



Black-throated  
Gray Warbler

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Snapshots from Camp Explorador © Portland Audubon

## CAMP EXPLORADOR!

by Steve Robertson, Education Director

If you have been a member of the Audubon Society of Portland for any length of time, you are likely aware of the array of education programs that we offer for both children and adults. You probably also know that we run an extensive Summer Camp Program that includes everything from half-day programs for first graders to week-long adventures that take older students far afield to investigate nature. But chances are you have never heard of the program that helps us reach the children that would otherwise have little or no opportunity to engage in authentic outdoor education. We call this summer camp “Explorador.”



For the past six years, Portland Audubon has teamed up with two organizations that provide affordable housing for Latino and other immigrant populations living in the metro area: **Hacienda in Northeast Portland, and Bienestar in Hillsboro. These organizations recruit and register**

**the children for Camp Explorador while Portland Audubon provides staff and operates the camp.** We rent a school bus (which our staff are trained to drive) and pick up the young Exploradors at their apartment complexes each day for their adventure.

This eliminates the barrier to environmental education that transportation has historically posed for these communities.

This exciting program has enabled us to give Latino and other immigrant children an experience all children should have: attending a week of summer camp. And more than that, because of Audubon’s environmental theme, Explorador helps children build meaningful relationships with nature and gain a better understanding of the workings of the natural environment.

**As the name suggests, the goal of Explorador is to give children the chance to explore their local wild areas and**

**greenspaces.** Students spend the week learning the names of the plants and birds living in their neighborhood, testing the water quality of local ponds and streams, discovering the fun of journaling one’s discoveries, and learning the basics of outdoor survival. They also may try their hand at nature mapping, animal tracking, and reading the clues of animal sign. Young Exploradors finally get to see the forest as more than just a wall of green, as they become familiar with the predominant trees and their uses. They learn, for example, that the Western Red Cedar is the tree to find if they are ever truly lost and cold in the woods, as the inner layer of its bark makes ideal tinder, easily ignited for a warming fire.

In addition to serving the community, Explorador also serves Audubon’s mission as we strive to “inspire people to love and protect nature.” To ensure that native birds and other wildlife and their habitats are protected, Portland Audubon needs to reach out to all members of our community. **If we hope to preserve the quality of life that defines living in the Pacific Northwest, it is vital that people from all cultures and economic backgrounds have the opportunity to explore, investigate, and better understand the natural world.** Only in this way can we help prepare children of all cultures and communities to become environmentally responsible citizens.

Camp Explorador is one of our “community-based Summer Camps” which is designed, as described, to travel to the community it serves. The other such camp currently running is the “Audubon Nature Team” (formerly known as Alberta Nature Team) or **ANT Camp**, serving children that live in North and Northeast Portland. For this program, we work with local schools to help recruit children that would benefit the most, since **ANT Camp — like Explorador — is designed to reach those students that may otherwise not be able to participate in such a program.** We are currently running six weeks of Explorador and three weeks of ANT Camp, each week having a maximum of 24 students.

**Both Explorador and ANT Camp are free for participants, so every year Portland Audubon seeks grant funding for these important programs. We also hope for donations from people who want to support this effort.** If you would like to help children learn to love and appreciate the value of a clean and healthy environment, please contact Catherine Halpin at **503-292-6855 ext.129**, or simply send your contribution for the Explorador/ANT program to Portland Audubon.

