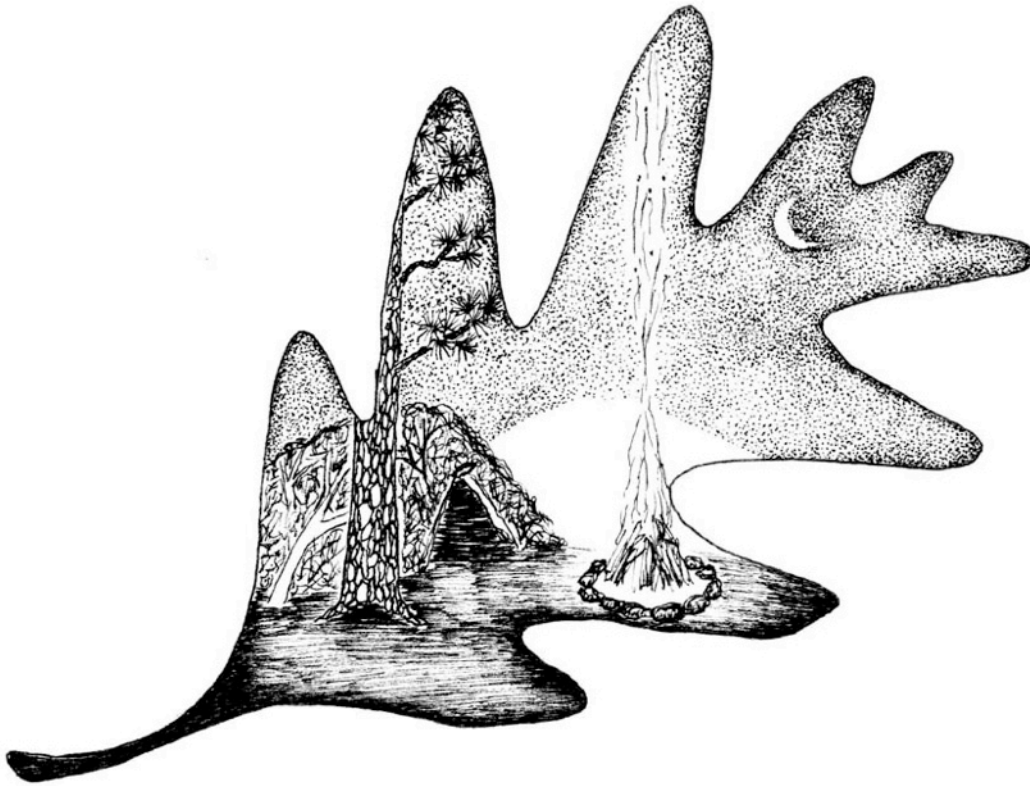


Hawk Circle Wilderness Programs

# Earth Skills

# Correspondence Course



Wilderness Survival, Awareness,  
Instructor & Teaching Skills  
through Self Guided Study in Your Own  
Bioregion.

Written & Created by Ricardo Sierra and Jeff Eckhouse

## What is the Hawk Circle Instructor Training Program?

Our training is the result of over 20 years of research by Ricardo Sierra and his staff in studying how students learn to become excellent earth skills practitioners and instructors. It provides a broad platform of understanding from which any skill may be learned. This is accomplished through direct experience in three levels:

**Level One** takes place with the future instructor learning in *direct contact with nature*. The teaching happens between student and the skill itself where he/she can develop experience, understanding and a personal history. Understanding concepts of mastery and the process of internalizing the wilderness mind are important elements for a future teacher, and we cover these extensively. Safety and hazard identification is heavily stressed throughout this part of the training. The Earth Skills Correspondence Course is taught at this level.



**Level Two** takes place in a group setting and deals with community, cultural and group dynamics issues as we practice skills and make art & crafts. *It is here that we see a deepening of how wilderness skills and understanding affects our sense of community and relationship*. It is concerned with integration of wilderness philosophy and mind into society in a positive and powerful way. **The Hawk Circle Instructor Training Program Residential Semesters and Weeklong Intensives** are taught at this level. Students live here in Cherry Valley and take part in classes, field excursions and trips to hone and practice skills, learn from a variety of different instructors and staff and make many crafts and survival tools needed for long term survival.

**Level Three** deals with understanding the patterns, connections and expressions of individuals and groups on an even deeper level. In this part of the training we focus on the meanings behind stories, the significance of many archetypes and mythology both from a personal and historical level as it applies to our teaching of earth skills. Instructor integrity, ethics, personal healing and inner balance are addressed here. Our belief is that one must be fully aware of our own inner growth process and be committed to addressing these issues in a healthy and positive manner if we are to be effective mentors for the next generation. Future instructors learn to recognize the inner mythological and archetypal desires that their students carry within them and how to tailor their teaching to address these requests for adventure in their own students. This occurs through **Intensive Personal Mentoring** with staff and learning according to the mirroring that occurs when working with youth, and happens according to the schedule of the individual student. *Level Three learning takes place between a student and mentor, with emphasis on the student doing considerable reflection, inner development, focused skills practice and in some instances, personal vision quests and ceremony.*

# What is Mentoring?

At Hawk Circle, we view mentoring as an approach to teaching that requires a commitment of time and energy from the student and teacher to build a relationship with each other.

Mentoring makes the teaching far deeper than a quick class or intensive skill workshop. It aims for a teaching method individually tailored to the student's specific interests, needs and concerns.

Access to a personal mentor helps in motivating, educating, sharing and connecting with the natural world and validates their process both as a Initiatory Guide and as a friend. It is through this personal contact that students can learn to overcome challenges to learning about earth skills, as well as grow personally. It is rewarding for both the student and mentor, earned through hard work and effort.



## Integrating Wilderness Skills & Society

The skills taught in the various levels of Hawk Circle Instructor Training Programs are as beneficial to the student in the city as they are in the middle of a wilderness area. Earth skills and survival living teaches a student to use his / her mind in ways that require subtle abstraction, analyzing of details, improvisation & creative thinking. Issues of safety awareness, anticipation of oncoming weather, being prepared and ready to adapt to changing conditions all add powerful life skills to a focused student of survival and awareness. The result is well grounded people who are confident leaders, inquisitive, and highly adaptable individuals. The earth based values that are instilled in students over time are ever-present and help them to be effective, powerful, self-motivated, and inspirational. Earth skills, tracking, awareness skills, and the creation of a deep connection with the Earth and within oneself assist a person in their professional career and throughout life.

### A Note from Ricardo:

*"I have found that one of the most difficult tasks facing a student is developing the discipline to learn how to master the basic skills. This is the foundation that will carry the student through tough situations when it counts--in the wilderness or throughout one's teaching career. I believe it is important to give yourself a real experience of gaining a working knowledge of the skills themselves before trying to pass them on to others.*

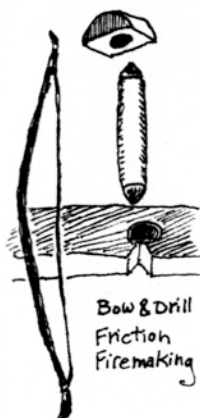


*I cannot recommend this training enough for the serious student. The personal approach, support and steady pace, will help you develop your skills in a way that my generation of instructors never had. I hope you will take the time to consider what these courses have to offer. If it feels like the right fit, we will be happy to work hard with you. The world needs this type of education now more than ever, and I am glad of your interest. It helps us all."*

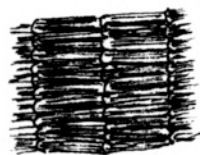
# Earth Skills Correspondence Course

The Earth Skills Course is designed to be studied correspondence style through independent work by the student. It is broken into ten blocks, which build upon each other, taking the student deeper into the world of survival and awareness. The emphasis here is on gaining direct field experience in a structured system of making and sleeping in shelters, finding water from various sources, making fires from friction, procuring wild foods, cooking, and understanding weather patterns through observation and journaling. An important part of this course is our tree and plant identification documentation, which helps the student to establish a relationship with their ecosystem in a well rounded manner.

Each block is designed to take about 30 hours to complete in a month, giving time for school, work, family and other responsibilities of the student. Most blocks should require about one weekend, (Saturday through Sunday afternoon) to complete the field work. The rest of the month includes researching, journaling and documenting the field work. This can be broken up into evenings or other times convenient to the student.



Bow & Drill  
Friction  
Firemaking



Grass Mats



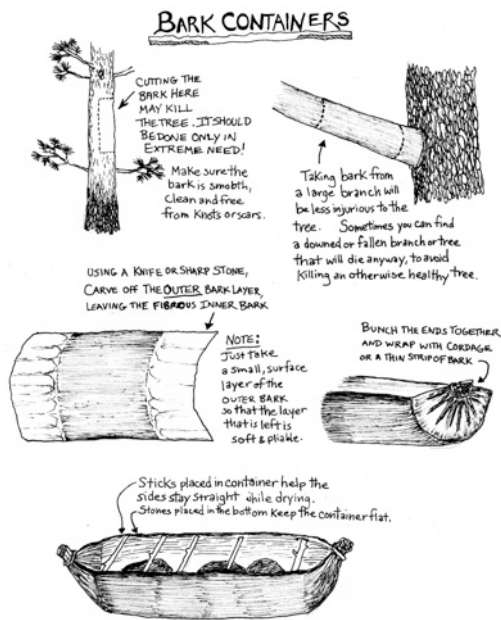
Shelters

- String from Plants
- Tree Identification
- Nature Awareness
- Cooking & Much More!

## Partial List of Topics Covered:

- Safety:** First aid, hazards such as hypothermia, ticks, and knives.
- Shelter:** Debris type, awnings, grass bedding, modifications & insulation concepts.
- Water:** Dew, plants, solar still, precipitation, springs, filtering, purifying, storage and transpiration.
- Fire:** Tipi style and other shapes, safety, reflectors, tinders, woods for friction methods, bow drill with nylon cordage, bow drill with self gathered materials, bow drill with handmade cordage, bow drill carved with rocks, hand drill methods, long match and transporting coals.
- Food:** Gathering and preparing acorns, grass seeds, nuts, roots and various plant leaves, wilderness food sources, teas, cooking and storage.
- Skills:** Natural cordage from local plant sources, basic camp utensils, coal burned bowls and spoons, hunting implements, rock tools & more.
- Trees:** Detailed study of at least three trees a month, plants, personal field journals of lore, identification, info and sketches, knowledge of direct observation and utilitarian, edible and medicinal uses.

Each block contains sections of required field work, such as sleeping in your shelter, making a fire, cooking, water purification and so forth. In addition to the active skills field work, students observe and identify three trees and plants in their local environment and document these through journaling. Required reading is also done for specific skills or



concepts in the program. Pictures, photos, sketches and even video may accompany student coursework to create a comprehensive body of knowledge for that block. Personal essays and responses to the course experiences help the mentor understand the process of learning, and also document the growth as well for the student to have on file. This can be exceptionally valuable later on if becoming a skills instructor is a goal. Students complete the required work in each block and can then begin work on the following block.

## Instructor Training Elements

Each block also contains many details that are valuable to a future instructor. These include essays on attitude, thankfulness, philosophy and safety and hazards. Examples of student essays and journals also help students to understand that

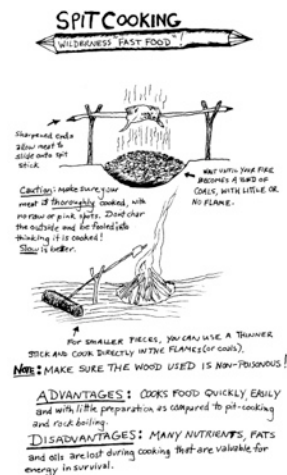
everyone has a unique way of learning and expressing the skills of living close to the land. Storytelling, program design, lesson plans, student observation and more are included in later blocks, and many of these later blocks are intense skills trainings as well. As in all parts of the course, students may tailor their program to best suit individual goals and needs. This is not one size fits all, but rather, a custom fit to help each person to grow and learn!

## Our Goals and Objectives

Our goal is to give the student the opportunity to experience what "mastery" feels like and to understand this in a deep way. This depth helps the student learn to master other areas of skill on his/her own after the course, and to have personal stories of their own direct field knowledge rather than relying on others for that type of lore. This is critical for teachers and mentors, whose students need to know and trust an instructor's skills, knowledge and insights.

Competence is also an important part of this program, through thorough documentation, assessment of skills and testing through direct experience. Our students are highly competent and confident in the skills learned and mastered.

Our instructors teach and lead by example and are valued by program directors everywhere, with excellent safety awareness and student outcomes.



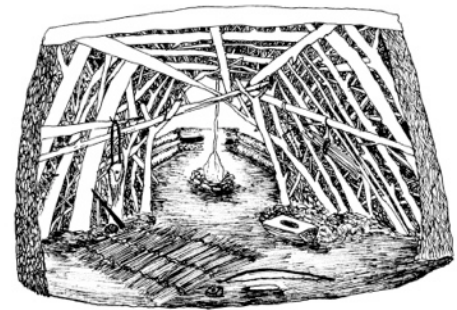
**Earth Skills Correspondence Program Fee: \$295**  
**Admission is ongoing.**

# Frequently Asked Questions



**How do I connect with my mentor?** Currently, Ricardo Sierra is the main mentor for the Earth Skills Correspondence Course. With extensive training and experience in a variety of different terrains and environments, he can help you learn to survive whether you are in Colorado, Kansas, Maine or Arizona (and many places other diverse ecosystems). When you send in your application/payment we will set you up in our **private Facebook Group**, where you will have access to monthly videos on specific skills in the course, as well as a monthly conference call to answer any questions you might have, and provide a forum for the group to learn, share pictures, resources and inspiration.

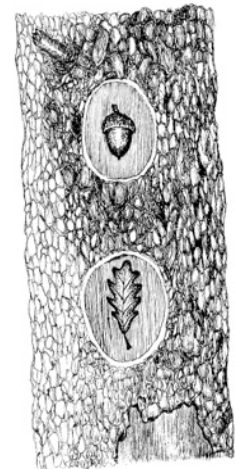
Ricardo answers most questions on a daily basis, but sometimes you might get answers from the group or a visiting instructor/mentor as well. You may also e-mail Ricardo your questions privately if you prefer.



**I have already taken classes at (fill in the Blank) Wilderness School. Why should I take the Hawk Circle Instructor Training?**

We believe that this course can benefit anyone who wishes to deepen their knowledge of skills, and that it can complement any other wilderness school course. Most courses are short, a week to 10 days or less, and leave the act of practicing and mastery up to the student to do on their own. Our training helps provide the structure and motivation for completing and understanding many of the background skills that many classes cannot cover in a short time period.

**Can I speed up the blocks if I have time?** You can do the work faster if you have time, as long as the quality of information gained is not comprised in the process. We believe that these skills will most likely take a lifetime to master and thus we avoid the “quick fix” or instant skill approach to learning them. Attention to detail and solid use of resources and field experience are the key to fully understanding these skills on all levels.



**What if I need to miss a month or more?** There is no time table for you to finish, as each student proceeds at his or her own pace. However, we recommend setting firm goals for yourself and sticking to them as closely as possible, so you can gain the full value of the program.

**Can I get college credit for this course?** There are many students who have received college course credit by doing this work as part of an independent study project in various outdoor leadership or eco-psychology degrees. Some students only choose to do the first half of the course if time is a factor, but that is up to the individual student. The amount of credit given is determined by the proposal, school and student. We will assist you in every way possible to help you receive credit for your course work should you decide to make the ESCC part of your formal studies. There may be a small fee to cover our additional costs in paperwork and administrative time, but this will be decided upon as the details unfold.

# The Hawk Circle Lineage:

Ricardo discovered a love of nature and wilderness through childhood fishing and trapping experiences as a boy, and later on, through two years of intense conservation work with the **California Conservation Corps**. Trail building, tree planting, salmon habitat restoration and



native dune revegetation work with the CCC in wild areas of Humboldt, the High Sierras, and the central coast further inspired a love of wild places. In 1984, Rick began a life long study of primitive wilderness skills with **Tom Brown Jr**, at the **Tracker School**, in the **Pine Barrens** of New Jersey. **Sun Bear's Medicine Wheel Gatherings** and the stories and ceremonies of Grandfather Wallace Black Elk gave a sense of a larger mission and vision to his study of wilderness skills, tracking and philosophy.



Rick gained valuable experience in wilderness outings in places like Arizona, Colorado, Utah, the Southern Sierra Nevada range in California, as well as areas of New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Over several years, Rick learned from **Jake Swamp**, director of the **Tree of Peace Society**, **John Stokes**, director of the **Tracking Project**, **Frank and Karen Sherwood** of **EarthWalk Northwest**, and many others. Rick soon created his own youth program, the Hawk Circle Wilderness Summer Camps, in the Hudson Valley region of New York State in the summer of 1989. Over 8 years of teaching these camps, school programs, working in Environmental Education programs and Audubon outings, an emphasis began to grow on the development of competent staff and instructors.



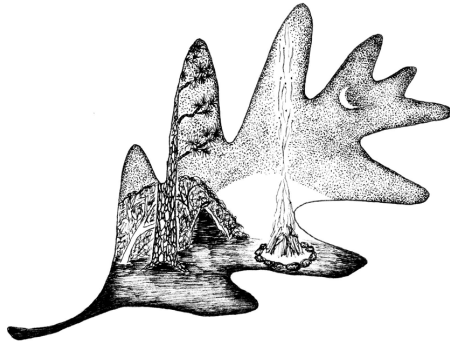
In 1998, Rick moved the Hawk Circle Programs to Cherry Valley, NY, with the purchase of 200 acres of land where the new programs could be located in a permanent home. With his partner, Trista Haggerty, he built a home and established the Earth Mentoring Institute, Inc, as a not-for-profit organization to further the development of



mentoring and wilderness skills study.

About that time, Rick began the creation of the Earth Skills Correspondence Course, with strong help and collaboration with Jeff Eckhouse, and the staff of Simon Mayer, Chris Marx and Matt Burr. Through trial and error, the foundations were made for the Hawk Circle Instructor Training Program and the continued growth of teaching the skills of survival and awareness to children, youth and adults. The work continues and the need for competent,

experienced wilderness skills instructors, guides and mentors has never been greater.



# EARTH SKILLS CORRESPONDENCE COURSE APPLICATION

HAWK  
CIRCLE  
INSTRUCTOR  
TRAINING  
PROGRAM

**EARTH  
SKILLS**

**CORRESPONDENCE  
COURSE**

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DIRECTOR

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NEW YORK

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[RICARDO.J.SIERRA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RICARDO.J.SIERRA@GMAIL.COM)

**HAWKCIRCLE.COM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Work Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Male Female Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have any medical concerns about taking this program?

How did you find out about our programs?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is your main reason for choosing this program?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Liability Waiver/Release*

I understand that I will be participating / engaging in potentially life threatening and dangerous activities during the course of the program I am registering for. I do not suffer from any medical condition, ailment, or other condition which could in any way limit my ability to participate in the activities required in the course / program I have chosen. I hereby assume full responsibility for all risks which may be associated with, and all injuries which may occur to me in connection with, my participation in the course / program. I hereby release and hold harmless the Hawk Circle Programs, its agents, and others working for it or on its behalf, from and against any and all claims, liabilities, injuries, or accidents (including, without limitation, any claims for personal injuries and any claims based on any negligent acts, omissions, or other fault on the part of any of the parties connected with, or who participate in, the course) resulting from, or in any way connected with, my participation in the course. I represent and warrant that I am over eighteen years of age.

Please note: If you are paying for the course in installments, there will be a \$5 service charge added to each installment to cover additional bookkeeping. Also please note: Due to copyright and general course policy, no refunds will be given for the Earth Skills Correspondence Course. However, we will make every effort to give you full value for your hard earned money in both content and mentoring. Please feel free to call us with any questions!

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) : \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For participants under 18, please have a parent sign below:

*"The child/legal dependent named above has my permission to attend and study the above listed program curriculum and participate in all activities. "*

Parent/Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Make Checks Payable To (in U.S. Dollars)

### **HAWK CIRCLE WILDERNESS PROGRAMS**

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check Number:

Visa and Mastercard Accepted

CC#: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Application and Deposit to :  
Hawk Circle, P.O. Box 506, Cherry Valley, NY 13320