



# Family Nature Clubs

## Resources for Texas Families

Forming a Family Nature Club can be one of the most rewarding things that you can do for your family. The Children & Nature Network- Nature Clubs for Families Tool Kit has everything you need to get started. This supplemental document will help you with some of the many resources that are local to Texas.

### **Building Your Natural Skills**

One of the biggest barriers families face when making a decision to get outdoors is a fear of the unknown. Many adults did not learn how to set up a tent, build a safe campfire, bait a fishing pole or paddle a canoe. Luckily for those families there are plenty of resources available to them in Texas to help them get started.

### **Camping:**

**Texas Outdoor Families-** Offered by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department takes families camping so they can build their skills to later be able to camp on their own.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/programs/texas-outdoor-family/>

**Camp Fire Central Texas** – Camp Fire is open to boys and girls and serves all ages. Offers Family Nature Clubs, Traditional Scouting Clubs, Back Packing Clubs, Family Camp Outs and Paddling Clubs. Camp Fire rents camping equipment to their members.

**Boy and Girl Scouts** – Both organizations offer some camping and outdoor skills for the kids in their programs. Often they go on group camp outs that are fun and a good place to build skills. They do not offer equipment or gear.

**REI-** Rents camping gear and equipment. This is a great way to test things out and keep costs down.  
<http://www.rei.com/stores/rentals.html>



The **C&NN Natural Families Network** engages thousands of parents and families from across the country and around the world in frequent, active time together in the natural world. Groups of families organized into Family Nature Clubs help to break down barriers to getting out in nature, bringing together families from diverse cultures and backgrounds, and across generations. Family Nature Clubs also foster quality time together with family and friends.

To find the full Nature Clubs Tool Kit please visit:

[http://www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CNN\\_Toolkit\\_final.pdf](http://www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CNN_Toolkit_final.pdf)

## Fishing:

The first Saturday in June of each year is the annual **Free Fishing Day** and no person is required to have a fishing license or stamp endorsements while fishing on that day.

**A fishing license and stamp endorsement are not required if fishing from the bank in a state park or in waters completely enclosed by a state park.** All other fishing regulations, such as length and bag limits, remain in effect. Children ages **17 and under DO NOT** require a fishing license.

**Neighborhood Fishin':** Texas Parks and Wildlife Department works in partnership with local governments to stock catfish and rainbow trout in small neighborhood lakes. These fish are stocked frequently in season, so there's nearly always a fresh supply of fish available to take your bait.

[http://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/management/stocking/urban\\_catfish.phtml](http://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/management/stocking/urban_catfish.phtml)

**Tackle Loaner Program:** Many Texas State Parks have a tackle loaner program that loans fishing equipment just like a library loans books.

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/education/angler-education/tackle-loaner-program>

**Go Fishing Events:** Families can learn the basics of fishing through fun, hands-on activities. Take away a fishing fun pack and enter the drawing for door prizes. Equipment and bait provided or bring your own. No license necessary. Adults must accompany children.

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/education/angler-education/learn-to-fish>

**Angler Education Program:** Adults can become a certified fishing instructor with TPWD.



## Explore Nature in Your Community:

**Texas Children in Nature:** Connects families with over 300 partner organizations around the state who offer nature-based activities or programs, parks, nature centers and green spaces around the state. Nature Rocks Texas is a suite of websites designed to be regional specific so families can connect with the nature that is just outside their front door.

<http://www.naturerockstexas.org/>



Connect with Nature Rocks Texas in Austin, Caprock, San Antonio, North Texas, and South Texas.

**Austin:** <http://naturerocksAustin.org/>

**Caprock:** <http://naturerockscaprock.org/>

**North Texas:** <http://naturerocksnorthtexas.org/>

**South Texas:** <http://www.naturerockssouthtexas.org/>

**San Antonio:** <http://naturerockssanantonio.org/>



## **Junior Rangers:**

### **Texas Parks and Wildlife Junior Ranger:**

TPWD has Junior Ranger Packs and journals. [Junior Ranger Journals](#) will help kids learn about nature, by drawing, writing and observing. Explore packs are at 50 state parks and include- a pair of binoculars and a magnifying glass; an animal tracking key and guides to flowers, birds, butterflies, trees, rocks, wildflowers and plants; and pencil, crayons and watercolors along with a journal and sketchbook.

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/programs/junior-ranger-program>

**National Parks Junior Rangers:** The NPS Junior Ranger program is an activity based program conducted in almost all parks, and some Junior Ranger programs are national. Many national parks offer young visitors the opportunity to join the National Park Service "family" as Junior Rangers.

<http://www.nps.gov/kids/jrRangers.cfm>

Some city or local parks also have junior ranger programs or an equivalent.



**Kayaking and Canoeing:** The Texas Paddling Trails is a program to develop public inland and coastal paddling trails throughout the state and support these trails with maps, signage, fishing and wildlife-viewing information, and more!

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/>

## **Texas Nature Challenge :**

The goal of Texas Nature Challenge is to get families and kids outdoors by visiting as many participating parks and nature areas in Texas as they can. At each site, participants complete activity challenges designed for family fun and nature exploration. To participate, register your team, download challenges, complete those challenges at the sites, then create a notebook about your experiences. Registered participants have a chance to win prizes in their home region based on their notebook.

<http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/websites/NatureChallenge/About.aspx>



### **Texas Master Naturalist Program:**

Trained adults provide nature-based outreach and education services in their communities around the state. <http://txmn.org/>

### **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:**

AgriLife provides many types of youth and family oriented education programs and outreach opportunities around the state. Their programs can range from sustainable local farming to native plants, farm animals to wildlife. They have tons of on-line resources for families and youth groups.

<http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/>



## Arts in the Parks: TPWD

May 1-November 1, 2015

Kids 19 and younger can enter the “Get to Know” Texas State Parks Youth Arts Contest! The contest has [five categories](#), each with its own rules and prizes. You can enter as many categories as you want.

First, visit a state park! Create an original work of art, writing, photography, video or music inspired by what you see there.

Next, submit your work on [Get to Know's contest page](#). Look for instructions on the left side of the page under “Easy Steps to Enter.” Be sure to tag your entry with the name of the park that inspired it. Your entry will appear in the [Texas State Parks Gallery](#).



### Enjoy the Night:

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has partnered with the [McDonald Observatory](#), the [International Dark Sky Association](#) (IDA) and local astronomy groups to promote stargazing in our state parks. We hope to raise awareness of preserving night skies with star parties, self-guided constellation tours and light pollution education programs.

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/spdest/programs/dark\\_skies](https://tpwd.texas.gov/spdest/programs/dark_skies)



## Geocaching and Letter Boxing:

**Geocaching:** is the hunt for any of more than 2 million geocaches worldwide hidden by folks like you. Each treasure hunt will take you to a fun, creative or beautiful place outdoors. Your neighborhood might have more geocaches than you realize. <https://www.geocaching.com/play>

**Letterboxing:** is an intriguing pastime combining navigational skills and rubber stamp artistry in a charming "treasure hunt" style outdoor quest. A wide variety of adventures can be found to suit all ages and experience levels.

<http://letterboxing.org/index.php>

**Texas State Parks Geocache Challenge:** Look for geocaches in over 90 state parks, historic sites and natural areas all over Texas. Discover hidden items, learn exciting facts and stories about Texas State Parks, and win prizes!

[http://tpwd.texas.gov/spdest/activities/outdoor\\_recreation/geocache/coordinates.phtml](http://tpwd.texas.gov/spdest/activities/outdoor_recreation/geocache/coordinates.phtml)

### Education Trunks:

**Loaner Trunks:** TPWD Formal and informal educators and youth groups can borrow education trunks free from Texas Parks and Wildlife. Trunk themes include:

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/education/resources/resources/loaner-trunks>

- Birds
- Coastal Expo
- Texas Waters
- Home in the Gulf
- Life in the Gulf
- Rare Wildlife
- Bats
- Wetlands
- Wild in the City

**Texas Wildlife Association:** Discovery Trunks are a great FREE, STATEWIDE, TEKS-aligned resource, and are in high demand! Discovery Trunks are available for 2-week loans and are shipped statewide. <http://www.trunks.texas-wildlife.org>

## **Volunteer:**

Volunteering can be a rewarding way to give back to your community and spend time in nature. Many organizations offer volunteer opportunities, here are a few to get you started.

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:** Offers volunteer opportunities through their angler, boating, hunting and outreach programs, plus options at many State Parks.

[https://ec.volunteernow.com/recruiter/index.php?class=VolunteerNavigation&recruiterID=1353&act=CONTROL:OPP\\_SEARCH\\_LINK](https://ec.volunteernow.com/recruiter/index.php?class=VolunteerNavigation&recruiterID=1353&act=CONTROL:OPP_SEARCH_LINK)

**Texas General Land Office:** Adopt-a-Beach program and children's art contest. This takes place twice a year and to keep Texas beaches clean from Sabine Pass to Boca Chica.

<http://www.glo.texas.gov/adopt-a-beach/>

**Keep Texas Beautiful:** Their mission is to educate and engage Texans to take responsibility for improving their community environment. We do this through programming and education addressing our three focus areas: Clean up, Beautification and recycling. <http://www.ktb.org/>

**Tree Folks:** TreeFolks volunteers and staff have planted 1 million trees in Central Texas at schools, parks, in medians, right of ways, community gardens, greenbelts and on private lands in fire ravaged Bastrop County.

<http://www.treefolks.org/about-us/>

**Texas A&M Forest Service:** Works with communities to plant, care for and conserve trees. They empower local volunteers to make a positive impact in their communities.

<http://txforestservicetamu.edu/>



## **Birding:**

Birding is a fun way for families to observe wildlife in Texas. Did you know that Texas has some of the best birding in the world? Each spring and fall a mass migration of birds moves from Canada to Central and South America and Texas is smack in the middle of their flyway.

**Texas Audubon:** Has chapters around the state that offer outreach and education programs and events to connect people with birding. They have several birding centers and habitat lands that offer access to observe and learn about birds. <http://tx.audubon.org/>

**Cornell lab of Ornithology:** Offers a variety of ways for families to engage with birds. They offer Citizen Science programs like eBird, Project Feeder Watch, Nest Watch, Great Backyard Bird Count, Urban Birds and Yard Map. <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/page.aspx?pid=1664>

**Texas Parks and Wildlife- Nature Tourism:** Offers birding and wildlife maps for each region of the state. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/>



Zoos and Nature Centers also offer a means for families to observe and learn about wildlife and conservation methods taking place in Texas and around the world. Find the zoos and nature centers at [www.naturerockstexas.org](http://www.naturerockstexas.org)