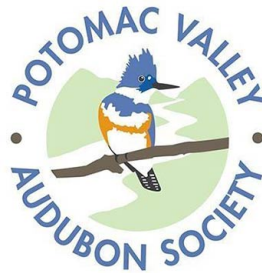


Audubon Discovery Camp Information Handbook



Potomac Valley Audubon Society

This information handbook is a great resource for parents or guardians deciding if Audubon Discovery Camp is the right fit for their child. We encourage you to read over all of the information in this handbook, including our policies and procedures, before registering for camp this summer. If you have any questions about our summer camps that are not addressed in this handbook, reach out to our camp staff by email, and we will be happy to assist you. Our email is Daycamp@potomacaudubon.org.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

IS MY CHILD READY FOR CAMP?

To attend camp, your child must:

- Be okay with being outdoors all day in the summer heat (with appropriate cool-down opportunities and drink breaks).
- Be potty trained and be able to use the bathroom on their own.
- Be capable of staying with their assigned group with minimal reinforcement.
- Be capable of maintaining appropriate self-control in social situations.
- Be capable of regularly following staff instructions.

Please note: If your child cannot follow directions and/or control themselves, they may be asked to leave camp. Refunds will not be given, in this circumstance.

We're happy to make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs, depending on their requirements. Parents and guardians with questions regarding the ability of camp staff to meet a child's needs should contact the Camp Director *before* registering for camp.

Undisclosed needs cannot be anticipated or accommodated and could interfere with your child's ability to participate in camp. As part of the registration process, we will ask you to share more about your child so we can reasonably support them. During online registration, there is a section that asks for "anything we should know about your child.", please use this space to let us know how we can best support your child so they have a successful experience. One of our Camp Directors may reach out prior to camp to learn more about your child's needs. Parents/guardians registering their children bear the responsibility for enrolling those campers in activities suited to their campers' abilities and needs.

PREPARING FOR CAMP:

- Review the [camp rules](#) with your camper
- Note that each camper must be signed in and out by an adult who has been granted permission either 1) on their registration form or 2) through written communication between the camper's parent/guardian and PVAS staff. If you need to make any changes to who may pick up your camper, please let us know by email no later than the business day (M-F) before.
- Please also inform PVAS staff in writing if there are any changes to your camper's medications or allergies since completing the registration form.

MORNING OF CAMP, BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME:

- Check the weather and make sure you have appropriate clothing/gear for the day
- Apply sunscreen and bug spray
- Make sure you have a backpack with everything on the [packing list](#) - and none of the prohibited items
- If your camper takes medication(s) or has severe allergies, plan to set aside time during dropoff to discuss this with the Camp Director
- Check driving directions:
 - Yankauer Nature Preserve
 - Cool Spring Nature Preserve
- Note that parking can be limited during drop off and pick up, so please have your camper ready to go as soon as you arrive.

DROPOFF/PICKUP

- **DROPOFF: Anytime between 9:00 am and 9:15 am** (we are trying to encourage a staggered dropoff/pickup)
 - Please have your camper ready for the day at the time that you arrive. Parking lot space is limited, so we ask that you depart promptly after sign-in to allow more cars in the parking lot.
 - Remember to sign your child in for the day at the check-in table.
 - Be sure to discuss any of your campers' medications or severe allergies with the Camp Director during the check-in period.
- **PICKUP: 3:00 pm**
 - Remember to sign your camper out for the day.
 - Note that a [late pickup fee](#) applies after 15 minutes past the pickup time.
 - Check lost and found for missing items.

AFTER CAMP, AT HOME:

- Talk to your camper about their day!
- [Please check for ticks](#) - we do our best to check for and remove them, but it is good to double-check.

PACKING LIST

- Comfortable clothing that can get dirty.**
- Closed-toed shoes strapped securely to the foot**, such as sneakers, hiking boots, or hiking sandals. Flip-flops and Crocs are examples of unsafe footwear for camp activities.
- Hat** This is very important for sun protection.
- Sunglasses** Optional, but recommended.
- Medication** Place all medicine in a ziplock bag (or in the original container) with the camper's name clearly marked on the bag. The parent/legal guardian must supply a note indicating when the medication should be taken and in what quantity. Turn in this medication to the Camp Director upon check-in.
- Backpack with...** (label as many items as you can!)
 - A lunch (for full-day participants)
 - A snack
 - A water bottle already filled to start the day (We have water available for refills)
 - Rain jacket or poncho if rain is in the forecast
 - Bathing suit and/or change of clothes, if water activities are expected

PROHIBITED ITEMS

- Knives or other sharp objects/weapons:** During select weeks of camp, whittling with specialized knives may be an age-appropriate camp activity, supervised by camp staff. Whittling knives will be provided when needed, and should not be brought from home.
- Toys:** We ask that toys/ trading cards be left at home. Your camper will be provided with exciting games, crafts, and activities throughout the camp day. No toys from home are necessary! **As an exception, campers may bring a fidget toy to camp if needed to improve their concentration during more focused activities.** Fidget toys should be kept in your child's backpack until needed.
- Candy, gum, and soft drinks**
- Body spray/cologne/perfume:** Fragrances from such items can negatively affect others, including triggering allergy symptoms.
- Pets or animals**
- Phones or Electronics:** Counselors in Training are permitted to bring cell phones to camp, but should not use phones in the presence of campers. Campers are not permitted to bring phones to camp unless their counselor plans an activity (such as using iNaturalist or Seek) and communicates with campers/ parents. Cameras are permitted for use at Photography Camp.
- Sports Equipment**
- Drugs/Alcohol/Tobacco**
- Valuables:** Do not send anything valuable to camp with your child. PVAS is not liable for lost, damaged, or stolen items.
- Clothing with offensive/inappropriate language and/or designs**
- Food for sharing:** Campers are not allowed to share food, as a general rule. However, if your camper is celebrating a birthday in the week, and you would like to provide treats for the entire camp, coordinate with the Camp Director at the beginning of the week. Snack sharing may be allowed only at the discretion of the Camp Director.

LOST & FOUND

PVAS is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen items, but we want to help you get them back! At each site, camp staff will maintain a lost-and-found bin, which is available to peruse and re-claim items during drop-off and pick-up. If you know an item is missing after camp is over, you may also contact the Camp Director to see if it has been found and if so, to arrange a pick-up time during camp hours. Remember that labeling items with a permanent marker is a great way to make sure these items are returned to you. At the end of the camp season, PVAS will email all camp families to offer a final chance to pick up lost items. After that period, PVAS will donate unclaimed items to a local charity.

CAMPER WELLNESS

The wellness of every camper is our top priority.

SUPERVISION

PVAS Summer Camp programs and activities are led by our enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and caring staff. All staff must pass a background check and receive specialized training including First Aid and CPR.

Campers are divided into groups of no more than 10 campers per group. Each group is led by a Counselor, supported by 2-3 teen Counselors-In-Training (CITs) or adult naturalists. Each camp location (Cool Spring Preserve and Yankauer Preserve) has an on-site Camp Director who oversees camp activities and supports counselors and campers as needed.

CAMP CONDUCT

RULES

Review the following camp rules with your camper before camp. We find that when families review expectations prior to camp, we have fewer behavior problems at camp.

1. **Respect all living things.** With your words and actions, be respectful to plants, animals, yourself, and all other humans. Some specific examples include:
 - **Listen to and follow the directions of staff.**
 - **With your words, be kind to others.** Do not hurt, tease, threaten, or fight with others. Do not use foul or otherwise hurtful language.
 - **With your body, be kind to others.** Remember that not everyone is comfortable being touched by others, even some kinds of touch that may seem nice to you, like hugging. To make sure that you are respecting your fellow campers, ask for permission before initiating hugs or hand-holding. Roughhousing, hitting, or other inappropriate touch at camp is never permitted.
 - **Treat camp supplies gently and respectfully.** Staff put effort into providing these objects for you and others to enjoy!
 - **Practice [Leave No Trace](#),** which is, in part, about respecting wildlife and their habitat. Camp staff will explain Leave No Trace to all campers.
2. **Take care of yourself.** Campers are expected to have water with them and to stay hydrated and will be expected to take care of themselves in other ways, too. Staff will provide reminders and encouragement.
3. **Keep up with your stuff.** You will need your stuff, so keep up with it! This is an important part of taking care of yourself as well as Leave No Trace.
4. **Stay with your group.** The group needs to stay together for activities so that camp staff knows that everyone is safe.

5. **Be an active learner.** There is so much to explore, enjoy, and learn about at camp! Make the most of this time by being an active learner, participating in activities, sharing your ideas, and listening to others' ideas. Remember to respect other learners by not distracting them.
6. **Have fun!** Remember that we all have ups and downs and that camp staff are here to help you have a good experience!

CONSEQUENCES

Audubon Discovery Camp is thoughtfully designed to be a pleasant, educational, healthy, and safe environment for all. PVAS reserves the right to send home any child who exhibits unsuitable or consistently disrespectful behavior, endangers the camp community, or engages in destructive acts. Any event of unacceptable behavior will result in the following:

- **1st offense:** the child will receive a warning from a staff member.
- **2nd offense:** the child will be given a time-out and/or be restricted from participating in the current activity. A staff member will discuss with the child what they did wrong and allow them to reflect on the situation. The Camp Director will also be informed. The parent will be notified of the incident.
- **3rd offense OR if the child refuses to cooperate in time-out:** the child will be sent to the Camp Director, and the incident will be recorded. At pickup, the parent will be made aware of the child's behavior. If appropriate, the child will be involved in the discussion.
- **4th offense:** the child's parent or guardian will be called to collect the child. At that time, it will be determined, based on the situation, if the child will be allowed to return on subsequent days. If the child is dismissed from a program, no refund will be given. In some cases, the Camp Director may deem it appropriate to suspend the camper from camp for a day or two. If your camper is suspended from camp during the week, no refund will be given.

If your child exhibits dangerous behavior, threatening their safety or the safety of those around them, you will be asked to pick them up immediately. The above discipline policy is applicable for minor rule infractions, but further steps will be taken for unsafe or defiant behavior. Campers sent home for the reasons listed below will not return to camp for the summer season.

- **Threatening or Causing Harm:** Campers making threats of physical harm to other campers or camp staff will be sent home. Campers verbally or physically harming other campers or staff will not be tolerated. They will also be sent home.
- **Leaving the Group:** Campers unable or unwilling to stay with their assigned group will be sent home. It is paramount that your child is able to be accounted for at all times. Campers who repeatedly or intentionally leave their group are not ready for camp.

- **Open Defiance:** We understand that accidents happen. Accidents can become teachable moments. However, openly defiant campers who intentionally defy counselors' directions present a safety hazard to themselves or the group.

MEDICAL CARE

All staff are trained and certified in First Aid and CPR, as well as risk management procedures.

Staff carry First Aid Kits while on trail/away from the main camp facility. All Camp Counselors are able to communicate with each other via handheld radios, and the Camp Director is able to contact emergency dispatch services. If your child becomes ill while at camp or requires medical treatment beyond basic First Aid (i.e. more than a Band-Aid for a minor cut or scrape), you will be contacted.

PVAS staff are not authorized to transport ill or injured children and will need to call emergency services to offer transport to campers whose parents are unable to respond promptly. All costs resulting from an emergency transport request and subsequent treatment will be the responsibility of the parent/guardians.

Any child suffering an injury (such as broken bones, injury to head or back, or sprains, etc.), including injuries incurred prior to camp, should not participate in camp until cleared by a doctor (written proof may be required) and receive permission from the Camp Director to do so. Participation without notification of prior injury, and without doctor clearance, may result in the camper being asked to leave the program.

Ticks are a reality of spending the days in the fields and forests. If a tick is observed during the camp day, our staff will remove them as soon as they are able. We encourage all camp families to perform thorough tick checks after getting home.

MEDICINE

All prescription and non-prescription medicines must be in the original packaging from the pharmacist/store with dosage, instructions, and camper's name clearly indicated. A ziplock bag, clearly labeled with the child's name on the bag, is also acceptable. The parents/guardians of campers with medications are required to discuss this with the Camp Director during the check-in period at the start of the camp day. Staff members will assist campers by storing prescription medication safely and reminding campers to take their prescription medication at the proper time each day.

Camp staff will have over-the-counter medications such as Benadryl and Aspirin on hand. Parents/guardians will be contacted prior to the use of over-the-counter medications, except in emergency situations (i.e. Benadryl for a worsening allergic reaction).

WHEN TO STAY HOME

Please do not send your child to Discovery Camp with any of the following symptoms:

- Sore throat (unless allergy-related)
- Excessive coughing
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Fever
- Head lice
- Undiagnosed rash, sore, or other skin condition
- A positive test for the flu, strep throat, or COVID-19
- Any other contagious disease or symptom

A child must be diarrhea, vomiting and fever-free for 24 hours before returning to the program. A physician's note may be required before re-admitting a child to the program. [Please read our refund policy for illness.](#)

SNACK PERMISSIONS

If you indicate at registration that your child has snack permission for their camp week, this is not a substitution for packing a snack for your child to eat during their regularly scheduled snack time. On rare occasions, PVAS may provide a snack as part of a camp activity. Please pack snacks for your child each day, regardless of planned activities, as our plans sometimes change. Snacks may include (but are not limited to) marshmallows roasted over the campfire, s'mores, simple recipes made from foraged ingredients, and popsicles. If your child has severe allergies, it is best to discuss this with the Camp Director. Camp staff can accommodate dietary restrictions in some circumstances if they are made known.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

In some circumstances, challenging environmental conditions may require us to modify planned camp activities. Camp staff are trained on risk management procedures and adjusting camp activities to the environmental conditions. For example, during periods of heat, counselors will make adjustments such as limiting activities requiring physical exertion to the cooler morning hours, maximizing time in cooler, shaded areas, performing numerous hydration checks, and monitoring campers for any signs of heat-related illness.

Thunderstorms may present a danger to campers. Camp Directors will keep an eye on potential weather events and may make the decision to call parents/ guardians to come pick up campers in the event of severe weather. Keep in mind that Yankauer Nature Preserve does not have an indoor space available to shelter from the weather, so the Camp Director may make calls home in the event of a severe thunderstorm. Indoor facilities are available at Cool Spring Preserve as emergency shelter.

Air quality events (due to fire, for example) may require adjusting planned camp activities, or in some cases when it is not safe to be outside, cancellation. AirNow is the site we use to monitor the Air Quality Index for each location: <https://www.airnow.gov>. Please note that while the indoor facilities at Cool Spring Preserve may be used as an emergency shelter for short-lived events such as thunderstorms, there is not adequate space to accommodate all campers, staff, and personnel for the duration of a camp day. We are investigating options for possible indoor alternative locations for air quality events.

POLICIES

Please note that the registration process includes completion of a release of liability form, as well as an acknowledgement and agreement to several of the sections throughout this document, including the ones below.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY

Individuals requesting cancellations before March 1 will receive a 90% refund for that week of camp. 10% is held as a non-refundable deposit to account for credit card fees and staff time spent processing cancellations.

After March 1, the refund amount depends on the amount of weeks remaining until the session start date, as indicated in the chart below.

Length of Time Before the Start of Camp	Refund Amount
6-8 Weeks	75%
4-6 Weeks	50%
2-4 Weeks	25%
0-2 Weeks	0%

In the event of a last-minute cancellation due to illness or a family emergency, contact our staff. Depending on the circumstance of the cancellation, we may be able to grant a refund of up to 75% of the program fee.

Failure to inform us of a cancellation (aka a “no-show”) may impact your ability to register for future programs, and in such cases, no refund will be given. We understand that last-minute cancellations may happen, but please try to let us know as soon as possible so that we can open the spot to someone else.

If PVAS cancels a program, you will receive a full refund. Registrants will be notified by email of any cancellations by 5:00 p.m. the evening before the program. PVAS will cancel a program if:

- Hazardous weather is forecasted that would create unsafe road conditions or unsafe conditions for being outside.
- A staff member or volunteer critical to conducting the session is diagnosed with an active case of COVID-19 or other communicable illness.
- The session doesn't meet PVAS's registration number minimum.

In the event that PVAS must cancel a partial or full day of camp during the camp week, refunds will not automatically be given. However, we encourage you to reach out to our staff if this day without childcare has caused you to incur additional expenses. We may be able to issue a pro-rated refund.

LIMIT TO NUMBER OF REGISTRATIONS- UNTIL MARCH 15

This year, we are limiting initial camp registrations to no more than four weeks of camp per child for the first month after registration opens. We have made this decision due to the high demand for our camp in the past several years. We have received feedback from several families that they were unable to register for any camp sessions because slots filled very quickly. PVAS wants to give as many children as possible the chance to experience Audubon Discovery Camp.

This new policy is clearly stated on the registration form. If a camper is registered for more than four weeks, PVAS will automatically cancel the most recently made registration(s) made after the four-week maximum. A partial (90%) refund will be given for these camp weeks. PVAS keeps 10% to cover our processing fees and the time spent processing cancellations by camp staff. To avoid this charge, please only register each child for a maximum of four camp weeks.

For any camp sessions that do not fill by March 15, PVAS will remove the four-week cap and families may register for more sessions at that time. We encourage you to look out for email announcements if you are interested in signing up your child(ren) for additional weeks of camp.

LATE PICKUP FEE

A \$10/per child late fee will be assessed 15 minutes after the official program end time. After 15 minutes, a fee of \$1 per minute will be charged. Ongoing disregard for the designated arrival and pick-up times may jeopardize the camper's continued enrollment in the program.

RELEASE OF LIABILITY

All outdoor activities present inherent risks of potential injury or harm. PVAS staff and volunteers do their best to identify hazards, minimize risk, and communicate potential danger to all program participants. By participating in this program, the participant and/or legal guardian (if the participant is a minor) assumes all risk of injury or harm as a result of the program activities and agrees to release, indemnify, defend, and forever discharge the Potomac Valley Audubon Society from all liability, claims, demands, damages, costs, expenses, and causes of action due to death, injury, loss, or damage to the participant.