



Dear Monthly Program Parents:

Monthly Programs at Wilderness Awareness School are starting once again. I want to welcome your family to the year ahead!

This program details letter includes the following information:

- Program Overview
- Program Specifics
- Gear List
- Program Location Information
- Program Location Schedule (includes all parks)

If you have friends who may be interested in having their children involved in our programs, please invite them to visit our website or to call our office to inquire about the Monthly Programs.

Thank you, and we look forward to many adventures with your children.

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## **Program Overview**

Monthly Programs are a hands-on opportunity for your children to get outside and learn about the natural world. Before breaking into groups of no more than 12 students per instructor, we play games, share a story, and sing a song. Each week has a theme, but we have the ability to adapt the day to the energy of the group. One of our teaching concepts is the “invisible school”, where we incorporate our toolbox of stories, games, and activities. Sometimes students don’t realize that they are learning because they are having too much fun! If you would like to know more about our unique teaching method we have a book called *Coyotes Guide to Connecting with Nature*.

**Note:** Many of our students return to our monthly programs year after year. Because our teaching style is very flexible and opportunistic, we have been able to vary their experiences from year to year. Starting in the 2015-16 school year, we implemented a three-year minimum rotating curriculum. Our experienced instructors bring their own passions for curriculum development, further allowing us to meet your child at their growing learning edges, year after year.

### **Nature Explorer (Ages 4-6) and Nature Adventure (Ages 6-13) Monthly Program**

Through creative play and exploration, participants ages 4-13 work together in small groups gaining nature awareness and knowledge of plants, mammals, tracking, birds, and survival. Our instructors guide students into seasonal experiences that nurture their connection to the earth and allow them to feel at home in the natural world.

### **Nature Skills Monthly Program (Ages 10-13)**

The Nature Skills Monthly Program expands on the curriculum of the Nature Adventure Monthly Program taking students even more deeply into explorations of the natural world and the skills of our ancestors. Students will be introduced to more advanced hands on skills like knife safety; carving; fire by friction; tracking; land navigation, with and without map and compass; and many other useful and exciting skills. The curriculum for this program will change annually, alternating themes throughout a 3 year cycle; scout, survival and naturalist/stewardship, to offer new knowledge and challenges to students who have taken the course in previous years. The Nature Skills Monthly program is open as a second day a month option for children who are enrolled at any of our other monthly programs or to students who have a minimum of 2 years of experience with Wilderness Awareness School.

**Note:** If at any time throughout the year, you feel that your child’s needs for adventure and challenge are not being met, please contact our program staff right away. We want to make sure that our families are engaged and enjoying their experience, and there are a lot of options that we have to make that happen.

## Program Information

### Drop Off/Pick Up

On the first day, we will meet at your park 15 minutes before start time, so that we can take care of all the details involved with registration. End-of-the-day pickup is at the same location as morning drop-off. **We do not have the ability to extend care after stated end time. Anyone arriving more than 15 minutes past pick-up will be charged a \$20.00 late fee.** Anyone requiring early pickup should let us know in the morning at drop-off, and make arrangements with us.

### Absences/Cancellations

If a program is cancelled due to weather or natural occurrences, we will do our best to work with the parks to reschedule missed days. However, we do not guarantee this and are unable to offer refunds for cancellations due to such events. We are unable to offer proration or make up days for unexpected absences due to illness or vacations. We hire and operate our programs with very specific student to instructor ratios and are unable to make adjustments mid-year. Tuition is paid on a 7-session basis.

### Volunteering

Our unique programs are clearly more enhanced with the participation of enthusiastic and trained volunteers. If you would like to volunteer at Monthly Programs, or you know someone that is interested, please contact us **before the start of class.** We require parent volunteers attend either our Coyote Mentoring course or our one day volunteer training. Parent volunteers will not be assigned to the same group as their children so parents and children can have their own full experience. Our intention is to have support in creating the best program possible by reducing our instructor to student ratio. Our intention is not to run a family program (at least in this program). **Please call or email Michelle to let us know if you would like to volunteer or if you have questions.**

### End of the Year Potluck

Parents are invited to attend a final circle on the last day of your program to hear highlights from the kids about their year. Then feasting together with a potluck after! Potluck contributions are welcome, though optional. We know how busy your days can get. If you need to simply fetch your child at pickup and whisk them off, no problem. A reminder will be sent closer to the end of the year.

Detailed information about drop-off, pick-up, gear, and parent volunteering are on the following pages.

Thank you for your enthusiasm and support as we begin the 2017-2018 year.

## What to Bring

- Clothing Recommendations
  - It is essential that your children are well outfitted with suitable clothes that they can explore and stay warm in. We whole-heartedly recommend wool socks, long underwear, and warming layers that do not absorb water, such as wool, polypropylene or fleece. Any sort of waterproof external rain jacket and pants will be fine. Many of these items are easily found at REI and/or second-hand stores. Cotton outerwear like jeans or hooded sweatshirts, absorb rain, steal body heat, and lead to cold and unhappy children. **We have had to send kids home because they were too uncomfortable to continue on with the day.** Please dress your children appropriately so this doesn't happen.
- Sturdy shoes (waterproof when appropriate) that can also get dirty (no sandals please)
- Full bottle of water (not broth, juice etc.)
- A snack
- A sack lunch
- A backpack, to carry their gear
  - A spare change of clothing (and a towel on wet days) kept in the car is a great idea. We recommend carrying all necessary items *and no more*. I have picked up 7 year-olds' backpacks that were heavier than mine!
- Garbage Bags (recommended)
  - For your vehicle: Many seasoned WAS parents pack extra garbage bags for pick up. They can be placed between muddy kids and car seats. Additionally they can be used for putting wet and muddy gear into.
- **Quality non-folding knife (\*Nature Skills Monthly Only).** We will be giving knife safety and carving instruction at these programs only. We have Mora knives for sale in our registration store for \$20.00. If you purchased a knife with your registration, it will be made available on the first day. Contact the office for more details.

## What not to Bring

- Knives (With the exception of the Nature Skills Monthly Programs)
- Toys in general (especially those that do not have a connection to the outdoors, nature, and learning)

## Program Location Information

### Cougar Mountain

Mornings are foggy and cold, *even when the surrounding area is bright and sunny*. Please have your child bring a warm layer in the car to put on if it is cold at the top of the mountain where we meet. There is no shelter at Cougar Mountain, and we are not allowed to have fires in the park. It is also **very** important that each child bring their own water every day, as there is no potable water available in the park. We do bring water containers, but thirsty campers can exhaust our supply fairly quickly.

Also, please be aware that Cougar Mountain is a VERY large park, and there are many access points. It is very important that you follow the directions linked below, on our website. If you search for Cougar Mountain on Google Maps, MapQuest, or in your GPS, it is very unlikely that you will find us.

### Seward Park

Seward Park is a uniquely rich forest ecosystem within the urban area of Seattle, and the park has strict policies in place that are designed to protect this very special habitat for many years to come. These policies do affect the activities in which we engage at this location, both because we support the staff at Seward Park in managing this island of wildness with the care that it deserves AND because we need them to continue to support us in providing opportunities for Seattle youth to connect with nature.

As of the writing of this letter we do not go off trail in the woods at Seward Park, harvest plants or berries of any kind, or make fires in the park. We will continue to seek ways in which we can offer these kinds of activities while still supporting the policies and management goals of Seward Park just as we will continue to offer activities and adventures that are fun, engaging and nature-connecting for your children within the policies of the park.

### Saint Edward State Park

A Discover Pass is required for parking at St. Edward State Park. These can be purchased for \$30 for an annual pass, or \$10 per day. The Discover Pass is now transferrable between two vehicles. For more information, or to purchase online, please visit [www.discoverpass.wa.gov](http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov). The park has not required the Discover Pass for drop off/pick-up, up to this point, though that is at the park's staff discretion. Wilderness Awareness School does not take any responsibility for any fees incurred during the program.

At **Saint Edward State Park** there are many long and steep trails, which we explore frequently. Heavy backpacks can make this tiring instead of fun! Please be very attentive to our required gear list (below) and make certain that your child is not carrying any unnecessary items with them to camp.

### Tolt MacDonald Park

Mosquitoes love the standing water in the flood plain of the Snoqualmie Valley, during some weeks they are abundant at Tolt-MacDonald Park. Because their life cycle is so weather-dependent, we are not able to anticipate when this will be the case. Please make sure to send your child with effective insect repellent, as well as the other items on the What To Bring list, below! You can help us further by making sure that your children know how to apply their insect repellent, including awareness of spraying away from other people, food, etc.

## Program Location Schedule

### Friday Nature Explorer Programs (Ages 4-6)

Cougar Mountain (Issaquah)  
9:00am-1:00pm

Sept. 8, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 8  
Feb. 2, Mar. 9, Apr. 6

Seward Park (Seattle)  
9:00am-1:00pm

Sep. 29, Oct. 27, Dec. 1,  
Jan. 26, Mar. 2, Mar. 30, May 4

St. Edward State Park (Kenmore)  
9:00am-1:00pm

Sept. 22, Oct. 20, Nov. 17,  
Jan. 19, Feb. 23, Mar. 23, Apr. 27

Tolt-MacDonald (Carnation)  
9:00am-1:00pm

Sept. 15, Oct. 13, Nov. 10,  
Jan. 12, Feb. 9, Mar. 16, April 20

### Friday Nature Adventure Programs (Ages 6-13)

Cougar Mountain (Issaquah)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 8, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 8  
Feb. 2, Mar. 9, Apr. 6

Seward Park (Seattle)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sep. 29, Oct. 27, Dec. 1,  
Jan. 26, Mar. 2, Mar. 30, May 4

St. Edward State Park (Kenmore)  
9:00am-3:00pm  
(1 session coincides with no school days for Lk WA School District)

Sept. 22, Oct. 20, Nov. 17,  
Jan. 19, Feb. 23, Mar. 23, Apr. 27

Tolt-MacDonald (Carnation)  
9:00am-3:00pm  
(3 sessions coincide with no school days for Riverview School District)

Sept. 15, Oct. 13, Nov. 10,  
Jan. 12, Feb. 9, Mar. 16, April 20

### **Saturday Nature Explorer Programs (Ages 4-6)**

St. Edward State Park (Kenmore)  
9:00am-1:00pm

Sept. 9, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 9  
Feb. 3, Mar. 10, Apr. 7

Cougar Mountain (Bellevue)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 16, Oct. 14, Nov. 11,  
Jan. 13, Feb. 10, Mar. 17, Apr. 21

### **Saturday Nature Adventure Programs (Ages 6-13)**

St. Edward State Park (Kenmore)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 9, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 9  
Feb. 3, Mar. 10, Apr. 7

Cougar Mountain (Bellevue)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 16, Oct. 14, Nov. 11,  
Jan. 13, Feb. 10, Mar. 17, Apr. 21

St. Edward State Park (Kenmore)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 23, Oct. 21, Nov. 18,  
Jan. 20, Feb. 24, Mar. 24, Apr. 28

Tolt-MacDonald (Carnation)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Dec. 2,  
Jan. 27, Mar. 3, Mar. 31, May 5

### **\*Saturday Nature Skills Programs (Ages 10-13)**

Cougar Mountain (Bellevue)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 16, Oct. 14, Nov. 11,  
Jan. 13, Feb. 10, Mar. 17, Apr. 21

St. Edward State Park (Kenmore)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 23, Oct. 21, Nov. 18,  
Jan. 20, Feb. 24, Mar. 24, Apr. 28

Tolt-MacDonald (Carnation)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Dec. 2,  
Jan. 27, Mar. 3, Mar. 31, May 5

\*Participation requires 2 years WAS experience and/or enrollment in simultaneous Nature Adventure Program or Weekly WAS program (Coyotes or Community School)

\*\*Please note that we do not necessarily follow the schedule of “The monthly program meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month”, etc. Our dates change based on our break schedule and vary during the year.