

## School Programs - 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

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### Program Info

Max: 50 students max/program

Program Fee: \$5.50/person

Minimum Fee: \$75.00/program

Length: 3 hrs in/outdoor

Location: ANSC or Outreach

### Astronomy Adventures

Learn to predict the next phase in the moon cycle after investigating why the moon's appearance changes during the month. Crawl into the StarLab to view the night sky. Use star maps and laser pointers to demonstrate recognition of patterns in the night sky. Patterns in the night sky have guided people throughout history and still guide astronomers today. Walk from the sun through the inner planets, through the asteroid belt, to where the outer planets begin without leaving ANSC. Compare the size, mass and temperature of planets, moons and other celestial bodies in a game that models the solar system. Use models and discuss their advantages and limitations. Use various magnifying lenses to locate distant objects. Explore the life cycles of stars and discover where our sun is in its cycle. Demonstrate safe practices using science equipment.

#### TEKS

Program aligned with Middle School Science TEKS

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## Adaptations to Survival

Safely touch a turtle, stroke a snake, pet a rabbit, feel a ferret while observing similarities and differences between groups of animals. Learn how animals have adapted different internal (organs) and external characteristics to survive in different habitats. Learn about food webs. Examine furs, feathers, scales, skulls, and bones to understand adaptations that have helped in their survival. Compare life cycles of mammals, reptiles, and birds. Observe inherited traits in mice.

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## Ecology Interaction

The Zilker Nature Preserve is located on the Balcones Fault Zone where multiple ecosystems come together. Explore the richness of flora and fauna that this overlap provides as we hike in the Zilker Nature Preserve. Safely gather data in the wetlands, meadow and urban ecosystems and discover the interdependence of animals, plants, water and soil in the Preserve. Explore how adaptations enable some organisms to survive in the Zilker Preserve. Identify examples of erosion and deposition and weathering. Discuss the impact of removing an essential element from an ecosystem. Assess the current health of the Zilker Preserve and predict its health for the future. Describe the flow of energy through food webs and predict the consequences of removing an element of a food chain. Compare the life cycles of some of the animals that call the Zilker Preserve home.

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Length: 3 hrs in/outdoor

Location: Pease Park

[Map to Pease Park](#)

## Shoal Creek Geology

Float a rock, smell a mineral and find Exogyra fossils in Shoal Creek. This outdoor exploration of Austin's unique geology offers students hands-on activities while they use tools to test properties of rocks and minerals. Examine minerals and rocks for properties including magnetism, hardness, smell and buoyancy. Safely examine sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous rock and learn some of their uses in today's world. Predict changes in rocks due to heating and cooling. Interpret patterns in rocks to identify fossils. Discuss form, function and adaptations of the Exogyra. Discuss survival strategies of marine organisms in the Cretaceous Period. Discuss the limitations of fossil information. Student paleontologists and geologists collect three fossils or rocks to take back to school. Identify changes in a creek bank caused by erosion, deposition and weathering. (This is one of our most popular programs.) Wear appropriate shoes for hiking.

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## Program Info

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Minimum Fee: \$75.00/program

Length: 3 hrs in/outdoor

Location: Sheffield Education  
Center at Barton Springs

[Map](#)

## Splash Lab & Field

Wear your water shoes as we wade into Lower Barton Creek to collect aquatic critters and predict water quality in this urban waterway. Safely observe collected critters under a microscope to identify and classify aquatic invertebrates. Analyze data collected and create a bar graph. Explore the "Splash" exhibit to see the endangered Barton Springs Salamander and to learn the geologic history of Barton Springs. Observe models to learn about the Edwards Aquifer. Observe and identify geologic forces like erosion and deposition. Play a game to understand the complexities of the water cycle. Describe the flow of energy through the food web. Explore the adaptations and life cycles of aquatic organisms. Wear appropriate shoes for wading.

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Minimum Fee: \$75.00/program

Length: 3 hrs in/outdoor

Location: ANSC or Outreach

## Threatened, Endangered, Extinct

Golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo, Barton Springs salamander - what do all of these animals have in common? They all live in Central Texas and they are all in danger of becoming extinct. Learn how to make informed choices in conservation of habitat and recycling of materials. Explore reasons why wildlife may not be able to survive in their current habitat and discuss solutions to problems like loss of habitat, disease, and ability to find food. Discuss survival and interdependence within an ecosystem. Describe the flow of energy in a food chain from beginning (the sun) to end (top consumers). Predict the effects of changes in ecosystems caused by living organisms. Compare the form and functions of different species. Analyze and interpret information to construct reasonable explanations for wildlife survival. Safely observe and touch live animals and specimens while discussing how the needs of these species affect humans and what we can do to help ensure their survival. Students meet a live bat and owl.

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