



## **Outdoor Adventure Program**

### **RISK MANAGEMENT:**

#### **Understanding the BENEFITS & HAZARDS of Outdoor Play and Learning**

We have crafted this critical resource to help you understand the many ways we protect children, staff, and the land we tread upon. We want everyone to thrive outdoors, which requires a commitment to thoughtful planning and safety routines. As you read through this resource, we hope it illuminates the thorough preparation of staff and the big ways in which nature is your child's third teacher. We are aware of the risks that children and staff are exposed to nature and the public environment.

Each section is divided by tabs. The "Hazards" section includes dangers and risks that we may, or likely will, encounter outdoors. Information is provided to demonstrate the potential for harm and ways we can prevent and mitigate each hazard. The "Benefits of Outdoor Play and Learning" section includes current peer-reviewed research, references, and testimonials to demonstrate why children benefit from our program.

Staff reviews and edits the information contained here as we discover additional benefits, hazards, or useful resources. If you have a question, suggestion, or ideas about other items to include, please feel free to contact the site supervisor.

### **WEATHER**

**We will follow the saying there is not such a thing as bad weather, only bad clothes!**

Children in attendance the outdoor afterschool programs are expected to participate in all planned activities. Only severe weather conditions prohibit this activity. For example, during thunderstorms, rain, sleet, excessive snow, or high winds, extreme cold under 30 degrees or higher than 100 degrees, or state emergency, we may cancel the outdoor program. A newsletter will be sent to the parents weekly with weather expectations and materials the children may use so parents can plan in advance for the week.

Please send adequate clothing for the weather; remember to label all clothing. We will go out to learn and explore the weather when it is raining, muddy, snowing, and have fun learning to live and interact with the weather and nature elements. Teachers are expected and prepare to follow the children's desires and accommodate children if necessary.

To stay in accordance with the CDC and New York State Health guidelines, we will be limiting the number of children in each group to 12 children with two adults. We will limit the sharing of



objects (e.g., electronic equipment, arts and crafts materials, etc.) and will thoroughly disinfect toys/ materials before and after each child has used them.

Recommended Reading:

[There's No Such Thing as Bad Weather: A Scandinavian Mom's Secrets for Raising Healthy, Resilient, and Confident Kids \(from Friluftsliv to Hygge\)](#) by Momma's Media

**Arts and Athletics respects the wildlife in Central Park. We will never feed or approach a wild, stray, or injured animal.**

<b>HAZARDS</b>	<b>BENEFITS</b>
Wildlife Insects	<b>Social</b>
Bees and wasps	Cultural knowledge about self, community, and land (place-based aspects of learning) Friendships
(European hornets, yellowjackets, bald-faced hornets, bumble bees, honey bees) Ants (fire ants)	Teamwork and collaboration
Horse and deer flies	Perspective-taking/empathy
Mosquitoes	Navigating Conflict with others
<a href="#">spiders (types here)</a>	<b>Emotional</b>
Brown recluse	Values of empathy, gratitude, kindness, and compassion Regulating emotions
Black widow Chiggers/mites Ticks/Fleas	Stress reduction
wild animals (bats, coyotes, raccoons, opossums, etc.)	Depression
Stray animals	Mental health
Birds (feathers, pellets, nests)	Reflection and appreciation
Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species of Plants	Emotional quotient (EQ)
Tree limbs, branches, and roots	<b>Cognition</b>
Tree climbing	High order thinking skills
Poison ivy, White Snakeroot, Jimsonweed, Pokeberry, The Apple Tree, Nuts and seeds (allergens)	Problem-solving and resourcefulness
Mushrooms	STEM-based learning (science, engineering, technology, math) Creative and expressive arts
Thorns and brambles	Language and literacy development



Nightshade fruits	Fresh air/impact on cognition
Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants	impact on cognition Vitamin D intake from sunshine
Water/Stream and pond exploration	Naturally occurring bacteria in the soil
Wind/Wind advisories	<b>Physical development</b>
Hyper- and hypothermia	Vestibular, proprioception, spatial Gross motor, locomotor
Dehydration Sun/Sunburn	Fine motor
Heat exhaustion and heat stroke	Hand-eye coordination
Storms (thunder, lightning, rains) Snow and ice	Sensory integration
Hurricanes/Earthquakes	Eye health
Tool use (knives, peelers, saws, hammers, hand drills, etc.) Unfamiliar persons	Decreased symptoms of ADD and ADHD
Stranger safety/ Residents of the upper west side and tourist	<b>Ecological Identity</b>
Roads/Crossing streets/ walking on the Trails	Stewardship and care-taking habits
Carrying or playing with sticks/Collecting from nature	Connection with indigenous heritage/origins of land
General injury with active play (first aid/CPR) Foraging	Personal connection with the natural world
Animal scat	Caring and concern for nature
Litter	Understanding and respect for diversity and interconnectedness of ecosystems
	Self-help skills
	Learning to care for one's basic needs (eating, toileting, dressing for the weather, etc.)

**RESOURCES AND BOOKS:**

Each source we reference is local, state, federal, or widely-recognized and reputable organizations with relevant information on a given topic.

Websites:

- [Wildlife New York City](#)
- [Central Park Conservancy](#)



- [New York City Department of Parks & Recreation](#)
- [North American Association for Environmental Education \(NAAEE\)](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)
- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

Books:

- [Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature](#) by Jon Young, Evan McGown, and Ellen Haas
- [Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook](#) by NAAEE
- [Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of the Plants](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- [A Forest Days Handbook: Program Design for School Days Outside](#) by Eliza Minacci and Megan Teach out
- [Barefoot and Balanced: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children](#) by Angela Hanscom
- [Botany in a Day](#) by Thomas J. Elpel
- [Nature Play Workshop for Families: A Guide to 40+ Outdoor Learning Experiences in All Seasons](#) by Monica Wiedel-Lubinski and Karen Madigan
- [Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning](#) by David Sobel and Patti Bailie
- [Play the Forest School Way](#) by Jane Worroll
- [The Great Outdoors: Advocating for Natural Play Spaces for Young Children](#) by Mary Rivkin and Deborah Schein
- [The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative](#) by Florence Williams
- [The Biophilia Hypothesis](#) by Kellert and Wilson
- [There's No Such Thing as Bad Weather: A Scandinavian Mom's Secrets for Raising Healthy, Resilient, and Confident Kids \(from Friluftsliv to Hygge\)](#) by Momma's Media