

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: June 10 Through 19, 2021

By Gary Mooney
thewritestuff25@gmail.com

Celebrate the final full week of Spring with a trip to the iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach! One of Southwest Florida's most-beloved historic attractions, the Mound House traces its roots back to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago. With rainy season now an almost-daily occurrence, all Mound House programs conclude by mid-afternoon so your family can avoid our area's downpours.

On Wednesday, June 16, the Mound House offers the exciting new program, "Junior Explorers," for kids 2 to 5 and their adult guardians at Newton Beach Park at 10 a.m. Junior Explorers learn about the environment, culture, and early life skills such as language, numbers, fine motor, and socializing. There are 3 different kayak programs this week, including the new "Advanced Kayak Tour" for ages 12 & up weather permitting on Wednesday, June 16, at 9 a.m. If dry land is more your style, the Mound House presents the new "Latino Outside Guided Tour" for all ages on two occasions, as well as its signature event, the "Shell Mound Outside Guided Tour," eight times.

The Town of Fort Myers Beach operates the Mound House as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning center that offers numerous educational programs each month, including for children. The oldest standing structure on Estero Island, the Mound House is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. All visitors must wear masks, with Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Social Distancing guidelines in place. It is at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Town residents receiving a 50% discount. For information, reservations, and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

FREE "Newton Beach Park Guided Beach Walk"

For all ages every Tuesday and Thursday weather permitting at 9 a.m.

This twice-weekly free outdoor nature program is different every single time, as the "Guided Beach Walks" have a simple premise – the groups walk roughly a half-mile down the beach and back, discussing whatever you find that particular morning. Meet at the thatched hut closest to the beach, with CDC and Social Distancing in place and face masks mandatory. Bring sunscreen, shoes to get wet, sunglasses, and hat. No reservations necessary; while free, parking is \$3-per-hour, with one hour generally enough. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.

"Garden Outside Guided Tour"

For all ages on Thursdays, June 10 & 17, at 10 a.m.

Stroll through the Mound House gardens to discover how its unique plants conserve water and protect wildlife, while learning how the Calusa and other Native Americans used them in their daily lives. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free.

“Shell Mound” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, June 10 & Saturday, June 12, at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Tuesday, June 15, at 11 a.m.; Thursday, June 17, at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m., and Saturday, June 19, at 11 a.m.

If you dig archaeology, the Mound House’s signature program is for you! Tour the 2,000-year-old Calusa Indian Shell Mound led by the Interpretive Staff as you explore the site’s archaeology to unearth clues about this ancient society. All participants over 6 must wear a mask. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free.

“Mangroves by Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Fridays, June 11 & 18, at 9 a.m.

Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden waters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve as only a kayaker can on this Environmental Educator-guided tour of the ancient realm of the Calusa! Witness birds, fish, manatee and dolphins as you paddle through the natural beauty of Estero and Hell Peckney Bays in a tandem kayak. All paddling & safety equipment provided, with kayak tours in accordance with Florida Society of Ethical Ecotourism guidelines. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15. Advance reservations necessary; private tours available. CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place and all participants wear masks on land.

“Family Fun Kayak Tour”

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Saturdays, June 12 & 19, at 9 a.m.

Fun for the whole family on a specially-designed Environmental Educator-guided kayak tour for families with children age 6 & up! See birds, dolphins, manatee, and other wildlife while paddling through the Estero Bay mangroves. \$25-per-person ages 13 & up; \$15-per-person ages 6 to 12 that includes Mound House admission, with advance registrations necessary. The Mound House provides all equipment, with CDC and Social Distancing in place; all participants wear masks on land.

“Family Adventures Outside Program”

For adults & children age 6 & older weather permitting on Saturdays, June 12 & 19, at 10 a.m.

Explore everything fun at the Mound House on this outdoor activity that is perfect for families with children age 6 & up, as the Interpretive Staff leads you through entertaining and educational experiences you will remember a lifetime! Participants must wear masks, with CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place. \$2-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free.

NEW “Latino Outside Guided Tour”

For all ages on Tuesday, June 15; and Saturday, June 19, both at 2 p.m.

Perfect for Florida history buffs! Learn about the Latino fishing village known as a “Rancho” that existed on the shell mound between the ancient Calusa and Anglo-Pioneer eras. Explore the site’s archaeology and history through unearthed clues about this multicultural society. All participants over 6 must wear masks and everyone observes CDC guidelines, with advance registrations necessary. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission.

NEW “Advanced Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Wednesday, June 16, at 9 a.m.

For kayakers who want a new 3-hour challenge of exploring areas of the Estero Bay where few get to venture, including the Hell Peckney Bay’s mangrove isles! \$55-per-person; Mound House members \$25 that includes all paddling & safety equipment. Advance reservations necessary, with CDC and Social Distancing guidelines in place and all participants wearing masks on land.

NEW: “Junior Explorers” at Newton Beach Park

For children 2 to 5 with their adult guardians on Wednesday, June 16, at 10 a.m.

Your Junior Explorer will investigate Newton Beach Park to learn about the natural environment, culture, and early life skills such as language, numbers, fine motor, and socializing during this 30-minute program, featuring topics like “Counting With Nature,” “Animals of The Estuary,” “Paint Making,” “Calusa Masks,” “Calusa Pottery,” and “Sorting Shells.” \$2-per-child, with adult guardians and Mound House members free; no reservations necessary. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.