The World is Your Classroom

2012 Outdoor Learning Symposium

September 21 - 22 at the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center

It’s important for all educators to think back on their most memorable learning moments. Karen Rent, an instructor at Stone Mountain Park, recounts her memorable moment. “It took place on a rainy spring evening in central Pennsylvania. My college class was taking part in a nighttime interpretation lesson. My teachers weren’t planning on the rain and they probably weren’t planning on the many hundreds of spotted salamanders and spring peepers which made an appearance that night. My class was actually on our way back to the building when we saw them -- hundreds of them -- making the journey back to their breeding pools. We spent the rest of the evening helping them cross the road. It was magical. We thought our teachers were gods.”

Teachable moments like this can happen in any outdoor setting, whether you are in a rural or urban environment, but they can’t happen inside a building. It’s not that quality learning can’t take place inside the traditional classroom, but for many children, being outside sparks a curiosity and opens up the door to all kinds of discovery, creating meaningful and memorable learning moments. The Outdoor Learning Symposium celebrates moments like these.

The 16th annual Outdoor Learning Symposium takes place on September 21st at the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center. The Buford, GA, facility will provide the backdrop to a full day of sessions focusing on outdoor teaching, the creation and enhancement of outdoor learning spaces, and how to overcome obstacles faced by teachers who want to get their students outside. Learn from experienced outdoor educators about ways to bring outdoor learning to any setting. The $75 registration fee includes a full day of sessions, a light breakfast, and lunch.

Educators may also choose to extend their learning and earn a professional learning unit (1 PLU) by participating in a post-symposium workshop to be held 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 22nd. The “Our Shared Forests” workshop will introduce educators to a multi-cultural, environmental education project featuring standards-based curriculum units on ethnobotany, migratory birds and sustainable forests, as well as family science night kits. The curriculum was developed through a partnership between the State Botanical Gardens of Georgia, the Ecuadorian NGO Fundación Maquipucuna, the Chocó Andes Alliance, and APROCANE associations of farmers and landowners in Northwest Ecuador.

Come together with other teachers who are motivated to get their students outside and to help create those magical moments that can only occur when students are beyond the walls of the traditional classroom. The world is your classroom!

Additional details and symposium registration information can be found at www.eealliance.org/outdoor-learning-symposium.
A Letter from the President

Dear EEA Members,

Welcome to the start of the 2012-2013 year! I am honored to serve as Board President of the Environmental Education Alliance (EEA) this year. The Board just finished our annual planning retreat and we are excited and energized for the year ahead. Your Board is made up of a diverse group of people who are passionate about the environment, education, promoting our field, and growing this organization. It is our privilege to serve you, the EEA membership.

The EEA is an organization that belongs to its membership. We encourage you to stay involved by attending events, communicating with other members and the Board, and volunteering to help grow this organization we love. Through our collective efforts, we will be more successful. This is the 20th year that EEA has been serving its members - what a milestone! When EEA began in 1992, its mission was to provide a networking forum to promote communication and education among professionals in the field of environmental education in Georgia. Today, we still embrace this mission on which we were founded, but are reaching beyond and growing our organization. Our goals this year center on promoting YOU, the hard working educators in classrooms, nature centers, non-profits, businesses, agencies, and the community. This year, the Board is focusing on:

1. **Professionalizing the field of environmental education**
   As budgets continue to tighten, and environmental education positions often being the first to be cut, there is a pressing need to advocate for the importance of EE positions. The EEA is working hard to raise the awareness of employers that EE is a professional field of practice. One of the ways we are accomplishing this is by offering the Advanced Training in Environmental Education in Georgia (ATEEG) Program. ATEEG is the only EE certification program in the state, and is on its way to becoming the first accredited EE certification program in the nation by the North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE). Becoming a certified environmental educator will add powerful professional credentials to your resume and demonstrate that EE in Georgia is a rigorous field of practice. If you are considering enrolling in the ATEEG Program or have questions, please contact the ATEEG Program Administrator at ateeg@eealliance.org.

2. **Growing our signature networking events - Outdoor Learning Symposium and Annual Conference**
   For many of us, the Outdoor Learning Symposium (OLS) and Annual Conference are the two premiere events that provide the opportunity to network, reconnect with other environmental educators around the state, form new and maintain existing partnerships with other organizations, and are also excellent professional development opportunities. We hope you will participate in these events this year. The OLS will be held on September 21 at the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center, and the Annual Conference will be in Athens on March 22-23. We hope to see you there!

3. **Advocating for the increased practice of environmental education**
   The EEA wants to serve as your voice for EE in the state. It is the role of EEA to promote the importance of and need for environmental education in Georgia. Through a concerted effort by the EEA Board, we aim to increase the number of people who self-identify as environmental educators, and keep our members informed about current issues that impact EE in Georgia and nationwide. Through our events, newsletters, e-blasts, ATEEG, and the Current Issues committee, we are striving to advocate for you.

These are just a few of the things the Board is focused on this year. We want to hear from you, and with your active participation, help shape and grow this organization. I encourage you to take advantage of all that EEA has to offer. For example, you are encouraged to nominate someone (or yourself!) for an EEA award, apply for one of the scholarships or grants EEA offers throughout the year, attend our unique events, enroll in ATEEG, join a committee, or communicate with members of the Board. Please contact me at president@eealliance.org with any input you may have. I look forward to serving you this year and learning from you. Thank you for your support of EEA.

With deep appreciation,

Laura Aikens
EEA President 2012-2013
Look, Don’t Touch
The problem with environmental education
BY DAVID SOBEL
Published in the July/August 2012 issue of Orion magazine

THE KIDS HAVE BEEN UP since seven-thirty playing computer games and watching cartoons. What a travesty for them to be inside on such a beautiful day, you harrumph to yourself. On the refrigerator, you notice the schedule of events from the nearby nature center: “Let’s Get Face to Face with Flowers,” it beckons. Just the thing! It’s a sparkly May morning. Buds are bursting. There’s a warm breeze full of the aromatic scent of the woods just waking up.

You trundle the kids into the minivan. They despondently consent. “Do we have to do a program? Programs are boring,” the older one complains. But as soon as you pull into the parking lot at Happy Hills Nature Center, their faces brighten. They fling the sliding door open and scamper down through the blossom-filled meadow to the shore of the pond. Ross, age seven, pulls off his sneakers and wades in, bent over searching for frogs. Amanda, age ten, plops down and starts making a dandelion tiara. What a good decision, you think to yourself.

Terri, the smiley naturalist wearing the official Happy Hills insigniaed staff shirt, saunters over. “Here for the flower program?” she chirps. “We’re meeting up in the Cozy Corner room to get started.”

Ross asks, “Can Freddie come too?” holding up the fat green frog he has befriended.

Terri’s bright face darkens a bit. “Sorry, Freddie needs to stay in the pond. Did you know the oils from your hands can make Freddie sick?”

In the darkened Cozy Corner room, Terri has prepared a PowerPoint of all the flowers you might see on the trail today. “Here are some spring beauties. They look just like little peppermint candies. Of course, we can’t eat them. And here’s one of my favorites, Dutchman’s breeches. Why do you think we call them that?”

After about the seventh slide the kids start to squirm in their seats. “Daddy, I have to go pee,” complains Ross. After about the twenty-seventh slide, you too have to go pee.

“And now, let’s see how many we can find,” Terri says. It’s good to be back outside. Upon entering the woods, Amanda notices a red eft in a patch of moss. She takes a few steps off the trail and Terri chastises her: “Remember, Amanda, nature is fragile! When you walk off the trail, you crush all kinds of little creatures you can’t see.” Farther on Ross scrampers up into the inviting branches of a tree that has fallen across the trail. “Sorry, Ross, no climbing, too dangerous, we wouldn’t want you to get hurt.” At each flower, Terri circles everyone around and tells them the Latin name, the herbal uses, the pollinator, the . . . Once in a while someone gets to touch the petals, only veeerrry gently. Picking flowers is strictly verboten. Toward the end of the walk, the trail comes out by the pond, where Amanda finds her discarded dandelion tiara and slips it into her shirt, watching to make sure Terri doesn’t notice. On the ride home, no one talks.

Want to know what happens next? To read the full article and join in on a lively discussion, go to http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/6929

Fair Trade: What is it?
Eco-conscious shoppers are drawn to fair trade products, but why? According to the Fair Trade Federation, fair trade is “a strategy for poverty alleviation and sustainable development.” Member organizations, like Ten Thousand Villages, help under- and unemployed artisans in developing countries to earn a fair income, significantly improving their quality of life.

To ensure a continued means of living and to minimize environmental impact, artisans use renewable, natural materials to create their wares. Many fair trade products are handcrafted with recycled newspaper or glass, post-consumer magazines, bamboo, and sustainable wood. To keep a low carbon footprint, shipments to the United States are consolidated tightly and sent by sea rather than air whenever possible.

In support of the fair trade movement, the EEA Store became a Ten Thousand Villages retailer in January 2012. Based on the reaction of spring conference attendees, the new merchandise is a bit hit! Be sure to check out these super eco-chic items at the Outdoor Learning Symposium on September 21 in Buford and at the 2013 conference in Athens. You’ll feel great about helping a worthy cause, delighted by the unique handicrafts, and amazed by the discounted prices!

Sources:
http://fairtradefederation.org
www.tenthousandvillages.com/fair-trade

An artisan from Guatemala
EEA Member Highlight: Jerry Hightower

If you have never met Jerry Hightower, imagine a grandfather figure jumping into a creek and motioning for you to “just follow me! We’re going to experience this.” There is no better method of learning than the adventure of following that welcoming statement and there is no better reward, Jerry says, than touching lives. This year he was presented with the Outdoor Classroom Service Award, and because he has been with the EEA since the second it was born, we thought it wise to seek some of his wisdom about environmental education during EEA’s 20th anniversary year.

A native of Sandy Springs, Jerry has been a park ranger at the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area for 34 years. This river was his childhood playground and he knows it intimately. As a young person he witnessed places that he held near and dear suddenly disappear and realized that environmental education was the only way humankind could awaken to their privileged role as stewards of the planet. He also realized that it was in these disappearing places that he learned more than he ever had inside a traditional classroom, and he then began to dedicate everything he was doing to their preservation through education. According to Jerry, environmental literacy is important because: we have increasingly major challenges facing us and we have to acknowledge the ecosystem services that clean our air, water, and soil, and provide us with a healthy space to grow.

Jerry’s career in environmental education began by embarking in activism during the 60’s and 70’s, a time of many exciting events. The Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act were passed, the Backyard Wildlife Habitat program started, and there was the first real effort to save the Chattahoochee. While stationed at Fort McPherson with his first infantry division, Jerry began volunteering for the Georgia Wildlife Federation, speaking publicly and leading guided hikes: He already knew that he wanted to teach. His career goal after the military was to become a biology teacher, but instead he was recruited by the National Park Service. Recently, we sat down with Jerry to get this thoughts about environmental education.

The Challenges in Environmental Education:
Whenever deeply engrained concepts are confronted, challenges usually arise. Many educational administrators are trained in one particular way and necessary changes are often unwelcome. It is a tragedy that Georgia’s educational system is ranked so low in the nation. However, by providing administrators with more information, encouraging them to participate, and demonstrating how environmental education can be an exciting vehicle to learning, then education in Georgia will drastically improve. An enormous difference is already made just by getting students outdoors.

In terms of dealing with environmental illiteracy or differing stewardship beliefs, the single most important way to positively influence others is living by example. Be willing to set that wonderful example and live the life you teach to others. Sometimes you have to realize that you might not make a difference with an individual at that moment. Just continue to politely and diplomatically present them with the facts. The best we can do is to continue to provide accurate information so people can make informed decisions, and if you give young people the abilities to make these decisions, they will. The real transformation, however, is not what they walk away with in their minds, but what they walk away with in their hearts.

The efforts of environmental educators are analogous to acorn planters: your work is done out of faith in a future that you may never fully know. Educators have the opportunity to plant an acorn, and perhaps see the seedling, the sapling, and even the young tree, but it will take many years before someone can really enjoy the majestic oak. Jerry’s parents encouraged and rewarded his interests in the natural world and, most importantly, taught him how to observe. He has the gift of being able to make a difference and he cherishes the special moments when parents thank him for making a difference to their children, and

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Connecting, Inspiring, & Empowering Environmental Educators: Past, Present, & Future

EEA 20th Anniversary Fall Retreat Invitation

Hopefully you’ve heard that 2012 marks EEA’s 20th Anniversary and you have joined one of our 20 events for 20 years. On November 16-17, our actual date of incorporation as an official 501c(3) non-profit organization, we are hosting a member retreat in Dahlonega.

We want to reach out to our many friends and founders, those who helped grow our organization, to offer an opportunity to reconnect with each other. And we want to get to know our newer members who continue to support the effort to develop a state-wide culture of environmental literacy and stewardship. EEA’s Advisory Council, made up of former Board Members, has developed a fun-filled weekend of programs designed especially for educators -- with both professional development and play. We hope you will be able to join us for the celebration.

Come be inspired with us, as we ignite purpose and value in environmental education. Registration is now open at www.eealliance.org. Space is limited so RSVP early!! See a full weekend schedule on our website!

Jerry Hightower... Continued from page 4

as a consequence, their children’s children. He urges fellow educators to realize what is most meaningful to them in their hearts and then dedicate themselves to that cause with the firm conviction that every individual can make a difference. “Every individual is like a pebble being thrown into a pond; the ripples go out a very long distance and every once in awhile, the sun hits those ripples in just the right way that they dazzle and sparkle!” Everyone in environmental education has to be willing to put fear aside, take risks, and not be afraid to fail. If you don’t venture, you won’t have those dazzling successes.

Jerry Hightower can be found at the Island Ford unit of the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area leading hikes and canoe trips. If he could be any animal, it would be the river otter.

EEA’s Member Events Have Been a Hit!

Summer Solstice at Arabia Mountain

On June 23rd EEA members and their families gathered at Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve to celebrate the Summer Solstice and outdoor learning with a unique evening program. Part of our 20th Anniversary series of events, members toured historic structures, explored the Preserve, and were treated to delicious local foods including fire roasted Georgia peaches. As twilight arrived, the multi-generational audience gathered by the fire and admired the stars and calmness of the special evening. If you missed the Summer Solstice then make plans to attend the Winter Solstice at Arabia Mountain. Please visit the EEA website for more information and registration regarding all 2012 member events. See you out there!

Jekyll Island Ecology Trip

‘The Art and Ecology of Jekyll Island,’ was a special 3-day EEA member trip in July, to experience one of Georgia’s jewels and get to know our precious barrier island ecosystems. Throughout the weekend, participants engaged in many ways to see and feel the island, starting with learning the basics on a beach walk while taking in a beautiful sunset to a sunrise painting ‘plein air’ on the beach. We walked with a DNR-WRD expert through a cross-section of the island from ocean to forest and at night we soaked in a female loggerhead turtle making her nest during this record year for Georgia’s sea turtles. We finished the weekend with a Sunday morning canoe trip through the marshes as the tides carried us in and out with marsh mud masking our faces. It was an incredible weekend to experience with other EEA members and one that will live in our memories for quite some time.

Please continue to look to our calendar for these very inexpensive and incredibly engaging events created for our EEA membership! Also, let us know where you would like to go in 2013 on a 1-3 day trip in Georgia! Complete the survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TXZ7YNQ or by sending ideas to Tara.Muenz@gaepd.org
Monarch Mania Hits Minnesota!

Science-fiction fans gather annually in Atlanta, GA, for Dragon*Con while comic book buffs mark their calendars for Comic-Con in San Diego, CA. Where do butterfly enthusiasts go to indulge their passion for monarchs? To Mon-Con, of course! On June 21 – 23, over 170 biologists, educators, citizen scientists, students, land managers authors, filmmakers, conservationists, and butterfly gardeners descended on Minneapolis, MN, to take part in the 2012 Monarch Biology and Conservation Meeting hosted by the University of Minnesota Monarch Lab. Appropriately, the meeting was held during Pollinator Week, an annual global event to draw attention to the plight of the world’s pollinators - bees, butterflies, bats, beetles, birds and other creatures that support the reproduction of over 70% of all flowering plants. Previous conferences were held in Morelos, Mexico (1981); California, USA (1986); Michoacán, Mexico (1997); and Kansas, USA (2001). This fifth international conference (dubbed Mon-Con for short) featured 32 oral presentations, over 50 poster sessions, and a variety of field trips and workshops all devoted to 1) monarch monitoring programs and population trends; 2) new findings in monarch biology; or 3) successful monarch conservation efforts. It drew attendees from over 30 U.S. states, Canada, Mexico, Spain, and Australia.

Three Georgia scientists shared their research related to monarch biology. Dr. Sonia Altizer from the University of Georgia (UGA) School of Ecology discussed “Migratory Immunity: Parasite Infection, Host Defense and Fitness Costs” while Andy Davis, also from UGA, gave a presentation titled “The Redder the Better: Subtle Variations in Monarch Wing Color and Fitness.” Dr. Jacobus de Roode from Emory University presented “Monarch Butterflies and Anti-parasitic Milkweed” and explained his findings showing parasite-infected female monarchs show a strong preference for laying eggs on a variety of milkweed that acts as a medicine to weaken parasites in the monarch’s offspring. These and other conference presentations are now available online at www.monarchlab.org/mn2012/Presentations.aspx.

A highlight of the meeting was the keynote address, “A 58-Year Journey with the Monarch” presented by legendary monarch researcher, Dr. Lincoln Brower. Known and respected by scientists and educators alike, Dr. Brower’s research interests include the overwintering and migration biology of the monarch butterfly, chemical defense, ecological chemistry, mimicry, scientific film making, and the conservation of endangered biological phenomena and ecosystems. He has authored and coauthored more than 200 scientific papers, eight films, edited two books, and is currently writing his magnum opus on the monarch butterfly for Harvard University Press. Instead of summarizing his vast past research, Dr. Brower focused on the results of his latest findings collected during last fall’s monarch migration through drought-stricken Texas.

In addition to all the scientific presentations, conference participants were treated to a sneak preview of a new IMAX®/Giant Screen film currently in production, Flight of the Butterflies. Promoted as “an awe-inspiring tale of extraordinary insect endurance and human perseverance,” the film is two stories intertwined. It’s about the astounding monarch butterfly migration, the longest known insect migration on earth, and Dr. Fred Urquhart, the determined Canadian scientist who spent almost 40 years working to discover exactly where the butterflies mysteriously went when they flew south for winter. The film is due to be released in October 2012. Check www.flightofthebutterflies.com for the latest updates and to find a theatre near you.

Between engaging in meeting activities, Mon-Con participants also took advantage of every moment including breaks, meals, and shuttle rides to...
network, share stories, and learn from each other. Three delegates from EEA’s own Monarchs Across Georgia (MAG) steering committee, Kim Bailey, Susan Meyers, and Trecia Neal, consider themselves extremely fortunate to be in attendance and representing MAG. “It was wonderful to meet so many others who share the same intense enthusiasm for monarchs we do and quite inspiring to see how they’ve shared their passion with others. We met a simply amazing group of people.” says Kim Bailey. Kim was particularly impressed by a group of middle school students who were spending the summer researching their own questions related to monarchs and milkweed – as well as the teacher giving her time to mentor them. Susan reflected, “What a great experience and opportunity to network! Although MAG was already connected to the existing monarch citizen science programs, we made some stronger relationships by meeting face-to-face. Trecia and I were invited to become Monarch Watch conservation specialists (www.monarchwatch.org). Kim and I were invited to write an article about MAG and environmental education to be included in a post-Mon Con book. Through a special promotional campaign tied to Journey North’s Symbolic Migration project, Bas Relief Publishing will be selling and sending books to Mexico for the 2013 Mexico Book Project. Could it get any better?” Trecia added, “It was so wonderful to see so many old friends from our frequent travels to Mexico again and to hear the newest research taking place from all over the world on Monarch biology and ecology. The conference energized me with many ideas for projects to bring back to Georgia and I am looking forward to working with the MAG committee again to begin to implement some of them!” The conference coordinators’ greatest hope is “the interactions between the people who gathered to promote and share research, conservation, and educational activities will support the continued health and well-being of North America’s favorite insect.”

While Mon-Con participants definitely take their butterflies seriously, don’t think they don’t also know how to have fun! Dragon*Con may be famous for its spectacle of costumes, but Mon-Con had its own informal parade of Monarch T-shirts in an astonishing variety. Some attendees took things a step further by adorning themselves in monarch fashions from head to toe… and even to fingertip! (See photo above). When and where will the next Mon-Con be held? Who will host it? No definite plans have been made yet, but the rumor is right here in Georgia. If so, watch out Dragon*Con - the Mon-Con-ners may be coming to town!

Save the Date for the 2013 Annual Conference!

For the first time since 1999 the annual conference will be held in Athens, GA. Mark your calendars for Friday and Saturday, March 22 and 23, 2013. The Classic Center’s Foundry Street Building, in the heart of downtown and only a few blocks from UGA, will serve as the home base for plenary and concurrent sessions. Of course we will also be taking advantage of all the great field trip opportunities Athens has to offer!

How are we as educators communicating with our audiences? How have we managed to stay relevant? The conference theme of “21st Century Communication for Environmental Educators” proposes answers to these questions and more. The sessions will be organized into three strands: Techniques and Tools for Changing Behavior, Promoting Programs, and Differentiating Instruction, and will examine closer social marketing strategies, managing and connecting to media trends (i.e. web presence and social media) when designing programs to reach the younger generations, and developing teaching materials so that all students can learn effectively. The call for proposals will be announced in September.

There are still specific opportunities to volunteer on the conference committee. Please email Joey Giunta at conference@eealliance.org with any questions or comments. We look forward to seeing you there!
That best portion of a good man’s life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.  
- William Wordsworth

Our close-knit community of Georgia's environmental educators recently lost a truly special soul: David Hedgepeth. David left us too soon, on June 30, at the age of 53. David was a Professor in the Department of Early Childhood & Special Education at Valdosta State University and served our community in many ways, including a turn on the Georgia Science Teachers Association Board and as EEA’s President in 2011-2012.

We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over. So in a series of acts of kindness there is, at last, one which make the heart run over.  
- James Boswell

As we all know, though, the true measure of a person is not the letters after his name or the boards on which he served, but how he touched the hearts of others. In that way, for me, David truly stands apart.

I had the great fortune to become friends with David during our tenure on the EEA board. While I don’t have any grandiose stories of David to share (David would be quick to agree that he was not a grandiose type of guy), what he has left me with was his steady undercurrent of kindness. David always had a quiet calm about him and when asked his opinion – he wasn’t one to pipe up unsolicited – had a level of empathy and fairness that made everyone take a moment and remember to be kind. David truly cared about EEA, about education, and about all of us. I came to value and look forward to the time we spent together. He was one of the kindest people I have ever known. And I will miss him.

Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.  
- Henry James

Farewell, David. Your departure is felt by everyone who had the pleasure to be on the receiving end your kindness.  
- Lisa Weinstein

DR. DAVID J. HEDGEPETH  
SEPTEMBER 24, 1953 - JUNE 30, 2012