

Nature Discovery Camp Frequently Asked Questions

Most questions are answered in the Camp Policies document. Some of the most common questions are repeated below. If you still cannot find an answer to your question please contact camp staff at 717-428-1961.

When is the first day I can register?

Park members can register online starting January 16th, 2023. Non-members can register online starting February 6th, 2023. To become a park member go to <https://www.supportyourparks.org/> .

Online registration isn't working for me, what can I do?

If you are having issues registering your camper online, please call Nixon Park Nature Center for support and we will assist you. To reach a Naturalist call: 717-428-1961 x 6656.

Can my camper attend a week that is not their current age?

Campers must meet the minimum age requirement before or during the week of their camp unless an age exemption has been granted prior to registration by the Manager of Education at (717) 428-1961 x3. Reasons an exemption may be granted include students with special needs such as a developmental delay.

Please understand that we do not grant exemptions for siblings to attend the same week. This causes issues including activities not being age appropriate, students outside the age range not relating to the younger or older students, and unfairly filling a camp space. We take your feedback seriously and do our best to adjust the camps each year to accommodate our York County families. Feedback can be provided anytime to NixonCountyPark@YorkCountyPA.gov.

How many kids are in each camp group?

Pollywogs (ages 5-6): 12 campers per group.
Fledglings (ages 7-8): 16 campers per group.
Explorers (ages 9-10): 16 campers per group.
Adventurers (ages 11-13): 16 campers per group.
Each camp week has one to three groups.

How many staff are with each camp group?

Each camp group has two full-time paid camp staff, plus additional teen or adult volunteers.

What qualifications do the Nature Discovery Camp staff have?

The NDC staff is comprised of full-time York County Parks Naturalists in addition to seasonal educators currently studying in the education or science fields. Seasonal educators have previous experience working with children and an enthusiasm for getting children engaged with the natural world. All camp staff have current CPR and First Aid training. All camp staff have state and federal child safety background checks.

Any adult volunteers working with campers are also required to have state and federal child safety background checks. Teen volunteers working with camp have completed an application, interview, and training process provided by the park staff.

What does a week of camp look like? Should we sign up for multiple weeks?

Each week of camp includes the same general activities. All camps are packed with nature walks, water exploration (stream, pond, wetlands), nature journaling, nature-themed games, interactive nature lessons, and free nature play time. A typical day starts with welcome activities, a morning nature walk, an educational adventure after lunch, and most days end with nature play. All of these activities will vary each week depending on the group leaders, the weather, guest speakers, the students' interests, and the park volunteers.

If your camp locations include Kain Park, then your students will be boating if weather permits. If your camp locations include Rocky Ridge Park, then your day will include all of the above activities but in a new location.

If your students enjoy exploring nature and making new friends, then yes, we think they will enjoy multiple weeks of Nature Discovery Camp. Each camper may initially sign up for one week of camp until April 1st, after which a camper may be registered for another week of camp if space remains.

My child will be 14 by the beginning of camp, can they still attend?

If your student is entering high school, we recommend they participate in camp by being a leader-in-training, instead of a camper. For high school students who do not want to volunteer at camp, but still want to make friends and enjoy exploring natural history and conservation with park naturalists, we encourage them to sign up for the Teen Naturalist Club that currently meets the second Friday of each month at 6pm, and for variously scheduled monthly field trips and volunteer opportunities.

Contact NixonCountyPark@YorkCountyPA.gov for more information on either program.

What can I do if my camper is afraid to attend camp?

To prevent the first day blues we encourage shy and new campers to attend our Nature Discovery Camp Launch Day. This is a special day before the start of camps for campers to get to know the facility, the staff, and what to expect during their first week of camp. The camp staff will be available to answer any questions you or your camper has in person, as well as providing some sample camp activities. The Camp Launch Day is Wednesday, June 7th, 2023. Please call the nature center to register.

Can parents stay with campers until they are comfortable?

Unfortunately, once camp begins parents and guardians must leave camp due to the safety procedures in place. If you are concerned about your camper's willingness to stay at camp, we encourage you to visit the park in advance, set up a meeting with camp staff in advance, and/or attend the Camp Launch Day activities.

If a parent/guardian is interested in volunteering for a whole week of camp, in order to support camp staff and help provide all campers with a positive outdoor experience, parents/guardians can apply to be camp volunteers. Volunteers are required to obtain federal and state child safety background checks, and complete volunteer training. Because of this, parents/guardians cannot decide to volunteer last minute. Please contact the camp staff at 717-428-1961.

My child's camp says NX, KN, RR - what does that mean?

Your child will need to be dropped off and picked up at various parks including: Nixon, Kain, and Rocky Ridge County Parks. Mondays and Fridays always take place at Nixon Park, unless in rare cases boating is rescheduled for Friday due to weather. If you are not able to drop-off and pick-up your student at various parks on Tues, Wed, and/or Thurs, please do not register for a camp that takes place at various parks. The pick-up and drop-off schedule will be sent to families several weeks before the start of your camp.

Will my campers be boating?

If you are scheduled to be at Kain County Park, your child may be boating pending lake conditions. Campers will primarily be using canoes and training will be provided. Campers are fitted and required to wear a personal floatation device (PFD) at all times while on the dock or in a boat.

Can I make sure my child is placed in the camp week with their friend?

These requests can generally be honored as long as you note this during registration. There is a question during the registration process to address friends attending camp. Once camp begins, groups cannot be switched, however, all students attending camps the same week, even if in different groups, will do some activities throughout the day together, such as free time nature play.