THE POWER OF
NATURE CONNECTION

We all need the benefits of connecting with the natural world and, in like measure, nature needs our care. This deep and reciprocal relationship with the earth is at the heart of our mission: mentoring children, youth, adults, and families in deep connection to nature, self, and others.

Nature education offers children and adults the opportunity to be their best, most powerful selves. As they return each year, our students renew and deepen their connection with the strength, vitality, and mastery that is available to them in the forest. By engaging in outdoor adventures, playing cooperative games, and acquiring primitive skills, participants meet challenges that are fun, build confidence, and cultivate a passion for learning and growing in all aspects of life.

Time in nature supports motor function, brain development, and sensory integration; reduces symptoms of ADHD and ADD; supports emotional, physical, and spiritual resilience; and has a lasting positive impact on leadership, communication, and self-awareness skills.

CORE PROGRAM ELEMENTS:

- Foraging for wild edibles
- Tracking animals
- Building shelters and crafts from the gifts of the earth
- Making fires in all conditions
- Identifying bird calls and alarms
- Honing our awareness through sensory games
- Learning to travel lightly on the earth
- Listening to stories and singing songs that inform and inspire
- Bringing home our own stories of our experiences and adventures!
SPECIAL EVENTS

5th Annual Polar Plunge
Saturday, February 8
A thrilling, chilling fundraising event that brings our community together!

Flying Deer Day
Saturday, June 13
Our annual community celebration for all ages!

Solstice Celebration
Saturday, December 12
We’ll celebrate the return of the light with festivities, food, and seasonal rituals.

A GREAT RESOURCE FOR NATURE EDUCATION

Flying Deer Program Director Devin Franklin’s Put On Your Owl Eyes, for 8- to 13-year-olds, is not only a really fun read, it’s also an excellent curriculum guide for schools, camps, and homeschoolers. It’s full of stories and exercises that inspire and educate; last year, the book catalyzed the complete restructuring of a Berkshire County summer camp for high-needs students. Order your signed copy by emailing info@flyingdeernaturecenter.org.
SUMMER CAMP

NATURE’S CANVAS
ages 7–12
LITTLE NATURE’S CANVAS
ages 4–6
June 15–19
June 29–July 3
Expand your sense of nature and adventure as you create art inspired by the outdoor world and using natural materials. This fun-filled week combines nature-awareness games and activities with age-appropriate art projects—tangible expressions of our explorations in the fields and forest.

COTTONWOOD CAMPS
ages 6–12
June 22–26, East Chatham
June 29–July 3, Sheffield, MA
July 13–17 & July 20–24, East Chatham
August 3–7, New Lebanon
August 17–21, East Chatham
An exciting day camp for children who love to spend time outdoors with friends, learning about the forest and all its valuable teachings: mysterious animal tracks, delicious edible plants, curious insects, shelter, and primitive fire-making, not to mention fun songs, games, and stories! We spend our days adventuring in age-based groups. Dive deeper into wilderness skills in our first-ever 2-week session in July!

KATYDID CAMPS
ages 4–5
June 22–26
August 17–21
All the fun of Cottonwood Camp in a nurturing, rhythmic week. Children take part in a story-filled adventure exploring the abundant joy and wonder of the outdoors. We’ll focus on creating comfort, fostering knowledge, and building self-reliance in nature.

CARETAKER CAMP
ages 13–17
June 29–July 3
Take action to care for the Earth! We’ll work together to build and maintain trails, create healthier and more vibrant plant communities, establish gardens, and more. Along the way, we’ll have fun and gain skills in tool use, ecology, and teamwork—all while engaging with the land in a direct and meaningful way.

RED-TAIL HAWK
ages 10–14
July 6–10 (five days, four nights)
Soar into a weeklong immersion of Flying Deer culture as we take adventure, fun, and friendship to the next level. Campers make the forest their home as we practice leather-working and make bone tools; learn fire-making methods; concoct delicious meals using primitive cooking techniques; stalk the nighttime forest in scouting games; experience Jedi Training; and more!

WOLF CAMP
ages 11–12
July 27–31
Monday, 9:00 am–3:00 pm
Tuesday–Friday on the trail
One small group of campers led by experienced instructors begin with one day of day camp, building our community and developing the knowledge and skills necessary for the journey ahead. Then we trek into the mountains, where we climb summits, eat and laugh around campfires, and enjoy the freedom that backpacking provides.

CAMP SHERWOOD
ages 13–16
August 10–14
Enter the shadowy world of the scout, where we merge mind and body with the forest and learn to see without being seen. After undergoing a fun, challenging test to join Robin Hood’s merry forest ruffians, we’ll embark on a series of unforgettable adventures as we set traps, seek gold, solve riddles, and save our friends.

ADIRONDACK CANOE EXPEDITION
ages 14–18
August 17–21 (five days, four nights)
Paddle your way through the wilderness, making and breaking camp each day to the sound of loons, sleeping under the stars, and immersing yourself in the wild. Learn practical canoe skills and safety, and gain valuable experience making life comfortable miles away from civilization. Fishing included as an optional food-gathering activity!
Our Forest Kindergarten Homeschool Program feeds children’s natural curiosity and inherent desire to learn through hands-on experience, experimentation, and play. Guided with love by expert mentors, children participate in a nourishing daily flow that includes stories, songs, exploration, and basic wilderness skills. Their time outdoors builds social and motor skills, resilience, and comfort in nature. Children learn to care deeply for the places they visit every day as they discover the abundance of life on the land and witness the seasons changing. Their sense of imagination and wonder flourishes amidst the enchantment of the natural world.

“In a culture that is screen-centrist and everything is contained within four walls, we regard this as a precious and rare opportunity for our child.” —Lenea G., New Lebanon, NY

Our program in East Chatham offers a complete outdoor alternative to traditional classroom education.

Mondays, Tuesdays, & Wednesdays from 9:00 am–1:00 pm in East Chatham
Optional after-care provided from 1:00–3:00 pm.

Fridays from 9:00 am–1:00 pm at Bartholomew’s Cobble in Sheffield, MA

“Some of my favorite things that my daughter now says when I try and get her to wear her coat or cover up in the rain: ‘I don’t mind the cold, Mommy!’ ‘I love the rain falling on my head.’ Those are the moments when I know she is feeling at one with the ultimate teacher, and I am certain she will carry that in her heart for always.” —Adriane S., Hudson, NY

• Spending time outdoors has been shown to improve physical and mental health and well-being for children, teens, and adults. Time in nature is linked to reduced symptoms of ADHD; reduced stress, anger, and aggression; increased physical activity; and improved relationship skills.

• Research shows that unstructured experiences are vital to the development of self-regulation, confidence, and empathy. Pushing formal academic curriculum before children are developmentally ready can have detrimental effects on their future learning.

• Connecting children to nature from a young age nurtures the next generation of earth stewards. When kids fall in love with the natural world, they want to protect it.

• Nature education offers both children and adolescents age-appropriate opportunities for risk-taking, challenge, and problem-solving. As a result, they learn self-management and emotional regulation skills while enhancing their confidence and competency.

Check out photos and stories of our homeschool adventures in our Forest Kindergarten and In the Woods blogs.
HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Each day of our Homeschool Programs is filled with opportunities to learn and grow in the natural environment. Our programs are uniquely crafted by our experienced guides to meet the needs and interests of the group. Through immersive holisitic-learning experiences, we explore curriculum areas such as Naturalist Identification, Survival and Primitive Craft Skills, Wildlife Tracking, Awareness Exercises, Community Building, and much more. In the process, kids and teens come to understand and practice the natural rhythms of day-to-day life, teamwork, peacemaking, physical fitness, stories, accountability for actions, and advanced scientific inquiry.

“Sacred Fire has been the most significant aspect of our son’s continuing growth and development from boyhood to manhood.”
—Elizabeth M., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

RITES-OF-PASSAGE PROGRAMS

Moon Tribe and Sacred Fire are three-year, wilderness rites-of-passage programs for young people who are ready to undertake a conscious journey into adolescence with the heartfelt support of family and community. This deeply engaging, fun, and friendship-filled process is a modern version of the youth initiations that human beings have engaged in throughout history, in every culture around the world. The goal of rites-of-passage programs is to create authentic, connected, mature human beings.

MOON TRIBE

Moon Tribe offers a journey into self-discovery, sisterhood, and personal voice. Girls participate in monthly gatherings and yearly initiations, learning to thrive in nature through shelter-building, fire-making, using wild edibles and medicinal plants, and making themselves at home on the earth. Woven throughout the program are events that support parent-daughter relationships in a fun and loving community.

SACRED FIRE

In Sacred Fire, boys take part in regular gatherings throughout the year, as well as summer immersions—deepening their naturalist skills, self-knowledge, and brotherhood through challenges such as a wilderness solo and community fire-tending initiation. They graduate from the program with a sense of mastery and a commitment to serving their families, their communities, and the planet.

“Sacred Fire has been the most significant aspect of our son’s continuing growth and development from boyhood to manhood.”
—Elizabeth M., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

WILD WAYS

for ages 12–17
Mondays from 9:00 am–3:00 pm
in East Chatham

FOREST

for ages 7–13
Wednesdays from 9:00 am–3:00 pm
in East Chatham

COBBLERS

for ages 7–13
Fridays from 9:00 am–3:00 pm
at Bartholomew’s Cobble in Sheffield, MA

“I love building skills out in nature. It’s really fun and I get to interact with kids in our own world.”
—Malcolm, age 11

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CUSTOM RITES-OF-PASSAGE PROGRAMS

Our expert mentors will work with you to create and lead a program for your school, church youth group, or community group, in a single-gender or mixed-gender format.
SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Flying Deer’s after-school programs, in-school programs, and field trips inspire curiosity, excitement, and joy while awakening awareness of the natural world.

Last year, we got 680 children outside for meaningful nature-connection experiences through 10 programs in school districts in Berkshire and Columbia Counties, including new programs in the Ichabod Crane Central School District and Berkshire Hills Regional School District.

Team challenges and collaborative adventures outside the walls of the classroom inspire new ways of relating and forge stronger bonds between students. Whether they’re first, second, or third graders in our Tree-cess program, or high schoolers in our school-based rites-of-passage program, they gain practical skills and self-knowledge that develop resilience and open the senses and the mind. And they take away unforgettable experiences that sow the seeds for a stronger lifelong understanding of the natural world.

Work with us to custom-craft ongoing in-school programs and field trips to meet the needs of your class or grade, creating a nature curriculum that complements and inspires art, science, social studies, and writing projects in the classroom.

TEACHER TRAININGS

Learn how to integrate nature education into your classroom. Our inspiring training for Pre-K to fifth-grade teachers offers tools and skills for incorporating the natural world into your Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts curriculum.

Explore ways to utilize wilderness education techniques to strengthen group bonds, develop communication techniques, and practice collaborative problem-solving. Custom programs created for schools; see website for details.

“Our work with Flying Deer was a highlight in my long career of teaching. The opportunity to practice self-reliance skills in a safe, encouraging environment will have lasting effects on all of my students.”
—Rebecca Leonard, Williamstown Elementary School

“Flying Deer’s program is unique because our students are simultaneously learning about working together and problem-solving through play-based nature activities. They’re not only playing new games, but also participating in an organized structure that supports positive peer relationships and collaborative learning.”
—Andrea Williams, Principal, Ichabod Crane Primary School
ADULT AND TEEN PROGRAMS

WOMEN IN THE WOODS
Spend a day attuning to the beauty and peace of nature while developing wilderness skills and greater awareness of the forest around you. Experience how the earth provides for you and feel the exhilaration and rejuvenation of meeting natural challenges with the support and fun of a community of women. Activities include plant identification, making crafts from the gifts of the earth, sensory awareness practices, fire skills, and much more.

See website for dates and specific activities.

“Half an hour into the morning, I had already learned so much about the plants and trees I live with. And the day just got better—delicious wild food, inspiring fire-making, peaceful sit spot, magical cord-making, and sharing stories. I went home feeling happy, connected, and alive.”
—Jane B., Great Barrington, MA

CORPORATE PROGRAMS
Like nature, organizations and corporations have their own climates and ecology and are continually adapting and evolving. Our program introduces an approach to systems thinking and systems “sensing” that fosters new connections and catalyzes breakthrough solutions. Through nature-based activities, leaders and teams gain skills in collaboration, communication, observation, and problem-solving—resulting in increased effectiveness and empowered teamwork. We’ll design a program tailored to your organization’s needs, with core elements like creating fire by friction, the art of tracking, and accessing intelligence through the senses.

“Half an hour into the morning, I had already learned so much about the plants and trees I live with. And the day just got better—delicious wild food, inspiring fire-making, peaceful sit spot, magical cord-making, and sharing stories. I went home feeling happy, connected, and alive.”
—Jane B., Great Barrington, MA

WILD WAYS HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM
For ages 12–17
Mondays from 9:00 am–3:00 pm in East Chatham
Gather with other teens each week to craft around the campfire, build skills and competency in the outdoors, and learn and grow as a group. We’ll have challenging adventures, practice naturalist and awareness skills, and share the triumphs and tribulations of adolescence.

HIDE TANNING WORKSHOP
June 5–7
Brain-tanned buckskin has been used for making garments and accessories from the Paleolithic to the present. We’ll take you through the entire tanning process, transforming a deer hide into a beautiful, functional material.

TRACKING CLUB
Sundays once a month
9:00 am–12:00 pm
Please check our website for dates.
Join Program Director Josh Wood to explore local habitats in search of animal tracks and signs—clues that open a window into the lives of local wildlife. Expect to find yourself well off the beaten path, traveling down hidden deer trails and peeking into the rocky refuges of porcupines! Josh also leads tracking workshops at regional nature preserves; details online.

WINTER TRACKING INTENSIVE
February 21–23
Head out into the woods for a weekend of wildlife tracking with Flying Deer’s Josh Wood and Dan Yacobellis of Tamakoce Wilderness Programs. We’ll spend two full days in the field following trails and interpreting tracks and sign, accompanied by evening and morning presentations and activities. You gain a solid foundation in tracking as we follow the path of fox, coyote, bobcats, and other wild neighbors.
AWAKENING WILD: NATURE IMMERSION FOR ADULTS

One Saturday per month, September through June, with a 72-hour Survival Challenge in May

Awakening Wild is a nine-month adventure in wilderness skills, community building, and nature awareness. Each day is a balance between focused work time on projects and skills; group time filled with laughter, stories, and song; and quiet time to recalibrate mind, heart, and body to nature’s rhythms.

Experience a slower, richer pace and space in which you awaken your senses, bolster confidence, strengthen your connections with land, village, and self—and return to your life refreshed and inspired.

Each month highlights a different wilderness skill:

- **September**: Basic Campcraft Skills
- **October**: Wild Edibles
- **November**: Primitive Shelters
- **December**: Friction Fires
- **February**: Wildlife Tracking
- **March**: Bark Cooking Baskets
- **April**: Back Pack Baskets
- **May**: 72-Hour Survival Challenge
- **June**: Graduation

PARENTS

Check out our 9-month Awakening Wild program for adults, same time/same place.

“My son and I both participated in the year-long Saturday program and benefited so much from it. It stabilizes our nervous systems. It assists us in being comfortable in the woods around our apartment. It’s helping us to recognize the resources around and within us. I love how empowered we both feel and how we both have a changing relationship with the natural world.”

—Ashley C., Stockbridge, MA

SATURDAY EXPLORERS

**ages 7–12**

February 15, March 21, April 18, May 16
10:00 am–4:00 pm each day
East Chatham, New York

We’ll meet one Saturday each month to learn, grow, play, and explore in nature. Guided by experienced mentors, shifting seasons, the interests of the group, and the lessons and opportunities from the natural world, we’ll sing songs, tell stories, play games, hike, craft, and learn wilderness skills and naturalist identification.

Through our engagement with each other and our environment, we’ll challenge our minds and bodies and build teamwork skills, resilience, awareness, responsibility, and community. All while learning, finding our place as part of nature, and having tons of fun!

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