

NEW YORK STATE

# CONSERVATIONIST

Kids!



HAVE A (SAFE)  
NEW YORK ADVENTURE



# NEW YORK STATE CONSERVATIONIST

for Kids!

Hey Kids and Families - Are you finding that you're spending more and more time indoors? Maybe getting caught up in a video game or watching what others are doing on social media? Getting outdoors and being an adventurer is way more fun! This guide will show you how to do it and how to stay safe at the same time.



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# Get Outside!

When you undertake an adventure outside, the benefits are plentiful. Outdoors, you're physically active, adventurous, and often more social. You also get fresh air and vitamin D. Playing in nature helps you relax and improves your attitude, so you'll be able to tackle homework and even sleep better.

**You're very lucky to live in New York State.** We're blessed with an abundance of natural resources like nowhere else, and there is plenty of public property that is open to everyone. In most cases, access is free and there's a great area close to everyone. Did you know:

- There are 5 million acres of public lands managed by DEC
- There are 55+ state campgrounds and day-use areas
- New York has 5000+ miles of public trails
- New York has 400+ public boating and fishing facilities

## Get Inspired. Get Organized. Get Outside.

We know that sometimes it can be hard to motivate yourself to get outside. Create a plan, check out locations you'd like to visit, invite your friends, and make it easy and fun. What are you waiting for? Take lots of pictures along the way and you'll be the one everyone else is watching.



## PLAY SMART • PLAY SAFE • PLAY LOCAL

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we are encouraging all New Yorkers to recreate locally, practice physical distancing, show respect for all outdoor adventurers, and use common sense to protect themselves and others.

Learn more and take the pledge to  
**PLAY SMART • PLAY SAFE • PLAY LOCAL**  
on DEC's website at  
[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/119881.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/119881.html)



*Take a look at the adventures on the next few pages. They are grouped by category so you can easily find those that interest you most.*

# Choose Your Adventures



**DEC is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year**, and to celebrate, we are offering you a list of 50 suggested outdoor activities you can take part in – do one or do them all! Some of these adventures are more seasonal in nature, so if you can't complete them right now, you can try to do them when the time of year or the weather is the best for these activities. Many of them can be completed in your own backyard or in your neighborhood, but some might mean taking a trip to a local park or other location. Make sure that you, your friends, and your family are playing it safe while on your adventures. Check DEC's website for the latest updates about what places are open or closed, or if there are any specific regulations in place due to COVID-19.

We'd love to hear about some of your outdoor adventures, and what you did & learned. Tell us about where you visited and what you experienced. Please feel free to include photos and stories about your adventures. You can send them to us at [KidsConservationist@dec.ny.gov](mailto:KidsConservationist@dec.ny.gov).

## ALL ABOUT CRITTERS:

\_\_\_ 1. Find and identify 8 birds—Observe them and then try to determine the species from a field guide.

\_\_\_ 2. Hear and identify 5 bird calls—Listen and determine the species from its call.

\_\_\_ 3. Go out at night and try to find/hear an owl or other nighttime bird.

\_\_\_ 4. Find at least 5 insects and identify 3 or more of them.

\_\_\_ 5. Find and identify 2 insects that are doing good things for the environment.

\_\_\_ 6. Go out at night and look for bats. Observe how they fly.

\_\_\_ 7. Go outdoors after a rainstorm and see what creatures have emerged (such as earthworms and red efts). Try to identify each creature you find.

\_\_\_ 8. Catch and release unharmed an aquatic creature from the water (e.g., crawdad, frog, water bug).

\_\_\_ 9. Find 3 butterflies and try to identify them.

\_\_\_ 10. Use a camera to “hunt” an animal and capture a picture of your “catch.”

\_\_\_ 11. Find animal tracks and identify 2 animals from those tracks.

## TAKING TIME TO OBSERVE WHAT NATURE OFFERS:

\_\_\_ 12. Visually observe 6 different rocks and try to identify them.

\_\_\_ 13. Dig in the soil (without disturbing any vegetation) and describe it. Is it sandy or more like clay? Look up the soil type you found.

\_\_\_ 14. Identify what you find under 5 rocks, and then make sure to return the rocks to their original position.

\_\_\_ 15. Find a plant that has seeds ready to be dispersed. Identify the plant and try to determine how the seeds are spread.

\_\_\_ 16. Photograph 10 different wildflowers and identify each.



\_\_\_ 17. Visit a DEC property to find and identify 6 different kinds of trees.

\_\_\_ 18. Make a bark rubbing of 4 trees and use it for identification.

\_\_\_ 19. Find and identify 5 different small plants found on a DEC property.

\_\_\_ 20. Visit a DEC property and collect 6 fallen leaves from the ground. Identify each and then leave them in the forest.

\_\_\_ 21. Look at the stars at night and identify 3 constellations.

## **OUTDOOR ADVENTURES:**

\_\_\_ 22. Find a DEC property where you can see different rock formations and exposed geological layers. Identify each of the layers. Suggested locations are available on DEC's website.

\_\_\_ 23. Go on a picnic with friends or family to a DEC property you've never visited before.

\_\_\_ 24. Relax in a natural setting at a DEC property and describe the way nature makes you feel.

\_\_\_ 25. Find a frozen waterbody that an adult has determined is safe and go ice fishing. Review the safety information at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7733.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7733.html) before heading out.

\_\_\_ 26. Visit a DEC campground and sleep in a tent under the stars.

\_\_\_ 27. Identify which direction the wind is coming from on 4 different days of the week.

\_\_\_ 28. Go to a DEC property or State Park you have never visited before.

\_\_\_ 29. Make a s'more over a campfire.

\_\_\_ 30. Go for a winter hike or a walk of at least a mile.

\_\_\_ 31. Go fishing in two DEC places you have not fished before.

\_\_\_ 32. Find 4 places on DEC properties that you think are worthy of a selfie and take your picture. Be mindful of your surroundings (don't step off a cliff!).

\_\_\_ 33. Accompanied by an adult, wade in a stream and describe how it feels and what you discover.

\_\_\_ 34. Cook a meal outside over a campfire for your family and friends. A tin foil meal is especially easy and fun.

\_\_\_ 35. Take a hike at least 2 miles long and try to find a walking stick to help you on your way.

\_\_\_ 36. Find a new hike on a DEC property that has a great view to photograph.

\_\_\_ 37. Go on 3 hikes on DEC lands that you've never done.

\_\_\_ 38. Find a place on a DEC property to read a book, and describe the site you chose and why.

\_\_\_ 39. Help with a seedling or tree planting to benefit the environment: a wind break, wildlife cover, stream stabilization, soil stabilization, or reforestation. Find suggested Arbor Day activities on the DEC website or visit

[www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org).



\_\_\_ 40. Take a friend fishing who has never fished before.

\_\_\_ 41. Go on a walk/hike that is longer than you've ever done, to challenge yourself.

\_\_\_ 42. Find a place to hear and record your echo.

\_\_\_ 43. Find different types of clouds on two different days and identify them and the weather they bring.

\_\_\_ 44. Follow a path using a compass and map.

\_\_\_ 45. Take a friend or family member on a hike he or she has never done before.

\_\_\_ 46. Go paddling in a kayak or canoe somewhere you've never been before.

\_\_\_ 47. Visit a DEC property to hear a sound from a mammal you can identify.

\_\_\_ 48. Go on a winter hike with snowshoes or cross-country skis. See DEC's website for locations that have equipment available.

\_\_\_ 49. Go on a hike to a fire tower.

\_\_\_ 50. Watch and photograph the sunrise or sunset in two different seasons.

\_\_\_ 51. **BONUS: make your own nature or outdoor experience! And tell us about it.**

## **LEAVE NO TRACE** 7 Principles of Leave No Trace

1. Plan Ahead & Prepare
2. Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Make sure to follow any specific rules and regulations for the area you are visiting. Don't pick plants or remove rocks/fossils/etc. that you might come across. Anything that you bring in with you should be brought back out. Don't chase or harass wildlife – take pictures, but don't chase them or get too close in order to get the "perfect" shot. Don't feed wildlife. Not only could this put you in danger, but it could also make them more comfortable around humans, which is not good for the wildlife. For more information, visit the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics website at <https://lnt.org>.

# HAVE FUN. STAY SAFE. BE PREPARED.

We want you to enjoy this adventure challenge, but we also want you to be safe. Make sure that you have an adult with you whenever you go out on an adventure. Staying safe on an adventure means being prepared. Following the Hike Smart NY guidelines is a great idea no matter what adventure you are on.

## Be Prepared

Wear proper gear and attire, including:

- Moisture-wicking synthetic fabrics that keep your skin dry and help regulate your body temperature in both cold and warm weather - avoid cotton as it holds moisture
- Layered clothing is recommended even for summer hikes
- Light-colored clothing, which will make it easier to see ticks
- Waterproof, sturdy, and comfortable shoes or boots
- A watch or other time-keeping device
- Snowshoes and traction devices in the winter
- Also, use trekking poles, which will reduce leg fatigue and joint pain

Use Maps, Guides, or DEC's Website to Plan Your Trip

Leave Trip Plans with Family or Friends

Be Realistic About Your Fitness and Skill Level

Check the Weather Forecast and Current Conditions

## Prepare For Survival

Hike in a Group and Stay Together  
Monitor Conditions and Turn Back if they are dangerous

At the Trailhead or Parking Lot (for all hikers young, and old):

- Conceal valuables, and lock your vehicle; save the DEC Emergency Dispatch number in your cell phone; sign trail registers and indicate the time.

***\*Don't forget to sign back out when you leave!\****

## If You Are Lost or Injured

Stop where you are, try to remain calm, and assess the situation. Try to determine your location using landmarks and by listening for nearby vehicles.

Call 911 or DEC Emergency Dispatch (518-408-5850; in the Adirondacks 518-891-0235).

For more information about being prepared, safety tips, and what to do if you are lost or injured, visit DEC's website at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28708.html>.



# Resources for your Adventure

In order to better prepare for your adventures, here are some links to resources that cover many of the topics listed in the challenge.

## **Watchable Wildlife**

GETTING STARTED

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/55423.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/55423.html)

I BIRD NY

[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/109900.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/109900.html)

## **Canoeing, Kayaking, & Boating**

GETTING STARTED

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/349.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/349.html)

BOATING REGULATIONS AND SAFETY

<https://parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating/>

## **Fishing**

GETTING STARTED

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/fishing.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/fishing.html)

OBTAINING A FISHING LICENSE

[www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6091.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6091.html)

## **Camping**

GETTING STARTED

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/camping.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/camping.html)

FIRST-TIME CAMPER PROGRAM

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/109909.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/109909.html)

## **Exploring & Learning**

EDUCATION CENTERS AND PROGRAMS

[www.dec.ny.gov/education/74.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/74.html)

FISH HATCHERIES

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html)

YOUTH SUMMER CAMPS

[www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html)

## **Hiking, Biking, & More**

HIKING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/351.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/351.html)

HORSEBACK RIDING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/101037.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/101037.html)

BICYCLING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/101033.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/101033.html)

SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/353.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/353.html)

SNOWMOBILING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7718.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7718.html)

ROCK AND ICE CLIMBING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/101035.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/101035.html)

GEOCACHING

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/98952.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/98952.html)

PLACES TO GO

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82098.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82098.html)

## **Accessible Recreation**

GETTING STARTED

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html)

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Learn more about Adventure NY:

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/)

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