

COLUMBIA SPRINGS PROGRAM REPORT 2020

Summer Nature Day Camp | Columbia Springs Volunteer Program | Education Programs

There is no single funder for several of Columbia Springs' environmental education and community programs. Generous community support, corporate and government partnerships sustain them. This report highlights last year's achievements made possible by donors like you!



What We're Celebrating

Our education team was heartbroken to cancel our fully-booked field trip calendar and favorite community events in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **But, we identified a great need among families to connect with nature during this unprecedented time, so we rolled up our sleeves to provide opportunities** using virtual or COVID-safe models.

In a year of challenge and creativity, we're celebrating:

- **Redesigning** Nature Day Camp for small groups of students, including new protocols that **allow students to engage in science and nature learning**, in a safe environment.
- **Hosting 48 campers over six weeks of camps** with six campers attending on full scholarship.



Campers upcycled old t-shirts with a screen printing class.

- Connecting students to science and nature at home with a suite of learning activities including videos, guided walks, and virtual lessons.
- Launching a **new Docent event providing winter activities**, bringing more families into our Visitor Center, and increasing connectivity between Columbia Springs programs.

- Reimagining the volunteer program to include **new roles and protocols that kept volunteers safe**, including working with an adapted Repair program and providing much needed care to our property through **individual stewardship opportunities**.
- Engaging volunteers in an astounding 1,705 hours of service across all programs.



"My son has loved this camp every year. But this year, in the hardest of times, it made his summer to be able to safely get out of the house in the great outdoors and have an opportunity to learn with peers."

- Alissa Robbins, Summer Camp Parent

Summer Nature Day Camp



The City of Vancouver and Waste Connections Inc partner with Columbia Springs each year to bring Nature Day Camp to the community. **At camp, students learn the important skills of caring for our planet**, while spending their days outside and immersed in nature. With virtual learning and pandemic restrictions in place, this program was more important than ever to provide a safe environment for students to explore, learn, and connect. We are thrilled that:

- **Our completely redesigned COVID-safe program meant smaller group sizes**, creating a uniquely supported camp experience.
- 34 campers attended with **16 returning for their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year in a row!**
- We are a community hub. Campers in 2nd-5th grade attended from **21 different local elementary schools.**
- Campers had a blast and learned a ton including a screen printing class, forest decomposer exploration lab, recycled and found natural materials craft lessons, wetland water quality surveys with aquatic macroinvertebrates, and more.

Nature Day Camp is focused on waste reduction as a critical and practical way for each camper to take action to protect the environment. From feeding lunch scraps to the worms, to working together to sort daily trash, **campers absorb valuable information about waste reduction, recycling, composting and more!** A zero-waste lunch challenge invites students to take action and bring the important conversation home to their families. Students take great pride in reducing the waste they bring each day.



Access for All—Scholarship Spotlight

One in six campers attends on a full, needs-based scholarship. Through partnerships with homeless service non-profit Share and Habitat for Humanity, families and campers are identified who would not normally have access to this type of program. Families are also encouraged to apply for a needs based scholarship based on income.

Aiden is a 2nd grader who joined us for his first camp experience on a full scholarship. **He brought enthusiasm each day for exploring nature and making new friendships.**



Teaming up to build an elaborate bug mansion, featuring multiple habitats to tempt different critters.

Aiden showed great zeal for being a naturalist. He was curious and attentive when learning about plants and animals we saw on the trails, peppered us with thoughtful questions and often shared with us his wealth of nature knowledge. He even brought to camp his collection of hawk feathers to share with the group. **It was a pleasure to watch him make deep connections with nature and share his joy of exploring and playing in the forest with his peers.**



Innovation: Expanding with Autumn Camp

As pandemic restrictions continued into the fall and schools remained virtual, it became clear that students in our community could benefit from more opportunities for safe nature programming. We adapted our successful summer camp model into an after-school format and rolled out Autumn Camp.

- Cohorts of up to ten students came to the site from 3-5pm daily for science and nature activities for one week.
- Universal mask wearing, no shared tools, health tracking, and social distancing were all practiced to ensure staff and camper safety.
- Activities ranged from hiking and animal tracking to restoration projects, and allowed students opportunities for hands-on learning that are always critical, but especially in 2020.

Due to delays in knowing if schools would reopen and the time it took to plan and roll out this new program, we were only able to offer two sessions in October. We hope to offer this program again in the spring.



What Parents are Saying

- “After the first day of camp **we noticed a weight lifted off our child.** He was so happy! As a super social kid, virtual school has been hard. **This camp gave him five straight days of connecting with other people.** Thank you!!!! We can't wait to come back!” - Lindsey Palisca
- “Camp had a special impact on my child during this pandemic because **it gave him the opportunity to be a part of something big alongside his peers.** Since this pandemic began, our family has remained apart from many people and activities that we love. Camp provided a space to keep my son busy, active, and distracted from what was going on around us. It was a chance to socialize with like minded individuals and my son really enjoys **learning about the role that science plays in nature.** The most important part of camp was the good leadership-your camp leaders are amazing!” - Maria Gomulkeicz
- “I was not trusting of COVID protocols elsewhere, but we were comfortable with Columbia Springs because of what and who you are. **I knew our kids and our family would be in good hands with caring and scientifically minded people.**” - Jessicah Wager



Columbia Springs Volunteer Program



January 2020: East Biddle Lake Trail improvements

Columbia Springs is a volunteer-driven organization. Volunteers do the majority of site maintenance, outreach, and community contacts. Due to safety restrictions, we could not engage as many volunteers this year, but **we took the opportunity to work more deeply with a handful of volunteers.** It pushed us to think more creatively, try new things, and reimagine some of the ways that we engage volunteers. Insights from this year will undoubtedly strengthen our programming, and enrich future volunteer experiences.

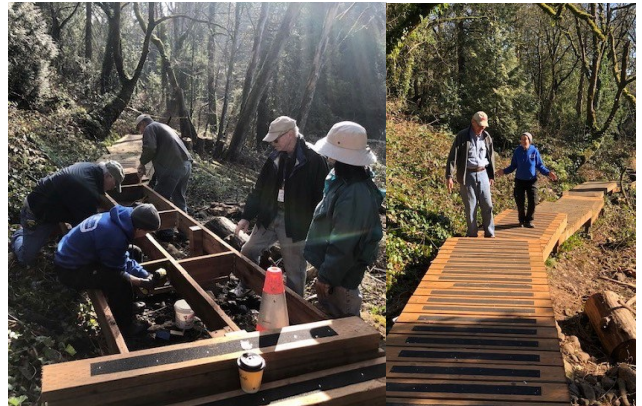
This year, we're proud to report that we:

- Engaged volunteers in 1,705 hours of service over 450 individual volunteer shifts
- Hosted three stewardship events (before March)
- Launched a new volunteer-led education program, Winter Nature

Project Spotlight

Heron Loop Trail Reconstruction:

A number of extreme weather events early in the year resulted in downed trees and trail damage. Our volunteers came to the rescue, replacing several sections of boardwalk on Heron Loop Trail. The finished project looks even better than before!



February 2020: Post wind storm, volunteers replace boardwalk sections along Heron Loop Trail.

Going Virtual:

One interesting adventure this year has been adapting to virtual engagement including moving volunteer meetings and social gatherings to a digital platform. The technology was challenging for many, but the emergent training turned out to be invaluable as we entered into months of sheltering at home. Volunteer commitment and adaptability was inspiring. Volunteers jumped on-board to plan and support our annual fundraiser, which was done as a livestream event for the first time in Columbia Springs' history!



Volunteer Tom Musser worked especially hard to bring the vision to life!

Heron House Gets a Makeover:

During the statewide closures, a handful of dedicated volunteers worked on independent projects to keep things going while being COVID-safe. After focusing our attention on the remodel and opening of the new Visitor Center last year, our administrative building "Heron House" was in need of a facelift. It required pruning, purging, cleaning and painting, inside and out. It is now a fresh cheerful place to welcome partners and community members!

Refining The Docent Program

As ambassadors of Columbia Springs, docents are passionate volunteers who help visitors interpret the site. They **share their enthusiasm** for exploration and curiosity, making **science and nature accessible to the community** and empowering people of all ages to see themselves as “citizen scientists”.

In 2020, inspired by the popularity of our “Family Nature Days” series, we developed indoor interpretation for winter. Bringing the activities inside required us to creatively adapt materials, which was a fun challenge for docents. **Each event featured an on-theme self-guided hike, and a repurposed or nature-made craft that highlighted creative waste reduction.**

A nature-based theme connected activities. For example, on Salmon Day, we highlighted the demo salmon tank in the Visitor Center. Families learned about egg development and made predictions about when they would hatch. Plant Day featured seed adaptations, an ethnobotany game, and water coloring with plant-based dye. Our final Winter Nature Day was cancelled due to Covid-19, but the program will reopen once it is safe to do so. We’ve prepared new themes and activities to pair with our Guided Walk program.

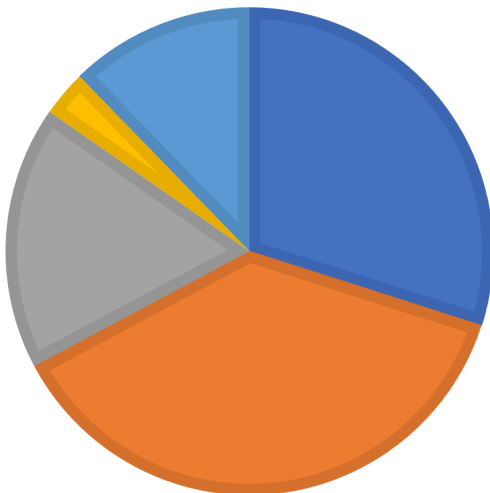
Looking ahead, **we are excited to share virtual learning opportunities with our docents.** Digital training content will improve ongoing volunteer development, and provide a new avenue for recruiting and training future docents.



February 2020: Winter Nature Day participants learn about plants and how to make paint from beets.

Volunteer Program By The Numbers

■ K12 ■ Repair ■ Stewardship ■ Admin ■ General



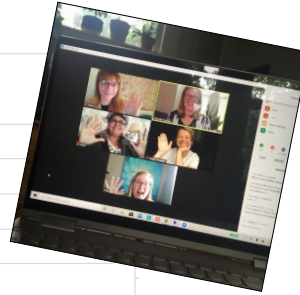
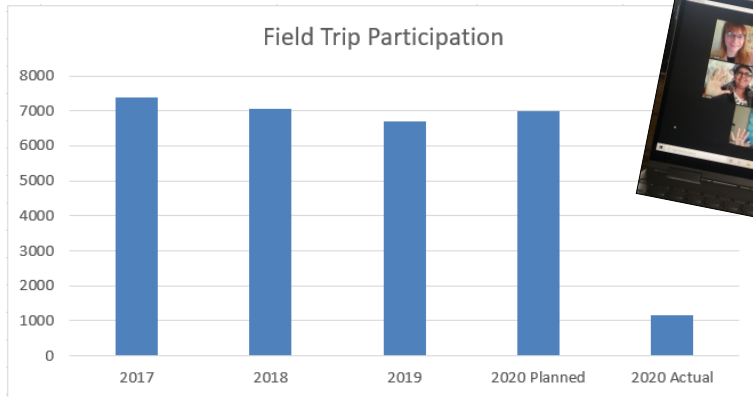
Volunteer Hours by Category

- K-12 Education (including Salmon in the Classroom, Field Trips and Summer Camp): **510.25**
- Repair Clark County: **635.83**
- Stewardship & Park Maintenance: **298.5**
- Development & Administrative Support: **52**
- General Hours : **208.92**
- Total Hours: **1,705**

Education Programs



In spring 2020, Columbia Springs was poised to bring out 7,000 participants for science and nature field trips. By March, our team had hosted 47 groups and 1,157 people. When the pandemic was declared, we canceled all remaining programs. The rest of 2020 required unprecedented innovation from our community, and Columbia Springs educators stepped up to provide support in many new and engaging ways as the learning landscape shifted rapidly.



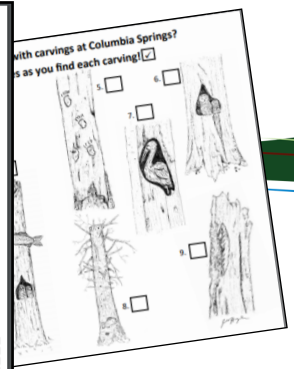
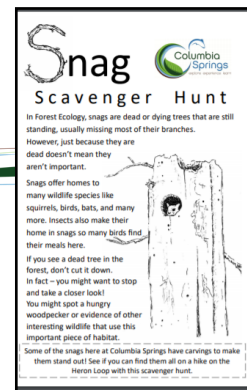
VIDEOS

Science and Nature Video Activities

Read to Salmon: Salmon Storyline
Video by Environmental Educators Katie Woolven and Shelly Skiffeld
Kindergartens - 5th grade and beyond
Join Columbia Springs educator Shelly Skiffeld for a very special storyline with our Columbia Springs salmon!
These fingerlings are almost ready to be released and are curious about life in the stream. Salmon Stream helps people and fingerlings alike learn what life is like for a salmon in the wild.
Teachers: Get this as a [SeeSaw activity](#)

SALMON LIFE CYCLE YOGA
Video by Environmental Educator Katie Woolven
Kindergartens - 5th grade and beyond
Join creative movement specialists Julie Sparling and Jenn Patton on a journey through the salmon life cycle! Shrink down to egg size and experience the life of a salmon from beginning to end, swimming from the river to the sea... and back again.
In under 15 minutes you'll learn about the salmon life cycle while using your whole body. Watch the video or [visit this link](#) for full instructions!
Teachers: Get this as a [SeeSaw activity](#)

BUG OUT SCAVENGER HUNT!
Video by Environmental Educator Megan Wadleigh
Kindergartens - 2nd grade
Bugs live all around us! What kinds can you find? Use this activity to explore the wild world of bugs in your own backyard, as you walk around the block or in a local green space!
Use our [bug scavenger hunt](#) to guide your exploration! No printer? Copy this on your own paper or draw your own bug scavenger hunt!
Teachers: Get this as a [SeeSaw activity](#)



Our education team developed a collection of science and nature videos that teachers, families and students can use to learn about a variety of topics, including:

- Simple activities that help students step outside, away from their screen, and engage with nearby nature
- Invitations to learn and move in new ways, like a salmon yoga video that highlights the salmon lifecycle

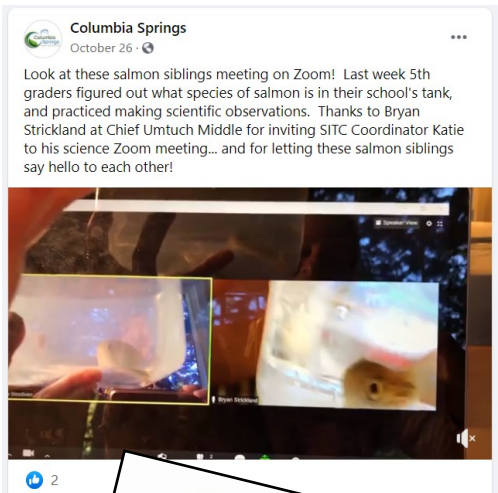
At-home activities were developed, providing simple, engaging ways for students to learn from the world around them, including:

- Backyard birdfeeder design and backyard birding tips
- Native and invasive plant ID, surveys, and games
- Nature bingo and links to additional short at-home activities

Activities that could be completed at Columbia Springs were also created with the intention of getting people to our site and to notice our beautiful natural features including:

- A snag scavenger hunt activity for hiking Heron Loop Trail
- Summer and Fall activity booklets for the site

Educators also made themselves available to teachers to join classrooms virtually for live teaching. Activities included fish dissections, fingerling ID, and more.



Thank you from our education team!



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Katie Woollven,
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Megan Wadleigh,
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Luisa Eding,
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