



Damariscotta River Association School for Field Naturalists

School and Group Programs

This listing focuses on offerings to school groups however; our programs can be specially designed to meet the needs of homeschool groups, clubs, and retirement home residents. Our goal is to enable students to make their own discoveries about the natural world because engaging in this process is what connects them to nature. All of our programs are designed to teach basic concepts of ecology and integrate hands-on opportunities to learn scientific methods. We incorporate a variety of activities including observation time, games and nature journaling designed to help students develop naturalists' skills. Special classes can be designed to meet specific needs. We encourage you to consider a two hour program or choose a couple of programs for a complete day of outdoor learning. Information about how these programs support Maine's Learning Standards is available. Specific programs can be designed to meet the needs of any group. Each of the programs listed below can be tailored for any age and are offered year-round unless otherwise specified. General natural history hikes are available year-round in any location. Visit www.DamariscottaRiver.org for more information.

The Heritage Center: Here on the shores of Great Salt Bay, Maine's first marine protected area, we have an unparalleled teaching resource. The 115-acre preserve surrounding the Heritage Center is an outstanding setting for an outdoor classroom, offering marine and freshwater marshes, fields, oak-pine forest, and historic and pre-historic archeological sites.

Fees: \$65/hour (Scholarships may be available). Travel cost for off-site programs \$ 0.55/mile.

Animals:

All About Horseshoe Crabs (Offered June – September 15)

These remarkable and ancient creatures present many mysteries. Learn how scientists are tracking these animals in Great Salt Bay and how critical they are to the life cycles of many other animals.

Animal Tracks and Signs

Tracks and signs can tell the life histories of wild animals if we learn to read them carefully. Go beyond footprints and scat identification to discover the habits of the many animals living among us. Observe signs of the interactions of animals with each other and with plants.

Birds of Midcoast Maine

Borrow our binoculars, a guide and learn to identify some common (and perhaps some uncommon) birds in several different habitats. Observe bird behaviors and make your own discoveries about the fascinating life histories of these animals that live all around us.

Fear and Fangs – Predators (Ages K- 4)

Large and small, predators are feared. Discover why we love them, the critical roles they play in the ecosystem and what really controls animal populations.

Incredible Insects

Even in winter, insects make their living all around us. Discover the many adaptations that insects have that enable them to thrive and focus on natural selection. View our observation bee hive. Learn about the variety of life cycles of insects.

Mammals of Maine

What makes a mammal a mammal? Become familiar with the variety of mammals in Maine and discover what makes them specially adapted. Do you know the difference between a mole and a vole? (Live trapping of small mammals is weather dependent.)

Diadromous Fish (Offered around Mothers Day through early June at the Damariscotta Mills Fish Ladder)

Eels, salmon, alewives and other shad have incredible life histories that are closely tied with conservation local human history. Witness the incredible annual migration of these fish, play a migration game and more!

Cultural History:

Wabanaki Living Skills and Culture

Our recreated Wabanaki village site is the actual site of thousands of years of history where Wabanaki people have lived. Help maintain wigwams, make cedar twine, taste wild edibles, hear a story, learn about traditional Wabanaki culture and, if time permits, visit a shell midden left by people thousands of years ago.

Plants:

Tremendous Trees

Trees have fascinating adaptations that enable them to survive in a variety of conditions. Learn to identify common trees and why they are important resources for people and other animals.

Maple Syruping (March only)

Tap maple trees, sample sap and see syrup being made. Learn all about how trees function, the parts of them and play an identification game.

Plant and Animal Interactions:

Forest Ecology

Learn to identify key forest flora and fauna. Focus on succession and the life history of forests. (Older groups may practice using a transect to document plant and animal diversity.)

(See reverse side for more)



Forgotten Pollinators, Seeds and Fruits (Offered August - October 15)

Discover how seeds are the result of millions of years of coevolution of plants and animals. Witness these complex and highly developed relationships.

Prehistoric Relics (Grades 4 and up)

Take a trip back in time to study geologic history and observe plants (like horsetails and conifer trees) and animals (like horseshoe crabs) that survived millions of years and have adapted to the modern environment.



Wetlands and Coastal Ecology:

Oysters and Aquaculture (Two hours is required.)

Dissect an oyster, learn about the ecological role of wild oysters and how they are raised commercially. Spring and fall the group can visit an aquaculture site where oysters are grown for human consumption.

Coastal Studies in Great Salt Bay (Two hours is required.)

Explore the shore of Maine's first Marine Protected Area and discover how organisms have adapted to exist in an ever-changing tidal environment. (Older groups will learn about nutrient cycling in the ocean.)

Go With the Flow: Comparing Salt and Freshwater Habitats

Compare stream and marsh habitats and the life they sustain. Observe the fantastic adaptations of freshwater invertebrates and plants. Learn how water quality is critical to supporting healthy aquatic environments.

Saltwater Marsh Geologic History and Ecology

Marshes serve a variety of important functions including as a nursery for young fish spawning, a sponge controlling flood tides and a hotel and restaurant for migrating birds. Witness the effects of tens of thousands of years of tides and other mechanisms that transport living and nonliving matter throughout this ever-changing environment.

Aquatic Invertebrates of Fresh Water

Go marsh mucking and discover the wide array of adaptations that can be found! Focus on developing observation skills to find adaptations and differentiating between different groups of animals.

DEEP (Damariscotta Estuary Education Program)

Three part, inquiry-based curriculum taught in school and then in the field. Students learn about estuaries, develop research questions, conduct field work to answer questions through data and create a final presentation to share findings. Partner: University of Maine Darling Marine Center

Conservation Issues:

Climate Change

This four-part program includes: an introductory game, a study of Maine's natural communities response to climate change, a study of island ecosystems (on Carlisle Island) and a study of students' carbon footprint.

Watersheds and Water Quality

How does a watershed function? Learn to sample dissolved oxygen, aquatic invertebrates (as a measure of water quality), salinity, pH, and turbidity. Study the utility of these indicators.

Outdoor Living Skills:

Orienteering

Learn to use a compass and map. Create compass courses for your friends to try! Or try our courses.

Basic Needs – Food, water and Shelter

Learn to build quick emergency shelters, fire-starting (with and without matches and find water).

Classroom Programs:

Who are the Wabanaki?

An introduction to the culture and history of the Wabanaki people. See artifacts (stone tools etc.), hear a story, make a birch bark spoon or cedar twine.

Microscopic Ocean Life (Best April 15 – November 1, grades 4 and up.)

View the extraordinary world of phyto and zooplankton through quality microscopes. Learn how these minute organisms impact the atmosphere and all life on earth. Identify key phytoplankton.

Freshwater Habitats

Observe the fantastic adaptations of freshwater invertebrates and plants (which we can bring to your classroom or use school grounds). Learn how water quality is critical to supporting healthy aquatic environments.

Land Conservation Game

Play a role-playing game and learn how communities can plan for a future that includes open space.

A few items to consider when planning your trip to the Damariscotta River Association...

- Please discuss any special needs your students may have with DRA staff before the program.
- Prepare your students with pre-visit and post-visit activities/lessons to enhance their learning. If you want assistance with this, please let us know.
- Consider having our staff provide an in-class program to enrich the experience.
- Encourage your students to come dressed appropriately for the weather and wear shoes or boots for walking. We frequently have muddy areas on the trails even if it has not rained for some time.
- You are welcome to lead your own activities on our trails, although we appreciate notification.

To register or for more information:



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