

Berrien Springs Partnership Syllabus – Spring 2026

CLASS TITLE: GVNCP - Nature Games

GRADE OR AGE LEVELS: ages 5 to 18

FORMAT: in-person

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

WEEKS TOTAL: 8 weeks **DAY/TIME:** 3 PM to 5 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 must pay for Fernwood membership)
13988 Range Line Road, Niles, MI 49120**

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.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Class is all outdoors. Dress for weather. Class will not be indoors.

This class is both informative and fun! Come enjoy Fernwood, explore its gardens, nature trails, plants, and animals, and play nature games. Learn about nature through a variety of nature games and hikes.

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. A parent is to help guide his / her kid(s) along nature trails to do nature activities. Also, a parent may be needed to help his / her kid(s) make nature crafts or play nature games. Unaccompanied students ages 11 and up may be paired up with each other to help each other.

Nature Game Topics include: Native Wild Animals, Birds, Butterflies, Tracks, etc., Michigan Trees, Tree Leaf Shapes, Food Webs, Nature and Gardens, and Nature Crafts. During each class, students will be outdoors, playing nature games and studying nature.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Teacher provides some info sheets

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

Dress for weather, class is all outdoors.

Bring a drinking water bottle, 3-ring binder, paper, pencils, clipboard.

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

SYLLABUS/OUTLINE: WEEKLY BREAKDOWN OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2 or more lessons per week (within 2 hours)

Week 1 – Jan 21 – Class Intro, and Winter Animal Game

Week 2 – Jan 28 – Winter Prairie, and Bird Game

Week 3 – Feb 4 – Winter Woods, and Wilderness Hike

Week 4 – April 15 – April Flowers, and Flower Game

Week 5 – April 22 – Garden Hike, and Garden Game

Week 6 – April 29 – Riverside Hike, and Tree Game

Week 7 – May 6 – May Flowers, and Nature Game

Week 8 – May 13 – Review, and Nature Books

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 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.

(Bring) Bring Required 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.

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