

**Theme Based – Nature is Primary Focus. Enrichment: Music (all sessions) and Spanish (during Fall/Winter sessions)**

1. Amphibians & Tadpoles/polliwogs (Spring/Summer) – Oakdale Nature Preserve & Olson Lake home/DeMontreville Lake
2. Reptiles (Summer/Fall) – Oakdale Nature Preserve & Olson Lake home/DeMontreville Lake
3. Fish and snails (Summer) – Olson Lake Home/Lake Isabella at Hastings Lock n Dam
4. Pollinators (Spring/Summer): Bees, flies, hornets, wasps, ants, beetles and more!
5. Predators vs Prey (Spring/Summer/Fall): Who is a predator or prey? Which animals are both?
6. Water is Alive! Organisms that live in local ponds and lakes and rivers! Good vs not so good organisms (Spring/Summer/Fall).
7. Busy as a Beaver - - in Oakdale! (Spring/Summer)
8. Night Sky Comes Alive with Owls and Nighthawks! Sounds and Identification (Spring/Summer/Fall)
9. Moth vs. Butterfly: How to identify common moths and butterflies in MN. Cocoons and host plants (Summer/Fall)
10. Moles, Voles and Shrews Oh My! Learn the differences (Spring/Summer)
11. Backyard Squirrels: Gray, Red, Fox and Flying Squirrels. Habitat and Daytime vs Nighttime Activity
12. Weasels, Mink, Otter and Fisher in MN
13. Exploring Trails and Plants - - Katherine Abbott camp for scouts!
14. Plants w Berries – Oakdale Nature Preserve (Summer/Fall)
15. Plants without Berries – Oakdale Nature Preserve (Summer/Fall)
16. Mushroom Identification – trees and logs that mushrooms love! (Spring/Summer)
17. Bird Nests in trees, shrubs, ground and rock nests (Spring/Summer)
18. Match Bird w its nest and egg – Cornell Bird Lab (Spring/Summer)
19. Bird and Owl Calls: Listen, Observe and Learn! Local Parks for Birding & Cornell Bird Lab (Summer/Fall)
20. Birds that fake injury/illness to distract or defend its nest – Cornell Bird Lab (Spring/Summer)
21. Animal skat and identification – Maplewood Nature Ctr (Spring/Summer/Fall)
22. Owl pellet dissection – Raptor Ctr (Summer/Fall)
23. Animal skull identification – Andy Shoemaker (Summer)
24. Visit from Andy Shoemaker (Spring/Summer/Fall)
25. Native Plants – Edible vs poisonous/itch/toxic (Spring/Summer/Fall)
26. Non-native Plants/Weeds (Spring/Summer/Fall)
27. Making Cider from apple (Jamie Jensen) (Summer/Fall)
28. Agate identification and polishing (Summer/Fall)
29. Honey Bee: Life cycle of beehive and honey production (Summer/Fall)
30. Moss and bark: Why do trees have them? (Summer/Fall)
31. Backyard garden: planting native plants like black cap raspberry, gooseberry, wild rose, onions etc. (Spring/Summer)
32. First aid outdoors (Summer/Fall)
33. Outdoor survival in rain and wind, safety kit making (Summer/Fall)

34. Conservation at Home: ideas to conserve, reuse, recycle, regenerate, save/restore and more! (Spring/Summer/Fall)
35. Compass Orienteering (Spring/Summer/Fall)
36. Pumpkins and gourds (Fall)
37. Spores, seeds, nuts and more!! (Fall)
38. Watching the sky: how to watch migration patterns and birds from afar! Eagles, hawks, crows, cranes, geese and more! (Spring/Summer/Fall)
39. Animal Hibernation/Brumation/Migration: MN Birds, Animals and Insects/Butterflies (Fall/Winter)
40. Animal Track Identification (Fall/Winter)
41. 101 Safety Outdoors: biting/stinging bugs (horse fly, house fly, biting black fly, gnats, honeybee vs. wasp and yellow jackets, ground bees, biting lady-bugs, ticks, and more), snakes, spiders, poisonous plants/grass, plants with spikes or itch plants. How to perform daily tick-checks. How to wear clothes and gear to reduce ticks! (Summer)
42. Music Camp: focus on composers, genre, styles, composing your own music
43. Music Camp: Intro to Flute
44. Music Camp: Intro to Piano and keyboard
45. Music Camp: Intro to Drum/bongo
46. Music Camp: Intro to Harp
47. Music Camp Combo: Intro to Flute, piano, keyboards, drum/bongo, harp and music composers (2 day camp)
48. Spanish Camp: Intro to Spanish (FALL/WINTER)
49. Spanish Camp: Intermediate Spanish (FALL/WINTER)
50. Spanish Camp: Spanish Songs (FALL/WINTER)
51. Spanish Camp: Beyond Intermediate (FALL/WINTER)
52. Forest Therapy Walk and Tea Ceremony
53. Field Day at Lake Elmo Swim Park (Summer - - Depending Class Size)
54. Student Lead Presentation on Nature Topic Research Project (FALL/WINTER)
55. Young Naturalists: MN Conservator Volunteer Program (DNR Officer Visit) (Summer/Winter)
56. Nature Journaling (WEEKLY - Spring/Summer/Fall/Winter)
57. Leaf and Tree Identification & Leaf Tracing/Tracking
58. Birds and Wildlife that thrive in urban/suburban areas: raccoons, flying squirrels, fox, coyote, squirrels, opossum, owls, nighthawks, mice, and more!
59. Meditation and mindfulness: how to hear and see more of everything that surrounds you!
60. Biking and Hiking Exploration on the Gateway Trail
61. Learn to read maps for hiking and biking!
62. Bison and Prairies: visit Belwin Nature Conservancy or Shar's Bluff Spring Lake Park
63. Dodge Nature Ctr Visit
64. Lillydale Walk along the Mississippi and Visit to Henry Sibley House/Site

**2026 SNFS Summer Themes (Explore Days Listed Separately)  
JUNE 2 to AUG 6**

	Theme Monday-Half Day (ages 6-13)  8:45 AM – 12:15 PM (Select Number from List Above)	Theme Tuesday-Full Day or Half Day (ages 6-13)  8:45 AM – 2:45 PM (12:15 PM) (Select Number from List Above)	Theme Wednesday-Half Day (ages 6-13)  8:45 AM – 12:15 PM (Select Number from List Above)
<b>Week 1: June 1-3</b>		Theme: 16, 17, 18, 20 & 43 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 2: June 8-10</b>		Theme: 1,3,6 & 32 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 3: June 15-17</b>		Theme: 1,3, 6, 19, 32, 57, 2 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 4: June 22-24</b>		Theme: 6, 7, 32, 41 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 5: June 29-July 1</b>		Theme: 41, 44, 30 & 33 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 6: July 6-8</b>		Theme:13, 14, 15, 34, 53 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 6: July 13-15</b>		Theme:5, 24, 45, 59, 23? <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 7: July 20-22</b>		Theme: 11,13, 21, 22, 23?, 28 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 8: July 27-29</b>		Theme: 4, 25, 26, 42 or 47, 44, 58 <b>Nature Journaling: 56</b>	
<b>Week 9: August 4 - 6</b>		Theme: 4, 9, 27, 29 34, 38, 52,55, 60, 61 Fun Day! Summer Picnic on Aug 4-6	

***LAST WEEK: AUGUST 4 and Explore Day Aug 6***

**2026 Summer Explore Days – First 3 Thursdays of the Month, Full Days**  
**Ages 6 – 13**  
**9:30 AM – 3 PM**

	<b>Nature/Outdoor Explore Theme</b>	<b>Creativity, Independent Thinking, Decision Making Theme</b>
<b>Week 1: June 4</b>	Theme: Chorus and Wood Frog Identification and Songs/Calls. Explore: Oakdale Nature Preserve & Discovery Center, ponds and natural spaces. Bring blanket to sit and listen to frogs; bring journal to draw pond life.	Theme: Making lemonade with grapefruits and lemons, water, simple syrup. Sumac spice & orange slice. Making at home feeder for Baltimore Orioles w grape jelly and meal worms.
<b>Week 2: June 11</b>	Theme: Identifying Hammock sites, making hammocks, hammock wind shelter, meditating outdoors, outdoor hammock reading, identifying bird calls/sounds. Intro to compass/orienteering. Explore: Lake Elmo Park Preserve hammock sites, ponds, trails	Theme: Making trail mix granola with oats, honey, brown sugar, butter, raisins and craisins. Make meal worm feeders for chickadees and bluebirds.
<b>Week 3: June 18</b>	Theme: Birding 101. Bird watching including Eagle/river bird watching. How to use birdbook, binoculars, call/sounds. How to record bird types. Meet w State Park Guide for junior explorer programs. Explore: Afton State Park birding sites Explore Afton State Park for birds that mimic other birds: catbirds and brown thrasher/wood thrush.	Theme: Making orange sippers w dye-free peppermint sticks and honey sticks
<b>Week 4: July 2</b>	Theme: Berry Time! Pick black cap berries. Olson Lake home and Oakdale Nature Preserve. How to create fermented sodas from natural fermentation and berries/leaves. Beaver homes at Oakdale Nature Preserve. Explore: Olson Lake woods and Oakdale Nature Preserve	Theme: Making pear compote w sumac spice.
<b>Week 5: July 9</b>	Theme: Making tent site and outdoor cooking/fire making (weather permitting) or learning fishing techniques. Intro to compass/orienteering at Savannah Trail. Explore: Lake Elmo Park Preserve or Olson Lake shore	Theme: fire making with flint, farro rod and starter. How to care for fire and extinguish fires. Making melted cheese dill crackers snacks over fire. Making melted cheese n crackers Smore's & chocolate marshmallow

		Smore's at home in 1 minute & making Horchata rice milk w cinnamon/sticks
<b>Week 6: July 16</b>	<p>Theme: Staying cool in hot weather. Ways to cool down and keep body comfortable on hot weather days. Wraps, hats, sunscreen, making/finding shade, plants that cool you, outdoor shelters, grass beds.</p> <p>Explore: Cottage Grove Ravine Park and shelter hideouts along beaver trails</p>	<p>Theme: making hot weather snacks outdoors: ant logs, ladybug logs, bear logs (cream cheese, peanut butter, hazelnut butter on celery ribs with raisins, raisin, vegan choc chip toppings)</p>
<b>Week 7: August 6</b>	<p>Theme: Nature's Cleaners! Migrating River Birds, Vultures, Owls, Bats &amp; Nighthawks. Birds that scavenge roads, ditches, streams, rivers. Bug-eating birds &amp; bats!</p> <p>Explore: Lock and Dam #2 Hastings. Owls</p> <p>Calls/Sounds: Great Horned, Barred, Screech, Saw Whet</p> <p>Nighthawks. Vultures. Bats.</p> <p>Eagles/hawks/ospreys.</p> <p><b>Alternate Option 1:</b> Theme: Urban parks and urban wildlife. Coyotes, foxes, opossum, racoons, flying squirrels, nighthawks, owls in backyard. How to set up night cameras</p> <p>Explore: Lake Elmo Park, Oakdale Nature Preserve or Maplewood Nature Ctr.</p> <p>Future Self-Guided Explores: Fall/winter star gazing opportunities at local parks, night walks/luminated walks at local parks, where to watch/observe migrating birds (Carpenter Nature Ctr saw whet owl banding, lock n dam #2 migration, river birds/birds of prey). Where to Fall/winter camp locally (Lake Elmo Park, Afton &amp; Wm O'Brian State Parks, backyard!)</p> <p><b>Alternate Option 2:</b></p> <p>Camping at Lake Elmo park or Lake Olson Homestead!</p>	<p>Theme: Easy kidd-O'-derves (pickles, salami, dried/smoked salmon, turkey, capers, dill, cream cheese, peppers, pineapple/peach, raisin, raisin etc.).</p> <p>End of Summer Picnic or Treat at DQ in North St. Paul or Luv's Ice Cream stand!</p>