NATURE CENTER
AT SHAKER LAKES

# Outdoor Adventure Camp 2027

Camp Starter Guide

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## Getting Ready for Outdoor Adventure Camp:

Getting Ready for Camp
We will be outside! Remember to prepare for the weather and put sunblock and/or bug spray on before dropping your camper off.

Each day, campers should bring:

- Reusable water bottle
- Morning snack and lunch (we do not allow campers to share food.)
- Closed toed shoes (required always)
- Complete change of clothes

Additional Items for Creek Walking Day (A note will go home the day before).

- Closed toed shoes that can get wet and are secure (no crocs)

Please label all items with your camper's name and pack them in a backpack. The Nature Center is not responsible for lost or misplaced items. Please leave video games and any expensive items at home. Each camper receives one camp t-shirt for the summer, regardless of how many weeks of camp they attend. They will receive the shirt on their first day of camp.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up
The Nature Center is located at 2600 South Park Blvd. Shaker Heights, OH 44120. Drop-off and Pick-up happen in our Pavilion, visible from the parking lot.

- Drop off is from 8:50-9:05am. Pick up is from 2:50pm-3:05pm.
  (for campers attending a half day program, these times are slightly different).
- If driving to the Nature Center, please park and walk your camper to the pavilion.
- After dropping off your camper, we appreciate adults promptly leaving the Nature Center to help facilitate the campers transitioning to the camp day.
- If your camper is going to be absent, please send an email to Hunter@shakerlakes.org to notify our Camp Manager.
- Anyone picking up a camper must show a photo ID and be listed on the approved pick-up list. No exceptions.
  - Please remind your approved pick-up people to have their ID ready.
  - Approved pick-ups can be updated at any time by logging into the registration system and updating "authorized pickup".
- If the pick-up person is running late, please call the Nature Center or email the camp manager as soon as possible to let them know. Late pick-up fees may apply.

(for Explorers and Rangers only): We are unable to accommodate late arrivals or early pick-ups on Tuesdays and Thursdays because the campers are offsite on field trips. In the event of four-day camp weeks, field trips will be on the middle days.

## Welcome!

Please use this document to learn what to expect at Outdoor Adventure Camp this summer and to determine if our programming is a good fit for your camper. This document is intended to be a guide to camp, answer questions, and ensure camp staff, campers, and parents are all on the same page. Please reach out to Hunter Hammil, Camp Manager, at hunter@shakerlakes.org if you have any questions.

## Camp Philosophy

The mission of the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes is to conserve a natural area, connect people with nature and inspire environmental stewardship.

It is our goal as an organization to make sure that we provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive outdoor space so that all people can connect with nature on their own terms and without fear, discrimination, or violence. (Read the Nature Center's DEI statement).

As a camp family, we aspire to reflect the diversity of our habitats and the communities we serve by honoring the unique differences among our staff, volunteers and campers and providing equitable access to nature for all people. Our campers will end their summer with a deep love and respect for nature, themselves and others.

## Camp Age Groups

Campers are sorted into groups based on the grade the camper will be going into during the upcoming school year. As your camper ages, the experiences grow with them!

### Chipmunk Patrol

- A half-day program for campers entering Pre-K and Kindergarten
    - Campers must turn 4 years old by September 1
    - Although both AM (9-12) and PM (12-3) camps are offered, campers are permitted to attend only one.
- The Chipmunks will be learning how to explore nature and make friends through carefully crafted activities and games designed for our youngest campers.
- To help facilitate social connections, campers will eat lunch at the beginning or end of their day, depending on if it's the AM or PM program.

### Squirrel Scouts

- A full-day program (9am-3pm) for campers entering kindergarten and 1st grade.
- The Squirrel Scouts will be exploring the trails, creating artwork or models of their adventures, and playing games with their new friends. Our activities for this age group keep your campers moving, exploring, and working together to discover new things.

### Nature's Detectives

- A full-day program (9am-3pm) for campers entering 2nd and 3rd grade.
- In addition to our fun-filled games and explorations, the Nature Detectives get a taste of our activities that require more focus and accountability. Some weeks include archery, slightly longer hikes, or scientific experiments.

### Nature's Explorers

- A full-day program (9am-3pm) for campers entering 4th and 5th grade.
- Nature Explorers spend their days engaging in hikes, natural observations, and challenging projects. In addition, they take field trips (1 or 2) to explore other parks and/or try specialized activities like fishing or swimming.

### Eco-Rangers

- A full-day program (9am-3pm) for campers entering 6th through 8th grade.
- Eco-Rangers engage in activities unique to them. They take the longest hikes, scientific experiments, and most interesting activities. In addition, they take field trips (1 or 2) to explore other parks and/or try specialized activities like fishing or swimming.

**Want to keep exploring with us? Check out our camp volunteer positions for ages 13-17 or our paid camp internship positions for ages 16+!**

## Goals and Objectives for Camper Development

We strive to create an experience where your campers can explore the natural world in a setting that allows them to grow, learn, and connect with others. Although the way these goals are achieved varies from our youngest to oldest campers (as illustrated in the following examples) we hold the following standards for each of our campers' Nature Center experiences.

- **Campers will develop confidence and a sense of self.**
  - Each camper will participate in at least one activity to promote self-esteem. (ex: complete a challenge, learn a new skill or experience something new).
  - Each camper will receive positive comments and encouragement from staff.

- **Campers will take an active role in the stewardship of our environment.**
  - Staff plan weekly themes around an environmental topic.
  - Campers will learn about nature and the natural world around them.
  - Campers will take part in activities (including games, hiking, or crafts) about nature.
  - Each camper will learn how to interact with nature respectfully.

- **Campers will discover their own skills and abilities.**
  - Each camper will participate in at least two age-appropriate activities during the week that will personally challenge the camper.
  - Each camper will have the opportunity to work in small groups during the camp week either in play, team building activities, or experimentation.
  - Each camper will either engage in at least one new skill or learn about one new topic while at camp.

- **Campers will experience cooperative play or teambuilding.**
  - Each camper will participate in at least one activity with shared supplies such as craft supplies or scientific equipment.
  - Each camper will participate in at least one group activity such as hikes, story time, team challenges, games, experiments, and meals

- **Campers will spend their days outside.**
  - Campers will spend much of their time at camp outside hiking, playing games, creek walking, etc.

## Camp Behavioral Expectations

To help promote a positive camp experience for all, we need each participant to follow the behavior expectations listed below. (Parents/guardians will need to agree to these during the registration process). If a camper fails to safely and consistently follow camp behavioral expectations, a behavior report will be sent home.

- After 3 reports, over any length of time, campers may be removed from camp.
- Immediate dismissal may occur if a camper's behavior is unsafe.
- Once dismissed from camp, tuition is forfeited and registration in any subsequent camps for that season may be canceled. No refunds are given if a camper is dismissed due to safety or behavior concerns.

## Behavior Expectations

**Camp staff are not permitted to assist campers in the bathroom. Our youngest campers are expected to:**

- Be fully potty trained and able to clean themselves independently while using the bathroom.
- Be able to dress/undress independently.

**All campers are expected to:**

- Always follow instructions. This includes staying with the group and responding when their name is called.
- Respect nature by staying on designated trails and leaving what you find.
- Respect fellow campers and camp staff. Causing emotional or physical harm, such as bullying, hitting, kicking, or punching is grounds for immediate dismissal.
- When a problem between campers arises, notify the camp educator. Educators are always ready to listen and assist in problem solving.

**Outdoor Adventure Camp Cancellation Policy**
All cancellations incur a fee of 20% of the cost of the session. "Cost" is defined as the total amount the purchaser is responsible for paying (camp fee minus the membership discount and/or financial aid). Cancellations made after a certain date will not be refunded at all.

**Spring Break Camp:**
Cancellations must be made by March 1, 2027 at 11:59pm to receive a refund minus a 20% cancellation fee. Any cancellation made after March 1st will not be refunded.

**Summer Camp:**
Cancellations must be made by April 30, 2027 at 11:59pm to receive a refund, minus a 20% cancellation fee. Any cancellation made after April 30th will not be refunded.

**All cancellation requests must be made in writing, by emailing the camp manager at hunter@shakerlakes.org**

**Note - Registrations made after the cancellation deadlines or families who are waitlisted and accept an open spot are subject to the same cancellation policy. **

**Transfer Policy:**
If you are interested in transferring your camper's registration to a different week, a $35 administrative fee will be charged in addition to the cost of the week or day. The ability to transfer is dependent on camp availability.

**If the Nature Center Team cancels a camp session:**
The Nature Center reserves the right to cancel a camp session. Potential scenarios include, but are not limited to, low registration, illness impacting staffing, power outage, emergency scenarios, etc. In these cases, a prorated refund will be issued to families reflecting the total days cancelled and the cancellation fee will be waived. If the entire week is cancelled, families may choose to transfer to another session instead of being refunded (provided an open spot is available). In this case, the transfer fee would be waived.

## Early Pick-up & Late Drop Offs

Campers are allowed to be dropped off late or picked-up early, with several exceptions:

- Campers going on field trips must be on time to camp and cannot be picked up early, due to the logistics of off-site field trips.
- No camper may be picked up within the last hour of their program (for full day campers, they must be picked up before 2pm, or at their normal pick-up time. For AM Chipmunks, they must be picked up before 11am or at their normal time).

Steps for Early Pick-up:

- Please inform whoever is checking campers in at drop off that the camper will be picked up early.
- When the time comes to pick up a camper, please go to the front door. If the building is open, please let the front desk know you are there to pick up a camper. If the building is locked, please ring the doorbell on the left-hand side of the door.
- A camp staff member will check ID, radio for the camper, and wait while they make their way to the front desk.
- Please allow extra time for early pick-ups, as getting campers to the building, collecting their things, and to the front desk can take time.

Steps for Late Drop Offs:

- Please email the Camp Manager to inform them a camper is going to be late.
- If the building is open, take them to the front desk and inform them you are there to drop off a camper. If the building is locked, please ring the doorbell on the left-hand side of the front door.
- A camp staff member will meet you at the door/front desk and escort the camper to their group.

## Late Pick-up Fees

If a camper is late being picked up at the end of the camp day, a late fee will apply.
The fee schedule is as follows:

- $10 per camper, for the first 15 minutes.
- $1 per camper, per minute after that.

If a camper is late being picked up, camp staff will attempt to call adults listed during the registration process. After one hour, if the camper has not been picked up, camp staff will contact Shaker Heights Police Department.

If a camper is late being picked up more than twice in a week, NCSL reserves the right to remove the camper from the rest of that week of camp. If a camper is late being picked up more than three times in a summer, NCSL reserves the right to remove the camper from the rest of that summer camp season. In either case, no refunds will be given.

## Camp Health and Safety Philosophy

We believe in providing a safe, healthy and fun experience for all our summer campers, staff and volunteers. While we do not have full-time health staff on site, we follow best practices from the ACA, CDC and Ohio Department of Children and Youth and review recommendations with trained health professionals throughout the camp season. All camp staff are trained in CPR/First Aid/AED through the American Heart Association. We also ask parents to take an active role in communicating with the camp staff regarding any health concerns and needs of their campers. This includes but is not limited to completing all parts of our medical form and informing camp staff of any injuries or physical/mental health conditions that may impact how camp educators assist them.

## Outdoor Adventure Camp Communicable Disease Prevention

These guidelines were written based on current CDC, ACA and Ohio Department of Health recommendations. NCSL continues to monitor best practices and may modify these procedures at any time.

- Campers, staff or volunteers must stay home if they have experienced:
    - A fever within the last 24 hours
    - Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
    - Severe cough and/or sore throat
    - Campers may be sent home from camp if there is a health concern impacting their ability to safely continue the camp day. Parents are expected to pick up their campers promptly. Please see cancellation policy for more information.
- If a camper, staff, or volunteer contracts a communicable disease (including, but not limited to, hand, foot, and mouth disease, COVID-19, measles, Mononucleosis, and Chicken Pox), the camp manager must be informed immediately.
- If the Nature Center becomes aware of a potential exposure of any communicable disease, the following protocol will be followed:
    - Notify all camp families within the same camp session as the ill individual.
    - Disinfect classroom spaces.

  Note: If staffing ratios are unable to be maintained due to ill staff and volunteers, camp sessions may be canceled. Please see cancellation policy for full details.

## Inclement Weather

Outdoor Adventure Camp at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes is a primarily outdoor camp. Campers should plan to spend most of their day outside. When the weather does not cooperate, we have policies in place to keep campers safe. In the event of rain (with no thunder or lightning) campers should still plan to be outside. If there is thunder, lightning, a severe weather alert, or the like, we execute the best judgement possible for the safety of the campers. This extends to air quality alerts and heat advisories as well.

## Camp Activity Risks and Considerations

Please consider whether this camp suits your child's abilities and interests. Please note, we do not have registered health staff onsite.

| Activity | Group(s) | Potential Risks and Considerations |
|---|---|---|
| Hiking (onsite and offsite) | All | Risks: Trips/Falls<br><br>Consider: Hikes are daily for all ages. Terrain includes a mix of ADA accessible trails, dirt paths, stairs and hills. Distance varies by age group but may be up to 1-2 miles for Explorers and Rangers. |
| Field Trips | Nature Explorers and Eco Rangers | Risks: Trips/Falls or Vehicular Accident<br><br>**Campers must demonstrate they can safely follow instructions in order to participate.** |
| Archery (onsite and offsite) | Nature Detectives, Nature Explorers, and Eco Rangers | Risks: Injury from improper use of archery equipment.<br><br>**Campers must demonstrate they can safely follow instructions in order to participate.** |

**During registration, please inform us of any accommodations your camper may need in the "emergency medical form" section.**

## Outdoor Adventure Camp Injury Communication

Should a camper become injured during the camp day, and not require emergency medical attention, NCSL staff will provide the parent/guardian with a written description of the incident at pick-up, including any first aid administered (band-aid, ice, etc.).

The following injuries result in immediate parent/guardian notification:

- Head injury
- Apparent or suspected broken/fracture bones
- Apparent or suspected sprains
- Rashes and swelling
- Deep cuts that cannot be appropriately remedied with basic first aid (ex. require a tourniquet.)
- Injury of any kind that impedes the camper's mobility or ability to communicate

If emergency services are required, the camp counselor will call emergency services immediately (or perform the alternative preferred action steps provided by the parent/guardian on emergency medical form).

## Property Policy

Please review the Nature Center's personal property policies below to ensure your camper meets expectations. Dismissal may occur if a camper brings a prohibited item to camp. Once dismissed from camp, tuition is forfeited and registration in any subsequent camps for that season may be canceled.

- **Smoke-Free Work Environment:** The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes is a smoke free environment. All camp educators, volunteers, campers and parents/guardians are expected to adhere to this policy while onsite.

- **Drug and Alcohol-Free Work Environment:** Alcohol and recreational drugs are not permitted at Outdoor Adventure Camp. Any medications (prescription or over the counter) must be listed on the medical form by the parent or guardian. If a camper or volunteer is found to have drugs on their person that is not listed on their medical form, the medication will be confiscated, and parents/guardians will be notified.

- **Weapons:** The Nature Center prohibits anyone from possessing or carrying weapons of any kind on Nature Center property. This includes: Any form of weapon or explosive; All firearms; All illegal knives or knives with blades that are more than six (6) inches in length. If a camper is found to have a weapon during the camp day, the item may be confiscated until the end of the camp day and parents/guardians will be notified.

- **Animal Policy:** Ambassador animals may be used during a camp week. Campers should not touch or handle any of these animals without supervision from an approved staff member. Campers are not permitted to bring animals from home.

## Special Activities

Some campers might engage in special activities while at camp depending on the age group and theme selected during registration. Campers must always follow the camp behavior expectations (following instructions, showing respect, etc.). To help your camper prepare, we've outlined some of the unique instructions for these special activities below:

**Birthdays at Camp (All Campers)**

- If your camper would like to celebrate their birthday at camp, parents/guardians should plan to send in 12 of any non-food items. (Sharing food is not permitted).

**Creek Walking (All Campers)**

- If an educator plans to take their campers creek walking, campers will be sent home with a sticker on their shirt the day before to let parents know.
- The day of the creek walk, campers need to come prepared with creek shoes (any closed-toed shoes that can get wet that secure the camper's foot. Crocs, flip flops, and sandals are NOT allowed) and a full spare pair of clothes.

**Archery (Select weeks for Detectives, Explores, and Eco-Rangers)**

- Campers **MUST** wear closed-toed shoes that have no holes in them. (tennis shoes, hiking boots, etc.) to participate in archery. Campers *will not* be allowed to participate if they are wearing open toed shoes or any shoes that have a hole in them larger than the diameter of the arrow (this includes sandals, crocs, or any shoes with holes).
- If a camper has long hair, it needs to be tied back such that the string of the bow cannot touch their hair while shooting.
- Campers may not bring any equipment from home.

**Field Trips (Explorers and Eco-Rangers)**

- Campers are expected to wear their camp t-shirts on field trips, when directed (this will be communicated with the parents and campers). Campers may be sent home for not wearing the proper clothing.
- We are unable to accommodate late drop-offs or early pick-ups on field trip days since the campers travel offsite. Please plan to have your camper at the Nature Center on time.

**Fishing (Sometimes offered on field trips)**

- All equipment will be provided. Campers must keep their own fishing equipment at home.

**Swimming (Sometimes offered on field trips)**

- Swimming will occur only at beaches within the immediate area that have trained lifeguards on duty.
- Swimming depends on the weather conditions. Any "Rip-Current Statement" issued by the National Weather Service, red flag warning, or any other safety creating concern will mean campers are not allowed to swim.
- When campers are going swimming, they **MUST** wear their camp issued t-shirts. These are to be worn the entire day of the field trip, from the moment of departure from the nature center, to when they finish swimming. Campers may not take their t-shirt off at the beach at any time. This is for the camper's safety, as it makes quick headcounts easier.

**Using Cell Phones/Electronics for Nature Activities (Eco-Rangers Only)**

- Eco-Rangers may use their cell phones for scientific information (including apps like Seek and iNaturalist) ONLY when given permission from their camp instructor.
    - Leave all other electronic devices at home (including but not limited to portable video game systems, DSLR cameras, laptops, tablets, etc.).
- All other campers may not bring any electronic device to camp. The presence of an electronic device will result in a behavioral report towards dismissal and confiscation of the item until the end of day.

**Biking or Walking to Camp Independently (Eco-Rangers Only)**

- Eco-Rangers may bike or walk to camp independently ONLY if parents/guardians fill out a biking and walking wavier during registration. Parents are expected to ensure their camper is aware of all-important rules and laws for their child when biking.
- All other campers must be dropped off at the pavilion by a parent or guardian and must be picked up by someone listed on their pick-up sheet. However, parents and guardians are welcome to bike or walk with their campers!

**Important Phone Numbers:**

**Nature Center at Shaker Lakes: 216.321.5935**

**Hunter Hammil, Camp Manager: x226**

**Erica Prange, Director of Education: x243**

**Cuyahoga County Health Department: 216.201.2000**

**Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services: 216.431.4500**

The State of OH asks us to share these numbers with you in case you have concerns about NCSL's day camp and want help outside our organization.

| | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Week 5 | Week 6 | Week 7 | Week 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Week Dates:** | **June 14-17 No camp Fri. June 18th** | **June 21-25** | **June 28 – July 2** | **July 6-9 No camp Mon. July 5th** | **July 12-16** | **July 19-23** | **July 26-30** | **Aug. 2-6** |
| **Camp Group** | **Semester 1** This summer, we will have two semesters of 4 weeks each. The program will repeat. Please do not sign up for the same theme twice. | | | | **Semester 2** This summer, we will have two semesters of 4 weeks each. The program will repeat. Please do not sign up for the same theme twice. | | | |
| **Chipmunk Patrol AM** Ages 4 & 5 | Earth Detectives $205 | Creature Features $250 | Naturally Creative $250 | Pond Pals $205 | Earth Detectives $250 | Creature Features $250 | Pond Pals $250 | Naturally Creative $250 |
| **Chipmunk Patrol PM** Ages 4 & 5 | Earth Detectives $185 | Creature Features $230 | Naturally Creative $230 | Pond Pals $185 | Earth Detectives $230 | Creature Features $230 | Naturally Creative $230 | Pond Pals $230 |
| **Squirrel Scouts** Rising K & 1st | Earth Detectives $330 | Creature Features $410 | Naturally Creative $410 | Pond Pals $330 | Earth Detectives $410 | Creature Features $410 | Naturally Creative $410 | Pond Pals $410 |
| **Nature Detectives** Rising 2nd & 3rd | Rocks Rock! (archery) $330 | Animal Agents $410 | Survival Skills 101 (archery) $410 | Water Adventure $330 | Rocks Rock! $410 | Animal Agents $410 | Survival Skills 101 (archery) $410 | Water Adventure $410 |
| **Nature Explorers** Rising 4th & 5th | Geology Rocks (archery) $390 | Wildlife Detectives $440 | Survival Skills 201 (archery) $440 | $H_2o$ Yeah! $390 | Geology Rocks $440 | Wildlife Detectives $440 | Survival Skills 201 (archery) $440 | $H_2o$ Yeah! $440 |
| **Eco Rangers** Rising 6th – 8th | Adventures in Rocks (Archery) $390 | Operation: Wild $440 | Survival Skills 301 (archery) $440 | Wetland Exploration $390 | No Eco Rangers these weeks. (A second session of Squirrel Scouts or Nature's Detectives will be offered during these weeks in place of Eco Rangers). | | | |