

L-I-T Handbook 2021



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Camp Hours:

Monday – Thursday
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Friday
9:00 AM – 3:30PM

Camp Location:

VINS Nature Center
149 Natures Way
Quechee, VT 05059

Dear L-I-Ts,

Thank you for choosing to participate in VINS Nature Camp's L-I-T program. Preparations are well underway for another summer of adventure and discovery.

This handbook is designed to help L-I-Ts plan for their week(s) of volunteering. It contains information about our policies, drop-off and pick-up, a packing list and much more.

At VINS Nature Camp, our mission is to help young people develop the life skills necessary to be a positive force for their community and the natural world. In order to be successful in our mission, we need the help of our Leaders-in-Training. The most significant way L-I-Ts can help is by becoming familiar with our rules and policies and by reviewing our behavior code before the first day of camp.

As you prepare for camp, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions. We look forward to a great summer.

Warm regards,

Sarah Strew
Lead Nature Camp

Contact Information

Address: Vermont Institute of Natural Science
149 Natures Way
PO Box 1281
Quechee, VT 05059

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Staff: Sarah Strew, Lead Nature Camp
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Julie Kozak, Nature Camp Assistant
jkozak@vinsweb.org
802-359-5000 x245 (May – August)

Who We Are

Organization

Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) has been a leader in environmental education and wildlife conservation since 1972. VINS' mission is to motivate individuals to care for the natural environment through education, research, and avian wildlife rehabilitation.

We offer locally relevant and compelling environmental education programs and services designed for a wide audience. Our programs combine environmental science concepts with hands-on exploration to build empathy for nature and empower individuals to care for local natural ecosystems. Thousands of schoolchildren, teachers, conservation volunteers and other adult learners from throughout New England participate in VINS' environmental education, research and rehabilitation programs each year.

VINS Nature Camp Mission & Philosophy

VINS Nature Camp helps young people develop the life skills and connections necessary to be a positive force for their community and the environment. By exploring the diversity of nature's living creatures and habitats, VINS Nature Camp nurtures each child's curiosity and helps them to build respectful and caring relationships with themselves, others, and the natural world.

At VINS Nature Camp, we have core values that inform all that we do from how we approach teaching and exploring the natural world, to how we interact with others. Those core values are:

- We recognize that curiosity and a love of learning are crucial to lifelong engagement.
- We believe that every individual has a capacity for scientific thinking and ecological awareness.
- We recognize the power of the individual to make a positive impact on the world.
- We believe in treating human and non-human nature with the utmost respect.

By recognizing these core values, VINS Nature Camp creates an environment that is inclusive, nurturing and exploratory. Camp participants develop friendships, learn new skills and grow more comfortable in a natural setting. Our goal is that when they leave VINS Nature Camp, they will have a better understanding of themselves and their relationships with the human and natural world.

General Camp Information

Camp Locations

VINS Nature Camp runs camps at locations in both Vermont and New Hampshire.

As an L-I-T you will be volunteering in camp(s) held at the VINS Nature Center in Quechee, VT. The VINS Nature Center serves as the center of VINS' organizational operations. Our 47-acre campus features nature trails, exhibit spaces including the Forest Canopy Walk, observation platform, outdoor classroom and 17 state-of-the-art raptor enclosures. The campus' trails and paths wind visitors through a floodplain forest, along the Ottauquechee River, and through an upland meadow.

Age Groups

Camps are designed for specific age groupings starting with pre-school through grade 8. VINS uses the following designations to identify camps and campers by age groupings:

- *Peeps* are children age 4 & 5 or entering kindergarten
- *Fledglings* are children entering grades 1-3

- *Falcons* are children entering grades 4-6
- *Eagles* are children entering grades 6-8

Leader-In-Training Information

VINS Nature Camp's Leaders-in-Training Program involves teens in our camp community by offering the opportunity to work closely with children, peers, and adults in a fun, recreational setting while providing experiences for participants to develop their leadership skills. Whether or not participants attended VINS Nature Camp as campers, our L-I-T Program offers a fun summer option for teens who love the camp experience or who want to gain experience leading groups in the outdoors.

L-I-Ts work closely with VINS Nature Camp staff who mentor them during their week(s) of volunteering at camp. L-I-T responsibilities are assigned by the VINS Nature Camp Instructors they are working with and may include leading group games, assisting specific campers, or helping to prepare lessons/activities for the week. VINS Nature Camp believes that the L-I-T Program is a valuable learning experience for all and hope that many of our L-I-Ts will eventually return as VINS Nature Camp Instructors.

Upon successful completion, all L-I-Ts will receive official acknowledgement of their volunteer hours at the end of the summer as well as a year-long membership to the Vermont Institute of Natural Science.

Required Forms

VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form

The VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form must be completed by a parent/guardian and returned at least **two weeks prior** to an L-I-T's first day of volunteering. This important information helps us prepare to welcome L-I-Ts to camp and must be on file with VINS Nature Camp before any L-I-T is allowed to participate in a VINS camp.

Instructors will review these completed forms before the start of each camp week to become familiar with any allergies or special health-related needs an L-I-T may have.

A link to this form can be downloaded from the Leaders-In-Training page on our website at <https://vinsweb.org/nature-camp/leaders-in-training/>.

Please note, a parent or guardian **must** sign the VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form.

Drop-off & Pick-up

Drop-off and pick-up is located at the white tent at the east end of the VINS Nature Center parking lot.

Important: As you enter and exit our camp locations **there is a speed limit of 10 mph** to ensure the safety of campers, visitors, and wildlife.

Drop-off Time: 8:45 AM Monday – Friday.

Pick-up Time: 4:15 PM Monday – Thursday, **3:45 PM Friday**.

L-I-Ts may be given explicit permission to sign themselves out at the end of the day on the VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form. Unless this permission has been granted, parent/guardian must provide VINS with a list of all adults who are authorized to pick up an L-I-T **INCLUDING** yourself. **Each person must show an ID at the point of pickup.** The authorized pick-up list is included in the VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form.

Visits

For the safety and privacy of all our camp participants, visits from parents/guardians or other family members or friends during the camp day is not allowed.

Late Arrivals/Early Departures

If an L-I-T will be arriving late or leaving early, please notify VINS Nature Camp at least one day prior so staff can plan accordingly. Contact the Nature Camp Assistant at 802-359-5000 x245 or email camps@vinsweb.org. All late drop-offs or early pick-ups must check in with staff at the VINS Welcome Center/Nature Store.

A Day at Camp

Daily Schedule for Camps

8:45 AM	Drop-off When L-I-Ts arrive at camp they should go directly to the Counselor Room to check in with a VINS Nature Camp staff member. They may assist Camp Instructors with prep work for the day. At 8:50 they will go to their respective camp meeting spaces.
9:00 AM	Campers Arrive L-I-Ts greet campers and engage them in some ongoing activity until the whole group has arrived.
9:15 AM	Official Week Kick-Off and Welcome (Mondays) Group Games (other days of the week) Each Monday campers gather at our Campfire Ring to welcome everyone to camp then briefly review behavior code and expectations. Either the Lead Nature Camp or Nature Camp Assistant runs this. Other days of the week, camps usually gather on the playing field for all-camp games.
9:45 AM	Guided Exploration on Daily Theme- Built in snack time During this 2+-hour activity block, Instructors lead lessons and activities pertaining to the theme for the day. Activities vary according to age of the campers and camp topic. All camps plan to take about a 15-20 minute snack break during this activity block.
12:00 PM	Lunch and Free Play Lunch generally happens at each camp's meeting space. L-I-Ts often will meet over the lunch hour with the Nature Camp Assistant.
1:00 PM	Continued Exploration of the Daily Theme During this 2.5 hour activity block, Instructors lead more lessons and activities pertaining to the theme for the day. Activities vary according to age of the campers and camp topic. On Fridays at 2:30 pm, the whole camp gathers for a closing campfire. Campers share a favorite memory from the week and roast a s'more.

3:30 PM	Wrap Up Activity Reflection is an important part of the day. It is a good opportunity for campers to review what they learned and share their experiences.
3:50 PM	Pack Instructors and L-I-Ts will take a few moments at the end of the day to help campers pack up their bag so they are ready to leave. Instructors can choose to have campers picked up at their camp meeting space, on the playscape or another convenient space.
4:00 PM (3:30 PM Friday)	Camper Pick-up/Free Play Parents/guardian are encouraged to check-in with their child's Instructors for a review of the day.
4:15 PM (3:45 PM Friday)	L-I-T Pick-up L-I-Ts check with Camp Instructors to make sure they have completed all tasks for the day. L-I-Ts must sign themselves out (if they have been given permission to do so) or be signed-out before leaving camp at the end of the day. In order to sign out their L-I-T, adults must present a photo ID to staff and initial their L-I-T out for the day on the camp roster.

Packing List

L-I-Ts should come to camp each day dressed in casual, comfortable clothes, ready to hike, run, and likely get wet and dirty. L-I-Ts should be dressed for the weather and be prepared to spend most of the day outdoors. During L-I-T training, specific information regarding VINS' dress code will be provided.

What to Pack/Wear

- Day pack to carry belongings
- Lunch**
- One or two snacks
- Water bottle (water is available for refills)
- Sturdy walking shoes (ex. sneakers)
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Baseball cap or sun hat
- Sweatshirt or lightweight jacket
- Raincoat
- Rain boots/shoes, if desired
- Medications (medication permission form must be filled out in [VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Form](#))
- Bathing suit and towel¹
- Water shoes, if desired (ex. aqua socks, water sandals, or old sneakers)

What NOT to Pack/Wear

- Video games, iPods, or any other electronic toys or devices (Please note: L-I-Ts are not permitted to use cell phones during the camp day unless given explicit permission from camp staff)
- Personal items
- Nice clothing that should not get wet or soiled
- Prescription or over-the-counter medications not listed in [VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Form](#)
- Water shoes, if desired (ex. aqua socks, water sandals, or old sneakers)

¹ There is no swimming facility at this camp location, however there are options for water play on hot days.

Please be sure to label all belongings. At the end of the camp season, all unclaimed lost and found items will be donated to the L.I.S.T.E.N. Center in White River Junction, VT.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

L-I-Ts are responsible for applying any topical skin applications, such as sunscreen or insect repellent themselves. Sunscreen along with insect repellent are strongly recommended.

Transportation Policies

If your L-I-T is participating in a camp that includes a field trip to an off-site location, VINS will be responsible for transporting L-I-Ts to and from any off-site field trip location.

All operators and passengers must wear seatbelts and/or other child restraint devices when riding in a VINS or VINS-rented vehicle.

VINS will have copies of driver's licenses on file of any staff member driving VINS Nature Camp participants. Camp participants will never be transported in a staff member's personal vehicle.

Photo Release

Parents/guardians will be asked to sign a photo release permitting VINS to use photo images of L-I-Ts in newsletters, on our website, and in brochures and other promotional materials. This is included in the Acknowledgement and Release section of the [VINS Nature Camp Health and Emergency Care Form](#). If a parent/guardian has refused the photo release, VINS staff will not take photographs of that L-I-T or if they do, must delete or crop out the image of the minor.

Health Care Policies

Medication

If an L-I-T will be taking any prescribed or over-the-counter medications while at VINS Nature Camp, staff must be informed by completing the Medication Information, Permission, and Waiver section in the [VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form](#). L-I-Ts must bring with them any necessary medication for themselves and keep that medication secure throughout the day. Camp staff are not permitted to administer any medications; however, we will remind and/or assist L-I-Ts in taking his or her medicine according to the instructions provided.

Epi-Pens, inhalers and any other lifesaving medications or medical devices can be carried by an L-I-T during the day or given to the Camp Instructor they are paired with. Parents/guardians of L-I-Ts with Epi-Pens and inhalers must initial the acknowledgment in the Medication Information, Permission, and Waiver section in the [VINS Nature Camp L-I-T Health and Emergency Care Form](#) of their child's ability to self-administer the medication.

Illness and Minor Injury

L-I-Ts should not come to camp for the day if s/he is ill. If an L-I-T will be absent for the day, they, or a parent/guardian, should contact the Nature Camp Assistant at (802) 359-5000 x245 or camps@vinsweb.org.

If an L-I-T is injured or becomes sick during the camp day VINS Nature Camp staff will provide any necessary care including First Aid. If the injury or illness limits the L-I-T's ability to participate in

camp activities, a camp staff member will contact parent/guardian to pick up the L-I-T or notify them that L-I-T is leaving camp for the day.

Parent/guardian will be notified of any other First Aid provided to an L-I-T by VINS Nature Camp staff at the end of the camp day.

Emergencies

All VINS Nature Camp staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR and are trained to respond to emergencies. In the event of an L-I-T health emergency, a parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. If staff are unable to reach a parent/guardian, the L-I-T's designated emergency contact will be notified.

If necessary, an L-I-T will be transported by ambulance to the nearest appropriate medical facility. A camp staff member will remain with an L-I-T, including during transport, until parent/guardian or designated emergency contact arrives.

If an emergency or last minute change may influence pick-up times or locations, parents/guardians will be contacted by the Lead Nature Camp via email broadcast as well as by phone.

Food

L-I-Ts should plan to pack a lunch as well as one or two snacks each day. Additionally, please come to camp each day with a refillable water bottle each day. Hydration is important and for camp participants' convenience, we have a filtered water filling station available at VINS.

L-I-Ts should not share food for health and safety purposes and should not bring any food to camp to give to other camp participants unless they have previously made arrangements with the Nature Camp Assistant or with their Camp Instructors.

Instructors will be aware of any food allergies in their group and take steps to ensure that camp participants avoid contact with their allergen. **PLEASE NOTE: VINS is NOT a peanut/tree nut-free site.** VINS cannot control the contents of lunches that our public visitors and other camp participants bring to our camp site and nature center. Individuals with severe nut or other food allergies will be provided a separate table to eat at and camp staff will check the lunches of other camp participants sitting with them to ensure their allergen is not present.

Behavior Policies

VINS Nature Camp is committed to providing each camp participant, whether a camper, Leader-In-Training, or staff member, with a safe, nurturing camp experience that accommodates individual needs and learning styles.

VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code

In order to maintain the safety and quality of our camp program, we expect that everyone understand and adhere to our VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code. Please review the VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code prior to the first day of camp.

VINS NATURE CAMP BEHAVIOR CODE

VINS Nature Camp's Behavior Code is based on the Five Finger Contract used by many adventure and challenge-by-choice programs. In our behavior code, we embrace five values, represented by each of the five fingers, which direct how we conduct ourselves at VINS Nature Camp.



- The **Pinky Finger** is the smallest and easiest to hurt which is why it represents **Safety** in our behavior code. When we look at our pinky, it reminds us to look out for the emotional and physical safety of others and ourselves, by following safety rules, using kind language, and keeping our hands to ourselves.
- People traditionally wear wedding bands on their **Ring Finger** to represent their **Commitment** to their partner. VINS Nature Camp expects participants commit themselves to the camp experience by participating in the activities of the day, being willing to try new things, and being open to facing challenges. This allows campers to get the most out of their camp experience.
- At VINS Nature Camp, the **Middle Finger** represents **Respect** for each other, ourselves, and the world around us. Camp participants practice working with others and seeing the capacity for good in everyone. While at camp, participants are also encouraged to think about ways to respect our camp environment.
- The **Pointer Finger** points; people often use it to point at others; at VINS Nature Camp we point this finger at ourselves. This finger reminds everyone about their **Responsibility** as part of a group. Everyone gets to choose how he or she behave. At VINS Nature Camp, children are taught to make their own choices and to take responsibility for their actions.
- “**Thumbs up**” is a universal gesture of approval. At VINS Nature Camp, the thumb reminds us to keep a positive attitude, encourage others and **HAVE FUN**. VINS Nature Camp curricula are designed so that campers will have fun while exploring nature and through those experiences build a better understanding of and appreciation for the natural world.

Behavior Management

VINS Nature Camp staff are trained in behavior management techniques and work to resolve issues with conduct. However, certain behaviors are deemed unacceptable at VINS Nature Camp; including, but not limited to, intentionally harming others, bullying, using abusive language and disobeying camp rules established at the start of the camp week.

In the event of unacceptable behavior, staff will discuss the conduct issue with the L-I-T and, in certain cases, may involve parent/guardian in that conversation to determine whether or not s/he should remain at camp for the rest of the week. VINS Nature Camp reserves the right to dismiss an L-I-T for unacceptable behavior or conduct.

If you have any questions about our VINS Nature Camp Behavior Code or our policies regarding discipline or expulsion, please contact Lead Nature Camp, at 802-359-5000 x245.