

Hot on the Trail

Rain or shine all summer long, the Discovery Trail has programs to keep kids busy and learning

By Karen Gadiel

Summer has its traditional melodies—the splash of water in lake or pool, putt-putt of lawnmowers, morning bird chirps and evening plunk of frogs. The consortium of eight institutions that make up the Ithaca Discovery Trail ensure one summer song, the kids' "I'm bored. There's nothing to do-o-o-" chant, can be retired. Throughout the season, whatever the weather, there's something interesting going on every day. Please note: there are other camp options and summer programs to kids available in the greater Ithaca area—the ones detailed are some of the ones affiliated with the Discovery Trail.

Plan now to enroll a child in one of the day camp programs offered by the Sciencenter or the Cayuga Nature Center. Both offer one-or two-week camp sessions focused by age and preferred activities of participants—and both are filling sessions already. Whether you want to explore life on the forest floor or in space, build rockets or learn more about the animals and bugs that share our environment, these camps are an opportunity for learning disguised as fun. All are rich in hands-on experiences for kids. "They're so much fun, I've enjoyed taking pictures of the kids there each year," says Teresa Bell of the Sciencenter.

All include outdoor activities, good, messy (supervised) projects, arts and crafts, games, snacks and a chance to try new things, often unavailable the rest of the year. Where else could you build an Alka-Seltzer rocket or gleefully drop eggs while grownups smile? Or go fossil hunting, and see eye-to-eye with snakes and turtles? Find summer camp information at scicenter.org and cayuganaturecenter.org.

For visitors and others who want to decide on activities one day at a time, Discovery Trail Coordinator Nancy Grossman advised, "The best way to find out what's going on at the eight locations are the Discovery Trail website (discover.net) and our Facebook page (facebook.com/discoverytrail). These are updated weekly, and every exhibit that comes up is included." Links on the web page can take the Internet visitor to that institution's own website for more information.

"There are events and happenings daily," Grossman said. "There's so, so, so much to do!" For example, even if summer camp is not on the horizon, a visit to the Sciencenter (admission charged) could include a round or two of "Galaxy Golf," and a self-guided tour of hands-on science exhibits. The six-story tree house at the Cayuga Nature Center (admission charged) might be on many kids' summer bucket-lists.

The Tompkins County Public Library takes part in a nation-wide summer reading program called "Fizz! Boom! Read!" "You can get a reading log online or at the library," said Youth Services Librarian Kate DeVoe. "Then you read all summer and there are prizes, as well as a lot of programs at

the library that have to do with science, engineering and math." Moreland the Magician will be at the program's kick-off party, Saturday June 28, where there will also be ice cream and crafts. Summer reading-related programs will be happening throughout the summer.

Other summer library programs include Tuesday Stories in DeWitt Park, at 11:30 am each week; Yoga Storytime, family movie nights, a school readiness series for prospective kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students and a sensory story time for children with sensory processing issues. More information will be posted, as it becomes available, at the library website tcpl.org. All library programs are free and open to all.



Photo by Justin Zoll

The Museum of the Earth is planning a special exhibit about the Isle of Shoals in New Hampshire that includes marine archaeology and some special summer programs. They're still finalizing special summer programs—and these will include hands-on experiences for kids and regular Wednesday programs at 11 am featuring specialists affiliated with Cornell University's marine laboratory. Admission is charged.

Also still in the finalization stages are activities around the History Center's soon-to-open exhibit "Switched on—the Birth of the Moog Synthesizer" a tribute to the ground-breaking work of local musical inventor Robert Moog, builder of one of the first electronic instruments. "Lots of summer programming is planned—please visit the history center website (TheHistoryCenter.net) for the details and fees—if any," said Catherine Duffy, curator.

Wide open spaces and intimate planned gardens can be enjoyed at the Cornell Plantations, which schedules regular guided walks, classes and other special events through the year. A schedule for the Shakespeare in the Park programs will be available soon. Learn more on their website (cornellplantations.org).

The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University has an eclectic permanent exhibit, to which special temporary exhibits are frequently added. These often come with family-friendly programming, exhibit tours with a docent, and lectures by an artist or curator. The best way to find out about these as they occur is to check the Discovery Trail website and the museum website (museum.cornell.edu). Admission is free to the museum and many programs.

"The fact that we have so many resources in a community the size of Ithaca is such a gift," Grossman said. "You can always look and find something."

Online: http://www.ithaca.com/family_and_health/ithaca-s-discovery-trail-will-be-busy-this-summer/article_1c9adc92-cb10-11e3-9257-001a4bfc887a.html