



ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK



Welcome to the Zoo's Family Nature Club!

**Please read this packet carefully
to prepare your family for play.**

BENEFITS OF NATURE PLAY

Children have a natural instinct to bond with nature and living things but they need the adults around them to provide opportunities and set an example to get outdoors in unstructured nature play. Giving your child the opportunity to play outside is a precious gift with many positive benefits.

The effects of outdoor experiences on academic achievement are profound. Play in natural environments can boost performance in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies; it can enhance creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Time spent outdoors helps children increase their focus and attention, encourages enthusiasm for learning, and helps students develop greater impulse control and curb disruptive behavior.

PLAY SCHEDULE

Times are subject to change according to the seasons- please check each date accordingly as time nears. Beginning December, meetups will only be held on Saturdays.

2017		2018
Saturday	Sunday	Saturday
August 19	August 20	January 20
September 9	September 10	February 17
October 7	October 8	March 17
November 18*	November 19*	April 21
December 2*		May 5**

*These dates the Zoo will offer free admission to the Holiday Lights program after 5pm. FNC meetings will be held in the late afternoon so that families may enter the Zoo immediately after.

**May 5 will conclude our final meetup for the season and will begin with an environmental stewardship project, followed by lunch (provided) and entry into the zoo!

TRANSPORTATION

All meetings will generally start in the Berson Education Center at the Turtle Back Zoo. We will then walk as a group to the play location. If there are any changes we will notify that month's group in advance.

Bus

There is an NJT stop right in front of Parking Garage 1 at the Zoo (from Newark take Bus 73). The Berson Education Center is the large building directly to your left if you're facing towards the parking garage and has a large giraffe statue in front of it.

Driving

Parking at the Zoo is free. When driving into the Zoo make a left after the parking garage (located on your left) then follow the road down, you should see the Berson Education Center up ahead. The Education Center has it's own parking lot and there is usually space available to park there (during spring and summer months this lot may be full and you will be directed to park elsewhere). Just ask staff for directions on how to get to the Berson Education Center if you get turned around.

CLOTHES AND SHOES

Each month we will be outside playing, which at times can be quite messy! Please dress yourself and your child(ren) in loose comfortable play clothes you don't mind getting dirty or wet. We recommend solid shoes that completely cover the feet for safety.

Be sure to dress for the weather as we will be outside in heat, cold, and rain. Please bring raincoats or ponchos instead of umbrellas so your hands are free to play.

In the event of severe weather, we may schedule alternate indoor activities or we may decide to cancel the outing ahead of time and will contact you via phone or email.

PLAY POLICIES

In order to promote a quality play experience, we ask that all program participants adhere to our policies at all times during our monthly outings.

Family Nature Clubs (FNC) are designed to encourage respect and appreciation of the natural world while engaging in imaginative child directed free play. To that end, we expect both children and adults to display respect toward nature, Zoo staff, our materials, and to each other.

- Always follow directions from the Zoo Educators and Docents
- Be kind to yourself and others
- Show respect to all plants and animals
- Play hard and have fun!

Parents/guardians will be responsible for the behavior of the child(ren) in their care.

What to Bring

- Reusable water bottle
- Sunscreen and bug spray
- Raincoat, poncho, or other weather gear
- Change of clothes for the kids depending on our activities that month
- Epi-pens, inhalers, or any other necessary medications for anyone in your family
- A camera to capture the memories
- Your imagination and eagerness to have fun!

What Not to Bring

- Anything you don't want to get dirty, wet, broken, or lost
- Grumpy attitude!

The Zoo is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

We understand that many parents/guardians may use a cell phone/iPad as a camera but we ask that you please put all electronics on 'airplane mode' for the duration of our outings. We do not want the electronics to become a distraction.

WAIVER AND PHOTO RELEASE

Upon attending your first FNC meet, you will be asked to sign a Waiver and Photo Release. The waiver acknowledges your understanding of the risks while on grounds with your FNC. For the Photo Release you may opt in or out; photos may be used for future marketing, promotional, news and reporting purposes. This form will be kept confidential and in your file for future visits.

Managed Risk

Risk spurs growth that helps children to develop good judgment, persistence, courage, resiliency, self-confidence, and improved motor skills.

We need to be realistic about the small dangers and powerful benefits of nature play. Most injuries that arise from nature play are minor and familiar to adults who grew up playing outside: scrapes, bruises, insect bites or stings, and an occasional broken bone. Yes, more severe injuries can occasionally occur – just as they do in virtually every aspect of our lives. This is not enough to warrant no risk. Removing risk from children’s lives will affect their physical and psychological growth.

Emergency Authorization

If you or your child(ren) are injured while ON Essex County property, appropriate first aid will be administered by a Zoo Educator. Educators are certified First Aid & CPR trained. They will always have a basic first aid kit available for minor incidents.

In a more severe medical emergency, Zoo staff will contact the County Sheriff and an ambulance will be called. By enrolling in Family Nature Clubs, you are authorizing emergency medical attention for you and/or your child by Zoo staff.

GIFTS & PERKS

All families will receive a free reusable Turtle Back Zoo Family Nature Club water bottle upon arrival to their first FNC meet. These will be given to each family member on a first come, first served basis until bottles run out. Bottles are BPA free with a wide mouth screw top.

Families that participate in a minimum of seven out of the ten FNC scheduled outings will be entered into a raffle to receive a free Zoo Membership at the conclusion of our season (June 2018), up to FIVE memberships will be awarded.

Some meetups may have additional optional activities or gifts handed out for families to take home!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What if I cannot attend one of our monthly outings?

If you have registered for a FNC meet and can no longer attend that event, please contact the FNC Coordinator at the Zoo so we know not to expect your family on that date:

Sarah Burroughs, Educator- Family & Community Programs
tbzsburroughs@gmail.com
973.731.5800 x230

What does a typical outing look like?

Our first two months serve as an introductory period where we focus on nature activities around the Reservoir next to the Zoo. From October through May, we will be using a combination of curriculum designed by the Children & Nature Network, and activities designed by the Zoo.

Please note time will be spent in the natural areas surrounding the Zoo- admission into the Zoo is not a part of the program. Each month's meeting will look different, but we will always include the following elements:

Nature Quest

We will be participating in a *mission* and a *quest* based on dramatic and imaginative play that uses nature as the game board. Research suggests that children can experience an immense amount of learning through combined types of play – dramatic, imaginative, constructive, and physical.

Activity

Each month we will also participate in an activity that correlates with our mission and quest. For example, if the quest is to search for sources of food for plants and animals, we may study how different kinds of plants and animals eat.

Who are the Family Nature Club leaders?

Your FNC leaders are Zoo education staff members and Docents who have experience working with children and have a passion for promoting good health and well-being through nature play. They have cleared the New Jersey state background check, required for Essex County Employment.

Can you accommodate special needs?

Please let us know ahead of time if you or your child(ren) have any special needs that may need to be addressed. The more information you can give us ahead of time, the better we can prepare to make sure everyone has the best experience possible. Physical, academic, and social needs will be accommodated to the best of our ability.

NATURE PLAY RESOURCES

Check your local Public Library- they may have these books already!

Websites

Children & Nature Network www.childrenandnature.org

Ecology Global Network www.ecology.com/ecology-kids

Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood www.greenheartsinc.org/Nature_Play.html

National Park Service www.nps.gov/state/fl/index.htm

National Wildlife Federation: What is Nature Play?

www.nwf.org/What-We-Do/Kids-and-Nature/Programs/Nature-Play-Spaces.aspx

Nature Play QLD: Getting Our Kids Outside www.natureplayqld.org.au/

New Jersey State Parks www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/parkindex.html

Roots and Shoots www.rootsandshoots.org/aboutus

U.S. Forest Service www.fs.fed.us/learn

“Bridges to the Natural World,” NJ Audubon

www.njaudubon.org/sectioneducation/bridgestothenaturalworld.aspx

Books for the Family

A Little Bit of Dirt: 55+ Science and Art Activities to Reconnect Children with Nature by Asia Citro

Conservationist for Kids Magazine by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (downloadable)

www.dec.ny.gov/education/40248.html

I Love Dirt: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover Nature by Jennifer Ward and Susie Ghahremani

Outdoor Science Lab for Kids: 52 Family-Friendly Experiments for the Yard, Garden, Playground, and Park by Liz Lee Heinecke

The Big Book of Nature Activities: A Year Round Guide to Outdoor Learning by Jacob Rodenburg and Drew Monkman

The Everything KIDS Nature Book by Kathiann M. Kowalski

The Kids Outdoor Adventure: 448 Great Things to Do in Nature Before You Grown Up by Stacy Tornio and Ken Keffer

Urban Roosts: Where Birds Nest in the City by Barbara Bash (storybook)

“What’s Good in My Hood?” by Akiima Price and the New York Restoration Project (downloadable)

www.nyrp.org/NYRP_WhatsGoodInMyHood_Workbook.pdf

Books for Adults

Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children by Angela J Hanscom and Richard Louv

Beyond Ecophobia by David Sobel

Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants by Douglas W. Tallamy

Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life by Peter Gray

How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature by Scott Sampson

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv

The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age by Richard Louv

The Nature Handbook: A Guide to Observing the Great Outdoors by Ernest H Williams

Urban Homesteading: Heirloom Skills for Sustainable Living by Rachel Kaplan K. Ruby Blume

Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature Rich Life by Richard Louv

Your Brain on Nature: The Science of Nature’s Influence on Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality by Eva M Selhub M.D. and Alan C Logan M.D.

The Family Nature Club is supported by a grant from the Children & Nature Network and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Greater Newark LifeCamp has partnered with the Essex County Turtle Back Zoo to provide its members year-round access to nature education for all ages.



Nature play begins at your zoo and aquarium

