

# **NIGHT PROGRAM OPTIONS**

## ***Indoor Classes***

### **BEHIND THE SCENES: ANIMAL CARE**

*Have you ever wondered what it takes to care for the animals here at the McDowell Environmental Center? In this hour and 15 minute presentation, students will get a glimpse into the work that goes into caring for our amazing avian educators and our herptiles from the comfort of their seats! Maybe a future animal caretaker is in our audience today! This program also includes seeing at least one of these amazing avian educators up close.*

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Students will:**

- Identify and name the three anatomical characteristics that make raptors, raptors.
- List what goes into daily animal care of McDowell Environmental Centers education animals
- Understand the value of live animal education and how our animals play a role in teaching stewardship

### **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

*Students will discover the fascinating traits of Alabama's local raptors. This program will provide an overview of the 8 raptor families in Alabama, with a deeper dive into a few of those families, and learn why they need our help and what we can do! Students will internalize their learning through observation, discussion, and live animal encounters with at least one education raptor.*

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Students will:**

- Raptors have specialized behaviors and body structures to survive
- Raptors fill an important role in the ecosystem
- Raptors of the Southeast need our protection

### **GAME NIGHT**

*Students will play together in a series of games in order to laugh, relax, and get to know some of their classmates better after a long day.*

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Students will:**

- Advance their teamwork skills
- Explore their creativity
- Have fun!

### **INVENTION EXPO**

*In this indoor activity, students will work together in small groups to find creative solutions to various problems and build imaginative inventions in a series of activities given by our instructors. Students must utilize their ingenuity and teamwork skills as they showcase the qualities that make them great inventors.*

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Students will:**

- Work in small groups cooperatively, sharing ideas and designs in pursuit of a common goal
- Engineer and test a solution to a problem offered by MEC staff with minimal resources and maximum creativity

- Find inspiration from natural objects, unfamiliar words, sketches, and in other surprising places, and use that to consider the design of current or future technologies

## McDOWELL WOODS

*Students participate in a town hall-style role play to determine how best to use land acquired by Camp McDowell. Students take on different stakeholder roles, such as Camp McDowell employees, coal miners, restaurateurs, scientists, and farmers, to come to a consensus on how best to use the land. Each stakeholder group will present their ideas for land use to the group, support their ideas with evidence, and will listen to other stakeholder groups with thoughtful respect to come to a solution that works best for everyone.*

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Students will:**

- Understand that making decisions about land use can be challenging
- The importance of weighing all the evidence in making a decision
- Listen and consider others viewpoints, even when in opposition, and be able to work together

## PELLET DETECTIVES

*Students will learn about the unique adaptations that make owls such impressive hunters and their role in our native ecosystem. Utilizing various tools, students will then work together to dissect owl pellets and identify what is found inside. Let's find out whooo ate what! **We charge an additional \$10 per student for this activity.***

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Students will:**

- Learn about the unique adaptations that owls use to hunt
- Understand native owls' role in our food web
- Dissect owl pellets to identify its prey

## *Outdoor Classes*

## NIGHT SKY NAVIGATORS

*Students will explore the forest of Camp McDowell at night while learning about our history as a species with the night sky. Students will also discuss ways different cultures have used our stars and planets in our sky for navigation and storytelling. **We recommend that this class not be taken in early September or May as sunset time does not correspond well with our evening class time.***

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Distance:** Varied, 0.5 - 1 miles, can be adjusted for each group

**Activity Level:** Low to moderate hike, on mostly flat terrain

**Students will:**

- Understand how humans' relationships to the night sky has changed over time
- Understand how different cultures relate to the night sky
- Understand how light pollution works

## NIGHT HIKE

*Students explore the forest of Camp McDowell at night, using all of their senses to enhance the experience and compare it to their hikes during the day. As they explore their senses, they discuss adaptations unique to nocturnal animals that help them be successful in their environment. **We recommend that this class not be taken in early September or May as sunset time does not correspond well with our evening class time.***

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Distance:** Varied, 0.5 - 1 miles, can be adjusted for each group

**Activity Level:** Low to moderate hike, on mostly flat terrain

**Students will:**

- Compare and contrast the animal adaptations needed for nocturnal success
- Discuss how sensory awareness plays a role in experiencing natural environments and compare their adaptations to those of the nocturnal animals they hear and see

## SCOPE OUT THE SKY

*Journey through the cosmos with a mix of immersive and hands-on astronomy experiences. Inside our inflatable planetarium, students will explore constellations and celestial stories through a guided presentation. Outside, we will use a telescope to observe the night sky firsthand, identifying seasonal stars, planets, and other astronomical wonders. Students will deepen their understanding of celestial motion, scale, and cultural interpretations of the night sky. **\*Group size limit of 30 students or less\****

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Distance:** N/A

**Activity Level:** Can be modified depending on group needs

**Students will:**

- Take a closer look at the night sky through McDowell's high resolution telescope
- Learn to tell the difference between stars and planets in the night sky
- Learn about the role of the night sky in human cultures

## SONGS, SPARKS AND STORIES

*Students experience an exciting evening of songs, skits, stories and games with our instructors. Connections to cultural entertainment before television and electricity are highlighted, as well as a sense of community and cultural preservation. The class takes place around a campfire and is ideal for all sized groups.*

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Distance:** 1/8 mile walk to fire location over a somewhat rocky path

**Activity Level:** Can be modified depending on group needs

**Students will:**

- Socially connected through experiences shared and activity objectives accomplished
- Historically connected to their cultural past by participating in activities that have entertained humans globally for centuries