

Weather Guidelines for ‘Winter Animals’ Field Trips to Kensington Metropark

As a field trip focused in large part on how animals survive during the winter season and conducted in the months of December, January, February or March, we often come across wintery weather conditions. As Michiganders, this provides an opportunity to practice managing the cold! We have a variety of strategies at our disposal to keep students warm and safe during the field trip. Your trip will most likely run on the day it is scheduled; generally severe winter weather causes a small number of trip reschedules each year. Besides for extreme cases, it is normally best to wait until 8:30 am on the morning of the trip to make a cancellation call, as forecasts often shift.

In AAPS, on the days when the temperature or wind chill is below 0 degrees F, students do not have outdoor recess. This is the guideline used by the EE Program for winter field trip cancellation decisions as well, however it's helpful to keep in mind that students are not outside until around 10:00 am during this field trip, and temperatures are often warmer than at the start of the school day. We can run programs on days that the temperature and wind chill is expected to be within district standards by the time students are outdoors at Kensington.

Reasons a ‘Winter Animals’ could be canceled:

- Ambient temperature or wind chill stays below 0°F (by 10:00 a.m.)
- Transportation is unable to run buses.
- Lightning is observed.
- Constant rain during the morning. Weather reports suggest no break in the rain.
- Severe Weather Alerts, Hazardous conditions imminent (High winds, ice, etc.)

Strategies for overcoming challenging weather conditions:

- Teachers communicate with families well in advance of the field trip to ensure appropriate winter clothing. Students generally come to the trip with warm, layered, waterproof winter gear, well beyond what is normally sent to school for outdoor recess. In cases of missing items (hats, gloves, etc.) on the morning of the trip, teachers often pull from reserve gear from the school's front office. EE staff also have back-up gear on hand.
- The school bus remains on site and can be used for sheltering and warming students in case of inclement weather during the trip. Students also warm up on the bus before and after visits to the Nature Center and Farm Center.
- There are warm, indoor spaces at both the Nature Center and Farm Center that can be utilized on wet or cold days. Indoor times are often extended during periods of inclement weather.
- We can stick to the shorter, buffered trails during outdoor portions of the field trip. We limit the length of time outdoors on days with tough weather conditions.
- Keep it moving! On chilly days, participants can generate extra body heat by picking up the pace during hiking times on the trails.
- Specialty items: Families who worry about discomfort in extremities due to cold temperatures sometimes send students with additional tools for staying warm, such as hand/toe warmers, double-layered socks, scarves, balaclavas, etc.
- Trip leaders, classroom teachers, and naturalists monitor student wellbeing and check in with participants to inform decisions about when to head inside or utilize additional precautions.

Sources of local weather info

Web site: <https://www.wunderground.com/weather/us/mi/milford>

Phone: Call (734) 973-2929 for local weather Information (Weather Line 1600 WAAM)