

Berrien Springs Partnership Syllabus – Spring 2026

CLASS TITLE: GVNCP - Habitats and Wildlife

GRADE OR AGE LEVELS: ages 5 to 18

FORMAT: in-person

Wednesday Class:

START DATE: January 21, 2026 **END DATE:** May 13, 2026

WEEKS TOTAL: 8 weeks **DAY/TIME:** 12 Noon to 2 PM (2 hours per day)

DAY OF WEEK: Wednesday (note: no classes in March)

Days of class: Jan 21, Jan 28, Feb 4, April 15, April 22, April 29, May 6, May 13

HOURS (REQUIRED): 16 hours total (16 total lessons)

LOCATION/ADDRESS: DIRECTIONS TO LOCATION :

Fernwood Botanical Gardens, (parents pay for Fernwood Membership)

13988 Range Line Road, Niles, MI 49120

And at Warren Dunes State Park (parents pay for MI State Park pass)

12032 Red Arrow Hwy, Sawyer, MI 49125

MAIN INSTRUCTOR: Zoe Elrick

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone: 269-612-8172

Email: galienvalley@gmail.com

Website: www.z-hub.org/galienvalleyncp.html

Please email the instructor to let her know that you signed up for her class.

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS: Zoe Elrick

Zoe Elrick has a background in education, culture, science, art, history, as well as landscape architecture and ecology. In 2011, she started the Galien Valley Nature and Culture Program (GV-NCP), in Three Oaks, Michigan. Also, she is a registered landscape architect in Michigan and has worked for Pizzo and Associates, an ecological restoration firm of prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Her landscape architecture degree is from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Plus, she has taken nature classes in New Jersey at the Tracker School of nature awareness, wilderness living, and wilderness survival.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: (websites):

www.z-hub.org/galienvalleyncp.html

www.z-hub.org/nature.html

<https://www.facebook.com/GalienValleyNCP/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Nature-Environmental-Advocacy-45111822807/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Class is all outdoors. Dress for weather.

This class is both informative and fun! Come enjoy Fernwood, explore its natural habitats - it's prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Plus, visit Warren Dunes and its lake and dunes, for 4 hours of class. Learn about nature through a variety of hands-on nature-exploration skills and 4 habitats. Bring the family and a blanket, it's a family picnic style class.

One or two parents (or adult relatives) must attend class with student(s) ages 10 and younger, per family. One or two parents (or adult relatives) may attend class with student(s) ages 11 and older, per family. The parents / adult relatives are to help guide their kid(s) along nature trails. Along nature trails, there will be designated spots for each family to take turns to stop at, to do a brief nature activity with their kid(s). Unaccompanied students ages 11 and up will be paired up with each other, along the nature trails.

Habitats and Wildlife Topics include: Southwest Michigan local habitats; Prairies; Lake and Dunes; Woodlands; and Wetlands; Nature Journal; Deep-Sensing Nature; Tracking and Awareness; Plant Identification; and Local Plants and Animals. Plus, each class day, students get to enjoy the features, plants, animals, and nature at Fernwood. During each class, students will be outdoors, studying nature.

Habitats and Wildlife – 4 Habitat Units

are Prairies; Lake and Dunes; Wetlands; and Woodlands.

SYLLABUS/OUTLINE: WEEKLY BREAKDOWN OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITY,

Wednesdays: 2 lessons per week (within 2 hours)

Week 1 - Wednesday – Jan 21 - Prairie Habitat, and Winter Prairie (at Fernwood)

Week 2 - Wednesday – Jan 29 – Wetland Habitat, and Winter Wetland (at Fernwood)

Week 3 - Wednesday – Feb 4 - Woods Habitat, and Winter woods (at Fernwood)

Week 4 - Wednesday – April 15 – Dunes Habitat, and Plants (at Warren Dunes)

Week 5 - Wednesday – April 22 – Lake Habitat, and Fish (at Warren Dunes)

Week 6 - Wednesday – April 29 – Wetland Habitat, and Spring Wetlands (at Fernwood)

Week 7 - Wednesday – May 6 – Prairie Habitat, and Spring Prairie (at Fernwood)

Week 8 - Wednesday – May 13 – Woods Habitat, and Spring Woods (at Fernwood)

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND APPROXIMATE TARGET DATES:

Each day of class, a student will draw / sketch and write in his Nature Journal.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT - what will be used to evaluate student progress and/or end of semester pass/fail status? All classes abide by the following:

1. Student agrees to attend at least 80% of class sessions/lessons offered. Attendance is kept online and tracked by Partnership staff. Failure to meet 80% or be on track to meet 80% may result in program discontinuation.
2. The Partnership Student Assessment or Performance Form is filled out by the teacher and turned into Partnership staff. The link to this form is found on the web page for this class. Failing marks for lack of participation, behavior issues, etc., may result in program discontinuation.

Student Assessment: Students to: 1. Be prepared / bring materials. 2. Listen to teacher. 3. Ask questions, if don't understand. 4. Be on time to class. 5. Do class activities. 6. Do activities to the best of ability of age. 7. Respects classmates. 8. Be open to suggestions. 9. Stay on task of class activities. 10. Brings required materials (see list below).

CLASS POLICIES: ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR, WEATHER, ETC.

Attendance: Students need to attend 80% of class hours.

Parents Needed to be in Class. Bring the family and a blanket, it's a family picnic style class. One or two parents (or adult relatives) must attend class with student(s) under age 11, per family. The parents / adult relatives are to help guide their kid(s) with nature activities and crafts.

Behavior: Students are expected to be on time, bring required materials (see list below), listen to teacher, follow directions, participate in class activities, and respect classmates.

Weather: Class will be postponed until next week, if there is severe weather.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Teacher provides some info sheets.

(Required) Required to bring to class (provided by student/family):

Dress for outdoor weather.

Water Bottle, 3-ring binder, paper, pencil.

Fernwood requires a membership, an annual membership. If you do not already have an annual membership, upon arrival, parents can buy a dual membership (for 2 people) for \$65, or a family membership (for 4 people) for \$75. FYI: kids ages 4 and under are free.

Warren Dunes State Park requires a pass, a "recreation passport" (annual park pass). If you do not already have a pass, it costs \$19 per vehicle, for parents to pay upon arrival at park.

Optional Materials (provided by student/family) Suggested optional stuff to bring: color pencils, pens, crayons, hat,