



Boston Nature Center Camp Family Handbook

BNC Camp - Mattapan

500 Walk Hill Street
Mattapan, Massachusetts 02126
Phone: 617-804-3740

BNC Camp – Jamaica Plain

British International School of Boston
416 Pond St
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts 02130
Phone: 617-804-3740

This camp complies with regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and is licensed by the local board of health.

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Camp Mission

At BNC Camp, we believe that camp is a place where children can grow, spend quality time outdoors and have a fun summer experience. Through engaging activities, free play and wonderful camp traditions children learn about themselves and others while having a great time.

Connect to Nature

Spending quality time outdoors and teaching children about the world around them fosters a deep, life-long connection to nature.

Science Outdoors

Through a nature-based science curriculum, children learn and practice science skills in a real-world setting. Skills include critical thinking, creativity, communication, and environmental literacy.

Play and Connection for all Ages

Children and young adults learn and relax by playing fun and age-appropriate activities. Play fosters independence, imagination, and socialization. By building friendships, discovering new interests and trying new activities, children grow socially, emotionally and physically at camp.

Building Community at Camp

To create a safe and inclusive camp atmosphere, we foster a camp staff that is diverse, well-trained and passionate about camp.

BNC Camp is a camp offered by Mass Audubon, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the nature of Massachusetts through conservation, advocacy and education. BNC Camp does not discriminate in providing service to campers and their families based on economic limitations, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, physical or mental abilities or limitations, or marital status.

Camp License

This camp is licensed by the City of Boston Inspectional Services Health Division. Under the terms of licensure, the camp is subject to visits by the City of Boston Inspectional Services Department. Any reports of these visits will be posted. This camp is also accredited by the American Camp Association.

The Boston Nature Center is in compliance with design standards for building accessibility. BNC Camp operates in compliance with regulations and has available, upon request, copies of policies on staff background checks, health care, discipline policies and grievance procedures.

Our Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

At Mass Audubon camps, we strive 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. We are committed to recognizing and celebrating the unique contributions of every member of our community.

Our staff receive training on a range of diversity, equity, and inclusion topics to ensure they are prepared to support all campers. We provide opportunities for campers and staff to introduce themselves using their names and pronouns, and to share something meaningful about themselves through identity-affirming activities. We intentionally create space for every individual to feel seen, heard, and valued.

We expect all campers and staff to treat one another with kindness, dignity, and respect. Discrimination, harassment, bullying, or hate of any kind—including actions or language based on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ability, family structure, socioeconomic background, or any other aspect of identity—will not be tolerated in any form.

Any behavior that undermines the safety or belonging of others will be addressed promptly and thoughtfully. Our goal is not only to prevent harm, but also to guide campers in developing empathy, accountability, and an appreciation for the diverse community around them.

Together, we work to ensure that camp is a place where everyone belongs.

Contact Information

Boston Nature Center Camp - Mattapan	Boston Nature Center Camp - Jamaica Plain
500 Walk Hill St. Mattapan, MA 02126 617-804-3740 (camp) / 617-983-8500 (site)	British International School of Boston 416 Pond St. Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 617-804-3740 (camp) / 617-522-2261 (site)

Staff Contact Information

Both BNC Camp Sites: Douney Fanfan, Camp Director,
617-804-1912, dfanfan@massaudubon.org

BNC Jamaica Plain: Casey Bermingham, Camp Director
508-530-1015 cbermingham@massaudubon.org

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 Registrar. No camper is allowed to attend camp unless all forms, waivers, and payments are complete.

Deposits

- A non-refundable deposit of \$50 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

1. On or before May 1: You will receive a refund for any payments made excluding the \$50 nonrefundable deposit per session.
2. After May 1: No refunds will be issued.

Please note: If BNC 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.

Packing List

We will spend most of the day exploring and playing outdoors. It is important to dress your camper for the weather for them to fully enjoy their experience. Please put your child's name on everything! We cannot be held responsible for lost items. We will keep a Camp Lost and Found. Any items not picked up by September 15 will be donated.

What to Wear:

- Comfortable clothes that can get dirty or muddy
- Closed-toe shoes like sneakers, boots or hiking shoes - for safety and sanitation reasons, no sandals, Crocs or shoes with holes in them such as Keens.
- Socks (to protect against blisters and poison ivy)
- A hat - wide-brimmed is best!
- Sunglasses (optional)

What to Pack:

- Backpack to keep your gear together
- Two nutritious snacks
- Lunch - We notice that campers need to eat more at camp than they do while at school. An insulated bag with an icepack is recommended.
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Water bottle(s)- we can refill throughout the day. Some ice or electrolytes can help on hot days!
- An extra set of clothes and socks, extra shoes if possible
- Raincoat, rainpants - we will still be out if it's raining, unless it's a thunderstorm!
- A bathing suit and towel on hot days for sprinkler time / water games

Please remember:

- BNC Camp does not provide food. We have some for emergencies, but please pack food every day.
- Always pack sibling lunches **separately**.
- Food should be non-perishable, we are unable to refrigerate any lunches.
- BNC Camp is nut free. Do not pack any nut-based snacks or lunch items.

What NOT to bring to Camp

- Cell phones are not permitted for campers. If your child has a cell phone, it must stay OFF and in their backpack all day. *We reserve the right to temporarily confiscate cell phones to be returned at the end of the camp day.*
- Electronic devices, cell phones/iPhones, walkie-talkies, iPods, etc.
- Collectable cards

No one may bring to camp:

- Personal sports equipment
- Matches, firearms/ammunition
- Knives or weapons of any kind (including toy weapons)
- Tobacco products, vapes, alcohol, illegal drugs
- Pets or any animals, except service animals

Mass Audubon is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged items.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

Parking at BNC

When arriving, look for the Mass Audubon logo. It will help you find the entrance. Once you have turned into the BNC entrance, please follow the signs for the George Robert White building. It will lead to a large parking lot in front of the nature center. It is a yellow building with a garden in front. Please **park your car and walk** to the designated check-in area.

Parking at British International School of Boston

When arriving, turn at the 'Showa Institute' gated entrance, directly across from Neillian Crescent. Continue on the road up the hill following signs for the British International School. Please **park your car and walk** to the designated check-in at the building entrance marked BNC Camp.

Public Transportation

BNC Mattapan is within a 10-minute walk from a bus stop. Please visit the MBTA website to find the best route for your family. BNC at Jamaica Plain is about a 20-minute walk from public transportation. Your child **MUST** come to camp with an adult every day.

Drop Off (8:30am - 9:00am)

Arrival is between 8:30am to 9:00am, unless you have signed up for Before Camp (starting at 7:30am). The drop-off person must check-in their camper with program staff before leaving. **Children cannot be at camp if they do not have a complete health history including a copy of their immunization records, and if payment is not complete.** After check-in camper(s) will be introduced to their counselors. The drop-off person will be given placards to show at pick-up.

Pick-Up (First pick-up: 3:15-3:35 pm, Second pick-up: 4:45-5:15 pm)

Please always:

- **Bring your pick-up Placard or Photo Identification.** If you forget both, please speak with the Camp Director. This protocol is in place to ensure the safety of your child and all campers.
- **Campers will only be released** to a person listed on the pickup form release list. To add someone to your child's pick-up list, send an email to [the camp office](#). If the pick-up person is not on the release list or does not have identification, the family will be called.
- After showing your placard or photo ID, staff will radio for your camper(s) to come to the pick-up location.

Late Drop-Off

If you arrive after 9:00am, please walk your camper into the building to check in with camp admin.

Late Pick-Up

If you pick up late twice a week, you will be charged a \$50 late fee. If a camper has not been picked up by 5:15 pm, the Camp Director will try to contact the parents / guardians / emergency contacts. If they cannot be reached by 6 pm, the local police will be notified.

Early Pick-Up

All early pick-ups outside of the designated pick-up times need to be scheduled prior to the day of the pick-up, as staff will not be monitoring the pick-up area outside of those times. Please email bnccamp@massaudubon.org or call the main number. We ask that you adhere to the pick-up windows as much as possible as early pick-ups tend to limit the group's activities.

If you are picking up a child due to an emergency, please call 617-804-3740 from the parking lot and a staff member will bring your child or children to you.

Absences

Please call or email when your child will not be attending camp. Please let us know if your child is staying home due to illness - it is important that we record and track any infections. The privacy of your child will be protected. If a camper fails to arrive and the camp staff has not been notified of the absence, the staff will call the family at the phone number(s) listed on the emergency forms.

Special Contingency Plans

- If an unregistered child arrives at camp, the Camp Director will try to contact their family to pick up the child. If unsuccessful, the Boston Police Department will be called.
- If a child scheduled to arrive by third party transportation does not arrive, the Camp Director will contact the family and or the transportation company. They will continue to call until successfully finding the whereabouts of the child.
 - If the camp staff cannot reach a family member to assure the child is accounted for, the Boston Nature Center staff will call 911, the Department of Family Services, and the Health Department.

Lost Items

We will do our best to return all lost items throughout the week. After September 15 lost items will be donated.

A Day at Camp

BNC Camp combines a high-quality nature activities with the wonderful traditions of summer camp, helping children to grow and connect with the world around them. Every day, camp is filled with hands-on/minds-on experiences, outdoor exploration, and engaging camp activities.

7:30am - 8:30am	Before Camp (Optional) During this optional program, campers can choose activities including board games, cards, or nature walks.
8:30am - 9:00am	Drop-off & Choice Time Campers choose an activity to join: Books & Board Games, Arts & Crafts or Outside Activities , including tag, soccer and outdoor play in the Nature Nook.
9:00am - 9:30am	Morning Circle & Group Time During Morning Circle we sing songs, tell jokes, and do stretches to get ready for a full day of nature exploration. Campers split into their age group cohorts and meet to know counselors and the other campers in their group.

9:30am-12:00pm	<p>Nature Exploration</p> <p>Each week campers explore a nature-based, age-appropriate curriculum. Activities range from nature hikes to gardening, animal play to bug sweeping and scientific experiments. Themes are interdisciplinary and include elements of art, science, and literacy. Morning snacks are during this period.</p>
12:00 - 1:00pm	<p>Lunch</p>
1:00pm - 2:00pm	<p>Recess</p> <p>The entire camp comes together on the Activity Lawn to play games, explore the Nature Nook, or to relax under the shade tree. ... Quiet time? Meditation time? Book reading? Other similar options?</p>
2:00pm - 3:30pm	<p>Nature Exploration Activities and Crafts</p> <p>Campers continue to learn about the theme of the week through nature games, art projects, gardening, experiments, and sometimes short nature documentaries.</p>
3:15pm-3:35pm	<p>First Pick Up</p> <p>The first pick-up is from 3:30-3:45. Afternoon snacks are also during this period.</p>
3:30-4:00pm	<p>Afternoon Blob</p> <p>The group will close out the day by sharing their favorite parts of the day, nature moments of the day, camp songs, and jokes.</p>
4:00pm - 5:00 pm	<p>Afternoon Choice</p> <p>Campers have a second opportunity to choose one of three activity areas to join: Books & Board Games, Arts & Crafts or Outside.</p>
4:45-5:15 pm	<p>Second Pick Up</p>

Lunch & Water

Snacks & Lunch

There are two snack times and lunch every day. BNC Camp does not provide lunch or snacks. Food should be non-perishable; we are unable to refrigerate any lunches. Make sure the food you pack is filling and something your camper will eat! Camp days are extremely active, and campers will be very hungry. Extra snacks are very helpful. Please plan to pack a snack for After Camp if your child is attending. Please bring a water bottle. We can refill bottles during the day.

Missing Lunch or Snack

If a camper is missing their lunch camp staff will call home to see if the family can bring it in. The camp will have some food for campers who need it.

Health and Safety

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 must be fever free (without the use of medication) for 24 hours before they can return to camp.

Medications: All prescription medication (including inhalers and epi-pens) must be sent in the **original container with the pharmacy label attached**. The label must have the camper's name and an unexpired date. All over-the-counter medications must be in their original container with the camper's name and date of birth written on the container along with instructions for administration.

Medication must be checked in with 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, which must include permission to administer and instructions for administration. Emergency medications must include an action plan written by the prescribing physician and uploaded to CampDoc, including triggers and steps to take if a reaction should occur.

Any medication that is not picked up will be held for two weeks and then it will be destroyed.

Camper Immunization Requirements

We require a copy of your child's immunization record from your health care provider before your child camp attend camp. As per the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Learn more at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/required-immunizations-for-children-attending-camp-and-camp-staff-2026/download>

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 this link: [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.

Sun Exposure/Insect Bites: Campers should come with bug spray and sunscreen already applied. We will have a designated sunscreen and insect spray area near the parking lot and encourage your camper to wear both. Applying sunscreen first and bug spray second is recommended.

Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention: Families need to be aware of the potential health risks ticks represent and take an active role in protecting their child by checking each evening for ticks by feeling the skin for bumps. Visual checks for ticks on campers' arms, legs, and clothing is a regular part of our routine. Even though we do regular tick checks at camp, we ask that you do a thorough tick check each evening. Please visit the following Mass Department of Public Health website for a fact sheet on ticks and tick-borne diseases: www.mass.gov/tick-borne-diseases

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. Please talk to your camper about this before camp. If you have any concerns, please reach out to the Camp Director.

Evacuations

If the City of Boston, State of Massachusetts or United States Government issues an evacuation order, BNC Camp will comply immediately. Families will be contacted, and children will be transported to a secure area in any manner deemed necessary by civil authorities.

Weather Emergencies

Thunderstorms and Strong Winds

If thunder is heard or lightning is visible, all campers and staff will remain indoors until a minimum of thirty minutes of no thunder or lightning. Should strong winds come up without warning, staff will immediately move campers to an indoor space. All field trips will be cancelled if thunderstorms or strong winds are expected, and there is no indoor space available.

Hurricanes, Floods and Tornadoes

As hurricanes and other weather emergencies are a predictable occurrence, camp will be canceled if there is a Watch or Warning for the area. If the program is in session, families will be notified. If a tornado is seen or heard, everyone will enter the basement.

Emergency Gathering Locations

Mattapan: The emergency gathering location on the sanctuary is under the Meadow Tent. If it is necessary to evacuate the sanctuary, the camp will walk to the Dennis Haley School (570 American Legion Highway, Roslindale MA 02131)

BISB/Jamaica Plain: The emergency gathering location on site is at the play structure next to the field. If necessary to evacuate the area, camp will walk to the Showa Institute gate.

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

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. 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 a 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 , a ‘leaf’, a reward for the group or choosing an activity
- 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.	Campers 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 staff (includes running away from staff, leaving the sanctuary grounds or leaving the immediate area of an 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](#).

Camp Policy Requests

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

Thank you for being part of the Boston Nature Center 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!

