



## AUDUBON VOLUNTEER NATURALIST

**GOAL:** To connect school students (ages 3-18 years) to nature with activities that develop understanding and appreciation of natural communities.

**PRIMARY DUTIES:** Audubon Volunteer Naturalists (AVNs) lead small hiking groups (8-15 school students) on “Outdoor Discovery” nature programs at the 134-acre Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve with diverse pond, field and forest habitats. AVNs connect students to the natural world through exploration, guided inquiry and hands-on activities (instead of a point-and-name approach). AVNs follow a provided lesson plan, but many plans have significant personal latitude for selecting trails, presenting activities and making spontaneous discoveries.

**OTHER ROLES:** AVNs are equipped and invited to assist with other educational programs at Beechwood as well as our other facilities, Succop Nature Park and Todd Nature Reserve. Two significant areas are scouting and major public events such as Creatures of the Night and Maple Madness. Such opportunities are optional and are not included in the minimum time commitment expectations.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** AVNs must have enthusiasm for the outdoors and working with children. They must communicate effectively with children and manage a group in an informal education situation. Flexibility and adaptability to spontaneous learning opportunities and changing circumstances are important. Prior experience with youth education, scouting, etc., helpful but not necessary.

**BACKGROUND CHECK:** For the safety of our visitors and to comply with state law, we require all AVNs to maintain a current Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check and an FBI Fingerprint Check (or affidavit), at the volunteer’s expense. Documents must be on file with ASWP before leading any field trip.

**TRAINING:** Candidates must attend a 30-hour training program that includes orientation to the organization and facilities, natural history information, program contents and techniques for leading groups. This training program is offered in spring and autumn. Candidates accompany experienced leaders before working alone. Continuing training and natural history education is provided through monthly meetings and additional optional trainings.

**TIME COMMITMENT:** After completion of the training program, AVNs should be available to lead an average of one walk per two weeks during the busy seasons (March to early June and mid- September to mid-November) or about ten hours a month in those seasons. All school field trips are on weekdays. Programs range from 90 minutes to 4 hours. Most begin in the morning between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m. AVNs select the dates and times per their own schedule and preferences. (We offer walks all year; AVNs are encouraged but not required to lead during other seasons. Scouting and public events are typically on weekends.) We request a commitment to lead walks for one year after the season in which the AVN was trained. Attendance at monthly meetings held September to May is strongly recommended.

**BENEFITS:** Free initial training; free monthly enrichment; free or discounted registration for many ASWP public environmental programs as well as select discounts at the Audubon Nature Store. In addition to the satisfaction of contributing to a more environmentally aware public, AVNs also enjoy regular use of a lovely natural setting, camaraderie with others who share a love of nature and access to ongoing training in natural history and educational techniques.

**CONTACT:** Scott Detwiler, Coordinator for On-Site Programs, (412) 963-6100, extension 20 or [sdetwiler@aswp.org](mailto:sdetwiler@aswp.org).