

WESTWOOD  
HILLS  
NATURE CENTER

# Home Education Program

*Planning Guide*  
*2011-12*



*Experience LIFE in the Park*

8300 West Franklin Avenue St. Louis Park, MN 55426  
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[www.stlouispark.org](http://www.stlouispark.org)

## THE SITE

Westwood Hills Nature Center is a 160 acre natural area operated by the City of St. Louis Park. The forest, restored prairie and marsh are unique outdoor classrooms in the middle of the city. Professionally-trained naturalists lead a wide variety of fun, informative, hands-on environmental education and outdoor recreation programs. Programs are designed to accompany what is being taught at school and the staff have suggestions for pre-trip and post-trip activities to reinforce what the students learn at the nature center. Students, teachers and other supervising adults should be dressed to be outside for most of their time at the nature center.

## THE PROGRAM

Westwood Hills Nature Center has a great program for families who home school. We offer monthly classes throughout the year that will help your children learn and develop skills in natural science and outdoor recreation. The classes are designed for a variety of ages and learning styles.

The chart on the reverse side lists the courses we offer and when they are available. Each class is one and a half hours in length and includes indoor and outdoor hands-on activities. Classes can be scheduled singly or for the entire

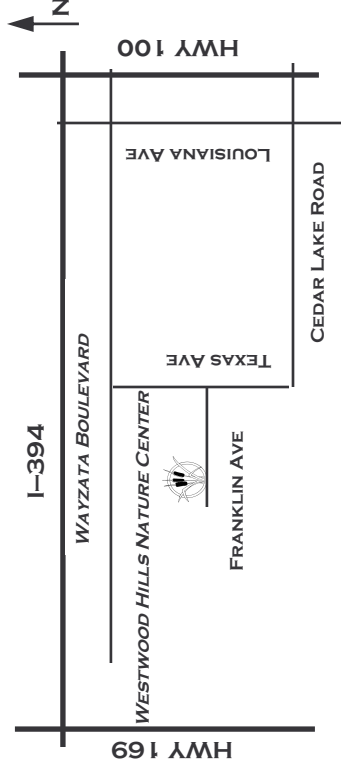
## CUSTOM PROGRAMS

Do you have a specific topic in mind that is not listed? Call Greg Feinberg at 952.924.2621 or email at [gfeinberg@stlouispark.org](mailto:gfeinberg@stlouispark.org) to discuss possible lessons for your group. By working together, a customized program may be developed.

## SIGNING UP FOR PROGRAMS

To schedule, pick the classes and month you are interested in and contact the nature center at 952.924.2621 or [gfeinberg@stlouispark.org](mailto:gfeinberg@stlouispark.org) to make arrangements. There is a minimum charge for each class; we schedule families and small groups together to make the classes affordable. You can also join our regularly scheduled monthly classes. The topics are selected by Westwood's staff. Call for details or refer to the St Louis Park, Park and Recreation brochure.

## LOCATION



From Highway 169: Take I-394 East to the General Mills Boulevard exit (exits to the right). Take a left onto General Mills Boulevard. Go about a mile and take a left onto Wayzata Boulevard. Go about a half of a mile and take a right onto Texas Avenue. At the stop sign, take a right onto Franklin Avenue. The nature center will be about four blocks down on the right.

From Highway 100: Take I-394 West to the Louisiana Avenue exit. Take a left onto Louisiana Avenue. Take your first right onto Wayzata Boulevard. Go about a half of a mile and take a left onto Texas Avenue. At the stop sign, take a right onto Franklin Avenue. The nature center will be about four blocks down on the right.

From 394 Westbound: See directions from Highway 100.

From 394 Eastbound: See directions from Highway 169.

## FEES FOR 2011 - 2012

### St Louis Park Residents

\$54 minimum or \$4.50 per student per visit

### Non-St Louis Park Residents

\$66 minimum or \$5.50 per student per visit

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

**Animal Tracks & Signs** Become an animal detective! Students are introduced to track patterns and the animals that make them. Outside they search for animal “clues”: tracks, homes and other animal signs.

**Archery** Here is your chance to learn how to shoot a bow and arrow. Instruction will be given on the history of archery, the proper way to shoot a bow and archery safety. Bows arrows and targets will be provided.

**Astronomy** Discover the wonders of the night sky! We'll use games and activities to study the movements of the earth and moon, learn about the solar system and understand the life cycles of stars.

**Apples & Autumn Trees** This unit uses apple trees as an example to help introduce pollination and tree life cycles. We will also learn how to recognize some Minnesota trees and will taste apple cider.

**Aquatic Invertebrates** Learn about common invertebrates and their importance in the food chain. We'll collect and observe these small animals from the pond. Some of the invertebrates will be brought back for closer observation using our magnifying slides.

**Bird Migration** This class focuses on the biannual event of bird migration. Learn about these birds, their migration as well participating in one of the most popular outdoor sports in the U.S., bird watching!

**Decomposers** Learn about this often overlooked, but vitally important part of the food chain. We'll look into the lives of worms, mushrooms, pillbugs and other scavengers in this completely “rotten” class.

**Frosty Fun** Test your mettle and skills. This class includes events such as snow snakes, ice golf, snowshoeing and kicksled races. Dress for the weather.

**Go With The Flow** Students will reinforce the terms producers, consumers and decomposers by taking part in an interactive program that shows the interconnectedness of the flow of matter and energy through biological systems.

**Honeybees** This class introduces students to the natural history of honeybees, the science of beekeeping and the importance of bees as pollinators. Students observe the nature center's beehives, participate in extraction and have the opportunity to taste some honey.

**Insects** What makes an insect an insect? Find out and make your own bug sucker jar to collect insects in Westwood's prairie and woods.

**Life Under Foot** Explore the world that lives under our feet. By hiking and sampling we will learn about soil, roots and critter that live beneath the ground.

**Living Green** Learn some simple ways how you can be part of the solution to reducing carbon emissions and global warming.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS-continued

**Natural Dyes** Learn the history and process of using dyes made from common plants. You'll learn to identify these plants while collecting them to make dye. You'll also get to dye an item to bring home with you at the end of the class.

**Nocturnal Animals** Delve into the dim world of nocturnal animals. Through artifacts and games, we'll explore the sights and sounds of Minnesota's night.

**Orienteering** This class teaches the basics of compass reading. We'll get practice using both skills as you navigate your way through Westwood's orienteering course.

**Papermaking** Make your own 100 percent recycled paper. Experience the whole process from start to finish and bring a handmade piece of paper home.

**Raptors** We will explore the world of raptors. We will learn about what makes these birds of prey so unique, look at some artifacts of raptors and dissect an owl pellet.

**Reptiles & Amphibians** Become an amateur herpetologist! You'll become familiar with the features that make these two groups of animals unique. You'll also practice handling reptiles and amphibians.

**Seeds** Learn the different ways that seeds travel and why they need to travel. Look for different seeds while hiking through a variety of habitats, and learn why plants make so many seeds by playing “Maple Seed Mix-up”.

**Snowshoeing** People have been snowshoeing for thousands of years. Learn the history of snowshoeing and find out about different types of snowshoes. Then strap on a pair and go looking for signs of animals active in winter. *Snow conditions permitting.*

**Trees** You will strengthen your observation and classification skills while learning how to use a scientific key to identify trees. On a self-led course, you will identify marked trees along Westwood's trails using a dichotomous tree key. We will end the day checking our answers and learning the importance of different trees.

**Water** Water may seem like a common everyday substance, but it's one of the most important and unique substances on earth. Discover the amazing properties of H<sub>2</sub>O through a series of experiments and activities.

**Wild Edibles** Find lunch in the woods! We'll learn how to identify common edible plants, go collect them and then prepare them. We'll end the day with a tasty meal made up of wild edibles.

**Winter Birds** Why do some birds leave and some birds stay? Learn the answer to these questions and become familiar with some of Minnesota's winter birds by learning about and observing wild birds.

**Winter Ecology** This program focuses on how the cold, snow and ice affect animals. We'll measure different properties of the ice, peer into the lake and search for animal signs.

