

How I learned to Love Nature

By Linnea Dun Rappaport



Summit of Mt Monadnock. From Left to Right: Bahar Reinhardt, April Song (in back), Vivien Sheena, Nia Madias, Linnea Dun Rappaport

Some people grow up in nature, loving it from their first encounter. Others are not so comfortable with it and must be forced to encounter it first-hand. Take me, for example. I was signed up for the Environmental Science Camp of Newton under duress. I was **strongly** encouraged to sign up through a series of guilt trips, bribes, and empty promises. My mother thought this camp would be “good for me.” I did not. Nonetheless, in part because there were no other options for a rising ninth grader in the summer of 2024, I acquiesced.

A week before camp started, I realized I was in for a unique form of hell. Hours on a bus (I get bus-sick) so that I could hike miles up mountains in the Berkshires (I am afraid of heights) to surround myself in nature (I am allergic to grass, pollen, and pretty much the entire outdoors). I worried I would be surrounded by tri-athletic, tree-hugging nerds who would look at me askance every time I misidentified a plant or flower. I desperately tried to weasel out, but to no avail; the security deposit was non-refundable, and my parents are *incredibly* frugal. There was no way out.

Alas, on the first day of camp, my stomach in knots, I biked the two miles to the daunting Environmental Science

Camp’s meeting spot at Bowen School. When I got there, the bright neon sign leered at me, mockingly: “Welcome to camp.” I’d rather not. To my utter shock, I survived the first day. The only truly horrible part of the day was losing, magnificently at Gaga Ball, to a kid younger than me. But the rest of the day was great. The camp leader, Misha, had a similar sense of humor and began a month-long inside joke that made me feel like a true member of the camp family.

In the following days, on the bike ride there, I pedaled as fast as I could to be the first one to arrive. I wanted to spend all summer hanging out with my newfound friends. I loved all the activities we did together, whether it was the easier walks to parks around Newton, or the 12-hour-long days hiking mountains such as Mt. Wachusett, Mt. Monadnock, or trails like the Welch-Dickey Loop. I didn’t even mind the long drives to get to these locations.

By the end of the month, I was already planning on signing up for the following summer, and I had discovered new passions: caring for the environment and being in nature — I now love hiking! I have taken my new passion for these things beyond Envi-Sci. I now lead the sustainability team at my high school and am a Youth Leader with Green Newton. I am even volunteering to lead an intergenerational walk at Edmands Park for Newton Conservators. Edmands Park has always held a special place in my heart. Growing up in Newtonville, I visited often, memorizing the trails while walking my dogs, sledding with friends, or going on Night Walks with Envi-Sci.

Why not join me on our Fall Walk at Edmands Park and discover nature’s appeal for yourself? ♦

Linnea Dun Rappaport is a rising sophomore at Newton North High School. Linnea is passionate about climate justice and is Co-chair of the Student Green Team. She’s a Youth Leader with Green Newton, a Co-Coordinator of the Service Learning Program at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Newton, and a member of the Newton Envi-Sci program. Linnea loves hiking and spending time with her spherical, opinionated cat, Melvin.

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