



Discover



Explore



Adventure



# OUTDOOR EXPLORATIONS PROGRAM

## INTEREST PACKET

Mountain Campus  
9112 Mountain Park Rd  
Beulah, Colorado 81023

River Campus  
5200 Nature Center Rd  
Pueblo CO, 81003



# NEW THIS YEAR:

## TEEN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM EVERY FRIDAY



"OEP": weekly nature-based enrichment for children in grades K-12

# Table of Contents

- |   |                  |   |  |
|---|------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Meet the Rangers | 4 | Empowering Young Stewards Through Nature |
| 2 | Program Overview | 5 | Testimonials                             |
| 3 | When & Where     | 6 | Registration and contact info            |

## Our Mission

The Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to promote environmental stewardship and community health through nature education, wildlife rehabilitation, and outdoor recreation.

Alpine International Preparatory Academy is a Kindergarten-12th grade multicultural learning community that offers a variety of high-quality and rigorous blended or virtual international academic programs. We promote student agency and experiential learning and inspire global citizenship.

## Our Vision

We envision thriving urban, rural, and wildlife ecosystems in Southern Colorado that foster a resilient connection between people and planet.

## Core Values

Equitable Access to Nature Experiences  
Connect with Community  
Preserve and Restore Nature

Collaborate with Partners  
Inspire Future Generations  
Encourage Learning

### **RANGER TIP:**

If you are viewing this digitally, be sure to click on hyperlinks like these:

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more on our latest and upcoming adventures at NWDC!



# Meet the Rangers



## **Elise Lokey, "Ranger Lokey"**

As NWDC's Program Manager, Elise (aka "Ranger Lokey") develops and facilitates OEP and supports a variety of other outdoor educational programs like summer camps and handling raptors at the Raptor Center. Before she joined the team at NWDC, she gained experience in field research, wildlife handling, conservation, ecology, and public speaking as a college student and research intern at CSU Pueblo. After presenting her research to a large group of curious kids at a number of symposiums, she fell in love with the idea of inspiring young minds. Before coming to NWDC, Elise worked for Lake Pueblo State Park as a naturalist. She strives to make a difference in the world by sharing her experiences with others in stewardship, outdoor recreation, and wildlife. In her spare time, Elise likes to go kayaking, roller skate, shoot archery, and travel with her husband.

## **Jay Zarr, "Ranger Jay"**

Jay, AIPA Director of Experiential Learning, is a master in using natural settings and adventure-based experiences to teach leadership, teamwork, and self-esteem. He works quickly to establish trust among all group members of all ages and has them involved, interested, and motivated. During his 35 years in higher ed., he created programs at CSU Pueblo, Colorado's Western State University, and Colorado Mountain College. His classroom is always collaborative in nature while developing leadership using the frame of Mother Nature as a vessel of knowledge. During this time, he was a senior instructor for W.E.A., Wilderness Education Association, and served as board president of the Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center. He has opened Alpine International Preparatory Academy 13 Outdoor Exploration Programs for kids k-12th grade throughout Colorado, partnering with local Nature Centers.



## **Noel Zant, "Ranger Zant"**

As NWDC's Program Director, Noel (aka "Ranger Zant") is responsible for the development and implementation of NWDC's youth and community programs, including [Earth Studies](#) and our [day/summer camps](#). Noel is a Pueblo native and she spent most of her free time outdoors during her childhood. She has a passion for nature and enjoys helping others find inspiration to discover the wonders of the outdoors. Her educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology from Colorado State University Fort Collins. She brings experience from Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Pueblo Zoo to her position with NWDC. When she is not wandering through the pines of our Mountain Campus or trekking through the prairie of our River Campus, Noel stays busy with her husband, twin boys, two dogs, eight chickens, two ducks, and one turtle.

# Program Overview



Welcome to the Outdoor Explorations Program (OEP) at the Nature & Wildlife Discovery Center! This dynamic weekly nature-based enrichment program caters to students from kindergarten through 12th grade (ages 5 and up), and is run in partnership with [Alpine International Preparatory Academy](#). Nestled within the serene landscapes of Pueblo and Beulah, Colorado, we offer two distinctive campuses (the [Mountain Campus](#) and the [River Campus](#)) that facilitate immersive explorations of diverse ecosystems including riverbanks, prairies, and mountain trails. At our River Campus, students have the unique opportunity to interact with and learn from our ambassador birds of prey housed at the [Raptor Center](#). These majestic creatures not only inspire curiosity, but also serve as living lessons in environmental stewardship.

## Our Objectives

### 1. Cultivate Lifelong Environmental Stewards

- Inspire a connection to local ecosystems through hands-on stewardship projects

### 2. Develop a Program that Grows with Participants

- Expand opportunities for skill-building, critical thinking, and leadership as students progress.

### 3. Introduce the High School Stewardship Program (Starting 2025-2026)

- Build leadership skills and resumes while fostering a deeper understanding of conservation and environmental careers.

### 4. Promote Outdoor Skills and Practical Knowledge

- Teach lifelong skills such as fishing, archery, animal tracking, gardening, and nature observation.

### 5. Encourage Socialization and Teamwork

- Foster collaboration, communication, and camaraderie through group activities, shared projects, and interactive lessons.

### 6. Encourage Local and Community Engagement

- Engage students in collaborative conservation projects that benefit local wildlife and ecosystems.

### 7. Inspire Curiosity and Creativity

- Create a supportive outdoor environment that encourages critical thinking and creative problem-solving.



## Extensions

- Curriculum extends beyond the classroom to include practical outdoor skills.
- Students learn fishing, archery, animal tracking, gardening and so much more!
- Annual science fair features student-led experiments in natural sciences.
- Encourages creativity and critical thinking in an outdoor setting



# When

Weekly sessions run from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Week Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Class	Pygmy Owls: Ages 5-7	Kestrels: Ages 7-10	Ospreys: Ages 9-12	Hawks: Ages 11-14	Eagles: Ages 14-17

- Sessions start in August and end in May, for a 34 total sessions, and will not operate on major holidays or during scheduled week long breaks.
- Weekly program day is based on age, cognitive, and physical ability.
- Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday groups may hike to Pueblo City Park; Monday and Tuesday groups have shorter hikes.
- Some students may need advanced material or additional support.

**We are committed to collaborating with parents to ensure we meet each child's unique needs and find the best day/educational fit for them.**



**PLEASE NOTE:**  
Pygmy Owls (Monday group) will not meet on major holidays. There will be make-up sessions held for this group on Fridays during weeks where a major Holiday falls on Monday.

# Where

- Our typical meeting location is our gorgeous [River Campus](#) - either in the Riverfront Room, or on the connected Patio
- We will occasionally have field trips to locations out of town like our [Beulah Mountain Campus](#) or [Lathrop State Park](#).
- Other locations could include:
  - [Pueblo City Park](#)
  - [Pueblo Zoo](#)
  - [Pueblo Heritage Museum](#)
  - [Lake Pueblo State Park](#)
- For any field trips, we will offer transportation using NWDC's vehicles to and from NWDC campuses and off site locations depending upon program schedule and transportation needs.



# Empowering Young Stewards Through Nature

## WHY OEP?

- OEP at the Nature & Wildlife Discovery Center connects students with nature and fosters lifelong skills.
- Bridges the gap between children and nature in an urbanized, tech-driven world.
- Promotes environmental stewardship and mindfulness beyond the classroom.
- Offers hands-on learning in Pueblo and Beulah's diverse ecosystems.

## THE IMPORTANCE:

- Teaches practical skills like fishing, archery, animal tracking, and gardening.
- Instills values such as preparedness, teamwork, and environmental respect.
- Hands-on conservation projects benefit local wildlife and habitats.
- Partnerships with the Pueblo Zoo and Raptor Center expose students to real-world impact.

## THE IMPACT:

- For kids: Inspires curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, building confidence and skills for life.
- For the community: Develops future leaders and environmental stewards, fostering sustainability.

## PROGRAM GROWTH

- Expands to include high school students, ensuring ongoing mentorship, leadership, and volunteer opportunities.
- OEP empowers students, benefits ecosystems, and creates a lasting impact on both individuals and communities.

*It's not just about learning in nature—it's about creating a future where people and the environment thrive together.*





# Testimonials

Click [here](#) to watch a video of OEP student Kadyn describing his experience in the program!



**Q: How does your child feel about the program so far?**

- *"She loves it! Loves the information and making friends."*
- *"Steven looks forward to nature school every week."*
- *"He loves it so much and we are very grateful!!"*
- *"He enjoys it and has learned a lot."*
- *"He enjoys it and likes being outside. He also likes science fairs and is excited for the next one."*



**Q: Have you noticed any changes in your child's comfort level outdoors since they started the program? If so, how?**

- *"He's very comfortable outside and is very active. He often mentions the rules taught by OEP and proudly shares what he has learned."*
- *"Steven seeks out more time outdoors more often."*
- *"She is way more comfortable being outside, playing outdoors, and even around spiders. Her anxiety has gone down—she doesn't run from bees anymore. She'll just stand still. She's definitely more comfortable outside."*
- *"Yes, he is so comfortable talking about all of the fun facts in nature. He loves talking about all the birds."*



*"The Outdoor Explorations Program has been an amazing experience for my daughter Evelyn. After switching to homeschool for medical concerns at her brick and mortar school last year, we wanted to get her into a program where she could socialize, learn about her special interests, and get plenty of exercise and fresh air. The rangers take every precaution to make sure the kids are safe and healthy; everything from monitoring dietary restrictions and allergies, to hygiene, to simply making sure the kids are well hydrated at all times. I completely trust them with the care of my daughter, even with her medical concerns."*

*Evelyn has made terrific memories in the group, learned so much, made new friends, and stayed safe and healthy throughout the program. She enjoys it so much that she has asked multiple times if she could just do nature school every day instead of our homeschool program. Nature school day is by far her favorite day of the week. We are very grateful to have this program and look forward to seeing what else is in store here."*

– Christina McClure



# Enrollment Process:

ENROLL NOW



1

Fill out the [registration form](#).

2

Virtually sign each required PDF.

3

If medication is needed during program hours for any reason, submit additional medical forms before the program starts.

4

Review the [OEP Student Handbook](#).

5

Sign the [OEP Expectation Agreement](#).

6

Get ready to explore!

7

Questions? Please reach out to us!



## Contact



**Elise Lokey, NWDC Program Manager**  
[elise@hikeandlearn.org](mailto:elise@hikeandlearn.org) | 405-664-1433



**NATURE  
& WILDLIFE**  
DISCOVERY  
CENTER



**Jay Zarr, AIPA Director of Experiential Learning & Outdoor Exploration Programs**  
[jzarr@aiprepacademy.org](mailto:jzarr@aiprepacademy.org) | 719-470-0942

