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Adults, families invited to explore nature with local experts

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NEWS RELEASE

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May 24, 1999

Contact: Lisa Mills, director, Montana Natural History Center, 327-0405.

ADULTS, FAMILIES INVITED TO EXPLORE NATURE WITH LOCAL EXPERTS

MISSOULA--

Learning about the natural environment in and around Missoula is fun, easy and inexpensive with a series of nature programs offered this summer by the Montana Natural History Center.

Experts from The University of Montana and the Missoula community will lead the explorations, which include field trips on Mount Jumbo, nature hikes in the Bitterroot Mountains and a field study of endangered water howellia in the Swan Valley.

The Montana Natural History Center has teamed up with the Five Valleys Land Trust and the Lolo National Forest to offer "Nature of Mount Jumbo Family Outings" at no charge to the public. (A suggested donation of \$5 will help defray costs.) They are open to all ages; however, adults must accompany children. All outings will meet at the top of Lincoln Hills Drive, below the Mount Jumbo saddle.

The Mount Jumbo outings are:

- "Birdwatching" with instructor Carol Snetsinger, 8:30 to 11 a.m. Saturday, June 5.
- "Bugs and Butterflies" with instructor Byron Weber, 9:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, June 26. Butterfly nets and field guides will be provided.

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- “Animal Tracks on Jumbo” with instructor Garry Kerr, 1 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, July 11. Materials for making plaster casts will be provided.
- “Night on Mount Jumbo: Stars & Stories” with instructor Diane Friend, 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 11. Bring a flashlight, binoculars if possible, and a favorite night sky story to share.

A similar walk, “Collecting Wildflowers and Native Grass Seeds,” will be led by UM botanist and recreation specialist Marilyn Marler on Saturday, July 10. The group will meet at 9 a.m. at the trailhead of Mount Sentinel’s M Trail, and then will follow Marler into the hills in pursuit of native plant seeds. Participants will learn how to identify wildflowers and grasses and how to grow local plants from seed. The walk concludes at noon and is free, although a \$5 donation is suggested.

Nature hikes in the Bitterroot Mountains will be offered throughout the month of August. All ages are invited to explore the beautiful canyons, creeks and waterfalls of the range, led by a trail guide, on four Saturday hikes. (Children must be accompanied by adults.)

Transportation will be provided, departing from the Nature Center at Fort Missoula at 8 a.m. and returning by 5 p.m. Each hike costs \$12 for member adults, \$6 for member children, \$16 for non-member adults, and \$8 for non-member children.

The hike schedule is as follows:

- Saturday, Aug. 7 -- Bass Creek Drainage, 6 miles round trip.
- Saturday, Aug. 14 -- Bear Creek Falls, 3 miles round trip.
- Saturday, Aug. 21 -- Glen Lake Trail, 5 miles round trip.
- Saturday, Aug. 28 -- Sweat House Creek Falls, 5 miles round trip.

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Botanist Peter Lesica will lead an excursion to the Swan Valley for a "Field Study of Endangered Water Howellia" on Saturday, July 24. The outing runs from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and costs \$28 for members and \$33 for non-members. Transportation and a picnic lunch will be provided. To reserve a space, call 327-0405.

The Montana Natural History Center also has a line-up of Elderhostel classes for seniors 55 and older, as well as learning opportunities specifically for teachers.

For a catalog or more information, call the Nature Center at 327-0405.

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