



REGISTRATION EXTENDED

Junior Naturalist 4th-5th Grade Schedule of Events

All classes will be from 9-12 in the morning on the second Saturday of every month. Throughout the sessions there will also be 4 family field trips, based on the naturalist theme and intended to bring our Junior Naturalist Community together. The dates of the field trips are yet to be determined.

*Taught by Schreiner science students
Supervised by Dr Chris Distel, PhD*

Session 1 – Explanation of and setting up a new habitat and a student garden

In this session, students will start two long term projects. The first project will be creating a habitat that they will then monitor for the remainder of the year. They will make scientific predictions of who may inhabit this area they have created and then make observations every subsequent session to see if their predictions become correct and record their collected data on the inhabitant. Secondly, the students will create their own small garden area where they will grow native Texas plants. Here the students will conduct small experiments on their plants using two variables, amount of water and amount of fertilizer. The following sessions will set aside no more than 30 minutes for each of these projects (an hour total) for observations and data collection.

Session 2 – Aquatic Ecosystems

Students will learn about the environmental process associated with aquatic ecosystems such as predation, competitions, productivity, etc. Students will learn about the diversity of aquatic ecosystems and wetlands globally as well as locally.

Session 3 – Fish and Fishing

Students will discover interactions between body type and niche in fish. They will make predictions and then observations regarding types of fish in the town creek. Students will use seines and dip nets as live-sampling techniques. Students will also learn the impact fishing has on the fish population and will address why certain fish are preferred game fish.

Session 4 – Aquatic/terrestrial connections

Students will now be asked to make connections between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. They will identify the role of the water table in terrestrial plant growth, evaporation, topography, etc. They will examine amphibious animals, birds that feed in aquatic systems, and human transport of aquatic species with an emphasis on exotic invasives.

Session 5 – Subterranean, terrestrial, and arboreal ecosystems

Students will learn about the abundance of life found underground, the roll of subterranean shelter for terrestrial animals, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of terrestrially and arboreality. Students will also discuss how Kerrville is an ecosystem.

Session 6 – Migratory species

In this session students will discover how many species migrate during the spring. Emphasis will be given to birds, but insects and fish will be discussed as well. Students will learn why aerial species are best designed for migration of long distances. Also, dispersal of animal offspring and plant seeds will be discussed. Students will document how close young plants are to their potential parent and how different modes of dispersal affect germination site.

Session 7 – Megafauna, feral, and invasive species

Students will discover how our perceptions of wildlife are often shaped by charismatic megafauna as well as the relatively minor roles these species play in ecosystems compared to much smaller individuals. A discussion of both urban and rural faunas will take place. Also, the effect of cats and dogs will be addressed as well as the role of white-tailed in this part of Texas.

Session 8 – Wrap-up and party

Students will make final observations of habitats and garden plots. They will decorate pots to take home their plantings. They will be given information and encouraged to lead a gardening project in school and/or at home. This is an opportunity to invite parents and have the students demonstrate their knowledge on site, as well as to recruit these and younger students for future Junior Naturalist programs.

For information and registration
Contact Riverside Nature Center 257-4837