Critter Camp is a day camp for budding naturalists to spend their days exploring the parks, forests, streams, meadows and trails with new friends. Camp crafts, themed hikes, snacks, group games and a day at the beach provide unforgettable memories for your child.

Please read this guide thoroughly as it contains important information about camp. If you have any further questions regarding your child’s stay, please contact the Dunes Learning Center office at (219)395-9555, or email Erin Crofton at ecrofton@duneslearningcenter.org.

Thank you for your interest in summer camp at Dunes Learning Center. We are looking forward to providing your child with a fun, educational, and exciting camp experience in the great outdoors!
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Contact Dunes Learning Center

Camp Information
Erin Crofton
(219) 395-9555
ecrofton@duneslearningcenter.org

Emergency Numbers
In the event of an emergency while your child is attending camp please call:

• Dunes Learning Center office: (219) 395-9555 ext. 1 Monday–Friday 8am-4:30pm
• Indiana Dunes National Park Dispatch at (219) 395-1077

Facebook
Follow camp adventures via Dunes Learning Center’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/duneslearningcenter. We do our best to capture and post images from camp, usually within one day. Like us to stay up to date!
Parent Checklist

Please review and complete this checklist to ensure a smooth transition to camp for your child.

Before the first day of Critter Camp

☐ Register for camp! Slots can fill up quickly.

Prior to each day of Critter Camp

☐ Tell your camper how much fun they will have at camp

☐ Help your camper pack for each day, including a water bottle and a nut-free lunch. Campers should wear closed-toe shoes and bring an extra pair of shoes each day. A change of clothes is also recommended. On Wednesday campers will go to the beach (weather permitting). They will need to come dressed in a swimsuit and bring a backpack with sunscreen, a towel, and their lunch.

☐ Make certain your camper has sunscreen and bug spray applied each day before they arrive at camp.

☐ Label all of your camper’s things that are going to be brought to camp with permanent marker. Be sure to use first and last names for easy identification of lost items.

Camp Check-In

☐ Be sure your camper eats breakfast before coming to camp.

☐ Check-in begins at 9am Central Standard Time.

☐ Check-in will include a brief medical consultation with the Camp Nurse. Have medications ready to turn in at this time. Medications must be in their original container.

☐ Pets are not allowed on campus.

Camp Drop-Off and Pick-Up Each Day

☐ Be sure your camper eats breakfast before coming to camp.

☐ Have medications ready to turn into camp staff at check-in. Medications must be in their original container.

☐ Drop-off: 9:00am CST

☐ Pick-up: 3:00pm CST

☐ Have your photo ID ready show staff at the check-out table.
About Dunes Learning Center

Inspiring lasting curiosity and stewardship with nature.

Dunes Learning Center is proud to carry on a tradition of learning in the dunes that dates back more than 100 years ago by the “Father of Ecology in North America,” Dr. Henry Chandler Cowles. Our programs provide a critical and beneficial connection to nature for learners of all ages—inspiring curiosity, scientific literacy, and environmental stewardship.

Located within the Indiana Dunes National Park, our residential environmental learning center is surrounded by scenic trails, historic sites, and one of the most biologically diverse National Parks in the nation.

We get kids outdoors, to explore and learn, to build confidence, form new connections, and make a difference. Residential and outreach programs connect classroom lessons with the natural and cultural history of this special region during the school year. We extend our engagement by hosting community events and providing summer camps to carry out our mission throughout the year.

Camp Outcomes

• **Develop** a sense of self and place by fostering social-emotional skills and strategies to connect with others and the natural world.

• **Provide** opportunities for safe outdoor learning experiences that promote positive relationships.

• **Promote** an understanding of the need for conservation and protection of natural resources.

• **Serve** the needs of participants from diverse communities and backgrounds.

• **Operate** as an organization that leads by example utilizing a professionally trained team of emerging conservation leaders who advocate for stewardship, sustainability, and environmental equity.

• **Integrate** program activities with the National Park Service to create an awareness of their role in protecting and preserving natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment and education of all generations.

**Dunes Learning Center is an ACA-Accredited Camp.**

ACA camps reflect current best practices and set the standard for the industry with regular, independent health and safety audits of camp operations. The ACA accreditation process is voluntary and demonstrates excellence, accountability, and an ongoing commitment to the children we serve. Learn more at DunesCamp.org.
### Health and Safety

#### Medical Care While at Camp

*The health and safety of every camper is our first priority.* Campers are monitored by all staff. All staff are trained and certified in First Aid and CPR. National Park Service emergency dispatch and law enforcement personnel are available 24 hours per day to help with emergency situations. Porter Regional Hospital and Chesterton Health & Emergency Center hospitals are both 11 miles or less from Dunes Learning Center campus. Ambulance service runs from Porter Fire Department, located approximately 3 miles from our campus. If your child becomes ill while at camp or requires medical treatment beyond basic First Aid, you will be contacted. Parents will be notified for pickup if their camper has a fever of 99º F or higher.

#### Medicine at Camp

All prescription and non-prescription medicines must be in their original container with dosage and camper’s name clearly indicated. Medicines will not be accepted in substitute containers.

- Medicines are kept in our First Aid room and administered under staff supervision based on parent instruction.
- Place all medicine in a Ziploc style bag with the camper’s name clearly marked on the bag.
- Medicines must be turned into the staff upon check-in. You will be asked to list all medications, dosages, and purposes.
- Dunes Learning Center keeps a stock of over the counter medications. Parents will be asked for permission to administer these medications at check-in.

#### Parent Visitation

It is essential that Dunes Learning Center staff knows who is on campus at all times. Please do not plan on visiting your child during camp. If for emergency reasons you need to pick up your child, please call one of the emergency numbers listed on page 3 to arrange pick up. You are invited to tour the camp with your child at one of our open house events, at camper drop-off, or following graduation on pick-up day.

#### Camp Food

Campers are responsible for bringing their own nut-free lunch each day. Snacks will be provided by Dunes Learning Center. In order to provide a safe environment for individuals with food allergies, Dunes Learning Center maintains a nut-free facility. If your camper has a dietary restriction, please complete and submit a Dietary Restriction Form, found on our website at duneslearningcenter.org/documents. Campers with special dietary needs for personal, religious, or medical reasons, must note this information on the Dunes Learning Center Camp Registration Form and complete and submit a dietary restriction form found at www.DunesLearningCenter.org/dietary.
Transportation

- Campers must be delivered to camp at the beginning and picked up at the end.
- Parents/guardians must specify who is allowed to pick their child up from camp, and that person will be required to present identification at the pick-up time. This information will be collected at check-in.

Please use caution when driving in pick up and drop off zones! Campers will be present!

Safety Rules
Camper safety is our highest priority. We use buses to transport campers to trailheads and activities. Dunes Learning Center and the National Safety Council urge parents and guardians to teach children the following bus safety rules:

Getting on the bus
- Avoid roughhousing or behavior that could lead to carelessness.
- Stay away from traffic.
- Wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before approaching.
- Use the handrail while boarding.

Behavior on the bus
- Sit quietly in your seat. Do not make noise that might distract the driver.
- Don’t put your head, arms, or hands out the window.
- Keep track of your belongings - keep aisles clear of backpacks and clothes.
- Wait for bus to stop completely before standing up.

Getting off the bus
- Follow directions from Dunes Learning Center staff. Do not stand up until instructed.
- Use the handrail when exiting the bus.
- If you have to cross in front of the bus, first walk 10 feet in front of the bus and make sure the driver can see you.
- Do not cross the road until the driver signals it is safe, then look left, right, and left again before crossing.
Camp Conduct

Behavior
The staff will do everything possible to help your child adjust to camp life. We follow a simple one-word rule: RESPECT. We expect campers to respect themselves by following instructions and safety guidelines; respect others by treating all campers and staff with courtesy; respect the facilities at camp; and respect the environment in their enjoyment of nature. Our RESPECT rule is clearly outlined for all campers at the beginning of camp. They are made aware of the rule and the consequences following disrespectful behavior.

Camp is thoughtfully designed to be a pleasant, educational, healthy, and safe environment for all. Dunes Learning Center reserves the right to send home any child who exhibits unsuitable or consistently disrespectful behavior, endangers the camp community, or engages in destructive acts. Any event of unacceptable behavior will result in the following:

• 1st Strike: a warning is issued and the program staff talks with the child.

• 2nd Strike: a second warning is issued and the child speaks with the Lead Staff or Education Director. The camper calls their parent/guardian to report their own misbehavior.

• 3rd Strike: child is withdrawn from activities. The child’s parent or guardian is responsible for picking them up from camp. In this case, there is no refund.

Serious infractions such as fighting, having weapons or controlled substances will result in immediate dismissal and possible prosecution.

 Supervision
Dunes Learning Center programs and activities are led by our enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. Cabin Leaders are undergraduates currently enrolled in an academic program. They lead evening activities and stay in the cabins with campers overnight. Interpretive Naturalists have a university degree and lead daytime programs. Dunes Learning Center recruits staff from across the United States and around the world. All staff must pass a background check and receive specialized training including First Aid and CPR.

Dunes Learning Center utilizes the “rule of three” to ensure the safety of our campers. This requires a minimum of 3 people to be together at all times. The group of 3 may consist of 2 adults and 1 child, or 1 adult and 2 children.
Sample Program Descriptions

Beach Party
Miles of shoreline are a defining feature of both the park and the camp experience! Campers will load Dunes Learning Center’s bus and head to West Beach, where they will have the opportunity to build a sand castle, play games, and have lunch on the beach. Weather permitting, campers have an opportunity to experience Lake Michigan while lifeguard-trained staff makes sure everyone is safe. Please send your child to camp in a bathing suit under their clothes and be sure they have a backpack containing a towel, sunscreen, lunch and two bottles of water. Campers must wear closed-toe shoes.

Coyote Game
The highlight of many summer camp stories, Coyote is a camp-wide nature themed game of tag designed to teach campers about resources and relationship in nature.

Day Hikes
Campers will put on their explorer hats and head out to the forest on several hikes throughout the week. Salamanders, frogs, insects, birds and flowers are just a few of the natural wonders we hope to encounter on our adventures.

Story Time
Everyone enjoys a good story under a shady tree. We take the opportunity to slow camp down a bit to allow campers to relax during a story where they will also be provided a snack that relates to the theme of the summer.

Themed Activities
Our themed activities change each year, but the style is always the same each day. Campers will participate in a high energy activity, a low energy activity, and a craft where they get to create something to bring home based on the theme.
Camper Packing List
Summer weather in the dunes can be unpredictable. The following is a list of suggested items. Keep in mind that most of the time spent at camp will be outdoors. Expensive designer clothing should be left at home - bring clothes that can get dirty!

- Nut-free sack lunch
- Sturdy closed-toe shoes for hiking. Open-toe shoes such as flip-flops are not permitted.
- An extra pair of shoes that can get wet and muddy may be desired on any day with rain.
- Raincoat or poncho
- Hat with sun visor
- Sunglasses
- Sweater or sweatshirt
- Lip balm
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent
- Two reusable water bottles
- Backpack (no drawstring backpacks)
- Swimsuit for (for day at the beach)
- Towel (for day at the beach)

Optional items:
- Camera (rugged or disposable)
- Binoculars

What NOT to bring!
Video games, cellphones, other electronic games, iPods, pocket knives

Strictly Prohibited
- Tobacco and electronic cigarettes
- Alcoholic beverages
- Illegal drugs
- Weapons, including but not limited to: firearms, ammunition, and knives
- Animals
- Sports Equipment such as hockey sticks, climbing gear, or baseball bats

Lost and Found
Remember to label all belongings with your camper’s first and last name so that they are able to return home with everything they brought to camp. Found items will be held at Dunes Learning Center’s office for two weeks after camp. If contacted about lost and found items is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to retrieve their property. Dunes Learning Center is not responsible for lost items.
Money Matters

Payment
Payment is due at the time of camp registration found online at DunesLearningCenter.org

Refunds and Cancellations
Your registration fee will be refunded if:

• The camper is withdrawn by writing Dunes Learning Center no less than 30 days prior to the camp start date.

• Camp is cancelled by Dunes Learning Center.

No refunds will be given if:

• A camper leaves camp early due to missing home or parent request.

• A camper is sent home for behavioral reasons.

• A camper does not show up for camp.

No Shows
Please make every effort to arrive on time. Dunes Learning Center will verify absences by phoning the family of absent campers.

For more information please phone Dunes Learning Center at (219) 395-9555.

Support Summer Camp Experiences for Everyone
Dunes Learning Center is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization that relies on the generosity of people like you to fund programs and keep tuition costs low. Please consider donating an additional $20, $50, $100 or the full camp tuition so that we can keep summer camp experiences affordable and accessible. Your tax-deductible donation will help us provide kids with outdoor experiences that last a lifetime.
Directions to Dunes Learning Center


Once off the interstate, continue east on U.S. Highway 20 for 1.6 miles to Mineral Springs Road (Mineral Springs Road is just past the metal bridge at the second blinking light, opposite the sign for the Spring House Inn). Look for Indiana Dunes National Park signs directing you to Dunes Learning Center.

**Turn north or left** on Mineral Springs Road and continue for 0.4 mile to Oak Hill Road.

Turn left or west on Oak Hill Road and continue 0.4 mile to Howe Road.

Turn left or south on Howe Road. After another 0.2 mile, the Learning Center entrance will be on your right. Enter through the stone gateway and follow the drive, keeping right at the fork to the camper drop off area before proceeding to the parking area just past Dunes Learning Center’s Cowles Lodge.


From the South: Take Interstate 65 North to Interstate 94 East and follow the above directions from the west.

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