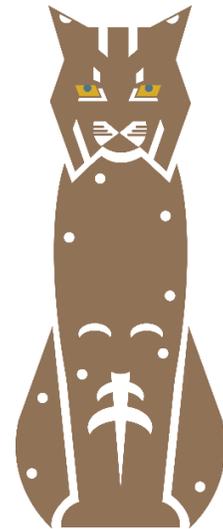




**Wachusett Meadow  
Nature Camp  
Family Handbook  
Summer 2026**



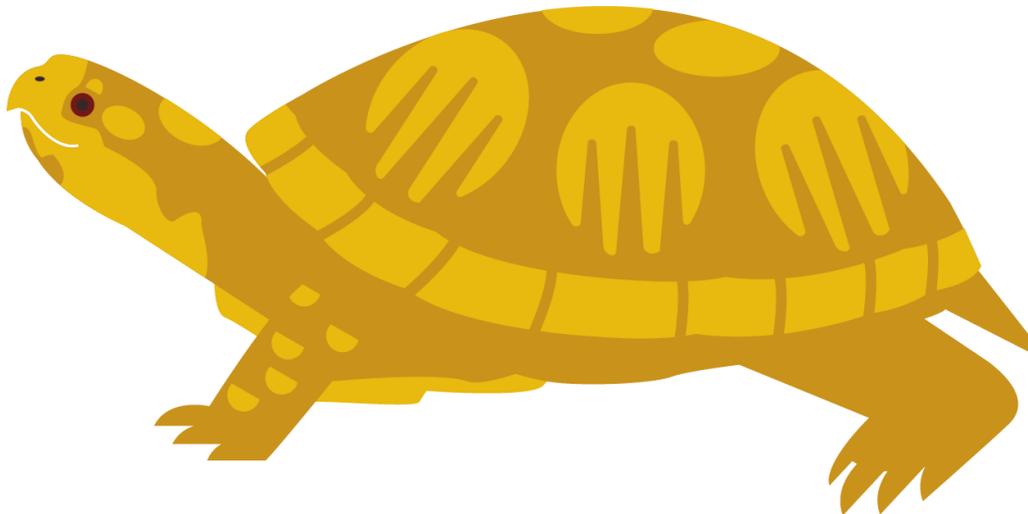
***Welcome!***

We look forward to a safe and enjoyable camp experience for everyone.

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## Camp Mission

We are committed to ensuring that every camper has the best possible summer while in our care. It is our goal that, by the end of each camp session:

- Campers of all backgrounds, abilities and identities feel safe and supported physically, socially, and emotionally.
- Campers explore local ecosystems and develop confidence in nature.
- Campers learn about conservation and stewardship through age-appropriate hands-on activities.
- Campers connect with each other, create friendships, and grow through trying new experiences.

## Camp License and Accreditation

Our camp complies with the regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (105 CMR 430) and is licensed by our local Board of Health. We are accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA).

## Contact Info

For questions about registration, payments, or camp openings, please contact the main office at 978-464-2712 and press “0” to be connected to a visitor services representative or email [wachusett@massaudubon.org](mailto:wachusett@massaudubon.org). For all other questions, you can reach Elizabeth Broughton, camp director at 978-481-7334 or email at [wachusettcamp@massaudubon.org](mailto:wachusettcamp@massaudubon.org).

## Camp Director

In addition to directing Wachusett Meadow Nature Camp, Elizabeth Broughton (she/her) is part of Mass Audubon’s year-round education team, coordinating and teaching homeschool programs, school and scout groups, and programs for families. She also serves as Wachusett Meadow’s resident caretaker and enjoys her scenic walking commute to work. Elizabeth holds a Bachelor of Science in microbiology and was a stay-at-home mom for many years while raising her four children. In her role as Camp Director, she is inspired by a love of all things nature and her commitment to educate people of all ages and abilities.

## Payment Deadlines, Deposits and Refund Policy

The balance of your camp tuition is due by May 1. If we have not received payment in full by May 1 and have not received contact from you, your space will be given to another family. If you register after May 1, payment in full is required and a specific camp form deadline will be set for you.

Payment plans can be arranged ahead of time by calling 978-464-2712

**Refund Policy:** A full refund, minus the nonrefundable, nontransferable deposit, is provided on or before May 1. After May 1, no refund is available. Refunds are not given for participant dismissal, failure to attend, absence, or sick days. If we cancel a session, you will receive a full refund.

**Session Transfers:** Session transfer requests will be honored if there is space available and if a request is made at least two weeks prior to the session start date, after which transfers are not permitted.

## Coming to Camp

**Daily Checklist-please label campers name on everything:**

- Lunch
- Refillable Water Bottle
- Long pants or shorts w/long socks
- Closed toed shoes
- One snack for half day camp, two snacks for full day camp
- Light jacket/sweatshirt/hat
- Change of clothes, socks and shoes
- Fanny pack or small backpack for hikes
- Sunscreen and insect/tick repellent
- Raincoat and Rain boots (if rain is forecast)
- (optional)Water shoes or crocs for water play-no flip flops

Please reach out to the camp director if you need any supplies for your camper.

**Lunch/Snacks:** All campers should bring lunch, water and 1 healthy snack for half-day camp or 2 healthy snacks for full day camp. Since we will often eat along the trail, a small daypack or fanny pack to carry snacks, water, and accessories is essential. Mass Audubon promotes the reduction of waste and encourages nutritious green snacks and lunches. Compost bins, recycling and trash containers will all be available at camp. We ask that you pack your food in reusable containers whenever possible. We DO NOT refrigerate or re-heat lunches, so please pack non-perishable food or include an ice pack in the lunch box. Tips on packing a safe lunch are available at the camp office on request.

Our camp is NOT a nut free facility. Accommodations will be made for any camper with food allergies, including tree nuts and peanuts. Whole group accommodation may be made in the case of an extreme allergy in a particular group, and you will be notified ahead of the camp week in those limited circumstances.

**Medications:** Camp staff can only administer oral or topical medications except for an Epi-pen. Prescription medicine needed during camp hours including inhalers and epi-pens:

- Must be listed on health forms and have an appropriate action plan on file.
- Must be in original containers and have a pharmacy label

Non-prescription medications needed during camp hours:

- Require a written note from the family.
- Must be in the original container that includes the directions.
- Must be labeled with the camper's name and date of birth

**Clothing:** Your camper should wear lightweight long pants that can be tucked into socks **or** shorts with long socks, to reduce exposure to ticks. **Tick checks are conducted frequently throughout the day; however, it is important that you conduct a thorough check of your camper daily.** Have your camper wear comfortable closed-toed walking shoes (no open toes) and a hat. On hot days, water play is a common activity, and campers should be prepared to get wet with a sprinkler or water games. Water shoes or crocs with heel strap are allowed during this time. Even big kids need to bring a change of clothes and shoes!

**Sunscreen and Insect Repellent:** These should be applied prior to arrival. Please make sure your camper knows how to re-apply (avoid pressurized containers). Opportunities to re-apply will happen throughout the day. Staff members will be able to assist in the reapplication process if necessary.

**Rainy days at camp:** We are an all-weather camp. Campers should plan on being outside every day, including rainy days. Rain boots, raincoats, and a change of clothes, including shoes & socks are needed on rainy days at camp. Indoor space is utilized in the event of heavy rain and hazardous weather conditions.

**Do Not Bring:** Campers may not bring pocketknives, personal electronics, cell phones, sports equipment, or pond nets. The possession or use of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, and weapons by anyone is strictly prohibited. Smoking is not permitted in any sanctuary building or on sanctuary grounds.

## Typical Day at Camp

8:00–9:00 am	Optional Before Camp Program (registration required)
9:00–9:30 am	Camper Drop off & Choice Time
9:30 am	Opening Circle—campers learn about the day ahead
9:45 am	Morning Hike, Snack, Story, & Exploration
12:00 pm	Lunch & Free Play
1:00 pm	Camper Pick-up for half day programs
1:00 pm	Afternoon Hike, Snack, & Activity for full day programs
3:15 pm	Closing Circle—campers share their adventures
3:30–3:45 pm	Camper Pick-up for full day programs
3:30–5:00 pm	Optional After Camp Program (registration required)

## **Arrivals and Dismissals**

**Before Camp Care** (preregistration required): Campers may arrive any time after 8:00am. Please park in the lot and escort your camper to the camp room. Campers may bring their breakfast with them to eat on site before camp begins.

**Arrivals:** Campers may arrive any time between 8:50 and 9:10am. If you arrive early, please wait in your car until camp is ready for drop off to begin. We cannot accommodate early drop offs unless you are registered for before camp care.

Please wait in your car to check in on the roadside with the camp director or designated personnel at the sign just past the crosswalk in front of the yellow Crocker house. Vehicle travel is one way during camp hours. Once your camper is checked in, they can exit the car and be escorted with one of our counselors to their camp area. If you wish to escort your camper to the camp program area, you must **check in first**, then proceed to the parking lot to park your car. You may then proceed to their designated camper area for drop off. It is expected that drop-off should be short and sweet.

If there is extreme weather during drop-off, check in will happen in the breezeway. Please park your car on the street and escort your camper to the breezeway.

**The direction of travel for cars is counterclockwise. Check in and drop off first, then drive through parking lot to exit.**

**Dismissal:** Half-day campers may be picked up between 1:00 and 1:15pm. Full Day campers may be picked up between 3:30 and 3:45pm.

Please wait in your car to check out roadside with the camp director or designated personnel at the sign just beyond the crosswalk in front of the yellow Crocker house. Vehicle travel is one way during camp hours. Have your ID ready as campers will only be released to authorized adults listed on your camper release form. After signing your camper out, they may get in your car. Extreme weather pick up will remain the same as regular pickup.

**The direction of travel for cars is counterclockwise. Pick up first, then drive through parking lot to exit.**

**After Camp Care** (preregistration required): Campers must be picked up by 5:00pm. Campers are often out exploring trails until 4:30pm. If you plan to pick up before then, please notify staff of the time at drop off so that your camper will be ready. When you arrive, park your car in the lot and walk across to the camp area. If you do not see the camp group, please check in at the office. We will radio the group to find out their location. Have your ID ready as campers will only be released to authorized adults listed on your camper release form.

**For camps with an extended program day:** A special schedule will be sent the week prior to camp.

**Late drop-offs or early pickups:** Park your car in the lot and check in or out with the front office.

- Early pickups: give notice the morning of the camp day.
- Known late drop-offs: give notice the day before.
- Unexpected late drop-offs: call the office to notify camp staff of the time to expect the camper. 978-464-2712

### **Camper Feedback**

We are excited to learn directly from Mass Audubon campers about their experience. This summer, some campers may have the opportunity to participate in a brief, internal group survey to help us learn about and improve the camp experience. These surveys are optional; campers have the choice of participating or not. Trained camp staff will make audio recordings, which we will share with the Director of Evaluation to transcribe and analyze. Quotes and data from these surveys may be published, however campers will not be identified. Campers will be chosen at random, and only campers with prior authorization (media release) signed by their parents/guardians may participate in the camper survey.

### **Camper Health and Emergency Information**

After registering for camp, you will receive an email from CampDoc with a link to fill out the required health forms online. Copies of necessary forms (immunization, proof of physical examination, and insurance) must be self-uploaded to the site. All health information is due by May 1. If you are waiting for a yearly physical, please complete as much of the camp doc information as possible and contact the camp director with the date of the physical. If a camper's health information is incomplete, they cannot join their camp session.

**Attendance:** If your camper is ill or won't be joining us on any camp day, you must call the Wachusett Meadow office at 978-464-2712 to leave a message by 8:15 a.m. We will call all absent campers that we have not heard from by 10:00am.

**Illnesses:** Please do not send a sick camper to camp (fever, vomiting, conjunctivitis, skin eruptions, continuous cough, etc.) If a camper becomes sick during camp, and/or has a minor injury and cannot comfortably continue camp that day, parents will be notified and expected to pick up their camper immediately. Participants infected with lice will be removed from the program and not permitted to return until treated.

**Health Care:** You may request a copy of our complete Health Care Policy.

Our healthcare team includes our full-time Camp Director, Assistant Camp Director, and Behavior Specialist. All camp staff members are CPR/AED/First Aid and Epi-pen trained. Wachusett Meadow's off-site healthcare consultant is Dr. Terry Callahan. If you have any questions regarding health care, please contact our team at [wachusettcamp@massaudubon.org](mailto:wachusettcamp@massaudubon.org) or 978-464-2712.

Campers are not considered to have increased at risk of Meningococcal disease but the department of public health requires us to share this information with you. [Meningitis vaccination requirements | Mass.gov](#)-

- In the case of a health emergency, we will initiate a call to 911 and notify the caregiver as soon as possible. Emergency care is provided by the Princeton Fire Department/EMS, just over one mile away.
- Required vaccines: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/required-immunizations-for-children-attending-camp-and-camp-staff-2025-0>

**Extreme Heat and Air Quality Index:** During very hot days, water play is made available throughout the day and activities are limited to shady areas of the sanctuary. Occasionally campers get soaked by water play and a change of clothes is essential. We monitor air quality throughout the summer and will utilize indoor spaces with air purifiers when unhealthy levels are present.

**Mandated Reporters:** Massachusetts law requires professionals who work with children to notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or both.

**Staff Training:** Camp staff are carefully selected for their enthusiasm, caring attitude toward children, and ability to interact with youth in an outdoor setting. All staff undergo background checks, are certified in CPR and first aid, and receive training in health and safety procedures, child development, natural history, and environmental education best practices.

Camp staff also receive training on how to build an inclusive camp group, lead age-appropriate conversations, and prevent and respond to bullying. It's difficult to predict what topics of conversation will arise in a camp group. If a sensitive developmental topic comes up or if discussions veer into arguments, staff are trained to respond with compassion, steer discussion toward camp-appropriate topics, and check in with campers to ensure they feel safe. The Camp Director and other leadership staff provide additional support if a sensitive topic arises or if staff have concerns about the group's behavior.

Camps will not tolerate bullying, harassment, or threats to any camper or staff, no matter their beliefs, values, or identity. Our aim is to build an inclusive and respectful camp experience for a diverse community of youth, families, and staff who care deeply about nature and its protection.



**Risk Management:** Mass Audubon staff members make every effort to conduct safe programs, to orient and support campers, and to inform families of inherent risks. Some activities may involve risks that campers do not routinely encounter at home. Risk management is an essential element of all the activities that we offer. Our standard precautions include conducting our program in a manner consistent with the practices and procedures recommended by the Mass Department of Public Health and the American Camp Association. While we anticipate that these efforts will ensure the well-being of each participant, we are also aware that it is neither possible to foresee every contingency nor to eliminate all risk.

Violation of our policies may result in expulsion from camp without a refund. If you would like to review our disciplinary policy, grievance procedure, or medical policy/treatment procedures, please ask.

## Accommodations for Campers

As an outdoor, nature-based program, it is important that families of children who have disabilities understand Mass Audubon's expectations, programs, and terrain prior to enrolling.

Due to the outdoor and exploratory nature of our camp programs, campers move on uneven terrain throughout the day. The terrain varies from hard-packed, gently sloped paths to steeper, uneven trails that may have exposed rocks, tree roots, and other obstacles. Weather could affect our trail conditions. We encourage all families to visit the camp's sanctuary prior to enrolling to understand its unique terrain.

If your child requires accommodation, please contact the camp's director as soon as possible; a delay in request could have the unintended consequence of disrupting your child's Mass Audubon camp experience.

### One-to-one Aides

Mass Audubon camps do not provide one-to-one support; however, we do welcome one-to-one aides to support campers when they are provided by the family. Aides must follow Mass Audubon's Child Protection Standards, including obtaining a CORI/SORI and background check prior to their time participating within our programs.

More information and training may be required prior to the aide starting within the program. If your child requires an aide in school, please contact the camp's director as soon as possible to discuss how Mass Audubon can best support your child. Family members are not permitted to be aides.

## Behavior Expectations

Our staff establishes expectations and offers guidance throughout each day. Mass Audubon sanctuaries are open to the public and camp groups may spend time in areas that have visitors, vehicles, varied terrain, water, and wild animals. In order for everyone to have a safe and positive experience, campers are expected to follow Mass Audubon's Camper Code of Conduct with minimal support from staff.

### Mass Audubon's Camper Code of Conduct

#### Respect Yourself

- Take care of yourself and your body and ask for help.
- Apply sunscreen and bug spray.
- If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, talk with an adult.

#### Respect Nature

- Carry-in/carry-out: Take trash and recycling with you or put in an appropriate bin.
- Leave animals, plants, and other parts of nature where you found them.
- Observe wild animals from a distance. Use your eyes not your hands, unless it is permitted by camp staff.

#### Respect Others

- Listen and follow instructions given by camp staff.
- Stay with your group at all times.
- Use caring and kind language.
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Respect other people's physical space and objects.
- Listen to all ideas and be inclusive; allow others to join/play with you.
- Treat others the way they want to be treated and celebrate each other's individuality. Use pronouns and names people introduce themselves with.

*All families and campers review and sign off on Mass Audubon's Behavior Expectations and Camper Code of Conduct before attending camp. In addition, visit our website to view Mass Audubon's [camp goals and inclusion practices](#).*

Failure by a camper to follow camper behavior expectations and/ or failure of a parent/guardian to disclose information about a camper via the camper's health form on CampDoc may be grounds for dismissal without a refund.

**Discipline Policy:** To ensure the safety of all campers and respect for people and the environment, campers are made aware of camp rules on the first day of each session. Should a camper choose not to follow camp rules, they will be asked to sit out of activities until they are ready to participate in a safe and respectful manner. If necessary, the Camp Director will ask a parent/guardian to join the conversation about the behavioral expectations at camp. If such expectations are not met, the Camp Director may dismiss a camper from camp. No refunds or transfer of funds will be given for dismissal or incomplete attendance (including sick days).

**Buddy Requests** One buddy (friend) request per camper will be honored when possible. Both campers must be a similar age. All buddy requests must be made in writing at least two weeks prior to the first day of camp and you can reach out to the camp office at [wachusettcamp@massaudubon.org](mailto:wachusettcamp@massaudubon.org) to make a request. We are unable to accommodate buddy requests on the first day of camp.

## Donations

We will be collecting the following items for donation for distribution to campers in need or for campers who left theirs at home.

- gently used raincoats
- rain boots
- hiking boots
- sneakers
- sunscreen and bug spray
- individually packaged snacks
- juice boxes
- small Gatorades

**Please help us to be good neighbors to people, pets and wildlife by driving slowly and carefully!**

**Police monitor Goodnow Road and the posted limit is 20 mph.**

**Camp will always wait for you.**

Thank you for being part of the Wachusett Meadow Nature Camp community. Together, we create a space where children can explore, learn, and grow in the natural world. We look forward to an exciting summer of discovery and adventure with your family!