in love with nature. Families in Nature's (FIN) mission is to connect families to nature and to each other through time playing, learning and volunteering together outdoors.

Audiences: Families from babies to adults; Schools.

Natureversity

13317 Fitzhugh Rd.
Austin TX 78737
Chris Hyde (512) 461-9395
E-Mail: natureversity@gmail.com
Net: natureversity.org



Our mission is to create a nature-based learning culture that promotes the restoration of eco-literacy among children and adults through the practice of earth-based crafts, skills and traditions. Co-ed and mixed age classes for children include: nature awareness; animal tracking; learning plants & trees; knife carving; fire making; shelter building; water purification; hunting tools; rope- and basket-making from plant materials; and pottery making.

Nature is not a commodity for the wealthy. Full and partial scholarships are offered. We have never turned away a family.

Children's Education

Campus Campout Program: Campus campouts take the best parts of a wilderness camping and recreate them on school campuses in a fun, safe, community-building way. FIN's Schools-to-Parks Campout Program breaks down the most common barriers to wilderness camping for families – cost, transportation, gear, real and perceived risks, lack of time, lack of outdoor skills – many of which may disproportionately affect under-resourced and under-represented families. The final step of the program's progression is camping in Texas State Parks. Title 1 schools are free as funding is available.

Guide Development and Ecologist School: FIN conducts Guide Development training that gives you over 1,400 ideas for teaching nature education to all ages through our Ecologist School Program. This program is designed to foster nature connection in all ages within the context of outdoor family adventures. It encourages hands-on experiences that add up over time to a well-rounded knowledge of ecology.

Nature Communities: We train parents, teachers, and community leaders to support creation of Nature Communities in your school or neighborhood – families that play, hike, camp, and volunteer together instead of being divided by age and gender. Once trained they can borrow camping and teaching equipment from our Gear Library.

Most activities are science-based, but there is a considerable amount of time for unstructured play. Nature Communities are encouraged to meet about twice a month during the school year, usually at a park or preserve.

Audiences: Ages 5 – 16; Adults; Schools, Youth groups.

Home School Programs: For ages 5–12, there are 32 sessions held Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, September – May, 9 AM to 3 PM, at Mary Moore Searight Park. 2020 cost is \$1,600. For ages 13–16, there are 32 sessions held Thursday or Friday, September – May, at Mary Moore Searight Park and other locations. 2020 cost is \$1,800.

Weekend Programs: Different classes for ages 5–16. One-day classes usually \$40 and two-day classes usually \$100 in 2020. Most classes are held at Mary Moore Searight Park or Natureversity location on Fitzhugh Road.

Monthly Programs: For ages 5–16, there are 9 classes held on Saturday, September – May, 9 AM to 3 PM, at Mary Moore Searight Park. 2020 cost is \$425 for ages 5–12 and \$475 for ages 13–16. Unlike weekend programs, the same consistent group of children attends each of these classes.

Summer (Day) Camps: For ages 5–12, each weekday for a week in June or July, 9 AM to 3 PM, at Roy Guerrero Park. 2020 cost is \$300 per week.

Spring and Winter Break (Day) Camps: Ages 5–12. These camps run for 5 consecutive days close to the New Year and during Spring break, 9 AM to 3 PM, at Mary Moore Searight Park. 2020 costs are \$300.

School & After-School Programs: Ages 5–16. Schools, youth groups, and churches can arrange onsite teaching. 2020 cost is \$300 per instructor for 6 hours + materials costs.

Partners for Education Agriculture & Sustainability



c/o Cunningham Elementary School, 2200 Berkeley Ave.
Austin, TX 78745

Lauren Zappone Maples (512) 348-8743

E-mail: admin@peascommunity.org

Net: peascommunity.org

Facebook: facebook.com/peascommunity



PEAS connects children and communities to nature and outdoor learning through place-based outdoor learning in school green-spaces and community gardens. We teach children the importance of caring for our environment, and teach teachers how to give children an outdoor education experience. Our curriculum is aligned with state requirements and chronologically aligned.

Texas Memorial Museum

2400 Trinity Street, MS D1500

Austin, TX 78712-1621

(512) 471-1604

E-mail: tmminfo@austin.utexas.edu

Net: TexasMemorialMuseum.org

Facebook: @TexasMemorialMuseum



Established on The University of Texas at Austin campus in 1939, there are 4 floors of permanent exhibits that include: skeletons of dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals; fossil plants; gems, minerals and meteorites; and preserved native Texas wildlife. Open 9 AM – 5 PM, Tuesday – Saturday. Closed on major holidays.

Audiences: Schools Pre-K – 12; Home Schools; University classes; General Public.

Audiences: Schools Pre-K – 7. In 2019, 19 Central Texas schools had PEAS programs.

Outdoor Education Program: Our educators work directly with teachers and their classes, using gardens and sometimes kitchens to teach lessons in science, health, and nutrition. Classes are ongoing throughout the school year. Lessons include: soil production; weather; compost; water; insects; habitats; plant structures; plant adaptations; and food preparation. We lead lessons while teachers enhance their outdoor leadership skills by participating in lessons with their classes. PEAS does not build gardens but supports schools by ensuring they are used for learning.

Organized Structure: Registration for the next school year opens in December. Costs per school range depending on the frequency of lessons, economic status of school, and availability of grant funding. Programs range from twice a month lessons to several a week depending on the needs of the school community and availability of funding. Refer to Web site for current info.



Admission (2020): \$7/ages 13+; \$5/ages 2 – 12; Under 2 yrs/free. \$4/college students with valid ID; UT Austin students and employees/free.

Group Rates (2020): \$5/person for organized groups of 20 or more. \$2/students & teachers for Pre-K–12 school classes of 15 or more (chaperones \$7 each). (September 1 – June 1)

Parking: A garage between San Jacinto Blvd. & Trinity St. currently charges \$3-4/hour; free school-bus parking across I-35 on Comal St.

Resources for Teachers: TEKS-aligned activities & curriculum guides for Museum self-guided tours, including pre- and post-visit lessons for grades Pre-K– 8. Audio tour, loaner kits and educator workshops are also offered.



Texas River School

801 W. Gibson St.
Austin, TX 78704
Joe Kendall (512) 289-0750
Net: texasriverschool.org
E-mail: joe@texasriverschool.org
Facebook: facebook.com/texasriverschool



Many economically disadvantaged youth are not allowed much exposure to nature and nature-based experiences. Since 1994, the Texas River School has been providing outdoor experiences, environmental education, and fun to Austin-area children and teens, many of whom attend Title 1 schools.

Audiences: Title 1 Schools – Ages 9 to 18; Families.

Discover the Source:

This is a day-long school field trip where students are guided in paddle boats from the Texas Rowing Center (near Austin High School) up Barton Creek to the “Splash Exhibit” next to Barton Springs Pool. Each tour requires a minimum of 25. Participants enjoy canoeing, snorkeling, and swimming while learning basic skills in paddling, river safety, and water-trip planning. This is grant-funded for Title 1 schools, with the only cost being transportation. Since this program began, it has given this tour to at least 13,000 students.



River Sense: This is a primer course in canoe operation and safety held for half a day on Lady Bird Lake. It is also grant funded for Title 1 schools. About 600 children and teens a year participate.

Moonlight Bat Float: Between May and October, children and families meet on the Saturday closest to the full moon at the Texas Rowing Center and paddle to the Congress Avenue bridge to watch Austin’s legendary Mexican Freetail Bats. Rowers are serenaded by Austin musicians towed on a raft next to them. The events typically last from 6 – 9:30 PM. Cost is \$15/adult and \$10/child; all income levels welcome. Check our Web site for notice and details of the next event.

Urban Roots

4900 Gonzales
Austin, TX 78702
Max Elliott (512) 750-8019
E-mail: info@urbanrootsatx.org
Net: urbanrootsatx.org
Facebook: facebook.com/urbanrootsatx



Urban Roots is one of the only urban farms still left in Austin, and the only one that offers tours to schools and the general public. We grow as much as 30,000 pounds of organic food a year, donating 40% of it to charities. A key part of our mission is youth training in key aspects of the food production. We also encourage and direct farm volunteers of all ages. Some corporations host volunteer workdays with their employees.

Audiences: Farm Tours – All school grades, youth groups, and adults; Community Volunteers – ages 10 to adult; Youth Training – High school thru college (ages 14 to 23).

Farm Tours: Tours and field trips for our East Austin farm are provided for all grades, as well as scout groups, youth groups, etc. Grades K – 5 are TEKS aligned. About 1,000 people a year take our tour, which is free for Title 1 schools. A minimum of 10 are required. RSVP on Web site.

Community Volunteers: Volunteer needs are cyclical and occur several times a year. They take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 9 AM to 12 PM for ages 10 to adult. There are about 1,500 individual and corporate volunteers annually. Staff and interns teach them to grow food. RSVP on Web site.

Youth Training: High school students 14 – 17 years old can become paid interns. They are trained in key aspects of the “food chain”: growing; sales and business management; donations; and preparation.

Interns also lead farm tours and instruct volunteers. College-aged students can become fellows. Their work includes an in-depth service project with a hunger relief partner. Young people learn formative leadership and job skills that help them in the future.



Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center

24814 Hamilton Pool Road
Round Mountain, TX 78663
Paul Vickery (830) 825-3442
E-Mail: info@westcave.org
Net: westcave.org



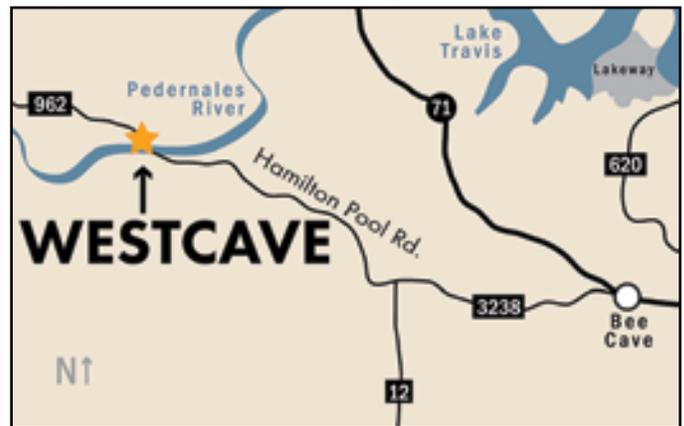
Westcave Preserve is an ecological community of exceptional beauty located on 75 acres in the Hill Country. A semi-tropical grotto cuts deep within its sheltered canyon by perennially falling water. Orchids and cypress trees share the cool, moist, terrarium-like setting while cactus and juniper grow in the hot, dry habitat above the canyon rim. Our mission is to inspire people to develop a lifelong practice of enjoying and protecting nature.

Audiences: Schools Pre-K – 12; Families.

School Programs: 1) *The Westcave Story* – Geology, local flora and fauna, history of the land, and current conservation efforts; 2) *Water: Lifeblood of the Earth* – Hydrogeology of the property, watersheds, point and non-point source pollution; 3) *Animal and Botanical Marvels* – Collecting observation data for animal sightings, animal evidence, leaf shapes and evaluating habitat; 4) *Custom Programs* – Developed to fit the needs/ goals of most groups.

All tours are weather permitting, and include guided hikes into the Canyon, Cave and Grotto areas. Maximum of 60 people (students and adults) per date. Cost varies from \$4-\$30 depending on program/ timing (minimum charge may apply for small groups). Programs usually last 3-4 hours.

Adult Tours: Weekday tours for organized groups up to 60 people. Check Web site for timing and online reservations.



Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve

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Photo by Heather Valey

Wild Basin, sited on 227 Hill Country acres, is one of Austin's first nature preserves. Its 3 miles of trails are open to the public during daylight hours every day of the year. The St. Edward's University Creative Research Center, with hands-on natural science exhibits, is open weekdays from 9 AM until 4 PM.

Audiences: Schools Pre-K – 12; General public.

Tiny Footprints Programs: Pre-K – 1st grade. Nature-based seasonal hikes to explore butterflies and caterpillars, arachnids, squirrels, and acorns.

Guided School Tours: 2nd – 12th grade. 1-2 hour guided hikes, discussing the plants, wildlife, and geology of the preserve. Hands-on natural science exhibits showcasing fossils, insects, birds, and mammals are in the Visitor Center.

Organized Program Structure: Tuesday – Friday, 9:30 – 11:30 AM. Tiny Footprints, up to 24 students per program; Guided School Tours, up to 40 students. Cost is \$3 / student (teachers/ adult chaperones free). Title 1 schools and schools with large share of low-income students are \$1 / student.

Public Programs: Monthly Second Saturday guided hikes and weekend events. Self-guided tours 365 days of the year; donation based. Protect the natural beauty of the preserve by staying 'on-trail' and leaving 'no-trace' during your visit. Pets, bicycles, fires, camping, and picnics are prohibited.

Volunteer Opportunities: Trail Stewards, Trail Guides, Public Information Rangers, invasive species removal, Student internships.

