

Naturalist in the Classroom

NEWSLETTER — January 2023

Curiosities & Gratitude

Dear Teachers, Administrators, Parents, and Friends,

We have a lot to be grateful for at Prescott Farm as we begin this coming year. We are surrounded by a caring, engaged, and resilient community. Our facilities have just been upgraded to better support our growing programs. And a growing number of area schools are welcoming our environmental educators into their schools to further connect students to the beautiful natural world around us.

The Prescott Farm staff are grateful for opportunities to share their curiosities while exploring outdoor spaces throughout the year. Winter is no exception. The calmness of snowy winter days are followed by animal tracks telling stories of scavenging for food, hunting for prey, finding water sources, and moving back to shelter for the next cold spell. Hearty birds that stay for the winter continue to visit feeders and eat the last of the berries off shrubs. And soon, the maple sap will be flowing and sugarhouses—such as ours at Prescott Farm—will be billowing with steam.

This season, I hope you have the opportunity to head outdoors, and take a moment to be grateful for the gifts of healing and connection that the natural world brings to us.

Be well,



Chris Wellens
Prescott Farm Camp & School Age Programs Director
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Our Environmental Educators are thrilled to visit local schools. Sometimes we even bring a friend along (a bear mount, of course)!

New opportunities at Prescott Farm

If you have driven by Prescott Farm Environmental Education Center this past year, you may have noticed the machinery around working on our newest facility upgrades. While the vast majority of our 160 acre property remains as natural fields, woods, and wetlands, these projects will enhance all of our programs. Some upgrades that are nearly complete:

- The Innovation Center will include a five-station teaching kitchen, maker space, screened porch, & restroom facilities
- A finished space in the ell connected to the barn will include public restroom facilities, a small classroom/meeting room, and a small office.
- An expansion of the parking areas with improvements to the current driveway that will improve traffic flow and safety during drop-off and pick-up times

Meet Our Team



Chris Wellens
Camp & School Age
Programs Director

Chris earned a BA in International Studies from Northern Michigan University. Since moving to New England in 2011, he has

worked at various camps and environmental centers with roles including program instructor, wilderness trip leader, environmental educator, nature director, farm camp director, director of education, and most recently camp director at a residential camp. He is also an avid gardener, beekeeper, food preserver, traveler, hiker, and cross-country skier.



Ashleigh Roberts
Environmental Educator
(Belmont, Gilmanton,
Loudon)

Originally from Ohio, Ashleigh began teaching outdoors as a summer camp counselor while earning a B.A. in Middle Childhood Education

from Ohio Northern University. Since then, Ashleigh has worked as an outdoor/environmental educator across the United States from Virginia to California and earned an M.A. in Education from Muskingum University. Ashleigh enjoys hiking—with lots of stops to enjoy the tiny things, being curious, and learning about how people relate to the outdoors.



Mary Doyle
Environmental Educator
(Inter-Lakes, Gilford)

Mary holds English, Psychology, and Secondary Education degrees from Alma College and Central Michigan University and an M.Ed. in Curriculum &

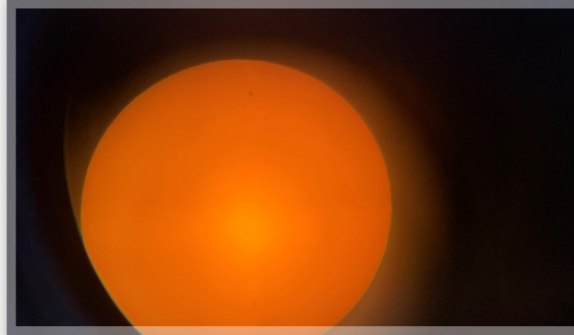
Instruction from Plymouth State University. She is a NH certified ELA teacher and has studies at Tom Brown's Tracker School and the Wilderness Awareness School. She has worked as a classroom teacher and an environmental educator in public and private schools and nonprofit organizations. Mary loves to garden, cross country ski, listen to the birds, and practice qigong.

Program Highlights

Our educators have been busy visiting the five Naturalist in the Classroom partner schools nearly every week of the school year. Working with 3-5 classes each day allows for lots of opportunities to learn about the natural world at their own school area. Read some highlights from our programs at other schools

Belmont Elementary School

As the seasons change, Belmont students have been learning how animals have evolved to stay alive. Kindergarten classes played a game to learn that some NH animals are dormant for the winter, some migrate, and others remain active in NH.



A look at the sun through our telescope equipped with a solar filter. We love bringing our telescopes to school to get a closer look at the sun and moon!

First grade students learned to find their way in the woods reading a map and have also been adding to the map of their school trails for future students to use. Later in the fall they returned to the woodland trails to find that many animals also use the trails. Since most animals are scared away by

human noises, they were able to get up close to some animal mounts including a bear, bobcat, bat, fox, skunk, and fisher.

Third grade Belmont Students learned about raptors' diet by dissecting owl pellets, comparing their findings to determine their most common food sources as well as animals that might be harder for them to catch.

Gilford Elementary School

Welcome back to the Naturalist in the Classroom program, Gilford Elementary students and staff! Students at GES have been busy exploring their trails making observations and discoveries: from learning how tiny seeds are dispersed to identifying the largest trees in the forest and all the animals that live among them.

Third grade Gilford Elementary classes have been learning about ways local Native American people survived our cold winters and made use of our native resources. They learned how cattail plants can be used to make cordage (rope) for weaving together things like a woven cattail mat. Students then made their own cattail cordage into a bracelet, necklace, or headband.

Mountain Village Charter School

Starting in February 2023, we are looking forward to our newest partnership with MVCS!

Gilmanton School

Various classes at Gilmanton have been able to use Prescott Farm's new telescope, even in daylight hours. Students have been learning how the refractor and reflectors help make it easier to see objects far away. Some were able to look at the moon as it was visible during the day while others were able to look at the sun with the solar filter.

Seventh grade classes have been working on a survival series all fall. They built shelters for warmth and to stay dry. They also learned various ways to light fires using matches, ferro rods, flint & steel, and magnifying glasses. Finally, they harvested, processed, and cooked acorns with a bit of maple syrup for a tasty, wild harvested treat.

Inter-Lakes Elementary School

In addition to spending time on the Laverack Nature Trail observing signs of the fauna and flora that reside there, Inter-Lakes Elementary students have been helping to bring back their school-wide composting program that was put on hold during the pandemic. By looking closely at some active compost, students found evidence of the FBI (Fungi, Bacteria, and Invertebrates) responsible for turning our food and garden scraps into rich compost to provide nutrients to plants.

Also learning about what food scraps should and should not go into the compost pile (animal products and oily foods will attract animals such as bears) ILES students are all ready to sort out their food scraps to help feed the school gardens this spring!

Loudon Elementary School

We are excited to welcome Loudon Elementary School as a new Naturalist in the Classroom partner school! The enthusiasm to explore the outdoor spaces at their school by the teachers and students alike is contagious!

Some students have a "tree buddy" that they are following throughout the year in their Tree Journals. Finding their same trees after they lost their leaves was a little tricky (except for those with evergreens, of course), but the notes and drawings in their journals from last time were a big help!

Other Loudon classes have been learning how many of our native mammals survive the long, cold, and harsh New Hampshire winters. Using Prescott Farm's collection of taxidermy, fur pelts, skulls, track prints, and scat models, students learned about animal adaptations, how to identify our most common mammals, and ways to be safe and respectful if they encounter any of them in the wild.



Students through compost for FBI (Fungus, Bacteria, and Invertebrates). Does your school compost? Our staff can help set one up and involve your students!

Topic Areas

animal tracking/snowshoeing

archaeology

camouflage/animal defenses

climate science/renewable energy

cooking from the garden

fiber arts (spinning, weaving, felting,
dyeing with natural dyes)

food webs/predator-prey relationships

forest/field/pond ecology

gardening/compost/local foods

geology & soil science

honeybees/pollinators/beeswax crafts

insects/butterflies/spiders

landscape history/forest forensics

maple sugaring

mapping/orienteering

Indigenous cultures

nature crafts/candle making/soap
making

nature journaling

NH mammals/birds/reptiles/
amphibians

non-flowering plants (mosses/lichens)

seasonal changes

seeds/seed dispersal

shelters/survival

STEAM/science experiments

tree/plant ID

using your five senses

water cycle/weather

wild food/medicine/dye plants

winter animal adaptations

There is something to do for all ages and experience levels at Prescott Farm. Join us for:

- Gardening classes
- Soapmaking workshops
- Summer and Vacation Camps
- Naturalist-led hikes
- Nature-based Preschool
- Wilderness skills
- Moonlit hikes
- Cooking classes
- Harvest Festival (Sept.)
- Rent a pair of snowshoes (winter)
- Natural Playscape
- And so much more!

Visit PrescottFarm.org/calendar to view all of our upcoming programs!

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:

Contact Us

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Visit us on the web at
www.prescottfarm.org



Scholarships Available!

WildQuest Winter Camp
February 27-March 3
Limited Spots Remain!
FMI prescottfarm.org
Let the Outdoor Adventures Begin!

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, place-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 Chris Wellens, Camp & School Age Director at:

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