

Emerging Ecologists @ Rio Fernando Park

Explore the natural world as you learn about forest, wetland and garden ecology at Rio Fernando Park! Sign up to visit us with your class for any of the workshops below, currently available from 9 - 5 on Tuesdays and Thursdays year-round. Every visit is free for all.

During the summer, we offer these workshops to camp groups and family groups. We recommend signing up at least two weeks in advance to reserve a space.

All lessons are modified to be grade-level appropriate, and we can provide lesson plans and grade-level standards upon request. We will also adapt our lessons to fit in with your current unit of study. If you want a lesson topic that is not listed here, email wicks@taoslandtrust.org to inquire.

Do-it-yourself option: Taos County teachers are also invited to bring their classes to the park during school hours to run their own outdoor workshops. This option is available Monday - Friday from 9 - 5. We ask that you please email us in advance to schedule, just so we can make sure there are no major event or construction conflicts and can make sure the front gate is open for your arrival.

Ecology Programs

* Nature Play

Learn by exploring and engaging in our natural landscapes at Rio Fernando Park. We have wetland, garden, acequia and forested areas for free play and exploration. Focus on one, or explore all four!

Year-Round

Grades PreK - 5

* Wintertime Animals

Bundle up and go on a hunt around Rio Fernando Park to observe the birds and mammals that are around in the winter. Learn how animals stay warm during the winter through hibernation, insulation, and migration. Use a winter animal tracking guide to see what stories snowy tracks tell about our park friends!

Winter

Grades PreK - 5

* Trees, Please

Learn to identify the trees found around Rio Fernando and Fred Baca Parks.

Optional add-ons: We can provide mini-lessons and class discussions on how trees grow, photosynthesis, forest ecology, positive and negative impacts of invasive trees in NM, and

healthy forest management. We can also add-on an introduction to the scientific illustration of trees so you can begin work on your own classroom tree identification guide.

Summer, Fall

All ages

* Dam it! - Observation and Engineering Challenge

Learn about the important role that beavers play in the ecosystem. Students will find and observe the beaver dams along the Rio Fernando, then get hands-on building their own scale models of beaver dams and designing innovative solutions to deal with flooding along the Rio Fernando.

Spring, Summer, Fall

All ages

* Native and Invasive Plant Scavenger Hunt

What are invasive plants - how do they propagate and why are they a problem? Learn to identify a few prominent Native and Invasive plant species in Taos County. Get your hands helping to mitigate the spread of some invasives around Rio Fernando Park.

Summer, Fall

All ages

* Why Wetlands?

Learn about the role of wetlands in local watersheds and ecosystems - how do they build healthy environments of other animals? How do they store and filter water? Students will get hands-on along the shores of the Rio Fernando to investigate riparian plant and animal life.

Spring, Summer, Fall

All ages

* Nature Poetry or Prose

Read and discuss some examples of nature poetry or prose, then take time on your own in Rio Fernando Park to write your own nature-inspired piece.

Spring, Summer, Fall

Grades 5- 12

* Data and Ecology

What is ecology and why does it matter? How do we measure ecosystem health? Participants complete line transects to sample vegetation in the wetlands then learn how to document their data in a spreadsheet and graph results over time.

Spring, Summer, Fall

Grades 7 - 12

Farm & Garden Programs

* Garden Exploration

Learn through free play, observation, and exploration. Students will get a tour of the garden areas at Rio Fernando Park and then will have free time to explore our garden beds. Students will get to lend a hand with seasonal garden tasks, like planting seeds, preparing beds, or harvesting.

Spring, Summer, Fall

All Ages

* Ballad of a Salad

Learn where your food comes from by helping to make a salad fresh from the ground. Students will get a garden tour, complete a short scavenger hunt to identify different salad ingredients, help harvest and clean their food, and then will work together to make a fresh salad for all to share.

Optional add-on: Lesson for older students about food systems, including examining the economic, environmental and cultural benefits of local agriculture

Spring, Summer, Fall

Grades 4 - 12

* Healthy Soils

Learn about the five Healthy Soils practices in the Rio Fernando Gardens. Students will collect data on soil temperature, texture and permeability to measure the effectiveness of different gardening practices.

Spring, Summer, Fall

Grades 4 - 12

* Science of Compost

Why is food waste a problem? What can we do about it? Students will compare natural and human-managed systems of decomposition, and will compare three different models of composting. Students will get hands-on by helping to set up a Johnson-Su Bioreactor in our composting greenhouse.

Year-Round

Grades 4 - 12

* Pollination

Dissect male and female squash blossoms to learn about the different parts of flowers and how they reproduce. Learn about the ecological importance of pollinators. Examine our pollinator garden: how have different plants co-evolved with different pollinators? Can you guess based on flower shape which pollinator may feast on which flower?

Late Summer/ Fall

Grades 4 - 12

* Science of Seeds

Learn about the parts of a seed and how they grow. What triggers germination? What can you tell about how to grow a seed based only on its shape and size? Students will get

hands-on by helping to plant seeds in the garden or greenhouse (Spring season) or by harvesting seeds to save (Fall season).

Optional add-on - bring some bean seeds back to your classroom to observe how they germinate!

Spring, Fall

All ages

Stewardship Programs

* Nature Stewardship

Be a steward of the land by volunteering to help clean and conserve our natural environment. These projects vary seasonally but can include river clean-up, trash pick-up, invasive weed mitigation, and more!

Spring, Summer, Fall

All ages

* Acequia in Action

Learn about the history and culture of acequias in New Mexico, and then walk up the Vigil y Romo ditch to explore the compuerta at the Rio Fernando. Depending on the time of year and seasonal conditions, your group can lend a hand with ditch cleaning or, if the water is running, experience what it's like to help irrigate the cover crop fields in Rio Fernando Park.

Spring, Summer, Fall

All ages

Art Programs

Our art programs are run by Marissa Macias, who offers the following:

* Garden Textiles

Dye fabric by using flowers and vegetables from Taos Land Trust.

Summer, Fall

All ages

* Plaster Time Capsule

Imprint and plaster cast shapes of the natural world of Taos Land Trust.

Spring, Summer, Fall

All ages

* Carve + Block print

Create prints and pop art on paper with vegetables and woodcuts.

Spring, Summer, Fall

All ages

* Solar Dye

Use glass jars to create vegetable dyes with the sun.

Summer, Fall

All ages