Young Naturalist Family Handbook
2016-2017

Hudson Highlands Nature Museum

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter	3
Mission Statements and Educational Philosophy	4
Registration Information	5
Class Options & Locations	7
Curriculum	8
Daily Schedule	9
Nature Play & Grasshopper Grove	11
Safety Guidelines for Nature Play	13
Arrival & Departure Policies	14
Tips for Easing the Transition	15
Discipline	16
Clothing Recommendations	17
Snacks	19
Special Occasions	21
Parent Conferences & Family Involvement	22
Illness & Emergencies	23
Ticks, Poison Ivy, Etc.	24
Inclement Weather Policy	25
Staff and Contact Information	26
Calendar	27

Dear Young Naturalist Family,

Welcome to the exciting world of a Young Naturalist! We are looking forward to exploring the wonders of nature with your child and are delighted to have you join us for our 22nd year of this unique program for young children.

The Young Naturalist Program is an active, hands-on learning experience where young children utilize the resources of the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum to develop the social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills that are crucial to their development and success in future school experiences. The children learn colors, shapes, numbers and letters while interacting with the natural environment. On a typical day, an investigation of rocks might lead to a game of rock shape bingo, sorting games or the development of motor skills as they move, stack and build with rocks.

The children have daily experiences with animals in the classroom and on the property of the Outdoor Discovery Center at the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum. The children regularly hike in the woods and fields and to the ponds on our site. They engage in play in our one-of-a-kind nature play area, Grasshopper Grove. In addition, the children make several trips a year to the Museum's Wildlife Education Center where they get an up close look at the Museum's collection of wildlife, including an opossum, snakes, frogs, and turtles.

This packet will provide you with the information you will need to get the most out of our preschool program. If you have any questions, however, please feel free to contact me at 845-243-6669 or at khunter@hhnm.org .

We look forward to welcoming your family into our Young Naturalist community.

Sincerely,

Kerrilee Hunter
Young Naturalist Program Director, Hudson Highlands Nature Museum

Mission Statements

The mission of the Young Naturalist Preschool is to provide an early childhood experience that meets the developmental needs of each child through interaction with the environment and engaging the child's sense of wonder with the goal of developing a lifelong appreciation and relationship with the natural world.

The mission of the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum is to create responsible caretakers of our environment. Through quality educational programs for the public that focus on the unique ecology of the Hudson Valley, the museum promotes knowledge and appreciation of our natural world and the dynamic role of human interaction in its well-being.

Educational Philosophy

In the Young Naturalist Preschool we believe that young children are naturally curious and motivated to learn. We facilitate this learning by:

- Providing an enriched environment that encourages exploration, experimentation and self discovery
- Developing learning activities that meet individual children's physical, cognitive and emotional needs
- Encouraging problem solving by asking open-ended questions
- Offering ample opportunities for children to engage in group activities that foster cooperation
- Providing meaningful active play experiences in the natural world
- Nurturing a child's natural sense of wonder

Registration Information

Enrollment
Enrollment is for the duration of the Young Naturalist Program: September 8, 2016-June 14, 2017. Children must be three years of age by December 1st and potty trained in order to be eligible for the three year old program. Children must be four years of age by December 1st and potty trained in order to be eligible for the four year old program.

New Students
To enroll, fill out an application form and submit it to the museum office. If space is available in the requested class, a contract will be given which should be read thoroughly, completed, signed and returned with a $65.00 non-refundable registration fee and a non-refundable first payment of 10% of the annual tuition. Student's families must be museum members at the family level ($70.00/yr) for the duration of their enrollment in the YN program.

Priority enrollment
Current students and their siblings receive priority registration. Current student families may register in December for the following school year and should complete the registration process by January in order to maintain their spot in the program. Alumni siblings also receive priority registration and may register in December as well. Museum members register in January and registration is open to the general public in February.

Wait List
We try to place your child in the class you select on your application. If no space is available in the requested class we will notify you when we send the contract that your child has been placed in an alternative class and your name will be added to our waiting list for the requested class. If an opening should arise in the requested class we will notify you by phone.

Tuition payments
Once enrolled each family is responsible for tuition payments regardless of their child's attendance. The remaining 90 % of the tuition can be paid in full in advance for a 5 % discount (if paid by check) or divided into an additional nine installments. The second installment is due on or before June 1, 2016. The remaining installments are due on the first day of each month starting with September 1, 2016 and continuing to April 1, 2017. You may choose to use your credit card to pay the installments and should see the museum office to set up automatic credit card payments.

Note: There is no reduction in tuition for missed days or for days canceled.

Museum Membership
Young Naturalist families must be Museum members at least at the family level of $70.00 per year for the duration of their enrollment. As a member of the museum you receive many additional benefits:

- Unlimited free admission to the Wildlife Education Center, and to Grasshopper Grove
- Subscription to the Museum Members' Bulletin highlighting upcoming events
- 10% discount in the Museum's nature gift shop
- Invitations to special members-only events (such as family camp out)
- Discounts on Museum Birthday Parties, summer camp, and many museum weekend and special programs
- Early registration to the Young Naturalist Preschool

Documents
The following documents must be submitted on or before September 8, 2016:

1. Completed application form
2. Signed and completed contract
3. A copy of your child's immunization record or vaccination waiver
4. Student information form for office with up-to-date parent contact information
5. Student information form for classroom

Class Options & Locations
Please note, for ALL classes, children must be potty-trained.
Owl and Deer classes meet in the Farmhouse (FH) classroom; all other classes meet in the Learning Center classroom (LC).

Three Year Old Class Options
All 3's classes take place in the Learning Center classroom (LC).

- Turtle Class
  - Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-11:45 AM
  - Must be three by 12/1/2016
- Frog Class
  - Tuesday and Thursday, 12:15-3:00 PM
  - Must be three by 12/1/2016
- Bluebird Class
  - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:00-11:45 AM
  - Must be three by 9/1/2016

Four Year Old Class Options
Owls and Deer meet in the Farmhouse (FH) classroom.
Dragonflies take place in the Learning Center classroom (LC).

- Dragonfly Class
  - Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 12:15-3:00 PM
  - Must be four by 12/1/2016
- Owl Class
  - Monday-Friday, 8:45-11:30 AM
  - Must be four by 12/1/ 2016
- Deer Class
  - Monday-Friday, 12:00-2:45 PM
  - Must be four by 12/1/2016

Why a Science and Nature-based Curriculum?

In contrast to a traditional preschool, the Young Naturalist curriculum is based on the natural world and scientific concepts. This allows the children to explore their world using all of their senses and helps them build a lasting connection to the natural world. Scientific themes allow for exploration, self discovery, and problem solving—all critical skills for early childhood development. The curriculum below is an outline for the teachers to follow but day-to-day experiences in the natural world lead the class on new adventures each day.

Curriculum

	Threes		Fours
September	Living/Non-living		Insects
October	Rocks & Minerals		Trees/Seeds/Leaves
November	Dinosaurs		Ecology
December	Animals in Winter		Simple Machines
January	Night & Day		Space Exploration
February	Shadows/Light		Human Body
March	Weather/Water Cycle		Bird Discoveries
April	Animal Habitats		Life Cycles
May	Growing/Animal Babies		Planting
June	Intro to Insects		Ponds & Rivers

A Day in the Life of a Young Naturalist

The Young Naturalist class is just under three hours, and in that time frame the children are provided with many opportunities to interact with each other and with their environment. They explore and make discoveries as they are introduced to a variety of science and nature topics.

Upon arrival the students and their parents are greeted by the teacher and directed to their cubbies to stow their belongings. The children are immediately drawn into the classroom by a wide variety of activities that are available during this discovery play period. A typical day's activities range from sensory experiences like rolling out play dough, scooping sand into a funnel and painting at the easel to building insect habitats from blocks, sticks and rocks. A teacher directed activity is available at one of the tables and relates to the monthly theme. The students might be discovering symmetry using pattern blocks and butterfly wings or reviewing metamorphosis by creating a butterfly life cycle from macaroni. A discovery table as well as many nature and story books is available for those children who want some time to explore on their own or spend some quiet time with a friend. This is a busy time in the classroom with many opportunities for self discovery and hands-on fun.

Following this play period, the children assist the teachers in cleaning up the classroom and preparing for the next activity-circle time. Circle time enables the whole group to come together to review previous lessons through song, puppet shows, dramatizations or stories. The children select jobs for the day-watering the classroom plants, caring for the classroom animals or setting the table for snack. The class discusses the weather with the help of the "meteorologist" of the day and graphs the weather on the monthly weather chart.

Snack time follows circle time. Parents take turns bringing a healthy snack in for the group in the three year old classes and the four year olds pack and bring their own snacks. The snack helpers for the day practice one-to-one correspondence as they set the tables and then the group enjoys eating together inside or outside for a picnic, if the weather cooperates.

After a bathroom break and independent reading time, the children eagerly arrive at Science Circle. This is a favorite time of the day where the students are fully immersed in the monthly topic. Mystery boxes, experiments and hands-on explorations introduce the students to exciting topics like metamorphosis, the water cycle, amphibians or outer space. The follow up activity to Science Circle is a trip outside for further exploration. The children carry magnifying glasses, collecting jars or nets on these adventures. Guided hikes, scavenger hunts, collecting walks and outdoor games are just a few of the outdoor activities a Young Naturalist enjoys each class. Playing in nature is a strong component of our program and the children enjoy running down hills, balancing on fallen logs, creating imaginary worlds from pine cones, sticks and rocks and digging in the dirt or mud each class.

The Young Naturalist day concludes with a review of the day's activities. There is often a discussion time, song or story to end the day. It is a day in which the students are fully immersed in activity and exploration, where they learn to be careful observers and stewards of their environment in the Hudson Valley.

Nature Play and Grasshopper Grove

Nature Play

A significant portion of the Young Naturalist day is spent engaged in nature play. It has become clear to professionals in the educational, early childhood, psychological, and scientific communities that it is vitally important to a child's healthy cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development to be given the opportunity to engage in play in the natural world. Those in the early childhood field have long recognized the value and importance of play in a child's development; in the Young Naturalist Program we also recognize the value of walking in the woods, creating fairy houses in the forest, climbing boulders and entering imaginary worlds where sticks, stones and bark become a young child's playthings. Young Naturalist students spend time outside each class day regardless of the season. In the fall we play among the leaves, in the winter we build with snow and go sledding down hills, in the spring we dance and pollinate like honeybees among the flowers, and in the summer we float leaf boats down the stream. The children actively engage in their surroundings as they explore their world using each of the senses.

Nature play is not only vital to a young child's healthy development; it has also been proven to be a factor in developing an environmental conscience. Children who engage in play in nature come to value and appreciate the natural world and in turn grow up to be adults who nurture and care for the planet and its resources.

Grasshopper Grove

The Museum has 177 acres for the children to explore and find magical play places like fallen trees, rock walls, flowing streams, and fields of wildflowers and milkweed. In addition to these wonderful natural spaces in our woods, fields, and ponds, we have created a natural play space close to the classrooms called Grasshopper Grove. Grasshopper Grove brings these creative, fun play spaces closer and makes them more accessible. The Young Naturalist students, teachers, and parents had a hand in the development and (even construction in some instances) of this wonderful, natural interactive play space. In Grasshopper Grove the children can climb aboard a fallen tree, hop from stump to stump, walk along a rock wall, run down hills, paint with water, dig in dirt, quietly read in a rustic lean-to, hide among the bushes, and search for critters underneath rocks or logs.

Watching children play in Grasshopper Grove is a delight. You witness engaged, creative minds working cooperatively while learning persistence and patience. The Young Naturalist classes are fortunate to have access to this magical play space and it is a favorite play destination for the students as well as their families.

Four and five year old students may enroll in special nature play clubs at the Outdoor Discovery Center: Grasshopper Grove After School or Lunch Club. These special Museum programs extend the class day and allow the opportunity for more free play in nature. Find out more information and register on the Museum's website.

Grasshopper Grove is also open on the weekends for families to enjoy sharing in the joys of nature play. Admission is free to Museum members so you can come as often as you like. Find specific information about hours on the Museum website at www.hhnaturemuseum.org.

Safety Guidelines for Nature Play

Hudson Highlands Nature Museum

We encourage you to play with your child in nature. Please enjoy our fields, woods, ponds, wetlands, and Grasshopper Grove safely and be respectful of the plants and animals that inhabit our property. Please adhere to the following safety guidelines and enjoy your time at the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum.

- Children must be supervised at all times
- Visit our many ponds, but don't throw anything into the ponds; many small creatures live here
- Be aware of poison ivy growing on the ground and as vines climbing on trees
- Snakes have the right of way-if you encounter a snake, give it space to get away
- Take the time to appreciate and smell the plants and flowers, but do not pick them; they are here as a habitat and/or food source for the animals that live here
- Quietly observe the life around you but do not remove any living creature from its natural habitat here at the Museum. This is their home and they are familiar with the food and water sources here on site. No creatures may leave the Museum grounds
- Check yourself and your child carefully for ticks after playing outdoors
- Sticks can be used in imaginative and creative ways but require caution and supervision. Do not run with sticks
- Use the sticks, leaves, branches and bark that are already on the forest floor to create fairy houses and forts. The living trees of the forest need their leaves, seeds, and branches to continue to provide us and the creatures of the forest with fresh air, shade, and shelter
- Water play is a great way to cool off on a hot day; wear water shoes or rubber boots to safely enjoy splashing in the stream

Experience the joy of playing in nature and recapture your own sense of wonder in the process!

Arrival and Departure

Arrival

There are two options for parking when you arrive for preschool. The upper parking lot, located by the classrooms, is for quick drop-off only (if you will only be in the spot for five minutes). If you expect to be here for a longer time, please park in the lower parking lot. Your child's teacher will open the classroom door when class is scheduled to begin. If you arrive early, you can wait in the lobby of the Education Center building, on the porch of the Farmhouse, or feel free to explore the property with your child.

When the classroom door opens, please walk your child into the classroom and help them stow their belongings in their cubby. Parents/guardians must initial the class roster to sign in when they arrive. Your child may begin his/her day at any of the fun play/learning activities set up in the classroom or at the table with a teacher for the teacher-directed craft. Help your child engage in an activity and take a moment to say goodbye, reassuring your child that you will return later to pick him/her up. Please exit the classroom at this time so everyone can begin their school day. Parents are free to gather in the lobby or outside for time to chat with one another. Siblings should be supervised at all times and not left to wander in the classroom.

Towards the end of the school year, to help prepare the four year olds become more independent and better prepared for Kindergarten, the four year old classes will begin an independent drop off time and you will be notified when that begins.

Departure

Please park according to your planned length of stay for departure—upper lot for quick pick up and lower lot if you plan to spend a little time chatting or playing with your child at the end of their school day. The teacher will open the classroom door at pick up time and invite the parents to come in and pick their child up from the classroom tables. Please be sure to sign your child out in the roster book and check for all of their belongings. If your child will be going home with someone other than the normal pickup person, please send a note or call and leave a message.* Be sure to include all persons you allow to pick up your child on the student information sheet.

Tips for Easing the Transition to Preschool

- Be enthusiastic about the transition to school. If you are excited and confident about your child entering school, your child will feel it and be confident too
- Arrange a play date with another child in the class. One-on-one play will help your child develop a relationship with a classmate and provide them with a feeling of security in their new class
- Start a daily routine for school days. Involve your child in the process of picking out their clothes for school and encourage them to begin to dress themselves. Plenty of sleep is also important for school days so your child is able to handle the day's activities
- Don't prolong your goodbye. If your child whines or clings to you, staying longer in the classroom will only make it more difficult
- Always say goodbye to your child. Be firm but friendly about separating. Establish a goodbye routine in advance and stick to it. (example: 2 hugs & 3 kisses) Do not sneak out without saying goodbye—children find it scary if parents 'disappear'
- If your child gets upset, acknowledge the feeling and find ways together that will help him/her with the adjustment. Some key phrases might be "I know you are upset; let's think about what you'd like to do first at school today" and "I need to leave now but I will be back to pick you up after you have fun playing outside with your friends"
- Ask the teacher for help! The teachers are there to assist your child and YOU with the separation. Please let the teacher know if you are having a difficult day with the transition to school and the teacher will help by involving your child in a classroom activity
- Don't talk about how much you will miss your child or how lonely you will be. Don't let your own anxiety get in the way of a positive experience for your child. Focus on the fun that you are sure your child will have in school
- Allow time each day to discuss your child's school day together. If your child doesn't want to talk about it right away, give them the time and space to talk at another time. Dinner or lunch time is a great time to discuss your day. It helps to prompt your child by asking them to tell the best thing that happened at school that day and the worst thing that happened. Share your own best/worst stories as well; they are great conversation starters
- Remember that all children deal with separation in their own way. It is perfectly natural for it to take up to two weeks for a child to become comfortable with the transition to school. Sick days, vacations, and holidays disrupt the normal routine and can begin separation anxiety all over again. Be patient! This is a big step in your preschool child's life and we will get through it together

Our Approach to Discipline

The physical and emotional well-being of every child is important to us! Every child will be made to feel safe and protected while in our care. We cultivate a calm atmosphere with clear expectations. Teachers and students work together to create a list of class rules. Parents can view the class rules posted in the classroom and discuss them with their child.

Whenever a child is having a hard time controlling his/her behavior, teachers will assist in a calm, helpful manner. We help children understand the connection between their behavior and consequences. We practice conflict resolution that encourages children to identify and express their feelings in order to become capable of self-regulation.

Positive reinforcement plays a big part in our classroom management. We model appropriate behavior and use literature, puppet shows, and dramatization to encourage kindness and caring. At this age, redirection is often an effective management technique as well.

Parents/guardians will be informed by the teacher if their child is not responding to disciplinary efforts. We will work with parents/guardians to develop and implement strategies to help the child succeed in the classroom.

Clothing

Outdoor discovery and preschool play requires freedom of movement and unrestrictive clothing. Tight clothing, dresses, and costumes can get in the way during active play. For independence in toileting, children need clothing that is easy to take on and off. Belts and overalls can be difficult for children to manipulate on their own and should be avoided on school days. Long pants are strongly encouraged to be worn at all times to help protect from insect bites, ticks, and injuries from falls.

We have smocks in the classroom for the children to use during art projects, but it is up to the child to wear a smock as we do not force children to wear them. Please dress your child in clothing that can be soiled so they will feel free to participate in messy projects and fun nature walks. If your child's clothing becomes wet and uncomfortable, we will assist them in changing into their spare set of clothes. Please be sure your child has a set of spare clothes (underwear, pants, shirt, and socks) in a sealed plastic bag, labeled with their name. This should be brought in during orientation day and checked and replenished as necessary.

For outdoor activities, your child should always have appropriate footwear for the weather. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping and climbing. Sneakers or well-fitting hiking boots are best. Open-toed shoes are never permitted for safety reasons. Students may leave a pair of slippers in their cubby so that when we return from wet or muddy trails, students can take off their boots or shoes and put on their slippers. Please be sure to label everything!

We go outside almost every day. It may seem cold or rainy at arrival time, but the weather may change, so send weather-appropriate clothing everyday. Even a steady rain is not uncomfortable with the right clothing, especially in the forest.

Ask the teacher or check the lost and found box for any missing items throughout the year.

Below you will find a handy chart to help you ensure your child has appropriate clothing for exploring as a Young Naturalist.

	Fall (Sept - Nov)	Winter (Dec - Feb)	Spring (Mar - Jun)
Item			
Spare change of clothes (shirt, pants, socks, underwear)	x	x	x
Close-toed shoes	x	x	x
Light gloves	x		
Rubber boots	x		x
Hat (cap/sun hat)	x		x
Rain jacket	x		x
Warm hat/toque		x	
Waterproof mittens		x	
Snow boots		x	
Snow pants/jacket		x	
Scarf		x	

Snacks

During your child's class day they will have the opportunity to sit with their friends and have a snack. Please be sure to fill out the allergy and dietary restrictions section on your child's student information forms and keep them updated with any new allergies that arise. We maintain a peanut-free class environment so bear that in mind when sending snacks.

Three Year Old Classes
The three year old classes have a shared snack supplied by an YN family each class. Your child's classroom teacher will provide you with a calendar each month, indicating which family is responsible for snack each class. If your child's name is on the snack calendar for the month, please provide the class with a healthy snack on that date. It is fun to incorporate the monthly theme into the snack, for example: ladybugs made from fruit or ants on a log (celery with raisins) during an insect unit. This is by no means a requirement, however.

Try to select nutritious, healthy choices like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Snacks could include foods like: berries, apples, cheese and crackers, raisins, cucumbers, bananas, yogurt, fruit salad or blueberry muffins. Sending in two different food options is a good idea as some of the children tend to be picky eaters and a choice is always a wonderful learning opportunity as well. Involve your child in the selection and preparation of the snack; they will enjoy it, take pride in it, and receive wonderful educational benefits from helping. Be aware of the number of students in your child's class and please plan accordingly.

Also send your child with a drink each day. We highly recommend water in a reusable container, as the children will be active all day. Individual juice boxes are difficult for three year olds to manage and not eco-friendly, so please refrain from sending them with your child.

Four year old classes
The students in the four year old classes bring their own individual snack to school every day except Friday. Friday is a shared snack day and families take turns bringing in a snack for the whole class to enjoy each Friday. See paragraph below for more information on Friday shared snacks. Your child should come to school with a lunch box or bag Monday-Thursday. Try to involve your child in the selection and preparation of their snack each day. They will receive educational benefits from helping, such as counting, sorting, and decision-making skills, and there is a better chance they will eat it if they are involved in the process. We try to be eco-friendly and suggest you send food in reusable containers and try for a zero-waste snack. We have a compost bin and the kids enjoy composting their banana peels, apple cores, etc. Remember this is just a snack—not a meal—and

keep portion sizes small. Be sure your child has a reusable drink container as well and comes with it filled each class.

Your child's classroom teacher will provide you with a calendar each month, indicating which family is responsible for snack each Friday. If your child's name is on the snack calendar for the month, please provide the class with a healthy snack and beverage on that date. It is fun to incorporate the monthly theme into the snack, for example: ladybugs made from fruit or ants on a log (celery with raisins) during an insect unit. This is by no means a requirement, however. Snack time is a nice relaxing social time for the class and a nice way to refuel after our active morning or afternoon.

Special Occasions

Holidays
Holidays can be an exciting time for young children. We feel it is best for families to enjoy the celebration with their children at home, so here in the Young Naturalist Program we focus more on the seasonal aspect of holiday celebrations. We welcome autumn with our Fall Family Fun Day in October. Around the Halloween season the four year old classes make tree costumes and perform a tree play for their families while the three year olds make critter masks in class and march in a parade for the parents. During the winter months, we focus on the spirit of giving and create tasty treats for the animals that inhabit the fields and forest of the Outdoor Discovery Center. Each class collects items that are needed by a wildlife rehabilitator, and then gives a basket of supplies to a local one. In the spring we celebrate the arrival of spring with bird presentations and egg hunts.

Birthdays
A birthday can be a special time for a young child. To recognize this special day in the life of your child, you may want to consider purchasing a book for your child's class library and presenting it to the class on or near your child's birthday. You or another family representative can come into class and read the book to the class. We will place a bookplate inside the cover of the book with your child's name and birth date. Each time we read the book we will fondly remember your child. Your child's teacher will be sure to schedule you for snack around the time of your child's birthday and the class will sing and celebrate along with your child. Please adhere to the school policy of healthy eating with a nutritious tasty snack.

Family Involvement/Conferences

We are delighted to you have your family join us in the Young Naturalist Program—and also as a member of the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum—and are proud to partner in your child's education. Please be sure to read the classroom newsletter each month for important information pertaining to your child's class. The Young Naturalist calendar lists important dates to put on your calendar now so you can enjoy the special programs offered during the school year. Dates that families are invited to participate in the classroom have an asterisk in front of them.

Stay informed of Museum happenings by checking the Museum's website at www.hhnaturemuseum.org and make sure the Museum has a valid email address so you can receive up-to-date information on museum family programs. Take advantage of your Museum membership by attending museum functions and special programs.

Parent conferences are a great way to stay informed of your child's progress. We perform on-going assessments of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. We are happy to share our thoughts with you at a scheduled conference. Conferences will be scheduled for the four year old classes in the fall to set goals for the year and then again in the spring to discuss readiness for Kindergarten. The three year old classroom teachers will meet with the parents late fall to discuss how their child has transitioned to school and their progress socially, physically and cognitively. Please check the monthly newsletters and classroom bulletin boards for conference sign-up information.

It is difficult for teachers to discuss classroom issues with parents at drop-off or pickup times, as the teacher's' attention needs to be focused on the children during this time. If an issue ever arises that you feel needs immediate attention please ask the teacher to call you after class or set up a date and time to meet to discuss the matter. You may also contact Kerrilee Hunter, Young Naturalist Program Director, at 845-243-6669 or email her at khunter@hhnm.org.

Illness & Emergencies

Illness

The Young Naturalist Preschool takes precautions to prevent the spread of illness by maintaining a clean environment and setting clear limits on the health of children in attendance. To keep all staff and children healthy, we need your cooperation.

Please keep your child at home when any of the following conditions are present:

- Fever of 100 degrees OR when your child had a fever the night prior (fevers tend to rise as the day progresses)
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Diarrhea, vomiting or stomach upset
- Symptoms of unknown origin (including rash)
- Cuts or wounds with bleeding or oozing
- Lice or other infestation
- Any illness in the contagious stage (pink eye)
- Your child requires one-on-one care OR more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other students.

Recovering students are more likely to pick up a new illness. Please keep in mind that the students spend time outdoors each class, and if your child is not well enough to be outside they are not well enough to be in school that day. If students have been exposed to a contagious illness like chickenpox, notice will be posted and also sent home with the children. Please be advised that teachers and staff cannot administer medication to students.

If your child becomes ill during class he/she will be isolated from the group to rest. You will be contacted by phone to pick your child up within the hour. If we cannot reach you, we will begin calling the other contact numbers on your student information form. If your child is going to be absent due to illness, please call and inform us at 534-5506 ext 214 for Farmhouse classroom and ext 205 for Learning Center Classroom.

Emergencies

Key staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR. In the event of an accident that requires medical attention, we will do one of the following:

- Call parent/guardian or emergency contacts immediately to pick up the child and seek the proper medical treatment
- If severe and immediate action is deemed necessary, we will call 911 and a staff member will accompany the child to the emergency room until parent/guardian arrives

*We conduct regular safety drills to help prepare students in case of emergency

Ticks, Poison Ivy, Bees, and Mud

They are all part of nature… and can be unpleasant! To keep an eye out for ticks, we do a spot check with the students when we return from playing outdoors. This helps the children get in the habit of checking themselves and their friends for ticks. Please do your own checks on your child every day. Be sure to check warm spots like armpits, behind the knees and behind the ears. The teacher will notify the parent at pick up time if they found a tick on a child.

The teachers identify poison ivy to the students and stay clear of it on the trails and in the woods. Please call your physician if you are suspicious of any rash on your child.

Bees are wonderful, helpful insects to our world. We encourage children to respect and observe but not touch these buzzing friends. In the unlikely event of a sting, we will monitor the child's condition and notify a parent at pickup time.
Please note: If your child requires an Epipen if stung, please give one to the child's teacher at the start of the school year.

Bug spray and sunscreen should be used at the parent's discretion and should be done at home or outside of the classroom by the parent.

As for mud… we dig into our learning and that includes mud! Children's clothes and bodies will get messy as they experiment and explore the natural world. Shoes might get muddy, pants may get grass stains and shirts may get paint drips on them. We encourage whole-hearted, whole-bodied learning so bear that in mind when selecting clothes for the day. One of our favorite books is entitled *I Love Mud & Mud Loves Me,* so embrace the inevitable.

Inclement Weather

The Young Naturalist Preschool follows the calendar of the Cornwall School District for holidays and closings. If the Cornwall school district closes due to poor weather and/or road conditions, the Young Naturalist Program will be closed as well. If the Cornwall District has a delay, either one or two hours, we will have a one hour delay of our morning classes. Dismissal would be at regular time but students would come to school one hour later than the usual time.

If weather related conditions arrive during the school day and the Cornwall school closes early, we will cancel afternoon classes that day. If you are unsure of weather related closings or delays, call 534-5506 ext 214 (Farmhouse) and ext 205 (Learning Center) and a message will inform you of any delay or closing.

Please use caution in the parking areas during inclement weather and request assistance from a staff member if you would like assistance getting a child to the classroom during slippery walking conditions.

The Young Naturalist Staff and Contact Information

The Young Naturalist teaching staff is committed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They all share a love of the natural world and are committed to sharing that love with the preschoolers in their care. They are knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate classroom practice for young learners and have a wealth of experience in working with young children.

There is one lead teacher and one teaching assistant in each classroom with a maximum of sixteen students. In addition, knowledgeable Museum Environmental Educators visit the classrooms with live animals and share their expertise with the students and teachers.

All Young Naturalist registration and paperwork is handled by Jill O'Brien, the Museum Membership & Registration Administrator. Jill's office is the first office on the left as you come up the stairs in the Learning Center Building.

Get in Touch:
Main line to Hudson Highlands Nature Museum: 845-534-5506

Learning Center Classroom: ext 205

- ➔ Kerrilee Hunter, *Director of YN Program and Turtles Lead Teacher*: 845-243-6669 or khunter@hhnm.org
- ➔ Kerry Kopf, *Assistant YN Director and Bluebirds Lead Teacher*: kkopf@hhnm.org
- ➔ Annie Kelly, *Dragonflies Lead Teacher*: akelly@hhnm.org
- ➔ Amanda Merritt, *Frogs Lead Teacher*: amerritt@hhnm.org

Farmhouse Classroom: ext 214

- ➔ Jackie Gioia, *Owls and Deer Lead Teacher*: jgioia@hhnm.org

Jill O'Brien, *Membership & Registration Administrator*: 845-534-5506 ext 204 or jobrien@hhnaturemuseum.org

Wildlife Education Center 845-534-7781

Jackie Grant, *HHNM Executive Director*: 845-534-5506 ext 203 or jgrant@hhnm.org

Young Naturalist Calendar

2016-2017 School Year · Hudson Highlands Nature Museum

*indicates a day when parents are encouraged to attend an event at school

- The Young Naturalist Program follows the Cornwall School District for closings & delays.
- If the weather is questionable please call the Museum @ 845-534-5506 ext 214 for the Farmhouse Classroom, or ext 205 for Learning Center Classroom.

All of our Young Naturalist Preschool classes meet at the Outdoor Discovery Center at the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum on Muser Drive. Please refer to the chart below for specific class information. (LC = Learning Center, FH = Farm House.) When a class is scheduled to go to WEC, the Wildlife Education Center, parents will drop off and pick up from the Museum's other location at 25 Boulevard.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM - LC	Bluebirds 9:00 - 11:45	Turtles 9:00 - 11:45	Bluebirds 9:00 - 11:45	Turtles 9:00 - 11:45	Bluebirds 9:00 - 11:45
AM - FH	Owls 8:45 - 11:30	Owls 8:45 - 11:30	Owls 8:45 - 11:30	Owls 8:45 - 11:30	Owls 8:45 - 11:30
PM - LC	Dragonflies 12:15 - 3:00	Frogs 12:15 - 3:00	Dragonflies 12:15 - 3:00	Frogs 12:15 - 3:00	Dragonflies 12:15 - 3:00
PM - FH	Deer 12:00 - 2:45	Deer 12:00 - 2:45	Deer 12:00 - 2:45	Deer 12:00 - 2:45	Deer 12:00 - 2:45

September

*Thursday, Sept. 1 Young Naturalist Play Date in Grasshopper Grove, 10 am - 11 am Rain date: Friday, Sept. 2
*Thursday, Sept. 8 → Orientation Day for Owls (8:45 AM), Deer (12:00 PM) ***adult orientation 9:00-10:00 for Owl families, 12:15-1:15 for Deer families in the ballroom** → Orientation Day for Turtles (9:00 - 10:00 AM), Frogs (12:15 - 1:15 PM)
*Friday, Sept. 9 Orientation Day for Bluebirds (9:00 AM) & Dragonflies (12:15 PM) ***adult orientation 12:30-1:30 for Dragonfly families in ballroom**
*Monday, Sept. 12 Owls, Bluebirds, Deer & Dragonflies first full day of school ***adult orientation 9:15-10:15 for Bluebird families in ballroom**
*Tuesday, Sept. 13 Turtles & Frogs first full day of school ***adult orientation 9:15-10:15 for Turtle families, 12:30-1:30 for Frog families in ballroom**
Friday, Sept. 23-24 HHNM Family Campout: see Museum office staff to register

October

Monday, Oct. 3 No school (Rosh Hashanah)
Wednesday, Oct. 5 Dragonfly class meet at WEC
Thursday, Oct. 6 Owl and Deer classes meet at WEC
*Saturday, Oct. 8 Young Naturalist Fall Family Fun Day (rain date October 15th)
Monday, Oct. 10 No school (Columbus Day)
Wednesday, Oct. 12 No school (Yom Kippur)
*Thursday, Oct. 27 → Halloween Tree Play Performance: Owl & Deer classes → Halloween Parade: Turtle & Frog classes
*Friday, Oct. 28 → Halloween Parade: Bluebird class → Halloween Tree Play: Dragonfly class
*Saturday/Sunday, Oct. 29, 30 HHNM Halloween I Spy Trail

November

Monday, Nov. 7 YN Election Day: Bluebird, Dragonfly, Owl, and Deer classes vote for names of classroom critters today
Tuesday, Nov. 8 YN Election Day: Turtles & Frogs vote for names of classroom critters
Friday, Nov. 11 No school (Veterans' Day)
Thursday, Nov. 10 Turtle and Frog classes meet at WEC
Monday, Nov. 14 Bluebird class meet at WEC
*Sunday, Nov. 20 HHNM Barnes & Noble Day: animal presentations at Newburgh Barnes & Noble; Owl, Deer & Dragonfly classes sing songs at B&N
Wednesday, Nov. 23 - Friday, Nov. 25 No school (Thanksgiving)
*Monday, Nov. 28 Recycle Projects Gallery viewing for Dragonfly, Owl, Deer class families

December

Wednesday, Dec 7 Dragonfly class meet at WEC
Thursday, Dec 8 Owl and Deer classes meet at WEC
Monday, Dec. 26 - Monday, Jan. 2 No school (Holiday recess)

January

School reopens Tuesday, January 3
Monday, Jan. 16 No school (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)
Thursday, Jan. 19 Turtle and Frog classes meet at WEC
Monday, Jan 23 Bluebird class meet at WEC

February

Wednesday, Feb. 8 Dragonfly class meet at WEC
Thursday, Feb. 9 Owl and Deer classes meet at WEC
Friday, Feb. 17 & Monday, Feb. 20 No school (Presidents' weekend)

March

Thursday, Mar. 9 Turtle and Frog classes meet at WEC
Monday, Mar. 13 Bluebird class meet at WEC
Monday, Mar. 20 No school (Staff Development day)
*Thursday, Mar. 29 Bird presentation for parents: Owl & Deer Classes
*Friday, Mar. 30 Bird presentation for parents: Dragonfly class

April **(continues on next page)**

*Wednesday, Apr. 5 Spring Egg hunts: Bluebird and Dragonfly Classes
*Thursday, Apr. 6 Spring Egg hunts: Turtle, Frog, Owl, and Deer Classes
Monday, Apr. 10 - Monday, Apr. 17 No school (Spring recess)
School reopens Tuesday, April 18
*Saturday, Apr. 22 HHNM Hike-a-thon & Earth Day Celebration: Families are encouraged to sign up for Hike-a-thon and stay for Earth Day celebration (Owl, Deer, and Dragonfly classes sing @ Earth Day Celebration)
Wednesday, Apr. 26 Dragonfly class meet at WEC
Thursday, Apr. 27 Owl and Deer classes meet at WEC

May **(continues on next page)**

Thursday, May 11 Turtle and Frog classes meet at WEC
Monday, May 15 Bluebird class meet at WEC
Friday, May 26 & Monday, May 29 No school (Memorial Day weekend)

*Wednesday, May 31 Family picnic/trip to Bear Mountain: Bluebird class

June

*Thursday, Jun. 1 Family picnic/ trip to Bear Mountain: Turtle & Frog classes (both in AM)
*Friday, Jun. 2 Family picnic/trip to Hudson River: Owl, Deer & Dragonfly classes
*Monday, Jun. 12 Owl Class Graduation Ceremony, 6:30 PM
*Tuesday, Jun. 13 → Last day of school for Turtle & Frog classes: certificates & performance for families → Deer Class Graduation Ceremony, 6:30PM
*Wednesday, Jun. 14 → Last day of school for Bluebird class: certificates & performance for families → Last day of school for Dragonfly, Owl & Deer classes → Dragonfly Class Graduation Ceremony, 6:30 PM