

American Public Gardens Association Education Community Symposium: Natural Connections

Into the Cave with Earth Camp



What is Earth Camp?



- City of Austin Watershed Protection Department education program est. 1998
- 4 days of field science focused on watersheds, aquifer, and water quality protection
- Reaches Title 1, fifth grade schools in the Austin Independent School District (AISD); 1,700 students/yr
- At the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center students visit the caves and sinkhole to investigate the Edwards Aquifer.

Partnership Development

Partnership formalized in 2013

Goal of both agencies:

- Raise awareness about the importance of earth wise gardening in environmentally sensitive areas
- Develop La Crosse cave due to lack of cave sites available for public education



Benefits for COA:

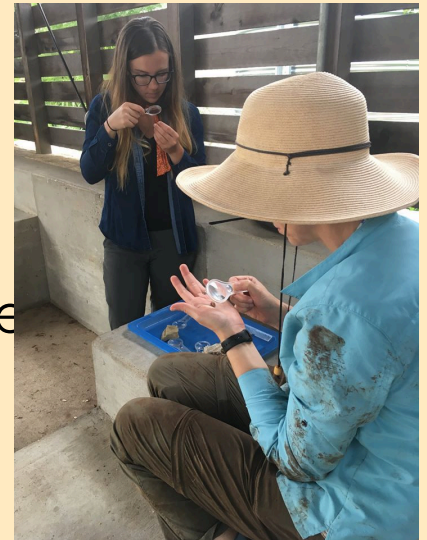
- Earth Camp has priority for using caves on specific days
- Fee entry waived
- Use of karst holes, pavilion, and sinkhole on designated days
- Storage of cave gear

Benefits

Earth Camp at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower

Center has:

- Created partnerships with other organizations
- Allowed Staff at the Wildflower to become more knowledgeable about our special features (caves and sinkholes)
- Given rise to programs at the Wildflower Center that focus on caves, water and the geology of the area
 - Rock N' Water Learning Station
 - Austin Cave Festival-Partner with cave related organizations
 - Groundwater to the Gulf-Summer institute for Central Texas teachers about water science
 - Nature Nights-Cave and water specific themes
- Provides use of caving gear for special events



Barriers/Solutions

Barrier	Solution
Scheduling	Schedules shared with Wildflower Center; shared google calendar
Inclement Weather	Alternative spaces such as indoor classrooms or covered pavilion
Wildlife (bats, raccoons, snakes)	Pre-safety check cave; move to other cave; stay out
Staffing	Minimum of 2 staff:15 students
Differently abled	Virtual Reality



Time to go into the Cave!



1. Safety
2. Gear up
3. Enter cave or VR



www.atxwatersheds.com/VR-CaveTours/#/



Into the Cave with Earth Camp

Contact Information: Your presenters for the session:

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