

Little Camp

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Little bekownst to some people, after camp has magically come back to its summertime longitudinal and latitudinal positions, we have a little known session called 'Little Camp'. While everyone is still in school, working away on last assignments and tests, and longingly looking out the windows at the May-time breezes floating through the bright, green, new leaves, some of us are already at camp playing in the sunshine and streams, with little ones. I know this might seem a little unfair, but let me explain, and then while you are sitting in school on those last days of May and into June, you can delight in daydreaming about all the adventures already happening at Little Camp.

Little Camp started way back when, when Don first met the first fairy he ever met in the woods, near that bend in the stream, a way down the path yonder towards the river. The fairy whose name I'm told was Starling, invited Don to a scrumptious feast in her forest grove, where she introduced him to her five darling fairy children. Well, Don was just so taken with those five lovely, dancing and laughing fair folk, that he thought it would be a wonderful idea to have a camp session just for the forest people.

Oh, that first summer was a delight! All the fairy children came, not just Star's but dozens of others, all dressed in bright colors and wings glittering in the sunshine. We went on rainbow hikes, and butterfly adventures, many weavings of all kinds, (this is originally when hair weaving and decorating began), and then in the evening, songs and marshmallow roastings.

In the years since that first summertime, we've had all kinds of forest children come to little camp, wee trolls, little leprechauns, some small pegicorns and even some tiny yetties. One year the old mother sharkapus even sent two of her small ones up the river to camp - at first we weren't sure about the safety of all of this - considering that sharkapi have teeth sharper than piranhas and are capable of biting through the entire cargo net in one bit, but they soon proved to be very joy-filled and happy little campers as long as we kept them in the stream. A sharkapus doesn't like to be dry, you see. This is actually why we now have stream hikes at camp. So what do we do at little camp, well, all the same things you do at all the other sessions, I suppose, though our pancakes on the family overnights are a lot smaller than the ones that Joe and Austin serve up, now-a-days.

Yes, we laugh and sing some troll and fairy songs of course! We hike to secret forests and mountains and caves. We make body paints and ambush each other every chance we get. Even though it is little camp, we have great, big, all day capture the flag adventures, which often turn into daydreaming in the nets and berry-picking adventures. We nature dance and swing on the big swings, which is great fun the smaller you are. The fairies have the best time because they can fly and when they reach the top of the swing's height, as high as it goes, they fly off and dive down into the stream. We climb in the mud pit and we love to become mud-monkeys. Can you picture a fairy as a mud-monkey?!? They are lovely mud-monkeys!

Every year we have Little Camp and more and more of our forest friends come out to play, and we have so many new and exciting adventures ever year. At the end of Little Camp, our fairy friends have a tradition to help us begin the regular camp summer. They go from place to place all over camp and spread the joy of fairies around, which looks like something we call fairy dust.

Look for it you might see it!

So while you are sitting in class, during the last days of school, and you don't think you can sit still one more minute, look out the window and think about Little Camp and how in no time at all you yourself will be at camp soon!

Rachael has been at Nature Camps for 19 years. She has a dual masters degree in Divinity and Social Work and is currently exploring possibilities of integrating these two fields of study with her interest in education.

One of her major involvements outside of camp is working with a group of educators devoted to peace and social justice in Haiti. Several years ago, when she was living in Haiti, Rachael was able to work with this organization piloting alternative educational initiatives to promote literacy and learning.