



Berkshire Waldorf  
High School

14 Pine Street  
Stockbridge  
MA 01262  
(413) 298-3800

PO Box 905  
Great Barrington  
MA 01230

[berkshirewaldorf.com](http://berkshirewaldorf.com)

July 2021

Dear Seniors and Senior Parents,

Each fall (well, last year excepted), our Seniors join seniors from several other Waldorf schools across the country to study zoology on Hermit Island, Maine. This year, our seniors, chaperoned by Ms. Orenstein and two volunteers, will join approximately 100 Waldorf school seniors from eight (or more) high schools from **Sunday, September 19, to Friday, September 24**. They will leave school at 8 a.m. on Sunday and return to school at the end of the trip around 8 p.m. on Friday. (We will call from the road with a more precise arrival time.)

The following information presents the program and the costs associated with it.

The Seniors and Ms. Orenstein will plan the trip in detail during the first week of school.

In the meanwhile, please call me if you have any questions about this program.

Sincerely,

Stephen Sagarin, Faculty Chair

**Location:** Hermit Island Campground, Phippsburg, Maine 04562

**Telephone:** 207. 443. 2101 (Note: This is a general store on the island, open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. At other times, it may be difficult or impossible to reach us. You can try to text Ms. Orenstein's cell phone, 413. 717. 1255.)

**Directions:** South of Bath, exit Route 1 and take Route 209, also called High Street. Pass the turn to Popham on left; continue toward Small Point. Look for signs and then two stone gates. Turn right and drive across.



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## Hermit Island Costs (Note: Subject to change; these are from 2019.)

- PLEASE BRING **\$170 CASH** (\$160 if you do not want a fresh lobster) WITH YOU ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19.
- PLEASE BRING A **CHECK PAYABLE TO BWHS for \$100** WITH YOU ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19.

Camping: 5 nights at \$25/night (Covers cost for chaperones)	\$125
Program fee reimbursement	100
Gasoline contribution	25
Firewood (cannot cut wood on island)	10
*Lobster (optional Thursday dinner)	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$270</b>

### Additional costs:

Each student will be responsible for planning, purchasing food for and cooking 1-2 meals for approximately 15 persons each. The students and Ms. Orenstein will also divide a general supply list, including propane, condiments, and other camp necessities. We will work out the details of meals and other supplies during the first week of school.

### *Pocket Money*

Students may also want pocket money for meals on the road to and from Hermit Island. There is also a general store on the island that sells coffee, ice, lobsters, snacks, and other supplies.

### *\*Lobster*

We usually have a lobster dinner on Thursday evening for those students who want to join us. The cost of the lobsters varies by season and size, but is usually between \$5 and \$10. Students who want a lobster should bring an extra \$10.



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### **Marine Biology Week for Waldorf High Schools: An Experiment in Collaboration** By Edward Edelstein

*It is a sunny September morning on Hermit Island, just off the Maine coast. Seniors from six North American Waldorf high schools are packed into the Kelp Shed, a simple wooden structure that serves as a snack bar during the busy summer camping season. One hundred and twenty-five people—113 students and 12 high school teachers—sit on picnic tables and stacking chairs, talking and laughing before main lesson begins. A fresh sea breeze wafts through a row of windows facing out to the dunes. The sound of waves mixes with the quiet drone of an aquarium pump... This makeshift classroom is complete with a portable blackboard perched on an old boat transom at the front of the shed.*

*Gary Shemroske, biology teacher at New York's Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School, begins main lesson with a confession: hands in his pockets, head down, in a penitent voice, Gary admits that since the age of nine, when he began going on fishing trips with his father, he has been a worm addict. Gary writes the word "Annelid" on the blackboard, and begins the morning lecture on marine worms.*

In 1996 I sent a letter to my fellow biology teachers at Waldorf high schools east of the Rockies and suggested we share a weeklong marine biology trip on the Maine coast. This unique experiment would join Waldorf high schools in collaborative academic work and share the broad expertise brought by teachers from different schools in North America. It would combine phenomenological study of invertebrate zoology—part of the twelfth grade Waldorf curriculum—with marine-based science labs and artistic activities.

In preparation for the initial trip, I visited the Island and began exploring its coastal habitats. Using plankton net, I found live sea-star larvae and studied them with a binocular microscope. Totally unlike the adult sea star, the larvae are bilaterally symmetrical. It was exciting to observe them moving; the students had to see this. Ronnie Kamphausen, the resident naturalist, shared her love of the island and organisms with me during that first visit, and she continues to share her knowledge and enthusiasm with each year's seniors.

That first trip in September 1996 involved two schools—Toronto, where I was teaching, and Kimberton, where Andy Dill teaches. We began Sunday evening with a ritual story about the four elements around the island. The academic work began in earnest early Monday morning. The days were divided into three parts: main lesson, artistic workshops or science labs, and tide pool observation. Each evening we had a campfire. At night that first year, the bay glowed with blue-green phosphorescent plankton. Some students went swimming, their arms like angel's wings in the iridescent sea. The students were awed by the beauty of the place and by the marine life they held in their hands. They loved getting to know other Waldorf seniors who could share in the experience of this unusual and rich educational system.

Andy and I encouraged other schools to join us, and the trip has steadily grown. Last year, the entire senior classes, including teachers, from the Waldorf schools in Chicago, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Kimberton, Lexington, Cape Ann, Great Barrington, and Hawthorne Valley, studied together on Hermit Island. The expanded format included tide pool work, main lessons, and six different artistic and science lab sessions. Surprisingly, main lesson for 113 works very well in the Kelp Shed. We appreciate the kind support of



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both the Island's owners, and the campground manager, Donny Wallace, for allowing us to work there each year.

By the week's end each student completed a seascape painting or pastel, composed sea poetry and participated in a geology lab. They all sketched living organisms seen under the microscopes, learned botany or beach and dune ecology, and studied life in the mudflats. With the help of Ronnie and other area naturalists, and aided by the nine foot "spring tides", the students identified more than fifty tide pool organisms.

On Friday, the students reflected upon the week by completing a two-hour solo main lesson. Afterward, they met in the Kelp Shed to conclude with the annual "Hermit Island Student Art Show and Poetry Reading." Here is one student's poem:

### *The Moon, the Ocean, and Me*

I stood on the rocks watching the ocean  
Saw the waves try to take over the rocks in an unbroken motion  
The waves came as regularly as the tic-tocks of clocks  
But the patient giants would not move from their spots  
The moon shone its light on the ground  
So it could reflect all around  
That night was the loudest quiet I have ever seen.

*-Steven Swisher, Chicago Waldorf School*

Each year, the students respond with phrases such as the "best ever", or "this hands on is the most meaningful kind of learning for me." One year, one student, Celeste Thom of Chicago, wrote:

*"I stood with a classmate out on one of the heads and watched my first Maine sunset and we were blown away by the beauty... I got to see my first wild sea star and my first wild living crab. I heard the sound of the tide coming in, crashing on the rock as my nightly lullaby...I surprised myself by realizing that I was able to just exist here. I was able to just be!"*

This trip has grown to full capacity; the experiment is working well. Other schools have joined and we have added a second week to accommodate them. The experience successfully integrates phenomenological science and artistic activities in a beautiful setting, while creating a healthy social atmosphere for our seniors and faculty. Teachers from more than a dozen schools enjoy working and learning together and have coalesced into a core faculty.

This collaborative, field-based academic trip meets the needs of today's adolescents in a way that no classroom can. Their experiences are often profound and spiritual in nature. My hope is that shared academic trips can be created in other disciplines in our Waldorf schools.



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### Personal Equipment List for Waldorf Seniors Trip to Hermit Island, Maine

Bring EVERYTHING on this list. Come prepared for hot & sunny or rainy & cold days and cold ( even freezing) nights.

- Pencils—graphite and colored
- Pencil sharpener
- Eraser
- Field notebook (provided by school)
- Hard-cover bound blank book (drawing pad; unlined)
- Water-resistant wrist watch or watch on a clip or lanyard
- WET SHOES—old-style canvas sneakers or closed-toe water shoes with good straps or laces. A good chance to wear an old pair for a last time, then throw them out. Some students find that muck boots work well. Fishing waders work well if you have them. Sandals or Crocs are great for around camp but will NOT be allowed in the tide pools
- Good raincoat, rain suit, or poncho—work goes on, rain or no rain
- 2 pairs of pants
- 2 shirts—at least one long sleeved and fast drying
- Fleece, sweater, or warm jacket
- Wool hat, mittens or gloves (One year I didn't bring a wool hat and I couldn't sleep because my head was so cold)
- Long underwear—silk or polypro
- Sneakers or hiking shoes
- Flip-flops, sandals, or Crocs for camp
- Wool or polypro socks (cotton socks will not keep you warm when wet)
- Shorts
- Swimsuit
- Beach towel
- Camp, shower or extra towel
- Sunglasses with strap
- Sun/rain hat
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray—can be lots of mosquitoes
- Flashlight with extra batteries (a headlamp is excellent if you have one)
- Tent (The school will help obtain enough tents for all)
- Sleeping bag
- Foam pad or air mattress
- Folding camp chair (the school has several)
- Water bottle to carry
- 2 gal. drinking/cooking water per student
- 2 Large plastic garbage bags for storing clothing—pack your clothing in a large garbage bag and then in your luggage. You will want another one for your filthy, muddy clothes for the trip home.
- A few extra smaller plastic bags to keep notebooks and other equipment dry in your pack. One or two gallon size zip-lock bags work well.
- Daypack
- Toothbrush and personal hygiene items, Kleenex or handkerchief.
- Cards, musical instruments, novels... there will be music at night so come prepared to share and perform... sing, play, recite, act at the campfire.

### Helpful Hints

- NO CELL PHONES. Poor to zero reception and no chargers available.
- NO FOOD in the tents due to annoying and destructive squirrels (red and gray), raccoons, skunks, and porcupines.
- Clean, close, and bungee all coolers and bins.
- Learn to identify **poison ivy**—there is lots on island!
- **Please** obey communal rules and curfews.
- Carry an island map at all times—getting lost is embarrassing.



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## Student Conduct Agreement for the Hermit Island Zoology Trip (Student Copy)

Each September, the zoology trip to Hermit Island enables Waldorf schools from all over North America to work and study together. Over many years, we have established a relationship of trust with the owners and managers of Hermit Island. We are guests on the island, and there will be other campers vacationing there who are not from our schools. Therefore, we all have a communal responsibility to behave in a positive manner.

As a participant, I agree to be courteous while on the island, to be punctual, to attend all of the scheduled classes and events, and to follow the curfew in the evenings. I understand there is a zero-tolerance policy regarding drugs, alcohol and the use of tobacco. I understand that if I am found to possess or use illegal drugs or alcohol, or if I am seen smoking, that I will be sent home immediately at my own or my parents' expense.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Student Conduct Agreement for the Hermit Island Zoology Trip (School Copy)

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date