

Nature Discovery Camps 2023 Summary

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Number of Volunteers: 2

Number of Hours: 147

Including:

- School's Out Adventures (including Spring Break and Winter overnight)
- Summer Camps

Counselors-in-training (CIT's) are volunteers who work alongside paid naturalists and interns in our Nature Discovery Day Camps to help campers have a fantastic camp experience. CIT's assist with crafts, keep track of campers on hikes, sing songs, play games, lead lunch time activities, watch out for camper safety, and help with set up and clean up before and after camp. CIT's work with campers range in age from 4 to 10 years old. Generally CIT's arrive at 8:30am and finish the day around 4pm. There may be overnights and differing schedules for some camps.

Our CIT program provides young adults with opportunities and experiences that push them to learn, grow, and practice new skills. This fun and educational program includes training in leadership skills in group and independent settings, interacting with different ages of campers, safe animal handling, and learning to lead many fun games, crafts, and activities. Our CIT's are depended upon to help lead activities, keep program materials clean and organized and, of course, join in on some fun and games with campers.

We believe that giving teens the chance to develop important life and career skills is a cornerstone of our program and we appreciate our volunteers' families' dedication to joining us in this process at home. We ask all of our volunteers to take the lead in managing their schedule, correspondence, and responsibilities when working with our volunteer program and we ask for adult family members to support them in doing so. With this in mind, we encourage volunteers complete their own applications and list their own email contact information when doing so. We thank families for helping their volunteers begin this process and encouraging teens take the lead.

SKILLS NEEDED

- Enjoy working with and teaching children.
- Work well as part of a team
- Relate well to others, especially children.
- Maintain a positive, patient and respectful approach with campers, families and staff
- Must not be afraid of snakes, spiders or getting dirty and/or wet

Optional, but Preferred, Skills

- Prior experience working with children is preferred, but not required
- General knowledge and interest of the local natural world and ecosystems. Volunteers will be trained with program-specific information, but prior knowledge or initiative for extra research is always helpful.

VOLUNTEER DUTIES

- Model appropriate behavior - set an example, use appropriate language. Be a friend to all campers. Encourage nervous or struggling campers. Be inclusive.
- Lead campers in games, songs, and free play activities daily
- Approach camp with a positive attitude

- Promptly communicate any issues to the naturalist
- Take steps to ensure camper safety
- Assist naturalists with set up, clean up, and transport of equipment. May include sorting, re-stocking, cleaning, hosing off, lifting, and carrying various items and weights.

REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

- We ask each CIT to volunteer for at least one week of camp during the summer
- CIT's must be available for all mandatory camp staff training days and a minimum 1 week availability during the summer (schedule based on participant's availability).
- School's Out Camp volunteers need to be past/current summer camp volunteers/paid counselors
- Be familiar with the park(s) where volunteering
- Be excited about exploring and spending time in nature, and be able to share this excitement with others
- Come appropriately dressed and prepared for the weather. The camp season includes high heat, wind, and thunderstorms. Volunteers may also be exposed to ticks, mosquitoes, and poison ivy.

TRAININGS

- Attend Summer Camp training week or meet with lead naturalist for an orientation (for School's Out camps)
- On-the-job training - There is a blend of training, shadowing, and leading camp activities with feedback from naturalists
- Attend additional trainings and enrichment events as available

PROJECT DATES

- Summer Camps occur late June through early August
- School's Out Camps occur through the year on days where Calvert County Public schools does not have classes
- We prefer full week commitments for consistency. Exceptions can be considered

SUMMARY OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

We had two CITs assist with summer camps. These volunteers attended summer camp staff training week and then assisted with camp (Damien worked one week, Oliver worked 2 weeks of camp). We had no CITs this year for School's Out camps.

FUTURE PLANS

- Working on recruiting a new crop of people and have them assist during the school year as well as during the summer.
- Continue to streamline how these volunteers to use Galaxy Digital to register for opportunities including their interview and orientation sessions
- Work with camp leaders to find a system that works for everyone involved to be sure that CIT's hours are recorded
- Lead scheduling meetings and website training as each CIT is hired to help them become more comfortable with using Galaxy and be sure these hours are recorded
- We will be offering several weeks of camp in summer 2024 that CITs would be able to assist with
- Try to have more involvement from the summer CITs and the counselors during the school year by having them help with other fall/winter/spring programs.

Supporting Calvert County's nature parks and natural spaces



CALVERT STEWARDS

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

A partnership between Calvert Nature Society and Calvert County Natural Resources Division

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Volunteer Portal: <https://calvertstewards.galaxydigital.com/>

Calvert Nature Society: www.calvertparks.org

Calvert County Natural Resources Division:
www.calvertcountymd.gov/NaturalResources

