

Eagle River Nature Center's 2019-2020 Nature Studies for Homeschoolers K-6th

Each individual class (a la carte) costs \$15/student and includes a day parking pass.

Members of ERNC can register for one of the following options:

- **Fall Series:** \$50 per student for 5 classes during the fall semester;
- **Spring Series:** \$50 per student for 5 classes during the spring semester;
- **FLEX Series:** \$70 per student for 6 classes during either fall or spring semester;
- **School Year Series:** \$90 per student for 5 classes during fall and 5 classes during spring.

REGISTRATION DETAILS

- 1) There are no refunds once payment is made. We suggest you try an individual class before committing to a series if unsure.
- 2) We need a minimum of 5 students to hold a class. If a class is cancelled due to low enrollment or bad weather, you will be able to substitute another class.
- 3) Those registered in the series get to first pick: Register for classes up to one month before registration opens to the public through the program website.
- 4) No changes once registered for a class. Please note that you do not need to select all the classes immediately upon enrolling for the series – you can register anytime, for just a few classes and hold off on registering for the remainder until you have a better idea of your family's schedule.
- 5) Registration for classes is done online and convenient. Those enrolled in the series will receive a username and password to sign up your child(ren) for classes. You can register up to 48 hours before a class starts.
- 6) Wait list is on a family group basis, but you can also put an individual child on a wait list. Once your group is moved from the waitlist to being placed in the class, you are committed to that class and cannot make changes. However, you can ask us anytime to remove your name from the wait list by emailing us.
- 7) If your child is sick and you're enrolled for a series, please let us know as soon as possible BEFORE the class. You may select a different class as "make-up", assuming space is available. If you fail to attend a class without letting us know, you lose your chance of selecting a make-up class.
- 8) Questions? Attend the Homeschool Orientation on September 4th, 2019 or January 8-2020, or contact us: Ute Olsson and Samantha Blumenkönig, (907) 694-2108 or naturalist@ernc.org

THIS IS THE RIGHT PROGRAM FOR YOUR FAMILY IF:

- **Your family is able to walk together with a group for up to 1 mile.** *Many classes involve an outdoor portion, usually hiking on the Rodak Trail.*
- **Your student is on the path to literacy.** *Often there are simple, self-guided reading pieces of each program. Your student will be most successful if they are on their way to becoming independent readers, or you are able to help them to read.*
- **Your student is able to respectfully listen to others and take turns.** *In order for everyone to have a positive learning environment, the expectation is that students are able to take turns and listen to others.*
- **Your student practices good self-preservation.** *The naturalists and all of the adults are around to help ensure the physical safety of all students, however the student must have the awareness to not take risks that may derail the class, such as tree climbing or*

inappropriate horse play.

KEY SKILLS: New for the 2019-2020, we've added Key Skills to some class descriptions. Key skills indicate skills needed beyond natural science that we will be using. They may be things like using an identification guide, using rulers, reading, graph reading, and simple math. Highlighting these skills is meant to help you determine if your student is ready to successfully participate in the class. For example, a class that involves graphing predator and prey relationships "like "Lynx and Snowshoe Hare" may not be appropriate for a student who is just learning about mathematical relationships. If you have any questions, please reach out to us!

SAFETY POLICY:

- 1) All children need to be accompanied by an engaged adult who is actively assisting and guiding children's learning, safety and behavior at all times. Our classes are facilitated with the expectation that adults learn and participate along with their students.
- 2) Siblings are welcome, but for safety reasons, each adult may only have 1 independently-walking pre-school child in their care during field trips (not counting babies in backpack or stroller).
- 3) When on the trail, all participants are expected to walk behind the guide, stay together, and follow instructions.
- 4) Dogs are not allowed during guided walks (except service animals).

We are committed to the success of each student. We are happy to work with families to develop supports and accommodations for special needs.

PARENT SIGNATURE I have read and agree to these policies.

_____ Date _____

Is Nature Studies for Homeschoolers at ERNC right for my family?

___ I **DO NOT** authorize ERNC to use pictures of my student in ERNC related publications

Nature Studies for Homeschooled Students K-6th

Eagle River Nature Center

FALL 2019 SCHEDULE

MEET & GREET *Wednesday, September 4th, 11am-1pm*

Our homeschool series starts with an “open house” orientation session at the classroom yurt: Interested families are invited to stop by anytime 11am-1pm to meet the instructors and learn more about the homeschool offerings at the Eagle River Nature Center. Meanwhile, students can explore animal pelts, skulls and tracks.

POWER OF SCIENCE *Tuesday, September 10th 1pm-3pm*

Investigate the basics of the scientific process, designing an experiment, gathering data, using simple scientific tools.

Key skills: Basic reading • Basic math • Direction following

This is a “freebie” for those enrolled in one of the Homeschool Series options (pre-registration is required). Not available for individual enrollment a la carte.

FUNGUS AMONG US *Wednesday, September 18th, 1pm-3pm*

Fungi are neither plants nor animals but comprise their own kingdom. We’ll go on a “Detritus Safari” to discover how saprophytic fungi help break down forest garbage, and develop some simple tools to start identifying the diverse fungi that are essential to our boreal ecosystem. Finish this session with some ideas about how to cultivate your own fungi and how fungus just might save the world!

Key Skills: Hand lenses • Using identification guides

BUILD-A-TREE *Thursday, September 26th, 1pm-3pm*

Explore plant growth & functions, then go on a leaf collection expedition and learn to identify tree species using a key. Discover how trees deal with winter. We’ll also explore what tools foresters use to track the health of a forest.

Key skills: Some reading & math • Group participation • Use of a dichotomous key

BEAVERS AND SALMON: Life Around the Pond *Tuesday, October 1st, 1pm-3pm*

They may be smaller than us, but salmon and beavers have a big impact on our landscape. Investigate beaver ecology and adaptations and explore how salmon nourish ecosystems—even the trees!

Key Skills: Group Participation • Safety around water • Some reading

OUTDOOR SKILLS *Friday, October 18th, 1pm-3pm*

Work as peers to learn how to prepare for outdoor adventures. We will discuss how not to get lost and how to stay warm. We will also practice building emergency shelters and discuss wildlife safety.

Key skills: Group cooperation

BIRDING 101 *Thursday, October 24th, 1pm-3pm*

Examine our collection of nests, wings and feathers to determine how birds are well adapted to their habitat. Learn about field markings and basic bird songs. We’ll practice using binoculars and explore

why some birds migrate and others don't. This is the class for a budding ornithologist!

*Key Skills: Binocular use • Guided reading **Please let us know if your student needs auditory support**

PUBLIC LAND TREASURES *Wednesday, November 6th, 1pm-3pm*

How is Chugach State Park different from Denali National Park? Who's responsible for building trails? What do I do with a topographical map? Find these answers and more as we go on a treasure hunt to find answers and try our hand at making maps! *This class is more appropriate for older learners.*

Key Skills: Compass Use • Map Reading

GEOLOGY ROCKS *Tuesday, November 12th, 1pm-3pm*

Investigate the rock cycle and survey Alaska's minerals. Then, explore public policy by working with a team to "mine" a baked good for resources!

Key Skills: Group games • Hand lenses • Direction following

GEOLOGICAL DISASTERS! *Tuesday, November 26th, 1pm-3pm*

As we approach the one year anniversary of "The Big One," learn more about how earthquakes and other natural disasters happen. We'll also talk about tsunamis, volcanoes and more! We'll also discuss ways you and your family can be prepared and stay safe in the event of a natural disaster.

Key Skills: Some reading

SNOW STUDIES *Thursday, December 5th, 1pm-3pm*

Take a close look at snowflakes and learn about how rain/hail/snow are formed in the atmosphere. We'll study the phase changes of water, learn about avalanches, and go snowshoeing, weather permitting.

Key Skills: Hand lenses • Snowshoeing

SPRING 2020 SCHEDULE

Registration starts Nov 1, 2019 for those enrolled in one of the Homeschool Series. Dates will be announced then, as well.

MEET & GREET *Wednesday, January 8th, 11am-12:30pm*

The spring semester series starts with an “open house” orientation session in the main building: Interested families are invited to meet the instructors and learn more about the homeschool offerings at the Eagle River Nature Center. Meanwhile, students can explore animal pelts, skulls and tracks.

POWER OF SCIENCE *Wednesday, January 8th 1pm-3pm*

Investigate the basics of the scientific process, designing an experiment, gathering data, using simple scientific tools.

Key skills: Basic reading • Basic math • Direction following

This is a “freebie” for those enrolled in one of the Homeschool Series options (pre-registration is required). Not available for individual enrollment a la carte.

SKULLS & BONES *TBD*

Inspect the bones of owls and their prey to discover similarities and differences between vertebrate animals. Discover why bones are important and how they support us. We’ll compare skulls of a variety of Nature Center creatures and see what their teeth and beaks can tell us about their diets.

Key Skills: Working with parts of animals that are no longer alive

FIRE & ICE *TBD*

For older students (ages 8-12): Like peanut butter and pickles, sometimes opposites go together. Investigate ice by studying glaciers and ice ages. Study our bodies’ metabolism and focus on how to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Practice how to start a fire outdoors. Weather permitting, we will also spend time using snowshoes.

Key Skills: Fire safety • Snowshoeing

CELESTIAL BODIES *TBD but will be in the late afternoon/early evening (1.5 hours)*

For younger students (ages 5- 9): We’ll start with some constellations storytelling inspired by the night sky. Study the phases of the moon, learn about the solar system, and look through a telescope at the night sky, conditions permitting. We’ll wrap up by making a night sky journal for recording your observations.

FOSSIL DIG *TBD*

Dig into Alaska’s ancient history as we investigate how fossils are made. Survey our fossil collection and hone your paleontological techniques by going on a fossil dig to reconstruct the past.

Key Skills: Group cooperation • Some reading

MISSING LYNX *TBD*

For older students (ages 8-12): How do predators change a landscape? Uncover evidence of the special relationship between the snowshoe hare and the lynx through tracking and other animal signs.

Investigate special adaptations that both the lynx and snowshoe hare use. Synthesize data to model predator-prey relationships--just like a Wildlife Biologist!

Key Skills: Graph making & reading • Data collection

HOME IS WHERE THE HABITAT IS *TBD (1.5 hrs)*

For younger students (ages 5-9): What does an animal need to make a home? Investigate adaptations, food chains, shelter, and water sources to build a mini-home for one of our creatures. Compare the different “jobs” different plants, animals, and fungi have in an ecosystem.

BEAR-LY WAKING UP: Bear Ecology *TBD (1.5 hrs)*

For younger students (ages 5-9): Bears are waking up! Experience a year in the life of a bear through an experiential game. Investigate which bears live in Chugach State Park and learn how to safely share trails and territory with our ursine neighbors!

SPRING GREENS *TBD*

Things are green again! Investigate how plants grow and reproduce. Learn how to identify local plants and discover some of their historic uses. Study the variety of seed dispersal methods found in nature, and “build” your own unique plant.

Key Skills: Some Reading • Number Recognition

CALLING ON CADDISFLIES! *TBD*

Go in search of the elusive Caddisfly larva. Learn about aquatic macroinvertebrates and what they can tell us about stream health. Find out who else shares this space and relies on these creatures for food. Bring your rubber boots and plan to be by the water so we can capture critters as the larval caddisflies, stoneflies, mayflies, and more!

Key Skills: Water Safety • Patient Investigation