

New Hampshire Conservation Corps



Digital Educator Naturalist Season 2021

Program Report

New Hampshire Conservation Corps (NHCC) is a partnership between the Student Conservation, AmeriCorps, and New Hampshire State Parks. Since 1994, NHCC has provided young adults with the opportunity to come live at Bear Brook State Park and develop their skills in conservation, education, and leadership through service to the state of New Hampshire. In 2021 nine AmeriCorps members served with NHCC in a new Digital Educator Naturalist (DEN) position, providing remote environmental education lessons to schools and after school programs across southern New Hampshire. The DEN program offered a unique way to continue NHCC's legacy of education service in the face of the new education landscape created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

NHCC DEN AmeriCorps members arrived in New Hampshire in January and completed their service term the first week of May. They received training in environmental education, pedagogy, digital content creation, and Leave No Trace trainer certification. They then put their training to use by creating a total of twenty-four remote lessons, a digital field trip to Bear Brook, and ten blog posts for New Hampshire State Parks. The digital lessons and field trip were shared directly with 44 classrooms in 13 schools and 10 after-school programs, in addition to being shared online via the New Hampshire State Parks blog.

The SCA

The Student Conservation was created in 1957 by Liz Tituss Putnam. Modeled on the CCC and intended to address the backlog of park maintenance work, The SCA's goal is to inspire stewardship and provide youth and young adults with professional development opportunities through hands on service to the natural environment. This is accomplished through, among other things, roving trail crews, internships with conservation organizations, and residential conservation corps—the oldest of which is NHCC.

Partnerships

The NHCC program would not exist without our partners. NHCC has been an AmeriCorps program since its inception in 1993, and our partnership with Volunteer New Hampshire provides funding for our AmeriCorps members to meet critical conservation and education needs across the state. Like our partnership with AmeriCorps, our partnership with New Hampshire State Parks has also been a vital part of the program since the beginning. NHCC is based out of the historic Spruce Pond Camp in Bear Brook State Park, and in addition to housing, New Hampshire State Parks has helped provide the program with support in a variety of ways. In addition to those partnerships, Eversource has also provided funding for our work through the Discover the Power of Parks program.

Our partnerships with the schools and after school programs where we provide environmental education lessons are also vital to our success. Many of these partners have worked with us since NHCC first offered educational programs, and we are grateful to everyone who was able to work with us again this year.

Digital Educator Naturalist Season

January: Training

The DEN service term began with three weeks of training and preparation for the service they would be doing. Their first week was an orientation, which introduced them to their new home in Bear Brook State Park, as well as AmeriCorps and SCA policies and procedures.

Following orientation, the DEN team dove into two weeks of education training. They received training on place-based education, pedagogical skills, and digital education with the NHCC Education Coordinator. They received further training on wildlife education from Lindsay Webb of NH Fish & Game, place-based education from Paul Bocko of Antioch New England, and wildlife tracking from Emma Tutein and Haley Andreozzi.

In addition to their early season trainings, the DENs had professional development opportunities throughout the program - AmeriCorps trainings through Volunteer New Hampshire, Leave No Trace Trainer training with NHCC staff, and ongoing feedback and support from NHCC staff.

February-April: Digital Education Season

During the digital education season, DEN members worked in teams of two or three to develop remote environmental education lessons for our school partners across New Hampshire. These lessons were designed to be delivered either synchronously (live over a digital video conferencing platform like Zoom or Google Meet) or asynchronously (through prepared PowerPoint presentations or videos that were prepared in advance). Each of our four teaching teams created a total of eight lessons for their partner schools. Topics covered included habitats, tree identification, watersheds, tide pooling, and more. A [selection of asynchronous lessons](#) were also posted on the NH State Parks blog. Teams built relationships with their students through synchronous lessons, as well as through both analogue and digital journal activities where students responded to lesson prompts and sent them back to teaching teams for feedback.

April-May: Field Trip Season

After completing their digital lessons, the DENs turned their attention to developing [a field trip to Bear Brook State Park](#). Having lived in the park since January, creating a digital field trip allowed the team to share a place that had become their home over the past four months. Working in three teams, the group developed video segments on Bear Brook's trails, forests, marshes, vernal pools, and the CCC museum. The field trip videos were also paired with supplementary activities teachers could use to expand on the videos in the classroom. Both the videos and the supplementary activities were shared on the NH State Parks Blog. In addition to creating the digital field trip, the spring also opened up the possibility of outdoor, in-person programs. Two in-person programs were lead at the Kingston Public Library as part of their Go Wild! series.

2021 Digital Educator Naturalist Accomplishments

It can be difficult to quantify the full magnitude of any education program. The goal is always for lessons to impact students, and the DEN program tried to do several things: teach scientific information, build scientific skills, encourage an interest in conservation, and empower students to explore New Hampshire's outdoor spaces and State Parks.

With that in mind, the accomplishments of the DEN season have been captured as numbers, but the reader should remember that education always transcends numbers. We don't know how many of our students might visit one of New Hampshire's State Parks this summer, or what piece of information from a DEN lesson will serve as the foundation for a student's future interest in science. We also hope the blog posts, lessons, and digital field trip, which have been shared online, will continue to find readers well after this report is completed.

To contextualize the table below, it is important to remember that all of the lessons the DEN team created was shared with the schools and after-school programs shown in the subsequent tables, in addition to being disseminated more broadly via the New Hampshire State Parks blog. ‘Total Lessons Delivered’ line of the table below is intended to capture the number of lessons that happened in classrooms, either synchronously or asynchronously, thanks to the DEN program.

Content Creation

Unique Lessons Created	32
Synchronous Lessons	9
Asynchronous Lessons	23
Total Lessons Delivered	1400
Lessons Shared Online	9
Digital Field Trip Segments	5
Blog Posts	10

NH State Parks Blog Data

Total Blog Post Views	3068
Total Lesson Plan Views	818
Most Viewed Blog Post	
<i>Foraging in NH</i>	1529
Most Viewed Lesson Plan	
<i>Habitats, Ecosystems, Biomes</i>	188

Data as of May 14, 2021

School Partners

<i>School</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Classrooms</i>
Abbott-Downing School	Concord	3 rd	3
Allenstown Elementary	Allenstown	3 rd	2
Beech Street School	Manchester	3 rd	4
Bluff Elementary	Claremont	3 rd & 4 th	2
Highland Goffe’s Falls	Manchester	4 th & 5 th	6
Hooksett Memorial	Hooksett	3 rd	7
McDonough	Manchester	4 th	3
North Charlestown	Charlestown	3 rd & 4 th	2
Pembroke Hill	Pembroke	4 th	4
Smyth Road	Manchester	4 th	2
Webster	Manchester	4 th	3
Weston	Manchester	4 th	3
Wilson	Manchester	4 th	3

After School Partners

<i>Program</i>	<i>Town</i>
Bakersville 21 st Century	Manchester
Beech Street 21 st Century	Manchester
Center for New Americans	Manchester
Girls Inc.	Manchester & Nashua
Gossler 21 st Century	Manchester
Hallsville 21 st Century	Manchester
McDonough 21 st Century	Manchester
Northwest 21 st Century	Manchester
Parker-Varney 21 st Century	Manchester
Wilson 21 st Century	Manchester

Reflections

The 2021 DEN program achieved its goal of continuing NHCC's environmental education through the COVID pandemic. As one of our teacher partners said, "Honestly, I didn't know if you could pull it off, but I have been impressed with the presentations!"

That said, this season was not without difficulty. Spruce Pond Camp is limited in its ability to provide internet access, which resulted in more asynchronous lessons than originally planned. Volunteer New Hampshire generously allowed members access to their conference room throughout the season so teams could have reliable internet access on a predictable schedule, which was very helpful. Everyone also had to adapt the techniques of environmental education, which often rely on in-person activities and interactions, to the remote environment. However, many of our school partners were grappling with the same difficulty of transitioning to remote or hybrid transition. Another teacher who worked with the program told us, "[The DENs] made a challenging year a little more bearable."

As we move forward, the DEN program offers fertile ground for reflection. Although the DEN program was created as a response to the changes COVID brought to education, it also freed NHCC as a program from the limitations of space, and allowed partnerships with schools that are outside of the Merrimack Valley. In future seasons, it may be valuable to incorporate some digital partnerships even if we return to in-person education - to expand the reach of our programs.



2021 Digital Educator Naturalist Team

AmeriCorps Members

Madi Cranford: Madi is a native of Escondido, California, and joined the DEN team during a gap year from her studies at Brown University. After she completes her senior year at Brown in 2022, she hopes to join the Peace Corps to continue her passion for environmental stewardship.

Chris Grahn: Chris is from Riverside, New Jersey, and brought a passion for hiking in National and State Parks, birdwatching, analyzing recent films, and Boston Sports teams to the DEN team. He hopes to eventually work in a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park as a Park Ranger or Media Coordinator.

Jake Rehm: Jake is from Fredericksburg, Virginia, and recently finished his degree in Integrated Science and Technology with a focus on Environment at James Madison University. He joined the DEN team to have the opportunity to help share his interest in the environment with the next generation.

Jackson Schneider: Jackson hails from Cincinnati, Ohio, and is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin – Madison with a degree in Computer Science. His background includes several years as a camp counselor, as well as work as a preschool teacher. He is passionate about environmental education and looks forward to continuing in this field.

Megan Spencer: Megan is originally from Kentucky and is a graduate of Western Kentucky University with a degree in Political Science. Prior to coming to New Hampshire, she worked in parks across the country, including California and Wyoming. After finishing her DEN term she will be off to New York to continue her work with the National Park Service.

Dante Sudilovsky: Dante is from Cleveland, Ohio, and joined the DEN program during a gap year from Princeton University studying History with a focus on the intersection between American media and the environmental consciousness. He is also a station manager for his university radio station and was able to continue hosting radio from the Hooksett Public Library parking lot during his DEN term.

Emily Tonn: Emily is from Davenport, Iowa, and a recent graduate of Iowa State University with a double major in Environmental Science and Global Resource Systems. Prior to joining the DEN team she had a summer position teaching marine ecology in the Dominican Republic, which inspired her interest in environmental education.

Rita Walsh: A Chicago native, Rita joined the DEN program after finishing her degree in Biology at the University of Mississippi. She discovered her love of nature through her childhood exploration of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and hopes to one day work in conservation-based research or wildlife rehabilitation.

Corrina Yobp: Corrina came to the DEN program from Pennsylvania, which is also where she got her start in environmental education leading interpretive programs with Allegheny County Parks. Corrina holds a degree in Environmental Studies from Slippery Rock University and is looking forward to moving forward in the environmental education field.

Staff

Davis Brush, Program Manager: Davis manages the general operations of NHCC, builds and maintains our partnerships for education and conservation, and ensures we continue to be able to provide great

service in the state of New Hampshire by maintaining AmeriCorps compliance. Davis began his career with NHCC as the Education Coordinator, and prior to joining NHCC he served two AmeriCorps terms and worked in environmental education from the Tetons to New England.

Kari Amick, Education Coordinator: Kari is the direct supervisor for the DEN AmeriCorps members and is responsible for planning, coordinating, and often leading their education season trainings and providing support throughout the season. In addition, she works with our school and afterschool partners to build and maintain partnerships. Prior to working for NHCC Kari worked as a park manager, classroom teacher, environmental educator, and academic researcher, and served as an AmeriCorps member.

Marcella Olds, Program Assistant: Marcella ensures all logistical aspects of the NHCC program are running smoothly and AmeriCorps members have all the food and coffee they need. From washing machine repair to meal preparation to member hiring, she does it all. Marcella came to NHCC as an alumna of The SCA's Massachusetts Conservation Corps, former NHCC Project Leader, and experienced trail worker.

Zach Colatch, Conservation Coordinator: Zach coordinates all aspects of NHCC's summer conservation season, managing NHCC's Conservation Steward AmeriCorps members, and working with Davis to build and maintain partnerships. In addition, Zach helps with the maintenance of Spruce Pond Camp. Zach is an alumni of NHCC and worked for conservation corps across the U.S. before returning to the New Hampshire as NHCC's Conservation Coordinator.