

FRIENDS OF RYE NATURE CENTER

2023 - 2024



The Forest School Program Guide





Mission

Friends of Rye Nature Center (FRNC) is an independent, not-for-profit organization which offers programs to people of all ages and abilities. We encourage conservation, provide environmental education, and support our community's access to nature.



Visit

Our grounds, trails, and playground are open daily from dawn to dusk, year-round. Come visit!

Office Hours

September - May

Monday through Saturday

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

July - August

Monday through Friday

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Contact / Connect

Visit ryenaturecenter.org for information on programs, events, opportunities, and to sign up for our weekly newsletter.

T: (914) 967-5150

E: info@ryenaturecenter.org

www.facebook.com/RyeNatureCenter

[@ryenaturecenter](https://www.instagram.com/ryenaturecenter)

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Notes from your Bigger Backyard

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Lining up programs for the school year when summer is still in full force always generates a new energy among FRNC's staff. Even though they are in the throes of camp and all its defining fun features – sticky s'mores, sudden thunderstorms, competitive rounds of deer and wolf – there is an anticipation for the start of another school year. This fall is especially exciting as we resume all our favorite weekend programs and launch new reasons to get up the hill. Be certain to check out our new "Animal Meet and Greet" hours and pre-book yourself and your little one into some "My Naturalist and Me" mornings.

As the pivots we made during the pandemic become part of the past, there are some lessons and wins that we have decided to make mainstream. The benefits of being outside were front and center for all of us during the past three years but FRNC's Forest Preschool has been embracing that philosophy since its inception. The outcomes of being outside – reduced anxiety, increased resiliency,

heightened awareness of the senses – last well beyond any pandemic's period. We have taken the culture we created for our Forest Preschoolers and expanded its features into all our programs. The Forest School at Rye Nature Center encapsulates the notion that the freedom of outdoor learning sets the foundation for developing independence, creativity, empathy, and eco-literacy. Outdoor learning creates responsible stewards for our planet.

When you look around the property, you are witnessing over 60 years of FRNC's stewardship. As the City of Rye's park operators, FRNC has adopted a new Strategic Plan for the 2023-2026 period. Projects such as restoring the Blind Brook Riparian and the Nanderwhere Pond are tied to preparing the site for climate weather events such as flash flooding. Other projects are tied to the long-term succession of the forest. Our conservation department has aggressive planting goals to counter the effects of invasives like the Spotted Lantern Fly, deer over browse, and other tree diseases.

Looking forward to a healthier forest and engaging our community in the process of making it happen is at the core of our Strategic Plan. We welcome you to review it on our website and see what is in store for you and your family as FRNC continues to create a Nature Center that provides something for everyone.

Happy hiking, birding, and forest foraging!

Warm regards,

Christine

Christine Siller, Executive Director

Important Dates

Friday, September 29, 2023

Saturday, October 14, 2023

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

Friday, December 1, 2023

Saturday, January 20, 2024

Friday, January 26, 2024

Friday, February 9, 2024

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Friday, April 19, 2024

Oktoberfest

Fall Birdseed Orders Due

Support Giving Tuesday

Preschool 2024-2025 Registration Begins

Winter Birdseed Orders Due

Summer Camp Registration

June Bugs Registration

Old-Fashioned Winter's Afternoon/Member Day

Nature Access Fund Benefit

NatureStation



NatureStation, our mobile exhibit and classroom, teaches people how to connect to, care for, and preserve nature. NatureStation brings hands-on environmental education opportunities to people who are unable to interact with nature.

This mobile unit is available for local fairs and community events, as well as visits to local schools and classrooms so students can benefit from the way we tie STEM concepts to nature.

NatureStation visits begin at \$300/hour. FRNC offers financial assistance to qualifying schools and organizations through our Nature Access Fund (NAF).



For more information, visit ryenaturecenter.org/nature-station

School Programs

Friends of Rye Nature Center (FRNC) provides environmental education for students and teachers. Our goal is to encourage scientific inquiry and analysis of natural processes so students do more than just memorize facts. Your students will be able to experience the science of nature through first-hand observation and discussion.

Pricing

School program pricing begins at \$200/hour for up to 25 students. Prices are subject to set-up/break-down and travel fees. FRNC offers financial assistance to qualifying schools and organizations through our Nature Access Fund (NAF).

If you are interested in booking a program, please submit a program request form online at ryenaturecenter.org/school-and-scout-programs



Our educational programs coincide with the NYS curriculum guidelines and most lessons can be tailored to any grade level. Some available school program topics include:

Age Level	Available Programs	
All Ages	Year Round On or Off Site	Animal Adaptations, Ecosystems
	Fall On Site	Apple Cidering
	Fall and Spring On Site	Pond Investigation
	Winter On Site	Maple Sugaring
Grades K-2	September and May Oakland Beach	Marine Ecology
Grades 2 and Up	Fall and Spring On Site	Plant Adaptations
Grades 3-5	Year Round On or Off Site	Energy
	Fall and Spring On Site	Geology
Grades 4-5	April On Site	Eeling

Afterschool Clubs



Our afterschool clubs give students the opportunity to spend some much-needed time exploring the outdoors. Each session will focus on a different topic to help participants connect with nature and have fun. Registration is available by the session. More dates and sessions for the winter and spring will be available on our website at ryenaturecenter.org/afterschool

Kindergarten - 1st Grade

Tuesdays 3:15 - 4:30 p.m.

Session 1

September - October

September: 19, 26

October: 3, 10, 17, 24

Geology:

Join us for a rock walk! Children will explore the rocks and minerals of Rye, learn about tectonic plates and soil composition, and see our own quarry up close.

Session 2

November - December

November: 14, 21, 28

December: 5, 12, 19

Forest Ecology:

Children will learn how ecosystems are interconnected, with hands-on activities focused on food chains and food webs.



2nd Grade - 4th Grade

Thursdays 3:15 - 4:30 p.m.

Session 1

September - October

September: 21, 28

October: 5, 12, 19, 26

Forest Ecology:

Children will learn about food webs and how to identify animal skulls as carnivores, herbivores, or omnivores. They will learn about evolution and animal adaptations and put their senses to the test as they discover how nocturnal animals navigate the dark.

Session 2

November - December

November: 2, 9, 16, 30

December: 7, 14

Backyard Bushcraft:

Explore the Rye Nature Center! Forage for edible plants, build an outdoor shelter, and collect natural materials to create art.

Forest Preschool

Friends of Rye Nature Center's Forest Preschool fosters a lifelong connection to nature in our students. With a curriculum based on the Swiss concept of forest kindergartens, our educators help children develop their own paths to experiential learning shaped by the beautiful forest around them. Our preschool is unlike any other preschool program – children will be in an outdoor, natural setting over 90% of their class week, year-round.

Preschoolers who are at least 3.5 years old by the start of the program (born prior to March 11, 2021) may apply. Children will range in age from 3.5 through 5.5 in each class. All students must be toilet-trained (no pull-ups). Children who attend in the morning may not attend in the afternoon. An optional walking component is available for children attending Christ's Church Nursery School or Rye Presbyterian Nursery School.



Registration for the 2024-2025 school year for our preschool programs begins online

Friday, December 1 at 10:00 a.m.

Morning Sessions

(8:45 am – 11:45 am)

5 Days

2 Days (Tues/Thurs)

1 Day (Wed)

Afternoon Sessions

(11:30 am – 2:30 pm)

5 Days

3 Days (Mon/Wed/Fri)

2 Days (Tues/Thurs)

2 Days (Wed/Fri)

1 Day (Tues)

1 Day (Thurs)

School's Out Workshops

When school is closed for a day or a week, our workshops offer time outside and endless possibilities for adventure. Workshops are for children ages 3.5 through 10 years old, unless noted otherwise. Children should be prepared to spend most of their day outside, bring lunch, and dress for the weather.

Online pre-registration required.
Registration is available by the day.
No credits, refunds, or make up classes will be given for missed days.

\$85/child per day.



APPLE CIDERING

Monday, September 25, 2023:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

FRNC's favorite way to enjoy the annual apple harvest is crushed, squeezed, and in a cup. Children will examine the life cycle of an apple and learn how it can be turned into sweet apple cider. They experience the cidering process as they press their own apple and sample some tasty cider.

ANIMAL ELECTIONS

Tuesday, November 7, 2023:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Join us this Election Day as we learn all about animals' special strengths. We will create campaign slogans for each "candidate," and at the end of the day, we will vote for the best representative to serve as Rye Nature Center's "Animal President."

RNC SURVIVAL GUIDE

Friday, November 10, 2023:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Winter is coming—can you make a shelter fit for the season? Whether it's a life-size fort or a fairy house for your garden, children will have the chance to design and build their very own structure out of natural and recycled materials.



CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Tuesday, February 20, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Whooooo only comes out at dark? Children will explore the habits of amazing nocturnal animals, from the stealthy barn owl to the adaptive red panda. Join us as we learn what helps them survive at night.

MAPLE SUGARING

Wednesday, February 21, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Tap a tree the old-fashioned way! Learn how maple trees produce sap and get a peek at the sugaring process in the Rye Nature Center's Sugar Shed.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Thursday, February 22, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Learn about distant stars and where we live in the Milky Way Galaxy! We will challenge the children to decipher sky charts, learn about the elements of space, and design their ideal spaceship.

POLAR SCIENCE

Friday, February 23, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

What makes magnets push and pull? How are they made and how can you use them to navigate? Come learn all about the forces of magnetic forces, fields, and poles at this fun-filled workshop. Prehistoric times, and look for clues that tell us how our landscape has changed or stayed the same over the years.





CLAWS, JAWS, AND PAWS

Monday, March 25, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Take a deep dive into the wonderful world of animal adaptations! Learn about how animals have developed to be the most successful predators or the most evasive prey. Learn about our forest friends' camouflage, diet, activity, and more!

DINOLAND

Tuesday, March 26, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Join us as we learn which dinosaurs roamed the City of Rye. We will examine fossils, learn about prehistoric times, and look for clues that tell us how our landscape has changed or stayed the same over the years.

NATURE ART

Wednesday, March 27, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Channel your creativity, get in touch with nature and bring a piece of the Rye Nature Center home with you! Learn to make nature art like watercolor paints and 3D sculptures using things you can find in the great outdoors.

SURVIVAL AND S'MORES

Thursday, March 28, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Put your survival skills to the test at Rye Nature Center! Learn how to build a sturdy, cozy shelter and how to safely and effectively start a fire to keep yourself warm! What better way to beat the cold than with a nice warm fire and a s'more?

ALL ABOUT BIRDS

Friday, March 29, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Whether soaring through the air, climbing trees, or swimming in the pond, we will look at all the amazing avians you can find here at Rye Nature Center! Learn about the adaptations, migratory patterns, and functions of different birds that live in the forest.

TREES LIKE THESE

Friday, April 19, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Learn all about the various trees and flowers that come back to life in the spring! Try nature journaling, tree ID, flower pressing, or leaf rubbing to preserve the new buds as we anticipate the Nature Center to transform this spring.

LET'S CELEBRATE EARTH!

Monday, April 22, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Join us for a day of celebrating the Earth. Our experienced environmental educators will help children differentiate between native and invasive plants which we will use to create wonderful pieces of natural art. Children will collect natural artifacts including forsythia and daffodil flowers.

CRITTER SEARCH

Tuesday, April 23, 2024:

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Explore macroinvertebrates and megafauna of Rye Nature Center! As spring returns, so do some new friends. Explore the animals that are waking up from hibernation or migrating back home. See what you can catch with a net in the pond or use binoculars to look at deer hiding in the woods!



My Naturalist and Me

Stop by this fun-filled hour with your little one(s). Learn all about nature through fun activities like animal meet and greets, crafts, and short hikes. Children must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

The cost is \$15 per family per class. No credits, refunds, or make up classes will be given for missed days. Please come prepared for the weather. Online pre-registration is required.

Fridays

(9:45 am – 10:45 am)

September: 8, 15, 22

October: 6, 13, 20

November: 3, 17

December: 1, 8, 15

January: 5, 12, 19

February: 2, 16

March: 1, 8, 17

April: 5, 12, 26

May: 3, 10, 17, 31

Saturdays

(9:15 am – 10:15 am)

September: 16

October: 21

November: 4

December: 16

January: 27

February: 3

March: 9

April: 13

May: 4



COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday, September 16, 2023
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Join us as we clean up the shore of our local brook. Contact jax@ryenaturecenter.org for more information. Pre-registration is required. Suggested for ages 8 and up.

FREE program.

APPLE CIDERING AND FALL HIKE

Saturday, September 23, 2023
12:30 p.m.

Ring in the arrival of fall with some fresh apple cider! Families will press and sample cider while learning about the cidering process. Afterwards, participants will enjoy a seasonal walk.

OKTOBERFEST Adults Only!

Friday, September 29, 2023
7:30 – 10:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual fundraiser filled with hops, vines, and delicious food! Local vendors will treat guests to a selection of drinks and bites. This evening of fun and community is made possible through your support! Sponsorship contributions underwrite the night's festivities and allow Friends of Rye Nature Center (FRNC) to remain dedicated to the pillars of our mission. Visit ryenaturecenter.org/oktoberfest for more information.

Weekend/Public Programs

COMPOSTING FOR OUR FORESTS AND BEYOND

Wednesday, October 11, 2023
6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Join the Rye Nature Center in hosting Sashti Balasundaram, the CEO and founder of We Radiate. Together with We Radiate, participants will learn how composting can help restore our forest soil ecosystem and what the best resources are, for doing so at home.

For information about the City of Rye's composting program visit: <https://www.ryeny.gov/government/public-works/food-scrap>

FREE program.

NATURALIST IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Friday, October 26 - Saturday, October 27

An FRNC naturalist will visit your property and provide suggestions on how to make it more welcoming to wildlife through eco-friendly methods. Contact jax@ryenaturecenter.org to arrange your visit or visit our website for more information.

TURKEY HIKE

Saturday, November 18, 2023
9:15 a.m.

Get in the Thanksgiving spirit at the Rye Nature Center! Join our staff as we search for local turkeys in the forest and create a Thanksgiving craft. Suggested for ages 4 to 7. \$15/family.

CANDLE MAKING

Saturday, December 9, 2023
12:30 p.m.

Join us for some festive fun! Children and families will make their own colorful candles to light up the holidays. Suggested for ages 5 and up. \$10/person.

ANIMAL MEET AND GREET

Saturday, January 20, 2024
9:15 a.m.

Join us for a meet and greet with the Nature Center animals! Children and families will get to meet and learn about our resident mammals, reptiles, and birds. Afterwards, we will go out on a hike and learn about how our local animals have adapted to their environment. \$15/family.

MAPLE SUGARING

Saturday, February 10, 2024
9:15 a.m.

Learn how to tap a maple tree! Families will learn about the process of creating maple syrup and get a tour of our Sugar Shed. \$5/person.

All children must be accompanied by an adult unless otherwise noted. Programs generally last between 45 minutes and one hour. Please register online to attend the programs.

OLD-FASHIONED WINTER'S AFTERNOON/MEMBER DAY

Saturday, March 2, 2024
12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Enjoy log-sawing, maple sugaring, crafts, winter-themed carnival games, and more at this 48-year-old Rye tradition! All ages are welcome for this afternoon full of fun and delicious food. Visit ryenaturecenter.org/ofwa for more information. Free for current members, flat fee for non-members.

SEED STARTING

Saturday, March 16, 2024
9:15 a.m.

Join us for a day of hands-on gardening education. Families will decorate pots and plant their own seeds, then learn about the importance of local pollinators. \$5/person

POLLINATOR PATHWAYS

Saturday, April 6 at 12:30

Learn how to best support the needs of pollinators that are vital to our environment and food sources. Join Rye and the surrounding region to create a Pollinator Pathway network of pollinator-friendly habitats.

BIRDING

Saturday, April 27, 2024
12:30 p.m.

Learn more about our local birds as they start to migrate back to the area. Help our staff refill the bird feeders and go on a hike with binoculars to see what birds you can identify! \$15/family.

POND INVESTIGATION

Saturday, May 18, 2024
12:30 p.m.

Join us for an exploration of our very own Nanderwhere Pond. We will hike to the pond to scoop leaves and silt, search for larvae and insects, and look for wildlife like frogs and turtles. \$15/family.

Birthday Parties



Celebrate your child's next birthday at the Nature Center! Friends of Rye Nature Center offers birthday parties that are eco-friendly, educational, and of course a lot of fun! To help make these parties green (and hassle-free for you) we provide reusable tableware.

Choose from a variety of themes suitable for a variety of ages—from animal adventures to scavenger hunts, there's something for everyone. Price and guest limit vary based on your chosen theme and child's age. Parties have a base fee of \$500. An Environmentalist-level membership (\$125) or higher is required to book a party. Membership may be added at booking.



For more information, visit [@ryenaturecenter.org/birthdays](https://ryenaturecenter.org/birthdays)

Nature Access Fund

Friends of Rye Nature Center partners with several organizations to bring nature to those who otherwise have few environmental education opportunities. Donations to the Nature Access Fund support over \$130,000 in scholarships and programming.



Summer Camp Memories

Since 2008, we have hosted a free summer camp for students from the Inner-City Scholarship Fund. These children experience nature firsthand, eat healthy lunches, see wildlife up close, and have a fun week of camp.

Empowering Projects

Senior citizens, women living at the YWCA Residence in White Plains, and developmentally disabled adults and teens enjoy our interactive workshops while developing new skills related to gardening, birding, tree identification, and trail work.

STEM Enrichment Classes

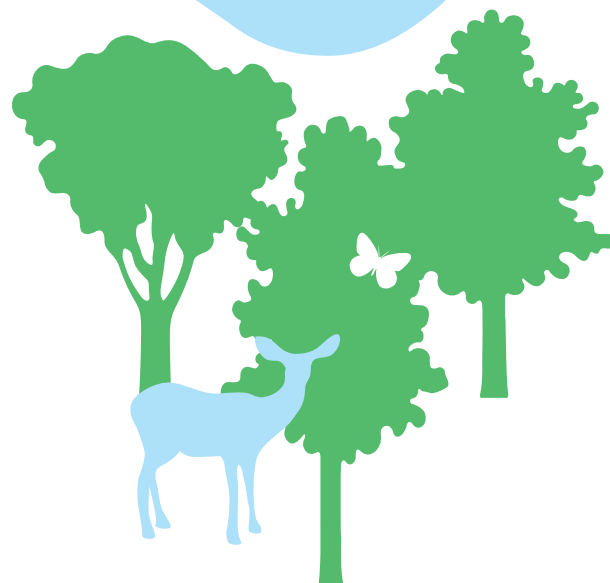
Children from the Community Resource Center in Mamaroneck, Port Chester's 5 Steps to Five program, Blue Skies summer camp, and Mount Vernon school districts learn about recycling, composting, animals, life cycles, and bees at their schools and on our 47-acre preserve.

Nature At Your Doorstop

Our mobile classroom, NatureStation, teaches people how to connect with, care for, and preserve nature. These hands-on exhibits have helped solve the transportation and logistical barriers that some people face when it comes to interacting with nature.

Program Scholarships

FRNC provides local Rye and Westchester families with need-based financial assistance to enroll their children in our camps, preschool and afterschool programs, and workshops. Annually, we award scholarships to Rye High School seniors who have demonstrated a commitment to environmental justice, education, and conservation. Please contact Christine Siller at christine@ryenaturecenter.org if you would like to apply for financial assistance for any of our programs.



Your contribution ensures that we can keep nature open and accessible, as it is meant to be. To support these programs, visit ryenaturecenter.org/nature-access-fund.

Save Friday, April 19, 2024 for our annual benefit supporting our outreach initiatives.

Citizen Science

Citizen science is conducted on a volunteer basis by members of the public. FRNC offers a variety of opportunities for you to learn more about plant and animal life while contributing to the scientific community. Visit ryenaturecenter.org/citizen-science for more information.



SAVE THE SOUND

Help Save the Sound monitor bacteria levels in the Blind Brook. Interested volunteers can visit savethesound.org/take-action/volunteer or email info@savethesound.org for more information.

PHENOLOGY NETWORK

Join FRNC and the National Phenology Network's efforts to monitor the impact of climate change on plants. On Thursdays during the fall and spring, our team notes various stages in plant development. Participants are asked to collect data at least twice a month from March through May and September through November. For more information, visit usanpn.org.

iNATURALIST

Help the FRNC conservation staff keep track of the flora and fauna that make the Nature Center their home. iNaturalist is a social network for naturalists run by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. iNaturalist helps its users identify the plants and animals around them by connecting them to experts and other nature lovers. To learn more and make an account, visit inaturalist.org. There are some tips to get you started at ryenaturecenter.org/inaturalist-how-to.

iMAP INVASIVES

The next time you visit the Nature Center, keep an eye out for invasive species! iMap Invasives is an online, map-based tool that tracks invasive species locations and management efforts. Citizen scientists can create a free account and log the locations of invasive species. iMapInvasives also offers guides to identifying local invasive species at imapinvasives.org/identification-guides. To learn more, visit www.imapinvasives.org.

eBIRD

Interested in birdwatching? Help FRNC document the biodiversity of our feathered friends! eBird is an online database managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that collects and archives data regarding birds around the world. To get started, visit ebird.org.



Volunteer, Intern, or Work at Rye Nature Center

Volunteer

FRNC owes much of its success to the volunteer support we receive in all areas of our operation. Detailed information can be found at ryenaturecenter.org/volunteer. Volunteer opportunities are available in:

Animal Care:

Help feed, clean, and interact with the resident Nature Center pets. Volunteers should be at least 14 years old and be able to commit to helping weekly or biweekly for 1.5 hours for at least 8 weeks.

Summer Camp:

Support our group leaders, counselors, and specialists in providing a fun summer experience for children. Must be at least 15 years old and commit to helping for two weeks between June and August.

Grounds and Trails:

Help maintain our forest and complete special projects. Group and corporate volunteer day opportunities are available.



Intern

FRNC's Internship Program seeks passionate and curious individuals to join us in our conservation department. These experiences are service-learning and project-oriented by design. High schoolers are eligible to complete their spring internship with FRNC or college-aged students may arrange a special opportunity as well. Visit ryenaturecenter.org/internships.

Work

High school counselors and college-aged group leaders work with our camp to help our educators and specialists provide fun, hands-on nature explorations and serve as role models to a group of children. Positions fill quickly, so please submit your application no later than March 1. Email alli@ryenaturecenter.org for details.



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