



Ipswich River Nature Camp 2026 Family Handbook

ipswichrivercamp@massaudubon.org

87 Perkins Row, Topsfield MA - 978-252-0204

Thank you for selecting Ipswich River Nature Camp for your camper. This handbook gives you an overview of our camp policies and contains important information to help ensure your camper is ready for the 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 our Camp Director
Maura Genova via email
ipswichrivercamp@massaudubon.org

We look forward to seeing you this summer!

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Ipswich River & You: A Camp Partnership

Ipswich 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.

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.

We pledge to provide:

- 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 ensures every camper feels included and cared about.

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

- Attention to the daily preparation needs of your camper (dressed appropriately, has a water bottle and nutritious snack/lunch).
- Cooperation with our stated and written policies; and willingness to act in concert with camp staff to maintain or restore appropriate behavior and courtesy.
- 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 day 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 check, health care, behavior and discipline policies as well as the grievance procedures at any time.

Our Staff:

Camp Director Maura Genova (she/her) is a passionate educator and naturalist with over 10 years of teaching and camp experience at Ipswich River. She started out at Ipswich River Nature Camp in 2014 as Assistant Director and quickly discovered what makes Mass Audubon North Shore so special. She has also taught at our Ipswich River Preschool in Wenham for five years and managed many special events like Halloween Happenings, Big Night and Sugaring. This will be Maura's second summer as Camp Director. She is excited to help facilitate and create a fun, welcoming, safe and educational experience where children can unplug, get dirty, explore and appreciate the natural world while making memories and friends that will last a lifetime. Maura's favorite part of camp is supporting campers' curiosities and interests while connecting with the whole camp community. She also enjoys canoe trips to Perkins Island, catching frogs and playing games with camp groups.

Assistant Camp Director Morgan Davidson (she/her) has called Ipswich River Nature Camp home since the age of five. She was lucky enough to attend camp here as a child, an experience that sparked her love for nature. She worked five summers as a camp counselor while obtaining her bachelor's degree in environmental science, with a minor in education, from Endicott College. Morgan is grateful for the opportunity to foster the next generation's love for nature through hands-on exploration and experiential learning, and she is committed to making camp a welcoming and memorable place for all. She loves hiking to the Vernal Pool to catch frogs, and going to the Rockery to see Godzilla the snapping turtle, all while building relationships with campers throughout the summer.

Camp staff members are carefully selected for their maturity and their caring attitude towards campers. All staff must pass background checks and receive training in safety, camper development and natural history. Camp staff are certified in First Aid and CPR. In addition, we have a Health Care Consultant on call to provide routine care if needed.

Our Credentials, License, and Accreditation:

Ipswich River Nature Camp is licensed by the Topsfield Board of Health and complies with the regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. We are accredited by the American Camp Association.

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.

Creating an Inclusive Camp Community

During camp welcome circles, campers and staff discuss what it means to create and support an inclusive camp community. Staff cover safety, camp expectations, and establish norms for respectful and inclusive communication and interactions. Campers and staff are invited to introduce themselves and have the option to share pronouns if they would like to. No one is required to share pronouns, and we ask that all campers and staff respect and use the names and pronouns that correspond with how each person introduces themselves. Mass Audubon does not require staff or campers to disclose any details of their gender identity.

Payment Deadlines, Deposits and Refund Policy

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

Full payment for camp and all forms (including health forms and immunization records to CampDoc) are **due on or before May 1** unless a payment plan has been set up with the Camp Director or Operations Manager. A late fee of \$25 per camper will apply if any forms or payments are late or incomplete. No camper is allowed to attend camp unless all forms, waivers, and payments are complete. Campers with outstanding balances and/or incomplete paperwork are at risk of losing their space(s) to someone from our waitlist.

Deposits

- A **non-refundable deposit of \$75 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 \$75 non-refundable deposit per session.
- **After May 1: No refunds** will be issued.

Please note: If Mass Audubon cancels a session, you will receive a full refund, including the deposit. Refunds are not available for participant dismissal, failure to attend, absences, or sick days.

Sliding Scale:

Mass Audubon is committed to ensuring that every family that wants their child to experience summer camp has the opportunity to do so. A sliding scale model helps us work toward that goal. Registrants who use a tier 1-3 tuition rate will need to upload **income verification (tax return/ pay stub) to their CampDoc profile**. Please contact our Program Registrar regarding additional financial assistance.

For your tax needs, Mass Audubon's Tax ID is 042-104-702

Coming to Camp: Camper Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Ipswich River Nature Camp Address: 87 Perkins Row Topsfield, MA 01982

A Note on Parking:

When pulling into camp, please pull into our main parking lot on the left-hand side. Follow the signage to the check-in area under the white pop-up tent. Our drop-off plan will be sent out to guardians before the beginning of their camper's session.

Camp Hours:

Camp **begins at 8:30 am and ends at 3 pm** Monday through Friday (unless otherwise scheduled for before and after camp sessions). An authorized adult (with ID) must sign campers in and out of camp every day. Registrants should use the **CampDoc Emergency Contact/Pick-Up** section to list adults authorized for drop-off/pick-up.

Camper Drop-Off

Please apply sunscreen (SPF 30 minimum) and bug repellent each morning at home before arriving at camp. No aerosols are allowed at camp.

- Drop-off will be **at 8:30 am** When entering the Sanctuary, please drive slowly and stay alert for pedestrians, wildlife, and other vehicles.
 - *Early Arrival: please wait with your camper in your car in the drop-off line until camp staff arrives. Staff cannot be responsible for campers before 8:30 am.*
- Check-in on the first day will take longer as we greet camp families, and make sure we have everything needed for the week. We appreciate your patience. Please do not leave your camper without signing in with a staff member.
- 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**.
- **Authorized Pick-up:** We will verify adults authorized for camper pick-up during the first day check-in. Adults must have **identification** at time of pick-up.
- After you check-in with the Camp Director, your camper will be escorted to their designated group area.
- **Late Arrivals:** Please email and call the office at (978) 887-9264 if your camper will be arriving late. When you arrive, please park in the main parking lot, and call the office; an Assistant Camp Director, or Maura, will come and retrieve your camper.

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 be prompt in picking up your camper. Please call immediately if there is an emergency that will make you late.

- This year pick-up will be at **3:00 pm; unless registered for After Camp 4:00 pm**

- Please be prepared to **show identification to camp staff**. Staff will remain with campers until an authorized adult has picked up each camper.
- 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 Barn and 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 (978) 887-9264** and ask for our Camp Director, Maura Genova. Only authorized adults with identification will be able to pick up campers.

Absence From Camp

For scheduled absences, please email ipswichrivercamp@massaudubon.org ; absences during camp sessions must be in writing. No refunds or transfer of funds will be given for dismissal or incomplete attendance (including sick days). See the Health & Safety section for more information on our sick camper policy.

Dogs & Pets: We love animals; however, domestic animals are not allowed at Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary. Please leave your pets at home or in the car during drop-off and pick-up times and please do not walk your pets in the parking areas.

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 camp age 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.
- **Please apply each morning at home before arriving at camp:**
 - **Sunscreen:** For camper safety, please show your camper how to apply their own sunscreen. We will reapply at lunch each day and may help campers with your permission.
 - **Bug Repellent:** Bug repellent is recommended; mosquitoes share the habitat at Ipswich River. We will reapply at lunch each day and may help campers with your permission.
 - **Aerosol sprays are not permitted at camp.**
- **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!

A Day at Camp

No two days are alike at Ipswich River Nature Camp, but this sample schedule gives an overview of daily activities and flow of the camp day.

Schedule	Activities
8:30–9:30 am	Camper Drop off and Games
9:30–9:45 am	Opening Circle The entire camp gathers to enjoy a community activity. Staff and campers sing songs, conduct team-building exercises, or act out nature skits to introduce the day.
9:45 am–12:00 pm	Morning Hike & Activities After Opening Circle, campers join their subgroups and with their counselors delve into a particular nature topic. For example, a group will discuss life cycles then hike to a pond and find frogs and tadpoles.
12:00–12:45 pm	Lunch
12:45–1:45 pm	Game, Craft, or Nature Play Campers enjoy some time engaging in nature play, arts and crafts, and/or water games on hot days.
1:45–2:45 pm	Theme-based Activity Time Campers have the opportunity to choose from a variety of activities developed by staff, all related to the day's nature theme.
2:45–3:00 pm	Closing Circle At the end of each day, the whole camp gathers to share stories of where they went, what they saw, and what they made.
3:00 pm	Camper Pick-up Caregivers bring IDs and sign out their campers.
3:00–4:00 pm	Optional After Camp Program Campers can choose from a variety of activities that may include active games, quiet table games, or reading. Pre-registration required.

Camper Feedback

We are excited to learn directly from Mass Audubon campers about their experience. Some campers may have the opportunity to participate in a brief, internal group survey to help us learn about and improve the camp experience. 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. Only campers with prior authorization (media release) signed by their parents/guardians may participate in the camper survey.

What to Wear & What to Pack

What to Wear:

- **Clothing:** 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.
- **Footwear:** We recommend **comfortable walking shoes** that can get wet and muddy and are secure. ***Due to our camp's nature, flip-flops are not allowed.***
- ***We do allow sandals, or crocs, to be worn in the canoe on camper's canoe days.***

Please LABEL, LABEL, LABEL all of your campers' belongings. Mass Audubon is not responsible for lost or damaged articles that have been brought to camp.

What to Pack: A backpack containing the following:

- **Snack and Lunch:** Please see Snack & Lunch section
- **Water Bottle:** A reusable water bottle or canteen; please *do not freeze the water bottle*, the ice will not melt fast enough to give your camper enough water to drink! We refill water bottles whenever needed.
- **Sunscreen- SPF 30+!** With your permission, we can help reapply. **Aerosol sprays are not permitted**
- **Insect repellent!** We share our habitat with mosquitoes. We recommend lotions, wipes, and pumps. With your permission, we can help reapply. **Aerosol sprays are not permitted**
- **EXTRA set of clothes:** adventure can get messy; a second set helps campers return clean and dry!
- **EXTRA pair of shoes and socks:** comfortable walking shoes that can get wet and muddy.
- **Hat and/or Sunglasses**
- **Hand sanitizer** (if age appropriate)
- Rain Jacket and rain pants (optional)
- Sweater or sweatshirt for cool days (optional)

What not to bring:

Mass Audubon is not responsible for lost or damaged articles that have been brought to camp. Your camper should not bring:

- Electronic devices, cell phones, iPods, walkie-talkies, etc.
- Collectable cards, stuffed animals, and other personal toys.
- Personal sports equipment.
- Matches, firearms/ammunition, knives, or weapons of any kind (including toy weapons) – Grounds for immediate dismissal.
- Tobacco products, alcohol, illegal drugs. Possession and use are prohibited.
- Pets or any animals.

Any such items will be taken and held by the counselors in a secure spot to be returned to guardians at the end of the day. If your camper wants to bring in an appropriate item, please contact our Camp Director in advance.

Food & Snacks

Please pack a nutritious and filling, non-refrigerated (an icepack is recommended to keep food cool) snack and lunch that will produce as little trash as possible. Due to potential problems with food allergies, children are not permitted to share food.

While we are not a nut-free facility, we **ask camp families to pack snacks and lunches that are nut-free**. If you have questions about nut-free products, please contact the Camp Director and be sure to read the ingredients on the packaging. A reliable website to refer to is: www.foodallergy.com.

Think about your impact – try to pack so as to produce as little trash as possible.

CARRY-IN/CARRY-OUT: Please note we have a carry-in/carry-out policy for all non-compostable trash/waste; all lunch wrappers/containers will be packed home with campers.

Health & Safety

Health care at camp:

The Camp Director, camp counselors, and other full-time Ipswich River staff have certifications in first aid and CPR. Our off-site healthcare consultant is Dr. Gordon, a hospitalist at Beverly Hospital in Beverly, MA. The Camp Director acts as the onsite Health Supervisor and will administer any prescribed medications during camp. The Topsfield Fire Department EMTs provide emergency care for Ipswich River camp programs.

If you have questions regarding your camper's ability to participate due to a health or behavioral concern, please contact the Camp Director, Maura Genova at Mgenova@massaudubon.org

Camper Health Information:

Under Massachusetts state law, **all campers must have a health form on file before attending camp.**

After registering, an email will be sent from **CampDoc.com**, an online electronic health records company, on how to complete their campers' health information online.

Immunization Record/Physical Exam:

Immunizations and Physicals must meet the requirements of the MA Dept. of Public Health. We require a copy of your camper's immunization record (dates must be provided by the health care provider). Please call us if you need a health care treatment/immunization form for your physician to complete. Families whose religious beliefs advise against physical exams and/or immunizations need to contact Ipswich River regarding our emergency treatment policy and waiver.

Remember:

- Doctors' offices are busy, and it may take a while to get the information you need from them.
- Please book any appointments needed soon as your child cannot attend camp without a current copy of their immunization record.
- Below are the required immunizations.

Grades Kindergarten–6

In ungraded classrooms, Kindergarten requirements apply to all students ≥ 5 years.

DTaP/Tdap	5 doses ; 4 doses are acceptable if the fourth dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday; DT is only acceptable with a letter stating a medical contraindication to DTaP
Polio	4 doses ; fourth dose must be given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥ 6 months after the previous dose or a fifth dose is required; 3 doses are acceptable if the third dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥ 6 months after the previous dose
Hepatitis B	3 doses ; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MMR	2 doses ; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday, and second dose must be given ≥ 28 days after first dose; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	2 doses ; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday and second dose must be given ≥ 28 days after first dose; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable

Grades 7–12

In ungraded classrooms, Grade 7 requirements apply to all students ≥ 12 years.

Tdap	1 dose; and history of DTaP primary series or age-appropriate catch-up vaccination; Tdap given at ≥7 years may be counted, but a dose at age 11–12 is recommended if Tdap was given earlier as part of a catch-up schedule; Td or Tdap should be given if it has been ≥10 years since last Tdap
Polio	4 doses; fourth dose must be given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥6 months after the previous dose or a fifth dose is required; 3 doses are acceptable if the third dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥6 months after the previous dose
Hepatitis B	3 doses; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable; 2 doses of Heplisav-B given on or after 18 years of age are acceptable
MMR	2 doses; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday, and second dose must be given ≥28 days after first dose; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	2 doses; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday and second dose must be given ≥28 days after first dose; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MenACWY (formerly MCV4)	Grade 7–10: 1 dose; 1 dose MenACWY (formerly MCV4) required; Meningococcal B vaccine is not required and does not meet this requirement Grade 11–12: 2 doses; second dose MenACWY (formerly MCV4) must be given on or after the 16th birthday and ≥ 8 weeks after the previous dose; 1 dose is acceptable if it was given on or after the 16th birthday; Meningococcal B vaccine is not required and does not meet this

Medications at Camp:

If your camper takes medication during the camp day or has emergency medications (inhalers, Epi-pens, etc.), you will be required to upload an allergy/medication action plan to CampDoc.com. No medication may be administered without this form. Medication must be in the original container, bearing the pharmacy label with the camper’s name and all necessary prescription information. Please send only enough of the medication for the camp session and write the number of tablets on the container. A record of medication administered is kept in the first aid logbook.

Bathroom Needs:

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, if needed, 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.

Health Insurance:

A Parent/Guardian must complete the health/medical/accident section of CampDoc. If your camper does not have U.S. health and accident insurance, **please contact our Camp Director, Maura Genova.**

Absent/Sick Campers:

If a camper is going to be absent, please call the office at 978-887-9264 to inform staff. If there are scheduled absences during the camp session, please inform camp staff in writing. Please do not send a sick camper to camp. Campers should stay home when they show any of the following symptoms:

- *Fever*
- *skin eruptions*

- *earache*
- *sore throat*
- *vomiting*
- *diarrhea*
- *discharge from or red eyes*
- *continuous cough*
- *active lice or scabies infestation*

Campers with viral infections can return when their fever returns to normal without fever-reducing medications. Campers with bacterial infections will be allowed to return after 24 hours on antibiotics. Participants infected with lice may return when they have been treated and are nit free. *No refunds or transfer of funds* will be given for incomplete attendance, including sick days.

In case of any illness where a camper is absent from camp, guardians must speak to the Camp Director before the camper may return to camp.

If your camper is sick at camp:

- All campers requiring medical assessment and/or treatment beyond basic first aid are referred to the Health Care Supervisor. Based upon assessment, the camper will be cared for on-site and returned to their camp group, sent home to guardians for personal health care provider care, or referred to emergency care providers.
- If your camper’s illness extends beyond 20-30 minutes, we will notify you by phone. Sick campers stay with the Health Care Supervisor in a quiet area so they can rest and be monitored.
- If your camper has an injury needing immediate care, we will call 911 and then call you immediately.
- In cases where campers are off-site, campers will be given treatment by a trip leader and transported to the nearest hospital if necessary.
- Guardians will be notified of any serious accident or illness as soon as possible; daily notification by paper slips or phone call is provided to guardians for all reported injuries and illnesses.

Tick Precautions:

We live in New England and ticks can be found everywhere, including in your own backyard. 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**. Be sure to check behind the knees, underwear lines, underarms, and on the back of the neck. If you would like more information about ticks and Lyme disease, please visit the MA Department of Health website at:

www.mass.gov/dph/tick.

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](http://www.mass.gov/dph/tick)

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.

Accommodations for Campers and 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 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 disrupt 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.

If your child requires an aide in school, please contact the camp's director as soon as possible to discuss how we can best support your child. Family members are not permitted to be aides.

Behavior Expectations & Discipline Policy

Our staff establishes expectations and offers guidance throughout each day. Our 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. 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.

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.

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 (includes 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.

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](#).

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.

Visitor Interactions:

Because the Sanctuary grounds are open to the public, meeting other visitors on the trail or in the Nature Center is always a possibility. Campers will be encouraged not to interact with casual visitors. Counselors will initiate any contact with visitors when appropriate. For staff and camper safety, all counselors are required to carry a two-way radio when outside the main buildings. Counselors will always keep all campers under observation when out on the grounds. Radios and staff will provide back-up if necessary to protect campers. Visitors will not be allowed to disrupt the camp activities and will be asked to leave camp areas (Camp Room or Buildings, picnic areas at lunch time and other camp shelter areas). Visitor Services and support staff are on duty in the Nature Center whenever camp is in session. Staff are instructed to ask unrecognized persons to leave the program area, kindly explaining that area is not open to the public. If resistance, or staff feel a threat in any way, they should contact the camp director/assistant director who will separate the person from campers and talk with unrecognized person. If there is still a threat, staff will contact the police.

Weather, Going Green, Birthdays at Camp

Adapting to the weather:

As an outdoor nature camp, we are well-prepared to respond to weather-related emergencies. Each camper group has access to indoor shelter spaces where they can stay safe and comfortable during extreme heat, poor air quality, flooding, or thunderstorms. Many of our activities and games can be adapted to be done while inside.

Our camp leadership team monitors weather conditions throughout the summer and during the camp day and makes proactive decisions to ensure the safety of all campers and staff. This could include canceling camp or activating our camp evacuation plan.

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!

Go Green! Please support us this summer by adopting some “green” practices at home or while on vacation. Pack lunches with reusable containers, avoid juice boxes (they stay sticky and attract yellow jackets) if possible, and pick up a reusable water bottle. Visit www.wastefreelunches.org for more ideas on how to pack waste-free lunches and snacks. Families walk, bike, and even paddle to camp each summer! Consider the environment when planning your transportation and try to carpool when possible.

Birthdays at camp:

We encourage each camp group to celebrate campers’ birthdays in their own style. Guardians are welcome to provide birthday treats but are reminded that they **MUST** check with the Camp Director at least 2 days prior to sending food to camp to accommodate any food-related allergies in the camp group.

We recommend fruit juice popsicles (with no food coloring dyes) and would be happy to store them in the freezer.

Camp Policy Requests

Our background check, health care, and discipline policies as well as the grievance procedures are available upon request.

Questions: Call the office 978-252-0204 or email ipswichrivercamp@massaudubon.org for additional camp details and FAQs.

Thank you for being part of the Ipswich 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!

