



Young Naturalists Newsletter



PRICKLY PEAR BY JONAH BOERBOOM

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

With the summer solstice comes some of our favorite projects! Environmental cues drive masses of horseshoe crabs up to the beaches at night for nesting, followed by diamondback terrapins emerging from the marsh scoping out the perfect area to lay their eggs. Ospreys are returning from their winter migratory vacations to prepare for new young, and many songbirds are courting and flying by with material in tow to construct their nests. Wherever you look, the natural world is teeming with life!

Over the past few months, we completed another boat building workshop, built vertical oyster gardens (VOGs), visited a sea turtle facility, participated in a few invasive species removal events and tagged horseshoe crabs! We also hosted our first public education event for 27 guests!

As always, I want to give a big thank you to our students and parents for your ongoing support. I will try my best not to send your children home in the car with low tide stench! I also wanted to extend a special thank you to our graduating class of 2025! Congratulations on all you've accomplished and thank you for your efforts and commitment to the Nature Initiative group! Wishing you all the best on this next step of your journey. You will be missed! Keep in touch and stop by on the trails, see you out there!



Do you see the 3 chicks? This catbird nest was found in a wineberry bush!

*Enjoy the sunshine,
Kayla*



ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Jonah Boerboom



Sorting through invertebrates in the seine net at our Shellfish Restoration project

Jonah enjoys being outdoors, is passionate about nature and is the featured artist on our cover page. Over the past couple of summers, Jonah has spent many hours volunteering on our Shellfish Restoration projects and enjoys the marine realm.

Jonah used oil paints for this piece and if you couldn't tell from the title, his inspiration was an eastern prickly pear cactus he saw at his local beach! This is only cactus species native to our area and is often found on sandy beaches along the Atlantic coast.

Thank you for your contribution of this beautiful painting Jonah!





HERBARIUM OVERTURE

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by Deia Colosi



Deia has been involved with Avalon's programs since she was in elementary school. Her inspiration behind the piece is from a story she is currently working on. The character standing in front of the herbarium is named Basil. Basil is symbolically connected to plants, and grows plants quite often, which Deia felt connected to the spring and summertime as symbols of growth and rebirth.

Thank you for submitting this wonderful drawing Deia!



FIDDLEHEAD CANOE

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2024-2025



VOLUNTEERS DEDICATED 7 MONTHS TO THIS
LARGE-SCALE WOODWORKING PROJECT
THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE SCHOOL
YEAR. CONGRATULATIONS TO A JOB WELL
DONE!

THE FIDDLEHEAD CANOE WILL BE RAFFLED
OFF AT THE QUICK & DIRTY BOAT BUILD AT
THE BAYLES BOAT SHOP IN PORT JEFFERSON
VILLAGE ON AUGUST 24TH!



ALUMNI CORNER

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»»» Congratulations to our 2025 Graduates!



««« **Gabe Finger**

Cornell University

Major: Environment & Sustainability

Lindsay Stype »»»

Binghamton University

Major: Human Development



««« **Charles Werder**

SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry (ESF)

Major: Wildlife Science

River Perrone »»»

FINE Mortuary College

Major: Mortuary Science



ALUMNI CORNER

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»»» Congratulations to our 2025 Graduates!



»»» **Mira Benigno**
SUNY Fredonia
Major: Music Education

Raymond Wolfson »»»
Stony Brook University
Major: Political Science



»»» **Sierra Needham**
SUNY New Paltz
Major: Environmental Science

Eleanor Schneider »»»
Penn State University
Major: Sociology





ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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We've reconnected with some of our alumni from Avalon's youth programs to see where they are now!
Meet them below ...



KALLEN FENSTER

Participated in Nature Initiative (formerly STATE)
from 2019-2020

Kallen is going into his sophomore year at Columbia University

➤➤➤ **Major/Area of Study:** History

➤➤➤ **Favorite hobby:** Watching movies!

➤➤➤ **How did our programs at Avalon inspire you?** My time at Avalon sparked a deep interest in environmental issues, which went on to shape much of my high school experience. I became a dedicated member of my school's environmental club and served as a youth leader with the Vermont Youth Lobby, where I had the opportunity to advocate for environmental legislation at the Montpelier Statehouse.

➤➤➤ **Favorite experiences, stories or Avalon memories:** I remember having a great time talking with other kids my age while planting vegetables.

➤➤➤ **Advice you would give to a high school student:** Don't be discouraged by setbacks. Many of the areas where I ultimately thrived began with struggle. In fact, it was those early challenges that helped me discover my passions and better understand myself. For instance, I once had a fear of public speaking, but I pushed myself to overcome it by joining my school's Model UN team. Not only did I grow more confident, but I went on to earn multiple awards. That experience taught me the value of persistence and the growth that can come from facing discomfort head-on.

➤➤➤ **Career goals/future plans:** I am hoping to go to Law School and eventually become a lawyer specializing in Entertainment Law.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

LITTLE FISH!

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On June 8th, Avalon hosted our very first public education event—and it was a splash! Families gathered for Little Fish, an interactive puppet show using large, wearable “scuppets” to tell the story of nitrogen pollution and its impact on aquatic life. Before the show, children made their own fish puppets in a hands-on workshop.

Five amazing Nature Initiative students starred as characters like Catfish, Storm Drain, and Nitrogen itself! The day before the event, they had a rehearsal and costume fitting. The scuppet heads are actually balanced on a pole attached to a backpack that the students wore. They were much more top heavy than we imagined and we had a lot of laughs!

“Lights, camera, action!” It’s showtime! The director of the show, Susan, announced our characters as they filed in... Little Fish, Blue Gill Sunfish, Catfish, Perch, Raccoon, Storm Drain and Nitrogen. Our students brought big energy and heart to the stage, keeping our audience entertained and engaged!

Our youngest guests dressed as algae and were welcomed onto the “stage” (representing Millers Pond in Smithtown) to interact with the scuppets. The show concluded with the scuppets and children marching in a circle around the pond with signs that read “no more Nitrogen!”

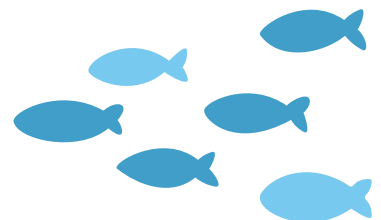
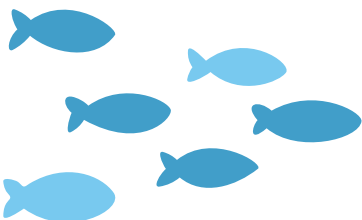
Thank you to our student volunteers and to Susan Buroker who is the creative mind and artist behind this powerful program!

[Join our email list](#) to receive announcements on future public outreach events!



Check out photos from the Little Fish performance

on the next page!





PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

LITTLE FISH!

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Little Fish is an interactive scuppet performance showcasing the effects nitrogen pollution has on aquatic life.

**Scuppet: Large scale sculpted puppets*

JUNE 7TH, 12:00PM AVALON NATURE PRESERVE
RAIN DATE: JUNE 8TH, 12:00PM SHEP JONES LN ENTRANCE

How does Nitrogen enter our watershed?

Little Fish is a recipient of the 2019 NYSCA Long Island Creative Individuals Grant

Very Important Person

VIP

»»» WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

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WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

(cont'd.)

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UPCOMING PROJECTS



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Terrapin Monitoring



July 18th



8:30 AM-10:30 AM



West Meadow Beach



Shellfish Monitoring



July 31st



10:00 AM-12:00 PM



Stony Brook Yacht Club Beach



Sweetbriar Community Garden



July 22nd



9:30 AM-12:00 PM



Sweetbriar Nature Center



"Be a Good Egg"



July 26th



9:00 AM-11:00 AM



Sunken Meadow State Park



Native Habitat Garden



July 27th



10:00 AM-12:00 PM



Sunken Meadow State Park

Please register on our website if you would like to attend!

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