


YMCA-YWCA CAMP THUNDERBIRD



2026 Parent Handbook



The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island commits to our core values of respect, honesty, responsibility, caring, and inclusiveness. These values guide us in everything from our everyday decision-making, our programming choices, and how we build and guide our camp community. In our commitment to these values, we recognize that we have room to grow and improve.

Camp Thunderbird is situated in, and benefits from, the territories of the T'Sou-ke and Scia'new Nations, who have lived in harmony with this land since time immemorial. We recognize the history of colonization and systemic racism that has shaped the world we operate in today, and we commit to increasing our awareness of where improvement is needed. We are dedicated to continuing to do the work of listening, learning, and making changes so that Camp Thunderbird is a place for everyone. A place where people who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, or may experience discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, body, age, health status, neurodiversity, or ability are truly welcome and included.

We recognize that this critical work will take time, may be uncomfortable, and will ultimately be a great benefit to the Camp Thunderbird community and those we serve and interact with.

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Introduction

The Y Outdoor Centre, home of Camp Thunderbird, is nestled in the Sooke Hills and has provided outdoor experiences for children and youth since 1935. Our mission is to work together to enhance individual and community potential through participation, learning and leadership. At the Y Outdoor Centre, we believe that high-quality mentorship, small group experiences, time spent being physically active in natural spaces, democratic group living and community service are key elements in the healthy growth and development of young people. We provide opportunities for young people to challenge themselves, build their self-awareness, social skills, take a break from technology and reconnect with themselves, others and the natural environment.

All of the information is vital for your camper to have a successful experience. Please be sure to read carefully, even if you have attended camp before.

Life at camp is different from the routines and patterns of home. Taking the time to talk with your camper about their upcoming experience is an important step in preparing. Setting a positive tone and clarifying expectations can really help your child adjust. In doing this, your child will get the most out of their Camp Thunderbird opportunity.

If you or your camper has any questions about their upcoming experience, we encourage you to contact our Summer Camp Program Coordinator, Alex. We look forward to having your child join us at Camp Thunderbird this summer.

Please reach out at any time if you have any questions about Camp Thunderbird

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Camper and parent commitment

Camper Commitment

I want to be a camper at Camp Thunderbird. I agree to behave respectfully at camp. I will do my best to make this a great experience for myself and my fellow campers. If I get into conflict with other campers at camp, I commit to working it out with the other camper and my counsellors. I also understand that camp prohibits the use of offensive language, inappropriate behavior, and the use of tobacco, cannabis products, vape juice, alcohol, or non-prescription drugs. I understand that failure to live up to my Commitment may mean that I am sent home from camp early. I also understand that by making this Commitment, I can look forward to fair treatment from my cabin mates, fellow campers, and staff.

Parent/Guardian Commitment

I have discussed the Camper's Commitment with my camper and confirmed that they agree to cooperate in the camp experience, to follow safety instructions, participate actively in conflict resolution, and refrain from behavior that is harmful or disruptive to themselves or others. I understand that by supporting this Commitment, my child may look forward to fair treatment from their fellow campers and the camp staff.

I also understand that camp prohibits the use of offensive language, inappropriate behavior, and the use of tobacco, cannabis products, vape juice, alcohol, or non-prescription drugs. I acknowledge that their use, or the failure by my camper to abide by this commitment, is cause for my camper to be sent home early without a refund of camp fees.



Camp Commitment

Camp Thunderbird strives to be a fun, safe, and nurturing environment where everyone has a chance to be their best. All camp participants, staff, and volunteers pledge to treat each other with dignity and respect. If necessary, parents will be required to collect their camper early. Inappropriate behavior, including the use of offensive language, aggression, or the use of prohibited items such as but not limited to tobacco, vape juice, alcohol, non-prescription drugs, or offensive materials, will not be permitted.

We recognize that conflict between program participants is a normal and inherent aspect of summer camp programs. It is important to note that we address these challenges through conflict resolution, not conflict elimination. This means we recognize that conflict is a reality in our work and that there are multiple stories to each conflict. We take the time to facilitate our participants working out their conflicts with each other in an age-appropriate way. We do not simply remove the conflict for our participants. This is a part of our overarching program goal of helping our campers learn and develop positive and lasting conflict resolution skills that will stay with them for life. The process is more challenging for the campers, but the outcomes are far more beneficial for the development of everyone involved. If one of the campers involved in the conflict does not live up to the commitments made through conflict resolution, we will then take steps to remove them from the program. The Camper's Commitment is a very important aspect of Camp Thunderbird's philosophy and speaks to our core values of respect, honesty, responsibility, caring, and inclusiveness. We ask that you take the time to read and discuss the Camper's Commitment with your child.

You will be asked to acknowledge and agree to the commitment during registration.



Risk management/awareness

The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird is committed to providing quality outdoor experiences that support the healthy growth and development of young people. We invest significant resources to create programs that provide these benefits to our participants without exposing them to unacceptable hazards.

Participants and their families should be aware of the risks involved in participating in camp programs and accept that by participating, they are taking those risks. Please take the time to review this summary of risks and our risk management approach. Risks will vary for each program, so we ask that you also take the time to review the information provided about each program.

Click here to read our full risk management document <https://vancouverislandy.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/YMCA-YWCA-Outdoor-Centre-Risk-Awareness-2024.pdf>





Packing for camp is a great way to prepare your camper for an unforgettable experience. packing together will help your camper recognize their own items to reduce lots and found, along with getting them excited about their stay. Follow the list below when packing bags. **For at camp**, duffle bags, hiking backpacks, and Rubbermaid totes are best for packing. Suitcases with wheels are hard to move around camp due to roots and rocks on our trails.

Packing list is for a 5-day base camp:

(Please adjust these numbers of the length of your stay)

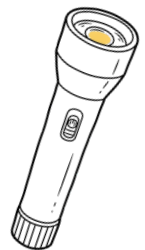
Clothing items:

- 4 Tee shirts
- 3 pairs of shorts
- 5-day supply of socks and underwear
- 2 pairs of pants
- 1 long sleeve shirt
- 1 warm sweater
- 1 hat (for sunshine or rain)
- Pajamas
- 1 Pair of running/hiking shoes
- 1-2 Bathing suits
- Toque and mitts for cooler evening activities
- Rain Jacket and pants



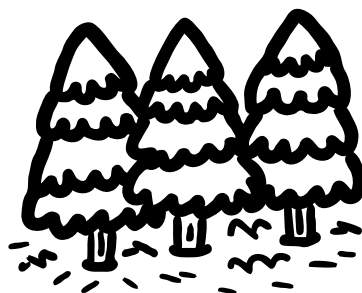
Personal items:

- Sleeping bag (Rated to 0 degrees)
- Pillow
- Day pack backpack
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Soap and shampoo
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Menstrual supplies
- Breathable Laundry bag
- Sandals
- other toiletries



Please DO NOT bring any of the following:

- Cell phones
- E-readers
- expensive clothing/items
- Pocket knives or Hatchets
- Money
- Tobacco or nicotine products
- Food
- Video games
- SPOT or other emergency communication devices



Optional items:

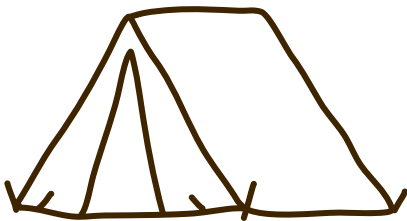
- Handheld camera (not a phone)
- Watch
- Book
- Stuffed animal
- Journal
- Paper, Envelope, Stamps
- Musical instrument

Packing list for Quest programs with out-trips:

(Please adjust for your campers' out trip length. Some of these items are also on the base camp list above.)

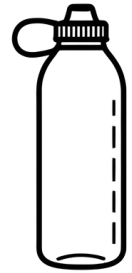
Out trip clothing:

- 1-2 breathable hiking shirts
- 1-2 Pairs of hiking shorts
- Hiking Socks
- Underwear
- Warm top (wool is best)
- Warm pants
- Warm toque
- Warm gloves for cool nights
- Rain jacket and rain pants



Out trip items:

- Hiking backpack (must have hip straps)
- Sleeping bag (packable into a stuff sack)
- Sleeping mat
- Hiking boots or shoes
- Bowl and Spoon
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent



Canoe trip specific items:

- Dry bags (for clothing and sleeping bag)
- Sport style sandals (Slides and flipflops do not provide enough support. Something with a backstrap is best)

Cotton vs. Synthetic Fabrics:

Cotton is an excellent choice for hot summer days – it is breathable. However, cotton does not insulate when it becomes wet, and it takes a very long time to dry. Synthetic fabrics such as polyester, polypropylene, nylon, spandex, and fleece are better suited for spending lots of time outside in different elements. These fabrics keep the wearer warm even when wet, and they dry quickly. Wool takes a long time to dry but insulates well even when wet. Having some cotton for hot days and non-cotton base layers for cooler or wet weather is a good practice.



Camper Health, Safety and Wellness

Staff are trained in a variety of emergency procedures and in reducing the risk of being in the outdoors. All swimming activities are supervised by certified lifeguards, and all boating activities require the use of PFD's or life jackets while on docks or the water.

Swimming :

All campers and staff members, regardless of experience, must participate in the "Swim Challenge" before accessing the large portion of the swim area each time they attend camp. The swim challenge consists of slipping into the swim area at one end, performing an underwater roll, swimming 50m, followed by treading water for one minute. This must be done all at once without using a floating aid or holding onto the dock. Campers may do the swim challenge in a life jacket if they wish.

If a camper does the challenge with a life jacket or needs the assistance of a floating aid during the challenge, the camper will be required to wear a life jacket in the large swimming area.

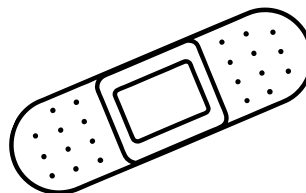
If a camper chooses not to participate in the swim challenge, they will not be permitted in the large swim area, but may wade in the small or shallow area. Campers may also do the swim challenge any day of the week for reassessment.

Supervision:

Camp Thunderbird provides staff supervision to all participants. A camp group will always have at least one staff member who knows the location of campers at all times. Counselors sleep in the cabins with campers and are always available to campers for assistance.

First aid:

All Thunderbird staff are certified in standard first aid and CPR-C. Each group also carries a basic first aid kit. Camp managers and program coordinators are trained in Advanced first aid and are available to assist in case of emergencies.



Medication and Camper Wellness



Medication at Camp:

- All medication needs to be checked in at the start of camp. This includes Tylenol, Advil, Melatonin, Vitamin supplements, etc. All medication is kept in a central and secure area to ensure accuracy and proper documentation, with the exception of Epi-Pens, inhalers, and other immediate need rescue medication.
- Please send ALL prescription medication in pharmacy packaged blister packs, with all relevant info such as time taken, dose, and name of medication. This will help ensure accuracy when administering your campers' medication.
- Dispensing of medication happens at meals (8:30am, 12:30pm, 5:30pm) and at bedtime, unless medically required to be at other times. Medications are administered at or just outside of the dining hall.
- Please ensure all details, including medication name, dosage, and timing, are up to date in the registration form prior to arrival.

Illness:

Campers showing signs of illness while at camp will be taken to our wellness center to rest and be away from other campers. A senior staff member will contact the family and arrange for pick up.

Campers may return to camp when the following conditions are met:

- Symptoms have resolved and do not require the use of medication (e.g. Tylenol, Advil, cough medicine) to manage.
- They are feeling better, AND 5 days since the onset has passed. OR their symptoms are completely gone in fewer than 5 days AND they can show a negative COVID-19 test from the day they wish to return.
- If a camper returns, and the symptoms come back, the family will be asked to come back and pick up the camper



Preparing Your Child for Camp:

Camp is an exciting and fun-filled place: new friends, new adventures, new skills, stories, songs, campfires and games. It's also a very different place: different washroom, different schedule and different people.

Along with the excitement of all these new experiences, there is bound to be some anxiety. Here are a few things you might do to keep the anxiety low and anticipation high.

- Talk about what it's like being in a group with up to 13 other children, and the ways they can go about making new friends
- Talk about ways to solve problems at camp—talking with a counsellor or other camp staff
- Focus on the positives, like all the new skills they will learn and build confidence in the skills they already have
- Talk with them about how it's likely other campers are feeling the same way too

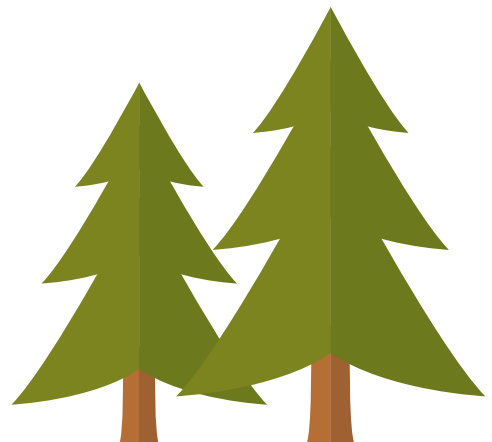
Homesickness:

It is natural for campers to feel homesick when coming to camp, whether it's their first time or their 10th time. Our counsellors are people who enjoy being with kids and will take the time to listen and try to help your camper navigate their feelings.

If your child is homesick, we will take the following steps to ensure a positive experience:

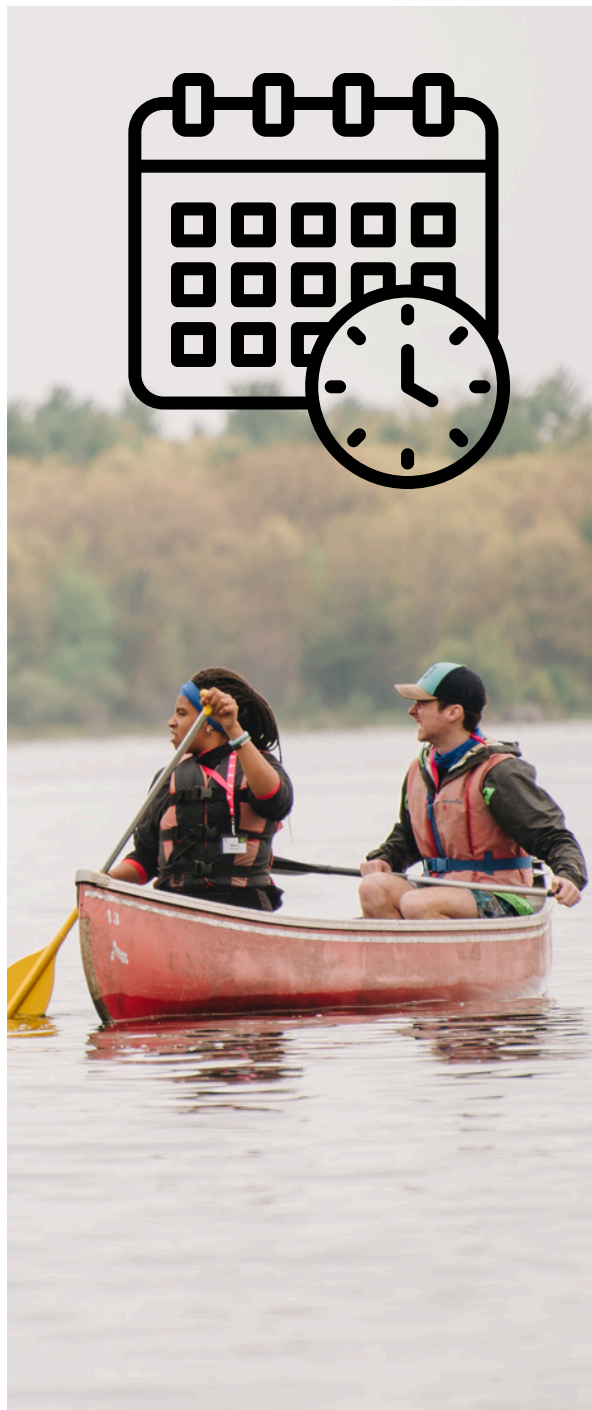
- Your child's counsellor will comfort and work with your child to overcome the negative aspects of homesickness.
- If your child continues to show strong signs of homesickness, the Team Leader will become involved.
- Staff may contact guardians to discuss options and strategies for working with your child.
- After the above has been tried, we may ask you to talk to your child to help them through the experience. We often try the above first because sometimes talking with guardians at home can make homesickness worse. However, campers are always permitted to talk to their parents.

In most cases, these steps will allow your child to overcome their homesickness and enjoy their remaining time at camp



Daily life at camp

This is an example schedule of a day at camp for an overnight base camp group. Quest groups, day camp, and longer than 5-day programs might differ slightly. However, the structure is essentially the same.



7:00am	Wake up
7:30am	Polar Bear dip (Optional)
8:30am	Breakfast
9:30 –10am	Cabin Clean up
10:00 – 12:15pm	Morning activity blocks
12:30pm	Lunch
1:15 – 2:00pm	Afternoon rest (BOB)
2:15 – 4:00pm	Afternoon activity blocks
4:00 - 5pm	DISCO (afternoon choice activities)
5:30pm	Dinner
6:30pm	Evening activities
8:00pm	Evening wind down and wellness checks



Food at Camp Thunderbird

At Camp Thunderbird, our full-service dining hall prepares meals for all campers and staff 3 times a day at 8:30am for breakfast, 12:30pm for lunch, and 5:30pm for dinner. Our kitchen staff serves a variety of meals in line with Canada's Food Guide. We understand that not everyone's food needs are the same due to allergies, preferences, religious views etc. Accommodation is regularly made available for vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free and celiac, dairy-free, no pork, and other needs. If there is something specific your camper needs accommodation for, please remember to let us know at the time of registration, or if things change over the coming weeks before camp starts, please go back into your camper's registration to update it.

Some examples of food served at camp may include:

Breakfast: Pancakes, waffles, sausages, scrambled eggs, hashbrowns. breakfast also has a side bar of yoghurt, milk, cereal, and hard-boiled eggs

Lunch: Burgers, build your own sandwich, hot dogs, chili. Lunch and dinners also have a side salad bar where campers can build their own salad with a choice of toppings and dressings.

Dinner: Pasta with sauce, chicken and rice, roasted meat with mashed potatoes, stir fry, side salad bar

We kindly ask that campers leave personal snacks at home, as food in the cabins tends to attract animals such as mice into the cabins. If campers get hungry in between meals, we offer fruit such as apples, oranges, and bananas as snacks to keep campers fueled for their day

Getting to Camp Thunderbird



Camp Thunderbird is located at 5040 Glinz Lake rd, Sooke BC. Approximately 40-60 minutes from downtown Victoria, and 20-30 minutes from Langford/Westshore.

Overnight camp:

Overnight camp drop-off starts at 9am on your first day. Pick up time for Junior campers starts at 2pm, and Senior campers starts at 2:30pm.

Overnight camp bus:

Overnight campers have an additional cost of **\$40** if they would like bus transportation to or from camp. This is a **SEPARATE** (additional) registration, as space for the overnight camp bus is limited.

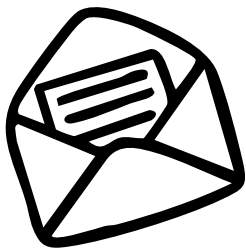
Daycamp:

All Daycamp participants have a spot on the daycamp bus to and from camp, no matter the location they will be getting on or off each day. The cost of busing is included in the registration.

Daycamp drop off at Camp Thunderbird is at 8:50am, and at camp pick up is at 3:45pm.

Drop off for all bussing is along **Quadra Street** between **Broughton** and **Courtney Street**, starting at 7:40am. The bus leaves at 8am sharp. **Pick up** is at 5:15pm. Despite our best efforts to be on time returning from camp, traffic (especially on Fridays) may play a factor in the arrival time of the bus.

Westhills Y Drop off starts at 8:20am. Please use the upper parking lot closest to the roundabout. The bus leaves the Westhills Y at 8:30am sharp. Pick up time is 4:20pm. The bus will leave Westhills Y at 4:30pm to continue Downtown. Please be on time for pick up.



Contacting Your Camper:

Sending notes to your camper can be a helpful and fun addition to your camper's experience. We use a system called **BUNK1**.

Bunk1 is a 3rd party service that is quick and easy to distribute. All families receive at least one free bunk note per child, per camp. Bunk1 is a for-profit venture, and they charge for any additional bunk notes. 50% of profits from bunk notes sent to Camp Thunderbird campers are donated to the Strong Kids fund, which helps send kids to Camp Thunderbird programs who otherwise could not afford it.

The daily cut-off time for bunk notes is 11am. Any note sent after 11am will be delivered the next day. Bunk notes sent after 11am on the last Thursday will **NOT** reach your camper in time.

To send a bunk note, please visit bunk1.com and register for a parent account or log in to your account. Look for us as YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island: Camp Thunderbird (there is another Y Camp Thunderbird in North Carolina that is NOT us.)

Telephone:

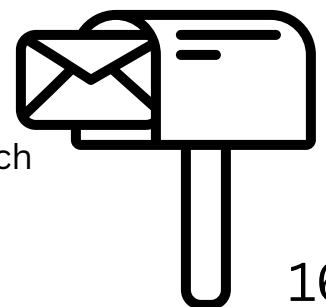
No phone is available for campers to regularly make or receive calls while at camp. If parents want to speak to their child, they are more than welcome to do so. Calls must be organized through Camp Thunderbird's supervisory staff. If you would like to speak with Camp staff for any reason, please feel free to phone the camp: 250-642-3136. Campers are also permitted to request to call home at any time during their stay. Camp staff will help organize a phone call.



Sending Mail to Camp:

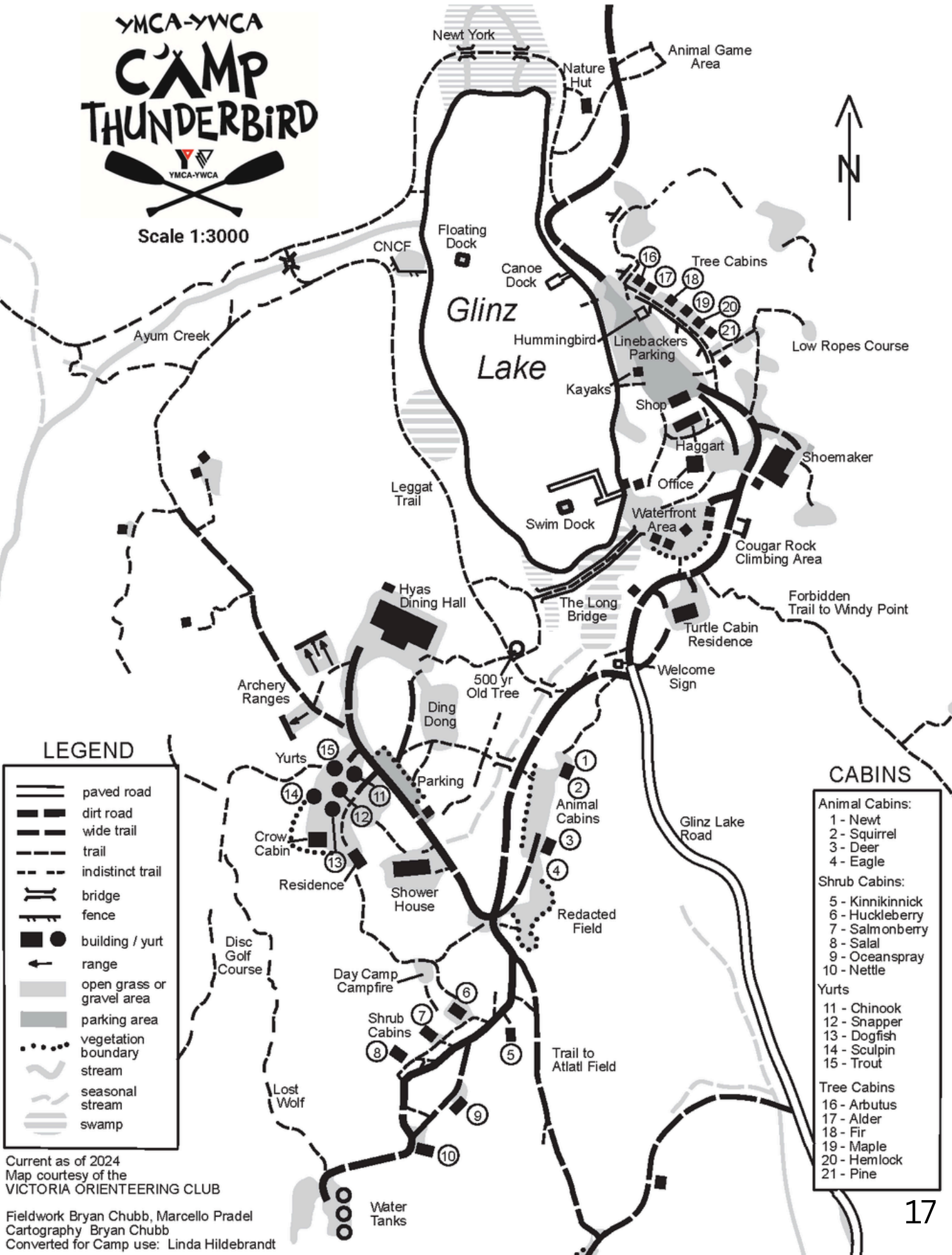
Mail service via Canada Post to Camp is slow and sometimes inconsistent. We encourage families to use our bunk note system to send messages to campers, as it is the most reliable way to get messages to your camper during their time at camp.

If sending a letter by mail to Camp. Please use a courier service such as UPS or FedEx, as they are more consistent with deliveries.



YMCA-YWCA CAMP THUNDERBIRD

Scale 1:3000



Current as of 2024
Map courtesy of the
VICTORIA ORIENTEERING CLUB

Fieldwork Bryan Chubb, Marcello Pradel
Cartography Bryan Chubb
Converted for Camp use: Linda Hildebrandt