



Junior Naturalist Program 2010

Dear Potential Junior Naturalist and Parent:

Thank you for your interest in the Junior Naturalist Volunteer Program for 2010! The Junior Naturalist program is an extremely successful, experience-based, volunteer program for youths between the ages of 12 and 15. All of us here at the Nature Center take pride in our work and would like to share that pride with you so that we can continue to provide excellent experiences for our visitors. In order to accomplish this goal, we will provide participants with the best training and guidance we can offer.

Junior Naturalists play a key role in assisting the Nature Center staff by helping to educate the public, as well as providing basic care for some resident animals. Applicants should be *outgoing, dedicated, mature, motivated, willing to learn, and most importantly, able to follow directions*. Participants will be challenged to expand their knowledge of the animal species at the Nature Center and how these animals are connected to each other and the people that share their homes. The knowledge and experience that participants gain will directly correlate to the amount of energy they put into the program.

The Nature Center receives an average of over 25,000 visitors throughout the summer. The Junior Naturalists will assist visitors at specific stations located at the most popular sites on the grounds. Participants will rotate through these stations during each shift.

The decision to become a Junior Naturalist will require more than just the participant's commitment. It will involve the entire family since transportation will need to be coordinated, as well as the organization of everyone's time. In order to help you decide if the Junior Naturalist Volunteer Program will meet your needs, please read the following list of program components.

Program Dates and Times

- The Junior Naturalist Program will run from **Saturday, June 19th**, until **Tuesday, August 24th**.
- Seven Junior Naturalists will be scheduled for each shift - two shifts per day, 7 days a week.
- Shifts will run from 9:45am to 1:15 pm and from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm.
- Each Junior Naturalist will be assigned a specific shift to work throughout the summer (e.g. Wednesday-PM or Friday-AM etc.)

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Requirements for Applicants

- All participants must be at least twelve years old on June 12th. No exceptions can be made.
- Dedication, respect and a true willingness to help will be essential.
- Participants must enjoy speaking to the public and be willing to perform tasks vital to the well being of some animals, including cleaning and basic upkeep of enclosures.
- Junior Naturalists will be handling reptiles and helping to care for some farm animals. Participants must be prepared to learn these skills and be willing to carry them out.
- Participants must be actively involved in developing their interest in wildlife and livestock by using downtime (when there are no visitors and all animal care is completed) to explore personal interest areas. Resources for this will be made available.

Program Fee

- To cover the cost of program materials, including a t-shirt (Junior Naturalists will be required to wear a volunteer t-shirt during every work shift), a program fee of \$20.00 must be **paid upon acceptance to the program (please *do not* send a check with the application)**.
- The program fee is non-refundable and is required before you can participate in the program.

Description of Duties

- Junior Naturalists' primary responsibility will be to assist visitors at multiple stations through which they will rotate during each shift.
- At the **Nature Lab Station**, Junior Naturalists will be available to answer visitors' questions, present a snake and a turtle for visitors to touch, and perform routine care for some reptiles, amphibians, and displays.
- The duties at the **Educational Farm Petting Area** include answering questions and providing basic care of petting area animals, their enclosures and surrounding areas.
- We are adding a "floater" position this year that will allow one individual on each shift to fill needed spots, engage in projects with staff members, or staff a new station focused on plants.
- Junior Naturalists will attend the "**Beauty of Butterflies**" exhibit, a walk-through hoop house structure with hundreds of free-flying butterflies. Jr. Naturalists will be stationed at entrances and exits of the exhibit to greet visitors and keep our butterflies from inadvertently escaping.
- Our Junior Naturalists will not be handling any animals other than select non-venomous snakes, turtles, butterflies, and designated livestock.

Applications

- Interested participants must complete the appropriate application packet in full. Note that there are **separate applications** for *new participants* and *returning participants*. Please enclose all application materials as noted at the end of each application. Incomplete applications may not be considered.
- The requested photo will be used to gain familiarity with participants, thus enabling staff members to better assist Junior Naturalists. The photo will not be used to determine acceptance or posted in a public area. The photo will not be returned. A current and candid photo helps us the most.
- Completed application packets must be received by **Friday, April 16th, at 5:00 pm** to be given full consideration.
- We encourage double-sided printing of the application packet in order to conserve trees and file space.

Enrollment

- Due to the popularity of the Junior Naturalist Program, the Nature Center may not be able to accommodate all applicants.
- Enrollment is limited to ensure a quality program.
- A waiting list will be compiled if the number of applicants exceeds capacity.
- All applicants will be notified in early May of their program status.

Orientation

- All accepted participants will be required to attend **mandatory** training sessions in order to participate in the program.
- Both new and returning participants **must attend their respective training sessions**. New participants will be assigned either Friday and Saturday, June 4th and 5th or Friday and Saturday, June 11th and 12th. Returning naturalists must attend on Wednesday, May 16th.
- The newcomer orientations will be held at the Nature Center from 4:30pm-7:30pm on Fridays and 9:00am-12:00pm on Saturdays. The returner orientation will involve a field trip to Cataloochee Valley in Great Smoky Mountains National Park from 2:00pm-8:00pm on their respective Wednesday.

Time Commitment

- Junior Naturalists will be asked to provide a **minimum of 35 hours of service** throughout the summer. This is equivalent to 10 shifts and does not include the orientation session(s).
- It is crucial that participants are prompt, including arriving **no more than ten minutes early**.
- To ensure safety, all participants must be picked up directly after each shift.

Further Information

- A confirmation packet containing details pertaining to the orientation sessions, the uniform, policies and procedures will be sent to accepted applicants and their parents/guardians.
- A Junior Naturalist Program Manual will be given to each Junior Naturalist at the orientation sessions. A copy of this manual is available for reference at the Nature Center during normal business hours: 10:00 am until 5:00 pm every day.
- If you have any questions, please contact me at **(828) 298-5600**. I can be reached at **extension 320** Wednesday through Saturday from 7:00 am until 5:00 pm.

Sincerely,

Daniel Clere
Junior Naturalist Volunteer Coordinator