

# KIDS GO WILD FOR NATURALIST'S CAMPFIRE CAMP



If your kids crave outdoor adventure, then they're bound to love Naturalist's Campfire Camp at Hidden Pond Nature Center. This summer session is an outdoor lover's adventure combo pack chock-full of hands-on activities, survival techniques, native wildlife, history, campfires and more.

"It's really fun," said 10-year-old Colben Krzos, one of three brothers who attended the new camp last summer. "I personally like normal fishing, turtle fishing and netting."

The tight bond between the outdoor-loving triplets was evident as they eagerly interjected memories of their shared camp experiences turtle fishing. "You can see the turtles before they bite," chimed in Owen, "so you can see what kind of turtles they are and how strong they are," said Logan. The purpose of turtle fishing was to identify the red-eared slider species and relocate the large, former pet turtles that people set free in the park pond to more suitable habitats. "We learned that they are not supposed to be there," Owen recalled. "The red slider was eating some of the food the fish eat, so the fish weren't getting enough food."

The brothers also explored animal tracks, learned which berries are safe to eat and discovered how to cross a stream without getting wet by making a temporary dam. "We built it piece by piece with big stones," Logan recalled. "You leave gaps so you could walk across but the water could still get through." Colben was fascinated by the frogs and the distinctive sounds they make at Peeper Swamp. "There are tons of them there," he said, "and they peep loudest in spring."

"They're always telling me facts about nature and wildlife – things I didn't know," said the boys' mother, Kristina Watts, who has enrolled her children in Park Authority programs since they were 3 years old. "We really like nature, and we camp a lot and wanted them to learn how to build a campfire safely and be good stewards of the earth," she said. "We learned different ways to build campfires," Owen recalled, "and we learned how to make fire starters," Logan said. That led to stories around the campfire and perhaps the sweetest camp memory of all. "You always get to make s'mores," Colben said enthusiastically of the traditional marshmallow, chocolate and graham cracker treats. "The instructors are really nice, and they teach you how to do stuff and they explain how to do it."

Naturalists Campfire Camp is just one of hundreds of outdoor Park Authority camps offered throughout the summer. To see all the camp options, turn to the Camps section.

