

Naturalist in the Classroom

NEWSLETTER—Issue #6

March 2020

Update: The Solstice to the Equinox

Dear Teachers, Administrators, Parents, and Friends,

March usually marks a turning point for programs at Prescott Farm. Sap is running. School groups flock to our sugar house to explore the classic New Hampshire tradition. Snow is melting. Community Connection participants swap snowshoes for muck boots. We hear a few of the first spring peepers. Our naturalists meet with teachers to plan lessons that no longer require snow pants. The vernal equinox marks that spring is here.

March is a little different this year. While the snow melts, peepers peep, and the days grow longer, the rest of our plans have changed. We are faced with new challenges. In this newsletter, we will celebrate the experiences of students connecting with their communities and getting outside this winter. We will also highlight what we are doing now to continue to get kids (and kids at heart!) outside to learn. In the uncertainty of the coming days and weeks, it is an especially important time to connect with nature.

Be well,

Andie Hession

Andie Hession
School & Community Programs Director
ahession@prescottfarm.org

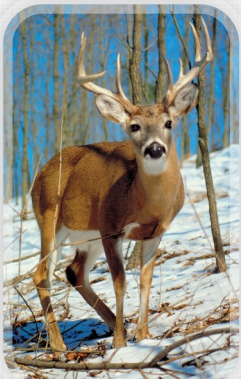


Gilmanton students are eager to get on the Nature Trail!

How We Respond

As schools switch to distance learning, our naturalists work creatively to deliver lessons. On March 27, Inter-Lakes second graders were scheduled to go to Prescott Farm for a Tap into Maple field trip. Instead, students received a short video from their Naturalist, Jake. After learning why we need sugar maple trees to make maple syrup and how to identify them in winter without

leaves, Jake challenged students to go outside to find these trees with sugary sap. Their teacher will collect photographs and drawings of what students find. No sugar maples? No problem! Students will describe the bark, branches, and buds of another tree that they find.



Gilmanton fourth graders were looking forward to a new program with their Naturalist, Alex, to investigate the school and nature trail to find examples of New Hampshire state symbols. Students will now search in and around their homes for the state animal (white-tailed deer), amphibian (red spotted newt), or emblem (Old Man of the Mountain). If they do not find examples in their space, students will consider why a symbol is chosen and will decide which symbols best represent their own space. If they do not find white birch, the NH state tree, what trees hold meaning for them? Is their favorite tree to climb an old oak tree? Is their treehouse built in a maple? Is there an abundance of hemlock?

Are you looking for creative ways to meet your curriculum goals while encouraging your students to safely explore the outdoors? Reach out to your school's Naturalist today!

SUGAR MAPLE TREES

With Jake the Naturalist



Meet Our Team



Andie Hession
School & Community
Programs Director,
ahession@prescottfarm.org
(Grantham)

Andie started with Prescott Farm in October 2017. She graduated with a B.S. in Public Health from George Washington University in Washington, DC. Andie worked with several environmental education programs in Arkansas and across New England before joining the team at Prescott Farm. Andie enjoys hikes with her dog, gardening and cooking with the veggies, and exploring New Hampshire's great outdoors.



Jake Newcomb
Camp Director,
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(Inter-Lakes)

Jake received his B.A. in History with a secondary education minor from UMaine Orono and holds a Maine teaching certificate. He worked for all three 4-H camps in Maine before joining the team at Prescott Farm in July 2018. Jake enjoys all things outdoors – including hiking, camping, backpacking and canoeing – when he is not at home with his cats Chloe and Mabel, as well as occasional foster kittens.



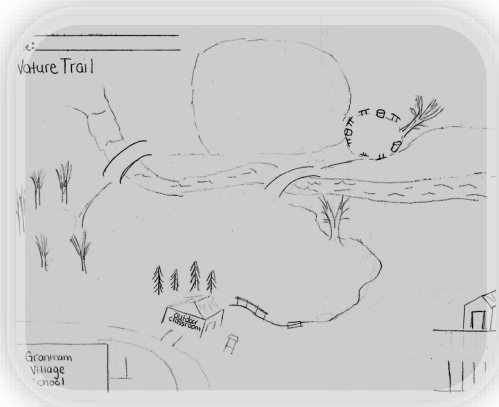
Alex Dyer
Environmental Educator
adyer@prescottfarm.org
(Belmont, Gilmanton)

Alex joined Prescott Farm as our newest Environmental Educator in May 2019. She received her B.S. in Biology from the University of Maine. At Prescott Farm, Alex hopes to bring her science and conservation background to the community while she pursues her M.S. in Sustainable Natural Resource Management. In her free time, she can be found mountain biking at Bear Brook State Park or red-lining the White Mountain National Forest.

Grantham Village School

Maps can tell us a lot of information. In their classrooms, Grantham second graders learned how to identify landforms and search for community boundaries. To connect the abstract concept of maps to students' tangible surroundings, we headed out to the Nature Trail with Andie.

How could you share the sounds of the trail with someone who has never been there? Create a sound map! Students received a panoramic map of the nature trail. On a nature hike, they stopped periodically at a total of five spots. They stood silently while recording what they heard with descriptive language and pictures in that location on the paper to make a sound map. Students also "Hid a Penny" to practice creating their own maps and reinforce the importance of small details. Each student hid a penny in an open location and drew a map to it. Then, students received a classmate's map to try to find a penny. Amazingly, Andie did not lose any money in this lesson!



A panoramic map of the Grantham Village School Nature Trail that would soon be filled with description of sounds.

Gilmanton School

The core of our Naturalist in the Classroom program is place based education: engaging students with their community and bringing learning to a local level. Alex had the opportunity to do just that with seventh graders this winter by bringing awareness to environmental challenges in New Hampshire. Before Alex met with the class, students read books about environmental issues such as clear-cutting the California redwoods, the current state of ocean pollution, endangered owl populations and habitat loss, as well as a nuclear power plant explosion.

These are important issues to explore, but Gilmanton students do not see Redwoods when they walk out of their school building. To bring it closer to home, students guessed "True or False" about New Hampshire environmental issues; did you know we have over 50 species of animals listed as threatened or endangered in the state? There are 39 New Hampshire lakes classified as acidic? Students researched local organizations that are tackling the same issues discussed in their books, as well as how they could help. With this focus on positive efforts in New Hampshire, students are more likely to feel connected to their area and hopeful about the future.

Learning Outside: Winter 2019-2020

Nature Journals

Fourth graders recorded small details to preserve seasonal observations.

Snowflake Classification

What common shapes of snowflakes could second graders find?

Snowshoeing

Students spent a lot of time on snowshoes with their Naturalists this winter: animal tracking, hikes, and learning how to put on snowshoes.

Belmont Elementary

After a fresh snowfall is a magical time to go out and explore nature, especially as a kindergartener. Through trial, error, and impressive patience, Belmont students strapped into snowshoes and left for their longest school nature hike to date. Alex led students as they practiced walking in circles, getting back up after falling down, leaving enough room for their friends, and walking over obstacles. They decided that snowshoes made for easier walking on top of deep snow. Perhaps that is how snowshoe hares got their name! Over rocks and up hills students built their confidence and even stopped for a game or two of a favorite game, Camouflage, in the woods, hiding from potential predators. This fun time outside gave students time to explore seasonal changes while learning an important New Hampshire winter tradition.



Belmont students enjoy the snow-covered Tiger Trail by snowshoe.

Inter-Lakes Elementary

Through bitter cold or long thaws, Inter-Lakes Elementary students were ready to explore the natural world. Kindergarteners and first graders learned how to snowshoe. While they hiked the nature trail with larger than usual feet, they also discovered invasive plants and pondered how natural camouflage conceals animals in winter. Older grades, already seasoned snowshoe-ers, used their new knowledge of animal prints and the patterns they leave behind in the snow to go tracking.

Fifth graders connected with New Hampshire heritage by investigating the origins and science of wool. Why was raising sheep so well-suited to New Hampshire? Students learned the history and economics of sheep production in the state. Why was wool so important? Students explored qualities of wool such as the structure of the fiber that makes it water resistant and the natural coil that makes it conducive to spinning into yarn. To conclude, students tried their hand at spinning wool roving into yarn with potato-and-pencil drop spindles!



What can you find in the snow?

Winter Solstice Shadows

How long are first graders' shadows on the winter solstice? On the summer solstice? Why? Students began an experiment to answer these questions.

Orienteering Course

Metal inside of a building reduces the effectiveness of a compass. Third graders went out to practice using this new tool.

Turkey Quest

Many students followed turkey tracks along their nature trails on a quest to stations to learn more about this large bird.

Connecting with Nature at Home

Here are a few suggestions for at-home experiential environmental education activities for students from our staff:

Snowflake Classification

A spring blizzard passing through? Get outside before it melts! Cool black paper in the freezer for 30 minutes. Find fresh snow and sprinkle a few flakes on your cooled paper. Are the snowflakes plates, stellar crystals, columns, or needles?

Spring Birding

Birds are migrating back to New Hampshire. Grab some binoculars and a guide to search for feathered friends we have not seen in a few months.

Tree ID

Before buds burst open to reveal new leaves, learn how to identify trees by the bark, branches, and buds. How does the bark feel? Are the branches opposite, alternating, or whorled? What shape and color are the buds?

Scavenger Hunt

Make a list of signs of spring. A few suggestions to include are: wooly bear caterpillars; the first spring flowers; mole hills; green grass; chipmunks; and spring peepers. What else can you add? Once you have your list, head out and search!

Follow Prescott Farm online for more daily suggestions!

Do you know a school that needs *Naturalist in the Classroom?*

We are always looking to expand the program into more Lakes Region schools. Since 2001 Prescott Farm's team of Naturalists and Environmental Educators have connected students and teachers to their communities and the natural environment. The staff works directly with teachers to integrate curriculum requirements into lesson plans that utilize the resources at hand. These lessons create opportunities for hands-on, placed-based learning and facilitate an enhanced understanding and respect for nature, natural systems, the natural history of the area, and the adoption of environmental stewardship practices.

Contact Andie Hession, School & Community Programs Director at:

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(603)366-5695 ext. 304.

Up Next at Prescott Farm: Community Connection Programs

Check our website for the 2020 Nature Connect 365 Program Guide—
featuring our annual Community Connections calendar.

WildQuest Camps Register online NOW!

Spring Vacation Camp

April 27-May 1, 2020

*For campers age 6-12.
Available by the day
or for entire week.*

Summer Camp

9 nature-themed weeks
June 29-August 28, 2020

*For campers aged 4-16, including half-day programs
for our youngest campers, a Leadership in Training
(LIT) Program for campers age 13-14* and Junior
Counselor (JC) for ages 15-16.**

**During selected weeks.*

- 1 (June 29-July 3) "Survivor" (LIT)
- Week 2 (July 6-10) "Kids Can Cook" (JC)
- Week 3 (July 13-17) "Nature Artists" (LIT)
- Week 4 (July 20-24) "Water, Water Everywhere" (JC)
- Week 5 (July 27-31) "Beyond the Myths" (LIT)
- Week 6 (August 3-7) "Mad Scientists" (JC)
- Week 7 (August 10-14) "Creature Feature" (LIT)
- Week 8 (August 17-21) "A Little Bit of Everything" (JC)
- Week 9 (August 24-28) "A Little Bit More!" (LIT)

About Us

Prescott Farm is a nonprofit dedicated to environmental education and preservation. We provide year-round environmental education programs for all ages, and we are a place in the Lakes Region that encourages curiosity, discovery, fun and connection to the natural world.

Founded in 1997 as Prescott Conservancy, Inc., Prescott Farm has helped build appreciation for nature and concern for the environment in thousands of program participants. We offer a wide range of programs designed to preserve and pass down knowledge and skills that encourage understanding of the natural systems that sustain us. Programs include: Naturalist in the Classroom, Field Trips, WildQuest Camps, Community Connection Programs, Fledglings Nature-Based Pre-School, and volunteer opportunities.

For more information:

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Visit us on the web at
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