



**Texas Children in Nature Network  
Summit Workshops  
December 11, 2024**

*You will be asked to choose a workshop upon registration. All workshop registration changes must be given prior approval and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

*When registering, please make note of the workshop selected.*

*As workshops fill, they will close and the workshops listed below may no longer be available on the Summit registration page.*

*Transportation to the workshops is on your own unless otherwise specified in the workshop description.*

*Public transportation is available through the [Waco Transit System](#). We encourage carpooling when possible.*

*Ridesharing options in Waco include [Uber](#), [Lyft](#), and [Micro Dash](#).*

*Please note all workshops will be held rain or shine.*

**1. Blue Spaces and Connection to Nature**

**Location:** Brazos River, Waco (exact location TBD), 1-4 p.m.

**Presenters:** Dr. Jay Maddock, Director-Center for Health & Nature, Professor – Texas A&M University School of Public Health

**Dr. Debra Kellstedt, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 13**

**Strands: Physical & Mental Health, Nature for All**

This workshop will include a kayak paddling trip down the Brazos River in Waco. Stops will be made along the way to discuss the health effects of blue space, accessibility, water safety (especially as it relates to children) and caring for our waterways. By the end of the session, participants will be able to discuss the health benefits of blue spaces, analyze opportunities for creating blue space programming, and create safe and effective ways to get children into blue spaces.

This workshop involves an active kayak trip. Participants should be able to kayak for up to an hour and should be prepared to be outdoors and on the water in December.

If there is inclement weather that prevents kayaking, the workshop will be held as a walking tour of blue spaces.

## **2. Changing Perspectives: Shadow Day - Forest School activities for ages 18 months to 5th grade. Pond Water Testing, Spots, & Tour.**

### **Summit School**

**Presenters: Mr. Peter Holmstrom, Ms. Camree Schraeder & Mrs. Melissa Skrhak**

**Location: Summit School, 1-4 p.m.**

**3701 Mockingbird Ln, Lorena, TX 76655**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 30**

**Strands: Early Education Outdoor Learning Environments, Formal & Informal Education**

Join us at Summit School for a dynamic day of experiential learning. Upon arrival, registrants will tour the campus with the Head of School, and then smaller groups will rotate through the following sessions. Upon arriving at our expansive 35-acre campus, our Head of School will guide you through our facilities. In Session 1, participants will engage in hands-on activities where adults experience learning through the eyes of learners, choosing between early childhood forest activities or upper elementary integration of science standards. Session 2A explores how farm animals enrich learning, followed by outdoor activities that can enhance daily toddler routines. Meanwhile, Session 2B includes a visit to the creek for sit spots and journal prompts designed to foster curiosity and connection with nature. In Session 3, participants venture to the pond to test water quality and observe microorganisms within the ecosystem. The day concludes with a Q&A featuring Summit School staff reflecting on the integration of forest learning into educational settings. Come discover how Summit School inspires outdoor education beyond traditional classroom walls!

## **3. Collaborating for Coastal Education: Chasing the Tide Learning Resources**

**Presenter: Anne Marie Fayen, Curriculum Developer for Chasing the Tide Film, Fayen Consulting**

**Location: Mayborn Museum Complex, Baylor University, 1-4 p.m.**

**1300 S. University Parks Dr., Waco, TX 76706**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 30**

**Strands: Formal & Informal Education, Community Engagement & Partnership**

Everyone in Texas is connected to the Gulf Coast. Join this interactive session to explore the K-12 learning resources that support the documentary series, *Chasing the Tide*. The learning resources highlight six themes from the documentary including: Ghost Wolves, Oysters, Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles, Aplomado Falcons, Birds, and the issue of trash in our waterways. Test out learning activities yourself and identify how you can use these resources with your audiences.

Anne Marie will share the in-depth details of the collaborative efforts that went into creating the Chasing the Tide learning materials, highlighting how conservationists and educators worked together to create accessible resources. Leave this session with practical ideas and tools to share the beauty and complexity of the Texas Coast with your audiences. Become part of Chasing the Tide's work to address the environmental issues faced by our resilient coast. Please bring a phone, tablet, or laptop for this workshop.

#### **4. Designing Natural Play Spaces in Urban Centers, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds**

**Presenters: Adam & Jill Bienenstock, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds**

**Location: Cameron Park, Redwood Shelter, 1-4 p.m.**

**2300 Cameron Park Dr., Waco, TX 76707**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 50**

**Strands: Formal & Informal Education, Early Education Outdoor Learning Environments, Greenspace Conservation & Development**

Participants will be coached to create their own natural playground designs out of sand and mini components all set to scale. We will start the design by using five basic elements: changing topography, creating pathways, and adding boulders, logs, and large trees. Next, natural playground components will be included in their designs to create areas that include art/creative play, dramatic play, science concepts, and areas that enhance social skills and collaboration. Participants will get a chance to present their models to the group while providing constructive feedback that will support the design principles, safety standards, and educational objectives presented earlier. Affordable ways to achieve these goals will be presented throughout. Specific attention will be paid to [CPTED](#), [ADA](#), [ASTM](#), and [CPSC Compliance](#). Operations and Maintenance for long-term sustainability and leveraging of current capacities will all be addressed as part of this modeling session.

#### **5. Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities by Sustaining Healthy Partnerships**

**Presenters: April Strickland - Better Living for Texans, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Libby Barnhill - Mission Waco, Gabriel Garmelo - GTG Outdoors, Emily Hills - Urban Reap, Rae Lucas - Waco Family Medicine**

**Location: Mission Waco, 1315 N. 15th St, Waco, TX 76707, 1-4 p.m.**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 30**

**Strands: Community Engagement & Partnership, Nature for All, Physical & Mental Health**

Participants will learn how Better Living for Texans (BLT) has partnered with local organizations to increase youth programming. They will be able to bring back new community partnership ideas and inspiration to their prospective counties and seek out the BLT Agent there for resources and opportunities to create new partnerships.

Despite all the resources available in the area, there are still hundreds of homeless in Waco and many of them are young people. Mission Waco will share how they are reaching youth in a variety of programs. The group will journey over to Mission Waco's 'The Rock' and hear how GTG Outdoors is aiding in this effort.

Then Urban Reap will discuss local Food Insecurity, Food Access, and Food Sovereignty during a tour of the Jubilee Food Market and walk through demonstration gardens to highlight how they are creating community engagement while also providing youth-centered activities and spaces.

Everyone will walk one block over to tour the Waco Family Medicine Wellness Center to see where patients can exercise indoors by appointment or on the outdoor work out equipment at their convenience. Families can exercise together and be outdoors!

Participants will also be introduced to the Junior Master Gardner's Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go Program. Everyone will participate in a Hands-On Cooking Demonstration and Interactive Lesson Example utilizing ingredients from the Community Gathering Space Garden sponsored by Waco Family Medicine. This is a teaching garden that is always accessible to the community. A little dirt never hurt! See ya there!

\*Parking Location: Registrants will be sent an ariel view of the Parking Area a few days before the workshop because of minor construction.

## **6. Guided Forest Therapy Walk: Engage your senses, quiet your mind, and immerse yourself in nature**

**Presenters: Courtney Crim, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Department of Education, Trinity University**

**Laura Allen, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Education, Trinity University**

**Location: Cameron Park at Lawson's Point, 1-4 p.m.**

**2601 N. University Parks Dr, Waco, TX 76708**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 30**

**Strands: Nature for All, Physical & Mental Health**

Our bodies share the same elements as the beings we meet in natural settings. Humans are nature, but we have allowed ourselves to become separated. During this guided forest therapy walk, you will experience the effects of *shinrin-yoku*—the Japanese practice of bathing your senses in the surrounding forest. The trained certified forest therapy guides will help you slow down by using a standard sequence of invitations that deliberately move you out of your head and engage your senses as you reconnect with the world around you. They will provide multiple ways for you to experience walks so everyone can participate in a way that meets their needs.

These walks are not strenuous and use gentle invitations to increase awareness, deepen connections, and elevate well-being. Honoring the spirit of *shinrin-yoku*, this experience will close with a tea ceremony featuring tea made from plants native to the forest. Participants will benefit firsthand how forest bathing can impact individual well-being which in turn benefits their educational interactions with children, experience invitations that can be transferred to their own contexts and examine research linking nature experiences to improved wellbeing. Please bring a water bottle and something to sit on.

## **7. Nature Play & Learning in the Museum**

**Presenter: Mayborn Museum Staff**

**Location: Mayborn Museum Complex, Baylor University, 1-4 p.m.**

**1300 S. University Parks Dr., Waco, TX 76706**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 40**

**Strands: Formal & Informal Education, Community Engagement & Partnership, Nature for All**

Visit the Mayborn Museum to see how the museum brings nature play and learning to visitors every week both in the museum and outside! Join the Museum Engagement Team Staff for a tour of the Backyard Ecology

Exhibit, a hands-on exhibit that encourages discovery and appreciation for the natural world with our visitors. After the tour, experience hands-on activities that take place at weekly programs in our Village and receive a tour of our Pollinator Rainwater Garden.

Through all tours and activities, learn how museum staff work with the community to enrich these offerings to continue bringing new and exciting offerings to museum guests.

\*Parking at the Museum is limited. Attendees are encouraged to take public transportation or carpool. Overflow parking is available at McLane Stadium, access the Museum from the pedestrian bridge over the Brazos River.

## **8. The Lake Waco Wetlands – Wading thru the Wetlands**

### **Lake Waco Wetlands**

**Presenter: Nora Schell, City of Waco Lake Waco Wetlands, Program Coordinator**

**Location: Lake Waco Wetlands, 1-4 p.m.**

**1752 Eichelberger Crossing Road, Waco, TX 76633**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 30**

**Strands: Formal & Informal Education, Community Engagement & Partnership**

Learn about the constructed Lake Waco Wetlands; the history of why it was created, who it benefits, and how it continues to inspire students, photographers, and nature lovers in general.

Nora Schell educates students and the greater community about reservoir systems and water issues through outreach and will share problems and solutions for running a constructed Wetland.

During this workshop participants will be introduced to the Bosque River Watershed and go on a tour of the Lake Waco Wetlands, focusing on the flora and fauna of the Wetlands. The tour will be in an open-air trailer ride around the Wetlands. Please wear proper attire, closed toe shoes, jackets, and/or rain gear.

## **9. The Power of Outdoor Play**

**Presenters: Dr. Debbie Rhea, Professor, LiNK Project Director, Texas Christian University**

**Cheryl Potemkin, Early Childhood Program Manager, Fort Worth Botanic Garden**

**Location: Dewey Park, 1-4 p.m.**

**925 N. Ninth Street, Waco, TX 76707**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 30**

**Strands: Physical & Mental Health, Formal & Informal Education**

Much is known about the need for play daily in children's lives. What is less known is how to attract children and adults to the outdoors and create intrigue, curiosity, and an inviting social/emotional climate through different landscapes with different opportunities at schools, parks, and community settings. Presenters will

introduce different strategies that have worked with the LiINK Project (in schools and communities) and Fort Worth Botanic Garden (in schools, community gardens, and teacher support). These include why the outdoors, school recess policies, and procedures, adult role during recess/play, weather guidelines, and equipment/loose parts for different landscapes to create an enticing environment for child and adult play. By the end of the workshop participants will be able to connect with reluctant adults where they are and allow them to change at their pace and they will be able to provide school, park, and community setting strategies that create an enticing recess/play environment for children and adults!

This workshop is for anyone who wants to feel more comfortable helping others who are reluctant to be outdoors, need to understand why the outdoors is so important, and need to be more comfortable being in spaces that produce active, healthy, and resilient children and adults.

## **10. Waco Mammoth National Monument: Community Partnerships for Preserving and Protecting**

**Presenters: Dr. Lindsey T. Yann - National Park Service, Raegan King and Kaitlyn Holyfield - City of Waco, Staff - Mayborn Museum-Baylor University, Priscilla Martinez and Hector Sabido - Waco Mammoth Foundation**

**Location: Waco Mammoth National Monument, 1-4 p.m.**

**6220 Steinbeck Bend Drive, Waco, TX 76708**

**Maximum Number of Participants: 25**

**Strands: Formal & Informal Education, Community Engagement & Partnership, Nature for All**

Visit Waco Mammoth National Monument where the National Park Service(NPS) paleontologist will give a tour of an active excavation of Pleistocene Columbian mammoths. This phenomenal site is supported through a partnership with the National Park Service, City of Waco, Baylor University, and the Waco Mammoth Foundation. These partnerships are vital to the Monument, and representatives from all partner representatives will discuss their role in the partnership including different ways students interact with the site's resources. Each presenter will also provide some best practices and tips that may help develop new partnerships.

Participants will have the opportunity to ask the panel questions about both the highlights and potential difficulties involved in developing partnerships. While there are often bumps in the road, sites like Waco Mammoth National Monument would not exist without the constant support of all partners. The hope is that participants will take these discussions home and begin brainstorming future partnerships to help students of ALL ages get more connected with nature.

\*There is little indoor space at Waco Mammoth, please come prepared for outside conversations. In the event of extreme weather, the partner presentations may be moved offsite.