



North River Nature Camp 2026 Family Handbook

Welcome to Mass Audubon’s North River Nature Camp!

This handbook gives you an overview of our camp policies and contains essential information to help ensure your camper is ready for their first day of camp. Please take some time to read it over and discuss it with your camper.

If you have any questions, please contact the Camp Director, Jacqui Shuster, at 781-355-6109 or email northrivercamp@massaudubon.org

We look forward to a successful camp season!



“This camp must comply with regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and be licensed by the local board of health.”

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Camp Mission

We believe that camp is a place where children can grow, spend quality time outdoors and have fun summer experiences. Through hands-on, inquiry-based activities, free play, games and nature discovery campers learn about their surroundings, themselves and others. Spending time learning and playing outdoors helps foster a deep, life-long connection to nature and inspires environmental stewardship.

North River & You: A Camp Partnership

North River Nature Camp strives to offer high quality, fun, and educational experiences to all our campers – experiences we hope they enjoy and remember for a long time. However, we cannot meet this goal without help from all our campers and their families, so we invite you to enter a partnership to ensure that every camper has the best possible learning adventure while attending our camp program.

We pledge to provide:

- A safe and healthy environment for your camper.
- Nature based programs that incorporate learning, social interaction, and free play.
- An environment where staff establish expectations and model appropriate behavior.
- Positive community spirit that helps every camper feel included and cared about.

In return, we expect the following from our guardians and campers:

- Cooperation with our written policies including our behavior guidelines.
- Detailed attention to the daily needs of your child to prepare them for camp.
- Willingness to act in collaboration with camp staff to maintain and restore appropriate behavior and participation.
- And commitment to the well-being of the entire camp community (such as keeping a sick or overtired camper at home).

If, at any time, you have a question or concern about our camp program, please contact our Camp Director. No question or concern is too small for you to bring to our attention. You may request copies of our background checks, health care, behavior, discipline, and/or grievance policies at any time.

Camp License and Accreditation:

North River Nature Camp complies with the regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (105 CMR 430) and is licensed by the Marshfield Board of Health. We are also accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA).

Camp Staff:

Our caring, well-prepared camp staff are actively engaged in teaching and exploring with campers. Camp staff bring their enthusiasm for the outdoors, a desire to facilitate learning, and a compassionate heart for children. This specialized team works to foster a sense of community among campers and individual connections with nature. Summer staff are carefully selected based on their enthusiasm, teaching experience, natural history knowledge, and deep commitment to engaging campers with nature. 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.

Payments, Deadlines, & Refund Policy

To find your balance, and to pay, visit: massaudubon.org/payments

Full payment for camp and all forms (including health forms and immunizations to CampDoc) **are due on or before May 1** unless a payment plan has been set up with the Camp Director. No camper is allowed to attend camp unless all forms, waivers, and payments are complete.

Deposits

A non-refundable deposit per session is required at the time of registration. Deposits cannot be transferred to another camper, session, family, or camp location. Please review your calendar for any scheduling conflicts before registering.

Refunds

On or before May 1, you will receive a refund for any payments made excluding the non-refundable deposit per session. After May 1, no refunds will be issued.

Coming to Camp

What to Pack?

We spend most of the day exploring and playing outdoors. It is important to dress your camper for the weather to allow them to fully enjoy their experience. ***If you label your camper's belongings, we can return lost items to you at the end of the day!***

What to Wear

- Clothing that can get dirty, wet, or messy. We recommend that campers wear comfortable, light-weight clothing. Long sleeve shirts, tall socks and long trousers can be helpful to avoid mosquito bites and ticks.
- Comfortable closed-toed shoes that can get wet and muddy and are secure – For safety reasons, sandals are prohibited.
- Socks! These protect campers from blistering, insects, and poison ivy.

What to Bring

A backpack containing the following:

- Lunch and snack - food should be non-perishable as we are unable to refrigerate lunches.
- A full water bottle. We refill water bottles whenever needed.
- A hat and sun block (minimum of SPF 30)
- Insect repellent

Just in Case

- Extra clothes can ensure campers stay comfortable; accidents happen.
- Extra pair of socks and shoes
- Rain jacket and rain pants

Peanuts and Tree Nuts at Camp: We allow peanuts and tree nuts at camp and will remind campers that food should not be shared with others. If there is a camp group with a known airborne nut allergy, we will inform camp families beforehand and ask that they do not pack any foods containing that specific allergen.

Extra Food at Camp: We have prepackaged snacks and lunches on hand for emergencies. If a camper's lunch is missing or they do not have enough food, we will call home to see if additional food can be dropped off. If not, we will consult their CampDoc profile for any known allergies and provide them with some snacks to help fuel them for the day.

Bathrooms: Campers will have opportunities to use the bathroom throughout the camp day. While we know some of our younger campers may be new to going to the bathroom on their own-- please reinforce potty training before the start of camp. Our staff do not provide one on one assistance during toileting and campers are expected to be able to fully use the toilet and clean up after themselves. While far from facilities, in case of emergency, we will provide campers with support if they need to use the bathroom outdoors in a safe, private and hygienic manner.

If an accident occurs, cleaning up and changing clothes is handled by the Camp Director and another trained member of camp leadership in a matter-of-fact way that does not shame, humiliate, or embarrass the child. Soiled clothes will be bagged and returned to the family at pick-up. If you have any concerns about bathrooming, please contact the Camp Director.

What Not to Bring (campers and adults):

- Toys
- Electronic devices
- Personal treasures
- Expensive items
- Knives, matches, firearms/ammunition, or other potentially dangerous items are not allowed and are grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.
- The possession and use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and weapons are prohibited.
- No animals, other than service animals, are allowed at camp. **Please do not walk your pets in the parking areas.**

Cell phones, iPods, smart watches, etc. are not to be used during the camp day. If you need to speak to your child during the day, please call the main number. Mass Audubon is not responsible for lost or damaged articles that have been brought to camp.

Typical Camp Day

Each day there will be a nature-related theme, and the hikes, activities, and crafts are all tied to that theme. Our camp days are built around the schedule below. There will always be some flexibility based on weather, camper interests, and what we might see while exploring!

9:00am	Drop off with games and art options
9:30am	Opening circle
10:00am	Snack
10:15am	Morning Hike and Activities
12:00pm	Lunch, reapply sunscreen and bug spray
12:30pm	Choice Time: Games, Nature Play, or Art
1:00pm	Afternoon Activities
2:30pm	Closing circle
3:00pm	Pick-up

First Day of Camp & What to Expect

Before your camper comes to camp:

Please take some time to prepare your camper for their participation in our camp program.

- Each group will have a designated area to meet and space to place their things. On the first morning of each session, counselors will provide an orientation to the camp area, boundaries, location of bathrooms, etc.
- Each camper will be expected to be courteous and respectful to others, and to follow instructions. We will address this with each camp group on the first day of each session.
- **TICK CHECKS:** During the camp day, we do **regular tick checks** at lunch and other times as needed. Every night at bath time or just before bed, please take a few minutes to **check your camper for ticks**.
- Encourage your camper to go to bed early the night before, and during their camp week – a good night's rest is essential to having a good day at camp!

Camper Drop-Off & Pick-Up

North River Nature Camp Address: 2000 Main St. Marshfield, MA 02050

Camp Hours: Camp hours are from 9am to 3pm. We do not offer before or after care.

Parking: When pulling into camp, please note that the parking lot is one-way. Follow the signage to the check-in area. Our drop-off plan will be sent out to guardians before the beginning of your camper's session.

Drop-Off

- Drop-off is rolling from 8:55-9:15 am. *Please wait with your camper at the drop-off area until camp staff arrive. Staff cannot be responsible for campers before 8:55 am.*
- A parent/guardian must be present on the first day of camp to verify health and authorized pick-up information. Under NO circumstances may you drop off your camper without signing them in with a staff member.
- After you check-in with the Camp Director, your camper will be escorted to their designated group area.

Late Drop-Off: Please email and call the office at (781) 837-9400 if your camper will be arriving late. When you arrive, please park in the parking lot and walk your camper into the Nature Center. Front desk staff will contact camp staff to come to retrieve your camper.

Pick-Up

Adults picking up campers must be authorized via campers' CampDoc Emergency Contact/Pick-Up section and have identification at time of pick-up.

Please call immediately if there is an emergency that will make you late.

- Pick-up is rolling from 3:00-3:15 pm
- Please be prepared to show identification to camp staff. Staff will remain with campers until an authorized adult has picked up each camper.
- Pick-up adults must be authorized via campers' Emergency Contact/ Pick-Up section on CampDoc. We will not release campers to anyone who is not listed on the release form or has not been authorized by you. There are no exceptions.

Early Pick-Up: Please notify the Camp Director as soon as possible if your camper will need to be picked up from camp early. This will let our counselors ensure your camper is ready on time. Please Note: Your camper's group may be up to 30 minutes away from the Nature Center at any time.

Emergency Pick-Up: If you need to unexpectedly pick up your camper, please call our office as soon as possible at (781) 837-9400 and ask for our Camp Director, Jacqui Shuster. Only authorized adults with identification will be able to pick up campers.

Late Pick-Up: If you arrive after general pick-up twice in one week you will be charged \$50. If a camper has not been picked up by 3:20pm, the Camp Director will try to contact the parents/guardians/emergency contacts. If they cannot be reached within an hour the local police will be notified.

Absences: Please email us at northrivercamp@massaudubon.org or call us at (781) 837-9400 by 9am. If a camper does not arrive and we have not been notified of their absence, we will call you to find out if they are not attending or if you are running late. A reminder, a camper needs to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to camp.

Camper Feedback

We're 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.

Health & Safety

Our complete healthcare policy is available upon request.

Health Care at Camp:

The Camp Director, camp counselors, and other full-time North River staff have certifications in First Aid and CPR. Our off-site healthcare consultant is Dr. Matthew Butka, a hospitalist at South Shore Hospital in Weymouth. The Camp Director acts as the onsite Healthcare Supervisor and will administer any prescribed medications during camp. The Marshfield Fire Department EMTs provide emergency care for North River camp programs.

Sick Campers:

If your camper is sick, please keep them home until they feel better. If a camper starts to feel sick while at camp, we will have them rest in a designated area until they can be picked up. A staff member will stay with them during this time. If a camper has a fever, they need to be fever free (without the use of medication) for 24 hours before they can return to camp.

Medications at Camp:

Medication must be sent in the original container with the pharmacy label attached. Medication must be handed to the Camp Director or Assistant Camp Director upon arrival. No medication, whether prescription or over the counter, may be administered to a child without it being listed in CampDoc. Be sure that any

inhalers have the prescription label attached or bring along the box with the label attached. All over-the-counter medications should be in their original container with the camper's name and date of birth written on the container along with instructions for administration.

Sunscreen Policy

Campers are encouraged to reduce their exposure to the sun. Children are encouraged to use wide brim hats, long sleeve shirts, long pants, sunscreens with a solar protection factor of 30 or greater, and lip balm. Families are encouraged to apply sunscreen at the beginning of the day. Staff will assist campers with the application of sunscreen at lunchtime if it is provided by the family.

Insect Repellent

It is important that families and campers take precautions to avoid insect bites from mosquitoes and ticks. Campers are encouraged to use insect repellent and wear light colored clothing. If insect repellent is provided, staff will assist children with the application. If you would like more information about insect repellent see: [Mosquito Repellent information](#)

Tick Checks

Staff will teach campers about tick checks and remind them to perform them throughout the day. Campers will be encouraged to inspect their clothing, exposed skin, and hair lines. We strongly encourage families to do another tick check before leaving and later at home where skin covered by clothing can be inspected. Bathing can also help find and/or wash off crawling ticks. For more information about ticks see: [Tick Prevention](#)

Adapting to the weather:

Rainy Days: Campers are outside for most rainy days. Summer rain can be cold. Be prepared with rain gear and jacket. We have outdoor shelters to use when needed as well as indoor spaces to use during thunderstorms.

Hot Days: On very hot days we will have misters set up. Your camper may be damp when you pick them up! You may want to bring a towel to protect your car seat. Please inform your camper and/or the staff if you wish to limit how wet they get. We will gain their verbal consent before any camper gets wet!

In the event of injury or first aid: Families will be notified, indicating the injury's nature, what was provided, and by whom. All camp staff are first aid and CPR certified.

Families will be contacted during the camp day if:

- A camper needs health care beyond our training
- A camper is not feeling well, and we determine it is best that they rest at home
- First aid was provided, and health care supervisors want to alert families prior to pick up
- A camper sustained an injury to the head.

In case of emergency: First aid will be administered at the level of training. We will work with you to coordinate further care, pick-up, or transportation of the child. When appropriate, local emergency response personnel will be called at the same time families are being notified. If a camper needs transportation, it will be provided by a parent/guardian or ambulance service. If unable to reach the camper's primary contacts, we will call emergency contacts from the health form.

Meningococcal Disease and Camp Attendees

Campers are *not* considered to have increased risk of Meningococcal Disease, but the Department of Public Health requires us to provide you with the information in the link below.
[Meningitis info from mass.gov](#)

Please read the document “Meningococcal Disease and Camp Attendees: Commonly Asked Questions.” You do not need to print or return a signed waiver to us.

Mandated Reporting

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.

Camp Goals and Inclusion

Camp Goals

- 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.

Our Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

Mass Audubon strives to create a safe, inclusive, and caring camp environment where each person is respected and supported in their learning and growth. We believe that diversity—both in nature and in our human communities—is essential to strength, resilience, and innovation, and we are committed to recognizing the unique contributions of each community member.

Accommodations for Campers & One-to-one Aides

Accommodations for Campers

Due to the outdoor and exploratory nature of our camp programs, campers move on uneven terrain throughout the day. The terrain at our site 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 camper requires accommodation, please contact the Camp Director as soon as possible, a delay in request could disrupt your camper’s Mass Audubon 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.

If your camper requires an aide in school, please contact the Camp Director as soon as possible to discuss how we 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.

All families and campers review and sign off on Mass Audubon’s Behavior Expectations and Camper Code of Conduct before attending camp. In addition, Mass Audubon’s camp goals and inclusion practices are on our website. [Learn more >](#)

Mass Audubon’s Camper Code of Conduct

1. Respect Yourself. Examples include:
 - 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.
2. Respect Nature. Examples include:
 - 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.
3. Respect Others. Examples include:
 - Listen and follow instructions given by camp staff.
 - Always stay with your group.
 - 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.

Proactive Behavior Guidance Strategies

Before coming to camp, family members provide information about camper’s needs to camp staff and/or the Camp Director. Camp staff may contact a family to discuss best strategies to meet camper’s needs during their session. Any previously known behavior issues that may affect a camper’s participation should be shared with the camp before the session begins. Failure to disclose information may result in grounds for termination.

Camp staff are trained to proactively manage behaviors within each group. Some strategies staff use include:

- Reinforce positive behavior through praise
- Provide ample warning to campers prior to transitions
- Clearly state behavior expectations through group agreements and visual tools
- Provide daily schedules through group check ins and visual tools

When campers struggle with the behavior expectations set for them in the Camper Code of Conduct, camp staff will follow one or more of the steps below, depending on the situation. Camp staff may try a step multiple times.

	Leader Response	Consequences for Camper
1st step	Reminders of the rule.*	Reminders of the rule, discussion of why behavior was inappropriate, and possible options.

2nd step	Reminders of the rule, plus short break. Take notes on a behavior incident report. Camp Director or designee may have a brief check-in with family in person or via a call.	Take a break for up to 15 minutes. Reminders of the rule, discussion of why behavior was inappropriate, and possible options.
3rd step	Discussion with the camper about the rules of camp. Update the Camp Director or Assistant Director on the steps taken so far. Supervise camper during longer break. Add to incident report. Camp Director or designee updates family.	Camper will take a longer break which may include an entire activity. Reminders of the rule, discussion of why behavior was inappropriate, and possible options.
4th step	Camper will be brought to the Camp Director or Assistant Director for a discussion. The Camp Director or Assistant Director will speak with the family about behavior contract.	The camper will be asked to reflect on the discussions about behavior and begin a behavior contract.
5th step	The Camp Director and other Leadership staff (Director of Camps, Education Manager, Regional Director) will discuss possible dismissal of participant from the camp and speak with family.	The family will be called. Behavior contract is reviewed. Possible dismissal.

*If a camper intentionally hurts another person, themselves, or runs away from the group or staff member, they will immediately be brought to the Camp Director, Assistant Camp Director and/or Behavior Specialist.

After steps 1 through 4, if there is no mutually agreeable resolution of the behavior issues, the Camp Director may issue a written notice of termination. Refunds will not be provided for behavior-based dismissals.

Prohibitions when Managing Behavior

In accordance with the State of Massachusetts Minimum Standards for Recreational Camps for Children:

1. Corporal punishment, including spanking, is prohibited;
2. No camper shall be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse;
3. No camper shall be denied food, water or shelter; and
4. No child shall be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.

Termination from Camp

Mass Audubon camps recognize the various needs of campers at different ages and stages of development, and that campers must be treated individually. The family will be notified of issues leading to a child's termination from a Mass Audubon camp.

Mass Audubon reserves the right to dismiss any camper whose actions or behaviors jeopardize the overall health and goals of the camp, including campers requiring routine, on-going one-on-one attention and direction related to behavioral issues. Mass Audubon also reserves the right to dismiss any enrolled participant whose actions interfere with the successful operation of the camp. Repeated failure to comply with camp rules and/or procedures will result in dismissal. No refunds will be given for behavior-based termination of participation.

Immediate Suspension

Any camper whose behavior seriously threatens the emotional or physical safety of themselves, or others may be suspended, for an initial period of up to 2 days. During the period of suspension, the Camp Director, camp staff, and the family will further evaluate to determine whether it is appropriate for the camper to return to the camp.

Examples of behavior that may warrant immediate suspension include:

- Physically attacking or threatening another child, themselves, or an adult.
- Documented harassment of another child, including the use of discriminatory language on the basis of “race, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.”
- Due to a child's dangerous behavior, an emergency physical restraint is used on the child to protect themselves or others from imminent serious physical harm.
- Leaving the camp site without permission of the staff (including leaving the sanctuary grounds or leaving the immediate vicinity of an outdoor activity without permission of camp staff).

The camp reserves the right to allow provisional reentry into the camp or to proceed with the termination of the camper's enrollment. No refunds will be given for behavior-based termination of participation.

Thank you for being part of the North River 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!

