



Growing the Outdoor Classroom Movement: Why EEA Hosts an Annual Outdoor Classroom Symposium

By Karen Garland, Environmental Education Senior Manager, Georgia Conservancy
According to National Wildlife Federation, Georgia is the leading state with over 362 certified schoolyard habitats. However, the state also hosts many more outdoor learning centers that are not certified. What is Georgia's secret to this successful initiative?

When considering ways to counter the effects of environmental isolation sometimes the simplest of plans are the most profound. Simply stated, why not take education outdoors?! However, informal surveys have shown that many classroom teachers are not comfortable or feel they have the time to take their students outdoors.



Through highly successful initiatives that are literally gaining ground across the state, its programs are exposing many educators and organizations into recognizing the value of teaching students outdoors.

On the front lines to assist with this crusade is the Georgia Outdoor Classroom Council



Concern for this isolation has led many education and conservation groups across the country to, individually or as small-scale partnerships, spearhead efforts to assist teachers and administrators into converting schoolyards into nature-based outdoor classrooms for students. However, one of the states at the forefront of initiating these efforts on a grand-scale is Georgia, who is leading the way of the schoolyard outdoor classroom movement with the help of the Environmental Education Alliance (EEA).

(OCC), a unique and creative initiative of EEA. Georgia educators are fortunate in that not only does EEA host an annual environmental education conference in the spring, but the Outdoor Classroom Council also host a highly successful Outdoor Classroom Symposium in the fall, so that educators throughout the state have an opportunity to specifically learn how to create, utilize, and maintain their outdoor learning centers, while at the same time

Organized in 1996, the Outdoor Classroom Council was originally a collaboration between the DeKalb County Cooperative Extension Service, the Atlanta Botanical Garden, and the Georgia Forestry Commission who had an idea to bring together parents, teachers, and administrators in the hopes that they would provide feedback in what resources they needed from environmental organizations if they were succeed in taking education outdoors. After much input from the participants the idea of the Outdoor Classroom Symposium was born with a mission to serve teachers, parents, principals, and community volunteers as a resource link, providing up-to-date training and literature on building, utilizing, and maintaining outdoor classrooms.

Prior to the "symposium" concept the Georgia outdoor classroom movement was disorganized, with many organizations feeling overwhelmed at the daunting task of trying to individually educate teachers on the benefits of teaching outdoors. Because of this many parts of the state were not aware of the available resources or benefits of such outdoor learning techniques.

For numerous years the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) provided small grants for Georgia schools to use towards outdoor classrooms. The Council's role in outdoor education continued to grow when they were invited to assist the Georgia DOE in reviewing the grants that were received and also determining which schools should be awarded the funds.

Therefore, the symposium became a great springboard to assist teachers who were interested in applying for a grant to participate in the grant writing session with tips on how to successfully fill out their Georgia outdoor classroom grant application. However, due to state budgets cuts several years ago the grant funds evaporated. Knowing how important funding is the Council continues to offer a grant writing session and providing additional creative solutions to fundraising.

Educational Eco-trips to the Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Colonies

By Kim Bailey, *EEingorgia.org* and *Monarchs Across Georgia Pollinator Volunteer*

In the entire world, no butterflies migrate like the monarchs of North America. Millions and millions of these butterflies from the central and eastern Canadian provinces and the eastern and midwestern United States fly in masses south to Mexico each fall. By instinct alone, these monarchs travel to the same mountains, often to the exact same trees, that their ancestors left the previous spring. Somehow they find a place in Mexico that they've never seen before. The monarch's unique winter habitat is found on only 12 mountaintops located at nearly 10,000 feet in the Transvolcanic Mountains of central Mexico.

Join Monarchs Across Georgia* on a trip to these overwintering sanctuaries to experience one of the world's most impressive natural phenomena. Walking through the mountaintop forests, you will witness thousands of butterflies draping the trees and fluttering in the beams of sunlight that pierce the canopy. The silence is only broken when a cascade of monarchs drops from a branch above your head and the beating of butterfly wings surrounds you like soft rain falling. After visiting this magical place, it's easy to understand why the remarkable monarch butterfly migration and Mexican state of Michoacán are both included in the book, *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*, by Patricia Schultz.

What sets this trip apart from other tours to the monarch overwintering sites? The itinerary includes visits to *three* monarch colonies. You will also learn about local conservation efforts by visiting the tree nursery at La Cruz Habitat Protection Project and touring Alternare, a Mexican non-profit organization assisting communities with sustainable and adequate food production, forest stewardship, and environmentally sound economic activities. Another unique highlight will be visiting a local school to donate books purchased through Monarchs Across Georgia's Mexico Book Project. In addition to exploring the natural history of the region, you will enjoy learning about the area's rich cultural heritage by tasting new culinary delights, touching the artisans'

handiwork, viewing remains of past societies, and hearing the stories of people who live in this colorful land.

Susan Meyers, who has been leading these trips since 2004, states "I love seeing the faces of people when they see the monarch colonies for the first time. It makes me relive my first visit to the monarch sanctuaries. I never tire of seeing the monarchs...to watch them is magical, spiritual. I also love being in Mexico, the country is beautiful, the people are kind and generous."



Two separate weeklong trips will be offered in 2010:

February 6-13, 2010

February 13-20, 2010 (trip is full)

Five Professional Learning Units (PLUs) will be available for Georgia certified teachers participating in the trip as well as a pre-trip workshop scheduled for January 9, 2010. Trip topics are correlated to the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and related student learning activities will be provided. In addition, educators will have the opportunity to submit their observations from the Mexican overwintering colonies to Annenberg Media's Journey North citizen science program.

Trips are open to both educators and non-educators from Georgia and from out-of-state. The registration fee of \$1500 per person includes accommodations (double occupancy) for all seven nights, all meals, and all ground transportation. Airfare is not included. Applications and deposits are accepted on a first come, first serve basis. Don't delay - both weeks sold out in 2009! A \$750 deposit will secure your place. The balance of the trip fee is due by December 31, 2009.

Monarchs Across Georgia is also pleased to announce a new partial scholarship program to assist Georgia educators who wish to participate in the trip. Two \$1000 scholarships will be awarded. The deadline for receipt of applications is October 15, 2009.

For complete details, itinerary, scholarship application form, and trip registration form, please visit www.monarchsacrossga.org. For additional questions, please contact Susan Meyers at smmeyers@gmail.com or 404-388-8228.



*Monarchs Across Georgia (MAG) is a collaboration of the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia, teachers, students, families, communities, businesses and others, all working together to study monarch butterflies and restore butterfly habitat across the state. Established in 2001, MAG strives to engage schools and families in learning experiences involving monarch and other native butterflies. MAG has coordinated trips to the monarch overwintering colonies since 2004.

Best Practices: Simple Ways to Help the Planet

- People have good intentions of using reusable bags, but many times forget them at home. A simple solution is to keep them in the car. I love the little reusable bags that fit inside a tiny drawstring pouch that can easily fit into a purse (www.chicobag.com). How often have you went into the store with the intention of buying one item, but actually purchased more than one item? Voilà – the bag is in your bag!
– *Chris Robie, High Meadows School/Roswell, GA*
- Keep a spray bottle with vinegar in the bathroom and kitchen to use as an easy, all natural disinfectant.
– *Sharon Smith, Fulton County Public Works Water Services Division, Atlanta, GA*
- Collect your plastic bottle caps and recycle them, since most recycling centers do not accept them.
(aveda.aveda.com/aboutaveda/caps.asp)
- Connect a drain line to your heat pump/ac unit to collect the condensation – the amount of water you collect is amazing and it can be used to water your house plants, garden, etc.
– *Holly Rutledge, Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center, Buford, GA*
- Use “retired” coffee cups and saucers for the birds. Glue the cup to the saucer. Set the combination out on a stump in your yard. Fill the cup with bird seed. If you don’t glue the cup to the saucer, you can then fill the saucer with a little water. I have also seen the cup handles wired to fences and filled with bird seed.
– *Naomi Thompson, Stone Mountain Memorial Park*
- Stop more than 46,000 pounds of unwanted crayons from going into landfills by sending them to the Crayon Recycle Program. They take unwanted, rejected, broken crayons and recycle them into fresh, new crayons. (www.crazycrayons.com)
– *Karen Garland, Georgia Conservancy*
- Cut up 1-sided used office paper into 4 rectangles for phone message paper (use the blank side) and keep stacks by every office phone. Recycle old greeting cards this way as well, which makes for some whimsical phone messages. Greeting cards can also be recycled into new, handmade greeting cards or gift tags.
– *Linda May, GA Department of Natural Resources, Social Circle, GA*

We want to know your “Best Practices!” Send them to newsletter@eealliance.org and we will share your ideas and observations with our readers in the next issue! All submissions will be entered into a drawing at the end of the year for a special prize.

Is it time to renew your EEA membership?

EEA MEMBERSHIP FORM

We don't want to lose you! Become a member today or this may be your last newsletter. If you are unsure of your membership status please email membership@eealliance.org.

Fill out this form and mail it along with a check made out to “EEA” to P.O. Box 286, Mansfield, GA 30055.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- **Quarterly Newsletter** – Provides educational resources, legislative updates, notice of workshops and events, grant opportunities, and much more.
- **Annual Spring Conference and Fall Symposium** – Held at different sites throughout Georgia with guest speakers, workshops and field trips. A great opportunity to meet people and share.
- **Sharing and Exchanging Resources** – The opportunity to find and exchange ideas with member organizations.
- **Discount to Events** – Attend the annual conference, the Outdoor Classroom Symposium and other EEA sponsored events at a discounted rate.

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

E-mail address _____

Membership Category: ___ Individual \$25

___ Organizational* \$100

___ Corporate* \$150

**Please Note: organizations and businesses can list up to five representatives to receive EEA mailings and information.*

EEA Annual Conference 2010 – Save The Dates Now!

It's time to plan ahead to join your friends and fellow professionals at the EEA Annual Conference Friday, March 19 through Saturday, March 20, 2010 at the Continuing Education Center on the campus of Kennesaw State University in Marietta, Georgia. This year's theme of "Environmental Literacy" will provide attendees the opportunity to increase their environmental knowledge, skills and behaviors, while earning PLUs, through sessions, field trips and wisdom from our keynote speakers that will include four strands:

- Consumer Choices (behavior)
- Knowledge
- Skills Development
- Partnerships for Environmental Literacy

The new, abbreviated 2-day schedule, first launched at our 2009 conference, is designed to better serve attendees with busy schedules and restrictive travel budgets. Yet, we are planning to offer thirty presentations from which to choose, a wide variety of unique and memorable field trips, our annual exhibition area and our *ever-popular* EEA Store and silent auction!

Scholarships to attend are available as well. The deadline for applications is January 8, 2010 and can be downloaded on the 2010 Conference page on our website. If you are interested in being an exhibitor, vendor or sponsor please email the conference chairperson at conference@eealliance.org.

For complete details visit the 2010 EEA Conference webpage at www.eealliance.org under the "Conference" tab. See you in March!

2010 EEA Conference

Join us for the annual EEA conference on March 19–20, 2010 at the Kennesaw State University, Continuing Education Center. Visit www.eealliance.org for more information.

Searching for a reason to attend? Try this word search!

S I L E N T A U C T I O N N R
 C E Q N C S E W S K J V I H E
 H E C P E O E T A W R J X S K
 O L I I K W I C S R F O N N A
 L Y K I O B K X R N D O T I E
 A C A S I H T N E U I S A Z P
 R A B H J Q C T O T O A P G S
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| Awards | Keynote speaker | Exhibits |
| Resources | Literacy | Knowledge |
| Consumer choices | Fieldtrips | Networking |
| Silent auction | Presentations | Scholarships |



EEA Remembers a Dear Friend and Determined Leader through Mini-Grants for Environmental Education



In honor of her life of service and legacy of environmental education through the arts, the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia has established the Petey Giroux Dragonfly Grants program. The program will provide mini-grant awards up to \$1,000 for projects that use the power of performing and/or visual arts to enhance environmental education.

Petey Giroux served as conference chair, president and advisory board chair of the Environmental Education Alliance (EEA) of Georgia, contributing greatly to the successful organization it is today. At the annual conference in March 2008, EEA honored Petey with the Eugene Odum Lifetime Achievement Award.

Petey once summed up her life philosophy when her daughter, Lynne, asked her for career advice: "It's finding the path that allows you to give the best of yourself to others and the earth, and sharing your time and talents with others in a way that makes positive change. It's love."

In her short life, Petey found her path, shared of herself and made positive change. The Dragonfly Grants Program is designed to honor Petey's memory by helping other passionate environmental educators make the world a better place, one project at a time.

Petey – Mom, storyteller, teacher, student, artist, organizer and VISIONARY

Anyone who knew Petey knew how committed she was to making the world a better place. Her enthusiasm for people and the planet was so great she developed an enormous and diverse network of friends and fans.

Some people knew her as the dedicated parent who created entertaining and educational characters to teach kids about environmental issues. (There was the garbage-strewn Waste Watcher, endangered Canis rufus, mother earth Earthina, and freshwater songstress Momma Bass, all starring Petey).

Others learned how to bring Petey's creative teaching strategies to their indoor and outdoor classrooms through the almost countless workshops she conducted across the state as the first ever chair of environmental education for Georgia PTA and then as the first coordinator of Georgia Project WET (Water Education for Teachers).

Still others knew Petey as a Twilight Twirler (majorettes at least 45 years old), strutting her stuff and spinning her baton up and down parade-filled streets. Then there are the African drummers with whom she donned a Dashiki and pounded away on percussion instruments. And her outdoor education graduate school cohorts (who were less than half her age ~ sorry, Petey) knew her as a

consummate storyteller who made their trip to the Boundary Waters exciting and memorable.

Petey helped establish the Chattahoochee River Environmental Education Center and directed the Parks as Classrooms program for the National Park Service. As an environmental outreach coordinator for the Environmental Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Petey championed environmental education through the arts by inspiring teachers statewide to participate in such programs as "River of Words," a national art and poetry contest that encourages students to know their watershed. Petey also left her magic mark on Project WET USA, the Georgia Aquarium and the Georgia Conservancy (they'll never be the same).

Regardless of how you knew Petey, you knew she was a determined leader. Wearing "the mommy shoes" as she called them, she helped her own children become vibrant, successful young women. Through her children's schools she became involved in the Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and after serving in many leadership positions at the school and district level, Petey was invited to create the position of environmental chairperson at the state level. She transformed the work of PTAs throughout Georgia by making environmental education a priority. In July of 2008 Georgia PTA honored Petey with its Visionary Award.

Petey Giroux leaves behind a legacy of public service and creative educational programs that enhanced the lives of Georgia's citizens, particularly its children. Her lifelong devotion to environmental protection, education and animals won her many awards, but more importantly it won her the love and respect of all those who knew her.

2010 EEA Dragonfly Grants



The Environmental Education Alliance (EEA) of Georgia is proud to offer mini-grant awards for up to \$1,000 for Environmental Education /Performing and Visual Arts Projects in honor of Environmental Educator, Petey Giroux (1945-2008). Petey was a master at using the power of

the performing and visual arts to support her teaching; bringing much joy and enthusiasm to her work. In presenting these grants to any Georgia educator of K-12 grade students (including those in public and private schools, home schools, scout troops, religious groups, community organizations, 4-H Clubs, etc.), we honor Petey's life of service and her legacy of environmental education through the arts.

Grant guidelines (rubric used to judge applications) and applications are available at the following websites: www.eealliance.org. The deadline for applications is November 30, 2009.

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making the connection to the curriculum and overall benefits these settings have to student learning.

Throughout the environmental education community it is known that the key to a successful outdoor classroom includes not only teacher participation, but also support from the school administrators, citizens, businesses, environmental organizations and government agencies. Community support comes in many forms including funding, teacher in-service training, technical help, equipment, expert labor, materials and more.

Therefore, through educational and networking opportunities the symposium becomes a catalyst for classroom teachers, administrators, PTA members, parents, scout leaders and other nonformal educators to collaborate with one another with the development, utilization and maintenance of their outdoor classroom areas, so that they have a safe, multi-functional, educational area for all to enjoy. Having an opportunity to meet presenters representing numerous environmental agencies, vendors or exhibitors that can provide additional resources and exchanging ideas with other schools that have successfully created outdoor classrooms shows participants how they too can be triumphant. It is simply connecting people to the available resources that they might not have otherwise known existed.

Celebrating its thirteenth anniversary with connecting teachers to the benefits of teaching outdoors, the Council has grown to include over 15 partner organizations from throughout the state that share the same vision of wanting to see an outdoor learning center created and used by every school in Georgia. This unique statewide collaboration has not only been part of the success of the annual symposium, but also the continued growth of the outdoor



outdoor learning centers long after the annual event through their individual organizations.

Partners represent a range of organizations including statewide and regional environmental non-profits, county and state governments, and private industry. Being a working committee,

that is strictly volunteer, the Council welcomes any individual or



organization that can provide financial resources, time, commitment, and/or energy in assisting with the planning and implementation of the annual event. Each partner brings their strengths to the committee with individual agendas set aside for the goal of creating a highly successful symposium that welcomes a

number of teachers to an educational opportunity that showcases the benefits of outdoor learning.

Through the years this highly successful event has continued to grow, welcoming over 275 participants from not only Georgia, but also other states, including Texas, Virginia, Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Kansas. The one-day symposium program has also grown to include over 35 multidisciplinary concurrent sessions that actively engage the

participants and promote outdoor classroom techniques and ideas. The concurrent presentations and workshops help establish that teaching in an outdoor classroom is more than just an aid to teaching science.

Through numerous interactive sessions, including art, mathematics, science, history, geography, and language arts, presenters from throughout the state with varied expertise come together to demonstrate to participants that these outdoors areas provide the perfect springboard for hands-on, real-world, experiential, outdoor learning opportunities in a fun and educational atmosphere.

classroom movement throughout the state, as each of the partners continues to promote the creation and utilization of

Georgia's success with being a leader in outdoor education has not been by accident, but is the direct result of the combined efforts of many dedicated individuals, organizations, and of course the Outdoor Classroom Council. Without everyone working together as a team, many educators would not have understood the value of transforming their schoolyards into outdoor learning areas, where their students could then reap the numerous educational benefits. The Outdoor Classroom Symposium through the years has provided the spark that many teachers needed to incorporate different learning strategies into their curriculum, which in turn has fueled the outdoor classroom movement throughout the state.

The more educators that can be exposed to the benefits of outdoor education by attending the annual symposium, the more they will understand the important role these areas can play in preparing

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2009 Conference Recap

By Naomi Thompson, Stone Mountain Memorial Park

Conferences teach you many things. Surprise at what resin looks like and how turpentine is made. An ice cream on the shady verandah while others walked by. A purchase of grits straight from the man who ground them in front of me. This was my experience one afternoon on the Buzzard Hike at the Agrirama. It was not a place I had ever thought to visit. The 2009 Conference took me there and taught me though. I also learned how you can take your environmental message to different audiences from the thought provoking keynote by Janisse Ray. She seems to easily talk to many who are not traditionally part of the environmental field. The Friday social once again proved to be a different kind of learning as I got to know acquaintances better than what their job title suggests. Conferences can teach you.



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their students to be productive citizens. OCC wants participants to understand that students have an opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and ownership in their schoolyards and ultimately in their communities. The Council also wants participants to understand that these areas provide numerous real-world learning opportunities that make education relevant.

Creating places of educational value that will foster creative play, inspire a sense of wonder, and encourage good citizenship is a no-risk investment in our future. Therefore, we hope you join the movement and rise to meet this challenge by creating your own outdoor learning centers or by continuing to offering programs to help bridge the gap for educators unsure on how to proceed on their own.





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EEA is a self-governed, non-profit organization that promotes communication and education among professionals in the field of environmental education in Georgia. EEA is an affiliate of the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Newsletter Committee

Karen Garland, Georgia Conservancy

Alison Findley, "Green" Marketing/
Communications Consultant

For comments and article suggestions
or submissions please email
newsletter@eealliance.org.

Deadlines:

December 1, 2009

March 25, 2010

August 1, 2010

December 1, 2010

*Give us Something to
Talk About!*

