Merry Lea Homeschool Series 2015-2016
Program descriptions and Information

Wed., 10/14/15 & Thurs., 10/15/15 – Autumn Adventures
Students will investigate what animals and plants are doing in autumn to prepare for an Indiana winter. During the morning, students will have a chance to learn about native organisms’ winter-survival adaptations through hands-on activities and instruction. After lunch, students will head to the trails to see how these concepts come alive in the forests, meadows and wetlands at Merry Lea.

• Meet at the Learning Center.
  • Will be rotating through several stations in and outside the Learning Center building in the morning.
  • Will be hiking on trails near the Learning Center after lunch.
  • Bring a sack lunch.

Wed., 11/4/15 – Poultry Butchering  [*One day only for this program]
For centuries people have raised animals for food. Students will have the opportunity to be part of this ancient tradition by helping and/or observing Merry Lea staff members butcher and process chickens to prepare them for eating.

*Please note that this program is only offered one day rather than two days like the rest of the series. Registration is limited to 40 people (including both students and parents) due to space constraints in the rooms where the poultry processing occurs.

• Meet at the Farmstead.
  • Bring a sack lunch that will be eaten inside away from the butchering location.
  • Participants will be able to just watch the processes or help with parts of them, depending on their comfort level. At this point we are not planning to allow homeschoolers to help with actually killing the birds.
  • Students should definitely come in old clothes that will get messy - greasy, bloody, feathery. They should also wear lots of layers if it's at all chilly. A lot of the time is outside and the part that is inside is in a building without central heating. Stocking hats go a long way to help keep us warm on butchering day.
  • Participants will be able to just watch the processes or help with parts of them, depending on their comfort level. At this point we are not planning to allow homeschoolers to help with actually killing the birds.
  • Students should know that they will very likely smell like chickens till they've bathed after their participation.
  • Some reflections from Lisa Zinn related to butchering day: “Butchering day is a strange day. It has a certain excitement as we all gather to do this work and it also has a sadness and solemnity. For me, though, I have found it to be a very important experience. I was a vegetarian for 8 years because I didn't like the disconnect that we modern Americans have between the meat on our plate and the living animal. I now eat meat from time to time and I value butchering day as the day that helps me remember that connection. I believe those…chickens at Merry Lea had good…chicken lives and I think it is alright for me to now use their death to help sustain my life and the lives of my friends. My hands plucking the feathers and removing the insides gives this life-death-life-death ecological system more of a reality for me. It helps me to remember throughout the year that the meat on my plate was a living creature and I should be grateful that its life is now sustaining mine. Butchering day also gives me a chance to participate in that ritual that has been done for ages, of people gathering to help each other prepare the meat for the season. So, I encourage you to embrace this experience and, even if you have done it before, allow yourself the reminder of the value of life and celebration of the amazing cycles that sustain life on the earth.”
  • We don’t have the final details about how many birds we’ll be butchering nor whether we’ll bring in some birds beyond the broilers we are raising ourselves. Some of these details will be worked out closer to the program date.
**Wed. 2/3/16 & Thurs, 2/4/16 – Winter Nature**

Enjoy the wonders of winter! Students explore how people, plants and animals cope with winter. We will also learn some aspects of animal tracks and tracking, then use this to search outdoors for signs of life in the wintery woods and meadows. Some indoor activities are also included to allow time for warming up.

- **Meet at the Learning Center.**
- Students should bring along snowpants, winter boots, and other warm layers. They won’t need to be wearing them immediately as they will be inside for a few activities at the beginning of the program.
- Students will be making plaster track casts to take home. This can be a somewhat messy process, so it would be good for students to wear old clothes.
- The amount of time spent outside will depend on the weather conditions on the day of the program, but there will definitely be time spent outside.
- Bring a sack lunch
- We will provide hot chocolate sometime during the program after lunch. If your child cannot have or does not want hot chocolate, feel free to send an alternative for them.

**Wed, 4/20/16 & Thurs, 4/21/16 – Land Ethic**

During an extended hike, students will increase their awareness of the land and explore ways they can become better land stewards. They will also explore the meaning of “land ethic”. This program is based on the writings and ideas of Aldo Leopold, known as the father of wildlife management. Leopold was a conservationist, forester, teacher, writer, philosopher and outdoor enthusiast. His best-known book is *The Sand County Almanac*.

- Bring a sack lunch and water bottle in a backpack as lunch will most likely happen along the trail during the program.
- Students should come prepared to be outside the whole program time. Depending on the weather, this could include wearing raingear, mud boots, hat with a brim, sunscreen, gloves, stocking cap – whatever will be appropriate for 4 hours outdoors.
- The hike for this program will travel at least halfway across Merry Lea’s property and might include hiking off trail.
- Closer to the program date we will inform participants of where they should be dropped off and picked up.

**Wed, 5/18/16 & Thurs, 5/19/16 – What’s Buggin’ You?**

Students will gain an understanding and appreciation of the characteristics, diversity and importance of insect populations. Students will learn about life cycles, behavioral adaptations, human interactions with insects, the types and essential parts of insect habitats, and how insects fit into food webs.

- Bring a sack lunch
- TENTATIVELY planning for this program to happen at Luckey’s Landing. Decision will be finalized closer to the program dates.